FACTORS CONTRIBUTE TOWARD UNMARRIED IN MIDDLE-AGED FEMALE AND MALE

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ABSTRACT

FACTORS CONTRIBUTE TOWARD UNMARRIED IN MIDDLE-AGED FEMALE AND MALE

Angela Ngu Sing Ling

The objective of the research is to explore the factors contribute toward unmarried in middle-aged female and male. There are two (2) female research participants and one (1) male research participant who in the range of age between 34 until 60. The research methods are semi structured interviews, which based on the questions that prepared and journals writing form the research participants. The researcher identifies several factors that contribute toward unmarried in middle-aged research participants, which are experiences in love, family, economic, educational background, interest and hobby, culture, thoughts to get married, social group, physical outlooks, personal thoughts toward marriage and requirements toward partner. Besides, the researcher also identifies the personalities of research participants is the factor that contribute toward unmarried in middle-aged. More specifically, the major factors contribute toward unmarried in middle-aged female and male are economic, requirements toward partner and research participants' personalities. The minor factors contribute toward unmarried among middle-aged female and male are experiences in love, family, educational background, interest and hobby, culture, thoughts to get married, social group, physical outlook and personal thoughts toward marriage.
ABSTRAK

FAKTOR-FAKTOR YANG MEMPENGARUHI WANITA DAN LELAKI PADA
PERTENGAHAN UMUR MASIH BELUM BERKAHWIN

Angela Ngu Sing Ling

Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk mengenalpasti tentang faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi wanita dan lelaki pada pertengahan umur yang masih belum berkahwin. Partisipan kajian terdiri daripada dua (2) orang wanita dan seorang (1) lelaki yang berumur dalam linkungan 34 hingga 60 tahun. Kaedah yang digunakan dalam kajian ini adalah kaedah temubual semi struktur yang berdasarkan soalan-soalan yang telah disediakan dan penulisan jurnal daripada partisipan kajian. Kajian ini telah mengenalpastikan beberapa faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi partisipan kajian yang belum berkahwin, iaitu pengalaman bercinta, keluarga, ekonomi, latar belakang pendidikan, hobi, budaya, keinginan untuk berkahwin, kumpulan sosial, penampilan fizikal, pendapat peribadi terhadap perkahwinan dan permintaan terhadap pasangan. Selain itu, kajian ini juga memperlihatkan personaliti-personaliti partisipan kajian yang mempengaruhi mereka belum berkahwin pada pertengahan umur. Secara spesifik, faktor-faktor utama yang mempengaruhi wanita dan lelaki pada pertengahan umur masih belum berkahwin adalah ekonomi, permintaan terhadap pasangan dan personaliti-personaliti partisipan kajian manakala faktor-faktor sampingan adalah pengalaman bercinta, keluarga, latar belakang pendidikan, hobi, budaya, keinginan untuk berkahwin, kumpulan sosial, penampilan fizikal dan pandangan terhadap perkahwinan.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter will give an overview of the study. This chapter included background of the study, statement of problem, objectives of study, research questions, significance of study and definition of terms.

1.1 Background of the Study

Being single would not appear in marriage and family relationship in a few years ago. In recent years, many people begin to consider the singlehood as a realistic
alternative. Both men and women feel freer to remain unmarried and postpone marriage (Jones & Ramdas, 2004, p. 20).

There is an essential to do the research on factors that contribute toward unmarried in middle-aged female and male. The rise of singlehood was a reflection of the difficulties involved in meeting a suitable partner rather than the rejection to engage in marriage (Quah, as cited in Jones & Ramdas, 2004, p. 20). Research has identified various factors that contribute toward the increase in women remaining single throughout their lifetime, which included increased enrolment in college, graduate programs and professional schools, enhanced career and employment opportunities, changing attitudes about the desirability of marriage and more liberal attitudes toward relationships and sex (Dalton and Stein, as cited in Hamilton, Gordon & Whelan-Berry, 2005, p. 395).

