



Received: 2025-11-27

Accepted: 2025-12-15

Published: 2025-12-15

Original Article

Understanding Emotion Regulation Among Single Mothers in Malaysia: A Thematic Analysis Through the Lense of Nabawi Practices

Siti Aidah Binti Tulimin^{a*} & Roshimah Shamsuddin^a^a *Department of Islamic Studies, School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 11800, Malaysia** Corresponding author, email: sitiaidah159@gmail.comDOI: <https://doi.org/10.22452/ris.vol12no2.9>

ABSTRACT

Single motherhood in Malaysia is often accompanied by emotional, social, and psychological challenges that require continuous emotional regulation. In navigating the demands of caregiving, financial responsibility, and social expectations, single mothers employ various strategies to manage emotions such as anger, sadness, and distress. This qualitative study explores how single mothers in Malaysia regulate their emotions amidst the challenges of single parenthood. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with six participants, thematic analysis revealed a dual approach to emotion regulations which are personal coping strategies such as screaming and throwing objects, and faith-based practices such as performing prayer (solat), remembrance (dhikr), and Qur'anic recitation, which reflecting Nabawi methods of managing emotions. These findings suggest a significant integration between the mothers' lived personal experiences and the emotional regulation strategies modeled by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) underscoring the significance of faith-based practices in the psychological resilience of Muslim single mothers. Throughout this research, it highlights the integration of psychological self-regulation with spiritual resilience, contributing to a deeper understanding of culturally and religiously embedded coping strategies among Muslim women. This study contributes to the understanding of culturally and religiously informed coping mechanisms, offering insights for mental health practitioners working within Islamic contexts. Implications are discussed for mental health practitioners, religious counsellors, and support systems working with Muslim single mothers.

Keywords: Emotion Regulation, Single Mothers, Nabawi Practices, Islamic Coping Strategies & Thematic Analysis.

Introduction

Single mothers frequently face a distinct array of emotional, financial, and social obstacles that challenge their resilience and emotional fortitude. In Malaysia, the population of single mothers has been rising consistently, driven by reasons such as divorce, widowhood, and

abandonment.¹ These women bear the dual responsibility of caring for themselves and raising their children, often lacking sufficient social or emotional support. Therefore, effectively managing their emotions is essential for preserving their mental health and achieving stability within their families.

Mental health concerns among Malaysian single mothers have been increasingly documented. Recent studies show that **20.2% of Malay single mothers in Perak experience depression**, with self-blame and lack of emotional support identified as major risk factors.² Similarly, found that mental health problems among single mothers in the B40 income group significantly correlate with lower quality of life.³ Other qualitative studies reveal that financial stress, parenting burden, and social stigma contribute to emotional strain and feelings of isolation.⁴ These findings indicate that emotional instability among single mothers is not merely a psychological concern but a multidimensional social issue that requires holistic solutions.

Meanwhile, emotion regulation, defined as the capacity to observe, assess, and adjust emotional responses, is acknowledged in psychological studies as a fundamental aspect of mental health.⁵ For single mothers, effectively managing emotions like anger, sadness, loneliness, and frustration is crucial for their coping mechanisms. Although numerous studies have examined emotion regulation through a psychological lens, there is a notable lack of research on how Malaysian single mothers incorporate religious or spiritual practices, especially Islamic principles, into their emotional management strategies.

Islam offers a comprehensive framework for comprehending and managing emotions, as illustrated by the teachings and life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). His experiences exemplify emotional intelligence, patience, compassion, and self-discipline during challenging times.⁶ By investigating how contemporary single mothers navigate their emotions and juxtaposing these approaches with the practices of the Prophet, we can uncover significant insights into faith-based emotional resilience.

This research intends to examine the awareness of emotion regulation among single mothers in Malaysia, identify the techniques they employ for emotional management, and assess the degree to which these techniques align with those exemplified by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Through a thematic analysis of interviews conducted with six single mothers, this study aims to illuminate the connection between psychological coping mechanisms and spiritual fortitude in the lives of modern Muslim women.

¹Muzalwana Abdul Talib et al., Household Income And Life Satisfaction Of Single Mothers In Malaysia, *International Journal for Studies on Children, Women, Elderly And Disabled*, Vol. 9 (2020).

² Lau, Y. T., Abdul Rahman, R., & Ismail, S. B., Determinants of Depression among Malay Single Mothers Living in Community in Perak, Malaysia. *Malaysian Journal of Medical Sciences*, 29(2) (2022), 80–93.

³ Zakaria, S. M., Abdullah, N., Md. Akhir, N., Amin, A. S., Mohd Shukry, A. N. A., Rashid, M. R. A., & Wan Yusof, W. N. (2022). Perceptions of Quality of Life During the Pandemic: A Case Study on B40 Single Mothers. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19 (2022) 12219.

⁴ Ibrahim, F. A., & Ghani, F. A., Relationship between the Belief System and Emotional Well-Being of Single Mothers. *Asian Social Science*, 11(27), (2015), 28–34

⁵ Gross, J. J. The emerging field of emotion regulation: An integrative review. *Review of General Psychology*, 2(3), (1998), 271–299

⁶ Goleman, Daniel. *Social Intelligence: The New Science of Human Relationships*. New York: Bantam Books, (2006)., Al-Ghazali, Abu Hamid. *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences). Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, (2005).

