

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter will focus on the background of the study, problem statement, research questions as well as research objectives. Then, the significance of the study and the definition of terms will also be discussed in this chapter.

1.2 Research Background

Parenting is a part of life as a parent with children. Parenting is derived from the Latin verb 'parere', which means "to bring forth, develop, or teach." Since its inception, this word has been more concerned with the process of growing and instructing than the person doing it (Hoghughi, 2004). 'To parent' is an active verb, which denotes the positive activities undertaken by parental figures toward children, however the noun "parent" usually implies a natural or biological parent (Hoghughi & Speight, 1998). Parenting is a special relationship between a parent and children as it is not limited to child rearing only but it can also imply the commitment of an individual or individuals to provide for the physical and psychosocial needs of a child (James & Ashwill, 2007).

According to Hoghughi (1998), parenting consist of three fundamental elements. First, care protects children from harm. Which also encompasses promoting emotional as well as physical health. Second, control which involves setting and enforcing boundaries to ensure children's and other's safety in ever widening areas of activity. Lastly, development which involves optimising children's potential and maximising the

opportunities for using it. Thus, it can be seen that parenting plays important role in the development of children.

Meanwhile, in Islamic perspective, parenting is views as the fundamental and essential component in the formation of family and individual well-being. Ibn Khaldun (2002) stressed on the importance of parents' duty to provide religious instruction, instil morals or social values, broaden ideas and thinking, and equip children with various practical knowledge to fill their future careers. In keeping the relationship between parents and children, parents not only must provide food, drink and clothing for their children, but also give education, love and affection, be the role models and fulfil other rights of children (Ba'daroni, 1996). Among other rights of children is to follow up on development of their mind and intelligence in stages, without harming them with the burden, and starting with matters appropriate to their mental strength (Ismail, 2010). This perspective is in parallel with the western perspective that believes that the role of parent is not only limited to providing basic needs to the children but also the role to gives education, promote self-development and to become the role model for the children (Ceka & Murati, 2016).

Each parent plays an important role in the education and development of their children. The parents take a crucial stand, when it comes to their children's development and educational as a whole, as the parents themselves are the ones to take care on the overall children physical and intellectual development, till the point they get independent and ready to face the challenges of the society they live in (Ceka & Murati, 2016).

Men who become first-time parents, like women, must adjust to the changes brought on by having to take care of another person. Some men take on parenting as an unconditional aspect of their lives and get involved in raising their kids (Lemay,

Cashman & Felice, 2010). Furthermore, father plays important role in the rearing of the children (Fagan & Kaufman, 2014). Consequently, current research highlights how fathers can help reduce risky behavior in adolescents (Ulveseter, Breivik, & Thuen, 2010), improve behavioral concerns in children of all ages (Choi & Pyun, 2014), and contribute to healthy psychological development within children (Wilson & Prior, 2010).

In conclusion, this research will be studying on the parenting experiences of Muslim single father. Thus, the question on the meaning of parenting, role of single father and others may arise during the process of data collection.

1.3 Problem Statement

In current society, non-traditional families, such as single parent households, are increasingly widespread. However, during the past few decades, even single parent families have undergone significant change, with an increase in single-father households (Stephens and Gillies, 2011). In recent years, statistics had found that there is a rise in the number of single fathers throughout the world. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there were 2 million single fathers in 2016. About 40 percent were divorced, 38 percent were never married, 16 percent were separated, and 6 percent were widowed.

Meanwhile, a newspaper entitled 'Malaysia - a country of widows and widowers' by Kosmo Online had spark a debate among Malaysians. The statistics shows that 1.7% of total Malaysian population are single mothers as many as 235,240 in year 2010 (KPWKM, 2014). Concurrently, the statistics indicate the rising of single fathers' population in the country. The number shows that the populations of single fathers are expected to grow in the subsequent years. Department of Statistics Malaysia (2011)

had recorded that 4.5 % of the population were single, widowed, divorced with kids or permanently separated from their spouse.

