

# Marital Happiness of Married Visually Disabled Persons: An Intrinsic Case Study

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This paper aims to explore the sources of marital happiness among married visually disabled persons. The driving force of this study is the lack of theoretical and scholarly insights regarding the happiness of visually disabled spouses especially in Malaysia. This study will apply the qualitative methodology which utilizes the case study design (Stake, 1995). One respondent was interviewed in this investigation. Eight themes that best represent marital happiness of visually disabled person were constructed: responsibility, acceptance, self-efficacy, achievements, access to transportation, spirituality, sense of togetherness, and financial stability. Through this research, proper understanding of marital happiness among married visually disabled persons could be obtained hence, serving as the guideline of policy making to ensure well-being in such population. In this sense, the study of marital happiness among such population is also crucial to expand the plethora of knowledge in the field of positive psychology.

*Keywords:* marital happiness, marriage, visually disabled persons

This paper would like to begin by stating that most people in the world would like to get married, including persons with disabilities. In the process of defining marriage, it is a rather complicated concept and thus, subjective representation of marriage varies between individuals. In general, marriage can be conceptualized as a legal contract that binds two adult partners, who initiate the sharing of economic resources, as well as engage in sexual interactions (Knox & Schacht, 2010). A married couple or spouse will also most likely to give birth to children (Strong, DeVault, & Cohen, 2008). In terms of factors that influence individuals' decision to get married, it includes love, personal satisfaction, or even just to avoid loneliness (Knox & Schacht, 2010), or to fulfill several motives such as spiritual motives, biological motives, and socio-psychological motives (Jamiah Manap et al., 2013).

A more specific viewpoint of marriage can be traced in a paper written by Girgis, Robert, and Ryan (2012). According to Girgis et al. (2012), there are two separate views regarding marriage, namely, the "conjugal view" and the "revisionist view". The conjugal viewpoint conceptualized marriage as the unity between two opposite sex adults who make long-lasting and a special commitment to each other of the type that is innate, inseparably fulfilled by mutual child bearing and child rearing. Furthermore, the conjugal view also perceived marriage as a situation which partners secured, consummate, and polish their unity by acts of loyalty (i.e. unity as a reproductive unit) which in terms promote the welfare and well-being of the children (Girgis et al., 2012).

On the other hand, the revisionist view perceived marriage as the unity of two adults, regardless of the same sex or different sexes, where spouses indulge themselves in romantic relationships and caring for each other, as well as sharing the challenges and benefits of domestic life. In other words, the conjugal viewpoint lies in the traditional form of marriage, whereas the revisionist view stands on the modern society where gay and lesbian couples are taken into considerations (Girgis et al., 2012). Please take note that in the context of Malaysian society, the revisionist viewpoint of marriage,

or even engaging in marriage in such manner is considered a taboo because it is strictly prohibited by many religions in Malaysia.

It is undeniable that there are a plethora amount of research regarding marriage (e.g. Almagor, 1991; Asoodeh, Khalili, Daneshpour, & Lavasani, 2010; Boyce, Wood, & Ferguson, 2016; Carstensen, Levenson, & Gotman, 1995; Dogan, Tugut, & Golbasi, 2013; Esere, Yeyeodu, & Oladun, 2014; Frech & Williams, 2007; Heinz, Wu, Witkiewitz, Epstein, & Preston, 2009; Indrawati & Fauziah, 2012; Jamiah Manap et al., 2013; Lavner & Bradbury, 2012; Lee & Ono, 2008; Levine, 2015; Loewenstein, Krishnamurti, Kopsic, & McDonald, 2015; Myrskylä & Margolis, 2014; Pan & Ye, 2012; Wade, 2004; Williams, 2010). However, these research does not include persons with visual disabilities. In regards to investigations related to visual disabilities and marriage, most investigations only focused on parenting experiences, adaptation, and challenges (e.g. Rosenblum, Hong, & Harris, 2009; Shackelford, 2004) but, these investigations do not explore marital happiness among visually disabled people.

The only investigations related to happiness among disabled people in Malaysia are those conducted by Ferlis (2012, 2014) and Teoh and Ferlis (2016). Ferlis (2012) has conducted a study to explore meaningful happiness among persons with physical disability and discovered that it is characterized by social interaction, support, social justice, and the quality of the self. Similarly, Ferlis (2014) discovered that there are four dimensions of happiness among physically disabled persons (i.e. spirituality, emotion, self-efficacy, and satisfaction with accessibility). As for the investigation carried out by Teoh & Ferlis (2016), there are three main sources of happiness among visually disabled adolescents, which is self-efficacy, support, and spirituality. However, the investigations by Ferlis (2012, 2014) and Teoh and Ferlis (2016) does not address the issue of marital happiness among visually disabled people.

