



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PARENTAL SOCIALIZATION GOALS,
POSITIVE PARENTING, SELF-REGULATION AND SOCIAL
COMPETENCE AMONG MALAYSIAN PREADOLESCENTS***

GAN SU WAN

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By

GAN SU WAN

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

April 2017

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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April 2017

Chair: Siti Nor Yaacob, PhD
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Building social competence is a key developmental task for preadolescents. Parents as the primary socializing agents are responsible in promoting social competence among their preadolescent children. Grounded by Contextual Model of Parenting Style (Darling & Steinberg, 1993) and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000), this study aimed to examine the relationships between parental socialization goals, positive parenting, self-regulation and social competence among Malaysian preadolescents.

This study applies descriptive correlational design with a survey method. A total of 711 preadolescents aged 10 to 12 years and their parents were recruited as respondents by using multistage proportionate-to-size sampling technique. Established instruments which are Socialization Goals Questionnaire (Li et al., 2010), Parental Beliefs Scale (Padmawidjaja & Chao, 2010), Parents as Social Context Questionnaire (Skinner et al., 2005), Questionnaire of Self-regulation (Novak & Clayton, 2001), and Individual Protective Factors Index (Springer & Phillips, 1997) were used to measure the main variables in this study. Self-administered questionnaire was used for data collection. AMOS software was applied to investigate hypothesized model that examined the relationships between parental socialization goals (i.e., collectivism socialization and child-centered goals), positive parenting, self-regulation and social competence. As hypothesized, parental socialization goals worked as causal factors of positive parenting. The results of the study also revealed that positive parenting contributed to higher level of self-regulation; however, it failed to predict social competence. Findings of the study also found that self-regulation had a direct contribution to higher level of social competence among preadolescents.

The mediating role of self-regulation on the relationship between positive parenting and social competence was confirmed by bootstrapping procedure.

Within the mediation model, self-regulation fully mediated the relationship between positive parenting and social competence. The results revealed that parents with positive parenting can help to develop higher level of self-regulation among preadolescents; thus, self-regulated preadolescents reported to have higher level of social competence.

Multigroup analysis was implemented to test the moderating effect of ethnic groups (i.e., Malay, Chinese, and Indian) on the path of parental socialization goals and positive parenting within the model. The results of Chi-square difference test reported that there were no significant differences for the paths from collectivism socialization and child-centered goals to positive parenting among Malay, Chinese and Indian parents. The results indicated that both collectivism socialization and child-centered goals lead to performance of positive parenting among Malay, Chinese and Indian parents. This study concluded that parents with collectivism socialization and child-centered goals are more likely to perform positive parenting, which in turn contributed to social competence through the promotion of self-regulation. The findings can enhance understanding on parental socialization goals and its predictive role in positive parenting among Malaysian parents. The findings can also be applied for parents from similar ethnic groups in other countries. Parents should strengthen their positive parenting in order to foster self-regulated and socially competent preadolescents.

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

**HUBUNGAN ANTARA MATLAMAT SOSIALISASI IBU BAPA,
KEIBUBAPAAN POSITIF, REGULASI KENDIRI DAN KECEKAPAN SOSIAL
DALAM KALANGAN PRAREMAJA MALAYSIA**

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Pembentukan kecekapan sosial merupakan satu tugas perkembangan utama bagi praremaja. Ibu bapa sebagai agen sosialisasi utama bertanggungjawab untuk menggalakkan kecekapan sosial kepada kanak-kanak praremaja mereka. Berdasarkan kepada *Contextual Model of Parenting Style* (Darling & Steinberg, 1993) dan *Self-determination Theory* (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000), kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji perhubungan antara matlamat sosialisasi ibu bapa, keibubapaan positif, regulasi sendiri dan kecekapan sosial dalam kalangan praremaja Malaysia.

Kajian ini menggunakan reka bentuk kajian kuantitatif dan korelasi dengan kaedah tinjauan. Seramai 711 praremaja berusia antara 10 dan 12 tahun and ibu bapa mereka dikenalpasti sebagai responden menggunakan teknik persampelan multistage proportionate-to-size. Instrumen yang sedia ada, iaitu *Socialization Goals Questionnaire* (Li et al., 2010), *Parental Beliefs Scale* (Padmawidjaja & Chao, 2010), *Parents as Social Context Questionnaire* (Skinner et al., 2005), *Questionnaire of Self-regulation* (Novak & Clayton, 2001) dan *Individual Protective Factors Index* (Springer & Phillips, 1997) telah digunakan untuk mengkaji pembolehubah utama dalam kajian ini. Soal selidik yang ditadbir sendiri digunakan untuk pengumpulan data. Perisian AMOS telah digunakan untuk meneliti model hipotesis yang mengkaji perhubungan antara matlamat sosialisasi ibu bapa (iaitu matlamat sosialisasi kolektivisme dan berpusat kanak-kanak), keibubapaan positif, regulasi sendiri dan kecekapan sosial. Seperti yang diandaikan, matlamat sosialisasi ibu bapa merupakan faktor penyumbang signifikan kepada keibubapaan positif. Hasil kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa keibubapaan positif menyumbang kepada tahap regulasi sendiri yang lebih tinggi; walau bagaimanapun, ia gagal meramal kecekapan sosial. Dapatan kajian juga mendapati regulasi sendiri mempunyai sumbangan terus terhadap tahap kecekapan sosial yang lebih tinggi dalam kalangan praremaja.

