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Empowerment Of Single Mothers as Family Heads in Tapos 1 Village, Tenjolaya District, Bogor Regency, West Java: A Strength-Based Approach

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Abstract

This research discusses about how empowerment of single mothers as family heads through a strength-based approach carried out by non-governmental organizations (NGO's) through SOS Children's Village program. A strengths-based approach is a method used by service recipients and providers to determine outcomes by identifying and mobilizing an individual's inherent resources and assets. This method views the risks or problems that clients have as enablers rather than obstacles. The role of the professional is not only to reduce risk; it is also to support the individual in managing risk. As single-mother households face socioeconomic vulnerabilities and societal stigma, NGO-led interventions that emphasize resilience and existing capabilities—rather than deficits—are critical for sustainable family strengthening. This study uses qualitative data from SOS Children's Village participants to show how the family strengthening program exploits single mothers' natural abilities to increase home stability, financial independence, and child well-being. The study's findings show that a strengths-based approach, which includes activities such as network development, stakeholder collaboration, the provision of support facilities and initial business capital, and regeneration, can help assisted families, particularly those led by female heads of household, understand and implement effective parenting strategies. This method may result to bigger income, improved access to government service programs, and decreased reliance on institutional aid. The study highlights the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in filling gaps left by government welfare systems, and it suggests an approach for building strength-based interventions in similar contexts.

Keywords: Empowerment, Single Mother, Tenjolaya Distric, Strength Based, SOS Children

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Village

INTRODUCTION

The difficulties faced by single moms who are the heads of their households can be numerous along with their connections to social, psychological, and economic aspects. The traditional patriarchal family structure is still highly valued in many Indonesian rural communities, which puts unmarried women at a social disadvantage. This social structure often make a single woman suffered a greater degree of discrimination and social stigma, worsening their already difficult situation (Nguyen, Vo, & Vu, 2021). These issues go above economic hardship and have a significant impact on their social position and psychological well-being in the society (Munir, Yuda, Kusumah, & Suwandi, 2024). The intersection of having fewer economic resources, the absence of support from spouses or coparents, everyday hassles, social isolation, and financial strain often leads to higher levels of stress that increase their vulnerability to emotional distress and disruptions in parenting. (Taylor & Conger, 2017). In general, single mothers depend on two sources of external support: parents or immediate family members. This social support network plays a significant role in reducing the pressures experienced by single mothers. The government has been providing support to single mothers and their families through economic empowerment programs. These programs tend to emphasize financial literacy, skill development, and mental health treatment to help single mothers in becoming financially independent and supporting their families. By helping women to escape poverty and become financially independent, these programs aim to empower single moms and their families. The concept of empowerment for single mothers includes a multitude of dimensions, one of the crucial dimensions is economic empowerment. This dimension encompasses access to education, employment, and financial resources that facilitate the attainment of economic independence and stability (Toros & Falch-Eriksen, 2021).

The economic capacities of single mothers to maintain their dependents is critical to the survival of their families. Psychological empowerment can be described as the growth of self-esteem, confidence, and resilience in single mothers, allowing them to deal with stress, overcome obstacles, and achieve their goals. Social empowerment is the process of empowering individuals or communities to solve social concerns, fighting prejudice, and reduce disparities in health, while allowing them to make educated decisions and participate effectively in society. This idea is believed to act as a protective factor against social isolation, increasing individual sense of belonging.

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Political empowerment refers to the process of transferring various elements of power (resources, capabilities, and positions) to those who do not have it. In this case, political empowerment is described as the participation of single mothers in decision-making processes at various levels of government, including local, regional, and national dimensions. This involvement guarantees that single mothers' perspectives and needs are effectively represented in the creation of policies and initiatives.

