

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Husband's social support and subjective well-being among Javanese mothers of children with special needs

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## ABSTRACT

A husband's social support is one of the factors shaping subjective well-being in mothers who have children with special needs. It is undoubtedly influenced by the cultural values that form the basis of relationships in families of Javanese ethnicity. Therefore, this study looks at the relationship between the husband's social support and subjective well-being in mothers with children with special needs with a Javanese ethnic background. The sampling technique used was probability sampling with 36 participants of mothers of Javanese ethnicity who had children with special needs in the age range of 1-18 years—data collection using the Mother's Subjective Well-Being Scale and the Husband's Social Support Scale. The data analysis technique used is Pearson product-moment correlation. The data analysis shows no relationship between subjective well-being and husband's social support in mothers of Javanese ethnicity who have children with special needs. The results of this study imply that subjective well-being in mothers with Javanese ethnicity is not related to external factors.

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## INTRODUCTION

Childcare is every parent's social responsibility and obligation (Inawati, 2014). As one of the social identities inherent in parents, ethnicity influences perspectives and cultural values explicitly characterized in the dynamics of parenting in the family. Parents of Javanese ethnicity have parenting patterns based on the values and cultural systems adopted. As stated by Uyun (2002), families of Javanese ethnicity have different parenting styles and perspectives because mothers tend to get greater propriety in caring for children than fathers. It is undoubtedly in line with the values in Javanese culture that specifically place mothers as caregivers of children in the family (Putri & Lestari, 2015; Uyun, 2002). The role of mothers in Javanese families is in the domestic sphere. This role is known as *kanca wingking*, which means friends behind. In another sense, it can be interpreted that the role of mothers is related to *masak* (cooking), *macak* (dressing up), and *manak* (birthing) (Hermawati, 2007; Putri & Lestari, 2015; Uyun, 2002). A number of studies on families of Javanese ethnicity have consistently found that the task of childcare is still focused on the mother's responsibility (Budiati, 2010; Nisa et al., 2022; Putri & Lestari, 2015; Uyun, 2002).

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The role of childcare, which mothers dominantly carry out, is considered normal in Javanese culture because being a mother and carrying out the role of childcare is the ideal characteristic of a woman from the perspective of Javanese culture (Budiati, 2010). In carrying out their responsibilities, mothers bring warmth to the family as a form of affection and act as caregivers in caring for their children (Nisa et al., 2022). The many roles that are carried out certainly affect the mother's psychological condition, especially in mothers with children with special needs, of course, experiencing different life dynamics in carrying out and interpreting their roles. Research by Değirmenci (2019) found that mothers who have children with special needs generally experience anxiety disorders and depression. These conditions impact the loss of connection between mothers and their social community. In addition, Shenaar-Golan (2015) summarizes several previous studies and then explains that mothers face problems with children with special needs. The difficulty of caring for children with special needs causes conflict between parents in the family and socially the child's companion. In this case, the mother becomes difficult to socialize with, and financially it becomes more challenging to deal with (Shenaar-Golan, 2015).

Mothers as caregivers and companions of children with special needs are also affected by the double burden they have to perform simultaneously, as found in research by Putri & Rahmawati (2021) that explains the psychological conditions of mothers with double burden, including learning companions of children. It is explained that this condition manifests in the tendency to abuse children both physically and verbally, and then mothers also experience a range of negative emotions such as worry, anxiety, fear, frustration and pessimism. These various conditions indicate that mothers of children with special needs are a group vulnerable to psychological disorders (Rasheed, 2022). Thus, it provides a clear overview of the psychological condition of mothers who are generally unhappy or unwell. The mothers' discomfort in caring for children with special needs is described in Andayani et al. (2021), which state that mothers who have children with special needs tend to experience negative emotions such as feeling disappointed, anxious, sad and angry. In addition, mothers also expressed feelings of dissatisfaction with health and perceptions of success. These conditions emerge as a form of low subjective well-being in mothers.

According to Diener et al. (2018), subjective well-being or globally referred to as Subjective Well-Being (SWB), is a personal understanding of the quality of life that can be achieved by feeling satisfied with life as a whole and experiencing pleasant or positive emotional states more often. Diener (2009) states that three components make up subjective well-being: happiness, the feeling of satisfaction with the life lived and the high intensity of experiencing positive emotions rather than negative ones. The existence of subjective well-being in mothers with children with special needs will certainly have a positive effect on the better psychological condition of the mother. As described above, it can be argued that subjective well-being must be owned by mothers who accompany children with special needs. This view is conveyed by Andayani et al. (2021) that mothers who have children with special needs will feel better if they have ideal subjective well-being in themselves. It is further explained that this state is characterized by life satisfaction, often happiness, and rarely experiencing negative emotions.

