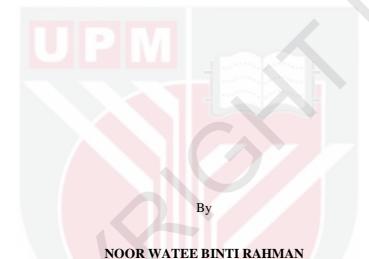


# RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SOCIAL SUPPORT, WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT AND COPING WITH PSYCHOSOCIAL WELL-BEING AMONG SINGLE MOTHERS IN MALACCA, MALAYSIA



Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,

in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science

June 2021

FEM 2021 30

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# DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the people who mean a lot to me My beloved mother, father, husband, daughter, friends and family.



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

#### RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SOCIAL SUPPORT, WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT AND COPING WITH PSYCHOSOCIAL WELL-BEING AMONG SINGLE MOTHERS IN MALACCA, MALAYSIA

By

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June 2021

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This study aimed to identify the relationships between psychosocial well-being and social support, work-family conflict, and coping among working single mothers in Melaka, Malaysia. This study used a quantitative approach and survey technique with descriptive analyses. Besides, the moderator analysis was performed to measure the moderating effect of coping on the relationship between independent and dependent variables. A total of 364 single mothers working in government agencies in the state of Melaka participated in this study. An online survey with a self-administered questionnaire was employed to collect data. The questionnaire collected data on demographic background, social support [based on The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)], work-family conflict [Work-family Conflict (WFC) Scale], coping [Ways of Coping Checklist (WoCC) Scale], and psychosocial well-being (Psychosocial Well-being Scale). Findings revealed that respondents showed a moderate level of social support and work-family conflict, while above 50% of respondents showed high level of coping and psychosocial well-being. The ANOVA revealed that there was a significant difference in psychosocial well-being based on age and education level. Furthermore, the findings indicated that social support (family, friend, and significant other) and coping had a positively relationship with psychosocial well-being while work-family conflict (work interference with family and family interference with work) had a negatively relationship with psychosocial wellbeing. The multiple regression analysis showed that predictor variables, namely age, education, social support, and work-family conflict had significantly predicted psychosocial well-being. Meanwhile, the results of aggression analysis using the stepwise method showed that friend support and significant other support were the most important predictors in predicting psychosocial well-being followed by work interference with family. The regression analysis also revealed that friend support was the most significant predictor in predicting psychosocial well-being followed by work interference with family. Next, the moderator test indicated that coping was a moderator of the relationships between psychosocial well-being and social support and work-family conflict. The findings imply that a support from family, friends, and significant other would increase the ability to cope and reduce psychological distress. For example, in drafting any related programmes, the element on coping must be taken into consideration when planning programmes for single mothers to enhance their psychosocial well-being.



C

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

#### HUBUNGAN ANTARA SOKONGAN SOSIAL, KONFLIK KERJA-KELUARGA, DAN DAYA TINDAK DENGAN KESEJAHTERAAN PSIKOSOSIAL DALAM KALANGAN IBU TUNGGAL DI MELAKA, MALAYSIA

