

Single women's happiness in terms of social support and religiosity

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Article Information

Submitted: 2024-02-11

Revised: 2024-05-26

Published: 2024-06-23

Abstract:

In Indonesia, single women continue to face negative stigma. They are often perceived as "incomplete" individuals for being unmarried or not wishing to marry. Society tends to view single women with concern, although they may still experience happiness through the social support and religiosity they possess. This study aimed to examine the relationship between social support and religiosity with happiness among single women. A quantitative approach was employed using an online survey of 82 single women selected through purposive sampling. Standardized instruments were used, and data were analyzed using parametric statistical methods with SPSS. The results revealed a significant positive relationship between social support and religiosity with happiness among single women ($r = 0.650$). Higher levels of both factors were associated with greater happiness. Social support helps mitigate external stigma, while religiosity provides positive meaning to singlehood, reduces stress, and enhances happiness. The study concludes that social support and religiosity are positively related to happiness in single women, with the majority of participants falling into the moderate category and religiosity emerging as a more prominent internal factor. This study contributes to social exchange theory and expands the understanding of religiosity as a coping mechanism, offering practical implications for developing social support systems, psychological interventions, and more inclusive public policies toward single women.

Keywords:

Social Support;
Religiosity; Happiness;
Singleness.



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To cite this article (APA Style):

Rufaidah, I., & Setiasih, S. (2024). Single women's happiness in terms of social support and religiosity. *An-Nisa' Journal of Gender Studies*, 17(1), 39–52. <https://doi.org/10.35719/annisa.v17i1.270>

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INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of single women in Indonesia remains relatively underexposed despite its increasing prevalence. Data from BPS 2020 show that out of 31.75 million adults, 48.24% of women are unmarried (Azhima & Indrawati, 2020; Selan et al., 2020). The view that marriage does not have to occur at a specific age has led many young adults to delay or remain single (Lianda & Himawan, 2022; Maryanto et al., 2024). This phenomenon is intertwined with social, cultural, and religious values (Himawan, 2020a). Early adulthood (ages 26-39) emphasizes the need for intimacy, the absence of which can lead to isolation and anxiety (Ang et al., 2020). Single women aged 30 and above face cultural pressure to marry, have children, and manage the household (Mulyani & Sari, 2024). They are stigmatized as "old maid," "too late," "unsold," and are even perceived as "weird," "cold," or "materialistic" (Gong et al., 2015; Budgeon, 2015; Nanik et al., 2022). Such stigma reduces psychological well-being (Nanik et al., 2020). Therefore, social support and religiosity are essential for maintaining happiness among single women.

A review of the literature indicates that the topic of happiness among single women has been widely studied. The present study classifies these studies into several main streams. First, single women have diverse experiences, yet the majority fall into the ambivalent category and remain capable of finding happiness through the subjective meaning of their lives (Veenhoven, 2012; Pandelaere, 2016; Tu & Hsee, 2016; Singh et al., 2023). Second, religiosity plays an important role in helping single women positively interpret life, enhance happiness, and support the management of psychological conditions through their relationship with God (Mullins, 2016; Pello & Soertjaningsih, 2020; Himawan, 2020b). Third, social support is essential for single women as it reduces loneliness, increases self confidence, comfort, and happiness, and supports overall psychological well-being (Bennett, 2015; Rahmani et al., 2016; Shahrak, 2021; Cantarella et al., 2023). Accordingly, previous studies have examined the happiness of single women separately; there remains a limitation in integrating social support and religiosity. Therefore, this study offers novelty through a simultaneous correlation analysis of both factors.

This study aims to examine the relationship between social support and religiosity with happiness among single women. The research question is whether there is a significant positive relationship between social support and religiosity, both simultaneously, with happiness in single women. The contribution of this study is threefold. First, theoretically, it strengthens social exchange theory and highlights the role of religiosity as a spiritual meaning system in the context of single women. Second, practically, the findings provide a foundation for community-based and religious interventions to enhance the happiness of single women. Third, this study also contributes to the enrichment of literature on psychological well-being among socially underrepresented groups in Indonesia that have received limited scholarly attention.

