

Supporting Factors for Grit and Mental Well-Being in Single-parents: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract:

The growing trend of single-parenthood in Indonesia imposes full childrearing responsibility and unique challenges that significantly impact parental well-being. This study aims to explore how grit supports emotional stability and mental well-being among single-parents in managing dual-role demands. This qualitative, phenomenological study investigates how the psychological construct of grit supports single-parents' emotional stability and their ability to navigate complex daily demands. The sample consisted of three participants characterized by a background of divorce or bereavement. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings show that participants managed financial, parenting, and work-related challenges through persistence and determination. This grit is heavily bolstered by social support—through emotional and social support, which serves as a primary supporting factor that enables individuals to survive emotionally and maintain their mental stability. These results underscore the importance of resilience-focused interventions, including counseling support, peer-support groups, and community-based programs for single-parents.

Keywords:

single-parents, grit, mental well-being, phenomenology

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1. Introduction

Parenting is a process and responsibility carried out in the role of a parent. In other words, parenting includes three main aspects: meeting children's nutritional needs, protecting them from harm, and guiding them through their growth and development process (Chavda & Nisarga, 2023). A single-parent is an individual who fulfills the parenting role alone, without the presence of a partner to share the responsibility. A single-parent can be a single mother or father. This condition can occur for various reasons, such as divorce, becoming a widow or widower, separation from a partner, or unplanned pregnancy.

The rise of single-parent households in Indonesia reflects a significant shift in family structures, with notable increases driven by divorce and the loss of a spouse (Chavda & Nisarga, 2023; Pujihasvuty et al., 2021). Data from the Central Statistics Agency show that, by 2022, there were 7.9 million single mothers and 2.7 million single fathers in a population of 275.77 million (Christine et al., 2024). This increase is not just a demographic trend; it raises critical concerns about individual and societal welfare. As the number of single-parents grows, the cumulative impact on family stability and community well-being becomes more pronounced, highlighting the urgent need to understand and address the challenges faced by these families.

Single-parents, particularly single mothers, face multifaceted challenges that threaten their well-being and the well-being of their children. They must lead the family, manage finances, and raise their children alone, making financial stability and time management particularly difficult (Noviandari & Rini, 2023). Women, who often bear a greater share of these responsibilities, face greater work-family conflicts and societal stigma. These stressors

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are compounded by financial difficulties and emotional burdens that can lead to psychological and physical health issues (Hasanah & Ni'matuzahroh, 2017; Stack & Meredith, 2017). The intense pressures on single-parents underscore the importance of finding effective strategies to cope with dual roles and maintain psychological well-being. Without adequate support, the ability of single-parents to fulfill both parenting and provider roles is compromised—ultimately impacting the welfare of the entire family (Pangestu & Tohari, 2024). The perseverance of single-parents in facing these challenges is central to their children's outcomes and is closely related to the concept of grit.

Single-parent families, frequently headed by mothers, face a complex and interconnected set of challenges that profoundly impact both parental and child well-being, directly influencing outcomes like educational attainment and psychosocial adjustment (Chang et al., 2023; Wen et al., 2024). On a societal level, the increased prevalence of single-parent families can place greater demands on social support systems, influence workplace productivity due to parents' increased need for flexible arrangements, and contribute to public health challenges. Higher rates of financial instability and mental health concerns among single-parent households may require expanded governmental and community assistance, impacting resource allocation and social development overall.

The foremost challenge is economic instability (Wen et al., 2024). Relying on a single income often results in lower socioeconomic attainment and increased financial strain, creating a cycle of poverty (Wen et al., 2024; Glendinning et al., 2015). This hardship is a significant risk factor, limiting resources for quality education, extracurriculars, and overall child development (Pandya, 2023; Garutsa & Owolabi, 2024). Higher parental education levels offer a mitigating factor (Pandya, 2023). This financial stress, as suggested by the Family Stress Model, leads to emotional distress and reduced life satisfaction for the parent (Ng et al., 2025).

The combined pressures of financial strain, parenting responsibilities, and societal stigma make single-parents, particularly mothers, highly vulnerable to mental health issues. Effective interventions must address not just material deprivation but also psychosocial support for parents, underscoring the need for comprehensive solutions (Ng et al., 2025; Pino Gavidia et al., 2023). Confronting these challenges holistically is essential for improving the lives of single-parent families and fostering a healthier, more equitable society.

Single-parent families, usually led by mothers, often face economic hardship in low-income settings, raising the risk of psychosocial maladjustment for adolescents (Chang, Kniess, Buschlen, & Fernandez, 2023). The formation of these families, such as through divorce, brings specific relational stresses (Angjelkoska, Stankovska, & Dimitrovski, 2015). Divorce-related disruptions and parental conflict create a negative atmosphere, hindering secure attachment. This leads to a lack of a secure base, potential future estrangement, and the development of insecure attachment styles that affect future relationships (Angjelkoska et al., 2015; Cowan, Coleman, & Cowan, 2022). These challenges set the stage for a range of developmental difficulties experienced by children and adolescents in these families.

