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The Relationship Between Islamic Piety, Maternal Age, Income, and Well-Being Among Working Mothers of Children With Special Needs

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ABSTRACT

Mothers of children with special needs are particularly in need of well-being, as raising children with neurodevelopmental disorders (NDDs) can be challenging due to their difficulties with independent daily activities and challenging behaviors. Therefore, identifying factors that may enhance maternal well-being is essential. Previous studies have highlighted Islamic piety (Maham & Bhatti, 2019a), family socioeconomic status (SES) (Nahar et al., 2022; W. Zhou et al., 2019), older maternal age, and lower family income as relevant factors. Spearman's rho analysis revealed a significant positive correlation between taqwa and well-being (($p < 0.001$), ($r = 0.816$)), indicating that higher levels of taqwa are associated with higher well-being among mothers of children with NDDs. Demographic analysis also showed significant negative correlations between maternal age and well-being (($p < 0.001$), ($r = -0.477$)) and between income and well-being (($p < 0.001$), ($r = -0.406$)). These findings suggest that younger mothers reported higher well-being, while mothers with higher incomes reported lower well-being. Overall, taqwa emerges as a potentially important spiritual resource associated with maternal well-being, particularly among younger mothers and those from lower-income backgrounds.

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INTRODUCTION

Well-being is an important indicator of individual psychological functioning that reflects cognitive and affective evaluations of one's life as a whole, encompassing life satisfaction and the balance between positive and negative emotions (Diener, 2000; Dursun, 2021; Sajjad et al., 2022). From a philosophical perspective, well-being is understood through two main approaches: the hedonic approach, which emphasizes subjective happiness and the attainment of pleasure, and the eudaimonic approach, which focuses on self-actualization, meaning in life, and optimal psychological functioning (Lin, 2022; Ryan & Deci, 2001). Both perspectives indicate that well-being is not merely about feeling happy but also about an individual's capacity to live a meaningful and adaptive life.

For mothers of children with special needs, such as Autism-Spectrum-Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity-Disorder (ADHD), or intellectual disabilities, achieving well-being becomes a complex challenge. Children's conditions that require intensive supervision, long-term therapy, assistance with daily activities, and management of difficult behaviors often place mothers under a higher caregiving burden than parents of typically developing children (Haddada et al., 2025; Herdani et al., 2022). This situation makes mothers vulnerable to emotional exhaustion, chronic stress, and reduced quality of life, particularly when mothers of children with special needs are also employed.

Working mothers of children with special needs experience imbalance in performing both roles simultaneously (Nohe et al., 2015), and some mothers face disciplinary issues, burnout, and intention to quit work (Vignoli et al., 2016). Consequently, mothers not infrequently experience psychological problems such as depression and emotional and physical exhaustion (Nohe et al., 2015), which may also affect the family's economic condition and maternal well-being (Caples & Sweeney, 2011).

Various studies have shown that mothers of children with special needs tend to have lower levels of well-being than mothers of children without developmental disorders. For example, Andayani et al. (2021) found that 419 mothers of children with ADHD attending inclusive schools in Surabaya had low psychological well-being. This finding is also supported by Pandin et al. (2019), who found that 336 mothers of deaf children in West Java had lower well-being than fathers. Scherer et al. (2019) and Neoh et al. (2022) reported a high prevalence of depression, anxiety, and psychological distress among this group of mothers due to continuous caregiving demands. In addition, Liang et al. (2021) found that psychological distress not only affects mental health but also reduces quality of life in physical, social relationship, and environmental domains. These conditions indicate that maternal well-being is an important aspect requiring attention because it influences the quality of caregiving, family dynamics, and child developmental processes.

