



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BUSINESS & SOCIAL SCIENCES



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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v12-i8/13939>

DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v12-i8/13939

Received: 19 June 2022, **Revised:** 21 July 2022, **Accepted:** 29 July 2022

Published Online: 11 August 2022

In-Text Citation: (Kasuma et al., 2022)

To Cite this Article: Kasuma, J., Desa, S. M., Enchas, C. A., Kamaruddin, S. F., & Panarina, E. (2022). Exploring Personal Engagement of Single Mother Involvement in Business: Qualitative Study. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 12(8), 1342–1358.

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Vol. 12, No. 8, 2022, Pg. 1342 – 1358

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INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BUSINESS & SOCIAL SCIENCES



www.hrmars.com

ISSN: 2222-6990

Exploring Personal Engagement of Single Mother Involvement in Business: Qualitative Study

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Abstract

Throughout history, motherhood is normally equated to femininity but nowadays, they are struggling to survive to face the reality. A single mother refers to the absence of a co-resident husband and which is known as “ibu tunggal” in Malay language. Although the income level of single mothers in the business field is quite low, the participation of single mothers in business is considered active due to their strong personal engagement and motivation toward business. The idea of this research was triggered based on a suggestion and an observation whereby only some of the single mothers were sustained in business for more than 5 years. A qualitative method is used in the research as it determined the process of gathering and collecting the data. Among the reasons that influence single mothers’ choice to be businesswomen were self-decision and which is considered the highest factor to continue the business; living condition improvement; perception from society; support and aid from family, friends, and other agencies; and the inspiring concept of “icon”.

Keywords: Single Mother, Personal Engagement, Qualitative Study

Introduction

“Single Mothers” are also known as “ibu tunggal” in Malay language. In Malaysia, there is no clear-cut definition of the term “single mother” and thus its definition is made based on the criteria that give characteristics to this term. A single mother can be understood as (1) a divorced woman with a dependent child, (2) a mother who is the breadwinner for the family with dependent children and supports husbands who are disabled, bedridden, or even deceased, or (3) divorced women with adopted children or children born out of wedlock (Lai, 2015). Around 1.9% of single mothers in Malaysia have their own business enterprises (Abu et al., 2018). Unfortunately, most single mothers already have children, and this may give them challenges to be productive in their business and at the same time, these mothers also need to raise their children. Consequently, most mothers might struggle in balancing business and home affairs which potentially leads them in having a high risk of poverty.

Life as a single mother is very challenging and demanding. Single mothers' psychological conditions are influenced by their challenges and productive lives, which affects their participation in daily activities. Health and wellness play an important role in encouraging people to participate in a variety of activities that can help them develop and grow at every stage of their lives. A previous study found that financial, day-to-day living, and health are three areas that have been identified as sources of stress among single mothers in Malaysia (Hashim et al., 2015). Rousou et al (2019) highlighted those single mothers are very likely to experience poor psychological well-being. Low monthly income had an impact on the psychological well-being of single mothers and children in rural and urban areas, according to (Nurliza et al., 2015).

Another issue affecting single mothers is the ongoing financial strain of a lower income, which necessitates the use of a second source of income in order to survive. Salwa et al (2015) stated that Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (AIM) offered single mothers involved in entrepreneurship to reduce the financial strain and poverty at once but, the performance showed by single mothers is worse compared to married entrepreneurs. This negative performance might be affected by the challenging and demanding role as a single mother.

Single mothers especially in Kuching, Sarawak is encouraged to use their skills and passions to start small businesses that will provide income for their families (Bong, 2016). Apart from that, they also need to equip themselves with ICT skills to position their business in the marketplace. Exploring this skill can reduce stress and help to avoid negative psychological conditions of single mothers.

