



Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

**IDENTIFYING STRESSORS EXPERIENCED BY SINGLE FATHERS
AND ITS EFFECT ON QUALITY CHILD CARE**

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**IDENTIFYING STRESSORS EXPERIENCED BY SINGLE FATHERS
AND ITS EFFECT ON QUALITY CHILD CARE**

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This project is one of the requirements for
Bachelor of Counseling with Honors

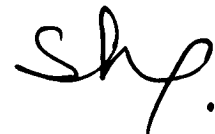
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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

JKM	Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat
NGO	Non-Government Organization
APA	The American Psychological Association
UNIMAS	Universiti Malaysia Sarawak
R1	Responden 1
R2	Responden 2
R3	Responden 3
R4	Responden 4
Dr.	Doktor
K. B.	Kaunselor Berdaftar
P. A.	Perakuan Amalan
MAL.	Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

[IDENTIFYING STRESSORS EXPERIENCED BY SINGLE FATHERS AND ITS EFFECT ON QUALITY CHILD CARE]

[Maizul Anisha Binti Hamid]

This study aims to identify the experiences of single fathers and their roles as primary caregiver to their children as men in society adopting traditionally feminine roles. Existing research does not address issues concerning single fathers and the stressors they experience in raising their children. This study addresses these issues and helps researchers understand single fathers by using a qualitative approach to understand their perception of parenting. Three single father from Kedah participated in semi-structured interviews to elicit information about this phenomenon. This study focused on experiences the men have while being a single parent, that have care for their children alone. By exploring how these fathers, maneuver childrearing as a male in society I assist in gaining insight and understanding to this population that has been previously overlooked in academic research. Results of this study found that there are four (4) types of challenges faced by single father. The types of challenges faced by single father is (1) childcare, (2) family conflict, (3) finances, and (5) the challenge of stigma dan support. Overall, this study provided additional information into the stressor fathers experience and the effect to the quality childcare. There are relationship between stressor experience faced by single father and their quality childcare.

ABSTRAK

[MENGENALPASTI PENGALAMAN YANG MEMBERI TEKANAN KEPADA BAPA TUNGGAL DAN KESANNYA TERHADAP KUALITI PENJAGAAN ANAK]

[Maizul Anisha Binti Hamid]

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenal pasti pengalaman bapa tunggal dan peranan mereka sebagai pengasuh utama kepada anak-anak mereka yang secara tradisionalnya sering diberikan kepada kaum wanita. Penyelidikan yang sedia ada tidak menyentuh isu-isu berkaitan bapa tunggal dan tekanan yang mereka alami dalam membesarkan anak-anak mereka. Kajian ini akan membincangkan isu-isu yang berkaitan dengan pengalaman bapa tunggal dan turut membantu penyelidik memahami kehidupan bapa tunggal dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif untuk memahami persepsi mereka tentang keibubapaan. Tiga orang bapa tunggal dari Kedah akan mengambil bahagian dalam temu bual semi berstruktur untuk mendapatkan maklumat mengenai fenomena ini. Kajian ini memberi tumpuan kepada pengalaman yang dialami oleh lelaki semasa menjadi bapa tunggal, yang menjaga anak-anak mereka sendiri. Dengan meneroka bagaimana bapa tunggal sebagai lelaki dalam masyarakat ini menjaga anak-anak mereka, saya juga membantu dalam memberi celik akal dan pemahaman terhadap populasi ini yang sebelum ini diabaikan dalam penyelidikan akademik. Hasil kajian mendapati terdapat empat (4) jenis cabaran yang dihadapi oleh bapa tunggal. Antara jenis cabaran yang dihadapi oleh bapa tunggal adalah (1) penjagaan anak, (2) konflik keluarga, (3) kewangan, dan (4) stigma dan sokongan masyarakat. Secara keseluruhannya, kajian ini memberi maklumat tambahan yang berkaitan dengan pengalaman yang memberi tekanan kepada bapa tunggal dan kesannya terhadap kualiti penjagaan anak. Terdapat hubungan diantara tekanan yang dihadapi oleh bapa tunggal dengan kualiti penjagaan anak.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Single parent have become a common phenomenon within our society. Single parent family structure has undergone significant change over the last few decades, including an increase in single father households (Stephens and Gillies 2011). Nothing simple or easy about raising children, and once combined with additional factors that make it becomes more difficult and presents numerous more challenges. Previous study give more attention to examined single mothers in the contexts of work and family conflict, parental practices, daily life, parenting struggles, service access, support networks, as well as how some combination of these factors influences their parenting practices and parenting experiences but not with single fathers issue.

