

The Influence of Self-Compassion and Emotion Regulation on the Psychological Well-Being of Working Parents Who Have Children with Special Needs

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aims to determine the influence of self-compassion and emotion regulation on the psychological well-being of working parents with special needs children. **Method:** This study uses a correlational quantitative approach, involving 68 working parents as the sample. The sample was determined using the accidental sampling technique at 4 special schools in the Sidoarjo District area. The instruments in this study consist of 3 psychological scales, namely: Psychological Well-Being Scales (PWB), Neff's Self-Compassion Scale, and Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (CERQ). The analysis technique used multiple regression analysis with the help of JASP 0.18.1 software. **Results:** The analysis results ($F(2.65) = 12.133$; $P < .001$) indicate that self-compassion and emotion regulation simultaneously have an impact on psychological well-being. **Novelty:** The implication of this research is as a basis for counseling-based intervention programs to enhance the self-compassion and emotional regulation abilities of working parents with children with special needs to achieve psychological well-being.

INTRODUCTION

Parents are a core part of the family consisting of father and mother, formed through legal marriage bonds. In married life, most couples want the presence of a child who grows up in good physical, psychological, and mental condition [1]. However, the reality is not always in accordance with expectations, because some couples are given gifts in the form of children with special needs. The presence of children with special needs in the family brings great changes, especially in the aspect of parenting. Children with special needs requires a special approach in terms of education and parenting to support its growth and development process [2], [3].

At the beginning of the presence of a child with special needs, parents experience a decrease in quality of life, stress, hopelessness, anxiety, and difficulty accepting their child's condition [4], [5]. These challenges become even more complex for working parents, as they must divide their responsibilities between their child's development and their professional duties. Previous research revealed that mothers who have a child with a child tend to feel sad and lose hope, while fathers are burdened with the economy and work [6]. The complexity of this parenting role can affect the psychological well-being of parents with children with special needs.

According to Ryff, psychological well-being refers to mental health conditions that are aligned with the principles of positive psychology. Individuals who have psychological well-being tend to feel positive things about themselves, both in terms of their past and the present experiences [7], [8]. This well-being involves the development

of self-potential, including the ability to accept personal strengths and weaknesses, live independently, build harmonious relationships with others, control the surrounding environment, and be able to adjust to environmental conditions in order to achieve life goals [9]. In addition, the belief of individuals in their self-worth is essential to cultivate positive attitudes that favor psychological well-being [10].

Based on data from Kemenko PMK in 2021, the number of crew members is around 2.1 million people. Meanwhile, based on data from the Ministry of Education and Culture as of August 2021, there are 269,398 children registered as students in special schools (SLB) (www.rri.co.id). In 2021, there were 110 cases of violence against children with special needs out of a total of 1,355 cases reported to the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KPPA). In addition, data from 2014 to 2017 shows a number of cases of violence committed by parents against children with special needs [11]. This situation indicates a problem issue related to the psychological well-being of parents. Parents with lower psychological well-being often face obstacles in achieving life goals effectively [12]. Conversely, parents with good psychological well-being are better equipped to perform their roles more optimally, including in nurturing and educating children with special needs, so that they can help them face various challenges in society [3].

Previous studies have shown that the psychological well-being of parents of children with special needs falls into low category of 52.5% and as much as 22.5% was in the high category [13]. Previous research also revealed that subjects had financial dependence and independence on their husbands and families, as well as lack of moral support from extended families [11]. This aligns with other studies that describe the condition of parents who have children with special needs based on the psychological well-being dimension with the personal growth dimension in the high category of 77.90% and the low category in the purpose of life dimension of 48.80% [3].

