

WOMEN'S VOICES IN RELATION TO FATE, CULTURAL PRACTICES AND LIFE SATISFACTION: A CASE STUDY OF SARAWAKIAN SINGLE MOTHERS IN SAMARAHAN, SARAWAK

(Suara wanita dalam memperkatakan tentang takdir, amalan budaya dan kepuasan hidup: Kajian kes di kalangan ibu tunggal di Samarahan, Sarawak)

Nor Ba'yah Abdul Kadir, Kamsiah Ali

ABSTRACT

This paper describes the women's feelings on religious beliefs in relation to fate, cultural practices and life satisfaction. Using their own language, these women expressed their happiness and hope to achieve a better life. Fate is used as self-defense, self-persuasion, and excuses when dealing with stressful life events. Women in this study used 'muhasabah' to improve their self and be a better person. This interview study is part of survey research of single mothers in Samarahan, Sarawak. The interviews were conducted from May to June 2001 at selected villages in Samarahan. Results had shown that most of single mothers described life satisfaction and happiness in terms of fate, role fulfillment, and a good social interaction. In spite of their ongoing difficulties and stigmas on their marital failure, these women put an effort to improve their social interactions and avoid any societal conflicts. It is clear that these women accept their roles as primary caregivers and lives with modesty, honor and dignity.

Keywords: *Single mothers, fate, cultural practices, life satisfaction, happiness*

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini menerangkan perasaan wanita berhubung dengan kepercayaan agama yang dikaitkan dengan takdir, amalan budaya dan kepuasan hidup. Dengan menggunakan bahasa mereka sendiri, wanita-wanita ini meluahkan kegembiraan dan harapan dalam mengejar kehidupan yang lebih baik. Takdir digunakan untuk benteng pertahanan diri, pemujukan diri dan alasan-alasan apabila berdepan dengan peristiwa hidup yang sangat menekan. Wanita-wanita dalam kajian ini turut menggunakan 'muhasabah' untuk meningkatkan diri mereka dan menjadi individu yang lebih baik. Temubual ini dijalankan daripada April hingga Julai 2001 di sekitar empat buah kampung yang dipilih di Samarahan. Keputusan kajian mendapati ibu tunggal menerangkan kepuasan hidup dari segi takdir, menyempurnakan peranan dan interaksi sosial yang baik. Dalam keadaan sukar yang berpanjangan dan stigma atas kegagalan perkahwinan mereka, wanita-wanita ini berusaha untuk memperbaiki interaksi sosial dan mengelak sebarang konflik dengan masyarakat. Jelas di sini bahawa wanita-wanita ini menerima peranan mereka sebagai penjaga utama dan hidup dalam keadaan sederhana, mulia dan bermaruah.

Katakunci: *ibu tunggal, takdir, amalan budaya, kepuasan hidup, kegembiraan*

INTRODUCTION

This article is a part of large study of Malay single mothers living in poverty in Samarahan area. Samarahan is the Eighth Division of Sarawak's District Areas. The estimate population of Samarahan is 46,583. From 46,583 permanent residents of Samarahan, 30,934 are Malays with males making up to 15, 637 and female 15,297 (Population Census Report 1991 in Yearbook of Statistics Sarawak, 2000).

We chose Older Malay single mothers for several reasons. First, they are marginalized people. Secondly, most of older Malay single mothers live in rural poverty. Thirdly, only few studies have been focused on older Malay single mothers' life satisfaction, happiness, and well-being in Sarawak. Lastly, we would like to hear their voices on how they feel about their lives. It has to be pointed out that the study was conducted because of the paucity information concerning on older, poor Malay single mothers. In fact, only few researches and studies have been done on older Malay single mothers' life satisfaction, happiness, and well-being in Sarawak.

Our aim is to analyze the happiness of Malay single mothers and at the same time investigate if life satisfaction and happiness are not identical. Life satisfaction here refers to how people evaluate their life. In other words life satisfaction is assumed to be a core dimension of happiness, which thus contribute to older Malay single mothers' well-being. We assumed that high levels of happiness could lead to life satisfaction and reduce social anxiety such as stigmas. We would like to highlight that only women's narratives will be used to describe their feelings thus no statistical analysis was applied in this article. Statistical analysis was described elsewhere (Abdul Kadir & Ali, 2002).

