

Dynamics of Self Control in Single Mother : A Case Study

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Abstract: Self control is an individual's ability to regulate behavior, emotions, and thoughts to achieve goals, especially in challenging situations. This study aims to describe the dynamics of self-control in a 56-year-old single mother of six, with five of whom successfully completed college, and the factors influencing her self-control. The method used was a qualitative case study design involving one participant who met the inclusion criteria. The data were collected through interviews and documentation, then analyzed using content analysis techniques. The results indicate that participants developed self-control strategies that included behavioral control, cognitive control, decision-making, information seeking, and reflection on past experiences. Influencing factors included family support, social activities, and high religiosity. These findings emphasize the importance of self-control in facing daily challenges for single mothers.

1 INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of single-parent families, particularly with mothers as heads of households, is increasing in various countries. In Germany, nearly 20 percent of households are led by single mothers. (Afdal et al., 2022). Meanwhile, in Indonesia, the Central Statistics Agency (2018) noted that 15.7 percent of the 10.3 million households were managed by women who had experienced divorce or the death of their husbands. (Prihatin, 2020). In Australia, the number of single-mother families reached 16 percent, which is higher than that of single fathers. (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2020) This change presents

significant challenges in various aspects of single mothers' lives. (Fitriyana, 2022)

One of the main challenges faced by single mothers is social stigma from society, which can cause psychological distress. (Sari & Hidayati, 2020) Lack of social support and resources often makes them feel isolated. (Pratiwi, 2020) The high burden of childcare also affects their overall well-being. (Wulandari, 2019) Negative impacts can arise on parenting patterns and child development. (Hinnant et al., 2015) In this context, self-control is an important key for single mothers to deal with life's pressures and provide more effective care. (Schofield et al., 2017)

Sarafino (1994) defines self-control as an individual's ability to make decisions and take

effective steps to achieve desired outcomes. Several factors influencing self-control include cognitive aspects, past experiences, and the surrounding environment (Nurfaizin, 2019). Self-control involves regulating behavior to achieve positive outcomes and helps individuals guide their actions (Goldfried & Marbaum, 1973). Gunarsa (2006) adds that self-control includes efforts to avoid losses and set goals independently, which are especially important for single mothers in their roles as caregivers and breadwinners (Asya, 2024).

The dimension of self-control plays a crucial role in strengthening personal responsibility. Sarafino (1994) emphasized that this ability helps individuals make effective decisions. Behavioral control allows individuals to alter situations through response regulation (Averill, 1973), while cognitive control provides the ability to process unwanted information (Nurfaizin, 2019). Decisional control helps individuals choose actions based on careful consideration (Goldfried & Marbaum, 1973). Furthermore, informational and retrospective control help prepare for stress and evaluate events positively (Gunarsa, 2006), key to good parenting and individual well-being (Bani et al., 2021).

Research shows that self-control is directly related to individual well-being. Nielsen et al. (2019) found that individuals with good self-control tend to be happier. Self-control strategies, such as distraction, also mediate this relationship. Yang et al. (2019) stated that self-control is closely related to resilience and self-esteem. Self-control can also reduce anxiety and stress (Fachrozie et al., 2021) and act as a connecting factor in effective parenting (Meldrum et al., 2018). These findings confirm the importance of self-control in improving the well-being of single

mothers (Wehrt et al., 2020). However, there is little research specifically examining the role of self-control in helping single mothers cope with life's stressors.

In Islam, self-control is the foundation of piety and the strength to face life's trials. (Alaydrus, 2017) For single mothers, self-control is essential for maintaining emotional stability, making wise decisions, and managing multiple responsibilities. This is not only a psychological skill, but also a manifestation of obedience to Allah SWT.