There remains lack of research on issues and challenges faced by the single fathers. Even there are one or two research before that deal with the single father in western culture, the studies is not enough to investigate the real issue and challenge that face by single father in our culture, which is Malaysia. Single father may be exposed to enormous stress due to the need to provide the all family needs of the family concurrently with caring for the home including those responsibilities traditionally assumed by women, acquiring new skills, and raising a child, all at the same time. The stress in the single father life and the way she deals with it also affects her child. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to identifying stressors experienced by single fathers and its effect on quality child care. This will give me opportunities to explore their

feelings about being a single father and provide these males with a voice about their own experiences.

Therefore, in this introductory chapter will presented the contextual understanding why this study was undertaken. The chapter begin with a brief overview of the background of study about the role of single father, with a focus on the stressor experience while raising their children alone and on it effect on the quality childcare. This chapter will elaborated more on background of study, problem statement, research objective, and research question, definition of terms that had been use in this research limitation of this study and it significant to knowledge development concerning the phenomena of being single father in Malaysia culture.

1.1 Background

Parenting is an activities that involves caretakers engage in for their children's benefit, which include nurturance (Haire & McGeorge, 2012), discipline (Dufur, Howell, Downey, Ainsworth, & Lapray, 2010), and provision of food, shelter, and healthcare (Wight, Chau, & Aratani, 2010). Some of key that bring some debate and issue of past few decade have focus on the important of quality of parenting and how well single parent do this responsible. In attachment, theory has stated that the special relationship initially formed between child and primary caregiver can influence learning, reaction of treat, exploration and many other behavior that competence and maladaptation. This show that the influence of families on child outcomes can be indirectly at many level in their life. The quality of parenting can also be moderated by the system that regulate parent behavior, such as the marital relationship. The marital status may have statistically significant effect on the children behavior, but these become give influence that is more negative when the children was rise in the broken family. In our society, the divorces and single parent become common issue. The increase in divorce rate over the years has resulted in Malaysia experiencing an increase in the number of single parent and this is a worrisome scenario. Hetherington (2001) reported that under these circumstances, parental separation comes as an unwelcome surprise for the most children because this will lead to a series of stressful transition for children that will directly affect their development.

The role as the single parent can be difficult one because the parent has to run the responsible of being the head of household and financial provider to meeting all the child's need (Umberson, 2010). This role also require the parent to put the need of their child before their own. Single parent who do not have support system might become stress on the number of task and obligations that they have to complete in one day alone without any help. The current research most focus on the primary taker, which is mother that correlate with Malaysian culture expectation. However, in today society, this traditional expectation already shifted to the father by the increase in the number of single father. Some of the western studies identifying single fathers as the primary caretaker lack knowledge on the specific needs of fathers through their own perceptions, and fail to identify vital information on single parenting as experienced by fathers (Hofferth, Forry, & Peters, 2010). The perception of single parenting through the views of fathers is significant, especially because there is an increase in the number of children residing on a primary basis with their fathers (Dufur, 2010).

A most stressor experience within the community that has been identify in Malaysian culture is the single fathers raising their children alone without any help. There are so many challenges that single father faced include the limited of service to help them, the judgment from society and discrimination because of society norm, which is mother, always get the primary caretaker to their children not father. in our society, men are judged as the breadwinner not as the nurture for their children. That why when take over the responsible as the single father they will lack of parenting skill when their have to take responsible as single father drastically because they never be taught how to be nurturing. Some of them are grateful for the chance they have to raise their children but some time their also have their own stressor experience that community never know. If we see in Malaysian culture, most of the service are provided to the single mom and this will make single father uncomfortable to get any service from the community and decided to turn away. For example if we go to Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat (JKM) or other non-government organization, they just focus on the single mother need in rising their child but not for the single father that rising their children and this will make single father experience more stressor experience.