Peranan perantaraan regulasi sendiri terhadap hubungan antara keibubapaan positif dan kecekapan sosial telah disahkan oleh prosedur *bootstrapping*. Dalam model pengantaraan, regulasi sendiri mengantara sepenuhnya perhubungan antara keibubapaan positif dan kecekapan sosial. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa ibu bapa yang mengamalkan keibubapaan positif boleh membantu untuk membangunkan tahap regulasi sendiri yang lebih tinggi dalam kalangan praremaja; dengan itu, praremaja dengan regulasi sendiri dilaporkan mempunyai tahap kecekapan sosial yang lebih tinggi.

Analisis pelbagai kumpulan telah dilaksanakan untuk menguji kesan penyederhanaan kumpulan etnik (iaitu Melayu, Cina dan India) ke atas laluan matlamat sosialisasi keibubapaan dan keibubapaan positif dalam model. Keputusan ujian perbezaan *Chi-square* menunjukkan bahawa terdapat perbezaan yang tidak signifikan bagi laluan daripada matlamat sosialisasi kolektivisme dan matlamat berpusat kanak-kanak kepada keibubapaan positif dalam kalangan ibu bapa Melayu, Cina dan India. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa kedua-dua matlamat sosialisasi kolektivisme dan berpusat kanak-kanak menyumbang kepada keibubapaan positif dalam kalangan ibu bapa Melayu, Cina dan India. Kajian ini menyimpulkan bahawa ibu bapa dengan matlamat sosialisasi kolektivisme dan berpusat kanak-kanak lebih cenderung untuk mengamalkan keibubapaan positif, yang seterusnya menyumbang kepada kecekapan sosial melalui galakan regulasi sendiri. Hasil kajian ini boleh meningkatkan kefahaman mengenai matlamat sosialisasi ibu bapa dan kesan sumbangannya kepada keibubapaan positif dalam kalangan ibu bapa di Malaysia. Dapatan kajian ini boleh juga diaplikasikan kepada ibu bapa daripada kumpulan etnik yang sama di negara lain. Ibu bapa perlu mengukuhkan tingkah laku keibubapaan positif mereka untuk memupuk regulasi sendiri dan kecekapan sosial praremaja.

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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 21 April 2017 to conduct the final examination of Gan Su Wan on her thesis entitled "Relationships between Parental Socialization Goals, Positive Parenting, Self-Regulation and Social Competence among Malaysian Preadolescents" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Preadolescence is a critical period for children to develop skills and competence in order to overcome and handle developmental challenges during adolescence (Erikson, 1968). During preadolescence, social development works as one of the key to success in adolescence. Accomplishment of social tasks will increase the competence among preadolescents which eventually encourage them to involve in an engaging social life and face social challenges actively. According to Hatfield (2007), children between the age of 10 and 12 years are in the stage of preadolescence. In Malaysia, there were 1,237,093 children aged between 10 and 12 who were studying in standard 4, 5 and 6 in 2012 (Malaysia Ministry of Education, 2013a). In the later 3 years of primary school education (age 10 to 12 years old), children are encouraged to join co-curricular activities due to their development and growth in cognition and physical aspects. Through activities outside of the classroom, children can increase their social involvement as compared with previous years.

Developmental task of children should not be limited to their academic-related task only. Psychosocial development of children also has an indispensable role in their daily life and future development. In order to experience better social development, be accepted by others, and fit themselves better in the society, children need to develop their social skills. Besides academic ability, social competence has been considered as a vital skill in helping children to adapt and achieve their objectives in school and community environments (Dirks, Treat, & Weersing, 2007; Rubin & Burgess, 2002). This shed lights on the importance and implications of social competence on children development.

Social competence refers to the ability to utilize developmentally appropriate strategies to engage in social interaction for attaining social goals (Odom, McConnell, & Brown, 2008). Socially competent individual can build and maintain friendships as well as be accepted by peer. Social competence plays an important role in the maintenance of general health and positive developmental outcomes for preadolescents. As indicated by past studies, social competence was linked to higher level of social adjustment (Mirabile, 2010) and physical health in children population (Swanson, Valiente, Lemery-Chalfant, & O'Brien, 2011), as well as better academic achievement in youth (Larson, Whitton, Hauser, & Allen, 2007). Low social competence is also related to poor academic performance, social maladjustment, and may lead to psychopathology among children (Burt, Obradovic, Long, & Masten, 2008; Parker, Rubin, Erath, Wojslawowicz, & Buskirk, 2006). Prior studies found that there are many factors that contribute to social competence such as parenting practices and resilience (Swanson et al., 2011), emotional intensity (Sallquist et

al., 2009), emotional regulation (Spritz, Sandberg & Maher, 2010), inhibitory control (Rhoades, Greenberg & Domitrovich, 2009), online communication (Valkenburg & Peter, 2008); and social emotional learning skill and self-regulation (McKown, Gumbiner, Russo, & Lipton, 2009). However, the current study only focused on positive parenting and self-regulation.

