

The Relationship Between Resilience and Psychological Well-Being of Mothers and Children with Autism During the Golden Age

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ABSTRACT

The complexities of parenting for mothers of children with autism, particularly during the golden age (ages 0–6 years), present unique challenges. In this context, mothers are required to adapt to various emotional pressures and the atypical developmental dynamics of their children. Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the relationship between resilience and psychological well-being in mothers raising children with autism. This research employed a quantitative approach using a correlational method. The sample consisted of 10 mothers selected through purposive sampling at the *Rumah Autis X*. Data were collected using two psychological scales: the resilience scale adapted from Putri Nasution (2024), which includes seven aspects emotional regulation, impulse control, causal analysis, self-efficacy, optimism, empathy, and reaching out with a reliability coefficient of 0.854; and the psychological well-being scale adapted from Kusumawati (2022), comprising six main dimensions self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth with a reliability coefficient of 0.935. The findings indicate a positive relationship between resilience and psychological well-being in mothers of children with autism aged 0–6 years. Higher levels of maternal psychological resilience are associated with better psychological well-being. Notably, the aspects of reaching out and self-efficacy showed relatively higher mean scores and were associated with mother adaptive responses in facing parenting challenges during the golden age. However, these findings should be interpreted cautiously due to the limited sample size, which may affect the generalizability and statistical stability of the findings.

Keywords : Resilience, Psychological Well-Being, Mother, Autism, Golden Age

INTRODUCTION

Mothers of children with autism face unique psychological challenges, especially during the golden age (0–6 years), a critical period of rapid brain development. Children with Autism often experience difficulties in communication, social interaction, and emotional regulation, requiring intense parental involvement. These demands, combined with social stigma and limited support, frequently lead to emotional exhaustion and lower psychological well-being among mothers (WHO, 2023; Putra & Aditya, 2021).

Psychological well-being plays a crucial role in helping mothers accept their child's condition, manage stress, and maintain positive relationships (Muttaqin, 2022; Tang et al., 2019). However, studies indicate that mothers tend to be more vulnerable than fathers due to their caregiving roles (Desiningrum et al., 2019). Resilience defined as the ability to adapt, regulate emotions, and find meaning in adversity has been identified as a key protective factor that enhances well-being (Dewi & Wideasavitri, 2019; Hafidz & Hamdan, 2024). Despite global research supporting the positive link between resilience and psychological well-being among parents of children with special needs, studies focusing specifically on Indonesian mothers of children with ASD in the golden age remain limited. This study aims to examine the relationship between resilience and psychological well-being in mothers of children with autism aged 0–6 years. The findings are expected to provide a scientific foundation for developing support programs that strengthen maternal resilience and improve long-term outcomes for both mothers and their children.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Psychological well-being

Psychological well-being refers to an individual's ability to function optimally, develop their potential, and find meaning in life (Muttaqin, 2022). It includes hedonic elements (pleasure), eudaimonic aspects (meaning and self-realization), and adaptive capacities such as emotional regulation and resilience (Tang et al., 2019; Hernandez et al., 2018). This construct also emphasizes subjective experiences like calmness, satisfaction, and a sense of meaning (Browne. et al., 2017).

Psychological well-being is reflected in several key dimensions, including self-acceptance, positive relationships, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth, as conceptualized by Ryff. These dimensions represent both internal and social aspects of individual functioning and continue to be widely used in recent research as core indicators of well-being (Muttaqin, 2022).

Resilience

Resilience refers to an individual's ability to recover and adapt positively after facing adversity. It encompasses both the process and the outcome of successful adjustment to external and internal demands through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility (APA, 2024; Cambridge Press, 2024). Resilient individuals are capable of navigating new challenges while maintaining well-being.

Resilience consists of several adaptive capacities, including emotional regulation, impulse control, optimism, causal analysis, empathy, self-efficacy, and the ability to recover from adversity, as proposed by Reivich and Shatté. It can also be viewed through Grotberg's framework, which highlights three main sources: I Have (external support), I Am (personal strengths), and I Can (interpersonal and problem-solving abilities). Recent research indicates that these aspects play an important role in helping individuals, particularly in early childhood parenting contexts, to adapt and cope with various challenges (Susanthi Pradini, Nopiana, & Nia Fatmawati, 2024).

