MODERATING ROLE OF GENDER IN RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PERSONAL, MATERNAL, AND CONTEXTUAL FACTORS WITH ADJUSTMENTS AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN MASHHAD, IRAN

NOOSHIN SABOUR ESMAEILI
MODERATING ROLE OF GENDER IN RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PERSONAL, MATERNAL, AND CONTEXTUAL FACTORS WITH ADJUSTMENTS AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN MASHHAD, IRAN

By

NOOSHIN SABOUR ESMAEILI

Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

August 2012
DEDICATION

Dedication to:

My parents, without whose mind and heart this project could ever have been written. I also dedicated this to my brother and my sister. My educational dreams could never come true without you.
Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of University Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

MODERATING ROLE OF GENDER IN RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PERSONAL, MATERNAL, AND CONTEXTUAL FACTORS WITH ADJUSTMENTS AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN MASHHAD, IRAN

By

NOOSHIN SABOUR ESMAEIL

August 2012

Chairman: Siti Nor Yaacob, Ph.D.

Faculty: Human Ecology

In recent decades divorce has become considerably more common. It is a life crisis for almost all families who experience it. The high number of divorced families over the past decade has created a vast amount of attention on the effects of divorce. The relationships between maternal and contextual factors with adolescents’ adjustment in divorced families have been established. However, much is to be understood on what factors moderate these relationships. It has received little attention in Iran. To address this paucity, the present study was conducted to study the moderating role of gender in the relationships between maternal and contextual factors with adjustment among adolescents in divorced families. Thus, the present study is essential and
necessary. The main purpose of this study was to determine the moderating role of gender in relationships between maternal (maternal distress, economic hardship) and contextual (post-divorce parental conflict, parent-child relationship) factors with adolescents’ adjustments (self-esteem, delinquency and academic achievement) in divorced families in Mashhad, Iran.

This study is a quantitative study and utilized a correlation research design. Respondents of the study consisted of 800 female and male high school students of divorced families aged between 15 and 18 years and their mothers whom were identified by probability proportional to size sampling technique.

Data were collected using self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of Centre for Epidemiology Studies Depression Scale (CES-D), Economic Hardship Questionnaire, Post-divorce Parental Conflict Scale, Parent-Child Relationship scale, Self-Esteem Scale and Youth Self-Report Scale. Academic achievement was measured by students’ CGPA. All the instruments used in this study were highly reliable. Descriptive, bivariate and multivariate statistics were used in data analysis.

The findings of the Pearson correlation analyses showed that maternal (maternal distress, economic hardship) and contextual (post-divorce parental conflict, parent-child relationship) factors were significantly related to adolescents’ adjustments (self-esteem, delinquency and academic achievement). The result of t-test showed that male respondents had significantly lower self-esteem and academic achievement and higher delinquency than female respondents. The hierarchical regression
analyses revealed that maternal (maternal distress, economic hardship) and contextual (post-divorce parental conflict, parent-child relationship) factors were significant predictors of adolescents’ adjustments (self-esteem, delinquency and academic achievement). Parent-child relationship emerged as the strongest predictor of adolescents’ adjustment (self-esteem, delinquency and academic achievement) in divorced families.

The findings unveiled that adolescent gender moderates the relationship between economic hardship, parent-child relationship and adolescents’ delinquency. Male adolescents had higher level of delinquency compared to females when they experienced high level of economic hardship and low quality of relationship with their mothers. Gender also moderated the relationship between maternal distress and parent-child relationship with adolescents’ academic achievement. Male adolescents had lower level of academic achievement compared to females when they experienced high level of maternal distress and low quality of relationship with their mothers.

The findings of the present study highlighted the importance of family context in enhancing self-esteem and academic achievement and preventing delinquency of high school adolescents in Mashhad-Iran. The nature of relationships between independent variables and adolescents’ adjustment implied that in divorced families, adolescents’ self-esteem and academic achievement can be increased and delinquency can be decreased if they do not experience maternal distress, economic hardship and continuing parental conflict following divorce. High levels of warmth by the custodial mother may have beneficial effects for adolescents’ adjustment in
divorced families. This study informs parents on how their post-divorce behavior contributes to their adolescents’ adjustment. This information can help parents to monitor their own behavior following divorce in order to enhance the well being of their adolescent child. This study suggests that adolescent gender is an important source of variability to consider in planning, implementing and evaluating programs for adolescents of divorced families. Findings of this study specifically supported the hypothesis that boys were more vulnerable than girls to maternal and contextual factors. Finding of this study emphasize the need to remain sensitive to gender issues in evaluating and treating child and family psychopathology.

