

The relationship between economic hardship, self esteem and parental behavior among low-income mothers

**Joki Perdani Sawai, Ferlis Bahari
Habibie Ibrahim and Zall Kepli Md. Rejab**
*School of Psychology and Social Work
Universiti Malaysia Sabah*

ABSTRACT

This quantitative research attempts to examine the relationships between economic hardship, self-esteem, and parental behavior among low-income mothers. Specifically, the objectives of this research are to: 1) measure the relationship between economic hardship and self-esteem; 2) measure the relationship between economic hardship and parental behavior; 3) measure the relationship between self-esteem and parental behavior; and 4) measure the relationship between demographic aspects such as age and level of income with economic hardship, self-esteem and parental behavior. This research is based on a survey of 110 low-income mothers residing in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. The instrument consisted of three dimensions: Economic Strain Questionnaire (ESQ) was used to measure economic hardship; Self-Esteem Inventories (SEI) to measure self-esteem; and Parent's Report Scale (PR) to measure parental behavior. The validity and reliability of the entire three dimensions has been measured. The data was analyzed by descriptive and inferential statistics which involved mean, percentage, frequency, standard deviation and Pearson-correlation using the Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The study showed that there was a negative relationship between economic hardship and self-esteem and a negative relationship between economic hardship and parental behavior. On the other hand, there was a positive relationship between self-esteem and parental behavior. The study also showed that there was a significant negative relationship between age and self-esteem, economic hardship, and parental behavior. Meanwhile, level of income was positively associated with self-esteem and parental behavior.

Keywords: *economic hardship; self-esteem; parental behavior; low income mothers*

Introduction

Happy and harmonious family is a dream of every person. Everyone wants to have warm and friendly relationship between members the family. Therefore, all the familial problems could be handled together to ensure a happy family. Children always hope their parents can spend time with them. While parents also hope that they can entertain the need of their children to establish a good relationship.

Family is an important system unit in the development of individual's self-concept. A good or friendly interaction helps individual to establish positive self-concept. Otherwise non-friendly interactions could lead to negative self-concept. An individual with high self-esteem feels good about him/her and can face challenges in life more effectively. High self-esteem provides the basis for success in coping with daily life in a rapidly changing environment. One can build his/her own self-esteem; and others, of course, family and parents can only lend supports and influence in decisions and choices of leading a life. An adult mother with a healthy self-esteem and a strong, vibrant and energized person can be successful in this highly

competitive world. Self-esteem is an important ingredient in improving not only mother's life, but also the lives of anyone with whom mother come in contact with. Rosenberg (1965) states: "someone who has high self-esteem will respect himself and think of himself usable. While, low self-esteem person can not accept themselves and always think they are useless, unsatisfied and less worthy" (in Lam, 1989).

Mother is an important person in a family. Mother's behavior can influence the family and economic hardship is one of the factors that changes mother's behavior. Financial matters have relationship with parental behavior (Conger et al., 1992; Dodge et al. 1994; Lempers et al., 1989; McLoyd, 1990). When parents are in stressful situations, they talk less about love, warmth, support and respect to each other (Conger et al., 1992; Ge et al., 1992). Lempers, Clark-Lempers and Simons (1989) found that in economic hardship, there is a decrease in parent's love and the inconsistent discipline for both parents.

Literature Review

Economic hardship

Economic hardship refers to the aspects of economy that has potential as a stressor to the individual family (Voydanoff, 1990). It consists of two important component objective factors namely, stability in job and decrease of income that will influence family directly (Gomel et al., 1998), and the second factor is subjective factor include economic hardship and vague job (Voydanoff, 1984).

Economic hardship is defined based on acquired score from the mother as a respondent through the scale of "*Economic Strain Questionnaire*". Economic hardship in this study refers to the statement relating whether they have enough money to buy food, treatment and medical, clothing, leisure activity, furniture and home furnishing, house and vehicle. It is measured in terms of frequency (highly agree, agree, disagree and highly disagree). Respondents who score high in ESQ can be described as experiencing high economy hardship while those with low scores show low economy hardship.

Self-esteem

Self-esteem means truly loving and valuing oneself and is a personal assessment of worthiness. Persons with high self-esteem appear poised and confident and are less influenced by their environments and situations. This is different from being self-centered, conceited or obnoxious. Building self-esteem is an ongoing process. It reaffirms that you know yourself but continue to work on capitalizing on your strengths.

