

Self-Acceptance: Mental Health Among Mothers With Special Needs Children

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Abstract. *This research aims to analyze the role of self-acceptance in mediating the influence between gratitude and social support on subjective well-being. The sample criteria are mothers who have children with special needs aged 1 – 12 years. The number of samples used was 102 people. The sampling technique is purposive sampling. The instruments used to measure subjective well-being variables are SWLS (Satisfaction with Life Scale) and PANAS (Positive Affect Negative Affect Schedule), the gratitude variable is Gratitude-Questionnaire (GQ-6), the social support variable uses MSPSS (Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support) and self-acceptance variables were measured using the Porter Parent Acceptance Scale (PPAS). Data analysis is in the form of mediation analysis with JASP version 18.3. The research results show that self-acceptance is proven to be able to significantly mediate the influence between gratitude and social support on subjective well-being. The influence of gratitude and social support on self-acceptance is 63.7% and the influence of gratitude, social support and self-acceptance on subjective well-being is 97.4%. This indicates that the role of gratitude and social support with the mediation of self-acceptance in forming subjective well-being is very large for mothers who have children with special needs.*

Key words: [subjective well-being, self-acceptance, social support, gratitude]

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INTRODUCTION

Parenting a child with special needs can involve high levels of parental stress (Britner et al. (2003), Feldman et al. (2007)). In fact, research studies examining parents of children with special needs show an increased risk of depression (Lee, 2013), lower levels of subjective well-being (SWB), and increased feelings of pessimism about the future (Cantwell et al., 2014) and detrimental physical health and parental mental health (Gallagher & Hannigan, 2014), when compared with parents of normal children of the appropriate mental age (Gallagher & Hannigan, 2014). Raising a child with special needs involves ongoing coping efforts and can have a negative impact on various aspects of a person's life (Gallagher & Hannigan, 2014). Financial reasons include the costs of therapy and treatment, plus absence from work when accompanying children for treatment (Aaron Resch et al., 2012).

According to Faradina (2016), parents' first reaction when they were initially told they had a "problem" child was disbelief, shock, sadness, disappointment, guilt, anger, and rejection. It is not easy for parents whose children have special needs to experience this phase, before finally reaching the acceptance stage. Parents' acceptance of children who have special needs greatly influences the child's development process. Acceptance is the feelings and behavior of parents who can accept the existence of their children unconditionally, realizing that their children also have the right to express their opinions, emotion, and the need to become independent individuals (Porter, 1954). Parental acceptance can positively contribute to psychological adjustment in children (Carrasco et al., 2019). Loving them unconditionally can help parents and children to live life with lower stress levels. Showering children with unconditional love and accepting them as individuals will also increase life satisfaction (Jigyel, 2014).

According to Pancawati (2013), parents who have a high level of acceptance of their children will be able to accept their children's strengths and weaknesses, be confident in their own abilities, be responsible, have an open attitude towards other people, be able to adapt to social pressure, be aware of limitations, namely having realistic values regarding weaknesses and strengths and accepting human nature without denying emotional impulses or feelings within oneself. Even Rohner & Khaleque (2010), stated that parental acceptance leads to the warmth of affection, care, comfort, attention, nurturing, support, or feelings of love which parents can feel and show to their children physically and verbally. If parents are able to accept the condition of their child who has special needs, this will help provide good care for their child. However, in reality, not all parents who have children with special needs can immediately accept their child's condition. Many of them feel embarrassed and disappointed with their

children, which results in the children not being given the skills to adapt to their environment. Having a child with special needs conditions can affect fathers, mothers, and families in various aspects of life.