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Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenal pasti hubungan antara kesejahteraan psikososial dengan sokongan sosial, konflik kerja-keluarga, dan daya tindak dalam kalangan ibu tunggal yang bekerja di Melaka, Malaysia. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif menerusi kaedah tinjauan dengan analisis deskriptif. Selain itu, analisis moderator telah dijalankan untuk mengukur kesan penyederhana daya tindak terhadap hubungan antara pemboleh ubah bebas dan bersandar. Pemilihan responden telah dilakukan menerusi kaedah persampelan mudah, di mana seramai 364 orang ibu tunggal yang bekerja di agensi kerajaan negeri Melaka telah menyertai kajian ini. Tinjauan dalam talian melalui soal selidik kendali sendiri telah digunakan untuk mengumpul data. Data yang diperolehi daripada soal selidik adalah berkaitan latar belakang demografi, sokongan sosial [berdasarkan Skala The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)], konflik kerja-keluarga [Skala Work-family Conflict (WFC)], daya tindak [Skala Ways of Coping Checklist (WoCC)], dan kesejahteraan psikososial [Skala Psychosocial Well-being]. Dapatan kajian mendapati responden menunjukkan tahap sederhana dalam sokongan sosial dan konflik kerjakeluarga manakala lebih 50% responden menunjukkan tahap tinggi dalam daya tindak dan kesejahteraan psikososial. Keputusan ANOVA mendedahkan bahawa terdapatnya perbezaan yang ketara dalam kesejahteraan psikososial berdasarkan umur dan tahap pendidikan responden. Di samping itu, dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa sokongan sosial (keluarga, rakan, dan pasangan) dan daya tindak mempunyai hubungan positif dengan kesejahteraan psikososial manakala konflik kerja-keluarga (campur tangan kerja dengan keluarga dan campur tangan keluarga dengan kerja) mempunyai hubungan negatif dengan kesejahteraan psikososial. Analisis regresi berganda menunjukkan bahawa pembolehubah peramal iaitu umur, pendidikan, sokongan sosial, dan konflik kerja-keluarga telah meramal kesejahteraan psikososial secara signifikan. Manakala analisis agresi menggunakan kaedah berperingkat menunjukkan sokongan rakan dan pasangan sebagai peramal paling penting dalam meramal kesejahteraan psikososial, diikuti dengan campur tangan kerja dengan keluarga. Analisis regresi juga

mendedahkan bahawa sokongan rakan merupakan peramal paling signifikan dalam meramal kesejahteraan psikososial, diikuti dengan campur tangan kerja dengan keluarga. Seterusnya, ujian moderator membuktikan daya tindak sebagai penyederhana hubungan antara kesejahteraan psikososial dengan sokongan sosial dan konflik kerja-keluarga. Kesedaran tentang kesan sokongan keluarga, rakan, dan pasangan boleh meningkatkan keupayaan dalam mengendalikan dan mengurangkan tekanan psikologi. Contohnya, daya tindak harus diambil kira dalam merangka sebarang program berkaitan bagi memastikan kesejahteraan psikososial ibu tunggal dapat ditingkatkan.



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My deepest gratitude also goes to Dr. Nobaya Ahmad, my supervisory committee member, for showing interest in my work and for her encouragement and guidance. Special thanks as well to Dr. Maarof Redzuan for imparting their knowledge on social statistics and research methodology, which have been very useful to my thesis and I highly appreciate the efforts expended by Dr. Roslan Rosnon This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
APA	American Psychological Association
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
EM	Expectation-Maximization
FIW	Family Interference Work
KMO-MSA	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin – Measure of Sampling Adequacy
MCAR	Missing Completely at Random
MSPSS	Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support
PhD	Doctoral in Philosophy
SPM	Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences Software
WFC	Work-Family Conflict
WIF	Work Interference Family
WoCC	Ways of Coping Checklist

#### CHAPTER 1

#### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background of the Study**

According to Luthar and Ciciolla (2015), even the most successful, educated, or invested woman may find motherhood difficult. Previous research has revealed that depression is more prevalent among single mothers than married mothers (Meier et al., 2016). Families with only one parent, especially single mothers, are becoming increasingly common throughout the world (Richeter & Lemola, 2017). The Population and Housing Census 2020 (Census of Malaysia 2020) report by the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) recorded that the number of single mothers in the country has almost reached 1 million people. Single mothers in developing countries are among the unfortunate groups that deserve attention due to their disadvantaged position in numerous life domains (Klasen et al., 2015).

Single mothers, who typically serve as their family's cornerstone, suffer from a greater strain than women in traditional dual-parent households (Rahman et al., 2017). For example, single mothers have been observed to experience more psychological discomfort and financial hardship (Nair & Sagaran, 2015). Motherhood can be very stressful for single mothers who are both primary caretakers and primary wage providers for their children (Kim et al., 2018). They are more likely to experience emotional discomfort and disturbances in parenting due to high levels of both financial and emotional stressors, making their children more sensitive to psychological distress (Taylor & Conger, 2014). In Malaysia, divorce and the death of a partner are the main reasons for the existence of single mothers (Rahman et al., 2017). Vast research on women's well-being in Malaysia has been conducted; factors such as conflict, personality, and roles are examined (Noor, 2002a, 2006; Noor et al., 2008). Nevertheless, unlike in developed countries, research pertinent to the well-being of single mothers in developing countries such as Malaysia is limited.

