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Experience of Becoming A Widow: A Case Study at Lima Puluh Kota District

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Objective: This study aims to explore the experiences of widowed women in Lima Puluh Kota District, focusing on social, psychological, and economic challenges they face. Method: A qualitative approach with a case study design was employed, utilizing primary data from widowed women and community leaders, along with secondary data from relevant documentation. Results: The findings reveal that widowed women in Lima Puluh Kota District experience profound emotional loss, social stigma, and changes in social roles, leading to feelings of isolation, anxiety, and insecurity. Economically, they face increased financial responsibilities, often relying on informal jobs or small businesses to meet their living needs. Despite these challenges, a process of recovery and self-empowerment is observed among some women. Novelty: This study provides a comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between social stigma, psychological adaptation, and economic resilience among widowed women, contributing to the limited literature on widowhood experiences in rural Indonesian contexts.

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INTRODUCTION

The experience of being a widow in society is often colored by stigma and complex social challenges. In the context of Indonesian society, especially in the Minangkabau region, the stigma against widows can serve as a barrier for them to reintegrate into society. Research by Jelly shows that there is a duality in the stigma experienced by widows, where they are often viewed in two conflicting ways: as individuals who deserve pity and as figures who have the potential to disrupt the harmony of other people's households [1]. This creates a difficult situation for widows to find their place in the existing social structure.

Furthermore, Sari and Wirdanengsih highlight how widows in Nagari Surian respond to the labeling they receive from society. This study shows that widows often have to struggle to build their identity amidst the negative stigma attached to their status [2]. Through in-depth observations and interviews, researchers found that widows' interactions with local communities were often filled with challenges, where they had to face prejudice and detrimental stereotypes. This shows that the experience of widowhood is not just about losing a partner, but also about facing ongoing social challenges.

From a psychological perspective, resilience is an important factor in the widow's experience. Afdal et al. studied the resilience of widows in dealing with various problems that arise after divorce or death of a spouse. This study found that widows who have strong social support tend to be better able to overcome difficulties and rebuild their lives [3]. This resilience is very important, considering that many widows have to play a dual

role as breadwinners and caregivers, which requires them to have high mental and emotional resilience.

In this context, social support from the community plays a major role in helping widows overcome the stigma and challenges they face. Shofi emphasized that support from the social environment can help reduce the stigma experienced by widows and give them space to adapt to their new status [4]. This support can come from a variety of sources, including family, friends, and community. When widows receive adequate support, they are better able to function socially and emotionally, and rebuild their identity after the loss of a spouse.

However, not all widows receive the same support. Halim et al. show that widows who experience divorce due to death often face different challenges compared to widows who are divorced alive. This study highlights how divorced widows try to maintain their family resilience amidst uncertain situations, often without sufficient support from society [5]. In many cases, widows feel isolated and marginalized, which can worsen their psychological condition.

The experience of being a widow can also be influenced by cultural and traditional factors. In societies that still hold firmly to patriarchal values, widows are often seen as individuals who have lost their social status. Research by Salsabila and Budhi shows that negative stigmas against widows, such as the assumption that they are seducers of other people's husbands, have existed for generations and are part of a larger social construction [6]. This suggests that to understand the experiences of widows, it is important to consider the broader cultural and social context.

Furthermore, research by Sudrajat et al. highlighted the factors that influence the resilience of elderly widows. This study shows that elderly widows often face additional challenges, such as health problems and physical limitations, which can affect their ability to adapt to their new lives [7]. In this context, social support becomes very important, as it can help elderly widows to stay connected to the community and reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation.

In an effort to empower widows, a participatory approach in research can also provide valuable insights. Afandi et al. emphasized the importance of involving widows in the community empowerment process, so that they can contribute and feel they have a role in society [8]. By involving widows in decision-making and empowerment programs, communities can help reduce stigma and improve the quality of life of widows. Widows in the context of marriage are not simply carried out without careful consideration. Islamic law teaches that marriage must be carried out with full consideration to avoid harm or damage to household life. For widowed women, this phenomenon often appears in various forms [9].

So, the experience of being a widow in society is a complex and challenging journey. From social stigma to the need to rebuild identity, widows often struggle to find their place in society. Social support, both from individuals and from the community, plays a vital role in helping widows cope with these challenges and build a new life after losing a spouse. Existing research suggests that with a better understanding of the

experiences of widows and the factors that influence their resilience, communities can be more effective in providing support and creating more inclusive environments for widows.