Although, these older single mothers are poor, we also assumed that they achieve their life satisfaction in their own ways. Due to the fact that older Malay single mothers have their own way of finding life satisfaction, it flashes out in our mind that "the concept of acceptance" or *takdir* may be a factor that contribute to life satisfaction and happiness. To what extent an individual's self-acceptance interrelated to life satisfaction? High self-acceptance views higher in an individuals' life satisfaction, and thus may fluctuate one's well-being through behavior.

In this article, the own words of the Malay single mothers were used in the text. Their contributions and views are of course mediated through researchers. Quotation marks was used for verbatim translations from the scripts but it has been edited, selected, and inserted into appropriate discussions. For the purpose of this article, pseudonyms was used in order to protect the respondents from being recognized in the interest of confidentiality. All older Malay single mothers used Sarawak Malay language, which is a different with the standard Malay. As an outsider of the Malay community in Sarawak (Nor Ba'yah from Peninsular Malaysia), the researchers are aware of this difference. Even though one of the researchers is local Sarawak, the researchers decided to hire a local numerator (who also act as our translator) because a large number of the participants did not allow the researchers to do all the interviews.

CONCEPTUAL AND RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

a) The belief in fate and cultural practices

Our theoretical framework in the study is based on understanding the meaning of fate or providence (*takdir*) in Islam and its association with cultural beliefs. *Takdir* means events that happen in human life which are determined by God and its beneficial aspects (*hikmah*) that may occur from it without an individual's concern or knowledge. *Takdir* is totally not associated to an individual's past experience, previous life, or punishment of the past sin. Believing in *takdir* means it is part of trials from God to justify whether His creations have faith in Him. *Takdir* is included in the concepts of *qada* and *qadar* that is a part of Islamic concepts of faith or *Iman*.

Iman is defined as an individual's belief and full confidence without any form of hesitation towards God.

Some Malays may misinterpret the meaning of *takdir*. Actually, beliefs in fate encourage people to be aware of their weakness and strength. It is also considered as a "coping mechanism in helping one to accept one's adversity" (Ling How Kee, 2000, p 165). Often, belief in fate is used as a self-defense, self-persuasive, and excuse.

In the concept of fate, there is an element of self-acceptance that has been developed in Malays in their personal growth. Self-acceptance as a part of self-esteem emphasized on capability and incapability of an individual optimal functioning in her or his environment. So that they do aware of their weakness and strength.

Fate is not only focused on individual internalization but also emphasized on external aspects of lives. Take for instance, all events have been determined by God. Only God knows what is the best for His creations. So, bad events or good events are also believed as tribunal and trial of life. Moreover, Moslems are discouraged to feel emptiness in lives as a matter of failure. Instead, they are facilitated to enhance and change their lifestyles to be more positive or sometimes it is called *hijrah*. *Hijrah* means transformation of way of life in order to improve for a better life.

On the other hand, the concept of effort (or *usaha* in Malay term) emerged to persuade people to be more positive in order to enhance their life satisfaction and well-being. In this connection, Moslems believed that God helps those people who put an effort to improve their life. In addition to that, fate helps them to be more humble and sensitive of the needs and welfare of others. Thus, fate does reflect active participation and action of human in seeking culturally appropriate attainments in a contemporary society.

In relation to the concept of fate, Malays have also practiced the concept of *muhasabah*. *Muhasabah* is a quite similar concept of introspective from psychodynamic perspective. It is also as a spiritual medical treatment for the Malay who experienced failure in life. In fact, religious practice is seen as a holistic approach to enhance an individual's well-being.

Other aspect that we need to discuss is the cultural beliefs that may influence Malays through social activities and services particularly for the elderly. In fact, social services offered by Moslem men and women differ and based on the community's social needs. Even though, both men and women are encouraged to be involved in social activities they must be aware of gender differences in socialization. To be more specific older Malays, both men and women are expected to be more religious and not to be involved too much in social activities. They are expected to be actively involved in religious activities. The idea is for them to be role models for the younger generation.

In fact, religious persons usually receive higher respect in the Malay society. They are source of references for religious practices. However, these cultural and social practices, and expectations have changed due to modern lifestyles that have been accepted in modern Malay community especially those who live in urban or metropolitan areas. This modern life

emphasized on material good such as higher income, class status, or wealth as a barometer of an individual's life satisfaction, happiness, and well-being.

