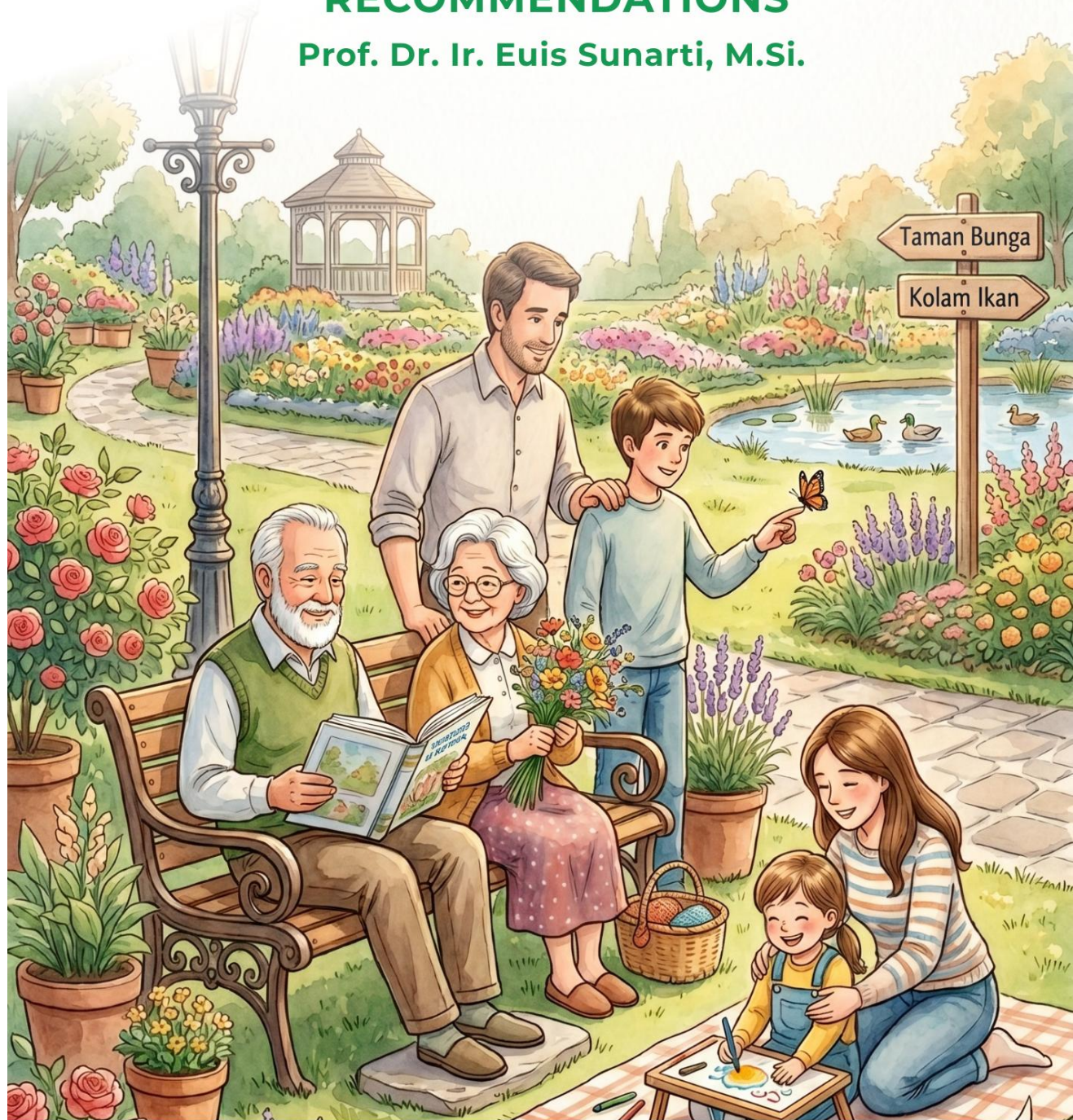


# MENTAL HEALTH IN THE FAMILY ECOSYSTEM PERSPECTIVE: INTRODUCTION, PREVENTION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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**INTRODUCTION: SCOPE OF DISCUSSION**

This paper discusses several main topics, beginning with the phenomenon of family mental health problems, including the basic definitions and scope, categories, causes, and impacts of mental health problems, as well as the concept of the “iceberg phenomenon,” which illustrates the large number of unseen mental health cases. The next topic discusses mental health from the perspective of the family ecosystem. This section elaborates on the individual and family micro-ecosystem (resilience, interaction, and stress management), as well as the meso-exo system of family-friendly communities, which play an important role in supporting the mental health of every family member.

As a recommendation, this paper discusses the importance of strengthening the meso system and the ecosystem of family-friendly communities that can provide environments and social support to improve overall family mental well-being. The next topic briefly describes mindful life as a continuum ranging from philosophical aspects to practical mitigation of mental health problems. The final section discusses family intervention programs for mental health promotion. This section includes:

1. youth and family mental health in Indonesia: key facts,
2. the family as the main system in shaping children’s development and mental health,
3. empowered and resilient families as the key drivers in reducing stigma and promoting mental health,
4. family interventions in mental health promotion, and

5. the importance of education for parents regarding mental health in order to increase awareness for prevention efforts and early intervention.

This paper on family mental health is partly based on materials presented by the author at various seminars and webinars over the past several years, including:

- “Family Intervention for Mental Health Promotion” at the *International Course on Public Mental Health*, organized by the Center for Public Mental Health, Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Gadjah Mada (October 29, 2025);
- Seminar “Let’s Talk about Family Mental Health,” organized by the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences, Faculty of Human Ecology, IPB University (February 15, 2025);
- “Family Mental Health” at the National Jamboree of the Family Activists Association (GiGa) Indonesia (Bogor, July 26, 2024);
- National Webinar “Family Mental Health,” Bureau of Public Welfare, Indonesian Islamic Da’wah Council, Special Region of Yogyakarta (December 1, 2024);
- Family Talk Series-3, organized by the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences, Faculty of Human Ecology, IPB University (June 26, 2024);
- Coordination Meeting, Synchronization, and Policy Implementation Control: *The Role of Families in Supporting Mental Health Services in Indonesia*, organized by the Assistant Deputy for Health Service Improvement, Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Cultural Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (Jakarta, August 8, 2023);
- “The Role of Families in Maintaining Mental Health and Preventing Children’s Antisocial Behavior,” organized by the Faculty of Public Health, Universitas Indonesia (Depok, November 14, 2020).

