

## PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING IN MOTHERS WITH TODDLERS

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### ABSTRACT

The psychological well-being of mothers can play a crucial role in the growth of toddlers, where mothers not only spend time with toddlers but also play a significant role in providing stimulation for their development. However, when having toddlers, mothers may face various challenges such as stress and fatigue that can affect their psychological well-being. The main objective of this study is to determine the level of psychological well-being among mothers with toddlers. This research employs a quantitative descriptive method with a cross-sectional approach involving 152 mothers with toddlers. Data were collected through a questionnaire using The Being a Mother Scale (BaM-13) instrument. Data analysis utilized univariate analysis with mean score categorization, defining positive psychology as  $\geq 13.43$  and negative psychology as  $< 13.43$ . The research findings indicate that 52% of mothers experience negative psychological well-being. Further analysis reveals that this condition may be associated with negative interactions in parenting and issues in toddler development. These research findings underscore the importance of psychological and social support for mothers, which can enhance mental health and caregiving quality. The study recommends the development and testing of interventions aimed at reducing parenting stress and assisting mothers in managing psychological pressure more effectively.

Keywords: Mothers, Psychological well-being, Toddlers

### INTRODUCTION

The psychological condition of the mother is one of the vital roles of the mother in an important period of child growth, where the child spends most of the time with the mother (Istiqomah et al., 2020). According to Rosyada et al. (2022), mothers have a crucial role in providing stimulation for child development, but many mothers, especially new mothers, do not fully understand how to optimize child development. When mothers have toddlers, it is a difficult and dangerous time for mothers' mental health, such as fatigue, stress, and the demands of parenting (McLeish & Redshaw, 2017). Mothers who experience psychological instability can reduce their ability to respond consistently and sensitively to their children's needs, often inhibiting the formation of emotional bonds with parents and impeding toddlers' social skills (Bozicevic et al., 2022).

The interaction between a mother and her toddler will be directly influenced by the mother's psychological condition. This is consistent with previous research indicating that poor maternal psychological well-being can lead to behavioral issues and anxiety in toddlers (McLeish & Redshaw, 2017). Essays (2019), show a prevalence of anxiety rates among elementary school children in Egypt at 7.9%, with 15% experiencing anxiety and depression disorders. Consequently, toddlers of mothers experiencing psychological disturbances are at higher risk of facing learning difficulties and behavioral problems that may persist into adolescence and adulthood (Sara & Monica, 2020).

Factors such as social isolation, economic difficulties, and lack of support from partners or family members can increase stress among mothers with toddlers. Economic burdens and unevenly distributed parenting responsibilities can add to mothers' psychological strain, often leading to decreased quality of life and mental health issues (Estes et al., 2013).

Psychological support to enhance maternal psychological well-being is crucial for mothers with toddlers because effective support programs not only assist mothers in

developing better coping strategies but also improve maternal parenting of toddlers and support long-term toddler growth (Bozicevic et al., 2022). Furthermore, general findings on maternal psychological well-being indicate that family care and support can be beneficial, such as aiding mothers in better stress management to enhance emotional regulation for both the mother and toddler (Tang et al., 2019).

Based on the phenomena encountered above, mental health problems in mothers will certainly harm the psychological condition of the mother and toddlers. Therefore, it is important to conduct research to determine the description of psychological well-being in mothers who have toddlers. Thus, this study can provide benefits in providing an overview of the psychological well-being of mothers in order to manage psychological stress during parenting and improve psychological well-being in mothers.

## METHOD

This study is a quantitative descriptive research using a cross-sectional approach to depict the psychological well-being of mothers who have toddlers. The study population consists of 152 mothers who have toddlers, particularly those located in the Sukamanah Village, Rancaekek District. The sampling technique used was total sampling. Data collection tools in the study involved distributing questionnaires using The Being a Mother Scale (BaM-13) instrument, which comprises 13 questions developed by Stephen Mathey. This research instrument has been translated and back-translated to adapt to mothers who use Indonesian language daily. The validity and reliability testing results of the instrument indicated valid and reliable outcomes with a Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.672 ( $>0.60$ ). Data analysis in the study employed univariate analysis to determine the frequency distribution of psychological levels in mothers who have toddlers. The results of the data analysis were categorized into two categories based on the mean value: positive psychological well-being  $\geq 13.43$  and negative psychological well-being  $< 13.43$ .

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1**  
*Responden Characteristics of Respondents (n = 152)*

Variables	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Age		
<20	7	4.6
21 – 25	30	19.7
26 – 30	47	30.9
31 – 35	37	24.3
36 – 40	14	9.2
41 – 45	15	9.9
>46	2	1.3
Education		
SD	9	5.9
SMP	77	50.7
SMA/SMK	55	36.2
D3	3	2
S1/D4	8	5.3
Income		

Variables	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
500.000 – 2.500.000	38	25
2.500.000 – 5.000.000	108	71.1
5.000.000 – 7.500.000	4	2.6
7.500.000 – 10.000.000	2	1.3

Table 1, the characteristics of respondents in this study showed that almost half of the respondents were aged 26-30 years (30.9%). Most of the respondents have a junior high school education (50.7%). Then most of the respondents have family income in the range of 2,500,000 - 5,000,000 (71.1%).

**Table 2*****Psychological Well-being in Mothers with Toddlers (n = 152)***

Variables	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Positive Psychological Well-being	73	48
Negative Psychological Well-being	79	52

Table 2, shows that most respondents in this study had negative psychological well-being (52%).

