

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SINGLE MOTHER STATUS AND THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN WITH THE RATE OF DEPRESSION OF SINGLE MOTHERS IN BANYUMAS

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Abstract

Single mothers have dual responsibilities as breadwinners as well as primary caregivers. This can trigger chronic stress and end up in depressive disorders. There are several factors that cause depressive disorders in *single mothers*, including the status of single mothers and the number of children who are responsible. The purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between single mother status and the number of children with the level of depression in single mothers in Banyumas. This research method uses correlational quantitative research with a *cross-sectional approach*. The instruments used were the DASS questionnaire that had been tested for validity ($r = 0.312 - 0.784$) and reliability test (Cronbach's alpha ≥ 0.80). Data analysis using the Spearman rank test. The results of the study showed that the status of single mothers in Banyumas was mostly in the living divorce group of 56.3% (27 respondents), the number of children mostly in the category of double children was 77.08% (37 respondents). The rate of single mother depression was mostly in the mild category of 54.16% (26 respondents). There was a relationship between single mother status and depression level with a p value of $0.001 < 0.05$ and there was a relationship between the number of children and depression level with a p value of $0.004 < 0.05$.

Keywords : Banyumas, DASS, Depression, Single Mother

Introduction

Depression is one of the mental disorders that can occur globally (Limenih et al., 2025) and is a crucial problem that affects people in the world (Kareem et al., 2024). Based on the *World Health Organization* (2021), the prevalence of depression in the world reaches 264 million people with a higher incidence of women than men. The incidence of depression in women is increasing in women who have dual roles as mothers and breadwinners, such as single mothers (Nahar et al., 2020).

Single mothers are women who no longer live with their husbands and parenting is their own responsibility (Nurfitri et al., 2019). Single mothers are prone to depression due to the great responsibility and psychological pressure of raising their own children without a husband (Kareem et al., 2024). Single mothers feel hopeless, lonely, helpless and lack confidence after being abandoned by their husbands either by death or divorce (Santrock, 2012). Mothers experience difficulties in raising children and continuing their lives as single parents, negative stigma over widowhood, number of children or dependents and economic problems (Afifatun & Sundari, 2021). Symptoms of depression are greater in single mothers with low incomes (Dharani & Balamurugan, 2024a). This level of depression can have a negative impact on the mother's lifestyle and cause parenting stress. This can affect children's growth and development and poor behavior (Lee, 2024), such as alcohol and drug addiction, sexual delinquency and even suicidal thoughts (Dharani & Balamurugan, 2024b).

The number of children has the potential to affect the risk of depression in single mothers. Some studies suggest that more children can increase the workload and financial stress thereby increasing the risk of depression (Zhang et al., 2025). Surveys in the United States show that mental disorders tend to occur in single mothers with high disparities, mothers with low education and mothers with children who are covered by public insurance or without insurance (Jamie et al., 2025). Based on this background, it is important to examine the relationship between single mother status and the number of children with the level of depression in single mothers.

Method

This study uses a type of correlation description research with *a cross-sectional approach*. Research that focuses on the relationship between variables and a one-time approach (Dahlan, 2020). This study aims to find a relationship between single mother status and the number of children with the rate of single mother depression in Banyumas. The instrument used was a questionnaire on the population of all single mothers in the Banyumas Region whose number has not been identified, so the researcher used *the snowball sampling* technique. *Depression Anxiety Stress Scale* (DASS). The validity test of the questionnaire showed $r = 0.312$ to 0.784 . Reliability test with Cronbach's Alpha ≥ 0.80 (Judge & Aristawati, 2023; Kurniawan, 2021). The inclusion criteria for this study are single mothers, both divorced and divorced, single mothers, less than 10 years, and childcare. The samples obtained were 48 people. Data analysis consists of univariate and bivariate analysis. Univariate analysis to look at the frequency distribution of single mother status, number of children and rates of depression. Bivariate analysis uses the Spearman Rank test to look at the relationship between single mother status and the number of children with single mother depression rates.

Results

The results of the research that has been carried out in Banyumas are as follows:

3.1 Overview of Respondent Characteristics based on Single Mother Status and Number of Children

Table 1 Frequency Distribution of Respondent Characteristics Overview based on Single Mother Status and Number of Children (n=48)

Variabel	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Status Single Mother		
Divorce Life	27	56.3
Divorce Dead	21	43.8
Quantity	48	100.0
Number of Children		
Single	11	22.92
Double	37	77.08
Quantity	48	100.0

Table 1 shows that the status of single mothers is mostly divorced living at 56.3% (27 respondents) and the number of children mostly doubles at 77.08% (37 respondents). Living divorce is greater than a dead divorce and the number of children is mostly more than one child.

3.2 Overview of the Depression Rate of Single Mothers in Banyumas

Table 2 Frequency Distribution of Single Mothers' Depression Levels Before Mindfulness Therapy Intervention (n=48)

Depression Rate	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Normal	3	6.2
Lightweight	26	54.2
Medium	17	35.4
Very Severe	2	4.2
Total	48	100.0

Based on table 2, it can be seen that the rate of *single mother* depression in Banyumas is mostly in the mild depression category of 54.2% (26 respondents). There was a very severe depression rate of 4.2% (2 respondents).