## **MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS**

### **1. Definition and Scope of Mental Health Problems**

According to Health Law No. 36 of 2009, health is a state of well-being that includes physical, mental, spiritual, and social aspects, enabling individuals to live productively both socially and economically. Meanwhile, the World Health Organization defines health as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

The term “mental” refers to aspects related to human character and inner life. The word originates from the Latin *mens (mentis)*, meaning soul, spirit, mind, or vitality. According to the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI), mentality refers to mental activity, ways of thinking, and ways of feeling.

The World Health Organization defines mental health as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes their own potential, can cope with everyday stresses, works productively, and contributes to their community. Furthermore, Mental Health Law No. 18 of 2014 clarifies that mental health is a condition in which individuals can develop physically, mentally, spiritually, and socially, enabling them to actualize their potential, work productively, and contribute to society.

Emotionally healthy individuals generally feel satisfied with themselves, happy, calm, pleasant, and able to control themselves. Mental health strongly influences how individuals think, feel, and behave. It includes one’s ability to make decisions, interact with others, manage stress, and face challenges without developing self-harming tendencies.

In the context of family resilience, health is viewed as an important component of well-being, while well-being itself is considered an output of effective family resilience. Therefore, mental health within the family is essential for achieving strong family resilience, supporting the well-being of each family member, and enhancing the family’s ability to face life challenges together.

Mental health conditions can generally be grouped into two major categories:

1. People with Mental Health Problems (ODMK), referring to individuals who experience problems in physical, mental, social, developmental, and/or quality-of-life aspects that place them at risk of developing mental disorders. These problems may include difficulties in adapting to life pressures or developmental challenges that may trigger more serious disorders if left untreated.
2. People with Mental Disorders (ODGJ), referring to individuals who already experience disturbances in thoughts, behavior, and emotions manifested through clusters of symptoms and/or significant behavioral changes. These disorders cause suffering and impair individuals in carrying out their normal functions. In severe cases, mental disorders may involve impaired reality testing or poor insight, such as hallucinations, illusions, delusions, thought-process disturbances, and unusual behavior.

Several common mental disorders within these categories include depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), and psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia. These disorders vary greatly in severity, ranging from mild symptoms to severe conditions requiring professional intervention to help individuals manage symptoms and improve their quality of life. Mental health disorders may arise from various life experiences or conditions. Contributing factors include:

1. Loss or death of loved ones
2. Severe trauma, such as military combat, serious accidents, or becoming a victim of crime
3. Prolonged stress
4. Genetic or family history factors
5. Socio-economic conditions
6. Substance abuse
7. Social isolation
8. Living environment

Mental health disorders may be characterized by various symptoms affecting emotions, thoughts, behavior, and relationships. Common symptoms include:

1. Persistent feelings of sadness, worthlessness, or hopelessness
2. Loss of interest or motivation in activities
3. Inability to cope with stress or daily problems
4. Excessive anger or a tendency toward violence
5. Excessive guilt, fear, or anxiety
6. Difficulty concentrating or remembering
7. Drastic changes in eating habits or body weight
8. Thoughts of self-harm or suicide
9. Sudden mood changes affecting social relationships

The impact of mental health disorders on physical health can be highly varied and may affect many bodily functions. Common impacts include:

1. Sleep disturbances and physical weakness
2. Slower speech or movement
3. Changes in the menstrual cycle in women
4. Decreased libido and constipation
5. Significant decrease or increase in appetite
6. Experiencing unexplained pain or aches.

## **2. The Iceberg Phenomenon of Family Mental Health Problems**

The “iceberg phenomenon” is often used to describe a situation in which the problems visible on the surface represent only a small part of a much larger and hidden issue. In the context of mental health, this phenomenon illustrates that many cases of mental disorders remain unseen or undisclosed, even though the problems may have been developing for a long time. Problems that become visible, such as domestic violence or criminal acts, are often merely the tip of deeper mental health problems within the family.

Examples of the iceberg phenomenon in mental health issues can be seen in several extreme cases occurring in society, such as a wife suffering from baby blues syndrome who set fire to her husband because he was involved in online gambling and infidelity. Likewise, there are tragic cases in which an entire family committed suicide by jumping from an apartment building, or a daughter who

killed her father after being hurt by harsh words and anger. These cases demonstrate that mental health problems not only affect the individuals experiencing them, but can also damage family relationships and impact those closest to them, especially family members.

In Indonesia, mental health problems have become increasingly widespread across various segments of society. Based on data from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) in 2017, mental disorders contributed significantly to the burden of disease in the form of disability (13.4%), although they were not the leading cause of death (Figure 1). Data from the 2018 Basic Health Research (Riskesmas) showed the prevalence of depression by age group. The data indicated the highest prevalence among the elderly population (8.9%) (Figure 2). This reflects that mental health is a serious issue requiring proper attention in Indonesia, and the need for preparedness is becoming increasingly important as Indonesia has entered the stage of an aging nation.

