

## Challenges and Locus Control among Single Mothers in Muar, Johor

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### Abstract

The challenges of single mothers as head of the family is very heavy because they have to run dual function both as a breadwinner and managers and educators of children. Being a single mother is a traumatic life experience for them. Therefore, this study will involve research on challenges and its relationship with locus control among single mothers in Muar. This article aims to identify the problems faced by single mothers and their relationship with locus of control among single mothers enrolled in the Darul Ta'zim Family Development Foundation (YPKDT) Muar. The study involved a total of 100 respondents consisting of single mothers enrolled. Questionnaires were used in this study and consist of 3 parts, background, problems of single mothers and locus of control among single mothers. Data were analyzed using Statistical Package For The Social Sciences (SPSS 16.0). Descriptive analysis is used to answer the objectives 1 and 2 by using frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation and inferential analysis used to answer the third objective of the correlation method. The results showed that the economic problem is most dominant problem faced by single mothers, followed by psychological and emotional problems, family problems and problems of stigma and community support. In addition, the findings also indicate internal locus of control is the most dominant with  $M = 82.2$  compared with external locus of control with  $M = 81.2$ . The study is significant as it provides exposure and awareness to government, non government organisation (NGO), private parties and community in order to aware of the challenges faced by the single mother in Malaysia.

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**Keywords:** challenges, locus control, single mother, relationship

### INTRODUCTION

'The hand that rocks the cradle capable of shaking the world'. That Malay proverb still intact and timeless in explaining the role of a human mothers. This maxim implies that the enormity of the role of a mother in one's life. The role and status as a person of glory mother was admitted in various cultures and religions the world over. According to the House Dictionary Fourth Edition (2005), can be defined as the mother who gave birth to one. Status and title as the mother is certainly the dream of every normal woman who has been married, but what if a person status as single mothers? Single mother phenomenon is not new in our society. However, over the years, it became a topic that invites discussion when we talk about women and their families. This may be due to the association of single mothers who now sprouted cause difficulties experienced by this group can be highlighted in a more effective manner. Furthermore, the present challenge is so strong that they cause problems become more acute.

According to statistics released by the Family Development Foundation Darul Ta'zim (YPKDT), the number of registered single mothers from 2003 to 2012 was over 5291 people. Meanwhile, in 2012,

there were 253 registered single mothers below the foundation. This clearly shows that there is an increase in the number of single mothers in the state of Johor. This does not include some single mothers who have not registered due to lack of information or lack of awareness of this government. In summary, a single mother who is a widow of her husband's death, the wife who has been divorced by her husband and the woman who leads, manages and raising children alone (Sufean & Jamaludin, 2006). While Hj. Hamdan (2007) defined a single mother as a person who has lost her husband by death and had her shares of responsibility as head of the family to educate their children or even a woman who is still legally her status as a wife to her husband but has been left out and about to continue her lives with children alone without getting any maintenance from her husband.

### Single Mothers According to Islamic Perspective

History has proved that Islamic civilization centuries has recognized the position and status of the mothers who a person with honorable position in the eyes of the Muslim community including single mothers. Islam also give attention to the rights and feelings of a mother when making the divorced mother is more entitled to defend and raise her children rather than

being a father. It is also recorded in a hadith when a woman came to ask the Prophet Joseph (2002), which:

*"O Prophet, verily my son is of my first conceived, and drink my milk, into my lap he place it into shelter. But his father divorced me and want to take him from me, so the Prophet sallallaahu 'alaihi wasallam said to her: "You have more right (to defend your son) as long for you not to marry."* (Narrated by Ahmad with a weak isnad).