The results of the study were reinforced by a preliminary survey of working parents who had children with special needs, it was found that working parents who have children with special needs faced significant challenges related to their psychological well-being. Anxiety is the most prominent challenge, particularly concerning their children's independence in the future. In addition, other challenges faced by working parents of children with special needs are poor social relations with the environment around where they live, dependence on close relatives in caring for children with special needs, and difficulty in arranging work schedules to take care of children with special needs. This shows that working parents who have crew members experience challenges in the dimension of psychological well-being. Ryff revealed 6 dimensions of psychological well-being, namely; 1) Autonomy, includes qualities such as self-determination, independence, self-control, and internal self-evaluation. 2) Personal Growth, the ability to continue to develop potential and grow as an individual. 3) Environmental mastery, the ability of individuals to master their surroundings and create or manage the environment to suit their desires or needs. 4) Purpose in life, the belief that life has purpose and meaning, as well as that the individual has a reason to live. 5)

Positive relationship with others, the ability to love and foster good relationships with others. 6) Self-acceptance, a person's ability to accept one's strengths and shortcomings as they are without blaming others and having a continuous motivation to continuously improve and develop oneself [14].

Psychological well-being is influenced by various variables, one of which is self-compassion. Research conducted by Isnaeni and Nashori shows that religiosity and self-compassion have a positive influence on psychological well-being [15]. An individual's level of psychological well-being tends to increase along with the high level of religiosity and self-compassion they have. These two variables contribute 33.7% to the achievement of psychological well-being. Another study, conducted by Mukhlisa & Nurmina, showed a positive correlation between self-compassion and psychological well-being. The study explains that self-compassion helps individuals accept their shortcomings, provide encouragement when facing difficulties, and encourage the search for solutions to the challenges encountered [16].

Self-compassion is the ability of an individual to understand and accept himself or herself when faced with suffering, failure, or adversity, by recognizing that the experience is part of human life [17], [18]. Self-compassion is associated with life satisfaction, psychological well-being, happiness, optimism, emotional intelligence, social relationships, personal initiative, and positive affects [16]. Self-compassion has a far-reaching impact, including in producing effective emotional regulation, increasing motivation, and developing individual abilities. Individuals with a strong sense of self-compassion are considered capable of accepting their shortcomings, as they recognize that every human has imperfections [19].

According to Neff, Self-compassion consists of six components that are interrelated and form a complex dynamic, the six components are: 1) Self-kindness, 2) Common humanity, 3) Mindfulness, 4) Self-judgment, 5) Isolation, and 6) Overidentification [20]. In addition to self-compassion, another variable that affects psychological well-being is the regulation of emotions. Research conducted by Dian et al revealed a significant positive relationship between emotional regulation and psychological well-being [21]. Supported by research from Farhanna & Tatiyani which shows that emotion regulation has a positive correlation with psychological well-being [22].

Emotional regulation refers to an individual's effort to control and influence emotional processes by managing the intensity, duration, type of emotions experienced, their timing, expression, and understanding to provide responses appropriate to the situation and demands [23]. The ability to regulate emotions helps individuals complete tasks effectively and respond appropriately to challenges [24]. Psychological well-being increases with higher emotional regulation skills, whereas difficulty in regulating emotions may lead to a decline in psychological well-being [25]. Gross identified two main strategies for emotional regulation: cognitive reappraisal, which involves rethinking before responding to emotions, and expressive suppression, which focuses on controlling emotional expressions during emotional situations.

Gross explains that emotion regulation includes five main processes; 1) Situation selection, choosing situations that minimize the impact of negative emotions. 2) Situation modification, changing situations to reduce emotional responses. 3) Attention Deployment, shifting attention to more pleasant things. 4) Cognitive change, changing the way of looking at situations to modify the emotions that arise. 5) Response modulation, controlling physiological responses to minimize the emotional response experienced [26].