Source: Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), 2017

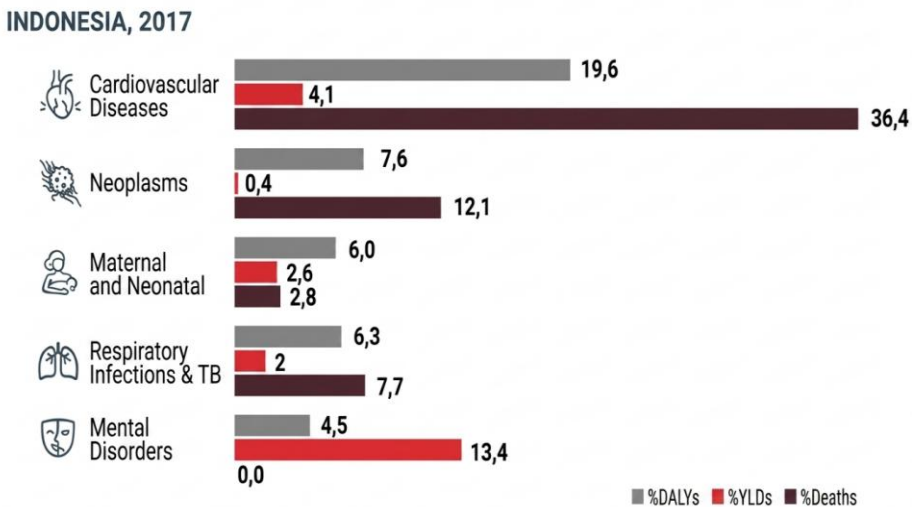


Figure 1. Prevalence of Mental Disorders Among Other Diseases

Sumber: Riskesdas Tahun 2018

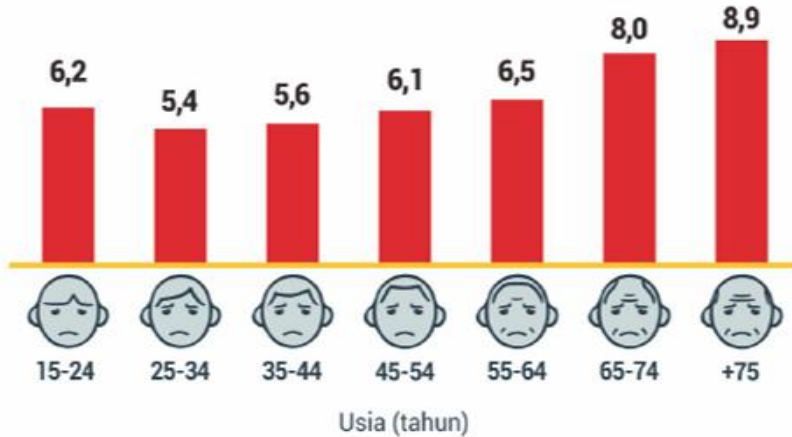


Figure 2. Prevalence of Depression by Age Group

Research findings indicate that family pressures, such as economic problems, marital issues, or anxiety regarding children's future, are contributing factors to mental health problems within families. Therefore, it is important to view mental health as a broader issue, not merely an individual problem, but also as a social issue that can affect the overall functioning of family life.

## **MENTAL HEALTH FROM THE FAMILY ECOSYSTEM PERSPECTIVE**

An individual's mental health is not determined solely by internal personal factors, but is also highly dependent on external factors, namely the environmental conditions and situations surrounding the individual, especially the family environment as the closest environment to the person. The family functions as a complex ecosystem in which each member interacts, influences one another, and shapes both the internal (micro) and external (meso, exo, and macro) family environments. This process is carried out to build a family-friendly environment, namely an environment that provides the support and assistance needed by families. A visualization of the position of mental health across the layers of the family ecosystem is presented in Figure 3.

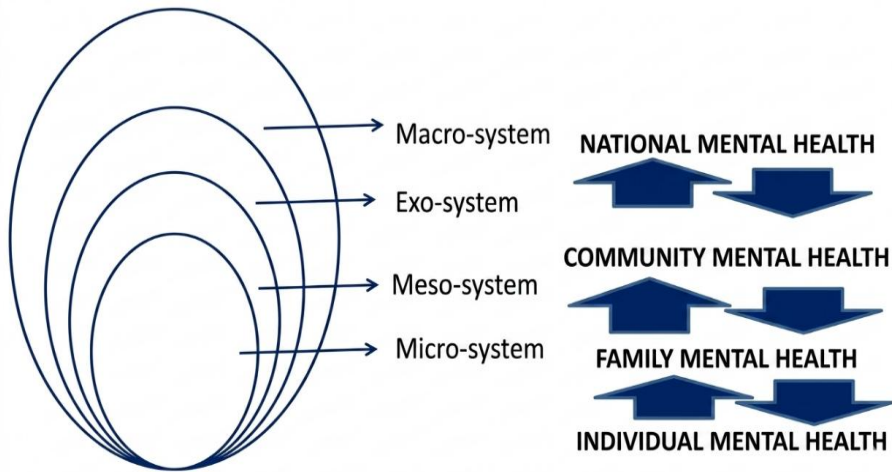


Figure 3. Visualization of the Relationship Between Individual, Family, and Community Mental Health from the Family Ecosystem Perspective

Families with a well-functioning system will achieve a condition of family resilience. Family resilience is created when the family is able to fulfill all of its components, roles, functions, and responsibilities effectively. One of the primary keys to achieving this is the mental health of family members. This is because individual mental health plays a significant role within the family system, including family inputs, processes, and outputs. Good mental health helps each family member function optimally, both in relationships among family members and in facing various life challenges.

### 1. Individual Micro Ecosystem

Strengthening the family resilience ecosystem is essential in building good mental health for every family member. This strengthening aims to create a conducive environment for the holistic growth and development of the family, including psychological aspects such as self-concept, self-regulation, self-control, integrity, and self-efficacy.

1. Self-concept is a collection of attributes, abilities, attitudes, and values that individuals believe about who they are (Berk, 2009). Self-concept is divided into two dimensions: academic

and non-academic. The academic dimension refers to an individual's knowledge and perception of their competence in academic domains, while the non-academic dimension focuses on social aspects (relationships with peers and significant others), emotional aspects, and physical aspects (physical abilities and appearance) (Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton, 1976). The three components of self-concept are self-image (how individuals perceive themselves), self-esteem (the value individuals place on themselves), and ideal self (how individuals hope to become) (Rogers, 1959).

2. Self-regulation is a person's capacity to make plans, control impulses, restrain unwanted thoughts, and adjust social behavior to align with goals (Hofmann, Friese, & Strack, 2009). There are three main components of self-regulation: standards (thoughts, feelings, or behaviors that individuals wish to achieve), motivation (the drive to reduce the gap between standards and actual conditions), and capacity (the ability to reduce these differences) (Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996).
3. Self-control is an individual's ability to act according to standards or social expectations, such as ideals, values, morals, and expectations. This includes the ability to inhibit or override inappropriate responses, thereby enabling more appropriate responses to emerge (Baumeister, Vohs, & Tice, 2007).
4. Self-efficacy is a subjective assessment of one's competence in performing behaviors or achieving certain outcomes in the future (Shea & Bidjerano, 2010). Self-efficacy does not always correspond to actual ability, as individuals may overestimate or underestimate their own capabilities (Bandura, 2007).
5. Integrity refers to the extent to which individuals think and act honestly and uphold strong moral values (Ramdani, 2018). Important components of integrity include self-motivation, courage and assertiveness, self-discipline, and transparency.

