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FATHERS' RESILIENCE IN COPING WITH THEIR NEW ROLE AS SINGLE FATHERS AFTER THE DEATH OF THEIR WIVES DUE TO COVID-19 IN PURBALINGGA, CENTRAL JAVA

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ABSTRAK: Keluarga yang tidak lagi utuh menyebabkan *single parent* mengalami perubahan peran dalam keluarga dan terpaksa harus melakukan peran ganda yaitu sebagai ayah dan ibu untuk anak-anak mereka. Oleh sebab itu, penelitian ini bertujuan menggambarkan problematika yang dihadapi oleh *single father* dan upaya yang dilakukan *single father* akibat Covid-19 di Kabupaten Purbalingga dalam menghadapi problematika tersebut. Metode pada penelitian ini adalah kualitatif deskriptif, dengan teknik pengumpulan data adalah observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa seorang ayah yang menjalani peran barunya sebagai *single father* menemui problematika-problematika diantaranya pengasuhan anak, peran sosial, ekonomi keluarga, dan biologis (hasrat seksualitas) serta berbagai upaya yang dilakukan oleh ayah tunggal untuk mengatasi problematika tersebut. Berdasarkan temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa upaya yang dilakukan para *single father* menghadapi problematika yang ada para *single father* memiliki kemampuan resiliensi yang baik (*causal analysis, self-efficacy, emotion regulation, empathy, impulse control*) dan telah menjalankan perannya sebagai seorang ayah untuk anak-anak mereka (*Child specialiser & educator, teacher & role model, protector, caregiver, provider*).

Kata kunci: *single father*, problematika, peran, resiliensi, covid-19

ABSTRACT: Families that are no longer intact leads to a restructuring of familial roles, necessitating single parents to undertake dual responsibilities as both fathers and mothers for their children. This study aims to describe the problems confronted by single fathers and their adaptive strategies during the Covid-19 pandemic in Purbalingga Regency. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings illuminated the multifaceted difficulties encountered by single fathers, encompassing childcare, social roles, family economy, and biological needs (sexual desires). Additionally, this study highlighted the resilient capabilities exhibited by single fathers, encompassing causal analysis, self-efficacy, emotional regulation, empathy, and impulse control. Moreover, single fathers showed their dedication to fulfilling the diverse roles of a father, including being a child specialist and educator, a teacher and role model, a protector, caregiver, and provider for their children.

Keywords: single father, problems, role, resilience, Covid-19.

I. INTRODUCTION

The sudden emergence of the Coronavirus Disease 2019, or Covid-19, towards the end of 2019 in China has significantly impacted various aspects of human life. One profound effect is the disruption of family structures due to the loss of family members. According to the World Health Organization and PHEOC Ministry of Health data as of November 4, 2021, Covid-19 has spread to 204 countries globally (Annisa, 2021). In Indonesia, from March 2020 to October 25, 2022, there have been 6,475,672 confirmed cases of Covid-19 (Komara, 2022). Alarmingly, as of September 2021, data from the Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia reported 30,766 children who lost parents to Covid-19, resulting in them becoming paternal orphans, maternal orphans, or double orphans (Pertana, 2022). Purbalingga Regency, located in Central Java, stands out as an area with a distressing mortality rate due to Covid-19, recording 1,085 fatalities as of August 28, 2021

(Government of Purbalingga Regency, 2021). Notably, data from the Department of Social Affairs, Women Empowerment, and Child Protection (DinsosDaldukKBP3A) of Purbalingga Regency for the year 2021 revealed the tragic toll of the pandemic: 107 mothers and 128 fathers lost their lives, leaving behind 147 maternal orphans and 186 paternal orphans, respectively. Additionally, the loss of both parents affected 9 children, rendering them double orphans (DinsosDaldukKBP3A of Purbalingga, 2022)

Indonesia has a deeply ingrained patriarchal tradition where the focus is on men, specifically fathers, as the primary breadwinners. Well-defined gender roles are assigned within families, outlining distinct responsibilities for both fathers and mothers. Mothers typically bear the responsibility of childcare, nurturing physical and spiritual bonds, and fulfilling social roles that encompass emotional expression or a blend of emotional and expressive traits. Their duties encompass animating the household, nurturing the family, and mediating conflicts among children. Conversely, fathers assume a leadership role, organizing the family's workforce and addressing political or interpersonal conflicts (Goode, 2007). Family members' roles are defined based on social expectations and behavioral norms within the family and broader community. As described by Soekanto, one's role is a dynamic aspect linked to their position or status. When an individual fulfills their rights and obligations in alignment with their position, they effectively play their role (Rahawarin, 2018).

