



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN EMOTIONAL AUTONOMY AND
PARENTAL
NURTURANCE WITH AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR AMONG
PRE-ADOLESCENTS IN KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA***

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FEM 2016 9



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NURTURANCE WITH AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR AMONG
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By

KATAYOUN MEHDINEZHADNOURI

**Thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science**

June 2016

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DEDICATED

TO

My beloved family for their endless affections and encouragement for success in my life.



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the Degree of Master of Science

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN EMOTIONAL AUTONOMY AND PARENTAL NURTURANCE WITH AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR AMONG PRE-ADOLESCENTS IN KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA

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June 2016

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Aggressive behaviour in pre-adolescents is a serious worldwide issue and it has developed into an internationally critical problems. Aggressive behaviour among pre-adolescents is considered to be unfavorable behaviour directed at other people possibly with the aim of harming them. Important factors related to aggressive behaviour during pre-adolescence are parental nurturance, and emotional autonomy. Pre-adolescents can increase their emotional autonomy by their close relationships with parents and enhance the ability to control and manage their behaviour in community. Therefore, this study was designed to examine the relationships between parental nurturance and emotional autonomy with aggressive behaviour by moderating role of age and gender among pre-adolescents.

The multistage cluster sampling method was utilized to recruit a total of 390 pre-adolescents aged 10 to 12 years old from six primary schools in the urban areas of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. This study utilized quantitative study by using correlational research. Respondents completed the Parental Nurturance Scale (Lempers et al., 1989), Emotional Autonomy Scale (Steinberg and Silverberg, 1986), and Child Aggression Inventory (Maria Chong Abdullah et al., 2011). Correlational analyses indicated that pre-adolescents who perceived low parental nurturance and had low emotional autonomy were more likely to show aggressive behaviour. More so, pre-adolescent's age and gender had relationships with aggressive behaviour. Additionally, the present research supported the moderating role of age on the relationships between parental nurturance and emotional autonomy with aggressive behaviour among pre-adolescents. Gender did not moderate these relationships. The findings of this research showed that parental nurturance and emotional autonomy were valuable predictors of aggressive behaviour among pre-adolescents. The current research improves understanding on the importance of parental nurturance and emotional autonomy as influencing factors on aggressive behaviour. The findings of this study can be useful for parents, teachers, counsellors, and policy makers to minimizing aggressive behaviour among pre-adolescents.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Master Sains

**HUBUNGAN ANTARA AUTONOMI EMOSI DAN PENGASUHAN IBU BAPA
DENGAN TINGKAH LAKU AGRESIF DEMODERASI OLEH UMUR DAN
GENDER DALAM KALANGAN PRAREMAJA DI KUALA LUMPUR,
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Tingkah laku agresif dalam kalangan praremaja merupakan isu sejagat yang serius dan perkara ini telah berkembang sebagai suatu masalah kritikal pada peringkat antarabangsa. Tingkah laku agresif dikira sebagai tingkah laku tidak baik yang ditujukan kepada orang lain dengan tujuan untuk mencederakan mereka. Faktor penting berkaitan dengan tingkah laku agresif semasa praremaja ialah pengasuhan ibu bapa dan autonomi emosi. Praremaja dapat memperkembangkan autonomi emosi mereka melalui hubungan rapat mereka dengan ibu bapa dan dengan itu mempertingkatkan kebolehan mengawal dan menguruskan tingkah laku mereka dalam komuniti. Oleh sebab itu, kajian ini telah direka bentuk untuk meneliti hubungan antara pengasuhan ibu bapa dan autonomi emosi dengan tingkah laku agresif melalui penyederhanaan peranan umur dan gender dalam kalangan praremaja.

Kaedah persampelan kluster pelbagai peringkat telah digunakan untuk memilih sebanyak 390 praremaja, berumur 10 hingga 12 tahun dari enam buah sekolah rendah di kawasan bandar di Kuala Lumpur. Kajian ini menggunakan kajian kuantitatif dengan menggunakan penyelidikan korelasi. Responden melengkapkan Skala Pengasuhan Ibu Bapa (Lempers et al., 1989), Skala Autonomi Emosi (Steinberg dan Silverberg, 1986) dan Inventori Agresif Kanak-kanak (Maria Chong Abdullah et al., 2011). Analisis korelasi menunjukkan bahawa praremaja yang menerima pengasuhan ibu bapa yang lemah dan mempunyai autonomi emosi yang rendah didapati menunjukkan lebih tingkah laku agresif. Demikian juga, umur dan gender praremaja mempunyai hubungan dengan tingkah laku agresif. Di samping itu, kajian ini juga menyokong penyederhanaan peranan umur ke atas hubungan antara pengasuhan ibu bapa dan autonomi emosi dengan tingkah laku agresif dalam kalangan praremaja. Faktor gender tidak menyederhanakan tersebut. Hasil kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa pengasuhan ibu bapa dan autonomi emosi merupakan prediktor penting terhadap tingkah laku agresif praremaja. Dapatan kajian ini juga memberikan pemahaman tentang kepentingan pengasuhan ibu bapa dan autonomi emosi sebagai faktor yang mempengaruhi tingkah laku agresif. Dapatan kajian ini berguna kepada ibu bapa, guru, kaunselor, dan penggubal polisi bagi meminimumkan tingkah laku agresif dalam kalangan praremaja.

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Pre-adolescence is an essential period of development which sees a number of changes in the neurological, emotional, interpersonal, and social roles that confront pre-adolescents in the developmental move through childhood to adulthood (Farmer et al., 2008; T'ng, 2011; Kong, Abdullah, & Roslan, 2013; Mazzotti, Test, & Wood, 2013). According to (Mayhew, Flay, & Mott, 2000; Spano, 2004; the Merriam-Webster's Medical Dictionary, 2009) the age of 10 years old is the start of pre-adolescence and ends before the teenage years.

Aggressive behaviour in pre-adolescents has become a serious worldwide issue (Burns & Kaufman, 2012) and it is considered to be unfavourable behaviour directed at other people possibly with the aim of harming them (Simcox, 2009). This is a risk factor to a range of negative results including the school failing to detect psychological problems and delinquency (Xie, Drabick, & Chen, 2011; Clark, Menna, & Manel, 2013; Lee, 2014).