These environmental and relational factors heighten the risk for numerous developmental challenges. Children and adolescents often struggle with a negative self-concept and low self-esteem, potentially due to the lack of dual parental support (Angjelkoska et al., 2015; Sahib & Aldoori, 2025). The absence of a father figure is specifically linked to a lack of paternal support and may lead to internalizing issues like feelings of abandonment (Chang et al., 2023). Adolescents generally face moderate challenges across psychological, emotional, behavioral, economic, and educational domains, with socio-demographic factors influencing the difficulty (Sahib & Aldoori, 2025). Boys in single-mother homes are particularly vulnerable to dysfunctional family relationships and externalizing problems like aggression

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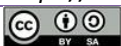


(Chang et al., 2023). This strain is also associated with poor educational outcomes, increased dropout rates, and engagement in high-risk activities (Sahib & Aldoori, 2025). These findings underscore a complex set of interwoven challenges that impact nearly all aspects of a child's development.

Despite these systemic difficulties, single-parents demonstrate remarkable resilience, often employing internal coping mechanisms like spirituality to maintain emotional well-being (Ng et al., 2025; Pino Gavidia et al., 2023). Ultimately, understanding and addressing the complex challenges faced by single-parent families is essential to fostering their well-being and promoting positive outcomes for both parents and children. In previous studies, the concept of grit has been discussed in the literature. However, the limited literature discussing grit in single-parents is an urgent need for new research. Previous studies have shown that individuals with high grit levels perform better at work (Cho & Kim, 2022). This finding is relevant in the context of single-parents because they have a double burden as breadwinners and also take care of their children. Single-parents with higher grit are potentially better able to manage the double burden they face, namely, managing time between work and childcare. Research conducted by Safariningsih et al. (2022) shows that grit plays a role in overcoming burnout; individuals with high levels of grit tend to be better able to overcome burnout than those with low grit. This finding is supported by other studies that reveal a significant negative relationship between grit scores and burnout scores. The higher a person's grit, the lower the level of burnout they experience. Thus, grittier individuals tend to feel better and do not get tired quickly (Seguin et al., 2019). In addition, research (Liu et al., 2024) also found a stable relationship between grit and performance, and social support and self-esteem mediate this relationship. Furthermore, this study revealed that grit positively impacts work performance, especially for nurses. Social support and self-esteem also play an important role in the relationship between grit and nurse performance. Social support can help nurses stay motivated and improve their performance. Thus, grittier individuals tend to feel more supported by those around them. This study emphasizes that grit, social support, and self-esteem are interrelated and contribute to improved work performance (Liu et al., 2024). Regarding stress, research conducted by Amawidya et al. found that grit affects students' stress levels during the COVID-19 pandemic. Further research revealed that the higher a person's grit, the lower the stress level experienced (Amawidyati et al., 2022). Strengthened by other studies, grit can play a role in reducing students' academic stress levels through perseverance and consistency in assignments (Ardis & Aliza, 2021). In addition, someone with high grit will use more effective coping strategies to face various challenges and obstacles, thereby reducing stress and achieving their final goals. This was found in a study conducted with students working on their final thesis assignments (Pratama & Ningsih, 2023). These studies show that grit has an important role in helping individuals overcome complex life challenges, including those of single-parents.

Grit is an integration of passion, a deep awareness of our goals, and perseverance, including hard work and a never-give-up spirit. A person with grit can maintain their enthusiasm and motivation in the long term despite going through various failures or difficulties. In a sense, a person with grit will always move forward, no matter how small, rather than turning in another direction. The concept of grit thinking is rooted in the thoughts of Dweck (2006), who discusses the growth mindset, namely that two types of mindsets can influence the way a person views themselves and deals with challenges, and the expectancy-value theory (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000), which explains how expectations and values for achievement affect individual motivation and success. Thus, grit reflects a strong determination to keep moving forward without giving up and a tendency to persist with a task despite various challenges and obstacles. Grit is divided into two aspects. Namely, passion is

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a concern for something and a deep commitment to the end goal without changing. In a sense, a person keeps moving in the same direction, always trying to take the slightest step forward rather than turning towards a different goal. Perseverance is the ability to remain steadfast in decisions that have been made, even when faced with difficulties. This reflects a strong determination to keep moving forward without giving up and a tendency to stick with a task even when faced with various obstacles.

Four psychological assets contribute to grit: First, interest and passion stem from liking what we do; great interest and intense curiosity can make someone believe they enjoy it. Second, practice is a form of perseverance, characterized by the consistent effort to do something better than we have achieved before. Third, purpose and passion grow when someone believes their work is meaningful. Therefore, it is essential to see work as something personally interesting. Finally, hope. Hope is a type of perseverance that arises when needed. Hope is important at every stage to keep moving forward, even though the situation is complex and we start to doubt ourselves (Shukla, 2017). The intersection of grit theory and clinical analysis reveals that for single-parents, the four pillars of interest, practice, purpose, and hope function as essential survival mechanisms against a "double burden." Clinically, grit serves as a vital buffer against burnout; research indicates a significant negative correlation between high grit levels and emotional exhaustion. While internal assets like purpose and hope provide the motivation to navigate financial instability and solo child-rearing, this perseverance is rarely a solitary endeavor. External validation, combined with internal coping mechanisms like spirituality, allows single-parents to sustain the "practice" of daily management despite systemic stressors. Ultimately, fostering resilience in this demographic requires a dual approach: strengthening a parent's internal psychological assets while providing the social scaffolding necessary to prevent burnout. This synthesis underscores that grit is not just about individual determination, but a dynamic interaction between personal resolve and the surrounding support system, ensuring long-term mental health and familial success.

