

INFORMASI ARTIKEL

Received: July, 28, 2025

Revised: July, 31, 2025

Available online: July, 31, 2025

at: <https://e-jurnal.iphorr.com/index.php/mhc>

The relationship between the role of working single parents and children's independence

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Abstract

Background: A single parent is a family consisting of a single parent, either a father or a mother, as a result of divorce or death. Single parenthood can also occur when a child is born out of wedlock and their care becomes their sole responsibility. Independence in the soul of a single parent is very necessary to carry out dual roles in the domestic sector, namely being responsible for household chores such as cooking, washing dishes and clothes, cleaning the house, preparing food for the family, caring for, raising and educating their children and in the public sector, namely having economic duties to ensure that needs are met, namely by earning a living for their family and socially, namely socializing with the community.

Purpose: To know how the role of a single working parent relates to a child's independence.

Method: This qualitative research involved 30 single mothers and their children. The informants were single mothers, with children aged 7-15 years old as the subjects. The study was conducted in Tuweley Village, RW 1-6, Tolitoli Regency, from January to March 2025.

Results: Based on interviews, it was found that each mother has a different approach to parenting their children. These differences are influenced by their educational background, socioeconomic status, family support, and personal values. Nevertheless, there is a common thread in parenting: consistent efforts to instill religious values, independent living habits, and discipline in daily life. Support from extended family, such as biological parents, siblings, or close relatives, is also a crucial factor in helping single parents raise their children.

Conclusion: The role of single parents significantly influences the development of children's independence. Mothers who fulfill the dual roles of breadwinner and caregiver still strive to provide time, attention, and guidance to their children.

Keywords: Child independence; Role of parents; Single parents.

INTRODUCTION

A single parent family is a family consisting of a single parent, either a father or a mother, resulting from divorce or death. Single parenthood can also occur when a child is born out of wedlock, and their care becomes the sole responsibility. Furthermore, a single parent is defined as a parent who raises their children alone without the presence, support, or responsibility of a partner (Backett-Milburn, Airey, McKie, & Hogg, 2018). Independence in the soul of a single parent is very necessary to carry out dual roles in the domestic sector, namely in charge of household chores such as cooking, washing dishes and clothes,

cleaning the house, preparing food for the family, caring for, raising and educating their children and in the public sector, namely in the economic sector to ensure that needs are met by earning a living for their family and socially, namely socializing with the community (McLanahan, & Sandefur, 2019). A single mother is a figure who gives deep love and attention to her children. They play the role of parents who support, nurture, and care for the emotional needs of their children. Not only that, they are fully responsible for educating their children. They must ensure that their children receive a good education, both at school

and at home. They also act as role models, providing guidance, values, and ethics to their children. Single mothers often have to take over the financial role in the family. They must meet their children's economic needs alone, such as meeting daily needs, education, healthcare, and so on. This may involve pursuing a career or finding additional sources of income (Nuryani, Suhardini, & Inten, 2024).

As single parents, women must set a strong example for their children. They must demonstrate that despite challenges and difficulties, they can face them with courage, perseverance, and adaptability. This can inspire children to become strong and independent individuals (Shaheen, Moosa, Shamim, Haider, & Nasir, 2025). Furthermore, single mothers play a role in building healthy relationships with their children. They must spend sufficient time with their children, listen to them, and foster a strong bond between them. A single parent is someone who does not have a husband, wife, or partner and lives with one or more children. There are various reasons why someone becomes a single parent, such as divorce, abandonment, death of a partner, or adoption by one parent. According to data from OECD countries in 2011, the percentage of households consisting of single parents ranged from 3% to 11%, with an average of 7.5%. The highest percentages are found in Australia (10%), Canada (10%), Mexico (10%), the United States (10%), Lithuania (10%), Costa Rica (11%), Latvia (11%), and New Zealand (11%), while the lowest are in Japan (3%), Greece (4%), Switzerland (4%), Bulgaria (5%), Croatia (5%), Germany (5%), Italy (5%), and Cyprus (5%). In Ireland and the United Kingdom, the percentage reaches 9% (Wulan, 2020).

The role of the head of the family is not limited to the father. Currently, many mothers in Indonesia also lead and support their families. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), there were 12.73% of female heads of households in Indonesia

in 2023 (Riyanti, Setiawan, & Rondli, 2023). This percentage increased slightly by 0.01 percentage points compared to the previous year's 12.72%. Looking at the trend, the percentage of female heads of households tended to increase from 2013 to 2020, but the figure experienced a decline in 2021 and 2022. By region, the percentage of female heads of households was higher in urban areas in 2023, namely 13.36%, while only 11.84% of female heads of households were female in rural areas (Anisa, 2018).