From the above discussion, we believed that integration of beliefs and practices; cultural values; expectations; and goals attainment will lead to individual life satisfaction and contribute to one's happiness. Thus, this integration will maintain well-being, and spread individual differences. However, an individual's uniqueness may differ from one to another when it comes to terms optimal potential functioning and experience of well-being.

b) Well-being: life satisfactions and happiness

Many researchers who have studied life satisfaction and happiness have defined well-being as how people evaluate their lives according to the standards of living (Diener, 1994; 1996; 1984), and the present of positive affect and life satisfaction (Huebner & Dew, 1997). Well-being is also described in terms of family, pleasant events, security and dealing with adversities, hobbies, and good luck among Cuban and Italian (Sotgiu, Galati, Manzano, & Rognoni, 2011). It has also been defined in terms of wisdom, openness value, and self-transcendence (Le, 2011). In our opinion, to experience happiness, one must have a feeling of satisfaction, and then all variables of life satisfactions become indicators of well-being. Ryan and Deci (2001) concluded that well-being contains two interrelated elements: human optimal potential functioning and affect experience. Meanwhile self-internalization that involves values as "guiding principles in life" (Oishi, 2000) would be another explanation factor to well-being. Therefore, this definition premises on the basis that "goal as a moderator model is that people gain and maintain their well-being mostly from the area on which they place special importance, and that to the extent that individuals differ in their goals and values, they differ in their sources of satisfaction" (Oishi, 2000, p. 90).

The individual's expectation, achievement, and accomplishment that include values, beliefs, and practices, and goals attainment will lead people to evaluate their well-being. This means that the integration of facet experience, individuals' will, and culture may contribute towards the individual's sense of well-being. If older Malay single mothers' evaluate her life as a good life or better life than before because all her needs are fulfilled in spite of their life deficiency (such as lowly-paid, lack of education, or less opportunities compared to other groups), then it fits very well within this theoretical framework.

METHOD

The study was conducted in separate methods. First method was on quantitative data. And, the second method was on qualitative approach in order to capture missing data particularly when it involved personal views on life experiences. For the purpose of this article, only qualitative data interviews were used to describe and explain the findings. Detail descriptions of survey research can be found in previous studies (Abdul Kadir & Ali, 2002).

In all families, only the mothers participated in this study. All of them were older Malay single mothers from Samarahan District area. We used several sampling techniques in the study. Firstly, random and purposive sampling was used in order to track down the selected location of single mothers residence. Then, a snowballing technique applied in order to select the

participants. Four villages were identified to be part of the study such as Kampung Tanjung Bundong, Kampung Sindang, Kampung Sungai Pinang, and Kampung Kuap.

Majority were full time worker and they were all farmers. The estimated number of single mothers in Sarawak is 3,433 a figure traced from the Women's Bureau for Hawa in Prime Minister Department. Out of the 3,433 single mothers, almost 43.7 percent of them were Malay women. We believed that the number of single mothers have increased by now. Based on the survey conducted by Women's Bureau, most of the single mothers are illiterate, low educated, and economically have low income. They have been categorized as marginalized people, which made us to hear their voices. In other words, they were categorized among the poor families. In this study, we interviewed 60 respondents of Older Malay single mothers.

In our study, only four single mothers had received formal education compared to 56 of respondents who were illiterate. The finding of the study is supported by the study from Women's Bureau, which stated that most single mothers have low education and or even illiterate. Illiteracy correlates with low education significantly because formal education instructs people to read and write.

Based on the existing information given by the Women's Bureau, we conducted personal interview in order to gather data to capture more accurate and precise data. We developed a warm relationship with the respondents so that they (respondents) felt more comfortable and free to express their feelings, ideas, and to reflect their own self. Before conducting the interviews, we explained briefly the purpose of our study to participants. In this study, consent played an important role so that the participants knew that they had the right to either participate or not in the study at any time during the process of collecting descriptive data, analyzing, and reporting the data qualitatively.

We went to the respondents' houses and make appointment with her or with the member of the family. The two-hour personal interview per respondent (sometimes it lasted more than two hours) gave us the opportunity to make an observation of the households such as the condition of the house, the availability of furniture, water supply, and electricity.