Based on the explanation above, being a single-parent is certainly not easy, given the many challenges faced. In facing this, high perseverance and resilience are needed to remain effective in carrying out the role of a single-parent. Thus, grit is important in facing significant challenges when carrying out dual roles as a single-parent. Therefore, researchers are interested in knowing the meaning of grit, which supports emotional stability, well-being, and the ability to manage and face daily challenges as a single-parent.

2. Methods

This study used a qualitative, phenomenological approach to explore individuals' lived experiences of the phenomenon. As Creswell (2007) described, phenomenological inquiry seeks to understand and describe how individuals experience and interpret a particular event to uncover its core meaning. Similarly, Herdiansyah (2015) states that this approach examines the meaning assigned by several individuals to a specific concept. Data were collected offline at participants' workplaces and online via Google Meet due to geographical distance.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, following Miles and Huberman (1994). The aim was to find people with lived experiences that matched the research goals. To be included, participants had to be single-parents who led their households and held jobs. Recruitment was done through online posters that linked to an application form. This process took place from February to March 2025. In the end, three participants were chosen. The small sample fits with qualitative research, which values in-depth understanding of individual experiences over broad generalization. A sample of this size is considered potentially

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saturated when participants possess high information power and offer dense, specialized insights into a narrow phenomenon.

The participants met these criteria: (1) single-parent due to divorce or spouse's death; (2) had biological children; (3) were employed; and (4) gave informed consent and wanted to join. First, potential candidates were identified. Then, interviews were scheduled. At the interviews, study details were explained, and consent was collected.

This study employed in-depth semi-structured interviews as its primary data collection method, guided by a researcher-designed interview protocol. The protocol was developed to facilitate a comprehensive exploration of participants' lived experiences, encompassing their backgrounds (e.g., family values, friendship dynamics), detailed accounts of their single-parent experiences, and their subsequent emotional and cognitive responses.

Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis involves six stages: familiarizing yourself with the data, generating initial codes, and searching for themes; subsequently, researchers review potential themes, define and name them for clarity, and finally produce the report, weaving together an analytic narrative and vivid data extracts to tell a coherent story (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this research, these stages were condensed into three core phases. Initially, researchers generated codes by identifying salient phenomena in each participant's responses. They assigned descriptive labels or codes to meaningful data segments, guided by their interpretive lens; during coding, they documented ongoing interpretations. In the second phase, researchers categorized and named themes by grouping codes that were semantically or conceptually similar. Overarching themes were then articulated using concise words or phrases to capture core concepts within each code group. Finally, in the third phase, a conceptual map was developed. Researchers delineated the hierarchical structure of the themes, distinguishing central from marginal propositions to visually represent emergent findings.

This study used specific strategies to uphold the trustworthiness of its qualitative findings. The approach drew on the framework proposed by Nowell et al. (2017). Central to this method were credibility and confirmability. To enhance credibility during thematic analysis, the researcher kept a reflexive journal and carefully recorded initial interpretations and analytical decisions. Participant checking was also used, letting participants validate the researcher's interpretations. This confirmed that their experiences about the meaning of grit in single-parent families managing dual roles were accurately represented.

Strict adherence to ethical guidelines was essential. Participants received a full explanation of the research objectives and procedures. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Each participant also got a detailed briefing form about community and counseling services available in case of emotional distress from the study. The Ethical Committee of Universitas Negeri Malang granted clearance for this research (Certificate No. 02.06.10/UN32.14.2.8/LT/2025).

3. Results

General Description of Participants

The analysis of interview data from three participants illuminated distinct yet convergent experiences concerning grit within the context of single-parenthood. Participants consistently demonstrated perseverance, enthusiasm, and unwavering determination as they managed the complex challenges of their dual roles. Two participants focused on struggles with financial management and childcare. The third participant emphasized the profound impact of spousal loss, leading to a perceived absence of a confidant. Despite these differences, all three showed sustained efforts to meet their families' needs. Notably, one participant, who had no

prior work experience, proactively sought employment to provide for her children after her husband's departure. The circumstance of Single-parenthood is described in Table 1.

Table 1. Profile Participants

Participant	Gender	Age	Location	The Circumstances of Single-parenthood
Participant 1	Female	46	Malang, East Java	Participant 1 has been a sole parent since 2016, following the death of her husband from a chronic illness. Her transition to sole parenthood resulted in significant changes, including a reduced household income and alterations in her child-rearing approach, particularly with her son. Furthermore, she supports a number of dependents, including her parents, children, and older siblings.
Participant 2	Female	53	Tangerang, Banten	Participant 2 became a single-parent approximately three years ago after the passing of her husband due to illness. This transition was characterized by the perceived loss of a confidant or discussion partner, necessitating a shift toward enhanced self-reliance.
Participant 3	Female	48	Malang, East Java	Participant 3 became a single-parent following her husband's sudden death from a stroke. She is the sole provider for seven children and must work to support her family.