In the case of single fathers, they must shoulder all the responsibilities typically associated with mothers, such as meal preparation, school drop-offs, bedtime routines, and tending to their children's health needs. Children who have lost one or both parents are particularly vulnerable and face numerous challenges. Therefore, fathers who excel in caring for and safeguarding their children contribute positively to their growth and overall well-being, especially during the critical transition into adolescence (Cabrera et al., 2000; Kwok et al., 2013; Parmanti & Purnamasari, 2015; Wulan et al., 2018).

In addition to addressing child development concerns, single fathers are confronted with the emotional toll of losing a spouse to Covid-19 and grapple with social expectations. Managing these pressures requires a reservoir of inner strength, commonly known as resilience. Resilience entails how an individual engages with their surroundings to navigate stress and ultimately achieve positive adaptive outcomes (Tricia & Handayani, 2021). The resilience process varies for each person and is influenced by factors such as enhanced self-awareness, a supportive environment, problem-solving abilities, and the presence of a caregiving support system (Tricia & Handayani, 2021). Individual resilience processes differ based on distinct life stages, encompassing variations in social support (external factors) and the individual's perception of the given situation (internal factors) (Aryadelina & Laksmiwati, 2019).

Indonesian society often casts doubt on the capability of men to juggle multiple roles, as multitasking is typically associated with women, renowned for their adeptness in managing various tasks simultaneously (Lestari & Amaliana, 2020). The foundation of this stereotype lies in the perception of women as exceptional multitaskers, seamlessly handling several tasks with focus and concentration. This stands in contrast to men who, when confronted with intricate problems, tend to address them sequentially and in a controlled manner. Moreover, certain qualities distinctly emphasize the strengths of women as compared to men, such as their tendency to exhibit resilience, subtlety, empathy, and exceptional multitasking abilities (Fitriana & Cenni, 2021).

Numerous individual studies have previously explored the impact of the father's role in childcare (Cabrera et al., 2000; Kwok et al., 2013; Parmanti & Purnamasari, 2015; Wulan et al., 2018), the resilience process (Tricia & Handayani, 2021), and social skepticism regarding men's ability to manage multiple roles (Fitriana & Cenni, 2021; Lestari & Amaliana, 2020). However, research specifically focusing on the resilience of single fathers adapting to their newfound role following the loss of a spouse, integrating aspects of the father's role in childcare, the resilience process, and social perceptions of men with multiple roles, remains somewhat limited. Hence, this study holds significant importance in comprehending how the father's role contributes to childcare, resilience capabilities, and public doubts concerning the resilience of single fathers as they navigate their new roles post the loss of their wives.

This study aims to (1) describe the problems faced by single fathers in Purbalingga Regency as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic, and (2) elucidate the coping mechanisms employed by these single fathers in response to the aforementioned challenges. It is anticipated that this research will serve as a valuable informational resource and a point of reference for future studies examining how fathers adapt to their newfound responsibilities as single parents following the loss of their wives due to Covid-19.

II. METHOD

The research employed a descriptive qualitative approach, a method characterized by the exploration and description of existing phenomena through observations (Sukmadinata, 2011). The purpose of utilizing this approach was to comprehend the experiences of fathers in adapting to their new role as single parents after the loss of their wives due to Covid-19. Specifically focusing on the challenges and coping efforts of single fathers,

the researchers gathered and documented data in the form of verbal descriptions. This qualitative research method proved instrumental in obtaining a comprehensive understanding of how fathers exhibited resilience while navigating their roles as single parents following their wives' demise due to Covid-19.

A case study approach was adopted as the research design, delving deeply into specific cases, individuals, or circumstances. The study was carried out in Purbalingga Regency, chosen due to its elevated death toll—1,085 individuals succumbed to Covid-19 in this region, making it one of the areas with a significant fatality rate in Central Java. Additionally, data from the Central Java Vulnerable Group Mapping Application team (APEMKETAN) & DP3AKB Central Java (2021) indicated that Purbalingga Regency ranked third out of 35 districts in Central Java concerning child victims of Covid-19. The research was conducted over the span of January to February 2023.