Parents as the primary socializing agents of children play crucial roles in nurturing children's social development. The importance of parenting quality were supported by empirical evidence in which positive parenting was found to have significant impact on children's various developmental outcomes in relations to psychological well-being, social behaviours, social competence and academic achievement (Ali & Frederickson, 2011; Shaffer, Burt, Obradovic, Herbers & Masten, 2009; Simon & Conger, 2007; Respler-Helman, Mowder, Yasik, & Shamah, 2012). Based on the developmental perspective, Vygotsky (1978) believed that children can accomplish their developmental tasks excellently and gain confidence in their abilities if the parents or caregivers can provide affection, guidance and encouragement to children for learning new things and overcome the problems. The positive parent-child interactions for cultivating family environment could be created through practice of positive parenting.

Past research claimed that warmth, autonomy support and structure are positive dimensions in explaining interaction between parent and children (Figueroa-Moseley, Ramey, Keltner, & Lanzi, 2006). Empirical studies found that positive parenting practices promote socially acceptable behaviour (Latouf, 2008), self-regulation (Vahedi, Mostafafi, & Mortazanajad, 2009), and peer acceptance and social competence (Chen, Dong & Zhou, 1997). Thus, positive parenting practices were tested as predictor of psychosocial development outcomes of preadolescents.

Parental socialization goals refer as parental expectations influence how parents nurture their children (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). The way parents behave and treat their children is influenced by culture-oriented parental socialization goals. Values promoted within a group tend to affect family development via shaping their social interaction and experiences among children and parents. It explained that children's capability can be culturally nurtured and influenced. During the child rearing process, parents perform their social responsibility and parental roles. Within the family, children will behave by following social expectations and norms. For example, Asian parents may request their elder child to take care of younger child; while, adult child were expected to provide financial support or involved in family business.

As aforementioned, parenting practices is influenced by macrosystem that embrace cultures and values (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Malaysia is a multicultural society comprised of three major ethnic groups (i.e., bumiputra =

67.4%; Chinese = 24.6%; and Indian = 7.3%) (Malaysia Department of Statistics, 2010). Each group holds specific religion-based beliefs. The intergenerational cultural values exert influence on family life. A particular family value is a key variable that are closely linked to parental goals and parenting practices among families across different ethnic groups. Prior studies found that there are differences and similarities in parental goals among three ethnic families in Asia and Malaysia (Cheah, Ozdemir & Leung, 2012; Gill & Gopal, 2010; Hei, 2011; Hossain, 2014). Malay parents tend to promote socially acceptable values to their children; Chinese parents nurture the importance of respectful, benevolence and filial piety to their children; while Indian parents expect their children to be filial and perform well in academic-related field.

In recent years, there might be a shift in traditional family values, parental goals and behaviour of Malaysian parents due to socio-cultural changes that occur as a consequence of globalization processes. In addition, changes in family size may also influence parental goals and parenting practices. Across the decades, fertility rate in Malaysia decreased from 4.9 (year 1970) to 2.1 (year 2012) (Malaysia Department of Statistics, 2013a). Due to the decrease in fertility rate, modern families which have less number of children might be more lenient to their child by exercising child-centered behaviour. Meanwhile, culture-oriented parental goals may probably be a central factor that guides Malaysian parents in their parenting practices. Thus, Malaysian parents' child rearing practices might be explained by individualistic versus collectivistic concept.

Individualism and collectivism are used to describe widespread cultural orientations in this world (Suizzo, 2007). In Malaysia, shifts in traditional values and goals might promote individualism in which parents tend to emphasize and prioritize values and behaviour that can benefit children, especially parents with fewer numbers of children. However, past study found that parental goals among Malaysian parents are generally influenced by collectivism (Keshavarz & Baharudin, 2009). Derived from the notion of individualism and collectivism, two types of parental socialization goals which are child-centered goals and collectivism goals were examined as the predictors of positive parenting practices. Child-centered goals encourage children's ability in self-expression and independence (Chao, 2001); collectivism goals that reflected Asian values uphold interdependence and maintaining harmonious social relationships (Li, Costanzo & Putallaz, 2010).

In addition to family factors, individual factor such as self-regulation has also been linked to social competence. Self-regulation is the child's ability or capacity to manage behaviours, thoughts, and feelings in an adaptive and flexible manner across a variety of social and physical context (Baumeister, Vohs, & Tice, 2007; Saarni, 1997). Self-regulation skills of an individual are gradually developing and become more sophisticated along the developmental process (Blair & Diamond, 2008). During preadolescence, a sophisticated self-

regulation skill is essential for preadolescent children to accomplish their developmental tasks. Preadolescents with lack of regulatory ability were more likely to involve in externalizing behavior problems (conduct problems and hyperactivity); and they are taken as antisocial child and rejected by peers (McEwen & Flouri, 2009; Gardner et al., 2008; Trentacosta & Shaw, 2009).