Problem Statement

Sarawak ranked third in Malaysia with a 9 percent poverty rate that involved 56,165 total households (Geraldine, 2020). According to Abu et al (2018), single mothers in Malaysia are primarily trapped in poverty. Single mothers usually struggle to raise their children and hard to get funds in order to run the business. Hence, this makes single mothers face difficulties to generate income for the family, and majority of the single mothers having financial problems (Kotwal & Prabhakar, 2009). According to Fay (2018), paying all the bills and having debt can cause a lot of psychological damage which allows low self-esteem and impaired cognitive functioning and due to that, it affects the state of psychology especially among single mothers. Although single mothers in Malaysia are scared to take any risk by not committing to business (Roddin et al., 2011), some of them choose to involve in the business field due to its scalable nature and not being tied to time (Brown, 2017). However, these past studies have indicated contradictory results which can confirm the dominant factors that can influence the decision made by single mothers to participate in the business field and most importantly, to sustain their business venture. Thus, to understand this issue closely in the context which involves single mothers, a qualitative study is conducted to delve deeper into the subject of single mothers. The overarching research question which guided this study is: To what extent did the personal engagement in terms of psychological condition affect the involvement of single mothers in business?

Literature Review

Single Mother Entrepreneurship

According to Malaysia's labor force survey report, women's participation rate in the labor force was 55.6% (Department of Statistic Malaysia, 2019). Meanwhile, around 1.9% of single

mothers in Malaysia have their own business enterprises (Abu et al., 2018). It shows that women were already involved in business a long time ago, and not have just commenced in this era. Unfortunately, since the number of mothers working in Malaysia is increasing, the number of single mothers who work has also increased tremendously.

Cheeseman et al (2011) stated that a challenging role is a formidable part of single motherhood. Due to that, the challenging role might lead to disadvantages such as financial hardship and poor mental health. The other challenge that could contribute to the difficulty of single motherhood is taking care of their children while also educating and disciplining them since these single mother's act as both mother and father figures in the family (Mulia, 2017). Besides, single mothers have been considered as deviant due to the level of stigmatization of certain groups of people (Cheeseman et al., 2011). The desire to change the social and economic status of the family is the dominant factor that motivates women in Malaysia to engage in business (Rohayu et al., 2000) and due to that, it may have exposed single mothers to some risks, such as mental health problems, which prevent single mothers in Malaysia from being laboriously involved in the business.

Single mothers suffer from depression at a higher rate than partnered mothers (Young et al., 2004). According to Hashim et al (2015), in Malaysia, single mothers tend to be exposed to a higher level of chronic stress. The main source of this stress is mainly related to financial concerns. Based on this situation stemming from mental health problems, the growing number of cases encouraged single mothers to discontinue their business ventures (Ismail et al., 2016).

Financial problems are one of the barriers that lead to poverty among single mothers. According to Ismail et al (2016), about 92% of single mothers have monthly incomes of less than RM1,000, which was reported in 2010. Therefore, some of these single mothers start their own small businesses to prolong their survival. However, these single mothers had to go through some problems and failures, and as a result, they did not manage to proceed with their business due to loss of interest and motivation.

In addition, poverty among single mothers in Malaysia is one of the issues caused by factors such as lack of sufficient skills, age, low incomes, unemployment, and low education levels (Mulia, 2017). Lack of skills contribute to a loss of motivation to run the business. Some single mothers have been trapped in this situation due to a lack of financial support from their ex-husbands and relevant government agencies. Meanwhile, single mothers in rural areas have limited ability to tackle employment opportunities. Therefore, many studies focus on entrepreneurship with the purpose to create an opportunity for them to generate income. The involvement of single mothers in business could help to empower them for achieving self-reliance. Therefore, National Key Result Areas (NKRA) which fell under government transformation program targeted to train around 4,000 women as entrepreneurs which also include single mothers' entrepreneurial training from 2010 to 2012 (Ismail et al., 2016).

Psychological Aspect

People who usually engage themselves in business have their own psychological characteristics. A person's behavior is one of the psychological aspects that can influence the individual's behavior. It can be interpreted in a variety of ways. One may stress on the people engaged in the behavior, while others may stress on what motivates the behavior, the skills necessary for mitigating the behavior, or the meaning of the behavior in a sociocultural context (Bergner, 2011; 2016). This also applies to single mothers who want to start a business

but only do so for the sake of survival. The life of a single mother is associated with great challenges (Mulia, 2017), not only earning a low income but also living in poverty (Van et al., 2015). Being involved in entrepreneurial activities is indeed capable of increasing their income and succeeding in bringing them out of the poverty line (Mat et al., 2017).