The informant selection method involved purposive sampling, with informants meeting specific criteria: being a man whose wife passed away due to Covid-19, having two sons and two daughters ranging from kindergarten to high school age, residing in Purbalingga Regency, and having employment outside the home. Data collection encompassed observations, interviews, and documentation. Both primary and secondary data sources were utilized. Primary data emerged from interviews and observations, while secondary data were derived from various literary sources, books, and accessible documents. The data underwent processing using interactive qualitative analysis techniques, a continuous iterative process that persisted until data saturation was achieved (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

III. RESULTS

Purbalingga District stood out among Central Java districts with a notably high mortality rate due to Covid-19, with a tragic toll of 1,085 lives lost. Data provided by the Central Java Vulnerable Group Mapping Application (APEMKETAN) & DP3AKB team (2021) revealed that Purbalingga Regency held the distressing third position out of 35 districts in Central Java concerning child victims of Covid-19, as assessed. In the year 2022, the National Socio-Economic Survey (Susenas) reported that 64.42% of individuals aged 10 years and above in Purbalingga Regency were married or had been married previously (comprising 62.82% male and 66.05% female). In terms of marital status, 3.86% of men and 11.46% of women were divorced, while 33.32% of men and 22.48% of women were unmarried (Purbalingga Regency Statistics Bureau, 2022).

Overall, this study described fathers' resilience in coping with their new role as single parents following the loss of their wives due to Covid-19, focusing on four critical aspects: childcare, social roles, family finances, and biological needs (sexual desires). Through the insights gained from interviews, the study identified various challenges that single fathers face in these domains. Remarkably, all three informants openly shared their experiences regarding the hurdles encountered and the proactive measures they took in managing their newfound responsibility as single fathers.

Table 1 Fathers' Problems in Coping with Their New Role as Single Fathers

Name	Childcare	Social Roles	FamilyEconomy	Biological Needs
SY	Difficulties in childcare, understanding children's emotions and time management.	Negative stigma from the neighbourhood	Reduced income, difficulty in financial management, and increased expenses	Feeling lonely
NTP	Difficulty in time management, lack of attention	Considered a lonely figure	Difficulty in financial management, increased expenses	Feelings of loss and shock due to the condition
IK	Difficulties in time management and childcare	Negative stigma and slander from the neighbourhood	Having debts	Feeling shocked and bereft

Source: Primary data, processed

Based on table 1, the four aspects of problems experienced by informants are as follows.

(1). **Childcare.** Single fathers are compelled to undertake the role traditionally associated with mothers, resulting in a complex set of responsibilities including providing for the family and tending to all household needs such as nurturing, cooking, upbringing, and guidance of their children. Challenges in childcare encompass difficulties faced during the initial days following their wife's death, struggles in understanding their children's

emotional needs, adjusting to the dual role of being both father and mother, and managing time effectively between caregiving and work;

(2). **Social role.** Informants encountered challenges related to their social role as single fathers after their wives' death due to Covid-19. They faced negative stigma from the community, even when diligently fulfilling their role as nurturing fathers, and were often perceived as lonely figures;

(3). **Family economy.** Mr IK lost his job due to Covid-19 and was forced to return to his hometown. Furthermore, based on the results of interviews with other informants related to economic problems, there were issues of difficulty in financial management, as well as increased expenses;

(4). **Biological needs (sexual desire).** In the interviews with the three informants, it was observed that they prioritized their children's well-being over their own sexual desires. The informants mentioned that they didn't dwell much on sexual desires and chose to focus on caring for their children. Moreover, they expressed a sense of loss, not only for a spouse and sexual partner but also for a confidante with whom they could share and navigate household and life-related challenges.

Table 2 Efforts made by Fathers to Deal with Problems in Coping with Their New Roles as Single Fathers

Name	Childcare	Social Roles	Family Economy	Biological Needs
SY	Asking and learning from others, going to play with his children, choosing not to leave his children with relatives, currently only sending his children to school without additional education such as tutoring or Quran learning, and always monitoring and updating with his children	Ignoring the issue and telling his children not to respond to it	Being prudent in financial management and setting up savings for his children	Playing with his children
NTP	taking the children to the grave of his deceased wife, choosing not to use the services of a baby sister, returning during office breaks to see the children, sending his first child to an Islamic boarding school, sending his second child to Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI), being a role model for his children, and maintaining communication with his children	Ignoring the issues	Learning and practicing good financial management, and setting up savings for their children	Keeping busy, choosing to go out and play, chat with neighbours or sit on the terrace.
IK	going for walks or visiting his late wife's grave with his children, not using the services of a baby sister, sending his first child to an Islamic boarding school, being a role model as well as a Quran teacher for his second child, and leaving the child with his parents or his new wife's parents when he worked or brought his child to work.	Ignoring the issues	Finances are managed by his new wife, and he plans to set up savings for his children	Visiting the grave of his deceased wife, and remarrying

Source: Primary data, processed

Based on table 2, the various efforts made by single fathers to deal with the four aspects of their problems are as follows.

