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The Effect of Spiritual Well-Being, Social Support, and Gratitude on Hardiness among Parents of Children with Special Needs

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Abstract

Parents of children with special needs face complex psychological stressors that can challenge their resilience and well-being. Understanding the factors that enhance parental psychological hardiness is crucial for designing effective support strategies. This study aimed to examine the simultaneous influence of spiritual well-being, social support, and gratitude on the hardiness of parents with special needs children. A cross-sectional quantitative design was employed, involving 120 parents of children with special needs. Data were collected using validated instruments to assess spiritual well-being, social support, gratitude, and hardiness, and analyzed through multiple linear regression. The results indicate that all three factors significantly contribute to parental hardiness, with gratitude emerging as the strongest predictor, followed by spiritual well-being and social support. These findings highlight that hardiness is shaped by the interaction of internal strengths, such as emotional regulation and meaning-making, and external resources, including social and community support. The study underscores the importance of holistic interventions that integrate gratitude practices, spiritual reflection, and the reinforcement of social support networks to strengthen psychological hardiness among parents caring for children with special needs.

Keywords

Children with Special Needs, Gratitude, Hardiness of Parents, Social Support, Spiritual Well-Being.

1. Introduction

Parents of Children with Special Needs (CSN) face unique and complex challenges in their daily lives. The responsibility of caring for a child, encompassing physical, emotional, and educational aspects, often imposes significant and chronic psychological stress. Contributing factors include uncertainty regarding the child's future, limited access to specialized services, social stigma, and the need to adjust family lifestyles, which may negatively affect parenting quality, family relationships, and parental well-being (Trisnowati, 2020). Bagereka et al. (2023) indicate that caregivers of individuals with disabilities experience high psychological burden and highlight the importance of psychosocial resources in facilitating adaptation. Hardiness, defined as the ability to perceive stress as a manageable challenge, is critical for enhancing parental hardiness (Chen, 2020).

Empirical research demonstrates that resilience or hardiness is influenced not only by personality traits but also by psychosocial and environmental factors that support coping and emotional recovery (Taher et al., 2025). Understanding modifiable determinants of hardiness among parents of CSN is therefore essential for developing effective supportive interventions (Bagereka et al., 2023). Previous studies indicate that spirituality and social support play crucial roles in helping individuals manage stress and build psychological hardiness (Bahrami & Sadeghi, 2025). Spiritual well-being, encompassing feelings of connection to a higher power, life meaning, and hope, provides an emotional and moral foundation for parents facing caregiving challenges (Alsubaie, 2020; Sit et al., 2020).

Similarly, social support from partners, extended family, friends, and the community serves as an external resource that can reduce isolation and enhance a sense of competence (Schutter et al., 2025). Evidence from international caregiving studies suggests that spiritual well-being significantly contributes to hardiness and psychological adjustment, while broader research demonstrates its positive association with mental health outcomes across populations (Güldeş & Karşlı, 2023). In collectivistic societies, where spiritual values are embedded in cultural life, this dimension may play an even more prominent role in shaping psychological endurance (Smith, 2020; Pargament, 2020).

Social support is another fundamental protective factor. Assistance from family, peers, and community members provides emotional reinforcement, practical help, and informational resources that buffer stress and enhance coping capacity (Lazarus, 2017). Research consistently shows that perceived social support is associated with improved psychological well-being and hardiness among caregivers and general populations. In the context of parenting children with special needs, community and family support networks strengthen caregiving confidence and reduce isolation, emphasizing the importance of interpersonal resources in hardiness formation (Supriyadi, 2020; Goodwin & Kraft, 2022).

In addition to these well-established factors, gratitude has emerged as a promising but relatively underexplored psychological variable in hardiness research. Gratitude, defined as the disposition to recognize and appreciate positive aspects of life despite adversity, is associated with higher life satisfaction, reduced stress, and stronger emotional adaptation (Wood, 2010). Empirical evidence shows that gratitude-based practices can foster hardiness and emotional well-being in caregiving contexts and are linked with emotional regulation and adaptive outlooks (Pargament, 2020). These findings align with the broaden-and-build perspective, which posits that positive emotions expand psychological resources and coping repertoires over time (Park, 2023).