Positive interaction with the socializing agents especially parents can enhance an individual's competence and sense of autonomy. With the provision of warmth, structure and autonomy support from parents, preadolescent children received responsive guidance, consistent rules and appropriate decision making choices in handling their social challenges. Deci and Ryan (1985) also suggested the idea that relatedness from parents can motivate children to internalize guidance as self-desired ideas. Due to the support and encouragement from positive parents, preadolescents might take initiative to regulate own cognitive, emotions and behaviour. Prior to adolescence, preadolescents need to derive the idea about the "self" (i.e., self-regulation) which in turn can assist them to cultivate their competence. Self-regulated preadolescents who hold adaptive ability can achieve their personal goals and adapt themselves in this society. Thus, it can be predicted that self-regulated preadolescents might be more competent in social life. Therefore, this study also examined the mediating effect of self-regulation in the relationship between positive parenting practices and social competence (Eisenberg, Cumberland & Spinrad, 1998).

In a nut shell, the present study proposed a parenting model which explains preadolescents' psychosocial development. Within the model, it examined the effects of collectivism socialization and child-centered goals on positive parenting; which in turn will indirectly contribute to higher level of preadolescents' social competence via the mediating effect of self-regulation of preadolescents. Positive parenting is postulated to link with social competence via self-regulation (Blandon, Calkin, & Keane, 2010; Eisenberg, Cumberland & Spinrad, 1998). In addition, ethnic background as culture-based factor is included in the model to test its moderating effect on the relationships between collectivism socialization and child-centered goals with positive parenting.

In summary, this study examined the relationships between parental socialization goals, positive parenting, self-regulation and social competence. Self-regulation was tested as the mediator in the relationship between positive parenting and social competence. The influence of parental socialization goals on positive parenting was also examined. The role of ethnicity on the link between parental socialization goals and positive parenting was also examined.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Social competence is believed to mitigate causes of mental health problem. The results from National Health Morbidity Survey stated that the prevalence of psychiatric morbidity among children and adolescents who aged 5 between 15 years have increased from 13.0% in 1996 to 20.3% in 2011 (Ministry of Health, 2012). These figures indicate that Malaysian children and adolescents are facing mental and psychological problems. Children with low social competence may have difficulty in coping with interpersonal problems and experience psychological and behavioural problems. Social competent adolescents tend to have good sense of mental well-being (NoorAini et al., 2015). Prior studies found that poor social competence among preadolescents were associated with mental health problems such as depression and loneliness (Hartup & Stevens, 1999; Kail & Cavanaugh, 2007; Ladd, 1999). These findings showed that preadolescents who have lower level of social competence are more likely to face psychological and behavioural problems. However, very little is known about the predictors of social competence among Malaysian preadolescents. Thus, this study aimed to examine the predictors of social competence.

This study targeted preadolescents as respondents because preadolescence is a critical period for children to develop their social competence and build social relationships (Erikson, 1968). Preadolescents with extended social network gradually increase their social interaction with peers. Failure in building or maintaining social relationship may bring negative effect on children development outcomes and vice versa. Interpersonal relationship and sense of belonging to a group become more important during transition to preadolescence. Social competence is important for preadolescents to express socially acceptable behaviour. Past study (Obradovic, Van Dulmen, Yates, Carlson, & Egeland, 2006) has revealed that the stability of children's social competence declined from early childhood to middle adolescence. Questions have been raised about the formation and development of social competence among preadolescents. Thus, this study is conducted to investigate social competence among preadolescents in Malaysia.

Low level of parental awareness in promoting self-regulation and social competence may nurture problematic children. According to Steinberg (2014), preadolescence commences with children's engagement in higher awareness on own behavior, beginning of detachment from parents, and more advanced reasoning abilities. Preadolescents should be expected to exhibit greater degree of self-regulation and more close interpersonal relationship as compared with previous developmental stage. Parents should understand that self-regulation strategies will become more varied and complex in order to face life challenges and adversities (Shaffer & Kipp, 2010). However, much uncertainty still exists about the relationship between positive parenting and self-regulation.

A lack of self-regulation and social competence would threaten the preadolescents' social interaction skills and psychological well-being. Preadolescents who are lacking in social skills will have difficulty in solving problem independently when they are facing problem. Self-regulation may lead to higher level of problematic behavior among preadolescents. Lack of self-regulation and social competence had existed as one of the health problems. Past studies found that self-regulation is positively related to mission success, popularity, mental health and adjustment, and good interpersonal relationships (Baumeister, Heatherton, & Tice, 1994; Duckworth & Seligman, 2005; Tangney, Baumeister, & Boone, 2004; Wolfe & Johnson, 1995). The linkage between self-regulation and social competence is vital to assist preadolescents in reducing general health problems and to develop better social life. However, causal factors leading to self-regulation and social competence remain speculative.

