

# Therapeutic Experiences Of Single Mothers Through Storytelling Therapy

Zakaria Mohamad, Siti Salina Abdullah, Jasmi Abu Talib, Mazidah Mohd Dagang

**Abstract :** This study aimed to understand the therapeutic experiences of single mothers through storytelling therapy in the district of Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia. Phenomenological qualitative approach was used as a method of data collection involving eight participants who were selected through purposive sampling techniques. A total of eight group counseling sessions was carried out using a modified narrative therapy module. During the session, three interviews were conducted to gather relevant research data in addition to observation and analysis of documents from the work of the study participants. NVivo software was used to analyze and generate verbatim theme. The findings showed that the use of narrative therapy successfully provided significant therapeutic experiences for single mothers to maintain their mental health. Three main themes were generated namely the direct impact, insight and emotional impact as the essence of the therapeutic experience. The implications of this study proved that narrative therapy is useful as a method in helping single mothers.

**Keywords:** Single mother, Therapeutic experience, Storytelling therapy, Mental health

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Single mothers have one of the features that can be classified as 1) women whose husband died and continue the task of raising their children, 2) women who are divorced by her husband and given custody of the children, 3) women who are not given maintenance by the husband to support her life and children, 4) women who are in the process of divorce (this may take a long time), 5) women with ill husband who needed intensive care and unable to provide maintenance, and 6) women raising children of another without the help from her husband. (Terengganu Family Development Foundation, 2009). The process of adjusting to the new situation when losing a spouse either through death or divorce is a difficult situation for single mothers (Hamidah, 2008). Among the problems faced by single mothers are emotional disorders, custody and socialization of the children, as well as problems with the community around them (Wan Ibrahim & Zainab, 2010). In addition, single mothers also experience loneliness, lost, hopeless, low self-esteem and life without meaning (Kotwal & Prabhakar, 2009). The situation becomes more stressful when there are ex-husbands who fail to provide maintenance for child support on top of the long and complicated procedures of divorce process, matrimonial property claim, custody of the children and others (Hamidah, 2008). Single mothers in Terengganu are also facing the same reality and if they assess their lives negatively, it would also impact their emotions negatively. This condition can cause anxiety, sadness, lack of focus and child neglect. It is feared that these problems could affect the mental health of single mothers including depression (Peden et al., 2005, Zainab, 2014).

Various approaches have been used to help single mothers, among them are individual counseling and group counseling techniques. Doyle (1997) for example, used counseling group technique to help single mothers handle the emotional crisis impacted from the psychological problems. Similarly, Roghayeh Hashemi & Kobra Darvishzadeh (2016) in their study used Group Schema Therapy to reduce stress symptoms in women. However, to date there is still no narrative therapy techniques used to help single mothers, especially in Malaysian context. Based on the above studies, the researchers took steps to conduct a study to test the effectiveness of narrative therapy towards single mothers. Effective use of this therapy has been proven in the West and given a good impact on clients receiving treatment with this therapy (Douge, 2010; Akhbar Mohammadi et al., 2013; Parisa Rahmni 2011). Nevertheless this study has not been conducted in Malaysia and following that, this study attempts to explore the therapeutic experience of single mothers through storytelling therapy. Narrative therapy method is one of the approaches in Expressive Therapies that can be used to help single mothers manage their emotions. In the study of Brogdon (2011), narrative therapy is when something or someone tells his/her own story through poetry, lyrics composition, journals, letters, and bibilo-counseling (Synder, 1997; Malchiodi, 2005). Storytelling therapy method is beneficial and highly effective for this study as it can cure and treat an individual whereby when she shares her story with someone else, she can reshape the meaning of her unique life experiences (Pearce, 1996). According to Glazer & Marcum (2003) narrative therapy could provide an opportunity for the individual to grow through challenging concerns with her thoughts, which is one way of going through the 'reframing' experience of transition from one content to another. In addition, the method of narrative therapy can also stimulate thinking and understanding of an individual (Pearce, 1996). Hedberg & Westby (1993) state that complex stories can be generated when the thematic content presented stimulus in accordance with previous experiences and interests of the individual.

## 2. METHODS

This study used a phenomenological design aimed to understand the thoughts and feelings experienced by single mothers. Phenomenology emphasizes how individuals

- Zakaria Mohamad, currently is an Assoc Professor at Universiti Malaysia Terengganu, specializing in Guidance and Counselling. His email: [zek@umt.edu.my](mailto:zek@umt.edu.my).
- Siti Salina Abdullah, is a senior lecturer in Counselling at Universiti Malaysia Terengganu. Her email: [ctsalina@umt.edu.my](mailto:ctsalina@umt.edu.my)
- Jasmi Abu Talib is a senior lecturer at Universiti Malaysia Terengganu specializing in Career Counselling. His email: [jasbatriasyia2@umt.edu.my](mailto:jasbatriasyia2@umt.edu.my)
- Mazidah M Dagang is a senior lecturer in Counselling at Universiti Malaysia Terengganu. Email: [mazidah@umt.edu.my](mailto:mazidah@umt.edu.my).

