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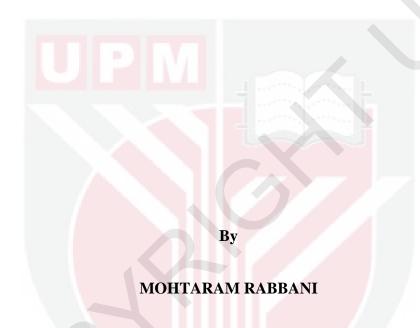
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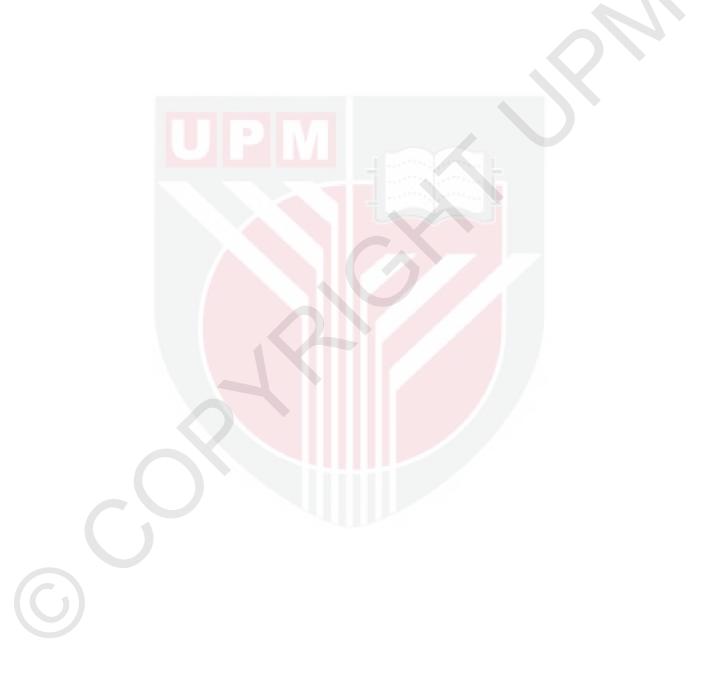
MOHTARAM RABBANI

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RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PARENTAL AND PEER ATTACHMENT, SOCIAL SUPPORT, COPING STRATEGIES AND STRESS AMONG IRANIAN ADOLESCENTS LIVING IN MALAYSIA

By

MOHTARAM RABBANI

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

October 2015

DEDICATION

Dedicated to my lovely daughter, Seyedeh Parmida, for her patience during this period of my study; to my father and my mother, Mr. Naser Rabbani and Mrs. Sedigheh Mousavinezhad who took care of my daughter in my absence; to my dear husband, Seyed Bagher, to my elder sisters, Maryam, Mozhgan, Mahtab, and my dear brothers, Mohammad and Amirali.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PARENTAL AND PEER ATTACHMENT, SOCIAL SUPPORT, COPING STRATEGIES AND STRESS AMONG IRANIAN ADOLESCENTS LIVING IN MALAYSIA

By

MOHTARAM RABBANI

October 2015

Chairperson : **Associate Prof Mariani Binti Mansor, PhD**
Faculty : **Human Ecology**

Understanding the factors contributing to stress among adolescents is vital for effective intervention. Parental attachment and peer attachment, as speculated in attachment theory by Bowlby (1982), are key factors of stress among adolescents. According to Transactional Model of Stress Lazarus (1987), social support is coping resources that has effect on stress. The effect of parental attachment, peer attachment, social support on stress could be influenced by coping strategies, as an internal factor. The present study was designed to examine the influence of parental attachment, peer attachment and social support on stress among adolescents, and to examine the mediating role of coping strategies on these relationships. This study utilized correlational study design using survey method. A total of 150 students aged between 12 and 18 years old was selected as respondents for this study using simple random sampling method. This study was conducted at one private and two public Iranian schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Findings from this study illustrated that there are significant and negative relationships between parental attachment, peer attachment and stress among Iranian adolescents living in Malaysia. Adolescents with secure attachment to parents have less stress. In addition, the relationship between social support and stress was negative and significant. So, adolescents with higher social support from important persons in their lives have lower stress. Furthermore, the results of mediation analysis suggest that coping strategies mediated the relationships between parental attachment, peer attachment, social support and stress. Emotion-focused coping strategy has the mediation effect on the relationship between parental attachment and stress. Both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategy has the mediation effect on the relationships between peer attachment and stress. Emotion-focused coping strategy has a mediation effect on the relationship between social support and stress. Social support is the strongest predictor of stress in this study. Other significant predictors of stress are parental attachment, peer attachment, problem-focused coping strategy and emotion-focused coping strategy.

