

Parenting Behaviour of Mothers, Adolescents' Social Emotional Adjustments and their Correlates in Intact and Non-intact Malay Families in Kuala Lumpur

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of the study was to determine the relationship between parenting behaviour of mothers and social emotional adjustments of adolescents in intact and non-intact Malay families. Sample comprised 213 mothers (n = 166 from intact families; 47 from non-intact families), with at least one adolescent child between the ages of 13 and 17 years, and are residing in Kuala Lumpur. The respondents were identified via a name list of the adolescents' and e-survey. Using a self-administered questionnaire, the respondents provided information on their background characteristics, self-esteem, family functioning, parenting behaviour, and adolescents' social emotional adjustments. Results revealed that mothers parenting quality and adolescents' social emotional adjustments in the overall sample were generally moderate. Better parenting behaviour was shown to be positively related to adolescents' strengths in non-intact family, and negatively related to adolescent's difficulties in both family types. Additional analysis, however, indicated that family functioning rather than parenting behaviour is a better predictor of adolescents' social emotional adjustments. Findings imply that parents and families in any structure are important contributors of adolescents' social emotional adjustments.

Keywords: Adolescents, difficulties, intact family, non-intact family, parenting behaviour, social emotional adjustments, strengths

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INTRODUCTION

Sociologically, family is defined as a social group, a social system and a social institution (Eshleman, 2003). As a social institution, family plays its roles that revolve around intimate relationships, as

well as reproduction and socialization of their offsprings. The studies on family have long made a distinction between “traditional family” and “non-traditional family”. The phrase, ‘traditional family’, is always used interchangeably with the term ‘intact family’, which refers to a nuclear family in which membership has remained constant in the absence of divorce or other divisive factors. Intact families have been differentiated from single parent families, step families and other family types which include cohabiting parents, gay and lesbian families (Björklund *et al.*, 2007). Hence, the remarkable characteristic that distinguishes intact families from non-intact families are adolescents from intact families living continuously with both their biological parents without experiencing disruption of family structure. The emergence of diverse family structures has resulted in various societal changes such as the increase in single-parent, step-parent, and reconstituted families. Despite these shifts in family life, family institutions remain to be the basic units of the society.

Earlier studies look into various parenting behaviour and adolescent outcomes by types of household. One such study was by Simons *et al.* (2006) who delineated three perspectives regarding the association between family structure, quality of parenting and adolescent well-being. Firstly, the marriage perspective holds that adolescents raised by married parents are more likely to demonstrate better growth and development. Secondly, the two-caregiver perspective asserts that the

presence of two caregivers in facilitating adolescent development is more favourable than a single caregiver. Lastly, from the evolutionary psychology viewpoint, it is believed that biological fathers will be more invested in their own adolescents than stepfathers and that a child in intact families tends to adjust better than one in non-intact families. This theory also suggests that women have the natural instinct of being more nurturing compared to men. Hence, parenting is viewed fundamentally as the domain of the female regardless of the family conditions. These perspectives are crucial among family scholars as they have significant influence on parenting and adolescent outcomes.

A review of the literature has revealed that parents of intact families are likely to provide healthier developmental support for their adolescents compared to non-intact families (Demuth & Brown, 2004; Sweeney & Bracken, 2000; Wen, 2008). As contended by Simon *et al.* (2006), the factors that lead to such condition could be that intact families have greater family income, social support from spouse and two parents who could provide for emotional support for healthy adolescent outcomes. However, Simon and colleagues’ (2006) investigation on parenting practices on different types of household, specifically intact nuclear, stepparent, mother-grandmother, mother-relative and single mother households, indicated that mothers did not differ in parenting regardless of the family structure. Another study by Aquilino (2005) found that single parents reported less positive

attitudes towards economic support than two-biological-parent families. The inconsistent findings thus call for the need to further investigate the impact of family structure on adolescents.