Literature Review

A) Emotion Regulation: Psychological Foundations

Emotion regulation refers to the processes individuals use to monitor, evaluate, and modify emotional reactions to achieve adaptive functioning. Gross introduced the process model of emotion regulation, emphasizing that individuals regulate emotions through strategies such as situation selection, cognitive reappraisal, and response modulation.⁷ These strategies are essential for psychological well-being, especially in navigating life stressors. Later, Gross and Thompson expanded on this by categorizing strategies into antecedent-focused and response-focused regulation, both of which have implications for coping in high-stress situations such as single parenthood.⁸

B) Emotional Regulation Among Single Mothers

Single mothers represent a vulnerable demographic group that frequently experiences high levels of emotional stress. The dual responsibility of parenting and income generation, compounded by limited social support, often leads to mental health challenges. In Malaysia, Lau et al. found that 20.2% of Malay single mothers in Perak suffered from depression, with self-blame coping emerging as a major risk factor.⁹ Similarly, Zakaria et al. revealed that poor mental health among single mothers in the B40 group correlates with low quality of life and limited access to psychological assistance.¹⁰

Qualitative research further highlights emotional exhaustion, loneliness, and financial stress as recurring themes among single mothers.¹¹ These stressors not only affect individual well-being but also disrupt family dynamics, parenting efficacy, and children's emotional development. According to Shamsudin et al. single mothers in the Malay Archipelago are nearly three times more likely to experience chronic depression than married women, suggesting an urgent need for targeted emotional and spiritual support.¹²

In response to these challenges, a growing body of Malaysian scholarship emphasizes resilience and coping among single mothers. For instance, Aga demonstrated that group counseling interventions improved emotional well-being and self-efficacy,¹³ while multiple

⁷ Gross, J. J. The emerging field of emotion regulation: An integrative review. *Review of General Psychology*, 2(3), (1998). 271–299

⁸ Gross, James J., and Ross A. Thompson. "Emotion Regulation: Conceptual Foundations." In *Handbook of Emotion Regulation*, edited by James J. Gross, 3–24. New York: Guilford Press, 2007.

⁹ Lau, Y. T., Abdul Rahman, R., & Ismail, S. B. Determinants of Depression among Malay Single Mothers Living in Community in Perak, Malaysia. *Malaysian Journal of Medical Sciences*, 29(2), (2022). 80–93.

¹⁰ Zakaria, S. M., Abdullah, N., Md. Akhir, N., Amin, A. S., Mohd Shukry, A. N. A., Rashid, M. R. A., & Wan Yusof, W. N. Perceptions of Quality of Life During the Pandemic: A Case Study on B40 Single Mothers. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19 (2022), 12219.

¹¹ Che Nurafidah Che Rasli, Zarina Md Nor & Rafisah Mat Radzi, "Coping with financial stress: a thematic analysis of low-income single mothers in northern Malaysia," *Muallim Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 9, no. 4 (2025): 187–203.

¹² Shamsudin, Roshimah; Mohd Talib, Nur Anis Hanani; Mat Akhir, Noor Shakirah; & Zali, Muhammad Aidil. "Ibu Tunggal dan Kemurungan: Tinjauan Awal Kajian-Kajian Terpilih di Nusantara [Single Motherhood and Depression: An Overview of Selected Studies from the Malay Archipelago]." *BITARA International Journal of Civilizational Studies and Human Sciences* 6, no. 4 (2023): 189–197

¹³ Aga, Rafidah; Jaladin, Mohd; Fernandez, Janet Ann; Abdullah, Nur Ain Sumaiyah; & Asmawi, Adelina. "Empowering Single Mothers through Creative Group Counselling: An Effective Intervention to Improve Mental Well-being." *Malaysian Journal of Medicine and Health Sciences* 16, no. 3 (2020): 192–201

studies indicate that religious values and religious coping act as protective resources for mothers' mental health reducing depression, anxiety, and the negative effects of stress both in Malaysia and internationally.¹⁴ These studies collectively affirm that emotion regulation is not only psychological but also deeply influenced by spiritual orientation and faith-based meaning-making.

C) Religious Coping and Psychological Resilience

Beyond psychological frameworks, religious coping has been recognized as a significant contributor to emotional regulation and mental health. Abu-Raiya and Pargament highlight that religious practices—such as prayer, recitation of sacred texts, and spiritual surrender—can provide emotional relief, meaning-making, and support during distress.¹⁵ Their work, grounded in empirical data, emphasizes how spirituality can serve both positive and negative functions in coping, depending on the individual's perception of divine interaction. In the Muslim context, positive religious coping often includes trust in divine wisdom (*tawakkal*), seeking forgiveness (*istighfar*), and remembrance of God (*zikir*), all of which align with core Islamic teachings and are supported by classical and contemporary sources.

D) Islamic Teachings and Prophetic Practices in Emotional Regulation

Islam offers a comprehensive and spiritually grounded approach to emotional regulation. Classical Islamic scholars such as Al-Ghazali emphasize the importance of managing the self (*nafs*) and emotions through acts of worship, reflection, and submission to Allah.¹⁶ The life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is replete with examples of emotional intelligence, such as his patience during trials, his calmness in anger, and his empathy toward others.

The Prophet (PBUH) encouraged specific practices for emotional management. For example, he advised those experiencing anger to recite *ta'awwuz* (seeking refuge in Allah from Satan) and to perform ablution to physically and spiritually cool down.¹⁷ He also regularly engaged in *istighfar*, stating, "By Allah, I seek Allah's forgiveness and turn to Him in repentance more than seventy times a day".¹⁸ Furthermore, the Qur'an confirms the role of remembrance in emotional comfort: "Verily, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest". Surah Ar-Ra'd, 13:28.

E) Social Intelligence and Emotional Health

In addition to religious and psychological insights, Goleman introduces the concept of *social intelligence*, which encompasses emotional awareness, empathy, and interpersonal effectiveness.¹⁹ These skills are vital for individuals who face social isolation or heightened

¹⁴ Lau, Y. T., Rahman, R. A., & Ismail, S. B.. Determinants of Depression among Malay Single Mothers in Perak, Malaysia, *BMC Public Health*, (2022); Alkaff, R. N. Does Religious Coping Matter among Mothers? *Malaysian Journal of Public Health Medicine*, (2022); Misran, R. N. The Role of Religiosity to Address the Mental Health Crisis, *Pertanika JSSH*, (2021); Whitehead, B. R., & Bergeman, C. S. Daily religious coping buffers the stress–affect relationship, *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, (2020).

¹⁵ Abu-Raiya, Hisham, and Kenneth I. Pargament. "Religious Coping Among Diverse Religions: Commonalities and Divergences." *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 7, no. 1 (2015): 24–33.

¹⁶ Al-Ghazali, Abu Hamid. *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences), 77.

¹⁷ Abu Dawud, Sulayman ibn al-Ash'ath. Sunan Abi Dawood, (Beirut: Dar al-Risalah al-'Alamiyyah, 2009), Kitāb al-Adab (Book of Manners), Hadith No. 4784.