Berk (2003) states self-esteem as "the evaluative aspect of the self-concept, and therefore the evaluation of a person's own competence, is related to accepting and approving of one's own characteristics". Williams (2001) defines self-esteem as "greatly impacts individuals' attitudes, emotional experiences, future behavior, and long-term psychological adjustments" (in Zyl, Cronje, Payze, 2006).

Self-esteem by its operational definition is based on acquired score from the mother as a respondent through the Self-Esteem Inventory which consisted of 30 items. This questionnaire uses likert-scale with five responses, 1= never, 2 = rarely, 3= sometimes, 4= often, 5=more often. The higher the score means the lower the mothers' self-esteem, and the lower the score

means the higher the mothers' self-esteem. For the level of classifications of mothers' self-esteem, score between 0-30 is classified as not affected by low self-esteem, 31-45 is classified as traces of low self-esteem, 46-61 is classified as presence of mild low-self esteem, 62-90 is classified as presence of moderate low self-esteem, 91-120 is classified as presence of severe low self-esteem, and score between 121-150 is classified as presence of profound low self-esteem.

Parental behavior

Generally, parental behaviors are defined as ways or actions taken by parent involving themselves in interaction with children. Leon Kuczynski (2003a) said that changes and continuous taking care for children are main issues in understanding the parent-child interaction, and how parents influence the development of their children. Additionally, the ability to demonstrate parental behaviors is essential implication in dealing with social and health problems of the children. Leon Kuczynski (2003b) found that parents are able to influence their children not only through child care strategy but also through other ways as parents are play the role of managers, facilitators and organizer for various social activities outside family environment.

Operationally, parental behavior is defined based on score collected from respondents through "Parent's Report Scale" (Dibble and Cohen, 1974). It comprises of the parental behavioral aspects from a mother perceptions toward one of the respondents, an adolescent age 13-17 years. In this study, parental behavior refers to the mother's perception toward an adolescent child as regards to parental style demonstrated by a mother, as she watched the good and bad behavior of the child, being firm teaching her child to behave, thought of things that make her child feel happy, caring, consider her child's interests and needs, making clear rules for the children to follow, and allow her child to express his/her feelings after being punished for failing to abide to the rules. These are measured using frequency (very often, often, sometimes and never) and respondents (mothers) who a high score demonstrated higher parental behavior whereas respondents with a low score showed a low parental behavior.

Research hypotheses

- H₁: There is a significant relationship between economic hardship and mothers' self-esteem.
- H₂: There is a significant relationship between economic hardship and parental behavior.
- H₃: There is a significant relationship between self-esteem and parental behavior.
- H₄: There is a significant relationship between economic hardship, self-esteem, parental behavior and demography aspects such as age and level of income.

Relationship between economic hardship and mothers' self-esteem

Lipnevich and Beder (2007) stated that self-esteem is often designated by the terms such as self-concept, self-efficacy and self-image. Shavelon and Bolus (1982) described self-concept as one's judgments of his own self. The referred judgments include one's beliefs, feelings, attitudes and values. Cohen (1959) said individuals may have a high or low self-concept and those with high self-concept has a high expectation and capable in a certain field and may appreciate himself. On the other hand, those with low self-concept are deemed to be easily frustrated and involves in self-hatred (Mohamed Saleh Lebar, 1999).

MacCandless (1970) said that self-concept comprised of three main components structure, function and quality.

1. Self-concept structure are;
 - a. Numb and flexible
 - b. Coordinated
 - c. Simple and complex

2. Self-concept functional aspect associate with;
 - a. Self-evaluation of right or wrong
 - b. Prediction of right or wrong
 - c. Prediction of success or failure
 - d. Related to multifunctional such as self-endorsement, self-actualization, and self-efficacy
 - e. One's behavior is based on internal motivation or external expectation.

3. Three concepts of quality are;
 - a. beautiful or ugly
 - b. self-acceptance and self-denial e.g. to what extent one can live comfortably with the sense of his well-being is not in a good condition.

According to Myrick (1987), self-concept and self-worth are the results of how individual communicate and interact with one another. When individual self-concept is developed, multiple attitudes and self-personalization appear to be part of learning process. Evidently, individual self-concept develops and matures as the product of environmental experiences (Mohamad Salleh Lebar, 1999).