This study is based on the argument that happiness among single women is not influenced by a single factor alone, but rather results from the interaction between social support and religiosity that operate simultaneously. Social support plays a role in providing a sense of acceptance, security, and appreciation within the social environment, while religiosity provides meaning in life, inner peace, and spiritual strength in coping with singlehood. The combination of these two factors forms a psychological balance that contributes to increased individual happiness. Although most respondents were at moderate levels, this indicates the potential for improved well-being if social support and religiosity can be strengthened. Thus, social and spiritual aspects become essential components in building more optimal happiness for single women in their daily lives.

METHOD

Research Approach

This study employed a quantitative approach with a survey design to examine the variables of social support, religiosity, and happiness among single women. The exact population size was unknown due to the absence of centralized data on single women in the research area. Therefore, the researcher applied a non-probability sampling technique, specifically purposive sampling, to select participants based on predetermined criteria. This technique was chosen because it enables the researcher to reach respondents who are difficult to identify randomly. Although the generalizability of the findings is limited, this method remains appropriate for the initial exploration of a specific social phenomenon.

Source of Data

Data collection was conducted by distributing questionnaires online via Google Forms to 82 respondents, covering aspects of age, regional background, and educational attainment. The variables were measured using a Likert scale with five response options: "always," "often," "sometimes," "rarely," and "never." The participant selection criteria included: (1) women aged 26-40 years, (2) not currently in a romantic relationship, and (3) unmarried. Hypothesis testing in this study was performed using the SPSS software.

Variables of the Study

The independent variables in this study are social support and religiosity. King defines social support as feedback from a person indicating that an individual is loved, valued, respected, engaged, and cared for in their environment. Meanwhile, Ancok explains religiosity as an individual's perspective and the level of commitment to religion (Brailovskaia et al., 2018; Lin et al., 2019; Sungadi, 2020). The dependent variable in this study is happiness. Seligman defines happiness as the positive emotions experienced by an individual as well as the overall engagement of a person in activities they enjoy (Tandler et al., 2020).

Research Instruments

This study employed the Medical Outcomes Study Social Support Survey (MOS-SSS) developed by Sherbourne and Stewart, with a reliability coefficient of $r = 0.97$. Religiosity was measured using the Centrality of Religiosity Scale developed by Huber and Huber ($r = 0.84$), and the researcher used only 15 core items. Happiness was assessed using the Indonesian Indigenous Peoples Scale developed by Anggoro and Widiharso (2010), as cited in Augustiya et al. (2020). This scale measures happiness through four dimensions: family ties, personal achievement, social relationships, and spiritual needs ($r = 0.90$). All three instruments demonstrated high reliability; therefore, they were selected for use in this study.

Data analysis

This study employed parametric statistical analysis. Prior to conducting multiple correlation analysis to examine the relationship between variables X and Y, assumption tests were performed, namely the normality test and linearity test.

Table 1

Normality Test

Kolmogorov-Smirnov	
	Sig.
Social Support	0.200*
Religiosity	0.200*
Happiness	0.200*

Table 1 shows that the significance values for the social support, religiosity, and happiness scales are 0.200. This indicates that the data are normally distributed, as the p-value is greater than 0.05. The normality of the data distribution suggests that the values of these variables are evenly distributed, making them appropriate for further statistical analysis.

Table 2
Linearity Test

Variable	Linearity
Social Support and Happiness	0,000
Religiosity and Happiness	0,000

Table 2 shows that the significance values for the relationship between social support and happiness, as well as between religiosity and happiness, are 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). This indicates a linear relationship. These findings confirm that social support and religiosity play an important role in enhancing happiness among single women; the higher these two factors, the higher the level of happiness.