¹⁸ Al-Bukhari, Muhammad ibn Isma'il. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, (Beirut: Dar Ibn Kathir, 1987), Kitāb al-Da'awāt (Book of Supplications), Hadith No. 6307.

¹⁹ Goleman, Daniel. *Social Intelligence: The New Science of Human Relationships*. (New York: Bantam Books, 2006), 100-121.

emotional demands common among single mothers. Goleman's framework reinforces the idea that emotional well-being is not only internally regulated but also supported through healthy social relationships.

Prior studies emphasize emotion regulation as an essential process for sustaining mental well-being, involving efforts to monitor and modify emotional reactions.²⁰ Within the Islamic framework, religious coping such as *solat*, *dzikir*, Qur'anic recitation, and *tawakkul* has been shown to enhance psychological resilience by promoting inner calm, meaning-making, and trust in divine wisdom.²¹ Prophetic teachings further demonstrate practical emotional management strategies, including the use of *ta'awwuz*, *istighfar*, ablution, and patience as mechanisms of emotional control. However, while these Islamic practices are well documented, their utilisation as emotion regulation strategies among specific marginalised Muslim populations remains underexplored.

Despite extensive theoretical literature on psychological and spiritual coping techniques, there is a lack of empirical research examining how Malaysian single mothers regulate their emotions using Prophetic-based practices. Specifically, little is known about their level of awareness, application, and perceived effectiveness of Hadith-inspired methods such as *ta'awwuz*, *istighfar*, *solat sunat*, Qur'anic recitation, and *tawakkul*. Thus, this study seeks to address this gap by exploring the emotional regulation methods of single mothers in Malaysia and analysing their alignment with Prophetic guidance.

Methodology

This study uses semi-structured interviews with six single mothers who live in Malaysia as part of a qualitative research approach. To guarantee the richness and usefulness of the data, participants were chosen via purposive sampling. These single mothers coming from various background, with different types of job and being single mothers due to death of spouse and divorce. The estimated age of these single mothers is between 36 to 49 years old, with the duration of being single mother between 3 to 12 years.

Using Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework, the data was analyzed using thematic analysis: (1) getting acquainted with the data, (2) creating preliminary codes, (3) looking for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and labeling themes, and (6) drafting the report.²² The objective was to identify themes that represent the participants' knowledge and techniques for controlling their emotions and to investigate how well these aligned with prophetic approaches.

Finding & Discussion

²⁰ Gross, J. J. The emerging field of emotion regulation: An integrative review. *Review of General Psychology*, 2(3),(1998) 271–299. , Gross, James J., and Ross A. Thompson. "Emotion Regulation: Conceptual Foundations." *In Handbook of Emotion Regulation*, edited by James J. Gross (New York: Guilford Press, 2007), 3-24. .

²¹ Abu-Raiya, Hisham, and Kenneth I. Pargament. "Religious Coping Among Diverse Religions: Commonalities and Divergences." *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 7, no. 1 (2015): 24–33. , Al-Ghazali, Abu Hamid. *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences), 77-79.

²² Braun, Virginia and Victoria Clarke. "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology." *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 77–101.

Throughout this research, the researcher reached some conclusions on it. They were written in terms of themes below:

Theme 1: Awareness of Emotional States

In the interview session, the respondents were asked about the importance of emotional regulation. As a result, five of six respondents agreed on the important of emotion regulation in the life of human being. Subject 2 stated that the information regarding emotional regulation is quite new for her and does not see the importance on it. Meanwhile Subject 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6 believed on the importance of emotional regulation especially on the aspect of mental health.

The majority of participants demonstrated an understanding of the importance of emotional regulation for mental health and family stability. This awareness aligns with Gross process model of emotion regulation, which underscores self-awareness as the first stage in modifying emotional responses.²³ Similarly, studies among single mothers in Malaysia show that those with greater emotional awareness tend to exhibit higher psychological resilience and adaptive coping.²⁴ However, one participant expressed limited awareness, indicating that emotional literacy is not yet universally internalized among single mothers—a finding that echoes Aga et al. who observed that awareness of mental well-being remains underdeveloped within certain socioeconomic groups.²⁵

This theme underscores the need for structured psychoeducational programs to cultivate emotional literacy, which can then be integrated with faith-based education.

Subject	Awareness of Emotional Regulation
1	Aware
2	Not aware
3	Aware
4	Aware
5	Aware
6	Aware

Table: Awareness of Emotional Regulation

Theme 2: Factors Contributing To Emotional Instability

In term of the factors that lead to unstable emotions, five of six respondents agreed that the internal and external factors were part of the cause for the unstable emotion. Subject 5 perceived that her emotional instability was partly influenced by her children's sadness and the

²³ Gross, J. J. The emerging field of emotion regulation: An integrative review. *Review of General Psychology*, 2(3), (1998) 271–299

²⁴ Ibrahim, F. A., & Ghani, F. A.. Relationship between the Belief System and Emotional Well-Being of Single Mothers. *Asian Social Science*, 11(27), (2015) 28–34

²⁵ Aga, Rafidah; Jaladin, Mohd; Fernandez, Janet Ann; Abdullah, Nur Ain Sumaiyah; & Asmawi, Adelina. "Empowering Single Mothers through Creative Group Counselling: An Effective Intervention to Improve Mental Well-being." *Malaysian Journal of Medicine and Health Sciences* 16, no. 3 (2020): 192–201

conflicts that arose between them. Furthermore, the burden of making decisions independently often triggered emotional distress. Feelings of shame when attending social events alone, as well as the longing for her absent husband, also contributed to her emotional challenges. Meanwhile, Subject 6 believed that the financial constraints, matters related to childcare, and a sense of injustice regarding her own circumstances were factors contributing to the emotional challenges faced by single mothers. At the same time, Subject 2 and 4 shared the same factors of unstable emotions which are stress at the workplace and at home especially when both need their attention simultaneously. On the other hand, Subject 3 felt that both external and internal factors affected her emotions such the societal stigma that look down on single mother and feeling unappreciated that she felt. While, only Subject 1 identified health issues and mental well-being as factors affecting the emotional stability of single mothers.