Furthermore, ingrained values of discipline and hard work, cultivated since childhood, significantly shaped their parenting approaches. Two participants faced unique challenges in child-rearing. One was solely responsible for raising a son and had to adjust to both maternal and paternal roles. Another participant endeavored to raise seven children. A third participant successfully achieved her parenting goals, fostering her child's independence into adulthood. The balancing act between domestic responsibilities and income generation further highlighted their perseverance. They managed their time carefully to prioritize both professional obligations and family commitments.

The participants consistently articulated long-term goals centered on their children's future. They strived to provide their children with quality education and improved life prospects, even amidst financial constraints. One participant, having achieved her child-rearing goals, now focuses on securing a stable retirement. Education emerged as a pivotal aspect influencing their lives. It shaped their perspectives on child-rearing, career attainment, and financial independence.

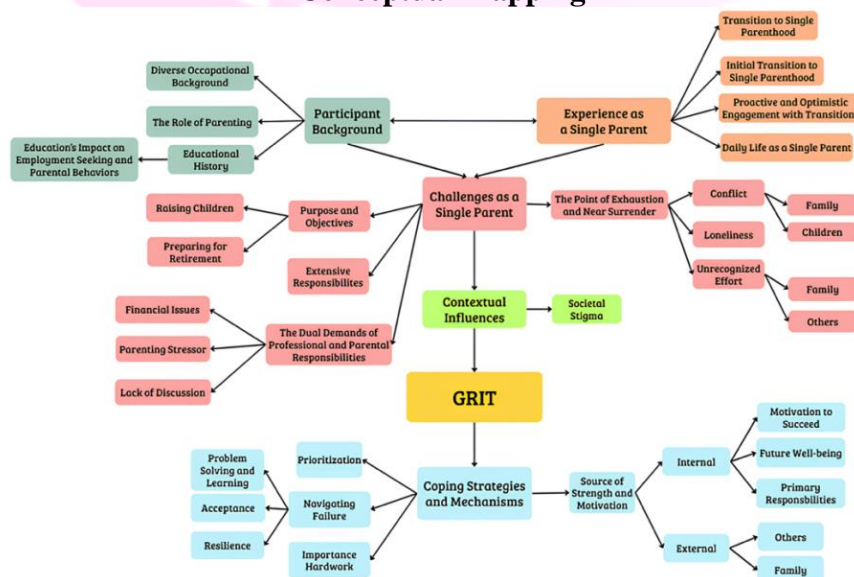
Crucially, external support systems from family, friends, and the broader environment served as a powerful impetus for their continued resilience as single-parents. This support primarily manifested as moral encouragement, including appreciation, opportunities for emotional expression, and general affirmations, all of which significantly contributed to their ability to sustain their demanding roles. The summary of coding and categorization is described in Table 2.

Table 2. Themes & Group of Categorisations

Theme 1: Participant Background	Theme 2: Experience as a Single-parent	Theme 3: Challenges as a Single-parent	Theme 4: Coping Strategies and Mechanisms	Theme 5: Contextual Influences
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Category 1: Diverse Occupational Backgrounds (commissioner, director, household member)	Category 1: Transition to Single-parenthood	Category 1: The Dual Demands of Professional and Parental Responsibilities <i>Subcategories:</i> Financial Issues, Parenting Stressors, and lack of discussion	Category 1: Sources of Strength and Motivation <i>Sub-category:</i> Children, Family, and Self-Determination	Category 1: Societal Stigma <i>Sub-category:</i> Neighbor's Criticism and Male Temptation
Category 2: The Role of Parenting in Cultivating Discipline and Diligence	Category 2: Initial Transition to Single-parenthood: Financial Constraints and Role Overload	Category 2: The Point of Exhaustion and Near Surrender <i>Subcategories:</i> Conflict, Loneliness, and Unrecognized Effort	Category 2: The Importance of Hard Work for Self-Reliance and Accountability.	-
Category 3: Educational History (Secondary to Tertiary Level) as a Determinant of Life Management Strategies.	Category 3: Proactive and Optimistic Engagement with Transitions	Category 3: Extensive Responsibility for Supporting Children, Parents, and Siblings.	Category 3: Prioritization Through Child Communication and Time Management	-
Category 4: Education's Impact on Employment Seeking and Parental Behaviors.	Category 4: Daily Life as a Single-parent <i>Sub-category:</i> Parent and Provider	Category 4: Purpose and Objectives <i>Sub-category:</i> Raising Children, Preparing for Retirement	Category 4: Navigating Failure Through Learning, Problem-Solving, and Sustained Motivation	-

Conceptual Mapping



Picture 1. The Dynamic of Grit on the single-parent with dual role

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Among single-parent participants, grit is shaped by their educational background, work experiences, and family upbringing. This combination of factors drives the unique strategies each participant uses for navigating single-parenthood. Differences in educational attainment and career levels directly affect how they face and overcome the initial challenges of this role.

This transition into single-parenthood sharpens their understanding of life in this role. Acting as both primary caregiver and sole provider creates unique obstacles, forcing them to manage complex responsibilities that are typically shared. These challenges—such as financial instability and family dynamics—highlight the moments when grit is most tested.

