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Current Situation of Research on Family Life in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

The main theme of the special issue will be "current situation of research on family life in Malaysia", addressing some of the key priorities on family life and its importance in human society in Malaysia. The nature of family in Malaysia, as in other parts of the world, is changing over time. All these papers represent the continuous research interests by the members of our colleagues. While research interests are divers, this volume will only cover themes related to research on family life and its importance.

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INTRODUCTION

According to numerous studies on family life (e.g. Winch, 1971; Chiam Heng Keng, 1992), for a society to survive, the family has to perform at least five functions, namely reproduction, economic, societal order, socialization, and emotional support. The Family is the basic unit of society and as such should be strengthened and included in the process of development since it becomes an initiation into life in society. Thus, the stability of a society will be very much depends on whether the family is functioning or otherwise. As society become more and more complex, the family could not manage all of them and thus resulting in other related institutions took over some of these functions (Chiam Heng Keng, 1992). But the development of the family in particular, or society in general, is not always running smooth. Many are unable to cope with a multiplicity of the changes, resulted in an explosion of complex social problems. As a result, the task facing social workers is tremendous.

This has led me to an interim conclusion that social workers should prepare themselves to be familiar with, not only the provision of services, but also to the preventive and developmental services. Despite the undoubted increase inthe efforts to study and examine the complexity of social problems in our society in recent years, I am quite wondering whether those studies will give us a better understanding about the existing issues or not. Up to now there have been a considerable number of researches conducted by the members of the school related to a multiplicity of social problem, but not many of us are familiar with the importance of theory related to the research being conducted, whereas as Gullotta, Adams and Alexander (1986) argue a good scientific inquiry is conducted within the guidelines of a particular theory because theory defines the social processes that predict the social behaviour. Its function is to enable researcher to understand as well as to predict social phenomenon in a better way. Without a theory as aguideline, pieces of information gathered remain unconnected items that tell us little about larger patterns (Hess, Markon and Stein, 1988). Thus, as a researcher in helping professional necessity, we have to be familiar with certain theories prior to conducting the research.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

This present paper is an introduction highlighting synopsis of all fourteen papers of this special issue. Materials from which the introduction is written come from the original works of the writers of these papers. It begins with introducing the general objectives of this special issue, and goes on to describe and summarize contents of all papers in this volume. It discusses the main issue that have analyzed in an individual paper. The papers are representing the continuous research interests covered by the members of the School. While research interests are divers, this volume will only cover theme related to family life and its importance.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There are 14 articles examining various issues in research on family life in Malaysia as depicted in Table 1 below. The articles are grouped into three main categories, namely methodological issues in research, research on family and related issues, and other issues. All discussions are a reflection of the current research interests of the members of the School of Social Development, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia.

Table 1: Authors and their Articles in this volume.

No.	Author	Title of Article
1	Wan-Ibrahim, W. A	Guest Editor's Note: Current Situation of Research on Family Life in Malaysia
2	Fuziah Shaffie	Reflections on Researching Colonial Policy on Child Welfare Services Using Historical Method
3	Chan Cheong Chong	Research In Foster Care: The Methodological Issues And How The Issues Are Addressed
4	Zakiyah, Jamaluddin	Premarital pregnancy and abortion among adolescent
5	Wan-Ibrahim, Wan Ab Rahman Khudzri, Md Zawawi Abu Bakar,& Asyraf H.A.R.	Illegitimate Child in Malaysia
6	Zakiyah Jamaluddin, Md Zawawi Abu Bakar, & Wan Ab Rahman Khudzri Wan Abdullah	Adolescent Pregnancy: Factors and Solution in Islamic Perspective
7	Zakiyah, Jamaluddin	Parent-child interaction in a low cost housing in Malaysia
8	Rajwani Md. Zain	Voices of wives who were infected with HIV/AIDS and lost their husbands to AIDS
9	Md Zawawi Abu Bakar, Rajwani Md Zain, & Wan Ab. Rahman Khudzri Wan Abdullah	The Rights of Wives Living With HIV/AIDS According to the Perspective of Islamic Family Law
10	Wan Ab Rahman Khudzri Wan Abdullah, Md Zawawi,Wan-Ibrahim, &Asyraf H.A.R.	The Law of *Nasab* in Islam
11	Wan-Ibrahim, W. A, Asyraf, H.A.R., I Komang Astina & Budiyanto	Global Distributions of Older Populations
12	Wan-Ibrahim , W. A., Asyraf, H.A.R., I Komang Astina & Budiyanto	Demographic Aspects of Older Women in Indonesia
13	Fatimah Zailly Ahmad Ramli	Malay caregivers' responses to depression among older adults
14	Zarina Mat Saad&Najib Ahmad Marzuki	Emotional Intelligence among Nurses
15	Noor Azniza, LimKhong Chiu, Fauziah, Nor Idayu, Nor Laily, Ariffin Abdul Mutalib, &Malek, T. Jdaitawi	Psychographic Profile among Potential First Class Public University Undergraduates in Malaysia

Methodological Issues:

Although research in social work in general and social welfare in particular is expanding rapidly in developed nations, the fact that it is still considered as a new spectrum in Malaysia. For Fuziah, although the literature and research in social work and social welfare domain is expanding rapidly in most advanced nations, it is seemingly this scenario is not reflected in Malaysia. As knowledge and information on the history of social welfare particularly in the colonial period in Malaysia had been collected in the past, social work researchers have no choice but to use the historical method to study social welfare history. Thus, Fuziah has a view that historical study should be closely linked to social work since the discipline has widely incorporated historical study into its knowledge base.