Rosenblatt and Keller (1983) mentioned that studies on the consequences of economic hardship have documented the detrimental effects of economic hardship on psychological well-being of the adults in families (in Ho, Lempers and Lempers, 1995). A study done by Mayhew and Lempers (1998) showed that mothers' and fathers' financial strain was related negatively to global self-esteem for mothers and fathers. Furthermore, Dooley, Catalano, and Rook (1988) stated that many researches has shown that economic stress is associated with depression, anxiety, psycho-physiological distress, and mental problems for both men and women. Rosenblatt and Keller (1983) have found that the detrimental effects of economic hardship on psychological well-being of the adults in families. On the other hand, Savaya (1998) examined the role or real-life economic need in the help-seeking attitudes and behavior of a group of Arab women living in Jaffa, a part of Tel Aviv, where there is considerable economic hardship, found that self-esteem was not related to the respondents' attitudes toward professional help-seeking.

Relationship between economic hardship and parental behavior

Economic hardship is regarded as distress in stress economy, economic pressure, economy and hardship finance. Those conditions mentioned are result from:

- i. incapacity to satisfy finance,
- ii. finance hardship,
- iii. sources of income indistinctness,
- iv. job instability,
- v. Inadequacy or revenue loss to meet the needs, requirement and desire.

Economic hardship also presence in the context of economy in general at the national, area or state level for example by reading poverty line floor, level of unemployment and experiencing drop in income level (Adler et al., 1994; MacFadyen, Macfadyen and Prince, 1996). It occurs temporarily, for example, income level decrease as a result of a loss in employment in short term or in a very chronic state for example loss of income for a long period of time due to inability to secure permanent job. Economy hardship in one family directly manifested with influence individual security and indirect influence which influences family interaction (Conger et al., 1990; Elder and Caspi, 1998).

Martin and Colbert (1997) held that parental behavior is a complex process. Unique parental and child characteristic especially in the interaction aspect will indicate how they influence each other. Sometimes this influence is directional such as a parent reaction when their child is smiling and non-directional when a parent feels satisfy with their child doing house chores. In both situations responses toward children involved more positive emotions. Parental behavior process usually involves protection, educational and supervision. Conger et al. (1992) found that economic hardship caused depression among parents is increasing and mothers are less competent in educating their children.

Relationship between self-esteem and parental behavior

Literatures has shown that there are many factors that can contribute to the development of low self-worth that is capable of forming the negative core label in which the individual will develop low self-worth in time to come. Those contributing factors include family background especially the negative parental behaviors (Berk,2003), unhelpful relationship with his parents (Gunnar and Stroufe in Pollack, 1999).

According to Rogers (1951) self-concept is the definition subconsciously given to oneself when one use "I". It reflects a constructive self-perception which can be brought to the conscious mind. Rogers argued that a person demonstrates his self-concepts for example by saying, "I am a genius". Tang Chee Yee (1993) said, self-concept is a part of one own personality development in the way how he/she thinks and see himself. What one thinks of himself is based on his/her awareness about his strength or weakness. On the other hand, the awareness is based on information he/she received from others in everyday life, cooperation, respect and participation in social environment.

Low self-esteem also has an impact on the way individual processes the information in his environment, and how he/she protect his and strengthen his low self-esteem as well as relationship with others. In the information processing, the following are things that usually found in a low self-worth individual; involve or interact with the things or negative situations (Hillman, 1997), using negative plan or scheme (Markus, 1977; Rugel, 1995: Williams, Watts, MacLeod, and Matthews, 1988), rejecting the positive information regarding self (Rugel, 1995; Traverse and Dryden, 1995), and incapable of witnessing others perspectives (Berk, 2003). An individual process information shows that individual is more focus on negative label rather than positive label which is related to his self-esteem. From the aspects of preventing and strengthening low self-esteem, the following phenomena are found in several literatures; charitable phenomena as elaborated by Greenwald (1980) where charitable concept and efficacy are combined to demonstrate his charitably self, and consider success for himself. Wrong appreciation to self is part of denial process (Sackheim, 1983); and over compensation through dependency of relationship and achievement (Gilligen, in Rugel, 1995). From the

individual angel or factor, literatures show a lack of self-assertiveness including mistake in quality of inferiority toward others (Rakos, 1991; Rugel, 1995); aspect of socialization including isolation; avoiding interrelationship and social activities (Rakos, 1991); and fear of rejection and resentment (Baumeister, 1993) as well as nonfunctional marital relationship and family system for those who have a low self-worth.