Participants attributed their emotional instability to both internal and external stressors—financial constraints, workplace stress, loneliness, and stigma. These findings mirror those of Lau et al. and Zakaria who identified socioeconomic pressure and isolation as primary predictors of depression among single mothers in Malaysia.²⁶ The participants’ emotional turbulence also reflects what Golema terms “social disconnection,” where lack of empathetic engagement intensifies emotional suffering.

From an Islamic perspective, these stressors resonate with the concept of *balā’* (trials) as tests of spiritual endurance. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) demonstrated composure during hardship—such as the loss of his spouse and uncle—by turning to remembrance (*dhikr*) and patience (*ṣabr*). Hence, when single mothers interpret distress as part of divine wisdom (*hikmah*), it reframes their suffering as spiritually meaningful, reducing emotional despair. This interpretation aligns with Abu-Raiya and Pargament’s (2015) finding that positive religious coping enhances emotional recovery by promoting meaning-making.²⁷

Subject	Perceived Factors Contributing to Emotional Instability
Subject 1	- Health issues- Mental well-being
Subject 2	- Stress at workplace- Stress at home (both needing attention simultaneously)
Subject 3	- Societal stigma towards single mothers- Feeling unappreciated
Subject 4	- Stress at workplace- Stress at home (both needing attention simultaneously)
Subject 5	- Children’s sadness and conflicts- Decision-making burden- Shame when attending events alone- Longing for absent husband
Subject 6	- Financial constraints- Childcare responsibilities- Feeling of injustice over personal situation

Table: Factors Affecting Emotional Stability of Single Mothers (Subjects 1–6)

²⁶ Lau, Y. T., Rahman, R. A., & Ismail, S. B. Determinants of Depression among Malay Single Mothers in Perak, *Malaysia*, BMC Public Health (2022); Zakaria, S. M., Abdullah, N., Md. Akhir, N., Amin, A. S., Mohd Shukry, A. N. A., Rashid, M. R. A., & Wan Yusof, W. N. Perceptions of Quality of Life During the Pandemic: A Case Study on B40 Single Mothers. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(2022), 12219.

²⁷ Abu-Raiya, Hisham, and Kenneth I. Pargament. “Religious Coping Among Diverse Religions: Commonalities and Divergences.” *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 7, no. 1 (2015): 24–33

Theme 3: Self-Regulation of Emotion Stability

The third theme discovered in this research is regarding the self regulation applied by single mother in maintaining their emotion stability. To be more specific, five emotions had been chosen for the researcher to know how single mother regulate it upon their method and technique. Those emotions are anger, sadness, worry, disappointment and happy. As the result, most of them had different ways yet some used similar technique for regulating the emotions mentioned.

a) For regulating the anger, Subject 1 chose to do *dzikir*, reciting al-Quran and pray *solat sunat*, similarly with Subject 2 that chose doing the *dzikir* for her to control the anger. Meanwhile, Subject 3 chose to regulate her anger by doing the breathing technique and together with reciting *istighfar*. If the anger still out of control, she chose to isolate herself and walk away. On the other hand, Subject 4 chose to nagging in controlling her anger. However, she will choose the physical approach like hitting and throwing things if her anger is out of control. In her opinion, applying these two methods could help her soothed the anger. On top of that, Subject 5 chose to cry and scream in order to handle her anger, while Subject 6 preferred to share her feeling by sharing it with others especially to her friends.

Subject	Anger Regulation Methods
Subject 1	- <i>Dzikir</i> (remembrance of Allah)- Reciting <i>al-Quran</i> - Performing <i>solat sunat</i>
Subject 2	- <i>Dzikir</i> (remembrance of Allah)
Subject 3	- Breathing technique- Reciting <i>istighfar</i> - Isolating herself and walking away when anger is out of control
Subject 4	- Nagging- Physical approach (hitting, throwing things) when anger is out of control
Subject 5	- Crying- Screaming
Subject 6	- Sharing feelings with others, especially friends

Table: Anger Regulation Methods Among Single Mothers (Subjects 1–6)

b) In term of sadness, Subject 1 preferred to recite al-Quran as surah *Yaasin* to overcome her sadness, while, Subject 2 chose to do *solat sunat* and *dzikir*. On the other hand, Subject 3 regulated her sadness through crying, put her reliance solely to Allah (*tawakkal*) and keep reminding herself things happen for reason. Crying also is the choice made by Subject 4 in handling her sadness. As for Subject 5, other than crying, reciting al-Quran and do *solat sunat*, sometimes she did watched movie to deal with her sadness such watching Korean movies. For her, so far this technique was efficient for her to deal with her sadness. Different with Subject 6, she believed that her sadness can be dealt effectively through *solat sunat* during *Qiyamullail* where she shares everything with Allah.

Subject	Sadness Regulation Methods
Subject 1	- Reciting <i>al-Quran</i> (<i>Surah Yaasin</i>)
Subject 2	- Performing <i>solat sunat</i> - <i>Dzikir</i> (remembrance of Allah)
Subject 3	- Crying- <i>Tawakkal</i> (reliance on Allah)- Self-reminder that everything happens for a reason
Subject 4	- Crying
Subject 5	- Crying- Reciting <i>al-Quran</i> - Performing <i>solat sunat</i> - Watching movies (e.g., Korean dramas)
Subject 6	- <i>Solat sunat</i> during <i>Qiyamullail</i> - Sharing her feelings with Allah in prayer

Table: Sadness Regulation Methods Among Single Mothers (Subjects 1–6)

c) For the part of dealing with worry, Subject 1 handling it by reciting *al-Quran*, do *solat sunat* and *dzikir*. Different with Subject 2, she preferred to keep advising her children about their futures especially regarding their studies and becoming a good person. This method chose by Subject 2 as her concern and worries are more likely towards the future of her kids. On the other hand, sharing with close friends and colleagues helping Subject 3 to deal with her concern and worries as getting advice and suggestion from them put her in relief. Other than isolating herself whenever in a worry situation, Subject 4 also dealing her worries through reciting *al-Quran* and practicing *solat sunat* as similar of what had been practicing by Subject 5. As for Subject 6, going out for a stroll and getting some fresh air could help her dealing with the worrying feeling.