In Indonesia, a variety of empowerment programs, particularly those targeting women, have been implemented by the government, local NGOs, and international NGOs. The concept of women's empowerment encompasses a wide range of factors, including the enhancement of women's roles in promoting family well-being (P2WKSS). This program is carried out in collaboration between the Office of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, the PKK Movement, related agencies (such as the Social Service, Health Service, etc.), city/district level regional officials, the business world, Baznas (National Amil Zakat Agency), and community elements (village/kelurahan representatives, community leaders, etc.) (Karlina, 2019). Another family and women's empowerment program that has been operational for some time is the Family Hope Program, which is administered by the Ministry of Social Affairs. The Family Hope Program is one of the social protection programs in Indonesia in the form of social assistance. The entrepreneurship program under discussion involves social assistants and business mentors. These individuals are responsible for KPM business development through socialization and motivation, entrepreneur education and training, licenses coordination, funding access, and marketing results (Yuhendra, 2023). The empowerment of single mothers is also facilitated through psychological education related to childcare and product development skills training conducted by Yayasan Rumpun Nurani in Yogyakarta. The objective of this empowerment program is to fortify family resilience and enhance the lives of single mothers (Sulistyarini, 2020). The women mentioned earlier and family empowerment programs are designed to enhance the knowledge and skills of women, with the overarching objective of fortifying their resilience and elevating their status and quality of life, particularly within the context of the productive economic sector. In addition to the enhancement of economic well-being, a crucial aspect of addressing the needs of single mothers is the implementation of an empowerment program that caters to their need for social support and facilitates the development of their internal resources.

One of the closely related approaches to the concept of resilience is the strength-based approach. The strength-based approach is rooted in social work principles, which emphasize client empowerment and self-determination. The approach entails collaborating with individuals,

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families, or communities to ascertain and fortify extant resources, coping strategies, exceptions, and possibilities, even in circumstances where such resources, strategies, exceptions, and possibilities appear to be nonexistent or insurmountable (Early & GlenMaye, 2000). When an individual's strengths are used to empower them, a change in perspective from obstacles to possibilities is necessary. This transition enables single mothers to take an active role in their own and their children's lives. Women's motivation to overcome problems, take initiative, and achieve their goals can be increased by exploiting their skills and competences. Furthermore, this strategy produces a supportive and inclusive workplace in which women feel safe, appreciated, and empowered to fulfill their full potential (Rahmawati, 2014).

As reaction to these issues, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as SOS Children's Village have implemented a strength-based strategy, replacing the paradigm from vulnerability and into empowerment. This change requires recognizing and developing single mothers' current strengths. This method has been found to improve not only financial independence and psychological well-being, but also the bond between families and development of children. The integration of skills training, psychosocial assistance, and community networking is achieved through the implementation of specialized programs.

This paper will focus on the integration of a strength-based approach to the women's empowerment process carried out in the SOS Children Village's Family Strengthening Program (FSP) for Female Family Heads in Tapos 1 Village, Tenjolaya District, Bogor Regency, West Java. Most of the residents of Tapos 1 Village earn a living as farm laborers. They work on other people's rice fields and receive minimal wages for their work. The reason FSP SOS Children Village selected Tapos 1 Village was due to the high rates of child labor, child selling, and early marriage in that village in 2018. The low income of single moms, their inability to obtain a basic education, and their lack of skills to boost the family's income are some of the reasons for the above. One of the causes of the above is the lack of access to basic education, the low income of single mothers, and the lack of skills possessed by single mothers to be able to increase income in the family.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research is performed with a qualitative approach, because it focuses on systematically describing and analyzing the results of interviews with informants and direct observation during the process of empowering single mothers through the Family Strengthening Program of SOS Children Village. The data collected and displayed in this study are not in the form of numbers, but in the form of writing (Neuman, 2013) obtained from observations and interviews

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(Bryman, 2016).

In this study, the selected informants must be able to provide an overview of single mothers' empowerment efforts through the Family Strengthening Program with a strength-based approach as well as factors that hinder and support empowerment efforts. The informants who will be selected in this study are:

a. The FSP Manager.
b. The Educator staffs.
c. Informants from the assisted family.

The assisted families or parents as informants with the following criteria:

a. Female head of household.
b. Has accepted and participated in the program and has been assessed as an independent family by the program in December 2024.
c. 18-65 years old and have children aged 0-18 years old.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION.