The evidence that positive parenting is associated with social competence is inconclusive. Findings of past studies on the relationship between positive parenting and social competence are inconsistent. Positive parenting exerts a direct and also indirect influence on social competence (Blandon et al., 2010; Soenens & Vansteenkiste; 2005). Some studies have found that personal factor such as self-regulation mediates the relationship between positive parenting and social competence (Brody, McBride, Kim, & Brown, 2002; King, Lengua, & Monahan, 2013). It is not yet clear what factors will lead to higher level of social competence. Therefore, the direct effect of positive parenting and self-regulation on social competence will be investigated. In order to explain the inconsistent finding on the direct path from positive parenting to social competence, self-regulation as personal factor was tested as mediator.

Based on online databases search (SpringerLink, EBSCOhost, Wiley, Google Scholar and Sage) on the related field throughout the year of 2000 to 2016, there is a research gap in the relevant literature about the relationship between parental socialization goals, positive parenting practices, self-regulation and social competence within the Malaysia context, especially related to differences in ethnic groups (Hossain, 2014; Idris, 2011; Keshavarz & Baharudin, 2009). It is believed that parental socialization goals and parenting style of parents from different ethnic groups are unique and dissimilar. The finding of this study may be helpful to government in reviewing the policy or programs for families from diverse backgrounds within this multicultural society. Interventions and programs that are not suitable or applicable for each ethnic group might be ineffective and even create problems. Within the multicultural society as Malaysia, more study is needed to examine the ethnicity difference in the parenting process that may affect self-regulation and social competence. Thus, this study investigated the moderating effect of ethnic group on the relationship between parental socialization goals and positive parenting.

Therefore, this study was conducted with the aim to examine the relationships between parental socialization goals, positive parenting, self-regulation and social competence among Malaysian preadolescents aged 10 to 12 years old. Within the proposed model, parental socialization goals were examined as the predictor of positive parenting. The relationship between positive parenting with preadolescents' social competence was tested by self-regulation as the mediator. In addition, ethnic background as the cultural factor included in the model to test the ethnic group differences in parental socialization goals and positive parenting practices and its moderating effect.

1.3 Research Objectives

1.3.1 General Objectives

This study aimed to examine relationships between parental socialization goals, positive parenting practices, self-regulation and social competence among Malaysian preadolescents aged 10 to 12.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

1. To describe the levels of parental socialization goals, positive parenting, self-regulation and social competence among respondents.
2. To examine the relationships between parental socialization goals (collectivism socialization and child-centered goals) and positive parenting among parents.
3. To examine the relationships between positive parenting with self-regulation and social competence of preadolescents.
4. To examine the relationship between self-regulation and social competence of preadolescents.
5. To examine the difference in parental socialization goals and positive parenting among Malay, Chinese and Indian parents.
6. To examine the predicting effects of parental socialization goals (collectivism socialization and child-centered goals) on positive parenting among parents.

7. To examine the mediating role of self-regulation in the relationship between positive parenting and social competence of respondents.
8. To examine the moderating role of ethnic groups (i.e., Malay, Chinese, and Indian) in the relationship between parental socialization goals and positive parenting.

1.4 Hypotheses

- Ha1: There is a significant relationship between collectivism socialization goal and positive parenting among parents.
- Ha2: There is a significant relationship between child-centered goal and positive parenting among parents.
- Ha3: There is a significant relationship between positive parenting and self-regulation of preadolescents.
- Ha4: There is a significant relationship between positive parenting and social competence of preadolescents.
- Ha5: There is a significant relationship between self-regulation and social competence of preadolescents.
- Ha6: There is a significant difference in collectivism socialization goal among Malay, Chinese and Indian parents.
- Ha7: There is a significant difference in child-centered goal among Malay, Chinese and Indian parents.
- Ha8: There is a significant difference in positive parenting among Malay, Chinese and Indian parents.
- Ha9: Collectivism socialization goal contributes significantly to positive parenting of Malaysian parents.

- Ha10: Child-centered goal contributes significantly to positive parenting of Malaysian parents.
- Ha11: Self-regulation mediates the relationship between positive parenting and social competence.
- Ha12: The relationship between collectivism socialization goal and positive parenting is moderated by ethnic groups (i.e., Malay, Chinese, and Indian).
- Ha13: The relationship between child-centered goal and positive parenting is moderated by ethnic groups (i.e., Malay, Chinese, and Indian).

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study seeks to explain how preadolescents can internalize nurturance from parents as their self-regulatory skill; in turn build up their social competence. Prior research revealed that positive parenting practices have significant contribution in preadolescents' developmental outcomes that include social competence (Lengua, Honorado & Bush, 2007), psychological well-being, social behaviors, and academic achievement (Respler-Helman et al., 2012; Ali & Frederickson, 2011; Simon & Conger, 2007). These results can be explained by the concept of internalization process (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Preadolescents who experience positive interaction with parents can internalize parental guidance and nurturance as self-desired ideas. With self-desired ideas, preadolescents become more self-regulated to accomplish tasks by performing alternative thinking, flexible emotion and adaptive behavior. During the interaction process outside of the family, preadolescents have to perform strong self-regulatory skill in handling problems individually. Accordingly, self-regulated preadolescents tend to perceive higher level of social competence (Trentacosta & Shaw, 2009; McKown, 2007; Bauminger, Edelsztein, & Morash, 2005) by achieving social goals with their adaptiveness. The finding of this study also highlights the importance of self-regulation in promoting social competence among Malaysian preadolescents. Therefore, it provides useful knowledge in establishing better social development for preadolescents.