In general, well-being is classified based on the eudaimonic and hedonic approaches (Diener et al., 2018). These approaches are different entities associated with well-being (Della Fave, 2014) and are discussed either together or separately, depending on the interest of the researcher. Although numerous studies have been conducted, the coverage of the well-being is different from time to time since some researchers prefer to discuss them together, while others discuss them separately. The eudaimonic approach is focused on oneself to perform the best (Ryff, 2018). Furthermore, eudaimonic is linked with the personal and social aspects which contribute to the psychosocial functioning of an individual (Diener et al., 2018). On the other hand, the hedonic approach is focused on positive rather than negative emotions.

The principle of hedonic well-being refers to emotional disturbance, psychological distress, and cognitive distortation. Past studies have shown that the emotional and psychological distress of single mothers is related to their psychosocial well-being. Researchers have found that happiness contributes to a high quality of life for single mothers (Avison et al., 2007; Nelson et al., 2014; Nomaguchi & Milkie 2003). Research has revealed that loneliness and depression are linked to psychosocial well-being. Moreover, depression is the most stressful event for single mothers. Concerning single mothers' psychosocial well-being, work-related problems, long hours, and working conditions are the risk of psychological distress (Bull & Mitelmark, 2009). Previous studies have reported that the custody of children, unemployment (Kotwal & Prabhakar, 2009), sexual harassment, out-of-wedlock pregnancy, financial problems (Stack & Meredith, 2018), mental health (Zakaria et al., 2019), health problems, and housing arrangements (Raymo & Zhou, 2012) generally contribute to psychosocial well-being.

Malaysia's Ministry of Women provides financial assistance to qualifying single mothers as well as medical, business, and welfare assistance. Nonetheless, as the number of single mothers has increased, their psychosocial well-being has deteriorated. Therefore, it is critical to understand the contributing variables when discussing the psychosocial well-being of single mothers. Several elements that influence the psychosocial well-being of single mothers have been identified in previous studies. Among them, social support is the element that most influences the well-being of single mothers around the world (Lee & Yoo, 2015; Taylor & Conger, 2015; Viner et al., 2012). Past studies have revealed the relationship factors and that authentic relationships are universal and have a lot of supportive dimensions to influence wellbeing. Matjeke (2017) has found that social support is an important aspect that influences the work satisfaction of single parents. Furthermore, stressful events may be reduced when single parents have a good relationship with their family, as opposed to those who do not maintain a good relationship with their family (Stouthamer-Loeber et al., 2002; Johnson et al., 2016). Single mothers with higher social support recorded higher positive parenting behaviours and lower depression and anxiety levels. As a result, there is evidence that a positive relationship is beneficial to one's psychosocial well-being (Jaladin et al., 2020)

On the other hand, conflict also has a significant relationship with well-being. Conflict is a stage of pressure between the work and family where those concerned a kind of mediator relationship between work and family roles and well-being which meant that conflict would direct to stress and other forms of psychological outcomes (Obronovic et al., 2020). Previous studies have demonstrated the existence of the relationship between work-family conflict and well-being. For example, Kalliath et al. (2013) report that work-family or family-work conflict is an influential antecedent to well-being. Other studies agree with that research, indicating that work-family factors play a role in psychological stress (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Spector et al., 2004; Bakker et al., 2005; Ford et al., 2007). Besides, work-family conflict reduces employees' productivity and affects employee turnover, psychological distress, and life satisfaction.