Previous research has explored psychological well-being. One of them is a study conducted by Isnaeni and Nashori, discussing the influence of religiosity and compassion on the psychological well-being of parents who have children with special needs [15]. Another study by Arjangi and Fauziah found a relationship between emotional regulation and psychological well-being in mothers who support their children during homeschooling [9]. This research has a novelty, namely involving working parents, both fathers and mothers, who have children with special needs as research subjects. This study aims to analyze the influence of self-compassion and emotional regulation on psychological well-being in working and having a children with special needs. The research hypothesis is that there is a significant positive influence between self-compassion and emotional regulation on the psychological well-being of working parents who have ABK.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a correlational quantitative approach, where self-compassion (X1) and emotion regulation (X2) are independent variables, and psychological well-being (Y) is a bound variable. Sampling was conducted using an accidental sampling technique in 4 Special Schools (SLB) in the Sidoarjo sub-district area, namely SLB AC Dharma Wanita, SLB B Dharma Wanita Sidoarjo, SLB Autis Mutiara Hati, and SLB Insani Tunas Mandiri. The criteria for the population in this study are as follows: working parents (fathers and mothers) who have children with special needs (ABK), whose children attend special schools (SLB) in the Sidoarjo sub-district, and who directly live with and care for their children with special needs. The population in this study consists of 68 working parents with children with special needs, including 37 fathers and 31 mothers.

The instruments used in this study consist of three scales, the psychological well-being scales, self-compassion, and emotional regulation. The psychological well-being variable is adopted from the psychological well-being measurement scale that has been developed based on [27] the psychological well-being theory by Ryff, consisting of 19 items with validity values ranging from 0.259 to 0.468. It consists of 6 aspects of autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationship with others, life goals, and self acceptance. The Self-Compassion variable adopts the self-compassion scale that has been adapted by [28] based on the concept of Neff (2003), which consists of 26 items with a reliability of 0.872. Aspects of self-compassion include self-kindness, a sense of shared humanity, mindfulness, self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification. The emotion regulation variable adopts the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (CERQ)

scale developed by Jamse J. Gross and Oliver P. John (2003) and adapted by [26]. This scale consists of 10 items that measure two main strategies of emotion regulation, namely cognitive reevaluation and expression suppression, with a reliability of 0.951. The data analysis in this study used multiple linear regression, as well as regression normality, linearity, assumption, and multiple regression, supported by JASP 0.18.1 software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Table 1. Categorization of working parents who have childhood carriers.

Category	Psychological Well-Being		Self-Compassion		Emotion Regulation	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Very Low	6	9%	4	6%	4	6%
Low	14	21%	19	28%	25	37%
Medium	27	40%	27	40%	22	32%
High	17	25%	10	15%	10	15%
Very High	4	6%	8	12%	7	10%
Total	68	100%	68	100%	68	100%

It is known that of the 68 parents who have children with special needs, the psychological well-being variable is dominated in the medium category by 40% and 31% including the high category. The self-compassion variable is also dominant in the medium category at 40%, but 34% is relatively low. Meanwhile, the variables of emotion regulation were dominated by the low category of 37% and 32% were in the medium category.

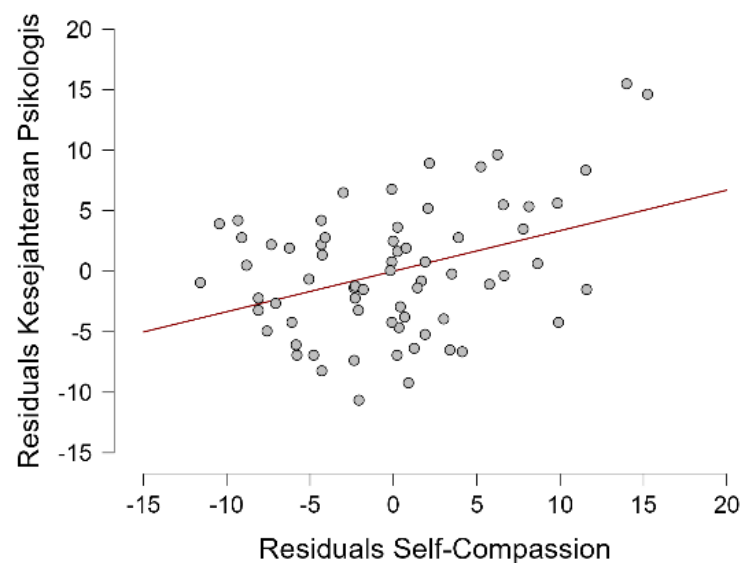


Figure 1. Psychological well-being vs. self-compassion.