In response, single-parents develop strategies that demonstrate their grit. They prioritize tasks, seek solutions, and show resilience amid setbacks. Social support from parents, friends, and others sustains them. The unwavering efforts of the participants show how grit is central to navigating single-parenthood.

Background of Being A Single-parent

Losing a spouse due to illness was a significant turning point in their lives, forcing them to adapt to the dual role of mother and head of the family and trying to meet the needs and responsibilities of both mother and father in the family.

“In 2016 my husband died of cancer, since then I have been a single-parent for my one child.” (W1.P1.20Nov24.007)

“Yes.. yes because eh.. my husband died of illness. Three years ago so after that I became a single-parent.” (W2.P2.21November24.006)

“My husband took me to the hospital like that suddenly, sis, I had high blood pressure and I took her to the hospital in Karsa. He said she was taken there at half past 7 and he said it was because of a severe stroke. Then when he came home my sister said she had a severe stroke and it was okay. He said that and my neighbor would be coming home soon. Oh, why did you bring the thermos home? I still brought the baby and why did you bring the thermos home? If you were at the hospital, you would have left the thermos behind, why did you bring it home. In a minute, then the chairs were taken out and the ambulance would be here soon” (W3.P3.27November24.010)

Transitioning to Single-parenthood

The significant impact felt by the participants after becoming single-parents was in two forms, namely financial and childcare, due to reduced income after losing a partner. In addition, the experience of raising children presents challenges in educating them and adjusting to the necessary role of a father figure.

“The change is that I have been working since before my husband died. In terms of income, it is reduced. For example, income is reduced; we must put in more effort, right? Then, coincidentally, my one child is a boy. The obstacle is in the world, how is the world of boys. He understands better if it is with his father because they are both boys. Well, that sometimes becomes an obstacle for us to tell him, to understand what his world is like: boys should be treated like that.” (W1.P1.20Nov24.014)

Challenges as a Single-parent

There are many challenges faced by a single-parent, starting from reduced income, obstacles in raising children, and family problems that they have to face alone.

“The change is that I have been working since before my husband died. In terms of income, it has clearly decreased, right? For example, in terms of income, it has clearly decreased, we have to put in more effort, right? Then coincidentally, my one child is a boy. The obstacle is in the world, how is the world of boys. With his father, he understands better because they are both boys. Well, that's what sometimes becomes an obstacle for us to tell him, to understand that his world is like what boys should be treated like” (W1.P1.20Nov24.014)

“Sometimes, children are like what, sis, like naughty, must be faced. Like there is a fight with a neighbor, for example, I have to face it: what is my child wrong or what. For example, my child is wrong, I do not pay attention, sis” (W3.P3.27November24.053)

Adjustment to dual roles in balancing responsibilities in the family and work is done by trying to manage time and priorities so that you can still fulfill your responsibilities as a parent, parent, and breadwinner.

“Yes, in the morning I take care of the children first, make lunch boxes, then I work, then when I am done I go to work.” (W3.P3.27November24.014)

The third participant's response to the challenges faced as a single-parent was a positive and forward-looking adaptation pattern, encouraging the participants to continue moving forward.

“... my friends tell me, come on, what is up, you have to work. Your burden is heavy, so many children, let alone school, I have to work.” (W3.P3.27November24.017)

The Period of Near Surrender

The emotional pressure faced by the informants often led to feelings of wanting to give up, especially when they experienced loneliness, felt unappreciated by family and those around them, or had misunderstandings with their children.

“Yes, sometimes when we advise our children, sometimes the children do not obey, sometimes there are times when there are fights with the children, both of them are stubborn, both of them have their thoughts, mom's opinion is not correct, right?”

Sometimes it is like this, you know we have struggled like this, but why do we receive it like this, not from our family, maybe from our parents? We have sacrificed a lot and done everything, but it is not enough. Well, that is when I sometimes feel it.” (W1.P1.20Nov24.074)

The Responsibilities as a Single-parent

Single-parents must carry many responsibilities, including bearing their living expenses, supporting their children, and sometimes also supporting their parents or siblings.

“I have to have a mother who I still have to take care of, and coincidentally, my mother's older sister is also not married, so she is also my responsibility, as well as the children. (W1.P1.20Nov24.076)

“Yes, that is the main thing, so they can all attend college. This is the case for my child, but the children of children- uhh. What ex or the late husband? There are three, too. Well, that is the first thing that

must be considered when becoming a single-parent. How can the legacy or inheritance from this husband help all these children to be able to live or- live their next life securely.”
(W2.P2.21November24.026)
“Yes (around) supporting seven children, sis”
(W3.P3.27November24.021)

The Purpose of Life

The speakers were equally focused on future goals for the welfare and comfort of their children. As single-parents, they are fully responsible for supporting their children to achieve the targets they have set.

