



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

**RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PARENTS' MARITAL QUALITY, FAMILY ENVIRONMENT AND STUDENTS' BEHAVIOUR OF SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN SELANGOR AND KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA**

**LAI CHOOI SEONG (ANNIE)**

**FPP 2008 20**



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**By**

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**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, University Putra Malaysia, in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**September 2008**



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of University Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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**September 2008**

**Chairman: Dr. Samsilah bt. Roslan, PhD**

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The objective of this research was to assess the differences and relationships between parents' marital quality and family environment of two hundred Form 4 delinquent and non-delinquent secondary school students in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. A final research model for parents' marital quality and family environment of students was finally established. Parents' marital quality was measured by Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier & Lewis, 1976), Family environment of students was assessed by Family Environment Scale (Moos & Moos, 1981, 2002), and behaviour of students (delinquent and non-delinquent acts) was assessed by a set of self-report instrument established by Rozumah, Rumaya, Asnarulkhadi, Amna, Mansur, and Tan (2003). Independent-samples t-tests reported significant differences in the family cohesion, family



expressiveness, family conflict, and family achievement orientation of delinquent and non-delinquent students. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient concluded that there were significant positive correlations between parents' dyadic satisfaction, parents' marital quality, family cohesion, expressiveness, conflict, relationship dimensions, achievement orientation and active-recreational orientation with students' behaviour. The final regression model indicated by binary logistic regression analysis showed that the predictor variables which had contributed significantly to the model were firstly, family conflict, followed by family cohesion, family members' achievement orientation, then parents' dyadic satisfaction, and lastly family members' expressiveness. Future studies should focus on parents' and family communication, conflict resolution, personality, financial management, leisure activities, parenting styles, extended family, and family adaptability. This study reiterated the importance of maintaining positive marital quality in married couples and positive family environment for children's well-being. Parents must realize that adolescents need their parents' companionship, care and to be active listeners to their emotions, achievements and problems.



Abstrak tesis ini dikemukakan kepada senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi syarat kelayakan Ijazah Doktor Falsafah.

**HUBUNGAN DI ANTARA KUALITI PERKAHWINAN IBU BAPA DAN PERSEKITARAN KELUARGA DENGAN TINGKAH LAKU PELAJAR DI SEKOLAH MENENGAH PILIHAN DI SELANGOR DAN KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA**

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Kajian ini telah dijalankan untuk mengkaji kualiti perkahwinan ibu bapa dan persekitaran keluarga bagi pelajar-pelajar sekolah menengah delinkuen dan bukan delinkuen di sekitar Selangor dan Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Satu model kajian untuk kualiti perkahwinan ibu bapa dan persekitaran keluarga telah berjaya dihasilkan. Seramai dua ratus pelajar tingkatan 4 telah dikenal pasti oleh 20 jabatan disiplin sekolah yang berisiko tinggi. Kualiti perkahwinan ibu bapa telah diukur oleh *Dyadic Adjustment Scale* (Spanier & Lewis, 1976), persekitaran keluarga pelajar pula dikaji menggunakan *Family Environment Scale* (Moos & Moos, 1981, 2002), and tingkah laku para pelajar (salah laku dan kelakuan biasa) dikaji menggunakan set instrumen *self-report* yang dihasilkan oleh Rozumah, Rumaya, Asnarulkhadi, Amna, Mansur, dan Tan



(2003). Analisa diskriptif menunjukkan bahawa bahan-bahan lucah merupakan mod bagi salah laku pelajar di mana mereka menonton, melibatkan diri dan juga menjual material lucah. *Independent-samples t-tests* menjumpai perbezaan yang ketara di antara *dyadic satisfaction* (kepuasan), kualiti perkahwinan ibubapa, kecenderungan keluarga, *expressiveness* keluarga, konflik keluarga, dan *achievement orientation* keluarga pelajar delinkuen dan bukan delinkuen. *Pearson correlation coefficient* terdapat perkaitan positif yang ketara di antara *dyadic satisfaction* ibu bapa, kualiti perkahwinan ibu bapa, kecenderungan keluarga, *expressiveness* keluarga, dimensi hubungan keluarga, *achievement orientation* keluarga, dan *active-recreational orientation* dengan tingkah laku para pelajar dengan tingkah laku pelajar. Model pengunduran (regression model) terakhir yang dihasilkan melalui analisa *binary logistic regression* menunjukkan bahawa variable yang telah memberi sumbangan yang ketara pada model adalah konflik keluarga, diikuti dengan kecenderungan keluarga (cohesion), *achievement orientation* ahli keluarga, *dyadic satisfaction* ibu bapa, dan akhir sekali adalah *expressiveness* ahli keluarga. Kajian pada masa-masa yang mendatang perlu memberi penekanan pada komunikasi ibu bapa dan keluarga, penguraian konflik, personaliti, pengurusan kewangan, aktiviti waktu lapang, cara asuhan dan didikan, keluarga luas, dan daya penyesuaian keluarga.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all the people who have helped and inspired me during my doctoral study and made this thesis possible.