interpret and give meaning to things or events that they have experienced. In addition, the phenomenology is also suitable when the study of affective, emotional and human experiences are involved (Meriam, 2009). This study seeks to understand how single mothers interpret and give meaning to the therapeutic experience during the group storytelling therapy. A total of 24 study participants underwent storytelling therapy in eight group sessions. These study participants were selected using purposive sampling based on the number of features that have been established by researchers which are divorced or widowed single mothers, 20 years to 60 years of age and can read. The study was carried out in Kuala Terengganu district. Data for this study were collected from two series of interviews with 4 single mothers engaged in group storytelling therapy. Each interview took about 60 minutes. Interviews conducted in this study were based on in-depth interviews using a model based phenomenological interviews developed by Seidman (1998). Besides the interviews, observation resources in group therapy storytelling sessions and document analysis were also gathered. The use of multiple sources of data collection is a multiple source triangulation techniques for strengthening data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The data obtained were analyzed through several stages. Firstly, data analyses were performed simultaneously with the process of data collection. The second stage of data analysis in this phenomenological based study followed the procedures by Giorgi & Giorgi (Giorgi & Giorgi 2003). The interview findings were obtained through verbatim transcription of the selected interviews in which the themes were identified. Validity and reliability of the study were conducted through a triangulation process, a long term study, peer review and audit trail. In this study, data triangulation was carried out through three series of in-depth interviews, observation and analysis of documents such as journal writing, paintings, participants' handicrafts and researcher's field notes. Peer review were also employed to confirm the findings (Merriam 2001). The audit trail was ran after all other processes were completed. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) audit trail is an important category that needs to be taken into account by any qualitative researchers.

### 3. RESULTS

After going through 8 sessions of narrative therapy, participants of the study have gained various therapeutic experiences. All these experiences were encountered through group sessions, document analysis and interviews. The findings resulted in three themes namely, direct impact, insight and emotional impact.

#### 3.1 Direct Effects

##### 3.1.1 Increase knowledge

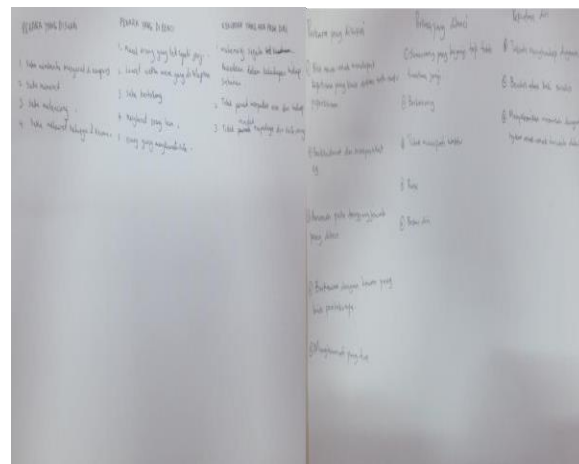
Sharing the experiences of other group members can provide information to single mothers such as to manage their time well as indicated in the interview below:

"I can share and increase knowledge through sharing experiences with other members in terms of how to manage the time" (P1/TRG/T01)

Figure 2 below shows the analysis of self-identification documents of the group members for the purpose of establishing trust between them. From the group sharing,

study participants gained more knowledge especially in terms of time management as shared by other members of the group through the 'To know is to love' activity as stated below:

Figure 2: Activity 'To know is to love'



(PT/KTRG/S1/02)

(PT/KTRG/S1/05)

##### 3.1.2 Reduce stress

Single mothers often experienced stress when having to assume a new status in her life. However, after attending narrative therapy counseling sessions, single mothers felt relieved and managed to reduce stress since they were able to express their feelings about the divorce. This can be explained by the revelation of the study participants in the following interview:

"In addition, I feel relieved from the pressure as I am able to express my experiences and what I have been through in my life" (P1/TRG/T01)

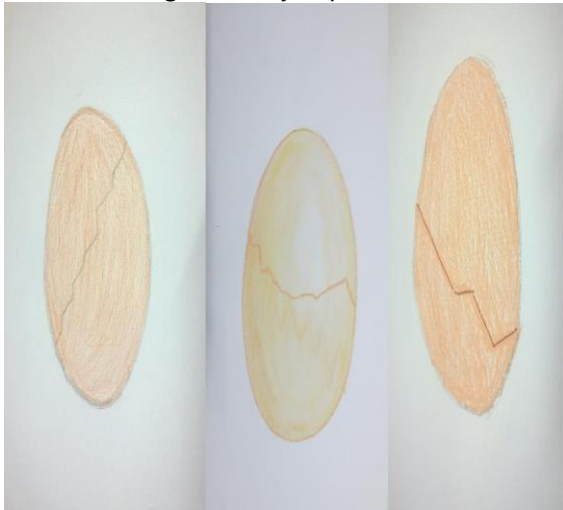
Study participants also symbolized their divorce experiences through document analysis with a picture of a cracked egg while being single mothers. The drawing of an egg that cracked revealed their own emotions. In addition, the form of the cracks have a unique meaning to the participants. The statement below shows the emotions portrayed by the study participants:

"I drew the shape of the crack in the middle which meant that I did not have any financial sources, I had to start my own side business even though I was not healthy. I felt hurt and pained with what had happened to me with my ex-husband. Only God knows how I felt and there were times when I was sad and felt like crying. I felt relieved when I cry. Now, since I came to these narrative therapy sessions I felt less depressed and anxious. It was satisfying to share with others, I could see where and how I can improve myself." (PT/ TRG/S5/02)

The egg cracks in the picture were associated to the divorce they experienced. Document analysis showed the crack was drawn in the middle of the egg which signified that the single mothers have no financial sources when they were divorced. This was because they depended heavily on the ex-husband while being married. This situation initiated them to create a side business to sustain and raise their children although faced with health constraints. Study

participants also felt painful and sad with what happened with their ex-husbands. When the study participants attended group narrative therapy counseling sessions with their friends, they were relieved since sharing with the group members helped reduced their stress and anxiety. Figure 3 below shows the results of the sharing experiences of participants through 'My Experience' activity with the drawing of a cracked egg based on their experiences.

**Figure 3: My Experience**



(PT/KTRG/S5/02)

(PT/KNRS/S5/10)

(PT/KTRG/S5/05)

### 3.1.3 Self-awareness

After following the narrative therapy, single mothers realized that this group storytelling therapy session helped them become positive and motivated, which aided them to think before taking any actions on any particular problems. As stated by the study participants through the interview below:

"Group sharing enables me to be a positive and motivated person. Even though we experienced different problems, it would help me to think and act on a problem in the future." (P2/NRS/T02)

### 3.1.4 Expressing feelings

Narrative therapy counseling session can help single mothers to express any concerns in terms of dealing with stress, numbness and others. Single mothers felt that they now have someone to turn to and by drawing and telling stories, they could express their feelings as stated by the study participants through the interview below:

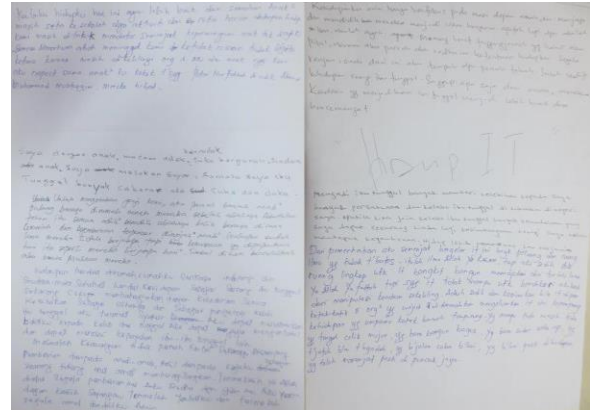
"This group sharing helps when I have problems as I know how to handle pressure, numbness and others. By way of drawing and telling stories, I can express my dissatisfactions since I have no one to turn to after being a single mother. Now I have to deal with all the problems and I have to be both a father and mother to my children. This narrative therapy is a good thing because I have the opportunity to share all my problems" (P3/NRS/T03)

Study participants stated that through Connecting Stories activity, they can express their feelings in life as single

mothers who carry a new role and responsibilities. This is revealed in the statements below:

"I used to be married to a husband who managed everything even though I think I too provided a lot of support. I was just backing up for the children. But now, when I assumed new duties as a single mother, I found that it is not that easy." (PT/NRS/S3 / 08)

**Figure 4** shows the expression of feelings done by the study participants. This expression of feelings through storytelling therapy gives a therapeutic experience to participants. **Figure 4: Connecting Stories Activity**



### 3.1.7 Self improvement

Single mothers had the opportunities to get the views of other participants in the storytelling therapy sessions. From the group sharing, study participants had a more positive development which new inputs were gained to improve themselves. This could be proven by the statements expressed by the study participants below:

"Through group sharing, I can get the opinions of other group members. This meant that despite the different problems I experienced from other group members, I could use their inputs to improve myself" (P4/TRG/T04)

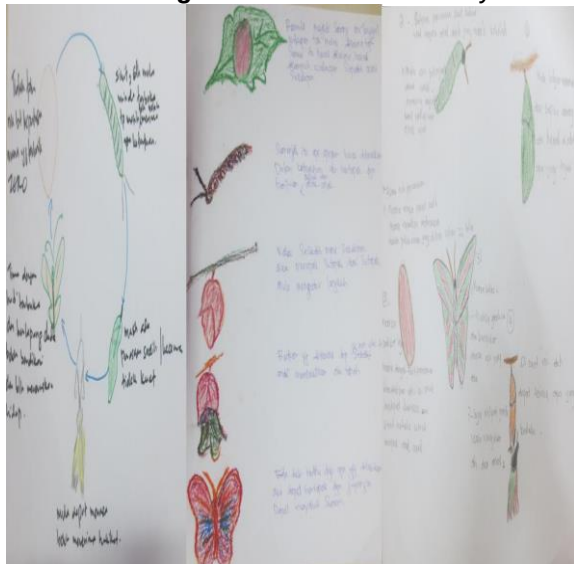
Through Me and You group sharing activity, the participants produced drawings of butterflies using the metaphor of "a little dragonfly that wants to develop into a butterfly." It was an analogy of a life-phase of study participants from the early stage of divorce until the acceptance and independence. The participants adopted the results of this activity to continue moving forward and improving themselves as stated in the following statement:

"Starting from the egg, I did not know how to make a decision - nothing. Numb. I really cannot think. In the larva stage, I was a bit open minded but still unable to accept the fact. Then, came the stage of cocoon. This time there was still a feeling of disappointment, but it was no longer strong. Out of the cocoon, I started to accept the fact. Finally becoming a butterfly meant that I had accepted what happened with open heart and an open mind, became independent and moved on with life." (PT/NRS/S4/09)

In the early stages of divorce, study participants felt empty, did not know how to make a decision, and felt agitated for

not being able to accept the reality. Apart from that, the divorce led them to feel sad, disappointed and not strong enough to go through life with the children. Once out of the cocoon, the life cycle of participants changed where they now accepted life as a single mother who would be head of the family to their children. Finally an adult butterfly symbolized their current life, where they accepted what had happened openly and freely. They became independent and able to move on with life with their children. This meant that the participants have acknowledged what happened as a positive aspect in life.

Figure 5: Me and You Activity



(PT/KNRS/S4/09)  
(PT/KNRS/S4/08)

(PT/KTRG/S4/02)

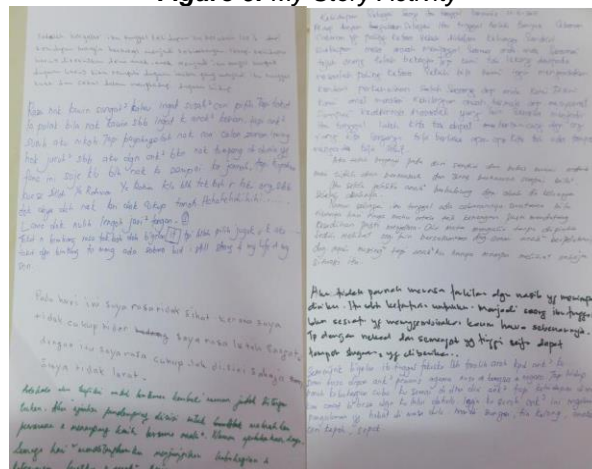
3.1.8 Open minded

After going through narrative therapy counseling sessions, the single mothers realized that the activities done were able to open their minds and escape from anxiety. The statement below described this:

"After following the narrative therapy session, I became more open minded. Before this I just only mingled with single mothers, so I was less open minded. This narrative therapy had also opened my heart and kept my mind off any feelings of anxiety "(P4/TRG/T04).

Figure 6 below shows the document analysis results of life built story of single mothers. This activity had opened the minds of participants in positive aspects to continue life as single mothers.

Figure 6: My Story Activity



(PT/KNRS/S3/14)  
(PT/KNRS/S3/08)

3.2 Wisdom

3.2.1 Accepting facts

Narrative therapy sessions helped the participants to accept the fact that they have to overcome the difficulties in life without their ex-husbands. This is stated in the interview below:

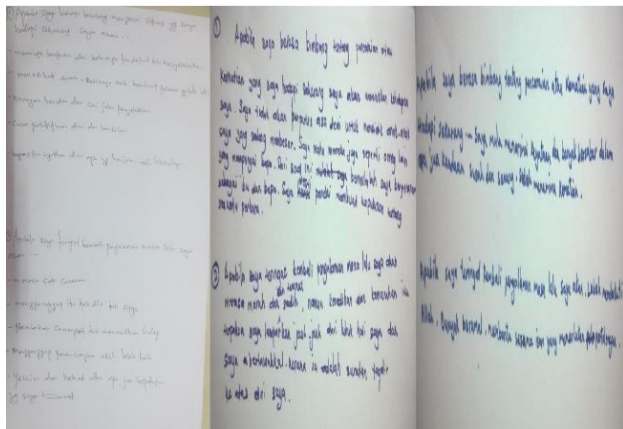
"Narrative therapy slot that affected me was the life cycle of a butterfly. While in the cocoon, I felt trapped and not free. Once out of the cocoon, I began to learn to accept my life after divorce, though in sadness. I learned what it meant to face the difficulties of life without a husband. "(P1/TRG/T01)

3.2.2 Self Reflection

Study participants were aware that in the event of a divorce, family ties would be broken because children often compared their parents. They would assess the situation whether the divorce was their fault or vice versa. The study participants notified that:

"When there was a divorce, I saw my own family broken up and the children were often comparing me and his father. When I was at peace the thought that there might be something wrong with me did cross my mind. I tried to figure out whether I caused the divorce. "(P2/NRS/T02)

The result from My Changes document analysis in Figure 7 below shows the expression of participants in assessing the plans selected to make changes and self-check.