Motivation is important in the creation of a new organization because it influences the decision-making process, such as motivation to start a new business enterprise (Barton et al., 2018). People who are involved in business tend to be owners of the business, which motivates them to be successful. Besides, some of the aspects like self-identity drives people to count in business (Avey et al., 2009). It is critical to consider how this factor affects entrepreneurial behavior because it can make or break a company. According to Mahto and McDowell (2018), motivation to become an entrepreneur can also lead an individual to become successful entrepreneurs while Nhemachena and Murimbika (2018) stated that motivation contributes significantly to the performance and sustainability of an enterprise. This is also supported by Pickford et al (2016), who reported that many of people's dedication and contribution in their jobs have positive consequences and inspire a sense of ownership. Furthermore, women's main motivation for starting a business is to gain financial security, find business opportunities, and make a lot of money (Selamat et al., 2020).

The family is another prominent element highlighted in the existing literature that influences motivation among females to establish or manage a business initiative. Family plays a role in motivating women to establish business enterprise where family is viewed as an obligation, a detriment, and a source of financial and psychological support (Agussani, 2018). Family can be a burden, and yet it can also be a vital source of support. For instance, a study conducted by Cesaroni and Paoloni (2016) found that the birth family may provide particularly valuable assistance to female entrepreneurs, which is frequently required for them to conduct business.

Moreover, the sense of ownership develops possessive feelings towards the target, which is a goal that needs to be achieved (Dyne & Pierce, 2004). These "feelings of ownership" are related to self-identity and make people believe that a business can generate a lot of money. Human understanding is different from one individual to another. When someone already has a sense of ownership, they will try to get involved in business and indirectly create the business community. Based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, social need is one of the needs in a hierarchy system. Social needs show someone is ready to associate with another person (Pardee, 1990). Therefore, it motivates a person to get involved in the business community and indirectly increases the level of self-satisfaction towards their needs.

Previous experience is another psychological aspect that engages a person in what they do. If a person has a good experience of doing work that they love, they will feel much happier. Basically, experience can be defined as a fundamental sense where someone puts themselves in a situation and feels what they have done (Roth & Jornet, 2014). Based on the previous study, experience can be defined as participation in activities or events and having certain feelings towards them. According to McMullan and Kenworthy (2016), a person has good experience such as job satisfaction in terms of flexibility when they are involved in business activities. When single mothers are feeling satisfied with their work, it can motivate them to do even better in their business.

Mindset is considered one of the psychological aspects of why people are involved in business. Mindset is viewed as a basic assumption that can shape the ability of a person to perceive and understand the world. In addition, it is a deep psychological construct that constructs attitudes, beliefs, and values (Buchanan & Kern, 2017). A person who loves doing business tends to set their mind to pursuing opportunities with massive discipline and passion (McGrath & MacMillan, 2000). As mentioned by Steven Jobs, "People with passion can change the world". Entrepreneurs who are successful are those who are passionate about their goals (Gallo, 2015). Hence, having the right and growing mindset when single mothers decide to pursue their business will ensure the sustainability of the venture as the passion will inspire the single mothers to push forward despite the obstacles they may face in the future.

Personal Engagement

Engagement emerges at several levels, which are individual, job, and organization levels. Khan (1990) conceptualized engagement as an individual extension through the psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety, and availability to a work role. Meanwhile, Truss et al (2013) refers to it as the "authentic expression of self". These psychological conditions affect personal engagement and disengagement at work (Kahn & Heaphy, 2014). People experience meaningfulness when they feel useful, valuable, and worthwhile (Kahn & Heaphy, 2014). This meaningful work, in turn, results in personal engagement. When single mothers decide to start a business, they are doing so not only for their own benefit but also for the benefit of their children or others who rely on them. The hardships that these single mothers encounter for the sake of those who are dependent on the single mothers will become the impactful meaning that keep them striving forward in their business. Because of that, they might feel that all their struggles will be worthwhile, which makes them more engaged in what they do. Previous research found a strong relationship between engagement and job performance (Van den Berg et al., 2017).