Table 2. Normality test.

Descriptive Statistics

	Psychological Well-Being	Self-Compassion	Emotion Regulation
Valid	68	68	68
Shapiro-Wilk	0.978	0.976	0.956

Based on the data in the table above, namely the normality test through the Shapiro-Wilk test, it is known that each variable in this study has a significance value of > 0.70 . So it can be concluded that the three variables in this study are distributed normally. This can also be seen on the histogram which shows the three variables are normally distributed.

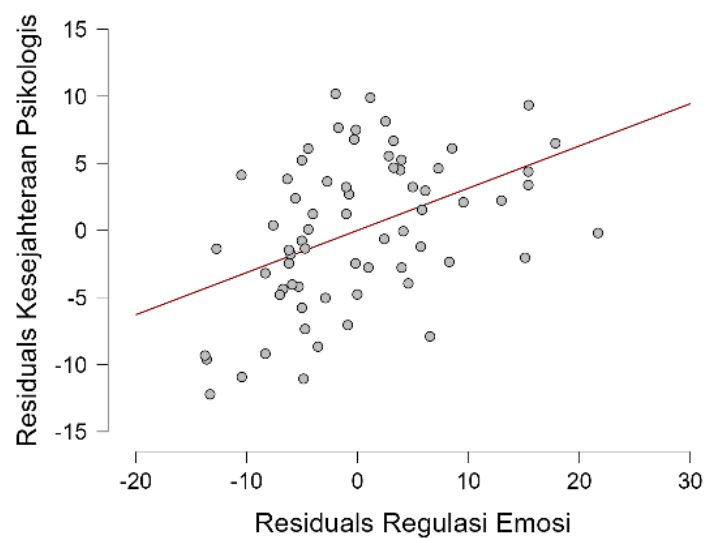


Figure 2. Psychological well-being vs. emotional regulation.

The results of the linearity test revealed that there was a linear relationship between self-compassion variables and emotional regulation and psychological well-being. Based on the results from the scatterplot chart, the data spreads close to the linear line, as well as the data point points that will form an ellipse if the circular line is drawn. So it can be concluded that the assumption of linearity has been fulfilled.

Table 3. Correlation test.

Pearson's Correlations		
Variable		Psychological Well-Being
1. Psychological Well-Being	Pearson's r	—
	p-value	—
2. Self-Compassion	Pearson's r	0.302
	p-value	0.012
3. Emotion Regulation	Pearson's r	0.388
	p-value	0.001

Based on the table above, it is known that self-compassion has a significant positive correlation with psychological well-being. ($r = .302$; $p = 0.012$), as well as the regulation of emotions with psychological well-being ($r = .388$; $p = .001$).

Table 4. Multicollinearity test.
Coefficients

Type		Collinearity Statistics	
		Tolerance	VIF
H ₀	(Intercept)		
H ₁	(Intercept)		
	Self-Compassion	0.988	1.013
	Emotion Regulation	0.988	1.013

Based on the results of the multicollinearity test, it was shown that there was no multicollinearity problem ($VIF = 1,013$; tolerance = .988), meaning that no strong relationship was found between the variables, and there was no multicollinearity. Therefore, based on these results, all assumption tests to perform multiple linear regression tests have been met.