**Figure 7: My Changes**

(PT/KNRS/S6/11)  
 (PT/KTRG/S6/02)  
 (PT/KTRG/S6/04)

### 3.2.3 Internal Strength

Participants were considered to possess an inner strength whereby they should strive to live so as not to be at the same level. Internal strength was very important in building single mothers' self-confidence as reflected in the statements below:

"I cannot remain at the same level or stay static. Whether I like it or not, I need to have the best added value for myself. Being a single mother is not just about me, but also being a source of inspiration for my children. It means that I am a motivator to myself and my children to be able to cope with humility, lack self-confidence and so on" (P3/NRS/T03)

### 3.2.4 Self-Reliance

Therapeutic experiences resulted from narrative therapy had indeed affected the study participants in terms of experiences encountered while being single mothers. After the divorce, the study participants lived a new life by making changes to themselves. Self-changes existed when single mothers learned to be independent in the upbringing of their children as described below:

"Narrative therapy slot that impacted me was when drawing a cat. I chose it because of the similarity of myself with the cat. I was physically lean after the divorce as food was scarce. In contrast, there were changes in me after a few years of being a single mother and I felt more independent." (P4/TRG/T04)

The statement below shows that participants experienced changes whereby they gained the awareness that they can now live life freely as a single mother rather than a stressful one with a husband. Study participants can also live independently after a divorce and with enough sustenance in raising children. This is shared as follows:

"There are many entrepreneur projects among single mothers. Only I didn't want to participate. This meant that money was readily available and

many courses were also offered. Compared to the time when I had a husband, I was always stressed. Stressed that there was never enough money even though I had a business. But now I had my business and the money was never short. That's the difference." (PT/TRG/Q2/04)

**Figure 8: My Life Story**

(PT/KTRG/S2/04)  
 (PT/KNRS/S2/13)

(PT/KNRS/S2/10)

## 3.3 Emotional Effects

### 3.3.1 Emotional Relief

After following the narrative therapy, study participants were relieved for the chances to express themselves with other group members. Through this group sharing, single mothers did not feel alone when facing problems since they had friends around them, as illustrated in the interview below:

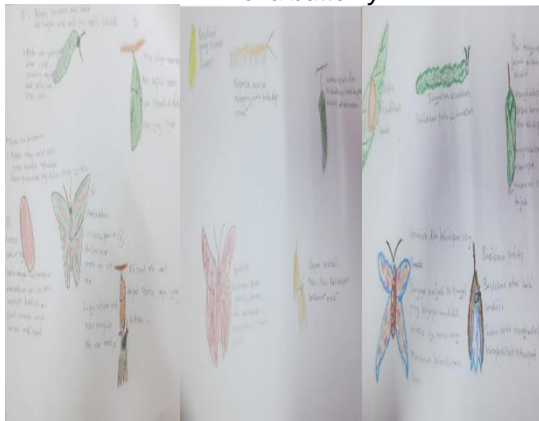
"I felt relieved to be able to communicate with other group members rather than being at home. Through this, I learned how to act when faced with problems and shared them with friends. This meant that I was not alone in facing this problem as my friends were there for me. In addition, I could take it as a guidance and lesson." (P1/TRG/T01)

The statement below shows a clear picture of the study participants who began to accept the reality with an open mind after the divorce and led them feeling free.

"The marriage that was built for 22 years had to be dissolved as nothing more could be done. At the time of the divorce, I did some serious thinking because I did not have a job. But after the divorce, I felt a sense of relief as there was a way for me to get help from the Social Welfare Department. After some time, while in the caterpillar stage I started looking for a job. Now I am able to accept the divorce, I feel free, happy and grateful." (PTKTRG/S04/02)

In consequent, the development of the life cycle of a butterfly had indeed presented a profound impact on the study participants because the life cycle of the butterfly symbolized themselves in the early stages of divorce until they came to gain emotional stability.

**Figure 9: Document analysis results on the life-cycle of a butterfly**



(PT/KTRG/S4/02)  
(PT/KTRG/S4/05)

(PT/KTRG/S4/01)

(PT/KNRS/S8/09)  
(PT/KNRS/S8/10)

(PT/KNRS/S8/11)

**3.3.3 Forgetting problems**

Narrative therapy counseling sessions provided positive emotional effects in dealing with stress and allowed participants to temporarily forget their problems, as noted by the study participant below:

"Through this narrative therapy sessions I could release my stress which meant that I could forget about whatever that was burdening me for a while. I came feeling relaxed, loved and peaceful"  
(P3/NRS/T03)

The therapeutic experience through narrative therapy could be clearly illustrated through the analysis of self-reflection documents as shown in the figure below. This portrayed that the group sharing sessions conducted could provide many benefits and positive self-developments to the participants. Among them were; helped reduce sadness of the situation experienced and provided relief in dealing with their situations such as financial, social and children. The statement from the participant said it all as shown below:

"From my point of view through this narrative therapy, single mothers get to alleviate their grief and heartache. The sharing between my friends and I can relieve all the problems in terms of financial, social and the children"  
(MF/NRS/S8/12)

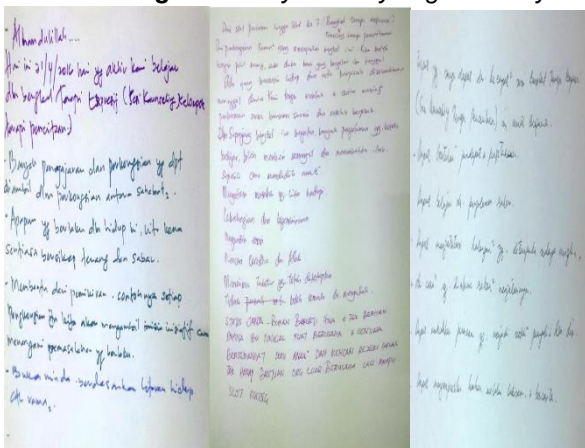
**3.3.2 Satisfaction**

The group sharing resulted in the participants and other group members to rid of stress after following this narrative therapy session. This is because the study participants could forget about the problems for a while and be able to express their feelings with members of other groups. Study participants also get the satisfaction and did not feel alone in facing the problem as stated in the interview below:

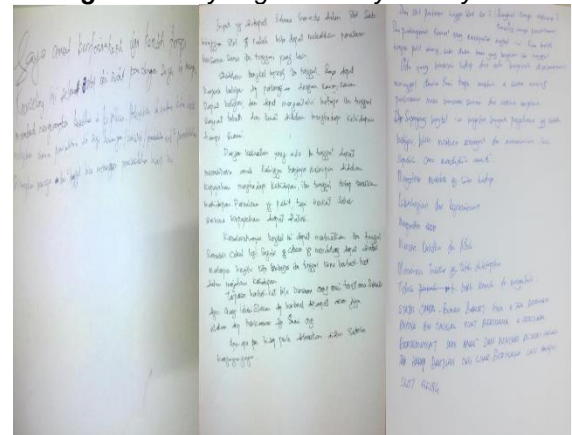
"After following this narrative therapy session, I felt that it could get rid of the stress because for a while there I could forget about all the problems. I got to express my feelings as did other group members"  
(P2/NRS/T02)

Figure 10 below shows the results of therapeutic experiences of study participants during storytelling group therapy sessions. The findings of group sharing conducted revealed that participants had gained a lot of input in which they could improve each other's knowledge. Apart from that, study participants also noted that the group sharing sessions also helped in their thinking such as what initiatives should be taken to address the problems faced. The figure below shows the group sharing therapeutic experiences:

**Figure 10: My Journey/Flight Activity**



**Figure 11: My Flight/Journey Activity**



(PT/KNRS/S8/12)  
(PT/KNRS/S8/11)

(PT/KNRS/S8/08)

**3.3.4 Release Stress**

Results from sharing experiences of single mothers through storytelling therapy sessions can rid them of stress in finding the financial resources to raise their children. This is stated in the interview by the study participant:

"I no longer felt depressed now. I did not think about financial resources. So far, I managed to maintain things. In contrast to the early stages of my divorce, I felt depressed because of the need to find financial resources to support my children"  
(P4/TRG/T04)

While the statement below revealed the lack of pressure felt by study participants as they gained the strength to bounce back after a divorce for the sake of bringing up their children and the freedom in life as a single mother:

"I used to depend on others ..... after a while, like two to three months I felt I have gained the strength to stand again and raise the children on my own. This meant that I have to pick all the pieces myself. I thought could I solve the problem alone, including the problems of my children, myself and my neighbors? Now, all that did not matter anymore, I felt free, I never thought about all that anymore"(PT/TRG/S4/14)

#### 4. DISCUSSIONS

Therapeutic experience is very important in group counseling sessions. This is because effective group counseling is viewed through sharing issues, building good relationship and practicing the skills learned in life, all that can contribute to self-development. Having said that, the therapeutic experience is proven essential to the relationships between counselor and client in the helping process of achieving the objectives and goals of the counseling services conducted and strength building within the client. Counseling service is one of the approaches used to help single mothers to manage their daily lives. Through this narrative therapy groups, single mothers can grow to become more positive. The study found that the counseling approaches using drawing, coloring, storytelling, collage making are accepted openly as they also get to express their emotions in an effective way. This is in line with Hughes' study (2010) which stated that creativity generated through the use of art materials is how the individuals portray their pent up emotions. Thus, whenever there is a therapeutic experience, clients can share their problems without any restrictions or obstacles in the group sharing conducted. The narrative therapy carried out in this study focused on how single mothers think and evaluate their concerns and situations experienced either divorced or widowed. Single mothers expressed their emotions through drawing, coloring, storytelling and so on. With such activities, single mothers were free to share their experiences while carrying the status. Indirectly, they can also express themselves in the group. This finding is supported by Zuraidah Abdul Rahman (1999) who stated that by sharing experiences in a group, individuals gained more positive self-development in terms of relationships with other individuals. According to Natalie (2007) the usage of art is more efficient when it is applied to individuals who found it hard to express their emotions or feelings through verbal communication. Hence, in order to produce individuals with positive self-development, therapeutic experience should be taken into account when conducting a counseling process. Therapeutic experience of an effective group counseling sessions must have elements such as catharsis (Yalom,1995). This is to achieve the goal of a group counseling session conducted. The findings recorded that this group sharing is very effective as a group member can help provide relief to single mothers, express problems associated with emotions and also reduce stress. This is in line with Yalom (1995) that group therapy was used as a platform to express their deepest feelings when they feel comfortable with the group,