According to the Well-being Model by Taylor & Conger (2015), social support exerts a significant influence on positive mental health and righteous parenting for single mothers. Therefore, it is important to investigate psychosocial well-being and social support (Wu & Eamon, 2011). For single mothers, lack of social support has been identified as the most problematic issue, as well as a persistent source of psychological conditions (Eamon & Wu, 2011; Liang et al., 2019). The losses of income and raising children have a negative impact on single mothers' psychosocial well-being. In other words, single mothers who received greater social support tended to adopt more coping strategies when faced with issues. Meanwhile, there is an evidence proof that coping moderated the link between social support and well-being (Yu et al., 2020). Thus, coping is not influenced by external factors such as social support. In other words, coping is a static construct and works in dynamic processes depending on the situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Therefore, coping was an important construct emphasised in this study.

### 1.2 Problem Statement

Single mothers form an important group in a country. Based on statistics up to 2021, in Malaysia, there are currently a total of 910,091 single mothers which is equivalent to 8.3 per cent of the total population in the country (Department of Statistics, 2021). There are various issues concerning single mothers, not only in Malaysia but all around the world. For example, 80% of about 12 million single-parent families with children under the age of 18 in the United States are headed by single mothers who must deal with psychological and financial difficulties (Kim et al., 2018). The increase in the number of single mothers, in turn, has indirectly contributed to the increase of households living in poverty (Damaske, 2017). It is now well recognised that mental illness is a significant issue in Malaysia, and the impact of such problems is increasingly recognised (Institute of Public Health, 2019). According to the latest National Health and Morbidity Survey (2019), every three in ten adults aged 16 years and above in Malaysia suffer from some form of mental health issues. In fact, the COVID-19 outbreak also caused the people losing their source of livelihood. This situation affect the increase in the unemployment rate in Melaka, that is, from 2.2 percent in 2020 to 3.0 percent until the third quarter of 2021, compared to rates Malaysian unemployment, which is 4.5 per cent each to 4.7 percent for the same period. The effects on work and families can be significant, and the quality of support and ways to cope is crucial.

Previous studies determined that psychological distress would impact single mothers' psychosocial well-being and later influence the children's behaviour (Marchetti et al., 2020). While there are single mothers who can raise their children on their own and manage their families, there is evidence revealed single mothers' psychosocial well-being is poor due to the work family conflict (Agnafors et al., 2020). Consequently, single mothers suffer from long-term effects such as psychological distress (Daryani et al., 2016). Recently in Malaysia, a series of studies has gained attention due to the rising mental health issues caused by financial hardships and poverty (Zakaria et al., 2019). In some cases, poor mental health can contribute to the emergence of psychological stress. As a result, poor mental health have caused single mothers to

suffer higher stress levels, personal and work burnout, and greater episodes of depression compared to mothers with a partner to pool resources with (Brady, 2016; Hartwig, 2016; Krame et al., 2016). Depression cases are increasing in Malaysia (National Health & Morbidity, 2019). Despite depression being an age-old dilemma, all concerned parties must treat it as a serious matter. Hence, this study focused on factors contributing to psychosocial well-being.

The present study was designed to uncover factors that might contribute to the psychosocial well-being of single mothers. Thus, this study examined three main variables namely social support, work-family conflict, and coping. Many factors that contribute to well-being have been recognised by previous scholars, and supportive relationship factors are the most significant factors affecting single mothers' well-being (Hannighofer et al., 2017). A meaningful relationship with their family and friends will protect them from anxiety and depression. Today, social phenomenon proved that the family problems occurred from the result of weak family institutions (Fomby & Cherlin, 2007). A study by Thomas et al. (2017) has indicated that family factors such as family relationships play an important role in well-being. Another study has revealed the association between family bonding and self-esteem (Symister & Friend, 2003). Family relationships have the greatest impact on single mothers' psychological well-being and high attachment leads to low involvement in misconduct activities (Karunanayake, 2021). Although previous research has discussed in-depth family factors and their contributions to single mothers' well-being, the domains used are varied, depending on the need of each study. Besides that, friend relationship also has an important role in supporting single mothers (Amati et al., 2018). According to Banovcinova et al. (2016), friend support greatly influence social support and enhance the quality of life of single mothers, thus, this friend factor should be examined further in conjunction with other variables.

