



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**DATING PATTERNS AND ATTITUDES
OF FEMALE FIFTH FORMERS IN AN INNER-CITY
SECONDARY SCHOOL IN KUALA LUMPUR**

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FPP 1997 4

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BY

NIRMALA PURUSHOTHAMAN

**Research Project Submitted in Partial Fulfilment
of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in the
Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia.**

October 1997



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This long over-due accomplishment can be attributed to several factors. To begin with, there was the burning desire to achieve a higher degree. This provided me with the intrinsic motivation. Then, there was this feeling that somehow I had been stagnating in the teaching profession for over twenty years, without actually making an academic and social contribution toward education and society. My recent involvement in counselling and even more recent appointment as a full-time counsellor further fuelled this ambition. I also had the good fortune of having the support of my lecturers, colleagues, family members, relatives and good friends. It is with great pleasure that I take this opportunity to place on record my thanks to all those who have in one way or the other contributed toward this study.

To Associate Professor Dr.Noran Fauziah bte.Yaakub, my supervisor, I am at a loss for words to express my sincere appreciation. Her ever-friendly and humble demeanour has always put me at ease in her company making her more of a friend first, and lecturer, second. The inspiration and support she has given me in the past two years is immeasurable. In short, she has been a model, both as a person and lecturer. My deepest gratitude goes to her for being such a wonderful person and mentor, and most of all



for the patience she has shown and that much-needed gentle push to get going.

To Associate Professor Dr. Kamariah Abu Bakar, Dr. Rohani Ahmad Tarwizi, Dr. Sidek Mohd.Noah, Professor Dr.David McCracken, Dr. Abdul Majid Mohd. Isa, Dr. Rahil Hj. Mahyuddin, Dr. Nordin Kardi and Associate Professor Dr. Habibah Elias all from Universiti Putra Malaysia I express my thanks. I would be failing in my duty if I do not mention them. I enjoyed and benefitted tremendously from their academic instruction in Statistics, Career Counselling, Research Design, Principles of Education Psychology, Cognitive Development, The Philosophy, Principles and Theories of Counselling and Motivation in Education. My profound appreciation goes to all of them for the academic enlightenment.

To Shirley Joseph, Shamala Durairajanayagam, Letchumi Sinadurai, Chitra Devi Ramasamy, Yogeswary Ramayah and Pooja Narinder Pall, my dear friends, who took time off to be there for me in times of dire need, I sincerely appreciate all their assistance.

To Vimala, my sister, go very special thanks for understanding and accommodating my need for the use of the computer day and night.



To Ayob, her husband, thanks for the stand-by emergency assistance on the computer.

To Gloria Leila, my 18-year old niece, who drew my attention to particular items in the questionnaire and highlighted the different perspectives of two different generations, hers, and mine goes my sincere appreciation of a two-hour long, constructive discussion of the questionnaire. This was instrumental in the final rewording and removal of ambiguous statements.

To Sujatha my daughter, and Shanti Maria and Rina Priya, my two other nieces, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for their assistance on the computer and their invaluable comments.

To Sanjiv Daevin, my son, go special thanks, for his time and assistance on the computer. For his contribution, I would if I could, award him the Junior Master of Science in Educational Psychology that he claims should be his. He was also instrumental in eliminating my fear of the mouse and converting me from a 'computer illiterate' to I can proudly claim, a 'computer-literate'.

To Colin Walsh, a friend, who so willingly offered constructive comments on this academic study, I would like to express my profound gratitude for his time and contribution.



To Jonathan Ptak, whose timely arrival and willingness to take on the burden of the final editing of this case-study, it is truly difficult to express my most sincere gratitude. His constructive evaluation, painstaking efforts and endurance will not be forgotten.

To all the fourth and fifth formers of the Year 1997 who so willingly participated in this study, go my sincere appreciation of their co-operation and contribution toward making this investigation a reality. Much as the questionnaire may have provided them with some amusement, it is hoped that it was also an instrument for self-analysis.

To the principals of the school, Mrs. S. Balakrishnan, Mrs. Tan Yin Toon and Mrs. Raj I wish to thank them for their constant encouragement, moral support and understanding.

To Puan Halimah, Senior Assistant of the school, go my sincere thanks for taking time off despite her busy schedule to assist with this project.