Following previous studies, up to 15% of pre-adolescents in the world show aggressive behaviour and tend to maintain this attitude into adolescence (Tremblay, 2010; Xie et al., 2011; Bowen & Wretman, 2014). Aggressive behaviour during pre-adolescence is a complicated and significant difficulty for society, community, victims, and the aggressor him/herself (Salaz, 2012). Within the last few decades, many studies have focused on realising aggressive behaviour among adolescents (Yahaya, Yahya, & Idris, 2012; Manzi, Regalia, Pelucchi, & Fincham, 2012; Salaz, 2012; Parra, Oliva, & Sanchez-Queija, 2015). Conversely, few research studies have investigated that the origin of aggressive behaviour in adulthood stems from early life, particularly in primary schools (Chin, 2013; Kong et al., 2013). The results of earlier studies have revealed that 7%- 11% of pre-adolescents in primary schools exhibit aggressive behaviour in comparison to their peers (Reijntjes, Kamphuis, Prinzie, & Telch, 2010; Tremblay, 2010).

In general, studies support the necessity to recognise aggressive behaviour in pre-adolescents in order to be able to offer a mitigation and preventative approach which could affect the aggressive behaviour during pre-adolescence and later in life. An important effective intervention approach is to gain better knowledge of the variables and aspects linked to aggressive behaviour in pre-adolescents who are at-risk of aggressive behaviour and who have difficulty in their relationships with others by coping academically, socially, behaviourally (Farmer et al., 2008).

Malaysia has a moderately young population, of which 60% of the population is under 30 years of age (Department of Statistics of Malaysia, 2013). Currently in Malaysia, most of the pre-adolescents are socially and emotionally healthy. Irrespective of these

facts, a number of pre-adolescents display aggressive behaviour in their setting (Yahaya, et al., 2012; Chin, 2013; Kong et al., 2013).

Research has explained that pre-adolescence is an important stage affecting the lifetime of children since they encounter social and personal difficulties and learn how to handle situations (Farmer et al., 2008). Nevertheless, pre-adolescents must be nurtured with consideration and attention (Ribeaud & Eisner, 2010; Brown, 2012). Recently, aggressive behaviour has posed a serious worry for the government, community, school staff, and parents (Yahaya et al., 2012; Chin, 2013; Kong et al., 2013). Although parents are worried when the psychological changes start in their children, typically it is a short-term period and pre-adolescents are likely to be more mature as they get older (Mazzotti et al., 2013). It is clear that parents have a major role during pre-adolescence. While these kinds of changes are usually non-permanent, parents could develop their children's behaviours by displaying positive and warm parenting behaviours such as parental nurturance and increasing their emotional autonomy (Abodunrin & Dosunmu, 2012; Arim, Dahinten, Marshall, & Shapka, 2011). Rearing a pre-adolescent is actually tough and complicated for parents since a pre-adolescent starts to behave in a more mature manner to transition into adolescence (Mazzotti et al., 2013). Development in a pre-adolescent is vital in his/her lifetime and parents would like to ensure that their young children are growing appropriately (Farmer et al., 2008).

Nurturance is a remarkably salient part of parenting, which consists of psychological attention and behavioural management by parents of their children's interpersonal and emotional growth during pre-adolescence (Arim et al., 2011). Different aspects of parenting such as warmth and responsiveness are linked to the psychological development of a pre-adolescent but this is not similar to parental nurturance (Arim et al., 2011). Little is known of the relationship between parental nurturance and aggressive behaviour in pre-adolescents due to the lack of studies that have examined this relationship during childhood and adolescence (Baker, 2006; Baldwin, McIntyre, & Hardaway, 2007; Anderson, Sweeney, & Williams, 2010). It has been discovered that in some children there is a negative linkage between parental nurturance and aggressive behaviour (Arim et al., 2011; Aldo, 2014). The anticipation is that this relationship may expand to pre-adolescence. However, it needs to be examined.

Pre-adolescence is an essential time to examine the relationships between parental nurturance and emotional autonomy with aggressive behaviour since the possibility of high levels in both parental nurturance and emotional autonomy with a lower level of aggressive behaviour is much more at age 10-12 compared to mid or late adolescence (Arim et al., 2011). To some extent, the connection among children and their parents during pre-adolescence is a core part of realising the behavioural and emotional improvement in pre-adolescents (Hassan & Ee, 2015). The family system is an important context in comprehending the roots of aggressive behaviour in terms of pre-adolescence (Hameed-ur-Rehman, Sadruddin, & Moosa, 2012; Hassan et al., 2015). The experiences of a pre-adolescent in the home setting have an influence on his/her thoughts and feelings which could affect his/her connection with the environment (Teoh, 2010). Researchers agree that aggressive behaviour is learned by observing and imitating the behaviours of the parents (Ingram, Patchin, Huebner, McCluskey, & Bynum, 2007; Hoeve et al., 2009; Ho & Cheung, 2010). Parents have strong influence on the lives of their children during pre-adolescence, much more so than at the other stages of life.

Aggressive behaviour can be highly affected by parents and could move over the years towards periods of violence (Jia Choon, Hasbullah, Ahmad, & Shin Ling, 2013).

On a related note, several studies carried out on aggressive behaviour of pre-adolescents in the Malaysian context identified that parenting is the top of the contributing variables to this difficulty (Asmah, Nurulhuda, & Mascilla, 2011; Yahaya et al., 2012), and the major predictor of aggressive behaviour is parenting behaviour (Ribeaud & Eisner, 2010). Thus, nurturing should be done ideally by the parents who should be able to manage and control this critical stage of growth (Benson & Buehler, 2012; Mazur, 2013; Bowen & Wretman, 2014). Parents assist their children during pre-adolescence to develop their interpersonal behaviours (Brown, 2012; Rentie, 2012) to become a healthy mature adult (Fong, 2010).

In all of these studies, there has been elevated focus on the techniques concerned with the way parenting affects the improvement of aggressive behaviour during pre-adolescence (Muchiri Karega, 2012; Rentie, 2012; Mazur, 2013). Nevertheless, few researchers have reviewed the parenting role in terms of minimising aggressive behaviour by parental nurturance (Hameed-ur-Rehman et al., 2012; Norman, 2012) and gaps still exist in the literature.