Abd Majid Mohd Isa and Rahil Mahyuddin (1998) said that positive self-esteem is the important part of self-concept and its development base on four aspects i.e. 1) feeling oneself is being loved and accepted by the significant others such as parents, teachers, friends and the members of one family, 2) feeling that he is capable of doing the tasks that are of important to him, 3) morally feeling good of himself and his achievement, and 4) having some authority to influence other people lives. When one has attained high judgment in all four aspects, he would certainly bestow upon himself a positive outlook.

Self-esteem is an aspect that assesses self-concept and self efficacy as well as connected to the acceptance and confirmation of one's characters (Berk, 2003). Self-esteem also gives a huge impact on one's attitude, emotion, future behaviors, and a long term psychological adaptation (Branden, 1969; William, 2001). Self-esteem can influence one way of doing thing when he is in his own environment, inspiration and decision making on important aspect of his life such as choosing career opportunities, life partner, functioning in workplace and also make decision for taking risks to protect himself against unnecessary threat.

Relationship between economic hardship, self-esteem, parental behavior and demography aspects – age and level of income

Greenlee and Lantz (1991), carried out a study with the Appalachian population living in condition of poverty, and found that the stress caused by limited economic resources generates feeling of depression, anxiety and worry, as well as the use of emotional strategies for coping. Banyard and Graham-Bermann (1998) observed that homeless mothers more frequently used evasive strategies for coping than mothers who had homes. Weiss et al. (1999) found that the impact of internal coping strategies used by parents on the risk of emotional and behavioral disorders in poor Latino children in the United States such a passive resignation were more likely to cause emotional suffering and behavioral disorders among the sample.

According to Twenge and Campbell (2002), there are three theoretical models that are relevant in explaining the relationship between socio-economic level and self-esteem: (a) the social indicator or psychological centrality model, which proposes that, since socio-economic level is an indicator of status in social groups, high self-esteem may be a result of a high socio-economic level to the degree that the individual places importance on such status; (b) the reflected assessment model, which proposes that the socio-economic level of individuals has an impact on the perception that others have of them, and consequently, on the treatment they received, and since individuals internalize others' perceptions, this affects their self-esteem; and (c) the self-protecting mechanisms model, according to which individuals possess a range of self-protecting strategies that serve as shields to external feedback related to socio-economic level, and thus individuals from low levels can blame external factors for their economic situation, maintaining their self-esteem by comparing themselves with others less fortunate.

Some other researchers who have found a strong positive relationship between the poverty and subjective well-being, stating that, to a degree, the population becomes impoverished, their

well-being diminished (Cantril, 1967; Belle, 1990; McLoyd, 1998). Though in this research, poverty is defined more within economic limitation (economic hardship), we ought to consider the impact it has on other types of needs such as psychological and psychosocial needs. The pressure of being a poor “old” woman who is heavily dependant on husband, with average of 4 children under her care, and facing a situation of high economic hardship, this could provoke a lot of stresses at any time in her life. It has generally been found that poverty promotes strategies for coping with stress that are passive (individuals hope the problem will simply be resolved by circumstances or by other persons), emotional (individuals are focused on the emotions caused by the situation, more than on assessing and coping with the situation in a rational way), and evasive

In a situation of economic hardship, as the age of respondent grows, it appears that self-esteem declines. In this case, the reflected assessment model which focus the impact on the perceptions of the others internalized by individual upon them, can very well explain the phenomena. Since every where young women are perceived as stronger and more attractive than the older ones, growing older as a woman in a traditional society where their husbands are the sole breadwinner (from food and shelter to security and love), is rather an unwelcome reality.

Methodology

This research is a survey research. Subjects consisted of 110 mothers with low income and residing in Bandaraya Kota Kinabalu. This research used a set of questionnaire as a instrument which consisted of four sections: Section A was about subjects’ demography; Section B was to measure economic hardship used Economic Strain Questionnaire, (ESQ); Section C was to measure self-esteem used Self-Esteem Inventories and; Section D was to measure parenting style used Parents Report Scale. The reliability and validity of these three instruments had been tested. Data was described through descriptive and inferential statistics which includes frequency, percentage, min and standard deviation. Meanwhile, inferential statistics had been analyzed through Pearson-correlation.

