Household Income and Life Satisfaction of Single Mothers in Malaysia

Muzalwana Abdul Talib, Department of Applied Statistics, UM
Noor Khaleeda Abdul Mutalib, Department of Applied Statistics, UM
Sharifah Muhairah Shahabudin, Department of Development Studies, UM
Adzmel Mahmud, Population and Family Research Division, NPFDB
SINGLE PARENTING SCENARIO

• 17% of children aged 0-14 live in single parent households where approximately 88% of these headed by women (OECD, 2014)
• From 89 countries, 101.3 million single mothers are living alone with their children (UN Women Report, 2019)
• 2.9% of the population were single widowed, divorced with kids or permanently separated from spouse (Ismail, I et al., 2016 citing Malaysia Population and Housing Census 2010).
• Widowhood related to divorce or spousal abandonment (UNDP, 2010)

DIVORCE IN MALAYSIA

2017 50,314 cases
2018 50,356 cases

Highest divorce case occurred at the age of 30 – 34 years
A steep increase in total number of single mothers in age group of 30 to 39 years
Positive relationship between number of single mothers to incidence of households living in poverty (Mulia, 2017)

Low education attainment – low participation in labor market, involvement in informal sector, some not working, no part time job (UNDP, 2010; Idris et al., 2012)

Poor parenting - less affectionate, less supervision, less able to control children; children at significant risks of antisocial (N. Zill, 2002) & delinquent behaviors (McCord, J., 1982).

Living in poverty, depression, social problems could impact children development and family institution. Children are important source of human capital to the nation.
This study attempts to:

- explore the socio-demographic and economic background of single mothers in Malaysia and to examine their income category and level of poverty.
- determine the life satisfaction of single mothers and their income category.
**DATA AND VARIABLES**

**DATA SOURCE**
- Fifth Malaysian Population and Family Survey (MPFS–5) conducted by National Population and Family Development (NPFDB)

**PRIMARY FOCUS**
- Working single mothers (either widowed, divorced or separated)
- Aged 15 –59 years old
- Residing in Peninsular Malaysia
- Children staying together

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC & DEMOGRAPHIC**
- Monthly Household income
- Age
- Educational level
- Residing states
- Ethnicity
- Marital status
- Number of children

**LIFE SATISFACTION**
- Personal Wellbeing Index (PWI) instrument develop by International Wellbeing Group (IWbG)
  - health condition
  - life achievement
  - relationship with person known well
  - self-security
  - relationship with society
  - own future
  - religious and spiritual practices
  - overall life

**Income category (median; range)**
- T20: RM13,148; <RM4,360
- M40: at least RM6,275; >RM4,360 – RM9,619
- B40: at most RM3,000; >RM9,619

Poverty level <RM 980
METHODS

HYPOTHESES
Examine relations between
• demographic variables household income
• life satisfaction
• overall satisfaction

ANALYSIS
• Descriptive
• Non-parametric
• PLS-SEM

SOFTWARE
• IBM Statistical Package for Social Studies (SPSS)
• Smart PLS 3.0
SINGLE MOTHER PROFILE (n=282)

**ETHNIC**
- Malay: 76.2%
- Chinese: 13.8%
- Indians: 9.2%
- Bumiputera Non-Malays: 3.8%

**AGE**
- < 30: 8.2%
- 30 – < 39: 36.2%
- 40 – < 49: 35.5%
- 50 – 59: 20.2%

**NO. OF CHILDREN**
- 1 – 3: 13.1%
- 4 or more: 86.9%
SINGLE MOTHER PROFILE (n=282)

**Marital Status**
- Widowed: 47.5%
- Divorced: 43.6%
- Separated: 8.9%

**Education Level**
- Primary or less: 60.3%
- Secondary: 16.3%
- Tertiary: 23.4%

**Income Category**
- B40: 89.4%
- M40: 8.9%
- T20: 1.2%
SINGLE MOTHER: B40 & BELOW POVERTY LINE BY STATES

(χ² test of Association: p = 0.004)

% OF B40 CATEGORY

BELONG POVERTY

ABOVE POVERTY

49%

3%

PERIS

KEDAH

KELANTAN

PENANG

PERAK

PAHANG

N.SEMBILAN

KEDAH

SELANGOR

MELAKA

FT PUTRA JAYA

FT KUALA LUMPUR

PERLIS

TERENGGANU

JOHOR

SINGLE MOTHER: B40 & BELOW POVERTY LINE BY STATES

(χ² test of Association: p = 0.004)
SINGLE MOTHER COMPOSITION (n=282)

Marital Status and Age Group (χ² test of Association: p =0.000) Education and Income Group (χ² test of Association: p =0.000)
**SINGLE MOTHER LIFE SATISFACTION (n=282)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th><strong>Generally Unsatisfied</strong></th>
<th><strong>Neutral</strong></th>
<th><strong>Generally Satisfied</strong></th>
<th><strong>Mostly/Highly Satisfied</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of health conditions (LS1)</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Achievement (LS2)</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>44.7</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship with other individuals (LS3)</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>57.8</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of security (LS4)</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>53.9</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship with Society (LS5)</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td>25.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own Future (LS6)</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>48.2</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religions and spiritual practices (LS7)</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall satisfaction (OLS)</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Close to 80% of respondents are at least Generally Satisfied with their Overall life
- Mostly/Highly Satisfied with their Religion and spiritual practices relationships (27.7%), Relationship with societies (25.5%) and Other individuals whom they knew (25.2%).
- Generally Unsatisfied with their Life Achievement (15.2%) and the other three aspects Generally Unsatisfied are Life Security (11.7%), Level of Health Condition and Own Future (10.3%).
SINGLE MOTHER LIFE SATISFACTION (n=282)

Results of Structural Model (PLS-SEM)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Std. Beta</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>p-values</th>
<th>Decision (R²)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1 Income Category -&gt; Life Satisfaction</td>
<td>-0.151</td>
<td>-0.151</td>
<td>2.945</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>Supported (0.023)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2 Income Category -&gt; Overall life satisfaction</td>
<td>0.011</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>0.489</td>
<td>0.312</td>
<td>Not supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3 Life Satisfaction -&gt; Overall life satisfaction</td>
<td>0.765</td>
<td>0.767</td>
<td>31.779</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Supported (0.582)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Their Income Category alone has slight negative relationship to Life Satisfaction.
- However, Life Satisfaction indicators are strongly associated to their Overall Satisfaction.
Large majority of working single mothers in Malaysia are in the B40 income category - tendency to earn income below poverty line.

Most of single mothers are not happy with their life achievement and health conditions.

Significant percentage of single mothers experience separation and divorce even before the age of 30 years, whereas widowhood is more prevalent after the age of 40.

With at least one child staying together, single mother perceive their own future is an important aspect of their life satisfaction.
Mostly in informal sectors to promote growth and infrastructure development within the informal sectors.

Low education attainment

Creating more quality jobs as transitions from existing low-paid of the informal to formal sectors.

Low-paid job

A national policy of minimum wage,

Low-wage employed single mothers
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

National Population and Family Development Board Malaysia (NPFDB)

THANK YOU!