In recent years, whether we accept it or not, because of certain reasons, many children in our society are separated from their families. Some are because of the status of these children themselves, others is related to poverty and the dysfunctional of family. Thus, research on foster care has become an important agenda for most of researchers in helping professional necessity in general. Chan Cheong Cheng, in his paper on foster care in Malaysia defines foster care as a substitute placement provided in family setting; act as a tailor-made substitute placement for children who are separated from their families.

Research in Family and Related Issues:

Foster care has been a consequence of other related behavior in modern Malaysia today. Sexual relationship before marriage has no more become an unusual behavior, and what is worried to most parents is that it has become an epidemic among teenage in Malaysia. As a result, pregnant out of marriage has no more considered a strange story. Zakiyah Jamaludin who analyzed such phenomenon demonstrated that among the reasons of premarital pregnancy, a pregnancy among female adolescent who have not yet reached adulthood status, has mostly related to low education status, broken home family, families with high rate of poverty, drug abuse and victims of rape cases.

Premarital teenage pregnancy is undoubtedly resulting in an illegitimate child. Illegitimate child, a term that is not widely used in Western culture, although until now little is known about the exact number of the problem, but its number keeps growing. As Wan-Ibrahim and his colleagues argue that the growing number of illegitimate child is also a result of rape and child birth of less than 6 months. How Islam handle this situation?

Islam is not just a religion, but it is a complete way of life. According to Zakiyah and her colleagues, there are Islamic scholars who permit child birth of less than 6 months as legal although the couple confessed that the birth was a result of a premarital sex. This view, however, is not seen as in line with the current National Fatwa among Islamic scholars in Malaysia and other parts of Muslim world. The National Fatwa has clearly stated that a child is to be recognized as legal is a child which comes from 6 month and above of pregnancy.

Illegitimate child and fatwa on this matter are especially related to the law of *nasab*(lineage)in Islam. *Nasab* is the Arabic word meaning family ties or blood ties that relates one member of a family to another.*Nasab* is emphasized heavily in the Islamic Law since it determines the purity of genealogy, and preserving the sanctity of family lineage is one of the objectives of the Islamic Law. A child status is to be considered legal according to Islamic law, and thus, the formation of family, must follow the rules ascribed by the Syariah. This is what Wan Ab Rahman Wan Khudzri and his colleagues described in their paper; "the law of nasab in Islam".Owing to a combination of factors, particularly with the increase in free sex among teenage, married couples in Malaysia today are facing risks from sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS.These issues are described by Rajwani Md. Zain, and Md Zawawi Abu Bakar and his colleagues.

Rajwani highlights that, because of HIV/AIDS, women are suffering from stigma and discrimination, isolated, and insulted by their own family and society. Fear of others knowing about their HIV status, these women feel helpless and there was nobody to turn to for psychosocial help.Md Zawawi Abu Bakar on the other hand, argue that women got infected when the desease are transmitted during any type of sexual exposure, including intercourse with their infected husbands. This indicated that the wives were unaware of their rights in the Islamic Family Law and thus, lack of knowledge to prevent the infection of HIV/AIDS.

All over the world today, whether it is in developed or developing countries, the older population is increasing. The growing number of older persons is described by Wan-Ibrahim et al. in their paper,"Older Population: Global Distributions" and"Demographic Aspects of Older Women in Indonesia" Although the latter is seen as not directly related to the family life in Malaysia, it is in fact reflecting the current interest of research of the program.Older people are a vulnerable group that suffers from a range of different types of health problems, and providing care giving for older people has an impact on caregivers' family life. This is explained by Fatimah Zailly through "Malay Caregivers' Responses to Depression among Older Adults".

Other Issues:

There are two papers in which I grouped as other issues, namely "Emotional Intelligence among Nurses" by Zarina Mat Saad&Najib Ahmad Marzuki, and also "Psychographic Profile among Potential First Class Public University Undergraduates in Malaysia" by Noor Azniza Ishak, Lim Khong Chiu, Fauziah Abdul Rahim, Nor IdayuMahat, Nor LailyHashim, Ariffin Abdul Mutalib, &Malek, T. Jdaitawi. These two articles are also directly related to the current research interests of the members of the School.

Conclusion:

This present paper is highlighting synopsis of all papers of this special issue. This special issue is the result of hard works of the members of the School of Social Development, Universiti Utara Malaysia. Many people were involved in producing it. As guest editor for this volume, I would like to express gratitude to all authors whose articles are published in this special issue. Without their support and commitment, this special issue would not have been possible. The editing of these fourteen articles was not an easy one. I am greatly indebted to the persons who helped in the making of this special issue a reality. Primarily, I want to express my thanks to Professor Dr Najib Ahmad Marzuki, Dean, School of Social Development, University Utara Malaysia for giving me the opportunity to be a person who would take the responsibility to publish this special issue and for his advice and support as well as Associate Professor Dr Azniza and Dr Zakiyah for their help in every stages of works since at the start. Last but not least, I would like to thank my dear friend, Dr Abdel Rahman Al-Tawaha, Founder President AENSI, and Editor-in Chief of Advance in Natural and Applied Science (ANAS) for his never-ending encouragement in making this special issue a reality.

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