Allah SWT said:

وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ الْهَوَىٰ فَيُضِلَّكَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَضِلُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ ۖ بِمَا نَسُوا يَوْمَ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٣٦﴾

It means:

"And do not follow your desires, for they will lead you astray from the path of Allah. Indeed, those who go astray from the path of Allah will have a severe punishment because they forgot the Day of Reckoning." (QS. Shad: 26)

This verse emphasizes the dangers of following one's desires and the importance of self-control to stay on the right path. For single mothers, this means the ability to control themselves from despair, anger, or temptations that could interfere with their roles as educators and breadwinners, allowing them to adhere to Islamic principles and achieve well-being. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by focusing on self-control as a key factor in supporting single mothers. This research is important because it can provide a deeper understanding of the role of self-control in single mothers.

2 METHOD

Design

This research method uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. A case study is an in-depth explanation and analysis of an individual, group, or event (Assyakurrohim et al., 2022). The goal is to provide a detailed overview of the background, nature, and unique characteristics of the case being studied. Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews. To maintain data validity, the researcher used a thick description technique, which provides in-depth descriptions when presenting interview results (Creswell, 2009).

Instrument

The instrument used in this study was a semi-structured interview guide to explore self-control in single mothers. This interview guide was developed based on deductive reasoning, in which the researcher sought predetermined subjects and relevant theories.

Participants

This study involved one participant, a 56-year-old woman who became a single mother after her husband died. The participant has six children, with five of them successfully pursuing higher education. This reflects the participant's success in guiding and educating her children independently. The participant did not remarry after her husband's death. Participant selection was based on specific criteria, namely having at least six children and being a single mother. Although several potential participants were identified, only one met the criteria and agreed to participate in this study.

Procedure

Researchers examined aspects of self-control in single mothers who had been abandoned by their husbands. First, they sought potential participants in the village who met the following criteria: women aged 45-60, who had been abandoned by their husbands for more than 15 years, who had six children, and who had not remarried. After obtaining consent, the researchers scheduled a convenient interview time and location for the participants. Interviews lasted 25-30 minutes using a semi-structured guide and were recorded to ensure all information was captured.

Technical Analysis

The analysis technique in this study used content analysis of verbatim interviews with single mother, using a latent analysis approach to identify hidden meanings within the data. Stages one and two of the analysis were conducted by one person, while stage three was conducted by two people. This approach aims to provide in-depth insight into the experiences and self-control strategies of single mother. The analysis process consisted of four stages:

Stage 1

Decontextualization

(Read the interview transcript thoroughly and identify codes related to Self Control in single mother)



Stage 2

Recontextualization

(Ensure the code matches the data and relates it to the Self Control aspect)



Stage 3

Categorization

(Grouping codes into categories and combining them into main themes related to self-control in single mother)



Stage 4

Compilation

(Drawing deeper meaning from the themes found by writing supporting quotes from the data.)

3 RESULT

In this study, single mother demonstrated a variety of effective self-control strategies in dealing with everyday challenges. The findings were grouped according to five dimensions of self-control as follows:

Theme 1: Behavior Control

Single mother actively avoid unproductive activities and engage in social activities for emotional support. Their involvement in social activities provides significant emotional support.

He stated, "I attend Yasinan and Tahlil so that I don't feel alone" (Code: 63-67).

These social activities help reduce stress and maintain emotional balance. In his statement, he also added,

"When I feel stressed, being with people makes me calmer" (Code: 75-76).

This reflects his ability to manage his time and energy well, thus remaining productive and his participation in the community also creates a positive environment for him.

Theme 2: Cognitive Control

He is able to analyze situations objectively and identify important information, especially in managing family finances.

"I'm always looking for ways to reduce costs without sacrificing my children's needs" (Code: 110-112). This ability helps me make informed decisions.

Additionally, this mother demonstrated the ability to analyze situations objectively and identify important information. She explained,

"I always try to analyze every problem that arises so as not to make a wrong move" (Code: 106-108).

Theme 3: Decisional Control

This mother involves her children in decision-making to foster a sense of responsibility and collaboration, such as when choosing a school. She said,

"I want them to feel in control of their education" (Code: 134-136).

Theme 4: Informational Control

In the Informational Control dimension, this mother actively seeks reliable information and seeks advice from her family members. She stated,

"I always ask for your opinion when I face a difficult problem" (Code: 187-188).