Malay culture's view on childcare has consistently been that it is the role of the mother. As times change so does the role of the primary caretaker with there being a steady increase in the number of single fathers providing for their children (Bronte-Tinkew, Scott & Lilja, 2010). Parker and Wang (2013) add that dads are taking on more childcare responsibilities.

Previous literature has examined single mothers in the contexts of work and family conflict, parental practices, daily life, parenting struggles, service access or usage, support networks, as well as how some combination of these factors influences their parenting practices and parenting experiences (Neblett, 2007). Single fathers, on the other hand, have not received the same level of scholarly interest (William, 2007). Dufur, Howell, Downey, Ainsworth and Lapray (2010) noted that single fathers are an understudied population, which hinders the current research on the role of single parents.

While studies exist, there is a need for further research that focuses on how fathers feel about being single parents, with a concentration on the stresses these men experience. There remains a gap in the research surrounding the stresses single fathers experience when raising their children and how these stressors influence the parenting process.

Most of the research that had been done, focus on the general stressor of a single father such as economic pressure, stigma and job. However, there are very few studies that focused specifically on parenting stress especially in Malaysia and among Muslim single father.

1.4 Research Question

There are several research questions that will be discussed and answered by the researcher in this study:

- i. What do single father understand about parenting?
- ii. What is the experience of parenting faced by single father?
- iii. How does single fathers' relationship with their children?

1.5 Research Objective

The objectives of this study are:

- i. To explore single father's understanding on parenting.
- ii. To understand the experiences of parenting faced by single father.
- iii. To identify the relationship between single fathers and children.

1.6 Significant of Study

The researcher believes that this study will gives benefit to single-fathers, counsellors and Non-Government Organization (NGOs).

1.6.1 Single father

The result of this study can help single father to understand and increase their knowledge about parenting. As parenting can impact children's tremendously, it is important for single father to prepare themselves with knowledges of parenting and the way to manage their children which they can apply whenever they are facing difficulties and struggles in their managing their children especially without the present of the mother. Research had found many ways for single father to cope with their daily

struggles. Thus, this research can benefit single father to prepare themselves in term of the knowledge on parenting and management of children.

1.6.2 Counsellor

Research had found that counselling service is one of the services that can provide support to single father. Thus, it is very important for counsellor to increase their knowledge on the experiences of parenting by single father. By understanding this aspect of their life, the counsellor can increase their feeling of empathy towards single father. Furthermore, the counsellor also can increase their knowledges in different types of coping strategies that they can use to help their client who isa a single father.

1.6.3 Non-Government Organization (NGOs)

Most of the help provided by non-government organization and agencies are usually focused on providing services and help to single mother. Meanwhile, less focus and attention are given to single father. This research can help to increase awareness to the community and NGOs on the difficulties faced by single father. Consequently, this can help the community and NGOs to play their roles as the support system to single father by providing help to them.

1.7 Research Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework which consists of theories that will be used as the foundation in discussing about the findings of the study serve as the guideline and conceptual model that establishes a sense of structure that guide research. Theoretical framework provides the underlying background that supports the research and offers a justification for the research of a particular problem.

1.7.1 Parent Development Theory

Mowder (1993) had started the study and development of Parent Development Theory that aimed to provide a framework for understanding individuals' parenting perceptions and behaviours as well as understanding how individuals construct and modify their ideas about parenting roles throughout their lifespan. Mowder (2005) had suggested that individuals gradually learn what it means to be a parent. This theory discusses parenting as a social role, in which the parent is performing a specific role in society, that includes being involved in parent-child dyadic relationship and performing behaviours associated with that role (Mowder, 2005).

The behaviours associated with parenting role have been conceptualized by Mowder (2005) into six fundamental characteristics which are bonding, discipline, education, general welfare and protection, responsivity and sensitivity (Turiano, 2001). Bonding refers to the display of affection and love from parents towards their children which importance in establishing emotional relationship between parent and child. While, discipline refers to parents' setting of limits for their and assuring that the limits are responded and adhered to. Education is defined as educating, guiding and teaching where parental transmission of information took place in order to inform the children.