In other term of personal engagement, it is an expression of a person who focuses on themselves in task behaviors that indirectly promote the connections to work and the existence of a personal presence with full role performance. Furthermore, when a person engages in behaviors, both the self and the obligatory role are brought to life. The existence of personal engagement automatically makes people involved in tasks based on their creativity, their own beliefs and values, and their connection to others in the organization. A person who believes in the organization, desires to work to make things better, starts to understand the business context, and keeps up to date with developments in the field is an example of the behaviour demonstrated by an engaged person in the organization (Robinson et al., 2004).

Positive emotion associated with what they are doing directly contributes to increased personal engagement. Positive emotion can be further interpreted into other forms such as involvement, satisfaction, and enthusiasm at the workplace (Harter et al., 2002). A study by Markos and Sridevi (2010) found that employees who are emotionally attached to their company and deeply involved in their work, with a strong desire to see their employer succeed, go above and beyond the terms of their employment contract. As suggested by Khan (1990), people who stayed within the organization which has appropriate ways of working felt more safer as compared to those who stayed outside. This concept is referred to as organizational norms which emphasizes their employee's well-being and create a protective boundaries perception. Besides, the ability of the personal engagement that link to the organization and business can create a good business performance and increase a

competitive advantage (Heger, 2007). A satisfaction from a person leads to the engagement and bring a direct relationship to business outcomes (Harter et al., 2002). The commitment shown by individuals can be observed and measured by the business success. Based on other research, the profit from the business comes from people who are committed in works (Robinson et al., 2004). Hence, personal engagement plays a crucial role in the organization and business since all of these aspects are linked to each other.

Push-Pull Factor Theory

Under the section of psychological aspect, the important variable to explain the reasons behind venturing into business field taken by single mothers is the theory of motivation which has been extensively discussed. However, there is another question emerges from the earlier discussion which is “what motivate the single mothers to start their business effort?” This can be explained using theory of push and pull factors as suggested by Uysal and Hagan in 1993 but their discussion was done in the retrospective of travel and tourism. Hence under this section, the theory of push and pull factor will be discussed with the focus on single mothers in mind.

Guang (2014) stated that the push-pull theory has existed over the past 30 years in regard to the literature. According to Ahmad et al (2016), motivation is an important factor in generating and linking reactions. The theory of push and pull motivation is such a common way of approaching the issues (Popp, 2013). Besides, motivation reflects the psychological needs and desires of human beings. There are two main components to the motivation of individuals involved in business. Both are pull motivation and push motivation. Push and pull factors motivate the single mother to get involved in business. Push factors normally relate to internal and intrinsic factors. Prestige, socialization, or the need for a change of scenery or escape from an ordinary environment are some of the examples for push factors (Popp, 2013). On the other hand, pull motivation places a greater emphasis on individuals' needs and emotions. In other words, it can be described as the forces that can influence someone's decision based on the specific journey they went through (Guang, 2014). The examples for pull factor are tangible resources such as agencies assistance to provide business facilities and resources as well as the entrepreneur's perception and expectation such as novelty, expected benefit and marketed image of the product (Baloglu & Uysai, 1996; Chan & Baum, 2007). In another point of view, pull factors can also be regarded as those which attract people to start business activities (Dawson & Henley, 2012; Isaga et al., 2015) which include autonomy, independence, social status, and greater personal control (Kirkwood, 2009).

Push motivation is usually driven by the business opportunities that are available in an area, and it refers to the specific forces that influence someone's decision. Based on Abu et al (2018)'s research, single mothers in Malaysia are mostly trapped in the poverty cycle. Hence, some of them are involved in business so that they can live in a stable and comfortable way. According to Mulia (2017), some of these single mothers start their own small businesses in order to survive. In other study done by Isaga (2018), she found that female entrepreneurs are driven more by push factors than pull factors. Influenced by push factor, the research respondents in Isaga's study indicated that lack of access to finance, gender-related problems as well as social and cultural commitments as the serious problems faced by female entrepreneurs in Tanzania.