Mostly, when the interview took place, we listened to the respondents life story. They expressed their feelings which were either of sadness, happiness or worries. From these expressions, we realized that the experience of the older Malay single mothers were complicated than what we thought. These expressions also became a platform for us to construct better understanding of these older single mothers own perspectives. This study was conducted from May to June 2001.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings in the study were twofold. The first is to look at the complexity in the culture. The second is to hear the voice and to question the silence of single mothers. According to Triandis (2000), culture is a "tools and ideas that are shared and transmitted to succeeding generations because they were once practical at some point in time" (p.13). Moreover, culture in a broader definition is always defined as a way of life. In connection to that, women's voice is viewed as

women's empowerment of social transformation to deal with challenges and to bargain better offer of life satisfaction from the community.

Majority of the respondents (65%) have adult children who were employed. Meanwhile 30% of respondents have dependent children and only 5% of the respondents have both independent and dependent children. In this article, dependent children referred to children who were still at school whereas employed children are called independent children.

With regard to the single mothers' children well-being, the State Welfare Department provides services to assist their children (they are exempted from paying for tuitions fees, and sometimes they receive scholarships to support their study); however, most of these children were still left behind in their academic performances and achievements. Why this situation happened? Do they feel inferiority because they are different from a "normal" family and their schoolmates? We hope future researchers will try to unfold these questions.

Most of these older Malay single mothers have their own properties such as houses and land. These properties were given to them from their late parents or husbands. Only two percent of the respondents have stayed with their parents after divorce or separate from their ex-spouses

All of the respondents had direct electricity and water supplied to their wooden houses. They also had household furniture such as old chairs and tables; but some shared certain household items such as refrigerators with their family members. In other words, the environment in a house is physically poor compared to other groups in general. The fact remains that they possessed only basic needs such as clothes, house, electricity, and water supply. Because of such poor condition, they were not able to repair their houses. Although, they received a sum of money (RM40-RM170 per month) from the State Welfare Department, there is still no meaningful welfare assistance for single mothers. The money is barely enough for them to survive. This group of older Malay single mothers draw an income of RM115.39 which is considered under poverty line.

(a) Life-satisfaction and fate

Life satisfaction is always related to happiness and joy. These are all positive experiences. Greek philosophy, a well known scholar from the fourth century B.C taught that the ultimate goal achievement of life is to experience pleasure and to avoid painfulness. And as a result, happiness is of one's hedonic moment totally. Her followers such as Hobbes and DeSade also suggested that the most important goal of life is to pursuit of sensation and pleasure. Thus, only those individuals who attempt to maximize the pleasure and self-interest then the intellectual society is built. Moreover, values and beliefs also played an important role in an individual's life satisfaction. For instance, if the individual depends on fate without putting any effort to accomplish goals in her life, she is unable to fulfill the basic needs of human being.

Our argument is that all normal human beings seek life satisfaction and happiness, and at the same time they seek pleasure and avoid painful experiences. What else can they do if they lack opportunities to upgrade their lives. Older Malay single mothers for example, expressed the disappointment of living in shoddy conditions, but lack the opportunities to minimize the problems. A case below illustrates the lack of opportunities of Older Malay single mothers to enhance their life.

Saniah (farmer, aged 62) is illiterate. She was married at the aged of 15. She has dependant children to support. Her husband passed away three years ago. She felt that she has lost a person who she can rely on. When her husband was alive, he was determined and controlled her life. Being dependent on her husband for a long period made her loss self-confident to be independent. She is afraid to go out alone without a child accompanying her. According to Saniah, she sometimes let her children make decisions for her. It can be sensed that she is aware of herself, her needs, and is concerned with what has changed her life. However, at the age of 62, being illiterate, she cannot find a suitable job to increase her household income. In addition, she was a full time housewife and never had any chance to work before. When we asked her about how she feels at present, either about her life in general or whether she plans to work. She said,

“I feel happy at the moment...I know I don't have much money to have a comfortable life...it is beyond my capability.... That's' life...I think at this age, there is nothing to do...(pada saya umur begini, tiada apa yang perlu dibuat...) and I'm illiterate...nobody want to hire me, in addition, I'm too old to work...about my life now...I feel comfortable...overall, I am satisfied with my life even when my life is not similar to others... what to do...(apa boleh saya buat) I have to accept it...(terima saja lah...) my life's journey is such...(itu perjalanan hidup saya)”.