This study specifically addresses the process of family empowerment that SOS Children's Village implements for Female Family Heads through the Family Strengthening Program, which employs a strength-based approach. The initial evaluation of the aided family, which focuses on identifying the family's assets and strengths, is one step in the process.

The SOS Children Village identifies two important elements as the initial assesment: the risks faced by the aided families and their strengths.This initial assessment serves as a foundation for SOS Children's Village to determine the areas of the assisted family that require reinforcement in order to enhance their well-being and self-sufficiency. The SOS Children's Village family strengthening program is comprised of eight dimensions (health, social and emotional well-being, education, livelihood, accommodation, protection, care, and food security). These eight dimensions delineate the parameters of well-being, growth, and development that are indispensable for the optimal development of every child and adolescent. Of the three assisted families, all of whom are female heads of households, all have initial strengths for empowerment, namely having small businesses and trading skills in their homes. The risks observed in the three assisted families are as follows: strong cultural and religious influences; economic difficulties; poor parenting models; and no access to local government program services.The educator staff plays an important role in determining the needs and goals of assisted families. This determination is informed by an understanding of the strengths and risks of each assisted family.

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The educator compiles the information gathered from home visits, goal setting, and action planning into a document known as the Family Development Plan (FDP).

The Family Strengthening Program implements customized Family Development Plans (FDPs) for all 30 participating households in Tapos 1 Village. While each family's strategy is customized to their own needs, parenting skills are consistently identified as the key intervention focus across cases.. *"Family A's FDP will be different from Family B's - but parenting is always the first focus"* (S, Program Manager, 2025).

The program manager explained that each family has different strengths and challenges, so each Family Development Plan (FDP) must be tailored to their needs. Although there are eight areas that SOS Children's Village focuses on to strengthen families, the main one is nurturing. The FDP describes the specific strategies and support that will assist the family and educator in achieving their mutually agreed-upon goals. A set time range is provided as well to give families with a clear plan and keep them focused on reaching their objectives.

After going through the initial assessment, goal setting, and planning stages, the next step is the empowerment intervention action. There are a few things that our educator staff do when they're working to strengthen assisted families through empowerment interventions.

a. Creation of a trusting relationship between clients and program implementers.

   Routine house visits served as the program's foundation for establishing trust between educators and assisted families. This trusting relationship allowed educators to gain a comprehensive understanding of each family's unique advantages and risks, directly contributing to the accomplishment of empowerment goals. As one educator highlighted, "*Since 2018, our weekly visits to Mrs. A's home allowed us to provide personalized parenting trainings and child protection law guidance*" (M, Educator, 2025). These continuous contacts not only built relationships but also ensured critical information transfer, demonstrating how continuous engagement applies strength-based techniques in practice.

b. Establishment of a supportive environment

   Educators played an important role in connecting assisted families with community resources by making local government services more accessible and developing long-term self-sufficiency. Rather of providing direct services, they took an institutional linking strategy, as one educator stated: "*We don't process birth certificates ourselves—we connect families to the Population Office's 'ball pick-up' program. That's how bridging works*" (M, Educator, 2025). This strategy was particularly useful in fixing documentation

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gaps, as educators stated that many children lacked birth certificates prior to the commencement of these collaborations. Besides of service access, educators trained families for community participation through:

- Skills-mapping: Identifying local training opportunities ("Where should I run to get families skilled?" [M, Educator, 2025]).
- Establishing relationships with PKK organizations, Posyandu cadres, and government units to establish long-term support networks.

This simultaneous focus on immediate problem solutions and capacity building ensured that families could survive independently after intervention.

c. Providing support for self-determination

The program highlighted self-determination through the integration of vocational training and targeted financial assistance, allowing participants to pursue occupations that fit their interests. One example is the online marketing education provided to a grandchild, which resulted in income from selling beauty products online. As the educator recounted: "*After mastering online sales techniques through our training, we supplied her with beauty products to launch her business—exactly what she wanted to sell*" (M, Educator, 2025).