Subject	Worry Regulation Methods
Subject 1	- Reciting <i>al-Quran</i> - Performing <i>solat sunat</i> - <i>Dzikir</i> (remembrance of Allah)
Subject 2	- Advising her children about their future (studies, being good individuals)
Subject 3	- Sharing with close friends and colleagues- Getting advice and suggestions for relief
Subject 4	- Isolating herself- Reciting <i>al-Quran</i> - Performing <i>solat sunat</i>
Subject 5	- Reciting <i>al-Quran</i> - Performing <i>solat sunat</i>
Subject 6	- Going out for a stroll and getting some fresh air

Table: Worry Regulation Methods Among Single Mothers (Subjects 1–6)

d) For the part dealing with disappointment, Subject 1 chose to accept everything that had happened in her life wholeheartedly. She believed that it is all in the plan of Allah and accept it despite of disappointment feeling. As for Subject 2, though tested with unfaithful and irresponsible ex-husband that led to the divorce in her marriage, she does not have any disappointment for what had happened. Different with Subject 3 that becoming single mother due the death of her husband, the disappointment that she feel is covered by turning back to Allah and find the reasons and goodness upon everything that had happened in her life. Meanwhile, Subject 4 believed that crying is the best remedy for her in dealing with her disappointment feeling as similar with Subject 5. Yet, Subject 5 practicing other method as well in dealing with her disappointment which is through reading *al-Quran*. Finally for Subject 6, sharing with the close friends helping her in overcoming the disappointment that she felt.

Subject	Disappointment Regulation Methods
Subject 1	- Accepting everything wholeheartedly as part of Allah's plan
Subject 2	- Does not feel disappointed despite divorce; accepts what happened
Subject 3	- Turning back to Allah- Finding reasons and wisdom behind what happened
Subject 4	- Crying
Subject 5	- Crying- Reading <i>al-Quran</i>
Subject 6	- Sharing with close friends

Table: Disappointment Regulation Methods Among Single Mothers (Subjects 1–6)

e) Dealing with happiness is the final emotion that is being analyzed among single mothers in term of the method that they chose. To be compared with other feelings, happiness is not a feeling that need to be overcome, yet it is a feeling that should be achieved. As for Subject 1, the activity that makes her happy is fishing during the evening time nearby her house. The joyful feeling when the fish is caught brings her happy. Spending quality time with her children is the way of how Subject 2 can be happy. For her, this is the moment that she could spend time with them. Unlike Subject 3, applying gratitude in life and avoiding of being overthinking about what happen helping her to be happy in life despite everything that had happened. As people say happy tummy happy day, Subject 4 believed that eating her favourite food always made her day happy. Yet, being silent sometimes brings her tranquility and calmness in her mind. Regulating the mind and heart that Allah always gives good things and Allah's plans are the best give happiness in Subject 5. Reminding herself regarding the sixth pillars of *Iman*, which is believing in Allah's destiny and decision also made her happy and calm. In the meantime, Subject 6 practices regularly gratitude and accept fully for what had happen in life in making herself happy. Other than considering time always healing, involve in outdoor activities such getting fresh air and window shopping with friends also helping her to be happy in life.

Subject	Happiness Regulation Methods / Activities
Subject 1	- Fishing in the evening near her house- Feels joy when catching fish
Subject 2	- Spending quality time with her children
Subject 3	- Practicing gratitude (<i>syukur</i>)- Avoiding overthinking about life events
Subject 4	- Eating her favourite food (<i>happy tummy, happy day</i>)- Staying silent for mental calmness
Subject 5	- Regulating thoughts with belief that Allah gives the best- Remembering the 6th Pillar of Iman (<i>Belief in Qada' and Qadar</i>)
Subject 6	- Regularly practicing gratitude- Fully accepting what happens in life- Believing time heals- Doing outdoor activities (e.g., getting fresh air, window shopping with friends)

Table: Methods for Achieving Happiness Among Single Mothers (Subjects 1–6)

The mothers employed varied methods to regulate emotions such as anger, sadness, worry, disappointment, and happiness. These included both psychological and spiritual strategies—crying, deep breathing, isolation, and cognitive reframing, alongside *solat sunat*, *dhikr*, Qur’an recitation, and *tawakkul* (trust in Allah).

This duality parallels Gross and Thompson’s categorization of regulation strategies as antecedent-focused (preventive) and response-focused (reactive). For instance, *dhikr* and *Qur’an recitation* may serve as antecedent-focused strategies, cultivating calmness before emotional escalation, while crying and isolation represent reactive regulation. The combination of modern self-soothing techniques with spiritual rituals reflects a hybrid coping model distinctively Malaysian and Islamic.

Theme 4: Awareness of Emotion Regulation From Hadith’s Perspectives

Based on the interviews conducted the single mothers, the researcher discovered that two out of six single mothers never knew about emotion regulation based on hadith’s perspectives which referring to Subject 1 and 2. Meanwhile, Subject 3, 4 and 6 know little about this method of emotion regulation but not in depth, yet agreed on its benefit. As for Subject 5, emotion regulation based on hadith’s perspectives is new exposure for her.

While four of six participants exhibited partial or new exposure to Prophetic methods, they nonetheless practiced several Hadith-endorsed techniques, including *wudhu’* (ablution), *ta’awwuz*, *istighfar*, *dhikr Fatimah*, and *solat tahajjud*. This suggests that Prophetic emotion regulation is often embedded implicitly within everyday Muslim routines.

The participants’ reliance on spiritual coping parallels findings by Gumiandari who Islamic-informed coping including faith, trust in God (*tawakkul*), patience (*sabr*), and other spiritual values constitutes a meaningful form of resilience that helps believers navigate adversity, stress, and trauma.²⁸ From a theoretical standpoint, these practices also correspond to Resilience Theory, which views spirituality as a form of internal resource enabling adaptation to adversity. Moreover, the participants’ recognition of limited knowledge about hadith-based emotional regulation underscores a significant educational gap. Integrating Prophetic psychology into community workshops could therefore transform intuitive coping into conscious, structured practice.