We've observed and found that most of older Malay single mothers accepted their life as being determined by their parents from the time they were born. And when they get married, the husband took from the parents. As Malay women, they were expected to show their respect and be obedient to their husbands as one of the obligations in their religions because the husband is totally responsible for the household affairs. As one of the respondents replied that “a good woman is a woman who keep silence on her own needs, concentrate only on her family, and understand her role as mother that is to educate the children and to make her husband happy”. From her expression, her story was twofold. First, we realized that the concept of motherhood in general is similar across culture. However, we believed that the concept of motherhood is varying from culture to culture. Secondly, the women's voices were not heard and if they were ignorant of the teachings of Islam that raises women's dignity and honor and put them at higher place in human society, they remained silent.

At one point, we sensed that a concept of fate has put into practice in life. They believed that bad events occurred from their weaknesses or incapability of self-management in term of physical, spiritual or psychological functioning. Kalsom, aged 60, one of the respondents said that “I've failed to maintain my marital life because I'm not good enough to become a good wife...at the beginning I cannot accept what had happened in my marital life but now I am gradually aware of my mistake...I accept it without blaming myself or my ex-husband...”.

From the statement above, we concluded that woman might blame herself on her unsuccessful marital life at an early stage. Thus, high levels of self-blaming may lead to high levels of anxiety and depression. However, a level of self-blaming gradually decreased by the time she discovered by herself that “whatever good events are gifts from the God and bad events come from my own weakness” (Kalsom, 60).

We believe that fate or providence is a holistic approach of seeking help indirectly. This holistic well-being approach is similar with the concepts of traditional seeking-help in order to be aware of individual's consciousness.

(b) Life-satisfaction and social interaction

Social interaction is one of the factors that contributed to life satisfaction. Self-acceptance, personal growth, purpose in life, positive relations with others, environmental mastery, and autonomy are variables of psychological functioning that should be accessed efficiently. Ryff and Keyes (1995) suggested that these factors are well fitted in the data and is culturally appropriate to any groups across the nations. To test the significant of these six factors, we asked the respondents several questions such as how they interact with other people; who will make decision in the family; what they want in their life; and are they feeling frustrated in what had happened in life; do they search for a better life; do you know what happened outside there. A case below illustrates psychological functioning of older Malay single mothers.

Rohani (farmer, aged 60) is also illiterate. She married at the age of 17. She has six adult children. Her husband has passed away 13 years ago. She managed to educate all her children with the financial support from the Welfare State Department. Now, the children have to support her since she earned less money from her farm. They give her some money but it is not enough to support herself. As a farmer, she was among the poor people. She understands that her children have their own responsibilities. Her youngest child stay with her. All her children and grandchildren visit her always. She never feels lonely since she actively participated in community activities.

"I always join the community activities...I've many friends...they're all my neighbours...(saya selalu ikut aktiviti kampung....dapat ramai kawan... mereka juga jiran saya...) ...sometimes I help them...if they are having feast...(kadang-kala saya tolong mereka...jika mereka ada kenduri...)...I'm happy when I meet my friends and I don't feel lonely... (gembira jumpa kawan...dan tak la berasa sunyi...) ... I feel I belong to the community...I was born here....(saya sebahagian daripada penduduk kampung...saya lahir di sini...) ... I'm not frustrated with life ... it's fate...I've to accept it... (saya tak kecewa dengan hidup saya...dah takdir...saya perlu terima...) ... Normally, my sons will decide for me if the problems are complicated...(biasanya anak-anak lelaki saya buat keputusan kalau masalah itu sukar...) ... sometimes I' decide for myself...(kadang-kala saya buat keputusan sendiri...) ... I feel my life is better now... (saya rasa hidup saya lebih baik sekarang...) no need for me to change it... (tak perlu la nak tukar ...) ...I hear the fighting among Indonesian...I know from radio...I know a bit information... (saya dengar pergaduhan orang Indonesia...dari radio... tau laa sikit-sikit...)".