Another finding by Negeri (2014) reported that up to 55.9% of mothers who have children with special needs feel satisfied with their current life, which is achieved by the existence of good subjective well-being conditions in mothers. In addition, Wijayanti (2015) reported that mothers' positive subjective well-being impacts the excellent acceptance of children with special needs. Therefore, the above findings clearly show that mothers with special needs need to have good subjective well-being in themselves (Andayani et al., 2021; Negeri, 2014; Wijayanti, 2015). In order to form positive subjective well-being in mothers as companions of children with special needs, it is necessary to pay

attention to a number of factors that promote subjective well-being. According to Dewi & Nasywa (2019), subjective well-being generally consists of two, namely internal factors such as personality, spirituality, forgiveness, gratitude, and self-esteem, while the external factor is social support.

The relationship between parents or couples who have children with special needs certainly has a significant impact on their personal lives. One form of relationship between husbands and wives is receiving social support from mothers that can come from husbands. As described by previous research, a good husband's social support is a manifestation of a quality home life and marriage (Dawenan & Shanti, 2021). The high level of the husband's social support also affects the equality of roles between husband and wife so that the two of them together take the initiative and try to help each other, especially in solving family problems (Martinea & Sunarti, 2020). A number of descriptions above indicate that the high acceptance of the husband's social support for mothers positively impacts the mother's well-being. In line with this, Martinea & Sunarti (2020) explained that the husband's social support to the mother is a tangible manifestation of love or affection expressed in everyday life. The more intense the mother receives the husband's social support, certainly increases the experience of life satisfaction and positive emotions of the mother.

However, Sarason et al. in Nurhayati Dawenan & Shanti (2021) explain that social support is also influenced by gender roles, including the husband's social support for mothers who have children with special needs. Therefore, a family's cultural context and values need to be considered. As explained by Uyun (2002), ethnic families, in particular, have unique patterns of interaction and relationships between husbands and wives. The unique relationship between husband and wife in Javanese families is still limited to explanations derived from general values and philosophy of life. Meanwhile, the reality of change and time development has affected the perspective and gender roles in Javanese culture (Hermawati, 2007). Therefore, it is essential to explain the relationship between the husband's social support to mothers concerning the basic dimensions that make up the existence of the husband's social support, which refers to the understanding of people from Javanese ethnicity.

From the above explanations, it can be seen that husband's social support is one of the essential factors that promote the formation of the mother's subjective well-being. Referring to Kuncoro et al. (2016), a husband's social support is the mother's or wife's view towards her husband about the existence of a husband who can support and help solve problems. The husband's social support dimensions are based on Javanese cultural values, namely giving advice, providing assistance, and expressing support through encouragement, consolation and understanding feelings. In this article, we aim to examine the relationship between husbands' social support and subjective well-being among mothers who accompany their children with special needs for distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **METHOD**

This study is an inferential quantitative study involving 36 mothers as research subjects. This study's subject criteria are mothers with children with special needs aged 1-18 years and of Javanese ethnicity. The sampling technique used in this study is probability sampling using a simple random sampling technique. Data collection was conducted online using Google Forms by distributing the scale through social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram directly to groups of parents who have children with special needs, are community members, and are parents of special school students.

The instrument used to measure subjective well-being is the Mother's Subjective Well-being (MSWB) scale, which was compiled by Nabilla (2020). This scale consists of 15 items, with the index of

the items differential between .564 and .781, and the alpha Cronbach value of the MSWB is .937. Meanwhile, the Husband Support Scale (HSS) was used to measure the husband’s social support, which was compiled by Kuncoro et al. (2016). This scale consists of 21 items, with the item differentiation index moving between .428— .564 and the reliability value of HSS of 0.733. Data were analyzed using Karl Pearson’s product-moment correlation technique for hypothesis testing. In contrast, additional analysis was conducted using the One-way ANOVA test to conduct a different test based on demographic factors such as employment status, mother’s education level, and child’s gender.



**Figure 1** Hypothesis model

## RESULT

The descriptive analysis of the research data shows maternal employment status, maternal education level, maternal residence, and number of children with special needs by gender, age, and type of education. Information on demographic data is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** The Demographic of participants (n=36)

Category	n (%)
<b>Mother's employment status</b>	
employed	16 (55.6%)
unemployed	20 (44.4%)
<b>Mother's educational level</b>	
Senior high	14 (38.9%)
Undergraduate	19 (52.8%)
Master	3 (8.3%)
<b>Mother's domicile</b>	
Special Region of Yogyakarta	19 (52.8%)
Central Java	6 (16.7%)
The Special Capital Region of Jakarta	3 (8.3%)
East Java	1 (2.8%)
North Sumatera	1 (2.8%)
Unidentified	6 (16.7%)
<b>Child's gender</b>	
Male	18 (50.0%)
Female	18 (50.0%)
<b>Child's age</b>	
5 years	1 (2.8%)
6 years	2 (5.6%)
7 years	2 (5.6%)
8 years	3 (8.3%)
9 years	5 (13.9%)
10 years	4 (11.1%)
11 years	2 (5.6%)
12 years	3 (8.3%)
13 years	4 (11.1%)
14 years	3 (8.3%)
15 years	4 (11.1%)
16 years	1 (2.8%)
17 years	1 (2.8%)
18 years	1 (2.8%)
<b>Type of child's education unit</b>	
Special school	27 (75.0%)
Regular school	9 (25.0%)