Mothers of Children with Autism During the Golden Age

Mothers play a central role in child development due to their direct and consistent involvement in caregiving, emotional support, and developmental stimulation (Cohen & Volkmar, as cited in Wideasavitri & Chyntia Dewi, 2019). Their presence is essential in shaping a strong foundation for optimal growth, particularly in children with autism a neurodevelopmental disorder that impairs verbal and non-verbal communication, as well as social interaction (Kakalo & Yuniar, 2019). These challenges typically appear in early childhood and demand intensive parental involvement to support adaptation and functioning. The golden age, defined as the developmental period between 0–6 years, marks a phase of rapid brain growth reaching up to 80% of its full capacity (Budiarti, 2020; Untung et al., 2023). Early childhood is characterized by heightened neuroplasticity and sensitivity to environmental stimuli, making children highly responsive to environmental experiences and stimulation (Putri, 2020).

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach using standardized questionnaires to assess whether there is a significant correlation between the variables. According to Sugiyono (2022), quantitative methods are based on positivist values and rely on hypothesis testing within a defined population. Correlational research aims to examine whether a relationship exists between two or more variables (Djaali, 2020).

The scope of this study focuses on the variables of resilience and psychological well-being in mothers of children with autism during the golden age. Specifically, the study aims to further explore the relationship between resilience and psychological well-being among mothers whose children are aged 0–6 years and are enrolled at the *Autis Rumah Autis X*.

This study used a cross sectional design, where data for both independent and dependent variables were collected simultaneously (Sugiyono, 2022). The hypothesis testing in this study was conducted using Spearman Rank correlation analysis. This non-parametric statistical technique was selected due to the limited sample size ($n = 10$), which is considered appropriate for non-parametric correlation analysis. An illustration of the research methodology is presented in Figure



Figure 1. Independent and Dependent Variables

RESULTS

The respondents in this study were mothers of children with autism aged 0–6 years, registered at the *Rumah Autis X*, with a total of 10 participants. Although the sample size was limited, all participants met the predetermined inclusion criteria established for this study. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Figures 2, 3, 4, and 5.

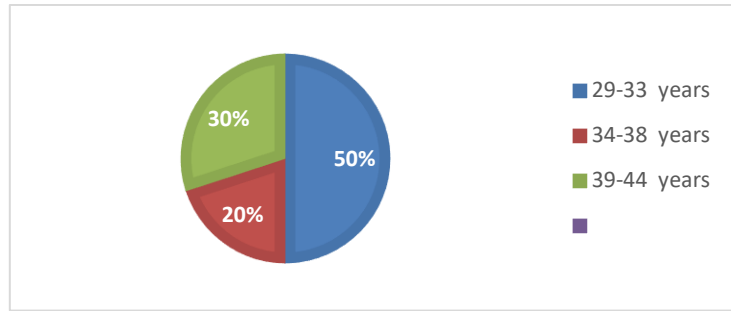


Figure 2. Age distribution of respondents

As shown in Figure 2, the respondents in this study were predominantly in the age range of 29–33 years (50%).

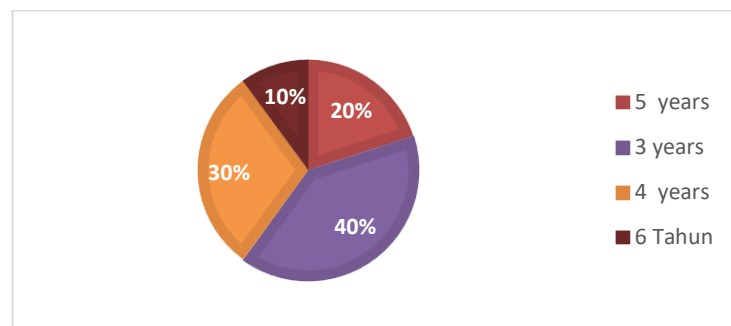


Figure 3. Age of Respondents' Children

As shown in Figure 3, the children of the respondents were between 3 and 6 years old. The majority were aged 3 years (40%), followed by 4 years (30%), 5 years (20%), and 6 years (10%).