The two-pronged approach of capacity building (knowledge) and asset provision (money) was effective in :

- Aligning resources with individual goals, such as beauty items for a startup business.
- Accelerating Agency: Immediate access to capital converted skills into actual income sources.

By customizing support to individual goals and skill gaps, the initiative went beyond general empowerment models to promote true financial control.Financial assistance will encourage them to make their own future decisions.

d. Providing support for critical thinking

The program encouraged critical thinking in children's education through continual involvement and rights-based counseling. A mother who stopped attending her child's school after her husband's imprisonment caused financial hardship for the family was the subject of a case with profound implications. Repeated family visits focusing on child rights discussions helped educators foster an enormous change in viewpoint. As reported: "*After months of conversations about child protection, she went from handing all responsibility to SOS to*

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actively meeting with her child's teacher—something she'd never done before" (M, Educator, 2025).

This intervention was successful through three primary mechanisms:

- Clarified the relationship between education and legal rights.
- Modeled appropriate school engagement, such as teacher meetings.
- Provided material support (Tuition support removed the financial barriers to implementation.)

The story shows how even the most severe financial limitations can be overcome to enhance educational advocacy by combining rights education with practical help. Future programs may define this approach through standardized child rights curriculum for home visits, teacher-educator collaboration protocol and sliding-scale tuition support systems.

The program's effectiveness was evaluated using a structured monitoring and evaluation framework developed by educators who tracked development across eight important well-being aspects. Using a color-coded assessment system (green/blue = achieved; red = requires improvement), educators assessed families' readiness for independence using complete database records.

As the Program Manager explained: "*We evaluate all eight dimensions—if fully green/blue, the family is independent-ready. Persistent red flags indicate required continued support. For instance, after parenting workshops, we document attendance and outcomes in the database, then follow up with home visits to assess real-world application*" (S, Program Manager, 2025). Accountability was maintained while a thorough impact evaluation was guaranteed by this two-pronged strategy of qualitative verification (home visits) and quantitative data recording (database metrics).

The family strengthening program included external monitoring to ensure intervention efficacy. An impartial assessment team from Bandung confirmed actual achievement, with one educator stating that "external evaluators verified business growth in our assisted families—their satisfaction highlighted our impact" (M, Educator, 2025). This third-party confirmation increases the reliability of the observed results.

Amel, a participant's granddaughter, successfully completed high school despite facing socioeconomic difficulties. Obtained formal job as a "skincare product official agent" (Mrs. I, 2025) through vocational training and startup funds.

This dual accomplishment—educational accomplishment and economic self-sufficiency shows how the program's integrated strategy (skills + resources + mentorship) opens hidden

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potential when participants exhibit:

- Agency: Strong goal orientation ("strong desire").
- Enabling conditions: tailored support (training, finance).
- Validation: External recognition drives motivation.

SOS Children's Village established a comprehensive two-pronged method for transforming assisted families into sustainable independence.

a. Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration Framework

Building cooperative relationships with community organizations and local government agencies is a top priority for the program. There are two important purposes for this strategic approach:

- Making certain that social welfare databases include assisted families in a methodical manner.
- Enabling access to specialized government aid initiatives.

In addition to establishing long-lasting support networks that endure beyond direct NGO intervention, such institutional integration shows governmental accountability.

b. Cascading Capacity-Building Model

The method uses an organized support withdrawal mechanism.

- The initial strong support focuses on one child per household.
- Progressive skills spread to siblings and other family members.
- The last stage prioritizes community network utilization.

As one educator explained: "*Our approach begins with supporting one child, then equips siblings with the same capabilities to create internal family support systems*" (M, Educator, 2025). This methodology ensures knowledge and resources become embedded within family structures, reducing long-term dependency.

SOS Children's Village provides families with information and assistance on how to utilize local government programs and services as part of its Family Strengthening Program. As SOS Children's Village progressively reduces its direct presence in the community, this approach aims to promote long-term self-sufficiency. The program's core is a strength-based system that addresses situational issues while emphasizing families' natural abilities. Some of the enabling factors that contribute to the effectiveness of this strategy include the development of community-based support networks, enhanced collaboration with relevant stakeholders, and the distribution of funding and infrastructure support.