Based on pre-interviews and pre-observation of problems in several special schools in Semarang City, information was obtained that mothers felt sad, confused, irritated, and anxious about their children with special needs, wanted to share their experiences and needed lots of advice and information to care for their children appropriately, however, it is hard to get the right person or place. Sometimes when parents pick up their children and meet with other parents, they tell each other stories and advise each other. However, there are a few cases when they do not know the answer, how to deal with children who behave in a disruptive way. Several mothers also consulted directly with the class teacher because there were no guidance and counseling teachers available in special schools. Unfortunately, the limitations of the existing teachers were due to the large number of tasks and their inadequate capabilities so the answers given to the students' parents were also less than satisfactory. Likewise, in pre-observation, it was also found that there were still parents who treated their children inappropriately, such as shouting at their children, scolding them harshly, and pulling their children away when they did not want to go home because they were still playing. From this case, it was seen that the self-acceptance of mothers with children with needs specifically is still low.

Apart from that, Inclusive School Services are currently still facing challenges in the school environment, such as rejection from some parents/community, harassment of people with disabilities, limited number of competent Special Guidance Teachers (GPK), low ability to adapt the curriculum, and not satisfactory availability of accessible learning media. Unsatisfactory support system, limited availability and accuracy of data on Children with Special Needs (ABK), and limited region reach of the Identification and Assessment Service Center and Affirmative Policies are also parts of the challenge. Through this research, researchers hope for the government's commitment, both central and regional, to cultivate inclusive education at all levels of society, including policy makers, schools, communities, and families, to fulfill the availability of Special Guidance Teachers with special competencies in special schools and inclusive schools. Researchers also hope that accessible learning media could be provided, the identification and assessment of Children with Special Needs (ABK) could be developed, Disability Service Units (ULD) in Provinces and Districts/Cities could be provided, as well as the issuance of regulations for the implementation of inclusive education in Regional Governments could be supported.

For this reason, parents, especially mothers, who have children with special needs are expected to show their unconditional love by getting social support from family, friends, and significant others and being grateful for what God has given. The sample of mothers used in this research was empirically found to be differences in psychological approaches between mothers and fathers in interaction patterns with children (R. Feldman, 2003); (Pajulo et al., 2015); (Cooke et al., 2017); (Pazzagli et al., 2018). In addition, the level of affective closeness in fathers was found to be lower than in mothers due to different ways of socialization regarding gender roles, resulting in lower awareness and emotional expression among men (Cooke et al., 2017).

A low level of parental self-acceptance ultimately affects subjective well-being (SWB). SWB is a broad concept that evaluates a person's life and emotional experiences, consisting of high life satisfaction, high positive effects, and low negative effects. Someone with a strong SWB is able to regulate emotions and overcome problems. On the other hand, those who have inadequate SWB tend to feel that their lives are unhappy and full of negative thoughts and feelings, giving rise to anxiety, anger, and even the risk of depression (Davey et al., 2019). The importance of the role of mothers' self-acceptance in their SWB is shown in several studies conducted by Xu et al., (2016), Muthmainah et al. (2019), Li et al. (2021), and Su et al. (2019) but on the contrary, Hafiza et al., (2020) actually stated that self-acceptance does not affect SWB.

The first factor that influences self-acceptance and SWB is the gratitude factor. Many cases show that it is difficult for a mother to accept the condition of her child with special needs. However, in several other examples, there are also parents who have children with special needs who consider that their child is a sign of love and favor from God. Therefore, they feel compelled to provide diligent and attentive care for their children without harboring feelings of regret within themselves. Several studies such as Hikmawati et al. (2023), Homan & Hosack (2019), Ikkyu & Yuliawati (2022), Gadzella et al., (2012), and Cholili et al. (2023) prove that gratitude has a significant effect on self-acceptance. Individuals with feelings of gratitude also influence their subjective well-being because it is a form of positive expression and influences the creation of pleasant positive emotions (Megawati et al., 2019). Apart from that, they also feel happy in making sense of life and appreciating what they have. Parents who are able to create SWB within themselves can be assured of having high self-acceptance, this is shown by (Komarudin et al., 2022) who stated that gratitude is able to influence a person's happiness if they are able to accept themselves as they are. Through high self-acceptance, it is hoped that parents will also have high SWB. Grateful parents are a form of accepting everything they have without feeling lacking. Several previous studies have proven that gratitude also influences SWB, such as research from Situmorang & Syuhada (2021), Salces-Cubero et al. (2019), Ramzan & Rana (2014), Tilkeridou et al., (2021), Alkozei et al (2018), Situmorang & Syuhada (2021), Safaria (2018), Bono et al. (2020), and Mead et al. (2021). The existence of different research results was also shown by Yang et al. (2021) and Hermaen & Bhutto (2020) that gratitude is not proven to influence SWB.