The study on the impact of family structure on adolescent outcomes is not exclusive from parenting behaviour studies. An understanding of the factors contributing to parenting behaviour without doubt will serve as a basis to improve child and adolescent's development. In his influential paper, Belsky (1984) postulated an ecological determinant of parenting behaviour model. Belsky suggested that parent's characteristics are the most important condition for effective parenting, followed by contextual sources of stress and support, and adolescent's characteristics. He posited that personal maturity, psychological health, and growth-facilitating parenting are some of the factors that lead to positive parenting. The present study also took into consideration some of the parental characteristics, including age, education and self-esteem, which would contribute to parenting behaviour. Elder mothers (Moore & Florsheim, 2008), higher educational attainment mothers (Cui, Conger, Bryant, & Elder Jr, 2002; Murry *et al.*, 2008), and positive maternal self-worth (Gronick *et al.*, 2007) were found to promote functional parenting. Thus, maternal attributes are expected to contribute to the parenting behaviour.

In addition to parental contribution, Belsky's model speculates that contextual sources of stress and support can also be

determinants of parenting. A few contextual factors included in the analysis of the current study were family size (number of children), family income, and family functioning. DeOliveira *et al.* (2006) found that large family size had negative effect on family socioeconomic and home environment, while Solantaus *et al.* (2004) suggested that deprivation of family resources, particularly family income, posed a risk for adolescents due to the economic pressure parents faced. Subsequently, it led to negative consequences in parental psychological health, marital, and parenting quality. Possibly better family socioeconomic status and smaller family size could reduce family stress and thus produce better quality of parenting. On the other hand, positive family functioning was associated with desirable parenting style (Drescher, 2008). More generally, these studies provide evidence that parents do better in conducive social contexts.

In his model, Belsky also noted the role of adolescent's dispositions on parenting. In particular, the temperament of the adolescent was given emphasis; however, adolescent gender and age were also included in the present study. Difficult temperament or perceived difficulty level of the adolescent causes lesser interaction and the parents to be less responsive towards their adolescents. Adolescents who are perceived as difficult are most likely to be rejected and are particularly and likely to be rejected if the mother is highly conscientious (Neitzel & Stright, 2004). Meanwhile, parent-adolescent conflict was found to be

associated with more behavioural problems for adolescents of all ages, but it is more detrimental for adolescent (Wen, 2008). With regard to adolescent's gender, there is limited information on how gender influences parents' behaviour. A comparative study of sons and daughters in Thailand revealed no significant difference in various parenting styles (Rhucharoenpornpanich *et al.*, 2010). Despite the incongruent findings, adolescent's contribution on parenting is widely recognized.

In general, positive parenting behaviour is associated with favourable social emotional adjustments of adolescents. Past research showed that parent-adolescent relations have significant impact on psychological well-being of adolescents, regardless of gender of the parent (Videon, 2005). Numerous research has also revealed that good quality parenting, such as parental support, parental warmth, and parental acceptance promote better psychological and behavioural adjustment (Finkenauer *et al.*, 2005; Suchman *et al.*, 2007). Furthermore, Rebecca (2006) found that perceived maternal parenting style was significant for Malay adolescents' attitude in school, in which authoritative mothers had more positive attitudes. These past findings posited a positive correlation between good parenting behaviour and social emotional adjustments of the adolescents.

Besides evidence of positive association between quality parenting behaviour and adolescents' outcomes, other studies revealed that poor parenting could contribute to several developmental maladjustments. For instance, Wissink *et*

al. (2006) found significant association between negative parent-adolescent relationship and adolescents' aggressive behaviour, delinquency and low self worth. Furthermore, parental strictness was shown to be related to psychological discomfort, as well as low expectation of future success in adolescents (Cairano *et al.*, 2008). Consistent with previous findings, Vieno *et al.* (2009) found a similar relation on parental control and maladjustments in adolescents, particularly the anti-social behaviour in boys. In summary, positive parenting behaviour is reckoned as important for it tends to facilitate adolescents' towards better adjustments.

Disruption of a family does have adverse effects on parents and adolescents (Cavanagh & Huston, 2006). Given the evidence that parenting behaviour will influence adolescents' behaviour, an imperative focus for investigation on the links of these two constructs in different family structures is highlighted. Although a substantial amount of research has examined the impact of different family structures on adolescents' well-being, the growing number of family decomposition has not been matched by an increase in our understanding of their family functioning, particularly parenting behaviour in different family forms and its impact on adolescents. Thus, the present study would add to the limited knowledge available on parenting and adolescent social emotional adjustments in intact and non-intact families.

The phenomenal increase in divorce among families of all races has led to the growth of non-intact families in Malaysia.