Meanwhile, negative workload, role conflict, and role ambiguity are important factors contributing to work-family conflict. Accordingly, work-family conflict has a great influence, either positively or negatively, on single mothers' psychosocial well-being. For example, past studies indicate that heavy workload contributes to work stress (Lu, 2007). Research also indicates that due to a lack of physical and emotional support, single mothers tend to suffer from high stress than married mothers (Cooper et al., 2009). The stressors experienced by single mothers are often linked to the financial demands of raising a family single-handedly, the multiple roles and responsibilities they hold (e.g., mother, daughter, and employee), and the challenge to strike a balance between work at home (e.g., childcare and housework) and at the workplace (Hancioglu & Hartmann, 2014; Hsieh & Leung, 2015; Knoef & Ours, 2016; Rose, 2017). Furthermore, the lack of affordable childcare and the need to satisfy basic family needs, such as shelter, food, education, and childcare (Brady, 2016; Shirahase & Raymo, 2014) have caused single mothers to experience higher levels of chronic stress, personal and work burnout, and greater episodes of depression as compared to married mothers (Biblarz & Gottainer, 2000; Cairney et al., 2003; Robinson et al., 2016; Taylor & Conger, 2017). Some studies have reported evidence regarding how negative workload, role ambiguity, and role conflict directly influence the work-family conflict (Elloy & Smith, 2003). Besides, family interference with work is a predictor of stress (Uddin, 2019). Similarly, multiple roles and being overburdened contribute to the work-family strain (Amah, 2021). Moreover, work interference with family and family interference with work either directly or indirectly contribute to work-family conflict (Boyer et al., 2008).

This study also intended to identify the differences in psychosocial well-being in terms of age and education level of single mothers. Research has consistently indicated that a mother's age and education level are strongly associated with her well-being (Birditt & Antonucci, 2008). For example, people in older age groups are shown to have a better well-being than those in younger age groups. Nevertheless, Noor (2006) mentions that minimising the age gap in the influence of well-being is essential since it may provide insights into the life-course approach. Meanwhile, it has been reported education can have a significant positive impact on psychosocial well-being. However, new studies revealed higher education is associated with less satisfaction of life (Tran, 2021). Thus given contradictory of result, there is a need for further research in understanding the link between education and psychosocial well-being.

The present study also examined coping as the moderator of the relationships between psychosocial well-being and social support and work-family conflict. According to Lazarus (2010), coping is a dynamic process and is not a static but fluid construct influenced by interactions with family and friends. In addition, Lakey and Archer (2000) state that there is a positive relationship between emotional support and coping. Family and friend relationships play an important role in single mothers' healing process. A lack of support from family and friends and being avoided by friends contribute to stress and consequently result in negative emotions and behaviour problems (Rahim, 2020). Social relationship is positively associated with self-esteem (Harris & Orth, 2020) which turned to high quality of life (Kim & Kim, 2020). In other words, coping plays a crucial role in giving support, which contributes to mental wellbeing.

Prior investigations have exposed that psychosocial well-being can be explained by the presence of family, friends, and significant other's support. Nonetheless, the association between work-family conflict and psychosocial well-being that is moderated by coping has rarely been investigated. Past studies explain that coping can reduce work-family conflict. According to Broussard et al. (2020) however, single mothers' stress and coping are linked to higher rates of violence. Therefore, coping was an important construct addressed in this study. Past research has shown that psychosocial factors can be explained by the presence of social support, work-family conflict, and coping. Nevertheless, the examination of the association between social support (family, friend, and significant other), work-family conflict (work interference with family and family interference with work), coping, and psychosocial well-being, in the context of single mothers, is limited. As a result, researchers have employed various techniques to study these elements, such as looking into them separately. The current study believed that all the factors were important aspects that should be discussed.

## 1.3 Research Questions

Based on the research problems, this study was conducted to answer the following questions:

- 1) What are the levels of social support, work-family conflict, coping, and psychosocial well-being of single mothers?
- 2) Are there any significant differences in psychosocial well-being of single mothers according to respondents' age and levels of education?
- 3) Are there any significant relationships between social support, work-family conflict, coping and psychosocial well-being of single mothers?
- 4) Does coping moderate the relationships between psychosocial well-being and social support and work-family conflict of single mothers?
- 5) Which factors uniquely predict the psychosocial well-being of single mothers?