To another dear friend, who has expressed a desire to remain anonymous, my deepest thanks for all the academic assistance rendered throughout my Masters Programme.

I am truly indebted to all of them.



The past two and a half years of academic and social development have left me with a wonderful feeling of academic achievement. This study will surely shed light on the counselling of adolescents in the future and on further research in the area of adolescent behaviour.



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Abstract of research project presented to
the Faculty of Educational Studies of Universiti Putra Malaysia in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Science in Educational Psychology

**DATING PATTERNS AND ATTITUDES
OF FEMALE FIFTH FORMERS IN AN INNER-CITY
SECONDARY SCHOOL IN KUALA LUMPUR**

OCTOBER, 1997

Supervisor : Associate Professor Dr. Noran Fauziah bt. Yaakob
Faculty : Educational Studies

Dating, while providing an opportunity for necessary emotional development in adolescents can also lead to disturbing sociological consequences. Rising levels of sexual promiscuity, teenage pregnancy, abortion and other negative consequences of dating has been widely observed. Based on this scenario, this descriptive case study attempts to identify the general dating patterns and attitudes of female fifth formers (N=206) in an inner-city school in Kuala Lumpur.



The following aspects of dating are examined: reasons for dating, dating code, dating preferences, intimacy, effects on self-esteem, consequences of dating and effects of parental restrictions.

It was found that widespread dating occurs among adolescents at a young age, and it quickly becomes a central part of their social lives. This is generally consistent among all three major races in Malaysia, and many will date secretly to avoid censure from their parents. Though most dating begins in groups, adolescents express a desire to date exclusively with one partner after only a short period of time.

The level of sexual activity, however, does not correspond with the high level of dating. The vast majority still believes that sex should be reserved for marriage, and many refrained from almost all intimate relations. Conservative parents will be relieved to know that Malaysian adolescents are not as liberal as they may seem. One must still remain painfully aware, however, of the minority who are sexually active, and are not necessarily aware of the risks involved. This study revealed that many students are completely unaware of how to practice safe sex or avoid pregnancy.



Adolescents must be educated and equipped with the knowledge and skills to protect themselves. Conservative societies such as those found in Malaysia, however, resist sex education at home, leaving many adolescents completely without resources for information. In this case, there is strong support for a more aggressive sex education campaign at school and in public to overcome this situation of dangerous ignorance. In addition, more detailed dating studies should be conducted and the results revealed to educators and counsellors. This would allow them to better assist adolescents with the emotional challenges that accompany dating, and thereby facilitate higher academic achievement.



Abstrak kertas kajian yang dikemukakan
kepada Fakulti Pengajian Pendidikan Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi sebahagian daripada syarat lulus
Ijazah Master Sains dalam Pendidikan Psikologi.

**SIKAP DAN CORAK 'DATING'
PELAJAR-PELAJAR TINGKATAN LIMA
DI SEBUAH SEKOLAH MENENGAH YANG TERLETAK
DI PUSAT BANDARAYA KUALA LUMPUR**

OCTOBER 1997

Penyelia : Profesor Madya Dr. Noran Fauziah bt. Yaakob

Fakulti : Pengajian Pendidikan

'*Dating*' merupakan satu cara yang dapat memberi ruang dan kesempatan bagi perkembangan emosi remaja, tetapi malangnya sebaliknya dapat juga menimbulkan beberapa kesan negatif dalam perkembangan masyarakat. Kesan-kesan negatif '*dating*' dapat dilihat dan dikesan melalui peningkatan dalam hubungan seks, jumlah remaja yang mengandung, kes-kes pengguguran dan aktiviti-aktiviti lain berkaitan dengan seks. Satu kajian kes telah dijalankan untuk mengkaji serta menyelidik sikap dan corak '*dating*' remaja berdasarkan punca-punca gejala-gejala ini. Kajian kes ini dijalankan ke atas satu kumpulan pelajar Tingkatan Lima (N=206) di sebuah sekolah yang terletak di pusat bandaraya Kuala Lumpur.



Beberapa aspek '*dating*' telah dipilih untuk kajian seperti sebab-sebab keluar '*dating*', keutamaan-keutamaan dalam '*dating*', hubungan intim, kesan sendiri, kesan-kesan '*dating*' ke atas individu dan kesan serta akibat halangan dari pihak ibu bapa.