Next, General Welfare and Protection means that parents responsibilities to assure that their children are protected from harm and to provide them with general needs. While, responsivity refers to the extend parent respond to their children's need through hearing, seeing and perceiving that the child is in need of something. Lastly, sensitivity which can be define as the ability of the parent to discern what the child is communicating and matches the parent's response to the child's needs.

1.7.2 Baumrind's Four Types of Parenting Style

Baumrind (1966) had begun the study of parenting style in relation with the outcome or effect parenting style has towards children. Baumrind (1966) had explored the effect \s of different parenting style on child's behaviour. Through the research, Baumrind had developed four models of parental control which consist of authoritarian, authoritative, permissive and uninvolved/neglectful parenting.

Authoritative parenting is developed with the characteristics of a close and nurturing relationship between parent and the children. The parent has clear rule and guideline for their expectations towards their children. They also often explain their reasons associated with disciplinary actions which had contributed to the increase of children's understanding and conformity in their action. Research found that parent who implement Authoritative Parenting Style had impact their children's positively in term of self-esteem, responsibility and self-regulation (Morris, Silk, Steinberg, Myers & Robinson, 2007).

Authoritarian Parenting Style often can be view as less nurturing and have high expectations with limited flexibility. Parents with this style commonly have one way communication where the parent establishes and implement strict rules that the child had to obey without any argument or chance of reasoning. Hence, there is no room for negotiations from the child and the rule are applied with no justification and explanation (Sanvictores & Mendez, 2022).

On the other hand, permissive parent tends to indulge their children with warm and nurturing interaction but does not emphasise on expectations. They impose limited rules on their children. Communication remains open, but parents allow their children to figure things out for themselves. These low levels of expectation usually result in rare uses of discipline. They act more like friends than parents. children of permissive

parents usually have some self-esteem and decent social skills. However, they can be impulsive, demanding, selfish, and lack self-regulation (Potrowski, Lapierre and Linebarger, 2013).

Lastly, uninvolved parent often gives their children too much freedom to their children. They fulfil their parental role as the provider of children's basic needs while generally remain detached from their child's life. This type of parent usually does not implement or utilize any rules or disciplining style as well as limited amount of communication with their child. Consequently, this type of parenting can negatively impact children's interpersonal and communication skills as well emotional and self-regulation (Nijhof & Engels, 2007).

1.8 Definition of Terms

The current study aims to explore the parenting experience of Muslim single father in Malaysia. The following terms are defined for an explanation.

1.8.1 Single Father

Single parent families can be defined as families where a parent lives with the dependent children either alone or in a larger household, without a spouse or partner (Single parent families, 2009). Single fathers, for the purpose of the study will be defined as the biological fathers of children who have become the sole and primary provider for their children due to the death of their spouse.

1.8.2 Parenting

According to The Free Dictionary (2007), parenting refers to the rearing of a child or children, in particular the care, love, and guidance given by a parent. It consists

of the methods, techniques and other activities that are used or required in the rearing of children. Parenting is a process of raising and educating a child from birth until adulthood, which is carried out in a child's family by the mother and father or biological parents. Additionally, the International Webster's dictionary (2003), defines parenting as the act or process of functioning as parents and of raising children. It refers to the skill or activity of looking after children as a parent.

1.8.3 Stressors

According to American Psychological Association Dictionary (n.d.) stressors can be define as any event or condition that results in physical or emotional stress. Stressors may be internal or external forces that require adjustment or coping strategies on the part of the affected individuals. Meanwhile, Holly, Fenley, Kritikos, Merson, Abidin and Langer (2019) define parenting stress as the distress an individual experience when they feel that they cannot cope as a parent due to high demand and low resources. For the purpose of this study, stressors were defined as any source of stress that comes along with parenting and the experience of being a single father.

1.8.4 Coping Strategies

Coping strategies refer to the process of how thinking and behaviours are mobilized to manage internal and external demands of situations that are considered or appraised as stressful (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). For the purpose of this study, coping strategies was determined by the way single fathers cope with their stressors based on their experience as a single father.