Undoubtedly, there are many challenges and imperatives faced by single mothers in their daily life after an absence of a husband. The economic problem is a major challenge to single mothers. This was stated by Syarifah (2003) in his study on the problems of single mothers in Sura, Dungun Terengganu found out that single mothers' main problem is an economic problem. Government concern with the fate faced by single mothers has led to various forms of preparation and planning strategies to reduce the burden borne by them. For example, the government has provided incentives to Malaysia Power to provide a three-month skills training courses in tailoring, beauty, floral arrangements, crystal and beads to single mothers to start their own businesses (Utusan Malaysia Online, October 2012).

#### **BACKGROUND OF PROBLEM**

Today, the role and woman challenges are increasing especially single mothers. Various challenges and hardships faced by single mothers in their daily lives. Issues and problems faced by single parents is not new but almost every year the media reported various problems and challenges faced by single mothers. For example, financial problems, family problems, problems of stigma and support from the community as well as emotional and psychological problems among single mothers. In Malaysia itself, most single parents facing financial difficulties to survive themselves and their children who grew up in isolation. This was revealed by the Daily Herald Newspaper Online (January 2, 2013) which reported about a single mother, Jamilah Ibrahim from Batu Pahat Johor who had to work for 16 hours a day to support her two children are still in school.

Single mothers also face challenges and psychological and emotional problems after holding the status as the capital tunggal. Hal also explained by studies Afifi, Cox, & Enns (2006) who showed that women who divorce are likely to suffer emotional distress and depression compared with married women or women who have never married. This applies especially for single parents who have lost their husbands or death. They tend to feel lonely and void because there was no place to share the ups and downs, to depend on and get the love (Hamid, Mottan, & Tyng, 2010).

Other challenges faced by single mothers is stigma from society of their future. This can be seen in the study conducted by Crosier, Butterworth, & Rodgers (2007) that single mothers deal with more trouble in getting social support compared with the wife who lives with her husband. Next, challenges or other problems faced by single parents are family problems of raising children alone. It is also supported by studies by Rohayu, Sharipah, Yusmarwati, Maziana, & Rasid (2000) which states that teens in single parent families living in the city and have a lower quality of parenting is risky to get involved with anti-social behavior.

#### **OBJECTIVES OF STUDY**

- i. Identify the problems faced by single mothers.
- ii. Identify the locus control among single mothers.
- iii. Identify the relationship between problems and locus control of single mothers.

#### **LIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

This study had limitations whereby it only confined to single mothers who enrolled in the Darul Ta'zim Family Development Foundation in Muar, Johor. The area is selected based on the statistics of single mothers enrolled in the Darul Ta'zim Family Development Foundation (YPKDT) in 2012. This sample was also selected using simple random sampling method because all respondents have the same opportunity to choose from in the study. This study is divided into a number of elements and aspects, to know the background or a single parent profile, challenge or issue, locus of control and responsibility faced by single mothers in their daily life.

#### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Issues and problems faced by single mothers has been widely discussed in the inside and outside of the country. Among them is a study conducted by Crosier, Butterworth, & Rodgers (2007), entitled *'Mental health problems among single and partnered mothers. The role of financial hardship and social support'* over 354 single mothers and 1689 mothers who have partners show that more single mothers who have mental health problems compared to women who still have a partner or couple.

Youngblut, Brady, Brooten, & Thomas (2010) in a study entitled "Factors Influencing Single Mother's Employment Status" has carried out research on 9 single mothers who do not work and the desire to work either part-time or full-time. The findings of the study show that the single mothers face three barriers to work or to get an education, which are of a child care issues, lack of a father involvement in child care and lack of positive support from family and friends

to encourage single mothers to go out to work and earn an income.

Turner (2007) conducted a study entitled "The Significance of Employment for Chronic Stress and Psychological Distress among Rural Single Mothers" over 508 single mothers aged between 18 and 39 years living in Northern New England. The results showed that single mothers who work in rural areas reported that they face less financial stress, child care stress, and stress of living in the rural areas. In addition, working mothers are also likely face less psychological depression than single mothers who do not work.

