

UMS module to strengthen rural women

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By Elizabeth Majaham

KOTA KINABALU: Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) will formulate a stress management module aimed at helping rural women strengthen their self-resilience that would in turn ensure the mental wellbeing of their children.

Head of UMS' School of Psychology and Social Health, Associate Prof. Dr Rosnah Ismail, said this followed the outcome of a two-year study on "The Relationship between Economic Hardship and Maternal Stress on Child Cognitive Development in Sabah".

She presented a paper on the subject findings at a Research and TAJMA Personality Profile Test Seminar, organised by the School, Wednesday.

The study, done by a group of researchers from the School's Research Unit and led by her, was funded with a grant from IRPA (Intensification of Research in Priority Areas) under the Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry.

According to her, past studies have shown that economic hardship can affect an individual psychologically as to bring about mental illness, depression, self-conflict and family crisis.

"Economic hardship in the family can affect the child's upbringing, cognitive functions, acad-

emic achievement, social development, emotional, physical, behaviour and mental state.

"Economic hardship is the source of continuous stress and has a huge impact on family harmony and the children's development."

On the study, she said the respondents comprised 212 mothers with children aged between one and three and living in the interior of Sabah. Their monthly household income is about RM685 and they do not suffer from any chronic illness such as heart problem, hepatitis or leukaemia.

It was found that economic hardship relates to the stress experienced by the mother and which in turn jeopardises the cognitive development of her children, she said.

"Nevertheless, even though the study revealed such, the situation is not as yet at a worrying stage as it is not the main contributing factor affecting the child's cognitive development.

"However, it cannot be viewed lightly, particularly as the Ninth Malaysia Plan is entrenched on a vision to improve the quality of the population in the interior and to enhance human capital development.

"Hence UMS' initiative for the stress management module," she said.



Dr Rosnah