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Parental attachment, peer attachment and social support are related to stress and the mediation findings suggests that coping strategies play complementary role on the relationship between parental attachment and peer attachment, social support, and stress. The study advances understanding on the important influences of parental attachment, peer attachment, social support and coping strategies on stress among adolescents. This investigation provides insights into the individual and environmental factors that are related to stress that can be beneficial to parents, school psychologist, counsellors and teachers.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

PERKAITAN ANTARA PERAPATAN KEIBUBAPAAN DAN RAKAN SEBAYA, SOKONGAN SOSIAL, STRATEGI DAYA TINDAK DAN TEKANAN DALAM KALANGAN REMAJA IRAN YANG TINGGAL DI MALAYSIA

Oleh

MOHTARAM RABBANI

Oktober 2015

Pengerusi : **Prof Madya Mariani Binti Mansor, PhD**
Fakulti : **Ekologi Manusia**

Memahami faktor yang menyumbang kepada tekanan dalam kalangan remaja adalah sangat penting untuk intervensi yang efektif. Perapatan keibubapaan dan rakan sebaya, seperti yang diramalkan dalam Teori Perapatan oleh Bowlby (1982), adalah kunci utama kepada tekanan dalam kalangan remaja. Menurut Transactional Model of Stress (Lazarus, 1987), sokongan sosial adalah sumber daya tindak yang memberi kesan kepada tekanan. Kesan perapatan keibubapaan, perapatan rakan sebaya, dan sokongan sosial kepada tekanan boleh dipengaruhi oleh strategi daya tindak sebagai faktor dalaman. Kajian ini dilaksanakan untuk meneliti pengaruh perapatan keibubapaan, perapatan rakan sebaya dan sokongan sosial dalam kalangan remaja, dan untuk meneliti peranan perantara strategi daya tindak terhadap perhubungan ini. Kajian ini menggunakan reka bentuk kajian korelasi menggunakan kaedah tinjauan. Sejumlah 150 pelajar berumur antara 12 hingga 18 tahun telah dipilih sebagai responden untuk kajian ini menggunakan teknik persampelan rawak mudah. Kajian ini dijalankan di sebuah sekolah swasta Iran dan dua buah sekolah awam Iran di Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa terdapat perhubungan negatif dan signifikan di antara perapatan keibubapaan, perapatan rakan sebaya dan tekanan dalam kalangan remaja Iran yang tinggal di Malaysia. Remaja yang mempunyai perapatan keibubapaan yang selamat menunjukkan kurang mergalami tekanan. Di samping itu, perhubungan antara sokongan sosial dan tekanan adalah negatif dan signifikan. Oleh itu, remaja yang mempunyai sokongan sosial yang tinggi daripada orang-orang penting dalam hidup mereka menunjukkan tekanan yang rendah. Tambahan pula, hasil analisis perantara mencadangkan bahawa strategi daya tindak adalah perantara dalam hubungan antara perapatan keibubapaan, perapatan rakan sebaya, sokongan sosial dan tekanan. Strategi daya tindak berfokus emosi mempunyai kesan perantara terhadap hubungan antara perapatan keibubapaan dan tekanan. Strategi daya tindak yang berfokus masalah mempunyai kesan terhadap hubungan antara perapatan rakan sebaya dan tekanan. Kedua-dua strategi daya tindak yang berfokuskan masalah dan

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emosi mempunyai kesan perantara terhadap hubungan antara perapatan rakan sebaya dan tekanan. Sokongan sosial adalah peramal terkuat tekanan dalam kajian ini. Peramal signifikan tekanan yang lain adalah perapatan keibubapaan, perapatan rakan sebaya, strategi daya tindak yang berfokus masalah dan strategi daya tindak yang berfokus emosi.

Perapatan keibubapaan, rakan sebaya, dan sokongan sosial adalah berkaitan dengan tekanan dan dapatan kajian bahawa strategi daya tindak sebagai pengantara memainkan peranan komplementari terhadap perhubungan antara perapatan keibubapaan, perapatan rakan sebaya, sokongan sosial dan tekanan. Kajian ini meningkatkan pemahaman kita tehadap pengaruh penting perapatan keibubapaan, perapatan rakan sebaya, sokongan sosial dan strategi daya tindak terhadap tekanan dalam kalangan remaja. Penyelidikan ini memberi maklumat tentang faktor individu dan persekitaran yang yang berkait dengan tekanan dan bermanfaat kepada keibubapaan, ahli psikologi sekolah, kaunselor dan guru.

AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I thank Allah for giving me the strength, patience and ability to carry out this research successfully. Special thanks to Universiti Putra Malaysia and the Faculty of Human Ecology that provided the support and permission letter that I needed for data collection. I wish here to express my gratitude and thanks to my supervisor, Dr Mariani Binti Mansor for her guidance and assistance. She continuously encouraged me in various ways and her valuable suggestions, patience, support and tolerance over the period of writing this thesis.

I am also greatly indebted to my supervisory committee members, Associate Professor Dr. Mansor Abu Talib and Dr. Siti Nor Yaacob for their cooperation and guidance. They have suggested valuable changes pertinent to the completion of this thesis. I would also like to thank the management of the three Iranian schools in Malaysia for their cooperation during data collection. I also wish to express my appreciation to all students who participated in this research.