Instruments

Section A: Subjects’ demography

Items in this section were about subjects’ demography which consisted of race, age, residency, education background, number of family members (number of staying together, number of children, occupation, monthly income, husband’s income and occupation also total of income).

Section B: Economic hardship

Economic Strain Questionnaire (ESQ) referred to questions about economic hardship which been perceived by subjects (mothers) as economic strain. Items are about financial attainment and family’s consuming taken from Economic Strain Questionnaire (Pearlin et al., 1981) where back translation had been done. This family economic hardship was stated by how much they agreed regarding food attainment difficulties, treatment, medical care, clothing,

leisure activities, furniture, residency and vehicles. This scale is consisted of 8 items. The higher the score means the higher the economic hardship. Score range is around 8 to 32.

Table 1: Scoring for Positive and Negative Items ESQ

Response items	Positive items	Negative
Strongly disagree	1	4
Disagree	2	3
Agree	3	2
Strongly agree	4	1

Section C: Self-esteem

Self-esteem among respondents was measured using Self-Esteem Inventory (the instrument and items was retrieved from (<http://www.soberrecovery.com/forums/anxiety-disorders/6340-self-esteem-inventory.html>) which consisted of 30 items. Used likert-scale with five responses, 1= never, 2 = rarely, 3= sometimes, 4= often, 5=more often. The higher the score means the lower the mothers’ self-esteem, and the lower the score means the higher the mothers’ self-esteem. For the level of classifications of mothers’ self-esteem, score between 0-30 is classified as not affected by low self-esteem, 31-45 is classified as traces of low self-esteem, 46-61 is classified presence of mild low-self esteem in his/her life, 62-90 is classified as presence of moderate low self-esteem, 91-120 is classified as presence of severe low self-esteem, and score between 121-150 is classified as presence of profound low self-esteem.

Section D: parental behavior

Parent’s Report scale by Dibble and Cohen (1974) was used to measure parental behavior. This scale contains 56 items which examine parental behavior of mothers toward their children; mothers with children aged between 13-17 years old. Researches only used 23 items which had been translated (back translation) in Malay language by Hanina (2002). Score for each items is 1=never; 2=sometimes, 3=often; 4=more often except item 2, 6, 7, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 21 and 22 are inverse items. Parent’s Report scale included 4 chosen answers as presented in following table:

Table 2: Scoring for Positive and Negative Items PR

Response	Positive items	Negative items
Never	1	4
Sometimes	2	3
Often	3	2
More often	4	1

The highest of score indicates better and higher quality of parental behavior shown by mothers and vice versa, the lowest of score means the lower of quality of parental behavior shown by mothers toward their teenage children. This scale ranges between 23 and 92.

Data collection and analysis

The research was conducted by researchers and enumerators for a period of four weeks using a set of questionnaire consisted of Economic Strain Questionnaire (ESQ), Self-Esteem

Inventories (SEI), Parent's Report scale and demographical data. Respondents were briefed on filling in the questionnaire so that they would not get confused and facing difficulties in answering the questionnaire. Subjects were given 30 minutes to answer the questionnaire and were given the assurance the data will be used for research purpose only.

Data obtained from the questionnaire was analyzed using descriptive analysis and inferential statistic. In this section the reliability of the instrument also will be shown. Descriptive analysis involves percentage, frequency; min and standard deviation are used to explain the subjects' background. Pearson-Correlation is used to examine the relationship between the variables.

The reliability of the instrument

The reliability of the instrument referred to the accuracy of the measurement tested. A test is said to have the reliability if the retest shows the same result at a different time. The reason behind reliability testing is to see how far changes in the measured score influenced by measurement error and the true score. Table 3 shows the result of internal consistency of value of reliability acquired through alpha Cronbach approach. The value of alpha Cronbach is around 0.60 to 0.76.

Table 3: Research Variables and Alpha Cronbach Values

Research Variables	Number of Items	Alfa <i>Cronbach</i>
1. Economic Hardship	8	0.76
2. Self-Esteem	30	0.62
3. Parental Behavior	21	0.60

Results and discussions

Table 4 shows descriptive analysis for age, income, number of family members, number of children, education level, occupation and type of resident. Average (min) age for all subjects in this research is 38. Average monthly income for the whole family members is RM568.55 and number of a family household and number of children is six and four respectively.