Most of the single father are struggle to know where to start because it is a difficult transition to be sure. Becoming single father resulted from death or because of divorce need them to dealing with their own feeling being lost of the love of his life while helping their children who were on adapting to a new world without their mom. The process to adjusting new reality of live is very challenging task. The role can be more difficult one because the parent have to know how to balance their responsible of being the head of household and financial provider to meeting all the child's needs alone (Umberson, 2010). Based on Ostberg and Hagekull (2013) note that social support is significantly related to single parenting as the parent has to provide for the child, manage a household, and attend to their own personal care. This role also requires the parent to put the needs of family before their own.

The role of single father started to change drastically when they become the only one that have to take care of their children. Before this, their main responsibility is only to take care pf the family financially but after become a single father, their role change to the nurturer also. This become a problematic because men were not raised to be nurturer. Burgess (1988), in his book the Single-Again Man states that Caring for children by a single-parent father can be difficult because he may not have been conditioned for the parenting role. Father who suddenly become the single father and primary caretaker for their children frequently show stress related to the transition of being the only parent. This stressor may include the lack of confident requires to be single father by the changing in their economic status, have to adjust to their new lifestyle and feeling not ready to take on the responsibility because typically the mother role shift directly to father and it became a difficult situation for the father.

This directly will affect the development of children and their wellbeing in many ways. Family is considered as the most important social agent that child will meet. It has a great influence on the child's physical, mental and moral development. Family also be the foundation of education before the child goes to school and the personality that the child takes to school is determined by the home. Hence, although the effect of single fatherhood on children's wellbeing is in largely negative, how and in what ways it affects the children's wellbeing through different channels. Should be investigate. Even the issue of father raising his children as a sole provider is not an unfamiliar concept that why these individuals are an understudied population requiring further examination (Rochlen, McKelley, & Whittaker, 2010).

Studies identifying single fathers as the primary caretaker lack knowledge on the specific needs of fathers through their own perceptions, and fail to identify vital information on single parenting as experienced by fathers (Hofferth, Forry, & Peters, 2010). Some single father studies outside Malaysia just include the feelings fathers have about their role as a parent, with a focus on the court system (Lawson, 2012) and societal views of them as fathers (DeJean., 2012). These studies examine the role the court has in determining the ability of the father to care for the child. Other studies explore the feelings children living in single father homes have about residing with their fathers and how the child's gender can influence the parenting process (Haire & McGeorge, 2012).

A review of the earlier research showed that there is a need for further studies on single fathers, with a focus on the stressors single fathers experience through their own perspective. This need is evident as there is a lack of qualitative studies using single fathers as the primary source of information. Completing a study that addresses fathers' own perceptions of what is stressful during the parenting process may provide insight into how this stress influences parenting. Single fathers face many of the same challenges single mothers face. The difference is single fathers have rarely had to take on this particular role. Transitioning into this new role of having all the responsibility of a father and mother is difficult for them, because it is something they have not had to do. The single fathers in the parenting class are willing to take on responsibilities and even welcome it. They want the same resources available to single mothers to be available for single fathers. This proposed study can provide a better understanding of their experience by identify stressors of this population, and its effect on quality childcare.

1.2 Problem statement

There has been a significant amount of research about single parenting has most commonly focused on single mother and the majority of this research has been based on the experiences, hardships and it relationships with their children. There is currently still have a big gap in research on single father population. In Malaysian culture, we does not expect men to be full time lone parent, that why until now there a still lack of research on issues faced by the single fathers even the rate of father become single parent is increasing (Cook, 2014). Statistics show that males are accepting their role as fathers and assuming primary responsibility for their children at higher rates (Troilo & Coleman, 2012). The realization of this parental shift has

caused me to examine this change so there can be a better understanding of this population's experience.

The number of families that headed by single father show increase compared to the families that headed by mother. There are some research studies have been done in the area of challenge of being single father but most of them are done in the western cultures. Little has been done in this area in Malaysia culture. Furthermore, not much research has been done to see it effect on quality childcare when their rise the children alone. Again, researcher has not seen any research looking at the stressor experience of single father in raising their children after become primary caretaker. All research are designed to help women and their children. Single father do not have anyone to talk to and discuss about the issue that they are going through in rising their children. Therefore, researcher wanted to contribute in this area in order to further a better understanding on the stressor experience that faced by single father in raising their children and want to identify if this experience will affect their quality of childcare.