Subject	Level of Awareness	Remarks
Subject 1	No awareness	Never knew about it
Subject 2	No awareness	Never knew about it
Subject 3	Limited awareness	Knows a little; agrees it is beneficial
Subject 4	Limited awareness	Knows a little; agrees it is beneficial
Subject 5	New exposure	Just learned about it during the interview
Subject 6	Limited awareness	Knows a little; agrees it is beneficial

Table: Awareness of Emotion Regulation Based on Hadith’s Perspectives

²⁸ Gumiandari, Septi; Abd. Madjid; Ilman Nafi’a; Safii Safii; Abas Hidayat. “Islamic Resilience as Spiritual and Psychological Coping Strategies for Muslims during COVID-19 Pandemic.” *Afkar: Jurnal Akidah dan Pemikiran Islam*, Special Issue on COVID-19, 2022, pp. 313–348.

Theme 5: Application of Emotion Regulation Based on Hadith's Perspectives

Throughout the interview session, the researcher concluded that there were application of emotion regulation among single mothers in dealing with their emotions. For this section, the researcher only chose few methods from hadith in dealing with the emotion which are taking ablution and recite *taawuz* for overcoming the anger, recite al-Quran, regulating *dzikir* and performing *solat sunat* during unstable emotion, and applying full dependence to Allah during stress. Subject 1 regulating herself with taking ablution, performing *solat sunat*, reciting ayat *Kursi* and short surah in Al-Quran such *3 Qul* as well as *dzikir* in dealing with her emotion. Apart from that, practicing the feeling of reliance towards Allah also helping her in stabilizing the emotions. As for Subject 2, performing *solat sunat*, reciting certain surah from al-Quran such *Yaasin* and *ayat Kursi* and regulating *dzikir* helping her with unstable emotions. Performing *solat sunat* also being one of the methods applied by Subject 3 for overcoming her unstable emotion despite of regulating the *dzikir* "*Lā Hawlā wa Lā Quwwata illā billah*", do *selawat* and recite al-Quran. Similarly, like Subject 1, Subject 3 also applying the reliance and trust towards Allah in dealing with unstable emotion. Subject 4 did not practicing of reciting *taawuz* in overcome the anger, but she preferred to utter *istighfar*. Similar with previous Subjects, Subject 4 also regulating herself with performing *solat sunat*, reciting al-Quran and applying trust and reliance towards Allah. These methods effectively give positive vibe in her life especially in dealing with unstable emotion. As Subject 5 applied all methods of Subject 4, only Subject 6 regulating herself with *taawuz* in dealing with her anger. Aside of regulating daily *dzikir* such as *dzikir* of Fatimah and supplication of Prophet Yunus, Subject 6 also chose to performing *solat sunat* such *Tahajjud*. This brings her positive feeling.

Subject	Anger Regulation (Hadith-Based)	Methods for Unstable Emotion / Stress	Remarks / Specific Practices
Subject 1	-Taking <i>ablution (wudhu)</i>	- Performing <i>solat sunat</i> - Reciting <i>Ayat Kursi, 3 Qul</i> - <i>Dzikir</i> - Reliance on Allah (<i>tawakkal</i>)	Combines both physical and spiritual methods, trusts Allah fully
Subject 2	Not mentioned	- Performing <i>solat sunat</i> - Reciting <i>Surah Yaasin, Ayat Kursi</i> - <i>Dzikir</i>	Uses Qur'anic recitation and worship for calming emotions
Subject 3	Not specified (but <i>anger</i> included under unstable emotion)	- Performing <i>solat sunat</i> - <i>Zikir</i> : " <i>Lā hawla wa lā quwwata illā billāh</i> "- <i>Selawat</i> - Reciting <i>al-Quran</i> - <i>Tawakkal</i> (full trust in Allah)	Similar to Subject 1 in combining <i>tawakkal</i> and Qur'anic methods
Subject 4	- <i>Istighfar</i> (instead of <i>ta'awwuz</i>)	- Performing <i>solat sunat</i> - Reciting <i>al-Quran</i> - <i>Tawakkal</i> (trust in Allah)	Reports positive emotional impact from these practices
Subject 5	Same as Subject 4 (no specific anger method mentioned)	- Same as Subject 4: <i>solat sunat, Quran, tawakkal</i>	Follows similar method set to Subject 4

Subject	Anger Regulation (Hadith-Based)	Methods for Unstable Emotion / Stress	Remarks / Specific Practices
Subject 6	- Reciting <i>ta'awwuz</i>	- <i>Dzikir</i> (including <i>Dzikir Fatimah</i>)- <i>Supplication of Prophet Yunus- Solat Tahajjud</i>	Practices spiritual routines at night, finds emotional healing in it

Table: Application of Emotion Regulation Based on Hadith Perspectives

Theme 6: Social Support of Emotion Regulation Towards Single Mother

The final theme is regarding the social support in term of emotion regulation towards single mother. Subject 1 and 2 agreed that single mother need the method in helping them regulating the emotions independently especially the spiritual method such regulating *dzikir*. While, Subject 3 preferred moral support as to help them in regulating their emotion such as from close friends, relatives and the society. As Subject 4 has a similar opinion likewise Subject 3, Subject 5 believed that what single mothers need in order to manage their emotions effectively is for others to show genuine concern by regularly checking in on them, offering kind words, and giving comforting hugs. On the other hands, Subject 6 believed that other than supporting single mother and becoming their listener, putting effort together to bring them closer to Allah also needed in helping them regulating their emotion.

All participants emphasized the importance of social and spiritual support in managing emotions. While some valued independence through *dzikir*, others highlighted the healing power of empathy and companionship. This duality is consistent with Social Support Theory, which posits that both perceived and received support mitigate stress and enhance emotional stability.

Empirical evidence from Shamsudin et al. and Jusoh & Latada also confirms that moral and social encouragement significantly buffer emotional distress among single mothers.²⁹ Subject 6’s emphasis on support that encourages religious growth is particularly noteworthy, as it reflects an integrative approach where social connection nurtures not only emotional but also spiritual well-being—an alignment with Prophetic principles of communal care.

