# Effects of Family Relationships on Adolescents Self-Control and Self-Efficacy

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to determine effects of family relationships on adolescents self-control and self-efficacy. A total of 318 adolescents residing in Johor, Malaysia were involved in this study. The results revealed that family communication has significant relationship with self-control while family cohesion is associated with self-efficacy of adolescents. The study concludes that family relationships play an important role in adolescents personal competences. Further research is necessary to investigate whether the sere lationships are upheld over time with extended the populations to other regions.

**Keywords:** Cohesion, support, communication, self-control, self-efficacy

### I. INTRODUCTION

Family relationships affects greatly in an adolescent life especially in their self-control (Farahati, 2011; Stillman, Tice, Fincham&Lambert, 2009; Kemp et al., 2008) and self-efficacy (Dietrich &Kracke, 2009). Self-control is a person's ability to resist temptations or to inhibit unacceptable behavior and forbidden impulses (Gottfredson&Hirschi, 1990). Self-control is usually hard to carry out and therefore motivation is the main factor for a person to exercise self-control (Muraven&Slessareva, 2003). Self-control exerted in an adolescent is usually the result of their past early life where they encountered bad socialization experience (Gottfredson et al., 1990). While, self-efficacy is the belief that one is able to do something on his own (Bandura, 2001). The adolescent with high self-efficacy is able to understand himself better as they are more likely to have the tendency to come up with a very challenging task and they will lay down a clear and attainable goal in their lives with the appropriate plan and actions to take in ensuring they can achieve it (Skinner, Connell & Zimmer-Gembeck, 1998).

Adolescents who grew up in happy and positive family surroundings are having high self-control rather than those who were raised in a problematic family (Tangney, Baumeister& Boone, 2004). Family with high cohesion, support and communications produces a better adolescent (Loeber, Farrington, Stouthamer-Loeber& Van Kammen, 1998). Cohesion in a family is essential in assisting children's development and performance (Arshat, Chai Yoke, Ng, &Pai, 2016; Pai&Arshat, 2016; Lucia & Breslau, 2006). The emotional bonding is the affection showed by family members through the sense of belongingness and acceptance in the family (McKeown et al., 1997). Family cohesion exists when all family members take pleasure in the activity they are doing and are always concerned about each other (Kliewer et al., 2006). Highly cohesive family convey the sense of care towards its members and that each and every one of the members is as important as the others (Kliewer et al., 2006). Therefore, adolescent from this family is able to function well in the society as they know how they worth. In addition, adolescent who grew up in a cohesive family enjoys the abundant safety and security provided by the family (Kliewer et al., 2006).

Research by Nota, Ferrari, Solberg and Soresi (2007) showed that self-efficacy of a person is influenced by his or her family support. Adolescent who have high level of self-efficacy and receives very much support from the family are the healthy type of person (Callaghan, 2006). Adequate support from the family can prevent an adolescent to do misconduct behavior (Eisenberg, Ackard&Resnick, 2007; Dekovic, Wissink& Meijer, 2004). Having continuous support from the family directs an adolescent to belief that he or she is capable to successfully achieve their targeted goals (Nota et al., 2007; Antonucci, Akiyama & Lansford, 1998). The support from the family members also helps adolescents to make better and wiser choice in their working prospects as they gained inputs and opinions from them (Ryan, Solberg, & Brown, 1996).

Family whose always communicates have better family relationships as the information or messages they want to relay is successfully passed over to their family members. Communication process that occurred within a family will help to instill good values and norms practiced by the parents to the child or adolescent (Whitaker & Miller, 2000). Family communication has many effects on children's behavior and attitudes in many areas (Farahati, 2011; Huang, 1999). Communication is an essential tool in family socialization (Stafford,

2004). Parents who initiate talk with their children produced adolescent with higher levels of self-control (Farahati, 2011; Clark & Shields, 1997; Mason, Cauce, Gonzales & Hiraga, 1994). Communication between the adolescent and the family members is important as it helps the adolescent to get the better depth of the topic discussed and also getting knowledge through conversation (Brody, Flor, Hollett-Wright, McCoy & Donovan, 1999). For instance, parents who discuss about sex to their children reported closer relationship with the adolescent and the adolescent showed late involvement with sexual activity (Martino, Elliott, Corona, Kanouse& Schuster, 2008).

In a research done by Franko, Thompson, Bauserman, Affenito and Striegel-Moore (2008) found that the cohesiveness within a family plays a very important part as they can influence both sexes in their daily food diet intake. Female adolescent who has low cohesion has higher tendency to involve in materials that could lead them to violence in order to fill their need for emotion (Kolbeins, 2001). In addition, family relationships too are able to determine the maturity level of an adolescent. Korean girls' maturity in deciding their career is greatly influenced by their family cohesion (Lee, 2003). The number of siblings that adolescent have has also effects on the family relationships (Rocca, Martin & Dunleavy, 2010). Adolescent who has many siblings showed that they have higher family support than adolescent without siblings (Hohepa, Scragg, Schofield, Kolt&Schaaf, 2007).