## 1.4 Research Objectives

#### Main objective:

To determine the relationships between social support, work-family conflict, coping, and psychosocial well-being of single mothers.

Based on the research questions addressed in this study, five specific objectives were formulated as follows:

Specific objectives:

- 1) To identify the levels of social support, work-family conflict, coping, and psychosocial well-being of single mothers.
- 2) To determine the differences in psychosocial well-being of single mothers according to respondents' age and levels of education
- 3) To determine the relationships between social support, work-family conflict, coping, and psychosocial well-being of single mothers.
- 4) To determine the role of coping as a moderator of the relationships between psychosocial well-being and social support and work-family conflict of single mothers.
- 5) To determine which factors significantly predict the psychosocial well-being of single mothers.

#### 1.5 Hypotheses

In this study, non-probability sampling was used for the selection of samples. The results in this study cannot be generalised to the general populations. Therefore, the aim of the results was not to test a broad population but to develop an initial understanding of a small population. Social support, work-family conflict, and coping were hypothesised to be significantly related to single mothers' psychosocial wellbeing. Carbonari (2013) states that social support has an important role in reducing the effects of stress. Meanwhile, Kingston (2013) reports that support network is significantly associated with psychological conditions, and there is a positive correlation between lack of good social support and negative feelings (Carbonari, 2013). On the other hand, work-family conflict is significantly related to depression, poor physical health, and heavy alcohol use (Rattay, Von Der Lippe, Borgmann, & Lampert, 2017) while coping has often been regarded as a positive approach to overcome stress (Puad Mohd Kari, 2017).

Previous research has demonstrated that age and education level may influence social support (Ahrens & Ryff, 2006), work-family conflict (Kalliath et al., 2013; Xu, 2009), and coping (Kalliath et al., 2013; Xu, 2009, Hurley, 2018; Williams, 2016). Furthermore, these variables have a reciprocal link to each other, according to the theory of Well-being, which is based on a theoretical framework on the relationships between social support, work-family conflict, coping and psychosocial well-being. As a result, hypotheses for this present investigation were meant to explore whether similar trend on findings exist in the sample.

# Objective 2: To determine the differences in psychosocial well-being of single mothers according to respondents' age and levels of education

Ha1a: There is a significant difference in psychosocial well-being in terms of respondents' age.

Ha1b: There is a significant difference in psychosocial well-being in terms of levels of education

# **Objective 3:** To determine the relationships between social support, work-family conflict, coping, and psychosocial well-being of single mothers

Ha2: There is a significant relationship between family and psychosocial well-being of single mothers.

Ha3: There is a significant relationship between friend and psychosocial well-being of single mothers.

Ha4: There is a significant relationship between significant other and psychosocial well-being of single mothers.

Ha5: There is a significant relationship between work interference with family and psychosocial well-being of single mothers.

Ha6: There is a significant relationship between family interference with work and psychosocial well-being of single mothers.

Ha7: There is a significant relationship between coping and psychosocial well-being of single mothers.

Objective 4: To determine the role of coping as a moderator of the relationships between psychosocial well-being and social support and work-family conflict of single mothers

Ha8: There is a significant moderating effect of coping on the relationship between social support and psychosocial well-being.

Ha9: There is a significant moderating effect of coping on the relationship between work-family conflict and psychosocial well-being.