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This thesis is submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee are as follows:

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Declaration by graduate student

I hereby confirm that:
‹ this thesis is my original work;
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Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name and Matric No.: Mohtaram Rabbani, GS28612

Declaration by Members of Supervisory Committee

This is to confirm that:
- the research conducted and the writing of this thesis was under our supervision;
- supervision responsibilities as stated in the Universiti Putra Malaysia (Graduate Studies) Rules 2003 (Revision 2012-2013) are adhered to.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

IPPA   Inventory of Parental and Peer Attachment

ASQ   Adolescent Stress Questionnaire

CASSS   Child and Adolescent Social Support Scale

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Adolescence is a time period between a childhood and adulthood and represents one of the acute transitions in a life span. Adolescents are categorised by a marvellous step in growth and development. The biological developments drive many aspects of this growth and change, with a start of puberty marking the passage from a childhood to adolescence. During this stage, adolescents also go through a phase of physical maturation and change in hormones (Thapar, Collishaw, Pine, & Thapar, 2012), develop an urge for independence and create an enhancement of a social salience and interactions with peers (Lomanowska, Lovic, Rankine, Mooney, Robinson, & Kraemer, 2011). The stage of adolescence is a stressful time for many adolescents during which they can go through the serious disorders and may lead to an onset or recurrence of the psychotic symptoms (Hoffmann, Cerbone, & Su, 2000; Howard & Medway, 2004; Tessner, Mittal, & Walker, 2011).

According to a report of the Iranian embassy in Malaysia, 70,000 Iranians are living in Malaysia and that appears to be creased yearly in the previous years (Rahmandoust, Ahmadian, & Shah, 2011). The multi-cultural, multi-religious and a relatively open social liberty nature of Malaysia have made it an ideal destination for many Iranians. There are a number of Iranian adolescents who are temporarily residing in Malaysia (Rahmandoust et al., 2011); however, there exist only few studies among the Iranian adolescents in Malaysia (Yousefi, 2012). The Iranian adolescents living in other countries are prone to develop the psychosocial stress (Lupien, McEwen, Gunnar, & Heim, 2009; Zangeneh, Nouroozifar, & Kantini, 2004) and mental health problems, whereby, the statistics of a study showed that 26% of adolescents had the psychiatric problems (Arman, Keypour, Maracy, & Attari, 2012). Stress among the Iranian adolescents was found to be associated with a variety of health related issues and 25% of the Iranian adolescents were detected to have mental stress and anxiety symptoms (Khalatbari & Azizzadeh, 2011; Babak Moeini, Shafii, Hidarnia, Babaii, Birashk, & Allahverdipour, 2008; Thapar et al., 2012). The Iran census reported that in 2011, about 37% of the Iranian adolescents had issues related to stress and anxiety (Noroozian, 2012); likewise, in another study, an overall prevalence of stress among the Iranian adolescents was found to be about 76.1% (Lopez, 2014). It is an alarming situation for both the Iranian government and researchers due to this increasing trend of stress, anxiety, delinquency, depression and other mental health problems among the Iranian adolescents.

This study has focussed on a normal stress among the Iranian adolescents in Malaysia. Since, adolescence is a developmental stage which is categorised by the numerous alterations in almost every feature of an individual's life, calling for new mental adaptations. A disclosure to various stressors caused by these changes characterises a central and normal part of a procedure development during

adolescence (Moksnes, 2011). Stress develops most often in a course of normal life events and normal developmental processes (Elder Jr, Caspi, & Burton, 2013; Seiffge Krenke, 2013). Likewise, the Iranian adolescents are temporarily living in Malaysia and the temporary nature of their stay in another country serves as a protective factor against their experience of a new culture and social situations (Roley, Kawakami, Baker, Hurtado, Chin, & Hovey, 2014). Most of the Iranian schools in Malaysia provide Iranian environment, which is a plus point for the Iranian adolescents as they can experience same customs and cultures in the early years of their stay in another country. According to most of the studies, the acculturative stress is generally concentrated among the immigrants, refugees, and indigenous peoples who encounter new culture and customs, while, the people living in another country on the temporary basis are not included in this category (Driscoll & Torres, 2013; Sirin, Ryce, Gupta, & Rogers-Sirin, 2013; Torres, Driscoll, & Voell, 2012). It is due to these reasons that stress has been considered as a developmental process during an adolescence period in this research study.