The present results have significant recommendation for future research and practice. This study was conducted among adolescents of divorced families in Mashhad, Iran. Therefore, to generalize the result of the study to the other population; it is recommended similar study be conducted in other regions of the country and with different demographic characteristics. The present study examined adolescents’ gender as the moderating variable. However, there are many other variables, such as length of parental divorce, parental education and employment status which could become moderating variables that could be studied in future researches. The present study focused on adolescents aged between 15 and 18 years old. It is suggested that future studies should also explore younger adolescents.
Dalam dekad kini perceraian telah menjadi perkara biasa. Ia adalah krisis kehidupan bagi hampir semua keluarga yang mengalamiinya. Bilangan keluarga bercerai yang tinggi beberapa dekad yang lalu telah mencetuskan banyak tumpuan terhadap kesan perceraian. Perhubungan antara faktor ibu dan kontekstual dengan penyesuaian remaja dalam keluarga cerai telah diwujudkan. Walau bagaimanapun, banyak lagi yang perlu difahami tentang faktor-faktor yang memoderasi hubungan ini. Ia kurang mendapat perhatian di Iran. Bagi menangani kekurangan ini, kajian ini telah dijalankan untuk mengkaji peranan moderasi gender dalam perkaitan antara faktor ibu dan kontekstual dengan penyesuaian dalam kalangan remaja daripada keluarga
cerai. Oleh itu, kajian ini adalah penting dan perlu. Tujuan utama kajian ini adalah untuk menentukan peranan moderasi gender dalam perhubungan antara faktor ibu (distres ibu, kesukaran ekonomi) dan kontekstual (konflik ibu bapa pasca penceraian, perhubungan ibu bapa-anak) dengan penyesuaian remaja (estim diri, delinkuensi dan pencapaian akademik) dalam keluarga bercerai di Mashad, Iran.

Kajian ini adalah kajian kuantitatif dan menggunakan reka bentuk kajian korelasi. Responden kajian terdiri daripada 800 pelajar sekolah tinggi lelaki dan perempuan daripada keluarga bercerai yang berumur antara 15 dan 18 tahun dan ibu mereka dikenalpasti melalui teknik persampelan kebarangkalian berkadar mengikut saiz.


Dapatan analisis korelasi Pearson menunjukkan bahawa faktor ibu (distres ibu, kesukaran ekonomi) dan kontekstual (konflik ibu bapa pasca-penceraian, perhubungan ibu bapa) mempunyai signifikan berkaitan dengan penyesuaian remaja (estim diri, delinkuensi dan pencapaian akademik). Hasil ujian-t menunjukkan bahawa responden lelaki mempunyai estim diri dan pencapaian akademik yang lebih rendah dan delinkuensi yang lebih tinggi serta signifikan berbanding responden
perempuan. Analisis regresi hirarki menunjukkan bahawa konflik ibu bapa pasca-perceraian, tekanan emosi ibu, kesukaran ekonomi dan perhubungan ibu bapa-anak adalah peramal signifikan estim diri, delinkuensi, dan pencapaian akademik. Hubungan ibu bapa-anak muncul sebagai peramal paling kuat kepada estim diri, delinkuensi dan pencapaian akademik dalam kalangan remaja dari keluarga bercerai.

Dapatan kajian mendedahkan bahawa gender remaja memoderasi perkaitan antara kesukaran ekonomi dan perhubungan ibu bapa-anak dengan delinkuensi remaja. Remaja lelaki mempunyai tahap delinkuensi yang lebih tinggi berbanding remaja perempuan apabila tahap kesukaran ekonomi adalah tinggi dan kualiti perhubungan dengan ibu yang rendah. Gender juga memoderasi hubungan antara tekanan emosi ibu dan perhubungan ibu bapa-anak dengan pencapaian akademik. Remaja lelaki mempunyai tahap pencapaian akademik yang lebih rendah berbanding dengan remaja perempuan apabila ibu mereka mengalami tekanan emosi yang tinggi dan kualiti hubungan dengan ibu mereka yang rendah.

