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### UNDERSTANDING AND ADDRESSING CHILD ABUSE: CASE STUDY OF B40 COMMUNITY

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The issue of child abuse has never gone away from the social problems existed in Malaysia since a long a time ago. The factors of child abuse cases are common in families with low economic status. Therefore, this study aimed to look at the most significant relationship factors, the most influential factors and the public's view of the efforts and measures taken to prevent child abuse among B40 community. The researcher had identified four factors, namely economic factors, lack of religious knowledge, household breakdown factors and parental stress at workplaces. The research methodology used in this study was a mixed qualitative and quantitative method with a total of 63 respondents. The instrument of the study was through a questionnaire form distributed to the study sample around Gong Badak, Kuala Nerus and the sample of the study within UniSZA (Sultan Zainal Abidin University). The results of the survey data were analyzed using SPSS software, Statistical Package for Social Science version 23. For this study, the researcher used descriptive analysis to analyze the frequency and percentage of respondents while infrared analysis on correlation and regression tests to see the relationship and influence of the variables. The overall results of this study showed that the lack of religious knowledge had the strongest degree of relationship and influence followed by economic pressure factor that both results in sig.  $p < 0.05$  contributing to the prevalence of child abuse according to perceptions among B40 community. For the open-ended question, most of the respondents encouraged each member of the community to study religious science more thoroughly and to understand the essence of what Islam teaches in the context of building a successful family while maintaining good relations with each other, especially parent-child relationships. Overall, the results of this study showed that people are beginning to realize the importance of understanding and

practicing the teachings of Islam in their daily lives in order to enjoy a happy, secure, and prosperous family life.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Children are a cherished treasure beyond other treasures in the world. The children themselves are the trust God has given to parents to nurture and educate them in the way that Islam is designed so that children can grow up and practice Islamic teachings better. Unfortunately, it is very contradicting from the current situation where we see, hear, and read various cases of abuse in the news, newspapers, the internet, and various other mediums of information showcasing various cases of child abuse. It is even more saddening that most of the reported abused are caused by their own relatives such as their parents or guardians, and members of their own family.

Child abuse cases continue to increase, according to information released by the Public Welfare Department (JKM). Studies have shown that abused children often live in high-risk areas, low socioeconomic levels, and unsafe neighborhoods (Ammie Schuck & Preeti Chauhan, 2017). This shows that the most abused children are commonly those from poorer families known as the B40 community. Shauk and Widon (2005) have argued that one of the causes of child abuse is due to the socioeconomic factors of many children with a household having high levels of poverty (Utusan Online, 2017).

Those living in middle-income neighborhoods show lower rates of abusers, less public distraction and less access to illegal things compared to those living in high poverty areas (Ammie Schuck & Preeti Chauhan, 2017). This shows that abused children often live in poor condition families and impacted their future lives throughout the various aspects of their lives.

Based on past researches, the researcher had looked at many of the results of previous studies listing the various factors that contributed to child abuse. Among the factors that are also used by the researcher are economic factors, household breakdown factors, lack of religious knowledge, and parents' stress at workplaces. Previously, many studies had touched on and interviewed whether the respondent was the perpetrator or victim of the abuse. Therefore, the primary objective is to look at public's perception of the B40 group and their views on the factors that lead to the abuse of children, especially those of the B40 group. For this reason, the researcher used very specific and specialized samples from those of the B40 group, especially the parents to better understand the feelings of the B40 community who have various pressures that require them to sacrifice themselves to meet their current demands while handling stress on their financial constraints.

## **NEED FOR THE STUDY**

A study conducted by previous researchers shows that child abuse cases occur more often in families with low socioeconomic status. Child abuse cases can be explained by looking at the level of socioeconomic status of the family, especially the poverty rate experienced by parents with large numbers of

children (Schuck & Widom, 2005). According to records from the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (KPWKM), the causes of abuse by parents towards their children can be attributed with stress at workplaces, financial problems and domestic issues causing them to physically attack and abuse their children to release the pent-up anger. These are parents who fail to control and balance their children's wellbeing with their workplace ethics. In addition, the factors contributing to child abuse cases are neighborhood, family background, social environment and their everyday life (Daily News, 2019).