As mentioned earlier, stress is one of the main problems among adolescents which leads to the beginning or reappearance of psychotic indications, and yet, there is an inadequate understanding of the effects of stress among the adolescents (Cho & Haslam, 2010; Lomanowska et al., 2011; Schraml, Perski, Grossi, & Simonsson-Sarnecki, 2011). A proper understanding of the factors contributing to stress is vital in order to deal with it in an effective way. So far, a relationship between the parents and adolescents has been considered as a critical and important factor on stress among adolescents. There have been consistent evidences which indicate that the adolescents, who have a secure attachment with their parents, are more adjustable and possess low stress and anxiety (Hampel & Petermann, 2006; Howard & Medway, 2004). To date, parents have been considered as a primary socialization agents that play a great role in a social development and stress control among adolescents (Howard & Medway, 2004) and family has been considered as one of the most influential and powerful agent in the lives of young people (Buchanan, 2014).

Although, the attachment relationships play a very important role during adolescence as a rapid growth and several significant structural changes are experienced during this time period, when peers become prominent as the attachment figures (Millings, Buck, Montgomery, Spears, & Stallard, 2012). A study of relationship between the peer attachment and stress supported an impact of the peer attachment on stress (Brumariu, Obsuth, & Lyons-Ruth, 2013; Paterson, Pryor, & Field, 1995; Pinheiro Mota & Matos, 2012) and illustrated adolescence is a vital time for the development because of the peer relations and relationships removed from the dependence on the older people (Erwin, 2013). A social support is another factor that contributes to stress and a relationship between a social support and stress has been clearly considered and explained by the previous studies (Benedict, Dahn, Antoni, Traeger, Kava, Bustillo, Zhou, & Penedo, 2014; Petroff, 2008). Social support mitigates the effects of stress and provides an actual assistance to the persons in the times of stress (Ganster & Victor, 2011). The parental attachment, peer attachment and social support are those external factors that create a positive influence in stress management during the stressful conditions. However, coping strategies are internal factors and behaviors that defends people from being psychologically hurt by the

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difficult social experiences (Cummings, Greene, & Karraker, 2014; Hetherington & Blechman, 2014; Revenson & Lepore, 2012). According to the research studies describing an impact of coping strategies on stress, there exist a relationship between coping strategies and stress (Hetherington & Blechman, 2014). The various types of coping strategies are related to stress which often regulate anxiety and stress (emotion-focused coping strategy) or allow the person to concentrate on making a decision (problem-focused coping strategy) in the stressful situations.

Relationships between the parental attachment, peer attachment, social support, coping strategies and stress have been individually studied in the previous research works (Baqutayan, 2011; Folkman, 2013; Howard & Medway, 2004; Operario, Tschann, Flores, & Bridges, 2006; Pierceall & Keim, 2007); however, an interplay of these variable has been considered in this research study. In spite of investigating in detail, a relationship between the coping strategies and stress in a previously carried out research works (Hager & Runtz, 2012; Mohammadinia, 2010), the studies describing a mediating role of coping strategies are still insufficient. This gap in a literature has been addressed by a present research study by considering interplay between the parental attachment, peer attachment and social support, as the factors related to stress. Moreover, mediating role of coping strategies on the relationships between the parental attachment, peer attachment, social support and stress have also been discussed in detail in this research study. It is a fact that an adolescence is a very sensitive period of one's life and this stage is characterized as a period of storm and stress (Cote, 2013; Wiklund, Malmgren Olsson, Ohman, Bergstrom, & Fjellman-Wiklund, 2012), therefore, an assessment of the important factors that are related to stress, together with impacts of coping strategies, serves as impressive bridges to advance the understanding of stress among adolescents.

1.2   Problem Statement

A problem statement discusses the problems relating to a study and a research design includes variables in the study and relationships among these variables, the respondents, and the research sites (Creswell, 2013). The statement of problem of this study is stated in the following paragraphs, which contains some main constituents; major intent, statement of core theory of the study, variables, connections of variables, type of strategy, unit analysis.

The purpose of this study was to explain the relationships between the parental attachment, peer attachment, social support, coping strategies, and stress among the Iranian adolescents. As mentioned in a previous section, an adolescence is a period of increased susceptibility to stress and individuals are confronted by the sequences of developmental challenges, for instance attaining increasing independence from a family or rewarding new social roles with peers (Piko, 2011). At this stage, these changes are responsible for producing stress among adolescents, which can also affect their development, behaviour, and health (Howard & Medway, 2004). Stress has been related with a variety of health consequences, mental, emotional, and physical morbidity in the previous studies (B. Moeini, Poorolajal, & Gharlipour Gharghani, 2012; Yusoff, Rahim, & Yaacob, 2010). Hence, it is essential to study

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the different factors that are related to stress, which is also a main objective of this research study. The vital factors such as parental attachment, peer attachment, social support as the environment attributes and the coping strategies as inner factors have been taken into consideration in this research study.