“For me, I raise my children, send them to school until they finish. I have told my child, your target is to graduate from BA. After that, you want to work, want to take a MA, I have handed it over to him. So I try to teach him responsibility, even though I might still interfere later. And coincidentally, my child wants it too. Maybe he sees his mother. In the past, if he saw me besides this job, which is oh well, my mother is indeed focused on this. But I also take it. For example, if there was no online before, I would buy clothes, bags, all sorts of things on credit, and he knows that, and in college he has tried several things, oh I want to do this business, try selling this, that is indeed allowed for me, I am not allowed to be embarrassed to say that, because my mother is not always there.” (W1.P1.20Nov24.064)

“The purpose of selling the house is to maintain the children’s finances; it has also been achieved, so I am calm. It is hard, but after it is finished, it calms me (W2.P2.21November24.043).

“What is the purpose? If I’m over 50 years old, my life goal is definitely to find... - saving. Saving for retirement age. That’s the main goal. So that when I retire I don’t depend on my children financially. That’s the main goal” (W2.P2.21November24.034)

The Primary Influence of Self-power

During their roles as single-parents, the three informants received different sources of strength or support, such as motivation to see their children succeed, love for their work, and emotional support from those closest to them.

“Yes, my source of strength is I always look for someone else, because I’m not single, who else can be the backbone of my family besides me, I have a mother who I still have to take care of, and coincidentally my mother’s older sister is also not married so she is also my responsibility and the children. As for children, I hope that I will succeed, and I pray for sure.” (W1.P1.20Nov24.076)

“That was from my parents at that time, when it was time to raise children, now I can’t do it if it takes a long time, because birds can find food for their children, why can’t people do it, that is my strong determination to take steps to raise those children”
(W3.P3.27November24.046)

The meaning of Hard Work

All three participants agreed that hard work is crucial for a single-parent to fulfill their responsibilities to support their family and children.

“Oh yes, hard work is very important to make us financially independent. That’s the main thing, as women we can’t 100% depend

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on our partners because we have to have responsibilities too, right? Financial responsibility is the main thing from hard work.”
(W2.P2.21November24.054)

“For children's expenses, it's the same, like electricity, you have to pay, Sis, if I don't work later, it will be even more difficult”
(W3.P3.27November24.063)

The Way to Determine Priority

As someone who has a dual role, where they have to be caregiver and breadwinner for their family, they are accustomed to determining a scale of priorities in order to be able to carry out this dual role in a more balanced way.

“I think if it were me, we could still divide our time; how do we divide our time, oh this is the time, I say, if it is for incidental calls, there are also those that we have to take training, right, training takes a month, for certification it is usually a month, so we explain to our children that's all I have. The term is more about communication. Communication: Mom has to be here, mom has to learn, mom has to take certification, mom has to learn like this and that too when leaving, my child knows that his mother is here. When I come home, he picks me up so he knows that his mother is not just playing around; even if there is an office event, if she is quiet or involved, I invite her; if she is still in junior high school, high school, she still wants to go to college, no. And my child is enough with this, enough with wanting to join in escorting the aunties
(W1.P1.20Nov24.078)

The Strategies for Mitigating Failure

As a single-parent with many challenges, the resource person has ways to deal with failures in his life, such as finding solutions, continuing to learn, being sincere, and trying to get back up again.

“... we still try to find a solution. The solution is to introspect what we experienced yesterday that was not appropriate because of what. Then we look for a solution there. What should the solution be like, we might have friends who can share if it's a work problem, or even a problem with how to raise children. Sometimes, I ask a lot of questions to fathers. Sir, if I do this to my child, this is a boy, is it wrong for me to do this to my child? Don't be too like that, this is a boy, they give understanding that boys are at this stage, they really rebel at this stage, after that he will cool down at this stage, later on, after a while he will reconnect with his parents, that's also difficult for me, my obstacle is child rearing, I don't really have much of a problem with work. Yes, that's the pattern, my child's pattern is that sometimes because he is an only child, so when I get angry at me, I get angry at his grandmother, defend his grandfather. That's what's difficult at that time that I experienced. But yeah, I learned that, so now, especially since there's TikTok, there's what, how do you parent a boy?” (W1.P1.20Nov24.100)

“I have to be enthusiastic, sis, the burden on the children, if I can't raise them, my family will think that I'm oh mom, why can't I do this? With my children, sis, even though I have many relatives, I never bother them. I have to struggle to raise the children myself, so

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what sis, what will the neighbors talk about, what won't my family talk about, I have to struggle myself" (W3.P3.27November24.05)

The Negative Stigma Received by Participants

Negative stigma is often encountered in carrying out their role as a single-parent, where they have to face temptations from the opposite sex and negative views or assumptions from their neighbors about their status as a single mother (widows).