The challenges faced by widowed women at Lima Puluh Kota District, one of the main problems is the social stigma that widowed women often receive. Societies that still uphold traditional norms often view the status of widow as something shameful, leading to social isolation and discriminatory treatment towards them. This creates feelings of marginalization and difficulty in interacting with the social environment. In addition, changes in social roles experienced by widowed women are also a major problem. Many women have to adapt to dual roles as both mothers and heads of households, forcing them to bear a greater burden of responsibility. This process of adjustment often creates internal conflict and difficulties in managing their new roles in the family and society.

On the psychological side, the emotional impact caused by widowhood is very significant. Widowed women often face deep feelings of loneliness, loss, and anxiety, especially if they have lost their spouse through death. These feelings can lead to stress, depression and other psychological disorders, affecting their quality of life and well-being. Economic problems are also an important issue. Many widowed women experience a decline in economic status after losing their partner, because previously they often depended on their husband's income. This makes them have to struggle to meet the needs of their own lives and those of their families. Difficulties in accessing jobs that match their skills or education, as well as limited economic resources, exacerbate this situation.

In addition, even though there is support from family or social institutions, not all widows receive sufficient assistance. Some find it difficult to get the emotional and economic support they need, which further exacerbates the challenges they face. Therefore, this study aims to explore more deeply the experiences of widowed women at Lima Puluh Kota District, as well as to understand the factors that influence their lives after losing their partners, both in social, psychological, and economic aspects.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research method uses a qualitative approach with a case study design which aims to explore the experiences of women who become widows at Lima Puluh Kota District. This study focuses on an in-depth understanding of social phenomena occurring in society, especially regarding social, psychological, and economic changes experienced by widowed women. The case study approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore individual experiences in depth and understand the specific contexts that affect women who become widows at Lima Puluh Kota District. This approach provides a more detailed understanding of the dynamics of their lives after becoming widows, including the challenges faced in social, emotional, and economic aspects.

The data sources in this study consist of two main categories: 1). Primary Data Sources: Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with widowed women and community leaders who have knowledge or experience related to the research topic.

Widowed women were selected as the main informants to explore their personal experiences, while community leaders provided a broader perspective on social perceptions of widowed women in society. 2). Secondary Data Sources: Secondary data in the form of documentation related to the research topic, such as reports, articles, books, and archives that are relevant to the experience of being a widow, social norms, and socio-economic conditions at Lima Puluh Kota District. This documentation is used to support the findings from the primary data.

The data collection techniques used in this study are: 1). In-depth Interviews: Interviews were conducted with widowed women and community leaders to obtain indepth information about their life experiences, social views on widow status, and the psychological and social impacts they experience. 2). Participatory Observation: Researchers also observed social interactions in the community involving widowed women, to understand how they were treated and how their roles changed after becoming widows and 3). Documentation: Researchers collected relevant documents, such as social records, government reports, and articles discussing widowed women in the area, to explore the broader social context.

The data analysis technique used is thematic analysis, where researchers identify and organize themes that emerge from interviews and observations. The collected data are analyzed by: 1). Coding: Researchers code interviews and observations to identify certain patterns or themes related to the experiences of widowed women. 2). Categorization: After the codes are identified, researchers group the data into relevant categories, such as social, psychological, and economic impacts. 4). Interpretation: Researchers interpret the data by connecting existing findings with relevant theories and understanding the meaning contained in each theme.

To ensure the validity of the data, this study uses several techniques, including: 1). Source Triangulation: By comparing information obtained from various primary data sources (widows and community leaders) and secondary (documents), researchers can validate findings and ensure data consistency. 2). Member Check: After the interview was conducted, the researcher returned the interview results to the informant to verify the accuracy of the information provided and ensure that the researcher's interpretation was in accordance with the informant's experience and 3). Continuous Observation: Direct and continuous observation of the social situation in the field was also carried out to verify data and explore further information regarding the dynamics occurring in society.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Forms of Experience of Women Who Become Widows at Lima Puluh Kota District

This study explores the experiences of women who become widows at Lima Puluh Kota District, which are often marked by social, emotional, and economic challenges. Many women in this area experience major changes in their lives after becoming widows, either due to divorce or the death of a spouse. In general, the experiences of widowed women include changes in their social status and self-identity in a society that still

adheres to traditional norms . Some women expressed feelings of loneliness and loss, but they also expressed a fairly long process of adjustment. In some cases, widowed women at Lima Puluh Kota District were forced to take on dual roles, both as mothers and as heads of households. This experience leads to feelings of independence but also burdened with great responsibility. Family and community support play a significant role in shaping this experience, with some women feeling empowered, while others feel marginalized and excluded.