Since pre-adolescence is a significant quantity of time in life preparing a child for the active social life of adulthood (Mazur, 2013), parents and their connection with their children have an effect on the aggressive behaviour of pre-adolescent (Ribeaud & Eisner, 2010). It is plausible that parents can employ various ways to interact socially with their children such as controlling or supporting methods. A significant form of supporting style is parental nurturance (De Haan, Prinzie, & Dekovic, 2012), which is illustrated as a protective aspect against aggressive behaviour (Mrug & Windle, 2009; Chapman, 2012). Parental nurturance involves many parenting behaviours such as warmth, being supportive, responsiveness, friendship, and admission (Puustinen, Lyyra, Metsapelto, & Pulkkinen, 2008; Muchiri Karega, 2012) and these kind of behaviours would be standard requirements for pre-adolescents (Hameed-ur-Rehman et al., 2012; Muchiri Karega, 2012).

It is clear that the emotions associated with protection and safety in pre-adolescents when put at risk can cause the children to behave aggressively (Arim et al., 2011). From this viewpoint, it is also possible that insufficient parental nurturance during pre-adolescence will predict a growth in aggressive behaviour in the pre-adolescents since they probably experience a risky environment and behaviour and may be irritated to the point that raises their probability to interact using aggressive behaviour (Arim et al., 2011). A high level of parental nurturance is considered a consequence of understanding that while a pre-adolescent finds his/her parents are nurturing, he/she thinks and experiences optimistic thoughts about the relationship with his/her parents and thus thinks positively regarding himself/herself (Chapman, 2012). Growing up in a nurturing family framework encourages pre-adolescents to be positive with other people in their environment (Chapman, 2012).

In line with the above, improvements in the area of child development and family studies have resulted in restored curiosity concerning the relationship between the aggressive behaviour of pre-adolescents and parental nurturance that involves the necessity to examine the trend towards aggressive behaviour during pre-adolescence. Considering that the family is the initial window to society for each pre-adolescent, then parental nurturance can significantly influence a pre-adolescent in terms of comprehending, perspective, and behaviours (De Haan et al., 2012; Muchiri Karega, 2012). Accordingly, one of the goals of the present study is to examine the relationship between parental nurturance and aggressive behaviour in pre-adolescents in Malaysia.

A substantial investigation was centred on examining the procedure of how a pre-adolescent attains autonomy from their parents (Pace & Zappulla, 2010; Parra et al., 2015). In this case, emotional autonomy is recognised as a developing level in pre-adolescence that signifies a transform to maturity and adolescence (Manzi et al., 2012; Parra et al., 2015). Autonomy inside the family system in pre-adolescence is emotional autonomy (Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986), which describes the concept of pre-adolescent individualisation and independence by self-confidence (Ingoglia et al., 2011). Furthermore, it is clear that a remarkably autonomous pre-adolescent totally supports his/her behaviours and decisions he/she makes and remains steadfast behind his/her behaviours (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Notably, individuals with a lower level of emotional autonomy tend to be more aggressive (Kuzucu & Şimşek, 2013). On a related note, as indicated before under parental nurturance, the perception of a lack of parental nurturance being linked to aggressive behaviour in pre-adolescents may be due to the lack of achievement of emotional requirements of any pre-adolescent (Deci & Vansteenkiste, 2004). A possible explanation for this relation is that unfulfilled emotional requirements possess a negative influence on the goal pursuits of a pre-adolescent that can cause aggressive behaviour (Kuzucu & Şimşek, 2013). Accordingly, Deci and Ryan (2000) mentioned that since a pre-adolescent obtains his/her requirements from parental nurturance, he/she is encouraged to behave autonomously in the environment and that he/she will consequently decrease the need to behave aggressively with others. Eventually, it is plausible that the ideal improvement of emotional autonomy will be attained from the parent's nurturing behaviours (Soenens, Luyckx, Vansteenkiste, Duriez, & Goossens, 2008).

Several researchers into emotional autonomy have carried out studies in Western societies, especially North America (Arim et al., 2011; Sklar, 2011; Kaur & Sandhu, 2012; Matte-Gagné, Harvey, Stack, & Serbin, 2015). However, limited studies on aggressive behaviours and emotional autonomy have conducted in the Malaysian context. In due course, this research is aimed to fill out this gap. The outcomes of this study are expected to offer helpful information for parents to realise greater improvement of emotional autonomy of pre-adolescents and to supply a suitable direction for both pre-adolescents and their parents. To continue, age and gender are an essential aspect in focusing on identifying aggressive behaviour and deciding a suitable study approach (Mazur, 2013). It appears normal to think girls are usually much less aggressive when compared to boys (Zhou, 2012).

In general, it is believed that boys often have a greater tendency to participate in intensive comparative situations once they find that challenges are excessive rather than girls (Archer, 2004; Morales-Vives & Vigil-Colet, 2010). Therefore, in terms of aggressive behaviour, it is expected that boys will be much more the aggressor than girls (Murray-Close et al., 2010). As such, individuals consider variant social tasks and their behaviours are generally controlled by the norms of the community to which they are attached (Zhou, 2012). As an example, boys often occupy masculine tasks including source attainment behaviours or even control behaviours within their surroundings. This is opposed to girls who usually offer feminine roles such as common and submissive behaviours (Morales-Vives et al., 2010). The gender role for boys usually includes norms in the community, which reinforces aggressive behaviour due to the stereotype that allows boys to act as an aggressor and to be tough in their environment. In contrast, for girls, the customary gender role does not reinforce aggressive behaviour since girls are expected to keep away from hurting others (Archer, 2004; Zhou, 2012).

Although numerous investigations in the area of developmental psychology have determined that girls are less aggressive than boys, the majority of such studies employed adolescence and the child population (Card, Stucky, Sawalani, & Little, 2008; Murray-Close et al., 2010). The number of studies designed to examine gender discrepancy among pre-adolescents are limited. Therefore, this study will look at gender differences in aggressive behaviour during pre-adolescence and attempt to supply an extra understanding of aggressive behaviour in the Malaysian context.

