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Abstract

The value of children lies in the way parents view their children. The perception of parents is influenced by the culture they adopt and live by, socioeconomic status, the gender of the child, and the number of children in the family. The purpose of this research was to look at the description of the value to Javanese mothers of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The method used is quantitative (nonparametric statistical calculations) with descriptive techniques. There were 30 participants in the study using convenience sampling data collection techniques. The required characteristics of the participants were mothers of children with ASD who applied Javanese parenting culture. The results of normality with a value of $asymp = .00$ ($p < .05$) so that it is stated that the data is not normally distributed. The resultant value of children to mothers of children with ASD that stands out is the family dimension, so according to this study children with ASD can strengthen relationships within families, such as parents who provide social support to each other and siblings who become more empathic towards their siblings who have ASD.

Keywords

value of children, autism spectrum disorder, mother, Javanese

The paradigm of Indonesian society stipulates that a couple must have children after marriage. There are numerous assumptions that the main purpose of marriage is to have children. According to Goode (Srisusanti & Zulkaida, 2013), a satisfying marriage is a happy marriage and one in which the couples are expected to reproduce children with good character because it is assumed that these children receive an outpouring of love. Furthermore, Srisusanti and Zulkaida (2013) found that the presence of children, in addition to affecting life expectancy, affects mar-

ital satisfaction. The absence of offspring can cause estrangement in the household, and can occasionally trigger conflicts that result in divorce. Wismanto (Mardiyan & Kustanti, 2016) found that the presence of children is a factor that influences marital satisfaction. In addition, another study found that individuals who were infertile exhibited profound sadness; suffering in life; stress; and feelings of unhappiness, uselessness, and guilt. These feelings caused the individual to ultimately consider separating from their spouse owing to their inability to reproduce offspring. This research proves that the inability to reproduce offspring can interfere with marital relationships and reduce satisfaction in life (Onat & Beji in Mardiyan & Kustanti, 2016). Furthermore, referring to extant literature, this research highlights that the existence of children is considered valuable in married life.

Offsprings can improve the psychological

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well-being and self-esteem of parents (Nauck, 2014). Moreover, this is explained in the theory of value of children regarding the perspective of parents on the presence of offsprings in their lives (Prasanti, 2013). The perspective of parents toward children is contained in the dimension of the value of children, which comprises emotional dimensions, normative economics, family, and old age (Mayer et al., 2005). In the emotional dimension, parents emphasize emotional bonds with children through their thoughts and feelings while interacting with children (Nauck, 2014). This is demonstrated through the outpouring of love and parental satisfaction following child development (Mayer et al, 2005). In the normative economic dimension, parents expect children to contribute to the family's economy wherein children work and earn family economic income (Nauck, 2015). In the family dimension, making children the reason for the importance of a family's integrity (Mayer et al, 2015) to bring parents and families closer, increase the sense of responsibility, and the communication between parents and children occurs frequently. In the dimension of old age, parents expect their children to assist them in old age.

The parents' perspective according to the value of children can be influenced by the culture adopted by the parents, socioeconomic status, gender of the child, and the number of children in the family (Thomson, 2015). The value of children—or the perspective of parents—will affect the parenting pattern toward children (Prasanti, 2013) and planning for their families (Nauck, 2014). The parenting pattern that is formed is not only based on the parents' perspective but also involves the condition of the child. This is clarified by the study of Darlig and Steinberg (1993) that parenting is an arrangement for children based on the concepts that parents have for their children and adapting to their child's needs (Bibi et al., 2013). Every parent has a different parenting pattern, and this difference arises as a consequence of social diversity. Parenting is associated with the culture of a community because parenting aims at raising a child who is accepted in society (Sunarti, 2004).

The acceptance of individuals within a society is not the sole purpose of parental activities, but an individual as a social being will receive

more respect and acceptance in society, thereby resulting in a more comfortable life. In addition, parents will be more satisfied. Certainly, all parents expect their children to be accepted in society regardless of their physical and mental conditions; similarly for children with disorders or special needs, who are often excluded and receive poor acceptance. However, social acceptance is not essential, and parents, as the closest parties to children, must have a different perspective and importance toward the existence of their children in society.