Table 5. T-test.
Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	p	Collinearity Statistics	
							Tolerance	VIF
H ₀	(Intercept)	32.676	0.710		46.021	< .001		
H ₁	(Intercept)	11.469	4.836		2.372	0.021		
	Self-Compassion	0.335	0.102	0.350	3.286	0.002	0.988	1.013
	Regulasi Emosi	0.315	0.078	0.428	4.014	< .001	0.988	1.013

Based on the results of the t-test, it shows that there is an influence of self-compassion (X1) on psychological well-being (Y) is ($t = 3,286$; $p = .002$). In addition, there was an effect of emotion regulation (X2) on psychological well-being (Y) ($t = 4,014$; $p < .001$).

Table 6. Multiple linear regression.
ANOVA

Type		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p
H ₁	Regression	624.389	2	312.195	12.133	<.001
	Residual	1672.493	65	25.731		
	Total	2296.882	67			

Note. The intercept model is omitted, as no meaningful information can be shown.

The results of Anova's one-way analysis showed that simultaneously, self-compassion and emotional regulation could significantly affect psychological well-being ($F(2.65) = 12.133$; $p < .001$). So these results show that self-compassion and regulatory variables contribute to improving individual psychological well-being.

Table 7. Determination test.

Model Summary - Psychological Well-Being				
Type	R	R²	Adjusted R²	RMSE
H ₀	0.000	0.000	0.000	5.855
H ₁	0.521	0.272	0.249	5.073

The results of the multiple linear regression test showed that self-compassion and emotion regulation simultaneously contributed by 27.2% to psychological well-being ($R^2 = .272$). Meanwhile, the other 72.8% were influenced by other variables other than self-compassion and emotional regulation.

Additional Analysis

Table 8. Categorization of the psychological well-being of working parents who have children with special needs.

Interval	Category	Father		Mother	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
X < 23.89	Very Low	5	7%	1	1%
23.89 < X ≤ 29.75	Low	6	9%	8	12%
29.75 < X ≤ 35.60	Medium	16	24%	11	16%
35.60 < X ≤ 41.46	High	6	9%	11	16%
X > 41.46	Very High	4	6%	0	0%
Total		37	54%	31	46%

The results of categorization based on the status of fathers and mothers showed that the psychological well-being of a dominant father was in the medium category with a total of 16 people or 24%, and the high category of 9% or a total of 6 people. Meanwhile, a mother is in the medium and high categories with the same large percentage, namely 16% or as many as 11 people.

Table 9. Categorization of the psychological well-being dimension of working parents who have children with special needs.

Psychological Well-Being Dimension	Parents	Average	%	Category
Autonomy	Father	9	35	Medium
	Mother	9	31	Medium
Environmental Mastery	Father	9	37	Medium
	Mother	9	40	Medium
Personal Growth	Father	6	37	Medium
	Mother	6	35	Medium
Positive Relation with Others	Father	4	38	High
	Mother	4	31	High
Purpose In Life	Father	3	28	Medium
	Mother	3	25	Medium

Self Acceptance	Father	3	40	Medium
	Mother	2	35	Medium

Based on the table, it shows that the psychological well-being of working parents who have children with special needs seen from the psychological well-being dimension of fathers and mothers are both in the high category in the positive relation with others dimension. Both are dominated in the medium category by 40% with fathers in the self-acceptance dimension and mothers in the environmental mastery dimension. In the purpose in life category, both have the lowest percentage of 28% for fathers and 25% for mothers.

Discussion

Based on the results of a study of working parents who have a child with a child, it was found that self-compassion and emotional regulation simultaneously affected psychological well-being ($F = 12,133$, $p < .001$), with a contribution of 27.2% to psychological well-being, while 72.8% was influenced by other variables such as religiosity [15], gratitude [29], philanthropy [27], stress coping and family support [1]. Partially, self-compassion had a significant effect on psychological well-being ($t = 3,286$, $p = .002$). Emotional regulation also had a significant effect on psychological well-being ($t = 4.014$, $p < .001$). Based on this statement, it was concluded that self-compassion and emotional regulation have a significant positive influence on psychological well-being is proven to be true, so the hypothesis of this study is accepted.