During the past decade, investigations of aggressive behaviour have been made available in research dedicated to pre-adolescents in primary schools (Gentile, Coyne, & Walsh, 2011; Li, Putallaz, & Su, 2011; Miller, Grabell, Thomas, Bermann, & Graham-Bermann, 2012). Hence, improvements in reducing aggressive behaviour in pre-adolescents may have an unfavourable impact on the life style of pre-adolescent as well as their normal capabilities (Gentile et al., 2011). Consequences include educational disability, adverse understanding perceptions, absence and rejection of school, fellow denial, antisocial behaviours, and finally, teenage delinquency (Van Lier, Vitaro, & Eisner, 2007). Some studies have reported that in primary school age children, emotional autonomy has been shown negatively related to the aggressive behaviour of pre-adolescents (Matte-Gagné et al., 2015; Van der Giessen, Branje, & Meeus, 2014). In addition, prior studies have found that during primary school, parental nurturance could be a predictor of the aggressive behaviour of pre-adolescents (Bocknek, Brophy-Herb, & Banerjee, 2009; Clark et al., 2012). In line with earlier research, several studies have looked at aggressive behaviour problems in Malaysian pre-adolescents (Asmah et al., 2011; Chin, 2013; Kong et al., 2013). Based on this, the aim of this study is to examine the relationships between parental nurturance and emotional autonomy with aggressive behaviour by moderating roles of age and gender among pre-adolescents in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Following the increasing trend of aggressive behaviour in Malaysia (Department of Social Welfare, Malaysia, 2013), academic studies have an important role in play in illuminating aggressive behaviour and possible usable and efficient solutions. Aggressive behaviour is transforming into a source of problems and has received critical awareness in society (The Malaysian Justice System, 2013).

Importantly, the Ministry of Education, Malaysia, (2013) and the Royal Police of Malaysia, (2013) reported that the number of pre-adolescents who were caught for misbehaviour in (2012) were 107191, included delinquency (13.3%), misbehaviour (9.2%), vandalism (3.3%), bullying (3.8%) and so forth. The statistics indicate that (26.9%) of these misbehaviours occurred amongst pre-adolescents in primary school. In the same year (2012), the Ministry of Education, (2013) reported that aggressive behaviour is increasing and this situation should draw the consideration of the government and the community.

This issue has increased community concerns since Malaysian pre-adolescents are a resource for the future of the country as an entirely developed country. It is essential to generate a group of high-quality human capital to development of the nation. Hence, it is serious to raise understanding of the related factors of aggressive behaviour among pre-adolescents. However, this study aims to address this gap by study on aggressive behaviour among pre-adolescence as normal population in Malaysia and identify reducing factors of aggressive behaviour that will be useful for prevention programs.

Eventually, Malaysia has to confront aggressive behaviour among pre-adolescents during primary school (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2013), and it further affects the well-being of families and society (Asmah et al., 2011; Yahaya et al., 2012). As such, findings of earlier studies on aggressive behaviour have demonstrated that aggressive behaviour is common in pre-adolescents in primary schools (Chin, 2013; Kong et al., 2013).

Pre-adolescents who study in primary school may experience different levels of difficulties in their behaviours (Aldo, 2014). Unfortunately, some of them who had difficulty with their environment, may realise aggressive behaviour as a solution of their problems (Averdijk, Malti, Ribeaud, & Eisner, 2011). Further, transitioning from pre-adolescents into adulthood can be challenging due to physical and emotional changing (Benson & Buehler, 2012). This is the age period (10-12 years of age) in which disobedient, anxiety, and aggression, will occurred and can disrupt a pre-adolescent (Branje, Hale, Frijns, & Meeus, 2010). Thus, the increase in aggressive behaviour among pre-adolescents is a problem which should not be pushed aside since it threatens the healthy growth of the next generation of Malaysia. However, to date, limited studies have been conducted on aggressive behaviour among pre-adolescents in Malaysia and most of them focused on factors that raising aggressive behaviour (Ho & Cheung, 2010; Alizadeh, Talib, Abdullah, & Mansor, 2011; Fauziah, Mohamad, Chong, & Manaf, 2012; Chin, 2013; Yahaya et al., 2012). Besides, limited studies have been conducted on the factors, which decreased aggressive behaviour among pre-adolescents (Li, 2012; T'ng, 2011; Yap & Baharudin, 2015). Following previous findings, when aggressive behaviour is treated during pre-adolescence this could prevent aggression and delinquency in adulthood (Li, 2012; Yahaya et al., 2012). Hence, this has demonstrated the gap in knowledge as there is a lack of investigation into aggressive behaviour in pre-adolescents and the influencing variables to possibly decrease the aggressive behaviour. There is a necessity to head towards minimising aggressive behaviour during pre-adolescence. Thus, the present study focuses on pre-adolescent's aggressive behaviour who represent the nation main asset and will shape the future of Malaysia.

Most importantly, due to the fact that pre-adolescents are members of the community, an extensive knowledge of their aggressive behaviour is fundamental in society such that appropriate parenting is the main key (Choudhary & Thapa, 2012). Realising how parents affect aggressive behaviour in pre-adolescence is vital since they are the most significant people in their children's life during the pre-adolescence period (Timpano et al., 2010; Chapman, 2012). Several investigations carried out studies of the connection between maladaptive parenting with aggressive behaviour (Kawabata, Alink, Tseng, Van Ijzendoorn, & Crick, 2011; De Haan et al., 2012). Relatively, few studies have centred on the influence of positive parenting behaviours such as nurturance (Timpano, Keough, Mahaffey, Schmidt, & Abramowitz, 2010; Chapman, 2012; Hameed-ur-Rehman et al., 2012).

From the theoretical viewpoint, Bandura (1977) and Lempers and colleagues (1989) mentioned that the role of poor parental nurturance in elucidating aggressive behaviour. Pre-adolescents need to have warm and close relationships with their parents to learn and imitate good behaviours. If they could not learn good behaviours, they might engage in aggressive behaviours in their relationship with others (Arim et al., 2011; McLeod, 2011). Review of literatures revealed that there is no study has been carried out on the relationships between parental nurturance and aggressive behaviour among pre-adolescents in Malaysia. Then, in order to understand parental nurturance as a predictor of aggressive behaviour and decreasing factor of aggressive behaviour, this study has utilised parental nurturance as an independent variable to explain aggressive behaviour among pre-adolescents in Malaysian context.