The second factor that influences self-acceptance is social support. Several studies have proven that social support has a significant effect on self-acceptance, including Kristiadi & Soetjiningsih (2024), Hafni (2020), Jati & Muhid (2022), Komarudin et al. (2022), and Pastimo & Muslikah (2022). According to Carpenter et al. (2016) when support from a partner is low, it is likely that the mother will have difficulty adjusting psychologically, and will show more intense feelings of anxiety and depression. Similar results were reported by Cavonius-Rintahaka et al., (2019), that family functionality is determined by the level of support, especially in families where responsibility and care are evenly distributed and all nuclear families participate according to their abilities, then the result is positive support. When partners do not receive support from the family environment, parents who care for children with special needs experience high levels of anxiety and depression. Increased anxiety and depression are indications that the SWB felt by partners, especially mothers, has decreased. Apart from the fact that social support can influence self-acceptance, it turns out that it can also influence SWB. Several previous studies that support that social support has a significant effect on SWB include Shang (2022) and Brajša-Žganec et al. (2018) stated that of the three forms of social support (Family, Friends, & Significant Other) only social support from friends was proven to have an effect on subjective well-being. Gülaçti, (2010) also stated that of the three forms of social support, the one that has a significant influence on SWB is family support. Even Dewi et al., (2021) added that family support, gratitude and self-acceptance have a simultaneous effect on subjective well-being. However, other research from Naraha et al. (2023) actually shows that social support, especially the husband's, does not influence the mother's SWB, because the mother's subjective well-being is not always influenced by external factors such as the husband's social support.

Based on the pros and cons of several previous research results, the researcher determined the aim of this research to analyze the influence of gratitude and social support on subjective well-being, mediated by self-acceptance, in order to create mental health in mothers of children with special needs. It is also hoped that the results of this research will provide benefits to counseling services focused on developing the potential of counselors as part of informal education that supports the optimal education of children with special needs.

METHODS

Research approach and variables identification

The approach used in this research is quantitative correlational. The variables used include the dependent variable is subjective well-being, the predictor variable is gratitude and social support, the intervening variable is self-acceptance.

Participants

The number of samples used was 102 people. This research was conducted at a Special School in Semarang City. The inclusion sample criteria were a mother who had a child with special needs. The exclusion criterion is the child's age, the child's age used in this research is 1 – 12 years, where the age

factor according to Rahayu & Hastuti (2017) also determines the positive influence between the application of discipline and parental attachment to their child. The sampling technique is *purposive sampling*.