The level of education of both parents has impacts on the family relationships. Less educated parents are found to be reserve and deal lesser with the family members (Kalmijn, 2006). Family that experience low levels of family relationships are usually from the less earning side (Sheidow, Gorman-Smith, Tolan& Henry, 2001). For families with low paying job, they faces the risks of having their family relationship worsen (Ngale, 2009). This is because they need to work harder and longer duration to be able to make ends meet and therefore having lesser time with their children. This disrupts the relationships of the family eventually. Based on this brief overview, the present study aimed to determine the effects of family relationships on adolescent personal competences. In addition the study also examine the relationship between personal and family characteristics with family relationships.

# II. METHOD

### **Sample and Procedure**

A total of 318 secondary students, aged 13 to 17 years old were involved as respondents in this study. Respondents were selected using convenience sampling technique. This study was conducted in Johor, Malaysia. Self-administered questionnaire was adopted to collect the necessary data from the respondents. Permissions from various parties were required before proceeding with this study. First of all, consent from Malaysia's Ministry of Education in order to carry out this study. Upon approval, another letter of permission was required for the local education authority which was the Department of Education in Johor. Study took place after the letter of approval was received and the headmaster had come to an agreement to have the study performed at the school.

#### Measures

Family Relationship: Family Relationship Measure (Tolan, Gorman-Smith & Henry, 2001) was used to assess family relationship. The instrument comprised of 61-item inventory which was to measure the quality of relationships among family members. The instrument contained subscales of family relationship (i.e. cohesion, support and communication). However, in this research only 15-item of the subscales was utilized (i.e. 6-item cohesion, 6-item support and 3-item communication). Responses were scored on a four-point Likert-scale (1=Not true at all, 2=Hardly ever true, 3=True a lot, 4=Almost always or always true) to access how the respondents reacts towards an items regarding his or her family. Examples of items of the relevant statement are "Family members ask each other for help", "My family expects too much of me" and "My family knows what I mean when I say something". Total scores from each subscale were summed up and average was taken from the calculation respectively. Higher scores denoted better family relationship quality for each of the subscales. The Cronbach alpha for family cohesion, support and communication subscales in this were .58, .54 and .51 respectively.

Self-Control and Self Efficacy: A measure of Adolescent Resiliency (Springer & Phillips, 1997) was used to measure self-control and self-efficacy of adolescents. The original measure has 71-item. However, in this study only 13-item was used to assess self-control (6items) and self-efficacy (7items) which was rated by using the Likert-scale (4-YES!, 3-yes, 2-no, 1-NO!). Examples of items for self-control are "Sometimes I have to physically fight to get what I want" and "I get mad easily". While example items for self-efficacy are "It is important to think before you act" and "If you work hard, you will get what you want". Total scores were calculated from each subscale and final score was obtained from the average of the items respectively. A high score indicated that the respondents were having high self-control or high self-efficacy. The internal consistency for self-control was .64 and for self-efficacy was .79.

#### III. RESULTS

# Personal and Family Characteristics of the Respondents

Results showed that number of female respondents (51.5%) was closed to the male (48.4%). Out of 318 adolescents who participated in the study, most (61.3%) of them belonged to the 13 year-old age group. The mean number of siblings in the family was 3.59 with a standard deviation of 1.24. The mean of father's age was 44.08 years old (SD=5.34). The mean age for mother was 41.23 years old (SD=4.76). Results of the study shows that average years of education of the respondents' father and mother were 11.23 and 10.53 respectively. The minimum family monthly income was RM850 (200USD) while the highest was RM14,300 (3372USD).

# Relationship between Personal and Family Characteristics with Family Relationships

The findings revealed that number of siblings (r = 0.13, p < .05) and family monthly income (r = 0.12, p < .05) were significantly correlated with family cohesion. There was a positive relationship between sex and communication of the respondents (r = 0.13, p > 0.05). This shows that female adolescents are more likely to communicate with the family compare to male adolescents. Meanwhile none of the personal and family characteristics were significantly correlated with family support.

Table 1Correlation between Personal and Family Characteristic and Family Relationships

Variable	Cohesion		Support		Communication	
	r	p	r	p	r	p
Personal characteristic						
Sex	.09	.13	00	.94	.13*	.02
Number of siblings	.13*	.02	10	.08	.07	.25
Family characteristic						
Family monthly income	.12*	.05	.08	.12	10	.09
Parents education years						
Father	.10	.04	08	.19	00	.94
Mother	.02	.80	.05	.42	.10	.09

*Note*: \*p <.05

# Relationship between Family Relationships, Self-Control and Self-Efficacy

The findings presented in Table 2 shows that cohesion was significantly related to self-efficacy (r = 0.19, p < 0.01). In other word, adolescents with high self-efficacy comes from a family that has high cohesiveness. Communication was negatively associated with self-control (r = -0.18, p < 0.01) shows that high communication within a family decrease the level of self-control of the adolescents.