In addition, in the field of positive psychology, several theories have dominated the construct of happiness. Diener (1984) has argued that the components

of happiness consist of high positive affect, lower negative affect and life satisfaction. Another important theory in regards to happiness is the authentic happiness theory by Seligman (2002). According to Seligman, there are three components of authentic happiness (i.e. positive emotions, engagement, and meaning). Besides the two theories presented, there is another interesting theory regarding happiness which is the broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001). According to the broaden-and-build theory, positive emotions is a very important domain in the pursuit of happiness with the argument that through positive emotions, individuals' thoughts and actions will be expanded, thus providing individuals with long-lasting resources in promoting personal and interpersonal growth. Elaborating on the broaden-and-build theory, Fredrickson and Lossada (2005) also stated that unlike negative emotions which narrow individual's thoughts and actions towards certain situations, positive emotions widen the scope of thoughts and actions.

Consequently, Fredrickson and Lossada (2005) has argued that positivity must be coupled with the appropriate amount of negativity. Finalizing on the broaden-and-build theory, In 2013, Fredrickson in her article Updated Thinking on Positive Ratios has finally concluded that a relevant ratio of positive emotions to negative emotions is 3:1. The ratio indicates that in order for a person to flourish, a person must have 3 positive affect and one negative affect. Note that too much positivity will backfire, an inverted-U effect, according to Fredrickson (2013). The key point is, a little bit of negativity is important to keep us moving, however, that negativity must be countered by positivity. In summary, Fredrickson (2013) has stated that "negativity dominates positivity in intensity, positivity dominates negativity in frequency." (p.819). All the theories of happiness presented indeed have provided significant insight into the construct of happiness, but, all the theories do not provide specific explanations on marriage and do not cater to the needs of persons with disabilities.

To sum up, research regarding marital happiness are still in its embryonic stage, with limited to no theories and investigations that satisfactorily address the issue of marital happiness among persons with visual disabilities. Additionally, Kirshbaum and Olkin (2002) have stated that most investigations regarding parents with disability have only focused on seeking problems in the families. Consequently, the purpose of this paper is to explore the sources of marital happiness of visually disabled persons.

## Method

### Design

This paper utilized the qualitative research design. According to Flick (2007), qualitative research design is an empirical study utilizing texts as the primary source of data and allows the researcher to explore broad domains in the real life. To be specific, this investigation has applied the intrinsic case study design (Stake, 1995). Stake does not provide an exact definition of case study as it might varies across different disciplines. However, according to Stake, a case in general can be conceptualized as a system with boundaries, which directs attention to it as an object rather than a process. In

addition, Stake (1995) suggested that the intrinsic case study design is applied when the investigator has a particular interest in a case and focuses solely on the case itself. Hence, this paper sought to seek understanding of the sources of marital happiness of visually disabled persons.

### Respondent

A total of one respondent from Sabah has been recruited in this investigation. Criteria for sample selection were: 1) Must be a visually disabled person, 2) registered under Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat Malaysia (the Department of Social Welfare Malaysia), 3) must be married and stays married at the time of investigation. Before proceeding, the paper would like to provide some introduction to the respondent recruited.

Mr. X is blind. He is currently 49 years old and working as a massage practitioner. His wife is also a blind person. Mr. X currently has two children (both female, and do not possess any visual disabilities). Mr. X reported having normal vision during his childhood. However, Mr. X stated that he was struck with a high fever at 15 years old which resulted in his visual disability.

### Data Collection

Data has been collected through in-depth interview sessions with respondent, which mainly focused on respondent's life stories or events or better known as narrative interviews (Flick, 2007). Interview sessions were recorded using a digital audio recorder in order to assist in the transcription process. Follow up interviews were also carried out which were conducted using a mobile phone. In the beginning of the interview, respondent was asked to answer a standard question (i.e. "could you tell me something about yourself?"). Follow-up questions to probe responses were asked as the interview progressed.