Statistics shows that divorce cases among Malays are more in number (i.e., from 13,536 in 2000 to 27,116 cases in 2009) than other ethnic groups (i.e., from 1,613 in 2000 to 2,938 cases in 2009) (Ministry of Women Family and Community Development, 2009). This situation may be expected since the population of Malays in this country is larger compared to other groups; nonetheless, it indicates the need to understand the impacts of the structural changes on the functioning of Malay families and their adolescents. Thus, the present study was designed to examine the relationship between parenting behaviour and adolescents social emotional adjustment amongst intact and non-intact Malay families. In addition, this study determined what family (parent and adolescent) background characteristics are related to adolescent social emotional adjustments. Hence, three research questions were addressed in the present study:

1. What are the parenting behaviour and adolescents social emotional adjustments in both intact and non-intact Malay families?
2. What are the relationships among family background characteristics, parenting behaviour and adolescent social emotional adjustments?
3. What factors are predictive of the social emotional adjustments of adolescents in both family types?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Location of the Study and Sampling Procedure

The present study selected the capital city of Malaysia, the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur, in its investigation involving intact and non-intact Malay families. Kuala Lumpur is well-known as the fastest growing metropolitan region in the country, and is the only state in Malaysia that has a 100% level of urbanization (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2000). Rapid modernization and urbanization were noted to contribute to greater decomposition of family structure, and subsequent variation in family forms in this area (Al-Kazi, 2008). According to the Social Statistics Bulletin (2007), 40.7 percent of the total populations in Kuala Lumpur are Malays, followed by Chinese (39.3%), and Indians (10.17%). Furthermore, the number of registered Muslim divorces in this state has seen an increase from 499 divorces to 1,637 divorces within 10 years since 2000. Thus, theoretically, this area is considered appropriate for the present study.

The theoretical population for this study was mothers with at least one adolescent, aged 13 to 17 years, and are residing in Kuala Lumpur. Due to unexpected poor responses (i.e., 32% of 465 distributed questionnaires collected, only 24% was useable) in the data collection process and the types of respondents needed for the present study, two methods of sampling techniques were employed: (1) non-proportionate stratified random sampling

(NPSRS) and (2) purposive sampling (PS) that includes an Electronic survey (ES). The NPSRS technique was utilized during the first attempt of the data collection. Via this technique, intact families were identified based on a name list of Forms 1, 2 and 4 male and female students obtained from four randomly selected daily government schools. Simultaneously during this first stage, since their availability was lesser in the accessible population, the PS technique was employed to identify non-intact families from the selected schools.

Due to the low return rate, as mentioned earlier, the present study opted for an electronic survey in order to obtain a larger sample size. The same questionnaire used in the previous phase was transformed into the electronic survey. The host provided a URL specifically for the survey created by the researcher. The identified respondents received emails provided with a password to assess the electronic survey. The service provided by the electronic survey host ensured complete responses before the respondents were allowed for submission, thus minimizing the rate of missing data. During this second attempt of the data collection, a total of 177 responses were

received, consisting of 144 intact families' mothers and 33 non-intact families' mothers. Eventually, a sum of 213 qualified responses was gathered from both phases (see Table 1 on sampling technique used and its respective sample size).

Sample Description

Most of the mothers from both family types appeared to be still in their productive age (mean_{intact} = 42.05 years; mean_{non-intact} = 41.34 years). On average, the mothers have moderate level of education (mean_{intact} = 11.76 years; mean_{non-intact} = 12.70 years). After data trimming, results showed that both intact and non-intact families seemed to have moderate monthly income (mean_{intact} = RM3921.60; mean_{non-intact} = RM3274.40). Number of adolescents in both family types appeared to be moderate as well (mean_{intact} = 4; mean_{non-intact} = 3).

The findings also revealed that intact families seemed to display a fairly good family functioning (adj. mean = 3.37 out of 4) compared to the moderate level for the non-intact families (adj. mean = 2.71 out of 4). Adolescents from both families were in their early adolescence (mean age = 15 years), and the number of females was more

TABLE 1
Sampling technique and sample size

	Subsample	Sampling technique	Sample Size	Sub-total
First attempt (Questionnaire)	Intact	Non-proportionate Stratified Random Sampling (NPSRS)	22	36
	Non-intact	Purposive Sampling (PS)	14	
Second attempt (Electronic survey)	Intact	Purposive Sampling (PS)	144	177
	Non-intact	Purposive Sampling (PS)	33	
			Total sample size	213

than males (intact families: male = 41.0%, female = 59.0%; non-intact families: male = 63.8%, female = 36.2%). Most of the adolescents (intact = 75.9%, non-intact = 66.0%) were perceived by mothers in both families as easy to raise or in other words, have good temperament.