Research Methodology

As the research is concentrating on the psychological condition of personal engagement of single mothers involved in business, a qualitative method is employed for this study. This

method would allow the researcher to probe deeper into reliable and primary data, obtaining a real understanding of the informant's real challenges (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2012). This research highlighted the problem and issues that occurred behind the participation among single mothers in business in Kuching, Sarawak, and several interview sessions were conducted. There are 6 single mothers who are willing to participate in this study. The informants were asked with 14 open-ended questions. For better collection of data, the informants' comments were recorded after permission was given by them. This encourages the fast capture of actual comments and views and a smoother flow of the interview session (Seidman, 1991). The interview transcripts were prepared to convert the data into printed form to assist further data analysis.

Demographic Background

The key informants of this research comprised of 6 single mothers who are actively involved in business activities. All the informants are highly skilled in their own fields of work and run their own businesses. Moreover, all the informants are no longer married and with children. The demographic profiles of the informants were summarized and shown in the Table 1 below:

Table 1

Summary of Demographic Profiles of the Key Informants

No	Key Informants	Descriptions
1	R1 1	Business – Photography Heritage: Melanau / Bidayuh, 42 years old Education: Malaysian Certificate of Education (SPM) Being a single mother for 13 years and involved in business for 5 years.
2	R1 5	Business – Alif Ba Ta Home Bakery Heritage: Malay / Melanau, 41 years old Education: Malaysian Certificate of Education (SPM) Occupation: Clerk at F&N Beverages Marketing Kuching Being a single mother about 11 years and involved in business for 6 years.
3	R1 3	Business – Tailor, Heritage: Malay, 63 years old Education: Primary School Achievement Test (UPSR) Occupation: Housewife Being a single mother about 28 years and involved in business for almost 46 years.
4	R1 6	Business – Catering, Heritage: Malay, 44 years old, Education: Malaysian Certificate of Education (SPM) Occupation: Housewife Being a single mother about 13 years and involved in business for 8 years.

- | | | |
|---|------|---|
| 5 | R1 2 | Business – Mini grocery store / Kek Lapis Sarawak,
Heritage: Malay, 48 years old
Education: Lower Secondary Evaluation (PMR)
Occupation: Housewife
Being a single mother about 3 years and involved in business for 21 years. |
| 6 | R1 4 | Business – Run a beverage section in a restaurant,
Heritage: Malay, 46 years old
Education: Lower Secondary Evaluation (PMR)
Occupation: Housewife
Being a single mother about 5 years and involved in business for almost 5 years. |
-

Findings and Discussions

Based on the research informants' comments, the overall participation of single mothers in business was auspicious. There are several personal factors that motivate single mothers to choose to be businesswomen, such as self-decision as the highest factor to continue the business, living conditions improvement, perception from society, and support and aid from family, friends, and other agencies and the inspiring concept of "Icon". There are some reasons behind the involvement of single mothers in business, which are categorized as follow:

Factor 1: Own decision to continue the business

Hansson (1994) stated that a decision is an evaluation-choice routine. It happens when a person tries to choose options to obtain a good outcome rather than a bad one. Thus, self-decision is a kind of decision commonly made by single mothers. Most of the research informants stressed that one of the factors to explain why they are involved in the business is due to their own self-decision to continue the business. This means that there is no pressure from other parties to get involved in the business. Informant 2 explained her comments about the reasons behind her involvement in the business.

"I choose to continue the business based on my own self-decision even though my late husband already passed away around 3 years ago. After the incident, I have nothing to do except to continue the business"
(Informant 2).

This is according to further comments by informant 3, as she managed the business due to her own decision and hobby. There is no force from the ex-husband and family to run the business.

"It is my own decision to continue the business since it starts from my hobby. Back then, I'm actually a housewife but due to my hobby, this skill helps me to open up the business, and now, I'm becoming a tailor"
(Informant 3)

The other comments by informant 5, where she started the business based on her own self-decision in order to take care of her children. Back then, the informant 5 worked and had to

leave her children with the maid. Since then, she felt bad and started to raise her children on her own.