Subject	Type of Support Preferred	Details / Description
Subject 1	Spiritual support (self-regulation)	Using methods like <i>dzikir</i> to regulate emotions independently
Subject 2	Spiritual support (self-regulation)	Emphasized importance of <i>dzikir</i> and spiritual practices for managing emotions on their own
Subject 3	Moral/social support	Support from close friends, relatives, and society helps in regulating emotions

²⁹ Shamsudin, Roshimah; Mohd Talib, Nur Anis Hanani; Mat Akhir, Noor Shakirah; & Zali, Muhammad Aidil. “Ibu Tunggal dan Kemurungan: Tinjauan Awal Kajian-Kajian Terpilih di Nusantara [Single Motherhood and Depression: An Overview of Selected Studies from the Malay Archipelago].” *BITARA International Journal of Civilizational Studies and Human Sciences* 6, no. 4 (2023): 189–197. , Jusoh, Mohamad Nawawy and Fatmawati Latada. “The Challenges Faced by Single Mothers in Malaysia During the COVID-19 Pandemic.” *Jurnal Al-Sirat* 19, no. 1 (2021): 80–87

Subject	Type of Support Preferred	Details / Description
Subject 4	Moral/social support	Agreed with Subject 3 on the importance of external emotional support
Subject 5	Emotional and physical support	Needs others to check in regularly, offer kind words, and give comforting hugs
Subject 6	Combined support (spiritual + social)	Others should be good listeners and also help bring single mothers closer to Allah

Table: Social Support for Emotion Regulation Among Single Mothers

Analysis of Alignment with Prophetic Practices

Throughout this research, it can be concluded that several emotional regulation methods practiced by single mothers are aligned with the Prophetic tradition. These methods include reciting *ta'awwuz* and *istighfar* during moments of anger or distress, performing *solat sunat* (voluntary prayers), reciting the Qur'an, engaging in regular *dzikir* (remembrance of Allah), and placing full trust and reliance (*tawakkul*) upon Allah.

This natural alignment suggests that Islamic spirituality serves not only as a cultural framework but as an embodied form of emotional intelligence. It reinforces the argument that *Nabawi emotional regulation* can be conceptualized as a therapeutic model comparable to modern mindfulness practices the one that harmonizes emotion with faith.

These practices are in accordance with various hadiths that exemplify how Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) regulated his emotions and guided others to do the same. For instance:

Reciting *ta'awwuz* during anger: The Prophet (PBUH) said, "*If any of you becomes angry, let him say: A'udhu billāhi min al-shayṭān al-rajīm (I seek refuge with Allah from the accursed devil).*"

Performing ablution and *solat* during anger or distress: The Prophet (PBUH) said, "*Anger comes from the devil, the devil was created from fire, and fire is extinguished only with water. So if one of you becomes angry, let him perform ablution.*"

Engaging in *dzikir* and Qur'anic recitation: Allah says in the Qur'an, "*Verily, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest.*" (Surah Ar-Ra'd, 13:28). The Prophet (PBUH) himself frequently recited *dzikir* and encouraged its practice during times of emotional hardship.

Seeking forgiveness (*istighfar*): The Prophet (PBUH) said, "*By Allah, I seek Allah's forgiveness and turn to Him in repentance more than seventy times a day.*" Placing reliance on Allah (*tawakkul*): The Prophet (PBUH) said, "*If you were to rely upon Allah with the reliance He is due, He would provide for you as He provides for the birds: they go out hungry in the morning and return full in the evening.*"

Implications of the study

This study contributes to the growing body of literature that underscores the interconnection of emotional regulation, spiritual resilience, and mental health among women in marginalized social roles. The findings have several key implications:

A) For Single Mother

The combination of self-awareness with Islamic rituals such as *solat* (prayer), *dzikir* and Quranic recitation offers a sustainable and spiritually grounded approach to emotional well-being. Acknowledging that their methods and approaches are not just legitimate but also aligned with the prophetic teachings may promote greater self-efficacy and spiritual assurance in navigating the emotional strain and stress.

a) For Mental Health Practitioners

Professionals working with Muslim single mothers should use culturally and religiously appropriate treatment approaches. Including Islamic spiritual coping mechanisms in therapy frameworks can improve rapport, relevance, and receptivity. This study promotes a change away from solely clinical models of emotion regulation and toward more integrative models that consider clients' spiritual worldviews.

b) For Religious Leaders and Counsellors

In disseminating the Prophetic model of emotional intelligence, the religious leaders and counsellor such *Imam*, *Ustazah* and other faith leaders can play a crucial role through sermons, workshop and community support program. These findings provide empirical basis for developing faith-based emotional literacy programs that include psychological insights and Islamic teachings.

c) For Policy Makers and NGOs

Spiritual and emotional empowerment module should be embedded through welfare policies and NGO-led support initiatives that specifically targeting the single mothers. The psychological resilience among single mothers is able to be strengthened by teaching and educating them regarding emotion regulation that grounded in Islamic ethics and Prophetic wisdom particularly during the times of financial or social crisis.

d) For Researcher

This study opens the door to further investigation of Islamic models of emotion regulation across different demographic groups and cultural contexts. Future research could include mixed-methods designs, larger and more diverse sample sizes, or longitudinal analyses of faith-based emotional therapies.

Conclusions

This study examined the emotion regulation strategies employed by single mothers in Malaysia and assessed their alignment with Prophetic practices. Through thematic analysis of interviews with six participants, the findings revealed a dual approach to emotional regulation: personal coping mechanisms and faith-based practices rooted in Islamic teachings.

The analysis identified six key themes. First, participants generally demonstrated awareness of their emotional states and acknowledged the importance of emotion regulation in daily life, reflecting the Prophetic emphasis on mindfulness and self-control. Second, emotional instability among participants was influenced by both internal and external factors, including financial strain, social stigma, parenting burdens, and personal loss.

Third, single mothers utilized a range of strategies to manage emotions such as anger, sadness, worry, disappointment, and happiness. These included crying, walking away, engaging in leisure activities, and spiritual practices such as *solat sunat*, *dzikir*, Qur'anic recitation, and *tawakkal* (reliance on Allah). Fourth, awareness of Hadith-based emotional regulation was

limited; while two participants had no prior knowledge, the remaining four showed partial or new exposure but acknowledged its potential benefits.