Measures

Self-esteem

Self-esteem of the mothers in this study was measured using Rosenberg's (1965) Self-Esteem Scale (RSE). The 10-item scale was rated on four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 4 (*strongly disagree*). Total scores were calculated by summing all 10 items after reverse coding the negatively worded items. A sample item is "on the whole, I am satisfied with myself". The alpha coefficient yielded for the total sample was 0.83, and 0.70, and 0.84 for intact and non-intact families, respectively.

Family functioning

The Family Assessment Device (FAD) (Epstein, Baldwin & Bishop, 1983) based on the McMaster Model of Family Functioning was used to assess family functioning of the respondents. A total of 12 items adopted from General Functioning Subscale was rated on four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 4 (*strongly disagree*). An example of the item in the scale is "planning family activities is difficult because we misunderstand each other". The items describing healthy functioning were reverse coded so as higher score would indicate a better level of family

functioning. Meanwhile, a mean score below 2.00 indicated problematic family functioning. For the present study, the general functioning subscale demonstrated good reliability with alpha coefficient of 0.86 for the total sample, 0.80 for intact families and 0.77 for non-intact families.

Adolescent temperament

The 'adolescent temperament' construct describes how easy or difficult it is to raise an adolescent. A single item, with four-point Likert responses, was used to rate the chosen focal adolescent ranging from 1 (*very easy to raise*) to 4 (*very difficult to raise*). High score in this measure indicates that the adolescent is perceived by the mother as being difficult to raise. This construct was first used by Simons, Whitebeck, Conger and Melby (1990) in their study to identify the determinant of parenting. Using the same scale, adolescent's temperament was found to have significant correlation with mother's parenting behaviour in a local study (Baharudin, 1996).

Parenting behaviour

Parenting Behaviour Scale (Voydanoff & Donnelly, 1998) which encompasses four dimensions; namely, parent-adolescent discussions, parent-adolescent activities, parental involvement and parental monitoring, was used to assess mother's parenting behaviour. The 12 items scale rated on a 5-point Likert ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*very often*) measure frequency of parents practicing various parenting

behaviour. Total score was derived by summing all items. An item from the scale is "Talk about a television show you watched together". A higher total score indicates a better quality of parenting behaviour. For this study, the overall scale yielded fairly good reliability, alpha coefficient was 0.85 for total sample, 0.77 and 0.89 for intact families subsample and non-intact families, respectively.

Social emotional adjustments

The social emotional adjustments of adolescents in the present study were measured using Strength and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQ) (Goodman, 1997). The respondents rated their chosen focal adolescent child's social emotional adjustments on two broad aspects, i.e., strengths (5 items) and difficulties (20 items). A strength item from the scale is "Considerate of other people's feelings" and one example of difficulties scale is "Restless, overactive, cannot stay still for long". The scale was rated on three-point Likert scale with 0 (*not true*), 1 (*somewhat true*) and 2 (*true*). Adolescent's strengths score was obtained by adding up all five items in the prosocial subscale. A higher score indicates greater adolescent's strengths. Total score for difficulties of the adolescent was obtained by summing all 20 items after reverse coding negative items. A lower score indicates lesser difficulties of the adolescent. The scale in the present study demonstrated varied reliability value based on the subscales. For the adolescent's strengths, total sample had a good reliability

with alpha coefficient of 0.78, while alpha for the intact family subsample and non-intact family subsample were 0.75 and 0.73, respectively. As for adolescent's difficulties, alpha coefficient of 0.80 was yielded for both total sample and intact families subsample, and this was 0.73 for non-intact families subsample.

Data Analysis

Univariate analysis was generated through descriptive statistics to provide information about the respondents' characteristics, parenting behaviours and adolescent's social emotional adjustments. Descriptive results were reported using percentage, mean, median, standard deviation, minimum, maximum, adjusted mean and range. Bivariate analysis was computed in order to determine the relationships between two variables according to the specific objectives using Pearson Correlation. The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) represents the degree in which the two variables are linearly correlated in the sample. For the multivariate analysis, multiple linear regression was computed to determine the predictors for adolescent social emotional adjustments, namely, strengths and difficulties.