RESEARCH METHOD

Qualitative research, this study describes data related to the current situation, attitudes and views that occur in a society, conflicts between two or more conditions, relationships between variables that arise, differences between existing facts and their influence on a condition, and so on. The criteria for participants to be taken in this study are based on: The role of single parents in shaping children's independence; The development of children's independence and the results of single parenting patterns on children's independence. The respondents of this study were 30 single parent mothers and children. In this study, single parent mothers served as informants with research subjects being children aged 7-15 years. This research was conducted in Tuweley Village, RW 1-6, Tolitoli Regency. The research will be conducted in the period January-March 2025.

Data analysis: Qualitative research requires valid and accurate data. Valid data is obtained through analysis of the initial data. Data reduction is an integral part of data analysis. Researchers choose which data to code, which to extract, and the pattern of summarizing a number of fragments or developing a story are analytical choices. A display, in this context, is a collection of organized information that allows for drawing conclusions and taking action. The third analytical activity is drawing conclusions/verification.

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RESEARCH RESULTS**Table Parenting Patterns of Single Parents and Their Impact on Children's Independence**

Aspects of Parenting Style	Implementation	Impact on Children
Discipline	Establish rules for study and playtime Assign daily responsibilities	Children become more organized and able to manage their own time.
Instilling Religious Values	Invite children to worship together Giving religious advice	Children have religious awareness and more polite behavior.
Socialization	Involving children in social activities Setting an example of good behavior	Children are more sociable and have empathy for others.
Homework Habits	Children are trained to do household chores Given certain responsibilities	Children become independent and responsible for the cleanliness and tidiness of the house.
Emotional and Physical Support	Accompanying children in learning Being a place for children to confide in	Children feel safe and emotionally supported
Mother's Dual Role (Economic & Parenting)	Mothers work and also raise children	Children sometimes lack emotional attention but learn to appreciate their parents' efforts.
Economic Limitations Due to Divorce	Father's income is limited or insufficient	Children learn to live simply and understand family conditions.

Based on the table above, it is known that, Discipline, Mothers establish daily rules and give responsibilities, so that children learn to manage time and be responsible for their actions. Religious Values, Mothers instill religious values through joint worship and religious stories, forming children who are more honest, polite, and moral. Socialization, Children are invited to participate in social activities and taught to be polite, helping them to be sociable and have empathy. Homework, Children are trained to do household chores according to their age, developing independence and life skills from an early age. Emotional Guidance, Mothers become a place to confide and provide emotional support, which makes

children feel safe, confident, and not overly dependent. Dual Role of Mothers, Mothers take over the roles of father and mother at the same time. Children learn to appreciate the efforts of their parents and grow into resilient individuals. Economic Limitations, Mothers teach frugality and gratitude. Children become more sensitive to family circumstances and grow with a simple attitude. Despite limitations, single parents are still able to shape independent and responsible children through appropriate parenting patterns.

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DISCUSSION

Based on interviews, it was found that each mother has a different approach to parenting their children. These differences are influenced by their educational background, socioeconomic status, family support, and personal values. Nevertheless, there is a common thread in parenting: consistent efforts to instill religious values, independent living habits, and discipline in daily life. Support from extended family, such as biological parents, siblings, or close relatives, is also a crucial factor in helping single parents raise their children (Usdansky & Wolf, 2018). The presence of other family members contributes to meeting the child's emotional needs and assisting the mother in supervising and educating them. Overall, the parenting approach adopted by single mothers supports the development of children's independence in various aspects, including physical (self-care and completing household chores), cognitive (the ability to think logically and make simple decisions), emotional (managing feelings and building self-confidence), social (interacting with the surrounding environment), and spiritual (practicing religious duties and understanding moral values) (Coontz, 2016).

Based on the results of interviews with 30 single parents, it was found that there are variations in the application of parenting styles they apply to their children (Booth, Macdonald, & Youssef, 2018). Although each mother has a different approach, in general they can be grouped into three main types of parenting styles, namely: authoritarian, democratic, and permissive. The following are details of the number and explanation, Parenting Styles Applied: Democratic Parenting Style - 10 mothers this pattern is characterized by open communication between mother and child, giving responsible freedom, and instilling values through dialogue and example. Examples of behavior: involving children in simple decision-making; Children are given the opportunity to choose clothes or set their own study schedule; Mothers give praise for children's achievements and provide guidance when children experience difficulties (Fitri & Yarni, 2022).