### Data Analysis

Stake (1995, p.71) has stated that analysis of data in a case study research is the process of "giving meaning to first impressions as well as to final compilations" through direct interpretation or aggregation of instances. Since the research gathered data mainly from interviews, the most appropriate method of analysis is through direct interpretation. Hence, data collected were analyzed using the qualitative content analysis suggested by Schilling (2006):

1. Transferring data from audio recordings into raw data through transcription.
2. Summarizing the raw data by paraphrasing.
3. Breaks down the paraphrased data into simple statements (categorizing).
4. Forming themes from the categories developed.

This study applied the method of analyzing qualitative data suggested by Schilling (2006) mainly because the second stage (paraphrasing) provides clearer and a more organized data set for the purpose of further analysis (i.e. development of categories and themes).

## Results

Based on the analysis carried out on the interviews with Mr. X, eight themes were constructed related to the sources of marital happiness (i.e. responsibility, acceptance, self-efficacy, achievements, spirituality, access to transportation, sense of togetherness, and financial stability). The theme of responsibilities was further divided into two sub-themes or categories (i.e. responsibilities in fulfilling basic needs and responsibilities in providing guidance). The theme acceptance was also divided into two sub-themes (i.e. acceptance by family members and acceptance by society). Each theme will be discussed in the subsequent sections.

### Responsibility

In this investigation, the theme of responsibility refers to the completion of tasks relevant to each spouse (i.e. husband or wife). Based on the interview conducted with Mr. X, tasks or duties to be more relevant, are based on gender roles. Two overarching themes represented the theme of responsibility. The first sub-theme is responsibilities in fulfilling basic needs which include food, clothes, sex, and finance. In the interview with Mr. X, he stressed that the main duties of a wife is to prepare meals and also carry out household chores such as washing clothes. As for the husband, Mr X stated that his main responsibility is to be the breadwinner for the family (i.e. bringing income to the family to provide basic needs). As for sexual needs, Mr. X stated that it is the duty of both the husband and wife. In addition, Mr. X has also stated that it is the duty of the husband and wife to attend to the needs of their children which includes food, clothes, education, and other demands of the children. The following were articulated by Mr. X during the interview:

*“Ah itu memang yang isteri la tu makan semua tu lah. Memang itu memang tanggungjawab kita punya isterilah. Makan minum kita, pakaian kita, semua, itu semua tanggungjawab isteri. Jadi kita laki-laki, tanggungjawabnya mencari apa tu rezeki apa untuk perbelanjaan anu lah. Untuk kita punya isterilah. Ah memang kebahagiaan lah. Memang kita laki-laki memang perlu layan isterilah. Itu yang paling membawa kebahagiaan. Layanan isteri kita kepada suami, daripada zahir pada makan kita punya anu la apa, batin lah (respondent laugh). Ah layanan kepada anak-anak tu apa ni, kita bilang layan anak-anak ni macam tu juga lah. Sentiasa kita layan deorang sentiasa beri perhatian kepada anak-anak lah. Itu yang paling penting sama kitalah. Apa yang anak-anak perlukan, kita kena sentiasa layan deoranglah. Contohnya dari segi daripada makan minum, pelajarannya, daripada pakaiannya, apa yang keperluan dialah apa dia mau yang penting, yang ada kaitan dengan keperluan diri sendiri dia lah. Itu perlu untuk kebahagiaan anak-anak.”*

Another category in the theme of responsibility is providing guidance. According to Mr. X, both him and his wife emphasized on providing guidance to their children especially in terms of interaction with peers and older persons. He stated that him and his wife always remind their children to be respectful to others. Furthermore, he and his wife also highlight the

importance of providing guidance to their children regarding religion. Mr. X said that as parents, they should become a good example for their children when it comes to religion especially carrying out their responsibilities to God as Muslims especially completing the five time prayers per day. The following were articulated by Mr. X:

*“Uh. Kita memangla, kita tekankan untuk berkomunikasi dengan anak-anak, sentiasa nasihat, sentiasa diberi peringatan lah. Terutama dari kita segi agama lah. Agama, segi itu lah yang kita kasi tekankanlah. Daripada segi daripada pergaulan dengan kawan-kawan, layanan kepada kawan semua, dan kita mau sifat hormat orang tua lah. Uh. Sebab kebahagiaan. Sebab kita sebagai ibu bapa dialah. Kita sebagai ibu bapa kita sentiasa kasi tunjuk yang baguslah (short pause) kepada anak-anak tu lah. Terutama contoh, dari kita buat amalan-amalan macam kalau orang Islam kan, Islam ni memang ada sembahyang lima waktu. Ertinya, lima waktu ni, dalam satu hari tu lima kali sembahyang lah. Jadi kita sebagai orang tua kita bagi contoh sama deorang sembahyang sebaik-baiknyalah. Jadi kita anak-anak pun kita pun kalau kita anak-anak kita sama-sama bawa dia apabila sampai waktu solat kalau boleh kalau dia masih di rumah kita bawa dia berjemaah bersama-sama. Itu membawa kebahagiaan kita dalam keluarga lah.”*