Broussard, Joseph, & Thompson (2012) in their study entitled "Stressors and Coping Strategies Used by Single Mothers Living in Poverty" conducted on 15 poor single mothers. The study found that among the problems faced by single mothers were physical and mental health problems, stigma associated with poverty, child care problems, and lack of social support from family, friends and community. However, in this study, some of the single mothers engage in volunteer activities and pet defend as a mechanism to cope with stress is perceived as a single mother.

Nixon, Greene, & Hogan (2012) in a study entitled "Negotiating Relationships in Single-Mother Households: Perspectives of Children and Mothers" on a sample of 35 single-parent families with 38 children . Findings showed that there were three things that reveal the relationship of mother and child, which are the child's dependency on the mother, care ethics and maintain the boundaries of the role. This study clearly shows a few things that should be encountered by parents in family problems.

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**METHODOLOGY**

**Research Design**

This study uses a quantitative approach in the form of correlation. Correlation is used because this method is suitable for use in studies involving the relationship between two variables in which the data used consists of ordinal data. In this study, the correlation method is used in order to study the relationship between challenges and locus control among single mothers .

**Sample and population**

According to Azizi et al., (2007), the sample is a part of the population regardless of whether it can be representative of the population or otherwise. While Chua (2006) noted that the sample is an integral element in the population. This study involved only single mothers enrolled in the Family Development Foundation Darul Ta'zim in Muar, Johor. In this study, a total of 100 registered single mothers were selected as respondents.

**Research Instrument**

In this study, the instrument used by the researchers was a questionnaire. Researchers used questionnaires for this survey as it serves more practical and effective applied to large populations (Mohd. Konting Majid, 2004). The two parts of the questionnaire, Section A (background of respondents) and Part B (single mothers' problems) was created by Faizah and colleagues (2012) based on an analysis of previous studies in Chapter 2. While in Part C (locus of control) is the one question that has been modified based on questionnaires by Rotter's IR-ER Scale contains 46 items questionnaire. Alternative instruments or questionnaires are the most suitable way to be able to save cost and time.

**RESEARCH FINDINGS**

**Single Mothers' Problems**

Table 1: Distribution of respondents based on the problems faced by single mothers

Number	Element	Low (10.00 -23.33) f (%)	Medium (23.34-36.66) f (%)	High (36.67-50.00) f (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	Economy	10 10.0	76 76.0	14 14.0	31.31	5.39
2	Family	47 47.0	45 45.0	8 8.0	24.04	7.46
3	Stigma and Support	57 57.0	39 39.0	4 4.0	23.2	7.02
4	Psychological and Emotional	28 28.0	64 64.0	8 8.0	27.13	6.78

Based on Table 1, the problems faced by single mothers are categorized into 4 types and the classification of the mean value is taken to explain the scores of the study. The highest score recorded by the economic problems mean score of 31.31. The second highest score was for psychological and

emotional problems that have mean score of 27.13. The third score is the problem with mean scores of family 24.04. Next, the lowest score recorded were problems of stigma and support mean score of 23.2.

**Locus Control Among Single Mothers**

Table 2 : Internal and external locus control among single mothers

Number	Items	Low (22.00-51.33) <i>f</i> (%)	Medium (51.34-80.66) <i>f</i> (%)	High (80.67-110.00) <i>f</i> (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	Internal locus	4 4.0	38 38.0	58 58.0	82.2	12.04
2	External locus	4 4.0	45 45.0	51 51.0	81.2	15.15

Based on Table 2, locus of control are categorized into two elements, namely internal locus of control and external locus of control. Through the classification, the mean value is taken to explain the scores of the study. Highest scores for internal locus of control is the mean score of 82.2 with a standard deviation of 12:04. The second highest score is external locus of control with the mean score of 81.2 with a standard deviation of 15:15.