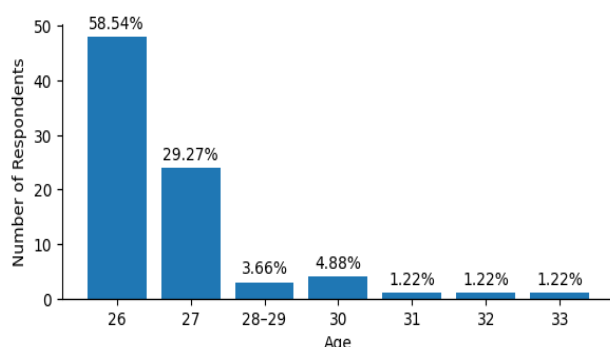
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Demographic characteristics of respondents

This study involved respondents with diverse characteristics based on age, regional origin, and highest level of education. This demographic variation provides a general overview of the participants' profiles in the study. The presented data reflect the distribution of respondents, which can be used as a basis for further analysis of the research variables under investigation.

Figure 1
Age Distribution



Source: Prepared by the authors (2024).

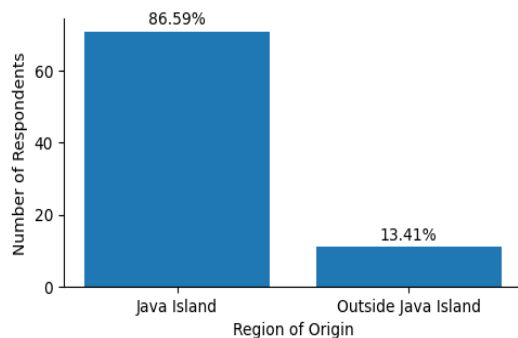
Figure 1 shows the age distribution of the respondents. Out of a total of 82 respondents, 48 individuals (58.54%) were aged 26 years, 24 individuals (29.27%) were aged 27 years, 3 individuals (3.66%) were aged between 28–29 years, 4 individuals (4.88%) were aged 30 years, and 1 individual each (1.22%) were aged 31, 32, and 33 years.

Based on the findings, respondents' age distribution indicates that most participants were in early adulthood, while smaller proportions were found in older age groups. The number of respondents decreased as age increased, suggesting that the sample was dominated by individuals at a productive and socially adaptive stage of life. This pattern reflects a relatively homogeneous demographic profile, which should be considered when interpreting the findings. However, the presence of respondents from several age categories still provides an adequate overview of the population's characteristics. Overall, the distribution shows that respondents were in a psychologically and socially dynamic life phase,

relevant to the study of psychological well-being and migrant children's educational experiences.

Figure 2

Distribution of Respondents' Region of Origin



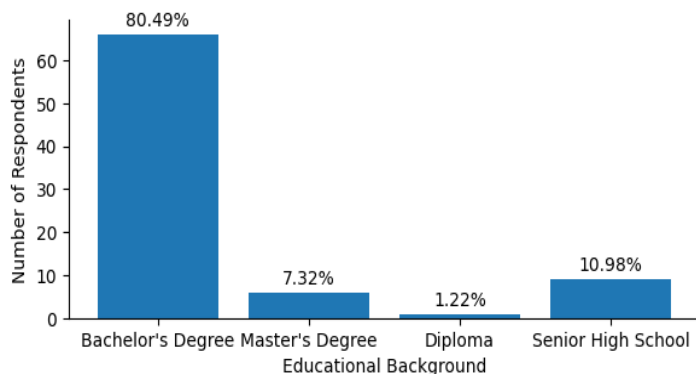
Source: Prepared by the authors (2024).

Figure 2 shows the respondents' regional origin. Out of a total of 82 respondents, 71 individuals (86.59%) were from Java Island, while the remaining 11 individuals (13.41%) were from outside Java Island.

Respondents predominantly originated from Java Island, which overwhelmingly dominated the sample. Only a small minority came from outside Java, revealing a notable geographic concentration. This imbalance implies the research findings are primarily shaped by Javanese cultural and socio-economic contexts. Consequently, perspectives from other regions are significantly underrepresented, potentially limiting the generalizability of the conclusions and failing to capture the full diversity of migrant backgrounds across the nation.

Figure 3

Distribution of Respondents' Highest Educational Attainment



Source: Prepared by the authors (2024).

Figure 3 shows the respondents' highest educational attainment. Out of a total of 82 respondents, 66 individuals (80.49%) held a Bachelor's degree (S1), 6 individuals (7.32%) held a Master's degree (S2), 1 individual (1.22%) held a Diploma (D3/D4), and 9 individuals (10.98%) had completed Senior High School (SMA).