By strengthening these aspects within the family ecosystem, each family member is expected to develop strong mental health, which in turn supports overall family harmony and well-being.

## 2. Micro Ecosystem Perspective: Family Strength

The visualization of the family ecosystem's micro system is presented in the form of a house (Figure 4), where the house symbolizes family resilience, and the parts of the house symbolize the derivative concepts of family resilience (Sunarti, 2008; 2013).



Figure 4. Visualization of the Components and Scope of Family Resilience (Sunarti, 2008, 2013)

Mastery in understanding and implementing the concepts of family resilience constitutes an integrated ecosystem in preventing and addressing mental health problems among family members. These components include:

- Pathway to the house: a visualization of an individual's journey toward adulthood.
- Terrace: a visualization of the introduction and preparation phase for building a family.
- Door: a visualization of marriage as a strong, noble, and sacred covenant.

- Foundation: a visualization of family values and goals, the value of children, and the willingness to commit and even sacrifice for the family.
- Walls: a visualization of family roles, functions, and responsibilities.
- Pillars and roof supports: a visualization of the latent components and system components of family resilience.
- Length of the house: a visualization of family developmental stages, including developmental tasks, vulnerabilities, and the potential for family crises.
- Windows and fences: a visualization of social support and family transactions with their environment (both social and natural environments).
- Contents of the house: a visualization of family resource management, family interaction, family resilience, and family stress management.
- Top roof: a visualization of the family's ultimate goals, namely achieving a resilient, prosperous, harmonious, happy, and high-quality family, or a *Sakinah, Mawaddah wa Rahmah* family.

The family ecosystem consists of many interconnected concepts. The structure of the relationships among these concepts and between the components of the family ecosystem is presented in Figure 5.

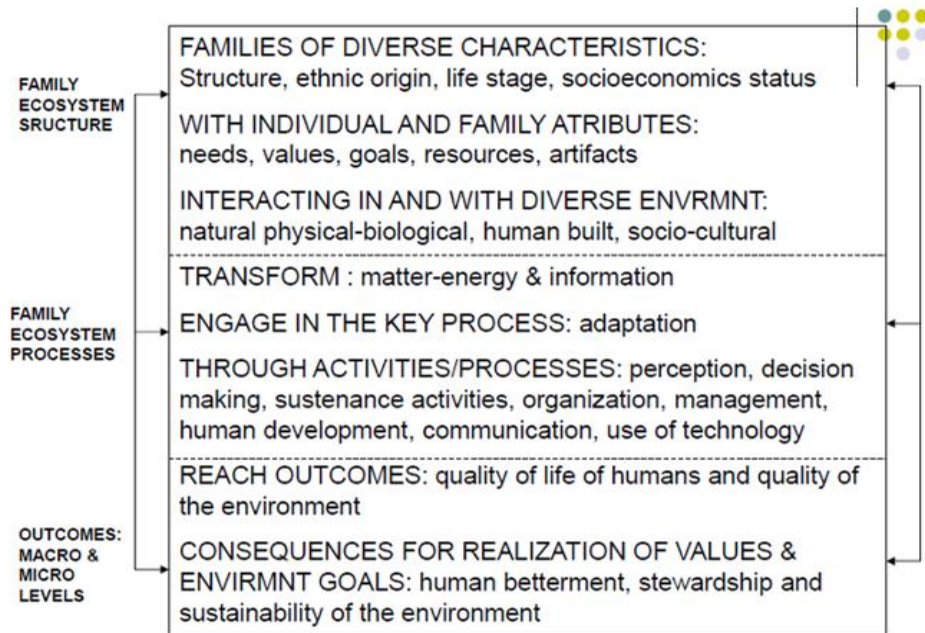


Figure 5. Structure and Concepts of the Family Ecosystem (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993)

Family resilience is an essential foundation for the well-being of every family member. This section discusses three key aspects that contribute to family resilience, namely family resilience itself, family interaction, and family stress management. These three aspects are interconnected and play important roles in maintaining family mental health.

Mental health should be viewed as an integral part of family well-being. One of the main approaches to mitigating mental health problems is by building family resilience, namely the family's ability to face pressures and crises. This resilience can be developed by strengthening both internal and external protective factors. Internal protective factors include family values and beliefs, organizational capacity within the family, and a supportive family atmosphere. Meanwhile, external protective factors include social support, access to mental health services, and a family-friendly environment.

### **3. Micro Ecosystem Perspective: Family Resilience**

Family resilience is the family's ability to survive and cope with crises, including mental health problems. In this context, it is important to emphasize the process of resilience investment, namely the ability to detect vulnerabilities and understand as well as fulfill family roles and functions. Resilience investment is carried out to enable families to face crises by strengthening family capacities (assets) and capabilities (protective factors), while also building external family protection systems.

According to Euis Sunarti (2013, 2021), resilience is the result of a family's process of investing in, accessing, and managing assets (both owned and non-owned) to become protective factors that help save the family during crises. Important elements of family resilience include family values, beliefs and rules, family organizational capacity, and family atmosphere. Families that invest in building resilience through three key processes—strengthening and maintaining values, rules, and beliefs; building or strengthening family organizational capacity; and creating a positive family atmosphere—are believed to be better able to prevent or manage problems before they develop into mental health issues among family members.

### **4. Micro Ecosystem Perspective: Family Interaction**

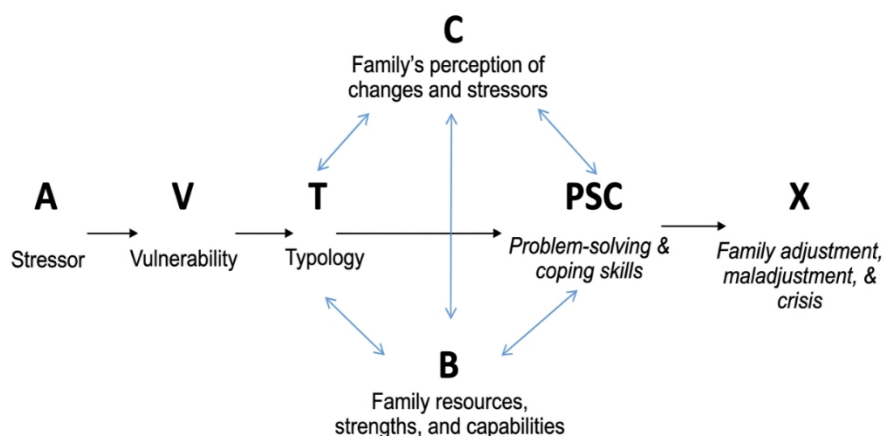
Family interaction refers to the actions, reactions, or reciprocal relationships among family members, both within the nuclear family and with extended family members, such as interactions between husband and wife, parents and children, siblings, and across generations (Sunarti, 2024). Family interaction is one of the core aspects of family life that greatly influences family happiness, satisfaction, and harmony.

