STRESS & COPING ACROSS LIFE CYCLE

INTRODUCTION
- Why family?
- Functions of family
- Different types of family
- Family life stages
- Challenges across life stages
  - Normal and expected
  - Unique
  - Unexpected

“STRESS”
The confusion created when one’s mind overrides the body’s basic desire to choke the living daylights out of somebody who desperately needs it!
WHAT IS A FAMILY?
- Various definitions
  - Social, cultural, legal, geographical influences
  - Differences in structure & functions
  - Life style?
- Family formation
- Newly wed
- Married without children
- Married with children
  - Different stages according to the age of the 1st child
- Empty nest
- The boomerang generation
- Retirement & The golden years

MATE SELECTION PROCESS

BASIC FAMILY FUNCTIONS
1. Legalized sexual relationship
2. Reproductive function
3. Socialization (care, love, protection, education, values inculcation etc)
4. Provision of support for members (esp. emotional support)
5. Social role & status enactment
LEGALIZED SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP

- Sexual relationships between married partners are legalized, blessed by religion & cultural norms ➔ High marital quality = happy, stable, satisfactory marriage
- Stress may arise due to problematic sexual relationships, previous “dark experiences”, sexual transmitted diseases, infidelity, abnormal sexual behaviour

REPRODUCTIVE FUNCTION

- To have children is expected in most marriages (fulfilling self, familial & cultural expectations)
- Stress due to: infertility, too many, too few, gender of children, unplanned pregnancy, unwanted children, complications & diseases

STRESSOR AMONGST INFERTILE FAMILIES

- Lasker & Borg (1995), infertility is a stigmatized stressor as society belittled infertile couples
- Couples resort to adopting children or trying using technological intervention
- Depend a lot on closed family understanding and societal acceptance.
- Education amongst society at large
- Intervention using natural pregnancy techniques
SOCIALIZATION
- Socializing the children into the immediate & broader environment
- Through education, values inculcation, role-modelling, done with love, care, protection, guidance, reinforcement, reward & appropriate discipline
- Stress: previous experience that may influence parenting style & behaviour, KAP, other contextual factors

PROVISION OF SUPPORT
- Unconditional psychological, social & emotional support can be obtained from family (one does not divorce (or divorced by) his family of origin)
- Married & family life broaden the network of social support beyond one's family ➔ in-laws, friends of families & in-laws, extended family members, relatives etc

ROLE & SOCIAL STATUS ENACTMENT
- To be married & have one’s own family of procreation is fulfilling socio-cultural expectation
- You are “somebody” with the new roles husband/wife; father/mother/ uncle/aunt etc (the status that follows)
- Gain social respects; avoid stigmatization (i.e “andartu, bujang terlajak”)
FAMILY DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES
- Family during early marriage
- Family during child-bearing
- Family during child-rearing
- Family with school-aged children
- Family with adolescents
- Family with adult children (empty-nest)
- Retirement & Ageing /Golden age
Tasks during Early stage
- Daily, weekly, monthly, yearly
- Expected stressor:

Tasks during intermediate stage
- Daily, weekly, monthly, yearly
- Expected stressor:

Tasks during later stage
- Daily, weekly, monthly, yearly
- Expected stressor:

- Developmental tasks of both adults & children within the family contexts (Who, What, When, How, Why, Why Not, How much)
- Tasks involving other systems surrounding the family:
  - Extended family, neighbours, work, schools, religion, culture, economics, legal, medical, etc
- Direct & indirect interactions at any point in life may cause stress
- Stressors may be common to many, some are very specific
- Both structural & functional factors may lead to stressful experience for individual and family

- Basic daily activities, changes that individual & family have to go through (some are normative, almost every family goes through it, expected, non-chronic)
- Life is more complicated, various micro & macro influences
- Expected & unexpected stressors
- For normative stressors, capability to adapt by individual & family members is very crucial to determine the outcome of such challenges
MARRIED LIFE AS A STRESSOR

- Structural & functional problems (role identity, economic, job-related, household tasks, religious factor, boundary ambiguity {who does what} etc)
- Wrong start, wrong purpose, too high/low or unrealistic expectations, poor adjustments, interference of 3rd parties
- Man versus Woman = roles & responsibilities
- Marital conflict (in many areas, poor communication, poor problem solving skills, KAP)

ECOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE FAMILY
**PARENTING AS A STRESSOR**
- Physical stressor
- Psychological stressor
- Financial stressor
- Transitional stressor (as a new parent, while the children are around, when they leave)
  - 1st time parent, preschool children, adolescent child, launching stage, grandparenting

**DUAL CAREER FAMILY STRESSOR**
- Childcare problems
- Financial burden paying for childcare
- Fatigue and health problem due to role overload
- Poor relation with spouse and children
- Children’s behavior and health problems
- Home is not properly managed
- Social blame (working mother caused social problems)
- Demands from work (work-family vs family-work)

**DUAL CAREER FAMILIES**
- Sharon Nickols (in McKenry & Price, 1994), working women experience higher stress levels than men because of traditional housework roles being burdened on women.
- Women experienced role overload (WHY?)
COPING AMONGST DUAL CAREER FAMILIES

- Skinner & McCubbin developed the DECS to identify coping strategies among dual career couples.
- DECS – Dual Earner Coping Scale.
- Consisting of 58 items measuring various coping strategies for couples and family.

DUAL CAREER COUPLE/FAMILY STRESSOR

- Time is the “most precious commodity” (Lagerfeld, 1998, p. 60).
- Fraenkel & Wilson (2000) suggest that the trend towards spending more hours at work has been the single most powerful factor leading to a sense of diminished time for couple relationships.

The phenomenon of spending more time at work and less time for leisure, called the 'leisure squeeze,' has been identified by other researchers as well (Schor, 1991; Leete & Schor, 1994).

DUAL CAREER & MARITAL QUALITY

- The advent of the information age has placed dual-career couples on “the fast track” (Papp, 2000). (Fast in everything? Fast food, fast life, fast to divorce?)

- The ability to sustain an intimate relationship, build a life together, & solve problems together requires a certain amount and quality of time together (Fraenkel & Wilson, 2000).

- This “time famine” (Galinsky, 1996) commonly experienced by dual-career partners, eventually affects marital quality.
“TWO HUSBANDS AND NO WIFE”
Both parents are absent from the home during the day and each struggles to balance career objectives while maintaining a family.
Rice lists 4 challenges confronted by dual career families:
(a) balancing career & familial responsibilities;
(b) attempting to provide mutual support while at the same time managing competitive feelings;
(c) dealing with a finite amount of time in light of multiple role demands
(d) preserving one’s identity as a “person,” as distinct from “spouse.”

Dual-career couples are “pressured to:
do more,
be more,
know more,
think more,
talk more,
relate more-
and do all this as quickly as possible.
The complaint, “There’s never enough time” is heard so often in therapists’ offices it might well be the theme song of the 21st century” (Papp, 2000, p. 6).
STRESSORS AMONGST DIVORCED FAMILY

- Financial problems as husband not paying alimony & child support
- Divorcee & children are shunned upon, alienated & lack social support
- Physical & mental health problems
- Children feel sad, despised & make comparisons of their families with others
- Role overload (one-parent)
- Difficulty in accepting divorce
- Children’s educations are negatively affected
- Children prone to negative behavior
- Custody war, co-parenting issue

STRESSORS AMONGST DIVORCED FAMILY

- Demo & Ganong (in McKenry & Price, 1994), divorced women experienced higher level of stress compared to divorced men due to economic factor
- Women have difficulty to move on in life and to forget the divorce as they are more committed in marriage compared to men
- Crisis due to divorce is only short term as conflict prior to divorce makes couple more accepting [redheat]
- Effect on children is more serious compared to effect on couple (however, adults’ well-being may influence the well-being of their children)

TYPES OF PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED BY DIVORCED CHILDREN

Although many children from divorced families will never show signs of severe psychopathology, a substantive body of research indicates that divorce does place children at an increased risk for three different types of adjustment difficulties:

1. Externalizing problems,
2. Internalizing problems,
3. Cognitive deficits

Hetherington and colleagues (1978) found that children from divorced families to demonstrate more disobedient & aggressive behavior than peers from two-parent families.

Divorced children are at risk for externalizing problems, particularly boys (Camera & Resnick, 1988; Forehand, McCombs, Wierson, Brody, & Fauber, 1990).