Although extensive research has examined spiritual well-being, social support, and gratitude independently, studies investigating their simultaneous contributions to parental hardiness remain limited, particularly in the Indonesian context (Lee,

2021). Existing literature emphasizes the need for culturally contextualized models that integrate internal emotional strengths and external relational resources to better understand hardiness among caregivers of children with disabilities (Krause, 2020). This study aims to examine the combined influence of spiritual well-being, social support, and gratitude on the hardiness of parents of children with special needs in West Java. By identifying the relative contributions of these psychosocial factors, the study seeks to provide an empirical basis for developing more holistic and contextually appropriate psychological support programs for families of children with special needs.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. The Effect of Spiritual Well-Being on Hardiness

Spiritual well-being refers to a state in which individuals experience a sense of purpose in life, meaning in existence, and a connection to something greater than themselves, which is often associated with positive psychological functioning (Pargament, 1997). According to the hardiness framework, spiritual well-being acts as a protective factor that enhances an individual's capacity to cope with stress and adversity (Alinejad et al., 2025). Spiritual well-being provides individuals with a meaningful interpretative framework that can transform stressful events from threatening to manageable challenges, a central characteristic of hardiness. Empirical work on spiritual experience and psychological adjustment shows that daily spiritual experiences significantly correlate with adaptive psychological outcomes, including enhanced well-being and reduced distress, suggesting that spiritual practices may bolster hardiness processes (Captari et al., 2022).

Research examining the relationship between spiritual well-being and hardiness suggests a positive association between spiritual dimensions and the capacity to cope with life stressors. In a correlational study involving patients with type 2 diabetes mellitus, Hosseini et al. (2022) found that higher levels of spiritual well-being were significantly associated with greater hardiness scores, indicating that individuals with stronger spiritual well-being reported better psychological hardiness in managing chronic health challenges. This aligns with broader psychological literature. Dubey et al. (2025) stated that spirituality, encompassing meaning, connection to a transcendent source, and personal beliefs, is robustly linked with improved mental health and coping capacities across diverse populations.

H1: Spiritual well-being has a significant effect on hardiness.

2.2. The Effect of Social Support on Hardiness

According to Rui and Guo (2023), the stress-buffering model, social support functions as a critical resource that mitigates the negative effects of stress by providing emotional, informational, and instrumental assistance. Social support has been consistently identified as a key psychosocial resource that enhances individuals' capacity to cope with stress and adversity. Research by Hamaideh et al. (2024) and Suhartini et al. (2025) focusing on hardiness and well-being among nursing students found that hardiness (a construct closely related to hardiness) was positively correlated with levels of perceived social support, demonstrating that students reporting higher social support also exhibited greater capacity to adapt to life. Complementary studies indicate that perceived social support from family, friends, and significant others fosters psychological stability and well-being, which in turn strengthens an individual's ability to meet life's demands and maintain psychological endurance.

In the context of hardiness, social support serves both emotional and instrumental roles that buffer stress effects and reinforce adaptive coping. Research

among adolescents living in institutional settings demonstrated that caregiver social support significantly predicted hardiness outcomes, with higher social support associated with higher levels of hardiness (Feeney & Collins, 2025). Social support functions by enhancing individuals' sense of belonging, self-efficacy, and problem-solving resources, which promote the three core dimensions of hardiness: commitment, control, and challenge. Collectively, these findings underscore that robust social networks are foundational external resources that contribute to psychological resilience and hardiness.

H2: Social support has a significant effect on hardiness.

2.3. The Effect of Gratitude on Hardiness

From a theoretical standpoint, gratitude is conceptualized as a positive emotion that broadens individuals' cognitive and behavioral repertoire, facilitating adaptive coping and psychological growth mechanisms central to models like the broaden-and-build theory. Wood et al. (2010) show that gratitude practices are linked with improved psychological well-being, increased positive affect, and reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety, all of which are supportive of resilient functioning.