Adalah didapati bahawa '*dating*' dan aktiviti-aktiviti berkaitan seks telah bermula di usia yang masih muda dan dengan cepatnya telah berkembang sebagai bahagian dan amalan yang penting dalam kehidupan sosial mereka. Perkara ini merupakan satu corak yang konsisten dikalangan ketiga-tiga bangsa utama di Malaysia dan ramai akan keluar '*dating*' secara rahsia untuk mengelakkan bantahan daripada ibu bapa. Walaupun sebahagian besar daripada kaum remaja bermula '*dating*' dalam kumpulan, mereka menunjukkan keinginan untuk keluar asing-asing bersama teman lelaki mereka selepas sahaja jangka masa yang pendek.

Tahapan aktiviti seksual, walaubagaimanapun, tidak setinggi dengan tahapan keluar '*dating*'. Kebanyakan dari kalangan remaja masih percaya bahawa hubungan seksual harus dijalankan selepas berumah tangga sahaja. Mereka juga mengelakkan daripada mencebur diri dalam hampir semua hubungan intim. Ibu bapa yang konservatif boleh berasa lega mengetahui bahawa sikap dan corak dating kaum remaja tidak begitu bebas sepertimana yang dianggap oleh orang ramai. Akan tetapi mereka masih mesti berwaspada kerana ada segolongan kecil yang menjalinkan hubungan seksual secara aktif dan mereka ini tidak semestinya sedar akan risiko yang

terlibat. Kajian ini mendapati bahawa ada kalangan pelajar yang langsung tidak tahu cara-cara mengamalkan hubungan seks yang sihat dan selamat serta cara-cara mencegah kehamilan.

Remaja harus dididik dan dilengkapi dengan pengetahuan dan kemahiran untuk melindungi diri mereka. Walaubagaimanapun masyarakat yang konservatif sepertimana yang terdapat di Malaysia menentang pendidikan seks dirumah. Ini mengakibatkan ramai remaja tidak mempunyai sumber maklumat dalam aspek ini. Dalam perkara seperti ini, terdapat sokongan kuat untuk kempen pendidikan seks yang lebih agresif di sekolah dan di tempat awam untuk mengatasi keadaan '*kejahilan merbahaya*' dikalangan remaja. Tambahan pula, lebih banyak kajian terperinci harus dijalankan dan hasil kajian tersebut harus didedahkan kepada para pendidik dan kaunselor. Ini akan membolehkan mereka membantu remaja yang mengalami cabaran emosi yang timbul dari '*dating*' dengan lebih berkesan dan dengan secara tidak langsung memudahkan pencapaian akademik yang lebih tinggi.



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Dating, while recognised as a universal and widespread social activity among adolescents, is believed to be the vehicle for involvement in many of our social ills. These range from minor infringements such as cigarette smoking, through a range of unwanted activities such as illicit sexual activities, to suicides. More specifically among female adolescents, the stark social ills include 'bohsia', sex before marriage, teenage pregnancies, abortion, baby dumping, the viewing of pornographic films, the reading of pornographic literature, alcoholism and the use of drugs. In contemporary Asia, the powerful influence of ongoing modernization has exacerbated these undesirable elements which are increasingly evident among our youth.

Factors that contribute to an explanation for this disturbing phenomenon include affluence and the opportunities that it brings, peer culture, parent-adolescent generation gap, free association of the sexes and the liberal sub-culture of cities.



A strong peer support system or “best friend” syndrome replaces the parents’ role as confidante. Parents are becoming out of touch with the emotional needs of their adolescent children. Having, perhaps, a more long-range perspective on their children’s lives, they find it difficult to understand and relate to the fascination felt by students for dating, and the elation experienced by adolescents in a heterosexual relationship. The crux of the issue is the growing gap in the parent-adolescent communication system.

The liberal sub-culture of the cities which includes adolescents’ liberal sexual values, the free association of the sexes and a lack of respect for elders is condemned by the adult conservative society. Some of this increased delinquency is also the result of increased parental permissiveness amongst adolescents, which often occurs through broken homes.

Far from equipping the younger generation with coping skills to face the global society, the unstable and conflict-ridden family life sabotages the children’s development. The product of affluence and unrestricted freedom is a restless youth society, which holds contempt for traditional societal norms.