Over decades, social competence had been defined in various forms by researchers and scholars worldwide (Harter, 1982; Gresham & Elliot, 1990; Oravecz, Koblinsky, & Randolph, 2008; Swanson et al., 2011; Webster-Stratton, 2007). However, constructs of social competence may vary due to cultural background and social context. Thus, this study is important to investigate social competence constructs which are suitable to apply on Malaysian preadolescents. Grounded by the social emotional development perspective of Erikson (1968), assertiveness, cooperation and confidence that

are referred as independence, sense of belonging and competence respectively were tested as the constructs of social competence among preadolescents. Moreover, statistical analysis will be conducted to test reliability and validity of these three constructs in order to yield a representative social competence constructs. The significant of this study relies on the results of proposed constructs; verified constructs can contribute to the knowledge regarding social competence among preadolescents in Malaysia.

Parental socialization goals in this study which was derived from individualism and collectivism can be used to clarify Malaysian's current cultural orientation trend. Past studies (Hossain, 2014; Keshavarz & Baharudin, 2009) found that Malaysia is similar to other Asia countries where parental goals are promoted based on the concept of collectivism. However, Malaysian parents, nowadays, may be more child-centered due to globalization effect and shifts in the traditional values. In addition, declined rate of fertility among Malaysian (Year 1970: 4.9; Year 2012: 2.1) (Malaysia Department of Statistics, 2010; Malaysia Department of Statistics, 2013a) leads to less number of children in modern families. Therefore, parents may also perform child-centered parental goals and practices which is similar to individualism. The findings of this study can contribute to literature about current cultural notion practiced among Malaysian parents; in which may increase or mitigate the formation of positive parenting practices.

The proposed model in this study is important for explaining the effect of parental socialization goals on positive parenting among Malaysian parents. Prior studies found the differences and similarities of parental goals among three ethnic families in Asia and Malaysia (Cheah et al., 2012; Gill & Gopal, 2010; Hei, 2011; Hossain, 2014). The effect of ethnic group difference on the path within the model can increase the understanding and knowledge on parenting process in this multicultural society. Within the hypothesized model, paths from parental socialization goals (i.e., collectivism socialization and child-centered goals) to positive parenting may be significant only for particular ethnic group or paths may vary due to the moderating effect of races. Discussion that focuses on Malaysia context (Hossain, 2014) also stated that parental goals and parenting practices varies among Malaysian parents of different ethnics. By considering the ethnic difference, the effects and relations within the hypothesized model becomes more representative and applicable within the local context. This hypothesized parenting model is vital in providing practical information for Malay, Chinese and Indian parents in understanding their parenting effect on the formation of preadolescents' self-regulation and social competence. It also provides a glimpse for researchers and educationists in understanding Malaysian parenting process and its effect on preadolescents.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

The current study is guided by Contextual Model of Parenting Style (Darling & Steinberg, 1993) and Self-determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Contextual Model of Parenting Style as the main theory was used to explain the relationships between parental socialization goals, positive parenting and children outcomes. According to the Contextual Model of Parenting Style, parenting practices is a manifestation of parental socialization goals; in turn parenting practices will directly affect developmental outcomes of children. Parental socialization goals reflect parental values and goals that parents hold about their parental roles. Parents transfer their parental goals and values via practices and parenting practices is defined as how parents behave and express their desired goals during parent-child interaction (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). In this process, parenting practices transmit the parents' values and expectations to children, instead of directly influence children development outcomes. Parents perform relevant and corresponding parenting practices in assisting children to attain their parental socialization goals; thus parenting practices act as a predictor of children's developmental outcomes.

Contextual Model of Parenting Style discussed that parental socialization goals focus on children development of global qualities (e.g, independence & critical thinking) and children's acquisition of specific behaviour (e.g., appropriate manners). Parental goals for socializing good children will contribute to the practice of good quality of parenting among parents. Based on the Contextual Model of Parenting Style, the present study includes child-centered goal and collectivism socialization goal as parental socialization goals for Malaysian parents. Child-centered goal aims to nurture independent and strong-willed children; whereas parents with collectivism socialization goal expect their children to be cooperative and socially active (Li et al., 2010; Padmawidjaja & Chao, 2010). Guided by Contextual Model of Parenting Style, parents need to provide positive parenting to socialize their children in developing personal values as well as performing socially acceptable behaviour, as what they expected.