There are too many cases of mistreatment in Malaysia that are caused by parents or guardians themselves. On January 4, 2018, in Kulai Johor, a 2-year-old was believed to have been abused to death by his mother and grandmother. A hospital examination showed that the child was found bleeding on both sides of the ear, a bruise on the left side of the head, back of the body and a reserve of water in the throat. The 18-year-old's mother worked as a cashier at a supermarket living with her abusive grandmother and young child. In a case of abuse in Johor Bharu on February 20, 2019, a 12-year-old boy was abused by his own mother and stepfather until the child suffered severe injuries all over his body. The child was abused using a rice cooker wire, with several afflicted injuries on his body. It is believed that his stepfather worked as a bus driver in Singapore while her mother worked as an online trader (Daily News, 2019).

On February 21 2019, an incident occurred in the state of Pahang when a five-year-old boy was abused by his stepfather who worked as a farm worker in a felda until he was killed. Inspection results showed chest bruises, cigarette burns on the feet, broken lips, long term bruises and new minor scars on the right side of the forehead. On 16 June 2019, a seven and eight-year-old child respectively suffered severe side effects throughout their body and suffered a physical deficiency according to a report released by the hospital. The suspect is believed to have worked as a gas conveyor while his wife did not work. Another case was when a teenager with a disability was abused by her own mother and older brother. They forced the teen to sleep outside the house, bathed in hot water, cluttered her body, beaten with bamboo sticks, and ignored her when her family went out for business.

The researcher can feel the pressure of the B40 community especially for those parents who need to think about the current situation that requires money as a solution. Economic pressures, if not controlled properly, can lead to dangerous and violent crimes. Furthermore, it leads towards general social and family problems due to the pressures of facing too much problems that may affect the thinking and control of human actions. These economic problems are considered to be the leading causes of child abuse cases. This is supported by Alavi (1999) when he argued that poverty stress is one of the leading causes of child abuse.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The methodology used in this study was through a quantitative study with the respondents consisting of residents from Gong Badak, Terengganu who passed the condition as among the B40 community. A total of 63 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents for this study. Data collection was made through questionnaire and reading of past researches. At the end of the questionnaire, the researcher also asked an open question to respondents pertaining their views on the steps that could be taken to prevent abuse, especially among B40 children. The results of the study data were then analysed using SPSS software. For this study, the researchers used descriptive analysis to look at frequency and percentage of respondents while infrared analysis was used on correlation and regression tests to see the relationship and influence of variables on community's perception among B40 groups.

### DATA ANALYSIS

In the inference analysis, the researcher has conducted two analyses, namely correlation and regression analysis, to find out the status of the relationship between independent variables (abuse factor) and fixed variables, while regression tests are used to determine which factors influence child abuse according to perceptions in B40 community.

**Table 1.** Correlation Analysis of the Relationship Between the Perceptions of Child Abuse Factors Among B40 Group.

		Correlations				
		M.EKONOMI	M. KERETAKAN RT	M. KURANGILM UAGAMA	M. TEKANANIBD TMPTKERJA	M. Persepsipend eraanakan2 dkaInganB40
M.EKONOMI	Pearson Correlation	1	.714**	.542**	.709**	.764**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	63	63	63	63	63
M.KERETAKANRT	Pearson Correlation	.714**	1	.735**	.656**	.704**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	63	63	63	63	63
M.KURANGILMUAGAMA	Pearson Correlation	.542**	.735**	1	.583**	.782**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	63	63	63	63	63
M. TEKANANIBD TMPTKERJA	Pearson Correlation	.709**	.656**	.583**	1	.662**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	63	63	63	63	63
M. Persepsipenderaanak2 dkaInganB40	Pearson Correlation	.764**	.704**	.782**	.662**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	63	63	63	63	63

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From the overall results of the correlation analysis, it showed that all of the factors have a significant relationship with child abuse based on B40 community perceptions. The results show that the causes of child abuse among the B40s have a strong positive relationship with economic factors, the lack of religious knowledge among parents, and the factors of domestic violence with their respective values ( $r = 0.764, p < 0.05$ ), ( $r = 0.704, p < 0.05$ ), and ( $r = 0.782, p > 0.05$ ) and had a strong positive relationship to parents' stress factors at workplaces with a value of ( $r = 0.662, p < 0.05$ ). Thus, among the four factors, religious education factors had the strongest relationship with the value of (0.782) compared to economic factor (0.764), household breakdown factor (0.704) and lastly parental stress factor at workplaces (0.664).