In addition to internal factors, maternal well-being is also influenced by various external factors, such as economic conditions, social stigma, and social support. Werner and Shulman (2015) and Herdani et al. (2022) explain that negative stigma from society toward children with special needs is often internalized by mothers into affiliate stigma, namely feelings of shame, inferiority, and negative self-evaluation resulting from the child's condition. On the other hand, economic constraints can increase psychological distress because the therapy and education needs of children with special needs generally require substantial costs. However, research findings on the relationship between economic status and well-being have not shown consistent conclusions. Zhao et al. (2024) found that working mothers with higher economic status do not necessarily have better well-being due to dual-role strain, work demands, and high social expectations regarding children's success. Conversely, social support from partners, family, and the community has been shown to be a protective factor that can reduce parenting stress and enhance mothers' adaptive capacity (Rakap & Vural-Batik, 2024; Sajjad et al., 2022).

In the context of Muslim society, spiritual factors constitute one of the internal resources that may help individuals cope with various life pressures. In Islam, spiritual values are reflected in the concept of taqwa, namely awareness of Allah's presence, adherence to religious values, and the ability to regulate behavior based on spiritual beliefs (Ida Suryani et al., 2024). Individuals with high levels of religiosity and spirituality tend to have better positive emotions, higher life satisfaction, and more adaptive coping abilities in difficult situations (Maham and Bhatti, 2019; Warsah et al., 2023; Sufya & Abas, 2024). Under the stressful conditions of caregiving for children with special needs, taqwa can function as a religious coping mechanism that helps mothers construct positive meaning from their experiences, enhance acceptance, and maintain psychological well-being.

In addition to spirituality, demographic factors such as age and income have also been reported to be associated with maternal well-being. Previous studies have shown that older age, accumulated family and work responsibilities, and economic constraints can increase the risk of mental health problems among mothers caring for children with special needs (Nahar et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2024). However, the relationships among age, economic status, and well-being still show varied results across populations, thus requiring further investigation.

Although research on the well-being of mothers of children with special needs has developed, most previous studies have examined spirituality, religiosity, and demographic factors separately. Research that specifically integrates Islamic piety (taqwa) with age and income in explaining the well-being of working mothers of children with special needs remains very limited, particularly in the context of Muslim society in Indonesia. In addition, most international literature still focuses on Western populations and

emphasizes child developmental outcomes more than mothers' psychological conditions (Edmunds et al., 2025; Winter et al., 2024). These limitations indicate the need to understand how spiritual factors and demographic characteristics jointly contribute to maternal well-being.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the relationships of Islamic piety (taqwa), age, and income with the well-being of working mothers of children with special needs in Pekanbaru, Riau. This study is expected to contribute to the development of an Islamic psychology framework for understanding well-being and to serve as a basis for designing spiritually based psychological interventions to improve the mental health of mothers of children with special needs.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants in this study were 145 working mothers of children with special needs in Pekanbaru City. The inclusion criteria were: (1) Muslim, (2) aged 18–60 years, (3) mothers of children with special needs who were attending school or enrolled in education. Sampling was conducted across 15 Special Schools (Sekolah Luar Biasa, SLB) in Pekanbaru City using a purposive sampling technique to ensure that selected respondents matched the characteristics and objectives of the study. Purposive sampling was chosen because no sampling frame specifically identified working mothers of children with special needs, making random selection difficult. Therefore, respondents were selected based on predetermined inclusion criteria so that participant characteristics aligned with the research objectives.

Research Instruments

The instruments used in this study consisted of the Well-being Scale and the Taqwa Scale.

a. Well-being Scale

Well-being was measured using the Well-being Scale developed by Lui and Fernando (2018). This scale measures individuals' evaluations of their psychological well-being and life satisfaction. The adapted instrument demonstrated very high reliability with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of $\alpha = 0.981$. The scale originally consisted of 29 items; however, based on item discrimination analysis, coefficients ranged from 0.244 to 0.917, with two items eliminated because they fell below 0.30. The reliability coefficient of the data was 0.981. An example item is: "I have someone who knows me well to talk to when I have problems."