Instruments and Data Analysis

The instruments used to measure subjective well-being variables are SWLS (Satisfaction with Life Scale) and PANAS (Positive Affect Negative Affect Schedule) where the SWLS and PANAS instruments are based on the theory of Diener et al (2017), namely the affective aspect (consisting of positive affect and negative affect) and cognitive aspects (related to life satisfaction). SWLS has been adapted into Indonesian with five items and a Cronbach Alpha coefficient value of 0.87 (Diener et al., 1985). SWLS was developed to identify the subject's overall life satisfaction, and the PANAS scale (Positive Affect Negative Affect Schedule) to measure aspects of positive affect and negative affect. This scale contains twenty items with ten items measuring positive affect (such as happy and excited) and ten items measuring negative affect. This scale contains twenty items with ten items measuring positive affect (such as: happy and excited) and ten items measuring negative affect with a Cronbach's alpha value of > 0.84 (Tran, 2020). The gratitude variable is measured using the Gratitude-Questionnaire (GQ-6) which is based on the theory of McCullough et al., (2004) , namely intensity, frequency, span, density . The GQ-6 scale consists of six GQ-6 items which have been translated and adapted by Indonesian researchers, namely Moningka & Soewastika (2023) . The reliability of the Indonesian Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ-6) was conducted on 300 respondents and tested using the Cronbach's alpha method. The test results show that the reliability value of this measuring instrument is 0.73 ($M = 21.65$, $SD = 4.62$). The GQ-6 model has an RMSEA value = 0.051; GFI = 0.99; AGFI = 0.99; CFI = 0.99; NNFI = 0.99. By looking at the model parameters, it can be said that the GQ-6 measurement model is appropriate. The social support variable is measured using the MSPSS (Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support) based on the aspect theory of Zimet et al. (1988) , namely families , friends and significant others with 12 items. MPSS This has been translated into Indonesian and has been tested for validity and reliability by Istiqlal (2018) where from the results of the CFA analysis a fit model was obtained with chi square = 51.48, $df = 39$, $p\text{-value} = 0.08698$ ($p > 5\%$), RMSEA = 0.037, meaning the model fits one factor (unidimensional) on the MSPSS and all items are valid/valid. Self-Acceptance Variable measured using Porter Parent Acceptance Scale (PPAS). PPAS was created by Porter (1954). The dimensions of self-acceptance are acceptance of feelings, acceptance of uniqueness, recognition of the child's need for autonomy and unconditional love (Porter, 1954) . As for PPAS which has been adapted to Indonesian by Sumiati et al (2022) , with the second-order CFA model , the Chi-Square = 764.612, $df = 704$, $p\text{-value} = 0.053$, RMSEA = 0.021, CFI = 0.962 and TLI = 0.958, based on these four indices the model is declared fit to the data . The total number of PPAS questions is 40 questions. The data analysis is in the form of regression mediation analysis with JASP version 18.3. This model determines the independent variables' direction and influence on the dependent variable.

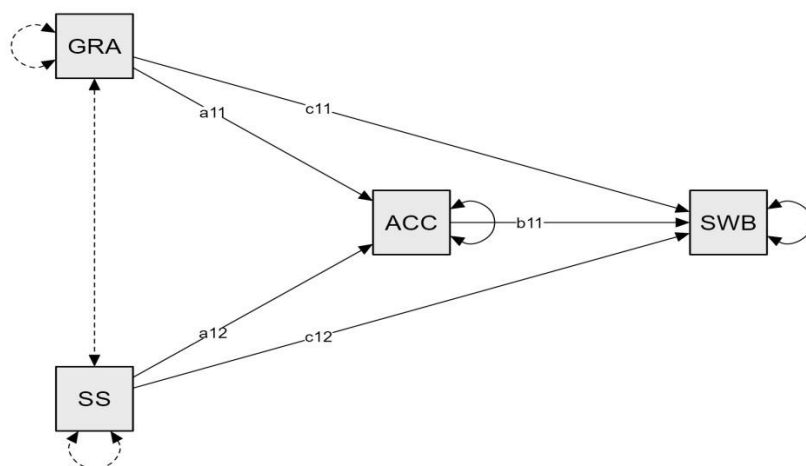


Figure .1 Conceptual Framework

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of data analysis with JASP 18.3 can be seen in Table 1 to Table 4

Table.1 Direct effects gratitude & social support toward subjective well-being

						95% Confidence Interval	
		Estimate	Std. Error	z-value	p	Lower	Upper
GRATITUDE	→ SWB	1,014	0.070	14,564	< .001	0.877	1,150
SS	→ SWB	1,191	0.053	22,271	< .001	1,086	1,296

Based on **Table.1** it can be concluded that First; The gratitude variable has a positive and very significant effect on subjective well-being, which can be seen from the p value <0.001. Second; Social support also has a positive and very significant effect on subjective well-being as indicated by a p value <0.001. Next, to see the indirect effect, see Table 2

Table.2 Indirect effects

			Estimate		Std' Error	z- value		95% Confidence Interval	
								Lower	Upper
GRATITUDE	→ ACCEPTANCE	→ SWB	0.133	0.042	3,183	0.001		0.051	0.215
SS	→ ACCEPTANCE	→ SWB		0.072		0.215			
			0.144	0.036	3,954		<		
							.001		

Table. 2 can be seen, namely First; that Self-acceptance is proven to significantly mediate the influence of gratitude on subjective well-being with a value of p = 0.001. Second; Self-acceptance has been proven to significantly mediate the influence of social support on subjective well-being with a p value <0.001.