The finding shows that 25 people (22.7%) of the subjects are from the Bajau ethnic, 18 (15.4%) Sungai and 12 (10.9%) are Dusun. One each (0.9%) from various ethnics of Iranun, Jawa, Kagayan, Chinese and Iban. Overall, 17 ethnics involved in this research.

As for the level of education, 54 subjects (49.1%) attended high school, 34 (30%) primary school, and only one subject or (0.9%) completed at collage level. 97 subjects (88.2%) are full time housewives, 4 (3.6%) working in government and private sectors. More than half of all subjects (66.4%) live in flats, while the rest live in villages dwelling.

Table 4: Descriptive Analysis Describing Respondents Base on Profile

Variables	Min/ Number (Percentage)	Standard Deviation (SD)
1. Age	37.95	10.162
2. Income	568.55	385.734
3. Number of Family Members	6.45	3.025
4. Number of Children	4.01	2.030
5. Ethnic		
5.1 Bajau	25 (22.7%)	
5.2 Sungai	18 (16.4%)	
5.3 Dusun	12 (10.9%)	
5.4 Bugis	11 (10.0%)	
5.5 Brunei	9 (8.2%)	
5.6 Suluk	7 (6.4%)	
5.7 Bisaya	7 (6.4%)	
5.8 Rungus	6 (5.5%)	
5.9 Kadazan	3 (2.7%)	
5.10 Melayu	3 (2.7%)	
5.11 Murut	2 (1.8%)	
5.12 Banjar	2 (1.8%)	
5.13 Iranun	1 (0.9%)	
5.14 Jawa	1 (0.9%)	
5.15 Kagayan	1 (0.9%)	
5.16 Cina	1 (0.9%)	
5.17 Iban	1 (0.9%)	
6. Education Level		
6.1 No formal education	11 (10.0%)	
6.2 Elementary School	34 (30.9%)	
6.3 Secondary School	54 (49.1%)	
6.4 College /university	1 (0.9%)	
6.5 Others	10 (9.1%)	
7. Occupation		
7.1 Housewife	97 (88.2%)	
7.2 Private Sectors	4 (3.6%)	
7.3 Public Sector	4 (3.6%)	
7.4 Retire	3 (2.7%)	
7.5 Own business	2 (1.8%)	
8. Type of Resident		
8.1 Flats	73 (66.4%)	
8.2 Village dwelling	37 (33.6%)	

Relationship between economic hardship and mothers' self-esteem

According to table 5, result showed negative relationship between economic hardship and mothers' self-esteem, $r = -0.117$, $k > .05$. The negative correlation showed that mother who

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reported having high economic hardship showed lower self-esteem. However, negative relation from the findings is not significant and relation strength also weak.

Table 5: Pearson Correlation Analysis for Relationship between Economic Hardship and Mothers' Self Esteem.

Variable	Mothers' Self -Esteem
Economic Hardship	-0.117

Pearson correlation analysis found that even though there is negative relation between economic hardship and mothers' self-esteem, the relations that exist was weak and insignificant. This research findings is parallel with the study done by Mayhew and Lampers (1998) where their research findings showed that mothers' and fathers' financial strain was related negatively to global self-esteem for mothers and fathers. Findings also parallel with what Dooley, Catalano, and Rook (1988) stated that many researches has shown that economic stress is associated with depression, anxiety, psycho-physiological distress, and mental problems for both men and women. Rosenblatt and Keller (1983) found that the detrimental effects of economic hardship on psychological well-being of the adults in families. Meanwhile, Savaya (1998) through her research in examining the role or real-life economic need in the help-seeking attitudes and behavior of a group of Arab women living in Jaffa, a part of tel Aviv, found that there is considerable economic hardship and that self-esteem was not related to the respondents' attitudes toward professional help seeking.

The relationship between economic hardship and parental behavior

Table 6 shows that economic hardship and parental behavior are negatively correlated, $r = -0.027$, $k > .05$. Negative correlation outcomes also show that economic hardship can frailer parental behavior mother. However, the finding is not significant and relation strength also very weak.

Table 6: Pearson-Correlation Analysis for the Relationship between Economic Hardship and Parental Behavior

Variable	Parental Behavior
Economic Hardship	-0.027

Pearson-correlation analysis found that even though there are negative relations between economic hardship and maternal behavior, the relations that exist were weak and insignificant. This research finding is parallel with the statement by several researcher including Elder, Van Nguyen and Caspi (1985), Patterson (1988), Pearson, DeBarsyshe and Ramsey (1989), Ho, Lempers and Clark-Lempers (1995), Lempers and Clark-Lempers (1997). All of them found that in problem situation economy, caress decline parents do exists and increase inconsistent discipline by both parents, causes competent mother are less in educating their children; economic hardship increases tension and deep disruption in the relationship between parents with their children; economic hardship produce negative parenting behavior like temperamental, depriving support and heavy punishment which affects their children.