Demographic data show that participants were predominantly young adults, with ages 26 (majority) and 27 years, while ages 28–33 represented a small proportion, indicating most were in early adulthood. Geographically, respondents were mainly from Java Island, with only a minority from outside Java, suggesting a Java-concentrated population. Regarding education, the majority held a bachelor's degree (S1). The remainder held master's degrees, senior high school diplomas, or associate degrees, with master's degree holders outnumbering diploma

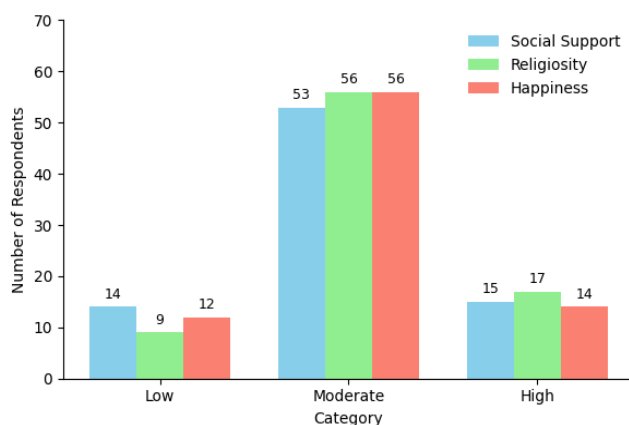
holders, though senior high school graduates remained notable. Overall, the typical respondent was a single woman aged 26, from Java, with a bachelor's degree.

Analysis of social support, religiosity, and happiness among single women

Social support, religiosity, and happiness are interrelated psychological aspects in the lives of single women. Social support from the environment provides a sense of security and acceptance, while religiosity offers spiritual meaning and inner peace. Both factors are presumed to contribute to happiness, particularly for single women who face stigma and social pressure due to their marital status.

Figure 4

Level Categories of Social Support, Religiosity, and Happiness Variables



Source: Prepared by the authors (2024).

Figure 4 shows that among 82 respondents, for the social support variable, 14 participants (17.1%) were in the low category, 53 participants (64.6%) were in the moderate category, and 15 participants (18.3%) were in the high category. For the religiosity variable, the low category comprised 9 participants (11.0%), the moderate category 56 participants (68.3%), and the high category 17 participants (20.7%). Meanwhile, for the happiness variable, the low category consisted of 12 participants (14.6%), the moderate category 56 participants (68.3%), and the high category 14 participants (17.1%). Thus, the distribution of respondents varied across variables.

Based on the findings, the majority of single female respondents were in the moderate category for social support, religiosity, and happiness. This condition reflects a relatively stable and non-extreme psychosocial situation. Regarding religiosity, the high category was more dominant compared to the other variables, while the low category was the smallest. Conversely, social support showed a more prominent proportion in the low category compared to the other variables. Happiness exhibited a pattern similar to that of social support, although there was a slight difference in the high category. Overall, the dominance of the moderate category indicates that the respondents were in a fairly balanced psychological condition without significant fluctuations in the aspects of social support, religiosity, and happiness.

Social support and religiosity in relation to happiness among single women

The relationship between social support, religiosity, and happiness indicates that both social support and religiosity have a positive association with happiness among adult single women. Although the relationship between social support and religiosity appears relatively weak, each factor independently contributes to the overall well-being of the participants.

These findings highlight the important roles that interpersonal relationships and personal beliefs play in shaping happiness in the context of single status.

Table 3
Correlation Test

	Social Support	Religiosity	Happiness
Social Support	1	0.152	0.374*
		0.35	0.001
Religiosity	0.152	1	0.582**
	0.174		0.000
Happiness	0.374**	0.582**	1
	0.001	0.000	

**.Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed)

Table 3 presents the correlation test results. The relationship between social support and happiness was 0.374, which was statistically significant ($p = 0.001$). Based on standard interpretation, this correlation coefficient is considered low. Furthermore, the relationship between religiosity and happiness was 0.582, which was statistically significant ($p = 0.000$). This coefficient falls into the moderate category. Both results indicate a positive direction of the relationship. In other words, higher levels of social support among single women are associated with higher levels of happiness. Similarly, higher levels of religiosity are also associated with higher levels of happiness. These findings suggest that both external social resources and internal spiritual beliefs play meaningful roles in enhancing the well-being of single women, although religiosity shows a stronger association with happiness than does social support.