RESULTS

Parenting Behaviour and Adolescents' Social Emotional Adjustments

Results from the descriptive analyses revealed that mothers from intact families seemed to demonstrate better parenting behaviours as compared to mothers from

non-intact families. The mean and adjusted mean score of mothers from intact families (mean = 41.19, sd. = 5.07, adj. mean = 3.43 out of 5) (mean = 33.51, sd. = 6.95, adj. mean = 2.79 out of 5) were slightly higher. Further analysis indicated significant difference in parenting behaviour between mothers from intact and non-intact families ($t = 7.06, p < 0.001$).

Social emotional adjustments were determined by adolescents' strengths and the difficulties as rated by their mothers. Adolescents from intact families were found to display more strengths, as measured based on prosocial behaviour, (mean = 7.91, sd. = 2.05, adj. mean = 1.58 out of 2) than those from non-intact families (mean = 5.81, sd. = 1.96, adj. mean = 1.16 out of 2). Nonetheless, adolescents' strength was not found to be significantly different between these two groups ($t = 1.63, p > 0.05$). Apparently, mothers tended to perceive their adolescents as not having much difficulty in social emotional adjustments. Adolescents were at a lower risk of difficulty in social emotional adjustments, where majority (83.1%) was having normal level of behavioural difficulties. However, the analysis on both subsamples revealed that adolescents from non-intact families (mean = 7.25, sd. = 5.46, adj. mean = 0.42 out of 2) have more difficulties compared to those from intact families (mean = 11.96, sd. = 4.51, adj. mean = 0.63 out of 2). The discrepancy was supported by a significant t-test results ($t = -5.03, p < 0.001$).

Relationships between Family Background Characteristics, Parenting Behaviour and Adolescent Social Emotional Adjustments

The correlation matrix for all the study variables is presented in Table 2. The findings revealed that family size and family functioning were significantly related to both strengths and difficulties. However, adolescents' temperament was related only to strengths, while mother's education, and self-esteem and adolescent's age were significantly associated to difficulties. The correlational analyses also indicated that there were fewer correlates of strengths in non-intact family, as compared to intact family. In particular, mother's self-esteem and family size were the only two factors that were significantly related to strengths in non-intact family. Meanwhile, in the intact family, beside mother's self-esteem, other factors (i.e., family income, family functioning, and adolescent temperament) were also found to be related significantly to strengths.

As for adolescent's difficulties, with exception of mother's age and family income, significant correlates for both subsamples were almost similar, and these included mother's self-esteem, family functioning, and adolescent temperament. Parenting behaviour and adolescent social emotional adjustments correlated significantly, except for strengths in non-intact family. Good parenting behaviour was positively related to strengths in intact family, but negatively related to difficulties, regardless of the family structure.

TABLE 2
Correlation matrix among variables in intact and non-intact families

Variables														
1.	Age (M)	I	1											
		N	1											
2.	Education (M)	I	-.152	1										
		N	-.153	1										
3.	Esteem (M)	I	-.036	-.011	1									
		N	.374**	-.283	1									
4.	Income (F)	I	-.132	.504***	-.147	1								
		N	-.229	.537***	-.227	1								
5.	Family size (F)	I	.308***	-.214**	-.111	-.025	1							
		N	.244	-.494***	-.308*	-.076	1							
6.	Functioning (F)	I	-.271***	-.163*	.325***	-.437***	-.177*	1						
		N	.069	-.052	.636*	-.308*	-.076	1						
7.	Age (C)	I	.235**	-.049	.096	-.004	.168*	.147	1					
		N	.389**	-.210	.345*	-.136	.243	.074	1					
8.	Sex (C)	I	.204**	-.038	.051	-.040	-.003	.081	.116	1				
		N	-.008	.402**	-.080	.047	-.294*	.044	-.142	1				
9.	Temperament (C)	I	.035	.038	.036	.109	.132	-.233**	-.121	-.074	1			
		N	.048	-.120	-.313*	-.149	.059	-.229	-.111	-.057	1			
10.	PB	I	.053	.084	.088	-.113	-.163*	.285***	.029	.097	-.397***	1		
		N	-.165	.377**	.359*	.026	-.289*	.688***	-.294*	.227	-.259	1		
11.	STR	I	.031	-.144	.303***	-.399***	.054	.633***	.060	-.037	-.274***	.285***	1	
		N	.003	-.051	.341*	.015	.370*	.058	-.017	-.040	-.245	.104	1	
12.	DIF	I	.154*	.039	-.298***	.320***	.683	-.487***	-.058	.002	.467***	-.189*	-.664***	1
		N	.182	-.157	-.552***	-.184	-.242	-.409**	-.119	-.136	.313*	-.374**	-.319*	1