I especially want to thank my PhD supervisor (chairman) Dr. Samsilah Bt. Roslan, for her guidance, enthusiasm and great efforts to explain things clearly and simply. Throughout my thesis-writing period, she provided encouragement, sound advice, and lots of good ideas. She was always accessible and willing to help with my research. As a result, research life became smooth and rewarding for me.

Prof. Dr. Aminah Bt. Hj. Ahmad and Dr. Maznah Baba also deserve special thanks as my thesis supervisory committee members. Their perpetual energy and enthusiasm in research had motivated me and they offer advice and suggestions whenever I needed them.

My deepest gratitude goes to my family for their unflagging love and support, this dissertation is simply impossible without them. I am grateful to my husband, C.K. Au for his care, inspiration, love, understanding and help in taking care of our three children (Kah Wai, Kah Mun and Kah Jun) while I was busy with my research and teaching career. Special acknowledgement is dedicated to my daughter, Kah Mun for helping with the household chores and cooking dinner when I came home late (attend classes, doing research at the library, and meeting with my supervisors). My gratitude goes to my eldest son, Kah Wai for being so discipline with his school work without any guidance from me. My love goes to all three of my children who had always been at their best behaviour and hence, allowing me time to complete this research.

To them I dedicate this thesis.

I would also like to gratefully acknowledge the support of Goh Soo See, my good friend and companion during these last 5 years (from Masters to PhD). She helped me immensely by giving me encouragement and friendship. She mirrored back my ideas so I heard them aloud, an important process for me to shape this thesis paper and future work.

Last but not least, thanks be to God for my life through all tests in the past five years.



I certify that an Examination Committee has met on 18 September 2008 to conduct the final examination of Lai Chooi Seong on her Doctor of Philosophy thesis entitled “**The Relationships Between Parents’ Marital Quality, Family Environment And Sudents’ Behaviour Of Selected Secondary Schools In Selangor and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia**” in accordance with Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980 and Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Regulations 1981. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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## **DECLARATION**

I declare that this thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously, and is not concurrently submitted for any other degree at UPM or at any other institution.

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Date: 13 November 2008





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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

KPWKM	Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development
DAS	Dyadic Adjustment Scale
FES	Family Environment Scale
KPM	Ministry of Education
JPS	Selangor Department of Education
JPWP	Federal Territory Kuala Lumpur Department of Education
D	Delinquent
ND	Non-delinquent
M	Mean
SD	Standard Deviation
t	t-test value
r	Pearson Product Moment Correlation
n	Sample size
p	Probability value
df	Degree of freedom
B	B values of the Regression Equation



# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Today's adolescents have many pressures to deal with among friends and family. Such pressures may include school academic performance, bully, gangsterism, truancy, fight as well as problems in the parents' marriage or frequent fighting or hostility among the family members. Any one of these isolated problems at home and school may trigger adolescent problem behaviour if they use delinquent behaviors as appropriate ways to deal with the pressures they experience.

Most parents may feel embarrass, angry, frustrated, or even guilty when they cannot understand and do not know where to seek help for their troubled adolescents and family. Teachers in schools also experience problem managing the classroom and find it impossible to create an environment conducive for effective teaching and learning to take place because of disruptions caused by students' delinquent behaviour. Effective teachers must find ways to keep their students in the classrooms as a team working together and oriented toward classroom tasks.