The Transactional Model of Stress developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) and the Attachment theory developed by Bowlby (1982) serves as a basic theoretical foundation for this study. In the Transactional Model of Stress, stress administration was advanced on an idea that stress is not a straight response to stressor but rather one's coping resources and skill to cope and mediate stress response. Whereas, a core idea of the Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1982) emphasized that the attachments with parents and peers can be effective on stress. Compas, Connor-Smith, Saltzman, Thomsen and Wadsworth (2001) and Howard and Medway (2004) illustrated that an attachment and close relationships may be relevant in understanding how adolescents handle stress in their lives. Applying these theories to the present study, the environmental factors such as social support and attachments are predicted to be mediated by the coping strategies in their relations to stress.

The five major predictive variables in this study are parental attachment, peer attachment, social support, and coping strategies. Parents are the most influential figure in the developmental process and the parental attachment has been given a constant attention because of its significant relationship with stress. Parents play the most influential role in stress among adolescents and the parental attachment is a unique emotional bond that provides a secure base which enables the regulation of stress(Howard & Medway, 2004). This is mainly because the parents provide a safe and secure base for adolescents. Moreover, the parental availability and responsiveness in contrast to the parental unavailability and lack of responsiveness, particularly in times of stress, would likely develop better adaptation and lower stress among adolescents (Dixon, 2007; Howard & Medway, 2004).

A nature of the peer relationships undergoes significant changes, as the children enter adolescence. Also, a close relationship with peers and their attachment is an important influencing factor on stress (Strohmeier & Spiel, 2012). This is mainly because the friendships in adolescence gradually deepen in terms of levels of intimacy, acceptance, trust and commitment (Pitman & Scharfe, 2010; Schnyders, 2012). Social support has also been recognised as a factor which is associated with a lower stress, lower problem behaviour, and satisfactory life (Baqutayan, 2011; Yoon, 2013). Social support is important in times of stress as the suggestions for coping with stress and a direct participation during a process of coping with stress prove to be very supportive (Ganster & Victor, 2011). In a meanwhile, an implementation of coping strategies in times of stress are very beneficial because they make adolescents to realize their strength and let them control and start gaining control over various situations. Once, the adolescents know how the coping strategies can help them to get out of the difficult situations, they start implementing them more consistently (Revenson & Lepore, 2012). The coping strategies can also provide various opportunities for adolescents in the stressful conditions (Hudson, 2013; Wadsworth & Compas, 2002).

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The parental attachment, peer attachment and social support are the independent variables, whereas, stress is a dependent variable and coping strategies are mediating variables in the relationships between the parental attachment, peer attachment and social support with stress. Although, a direct relationship between the parental attachment, coping strategies and stress (Howard & Medway, 2004); between peer attachment, coping strategies and stress (Pinheiro Mota & Matos, 2012); social support, coping strategies and stress (Baqutayan, 2011); has been examined in the previous studies; still, there is a lack of a comprehensive study which considers an interplay between these variables. Momtazi and Rawson (2010), Najafi, Zarrabi, Shirazi, Fekri and Mohseni (2009), Rahmandoust, Ahmadian, and Shah (2011), Saffari, Ghofranipour, Mahmoudi and Montazeri (2011), have conducted studies on stress among the Iranian adolescents in Iran, while Jafari, Baharlou, and Mathias (2010) investigated stress among the Iranian adolescents in the countries other than Malaysia.

A researcher perceived the findings of these previous studies as limited because these studies did not consider the Iranian adolescents in Malaysia. Most of the studies on the Iranian's in Malaysia have emphasized on the Iranian adults in Malaysia (Fazeli Falavarjani, 2014; Ghoroghi, Hassan, & Baba, 2012; Kalantarkousheh & Hassan, 2010; Madanian, Mansor, & Shafeq, 2011). In terms of unit analysis, a population of the Iranian adolescents in Malaysia has been targeted in this research study. They are the valuable possessions of a future society and thus, an attention on their prevention by applying intervention strategies must be given, as it is a very sensitive period. The previous studies have examined a parental attachment, peer attachment and social support in relation to stress among adolescents (Baqutayan, 2011; Howard & Medway, 2004; Pinheiro Mota & Matos, 2012); and the mediating role of the coping strategies was not investigated in these relationships.

In a nutshell, the examination of the relationships between parental and peer attachment, social support, and coping strategies with stress is a main objective of this research study. In addition, it also examined the mediating effect of coping strategies on the relationships between the parental and peer attachment, and social support with stress among the Iranian adolescents living in Malaysia. Likewise, a simple random sampling procedure was used in this study for sampling and data were based on the self-report questionnaires. The study was analysed by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 for Windows and the Sobel mediation test was conducted in the six models, which included a relationship between the parental attachment, peer attachment, social support and stress with the mediation influence of the problem-focused coping strategy and emotion-focused coping strategy.

1.3   Research Objectives

The general objective of this study is to examine the relationships between parental, peer attachments, social support, coping strategies and stress among Iranian adolescents living in Malaysia.

Following are the specific objectives of this study:

1. To describe parental attachment, peer attachment, coping strategies (problem-focused and emotion-focused), social support and stress among the Iranian adolescents living in Malaysia.