The quality of family interaction is an important indicator in family typology, resilience, and quality. This is because the quality of family interaction plays a major role in determining family

functioning, fulfillment of responsibilities, and the management of resources, problems, and family pressures. Positive family interaction reflects the overall quality of family life, including mental health. According to Ratna Megawangi (2014), the attachment between mother and child is a key foundation for nation-building.

## 5. Micro Ecosystem Perspective: Family Stress Management

Stress is a natural part of human life; however, how individuals manage stress greatly influences family mental health. A mentally healthy individual is not necessarily free from stress, but rather someone who can control and manage stress effectively. Stress may arise from various sources, both internally and through interactions with other family members. Therefore, stress management within the family system is important as an indicator for preventing or addressing family mental health problems. Through effective stress management, families can create a more harmonious environment that supports the mental health of all family members.



McCubbin & Patterson (1980)

Figure 6. Model of the Family Stress Adjustment Phase

The family stress adjustment phase model proposed by Hamilton McCubbin and Joan Patterson (1980) illustrates the process through

which families react and adapt to events or changes that trigger stress. When stressors, family vulnerabilities, and stressor typologies emerge, they influence how the family appraises the situation. Based on this appraisal, the family determines how to utilize its resources, strengths, and capacities in applying problem-solving and coping strategies. The outcomes of this adjustment process may include healthy adjustment, negative adjustment, or even crisis.

According to Euis Sunarti (2023), mentally healthy individuals are not those who are free from stress, but those who are able to manage stress effectively. The stress adjustment phase model helps explain how families cope with pressures and develop effective coping strategies. Effective management of stress components within the family is a key factor in maintaining the mental health of all family members, particularly in preventing mental health problems. Sunarti (2023) identified 16 coping strategies for managing sources of stress (stressors), namely:

1. Making religious values and norms as guidelines and direction in life;
2. Adopting a non-materialistic life philosophy;
3. Choosing a simple lifestyle and feeling content;
4. Developing gratitude and acceptance, and being able to find gratitude in all situations, even under non-ideal conditions or unmet expectations;
5. Thinking positively, practicing good self-control, and actively seeking constructive solutions;
6. Engaging in enjoyable and healthy activities to reduce emotional tension;
7. Managing time and resources effectively while creating a harmonious and balanced life;
8. Learning to accept problems that are difficult to solve or circumstances that cannot be changed;
9. Continuously thinking positively and finding wisdom in every event, believing that everything that happens in life has a purpose;
10. Accessing support, such as advice and solutions from trusted individuals to address ongoing problems;

11. Engaging in physical activities or self-calming practices to reduce emotional tension and clear the mind;
12. Trying new and challenging activities to increase self-confidence;
13. Setting aside time for hobbies or personal interests;
14. Participating in social activities to help others and gain feelings of satisfaction and happiness;
15. Avoiding harmful negative behaviors (such as smoking, alcohol consumption, drug use, etc.) as a way to relieve stress;
16. Exploring, discovering, or creating joy in various activities, especially while working.

The prevention of mental health problems among family members can be achieved by developing positive habits and meaningful togetherness among family members. Simple yet effective ways to reduce family stress include creating a warm atmosphere in the family room, gathering around the dining table, or engaging in shared activities such as family camping, outdoor adventures, or traveling together. These activities not only reduce stress but also strengthen emotional bonds among family members. In addition, families can participate in community-based activities with neighbors, such as group exercise and mutual cooperation activities (*gotong royong*), to help create a family-friendly environment.

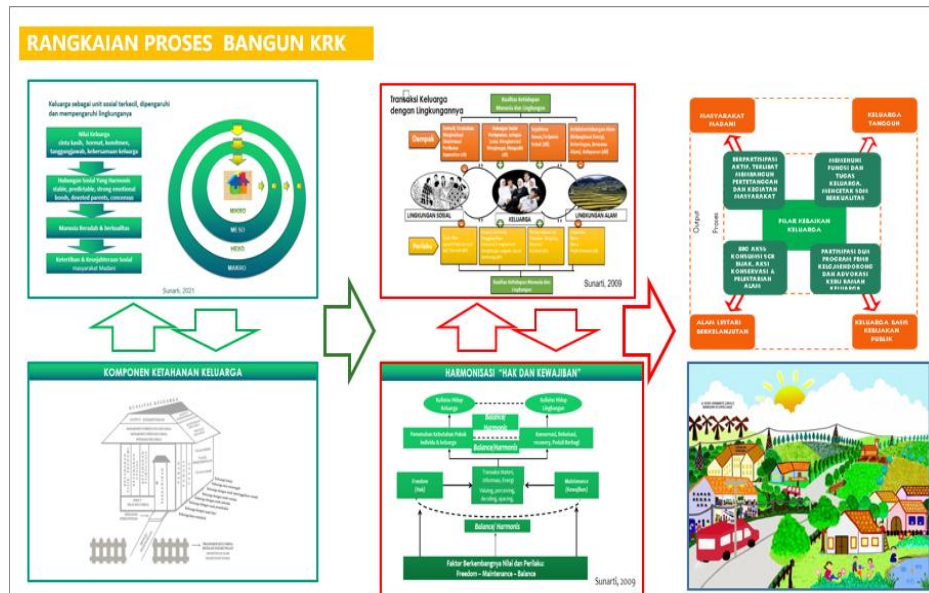
## **6. Meso and Exo System Perspective: Family-Friendly Village (Kampung Ramah Keluarga/KRK)**

The Family-Friendly Village (*Kampung Ramah Keluarga* / KRK) is a derivative concept of family-friendly development based on a territorial or community approach. It refers to an area of family interaction that provides both physical and non-physical environments covering all dimensions and aspects of life (education, health, social, cultural, economic, and political) that strengthen family resilience (through fulfillment of family roles, functions, and responsibilities) in order to achieve quality and sustainable family life as well as social and environmental well-being.