This single father study will use a qualitative method to obtain information on the male perspective surrounding this phenomenon. The purpose of this research is to obtain a better understanding of the stressors single fathers experience while raising their children. The intent is to explore fathers' feelings about being a single parent and provide these males with a voice about their own experiences. Single father who not able to meet the children need will increase the level of stress of this population experience. Daughter especially need their mothers but when that is not possible, father must ensure that their daughter receive enough support that they need to go through the puberty, dating and to having high self- esteem. For single father this is hard for them in rising young girl when they have to do it alone. This study will make efforts to identify the biggest stressors that this population feels impact their parenting abilities. Obtaining this information can also help develop services specific to single fathers and ultimately help reduce this population's stress level.as we can see the most service that provided in Malaysian culture just concern about single mother and get little concern about single father.

Next, as the part of these research single fathers have a chance to identify the stressors that affect their ability to care for their children. The impact of single fatherhood on children wellbeing will be reflected through different channels. Children tend to change their behavior especially if the parent became single due to a divorce for example boys may become arrogant and aggressive after their fathers have left the house making it difficult for the mother to control him. The boys will develop some behavior and assume a husband-like relationship with the mother. They may try to offer financial advice, become jealous if the father starts dating, and attempt to assume an adult role in the family.

There is an expectation for single fathers to be the sole provider even when they are raising their children alone. Not being able to meet societal expectations may add to the level of stress this population experiences. As part of this research, single fathers have a chance to identify the stressors that affect their ability to care for their children. The goal of this study is to develop a list of key stressors single fathers experience during the parenting process and then use the identified stressors to develop supportive services that can assist this population. The supportive services may help facilitate some stress relief for single fathers in caring for their children. This research can also provide an understanding of what outreaches can occur in an effort to encourage fathers to utilize these services as a means of minimizing stress while providing care for their children. Given that the number of children raised by single fathers is increasing, this study's focus is to fill in the gaps in the knowledge of the stressors single fathers' experience, and provide more insight into the phenomenon.

1.3 Objective of the Study

To make sure this research was done correctly and follow the research goal, researcher already set some research objective. There are:

General objective:

The overall aim of the study is to find out the experiences of single father in raising their children

Specific objectives:

1. To identify the possible challenges of single fatherhood in raising their children.
2. To explore positive aspects of attending counseling service as being single fatherhood in terms of raising their children.
3. To suggest possible means in dealing with the challenge of single fatherhood and its impact on their children.

1.4 Research questions

Experience as single father

1. As a single father, are there any challenge that you have experienced?
2. Do you feel your experience will affect the quality childcare?
3. Do you think these counseling services can improve your parenting?

1.5 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual frameworks will help the researcher to identify the main concepts and ideas of the study. This framework also the details what answer that researcher is seeking to obtain. This study will focuses on the stressor father experience as single parent and how they feel this experience will affect their quality childcare in raising their children. Many of researcher before just address the experience of single mother as the primary parent. This study seek to obtain on the stressors experience of single father and it effect on quality childcare living in Kedah. Refer to the conceptual framework of the study on diagram 1; there are three main domain that is *input*, *process* and *output*. *Input* is the aspect that researcher want to study .In this research, the *input* is the Stressors Experienced that faces by Single Fathers and how this experienced will Effect their Quality Child Care. While *process* is an analysis from the data that get from the interview session with the single father. Result from the interview with single father is a *output* that is the list of the stressor experience that had been shared by single father and about the effect on their quality child care.