2. To examine the relationships between age, number of siblings, duration of stay in Malaysia with stress among the Iranian adolescents living in Malaysia.

3. To determine the relationships between the parental attachment, peer attachment, coping strategies (problem-focused and emotion-focused), social support and stress among the Iranian adolescents living in Malaysia.

4. To determine the unique predictors of stress among the Iranian adolescents living in Malaysia.

5. To determine the mediation effects of coping strategies (emotion-focused and problem-focused) on the relationships between social support, peer attachment, parental attachment and stress among the Iranian adolescents living in Malaysia.

1.4 Research Hypotheses

H_A1: For all the selected independent variables, the regression coefficients are significant when regressed against stress among the Iranian adolescents living in Malaysia.

H_A2: Problem-focused coping strategy significantly mediates the relationship between stress and parental attachment among the Iranian adolescents living in Malaysia.

H_A3: Emotion-focused coping strategy significantly mediates the relationship between parental attachment and stress among the Iranian adolescents living in Malaysia.

H_A4: Problem-focused coping strategy significantly mediates the relationship between peer attachment and stress among the Iranian adolescents living in Malaysia.

H$_A$5: Emotion-focused coping strategy significantly mediates the relationship between peer attachment and stress among the Iranian adolescents living in Malaysia.

H$_A$6: Problem-focused coping strategy significantly mediates the relationship between social support and stress among the Iranian adolescents living in Malaysia.

H$_A$7: Emotion-focused coping strategy significantly mediates the relationship between social support and stress among the Iranian adolescents living in Malaysia.

1.5   Significance of the Study

Due to an insufficient knowledge on stress among adolescents as well as its predictors and factors like the parental attachment, peer attachment and social support that may affect a level of stress in adolescents especially among those living in another country, the significant factors contributing to stress have been identified as an objective of this research. Furthermore, this research also attempted to examine the mediating role of coping strategies in these relationships. It was argued by Marshall and Rossman (2014) that a study should be considered as significant and must be carried out, if it contributes to a knowledge, proposes practical suggestions to practitioners and meaningful and useful to the policymakers. The future researches regarding the factors influencing stress among adolescents can benefit a lot from the findings of this research study. A fundamental knowledge regarding the predictors of stress and the mediating role of coping strategies can be gained through the findings of this research study. Significant scientific information acquired through this study regarding the significant predictors of stress among adolescents will enhance the role of attachment and social support by attracting health and social policymakers to produce programs.

Furthermore, the policymakers will concentrate more on the adolescents having higher stress levels by gaining a useful knowledge from this research study. Since, a mediating role of coping strategies on stress of adolescents was tested in this study, the social workers, counsellors and other mental health professionals who deal with adolescents can acquire some scientific information by considering both direct and indirect effects of parents, peers and social support as the important resources for their therapeutic work in reducing stress among adolescents.

So far, this research study is one of those very few researches which attempted to inspect an influence of parental attachment, peer attachment and social support on stress of adolescents. Hence, the upcoming researches can gain unlimited opportunities from the findings of this study. This study is also significant ion determining up to what extent the assumptions of the Transactional Model of Stress by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) and the Attachment Theory (1982) are supported by its findings. According to these theories, the environmental factors and coping

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resources also influence stress among the individuals. Stress can be associated to the various factors within the parents, peers and social support.

1.6   Theoretical Framework

This section discusses a main theoretical framework that has been implemented in the development of a conceptual framework of this study (Figure 1.1). The Transactional Model of Stress (Lazarus & S. Folkman, 1984) and the Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1982) provide a basic theoretical foundation for this study. This study describes stress as a developmental outcome that emerges as a result of an interaction among the parental and peer attachment, social support and coping strategies. This interaction has been partly explained by the Transactional Model of Stress and complemented by the Attachment Theory. The Transactional Model of Stress describes a management of stress as being designed and premised on an idea that stress is one's coping resources and capability to cope and mediate the stress reaction and agreeable to change, thus letting stress to be manageable by coping strategies, rather than a direct response to stressor (Lazarus & S. Folkman, 1984).

The coping resources are the characteristics of a person, group, or environment that are helpful in getting familiarised to stress. The coping resources that can affect stress include, family support, social support, socio-economic status, parenting behavior, parental drug abuse, and social and extra-curricular activities (Christopher J Mccarthy, Lineback, & Reiser, 2014; Montgomery, 2012). According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), a concept of social support is "a psychological resource which defines an individual's perceptions with regard to a quality of their social relationships". One of the main coping resources includes a social support that may enhance an impact of stress by solving a problem or by reducing the perceived significance of a problem. Stress is also highly influenced by the individuals' coping strategies along with the coping resources which act as another significant factor that have an influence on stress. Coping strategies are as traits, styles and processes of executing of different responses to stress. Coping can be demarcated by the relationship between the person and the environment (Afshar, Roohafza, Keshteli, Mazaheri, Feizi, & Adibi, 2015). Some studies have indicated that there were indirect relationships between coping resources and stress (Aazami, Shamsuddin, & Akmal, 2015; He, Xu, & Wu, 2013). So, coping strategies are the ways that are potentially important mediators of the impact of stress (Bruce E Compas, Jennifer K Connor-Smith, Heidi Saltzman, Alexandria Harding Thomsen, & Martha E Wadsworth, 2001; Xiao, 2013).