Table.3 Total effects

						95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower	Upper
GRATITUDE	→ SWB	1,147	0.072	15,839	< .001	1,005	1,289
SS	→ SWB	1,335	0.051	26,143	< .001	1,235	1,435

In **Table 3**, it can be seen that the total effect of the gratitude variable on subjective well-being has increased the estimated value by 1,147 ($p < 0.001$) and the social support variable has also increased the estimated value by 1,335 ($p < 0.001$). There is an increase in the estimated total effect value for the gratitude and social support variables on subjective well-being and the p value is < 0.001 , so it can be concluded that gratitude and social support simultaneously have a very significant effect on subjective well-being.

Table.4 Combined Direct Effect

						95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower	Upper
ACCEPTANCE	→ SWB	0.103	0.020	5,121	< .001	0.063	0.142
GRATITUDE	→ SWB	1,014	0.070	14,564	< .001	0.877	1,150
SS	→ SWB	1,191	0.053	22,271	< .001	1,086	1,296
GRATITUDE	→ ACCEPTANCE	1,296	0.319	4,063	< .001	0.671	1,922
SS	→ ACCEPTANCE	1,400	0.225	6,221	< .001	0.959	1,841

Table.4 can also be seen that the self-acceptance variable has a very significant effect on subjective well-being ($p < 0.001$), the gratitude variable also has a very significant effect on subjective well-being ($p < 0.001$), the social support variable has a very significant effect on subjective well-being. -being ($p < 0.001$), the gratitude variable has a very significant effect on self-acceptance ($p < 0.001$) and the social support variable also has a very significant effect on self-acceptance ($p < 0.001$).

Discussion

The influence of gratitude on SWB

The results of this research show that gratitude has a positive and very significant effect on SWB. Individuals with feelings of gratitude affect their subjective well-being because it is a form of positive expression and influences the creation of pleasant positive emotions (Megawati et al., 2019). Apart from that, they also feel happy in making sense of life and appreciating what they have. Several previous studies have proven that gratitude also influences SWB, such as research from Situmorang & Syuhada (2021), Salces-Cubero et al., (2019), Ramzan & Rana (2014), Tilkeridou et al. (2021), Alkozei et al. (2018), Situmorang & Syuhad (2021), Safaria (2018), Bono et al. (2020), and Mead et al. (2021).

The influence of social support on SWB

The results of this study show that social support has a positive and very significant effect on SWB. This is in accordance with previous research including Shang (2022), (Brajša-Žganec et al., 2018) who stated that social support has an influence on SWB, but of the three forms of social support (Family, Friends & Significant Other) only social support comes from friends. which is proven to influence subjective well-being. Gülaçti (2010) also stated that of the three forms of social support, the one that has a significant effect on SWB is family support. Even Dewi et al., (2021) added that family support, gratitude and self-acceptance have a simultaneous influence on subjective well-being.

The influence of self-acceptance on SWB

The results of this research prove that self-acceptance has a positive and very significant effect on SWB. The importance of the role of self-acceptance in mothers regarding their SWB is shown in several studies conducted by Xu et al. (2016) , Muthmainah et al., (2019) , Li et al. (2021) , and Su et al. (2019) . SWB is a broad concept regarding the evaluation of a person's life and emotional experiences consisting of high life satisfaction, high positive effects, and low negative effects. Someone with strong SWB is able to regulate emotions and overcome problems. On the other hand, those who have inadequate SWB tend to feel that their lives are unhappy, full of negative thoughts and feelings, giving rise to anxiety, anger, and even the risk of depression (Davey et al., 2019)

The influence of gratitude on self-acceptance

The results of this research prove that gratitude has a positive and very significant effect on self-acceptance. This is supported by several studies such as Hikmawati et al. (2023), Homan & Hosack (2019), Ikkyu & Yuliawati (2022), Gadzella et al. (2012), and Cholili et al. (2023) which proves that gratitude has a significant effect on self-acceptance.