### Acceptance

The second source of marital happiness is acceptance. Acceptance in this investigation refers to non-discriminatory attitude from others towards the married visually disabled couples. This theme was divided into two sub-themes (i.e. acceptance from family members and acceptance from society).

The sub-theme acceptance from family members was constructed when Mr. X was telling stories about how he approached his wife's family to propose the marriage. Mr. X stated that despite his visual disability, his wife's family did not turn down his marriage proposal. Mr. X has also stated that during his marriage proposal, his wife's father is so excited about it and he received good treatments from his wife's family. Other than that, Mr. X said that he is happy that family members (in-laws or own family) visit them from time to time. Mr. X argued that for some people, it is hard for them to visit their relatives but, in his case, he is very grateful that his family members took the initiative to visit them despite their visual disability as if they are not being side-lined. In addition, he also stated that he is happy that his family are willing to eat whatever they cook and are not grossed out by their cooking.

*“Memang keluarga kita macam kita ni tidak nampak, deorang datang pergi tempat kita memang kita rasa memang kita gembira lah. Seolah-olah kita tidak disisihkan lah. Ah dia masih ingat kita walaupun sekurang-kurangnya deorang masih ingat pergi rumah kita lah. Memang gembiralah. Kita yang didatangi pergi rumah tu kan. Kadang-kadang, ada sesetengah orang, macam kita ini kadang-kadang walaupun kalau keluarga kadang-kadang deorang susah pergi rumah. Ah salah satu lagi deorang kita ni tidak nampak kadang-kadang deorang tidak makan masakan kita. Ah deorang peduli sama kita. Ah tapi saya punya daripada keluarga isteri*

*dan keluarga saya sendiri Alhamdulillah la. Tiada yang pernah begitulah. Memang kita rasa tu cukup happy lah bah. Kita happy sebab keluarga kita menerima kita punya layanan kita, apa masakan kita pun deorang makan semua, deorang tidak pilih pilih apa saja kita masak deorang makan bah, jadi kita pun rasa happy, gembira, ertinya deorang tidak sisihkan kita dan tidak geli sama kita bah.”*

The next category in the sub-theme of acceptance is acceptance from society. This sub-theme generally covers societal attitude towards persons with visual disabilities, or perhaps even persons with disabilities in general. In Mr. X case, he stated that people around him often questioned his and his wife’s abilities to take care of their own family. Regarding this matter, Mr. X elaborated that people often see persons with visual disabilities being guided by their family members when walking. Consequently, they viewed that persons with visual disabilities are not independent and they questioned Mr. X’s and his Wife’s ability to take care of their own family. Other than that, he also stated that people around him often questioned their abilities in performing child-rearing tasks such as feeding and bathing their children. Occasionally, when Mr. X and his wife are walking on their own, people around him will shout towards them asking them to be careful of drains. Mr. X said that he felt pressured by such behaviors because he already knows the structure of the place they are navigating. Hence, this theme was developed because if people surrounding persons with visual disabilities would understand how they manage their life and change their negative perceptions, it will make life less stressful for the visually disabled.