Dapatan kajian ini mengenengahkan kepentingan konteks keluarga dalam meningkatkan estim diri dan pencapaian akademik, dan mencegah delinkuensi pelajar sekolah tinggi di Mashhad-Iran. Jenis hubungan antara variabel bebas dan penyesuaian remaja memberi implikasi bahawa dalam keluarga bercerai, estim diri dan pencapaian akademik remaja dapat ditingkatkan dan delinkuensi boleh dikurangkan jika remaja tidak mengalami konflik ibu bapa, tekanan emosi ibu, dan kesukaran ekonomi yang berterusan selepas bercerai. Kemesraan yang tinggi oleh ibu mungkin mempunyai kesan berfaedah terhadap penyesuaian remaja dalam keluarga bercerai. Kajian ini memaklumkan ibu bapa tentang bagaimana tingkah laku

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I want to thank my God for not only making this possible, but giving me the strength and determination to get through this process.

I would like to express a special thank and deepest appreciation to my supervisor, Dr. Siti Nor Yaacob for the time invested in this project and helpful feedback and suggestions. She challenged, motivated and nurtured me through one of the most challenging yet fruitful and rewarding period in my life. I also wish to gratefully thank my committee member, Associate Prof. Dr. Rumaya Juhari and Dr. Mariani Mansor for all their advice throughout this project. I also would like to thank my parents, my brother and my sister whose support and continued encouragement has helped me to achieve and to accomplish my dream.
I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 16 August 2012 to conduct the final examination of Nooshin Sabour Esmaeili on her thesis entitled “Moderating role of gender in relationships between personal, maternal, and contextual factors with adjustment among adolescents in Mashhad, Iran” in accordance with the Universities and University colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the University Putra Malaysia [P.U. (A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the relevant degree.

Members of the Thesis Examination Committee were as follows:

**Sarjit Singh a/l Darshan Singh, PhD**
Lecturer
Faculty of Human Ecology
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Chairman)

**Rahimah binti Ibrahim, PhD**
Lecturer
Faculty of Gerontology
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Internal Examiner)

**Marof binti Redzuan, PhD**
Lecturer
Faculty of Human Ecology
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Internal Examiner)

**Tamara D. Afifi, PhD**
Professor
Department of Communication
University of California-Santa Barbara
United States
(External Examiner)

______________________________
SEOW HENG FONG, PhD
Professor/Deputy Dean
School of Graduate Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date:
This thesis was submitted to the senate of University Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

**Siti Nor bt Yaacob, PhD**  
Senior Lecturer  
Faculty of Human Ecology  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
(Chairman)

**Rumaya bt Juhari, PhD**  
Associate Professor  
Faculty of Human Ecology  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
(Member)

**Mariani bt Mansor, PhD**  
Senior Lecturer  
Faculty of Human Ecology  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
(Member)

---

**BUJANG BIN KIMHUAT, PhD**  
Professor and Dean  
School of Graduate Studies  
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date:
DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis is 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 currently, submitted for any other degree at University Putra Malaysia or at any other institution.

________________________________________
NOOSHIN SABOUR ESMAEILI
Date: 16 August 2012
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRAK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPROVAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DECLARATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER

1 **INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Background of the Study 2
1.2 Statement of the Problem 8
1.3 Significance of the Study 11
1.4 Objectives of the Study 13
1.4.1 General Objective 13
1.4.2 Specific Objectives 14
1.5 Research Hypothesis 14
1.6 Theoretical Background 16
1.6.1 Erikson’s Psychosocial Development Theory 16
1.6.2 Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory 18
1.6.3 Economic Deprivation Perspective 23
1.7 Conceptual Framework 25
1.8 Definitions of Terms 29
1.9 Limitations 32
1.10 Chapter Summary 32