The characteristics of a Family-Friendly Village include:

1. Families engage in positive interactions to achieve higher quality, resilience, and well-being;
2. The environment supports resilient families through the implementation of family roles, functions, and responsibilities;
3. The environment is safe and comfortable, thereby supporting the development of all families and community members, especially vulnerable groups;
4. The development of values and cultures of mutual assistance, care, concern, and sharing among families within the community;
5. The exchange of information, knowledge, work skills, and life skills among community members;
6. The functioning of protection mechanisms and systems for families and all community members against disturbances, disaster threats, and exposure to deviant behaviors;
7. The existence of strong social capital through institutions that support resilient families and a civil society as the foundation for building a civilized nation.

The development process of a Family-Friendly Village (KRK) consists of three main stages. The first stage is strengthening the role of the family, emphasizing the importance of the family as the smallest social unit that plays a central role in shaping individual character, values, and identity.



**Figure 7. Stages of the Development of a Family-Friendly Community**

The second stage is optimizing family transactions and interactions both within the internal family environment and with the external environment, as these influence family resilience. The third stage is achieving a balance between rights and responsibilities within the family. Individual rights must be respected, but they should also be accompanied by responsibilities toward the family and society. This balance creates a harmonious atmosphere and supports family growth. Ultimately, family resilience is not only about the family's internal condition, but is also influenced by the social environment that enables families to adapt to change.

**MINDFUL LIFE: FROM PHILOSOPHICAL ASPECTS TO PRACTICAL MITIGATION OF MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS**

Mental health issues have become an increasingly concerning reality in recent years. Mental health problems are often not immediately visible, much like an iceberg. Many tragic events, such as domestic violence, crimes caused by mental distress, and suicide cases,

reflect the severe consequences of untreated mental health disorders. Research shows that economic pressures, children's social environments, and social demands increasingly contribute to anxiety within families.

Mental health has become a crucial issue in modern life, where social, economic, and family pressures frequently affect individuals' psychological well-being. Cases of depression, anxiety, and various forms of domestic violence demonstrate that mental health problems are not merely individual issues, but are also rooted in family and societal dynamics. To address and prevent the negative impacts of mental health problems, approaches based on mindfulness and joyful life have become key strategies in building individual and family resilience. In religious terms, mindful life can be interpreted as a state of tranquility and inner peace (*tu'maninah*).

The concept of mindfulness emphasizes full awareness of the present moment, accepting circumstances wholeheartedly, and managing emotions wisely. Meanwhile, joyful life teaches that happiness is not always correlated with material wealth, but rather with life balance, contentment, and purity of heart. Several ways to apply mindfulness and joyful life within the family include:

- Finding happiness in simple activities, such as cooking, cleaning the environment, gardening, talking with family members, or simply enjoying the atmosphere at home;
- Creating a loving family environment characterized by open communication and mutual respect;
- Controlling ambition and avoiding materialistic lifestyles that may increase mental pressure;
- Managing hormonal systems, particularly through activities that stimulate hormones associated with peace and happiness.

Simple activities such as exercise, meditation, sharing affection, and enjoying hobbies can increase these hormones and improve quality

of life. Mental health can also be supported through the enhancement of happiness hormones such as:

- Dopamine: Increases motivation and self-reward.
- Oxytocin: Strengthens bonding and love within the family.
- Serotonin: Regulates mood and reduces anxiety.
- Endorphins: Relieves stress and enhances feelings of comfort.

The mitigation of mental health problems must begin within the family by instilling the values of mindfulness and genuine happiness (joyful life). Resilient families that are able to manage stress and live with simplicity and gratitude will be better equipped to face life's pressures. By creating a healthy and harmonious family environment, we not only protect individual mental health but also build a psychologically healthier and more prosperous society.



Figure 8. Various Daily Activities for Stress Mitigation

Contoh sederhana tapi fungsional

Menghangatkan suasana ruang keluarga dan meja makan



**Gambar 9. Ragam Aktivitas Keseharian untuk Mitigasi Stres (lanjutan)**

## **FAMILY INTERVENTION FOR MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION**

Mental health challenges are rising globally, especially among children and adolescents. But in every culture and every community, the family remains the first and most important system that shapes mental health. When we talk about mental health, we often imagine hospitals, psychologists, or professional counseling rooms. But in reality, mental health begins much earlier and much closer to home.

Mental health begins in the family, in the way we speak to each other, how we respond to stress, and how love, care, and communication are expressed in daily life. The family is not only the smallest unit of society; it is the first school of life, where values, emotions, and resilience are shaped. That is why, in promoting mental health, families must not be seen merely as recipients of services, but as active partners and protectors of mental well-being.

### **1. Youth and Family Mental Health in Indonesia: Key Facts**

The mental health of Indonesian adolescents presents a significant public health concern. When we talk about mental health among young people in Indonesia, we are speaking about a challenge that is both urgent and deeply human. Key data from The Indonesia Health Survey 2023 and Indonesia National Adolescent Mental Health Survey 2022, highlighting prevalence, risk factors, and service gaps in youth mental health. Key data shows the alarming reality and hidden suffering. Data Indonesia Health Survey 2023 indicates about the mental health of Indonesian children and youth, a challenge that touches families, schools, and communities across our nation.

Findings from the Indonesia Health Survey 2023 indicate that 61% of youth with depression reported suicidal ideation within the previous month, compared to 1.7% of youth without depression. Despite the high prevalence, only 10.4% of affected youth sought treatment. This highlights a substantial treatment gap in mental health service utilization. This shows us that even though youth have the highest prevalence of depression, they are also the least

likely to get help. Depression prevalence was highest among youth (2%), particularly among females (2.8%), urban residents (2.5%), individuals with secondary education (2.2%), and those unemployed or still in school. Yet, no matter the background, untreated depression can carry devastating consequences, including suicide risk.. These figures illustrate a profound treatment gap --high prevalence yet low help-seeking behavior, particularly among female and urban youth. Depression among youth, though numerically small, has significant psychosocial and clinical consequences if left untreated. Even though depression among youth is relatively low in percentage, it is often severe and invisible. Untreated depression increases vulnerability to suicide and other adverse outcomes. When untreated, it can lead to tragic outcomes, including suicide.