The experiences of women who become widows at Lima Puluh Kota District reflect a variety of complex social, economic, and cultural aspects. In this context, widows often face significant challenges, both in terms of social stigma and in terms of meeting their daily needs. Research shows that widowed women often experience marginalization and negative stereotypes that impact their social interactions. For example, in a study conducted in Sailong Village, the labeling of young widows showed that despite the negative stigma, many women were able to prove that the label did not reflect their abilities [10]. This shows that the experiences of widows are not only influenced by their status, but also by how society views them.

Furthermore, widowed women at Lima Puluh Kota District often have to struggle to meet their economic needs. In this context, research shows that women who are widows are often involved in informal economic activities, such as trading, to support themselves and their children [11]. Research at Sinjai Central Market shows that widows who work as traders face unique challenges, including income uncertainty and lack of social support [11]. This creates additional stress for them, who often have to play the dual role of breadwinner and child care provider.

The psychological aspect of the experience of being a widow cannot be ignored either. Many widowed women experience feelings of loss and loneliness after losing their partners, which can affect their mental health [12]. Research on Toba Batak Christian women shows that they often feel stressed by the new responsibilities they have to shoulder after losing their husbands, including educating their children alone [12]. This shows that the experience of being a widow not only impacts the economic aspect, but also the emotional and psychological well-being of women.

In a cultural context, widowed women are often trapped in patriarchal norms that limit their freedom. Research shows that patriarchal culture is still strong in many areas in Indonesia, including Lima Puluh Kota District, which often considers widowed women as less valuable individuals [13]. This can hinder their ability to actively participate in society and access the resources they need to survive. Research on the transformation of rural women's roles shows that despite challenges, many widowed women strive to challenge these norms and find ways to empower themselves [13].

In addition, the experiences of widowed women are also influenced by external factors such as government policies and support from social institutions. Research shows that access to legal services and social protection is essential for widowed women to protect their rights and get the support they need [14]. Legal Aid Institutions, for example, play a vital role in providing assistance to women who experience violence and

discrimination, including widows who may face legal challenges [14]. This suggests that institutional support can help widowed women overcome the challenges they face.

In terms of social interactions, widowed women often find themselves in a difficult position. They may face stigma from society that considers them as "unlucky women" or "women who cannot take care of their husbands" [15]. However, research also shows that many widowed women are able to build support networks among fellow widows, which can help them overcome the challenges they face [15]. This shows that despite stigma, there is also potential for solidarity and support among women who share similar experiences.

Furthermore, the experiences of widowed women can also be influenced by their education and awareness of their rights. Research shows that women who have access to education are more likely to understand and fight for their rights, including the right to legal protection and access to economic resources [16]. Therefore, it is important to increase education and awareness among widowed women so that they can be more independent and empowered.

In a broader context, the experiences of widowed women at Lima Puluh Kota District reflect the complex gender dynamics in Indonesia. Research shows that despite progress in terms of gender equality, many women still face significant challenges in terms of access to resources and legal protection [13]. This shows that there is still work to be done to ensure that widowed women can live with dignity and get the support they need to succeed.

Thus, the experiences of women who become widows at Lima Puluh Kota District are a reflection of the various challenges faced by women in a patriarchal society. Although they often face stigma and economic challenges, many widowed women demonstrate resilience and the ability to adapt to their circumstances. Social support, education and access to legal services are key factors that can help widowed women overcome these challenges and build better lives for themselves and their children.