and felt relieved when they can do it together. Moreover, this finding is also supported by Douge (2010) who stated that the use of narrative therapy can provide relief to an individual as they can change their self-perceptions through the stories shared. In addition, the findings also indicated that this group sharing could improve knowledge, motivate oneself and create self-awareness. This is similar with the study by Yalom (1995) which stated that interpersonal learning is the most important element in the counseling group. Henceforth, good interpersonal relationships in a group can help create insights and reduce negative attitudes that existed before. This finding is also supported by Russo, Vernam and Wolbert (2006) who explained that narrative therapy could develop a cognitive assessment to rebuild their world view. As a result, it is apparent that these single mothers have gained therapeutic experiences through storytelling therapy. Experiences encountered by single mothers after undergoing storytelling therapy exhibited a positive change in them. The results of these sharing experiences focused more on the hardships faced concerning the difficulties in raising children. With the narrative therapy, together they shared their life experiences that were commonly faced by the single mothers. This group sharing gave a positive impact to them, where they felt relieved with every emotional expression through the activities of each slot. This is consistent with the opinions of Sakaki et al., (2007) that related this narrative therapy as a positive treatment in the healing process and in understanding the world of an individual. Additionally, Parisa Rahmani & Naeimeh Moheb (2010) also described narrative therapy as a process in helping an individual to express things and explore life experiences. All in all, effective therapeutic experiences could be seen through the narrative therapy conducted for it provided space and opportunity for single mothers to express their emotions and concerns that they experienced. Narrative therapy results by way of coloring, drawing, storytelling and so on proved that they were free to express their emotions without any restrictions. These results demonstrated that narrative therapy could also reduce the pressure when facing problems. This is concurrent with Heather & Jeremy (2010) who stated that participation in artistic activities had the potential to contribute towards the reduction of stress and depression. Consequently, it is clear that the use of narrative therapy presented positive treatment effects in the relationship between the counselor and the client as it helped the single mothers in addressing the problems faced.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

This study discussed the therapeutic experiences of single mothers through storytelling therapy in the district of Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia. Phenomenological qualitative approach was used as a method of data collection involving eight participants who were selected through purposive sampling techniques. A total of eight group counseling sessions was carried out using a modified narrative therapy module. During the session, three interviews were conducted to gather relevant research data in addition to observation and analysis of documents from the work of the study participants. NVivo software was used to analyze and generate verbatim theme. The findings showed that the use of narrative therapy successfully provided significant