(1). **Childcare.** The interviews revealed various proactive efforts made by the single fathers concerning childcare. These efforts encompassed seeking guidance and knowledge from others, engaging in playtime with

their children, visiting their late wife's grave along with the children, choosing not to delegate childcare to relatives or babysitters, and maintaining constant communication and vigilance. Additionally, the informants exhibited strong resilience skills, attributed to their empathy and self-efficacy. They diligently fulfilled their roles as providers within the family, ensuring their children's education and acting as teachers and positive role models, nurturing and educating their children, and serving as protectors when they were away at work. By providing a protective environment, the fathers conveyed their affection to their children, thereby indirectly fulfilling the caregiver aspect of childcare.

(2). **Social role.** Based on the results of interviews with informants, they chose to be ignorant. The ignorance shows that they have resilience skills in the form of emotion regulation, impulse control, and good self-efficacy. This certainly has a good impact on the informants;

(3). **Family economy.** Being the primary financial provider for their families, single fathers need to possess strong financial management skills and exercise prudence in their expenditures. The informants demonstrated a careful and diligent approach, actively seeking to learn and implement effective financial management techniques. Moreover, they displayed a commendable intention and effort to save for their children, underscoring their robust self-efficacy and proficient problem-solving abilities.;

((4). **Biological needs (sexual desire).**It's evident that the informants displayed creativity in their coping mechanisms. They proactively engaged in various activities, such as spending quality time playing with their children—an expression of heightened attention. Bringing work home, initiating conversations with neighbors, simply relaxing on their house's terrace, and visiting their late wife's grave were all methods employed to combat the profound loneliness resulting from the loss of a wife who not only played the role of a life partner but also a cherished confidante. Some informants even made the choice to remarry. These diverse efforts underscore the informants' strong self-efficacy and problem-solving abilities.

IV. DISCUSSION

Single fathers thrust into sole responsibility for their children following the loss of their wife due to Covid-19 encounter a myriad of challenges in providing care and support. Typically, the most significant stressor stems from the transition to assuming complete parental responsibility, a role that fathers may not be accustomed to, especially in understanding and addressing the emotional needs and feelings of young children (Lestari & Amaliana, 2020). Single father parenting entails a dual role, where the father must nurture, support, educate, and guide their children. Failure to adequately meet these childcare needs often results in internal conflicts within the child, conflicts between children and parents, and strains within the broader environment. When a single father focuses solely on the physical needs of their child and overlooks their mental and emotional requirements, the child is deprived of both maternal and paternal figures simultaneously (Wulan et al., 2018). Balancing this dual role is imperative for parents to fulfill various essential needs such as emotional support, financial stability, education, and a sense of security within the family. In this context, men taking on the role of single parents face complex challenges as they strive to fulfill both roles concurrently. The multitude of challenges experienced by single parents necessitates the development of resilience skills, characterized by the process of an individual's interaction with their environment to effectively navigate pressure and achieve positive adaptive outcomes (Tricia & Handayani, 2021). The interviews with the informants revealed commendable resilience abilities, attributed to their strong empathy and self-efficacy. It's worth noting that the resilience capabilities of single fathers profoundly influence the resilience of their children. The loss and grief resulting from the death of a wife due to Covid-19 are not exclusive to the father; the children also grapple with the void and sorrow from losing their mother.

Childcare encompasses more than just tending to a child's basic needs; it also involves educating and guiding them. As a result, single fathers strive to ensure their children receive good education. One of the vital roles of fathers within a family is that of a provider (Parmanti & Purnamasari, 2015), constantly offering resources to their children, education being a significant one. In the realm of childcare, fathers also serve as teachers and role models (Parmanti & Purnamasari, 2015), imparting valuable examples and guidance to their children. Moreover, fathers act as specialized educators in childcare (Parmanti & Purnamasari, 2015), taking on the responsibility of guiding and protecting their children (Parmanti & Purnamasari, 2015) when they are away at work. The protectiveness demonstrated by the informants toward their children allows them to feel their father's love, indirectly fulfilling the caregiver role in childcare (Parmanti & Purnamasari, 2015).