*“Cuma dia bilang, deorang hairanlah. Kalau yang orang-orang kampung ni kalau macam kita kahwin sama, sama-sama tak nampak ni kadang-kadang deorang ni, macam hairan macam mana boleh hidup. Macam deorang tanya, jadi macam mana lah kahwin ni dia bilang kalau mau, kalau tiada orang yang nampak. Kamu-kamu sendiri macam mana, boleh hidup ka? Boleh! (respondent stress the statement). Ya. Sebab kami sudah kena ajar berdikari di pusat, latihan semua. Ah jadi kami pandai sudah la. Biasa sudah. Ah. Sebab mungkin deorang hairan dia tengok kita kahwin sama-sama tidak nampak, habis tidak pernah berkahwin itu yang sama-sama tidak nampak bah. Ah jadi mungkin mereka hairan macam mana deorang kahwin sedangkan tidak nampak. Sedang pun macam mana boleh hidup? Deorang ni pun orang tua yang kasi makan kasi minum. Jadi mungkin maksudnya menyusahkanlah. Kalau yang satu jadi dua sedangkan tidak nampak itu keluarga. Jadi kita kena kasi terangkanlah pada deoranglah. Kasi jelaslah. Kadang-kadang deorang hairan sama kita jalan, kita sikit-sikit berjalan dari rumah pun deorang teriak sudah jatuh-jatuh, ah itu kadang-kadang kita pun, itu tekanan sama kitalah. Kalau macam kita sikit-sikit berjalan dia tegur oi jatuh jaga-jaga parit ah itu kadang-kadang kita pun emosi kita pun tidak senang bah. Padahal sudah tahu. Kita dapat kesan mana itu parit itu anu. Macam mengganggu kita punya emosi itu bah tidak bagus.”*

## Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is the third theme in regards to the sources of marital happiness among visually disabled persons. Self-efficacy in this paper is defined as the feeling of competency in performing various tasks in relation to personal skills. Note that in the previous section, the paper has discussed about acceptance from society. Mr. X often receives questions in regard to their abilities in taking care of the family and child-rearing. This theme was constructed mainly based on Mr. X responses to those questions. When questioned, Mr. X responded that they are able to live their life as a normal person and even take care of the family because they have been taught various skills to help them function independently (e.g. mobility, farming, and cooking).

*“Ow masa saya di latihan tu, contoh macam dia kasi latihan untuk mula-mula, dia ajar kita cara berjalan, di Sandakan pusat tu. Di Sungai Manila Taman Cahaya. Ah dia ajar kita jalan, uh apa ni, berkebun, (researcher interrupts “”ui ada juga berkebun”). Ada, tanam sayur-sayur begitu, uh menebas semua, termasuklah memasak-masak sendiri lah. Kena ajar semua.”*

## Achievements

Achievements will be the fourth source of marital happiness. Achievements is defined in this investigation as a sense of accomplishment. This theme might be related to self-efficacy as a person needs to feel that they are capable in order to know what they have achieved or vice versa. Mr. X reported sense of achievements because he believed that they have succeeded in raising their children without assistance from others, providing education to their children, as well as being able to treat their children just like non-disabled parents.

*“Ah biasanya keluarga ni, mula-mula kalau kita tu, kalau kesan dia ni, dia paling deorang gembira ni kalau sudah anak kita membesar sudah. Ah. Deorang nampak kita membesar, kerana kita tiada siapa mau bantu kita selain suami isteri sendiri saja. Anak kita sampai boleh pergi belajar, sampailah kepada sekolah menengah. Ah. Di situ deorang betul-betul gembira dan cukup bangga sama kita walaupun kita tidak nampak tapi kita boleh buat anak kita macam orang yang nampak, yang normal. Itulah. Anak-anak kita ni boleh juga boleh belajar macam orang lain.”*

## Spirituality

Spirituality in this investigation is defined as a sense of connectedness to a greater power as well as the attainment of the meaning of life. In the accounts of Mr. X, he stated that by having faith towards his religion, he feels that no matter what problems arise, he is able to overcome those problems with ease as if God is helping him. As mentioned earlier one of the responsibility of parents is to provide spiritual or religious guidance to children. Through the action of guidance, Mr. X stated that he is happy and proud of himself to succeed in guiding his family to stay close with God. Moreover, Mr. X also believes that families who do not possess religious guidance will most likely be unhappy as everything that happens in this world is decided by God which include

wealth, health, and happiness. The following was stated by Mr X:

*“Ada. Memang ada. Kalau kita kalau agama ni makin kita punya setiap kita punya bilang orang agama ni, setiap bila orang pegang dengan agama ni, kita sentiasa macam hati kita rasa lapang saja. Kita bahagia sebab, macam selesai semua masalah kita tu. Apa pun masalah kita bilang orang kita sentiasa berada dengan Allah itu, memang macam masalah kita tu macam terlepas semua bah. Ah. Itu diri saya sendirilah. Tidak tau la kalau yang orang lainlah. Yang saya pernah alami lah inilah. Sebab kalau kebahagiaan, isteri pun solat, anak-anak pun solat, kita rasa bahagia kita nampak anak-anak kita sentiasa tidak apa itu, tidak melepaskan apa yang ditentukan kepada kita oleh Allah S.A.W. Bah. Saya rasa kalau kita tiada agama, kebahagiaan ni memang, jarang orang bahagia kalau tiada didikan agama atau tiada agama ni. Sebab kita ni, kita kena dicipta oleh Allah, kita dilahirkan di dunia ni untuk menyembah Allah. Tapi kalau kita tidak sentiasa ingat Allah, kebahagiaan kita semua akan kurang. Sebab apapun diturunkan semua ini, semua oleh Tuhan. Jadi sama kita tidak pentingkan dalam hidup kita dalam keluarga kita, memang tidak akan bahagia orang bilang. Semua rezeki, rahmat semua diturunkan jadi kita minta perlindungan sama dia kita mohon doa sama dia.”*

### Access to Transportation

Access to transportation refers to the availability of transportation whether personal or public and it could be obtained or utilized without difficulties. This theme was developed when Mr. X was talking about transportation. Before his children reached the legal driving age and obtained a driving license, the only way Mr. X and his spouse navigated from places to places was to call and wait for someone to drive them around. However, after his children have reached the legal driving age and are able to drive, the family does not need to wait for others to fetch them as personal transportation is now available. Although Mr X stated that access to transportation does not bring happiness, he stated that by having their own transportation, getting from places to places has gotten easier. In addition, he also stated that he enjoys riding in their own transport because there are no outsiders in the car. The fact that he stated enjoying having his personal transportation is sufficient proof that access to transportation is one of the sources of marital happiness for the visually disabled.

*“Uh. Pengangkutan tiada jugalah. Tapi sekurang-kurangnya untuk memberikan kesenangan kepada kita sekeluarga. Ah senang lah apa urusan kita, lepas tu bilang orang apa-apa urusan kita senanglah. Tidak payah lagi panggil-panggil tidak payah lagi tunggu-tunggu lah. Ah kita rasa macam bahagia lah kita. Kita rasa ada kebahagiaan la. Kita sama-sama dengan keluarga kan, dengan anak-anak satu kereta, kebersamaan tu bah, kita rasa macam ada kegembiraan dalam satu kereta tu satu keluarga saja bah. Macam kita berasa happy kita sama anak-anak berjalan tu. Itu kesannya la tu lah.”*

### Togetherness

Togetherness in this study refers to quality time spent together among family members. Mr. X stated that he is happy when the whole family sit down and eat together. Another situation that Mr. X reported of feeling happy is times when the whole family engage in group prayers which is known as “sembahyang berjemaah” or “solat berjemaah”. When the researcher ask why engagement in such activities (i.e. eating together and pray together) could bring happiness, Mr. X responded that by engaging in such activities, children spend less time with their friends which will most likely prevent them from getting involved in bad or unsavory activities. Also, he stated that by spending time together, children will realize that family is the most important thing in life.

*“Jadi kita anak-anak pun kita pun kalau kita anak-anak kita sama-sama bawa dia apabila sampai waktu solat kalau boleh kalau dia masih di rumah kita bawa dia berjemaah bersama-sama. Itu membawa kebahagiaan kita dalam keluarga lah. Makan pun macam tu jugak. Kita makan sama-sama. Jangan asing-asing kalau anak di rumah. Sebab apa boleh bawa kebahagiaan begitu. Sebab kurang untuk deorang berkawan yang diluar bah. Kurang deorang pergi macam pergi jumpa kawan, ataupun selalu kadang-kadang anak-anak ni, dia banyak buat aktiviti di luar jadi bila kita sama-sama begitu, kita sentiasa layan begitu, kadang-kadang deorang di luar ini rasa macam di luar ni bukan perkara yang penting bah. Deorang jarang terjebak dengan bidang luar yang tidak bagus di luar bah. Jadi itu yang kita titik beratkan agama tu.”*

### Financial Stability

The final theme that has been developed in this investigation is financial stability. This study defined financial stability as having adequate or sufficient income in order to fulfill basic needs of the family which includes food, clothes, etc. Sufficient amount of funds are also needed to pay for installments. In the interview conducted, Mr. X stated that having a stable source of income is very important as without proper income, it is difficult to provide basic needs to his wife and children. He also stated that without a stable income, it would be close to impossible to send their children to school and pay for their car installments. MR. X also argued that sometimes, most conflicts or complications in marriage are caused by lack of financial power. The following were sample of verbatim by Mr X:

*“Yala. Kalau tiada kemahiran macam mana kita cari duit kan. Ah kita bilang bukan tidak penting dalam kebahagiaan tapi memang penting la duit ni masa kita hidup ni memang seharian kita ni pentinglah. Contoh kadang-kadang ah contohlah kan ok, sebab apa penting, kita apa perlu pun mesti guna duit. Jadi kalau tiada duit, anu anak-anak pun mau minta duit, isteri pun minta duit, macam mana kita mau bagi kalau tiada duit. Ha itu kadang-kadang yang membawa kebahagiaan juga. Sebab kalau kita tidak bekerja, macam mana kita menyara anak-anak kasi anak-anak belajar, bayar kereta itu ini, macam mana kau mau perlu itu ini lagi. Jadi kalau tiada duit macam mana kita boleh anu. Itu jadi kadang-kadang tiada kebahagiaan sudah. Kadang-kadang jadi pertengkaran. Memang susah sebab*

*sekarang apa yang perlu semua duit bah. Tiada yang tidak perlu duit. Semua perlu duit. Jadi sebagai ibu bapa sebagai kita sebagai laki-laki sebagai ibu bapa ni tanggungjawab kita la bah cari duit lah untuk perbelanjaan anak pergi sekolah, bayar kereta, semua itu perlu duit. Temberanglah kalau orang cakap duit ini tidak penting.”*

## Discussion

The purpose of this investigation is to explore the sources of marital happiness of married visually disabled persons. In conjunction with this objective, eight themes were constructed regarding the sources of marital happiness based on the in-depth interview with Mr. X. The first theme, responsibility refers to tasks or duties needed to be completed or carried out by parents which includes basic needs and guidance. In addition, responsibility in the accounts of Mr X are mostly divided based on gender roles. For example, the main duties of a wife is to prepare meals for the family as well as carrying out household chores. As for the husband, the main duty is to bring income to the family. Another duty under the category of basic needs is sexual interaction which demands reciprocal commitment from both the husband and wife. As for the category of guidance, it involves both parents to guide their children in daily interactions as well as religious practices.

Bagchandani (2014) has discovered that one of the impact of visual disabilities on marriage is it brings changes in the relationship dynamics. Changes in relationship dynamics in Bagchandani's research refers to adaptation needed to be implemented when a spouse acquired a visual disability and needed to quit usual tasks that the particular spouse used to perform and the other spouse will need to take over the tasks which might create some strain in the relationship. For instance, Joseph needed to quit driving because he acquired a visual disability due to cataract. His wife, Annie would need to take over the driving task which includes driving her husband to work and sending their children to school. This situation creates additional workload for Annie and may result in stress. However, in this research, problems in the family is not the main focus but the sources of marital happiness. Hence, this paper argues that when responsibilities are divided clearly between spouses, conflicts or complications will be absent as spouses have already set clear boundaries of which duties need to be carried out.

Another source of marital happiness for visually disabled persons is acceptance which is divided into acceptance by family members and acceptance by society. Acceptance in this investigation refers to non-discriminatory attitudes from others in regards to visually disabled persons' abilities to perform various parenting tasks and taking care of the whole family. Acceptance from family in this investigation carries the meaning that family members of the disabled spouses does not discriminate and ignore them due to their visual disability, taking the initiative to visit them, eating their cooking without feeling grossed out. As for the category of acceptance from society, it refers to the absence of discriminatory attitude from people surrounding the visually disabled spouses. In the interview, respondent reported that they are often questioned or challenged about their capabilities in taking care of their own family as well as executing parenting responsibilities. In an

investigation conducted by Shackelford (2004), one of the influence of parenting experiences by blind mothers is external influence or societal influence. In the investigation, blind mothers reported that most people discriminate them and blame them solely on their blindness. For example, people often associate their child's untidy appearance to their blindness or even when their child break things. In reality, breaking things and children being untidy will also occurs in families without disabled parents. Consequently, this paper proposed that by the absence of discrimination or bias, it could help visually disabled parents to feel less stressful and happier in their life.