To continue, emotional autonomy is another important protective factor of aggressive behaviour, which in literature identifies the developing capability of a pre-adolescent to experience, think, have choices, and behave on their own (Steinberg, 2008; Karabanova & Poskrebysheva, 2013). Based on theoretical view point, Ryan and Deci (2000) children during pre-adolescence acquire emotional autonomy because of their relationship with their parents since during pre-adolescence children start to have the ability to control and manage their own behaviour (Steinberg, 2008; Karabanova & Poskrebysheva, 2013). A large body of literature has led to obscurity in expression due to the perceived lack of interest in the sole centre of the relationship between emotional autonomy and aggressive behaviour. (Brauer, 2011; Peltokorpi & Määttä, 2011). However, it is believed that emotional autonomy has a significant effect in pre-adolescence's behaviours, particularly when coupled with parental nurturance and it is necessary for development of public health (Rutkowski, 2011; Kaur & Sandhu, 2012).

As such, recently much research concerned with the influence of emotional autonomy on aggressive behaviour has been carried out in Western European cultures and the American nations (Lopez et al., 2008; Peltokorpi & Määttä, 2011; Rutkowski, 2011; Kaur & Sandhu, 2012). Even so, these reports are viewed as unpersuasive with regard to Asian societies (Hameed-ur-Rehman et al., 2012). Thus, the second goal of the present study is to examine the relationship between emotional autonomy and aggressive behaviour in Malaysia as an Asian society.

Finally, theories of aggressive behaviour and study outcomes will be useful although they may originate from various cultures. However, Malaysia as a collectivistic culture

in which parental nurturance and emotional autonomy in relation to aggressive behaviour in pre-adolescence has been little investigated. Based on previous findings and insufficient literature on this subject in Malaysia, the present study tries to fill this gap and provide better comprehension by examining the relationship between parental nurturance and emotional autonomy with aggressive behaviour during pre-adolescence in order to provide competent prevention and intervention programs for the reduction of aggressive behaviour.

Previous researches have recognised diverse socio-demographic as factors related to aggressive behaviour and among these factors, age and gender differences seem to be the most significant factors (Bowie, 2010; Zhou, 2012). As regards aggressive behaviour as a serious issue in pre-adolescents, it is relevant to investigate the factors, which reduce aggressive behaviour such as parental nurturance and emotional autonomy at various ages and for different genders in the Malaysian population. It will be valuable to examine the age onset that is increasingly important, particularly for parents to be aware of the signs of aggressive behaviour in pre-adolescents. Moreover, the results of the present research will offer a framework to comprehend the relationship between gender discrepancies with aggressive behaviour. This will allow further evaluation for those at-risk boys and girls who display aggressive behaviour during pre-adolescence. Therefore, the aim of the present study is to determine whether age and gender play a moderating effect on the relationships between parental nurturance and emotional autonomy with aggressive behaviour. Findings on the moderating role may contribute towards the development of aggressive behaviour prevention and intervention programs, which are sensitive to age and gender difference. In addition, the present study has acquired greater inspiration due to the number of earlier studies in this field being limited in Malaysia as an Asian context. Therefore, this study intends to supply important information for future researchers to determine and expand the knowledge of the way in which aggressive behaviour may occur and be managed by producing accumulative full viewpoint.

1.3 Research Questions

Due to the previous research mentioned above, this study explores the following questions:

1. Are there relationships between parental nurturance and emotional autonomy with aggressive behaviour among pre-adolescents?
2. What are the differences in the aggressive behaviour according to different age and gender among pre-adolescents?
3. What is the best predictor (parental nurturance, emotional autonomy) of the aggressive behaviour among pre-adolescents?
4. To what extent gender and age moderate the relationships between parental nurturance and emotional autonomy with aggressive behaviour among pre-adolescents?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1.4.1 General Objective

The main purpose of the present study is to examine the relationships between parental nurturance and emotional autonomy with aggressive behaviour by moderating roles of age and gender in pre-adolescence in Malaysia.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

The Specific Objectives of this study are:

1. To examine the relationships between parental nurturance and emotional autonomy with aggressive behaviour among pre-adolescents.
2. To examine the differences in aggressive behaviour between age and gender among pre-adolescents.
3. To determine the best predictor of aggressive behaviour in pre-adolescents.
4. To examine the moderating role of gender and age in the relationships between parental nurturance and emotional autonomy with aggressive behaviour among pre-adolescents.

1.5 Research Hypotheses

The present study employs a null hypothesis based on the objectives of the study as follows:

Objective 1: To examine the relationships between parental nurturance and emotional autonomy with aggressive behaviour among pre-adolescents.

- H₀₁) There is no significant relationship between parental nurturance and aggressive behaviour in pre-adolescents.
H₀₂) There is no significant relationship between emotional autonomy and aggressive behaviour in pre-adolescents.

Objective 2: To examine the differences in aggressive behaviour between age and gender among pre-adolescents.

- H₀₃) There is no difference in aggressive behaviour and gender in pre-adolescents.
H₀₄) There is no difference in aggressive behaviour according to age among pre-adolescents.

Objective 3: To determine the best predictor of aggressive behaviour in pre-adolescents.

- H₀₅) The regression coefficient for all selected independent variables does not equal zero when regressed against aggressive behavior.

Objective 4: To examine the moderating roles of gender and age in the relationships between parental nurturance and emotional autonomy with aggressive behaviour among pre-adolescents.

- H₀₆) There is no significant moderating role of age in the relationship between parental nurturance and aggressive behaviour in pre-adolescents.
- H₀₇) There is no significant moderating role of gender in the relationship between parental nurturance and aggressive behaviour in pre-adolescents.
- H₀₈) There is no significant moderating role of age in the relationship between emotional autonomy and aggressive behaviour in pre-adolescents.
- H₀₉) There is no significant moderating role of gender in the relationship between emotional autonomy and aggressive behaviour in pre-adolescents.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The present study was carried out to examine the relationships between emotional autonomy and parental nurturance with aggressive behaviour in pre-adolescents in Malaysia. This study provides a number of contributions towards the body of knowledge, for upcoming investigations, and for policy makers.