Human beings are inherently social and thrive on interactions and relationships within society. Consequently, individuals living within a society must recognize their social responsibilities, respecting the rights and interests of others while maintaining order and harmony in the social environment. However, single fathers often encounter challenges while navigating their social roles. The designation of being a widower or widow is bestowed upon individuals when their spouse passes away or they undergo a divorce. Consequently,

society views widows and widowers as incomplete families (Sofyan et al., 2021). Role is a dynamic facet of one's position (status); if an individual fulfills their rights and obligations in alignment with their position, they effectively enact a role (Soekanto, in Rahawarin, 2018). Social roles are intrinsically tied to one's social status. When an individual's actions align with their social position, they are fulfilling their social role. However, the practicality of social roles often leads to conflicts, particularly when individuals occupy multiple statuses, necessitating the performance of multiple roles. Single fathers face challenges related to their social roles due to social perceptions, often facing negative stigma and being viewed as lonely figures, sparking concerns about their behavior (Ghani & Aziz, 2013). Interview results demonstrate that the informants possess resilience skills, notably in emotion regulation, impulse control, and strong self-efficacy (Sari & Yendi, 2019), which undeniably has a positive impact on the informants.

Humans always encounter economic challenges in their daily life, including providing basic needs such as clothing, food and shelter. With the surge in Covid-19 cases in Indonesia, a multitude of economic issues emerged within the community. The implementation of government policies to curb the spread of the Covid-19 virus, including lockdowns, work-from-home mandates (WFH), social distancing, and Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB), significantly impacted society across various economic strata (Maimunah, 2020). The economic struggles amplified amidst the ongoing pandemic considerably compound the financial hurdles faced by single fathers, creating a complex and diverse set of challenges. Family economics explores how individuals strive to meet their needs by engaging in activities that ensure the well-being and contentment of their lives (Tindangen et al., 2020). Economic stability functions as a means to emancipate individuals from destitution; with a sufficient or thriving economy, one can lead a peaceful and prosperous life. Single parents shoulder a dual role that profoundly influences the family's well-being and economic standing. Thus, it's not uncommon for single fathers to grapple with economic challenges. Particularly for men accustomed to prioritizing their careers, earning a livelihood, and entrusting financial matters to their wives, managing finances independently presents a distinct challenge. Serving as the primary financial provider for the family, single fathers must possess adept financial management skills and avoid unnecessary expenditures. The interviews affirmed that the informants exhibit strong self-efficacy and effective problem-solving abilities.

Sexual needs are an inherent and inevitable aspect of human existence, acknowledged as fundamental needs that must be met (Restuadhi, 2016). Consequently, biological needs related to sexuality are deemed essential rights encompassing primary necessities, and they cannot be substituted. The fulfillment of sexual needs is regarded as a fundamental requirement that persists even in old age. Primary needs are biologically driven and originate within individuals, encompassing essential actions such as eating, drinking, breathing, maintaining body warmth, sexual needs, and self-protection (Rahmanto, 2021). In the Indonesian context, the pinnacle of attraction towards the opposite sex is traditionally associated with marriage (Restuadhi, 2016). When a man and a woman legally unite in marriage, significant life changes occur. Instances such as a spouse's departure for work abroad or their passing present new challenges concerning the biological needs of the remaining spouse. Sex is viewed by some as a biological necessity due to its critical role in reproduction and human development. However, its importance extends beyond reproduction to encompass overall human health and well-being. For the individuals interviewed, the loss of their wives not only meant losing their sexual partners but also losing cherished confidantes. Wives play a crucial role as partners in problem-solving, addressing issues within their relationship, household, individual lives, and even community matters (Restuadhi, 2016). Consequently, the absence of a wife by their husband's side leaves them feeling unsettled. The findings from the interviews suggest that the informants demonstrate creativity in their thinking and possess strong self-efficacy, enabling them to effectively navigate and solve various problems.

V. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The new roles undertaken by men who have lost their wives to Covid-19 not only encompass challenges related to childcare but also extend to the family's social and economic dynamics. Regarding biological needs, particularly sexual desires, no specific issues were identified. However, the informants expressed a deep sense of loneliness resulting from the loss of a wife who was not just a life partner but also a cherished companion.

The study's findings highlight that single fathers effectively fulfill their roles as child specialists and educators, serving as teachers, role models, providers, protectors, and caregivers. Moreover, they demonstrate admirable resilience in facing challenges such as managing emotions, controlling impulses, and enhancing self-efficacy.

In light of this research, there is a strong recommendation for governmental policies to include provisions aimed at preparing prospective married couples for the journey of married life. One effective approach could be the

implementation of pre-marital education programs, recognizing that marriage involves both a physical and emotional union between a man and a woman, intending to create a joyful and enduring family unit with the blessing of children.

This study exclusively focuses on the challenges confronted by single fathers as they embrace their new roles after the loss of their wives to Covid-19, and the proactive measures they employ to navigate these challenges. It underscores the importance of future research delving into understanding the dynamics of parenting within married couples and its impact on family resilience. Recommendations for subsequent research involve employing similar qualitative methodologies or exploring alternative quantitative approaches utilizing valid and reliable measurement instruments.

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