Adolescence is a time when they have a change of new potentially stressful experiences, but also they have strong needs to deal with life events individually. Although they benefit from adult guide and their peers, but it can be a challenge for adults to adjust their support to adolescents needs for self-sufficiency. At the same time, coping strategies are improving and helping adolescents avoid stress and more efficient in a long term in the stressful situations (Seiffge Krenke, 2013). Adolescents do not approach each coping context a new, but rather bring to endure a favoured set of coping strategies that ruins comparatively static across stage and

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condition (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In the stressful conditions, the individuals are strong enough to alter the situation causing stress and able to implement their knowledge of coping resources to find out the coping strategies that can reduce the intensity of stress (Lazarus & S. Folkman, 1984; Mandl, 2007). During adolescence, such emotion-focused coping strategy and problem-focused coping strategy can appraise the problem and coordinate the regulatory efforts to reduce stress. At the same time, adolescent coping is increasingly become more powerful in supervisory act and amendable emotions in the expression of situational pressures (Christopher J Mccarthy et al., 2014; Zimmer-Gembeck & Skinner, 2011).

According to the Attachment theory presented by Bowlby (1982), the attachments with parents and peers can sufficiently reduce level of stress. Compas, Malcarne and Fondacaro (1988) and Howard and Medway (2004) illustrated the attachments and close relationships that may be relevant in understanding how adolescents handle stress in their lives. From the view point of Erdman and Kok-Mun (2010), an attachment behaviour is defined as any kind of behaviour that is performed by a person achieving an intended proximity to an identified individual whom the one sees as better able to cope with the world; the adolescents having secure attachment to parents tend to report a lower stress.

During the routine interactions with a protective and sensitive caregiver, it was proposed that a child developed a cognitive sketch of a general support in access for a decreasing stress in a new and potentially threatening conditions that will be developed during the other periods of their lives (Ditzen, Schmidt, Strauss, Nater, Ehlert, & Heinrichs, 2008). Having a secure attachment with the parents might be even a more fundamental need for the adolescents in the stressful situations (Davis, 2012; Johnson, Ketring, & Abshire, 2003). With an application of these theories to a present study, the coping resources such as social support and attachments are predicted to interact with the coping strategies in their relations with stress. So, according to combination of these theories, coping resources like; social support and attachment with parents and peers are those external factors that influence on stress among adolescents and coping strategies are as internal factors and traits of implementing of altered reactions to stress that can have effect on stress. As such, it will be imperative to take coping strategies in to account when studying the relationships between parental attachment, peer attachment, social support and stress.

Figure 1.1 Theoretical Framework of the Study

1.7 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework of this study was based on the speculation of the Transactional Model of Stress (Lazarus & S. Folkman, 1984) and the Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1982). A parental attachment, peer attachment, social support and coping strategies are posited to influence an outcome variable, stress. In addition, the coping strategies are postulated to influence the parental attachment, peer attachment and social support in their effects on stress. The present study examined that the coping strategies mediate a relationships between parental attachment, peer attachment, social support and stress based on the direct and indirect effects among the variables. According to these theories, the coping resources like, social support and attachment and using coping strategies are related to stress.

Figure 1.2 The Conceptual Framework of the Study

More specifically, parental and peer attachment hold significant relationships with stress. It can be postulated from the present research study that the coping strategies mediated relationships between parental attachment, peer attachment, social support and stress. This is based on the coping s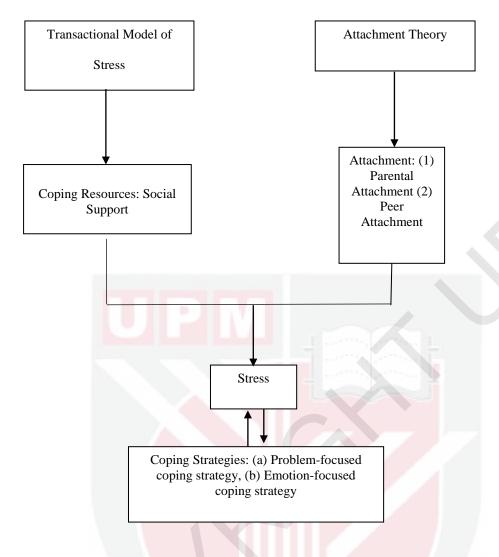trategies which functioned as mediators in relationships between parental, peer attachment and social support with stress (Figure 1.2).