Social and psychological well-being seemed to influence the older Malay single mothers' life satisfaction and happiness. Most of them agreed that they need to interact with others by actively participating in social functions organized by the community. If they have plenty of time, they will also visit their neighbours. The older Malay single mothers view is paralleled with the study done by Ryff (1989). The study found that older women agreed that they were

having good relationships with others in the community. In other words, a good relationship is one of the most important aspects of life satisfaction, and this will enhance an individual's well-being. Ryff and Singer (1989) also found that a primary feature of the purpose of life is a sign of positive human health as "partly because of their pervasiveness—across philosophical, ethical, and social scientific formulation, but in addition, because of their capacity to engage the mind and body" (p.9).

This result also supported by an other study done by Martin et al (2001). They found that social sources as defined as "resources that include perceived quality of available social contacts and the satisfaction with social activities" and there is no significant difference between older and middle aged adults. In other words, well-being significantly correlates with older adults too. Related to older Malay single mothers, they have already developed stable positive relations with others in the community. This establishment was developed since they were young. The practice of *gotong-royong* for example can "represent an extension of the values of interdependency and reciprocity of the family to one's kinship network, neighbors" (Ling How Kee, 2000), and the community. These communal social activities have implemented individual feelings of belonging to society indirectly.

In addition to community activity, Malay society does not lay any restriction on spiritual, social, and economic or political activities of women. Women are completely equal to men in term of rights and responsibilities. Similarly, older Malay single mothers share the same practices. They do have responsibilities and obligations towards the community. However, the women's obligations and responsibilities are based on mental faculties and capabilities. So, toleration of women's responsibilities and obligation in particular may develop a sense of belonging and may lead to high levels of well-being.

Even though, Malay women are permitted to be socially involved in social services, they should keep in mind that they have restrictions to mingle with who are strangers. Older Malay single mothers clearly explained that they themselves will feel uncomfortable to mix with other males whether they are unknown or even neighbors. One of the respondents said "I don't think I can talk freely with any other man firstly because the society is not keen on this kind of attitude; secondly, I'm a widower and I am afraid that the community will label me with bad names; and thirdly, I feel embarrassed..." (Maria, 63).

In addition, autonomy was not correlated significantly to life satisfaction among older Malay single mothers. Culturally, autonomy among Malay females is indeterminate and ambiguous. For instance, Malay wives were prohibited to go outside their home without the husband's consent. Modern Malay society now emphasized on males' understanding of giving more opportunities to their female counterparts to make decisions but again the males still have the final say in making decisions. We suggested that cultural beliefs might have indirect influence on decision-making processes by females and this will then have an affect on the life satisfaction and happiness and women's sense of well-being as a whole.

In relation to autonomy, we assumed that self-determination is not practical for Malay women in general. An example is when older Malay single mothers do not have courage to make decision even though they were recognized as the head of the family. Differing from other Malay

women, older Malay single mothers were supposed to have full authority when it came to their own family's management. However, the structure of the family has permitted other member in the family to interfere in the affair of their parents. This tradition is still practiced and sustained in the Malay community and indirectly controls older single mother's decision. This can be clearly observed when their siblings and relatives interfere in their personal choices.

For future researchers, diary methods were suggested in order to capture more accurate and precise data. However, this method is only suitable for educated people. The advantage of diary report or personal journal is that the researchers are able to capture the situational and contextual factors that may influence an individual's happiness within a year, a month, or a week to record, analyze and evaluate details.

(c) Limitations and future directions

This study has several limitations. First, all participants in this study were old age females from low income group and 2) sample size was small. Therefore, generalization was impossible to other populations. For future research, other researchers are encouraged to construct empirically research on positive optimal functioning and experience, and acceptance of life based on Malaysia culture. The housewives' well-being and its association with modern and traditional roles within the Malay community have not discovered yet.