Although direct research linking gratitude specifically with hardiness is limited, evidence from hardiness research suggests that gratitude has a meaningful relationship with psychological hardiness, a concept closely related to hardiness. Studies examining the relationship between gratitude and hardiness among university students have reported a high positive correlation, with gratitude significantly associated with stronger hardiness outcomes (Emmons & McCullough, 2023). This pattern aligns with broader findings that individuals who cultivate gratitude tend to experience greater emotional adaptability, higher life satisfaction, and more effective coping strategies in the face of stress. When integrated into theories of hardiness, these emotional and cognitive benefits of gratitude, such as a strengthened positive outlook and enhanced emotional regulation, suggest that gratitude may contribute to the internal strengths that support hardiness, even if this relationship has been less directly studied.

H3: Gratitude has a significant effect on hardiness.

2.4. Simultaneous of Spiritual Well-Being, Social Support, and Gratitude

Emerging research increasingly points to the significance of integrative models that consider multiple psychosocial factors influencing psychological hardiness. For example, studies focused on hardiness frameworks in higher education reveal that spirituality, social support, and gratitude are each positively related to adaptive psychological outcomes, including hardiness and well-being, through both direct and mediated pathways (Yang et al., 2025). Krause (2020) found that spirituality, social support, and gratitude together predicted higher levels of happiness and psychological adaptability, indicating the synergistic role these factors play as psychosocial resources (Krause, 2020). Although this research did not measure hardiness per se, it illustrates how these resources interact to promote psychological adjustment and hardiness.

In the context of hardiness research among parents of children with special needs, integrative empirical work remains limited but promising. A study examining predictors of hardiness among parents with special needs children reported that spiritual well-being, perceived social support, and gratitude collectively explained a significant proportion of variance in hardiness scores, underscoring the value of considering these factors in combination rather than isolation (Supriyadi, 2020). Conceptually, spiritual well-being provides meaning and purpose, social support offers relational and emotional backing, and gratitude enhances positive emotional

experiences, together forming a multi-layered resource system that supports the cognitive appraisals and coping strategies central to hardiness. This integrative perspective aligns with hardiness theory, which posits that both internal dispositions and external resources interact to shape adaptive coping and stress transformation.

H3: Social well-being, social support, and gratitude have a significant simultaneous effect on hardiness.

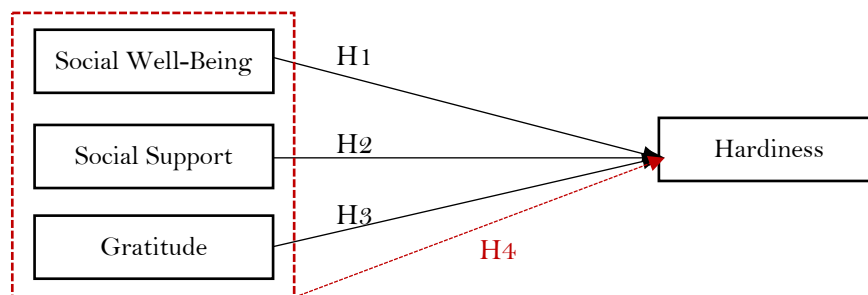


Figure 1. Research Framework

Figure 1 illustrates the research model examining the effects of several variables on hardiness. The independent variables include social well-being, social support, and gratitude, each of which is tested partially through hypotheses H1, H2, and H3. Additionally, hypothesis H4 tests the simultaneous influence of these three variables on hardiness. The arrows from each variable to hardiness indicate the assumed direction of influence in this model.