b. Islamic Piety Scale

Islamic Piety Scale was measured using the Islamic Piety Scale developed by Nazam et al. (2021) and adapted to the Indonesian context by Ikhwanisifa et al. This instrument measures dimensions of spirituality, religious awareness, and adherence to Islamic values. Reliability testing showed a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of $\alpha = 0.994$, indicating very high reliability. The scale consists of 12 items with coefficients ranging from 0.937 to 0.980. An example item is: "I feel the presence and pleasure of Allah in all aspects of daily life

Both scales used a Likert-type format with six response alternatives: strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree. Each response option was scored from 1 to 6.

c. Demograpic Data

Demographic data collected included age, occupation, and income level of respondents.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 27. Prior to hypothesis testing, assumption tests (normality and linearity) were conducted to determine the appropriate analytical technique. The normality test indicated that the data were not normally distributed; therefore, hypothesis testing was conducted using non-parametric statistics, specifically Spearman's Rho (Spearman Rank Correlation). This analysis was used to examine the relationships between taqwa, age, and income with the well-being of working mothers of children with special needs. Additional analyses were conducted to examine differences

in well-being levels based on age groups and economic/income status. Differences in well-being based on age groups were analyzed using the Mann Whitney test, while differences based on income groups were analyzed using the Kruskal Wallis test, as the data were not normally distributed and income groups consisted of more than two categories.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis Results

Before presenting the hypothesis testing results, the descriptive data of the research participants are presented below:

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Research Participants

Demographic Characteristics	N	%
Type of Disorder		
Autism	42	28.97%
Intelectual Dissability	29	20.00%
Speech Delay	17	11.72%
Balance Disorder	1	0.69%
Low Vision/Blind	1	0.69%
ADHD	12	8.28%
Dyslexia	4	2.76%
Slow Learner	2	1.38%
Hearing impairment	23	15.86%
Cerebal Palsy	2	1.38%
Not specified	12	8.38%
Age		
Early Middlehood (18-40)	70	48.3%
Early Adulthood (40-60)	75	51.7%
Occupation		
Civil Servant	29	20%
Teacher	31	21.3%
Employee	47	32.4%
Enterpreneur	38	26.3%
Economic Status/Income		
Upper	17	11,72%
Middle	83	57,24%
Lower	20	13,80%
Unknown	25	17,24%

Based on the table above, the participants in this study comprised both early and middle adulthood age groups. The majority worked as employees in private companies, entrepreneurs, teachers, and civil servants (ASN). Participants were predominantly of middle economic status, with an average income ranging from IDR 1,000,000 to IDR 5,000,000.

To determine the appropriate hypothesis testing technique—parametric or non-parametric—normality and linearity analyses were conducted for all variables. Based on the normality test using Skewness and Kurtosis values, the Skewness/Standard Error ratio was (-0.695/0.201 = -3.457) and the Kurtosis/Standard Error ratio was (-2.143), indicating that the data were not normally distributed because they did not fall within the -2 to +2 range. The linearity test for the four variables indicated linear relationships. Therefore, the hypothesis testing in this study used non-parametric analysis because the normality assumption was not met. The following are the hypothesis testing results based on non-parametric Spearman's Rho analysis.

Table 2. Spearman's Rho Correlation Between Variables

Variable	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	Noted
Islamic Piety—WellBeing	0,816	0,000	Significant

Based on the Spearman Rho analysis results above, a significant result was obtained with p = 0.000 (< 0.05), leading to the conclusion that the hypothesis was accepted. This means there is a significant relationship between Taqwa and Well-being, with a positive direction and a correlation coefficient of 0.816, indicating a strong and positive relationship between taqwa and well-being. In other words, the higher the taqwa possessed by mothers of children with special needs, the higher their well-being

Table.3. Spearman's Rho Correlation Between Variables

Variable	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	Noted
Age—WellBeing	-0,477	0,000	Significant

Tabel 4. Test of Differences in Well-being Based on Age

Variable	F	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean	Mean Difference	Cohen's d	Noted
Well-Being Based one Age	135,519	0,000		39,001	1,624	Significant Difference
Early Middlehood (18-40)			140,076			
Early Adulthood (40-60)			101,075			

Based on Table 2, there is a significant relationship between age and well-being with a significance value of 0.000 (< 0.05). The correlation coefficient is -0.477, indicating an inverse relationship. This leads to the conclusion that there is a significant and negative relationship between age and well-being. Thus, the younger the age, the higher the well-being of mothers of children with special needs.