Social and Psychological Impacts Experienced by Women Who Become Widows at Lima Puluh Kota District

The social and psychological impact is one aspect that is very much felt by widowed women at Lima Puluh Kota District. Socially, women who become widows often face negative stigma from society. Conservative societal views sometimes give rise to prejudices that widowed women no longer have the same value or dignity as before. This causes some women to experience social isolation and marginalization from their social groups. They often feel ashamed or reluctant to interact with others, especially in environments that highly value family and marriage norms. Psychologically, widowed women often experience a deep sense of loss, especially if they lose their spouse through death. Feelings of anxiety and stress related to their future and that of their children are also unavoidable burdens. Some women report that feelings of loneliness and emotional disrespect weigh heavily on them, but others feel a sense of freedom and strength in living their post-marriage lives, despite the enormous challenges they face.

The social and psychological impacts experienced by women who become widows

at Lima Puluh Kota District are complex and multifaceted issues. In this context, widowed women often face significant challenges, both socially and psychologically. Research shows that widowhood can affect an individual's psychological well-being, which is often related to social stigma and changing roles in society. In many cases, widowed women experience deep feelings of loss, loneliness, and anxiety, which can contribute to mental health problems such as depression and anxiety [17], [18].

One of the most striking social impacts is the stigma attached to widowed women. In many cultures, including Indonesia, widowed women are often viewed negatively. They may be considered worthless or unfit to remarry, which can lead to social isolation. Research shows that women who experience domestic violence, which often results in divorce or loss of a partner, are more likely to experience psychological disorders such as depression and anxiety [17]. This is compounded by a lack of social support, which often makes it challenging for widowed women to rebuild their lives.

From a psychological perspective, widowed women often experience deep emotional trauma due to the loss of a spouse. Research shows that the loss of a spouse can trigger strong psychological reactions, including prolonged feelings of sadness, guilt, and anxiety about the future [19]. In addition, widowed women often have to face new responsibilities, such as taking care of children without the support of a spouse, which can add to their emotional and psychological burden [11]. In this context, it is important to understand that social support and psychological interventions can play a vital role in helping widowed women cope with these challenges.

Economic impact is also an important factor influencing the welfare of widowed women. Many widowed women face financial difficulties after losing a spouse, which can worsen their psychological condition. Studies show that widowed women often do not have sufficient sources of income to meet their and their children's basic needs, which can lead to greater stress and anxiety [11], [20]. In many cases, widowed women must seek employment in the informal sector, which often does not provide adequate financial stability.

In addition, widowed women also often experience changes in their social relationships. Friends and family members may distance themselves because of stigma or lack of understanding about the situation they are facing. Research shows that strong social support can help mitigate the negative impact of spousal loss, but many widowed women do not have access to the necessary support networks [11]. In this regard, it is important to create a supportive and inclusive environment for widowed women, so that they can feel accepted and valued in society.

From a cultural perspective, widowed women are often trapped in patriarchal norms that limit their freedom and choices. In many cases, widowed women are expected to remain faithful to the memory of their partners, which can prevent them from seeking happiness or new relationships. Research shows that women who experience domestic violence or lose a partner often feel trapped in restrictive traditional roles, which can worsen their psychological condition [17]. Therefore, it is important to educate the community about the importance of respecting the choices of widowed women and

providing the necessary support to help them rebuild their lives.

The psychological well-being of widowed women can also be influenced by factors such as religiosity and spiritual practices. Research shows that many widowed women find comfort and support in their religious practices, which can help them cope with grief and anxiety [21]. However, not all widowed women have access or desire to engage in religious practices, which can lead to feelings of alienation and loss of meaning in their lives. Therefore, it is important to understand the role of religiosity in the lives of widowed women and how it may affect their psychological well-being.

In the context of intervention, it is important to develop support programs specifically designed to meet the needs of widowed women. These programs may include psychological counseling, skills training, and economic support to help widowed women rebuild their lives. Research shows that interventions that focus on women's empowerment can help improve their psychological and social well-being [20]. Additionally, it is important to involve the community in supporting widowed women, so that they do not feel alone in their struggle.

Thus, the social and psychological impacts experienced by widowed women at Lima Puluh Kota District are complex issues that require appropriate attention and intervention. By understanding the challenges faced by widowed women, we can work towards creating more supportive and inclusive environments, where they can feel valued and have the opportunity to rebuild their lives. Further research is needed to explore the experiences of widowed women and develop effective strategies to support them in their recovery process.