The Indonesia National Adolescent Mental Health Survey 2022 (I-NAMHS) gives us an even broader picture. Complementary data from the first national survey to measure the prevalence of mental disorders among adolescents aged 10–17 years (I-NAMHS) show that 34.9% of Indonesian adolescents, equivalent to 15.5 million young people, experienced mental health problems in the past year. About 5.5%, or 2.45 million adolescents, had a diagnosable mental disorder, most commonly anxiety disorders. Alarming, fewer than 3% of these adolescents accessed professional help.

**Causes and Risk Factors.** Imagine, millions of young people struggling silently. What causes this? The survey identifies multiple risk factors for poor mental health, including bullying, strained relationships with peers and family, Risky sexual behavior, substance use, and adverse childhood experiences (trauma). These problems don't arise in isolation. Many young people face bullying, unstable family relationships, or difficult early experiences. These factors can accumulate and lead to serious emotional distress.

Barriers to mental health care remain pervasive. Stigma, misconceptions, and cultural myths continue to discourage help-seeking behaviors. Common societal beliefs — such as associating mental illness with personal weakness, lack of religiosity, or violent tendencies — perpetuate discrimination and social exclusion.

Yet, one of the biggest barriers remains stigma. Stigma remains a major obstacle for individuals with mental disorders. Many still believe that mental illness is a sign of weakness, a lack of faith, or even moral failure. Some think people with mental disorders are dangerous or pretending. These myths must be challenged because silence and stigma are just as harmful as the illness itself.

Therefore, families, schools, and communities play a vital role. They are the first line of defense, where listening, compassion, and early support can save lives. Promoting mental health among our youth is not just a medical concern — it is a collective social responsibility.

Addressing these challenges requires a family-centered approach that emphasizes early detection, open communication, and parental education. Promoting youth mental health must be positioned not only as a clinical issue but as a national investment in human development

## **2. The Family as the Main System in Shaping Children’s Development and Mental Health**

From the moment a child is born, the family becomes the primary environment where development takes place. Through everyday interactions: a smile, a gentle tone, a patient response. Children learn emotional regulation, trust, and empathy.

Attachment theory tells us that secure relationships with caregivers form the foundation for healthy mental development. When parents are responsive and emotionally available, children grow with a sense of safety. This sense of safety allows them to explore the world, to build confidence, and to manage challenges. On the other hand, when families experience chronic conflict, neglect, or instability, children may internalize fear, anxiety, or low self-esteem. Even subtle patterns , such as harsh criticism, inconsistent parenting, or emotional distance can leave deep marks on a child’s mental world.

## 1) Mental Health Begins At Home

Mental health is not only the concern of clinics or hospitals. It begins in everyday family life, how we love, speak, and respond. Families are not passive recipients of care, but *active agents of well-being*.

Mental health does not begin in hospitals or clinics — it begins at home. It begins in the way we talk to one another, how we respond to our children's emotions, and how we build daily routines filled with love and safety. When a family becomes a place of warmth, support, and listening, it naturally promotes emotional well-being. Families are not passive recipients of care; they are *active agents of healing and resilience*.

## 2) The Family as the First School of Mental Health

Family is the primary environment shaping emotional and psychological development. Secure attachment fosters trust, confidence, and resilience. Conflict, neglect, or instability increase vulnerability to distress. "Behind every resilient child, there is a caring and consistent family."

The family is the first school where children learn how to manage emotions, handle stress, and build relationships. If this early environment is secure, loving, and stable, children develop confidence and trust in the world around them. But when conflict, neglect, or instability becomes part of daily life, it can leave long-lasting emotional marks. That's why strengthening the family is not just a social goal — it is a *mental health strategy*.

These things are implemented or related to the functions (both internal and external; ) and tasks of the family (both main tasks, development tasks, and family crisis tasks). Internal family function consisted of instrumental and contribution and protection; meanwhile eksternal family function consisted of expressive, and family system maintenance

### 3) How Families Shape Mental Health

Simple, consistent parenting practices can make an enormous difference. When parents *listen actively*, when they set *clear and consistent boundaries*, when conflicts are resolved with *calm and empathy*, and when families spend time *connecting rather than correcting*, resilience grows naturally.

Resilience is not something children are born with — it's something nurtured through daily love, structure, and communication. Therefore, promoting mental health begins with *supporting healthy family functioning*. Simple acts — spending quality time together, listening with empathy, showing affection, resolving conflicts peacefully — are powerful forms of mental health promotion. Everyday parenting practices that build resilience consisted of:

- Warm communication and active listening
- Consistent rules and routines
- Peaceful conflict resolution
- Shared family time and emotional support

A child who grows up feeling loved and understood develops resilience — the ability to recover from setbacks and adapt positively to life's stressors.

As the saying goes, "*Behind every resilient child, there is a caring and consistent family.*"

### **3. Empowered and Resilient Families: The Key to Reducing Stigma and Promoting Mental Health**

Addressing several and main challenges on youth mental health requires a family-centered approach that emphasizes early detection, open communication, and parental education. Promoting youth mental health must be positioned not only as a clinical issue but as a national investment in human development.

## 1) Empowered Families Reduce Stigma

In many communities, mental illness is still surrounded by silence, fear, or shame. mental illness still carries stigma. This silence can isolate families and delay help-seeking. Families often feel ashamed to talk about it, fearing that others will judge them or blame them. But when families are educated and confident, they can replace that silence with understanding. But when families are empowered — when they have the knowledge, confidence, and emotional strength, they become the *frontline advocates* of mental health. Key message is that empowered and resilient families help reduce stigma:

- Stigma and shame still prevent open discussion about mental health.
- Empowered families replace *fear* with *understanding* and *silence* with *communication*.
- Resilience means adapting under stress, staying hopeful, and supporting one another.

Resilient families acknowledge that mental health struggles are part of being human. They focus not on "*what's wrong*" but on "*what can be done*.". They encourage open conversation, seek support, and model acceptance for their children.