Suparmi (2016) found that the values in children with special needs are as follows: 1) Emotional, parents perceive their children as valuable and accept them despite different circumstances from other children; 2) Religion, parents perceive their children with special needs as a gift; 3) Family, children serve as parents' encouragement to continue working. However, there are certain differences between the results of Suparmi's research compared to the previous theory of Hoffman and Nauck. In Suparmi's study, there is a religious value in the Indonesian parents' perspective, especially the Javanese. According to Geertz (Baiduri & Yuniar, 2017), Javanese parenting is a process of continuous interaction between parents and children to form an ideal "Javanese," usually referred to as *dadi wong*. Therefore, parenting in a Javanese family adheres to two important principles, namely, respect and harmony. This attitude of respect is further divided into the typical Javanese concepts of *wedi*, *isin*, and *lan sungkan*. The parenting model adopted by a Javanese family is a model is ignorant or permissive. Second, it is a model that provides detailed and unemotional orders without the threat of punishment or discrimination. Third, the parenting model through *ngeden-ngedeni* means to frighten children by threatening them about their terrible fate at the hands of other people, spirits, and authoritarians.

If you analyze the parenting pattern of Javanese parents, its application for children with special needs is challenging, as children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) have barriers to social interaction and perform repetitive behaviors. In addition, individuals with ASD possess traits that are difficult to meet the dimensions of the value of children. This was highlighted in a study conducted by the National

Autistic Society (Griffths et al., 2016), which states that 85% of individuals with ASD cannot be financially independent owing to their limitations in communicating and interacting at work (Paul et al, 2016). These limitations prevent individuals from taking job interviews because they will be asked about the behavior of prospective workers in certain situations or behavior that had been exhibited (Campion et al, 1994; Paul et al., 2016). Meanwhile, individuals with ASD have difficulty projecting themselves into imaginary situations (Tickle, 2009; Paul et al., 2016); hence, they require more effort. Therefore, it will be difficult for individuals with ASD to fulfill the normative economic dimensions, which requires them to live up to their parents' expectations of contributing to family finances.

Individuals with ASD have neurodevelopmental barriers in communication and interaction, making it difficult for children with ASD to interact with others (WHO, 2013). They find it difficult to smile and laugh in social situations (Pullen, 2014), which hampers the emotional and family dimensions. In addition, they have difficulty in focusing on their thoughts, receiving and processing information, and conveying and regulating emotions (Griffths et al., 2016). Several of these barriers make it difficult for children with ASD to help others; therefore, individuals with ASD will find it difficult to meet the dimensions of old age as generally expected by parents who care for them. However, countries with a collective culture typically have higher old age dimensions than countries with individualist culture (Bulao, 1979; Darroch et al., 1981; Fawcett, 1983; Kagitcibasi, 1982; Kagitcibasi & Ataca, 2015). Countries with collective cultures include Turkey, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Taiwan. These countries have a higher dimension of the value of children in old age than countries with individualist culture, such as the US and Germany. Parents in countries with collective cultures expect their children to help and provide emotional support in their old age.

Meyer (1981) studied the culture that influences the value of children in Indonesia and explained that the value of children of Javanese and Sundanese parents is a normative economic dimension. The normative economic dimension, according to the value of children, is the one in which parents expect their children to financial-

ly support their family. According the results of Meyer's study on Javanese and Sundanese culture, children are expected to guarantee their parents' old age, support their parents financially, provide physiological support, help run the family business, and assist them with housework. However, children with ASD have difficulty fulfilling the normative economic dimensions according to parents' expectations so that their children can contribute to family finances so that it becomes an interesting thing to study related to how the value of children depicts in mothers who come from which Javanese ethnic group based on the research has a dominant normative economic dimension?