However, researchers finding are not strong and insignificant as there could be cases where parents' behavior are moderate. For instance, descriptive analysis shows that 85.5 percent of mother said they take into account their children needs and interest in making plan dispersion.

Apart from that, 83.6 percent of mother reported that they often think of things that please their children. Only 15.4 percent mothers scolded their children for committing small mistakes. This research finding shows that respondents still show positive quality in parental behavior although facing with economy difficulties.

Research study is also supported by the result of the study conducted by Rosnah (2004) entitled "Relationship among Economic Hardship with Family Working, Marriage Relationship and Behavior Ethnic Parental Behavior Iranun, Rungus and Melayu". The study discovers that economic hardship has no significant negative relation with proper behaviors parenting. The supply sample of 776 people $r = -0.06$, $k > .05$; mother sample (403 people) $r = -0.01$, $k > .05$; ethnic sample Rungus $r = -0.09$, $k > .05$. All of the results of this study show if the parents facing higher economic hardship, it can decrease their behavior in parental behavior quality displayed by the respondent. But relationship that exists was very low and did not even significant.

Relationship between self-esteem and parental behavior

Based on Table 7, the relationship between self-esteem and parental behavior is positive and significant $r = 0.514$, $k < .05$. Positive correlation values confirming that a high self-esteem could increase the quality of parental behavior.

Table 7: Pearson-Correlation Analysis for the Relationship between Self-Esteem and Parental Behavior

Variable	Parental Behavior
Self-esteem	0.514**

** $k < .001$

Finding reveals that there is a positive relationship between self-esteem and parental behavior. This finding is supported by MacPhee et al., (1996) that have recently found parent's self-esteem was associated with their child-rearing patterns: those with low self-esteem adopted a more authoritarian in their parenting than did those with high self-esteem.

Other study also has proven that self-esteem may also correlate with parent child interactions. Low parental self-esteem is related to increased risk of authoritative parental behavior (Aunola et al., 1999; Lutenbacher and Hall, 1998). High self-esteem in mothers could act as a buffer in an environment of increased stress allowing a mother to maintain her ability to effectively parent the child, thereby enriching the child's family environment.

Mothers with higher self-esteem may be less depressed, communicate a more positive attitude to their children, and provide a higher level of intellectual stimulation and/or emotional support. Strong evidence exists to show that depressed mothers have poorer interactions with their children (Cooper and Murray, 1998; Newport et al., 2002).

Furthermore, self-esteem could be a buffer to lessen the stress response, a notion grounded in stress moderation theory (Cohen and Rodriquez, 1995). Because low maternal self-esteem is correlated with maternal stress (Aunola et al., 1999), it may serve as a marker of a social environment which is also stressful for the child (Caldji et al., 2000) and (Essex et al., 2002). Self-esteem may lessen a mother's perception of stress or enhance her ability to deal with it,

i.e. high self-esteem may directly help her to protect herself from stressors (Longmore and DeMaris, 1997; Spencer et al., 1993).

Relationship between age and income with economic hardship, self-esteem and parental behavior

Table 8, shows the significant negative relationship between age and mothers' self-esteem $r = -0.205$, $k < .05$. Positive correlation value between variables conform that as age is growing the self-esteem demonstrated by mothers declining. It is also found that even though age negatively related to economic hardship and parental behavior, the relationship is not significant. On the other hand, mothers' level of income is related positively and significantly to self-esteem and parental behavior.