Contextual Model of Parenting Style provides an explanation on the causal effect of parental socialization goal on parenting practices. In addition, this model also concerns the variability of society contexts that may alter the magnitude of the path from parental socialization goals to specific parenting practices. Guided by Contextual Model of Parenting Style, the moderating role of ethnic groups in the relationship between parental socialization goals and parenting practices will be explained. According to the proposition of Contextual Model of Parenting Style, parental goals that vary in different social context determine various parenting practices. Parents from various ethnic backgrounds tend to have different social expectation on preadolescent children based on their culturally defined tasks. It also highlights the

importance of cultural forces in influencing parenting practices and then preadolescents' developmental outcomes. Past study also revealed that cultural scripts are able to determine parenting practices and parents' goals or expectations (Padmawidjaja & Chao, 2010). Parents from specific ethnic groups may hold particular parental socialization goals (child-centered goals or collectivism goals) to nurture preadolescents by following their value and specific societal expectations. The propositions of Contextual Model of Parenting Style highlight the need to examine the ethnic difference in relationship between parental socialization goals and positive parenting.

Contextual Model of Parenting Style asserts the effect of parental socialization goals on positive parenting in predicting children development outcomes. However, Contextual Model of Parenting Style might not sufficient to explain the constructs of positive parenting and its effect on social competence. Thus, the current study integrated Self-determination Theory (SDT) in explaining the hypothesized model. SDT asserts the importance of positive parenting in motivating children along their development process. SDT posits that individual strives for the need of competence to achieve healthy human functioning. Motivation from role model or parents is useful to develop a sense of mastery and competence among children. Past study (Skinner et al., 2005) also found that positive parenting contributes to higher level of social competence. Within SDT, positive parenting is represented by parental involvement, autonomy support and structure (Grolnick, Deci, & Ryan, 1997). Positive parenting that offers positive parent-child interaction encourage children to engage in social task; in which children can gain competence through accomplishing the specific task independently. Besides of parenting factor, individual factors may contribute to the development of social competence. A previous study (Blandon et al., 2010) revealed that parenting practices is not a significant predictor of social competence, whereas self-regulation mediated the relationship between positive parenting and social competence (King et al., 2013). Thus, this study proposed that a mediating effect may be able to explain how positive parenting affect social competence.

Self-determination Theory explains how positive parenting contributes to social competence through the promotion of self-regulation of children. Self-determination theory is a macro theory of human motivation that proposed the role of underlying motivation mechanism in directing self-regulation (Deci & Ryan, 2008). The proposition of Self-determination Theory asserts that positive interaction with parents worked as extrinsic motivation to facilitate children's internalization, also known as self-regulation. Internalization process occurs while preadolescents integrate their parents' guideline with their own values. Through the internalization process, children who perceived warmth, support and guidance from parents are self-motivated to actively involve themselves in their development process (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Recent study that applied SDT (Rhodes et al., 2013) also found that motivation has a positive relation with higher level of self-regulation. Self-regulated individual who can initiate their behavior and perform socially acceptable behavior has higher willingness

to engage in social tasks as well as perceived higher level of social competence (Buckner, Mezzacappa, & Beardslee, 2009; Morton, Barling, Rhodes, Masse, Zumbo, & Beauchamp, 2010). Once children understand about who and what controls outcomes of the task, they will obtain competence in themselves by accomplish the task successfully. A study that applied SDT also found that parents teach and encourage their children to behave in an appropriate way, regulate own behavior and achieve personal goals as well as maintain positive interpersonal relationships by developing children's sense of mastery in social capabilities (Joussemet, Landry & Koestner, 2008).

As shown in Figure 1, this current study has merged Contextual Model of Parenting Style and SDT to explain the importance of positive parenting for self-regulation and social competence; while, parental socialization goals are required to explain the performance of positive parenting beforehand in which ethnic groups may vary this path.

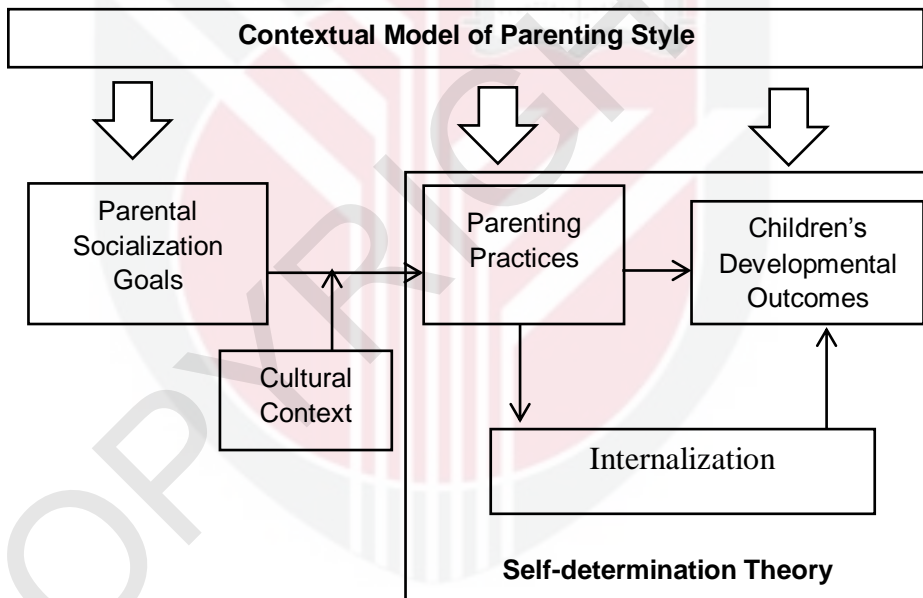


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework that Integrated Contextual Model of Parenting Style (Darling & Steinberg, 1993) and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000)