Changes in the Economic Status of Women Who Become Widows at Lima Puluh Kota District

Changes in economic status after becoming a widow are a crucial issue experienced by women at Lima Puluh Kota District. Many women experience a decline in their economic status after losing their spouse. Most of them previously relied on their husband's income, so after divorce or the death of a spouse, they have to find ways to meet their own and their family's needs. Some women find it difficult to access jobs that match their skills and education, while others face difficulties in earning adequate income. However, there are also widowed women who have managed to adjust to their new economic situation. They started small businesses, such as trading or processing local products, to support the family economy. Support from social or government institutions, such as social assistance or skills training, also helps most widowed women to increase their economic independence. However, overall, the experiences of widowed women at Lima Puluh Kota District related to economic change are often marked by uncertainty and ongoing challenges in seeking economic stability.

Changes in the economic status of women who become widows at Lima Puluh Kota District are a complex social phenomenon and are influenced by various factors, including culture, economy, and social policies. In this context, it is important to understand how widowhood can affect women's economic and social conditions, and how women adapt to these changes.

Widowhood often carries significant social stigma, which can impact women's ability to participate in economic activities. According to research by Nisa and Koentjoro, divorced women often face challenges in maintaining their economic life, especially in societies that still strongly adhere to patriarchal norms that view divorce negatively [22]. This is reinforced by research by Muardini et al., which shows that young women who become widows experience significant socio-economic impacts, including difficulties in meeting their basic needs [23].

On the other hand, there is also potential for widowed women to improve their economic status through empowerment and access to resources. For example, Iqbal et al. highlighted that women in villages have the potential to utilize natural resources as a way to improve their family's economy [13]. With training and support from social institutions, widowed women can transform from a marginalized position to being more economically independent. This is in line with research by Wulandari and Laksono, which shows that women in rural areas can contribute significantly to the family economy through involvement in creative economic activities [24].

Changes in the economic status of widowed women are also closely related to education and skills. Research by Pratiwi shows that education and skills training can provide women with better access to employment opportunities, which in turn can improve their economic status [25]. In the context of Lima Puluh Kota District, where the agricultural and creative economy sectors are the mainstay, women who have skills in these fields can adapt more easily and increase their income [26].

However, challenges remain. Siregar noted that although there have been positive changes in society's views towards working women, there are still obstacles to be faced, such as lack of support from family and society [27]. In addition, the economic pressures faced by widowed women are often greater, especially if they have children to support. This indicates the need for greater intervention from government and non-governmental organizations to support widowed women in accessing economic resources and opportunities.

Women's involvement in the economic sector can also contribute to broader social change. According to research by Fatimah et al., women who participate in economic activities tend to have greater influence in decision-making within the household, which can lead to increased overall family welfare [28]. This shows that the economic empowerment of widowed women is not only beneficial for them individually, but also for society as a whole.

In the context of Lima Puluh Kota District, the agricultural sector, especially in the processing of gambir, is a significant source of income. Research by Cahyaningrum shows that widowed women can utilize this sector to improve their economic status, even though they have to face challenges from the still strong patriarchal system [29]. Therefore, it is important to develop programs that support widowed women in accessing the training and resources needed to participate in this sector.

Overall, changes in the economic status of women who become widows at Lima Puluh Kota District reflect complex dynamics between social, economic, and cultural factors. Despite significant challenges, there are also opportunities for empowerment and economic improvement through education, training and social support. It is therefore important for all stakeholders to work together to create an enabling environment for widowed women to thrive and contribute positively to society.

So, in order to achieve this goal, there needs to be a policy that is more inclusive and responsive to the needs of widowed women. This includes providing access to education and skills training, financial support, and removing the social stigma that often prevents widowed women from participating in economic activities. With a holistic and integrated approach, it is hoped that widowed women at Lima Puluh Kota District can experience better and more sustainable changes in their economic status.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding: This study reveals that widowed women in Lima Puluh Kota District face significant social stigma, emotional distress, and economic challenges, influencing their social interactions, psychological well-being, and financial independence. Despite these adversities, some women demonstrate resilience through self-empowerment and economic adaptation. Implication: These findings highlight the need for targeted social, emotional, and economic support programs to enhance the well-being and empowerment of widowed women. Community awareness initiatives are also essential to reduce social stigma. Limitation: This study is limited by its qualitative approach and case study design, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other regions. Future Research: Further studies should employ quantitative methods or comparative analyses across different cultural contexts to provide a more comprehensive understanding of widowhood experiences and to develop effective intervention strategies.

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