Table 8: Pearson Correlation Analysis for the Relationship between Age and Level of Income and Economic Hardship, Self-Esteem and Parental Behavior

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Age	1.000	0.229*	-.075	-.205*	-.138
2. Level of Income		1.000	-.098	.026	.022
3. Economic Hardship			1.000	-.117	-.027
4. Self-Esteem				1.000	.514**
5. Parental Behavior					1.000

According to Twenge and Campbell (2002), there are three theoretical models that are relevant in explaining the relationship between socio-economic level and self-esteem: (a) the social indicator or psychological centrality model, which proposes that, since socio-economic level is an indicator of status in social groups, high self-esteem may be a result of a high socio-economic level to the degree that the individual places importance on such status; (b) the reflected assessment model, which proposes that the socio-economic level of individuals has an impact on the perception that others have of them, and consequently, on the treatment they received, and since individuals internalize others' perceptions, this affects their self-esteem; and (c) the self-protecting mechanisms model, according to which individuals possess a range of self-protecting strategies that serve as shields to external feedback related to socio-economic level, and thus individuals from low levels can blame external factors for their economic situation, maintaining their self-esteem by comparing themselves with others less fortunate.

In this research, significant negative correlation between age and mothers self-esteem, $r = -0.205$, $k < .05$, shows a positive correlation value. This shows that in a situation of economic hardship, as the age of respondent growing, they demonstrated a declining self-esteem. In this case, the reflected assessment model which focus on the impact of the perceptions of the others internalized by individual upon them, can very well explain the phenomena. Since every where young women are perceived as stronger as and more attractive than the older ones, growing older as a woman in a traditional society and depend solely upon their husbands for everything (from food and shelter to security and love), is rather an unwelcome reality. With 88.2 percent are full time housewives and average age of 37.95, the finding reflects a true phenomena among the respondent. Growing old is robbing them most of their strong points which could render them with the opportunity to feel good about themselves.

Rosenberg and Peals, (1978) found that mediating variables such as age, gender, race and culture, indicating different social experiences and psychological meaning for the subjects whose self-esteem and socio-economic level are measured.

In this research, level of income is also related positively but not significantly to the self-esteem ($r = .022, k > 0.5$). This means that the self-esteem increase following the increase in level of income. High level of income is perceived as a positive quality of life even though respondents are basically living in the situation of economic hardship throughout their lives. Low level of education (30 percent with elementary level and 10 percent no formal education), and with average of 4 children, would reduce their chance to become wealthy viewing from the limitation they are having now. Anyway, this would not hinder anyone in their position from building hope for a better level of income. The social indicator or psychological centrality model is also applied here as high self-esteem may be a result of a high socio-economic level to the degree that the individual places importance on such status (Twenge and Campbell, 2002). Finally, just being "old", independent sole upon the husband, and may be less attractive to their partner compare to the younger women, higher level of income would function more than just negate them of higher self-esteem

Another finding produces by this research is that age do relate negatively and not significantly to economic hardship and parental behavior. High level of economic hardship cause weaker parental behavior. This finding run in chorus to some other researchers who have found a strong positive relationship between the poverty and subjective well-being, stating that to the degree that the population becomes impoverished, their well-being diminished (Cantril, 1967; Belle, 1990; McLoyd, 1998). Though in this research, poverty is defined more within economic limitation (economic hardship), we ought to consider the impact it has on other types of needs such as psychological and psychosocial needs. The pressure of being a poor "old" woman, heavily dependent on husband, with average of 4 children under her care, in situation of high economic hardship, could provoke a lot of stresses at any time in her life. It has generally been found that poverty promotes strategies for coping with stress that are passive (individuals hope the problem will simply be resolved by circumstances or by other persons), emotional (individuals are focused on the emotions produced by the situation, more than on assessing and coping with the situation in a rational way), and evasive (individuals avoid confronting the problem or situation that causes them stress) (Lever, Pinol, and Uralde, 2005). Applying negative strategies to cope with the stresses (which many time involve feeling of frustration and anger), could end up in negative parental behavior. Children as weaker and the closest persons at hand would always be the easiest preys to a frustrating and angry mother.

Conclusions and implications

This research is carries out to see the effect of economic hardship on self-esteem and parental behaviors. With the respondents focused basically on women population at an average age of 38 years, and confronted with situation of economic hardship for most of their lives, majority of the housewives who depend heavily on their husbands for a living. The results of this research showed that there were positive relationship between self-esteem and parental behavior, and age and self-esteem. Growing older and fully occupied as full time housewives, hindered their chance to compete in the scarce jobs opportunity in the local job market or started their own business. This would reduce their opportunity of being at least of any help to increase their family level of income and feel good about themselves. The higher level of income positively related to high self-esteem. But the inability to raise the income level had

caused them a low self-esteem. Economic hardship negatively affected parental behavior, but being poor most of their lives make them more in control of themselves as far as parental behaviors are concern.

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