1.8   Conceptual and Operational Definitions of Terms

This section consists of the operational definitions of key variables and includes the terms used in this research study. These variables include: adolescents, parental attachment, peer attachment, problem-focused coping strategy, emotion-focused coping strategy, social support and stress.

Adolescents

Conceptual Definition

Adolescents are those individuals who are in a transitional period between a puberty and an adulthood in a human development (Sigelman & Rider, 2014) and according to Erikson (1980), they are between 12-18 years old.

Operational Definition

In this research study, the adolescents are referred to the Iranian students aged between 12-18 years studying in the Iranian schools in Malaysia.

Parental Attachment

Conceptual Definition

A relational bond that exists between a parent and child is referred as a parental attachment. The parental attachment produces a sense of security and safety which is developed in the children and introduced by the acts of the parents. However, varying levels of trust, alienation and communication represent a presence of the parental attachment (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987).

Operational Definition

According to Armsden and Greenberg (1987), parental attachment is operationally defined by the respondents' score on the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA). The scale measures an attachment relationship between the adolescents and their parents and assesses the adolescents' perceptions of trust, alienation and communication within the parent-adolescent relationship. Higher scores on the parent scale of IPPA indicate a greater attachment security with parents.

Peer Attachment

Conceptual Definition

Peer attachment refers to the endurance of an emotional attachment bonds with the peers that are external to a family. Proximity and time investments are the basic factors that contribute in an establishment of a peer attachment and are articulated through alienation, changing levels of trust, and communication. A relational bond qualified between the persons of an equal relational upright is known as a peer attachment (Nickerson & Nagle, 2005).

Operational Definition

According to Armsden and Greenberg (1987), the operational definition of a peer attachment is the respondent's score on the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA). This scale measures an attachment relationship between the adolescents and their peers and assesses the adolescents' perceptions of trust, communication and

alienation within their relationships. Higher scores on a peer scale of IPPA indicate a greater attachment security with the peers.

Social Support

Conceptual Definition

The social relations that support and provide an real help to the individuals or that implant persons within a social system that are thought to provide care, love, and presence of others, or the resources provided by them, prior to, during, and following stressful event is referred as a social support (Ganster & Victor, 2011).

Operational Definition

The respondents' scores on the Child and Adolescent Social Support Scale is referred as social support (Demaray & Malecki, 2002). For the measurement of a perceived social support from the five sources: parents, close friends, classmates, teachers and other people in a school, a 60-item multidimensional scale named CASSS are used. Frequency ratings for each subscale are added up by creating a frequency total score for each of the five subscales. These five subscale scores can then be added to result in a general social support score. Likewise, the important ratings are summed up for each subscale and then the five important subscale scores are summed up for a total importance scale. High scores on the CASS indicate a high social support.

Coping Strategies

Conceptual Definition

A coping mechanism that deals psychologically and contributes a conscious effort to find out a solution of the personal and interpersonal problems, and contributes in reducing stress and makes stress tolerable is referred as a coping strategy. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984) and Carver and Connor-Smith (2010), the coping strategies can be characterized in to problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping strategy. The problem-focused coping strategy deal with a root cause of the problems and focus at altering and eliminating a situation causing stress. Whereas, the emotion focused coping strategy involves a release of pent-up emotions, meditating or using systematic relaxation procedures, managing hostile feelings and distracting oneself. The emotion-focused coping strategy target stress and lessen its intensity by preventing, minimizing and reducing the emotional components of stressor (Carver & Vargas, 2011)

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Operational Definition

The operational definition of coping strategies is a respondent's score on the Brief Cope Inventory by Carver, Scheier and Weintraub (1989). Both the problem-focused coping strategy and emotion-focused coping strategy can be assessed by the five scales. A total score of each coping strategy shows the types of coping strategies (problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategy) that a person uses in the different situations. Mostly, each scale should be considered separately to find out its relationship with the other variables. In this scale each scale should be considered separate and there is no main coping strategies for a given person. There is no such thing as an "overall" score and no such instructions for "adaptive" and "maladaptive" composites on this measure. High mean of each scale shows that the respondents use this type of coping strategy in the stressful situations more than the other one. If the respondents score high on both types of coping strategies, it means that a person implement both types of responses excessively.

Stress

Conceptual Definition

Stress is considered as a common experience faced by every human being, which is either an external event or an internal drive which effects a normal working of an individual and causes several issues related to health and behavior (Saffari et al., 2011).

Operational Definition

The operational definition of stress is a respondent's score on the Adolescent Stress Questionnaire (ASQ). The scale scores are derived by summing the affirmed response to each item (response range = 1 to 5) and high scores indicate high stress experienced (Byrne, Davenport, & Mazanov, 2007). There are 58 items in this questionnaire that 5 items deleted.

1.9   Chapter Summary

This chapter describes the introduction, problem statement and highlights the importance of different variables in accounting for the parental attachment, peer attachment, social support, coping strategies and stress among the Iranian adolescents in Malaysia. The next chapter reviews the previous studies related to this study.

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