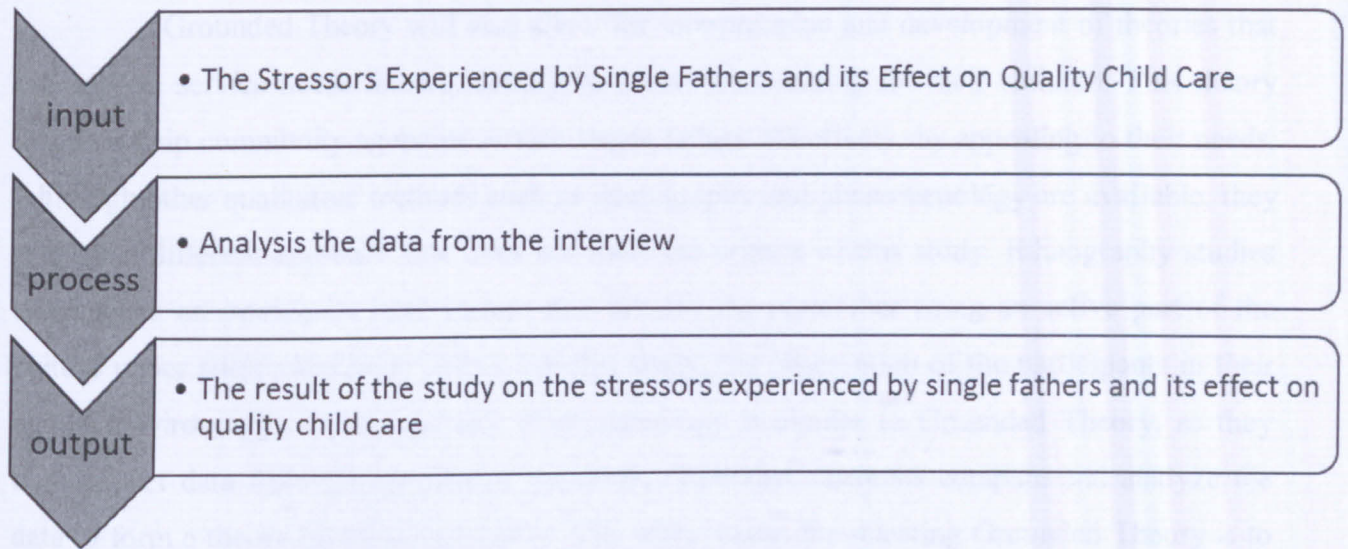


Diagram 1: Conceptual Framework

1.6 Theoretical Framework

1.6.1 Grounded Theory

For this study, the preferred method is the Grounded Theory approach and the attribution theory. The Grounded Theory approach is best because the intent of this study is to develop a theory on the stressors. Grounded Theory is a research tradition that develops a theory that explains human experiences (Hall et al., 2013). Traditionally, Grounded Theory allows the researcher to build a theory from the bottom up (Bendassolli, 2013) and formulate a theory based on the proposed study's findings. Grounded Theory's main purpose is to identify a phenomenon by identifying key concepts (Toloie-Eshlaghy et al., 2011). Glaser and Strauss were the first to introduce Grounded Theory to researchers. Through their theory, they believed the gap between practice and theory could be filled (Hall et al., 2013). In relation to this study, Grounded Theory will allow the development of a theory that identifies the stressors single fathers experience in Malaysian culture. The design will test the common belief that single fathers are less likely to ask for support because of concerns that society will view them as unable to care for their children, as noted by Rochelen et al. (2010).

Grounded Theory will also allow for interpretation and development of theories that incorporate service needs fathers identify as useful when caring for their children. This theory can then help community agencies service single fathers effectively, by appealing to their needs. Although other qualitative methods such as ethnography and phenomenology are available, they employ a different approach that does not meet the criteria of this study. Ethnography studies often focus on participant observations and involve the researcher being an active part of the culture under study (Moriarty, 2011). For this study, the observation of the participants in their natural environments is not planned. Phenomenology is similar to Grounded Theory, as they both collect data from the participant; however, Grounded Theorists compare and analyze the data to form a theory (Bendassolli, 2013). The main reason for selecting Grounded Theory is to make interpretations that explain single parenting through the fathers' experiences and provide information to community agencies that service this group.