For theoretical extension, the present research extends the Social Learning Theory of Bandura (1977) theory of aggressive behaviour by integrating other related variable like emotional autonomy (Self-Determination Theory) to make clarification on the relationships between variables and to illustrate the occurrence of aggressive behaviour among Malaysian pre-adolescents. Thus, it is hoped that better understanding of aggressive behaviour in pre-adolescents would lead to greater results.

Regarding to prevention and intervention, the present study examined aggressive behaviour and two reducing factors related to aggressive behaviour among pre-adolescents in Malaysia. First, when considering the aggressive behaviour, it is important to knowing of poor parental nurturance and low emotional autonomy can predict aggressive behaviour during pre-adolescence. These two factors are important to combine into aggressive behaviour prevention and intervention programs. Decreasing aggressive behaviour in pre-adolescents is a serious part of any prevention and intervention programs. The perception of parental nurturance in pre-adolescents produces details for parents of how they could be successful and useful in the behavioural development of their pre-adolescents. This is because parents have been identified as significant contributors to the lives of their pre-adolescents.

In an effort to advance this field, this study supplies data for the Ministry of Education of Malaysia, the Ministry of Youth of Malaysia, the National Family Policy, educators, and parents to obtain further knowledge of aggressive behaviour in pre-adolescents and the reducing factors associated with aggressive behaviour in the Malaysian context. Such awareness could be beneficial for policy makers to realise mental health policy in the national curriculum for preventing aggressive behaviour among pre-adolescents. Parental nurturance and emotional autonomy are the significant factors in aggressive behaviour, which are to be studied and the Ministry of education and Ministry of youth should elevate prevention programs and training effective parenting behaviour skills for

preventing aggressive behaviour during pre-adolescence. These organisations may use the results of the study as a guide to produce plans for improving the psychological health of Malaysian pre-adolescents

The outcomes of this study are helpful for parents as they will be able to recognize aggressive behaviour. Furthermore, procedure of treatment requirements a supportive network of parents, school staff, and counsellors who have communication with pre-adolescents with aggressive behaviour. Teachers and educational counsellors can be made more sensitive concerning the requirements of aggressive pre-adolescents and to recognise how factors such as parental nurturance and emotional autonomy could have an effect on the pre-adolescent's behaviour. Subsequently, once these groups are likewise informed it is intended to establish treatment plans to help in minimising the aggressive behaviour of pre-adolescents in the school setting through supporting parents to understand the areas in which their help is desirable. The hope is to emulate non-aggressive pre-adolescents through the quality of nurturance and also to improve emotional autonomy that parents can offer to their pre-adolescents. Following this, the question arises as to the parent's awareness of pre-adolescent behaviour and their experience in school along with the relationship with their child at home, including supervising their routines at home and school to have a friendly connection with them.

Moreover, the results of the present study contribute to the study literature for upcoming research. The results can provide useful data as to how parental nurturance and emotional autonomy have an effect on the aggressive behaviour of pre-adolescents. Finally, useful steps might be taken to improve parental nurturance and produce an increased degree of emotional autonomy in decreasing aggressive behaviour among pre-adolescents in primary schools in order to have a healthier community.

1.7 Definitions of Terminology

Parental Nurturance

Conceptually: Nurturing is described as a series of actions and behaviours that focus and guide the targeted person towards socially acceptable behaviour (Faber, 2002). Hence, parental nurturance involves parent's care, support, friendly attention, consideration and interest, which is given to and shared with their children (Arshat, 2010).

Operationally: Perceptions of parental nurturance refers to respondent's scores on the Parental Nurturance Scale (PNS) (Lempers, Clark-Lempers, & Simons, 1989). Higher scores in the scale indicate high parental nurturance.

Emotional Autonomy

Conceptually : Autonomy includes the well-being, comprehension, knowledge, and realisation of a person, as well as a pre-adolescent's potential to follow possibilities and chances as they arise (Hamilton & Redmond, 2010; Nelson, 2012).

Operationally: Emotional autonomy refers to respondent's scores on the Emotional Autonomy Scale (EAS) (Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986). Higher scores in the scale indicate higher emotional autonomy in pre-adolescents.

Aggressive behaviour

Conceptually: Aggressive behaviour is described as damaging actions that are clearly visible (Mazur, 2013). Aggressive behaviour can be socially described as the strength, length of time, and regularity of such aggressive behaviour (Bandura, 1973).

Operationally: Aggressive behaviour refers to respondent's scores on the Child Aggression Inventory (CAI), (Maria Chong et al., 2011). Higher scores in scale indicate high aggressive behaviour.

Pre-adolescence

Conceptually: The course of individual development before entering to adolescence; particularly, the age between 9 to 12 years old (Spano, 2004; Merriam-Webster's Medical Dictionary, 2009).

Operationally: Respondents aged 10-12 years old who participated in this research.

Demographic Characteristics:

Conceptually: Demographic characteristics are a series of characteristics and attributes of individuals to present his or her definition (Christenson, Rounds, & Gorney, 1992).

Operationally: Demographic characteristics refer to the age and gender in this study. Age is a continuous variable and gender is categorical variable.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

The present study examines the relationships between parental nurturance and emotional autonomy with aggressive behaviour in pre-adolescents. In this research, as shown in Figure 1.1), the Social Learning Theory created by Bandura (1977) and the Self-Determination Theory created by Ryan and Deci (2000) are employed in order to explain the relationships between all the variables in this study.