I: Intact family; N: Non-intact family; M: Mother's characteristics; F: Family social contexts; C: Adolescent characteristics; PB: Parenting behavior; STR: Strengths; DIF: Difficulties; *p ≤ 0.05, ** p ≤ 0.01, ***p ≤ 0.001; Sex was dummy coded: 0=male, 1=female

Predictors of Adolescents' Social Emotional Adjustments

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to investigate the unique predictors of adolescent strengths and difficulties. Linear regression analysis requires that there is a linear relationship between the independent variables and dependent variables (Leechet *al.*, 2005). For the present study, all the factors significant at the bivariate level were entered into the regression model for further analysis. Results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 3. For intact family, the combination of all five factors

was statistically significant, $F = 27.91$, $p \leq 0.001$. All factors, with exception of parenting behaviour, significantly predicted adolescent's strengths. Together, these predictors accounted for 46 percent of the variance in adolescent's strengths in intact family. Nonetheless, for non-intact family, the results did not reveal any significant predictor.

Regression analysis results on the adolescent's difficulties are presented in Table 4. For intact family sample, the six factors produced a significant model ($F = 21.21$, $p \leq 0.001$) for the prediction

TABLE 3
Predictors of Adolescent's Strengths

Model 1 (Intact)				Model 2 (Non-intact)			
Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	β	Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	<i>B</i>
Self-esteem (M)	.099	.043	.146*	Self-esteem (M)	.107	.068	.233
Family income (F)	.000	.000	-.152*	Family size (F)	.405	.214	.280
Functioning (F)	.209	.033	.463***				
Temperament (C)	-.604	.279	-.145*				
PB	.036	.027	.089				
	<i>R</i> ²		.463		<i>R</i> ²		.146
	<i>F</i>		27.91***		<i>F</i>		4.937*

M: Mother's characteristics; F: Family social contexts; C: Adolescent characteristics;
* $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$

TABLE 4
Predictors of adolescent's difficulties

Model 3 (Intact)				Model 4 (Non-intact)			
Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	β	Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	<i>B</i>
Mother's age (M)	.032	.079	.027	Self-esteem (M)	-.555	.192	-.484**
Self-esteem (M)	-.406	.117	-.227**	Functioning (F)	.077	.199	.081
Family income (F)	.000	.000	.146*	Temperament (C)	.945	1.027	.122
Functioning (F)	-.290	.096	-.243**	PB	-.158	.124	-.224
Temperament (C)	5.406	.758	.490***				
PB	.150	.076	.139*				
	<i>R</i> ²		.437		<i>R</i> ²		.295
	<i>F</i>		21.21***		<i>F</i>		5.80**

M: Mother's characteristics; F: Family social contexts; C: Adolescent characteristics;
* $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$

on adolescent's strengths. Mother's self-esteem, family income, family functioning, temperament, and parenting behaviour were found to be significant predictors. About 44 percent of the variation in adolescent's difficulties was explained by these predictors. In the meantime, in non-intact family, the model ($F = 5.80, p \leq 0.01$) consisted of four factors, namely, mother's self-esteem, family functioning, temperament and parenting behaviour, significantly predicted adolescent's difficulties. However, only mother's self-esteem was found to be significant predictor. Together, the four factors accounted for 30 percent of the variance in adolescent's strengths in non-intact families.

DISCUSSION

As noted earlier, the primary objective of the study was to determine the relationships between parenting behaviour and adolescent's adjustments in both intact and non-intact families. Prior to this, the level of parenting and adjustments of the adolescent were identified. In contrast to earlier evidence (Simons *et al.*, 2006), the present study revealed that mothers from the intact families seemed to practice more favourable parenting behaviour compared to non-intact families. With regards to adolescent's adjustments, although the study unveiled the discrepancies of adolescent's difficulties between the two studied samples, overall, adolescents scored better in "strengths" compared to "difficulties". These findings seem to suggest that the target adolescents in this study may not be experiencing social emotional problem.