Authoritarian Parenting Style – 5 single parents, this style emphasizes strict discipline and full control over children's behavior. Mothers usually make rules that must be obeyed without much discussion. Examples of behavior: Children are not given many

choices and must follow instructions; Mild physical punishment or prohibitions on playing with cell phones are often used as a form of discipline; Communication tends to be one-way from mother to child. Permissive Parenting Style – 8 mothers, in this pattern, mothers tend to over-indulge children or give excessive freedom without clear boundaries (Arsanti & Nurzannah, 2024). Examples of behavior: Children are allowed to play with cell phones for long periods without supervision; Mothers rarely reprimand or correct children's behavior, even when the child is disrespectful; Children's study or sleep schedules are not strictly regulated. Mixed Parenting Style (combination) – 7 mothers, some mothers combine two parenting styles according to the child's situation and condition (Sari, 2019). For example, being firm in terms of discipline, but still allowing freedom of expression. Examples of behavior: Mothers are strict about study time, but flexible in matters of clothing or choosing playmates; Children are given household responsibilities, but still help if they experience difficulties. Although parenting approaches vary, nearly all mothers share the same goal: to raise independent, responsible children with strong moral values. Support from the extended family, especially grandparents, or siblings, is a crucial factor in the success of this parenting process (Kamilewicz-Rucińska, 2025).

In this study, in addition to interviewing 30 single mothers as the primary respondents, the researchers also interviewed several key informants from close family members, such as grandmothers (the respondents' mothers), grandfathers, siblings, or the children's aunts and uncles. These informants were chosen because they play an active role in helping with childcare and are directly involved in the family's daily life (Iiboshi, Ozaki, & Yoshii, 2023). The grandmothers and grandfathers stated that they often serve as a place for children to share stories, especially when their mothers are busy working. They also help supervise children's activities at home, such as eating, studying, and playing. Close family members also play a role in instilling religious and ethical values. Several informants mentioned that they regularly invite their children to pray together or recite daily prayers. The majority of informants recognize the importance of consistency in parenting (Harianto & Alfita, 2025). Therefore, they try to follow

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their mothers' instructions to prevent their children from receiving conflicting messages. In some cases, when mothers tend to be permissive out of pity, grandmothers or aunts play a role in setting boundaries so that children maintain discipline. Several informants expressed challenges when having to play dual roles, for example, as caregivers and educators, especially when mothers are unable to accompany their children due to work. They also mentioned the need for open communication between mothers and immediate family members to ensure synergistic parenting. They help enforce family rules and support the mother's parenting decisions (Wessels, 2023).

Positive impacts of single parenting: children become more independent in carrying out daily activities such as bathing, eating, dressing, and completing household chores; increased sense of responsibility for schoolwork and religious obligations; children show high empathy towards parents and other family members; children learn to solve problems on their own more quickly and adapt to their social environment (Ashari, 2018). Possible negative impacts: emotional stress due to the absence of a father figure, which can cause feelings of loss, loneliness, or anxiety; limited time with a working mother leads to a lack of emotional interaction and deep communication between mother and child; potential dependence on gadgets (cellphones or tablets) as an escape from loneliness or lack of attention if there is no close supervision from the mother; in some cases, children experience difficulty in expressing feelings or building social relationships due to the limited presence of male role models in the family (Cain, 2016). By understanding the various dynamics that arise in single parenting, it is hoped that society and policy makers can provide more concrete support, both in the form of guidance programs, counseling services, and safe spaces for children and single parents to care for and support their children's optimal growth (Yanseva, 2023).

CONCLUSION

The role of single mothers significantly influences the development of children's independence. Mothers, who fulfill the dual role of breadwinner and caregiver, still strive to devote time, attention, and guidance to their children. Despite limited time due to

work, mothers maintain a parenting style that instills responsibility, discipline, and self-confidence in their children. Children's independence is evident in various aspects, such as the ability to care for themselves (bathing, eating, dressing), complete schoolwork without full assistance, choose activities independently, and express feelings. This indicates that the parenting style implemented by mothers is quite effective in shaping children's resilient and independent character.

Extended family support (key informant) also plays a crucial role in fostering children's independence. Even though mothers work, the involvement of close family members, such as older siblings, aunts, uncles, or cousins, helps provide a positive environment for children to learn to socialize and adjust. Consistent parenting and open communication between mothers and children are key factors in fostering independence, despite the limitations of a single parent's role.

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