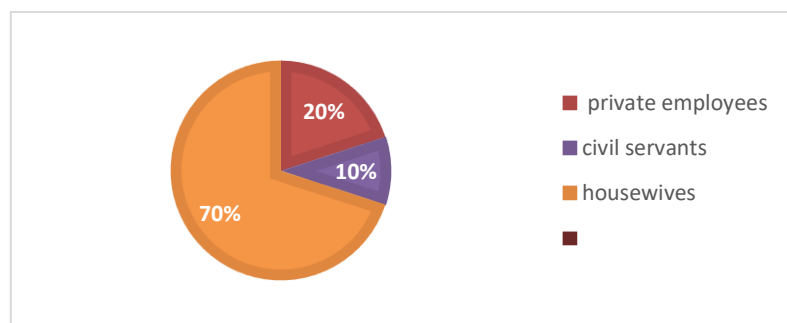


Figure 4. Respondents' Occupation

The majority of respondents were housewives (70%), followed by private employees (20%) and civil servants (10%).

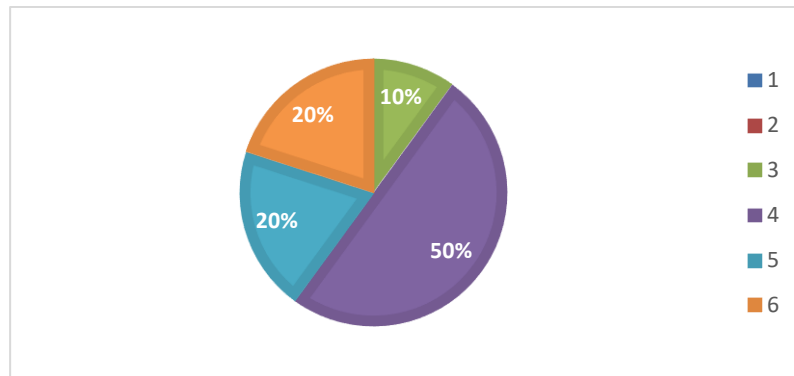


Figure 5. Respondents' Family Size

Half of the respondents (50%) lived with four family members. Meanwhile, 20% each lived with three and five family members, and 10% with six. None of the respondents reported living with only one or two family members.

Reporting Research Results

Table 1. Resilience Category Distribution

Category	Interval	F	Percentase %
Very high	$X \geq 64,60$	8	80.0 %
High	$53,20 < X < 64,40$	2	20.0 %
Moderate	$41,80 \leq X < 53,20$	-	0%
Low	$30,40 \leq X < 41,80$	-	0 %
Very Low	$X < 30,40$	-	0 %
Total		10	100 %

Most respondents (80%) were classified as having very high resilience ($X \geq 64.60$), while the remaining 20% were in the high category ($53.20 < X < 64.40$). No respondents were classified as having moderate, low, or very low resilience. This suggests that the majority of mothers demonstrated strong psychological resilience.

Table 2. Psychological well-being category distribution

Category	Interval	F	Percentase %
Very high	$X \geq 119$	3	30.0 %
High	$98 \leq X < 119$	7	70.0 %
Moderate	$77 \leq X < 98$	-	0 %
Low	$56 \leq X < 77$	-	0 %
Very Low	$X < 56$	-	0 %
Total		10	100 %

A total of 70% of mothers scored in the high category ($98 \leq X < 119$), and 30% were in the very high category ($X \geq 119$). None of the respondents fell into the moderate, low, or very low categories, indicating generally good psychological well-being.