In fact, research shows a relationship among the men’s incomes and marriage rates. Women’s marriage rates are higher in areas with more “marriageable men”, which is men with higher incomes (Jones & Ramdas, 2004, p. 22). Therefore, men with higher income would not engage in unmarried or late married. Jones and Ramdas (2004, p. 11) claimed that men nervous to marry women with higher social and educational status and women would not inclined to “marry down”.

Researcher was going to do the research on factors contribute toward unmarried in middle-aged female and male. There were three (3) research participants required in this research, which are two (2) females and one (1) male. The research participants’ age range is 34 until 60.
1.2 Statement of Problem

Being single would not appear in marriage and family relationship in few years ago. Today, we see the number of never married is increasing. The increasing number of unmarried persons can attribute to the trend to marry at later ages (Jones & Ramdas, 2004, p. 20). The number of unmarried in middle-aged female and male increases significantly. In 2006, a large national sample mentions that majority of adults are unmarried, which is 50.3% (Alternatives To, 2008).

People have begun to consider singlehood as a realistic alternative in recent years. They feel freer to remain unmarried and postpone marriage. The increasing in the number of unmarried has been concern because number of unmarried increases significantly. Consequently, birth rate also decreases. There is the need to do the research on factors contribute toward unmarried in middle-aged female and male.

Singles have increased in absolutely number partly because the population as a whole has grown. The proportion of never-married women and men between the ages of thirty and thirty-four is more than triple the percentage of never-married single people in 1970 (Zinn & Eitzen, 2007, p. 217). Singles have also increased as a relative proportion of the population, which is from 28 percent of the total population in 1970 to 39.5 percent in 2002 (Lamanna & Riedmann, 2006, p. 326).

There are a growing numbers of adults to postpone marriage until they are older (Lamanna & Riedmann, 2006, p. 326). The median age of first marriage had increased in year 2000 (Fields and Casper, as cited in Lamanna & Riedmann, 2006, p. 326). Therefore, there is a need to do this study to reduce the number of unmarried.

Conclusion, there are definitely many factors that contribute toward unmarried in middle-aged female and male. Besides, there is a little research has been
done toward this topic. More specifically, Baumbusch, Lewis and Borders's study (as cited in Hamilton & Gordon, 2006, p. 394), there is only the limited research has focused on never-married female and male and experiences of singlehood. Therefore, there is a need to do the research on this topic.

### 1.2.1 Objective of Study

The objective of this study is to explore the factors contributing toward unmarried in middle-aged female and male.

### 1.3 Conceptual Framework

![Conceptual Framework](image)

Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework.

The aspects that can be seeing through the conceptual framework are the factors contribute toward unmarried in middle-aged female and male.

### 1.4 Research Question

The research question of the study is as follow:

1.4.1 What are the factors contribute toward unmarried in middle-aged female and male?
1.5 **Significance of Study**

The contributions of the study are:

1.5.1 Identifying the actual and additional factors that contribute toward unmarried in middle-aged female and male.

1.5.2 Identifying the personalities demonstrated by the unmarried in middle-aged female and male.

1.5.3 As additional reference for marriage counsellors to identify the factors that contribute toward unmarried in middle-aged female and male. Thus, marriage counsellors can identify solutions to help unmarried middle-aged female and male who wish to engage in marriage.

1.5.4 As reference for government to identify the factors contribute toward unmarried in middle-aged female and male. Thus, government can implement solutions to increase the percentage of marriage as well as to increase the birth rate.

1.5.5 As a reference for the community on this topic. Thus, the community aware of the factors contribute toward unmarried in middle-aged female and male.

1.5.6 As the reference for future researchers on this topic. Thus, researchers who want do researches on the topic will be aware of significance and limitations of study.
1.7  Definition of Terms

There are several definitions of terms to avoid confusion among the readers.