"Yes, sometimes there are, more to men. Yes, sometimes they try to tease or something and then they make negative comments, sometimes they want to be invited to dinner or something even though he is the husband of someone like that, we have to be able to refuse like that. There are many temptations like that. For me, that's what I feel." (W1.P1.20Nov24.050)

"There are, if a single-parent is called a widow, Sis. If I go out, the neighbors say this. Even though my goal is to work and raise children. I do that every day, Sis, I don't care about what people say, the important thing is that my child can eat and go to school" (W3.P3.27November24.037)

4. Discussion

The study demonstrates that single-parents' resilience in overcoming dual-role challenges is fundamentally tied to grit and social support. Beyond financial and childcare difficulties, grit emerges as a crucial factor in sustaining their strength amid life changes requiring them to fulfill both maternal and paternal responsibilities. While this study is limited by its small sample size of only three participants, the qualitative data obtained offers significant richness and depth, allowing for an intensive exploration of how grit manifests within the unique supporting factors of single-parenthood. Research indicates that single mothers, in particular, navigate more frequent conflicts between work and family life than single fathers, highlighting unique stressors. Alongside these, the loss of a partner or reduced income motivates single-parents to remain strong for their children's future. These challenges, compounded by social stigma, underscore that sustained resilience relies not only on practical coping but on the unwavering grit to persevere. The study aligns with existing research that points to financial, emotional, and societal struggles, but sharpens the focus on the pivotal role of grit in navigating these adversities.

The findings demonstrate that grit serves as a vital psychological resource for single parents navigating the double burden of being primary caregivers and sole breadwinners. While prior research links high grit to superior occupational performance (Cho & Kim, 2022), this study reveals that grit enables single parents to effectively manage competing demands by establishing clear priority scales and adaptive coping strategies. Empirically, this balance is maintained through proactive communication with their children regarding professional commitments (e.g., training and certifications), which fosters mutual understanding and secures familial support. Ultimately, grit provides the resilience necessary to mitigate immediate structural stressors, allowing single parents to sustain long-term commitment to both family well-being and economic survival.

The observed synergy between determination and domestic stability can be further understood through the lens of resilience theory. In positive psychology, resilience is conceptualized not as an extraordinary or rare trait, but rather as an "ordinary magic" arising from the operation of basic, normative human adaptational systems (Masten, 2001). Within this framework, grit acts as a prominent non-cognitive character strength that directly fuels the resilience process (Wang, 2021). While resilience provides the psychological buffer

<https://doi.org/10.31293/mv.v9i1.9135>

necessary to adapt, rebound, and maintain emotional stability during immediate socioeconomic threats, grit functions as the sustained behavioral engine that drives long-term goal progression (Wang, 2021). For single parents, this dynamic means that resilience allows them to absorb daily contextual shocks—such as sudden financial constraints or childcare conflicts—while grit ensures they maintain the continuous effort and structural consistency needed to secure long-term family flourishing and professional advancement.

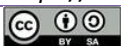
The preservation of mental well-being for single mothers requires a delicate balance between internal self-motivation and external social support, especially as they navigate a precarious socio-cultural landscape dominated by patriarchal norms. While empirical evidence highlights that these women face systemic marginalization—including gendered surveillance, predatory solicitation, and the pejorative labeling of "widows"—robust social support serves as a critical buffer against such stressors. Building on these findings, when facing challenges that can affect the mental well-being of single-parents, both self-motivation and social support are important for maintaining emotional balance. The form of social support received by the informants tends to be moral, such as appreciation for their hard work or a place to share stories and seek advice when facing problems. The findings reveal that when single parents encounter deep emotional pressures—such as profound loneliness, lack of family appreciation, or conflict with their children—grit serves as a crucial psychological barrier against despair. Instead of succumbing to emotional exhaustion or the urge to give up, gritty individuals leverage their sustained perseverance to process these interpersonal stressors without losing sight of their long-term familial goals. Ultimately, this psychological fortitude reduces daily stress by transforming immediate emotional vulnerabilities into opportunities for adaptive coping, thereby preventing emotional burnout and maintaining overall well-being.

The findings highlight social support as a critical environmental resource that preserves the mental well-being of single parents and sustains their capacity for grit. Navigating a dual role in isolation often induces profound loneliness; however, a robust support network acts as a psychological buffer, alleviating the emotional weight of bearing structural burdens alone. This aligns with Pangestu and Tohari (2024), who established that strong social support and effective stress management are foundational for overcoming dual-role conflicts and daily compounding pressures. Rather than serving as a passive coping aid, social support functions as an activating mechanism that reduces systemic stress and reignites the motivation to persist. Ultimately, a supportive ecosystem provides the emotional stability necessary for single parents to look beyond immediate hardships and actively pursue long-term personal and familial goals.

In addition, the study reveals that educational background, childhood parenting, and work significantly influence how single-parents respond to challenges. Those with higher education typically have more stable jobs and financial situations, while those with less education face job and financial uncertainty. Disciplined parenting and a strong work ethic from childhood help single-parents adapt, manage time, and prioritize their family. Their motivation to raise successful children is central, and grit is reflected in their determination to prioritize, focus, and persevere despite difficulties, enabling them to overcome challenges and pursue their goals.