3. Methods

This research employs a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design, allowing for data collection at a single point in time to examine the relationships between variables. This approach is suitable for testing the simultaneous relationships of several independent variables with one dependent variable, without the need for long-term observation. The focus of the study is to analyze the relationship between spiritual well-being, social support, and gratitude towards hardiness in parents of children with special needs (*Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus/ABK*). The sampling was conducted purposively, involving 120 parents of ABK at SLB Asih Soreang, Bandung Regency. Inclusion criteria included mothers aged 25–60 years who have cared for a child with special needs for at least two years. This school was chosen because it has a sufficient population of ABK students and active parental participation, making the data obtained representative.

Data were collected using four instruments that have been validated for validity and reliability, including: the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS) used to measure religious and existential spiritual well-being; the Duke Social Support Index (DSSI) which evaluates emotional and instrumental social support; gratitude measured by the Gratitude Questionnaire version GQ-6; and hardiness measured by the Dispositional Resilience Scale DRS-15 ($\alpha=0.89$), which includes aspects of commitment, control, and challenge.

Data analysis was performed using multiple linear regression with the help of SPSS version 25.0 to examine the relationships of the three independent variables with hardiness. This study employed multiple linear regression analysis to examine the effects of social support, spiritual well-being, and gratitude on the dependent variable. Prior to the analysis, the data were tested for instrument validity and reliability as well as classical regression assumptions, including multicollinearity, heteroscedasticity, and residual normality. The regression results were then

analyzed to assess both the partial and simultaneous effects of the independent variables, as well as the strength of the relationships and the contribution of each variable using R^2 and the F-test. This research has undergone ethical testing at Aisyiyah University Bandung with Number 1366/KEP. 01/UNISA-BANDUNG/VI/2025.

4. Results

This study involved 120 respondents who were parents of children with special needs at SLB Asih Soreang. Respondents were selected to provide information relevant to the variables examined in this study. The demographic characteristics of the participants were analyzed to describe the sample profile. The detailed distribution of respondents based on these characteristics is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	25-35 Years	38	31.7
	36-45 Years	52	43.3
	46-60 Years	30	25.0
Education	High School	65	54.2
	Diploma /Strata	55	45.8
Gender	Male	22	18.3
	Female	98	81.7
Duration of Caring for Children with Disabilities	2-5 Years	44	36.7
	>5 Years	76	63.3

Table 1 presents the characteristics of the 120 respondents included in this study. Most respondents were aged 36–45 years (52; 43.3%), followed by those aged 25–35 years (38; 31.7%) and 46–60 years (30; 25.0%). In terms of educational level, the majority had completed high school (65; 54.2%), while 55 respondents (45.8%) had a diploma or higher education degree. Based on gender, most respondents were female (98; 81.7%), whereas 22 respondents (18.3%) were male. Regarding the duration of caring for children with disabilities, the majority had been providing care for more than five years (76; 63.3%), while 44 respondents (36.7%) had been caring for 2–5 years.

Table 2. Validity Test (Corrected Item–Total Correlation)

Variable	Instrument	Item	Range Corrected Item–Total Correlation	Cronbach Alpha
Spiritual Well-Being	SWBS	20	0.41 – 0.73	0.87
Social Support	DSSI	11	0.38 – 0.69	0.81
Gratitude	GQ-6	6	0.44 – 0.71	0.79
Hardiness	DRS-15	15	0.40 – 0.75	0.89

Table 2 presents the results of the validity and reliability tests for the instruments used in this study. The spiritual well-being showed corrected item–total correlation values ranging from 0.41 to 0.73 with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87. The social support had correlation values between 0.38 and 0.69 with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.81. The gratitude demonstrated correlation values ranging from 0.44 to 0.71 with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.79, while the hardiness showed correlation values between 0.40 and 0.75 with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89. All instruments demonstrated acceptable validity and good reliability, indicating that they were appropriate for use in this study.