therapeutic experiences for single mothers to maintain their mental health. Three main themes were generated namely the direct impact, insight and emotional impact as the essence of the therapeutic experience. In addition to the storytelling therapy, the study also found that other counseling approaches using drawing, coloring, collage making are accepted openly as they also get to express their emotions in an effective way. This is in line with Hughes' study (2010) which stated that creativity generated through the use of art materials is how the individuals portray their pent up emotions. Thus, whenever there is a therapeutic experience, clients can share their problems without any restrictions or obstacles in the group sharing conducted.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Akbar Mohammadi, Roghayeh Sohrabib, Golnaz Adalatzadeh Aghdam (2013). Effect of narrative therapy on enhancing of couples intimacy. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 84 (1770-1772).
- [2] Brogdon N., L. (2011). *The Use of Expressive Arts by Social Workers as an Intervention with Children*. California: State University.
- [3] Corey, G. (2003). *Theory and practice of group counselling* (6th ed.). Australia: Thompson Brooke Cole.
- [4] *Ekonomi Malaysia (PERKEM IV)*, Jilid 1, 324-336.
- [5] Douge, J. (2010). Scrapbooking: An Application of Narrative Therapy. *Social Behavioral Sciences* (p. 684-687): ELSEVIER.
- [6] Doyle, C.P (1997), A project submitted to the school of graduate studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of master education, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland. *Parenting Through crisis: Group Counseling With Single Mothers*.
- [7] Glazer, H.R, & Marcum, D. (2003). Issues in child development: Expressing grief through storytelling. *Journal of Humanistic Counseling Education and Development*. Vol.42.
- [8] Giorgi, A., & Giorgi, B. (2003). Phenomenology in Qualitative Psychology: A Practical Guide to Research Methods (pp. 25-50). London: UK. Sage.
- [9] Hamidah Ab Rahman. (2008). Faktor Penyumbang kepada Masalah Keluarga Tunggal dan Penceraian: Kajian Kes di Johor Darul Takzim. *Isu-isu Sosial*. Selangor: Univision Press.
- [10] Haney, H, & Leibsohn, J. (2001). Basic counselling responses in groups: A multimedia learning system for the helping professions. Australia: Thompson Brooke Cole.
- [11] Heather, L. S. & Jeremy, N. (2010). The connection between art, healing, and public health: A review of current literature. *American Journal of Public Health*, 100, 2: 254-263.
- [12] Hedberg, N.L., & Westby, C.E. (1993). *Analyzing storytelling skills: Theory to practice*. Tucson, AZ: Communication Skills Builders.
- [13] Heo, H. (2006). Inquiry on storytelling from the web-based environmental learning environment. Association for Educational Communications and Technology. Retrieved Mac 20, 2015 from Ebsco Host Database.
- [14] Hughes, E.G. (2010). Art Therapy as A Healing Tool for Sub-Fertile Women. *Journal Med Humanities*. 31, 27-36.
- [15] Kotwal, N., & Prabhakar, B. (2009). Problem Faced by Single Mothers. *Journal of Social Science*, 21(3), 197-204.
- [16] Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- [17] Malchiodi, C. A. (2005). *Expressive Art Therapies*. New York, NY: Guilford Publications. p1-45.
- [18] Mei-Wei Chen & Rybak, C.J. (2004). *Group leadership skills: Interpersonal process in group counselling and therapy*. London: Thompson Brooks Cole.
- [19] McAdams, D.P. (1993). *The stories we live by: Personal myths and the making of the self*. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc.
- [20] Merriam, S. B. (2001). *Qualitative research and case study application in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- [21] Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- [22] Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis* (2nd ed.). London, UK: Sage.
- [23] Natalie, R. (2007). Dalam John Sommers-Flanagan: *The Development and Evolution of Person-Centered Expressive Art Therapy: A Conversation with Natalie Rogers*. *Journal of Counseling and Development*. Vol 85 (1).
- [24] Parisa Rahmani & Naeimeh Moheb (2010). The Effectiveness of Clay Therapy and Narrative
- [25] Peden, A. R., Rayens, M, K., Hall, L. A. & Grant, E. (2005). Testing an Intervention to Reduce Negative Thinking, Depressive Symptoms and Chronic Stressors in Low- Income Single Mothers. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*. 37: 3, 268-274.
- Therapy An Anxiety of Pre-School Children: A Comparative Study. *Social and Behavioral Sciences* (p. 23-27): ELSEVIER.
- Pearce, S.S. (1996). *Flash of insight: Metaphor and narrative in therapy*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- [26] Rohayu Roddin, Noor Sharipah Sultan Sidi, Yusmarwati, Maziana & Abdul Rasid Abdul
- [27] Razzaq. (2011). Poverty Alleviation Among Single Mother in Malaysia: Building Enterpreneurship Capacity. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*. Vol. 2. No. 17.
- [28] Roghayeh Hashemi & Kobra Darvishzadeh (2016), Effectiveness of group schema therapy in reducing the symptoms of major depression in a sample of women. *Asian Social Science*; Vol. 12, No 6.
- [29] Russo, M. F., Vernam J., Wolbert A. (2006). *Sandplay and Storytelling: Social Constructivism and Cognitive Development in Child Counseling*. *The Art in Psychotherapy* (p.229-239): ELSEVIER.
- [30] Sakaki T., Ji Y., & Ramirez Z.S., (2007). Clinical Application of Color Inkblots in Therapeutic Storytelling. *The Art in Psychotherapy* (p. 208-215): ELSEVIER.
- [31] Seidman, E. (1998). *Interviewing as Qualitative Research*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- [32] Synder, B.A. (1997). *Expressive art therapy techniques: Healing the soul through creativity*.



- Journal of Humanistic Education and Development, 36 (2) p.74-83.
- [33] Unit Perancangan Ekonomi Negeri Terengganu, (2011). Statistik Ibu-ibu tunggal mengikut Dun dan Parlimen di setiap Daerah di Terengganu
- [34] Wan Ibrahim Wan Ahmad & Zainab Ismail. (2010). Kualiti Hidup dan Harapan Masa Depan Ibu Tunggal Melayu Muslim di Pantai Timur Malaysia. *Islamiyyat*. 32 (173-202).
- [35] Yalom, I. (1995). *Theory and practice of group psychotherapy*. New York: Basic Books.
- [36] Terengganu Family Development Foundation (2009). Retrieved March 23, 2015, from <http://www.ypkt.gov.my/rakyat/program/program-cakna-ibu-tunggal>
- [37] Zainab.I, Wan Ibrahim. W.I, Asyraf HAR (2014). Counselling Services in Muslim Communal Life in Malaysia. *Middle - East Journal of Scientific Research*. 20:11. 1445-1448.
- [38] Zuraidah Abdul Rahman. (1999). *Introduction to Group Counselling trans. (Pengenalan Kaunseling Kelompok)*. Selangor: Penerbit IBS Buku Sdn.Bhd.