The research data were processed through a series of analyses to get an overview of the subject's condition. The assumption test was carried out as a prerequisite for conducting hypothesis testing, namely the normality and data linearity tests. The results of the data normality test by the Shapiro-Wilk test obtained data on the husband's social support ( $p = .158$ ), and the mother's subjective well-being ( $p = .281$ ) showed that the data were normally distributed. Furthermore, the obtained linearity test ( $F = 1.301$ ;  $p = .281$ ) showed that the data had a non-linear relationship. Furthermore, hypothesis testing was carried out using Karl Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis technique to test the relationship between the husband's social support and the mother's subjective well-being obtained ( $r = .148$ ;  $p = .390$ ), indicating that there is no relationship between husband's social support and mother's subjective well-being. The analysis results obtained the coefficient of determination ( $R^2 = .022$ ), which means that the husband's social support contributes effectiveness of (2.2%) to subjective well-being in mothers with children with special needs from Javanese ethnicity. Meanwhile, (97.8%) of mothers' subjective well-being is influenced by other factors not examined in this study, such as resilience, gratitude, adaptability, and coping strategies. The results of hypothesis testing using correlation tests can be seen in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Mean, standard deviation and correlation between variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Correlation	
			1	2
Mother's subjective well-being	15.6	2.406	-	-
Husband's social support	69.47	18.537	.390*	-

$n = 36$ ;  $*p < .05$

Hypothesis testing was conducted using Karl Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis technique. The correlation test results between the husband's social support and subjective well-being obtained a value of  $r = .148$  ( $p = .390$ ), meaning there is no positive and significant relationship between the husband's social support and the mother's subjective well-being. These results indicate that the social support of their husbands does not always determine the high subjective well-being of mothers who have children with special needs.

The analysis results showed a coefficient of determination  $R^2 = .022$ , which means that the social support of the husband contributes 2.2% to the effectiveness of the subjective well-being of mothers with children with special needs. Therefore, 97.8% of mothers' subjective well-being is influenced by other factors not examined in this study, such as resilience, gratitude, adaptability, and coping strategies. In an additional analysis, One-way ANOVA was used to examine the subjective well-being of mothers with children with special needs about demographic factors such as employment status, mother's education level, and child's gender. The results of the difference test are shown in Table 3.

**Table 2.** Mother's subjective well-being level based on demographic factors

Category	N	Mean	SD	F	$p$
<b>Mother's employment status</b>				.272	.606*
Employed	16	15.38	2.419		
unemployed	20	15.80	2.441		
<b>Mother's educational level</b>				.944	.399*
Senior high	14	14.93	2.235		
Undergraduate	19	16.00	2.646		
Master	3	16.33	.557		
<b>Child's gender</b>				2.916	.097
Male	18	16.28	2.024		
Female	18	14.94	2.623		

$n = 36$ ;  $*p < .05$

## DISCUSSION

This study aims to analyze the relationship between the husband's social support and subjective well-being among mothers of Javanese ethnicity with special needs children. The findings of this study are consistent with the views of Diener et al. (2018) that subjective well-being is an evaluation of all life experiences that comes from the individual's own reflection. This means that the subjective well-being of mothers who have children with special needs is not always influenced by external factors, such as the husband's social support, because subjective well-being can be experienced through the mother's internal meaning and perspective. Nevertheless, the results of this study contradict some previous studies. In a study, Indraswari (2019) conducted on families of Javanese ethnicity, it was explained that the husband's social support is one factor that shapes good marital quality. It was explained that marital quality also influenced the level of subjective well-being of husbands and wives in the family, with a percentage of (6.2%).

In line with previous opinions, the results of a qualitative study by Balkis & Masykur (2016) show that subjects who are mothers have good subjective well-being due to the social support of their husbands. The presence of social support from the husband impacts the subjects' low experience of negative emotions such as hopelessness, sadness, and disappointment. The above two research findings both show a positive relationship between the husband's social support and the subjective well-being of mothers (Balkis & Masykur, 2016; Indraswari, 2019). In contrast to the previous studies, the results of this study showed no significant relationship between husbands' social support and subjective well-being in mothers. Regarding the characteristics of the subjects, mothers with children with special needs from Javanese ethnic families, it is explained that the mother's social identity as a Javanese woman and the cultural values she holds contribute to the state of subjective well-being of the mother (Diener, 2009). In support of the above statement, according to Akhtar (2018), the understanding of subjective well-being is commonly known as happiness. However, to understand it more, the subjective well-being of Javanese people must be viewed from a cultural perspective.