Self-compassion and emotional regulation are factors that affect the psychological well-being of working parents who have children with special needs. When working parents of children with special needs with a high level of self-compassion and emotional regulation, they will experience a prosperous psychological condition in facing life challenges, namely they will have a positive outlook on the life they are living. Asi and Endah research shows that self-compassion has an influence that compassion or self-compassion is one of the factors that affect psychological well-being [15]. Research on working parents of children with special needs shows that self-compassion is one of the important factors that can improve their psychological well-being.

Neff stating that self-compassion is the ability of individuals to provide warmth to themselves when faced with suffering [7]. The results of this study show that the level of self-compassion in working parents of children with special needs is in the medium category. These findings are in line with previous research showing that self-compassion contributes by 36% to psychological well-being [30]. This means that the higher the level of self-compassion in individuals, the more individuals will have the ability to control themselves, have life goals, and accept themselves. Efforts to achieve psychological well-being involve paying attention to the fulfillment of their potential. Self-compassion means how a person faces challenges by taking advantage of their strengths and weaknesses. Self-compassion has a positive impact on improving psychological well-being [16]. Othre research states that well-being is an outcome achieved when a person meets the expected goals [19]. Self-compassion plays an important role as a support in

the process of achieving these goals, by minimizing the impact of negative emotions due to failure and providing a positive influence on goal setting. In addition, self-compassion has the ability to manage emotions effectively, increase motivation, as well as develop individual potential [22]. This ability to manage emotions is known as emotion regulation.

Emotional regulation is another factor that contributes to psychological well-being, where individuals have the ability to calm down, think positively, and be wise in behaving with the environment, creating a conducive atmosphere [21]. Previous research has shown a positive effect between emotional regulation and psychological well-being, with the highest score on the cognitive reappraisal aspect [31]. In line with other research, it was found that emotion regulation had a significant positive impact on psychological well-being, with aspects of cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression [32].

Emotion regulation refers to a person's ability to manage and respond to their emotional experiences efficiently in a variety of situations and times. These include alterations in emotional responses, such as the enhancement, maintenance or decrease of positive and negative emotions [32]. Previous studies have shown that parents of children with special needs often experience stress, feelings of anger when their child misbehaves, and worry about their child's development and future. These limitations can make it difficult for parents to control negative emotions [33]. The ability to regulate emotions is essential for human life and well-being, where individuals are able to maintain, strengthen, or control their emotions [25]. This study shows that the emotional regulation of working parents who have children with special needs is in the low category. In line with previous research, when individuals prioritize negative emotions in overcoming challenges, it will also have a negative impact on their psychological well-being [25]. Conversely, managing emotions to be more positive allows them to effectively overcome challenges [33].

The results of this study show that the category of psychological well-being in working parents of children with special needs is in the medium category of 40%. The results of previous research show that the level of psychological well-being of parents of students at SLB Muhammadiyah Gamping is medium category [13]. This is in line with the other study describing the psychological well-being condition of parents who have children with disabilities in the medium category, where at first parents do not accept the condition of their children, but over time they feel that the condition of their children is a gift that should be received [29]. Research [3] supporting the finding that psychological well-being in parents with early childhood with special needs in kindergartens throughout Pekanbaru City is generally in the medium category. This is reflected in the ability of parents to set life goals, build warm relationships with the surrounding environment, manage themselves, and be in an environment that suits their needs. The psychological well-being of working parents who have children with special needs can be improved through positive responses to themselves, such as providing kindness, compassion, and managing negative emotions when facing challenges [15], [25].