**Table 2**Correlation between Family Relationships and Personal Competences

Variable	Self-control	Self-efficacy r	
	r		
Family Relationships			
Cohesion	10	.19**	
Support	01	.02	
Communication	18**	.10	
Note: ** n < 01			

*Note*: \*\* p <.01

## Predictors of Adolescents Self-Control and Self-Efficacy

Multiple regression analysis using forced-entry procedure was conducted to determine the best set of predictors of adolescents self-control and self-efficacy. Based on the data analysis, the study found that only one of the family relationships variable which was cohesion ( $r=0.19,\,p<.01$ ) to be the significant predictors of adolescents' self-efficacy. The findings accentuate suggest that 3% of the variance in self-efficacy was explained by cohesion.

Table 3Multiple Regression Analysis for Adolescents Self-Control and Self-Efficacy

Variables	Self-control			Self-efficacy		
	В	β	p	В	β	p
Personal characteristic						
Sex	.11	.10	.10	.14	.11	.07
Number of siblings	.00	.00	.95	.02	.03	.59
Family characteristic						
Family monthly income	4.08	.02	.84	2.92	.10	.21
Parent's education						
Father	00	02	.84	01	03	.70
Mother	.00	.01	.82	. 00	.00	.99
Family relationships						

Cohesion	08	07	.26	.21	.16*	.02
Support	.01	.01	.85	-5.12	.00	.99
Communication	17	18**	.01	.06	.05	.43
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> =	.03			.03		
$\mathbf{F} =$	1.70			2.10*		

Note: \*p<.05, \*\* p<.01,

## IV. DISCUSSION

The findings showed that number of siblings was found to have positive relationship with family cohesion. This implies that as the number of siblings increases, the level of family cohesion increase as well. The finding is consistent with previous research that showed large families can strengthen the relationships among family members (Zarinah&Rozumah, 2009). The number of siblings in a family plays an important factor in the family relationship as its influences how the family reacts to that particular child (Richmond & Stocker, 2006). It is evident from the study that female adolescent communicates more with family members. The finding is aligned with research done by Maccoby (2003) that found females are more likely to have conversation than male during communication process. In other research too found that female adolescent was reported to have higher communication with their mother than the male adolescent (Strom et al., 2001).

The present study also revealed that family income was significantly associated with high levels of cohesion. Family with plenty of financial provisions can do many activities together like travelling and vacationing with all family members. This activities can help to increase the relationship between family members. In research done by Milburn et al. (2005), adolescent with extra emotional and financial support were associated with having better cohesiveness in the family. As expected, adolescent who having high cohesion in the family are more likely to have high self-efficacy. Family that is generous with praises to their children is actually showing their encouragement and provides supports towards them and simultaneously intensifying the ability for the child to learn to have confidence and trust himself (Dietrich &Kracke, 2009).

There are several limitations that need to be aware of in the present study. First, the research was conducted in a school in Johor region. The respondents were selected in a particular region, i.e. Johor, which limits the findings to be generalized to populations of other regions. Hence, the generalization of the results is limited to that particular sample. Second, current research is only considers how the respondents felt over the past month. Being a cross-sectional study, this study can't determine age appropriate change of the adolescent. All experiences which the adolescent had won't be able to be included in the study and how the findings affects the adolescent's development is unclear. Consequently, there might also be errors in the recalling process during answering the questionnaire.

# V. CONCLUSION

The findings of the present research provide better insights on the studies of family relationships and personal competences among adolescent particularly in the Malaysian context. Some of the results had provided evidence on the impacts on family relationships towards adolescent's personal competences. Results revealed that cohesion and communication was the dominant determinant of the adolescent's personal competences. Also, the current finding adds to a growing body of literature on the field of family relationships and adolescent personal competences. Results of this study provided a baseline in understanding the adolescent's personal competences in secondary school in Malaysian context. Once understanding has been ascertain, strategies to uncover other factors that predicts the adolescent's personal competences can be further developed for future research.

The results showed that adolescent who have low family relationships are more likely to have low personal competences. Therefore, findings may be useful in providing information for families to understand and handle adolescents better. Parents ought to take action in improving the relationships among its members to ensure none of the members are being left out. In the adolescent's stage, it is crucial for the family to lend their support and provide sufficient affections for the developing adolescent. The present study helps to encourage the involvement and commitments from various parties to emphasize on the importance of the socioeconomic development of a family. This is in accordance with the National Family Policy in Malaysia, where all parties are call upon to put family first in planning and developing the country. The results showed that socioeconomics does play an important role in the family relationships to increase the personal competences of the adolescent.

Teachers too have benefits in this study's results as they can gain additional knowledge in dealing with difficult adolescents. They are able to comprehend the factors that might contribute to the adolescent's certain attitude. Intervention programs of personal competences could be applied in secondary schools to assist the adolescent in discovering his or her own self. Teachers, parents and other parties should be aware of the need of the intervention so that future problems could be at least minimized and simultaneously increasing the quality of family relationships and personal competences in time. The current research may perhaps be informative for future Malaysian researches and educationalist to understand better of adolescent in our local context. This

study may possibly be used as references for all in many ways such as providing supportive environment for the growing adolescents to search and develop themselves through ways they can appreciate. By understanding the potential influences on the family relationships, the results established could be helpful for counselors or social workers in the field of family studies to provide support and assistance for those adolescent seeking for help.

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