Divorced children were found to be:
- significantly more dependent
- noncompliant, and unpopular with peers
- had a history of lower grades
- LOWER school achievement scores than nondivorced children (Amato & Keith, 1991).

Wolfinger’s research is based on the National Survey of Families & Households, (big study, thousands of respondents, over 30 years)

Wolfinger research suggests that if one spouse comes from divorced parents, the couple may be up to twice as likely to divorce. Spouses who are both children of divorced parents are three times more likely to divorce as couples who both hail from intact families.

One reason children from divorced families get divorced more often is because they have a tendency to marry as teenagers, Wolfinger reports, adding the older you are when you marry, the less likely you are to get divorced.

+++ learning the pattern of conflict resolution by ending the relationship.

WIDOWED FAMILY STRESSORS

- Collen Murray (in McKenry & Price, 1994), grief due to unexpected death is more stressful compared to anticipated death such as cancer patient
- High stress among ‘stigmatized patients such as AIDS & suicidal
- Children reaction & acceptance depend on quality of relationship with the deceased (father or mother)
STRESSOR AMONG FAMILY WITH SPECIAL CHILDREN

- ‘Chronic sorrow’ (Bright & Hayward, 1997) to reflect grief and stress experienced by family
- Lifelong stress as child’s need changes developmentally & can be VERY challenging
- More serious contribute more distress
- Adaptation through various interventions
- Acceptance by couple is a first step

COPING WITH DISABLED CHILDREN

(SOURCE: TAANILA ET AL, 2002)

- Coping with the disabled children is a highly individualized process; and some families may never adjust fully to this event (Koller et al. 1992; Gibson, 1995).
- Coping strategies used (Taanila et al, 2002)
  - Information and acceptance
  - Good familial cooperation
  - Social support
  - Emotional activities and openness
  - Personal resources

Differences between the high and low coping families:
(1) Parents’ initial experiences
(2) Parents’ attitudes and personal characteristics
(3) Parent’s values and individual activities
(4) Parent’s participation in their child’s care and housework
(5) Parents’ experiences of social support
STRESSORS AMONG FAMILY CARING FOR SICK MEMBERS

- More stressful if illness is a 'stigma' that entail negative connotation
- Systemic – member’s illness is a family illness.
- Unmanaged family members are more distress
- Beside ‘bedridden’ patient, family caring for mental patient are more stressful compared to physical ailment [Campbell & Gavazi (in McKenry & Price, 1994)]

SINGLE PARENTS STRESSOR

- Due to death or divorce
- Role changes – ‘solo caregiver’
- Economic stressor – standard of living
- Changes in life style and social activities
- The need for social support

STEP AND BLENDED FAMILY STRESSORS

- Children and adult experienced lost
- Fantasize that biological parent reunite
- Substitute mother/father – children not ready
- ‘The old luggage’ phenomenon
- Adaptation towards ‘instant children’
- Knowing that biological parent still alive
- Combination of two new families with different life cycle
**BURR & KLEIN (1994): FAMILY STRESS & COPING**

Studied 6 family stressors
- Bankrupt family
- Disabled institutionalized children
- Adolescent with conduct problem
- Muscular dystrophy child
- Infertile family
- Housewife going to work

**7 COPING STRATEGIES (BURR & KLEIN, 1994)**

- Cognitive
- Emotion
- Relationship enhancement
- Communication
- Community (social support)
- Spiritual or religiosity
- Self development

**STRESSOR AND COPING STRATEGIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family stressor</th>
<th>Effective coping strategies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bankrupt</td>
<td>Spiritual, Relationship, Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special children (I)</td>
<td>Relationship, Self dev., Communication</td>
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<td>Special children (H)</td>
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<td>Infertile</td>
<td>Relationship, Communication, Self dev.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Problem adolescent</td>
<td>Community, Spiritual, Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working housewife</td>
<td>Spiritual, Relationship, Communication</td>
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McCubbin (1987) SUGGESTION FOR FAMILY STRESS RESEARCH

- When the stressor first emerged and how?
- Normative or non-normative stressor?
- Effect of stressor on family members and family?
- Other stressors?
- Coping strategies employed by family?
- Was it effective?
- Support system available and usage?

URGGGHHHHHHH – good luck~