The effect of social support and religiosity on happiness among single women

The influence of social support and religiosity on happiness among single women is an interesting topic to examine. Single women often face psychological challenges due to social stigma and loneliness. Social support from the surrounding environment can provide a sense of security, while religiosity offers spiritual strength. This study aims to examine the extent to which these two factors jointly influence the happiness of single women.

Table 4
Multiple Correlation Test

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of The Estimate
1	0.650 ^a	0.422	0.408	11.403

a. Predictors: (Constans), Religiosity (X2), Social Support (X1)

b. Dependent Variable: Happiness (Y)

Table 4 shows that the multiple correlation analysis yielded a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.650. The coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.422, indicating that social support and religiosity account for 42.2% of the variance in happiness, while the remaining percentage is explained by other variables.

Based on the findings, there is a relationship between social support, religiosity, and happiness. Social support influences an individual's psychological well-being. When single women have good psychological well-being, happiness is more likely to emerge. Conversely, when single women do not receive adequate social support, various problems may arise that directly affect their psychological well-being and, in turn, their level of happiness.

Discussion

This study found a positive and significant relationship between social support, religiosity, and happiness among single women, with a correlation coefficient of 0.650 (strong category). This means that the higher the levels of social support and religiosity, the higher the perceived happiness. Social support functions as an external factor that helps individuals cope with stigma and discrimination, while religiosity serves as an internal spiritual support that provides positive meaning to single status, thereby reducing stress and increasing happiness. These findings indicate a positive association between social support, religiosity, and happiness among single women.

This study is relevant to the current social reality, in which single women often face negative stigma and pressure to marry soon (Luchesi et al., 2018; Oh et al., 2021; Arini & Indriani, 2024). Such stigma can trigger loneliness, low self-esteem, and psychological well-being disturbances (Natasha & Desiningrum, 2020; Mund et al., 2020; Umberson et al., 2022). The finding that social support and religiosity significantly contribute to happiness highlights the importance of community-based and religious interventions. In the digital era, many single women actively participate in online community groups that provide emotional support. However, the dominance of participants from Java (Anjara et al., 2021; Amna & Anastasya, 2023; Putra et al., 2024) reminds us that access to social support is geographically uneven. This issue urgently requires responses from policymakers and community leaders to prevent the marginalization of single women and to strengthen inclusive support systems.

From the perspective of social exchange theory (Homans, 1958; Cook et al., 2013; Cropanzano et al., 2017), individuals evaluate the benefits and costs within relationships. Single women who receive positive social support tend to perceive relationships as beneficial, thereby increasing their happiness. Conversely, a lack of support becomes a psychological cost (Ariska, 2020; Nasution & Fauziah, 2020; Anhar, 2021). Religiosity functions as a system of spiritual meaning that helps individuals accept their singlehood status (Granqvist & Hagekull, 2000; Abo-Zena, 2024). The significant linearity findings confirm that increases in social support and religiosity are consistently followed by increases in happiness. The dominant moderate category indicates an ideal balance, as excessively high levels of support may lead to dependency, while excessively low levels trigger loneliness (Diener, 2000; Hidayati, 2020; Mariam et al., 2023). Thus, the interaction between external resources (social support) and internal resources (religiosity) forms psychological resilience that maintains happiness among single women.