**Table 2:** Regression Coefficient Various Factors of Child Abuse among the B40

Model	Non-Standard Coefficient		Standard Coefficient	t	Sig.
	B	Standard Error	Beta		
Constant	.987	.230		4.297	.000
Economic	.388	.079	.491	4.925	.000
Household Breakdown	-.067	.095	-.078	-.705	.484
Lack of religious knowledge	.412	.071	.546	5.844	.000
Parental stress factor at workplaces	.045	.092	.046	.493	.624

The results showed that there were two factors with a significant value of 0.000 ( $p < 0.05$ ), both religious and economic factors. This indicates that factors of lacking religious knowledge and economic pressure have an impact on child abuse according to the B40 perspective. According to the table above, lacking religious knowledge were the most influential factors in child abuse with the values ( $\beta = 0.546$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ). While economic factors were the second factor influencing child abuse among the B40 community with a value of ( $\beta = 0.491$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis for the household breakdown factor and the parental stress factor in the workplaces are rejected because the null hypothesis for lack of religious knowledge and economic factors are rejected.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The results of this study focused on the B40 community on their perception of the major factors of child abuse among the B40 group. Therefore, the data obtained showed that the respondents to this questionnaire averaged at 41 respondents with a total income of less than RM1, 900.00 a month. The highest numbers of household dependents are four, followed by three with 14 and 13 people respectively. They mostly work in the private sector with jobs as janitors in their respective places. With regard to their level of education, 33 respondents only continued their education at the primary level of secondary school, which was until the end of third grade, which meant that they had only a lower secondary examination certificate (PMR). Followed by those who have never been to school with nine respondents. There were 13 respondents with higher education and college level. This shows that, most of the B40's have a low level of education since childhood. This may be due to factors in their families or financial constraints or other constraints that prevent them from pursuing higher education. The respondents were mostly 40- to 49-year-olds, followed by 20- to 29-year-olds aged 16 to 29.

The researcher had focused on four major factors of child abuse in the B40, namely economic stress factors, household breakdown factors, lack of

religious knowledge and parental stress at workplaces. The overall results of the correlation analysis showed that all of these factors have a significant relationship with child abuse. Among the four abusive factors mentioned, parents' lack of religious knowledge had the strongest relationship with a value of (0.782) compared to economic factor (0.764), household breakdown factor (0.704) and lastly parental stress in the workplace with value (0.664). This indicates that the majority of respondents agree that the lack of religious knowledge is the cause of child abuse. It is undeniable that there are parents who do not see the importance of religion in educating their children or for themselves.

This may be possible because they see young children as an added burden to them and not as a test of life that they have to face patiently and work towards. When there is no understanding of religion, then they blame everything that happens to oneself and the environment. This is supported by Noor Zulaika Zulkifli Merican and Ridzuan Hussin (2015) who stated that religious beliefs should be taken seriously by parents when it comes to creating a harmonious environment in their families. This was also stated by one of the respondents who suggested that parents must learn how to live in the family by following the *Sunnah* (teachings) and how to live like the family of *Rasulullah* if they want to live a happy life.

The economic pressures in society which results in uncontrolled action on children is a detriment both parents and guardians face. This is because when being under economic pressure, individual attitudes and actions can become unconditionally violent. This is supported by Noremy Md. End et al. (2012) when he states that in shortages of life, parents can act out of control when facing financial difficulties. This statement is also supported by Conger et al. (2002), from Noremy Md. End et al. (2012) when they find that the psychological pressures faced by parents from a psychological point of view increase the emotional stress that makes them furious, and tend to attack children when they find themselves in a state of stress.

In addition, the effects of these household breakdowns have resulted in a lack of good communication between parents and children. This is supported by Osofsky and Fenichel quoted by Zakaria Mohd Ramzi (2015) who stated that when there is domestic violence, parental thoughts and focus are interrupted resulting in less attention to the children and even communication between parents and children. This will worsen if parents use violence to release their anger towards the household conditions by using the child as their place. This is supported by Norsaleha Mohd.Salleh (2018) quoted from Noor Zulaikha and Ridzuan (2015) and Norsuhaily Abu Bakar et al. (2020) who argued that weakness in communication between parents and parents with children is one of the causes of domestic violence and thus causes children become victims in their abuse.

The last factor tested by the researcher is the parental stress at workplace. Based on the results of the study, the factors that influence parents' stress in

workplaces towards committing child abuse based on people's perception of B40 have a strong positive relationship with values ( $r = 0.662$ ). This indicates that the stress factor has the lowest correlation values among the four factors tested. Workplace pressure is also a factor that cannot be overlooked for hiring. Nor Saleha Mohd. Salleh (2018), stated that financial stresses and stresses brought home by parents with the extra attention of inconvenient home conditions can cause the outburst of anger and causes child abuse.