### Objective 5: To determine factors that significantly predicts psychosocial wellbeing of single mothers

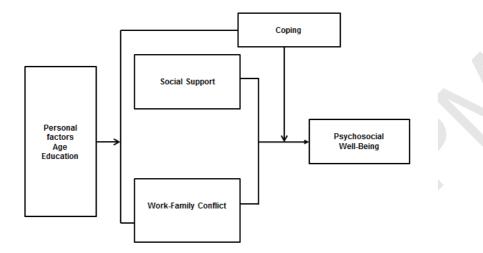
Ha10: Age, education, social support, work-family conflict, and coping significantly predict psychological well-being of the respondents

#### **1.6** Theoretical Framework

#### **1.6.1** The Well-being Theory

The overarching theory employed in this study was the Well-being Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2008) to examine the psychosocial factors that influenced the well-being of single mothers. Well-being is a condition of holistic health in all its dimensions i.e. physical, cognitive, emotional, social, physical, and spiritual. In this study, psychosocial well-being refers to the emotional, psychological, and physical components that underscore the connection between psychological aspects and social interaction (Larson & Lee, 1996; Martikainen, 2002). Psychosocial well-being is a multidimensional construct consisting of psychological, social, and subjective components that influences the overall functionality of individuals in their true potential (Kumar, 2020). The term psychosocial emphasises the close connection between the psychological aspects of our experience and the psychosocial environment (Burns, 2016). This state of well-being motivates us to engage with the environment and live a better life. Specifically, all these aspects must converge to transform an individual into a meaningful person and live a good life. In other words, having a good social support from family and friends will lead to better overall functioning of an individual's well-being.





**Figure 1.1 : Theoretical Framework** 

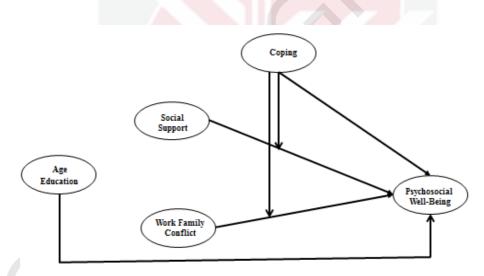
Figure 1.1 displays the theoretical framework of this research which indicates the interaction of the variables consisting of environmental and psychological aspects. The Well-being Theory discusses the viewpoint of people's feelings about everyday life activities. These feelings range from negative mental states to psychological strains such as anxiety, frustration, and unhappiness. In the past decades, this theory has postulated that the individual factors are the key indicators of well-being (Csikszenthmihalyi, 2008; Frederickson, 2001; Steger et al., 2009). Later, the environment and psychological aspects must converge to form well-being since life is becoming too complex (Diener et. al., 2010; Seligman, 2018).

The Well-being Theory is explained in various ways by assuming a relationship between personal and environmental factors. In general, this theory postulates that personal factors interact with environment factors to develop behaviours. Furthermore, the theory considers a person's social interaction with the environment. Daily activities' psychosocial environment influences stressful life events. In other words, psychosocial environments such as workload, working conditions, and multiple roles are the major stressors that shape an individual's well-being. The interrole conflict of multiple roles has negative implications on psychological distress causing individuals to experience high stress levels. Two domains of interrole conflict, work to family conflict (WFC) and family to work conflict (FWC), have been observed to impact individuals' family, work, and personal lives in numerous ways. Nevertheless, the psychosocial factors provide an understanding of good life in meaningful ways. The internal and external environments' effects will lead to a state of stress to adapt to the work environment. Due to the uncertainty, the imbalance of getting the expectation of work and family will create high stress in life. A good life is when a person achieves certain meaningful things in life such as friendship, happiness, and purposeful life (McQuaid & Kern, 2017).

The goal of well-being is to explain how people perceive stress through unique appraisals and coping resources. The Well-being Theory states that people possess capabilities to cope with stress. Thus, coping is the most important predictor of emotional outcomes. Several researchers believe that coping is a process rather than a trait that varies from situation to situation for any one individual (Puah Mohd Kari, 2017). Overall, the Well-being Theory emphasises meaningful life by focusing on the psychosocial environment that influences the behaviour of individuals. In this study, the association between the three factors (social support, work-family conflict, coping) was explained by the relationship between the environmental factors and psychosocial factors towards achieving psychosocial well-being.

#### 1.7 Conceptual Framework

Based on the theoretical background, the conceptual framework of the present study was developed, as illustrated in Figure 1.2. It demonstrates the relationships between the independent variables (social support, work-family conflict, and coping), the respondents' demographic factors (age and education), and psychosocial well-being. The current study also postulated that coping would moderate the relationships between psychosocial well-being and social support and work-family conflict.