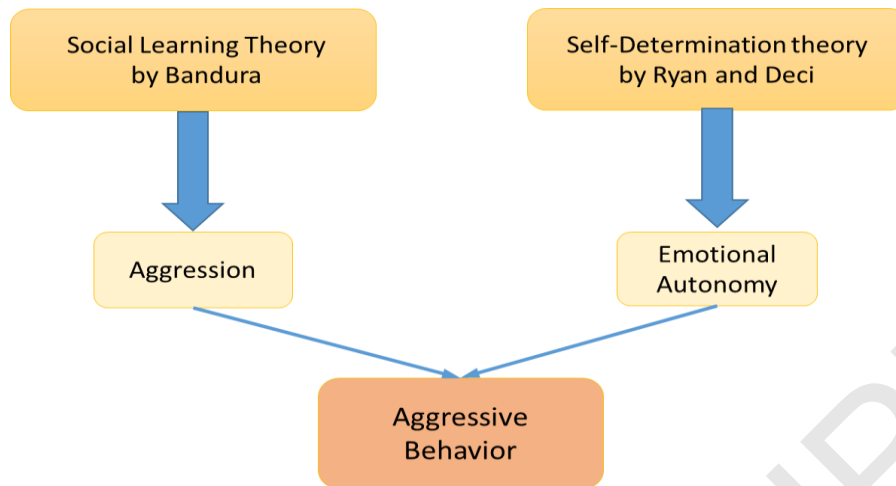


Figure 1.1 Theoretical Framework

Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) exposes a basis for understanding the occurrence of aggressive behaviour. Social learning theory is usually used for pre-adolescents since they are particularly vulnerable to adopting new behaviours by imitation. Bandura (1977) in social learning theory claimed that behaviour can be learned through the environment by observational understanding. (Anderson et al., 2010; McLeod, 2011). This theory is valuable in describing the way pre-adolescents can discover, understand and learn new behaviours and improve their attitude simply by paying attention to role models, especially parents (Whitaker, 2010). How such children behave on their own and with others as well, leads to the development of independent emotional displays and relationships with their environment (Mash & Wolfe, 2010).

The main point of Bandura's social learning theory is that pre-adolescents usually learn tips about their environment by observing other persons close to them acting in different ways who are known as role models (Zainab Mahirah Ismail, 2012). The social learning theory states the significance of parental engagement in the growth of aggressive behaviour among pre-adolescents (Brown, 2012). Within society, important role models, particularly parents, are usually close to pre-adolescents (Bandura, 1977). Pre-adolescents take note of their parents and encode their behaviour. Later, they will imitate the parent's behaviour in their interpersonal communication, which they observed earlier (Bandura, 1977; McLeod, 2011). Consequently, when parents display good and positive behaviour, pre-adolescents may behave positively in their interpersonal relationships (McLeod, 2011). Even so, when parents do not show nurturing behaviour, pre-adolescents will be more inclined to being aggressive to others (McLeod, 2011).

Self Determination Theory

Ryan and Deci (2000) offered the self-determination theory (SDT) that is the most persuasive idea to realising the substantial traits of autonomous people whom are able to specify their own approach of living without being estranged from society. Autonomy in this respect, mentions an inner causation and is understood as an innate incentive to

please one's intrinsic emotional requirements (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Deci & Vansteenkiste, 2004; Kuzucu & Şimşek, 2013).

Self Determination Theory argues that pre-adolescents often consider support from their parents in regard to their essential emotional and psychological needs, especially, the need to have autonomy (Ryan, Deci, Grolnick, & La Guardia, 2006; Lynch, 2013). Generally, autonomy is a fundamental emotional requirement inherent in SDT. Deci and Ryan (1991) discussed that warmth and supportive parents usually assist the improvement of the "core organism self" by means of gratifying the innate requirements as part of the intended autonomy of pre-adolescents. In contrast, cold and controlling parents may push their children to stop the development of autonomy as a way to maintain security. Furthermore, parents by their cold and controlling behaviours usually lead their children to exhibiting aggressive behaviour.

The advantages of good autonomy in a supportive setting are recognised as an essential factor for the improvement of pre-adolescents over different ages (Matte-Gagné, 2015). Based on SDT, among the essential aspects of the ideal improvement of pre-adolescents is usually autonomy, which means a feeling of pre-adolescent animus and the foundation of behaviour and function of pre-adolescent children. SDT supposes that the interpersonal development and well-being of pre-adolescents is based upon the level of requirement for autonomy (Ryan and Deci, 2000).

Autonomy should not be mixed up with the desire for independence from parents since autonomy as explained through SDT is due to the pre-adolescent's animus on her/ his behaviours (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2005; Matte-Gagné et al., 2015). To ensure that pre-adolescents meet up with their innate emotional needs, and thus attain ideal improvement, the environmental surroundings should be approving and favourable to help their autonomy instead of controlling and managing their behaviours (Matte-Gagné et al., 2015). Any interpersonal setting can be considered as autonomy-supportive if it offers possibilities and motivates self-initiation of pre-adolescents as well as stimulates entire internalisation devoid of controlling the feelings and ideas of pre-adolescent behaviour (Joussemet et al., 2008).

Based on SDT, while the requirement of pre-adolescents for autonomy is reinforced, their behaviours to interact by using useful actions such as innate inspiration and to incorporate essential belief as well as interpersonal norms is important in their perception of self. This is such that their internalisation may perform optimally (Joussemet et al., 2008). Since innate inspiration and internalisation are a pair of functions underlying the ideal interpersonal performance, autonomy assist can be established to become significant in the improvement of the interpersonal and emotional aspects of pre-adolescents (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Despite the fact that emotional autonomy assistance comes through a variety of resources such as family, teachers and friends as well, the initial and main critical resources developmentally originates from parents (Matte-Gagné et al., 2015). Parents can build the emotional autonomy of pre-adolescents which is understood to be the level to which parents promote independence, problem fixing, options, and partake in

determination as opposed to externally preventing pre-adolescent feelings and behaviours (Matte-Gagné et al., 2015). Emotional assistance should not be confused with permissiveness and insufficient participation associated with independence (Joussemet et al., 2008), while parents who help the development of the emotional autonomy of the pre-adolescents, positively help them to possibly being autonomous (Ryan et al., 2006).

1.9 Integration of Theories

Overall, due to no single theory that could describe relationships between parental nurturance and emotional autonomy with aggressive behaviour in pre-adolescents, this study has integrated two different theories, namely Social Learning Theory and Self Determination Theory to explain the above mentioned relationships. Figure 1.1) illustrates the integration of these two theories in understanding the aggressive behaviour of pre-adolescents.