Fifth, several Prophetic methods—such as taking ablution to calm anger, reciting *ta'awwuz*, practicing *dzikir*, and seeking solace through *solat* and the Qur'anic recitation were found to be practiced, either consciously or unconsciously, by participants. This suggests a natural alignment between lived experiences and Prophetic guidance. Sixth, social support emerged as an essential component of emotional regulation. Participants emphasized the need for both spiritual independence and external support from family, friends, and community members.

In conclusion, the findings underscore the interconnection between psychological resilience and spiritual coping among Muslim single mothers. The integration of Islamic principles into emotion regulation not only reflects internalized religious values but also enhances emotional well-being. This study contributes to the understanding of culturally and spiritually informed coping strategies and highlights the need for faith-sensitive approaches among mental health professionals, religious leaders, and policymakers working with Muslim women. Future research should expand on these insights with larger, more diverse samples and explore the long-term impact of Prophetic-based emotional regulation frameworks.

References

- Abu Dawood, A. A. (2008). *Sunan Abi Dawud* (Arabic–English, Translated by Nasiruddin al-Khattab). Riyadh: Darussalam Publishers.
- Abu-Raiya, H., & Pargament, K. I. (2015). Religious coping among diverse religions: Commonalities and divergences. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 7(1), 24–33. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0037652>
- Aga, R., Jaladin, M., Fernandez, J. A., Abdullah, N. A. S., & Asmawi, A. (2020). *Empowering single mothers through creative group counselling: An effective intervention to improve mental wellbeing*. Universiti Malaysia Sarawak Institutional Repository. <https://ir.unimas.my/id/eprint/46029>
- Al-Bukhari, M. I. (1997). *Sahih al-Bukhari* (Arabic–English, Translated by Muhammad Muhsin Khan). Riyadh: Darussalam Publishers.
- Al-Ghazali, Abu Hamid. (2005), *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din (The Revival of the Religious Sciences)*. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah.
- Al-Tirmidhi, M. I. (2007). *Jami' at-Tirmidhi* (Arabic–English, Translated by Abu Khaliyl). Riyadh: Darussalam Publishers.
- Aziz, M. K. N., Rabu, N., Ayub, M. S., Ismail, M., Ibrahim, K., & Abd Malib, M. (2023). *Mental well-being of single mothers: A preliminary review issues and challenges according to Islam*. Universiti Teknologi MARA Institutional Repository. <https://ir.uitm.edu.my/id/eprint/104106>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
- Che Nurafidah Che Rasli, Zarina Md Nor & Rafisah Mat Radzi, (2025), "Coping with financial stress: a thematic analysis of low-income single mothers in northern Malaysia," *Muallim Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 9, no. 4 (2025): 187–203.

- Goleman, Daniel. (2006), *Social Intelligence: The New Science of Human Relationships*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Gross, J. J. (1998). The emerging field of emotion regulation: An integrative review. *Review of General Psychology*, 2(3), 271–299. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.2.3.271>
- Gross, J. J., & Thompson, R. A. (2007). Emotion regulation: Conceptual foundations. In J. J. Gross (Ed.), *Handbook of Emotion Regulation* (pp. 3–24). Guilford Press.
- Gumiandari, Septi; Abd. Madjid; Ilman Nafi'a; Safii Safii; Abas Hidayat. (2022), "Islamic Resilience as Spiritual and Psychological Coping Strategies for Muslims during COVID-19 Pandemic." *Afkar: Jurnal Akidah dan Pemikiran Islam, Special Issue on COVID-19, 2022*, pp. 313–348.
- Ibn Kathīr, Ismā'īl bin 'Umar bin Kathīr al-Qarashī, (1419H), *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Shams al-Dīn, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1419H.
- Ibrahim, F. A., & Ghani, F. A. (2015), Relationship between the Belief System and Emotional Well-Being of Single Mothers. *Asian Social Science*, 11(27): 28–34
- Jusoh, Mohamad Nawawy and Fatmawati Latada. (2021), "The Challenges Faced by Single Mothers in Malaysia During the COVID-19 Pandemic." *Jurnal Al-Sirat* 19, no. 1 (2021): 80–87
- Lau, Y. T., Rahman, R. A., & Ismail, S. B. (2022). *Determinants of depression among Malay single mothers living in community in Perak, Malaysia. BMC Public Health*, 22(1), 936. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9036928>
- Muzalwana Abdul Talib et al., (2020), Household Income And Life Satisfaction Of Single Mothers In Malaysia, *International Journal for Studies on Children, Women, Elderly And Disabled*, Vol. 9 (2020).
- Shamsudin, R., Talib, N. A. H., Akhir, N. S. M., & Zali, M. A. (2023). Ibu tunggal dan kemurungan: Tinjauan awal kajian-kajian terpilih di Nusantara. *BITARA International Journal of Civilizational Studies and Human Sciences*, 6(2), 70–82. <https://bitarajournal.com/index.php/bitarajournal/article/view/461>
- Shamsudin, Roshimah; Mohd Talib, Nur Anis Hanani; Mat Akhir, Noor Shakirah; & Zali, Muhammad Aidil. "Ibu Tunggal dan Kemurungan: Tinjauan Awal Kajian-Kajian Terpilih di Nusantara [Single Motherhood and Depression: An Overview of Selected Studies from the Malay Archipelago]." *BITARA International Journal of Civilizational Studies and Human Sciences* 6, no. 4 (2023): 189–197
- Zakaria, S. M., Abdullah, N., Md. Akhir, N., Amin, A. S., Mohd Shukry, A. N. A., Rashid, M. R. A., & Wan Yusof, W. N. (2022) Perceptions of Quality of Life During the Pandemic: A Case Study on B40 Single Mothers. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19 (2022), 12219.
- Zakaria, S. M., Akhir, N. M., Wan Yusof, W. N., & Shukry, A. N. A. M. (2022). Hubungan antara kualiti hidup dan status kesihatan mental ibu tunggal B40 di Malaysia. *Journal of Management and Muamalah*, 12(1), 89–104. <https://spaj.ukm.my/ppppm/jpm/article/view/792>