Psychological well-being is a concept that refers not only to the experience of negative mental health but also to an individual's experience and ability to develop their potential optimally, thus enabling them to become physically, psychologically, and emotionally integrated individuals (Ryff, 1995). It is undeniable that young age will affect the psychological development rate (Chung, 2018). Therefore, if a mother marries and has a child at an immature psychological age, it will impact the parenting style towards the baby or toddler (Duncan et al., 2018). Hence, a mother's psychological well-being is required to provide optimal caregiving to her baby or toddler. However, over time the psychological well-being of mothers decreases, while the well-being of women without children remains stable (Kuipers et al., 2021).

In this study, it was found that 52% of mothers had negative psychological well-being. This indicates a fairly high level of mental health issues among mothers of toddlers, requiring specific attention from researchers and healthcare professionals (Cameron et al., 2016). These findings reflect similar previous research, which has demonstrated a strong relationship between parenting roles and the psychological pressure experienced by mothers (Bridgett et al., 2017). The results of this study are consistent with earlier studies indicating that mothers of toddlers in the Solo Peduli Inpatient Clinic in the Jebres District, 16 mothers or approximately 53.33% were categorized as having high psychological well-being scores above 224, while 14 mothers or around 46.67% were classified as having low scores below or equal to 224 (Octavia, 2023).

Mental health issues in mothers, including depression and anxiety, indicate that the experience of motherhood often presents challenges that can impact maternal psychological well-being (Howard & Khalifeh, 2020). The postpartum period can be a particularly vulnerable time for mothers, where they often experience stress, depression, or anxiety (Cameron et al., 2016). The prevalence rates of depression and anxiety before and after childbirth vary widely, ranging from 9% to 60.8% worldwide (Dennis et al., 2017). Research by Stewart & Vigod, (2019) found high prevalence rates for postpartum depression among

new mothers. Additionally, 30.2% of breastfeeding mothers experience postpartum depression (Kadek Rudita Yasa & Cokorda Bagus Jaya Lesmana, 2019).

Research by Jones Harden & Slopen, (2022), indicates that maternal psychological health significantly influences the emotional and cognitive development of toddlers. This finding reinforces that toddlers whose mothers experience negative psychological well-being are more likely to face challenges in their social and cognitive development (Murray et al., 1996). This could occur because toddlers of mothers with mental health issues often experience delays in various developmental aspects, such as social and language skills, as well as a lack of positive and responsive interaction from their mothers, which are crucial components in shaping toddlers' social and cognitive abilities. These impacts are not only evident in the short term but can also extend into late childhood and adolescence (Sara & Monica, 2020).

Factors such as lack of social support, financial stress, and low education levels can exacerbate maternal psychosocial well-being (Leahy-Warren et al., 2012). This study indicates that the majority of mothers have a maximum education level of junior high school and are in early marriages. This condition can lead to various conflicts and psychological pressures for mothers, such as sadness, discomfort, and regret (Wulansari & Setiawan, 2019). Additionally, young women who enter early marriages are more vulnerable to experiencing negative psychological well-being during marriage, such as anxiety, irritability, stress, sadness, and other negative feelings (Sonata, 2014). This study also shows a high score for question 2, where mothers with toddlers express "I miss my life before pregnancy and having a baby/toddler." Moreover, young mothers also struggle to cope with the emotions that arise when their toddlers cry, which can be associated with their insufficient knowledge in optimizing development coupled with the psychological aspects of mothers often overlooked by the family (Rosyada et al., 2022).

Furthermore, one significant factor contributing to maternal mental health is socioeconomic status (Smith et al., 2023). A study by Marcil et al. (2020), identified that financial problems and inadequate resources can worsen maternal psychological conditions, increasing the risk of depression and anxiety, which negatively impacts parenting practices towards toddlers. Cooper, (2021) states that mothers with low socioeconomic status often lack adequate access to effective mental health care, necessary for addressing the psychological challenges they face.

Considering the research findings indicating a high percentage of mothers with negative psychological well-being, it is important to question the effectiveness of the current support systems. Related studies indicate that many mothers feel existing support is inadequate or difficult to access, especially for those in remote areas or with economic limitations (Leahy-Warren et al., 2012). This is corroborated by research highlighting the need for more integrated and sustainable mental health services accessible to all mothers, regardless of their socioeconomic backgrounds (Lasater et al., 2017). A study by Mu et al. (2021) found that effective support programs to enhance maternal psychological well-being must provide extensive and easily accessible resources, including professional counseling, peer support groups, and online interventions.

In addition, interventions that can be done to minimize the increase in negative psychological well-being conditions in mothers are mindful parenting programs. Parenting with mindful parenting is used as one of the various methods that are starting to be widely suggested to be able to build relationships between parents and children that are safe (Cowling & Van Gordon, 2022). According to research conducted by Sofyan (2019) mindful

parenting has been shown to be effective in reducing parental stress, increasing their satisfaction in parenting, and improving children's prosocial behavior. In addition, mindful parenting also improves the quality of verbal and nonverbal communication that is more affective. This method is even effective in supporting parents who have children with autism and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (Nur Sabilla, 2021).

### **LIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

The analysis was limited to only one variable studied in cross sectional time in the period January to February 2024 using the questionnaire filling method.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

This study revealed that most mothers of children under five experience negative psychological well-being, a finding that underscores the importance of more effective and affordable mental health support for this population group. These results make a novel contribution to health science by emphasizing that maternal psychological well-being affects not only the mother but also the child's care and development. This study adds evidence supporting the theory that maternal psychological health is of key importance in the development of child health and well-being, clarifying the link between maternal mental health and developmental problems in children. This has implications for health practice to integrate mental health screening and therapy as part of routine health care for new mothers and mothers of young children. It is important for future research to explore in more depth how specific interventions, such as mindful parenting, can help reduce the prevalence of negative psychological conditions in mothers and improve parenting outcomes. Further research also needs to evaluate the effectiveness of existing support programs and develop more innovative and accessible solutions that can be implemented at the community level.

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### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT**

No conflict of interest.

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