Therefore, the difference between Western and Javanese cultural perspectives is one of the factors in interpreting the subjective well-being of individuals, including mothers who have children with special needs and are of Javanese ethnicity (Akhtar, 2018). In support of these findings, Mujamiasih et al. (2013) explained that a number of factors influence subjective well-being in Javanese people, such as the principle of life intended, feelings of security and comfort, and knowledge and life experiences. The intended life principle, by Mujamiasih et al. (2013) is consistent with the concept of Javanese subjective well-being described by Akhtar (2018) that a person is considered to be prosperous if he or she is able to accept sad and happy situations in his or her life, this acceptance is also consistent with a sense of stoicism, which is one of the Javanese life principles, including mothers who have children with special needs from Javanese ethnicity. Research by Nirmala (2013) reports that the well-being of mothers who have children with special needs can be achieved with the perception of good meaningfulness in life. It is explained that mothers with good meaningfulness in life can develop a more positive attitude towards life, thus encouraging mothers to live their daily lives with a sense of responsibility. The subjective well-being of mothers of Javanese ethnicity who have children with special needs is indeed inseparable from the mother's view of her identity as a Javanese woman. Nirmala (2013) explained that the meaning of their lives strongly influences mothers who experience well-being or happiness. The intended meaning is, of course, also related to the role of the mother.

A study by Uyun (2002) reported a shared role between mother and father in Javanese family life. It is explained that the mother's role is related to domestic matters, such as taking care of children and helping her husband. In line with the above view, Putri & Lestari (2015) added that the mother's

role also includes taking care of and educating children, so it can be said that mothers, in particular, play an important and central role in Javanese families. Nevertheless, the many roles mothers play may also affect their subjective well-being, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. The results of the study, Andayani et al. (2021) report that the condition of mothers who have children with special needs in a pandemic is actually at a good stage because mothers consciously recognize that they are satisfied with the life they are living. The life satisfaction experienced by mothers is a form of good subjective well-being because mothers can interpret the various conditions they face positively (Andayani et al., 2021). The various descriptions above show that the mother's identity as a Javanese woman strongly influences her views on caring for and accompanying children undergoing distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is reinforced by the view of Musman (2021), who states that Javanese women must basically have a soft heart, stable emotions, calm feelings, and polite behavior. Through these principles, Musman (2021) explains that there are a number of positive attitudes lived by a Javanese woman, including willingness or "*rila*", which means awareness to accept various conditions fully and honestly. In addition, Javanese women also have an attitude of "*narima*" or acceptance, which means acceptance with gratitude for whatever happens and honestly being able to take responsibility for it. This attitude is certainly based on Javanese cultural values that encourage mothers to develop a positive attitude so that internally mothers with children with special needs can develop better subjective well-being. Therefore, mothers' subjective well-being does not always depend on external factors outside of themselves.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis results described above, it can be concluded that there is no relationship between the husband's social support and subjective well-being among mothers of children with special needs who are of Javanese ethnicity. This result shows that mothers' subjective well-being is not always influenced by external factors such as the husband's social support. There is little contribution to the mother's subjective well-being from the husband's social support. Meanwhile, mothers' subjective well-being can be influenced by other factors not examined in this study, such as resilience, gratitude, adaptability and coping strategies.

The author's suggestion for future researchers is to explore the state of subjective well-being of mothers, especially mothers of Javanese ethnicity, which can be viewed from an indigenous psychology perspective. In addition, the conditions after the COVID-19 pandemic certainly affect the psychological dynamics of mothers. Thus, it can be an input for future research. In the meantime, practical advice is given to mothers who become caregivers of children to improve and maintain stability within themselves so that they have better subjective well-being.

## DECLARATION

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### Author contribution statement

Hesdo Calvin Naraha contributed to conducting the research design, creating Google forms for data collection, distributing the scales, analyzing the research results and writing the manuscript. Sowanya Ardi Prahara served as a supervisor who assisted and approved the research design development,

oversaw the data collection process, and reviewed the results and manuscript. Angelina Dyah Arum Setyaningtyas contributed as a supervisor who assisted in preparing the research design, controlled the data collection process, distributed the research scale, provided input related to the theoretical discussion, reviewed the results and wrote the manuscript.

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### Data access statement

The data described in this article are not publicly available, so the results of the research can be seen directly in the manuscript presented.

### Declaration of interest's statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

### Additional information

This research was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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