CONCLUSION

Previous studies on well-being have revealed that an individual's health, socioeconomic factors, social interaction, marital status, and living situation correlate with well-being (Bowling & Browne, 1991; Bowling, Edelman, Leaver, & Hoekel, 1989; Berg, Mellstrom, Persson, & Svanborg, 1981). On the other hand, studies also pointed out that there was no consistent relationship of well-being among older people based on gender and race, particularly when it came to older Malay single mothers in Malaysia. Their psychological functioning can be addressed in term of relationship with others. Acceptance of oneself or her environment, purpose in life, and belief in fate are the primary sources of happiness whereas income is justified as moderate variable. Cultural beliefs and practices, values, expectations, and goals attainments lead to different evaluation of life, thus providing different levels of life satisfaction and well-being. Furthermore, individual belief in fate is a strong positive acceptance of life. This may enhance her well-being. Thus, this unfolds our research question on why older Malay single mothers who live in poverty and still maintain their lifestyles.

REFERENCES

- Abdul Kadir, N.B., & Ali, K. 2002. Indicators of well-being amongst single mothers in Sarawak. *Jurnal Kerja Sosial Malaysia*, 1, 75-92.
- Berg, S., Mellstrom, D., Persson, G., & Svanborg, A. 1981. Loneliness in Swedish aged. *Journal of Gerontology*, 36, 342-349.

- Bowling, A., & Browne, P. D. 1991. Social network, health, and emotional well-being among the old in London. *Journal of Gerontology*, 46, 20-23.
- Bowling, A., Edelman, R. J., Leaver, J., & Hoekel, T. 1989. Loneliness, mobility, well-being and social support in a sample of over 85 years old. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 10, 1189-1192.
- Diener, E. 1984. Subjective well-being. *Psychological Bulletin*, 95(3), 542-575.
- Diener, E. 1994. Assessing subjective well-being: progress and opportunities. *Social Indicators Research*, 31, 103-157.
- Diener, E. 1996. Subjective well-being in cross-cultural perspective. *International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology*, Swets & Zeitlinger Publishers.
- Huebner, E.S., & Dew, T. 1997. The interrelationships of positive affect, negative affect, and life satisfaction in an adolescent sample. *Social Indicators Research*, 38(2), 129-137, DOI 10.1007/BF00300455
- Le, T.N. 2011. Life satisfaction, openness value, self-transcendence, and wisdom. *J Happiness Stud*, 12, 171-182, DOI 10.1007/s10902-010-91821-1
- Lerner, R.M., & Hultsch, D.F. 1983. *Human development: a life-span perspective*. McGraw Hill: USA.
- Ling How Kee. 2000. Towards developing culturally appropriate social work practice: Insights from a study of help-seeking and help-giving experiences in Sarawak, Malaysia. PhD dissertation has not been published.
- Martin, M., Grunendahl, M., & Martin, P. 2001. Age differences in stress, social resources, and well-being in middle and older age. *The Journals of Gerontology*, 56B(4), P214+.
- Oishi, S. 2000. Goals as cornerstones of subjective well-being: Linking individuals and cultures. In E. Diener & E.M. Suh (Eds.), *Culture and Subjective Well-being* (pp.87- 112). Boston: The MIT Press.
- Sotgiu, I., Galati, D., Manzana, M., & Rognoni, E. 2011. Happiness components and their attainment in old age: A cross-cultural comparison between Italy and Cuba. *J Happiness Stud*, 12, 353-372, DOI 10. 1007/s10902-010-9198-6
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. 2001. On happiness and human potentials: A review of research on hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52, 141-166.
- Ryff, C. D. 1989. In the eye of beholder: Views of psychological well-being in middle and old-aged adults. *Psychological and Aging*, 4, 195-210.
- Ryff, C. D., & Keyes, L. M. 1995. The structure of psychological well-being. Revisited. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69, 719-27.

Ryff, C. D., & Singer, B. 1998. The contours of positive human health. *Psychological Inquiry*, 9, 1-28.

Trandis, H. C. 2000. Cultural syndromes and subjective well-being. In E. Diener et al (Eds.), *Culture and Subjective Well-being* (pp.13-36). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Wilson, W. 1967. Correlates of avowed happiness. *Psychological Bulletin*, 67, 294-306.

Yearbook of Statistics Sarawak 2000. Department of Statistics, Malaysia.

Dr. Nor Ba' Yah Abdul Kadir
School of Psychology and Human Development
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
43600 Bangi, Selangor
email: aknbayah@ukm.my
tel: 03-89213674

Ms. Kamsiah Ali
Faculty of Social Sciences
Universiti Malaysia Sarawak
94300 Kota Samarahan
Sarawak