In addition, the researcher has also conducted regression tests on the study data which is intended to determine what factors are most likely to be the cause of child abuse based on the views of the B40 group itself.

**Table 3: Model Summary**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F	df1	df2	Sig.
1	.882 <sup>a</sup>	.777	.762	50.576	4	58	.000

a. Variable: .workplace stress, lack of religious knowledge, economic , household breakdowns

For regression tests, based on the model summary table, the value of R = 0.882 showed the correlation value between the independent variables and the dependent variables. This explained that the four tested factors have a good relationship with the variables, which are to measure the perception of the B40 group on the factors that cause child abuse among the B40 community. The R2 value represents the percentage level of influence that the independent variable values have on the perception of the B40 group on the factors of child abuse among the B40 community. Based on the regression test results, the researcher found that 77.7% of the factors studied contributed to the cause of child abuse occurring in the B40 community.

**Table 4: Regression Coefficient of Various Factors of Child Abuse Among the B40 Community**

Model	Non-Standard Coefficient		Standard Coefficient	T	Sig.
	B	Error Coefficient	Beta		
Constant	.987	.230		4.297	.000
Economic	.388	.079	.491	4.925	.000
Household Breakdown	-.067	.095	-.078	-.705	.484
Lack of Religious Knowledge	.412	.071	.546	5.844	.000

Parental Stress at Workplaces	.045	.092	.046	.493	.624
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a. Dependent Variable: B40 Perception

In addition, the results also indicated that there were two factors with a value of 0.000 which is  $p < 0.05$ . This indicated that there were two factors that had a dominant influence on the causes of child abuse among B40 groups, namely the less religious knowledge factor with a value of ( $\beta = 0.546, P < 0.05$ ) and also the economic pressure factor with the value of ( $\beta = 0.491, P < 0.05$ ). Therefore, the comparative results between these two factors indicated that the lack of religious knowledge is the most dominant and influential factor in child abuse compared to the economic pressure factor which is slightly lower than the first factor. Whereas the household breakdown factor with the value ( $\beta = -0.078, p = 0.484$ ) and the parents' stress factor at workplace indicated a value of ( $\beta = 0.046, p = 0.624$ ), the value showed a non-significant value of  $p > 0.05$  in regression testing even though these factors are related to child abuse factors.

**CONCLUSION**

Child abuse cases is very worrying because every passing days, months or years leads to the existence of cases of abuse, even the kind of abuse that is being done today is increasingly violent and inhumane. Children are important people in both national and religious development. Children need the physical and moral support of the people around them, especially the support of their own family members. If abuse is caused by the parent or guardian itself, then it disregards the parent's concept of protecting, securing and providing enough love for the child. Therefore, both parents and guardians should be aware of that the child is an invaluable gift of God because of the life that God had entrusted to the parents. If the trust is not properly maintained, then the parents themselves have been harmed and will receive the appropriate punishment both in the world and in the hereafter.

As such, it is important for parents, the community, and the nation to recognize that every act and behavior done to children will have a profound effect on them. From a young age child learn to value everything in front of them and every parent's behavior will surely be an example to them as they grow older. These effects will lead to their future development and behavioral disposition. Although child abuse cases can be explained by looking at the level of socioeconomic status of the family, especially the poverty rate experienced by parents with large numbers of children (Schuck & Widom, 2005), poor living does not necessarily lead towards child abuse but the effects of life stress on poverty are difficult to control. Every person's life is certain to have stress, but not all the stresses of life are negative, yet it is evident that the facing pressures can make people more mature and better understand the meaning of life. It depends on each individual as to how they perceive the pressure and respond to it.



Although economic pressure is believed to be the leading cause of child abuse problems, this is supported by Alavi (1999) when he pointed out that poverty is one of the leading causes of child abuse but this study showed that not all of the problem among B40 groups can be attributed to economic pressure simply based on the findings of the study, it showed that the lack of religious knowledge is also a factor that strongly influenced child abuse factor based on the B40 public opinion.

With this study, it is hoped to open the eyes of the public to be more aware and sensitive to the incidents and circumstances surrounding child abuse. The community's concern for the home environment is a great help in reducing the problem of criminal abuse. This effort is crucial in eradicating the incidence of crime among children as they will lead our nation's future.

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