To further illustrate the interplay between internal and external factors, the cultivation of grit and the maintenance of mental well-being in single-parents, particularly mothers, is critically dependent on both internal resilience and a robust external support infrastructure. Managing well-being requires single mothers to build internal resources, such as self-efficacy and optimism, which act as essential buffers against adversity (Ng et al., 2025). Furthermore, adopting constructive coping mechanisms, such as integrating spirituality and gratitude into

<https://doi.org/10.31293/mv.v9i1.9135>



daily routines, has been shown to enhance resilience in the face of life's challenges (Pino Gavidia, MacDermid, Brunton, & Doralp, 2023). To establish an effective support system, single mothers benefit from a multifaceted approach. These insights underscore the critical need for structured counseling and support groups as practical interventions to bolster the psychological resilience of single parents. Peer support groups serve as a vital, non-judgmental space to share lived experiences, which effectively strengthens self-image, boosts confidence, and complements traditional formal mental health services (Ng et al., 2025). Furthermore, incorporating modern digital solutions—such as the metaverse-based SMILE-MOM program—presents innovative avenues to deliver emotional support, parenting education, and community-building in a flexible, stigma-free environment that reduces social isolation (Woo & Chae, 2025). In terms of practical and structural support, addressing economic stress through better access to employment and social benefits is paramount, especially for vulnerable groups like immigrant single mothers. Furthermore, comprehensive, integrated support strategies must include practical assistance like financial aid, legal advocacy, and flexible services such as extended childcare, which are foundational to improving healthy behaviors and managing stress (Ng et al., 2025; Gavidia et al., 2023). Finally, single-parents managing the complexities of dating and family life can enhance their well-being by carefully balancing their social contacts and time, and by strategically presenting their positive parental status in social contexts to attract supportive partners (Plumm, Sommer, Uhl, & Stone, 2016). Ultimately, this combination of internal strength and accessible, tailored external support is key to fostering well-being and promoting grit in the single-parent journey.

The resilience of single-parents is driven by a dynamic interplay of internal psychological assets and external support structures. At the core is grit, characterized by unwavering perseverance and a determination to secure their children's future, often fueled by internal resources like self-efficacy, optimism, and a strong work ethic rooted in childhood parenting.

This study foregrounds the vital role of grit in helping single-parents navigate the unique pressures of dual roles, offering new insights into how this quality is cultivated and sustained amidst adversity. By focusing on single-parents—a group whose struggles with grit have been underexplored—the qualitative approach allows for detailed examination of how grit manifests under challenging social and cultural conditions. Highlighting the impact of stigma on grit, the study argues that a deepened understanding of grit is central to supporting single-parents' ongoing resilience. Crucially, empirical focus on grit among single parents remains noticeably scarce in contemporary literature, leaving a significant gap in our understanding of their specific psychological endurance. This scarcity is even more pronounced within the Indonesian context, where the intersection of traditional family values and the realities of solo parenting is rarely examined through the lens of grit. Consequently, this study addresses an essential geographical and thematic oversight by capturing how non-traditional families foster resilience within this specific socio-cultural landscape. Highlighting the impact of stigma on grit, the study argues that a deepened understanding of grit is central to supporting single-parents' ongoing resilience.

5. Conclusions

This study examines how grit supports emotional stability, well-being, and the management of daily challenges for single-parents. Grit, defined as perseverance, enthusiasm, and determination, is evident in the consistent efforts of informants to meet family needs, educate children, and balance work and family priorities. The main challenges include financial problems, childcare, lack of a partner for support, and societal stigma. Still, social

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support like appreciation, storytelling opportunities, and advice helps informants survive emotionally. With perseverance and strong determination, single-parents overcome financial and family obstacles and maintain mental and emotional balance. Grit shows in informants' perseverance, enthusiasm, and determination to survive and reach goals despite challenges. The study shows that grit is key for single-parents to survive, maintain emotional stability, and achieve long-term goals. This study is novel in exploring grit in single-parents, a rarely discussed topic. However, its focus on single-parent families limits its representativeness. Future studies should include diverse backgrounds, such as single fathers, for a more comprehensive view of grit among single-parents. The study shows that grit is key for single-parents to survive, maintain emotional stability, and achieve long-term goals. Significantly, these findings contribute to the foundational design of targeted support systems and psychological interventions tailored to the unique needs of single-parent households. This study is novel in exploring grit in single-parents, a rarely discussed topic. However, a primary limitation lies in the lack of variation among participants; the current focus restricts the representativeness of the findings. Future research should prioritize an exploration of diverse demographics, including different types of single mothers and the specific experiences of single fathers, to provide a more comprehensive and inclusive view of grit across the full spectrum of single-parenthood.

6. CRediT Authorship Contribution Statement

Mutia Husna Avezahra: Conceptualization; Formal Analysis; Funding Acquisition; Visualization; Writing Original Draft. **Ananda Puspitasari:** Conceptualization, Data Curation; Formal Analysis; Investigation; Methodology. **Salma Alfiyyah Dienariantie:** Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Investigation. **Tiara Dini Areta:** Formal Analysis; Investigation; Methodology. **Zulfauzy Abu Hasmy:** Writing, Review & Editing., **Ikhwanul Ihsan Armalid:** Project Administration; Resources.

7. Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

8. Declaration of Generative AI and Assistive Technologies in the Writing Process

The authors declare that the Grammarly tool was utilized during the preparation of this manuscript. Specifically, Grammarly was employed to refine the text generated during the translation process from the original source language into English, with the aim of ensuring clarity, grammatical accuracy, and adherence to standard academic English conventions.

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10. Ethical Approval

The Ethical Committee of Universitas Negeri Malang granted clearance for this research (Certificate No. 02.06.10/UN32.14.2.8/LT/2025)

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