The analysis results show a significant difference in well-being levels between the early adulthood and middle adulthood groups (p < 0.001). The early adulthood group had a higher mean well-being score (M = 140.076) compared to the middle adulthood group (M = 101.075), with a mean difference of 39.001 points. The magnitude of the difference between the two groups is indicated by a Cohen's d value of 1.624. According to conventional guidelines described by Lakens (2013), Cohen's d effect sizes of 0.20, 0.50, and 0.80 represent small, medium, and large effects, respectively. Thus, a Cohen's d value of 1.624 indicates a large effect size. This finding suggests that the difference in well-being between the early adulthood and middle adulthood groups is not only statistically significant but also represents a large standardized difference. Nevertheless, interpretation of effect sizes should consider the research context and not rely solely on conventional thresholds (Lakens, 2013).

The above data are also supported by the results of the test of differences in well-being based on age. The analysis revealed a difference in well-being levels between early adulthood and middle adulthood, with a significance value of 0.000 (p < 0.001). The mean well-being score for the early adulthood group was (M) = 140.076, and for the middle adulthood group was (M) = 101.075. The Cohen's d value of 1.624 indicates a very large effect because d ≥ 0.8 is considered large, meaning the difference in well-being scores between the two groups is very substantial, with a mean difference of 39.00 to 48.12 points. This refers to the conventional guidelines from Lakens (2013) where a Cohen's effect size of 0.8 represents a large effect.

Table 5. Spearman's Rho Correlation Between Variables

Variable	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	Noted
Income—WellBeing	-0,406	0,000	Significant

Table 6. Test of Differences in Well-being Based on Income

Variable	F	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean	Noted
Well-being Based on Income	26,830	0,000		Significan different
Upper			140,50	
Midlle			128,55	
Lower			67,17	
Unknown			102,76	

Based on the table above, a significance value of 0.000 (< 0.05) was obtained, indicating a significant difference in well-being levels among the lower, middle, upper, and unknown economic status groups. The mean well-being of the lower economic status group was higher than that of the middle and upper groups. This indicates a negative relationship (-0.406) between economic status/income and well-being, meaning that an increase in economic status is actually followed by a decrease in well-being.

DISCUSSION

Consistent with Maham and Bhatti (2019), Islamic Piety is not merely a ritual but an effective religious coping strategy for achieving happiness and stable mental health. In the context of Indonesia's collective culture, spiritual values such as gratitude (syukur) and patience rooted in Islamic Piety enable mothers to reframe the challenges of caring for children with special needs as a form of "amanah" (trust) or a meaningful test. Sufya and Abas (2024) also affirmed that the dimension of Islamic spirituality has a significant impact on enhancing individuals' life satisfaction. Furthermore, this spiritual support acts as a buffer that mitigates the negative impact of limited physical social support that may be experienced by migrant or working families.

The second analysis result shows a negative correlation between economic status and well-being. Paradoxically, this study found a significant and negative relationship between income and well-being. This result indicates that in the population of working mothers of children with special needs in Pekanbaru, an increase in economic status is actually followed by a decrease in subjective well-being.

This can be explained through the phenomenon of intense dual-role conflict, where mothers with higher incomes often face greater work demands, triggering psychosocial burdens and guilt over insufficient time with their children. Additionally, social and personal expectations regarding children's success are often higher in the upper-middle class, causing mothers to more easily feel like failures and experience stress. As presented in studies by Leach et al. (2025), Schnettler et al. (2024), Straatmann et al. (2024), and M. Zhou et al. (2021), dual-role conflict is a major factor reducing well-being in working mothers, where mothers are confronted with both work demands and the demands of caring for children with special needs, as well as experiencing psychosocial burdens. This condition significantly disrupts mothers' mental health, and groups with more demands/expectations—the upper-middle class—experience different forms of pressure.