This study provides the understanding that happiness does not depend solely on marital status, but rather on the quality of vertical and horizontal relationships (Rani, 2016; Ramadhani et al., 2023; Yuliani et al., 2023). The wisdom gained is the importance of building a healthy support system without over-dependence. Single women can learn to activate religiosity as spiritual coping, as expressed by Mahmoodi et al. (2022) that singlehood can become a period of self-reflection and personal growth. This study also reveals that societal stigma is often unfounded; happiness can be self-generated through meaningful social relationships and strong beliefs (Nisa et al., 2021; Indrianie & Dwijyanthy, 2024). This study teaches the importance of listening to the voices of single women without prejudice. The limitations of non-probability and cross-sectional methods serve as lessons for designing future longitudinal studies to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of singlehood well-being.

A study by Khuzaimah et al. (2021) on the elderly demonstrated a relationship between social support and happiness. Akhrani & Nuryanti (2021) found that religiosity contributed 19.6% to happiness among disaster relief volunteers. Himawan (2020b) reported that

religiosity contributes to the well-being of single individuals in Indonesia. Lammers et al. (2011) also support the notion that a bachelor's degree provides better access to social networks. Meanwhile, a study by Girmé et al. (2022) in New Zealand and Canada stated that single individuals have lower well-being than those in relationships. The findings of the present study are consistent with Husna (2016) and Ng (2022), but differ from Petrovic et al. (2021). The novelty of this study lies in the finding that many single women in Indonesia are actually in the moderate to high happiness category, which can be explained by the religious cultural context of Indonesia, where community support and spiritual beliefs are stronger (Slatcher & Selcuk, 2017; Attia et al., 2022; Adamczyk et al., 2024).

Based on the findings, the following actionable recommendations are proposed. First, the government and non-governmental organizations should develop life skills training programs and peer support groups specifically for single women in various regions, particularly outside Java. Second, religious leaders and community facilitators can integrate inclusive messages into religious gatherings or spiritual activities, conveying that singlehood is not a disgrace, while also encouraging religious practices as a coping mechanism. Third, workplaces and universities should create single-friendly policies, such as providing psychological counseling services and discussion forums without discrimination. Fourth, further research employing longitudinal designs and larger samples should be funded to explore mediators such as personality traits or coping mechanisms. Finally, social media campaigns highlighting positive experiences of single women can reduce stigma and build societal empathy.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that social support and religiosity together have a strong positive relationship with happiness among single women, with a significant contribution. However, more interesting is the fact that most single women actually fall into the moderate to high happiness category, contradicting the common assumption that singlehood is synonymous with unhappiness. The dominance of the moderate category across the three variables indicates a stable, non-extreme condition. Unfortunately, the proportion of single women with low social support is larger than those with low religiosity, indicating that some single women still lack support from their environment. Meanwhile, religiosity emerges as a more prominent internal strength. This confirms that happiness among single women is more determined by spiritual beliefs than merely by external social relationships.

This study contributes to strengthening social exchange theory by demonstrating that single women perceive social support as a benefit that enhances happiness. Furthermore, this study expands the understanding of religiosity as a system of spiritual meaning that functions as a unique coping mechanism for single individuals. Practically, these findings encourage the development of community-based interventions such as peer support groups and psychological assistance programs grounded in religious values. Families and friends need to be more active in providing emotional support without pressure to marry. Religious institutions can design study programs that normalize singlehood as a meaningful period. Public policies also need to reduce discrimination against single women in the workplace and social services.

This study has several limitations. First, the sample consisted of only 82 respondents, with the majority from Java Island, so the results cannot be generalized to all of Indonesia. Second, the cross-sectional design cannot capture the dynamic changes in the relationships between social support, religiosity, and happiness over time. Third, the non-probability sampling technique may introduce response bias. Future research should employ longitudinal

designs with larger and nationally representative samples. Subsequent studies may also explore mediator variables such as self-esteem or coping mechanisms, as well as compare single women by choice versus by circumstance. In-depth qualitative studies are needed to understand the subjective meaning of happiness from the perspective of single women themselves.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors express their sincere gratitude to all informants who participated in this study. Without their support and trust, this research would not have been successfully conducted. The authors hope that the findings of this study will contribute to the advancement of knowledge.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Islahiani Rufaidah: Conceptualization; Formal analysis; Investigation; Methodology; Project Administration; Writing Original Draft. **Setiasih:** Conceptualization; Methodology; Validation; Visualization; Writing Review & editing.

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