1.6.2 Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy (REBT)

As a therapeutic model, REBT proposes that collaboratively, the clinician and client can work towards reducing undesirable emotions and behaviors by changing the thoughts and beliefs associated with a trigger or activating event (Nucci, 2002). This model implies that emotions are not caused by the actual events in people's lives, but rather emanate from how an individual perceives, interprets, and evaluates these events (Ellis, Gordon, Neenan & Palmer, 1997). It is important to note that cognitions, feelings, and behaviors are interrelated and interact with one another and therefore would be better served clinically if they are viewed together, rather than in isolation. While life may have many common stressors or negative life events, based on the principles of REBT, we may all process these events differently and as such have different negative or maladaptive affect or behavioral responses to these events.

The core of REBT is the ABC explanatory sequence of emotional disturbance. This model can be used to guide clinicians working with parents and teachers, while also providing a didactic explanation to allow individuals to apply this model for themselves independent of clinical intervention. That is, the ABC model can be used to help the individual understand that their negative affective response such as anger, stress, depression as the results from how they perceive and evaluate some of these negative life events rather than by the events themselves

(Ellis et al., 1997). The ABC model of REBT will be briefly explained below and examples of its use with parents and teachers will be provided.

In the ABC model, the A stands for a perceived unpleasant Activating Event or a set of Activating Experiences (Ellis et al., 1997). The reason that we use the adjective “perceived” is that while there may be some life events that are truly negative (i.e., death of a loved one) there may be other events that for the most part by themselves are not as objectively negative as one perceives them to be. This visit is not necessarily as negative a life event as the death of a loved one. Typically, people tend to believe that it is the situations themselves (A) that cause their emotional responses or consequences (C). As an example, single father experience a stressful event after death of their partner or getting divorce that will affect their quality child care. The REBT model proposes that there exists a mediational step between the activating event (A) and the consequences (C), in which the A is evaluated by the individual which gives rise to the Consequences.

This evaluative component is the B of the model. The B stands for the beliefs, thinking or cognitions that an individual has about the Activating Events (Ellis et al., 1997). People may evaluate and interpret these events very differently, as some beliefs can be healthy and flexible in nature (Rational Beliefs; rB) while others may be dysfunctional or inflexible (Irrational Belief; iB). Healthy rational beliefs that are posited to lead to healthy affective and behavioral functioning may take the form of wishes, preferences, wants, and desires while on the other hand, unhealthy irrational beliefs are rigid and dogmatic in nature, often leading to unhealthy affective and behavioral functioning. These Irrational beliefs may only serve to increase stress in an already stressful situations (Forman, 1994).

1.7 Significance of the study

This study will provide an understanding, from their perspective, of what is the single father experience while parenting. This research will provide information into the role of stress in single father homes. The majority of the available research incorporates quantitative approaches to understanding single father experiences, but lacks insight into the single fathers’ views of their experiences and how they feel these stressors affect them. The findings of this study can add to

the current literature by providing an interpretation of what stressors influence single father parenting. Using this study, researchers will help counsellor that work with single fathers by addressing the physical, emotional, and mental concerns they experience. Counsellor can use the finding by this study when serving these fathers and have some understanding of the stressors that fathers feel impact their parenting. By having some insight into the problem, counselling service to this population may become more focused on their needs.

As stated in the problem statement, this study can help to raise awareness of the existing problem and help community to support single father by providing different supports based on the finding of this researcher. As we all know, in our society already have so many stigma about single father especially in Malaysia. So this study help to society to understand more about what the real single father faced and believed that this study would be highly valuable for intervention program because single father also deserve support from society to meet the needs of this population.

The third of significance of the study is to bring awareness to government, non-government organization (NGO), private parties and community Malaysia who are involved in areas of improvement of socio-economic livelihood of individuals and groups in general and single mothers and their children in particular. Above all, it will pave a royal road in attracting many resources and intervention ventures which is supported by organizational responses that are guided and shaped by international, regional and national standards. In order to be aware of the challenges faced by the single father in Malaysian community.

1.8 Limitations of the study

The research study was limited by the following conditions. First, this study had limitations on the language. This language barrier will happen between researcher and respondent during interview session because researcher do not really understand on the Malay Sarawak language. That why researcher choose to do the interview with single father whom living in Kedah area only. This is because researcher had limitation to understand on other language. Fathers who do not live in the Kedah area will not fall within the scope of this study, which limits the single father experiences to the circumstances experienced by single father in