The influence of social support on self-acceptance

The results of this research prove that social support has a positive and very significant effect on self-acceptance. Several studies have proven that social support has a significant effect on self-acceptance, including: Kristiadi & Soetjningsih (2024), Hafni, (2020), Jati & Muhid (2022), Komarudin et al. (2022), Pastimo & Muslikah (2022). According to Carpenter et al. (2016) when support from a partner is low, it is likely that the mother will have difficulty adjusting psychologically, and will show more intense feelings of anxiety and depression. Similar results were reported by Cavanaugh-Rintahaka et al., (2019), that family functionality is determined by the level of support, especially in families where responsibility and care are evenly distributed and all nuclear families participate according to their abilities, then the result is positive support.

The influence of gratitude on SWB is mediated by self-acceptance

The results of this research also prove that self-acceptance is able to significantly mediate between gratitude and SWB. This is in accordance with research by Komarudin et al. (2022) who stated that *gratitude* can influence a person's happiness if he is able to accept himself as he is. Through high *self-acceptance* , *parents are expected to also have high SWB*. Grateful parents are a form of accepting everything they have without feeling lacking . This shows that individuals with feelings of gratitude also influence their subjective well-being because it is a form of positive expression and influences the creation of pleasant positive emotions (Megawati et al., 2019) . Apart from that, they also feel happy in making sense of life and appreciating what they have. Parents who are able to create SWB within themselves can be sure of having high *self-acceptance* .

The influence of social support on SWB is mediated by self-acceptance

The results of this research also prove that self-acceptance is able to mediate significantly between social support and SWB. Individual interactions within the family or with other people as well as the social support they receive from peers, family and significant others can not only motivate a mother positively but also make her feel accepted by the surrounding environment, feel like there are other people who can understand her, don't judge him. When a partner does not get support from family, friends, significant others, then the mother will feel that he is rejected and not recognized because he has a child with special needs, which will indirectly give rise to feelings of anxiety and a tendency to depression in him. Increased anxiety and depression is an indication that the mother's perceived SWB has decreased. The role of *self-acceptance* by the mother, which involves accepting her identity as a parent of a child with special needs, is very important. This acceptance leads to the provision of love, attention, warmth, comfort and support, which has a significant impact on the child's well-being

((Rahayu et al. (2022) and Kristiadi & Soetjiningsih, (2024)). Winarsih et al. (2020) stated that Self-acceptance is a positive attitude towards oneself, accepting one's shortcomings and strengths without negative feelings such as shame, guilt, or low self-esteem, and freedom from anxiety about other people's judgments and a determining factor in the emergence of self-acceptance if there is social support from the people around you. For mothers who have children with special needs, self-acceptance is very important to provide the necessary care and affection. Without a mother's self-acceptance, there will be many negative impacts in her care for the child and family.

CONCLUSION

The current research study focuses on the importance of having self-acceptance in order to increase SWB in mothers who have children with special needs, where the results of this research conclude that self-acceptance is able to mediate the influence of gratitude and social support on subjective well-being (SWB). This is because caring for a child with special needs is considered a stressful experience and requires handling daily anxiety, the mother's concerns about the child's future, and the emergence of disruption to normal family life. In this situation, the results of this research have proven that the way parents view their child's disability with full gratitude, the presence of great social support from family, friends and significant others through self-acceptance in the mother in particular can have a positive influence on the personal life of the mother and family. them, and have a significant impact on maternal SWB. For mothers who have children with special needs, self-acceptance is very important to provide the necessary care and affection. Without self-acceptance from a mother, there will be many negative impacts in her future care for the child and family.

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