Many research conducted in the West indicated that the most effective approach to understand students' delinquent behaviour are programmes and treatments that are family-based. This means treatment that involves the adolescent and his or her family, and focuses on the parts of the adolescents' life that shape how he or she views the world, emphasizing on family and parental support.

In line with these research results from the West, our Malaysian government in fact has long placed emphasis on the importance of stable and resilient family life because our Eastern values recognize the fact that family plays an important role in inculcating moral values in society, such as respecting the elders, be creative, innovative, capable and has self-discipline for the future generations to follow.

Malaysian government also recognizes the fact that marriage is not just a family institution, but also a social institution where it is centered to nurture and raise children. Marriage also contributes to the physical, emotional and economic health of the society, which consists of men, women, children and finally the nation as a whole.



This is illustrated in the theme “*Family First – Bring Your Heart Home*” with its ten principles launched by the Ministry Of Women, Family and Community Development (KPWKM) in 2006. The ten principles are shown in Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1 Ten Principles of “*Family First – Bring Your Heart Home*”**

<b>FAMILY FIRST PRINCIPLES</b>		
1	Love And Affection	To shower love and understand each other’s emotional needs.
2	Family Fun Time	To spend quality time and to spread joy of being a family.
3	Effective Communication	To interact and to communicate actively and effectively.
4	Noble Family Values	To inculcate and practice noble family values.
5	Parenting Excellence	To be a shining example and to bear responsibilities together.
6	Balancing Career And Family Life	To strike a balance between career and family life.
7	Security And Health	To provide a safe and comfortable environment and to practice a healthy lifestyle.
8	Family Economics	To plan, organise and manage family resources wisely.
9	Education And Skills	To promote life-long learning and acquiring of skills.
10	Family Friendly Policies	To put family as top priority in planning for family programmes and services.

Most young Malaysian married couples moved out of their parents' home after marriage and set-up their own household. This has led to lesser and lesser traditional extended families within our society. Lesser extended families caused the new nuclear households to feel increasingly isolated as they have to manage their lives and families without the extended family and friends' supports, which in the past were a primary resource in raising children and meeting families' needs.

Malaysia multiracial society has also become more complex and diverse over the last two decades of rapid economic growth. Hence, the family as a social institution has also undergone rapid transformation in its structure such as getting married and divorced, and more females receiving education to the tertiary levels.

This resulted in increasing number of mothers entering the labour market and thus, increased number of dual-career families. Consequently, the time spent with children has decreased, as well as parent-child interactions. Therefore, children are left largely unsupervised

This explains why despite the emphasis by the Malaysian government on the importance of stable and resilient family in nurturing and raising mentally and physically healthy children, there were still increasing reports of adolescents' problem behaviours received over the last decade.

There are also increasing newspaper reports on marital conflicts ending in suicides involving innocent children and on tug-of-war between separated husbands and wives on custody of their children.

Adolescents are especially influenced by their parents' marital satisfaction because of the long-term exposure to the cumulative effects of the quality of their parents' marital relations. This is also because adolescence is a period of time when teenagers are dealing with many challenges such as hormonal fluctuations, changes in school structure, higher achievement expectations, expanded peer relations and influence, pressures from dating, and emergent sexuality (Ellickson & McGuigan, 2000).

Since marital dyad plays a pivotal role in providing cohesiveness and stability for the entire family, the quality of the marriage can have a pervasive effect on family life as a whole, as well as on the adaptation of individual family members



(Feldman, Fisher & Seitel, 1997). Consequently, the family environment is an influential factor in the development and maintenance of both conduct disorder and depression in children and adolescents (Teeter, 1998).

According to Byrne (1986), the family represents a basic human support system within which various needs are met, or go unmet. Thus, the degree of family happiness has been found to be significantly related to individuals' subsequent level of self-esteem, as well as regard for others within and out of the family (Parish & Nunn, 1988).

Hence, in this study, the researcher will concentrate on the family etiology aspects of adolescents' behaviours, namely delinquent and non-delinquent.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

From the years 2001 to 2004, consecutively 4160, 4493, 4189, and 4715 cases of delinquency were committed by adolescents ranging from offences against property, against persons, sex delinquencies, and drugs-related were recorded (Malaysia Social Welfare Department, 2005).