The feeling of being competent or self-efficacy also plays an important role in marital happiness among married visually disabled persons. In this study, self-efficacy reflects respondent's feeling of confidence as he possess many skills and being able to be independent. This theme was constructed mainly based on respondent's response to questions from others regarding his' and his wife's capabilities both as a blind person and as parents. A few studies have discovered similar situation where self-efficacy contributes to the feeling of happiness (i.e. Ferlis, 2012, 2014; Teoh & Ferlis, 2016). Although the sample in these findings are different, the focus is the same (i.e. happiness).

Another source of marital happiness for visually disabled persons is achievements which refers to the sense of accomplishment. Respondent in this study reported a sense of achievement knowing he has succeeded in raising his children without help from others, provide education for their children, Ferlis (2014) has discovered similar finding that achievements is one of the significant source of happiness among persons with physical disabilities. This has proven that although types of disability might varies, they obtain happiness in almost similar ways.

The subsequent theme that contributes to marital happiness for visually disabled persons is spirituality. Respondent has stated that whenever he believes in God or stay true to his religion, he felt that his heart is at ease and as if all problems are solved without any hardship. In this sense, by having faith, it will assist individuals to be stronger, to have patience, and giving them a sense of meaning of life. This theme has also been confirmed by Ferlis (2012, 2014) and Teoh and Ferlis (2016) as a significant contributor to happiness. In addition, Asoodeh et al. (2010) has discovered that believing in God is one of the factors that lead to successful marital relationship.

The themes highlighted so far in this investigation mainly focuses on respondent's interaction with people. However, another source of marital happiness is access to transportation which reflects the infrastructure of a country. In the in-depth interview conducted, respondent stated that before his children are able to drive, the only way for him and his wife to navigate from places to places is by depending on others to drive them. After their children has reached the appropriate age to drive, he stated that going from places to places as well as taking care of matters that arise has gotten so much easier. Again, this theme collaborated well with findings from Ferlis, (2012, 2014) and Teoh and Ferlis (2016).

Last but not least, marital happiness are also influenced by the sense of togetherness which refers to quality time spent together with family members. This paper does not deny that maybe this theme is more appropriate to be labeled as interaction. However, this

investigation should not be discredited for such reason as Stake (1995) stated in his book entitled *The Art of Case Study Research*, there are multiple realities to every phenomena. the researcher constructed the theme togetherness because it reflects quality interaction in a family as a whole.

The final source of marital happiness is financial stability. It is undeniable that money is needed for most things in the world. Most people might argue that money cannot bring happiness. However, it is hard to prove whether this statement is true or not as money is a main instrument in fulfilling our basic needs such as food, clothes, and accommodations. Furthermore, money is also required to fulfill our desires such as owning a high-ended smartphone, or a car which could make life easier for everyone. Consequently, this investigation has discovered that having adequate income to support the needs of family members is very important in order for a marriage to be happy or at least less stressful. Ferlis (2012, 2014) and Teoh and Ferlis (2016) did not present any findings regarding financial stability. This might be due to the focus of their investigation which is happiness in general. Hence, when marriage is added into the context, financial stability does play a significant role.

The researcher does accept that the generalizing power of this investigation is not strong as it focuses only on one case or one respondent only. However, this research does provide significant insights to marital happiness among the visually disabled that could be added into the branches of positive psychology. Moreover, judging this investigation based on its generalizing power is unfair as Stake (1995) stated that the main focus of case studies is not generalization but particularization. Future research could increase the size of the respondent as it could provide more contextual richness to the themes constructed.

### Conclusion

To sum up, there are eight sources of marital happiness for visually disabled persons (i.e. responsibility, acceptance, self-efficacy, achievements, spirituality, access to transportation, togetherness, and financial stability). Most of the sources of marital happiness are based on the family itself. However, there are sources of marital happiness that are based on external factors such as acceptance from society and access to transportation. Through this investigation, the researcher hopes that society could change their negative attitudes and beliefs towards persons with disabilities. The researcher believes that persons with disabilities have already gone through enough challenges coping with their disabilities and any additional stressors are unnecessary. At least, by applying a more positive viewpoints towards such population, it will not only makes life enjoyable for them but, also provide the feeling that they actually belong in the society. Other than that, the researcher also hopes that developing countries such as Malaysia itself could revise their public transportations system to better accommodate persons with various disabilities. By having accessible transportation systems, persons with disabilities could be more independent in navigating from places to places. The researcher would like to end this paper by saying that, nobody in this world wants to be disabled, but it is

not a choice to be made by us, and everyone deserves to be a part of the society.

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