According to Sharabi and Marom-Golan (2018), mothers are more involved with children with ASD than fathers. Furthermore, mothers participate in child therapy and play more actively with their children than fathers do. In addition, mothers are more responsible for parenting than fathers and are the primary caregivers to their children (Koydemir & Tosun, 2009; Jose et al, 2017; Desiningrum et al., 2019). The role of mothers in families with children with ASD is to create a framework for the family structure (McAuliffe et al, 2019). Mothers make plans every day; for example, looking for a therapist and then scheduling the therapist. Sianggung Hilderia (1991) suggested that mothers play a significant role in raising children because fathers spend more time outside the home, especially with regard to their work. Therefore, mothers contribute more to the development of children with ASD than fathers (Sharabi & Moramgolan, 2018). Furthermore, mothers interact more often with their children to provide stimulus (Chodidjah & Kusumasari, 2018).

Methods

This research used a quantitative approach, which, when viewed from the perspective of data collection, was included under the type of survey research. The sample comprised 30 people with the characteristics of mothers of children with ASD who follow Javanese cultural parenting styles. A cross-sectional design was employed. The results of the study were analyzed using descriptive methods (nonparametric statistical calculations).

The variables were the value of children for mothers with Javanese upbringing for their children with ASD. Data were collected using a questionnaire method, which comprised 12 value of children items, and each item had a rating scale of 1–5 with 1 being “Highly Not Appropriate” and 5 being “Very Appropriate.”

The questionnaire was distributed via an online link. The questionnaire comprised a value of children instrument, and prior to its use, the instrument was tested for validity and reliability. The instrument test results revealed that one item was invalid; therefore, it was excluded from the measurement of the value of children in mothers who follow Javanese parenting style. After conducting the reliability test, the instrument value of children was 0.887 therefore, it was declared reliable and could be utilized to collect data.

This study used a descriptive quantitative data analysis method. The average value was calculated on the four dimensions in the value of children instrument, subsequently analyzed, and described the value of children with mothers to children with ASD who apply Javanese parenting style.

Results

The study spanned from April 23 to May 9, 2020. Google form links were shared with participants who met the following criteria: (1) mothers who perceived themselves as part of a family who generally lives by Javanese cultural values; (2) who were mothers to children with ASD; and (3) who were willing to participate. Initially, there were 41 participants; however, 11 could not be included. In addition, there was one participant who was not Javanese and 10 participants who could not be grouped on certain values of children, such as emotional, normative economics, family, and old age. The 10 participants had two or more dimensions on the value of children because the participants tended to answer questions on the same scale on each item. Consequently, the data recorded from the study were 73.17% of all the data collected. The following is an overview of the participants based on age, number of children, sex of children with ASD, and the spectrum of children

with ASD. Table 1 highlights the results of the research.

Participant Characteristics

Table 1. Distribution of the Number of Children Participants

Sum	F	%
1–2	17	56.67
>2	13	43.33
Total	30	100

Note. This table demonstrates the number of children from participants that show there are two points. First, the mother that had 1–2 children and the second that the mother that had more than two children.

According to the results reported in Table 1, 56.66% of the participants (or as many as 17 participants) had 1–2 children, whereas the remaining 13 participants (43.33% of the participants) had more than two children.

Table 2. Gender Distribution of Children Participants

Gender	F	%
Male	25	83.33
Female	5	16.67
Total	30	100

Note. This table demonstrates the gender distribution of the children participants.

Based on the demographic data, 16.67% of the participants (five participants) had daughters with ASD. The remaining 83.3% of the participants (25 other participants) had sons with ASD. Groups of participants were created based on the spectrum of children with ASD.

The spectrum was divided into mild, moderate, and severe (the mild, moderate, and severe as used in Zablotsky [2016]). Based on the demographic data, 40% (12 participants) had children with mild spectrum ASD. Furthermore, 50% of the participants had children with moderate

spectrum ASD (15 participants). Other data accounted for 10% of the findings (or as many as three participants), namely, mothers who had children with severe spectrum ASD.