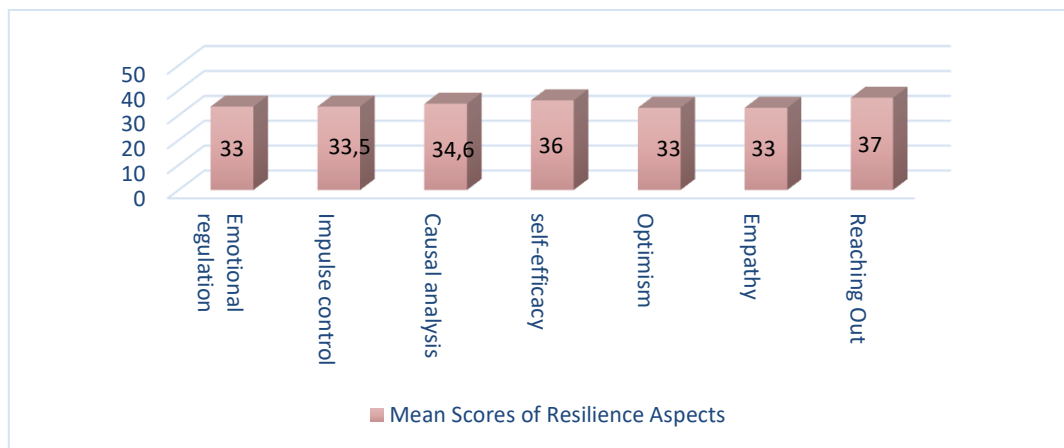


Figure 6. Mean Scores of Resilience Aspects

The highest mean score was observed in reaching out (37), followed by self-efficacy (36) and causal analysis (34.6). Both emotional regulation and impulse control had equal means (33.5), while optimism and empathy showed the lowest mean scores (33.0).

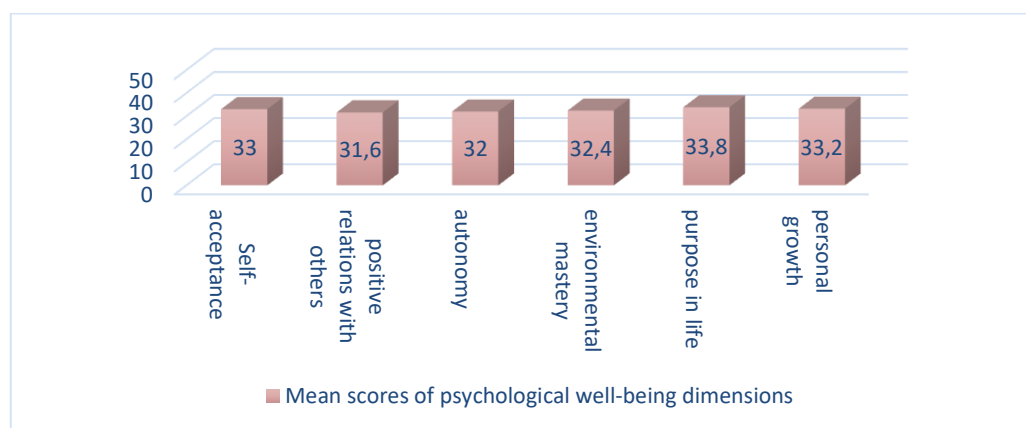


Figure 7. Mean scores of psychological well-being dimensions

The highest mean was found in purpose in life (33.8), followed by personal growth (33.2) and self-acceptance (33.0). The lowest mean was observed in positive relations with others (31.6), suggesting that interpersonal relationships may present a greater challenge for respondents compared to other domains.

Table 3. Correlation between resilience and psychological well-being

<i>Resilience</i>	Uji hipotesis		
	<i>Correlation coefficient</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	<i>N</i>
<i>Psychological well-being</i>	0.638	0.047	10

The correlation analysis showed a positive relationship between resilience and psychological well-being ($r = 0.638$, $p = 0.047$). These findings indicate that mothers with higher resilience tended to report better psychological well-being. However, considering the limited sample

size ($n = 10$) and the significance value being close to the statistical threshold ($p < 0.05$), the findings should be interpreted cautiously.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study showed a positive relationship between resilience and psychological well-being in mothers of children with autism during the golden age. The following discussion elaborates on the relationship between each dimension of psychological well-being and the aspects of resilience identified in this study. Although these findings support previous literature, they should be interpreted cautiously considering the limited sample size ($n = 10$), which may affect the stability and generalizability of the findings.