2 **LITERATURE REVIEW**

2.1 Adolescents’ Adjustment in Divorced Families 34
2.1.1 Self-esteem 35
2.1.2 Delinquency 37
2.1.3 Academic Achievement 41
2.2 Demographic Variables and Adolescents’ Adjustment 44
2.2.1 Age, Gender and Adolescents’ Adjustment 44
2.2.2 Frequency of Meeting Non-custodial Parent 46
2.2.3 Mothers’ Years of Education 48
2.2.4 Length of Parental Divorce and Adolescents’ Adjustment 49
2.3 Maternal Factors 50
2.3.1 Maternal Distress and Adolescents’ Adjustment 50
2.3.1.1 Maternal Distress and Adolescents’ Self-esteem 52
2.3.1.2 Maternal Distress and Adolescents’ Delinquency 53
2.3.1.3 Maternal Distress and Adolescents’ Academic Achievement 54
2.3.2 Economic Hardship and Adolescents’ Adjustment 55
  2.3.2.1 Economic Hardship and Adolescents’ Self-esteem 58
  2.3.2.2 Economic Hardship and Adolescents’ Delinquency 60
  2.3.2.3 Economic Hardship and Adolescents’ Academic Achievement 61
2.4 Contextual Factors 64
  2.4.1 Post-divorce Parental Conflict and Adolescents’ Adjustment 64
    2.4.1.1 Post-divorce Parental Conflict and Adolescents’ Self-esteem 67
    2.4.1.2 Post-divorce Parental Conflict and Adolescents’ Delinquency 70
    2.4.1.3 Post-divorce Parental Conflict and Adolescents’ Academic Achievement 72
  2.4.2 Parent-child Relationship and Adolescents’ Adjustment 73
    2.4.2.1 Parent-child Relationship and Adolescents’ Self-esteem 76
    2.4.2.2 Parent-child Relationship and Adolescents’ Delinquency 77
    2.4.2.3 Parent-child Relationship and Adolescents’ Academic Achievement 81
2.5 Gender as a Moderator 84
2.6 Chapter Summary 88

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 89
  3.1 Research Design 89
  3.2 Location of the Study 90
  3.3 Population of the Study 91
  3.4 Determination of Sample Size 92
  3.5 Sampling Procedure 93
  3.6 Sample of the Study 95
  3.7 Data Collection Procedure 96
  3.8 Instrumentation 97
    3.8.1 Translation of instruments 97
    3.8.2 Maternal Distress 98
    3.8.3 Economic Hardship 100
    3.8.4 Post-divorce Parental Conflict 101
    3.8.5 Parent-child Relationship 102
    3.8.6 Self-esteem 103
    3.8.7 Delinquency 103
    3.8.8 Academic Achievement 104
    3.8.9 Demographic Characteristics Questionnaire 104
3.9 Reliability of the Instruments 105
3.10 Pilot Study 105
3.11 Data Collection and Analysis 106
3.11.1 Exploratory Data Analysis (EDA) 106
3.11.2 Inferential Statistics 111
3.12 Chapter Summary 113

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION 114
4.1 Descriptive Findings 114
4.1.1 Respondents’ Profile 115
4.1.2 Respondents’ Family Background 116
4.1.3 Maternal Factors (Maternal Distress, Economic Hardship), Contextual Factors (Post-divorce Parental Conflict, Parent-child Relationship) and Adjustment (Self-esteem, Delinquency and Academic Achievement) 119
4.2 Correlation Findings 126
4.2.1 Correlates of Adolescents’ Self-esteem 127
4.2.2 Correlates of Adolescents’ Delinquency 130
4.2.3 Correlates of Adolescents’ Academic achievement 135
4.2.4 Gender Differences in Adolescents’ Adjustment 138
4.3 Multivariate Findings 141
4.3.1 Predictors of Adolescents’ Adjustment 142
4.3.2 Gender as Moderator on the Relationships between Independent Variables and Adolescents’ Adjustment 151
4.4 Summary of Findings 170
4.5 Chapter Summary 174

5 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 176
5.1 Introduction 176
5.2 Summary of Findings 176
5.3 Conclusion 179
5.4 Implications of the Findings 180
5.4.1 Theoretical Implications 180
5.4.2 Practical Implications 182
5.5 Limitations of the Study 183
5.6 Recommendations for Future Research 184

REFERENCES 186
APPENDIX 210
BIODATA OF STUDENT 254
LIST OF PUBLICATION 254