Table 3. *Spectrum in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder*

Spectrum	F	%
Mild	12	40
Moderate	15	50
Severe	3	10
Total	30	100

Note. This table demonstrates the spectrum in children with ASD divided into mild, moderate, and severe.

The demographic data on socioeconomic status was determined by using a socioeconomic status questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised 21 questions—each question with four multiple choice answers. Thus, the lowest socioeconomic status value was 21 (1 x 21), and the highest socioeconomic status was 84 (4 x 21). The diversity of data was indicated by a standard deviation of 10.52. Based on the demographic data, the lowest socioeconomic status was 54 and the highest was 89. The average socioeconomic status of the participants was 71.23. The average value of socioeconomic status was in the moderate socioeconomic status category.

Table 4. *Socioeconomic Status of Mothers to Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder*

Interval	Category	F	%
54.0–65.6	Low	12	40
65.7–77.3	Medium	8	26.67
77.4–89.0	High	10	33.34
Total		30	100

Note. This table demonstrates the socioeconomic status of mothers to children with autism spectrum disorder. They were divided into low, medium, and high.

Value of Children

Furthermore, additional research was conducted that concluded that there was no difference between low, medium, and high socioeconomic status and the value of children in mothers to children with ASD. Similarly, with the gender of the child, number of children, and spectrum of children, there was no difference in the value of children in mothers to children with ASD. This is proven in Table 5.

Table 5. *Distribution of Chi-Square Data Based on Demographic Data*

Demographic Data	Pearson Chi-square	Critical Value
Socioeconomic Status	6.112	12.59
Number of Children	0.621	7.81
Gender of Children	1.457	7.81
Spectrum	7.696	12.59

Note. This table demonstrates the distribution of Chi-Square data based on the demographic data that show the socioeconomic status, number of children, and gender of children.

Discussion

This study found that the value of children for mothers (within the Javanese culture) toward children with ASD is dominated by the family dimension. Mayer explained that the value of children with a family dimension indicates that parents are more likely to interact with their children (Mayer et al., 2005). Chodidjah and Kusumasari (2018) supported this argument and elucidated that mothers to children with ASD often interact by inviting children to sing and talk to provide stimulus to children. Barriers to children with ASD, who are difficult to interact with, make mothers the first individuals with whom children interact more often as compared with other people (Barnes et al., 2011). According to Fardhani (2015), mothers within the Javanese culture follow the dadi wong principle, according to which, being a successful parent means that their children must be more success-

ful than their parents (the difficulties parents suffer should not be experienced by the children). As for the assumption about associations with the *dadi wong* concept, namely, that a person should feel calm, safe, and happy; in this case, mothers to children with ASD still feel happy and can live without pressure. This is evident in the family dimension that dominates where there are several measuring aspects, such as the presence of children that can strengthen family relationships (Mayer et al., 2005). Families who have been able to accept the condition of children with ASD are proven to be stronger families (Meadan et al., 2010). The family provides mutual support to reduce anxiety about a childhood with ASD. In addition, parental relationships are closer because parents provide each other with social support (Ilias et al., 2018).

Judging from the sociocultural aspect, *dadi wong* has a very decisive meaning and role as elements that contribute to the broader *dadi wong* concept. This sociocultural aspect is an inherent characteristic of the Javanese way of life. In line with the concept of a mother from Javanese culture, the family dimension in the value of children reveals that the presence of children can strengthen family relationships (Mayer et al., 2005). Social support from partners is the most important thing compared with social support from other parties. Families in the value of children elucidate that children can increase parental responsibility (Mayer et al., 2005). Boyd (2012) found that the presence of children with ASD in the family makes parents more responsible, especially in terms of household activities (Meadan et al., 2010). Furthermore, a qualitative research revealed that the presence of children with ASD makes mothers enthusiastic about recovering from illness to resume caring for their children (Barnes et al., 2011).