However, the program's implementation faces several challenges. These include deeply

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held cultural and religious beliefs, varying parental education levels, and the existence of economic competition within the supported family community. If family empowerment initiatives are to be maintained for an extended length of time, it is imperative that these challenges be identified and addressed.

Strength-based interventions are effective in improving the lives of single mothers and their families, according to the study "Empowerment of Single Mothers as Family Heads: A Strength-Based Approach." This strategy, which is used by NGOs such as SOS Children's Village, moves the emphasis from weaknesses and vulnerabilities to identifying and enhancing each person's current resources and capabilities. Given the socioeconomic vulnerabilities and social stigma that single-mother households frequently experience, this is especially important.

A synthesis of the findings reveals several key themes:

- **The Power of Social Support:** Social support networks are consistently identified as a crucial factor in promoting the well-being and resilience of single mothers (Aubé et al., 2019; Taylor & Conger, 2017). Interventions should focus on creating opportunities for single mothers to connect with one another and build supportive relationships (Taylor & Conger, 2017).
- **Internal Strengths and Coping Mechanisms:** Recognizing and building upon the internal strengths and coping mechanisms of single mothers is essential (Pulla, 2017; Taylor & Conger, 2017). This includes fostering optimism, self-efficacy, and self-esteem (Taylor & Conger, 2017).
- **Empowerment through Collaboration:** A collaborative partnership between service providers and single mothers is crucial (Early & GlenMaye, 2000). This involves recognizing the expertise and inherent capabilities of single mothers and empowering them to make decisions about their lives.
- **Addressing Systemic Barriers:** While strength-based approaches are valuable, it is also important to address systemic barriers such as gender inequality, discrimination, and lack of affordable housing.

These findings suggest a few critical things we should take. For starters, single mothers require more programs that focus on their strengths, such as assisting them in developing support networks, increasing resilience, and feeling empowered. Second, social workers and other helpers should collaborate with them rather than for them, because mothers are the most knowledgeable about their own challenges. Finally, we need to advocate for policy changes that address the systemic barriers that single-mother families face. Real support involves offering individuals with

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tools, respecting their opinions, and solving unfair procedure.

We can build more supportive and empowering environments for single mothers and their children by taking a comprehensive strategy that combines strength-based initiatives with attempts to eliminate structural challenges.

CONCLUSION

The study, "Empowerment of Single Mothers as Family Heads in Tapos 1 Village, Tenjolaya District, Bogor Regency, West Java: A Strength-Based Approach," explores how SOS Children's Village's Family Strengthening Program empowers families. It specifically looks at the use of a strength-based approach and the enabling and stalling elements that affect empowerment results.Several key conclusions can be drawn from this research:

- **Shifting the Focus:** The strength-based approach sends attention away from single mothers' weaknesses and vulnerabilities and toward their natural resources and strengths. The change in viewpoint is essential to their empowerment.
- **Key Components for Success:** Network building, stakeholder cooperation, support facilities, business capital, and regeneration are all components of successful programs. Together, these elements strengthen the ability of families headed by single mothers.
- **Positive Outcomes:** The method promotes household stability, financial independence, and child well-being. It also makes it easier for single mothers to earn more money and gain access to government assistance.
- **NGOs' Role:** NGOs play a vital role in implementing these interventions, filling gaps left by public welfare systems.
- **Empowerment as a Process:** Empowerment is identifying available resources, coping strategies, and opportunities, even in potentially overwhelming situations. It empowers single mothers to be active participants in their own life.

In conclusion, the study confirms that discovering and capitalizing on single mothers' current talents is critical for allowing them to overcome socioeconomic barriers and create sustainable, empowered futures for themselves and their kids. A strength-based strategy, along with collaborative efforts and policy alignment, provides a potential road to inclusive and effective family empowerment.

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