Social Learning Theory describes that pre-adolescents may discover and find the appropriate behaviour simply by seeing parents as significant persons within their environment (Bandura, 1977). This sort of understanding has been obvious in several studies which have demonstrated how pre-adolescents learn aggressive behaviour through encountering or even paying attention to parents who display their own aggressive behaviour (Brown, 2012; Stoltz et al., 2013). According to social learning theory, pre-adolescents imitate aggressive behaviour whenever they see their parents show such aggressive responses (Brown, 2012). Furthermore, since pre-adolescents experience aggressive behaviour at home, they become prone to exhibit aggressive behaviour and become to realise that this kind of behaviour is an acceptable strategy to deal with troubles in their environment (Stoltz et al., 2013). It is not unexpected that according to social learning theory, the aggressive values and thinking of pre-adolescents can be usually linked to their parent's attitude of aggression (Brown, 2012).

The current study appends the Self-Determination Theory to the theoretical framework due to the need to complete and describe the relationship between emotional autonomy and aggressive behaviour in pre-adolescents. Based on the Self-Determination Theory offered by Ryan and Deci (2000), in line with the social learning theory, less parental nurturance places pre-adolescents at risk of aggressive behaviour by reducing their inner thoughts about themselves, since they look for emotional support from their parents (Ryan et al., 2006; Lynch, 2013). As Ryan and Deci (2006) illustrated, parents by increasing their nurturing behaviour will develop emotional autonomy in pre-adolescents and this may result in decreasing the aggressive behaviour in their children. As proposed in the self-determination theory, pre-adolescents who do not have a close relationship with their parents, usually fail to receive parental support for their emotional and psychological needs, particularly their requirement to improve their emotional autonomy. Therefore, these pre-adolescents have a greater tendency towards being aggressive in their environment (Lynch, 2013; Matte-Gagné et al., 2015).

1.10 Conceptual Framework

Based on the theoretical framework, the present study has developed a conceptual framework as follows. The conceptual framework of the study outlines the relationship

between emotional autonomy and parental nurturance with aggressive behaviour in pre-adolescents by the moderating role of age and gender in Malaysian primary school students (10 to 12 years old) who study in National schools in Kuala Lumpur, the capital city of Malaysia.

In particular, Bandura's social learning theory (1977) shows the importance of parental nurturance in the relation with pre-adolescent's aggressive behaviour. According to the social learning theory, the occurrence of aggressive behaviour in pre-adolescents is significantly related to parental nurturance. Hence, the loss of parental nurturance offered by parents can possibly predicts and cause aggressive behaviour in pre-adolescents. Therefore, as indicated in Figure 1.2), it is hypothesised that parental nurturance has a relationship with aggressive behaviour. Demographic variables such as age and gender are hypothesised to moderate in the relationship between parental nurturance and aggressive behaviour in pre-adolescents and they are supported by social learning theory.

Essentially, in line with the social learning theory, the self-determination theory by Ryan and Deci (2000) emphasises that pre-adolescents usually look for emotional assistance and guidance from their parents. Therefore, the weak quality of parental nurturance is seen as insufficient closeness and endorsement, such that pre-adolescents cannot develop their emotional autonomy and as a result this could be a predictor for behaving aggressively. Based on this, it is also hypothesised that the emotional autonomy of pre-adolescents and their aggressive behaviour are correlated and more so, it is hypothesised that their age and gender act as moderators in the relationship between emotional autonomy and aggressive behaviour in pre-adolescents. Furthermore, as shown in Figure 1.2) it is hypothesised there is a differences between aggressive behaviour and age and gender in pre-adolescents.

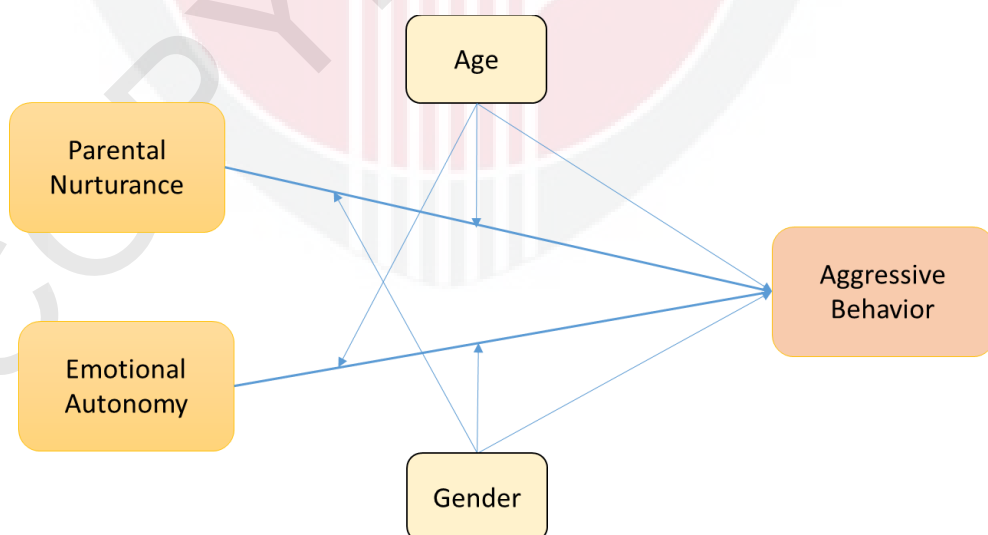


Figure 1.2 Conceptual Framework

1.11 Chapter Summary

The first chapter of the present study begins with an introduction to the investigation that highlights the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable of the study of pre-adolescents. As mentioned in the introduction, parental nurturance, which includes warmth and closeness from parents towards pre-adolescents, is essential for the development of a secure attachment between pre-adolescents and their parents. If pre-adolescents achieve a high level of parental nurturance, they have less tendency to engage in aggressive behaviour (De Haan et al., 2012). Furthermore, by raising the level of parental nurturance, the emotional autonomy of the pre-adolescents will be raised by feeling positively about others in their environment and consequently, they are less likely to exhibit aggressive behaviour (Arim et al., 2011).

The importance of the dependent variable is discussed by accenting the problem in Malaysia. Due to insufficient studies of the influence of parental nurturance and emotional autonomy on aggressive behaviour during pre-adolescence in Malaysia, there is requirement for this study, which investigates the relationships between parental nurturance and emotional autonomy with aggressive behaviour in adolescents in the local context.

Subsequently, the significance of the study is emphasised. The objectives and hypotheses of the study as well as a discussion of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks and the definition of terms follow. The upcoming chapter will discuss earlier studies related to the present research.

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