Table 3. Classical Assumption Test

Variable	Multicollinearity Test		Heteroscedasticity Test	Normality Test
	Tolerance	VIF	Sig.	Asymp. Sig (2-tailed)
Spiritual Well-Being	0.71	1.41	0.214	0.200
Social Support	0.69	1.45	0.327	
Gratitude	0.74	1.36	0.189	

Table 3 presents the results of the classical assumption tests. The multicollinearity test shows tolerance values of 0.71, 0.69, and 0.74 and VIF values of 1.41, 1.45, and 1.36 for spiritual well-being, social support, and gratitude, respectively. Since all tolerance values are greater than 0.10 and all VIF values are below 10, the results indicate that multicollinearity is not present among the independent variables. The Glejser test also indicates no heteroscedasticity, as the significance values for social support ($p = 0.214$), spiritual well-being ($p = 0.327$), and gratitude ($p = 0.189$) are all greater than 0.05. Furthermore, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test shows a significance value of 0.200 ($p > 0.05$), indicating that the residuals are normally distributed. These results confirm that the regression model meets the classical assumption requirements.

Table 4. Multiple Linear Regression Test

Variable	B	Standardized Beta	t-statistics	Sig.
Constant	12.541	–	–	–
Social Support	0.28	0.25	2.71	0.008
Spiritual Well-Being	0.35	0.31	3.19	0.002
Gratitude	0.47	0.42	4.83	<0.001

Table 4 presents the results of the multiple linear regression analysis examining the effects of social support, spiritual well-being, and gratitude on the dependent variable. The constant value was 12.541. Social support showed a positive and significant effect ($t = 2.71$; $p = 0.008$), indicating that higher social support is associated with higher levels of the outcome variable. Spiritual well-being also demonstrated a positive and significant effect ($t = 3.19$; $p = 0.002$). Meanwhile, gratitude had the strongest positive and significant influence among the independent variables ($t = 4.83$; $p < 0.001$). These findings indicate that social support, spiritual well-being, and gratitude significantly contribute to the dependent variable in this study.

Table 5. Model Summary and F-Test

Test	Result
R	0.825
R Square	0.680
Adjusted R-Square	0.670
Std. Error of Estimate	3.214
F-Statistics	39.82
Sig	<0.001

Table 5 presents the summary of the regression model and the results of the F-test. The correlation coefficient (R) was 0.825, indicating a strong relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The R Square value of 0.680 shows that 68.0% of the variance in the dependent variable can be explained by social support, spiritual well-being, and gratitude, while the remaining 32.0% is influenced by other variables not included in the model. The Adjusted R Square value

was 0.670, with a standard error of estimate of 3.214. Additionally, the F-statistic was 39.82 ($p < 0.001$), indicating that the regression model is statistically significant and that the independent variables collectively have a significant effect on the dependent variable.

5. Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the three independent variables, gratitude, spiritual well-being, and social support, collectively contribute significantly to enhancing hardiness or psychological hardiness among parents of children with special needs, with the model explaining 68% of the variability in hardiness. These findings highlight that psychological hardiness is not solely determined by personality or biological factors but is also strongly influenced by psychosocial conditions shaped through spiritual experiences, interpersonal relationships, and the continuous development of a positive mindset.

Gratitude emerged as the strongest predictor, exerting a significant positive effect on psychological hardiness. This finding aligns with Fredrickson's (2024) Broaden-and-Build theory, which posits that positive emotions such as gratitude not only provide temporary comfort but also broaden cognitive perspectives and build long-term psychological resources, including hardiness, optimism, and adaptive flexibility. Parents with high levels of gratitude demonstrate better capacities to interpret challenges positively, find deeper meaning in caregiving experiences, and maintain realistic hope. Prior studies by Wood (2010) emphasize that gratitude is positively correlated with subjective well-being, even under highly stressful conditions, while Chen (2020) found that parents who actively practice gratitude, such as through gratitude journaling or meditation, tend to experience lower stress levels and greater hardiness in caring for autistic children. The ability to cultivate gratitude in difficult contexts functions as a form of positive reframing, interpreting negative experiences constructively, which is particularly relevant in the Indonesian cultural context, where values of sincerity, acceptance, and religious expression are prominent. Therefore, gratitude serves as a significant emotional regulation mechanism that strengthens internal hardiness.