This study also explained that psychological well-being is more felt by a mother with a percentage of 11% in the high category, while 6% are fathers in the high category. This is due to several factors, including the mother's ability to accept the child and consider it a gift. Mothers are more able to accept the condition of their children and feel happy with the existence of the child [29]. Mother's psychological well-being can be achieved if she does not consider conditions as a burden in building good relationships with children. This condition is also supported by the role of fathers who are willing to share responsibilities equally. The equal role between father and mother in supporting parental responsibilities can ease the burden of the mother, especially if she has a job [34]. Raising children with special needs, which requires a different approach compared to raising typical children, necessitates good psychological well-being for parents. Working parents of children with special needs who possess adequate self-compassion and emotional regulation are more likely to perform their roles and responsibilities as both caregivers and professionals effectively [6], [19], [21]. This is supported by the ability to accept the situation experienced, manage negative emotions, build positive relationships with others, and stay firm in their beliefs [3].

Psychological well-being is very important for parents to be able to function positively. This is reflected in the good ability in the 6 dimensions of psychological well-being proposed by Ryff, namely autonomy, personal growth, environmental mastery, purpose in life, positive relationship with others, and self acceptance [12], [14]. This study shows that working mothers who have children with special needs are dominated by the environmental mastery dimension of 40%. Research [34] shows that working mothers tend to experience higher levels of stress than housewives, caused by pressure from society and the environment, as well as time management between work and family responsibilities. Parents of children with special needs face various challenges by experiencing negative stigma and discrimination by the surrounding environment which has an impact on the physical of parents which causes fatigue [35]. Supported research [36], it is revealed that mothers who have a good environment will be able to live a good life, not stress, and achieve psychological well-being. Meanwhile, in this study, the condition of working fathers who have children with special needs is dominated by the self-acceptance dimension at 40%. Kubbler Ross stated that parents go through several stages in the process of self-acceptance, namely the stages of denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Psychological well-being is closely related to self-adjustment and self-acceptance to any condition faced by the individual [37]. The study [35] explains that self-acceptance and personal growth are processes that involve the ability of parents to accept and understand all aspects of their and their children's physical limitations, including the quality of life, both positive and negative, in the past and present. In addition, parents show significant personal growth as a result of the self-acceptance they have, which allows them to gradually increase their gratitude over time.

This study reveals that self-compassion and emotional regulation simultaneously influence the psychological well-being of working parents who have children with special needs. The theoretical implications of these findings are to enrich the literature on

the importance of self-compassion and emotion regulation in psychological well-being. Practically, the results of this study can be the basis for the development of an intervention program to improve the psychological well-being of working parents who have children with special needs as the basis for counseling programs between parents and schools. Good communication between parents and teachers can create a harmonious relationship and mutual trust in supervising the development of children with special needs [35]. This study has limitations in the limited sample size. Therefore, further research with a larger sample size, more diverse data collection methods, and consideration of additional variables are needed to strengthen these findings.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding : Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that self-compassion and emotional regulation have a significant influence on psychological well-being. Working parents of children with special needs with high levels of self-compassion and emotional regulation tend to achieve better psychological well-being. In contrast, older people who work with low levels of self-compassion and emotional regulation tend to experience lower psychological well-being. The variables of self-compassion and emotional regulation simultaneously contributed 27.2% to psychological well-being, while 72.8% were influenced by other variables such as religiosity, gratitude, philanthropy, stress coping, and family support. **Implication :** This research offers practical benefits for working parents of children with special needs in achieving psychological well-being by improving self-compassion and emotional regulation through journaling or participating in training. Parents who develop self-compassion will be able to accept natural conditions and face life's challenges more calmly and positively, thereby increasing happiness. In addition, good emotion regulation abilities allow parents to manage and respond to emotional experiences more wisely, maintain a conducive mood, and behave positively in daily interactions. **Limitation :** This study is limited by the relatively small sample size and its focus on a specific demographic – working parents of children with special needs – which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. Additionally, the use of self-report questionnaires may be subject to response bias. **Future Research :** For future researchers, this study opens opportunities to explore other factors that affect the psychological well-being of working parents who have children with special needs or develop a theoretical model from this research.

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