



UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**“A STUDY ON SINGLE MOTHERS IN
KUCHING”**

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ABSTRACT

The Study on Single Mother: Kuching as a case study is designed to follow a group of more than 1,000 single mothers and their families and assess the single mother's family development and well being. The goal of the study will be to determine the pathways leading to successful implementation of the government's assistance programmes for the group. The Study aims are to (1) identify and characterize single mothers experiencing both positive and negative outcomes of their status; (2) understand the conditions shaping those outcomes; and (3) make strategic and tactical recommendations to improve the well being of Kuching single mothers and their liabilities and thereby benefit Sarawak society as a whole. The Study will provide ethnic-specific information to a variety of end-users. This is to support interventions and inform policy development to help address the many negative social statistics that face Kuching single mothers. This research will continue the programme of research aimed at identifying the needs of single mothers in Kuching and understanding how far the welfare and assistance programmes meet those needs in new social and economic policy environment. This will be pursued by investigating the constraints upon labour market participation experienced by single mothers presently living at or below the poverty threshold. Governments are shifting their focus from the delivery of outputs to influencing social, economic, environmental and cultural outcomes in communities. Government in Malaysia at local, state and federal levels are under pressure to be more responsiveness to both global and local issues such as single mothers Government strategic planning and policy provide an important vehicle through which community problems can be addressed. This research project develops an evaluative framework in order to benchmark existing government strategic planning and policy as well as welfare assistance its capability to deliver desired social and economic outcomes.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

I.I BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

A single parent is a parent with one or more children, who is neither married, nor living together with his or her spouses. Single mothers are far more common than single fathers. The different of single parents may be varying according to local laws of nations or provinces. However, in typical cases, she or he may be so after her divorce, after giving birth to a child outside marriage, or after his or her spouse died.

Some single mothers may have chosen to be so voluntarily but for some others it is the result of accidental pregnancy. While not wanting, or not having the opportunity for abortion, and not wanting, or not having the opportunity for marrying or living together. Financial problem or other circumstances often play a role. Especially in the United State of America, teenage single mothers have become a serious social issue (*Casion, 1982; Lindblad- Goldberg, 1989; Amato Keith, 1991*). This phenomenon has become one of the serious social issues in advanced countries.

2.2 SINGLE MOTHERS' NEEDS AND PROBLEMS

While the social stigma on single mothers may not be as prevalent as it was before, they are still faced with problems, challenges and hardships. Once divorced, single mother moves from complete dependence to total independence. They have to deal with emotional pressures, legal issues and society's perceptions. Some may be blessed for having good support from family and friends. *Mona Sheikh Mahmud*, a divorcee of two years and an account manager, who was interviewed over *TV3's women's programme Wanita Hari Ini*, says financial support is the most crucial aspect for a woman when she goes through a divorce, separation or when her husband dies. (*Berita Harian, September, 9, 2003*)

Lack of income has been identified as the single mothers most important factor in accounting for the differences in children from single parent and two-parent families (*Casion, 1982; Lindblad-Goldberg, 1989; Amato & Keith, 1991*). Single mother families are more likely to be poor because of the lower earning capacity of women; inadequate public assistance and child care subsidies. One of the major expenditures of single mother is childcare.

On average, a poor mother spends 32% of her total weekly income on childcare. This percentage doubles when more than one children