## **1.8** Conceptualisation and Operationalisation Definition

This section conceptually and operationally describes the meaning of the study's variables. The definitions of the variables are as follows:

## i. Psychosocial Well-being

*Conceptual definition:* Psychosocial well-being consists of psychological, social, and subjective components which influence the overall functionality of individuals (Kumar, 2020).

*Operational definition:* The respondents' scores on the PERMA-Profiler (Peggy Kern, 2005). A high score indicates a higher level of well-being.

## ii. Social Support

*Conceptual definition:* Family, friends, and significant others are widely known as the main resources of social support (Martinez & Abrams, 2013).

*Operational definition:* The respondents' score on the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (Zimet et al., 1988). A higher score indicates a higher level of social support.

#### iii. Work-family Conflict

Work-family conflict consists of two domains of interrole conflict, i.e. work to family conflict (WFC) and family to work conflict (FWC).

*Conceptual definition*: Work interference with family (WIF) refers to the distraction of work to the family (Zainal et al., 2020).

*Operational definition*: The respondents' score on work interfence with family (Netemeyer et al., 1996). A high score indicates a higher level of work interference with family.

*Conceptual definition*: Family interference with work (FIW) is is the distraction of family to work (Zainal et al., 2020).

*Operational definition:* The respondents' score on family interference work (Netemeyer et al., 1996). A high score indicates a higher level of family interference work.

## iv. Coping

*Conceptual definition:* Coping can be defined as the cognitive and behavioural efforts when dealing with special external or internal demands that are shown to be exhaustive to the person's resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1991).

*Operational definition:* The respondents' score on the Ways of Coping Checklist (WoCC) (Lazarus & Folkman, 1991). A high score indicates a higher level of coping.

#### **1.9** Significance of the Study

First, this research could assist collaborations among practitioners such as educators, counsellors, and policymakers in addressing psychosocial well-being issues. In conflict situations, the psychosocial well-being of single mothers is vital because they may not only suffer from the psychosocial environment but also daily sources of stress such as at the workplace and home. Without paying attention to these issues, the workplace environment could become a highly stressful environment that encourages poor attendance and performance. Hence, this research can play an important role in enhancing single mothers' psychosocial well-being through an effective preventive at workplace. To achieve this, the educators, counsellors, and policymakers must promote psychosocial well-being and support single mothers for them to perform their tasks well under difficult situations.

Second, the findings from this study could create awareness in the family institution, whereby families should give more attention towards the single mothers or single parents' well-being. Additionally, this research may be an eye-opener to the community as it can provide information regarding psychosocial well-being. Finally, the findings of this study are expected to show a correlation between work-family conflict, social support, and coping on the development of psychosocial well-being. Moreover, this study can also offer some benefits to single mothers, the focus of this research.

#### 1.10 Limitations of the Study

The research implication is that the data gathered in this study can serve as a need assessment survey to gauge the severity of the psychosocial environment stressors. Nevertheless, this study has a few limitations that must be indicated to provide more opportunities for further studies in the related field. The survey method process helped the researcher to develop study. Even though surveys are extremely useful, there are some disadvantages to using online surveys. Participants in this study responded to self-reported survey questions without being reviewed or observed, thus, their answers could include some response biases. Besides, the non-probability sampling using convenience sampling is not useful enough when compared to the probability sampling in terms of data, analysis, and findings. Therefore, the results of this study cannot be generalised and can be treated as descriptive explorations only.

#### 1.11 Summary

This chapter began with an introduction of the current scenario and issues concerning single mothers and the impact of psychosocial stressors on psychosocial well-being.

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Based on the problem statement, there is a need to study the psychosocial factors that contribute to the psychosocial stressors among single mothers. As such, from the research questions, some research objectives and hypotheses were developed. Next, the conceptual framework, theoretical framework, definitions of terms, and significance of the study were presented in this chapter. The present research is important because it can provide information and serve as a guideline to employers and policymakers.



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