Social support also demonstrates a significant positive effect, although its contribution is lower than that of gratitude. As an external resource, social support mitigates stress and enhances perceived control. In the collectivistic society of Indonesia, support from family, peers, and religious communities provides an important buffer for parents of CSN. Lazarus (2017) notes that social support reduces stress impacts through both direct effects (enhancing overall well-being) and buffering effects (shielding individuals from the negative consequences of stress). Emotional, instrumental, and informational support enables parents to feel less isolated and reinforces self-efficacy in caregiving roles. Similarly, Supriyadi (2020) found that active social engagement in parental or peer groups enhances confidence and parenting competence, though its effectiveness is maximized when combined with internal readiness and acceptance.

Spiritual well-being also exerts a significant positive effect on hardiness. Encompassing both religious dimensions (relationship with God) and existential dimensions (meaning, purpose, hope), spiritual well-being allows parents to interpret suffering as part of a divine plan or life's learning path, thereby reinforcing hope and perseverance (Zimet, 2024). Dewi (2021) highlights that spirituality helps individuals construct a personal narrative of their experiences, including suffering, thereby fostering self-integrity and a sense of life's meaningfulness. In the religious culture of Indonesia, spiritual meaning is embedded not only in personal domains but also in social structures, rituals, and collective norms, making spiritual well-being a foundational source of psychological strengthening.

Psychological hardiness among parents of CSN arises from a harmonious combination of gratitude as internal strength, spiritual well-being as a source of meaning and hope, and social support as an external pillar (Laili et al., 2022). The significant contributions of all three factors underscore the importance of a multidimensional approach in promoting parental well-being and reaffirm that psychosocial factors are as crucial as biological and personality factors in fostering hardiness.

The differences between this study and Kim (2020) in South Korea, where social support is the primary predictor, underscore the importance of cultural context. In Korea, performance-oriented values and institutional support are prioritized, whereas in Indonesia, spirituality and patience are emphasized in family responses to social pressures (Worthington, 2024). These findings indicate that psychosocial interventions for parents of children with special needs should integrate gratitude training and positive reframing through journaling or acceptance-based therapy, strengthen social networks via parenting communities or support groups, and incorporate spiritual-transpersonal approaches, such as value-based life counseling or logotherapy, tailored to individual beliefs and meaningful experiences (Smith, 2020).

6. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that gratitude, spiritual well-being, and social support collectively play a significant role in enhancing psychological hardiness among parents of children with special needs. Gratitude emerged as the strongest predictor, indicating that cultivating positive emotions and the ability to reframe challenges constructively substantially strengthens internal hardiness. Spiritual well-being also contributes significantly by enabling parents to find meaning, hope, and perseverance in the face of caregiving difficulties. Meanwhile, social support functions as a critical external buffer, allowing parents to feel supported, connected, and more confident in fulfilling their caregiving roles. These findings underscore that psychological hardiness develops through the dynamic interaction of internal strengths and external resources, emphasizing that psychosocial factors are as crucial as biological and personality traits.

The implications of this study suggest that interventions should adopt a holistic and culturally sensitive approach, integrating gratitude practices, spiritual reflection, and the enhancement of social support through parenting communities, support groups, or broader social networks. Limitations include reliance on self-reported data and a sample confined to a specific cultural context, which may restrict generalizability. Future research could expand to diverse cultural and socioeconomic settings, examine longitudinal effects, or explore additional psychosocial factors influencing hardiness. The findings reinforce previous studies highlighting the importance of positive emotions, spiritual meaning, and social support in fostering hardiness. Programs for parents of children with special needs should therefore address all three dimensions simultaneously to maximize psychological well-being and adaptive coping in the ongoing challenges of caregiving.

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval and Originality Statement

Ethical approval was obtained for this study. The manuscript represents original work and has not been previously published, nor is it under consideration by another journal.

Data Disclosure Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.



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