**Relationship between Problems and Locus Control Among Single Mothers**

Economic problems, family, stigma and community support as well as psychological and emotional faced by single mothers have a strong relationship with external locus of control among single mothers compared with internal locus of control. This is shown by every high coefficient *r* for each relationship between a problem with an external locus of control among single mothers. This means that single parents believe that the problems faced by them are heavily influenced by external factors than by internal factors themselves (internal locus).

start a business related to the financial aspects of 81.7 per cent in addition to the problem of getting loan from the government amounting to 73.3 percent. It shows a single mom entrepreneurs also face financial problems when looking to start a business to generate income families.

Meanwhile, other studies that also support the finding of this study is the study by Afifi et al. (2006) who found that women who divorce tend to suffer from psychiatric disorders than women who marry and women who have never been married. This means that the psychological and emotional problems were among the dominant problem faced by single mothers.

However, these findings do not coincide with the study by Bull (2009) who found that single mothers in Scandinavia have greater job opportunities, higher education level, financial support and high life satisfaction. According to another study, the single mother's well-being is dependent on the level of support available from the welfare system.

**DISCUSSION, SUMMARY AND SUGGESTION Single Mothers' Problems**

The findings showed that the majority of single parents face economic problems with mean score of 31.3, followed by psychological and emotional problems that had mean scores of 27.1, family problems which have a mean score of 24.0 and the last is the problem of stigma and community support with a score of 23.2. The results are also in line with several studies in and outside the country carried out before. For example, a study by Syarifah (2003) who studied the problems of single mothers in discharging its children's education at Sura, Dungun Terengganu. The results showed that the main challenge faced by single mothers are economic problems. Further, other studies that parallel and support the findings of this study is the study by Che Noraini (2010) who found that single parents have problems when looking to

**Locus Control Among Single Mothers**

The findings of this study show that the most dominant locus of control among single mothers is internal locus of control with a mean of 82.2 and followed with external locus of control with a mean of 81.2. However, no study has been done in connection with this single locus of control mothers. However, there are findings of the study by Smith et al.,( 2000) conducted a study of 131 mothers with children to see the influence of locus of control mothers on children's development. The findings show that the locus of control mothers did not have a significant relationship with the development of children.

The study also found a significant relationship between economic problems , family problems , problems of stigma and community support as well as

psychological and emotional problems with the locus of control among single mothers. The findings of this study indicate there is a relationship between economic problems with internal locus of control single mother with Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) obtained was 0.281 and this means that the relationship is very weak. Meanwhile, the study also found that there is a relationship between economic problem with an external locus of control with the Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) obtained was 0.590 and this means that the relationship is moderate. This finding is consistent with studies Rohayu et al, (2000) which describes the challenges faced by single mothers in Malaysia in the field of entrepreneurship. For example, lack of education, capital and support environmental factors.

The findings also showed a significant relationship between the psychological and emotional problems with internal locus of control, with the Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) obtained was 0.464 and this means that the relationship is weak. Meanwhile, this study also found that there is a relationship between the psychological and emotional problems with external locus of control with the Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) obtained was 0.706 and this means that the relationship is strong.

Further, the study also showed a significant relationship between family problems with internal locus of control with the Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) obtained was 0.417 and this means that the relationship is weak. Meanwhile, this study also found that there is a relationship between family problems with external locus of control with the Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) obtained was 0.674 and this means that the relationship is moderate.

The research findings also showed a significant relationship between the problems of stigma and community support to internal locus of control with the Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) obtained was 0.245 and this means that the relationship is very weak. Meanwhile, this study also found that there is a connection between the problem of stigma and community support with external locus of control with the Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) obtained was 0.559 and this means that the relationship is moderate. The findings of this study are consistent with studies by Nelson (2000) who found that single mothers in rural areas was dependent on others for help and support.

In conclusion, these findings show that the single mothers are facing the economic problems, family problems, negative stigma from society and psychological emotional problems. This study also indicated that most of single mothers in Muar are influenced by external control. Besides that, there is a significant correlation ( $r=0.706$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) between

psychological emotional problems and external locus of control.

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