"This is my own choice since it's hard to leave my children for my daily job, plus they are still young. That time, I feel bad to leave them with the maid and I slowly start to run a small bakery business since I have the baking skills"
(Informant 5)

Factor 2: Improve the Living Condition

Improving living conditions is part of the reason why a single mother chooses to do business. This is indeed in line with a study conducted by Mat et al (2017) where their involvement in entrepreneurial activities is indeed capable of increasing their income and succeeding in bringing them out of the poverty line. Women, especially single mothers, who are always associated with having difficulty in life, need to improve their living conditions by making some changes in their social and involvement with various experiences (Viswanathan, 2007). According to informant 6, she agreed that business can improve her living conditions. This is because they can gain some income from the business rather than depend on other stable jobs. Even though her income is not stable like other people who work in government or private sectors, she is still grateful for her occupation as a businesswoman.

"For me, this is the way to generate my income since I don't work in the government or private sector. Besides, by doing catering, my income might fluctuate but it has much helped our little family and improved our living conditions"
(Informant 6)

Factor 3: Perception of Society

Perception can be defined as the process of gathering and processing information (Demuth, 2013). Society might have a positive or negative perception of single mothers. There were two informants, RI 1 and R1 4, who agreed that the perception of society encouraged them to be involved in the business.

"The perception encourages and gives a spirit to continue the business. It is a positive effect for me."
(Informant 1).

This is vindicated further by informant 4, as she agreed with the perception, whether positive or negative, that could drive her to continue the business. The perception of society just creates a motivation for her to move forward with the aim to be a successful person. Informant 4 wanted to prove that a single mother can be successful without burdening others.

"I'm not affected by other people's opinion.....either it was positive or negative, and what matters to me is as long as I'm being honest and sincere to make a life for my children. I take it as a motivation for me to move forward also to prove that a single mother can be successful and doesn't burden others."
(Informant 4).

Factor 4: Support and aid from family, friends, and other agencies

Family and friends are very important in an individual's life, but the level of sup

port varies depending on the relationship (Walen & Lachman, 2000). Besides, Walen and Lachman also stated that middle-aged adults have a higher tendency to be affected by friend networks as compared to older adults. A study by Cesaroni and Paoloni (2016) found that the birth family may provide particularly valuable assistance to female entrepreneurs. During the interview sessions with the research informants, some of the participants agreed that family, friends, and agencies' support are not only very helpful for business growth, but also for personal development. Informant 2 stated that she had received various assistance from SEDC in terms of loans and equipment. Moreover, her family and friends always give her moral support in motivating her to keep the business.

Before this, I got assistance from SEDC which has supported me to continue the business. They provided a loan of around RM3, 000 and I have to pay by using monthly installments. They have also been giving me assistance in terms of goods about RM8, 000 but it's a few years ago. Besides, my family and my friends always give me support especially moral support." (Informant 2).

Further comments were also substantiated by informant 4, as she handled the beverage section in a restaurant owned by Koperasi Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat which stated that she has received support from Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat (JKM) and Sarawak Economic Development Corporation (SEDC). JKM provided her with a grant in the form of equipment. Moreover, Informant 4 also received a chiller from SEDC. Her family used to support and pray for her success, especially in business, although it was inevitable when she was down at a certain point of her life.

I have received RM5, 000 grant in the form of equipment by Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat (JKM) and a chiller from SEDC. Apart from that, my family and my children always pray for my success, and they also have never failed to support me whenever I'm down."... (Informant 4).

Informant 5 naturally expressed her feelings about the support she got from the other agencies and her family as she has been involved in the business for 6 years. The informant 5 has received assistance in the form of equipment, guidance, and financial aid from the Integrated Agricultural Development Area (IADA), Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat (JKM), and Jabatan Pertanian Sarawak. In terms of support, her children and her family will always be there for her.

"Of course, I have received assistance from IADA, JKM, PERTANIAN in the form of equipment and guidance. Besides, JKM has been giving me RM500 monthly as financial aid. Obviously, my children and my family kept on giving support for me such as try not to give up when facing the challenges and being patient with all kinds of things." (Informant 5).