This descriptive study of the dating patterns and attitudes of female fifth formers stems from the grave concern amongst educators, counsellors, parents and social workers over the decline of moral and social responsibility of adolescents in Malaysia. It is

the researcher's contention that dating activities have provided adolescents the arena for direct or indirect involvement in these social ills. What is even more alarming is that contemporary adolescents are beginning to date at a younger age. This simply means that the problem encompasses an even larger percentage of adolescents.

To obtain a proper perspective and to set the scenario, it will be useful to examine the concept of dating from the perspective of the modern adolescent in Malaysia. This will assist in the discussion of dating as an aspect of development, the integration of dating into the social lives of adolescents, and the associated sexual activities of dating.

The Concept of Dating

An adult's formal definition of dating is likely to be when '*a boy asks a girl to go out*' for some event or dinner. This may contrast significantly with an adolescent's definition.

Dating, from a modern, urban, Malaysian adolescent's point of view is not confined to when '*a boy asks a girl out*'. Consistent with a greater socialization of gender equality, it also includes invitations where '*a girl asks a boy out*'. Single dating, generally means going out alone with a date to the movies, shopping complexes, for a walk to a park or to the favourite 'necking spot', to name only a few. This type of dating is generally geared toward

socio-sexual interaction. Dating, however, is not necessarily restricted to a single couple or even to two or three couples. Dating can also refer to group situations, like attending a party in public or private places where adolescents socialise together, with or without adult supervision. Transportation may be by car (driven either by the boy or the girl), bus or taxi. There is also the possibility that girls and boys may arrive separately and then pair off based on a prior arrangement. The choice of transport is usually due to either convenience or secrecy of the date.

The purpose of the date is also important as it determines the variety of activities and locations in a date. A date may be arranged for an eat-out session at a fast-food outlet or open-air stalls with a large group. It may be to attend a birthday party, a social gathering, a movie or a game entertainment outlet where again, a large group concept is observed. These large group gatherings are generally with the blessings of their parents, who perhaps feel there is greater security in numbers. It is also possible that they understand that adolescents occasionally need to be with their peers.

Dating activities are not restricted to the evenings. On the contrary, the general tendency is to date during the day rather than in the evenings. This is generally a matter of convenience, as dating is generally more feasible after school or after tuition classes, with or without parental consent. The possibility of convincing parents

to consent to the adolescent having ‘*an evening out*’ is usually less likely, except perhaps for a special occasion.

Dating as an Aspect of Development in Adolescence

Dating is considered crucial in the “career of passing from adolescence to adulthood” (Place, 1975 in Hopkins J. R. 1983, p236). The incorporation of the adolescents’ newly matured, sexual drive (during pubescence) into their personality is a physiological and psychological task the adolescent is ill equipped to handle. It must also be borne in mind that this period of development is generally associated with turbulence, instability, confusion and stress. Considering the cultural sexual repression in Malaysia, the adolescent is faced with the important developmental challenge of sexual adjustment, which is required for a mature, heterosexual relationship. The period of adolescence is believed to be accompanied by a cognitive and emotional awareness that compounds the effects of the new heterosexual relationships. According to Siegal (1995), the need for love or the “reaching out for love is magnified in adolescence”. The adolescent interpersonal cognitive system perceives dating as being full of difficulties, yet considers it as a very desirable activity.

Peer pressure is a powerful force among adolescents that leads them toward dating. Adolescents feel an urgent and desperate need to become part of the peer ‘in-group’. This may be partially attributed to a sense of deprivation or loss of love from parents,

being subject to single parenting, or the inability to form relationships.

Siegal J. (1995) attributes adolescence's glory and trauma to the intensity of the crucial "*first time*" when the adolescent faces the reality of the

first kiss, first dance, first date, first crush and first love
(Siegal J. 1995)

and there is a great desire to be accepted by their peers through sexual '*first times*'.

Adolescents are generally unprepared for these sudden emotional encounters. They do not yet possess the skills to effectively handle a broken love affair, in a healthy, rational manner. They believe the love, exhilaration, anxiety or hurt they experience is a feeling so deep and personal. Some of these experiences and powerful feelings are so overwhelming that they "lead to suicidal ideation, attempts and actual suicides" (Shaughnessy & Shakesby, 1986 in Siegal J. & Shaughnessy p218). Siegal (1995) is of the opinion that the adolescent transitional period can be better comprehended with an understanding of the emotional energy invested by adolescents in dating and their other concerns.