An empowered family speaks openly, seeks help without guilt, and stands together. Resilience does not mean the absence of problems. It means the ability to adapt, to keep hope alive, and to walk through difficulties together. Empowerment means families believe they have the capacity to influence outcomes, to make choices that promote well-being. A resilient family may experience stress, but it knows how to adapt, communicate, and maintain hope.

## 2) Community Ripple Effect. From Family Empowerment to Social Change

Empowered families inspire other families. Openness and acceptance spread across communities. Promoting mental health is

a shared cultural movement. This is not just an assumption, but is supported by research evidence, leading to the belief that:

- When one family becomes empowered, others follow. When families share their experiences, when they speak up, when they show that mental health is a part of normal life, they create a *ripple effect of acceptance* throughout society. And this empowerment is contagious. When one family stands strong and speaks openly, it inspires others to do the same. This is how community change begins, from one family that chooses openness, compassion, and support.
- Communities then begin to shift, from stigma to solidarity, from silence to understanding. Promoting mental health is not an individual effort; it's a *cultural transformation*. So, empowering families is not only a private matter. It is a public strategy for building a more compassionate society.

#### 4. **Family Interventions in mental health promotion**

##### 1) Family Interventions in mental health promotion.

Family interventions are structured efforts to strengthen family functioning while promoting mental health. The term "family intervention" may sound clinical, but in reality, it covers a wide range of actions, from simple preventive education to structured therapy. At the preventive level, family interventions may include:

- Parenting education programs to build communication and empathy. Where parents learn how to communicate effectively, manage stress, and guide children with empathy;
- Family therapy, to improve understanding and problem-solving; and
- Community support groups, where families share experiences and coping strategies, which connect families facing similar challenges, reducing isolation and sharing coping strategies;
- School–family–community partnerships that connect families to mental health resources. Where teachers, parents, and

community collaborate to monitor children's emotional well-being and intervene early when needed.

At the promotive or therapeutic level, family interventions can include family counseling, conflict resolution sessions, and resilience training workshops. These interventions not only help families in crisis, but also strengthen those that are at risk, turning potential problems into opportunities for growth. These activities strengthen family bonds, enhance problem-solving, and build positive coping mechanisms.

## 2) Impact of Family-Based Interventions.

Research across countries consistently shows that when families are involved in mental health care, recovery is faster, and outcomes are better. When families participate actively in mental health interventions, outcomes improve significantly, not only for the person who is ill, but for the entire household. Children and adolescents supported by their families show greater emotional stability, higher school engagement, and better social relationships.

Family involvement also reduces relapse and builds long-term resilience. Family-centered approaches recognize that recovery happens not in isolation, but through connection. It is not only about reducing symptoms; it is about restoring *relationships, communication, and hope*. In short, when families participate, *healing lasts longer*.

*When Families Participate, Outcomes Improve as indicated by:*

- Improves recovery and long-term well-being
- Strengthens relationships and coping skills
- Reduces stress and relapse
- Builds sustainable mental health ecosystems

## 5. The Importance Of Mental Health Education For Parents

The role of parents is irreplaceable. Parents are the ones with the greatest interest, concern, and care for their children. Parents will

always seek and provide the best for their children, and will especially protect them from unwanted harm.

### 1) Mental Health Education for Parents

Education for parents regarding children's mental health is crucial. Educating parents means protecting futures according to several considerations:

- Parents are the first observers of change in children.
- Early awareness prevents escalation.
- Education promotes self-care and empathy.
- Normalizing mental health discussions at home creates emotional safety.

Parents are often the first to notice changes in their children. Parents are the first observers of their children's emotions and behavior. They are often the first to notice when something changes, when a child becomes withdrawn, irritable, anxious, a sudden withdrawal, mood changes, or difficulty sleeping. When parents are aware and informed, they can respond early. Education gives them the language to talk about emotions and the tools to act before problems grow.

Mental health education also helps parents care for themselves, because emotionally healthy parents raise emotionally healthy children. But without understanding mental health, these signs can be misinterpreted. A child's sadness may be mistaken for laziness, or anxiety seen as disobedience. Therefore, educating parents about mental health literacy is essential. It empowers them to recognize early warning signs, respond appropriately, and seek help before problems escalate. Education also helps parents manage their own stress and emotional health. Parents who understand their own feelings are better equipped to guide their children through emotional challenges. Moreover, when parents talk about mental health openly at home, they normalize the topic. Children learn that it is okay to express emotions and to ask for help when they need it. This kind of environment builds long-term protection against mental health problems.

## 2) Strong Families, Strong Communities

Five core messages or the five key takeaways of the importance family intervention on family members mental health:

1. Family is the foundation of mental health.
2. Empowered families reduce stigma.
3. Family interventions strengthen resilience.
4. Mental health education prevents crises.
5. Promoting mental health starts with connection, not correction.

If we hold onto these five messages, we will build not only healthier families, but stronger communities. To conclude, family intervention for mental health promotion is not just a program or policy. It is a mindset and a movement, since “A healthy family is the foundation of a healthy society.” When we strengthen families through education, compassion, and empowerment, we are building a future generation that is mentally stronger, emotionally wiser, and spiritually grounded.

It reminds us that families are not passive recipients of care, but active partners in building well-being. They are the first teachers of empathy, the first models of coping, and the strongest pillars of emotional security. When families are empowered and resilient, they not only help their own members but also contribute to the collective mental health of the community. So, let us continue to invest in families — to educate, to empower, and to accompany them. Because strong families create strong individuals, and strong individuals build a strong and healthy nation.

## 3) Policy and Family Implications

Mental health begins at home and in our communities. When families listen, schools care, and society removes stigma, we save young lives. Mental health promotion begins not in hospitals or schools alone, but in the *heart of every family* in small moments of listening, caring, and understanding. Let’s continue to invest in families, because family is where hope grows. “Together, we can strengthen family resilience and promote mental well-being”.

Together, we build a mentally healthy generation. Promoting adolescent mental health should be viewed as part of human capital development , ensuring Indonesia's youth thrive emotionally, socially, and economically. Based on the discussion of various topics regarding family intervention in dealing with mental health problems, the crucial implications of family policy are: (1) family-centered intervention, (2) early detection and mental health education, and (3) reframing youth mental health as a national investment.