In fact, roles and supports, as the second theme been identified in this systematic review analysis for general entrepreneurs. It is also pointed out that religious institutions, communities as well as families are there to play their roles to support each other spiritual, social, and economic wellbeing (Annuar & Ali, 2021)

Factor 5: The inspired concept of "Icon"

Based on the Cambridge English dictionary, an *icon* can be defined as a famous thing that is considered by means of representing a set of beliefs or a way of life. The concept of *icon* is directly related to who is the person that a single mother admires the most, which encourages them to take part in business. They admired certain people as icons as a result of their inspiration, according to informants 2, 3, 4, and 5. Having exposure to women as an icon or role models in successful counter-stereotypic roles such as female entrepreneurs is crucial as it improved self-perception and career aspirations, especially among single mothers (Simon & Hoyt, 2012). To illustrate, Informant 2 stated that her icon is Rabiah Amit, who is a writer and a famous baker for Kek Lapis Sarawak.

"My idol could be Rabiah Amit. She is a writer, and she also writes recipes for Kek Lapis Sarawak. My dream, one fine day, I want to open up Kek Lapis Sarawak's shop and be successful businesswomen in making Kek Lapis. Not to forget, I also want my child to become a successful person." (Informant 2).

For Informant 3, Hajah Salmah, the President of the Single Mothers Association is her icon. She became an icon for informant 3 based on her good attitude and ability to be nice to everyone. Besides, Hajah Salmah always gives motivation for single mothers out there so that they can be strong.

"Hajah Salmah is my icon since she's the President of Single Mothers Association. She always motivates us as single mothers and is such a good role model. She's very kind and being nice to everyone, especially poor people." (Informant 3).

The comment made by Informant 4 on the same factor mentioned that the icon encourages her to be involved in the business. This is most likely to aid in their business advancements and inspiration. Informant 4 stated her icons are her mother and her children.

"My icon... Of course, my mother and my children. Without them, perhaps, I will be straying from my responsibilities as a child and mother." (Informant 4).

According to Informant 5, the famous icon who inspired her to be a courageous and brave single mother is Dato' Sri Vida. Dato' Sri Vida is such an inspiration to informant 5 due to her grappling with the past story. In addition, she was inspired by the bravery that had been shown by Dato' Sri Vida to indirectly encourage her to be a businesswoman.

"I like Dato' Sri Vida. She has a quite interesting story even though she always showing off her wealth, but her story does inspire quite a bit, and plus she is also a brave woman." (Informant 5).

In conclusion, all the supporting reasons show the different factors that have engaged single mothers in choosing their path to being businesswomen. Thus, these factors have some impact on single mothers' ability to struggle for their future. It really showed that there are many factors that can trigger them to become involved in the business (Mohammad & Kasuma, 2016).

This research has directed to the focus area in which it involved personal engagement among single mothers and their business involvement as variables of this research. It was clear that there are many factors that encourage the personal drive of single mothers to achieve success in becoming businesswomen. It is their own decision to pursue themselves in the business field. Besides, they also want to be an independent person in enhancing their living conditions, especially for their children. The perception of society and the support from family, friends, and other agencies have helped these single mothers in terms of building their emotional and financial resilience in engaging with entrepreneurship. Apart from that, some of single mothers started to participate in the business field after being inspired by their icons or role models. Having successful icons or role models among single mothers has provided them with a motivational blueprint because they can also be successful like their icons and the cursed label of being single mothers will not stop them from achieving their dream.

Conclusion

In conclusion, business participation among single mothers in Kuching, Sarawak was promising since some of them got assistance from many sources including their family and friends, as well as other agencies. On the other hand, even though they are the breadwinners in the family and need to face all the challenges, they are very committed in doing business. The single mother's participation in the business had proved that, even without their husband, they could still support the family. This has been proven through this study that there are five factors that have been identified to influence their strong engagement in sustaining their business. Therefore, many single mothers decided to start up or continue the business based on their own decisions to improve their living conditions is considered as one of the major findings of this research.

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