1.7.1 Unmarried

Conceptual Definition

"Unmarried" means an individual who have never been married, are divorced or widowed in marital status (Fields and Casper, as cited in Zinn & Eitzen, 2005, p. 215). Zinn and Eitzen (2005, p. 215) mentioned that unmarried adults live in a number of different household arrangements, include living alone, with roommates, with an unmarried partner as a heterosexual cohabiting couple or with a same sex partner in a gay or lesbian couple household.

Operational Definition

This research involves research participants who are unmarried, either never married or married late. In other words, research participants must be single in their marital status.

1.7.2 Middle-Aged

Conceptual Definition

"Middle-aged" means the developmental period that begins at approximately 40 years of age and extends to about 60 to 65 years of age. "Middle-aged" is a time of declining physical skills and expanding responsibility. This is a period where people become more conscious of young-old polarity and shrinking amount of time left in life (Santrock, 2007, p. 530).
Middle-aged adults face a significant issue, which is generativity versus stagnation (Erikson, as cited in Santrock, 2007, p. 559). Generativity means that adults' desire to leave legacies of themselves to the next generation in order to achieve a kind of immortality (Petersen, as cited in Santrock, 2007, p. 559). On the contrary, stagnation develops when individuals sense that they have done nothing to the next generation (Santrock, 2007, p. 559). Carol Ryff's study (Santrock, 2007, p. 559) examined the views of women and men at different ages and found that middle-aged adults especially were concerned about generativity.

Newman & Newman (2003, p. 58) claimed that the "middle-aged" is the age range from 34 until 60. In sum, "middle-aged" is balancing work and relationship responsibilities in the midst of the physical and psychological changes associated with aging (Lachman, as cited in Santrock, 2007, p. 530).

**Operational Definition**

In this study, "middle-aged" is defined as the age range from 34 to 60. The research participants in this research are in the age range of 34 to 60.

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter had discussed background of the study, statement of problem, objectives of the study, research questions, conceptual framework, definition of terms and contributions of the study. The next chapter will review relevant researches that had been done by previous researchers on this topic.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews previous researches which are relevant to the topic. Internet sources, journal articles, reference books, newspaper articles and other resources relevant to study will be discussed in this chapter to support the topic of research.

2.1 Middle-Aged

Middle-aged is the point in life when someone shifts from seeing the future in terms of potential and to see it in terms of limitations (Adams, 2004). In other words,
middle-aged is a time of declining physical skills and expanding responsibility. This is a period where people become more conscious of the young-old polarity and the shrinking amount of time left in life (Santrock, 2007, p. 530).

The middle-aged adults face a significant issue, which is generativity versus stagnation (Erikson, as cited Santrock, 2007, p. 559). Generativity means that adults' desire to leave legacies of themselves to next generation in order to achieve a kind of immortality (Petersen, as cited in Santrock, 2007, p. 559). On the contrary, stagnation develops when individuals sense that they have done nothing to next generation (Santrock, 2007, p. 559). Carol Ryff's study examined the views of women and men at different ages and found that middle-aged adults were concerned about generativity (Santrock, 2007, p. 559).

Middle-aged is starting at 34 years old until 60 years old. According to psychosocial theory, changes of personality toward achievement occur in middle-aged adult. In sum, "middle-aged" is balancing work and relationship responsibilities in the midst of physical and psychological changes associated with aging (Lachman, as cited in Santrock, 2007, p. 530).

2.2 Research on Unmarried Female

Women need to marry in order to survive in the past. Today, women are educated and financially independent. In contrast, being a wife no longer determines the happiness and well-being of a woman. They can actually lead a full and happy life without being engaged in marriage. Involvement in formal sector workforce had exposed women to new aspirations and increased their access to resources that enabled them to postpone marriage and unmarried (Jones & Ramdas, 2004, p. 16).
Baumbusch's qualitative study of never-married women identified personal choice, circumstance of times (social and historical conditions), social structures or norms around dating and immediate family responsibilities are the additional factors that contribute to the lifelong singlehood for women (Hamilton, Gordon & Whelan-Berry, 2006, p. 395).