Mothers who demonstrated higher emotional regulation and self-efficacy tended to report greater self-acceptance. Their ability to manage emotions and maintain confidence in their parenting role was associated with a more adaptive and accepting perspective toward themselves and their child's condition. This may reflect the importance of psychological readiness in helping mothers process emotional challenges related to their child's developmental condition. However, because participants were recruited from a single foundation, these experiences may not fully represent mothers from different caregiving or cultural backgrounds. Nevertheless, these findings provide preliminary insight into the potential importance of emotional regulation and self-efficacy in maternal self-acceptance. These findings are consistent with previous research by Higgins et al. (2022) and Larasati et al. (2021), which highlighted the relationship between emotional stability, parental self-efficacy, and self-acceptance.

Empathy and reaching out were also associated with positive relationships with others. Mothers who were able to understand others' emotions and actively seek social support tended to show better interpersonal adjustment. This may indicate that social connectedness plays an important role in reducing feelings of isolation often experienced by mothers of children with autism. At the same time, the current findings should be interpreted carefully, as the small sample size may not fully capture variations in family or social support systems. These findings are in line with studies by Chan et al. (2023), Nurani and Fitriani (2022), and Kurniawati et al. (2022), which reported that empathy and social support are associated with stronger emotional relationships and family resilience.

Autonomy in mothers was associated with impulse control and self-efficacy. Mothers who remained composed under pressure and trusted their parenting decisions tended to report greater independence in daily caregiving. This finding may suggest that internal confidence and emotional control serve as important psychological resources in managing parenting responsibilities. Despite this, because the participants shared relatively similar caregiving environments, broader studies are needed to confirm whether similar patterns emerge in more diverse populations. These findings are consistent with Weiss et al. (2021) and Putri and Adhimulya (2023), who also found a relationship between self-efficacy, emotional control, and parental autonomy.

Environmental mastery was associated with causal analysis and emotional regulation. Mothers who were able to logically assess caregiving situations and regulate their emotional responses tended to manage daily caregiving routines more effectively. This may reflect the

importance of cognitive and emotional flexibility in adapting to the complex developmental needs of children with autism. Nevertheless, these interpretations remain preliminary due to the limited sample size. These findings are consistent with Chuang et al. (2022) and Andriani and Sari (2023), who reported similar patterns in parental caregiving adaptation.

A sense of purpose in life was associated with optimism and analytical thinking. Mothers who maintained realistic hope and future-oriented thinking tended to show stronger meaning in their parenting role. This may indicate that optimism functions as an internal psychological resource that helps mothers maintain motivation despite ongoing caregiving demands. However, further studies with larger samples are needed to strengthen this interpretation. These findings support Trudel et al. (2021), who emphasized the role of optimism in sustaining long-term caregiver motivation.

Finally, personal growth was associated with reaching out, causal analysis, and optimism. Mothers who actively sought support, reflected on challenges, and maintained positive expectations tended to report stronger personal development. This finding suggests that resilience may help mothers reinterpret caregiving challenges as opportunities for psychological growth. Although these findings provide valuable initial insight, the limited sample size and single research setting should be considered when interpreting the broader applicability of these results. Similar findings were also reported by Lestari and Pratiwi (2023), who found that mothers who actively engage in adaptive coping behaviors tend to experience greater self-awareness and psychological development.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that there is a significant positive relationship between resilience and psychological well-being in mothers of children with autism during the golden age (0–6 years). Higher resilience levels particularly emotional regulation, self-efficacy, empathy, and optimism are associated with stronger psychological well-being. Each aspect of resilience was associated with dimensions of psychological well-being, including self-acceptance, autonomy, positive relationships, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth, indicating that these aspects are closely related to maternal psychological well-being during the caregiving process.

However, this study has limitations. The small sample size and single-location data collection may affect the generalizability of the findings. Future research should involve larger and more diverse populations, as well as examine additional variables such as social support, parenting stress, and coping strategies to gain a deeper understanding of the resilience–well-being dynamic in caregiving mothers.

LIMITATION

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The small sample size of only 10 respondents limits the statistical power and generalizability of the findings to a broader population of mothers raising children with autism. Additionally, the psychological scales used although adapted were not specifically designed for mothers of children with autism, and did not fully account for the age variability of the children. These limitations may

affect the accuracy of the measurements in capturing the psychological experiences of the participants during the golden age caregiving phase.

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