The bivariate findings paralleled the literature where parenting behaviour and adolescents' outcomes are closely related. The present study provides evidence on the significant impact of parenting on adolescent's adjustments for both intact and non-intact families, with the exception of adolescent's strengths in non-intact families. Another finding from the present study worth mentioning is on the multiple determinants of parenting behaviour, as proposed in Belsky's model, although the order of importance was dissimilar. As expected, positive developmental outcome in adolescents is associated with responsive mothers, i.e. those with conducive parenting behaviour. The three dimensions of parenting behaviour focused in the present study were parent-adolescent relationship, parental monitoring and involvement. Based on the results, the study suggests that good quality parenting is vital for adolescent's social emotional well-being.

Regression analyses were computed to determine the predictors of adolescent's social emotional adjustments. In intact families, mother's self-esteem, family income, family functioning and temperament predicted strengths in adolescents. A similar set of predictors for strengths including parenting behaviour were found in non-intact families. All of these factors were in the expected direction, with exception of family income. Interestingly, family's wealth seemed to promote difficulties rather than strengths in adolescents. This finding contradicts with Solantaus *et al.* (2004) who viewed family deprivation in financial resources as a risk for adolescents. The possible reason for this

sociological pendulum could have attributed to the increase of affluent parents in the society, which in turn produce “pampered adolescent”, as denoted by Mamen (2006). Wealth could to a certain extent complicate developmental process because it can “belittle achievement, distort relationship and amplifies sense of what is good enough” (Pittman, 2004).

Despite the significant correlation found at the bivariate level, findings from the study revealed that family functioning instead of parenting behaviour played a stronger role in influencing adolescent's social emotional adjustment, particularly in intact families. This finding may be plausible as the interactive function of a family as a whole unit could bring bigger impact on adolescents compared to their experience in its sub-unit (i.e., parent-child interaction) (Cox & Brooks-Gunn, 1999; Holmbeck, 1996). Thus, the finding cast light on the crucial role of systematic, rather than dyadic functioning, in studying adolescent's development. Nonetheless, the focus on interaction between parent and adolescent in this study may not help to refine the understanding on the impact of social interaction patterns in families on adolescent development.

Several implications could be drawn from the present study and useful for the parents, educators, policy makers and other relevant parties. The present study has provided greater insight into the studies of parenting behaviour and adolescent's adjustments, particularly in the Malay population. From the theoretical

perspective, determinants of parenting are multidimensional and this had been shown in the primitive analysis. However, some novice findings were found regarding the factor of strengths and difficulties. One of the notable ideas is the discovering of family process in influencing adolescents' adjustments. Such conception connotes that a system perspective may be better to understand how developmental process occur beyond the dyad. This new knowledge redefines both the processes and outcomes that emerge between parents and their adolescents. In closing, the present study furthers our understanding of the dyadic parenting process and the systemic family functioning that play unique roles on adolescents' social emotional adjustments, for both intact and non-intact families. Some empirical support for the theoretical integration of determinant of parenting has been realized. An enhanced understanding of families helps family practitioners to better assist families to balance the dyadic and systemic processes that both can be protective factors for promoting adolescents into well-adjusted member in the society. Assistance given to a family should incorporate assessment of family contextual factors together with parental factors into practice and education.

There are some limitations within the present study. The present study included only two types of households, which were simplified to intact and non-intact families. A broader array of family structures is recommended to avoid undue generalization. Furthermore, the present

study focused only on maternal parenting; in fact, paternal parenting behavior deserves further exploration. As noted earlier, mixed sampling methods were utilized when there are complications in data collection. Along with the shortcomings in data collection, difference in the sample size of the two subgroups was large; thus, limit the statistical comparison tests to be conducted. Despite the drawbacks in the study, it revealed that conducive parenting could contribute to adolescent's positive behavioural development and subsequently buffer an adolescent from difficult disposition. Conceptually, mother's parenting behaviour is influenced by multiple factors, those of which discussed in this study were parental characteristics, family social contexts and adolescent's characteristics. These determinants of parenting could have influenced on the adolescent-rearing of the mothers, which in turn, have marked effects on adolescent's adjustments.

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