Despite the growing presence and stature of population, there are limited research on unmarried women and experiences of singlehood (Baumbusch et al., as cited in Hamilton, Gordon & Whelan-Berry, 2005, p. 394). Women's economic independence had a great impact on the rise of singlehood (Zinn & Eitzen, 2007, p. 236). This is because occupational women have sufficient salary. Thus, they do not require a partnership with a man to have a stable life (Zinn & Eitzen, 2007, p. 236).

The limited research existing on never-married women often focus on identifying both advantages and disadvantages of the lifestyle for women. Benefits of singlehood include independence in various aspects of life, financial control, knowing how to be alone, pride, self-respect, pursuit of career goals, personal growth and friendship. In contrast, disadvantages of being unmarried women are absence of relationships with children and spouse, lack of companionship and physical intimacy, financial difficulties, absence of informal caregivers during aging and negative societal attitudes (Baumbusch and Lowenstein et al., as cited in Hamilton, Gordon & Whelan-Berry, 2006, p. 395).

2.2.1 Research on Unmarried Female in Malaysia

According to Laporan Ciri-ciri Pendidikan dan Sosial Penduduk, Banci Penduduk dan Perumahan (2004), median age of women to get married was 21.9 years old in year 1991 and it increases to 24.8 years old in year 2005. The estimation for year 2020 is 29.2 years old. Additionally, this report also mentioned that the
factors contribute toward unmarried women included financial problem, unsuitable partner and emphasis on career (Shan, 2008).

Besides, women tend to remain unmarried because they often meet men who are already married and they fear of choose unsuitable partners. Women mentioned that men’s physical appearance do not give the real picture of real personalities of men (Noor Azmah, 2005). This makes them cautions to engage in marriage.

Singles among Kuala Lumpur women in their 30s and 40s had doubled between 1970 and 2000 (Jones & Ramdas, 2004, p. 8). The rise has been relatively greater for females in Malaysian population. Number of never married women in their 30s and 40s rose from 26,000 to 80,000 in Malaysia.

The factors that cause females to remain unmarried include:

(a) Revolution of Education

Majority of Malaysians finish their study after Form 5. It means that they not married after they finished their study, which is around age 18. For those who want to further study, they may delay their marriage to age 23 or 24. Some of them who want to have financial stability, they will emphasize on their careers and delay marriage for several years. This phenomenon definitely contributes to them remaining unmarried in the early years after they finished their studies.

(b) Opportunity of Career Involvement Increase

Female had become more independent as they engage in careers, whether professional or non-professional. They can gain income form their career. Therefore, they are independent without depending on their family or husband. This category of
female has a thought that “they hold money in their own hands”. Thus, this also contributes toward unmarried female. Additionally, the dedicating of professional female toward their careers also hinders them from engaging in marriage.

(c) Responsibility toward the Family

Some females especially the eldest daughter in family would delay their marriage because they think that they have responsibility to their family. The eldest daughter will work to ease the burdens of parents. They will delay their marriage until their brothers and sisters finished their studies and get married. Unfortunately, they are “old” already when they have the thoughts to engage in marriage.

(d) High Expectations

A female would delay her marriage because she puts high expectations toward a male. For example, a female expects to have a male who is handsome, rich, high level of education, good personality and other aspects. Female definitely spends extra time to search for her dream man to fulfil all requirements. This contributes toward single until the end of her life.

(e) Low Enforcement of the Parents

Nowadays, parents do not force their children to engage in marriage because they can get benefits from their children in terms of monthly income if their children are working. Their children would give them money to ease burdens of their parents. Parents would be satisfied although they do not have financial problem. For parents who have high level of education, they would think that it is irrational to arrange their children’s marriage. Thus, they would just focus on their studies and careers. As a result, they would delay marriage or remain unmarried.