This shows that he does not hesitate to look for solutions to solve problems and he does not hesitate to ask friends or relatives who have similar experiences.

"I believe that other people's experiences can be valuable lessons for me" (Code: 190-192).

By seeking relevant information, he feels more confident in facing challenges.

Table 1 Table of Findings on Subjects

Theme	findings on the subject	
Behavior control	Avoid unproductive activities.	Active in social activities
	Analyze the situation objectively.	Identifying important information.
Cognitive Control	Deciding on the best move	Inviting children to discuss
	Looking for reliable information.	Seek advice from family.
Informational Control	Learn from mistakes	Evaluating previous decisions

Theme 5: Retrospection Control

This mother always reflects on the decisions she has made so she can learn from them and avoid making mistakes in the future. She explained,

“Whenever I make a mistake, I always try not to repeat it” (Code: 241-243).

By learning from experience, he can avoid repeating mistakes and adapt better to new situations. He also added,

“I try to see every mistake as a learning opportunity, not as a failure” (Code: 250-251).

This shows that he has high self-awareness and a commitment to continue learning and developing.

Overall, these findings indicate that this single

mother employed a variety of effective self-management strategies in her life. These abilities to manage behavior, cognition, decision-making, information, and reflection are interconnected and reflect approaches that can help single mothers manage daily challenges.

4 DISCUSSION

This study reveals the self-control strategies employed by a single mother of six children in managing her life. This mother is able to manage various aspects, namely behavior, cognition, decision-making, information seeking, and self-reflection. In the Behavior Control dimension, active involvement in social activities helps reduce loneliness and supports her mental health. This finding aligns with research by Berkman & Glass (2000) which states that social support improves psychological well-being. Social activities also create a positive environment for her children, contributing to their social and emotional development.

In Cognitive Control, the ability to objectively analyze situations is crucial for parenting and household management. This critical thinking ability helps mothers manage financial issues and find appropriate solutions, consistent with the findings of Gonzalez et al. (2016) on the importance of cognitive skills in decision-making. This suggests that education and training in financial management may be beneficial for other single mothers. Furthermore, in Decisional Control, mothers involve their children in decision-making, which strengthens a sense of responsibility and family togetherness. This approach supports children's character development through participatory experiences, as explained by Zhang &

Wang (2020). This not only teaches children about responsibility but also builds stronger relationships within the family.

Informational Control demonstrates mothers' proactive approach to seeking information and advice from family and friends. This improves decision-making quality and aligns with Taylor's (2011) findings that social support and access to information contribute to problem-solving. In this context, it is crucial for single mothers to have a strong social network that can provide emotional and practical support. Finally, in Retrospective Control, mothers routinely reflect on past decisions and experiences to learn and improve. This approach supports the learning and self-development process, as per Kolb's (1984) theory. Through reflection, mothers can identify mistakes and devise better strategies for the future, enhancing adaptability. Overall, these single mothers apply holistic self-control, which is very helpful in facing the challenges of being both parents and breadwinners. These findings underscore the importance of social support, empowerment programs, and access to information for single mothers to better navigate their dual roles.

5 CONCLUSIONS

This single mother of six applies effective self-control strategies in her daily life. She is active in social activities (Behavior Control), able to analyze situations objectively (Cognitive Control), involves her children in decision-making (Decisional Control), proactively seeks information and advice (Informational Control), and regularly reflects on her experiences to learn from her experiences (Retrospective Control). This self-control helps

single mothers face everyday challenges.

Theoretical Suggestions

Further research is recommended to explore the factors influencing self-control strategies in various social and cultural contexts. Specific life skills training and mental health support programs for single mothers are needed to help them navigate the challenges of their dual roles. Furthermore, the findings of this study can inform more inclusive social policies to support the well-being of single mothers. Support from the community and relevant institutions is crucial for single mothers to achieve a more balanced and fulfilling life. This initiative is expected to create a more supportive environment for single mothers, enabling them to more effectively fulfill their roles.

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