Furthermore, Rivard et al. (2022) noted similar findings where higher household income is sometimes associated with lower satisfaction with disability-related support, possibly due to loss of access to government subsidies or the high cost of private therapy that does not always yield instant results. Conversely, in this study, mothers with lower economic status had higher levels of well-being. This can be explained in the social and life context where mothers with lower economic status often possess stronger family values, religiosity, and social support. Several studies also support that social support, community involvement, family values and spiritual values, as well as resilience, serve as protective mechanisms enabling the lower economic class to have relatively high well-being. This indicates that economic status is not solely a determinant of well-being but is more influenced by psychological and cultural values (Fry, 2024; Park & Lee, 2022).

The third analysis result reveals a significant and negative relationship between age and well-being. The early adulthood group (18–40 years) reported significantly higher levels of well-being compared to the middle adulthood group (40–60 years). This phenomenon supports the "wear-and-tear hypothesis," which states that as children and parents age, long-term caregiving burdens lead to accumulated chronic fatigue, sleep disturbances, and psychological exhaustion (burnout). Meads et al. (2022) added that in middle adulthood, parents' hopes for their children to live independently often begin to fade, triggering feelings of hopelessness and depression. Barratt et al. (2025) explained that younger mothers tend to report better emotional adaptation because they have not yet experienced years of accumulated chronic physical fatigue and long-term anxiety regarding the future of their children's care.

On the other hand, mothers in early adulthood tend to have greater physical energy, cognitive flexibility, and broader social networks to seek peer support. The accumulation of physical and psychological health decline in older parents, combined with increasing role conflict between career and increasingly heavy household responsibilities, are the main factors contributing to decreased well-being in middle adulthood. Additionally, the accumulation of physical and psychological health decline in older individuals, such as chronic fatigue, sleep disturbances, and anxiety symptoms, can worsen well-being in middle adulthood (El Keshky & Sarour, 2024; Shahali et al., 2024). As in the study conducted by Rusu et al. (2025), a recent meta-analysis stated that parental age is a moderating variable between stress and well-being. Conversely, in early adulthood, well-being is higher. This is because early adults tend to have more energy, flexibility, and broader social networks, making it easier to seek social support. Research results show that social support can enhance resilience and optimism in parents of children with special needs (Buchholz, 2022; Dijkstra-de Neijs et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that there are significant relationships between Islamic piety (taqwa), age, and income with the well-being of working mothers of children with special needs. Taqwa shows a positive relationship with well-being, indicating that the higher the level of taqwa possessed by mothers, the higher their level of psychological well-being. This finding suggests that spiritual values and religiosity have the potential to serve as internal resources that help mothers cope with various pressures of caring for children with special needs. Conversely, age and income show negative relationships with well-being. Mothers in the early adulthood group tend to have higher levels of well-being compared to the middle adulthood group. Additionally, there are differences in well-being levels based on income groups, indicating that demographic factors do not always correlate linearly with mothers' psychological well-being. The results of this study demonstrate that the well-being of mothers of children with neurodevelopmental disorders is influenced not only by economic factors and demographic characteristics but also by psychological and spiritual aspects.

The findings of this study imply that strengthening spiritual values, particularly taqwa, can be considered as one approach to improving the well-being of mothers of children with special needs. Therefore, psychological support and spirituality-based intervention programs can be developed by psychology practitioners, schools, and family support agencies for children with special needs to help mothers manage caregiving pressures and maintain their psychological well-being. Future research is recommended to examine other factors that may potentially influence well-being, such as social support, resilience, dual-role conflict, severity of the child's disorder, and other family characteristics. Additionally, the use of longitudinal research designs and more comprehensive analyses is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the factors influencing the well-being of mothers of children with special needs.

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