3.3 The Relationship between Single Mother Status and Single Mother Depression Rates

Table 3 The Relationship between Single Mother Status and Single Mother Depression Rates (n=48)

Status Single Mother	Depression Rate				P value
	Normal	Lightweight	Medium	Very Severe	
Divorce life	3	24	0	0	0.001
Divorce	0	2	17	2	
Total	3	26	17	2	

Based on table 3, it can be seen that there is a significant relationship between single mother status and single mother depression levels with a p value of $0.001 < 0.05$. This shows that single mothers who are divorced are more prone to depression than single mothers because they are left to die by their spouses.

3.4 Hubungan Jumlah Anak dengan Tingkat Depresi Single Mother

Table 3 The Relationship between the Number of Children and the Rate of Single Mother Depression (n=48)

Status Single Mother	Depression Rate				P value
	Normal	Lightweight	Medium	Very Severe	
Single	1	10	0	0	0.004
Double	2	16	17	2	
Total	3	26	17	2	

Based on table 3, it can be seen that there is a significant relationship between single mother status and single mother depression levels with a p value of $0.004 < 0.05$. This shows that single mothers who are divorced are more prone to depression than single mothers because they are left to die by their living partners.

Discussion

1. Characteristics of Respondents based on Single Mother Status and Number of Children

The results of the study show that the status of single mothers in Banyumas is mostly a living divorce. This means that the status of a single mother occurs because the wife divorces her husband, not because she is left to die by her husband. This shows that the divorce rate in Banyumas is quite high, causing an increase in the number of widows. This is not in accordance with the results of Sari (2021) research which explains that the majority of single mothers due to being left behind die by their spouses amounted to 67.81%. The stress and depression caused by single mothers due to divorce live higher than those left behind due to death. There are feelings of hatred, rejection or sadness because they feel like they have failed to maintain the marriage.

As for the number of children who are dependent on single mothers, most of them amount to more than one, totaling 77.08% (37 respondents). This explains that single mothers can experience higher rates of depression because they have to bear many children. Single mothers who have custody of children must be fully responsible for the cost of living and education of children. Single mothers have to finance and struggle on their own without help from their husbands.

2. Single Mother Depression Rate in Banyumas

Based on table 2, it is known that the level of depression experienced by single mothers is mostly in the category of mild depression of 54.2% (26 respondents). This figure was followed by the level of moderate depression at 35.4% (17 respondents), normal depression at 6.2% (3 respondents) and finally severe depression at 4.2% (2 respondents). This is in line with the results of research by Hallerback et al. (2025) which explained that single mothers experience higher psychological distress compared to mothers who have a life partner. The researcher assumes that the level of depression of respondents is in the mild category because of the age of the respondents who are in the late adulthood stage, so they are more mature in responding to problems. Single mothers have effective coping in facing and interpreting life. In addition, the high level of education also makes respondents have a better perception.

Environmental factors also play a role in shaping the level of depression of single mothers. The social support that single mothers get from their families or the environment plays a role in the life of single mothers. This is in line with research by Rahman et al. (2022) which revealed that social support from family and community aspects, finance and welfare, and moral support are important specs for single mothers in supporting their children's lives.

3. The Relationship between Single Mother Status and Single Mother Depression Rate in Banyumas

The results of the study showed that there was a significant relationship between single mother status and the rate of single mother depression in Banyumas. This can be seen from the p value which shows the numbers $0.001 < 0.05$. This is in accordance with Kareem's (2024) research which explains that single mothers divorced by living partners have a higher risk of depression, but the main explanation is related to low social support and financial burden. Single mothers who are divorced by their husbands feel that they have failed in their marriage, so they feel more disappointed, sad and angry. Meanwhile, single mothers who are left behind by their spouse do not have hatred because it is an irreversible provision.

4. The Relationship between the Number of Children and the Rate of Single Mother Depression in Banyumas

The results of the study showed a significant relationship between the number of children and the rate of single mother depression in Banyumas. This is evidenced by a p value of $0.004 < 0.05$. The greater the number of children, the greater the cost of living, attention, and the responsibility of educating children. This of course makes single mothers feel physical and mental fatigue. If this feeling is left unchecked, it will turn into depression that interferes with the well-being of single mothers.

Conclusion

The conclusion of the results of this study is as follows:

1. The characteristics of respondents based on the status of single mothers were mostly divorced living as 56.3% (27 respondents) and most of the number of children with more than one was 77.08% (37 respondents).
2. The rate of single mother depression in Banyumas was mostly in the mild depression category of 54.2% (26 respondents).
3. There was a significant relationship between single mother status and the rate of single mother depression in Banyumas with a p value of $0.001 < 0.05$.
4. There was a significant relationship between the number of children with the level of single mother depression in Banyumas with a p value of $0.004 < 0.05$.

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