Research on mothers to children with ASD has revealed that the old age and economic dimension were the least prominent. According to the value of children theory, the dimension of old age is the expectation held by parents that their children will assist them in old age (Mayer et al., 2005). However, children with ASD face difficulty in being independent; therefore, these expectations are difficult to fulfill.

According to the National Research Council in his book, *Educating Children with Autism*,

the ability to be independent is typified by the ability to perform assigned work and instructions without help from others (Hume, 2004). Studies with individual participants with ASD, intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, and emotional disturbances from various countries found that young adults with ASD live with their parents or guardians more than they live with other individuals with disabilities (Heasley, 2013). Individuals with ASD are the most supervised and least independent individuals after completing their studies. Furthermore, difficulty pertaining to independence makes it difficult for mothers to children with ASD to hope that their children will be able to assist them in old age. Therefore, it is contrary to the perception of Javanese culture in which, according to Fardhani (2015), Javanese parents view someone as *dadi wong* if their life is no longer dependent (or a burden) on anyone, including their own family. That is, a man who is *dadi wong* must be independent in the sense of being able to care for himself. Being independent means living separately from parents while maintain a cordial relationship with them. When the child is married, they are expected to manage their life without interference from others.

In Javanese culture, the value of *dadi wong* does not necessarily refer to people who are materially rich but is adjusted to the level of knowledge/education and socioeconomic conditions of the people. When viewed in this study, the economic dimension of the value of children does not stand out as compared with the family and emotional dimensions of mothers to children with ASD. The economic dimension explains that parents expect their children to contribute financially to the family (Mayer et al., 2005). Furthermore, research from the National Autistic Society (2016) explains that 85% of the individuals with ASD cannot be financially independent; however, 69% of them want to be able to work (Paul et al., 2016). The wages of individuals with ASD are lower than those of other employees. In addition, individuals with ASD face greater challenges to becoming employees than individuals without ASD. This raises concerns in the minds of parents of children with ASD about their children's future, especially regarding their child's ability to be financially independent. Consequently, mothers to children

with ASD do not highlight the economic dimension of the value of children.

In the results of the Chi-Square statistical test, there is no difference in the category of values of children in mothers to children with ASD. There is no difference in low, medium, and high socioeconomic status with the value of children in mothers to children with ASD, as well as the sex of the child, number of children, and spectrum. This is because other factors affect the value of children, such as the beliefs held and the information obtained (Fawcett, 1973; Kagitcibasi, 1982; Nauck, 2014). Furthermore, variations that affect the value of children have dynamics with each other. Based on the value of children theory, increasing the number of children will increase the amount of parental financial expenditure so that parents hope that their children will contribute to the family economy (Thomson, 2015). For example, the economic burden of a family with large number of children with high socioeconomic status will be lighter than a child in a family with a low socioeconomic status. Therefore, the category of the number of children cannot stand alone, as it depends on the socioeconomic status of the family.

According to Fardhani (2015), the concept of *dadi wong's* value contains a comprehensive understanding because it involves economic/material/physical, moral/religious/ethical, psychological, and sociocultural aspects that are intertwined to form the concept of *dadi wong*. Conditions that cannot be fulfilled completely will reduce the meaning of the *dadi wong*. In this research, mothers who perceive themselves as living within families who follow Javanese cultural values in several aspects are not always associated with the *dadi wong* concept. The development of the times and conditions causes some *dadi wong* concepts in Javanese culture cannot be applied to children with ASD so that mothers choose not to apply it as seen in the low value of children in the socioeconomic dimension and the dimension of old age.

Conclusion

Social and cultural changes have transformed several parental aspects of mothers within the Javanese culture. These changes have affected the value of children of mothers to children with ASD. The value of children for mothers who fol-

low Javanese upbringing of children with ASD is family; therefore, mothers to children with ASD consider these children to make the family more meaningful, strengthen family relationships, increase mothers' responsibility, and improve communication with children. Meanwhile, the economic and old age are the least prominent dimensions for mothers to children with ASD.

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