1.7 Conceptual Framework

This study aimed to examine the relationships between parental socialization goals, positive parenting practices, self-regulation and social competence among Malaysian preadolescents. This study consisted of parental socialization goals as antecedent variable, ethnic group as moderator, positive parenting as independent variable, self-regulation as the mediator and social competence as dependent variable. Within the model, Parental socialization goals were examined as the potential causal factors of positive parenting practices. Positive parenting and self-regulation are proposed as predictors of social competence. The relationship between positive parenting with preadolescents' social competence is hypothesized to be mediated by self-regulation. In addition, this study proposed that the path from parental socialization goals to positive parenting is moderated by ethnic groups.

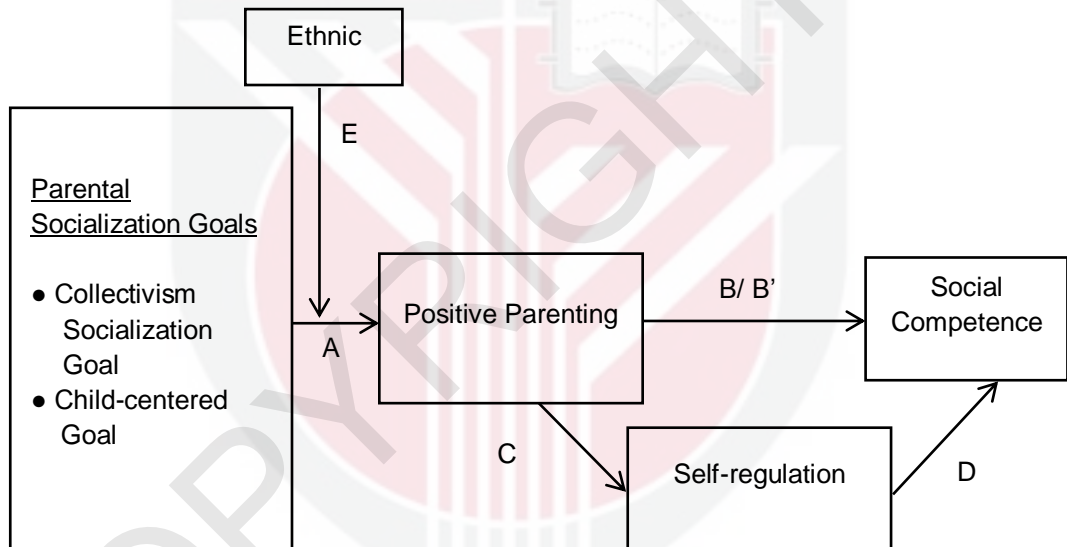


Figure 2: Conceptual framework for the study on the “Relationships between Parental Socialization Goals, Positive Parenting, Self-regulation and Social Competence among Malaysian Preadolescents”.

As shown in Figure 2, path A presented the link between parental socialization goals and positive parenting. The direct predicting effect of positive parenting on social competence and self-regulation were examined as shown in path B and C respectively. Meanwhile, path D indicates the contributing effect of self-regulation on social competence. The relationship between positive parenting

practices and social competence is mediated by self-regulation as in path B'. Path E represented the moderating effect of ethnic groups on path A.

The current study proposed that collectivism socialization goals is expected to positively contribute to positive parenting; child-centered goals which focused on children's needs may lead to performance of positive parenting. The current study proposed that positive parenting will promote higher level of self-regulation and social competence among preadolescents. Positive interaction with parents is hypothesized to internalize preadolescents to be self-regulated; self-regulated children are more likely to develop higher competence to accomplish social tasks. This study also posited that the magnitude of the paths from collectivism socialization and child-centered goals to positive parenting among Malay, Chinese and Indian families may vary.

1.8 Definition of Terminology

1.8.1 Social Competence

Conceptual definition: Social competence is defined as an individual's ability to achieve social tasks and maintain positive interpersonal relationship (Rubin, Bukowski & Parker, 2006).

Operational definition: It refers to the average score of the social competence subscales in Individual Protective Factors Index (Springer & Phillips, 1997). Three subscales, namely assertiveness, confidence and cooperation, were used to measure perceived social competence among preadolescents. Higher scores indicated higher level of social competence.

1.8.2 Self-regulation

Conceptual definition: Self-regulation encompassed the ability in initiating and maintaining attention, and avoiding negative emotion and behavior in order to achieve social adaptation and personal goals (Eisenberg & Spinrad, 2004).

Operational definition: Perceived self-regulation refers to the respondents score on the Questionnaire of Self-regulation (Novak & Clayton, 2001) which examined emotional, behavioural and cognitive regulation. Higher average scores on Questionnaire of Self-regulation represent higher level of self-regulation.

1.8.3 Positive Parenting

Conceptual definition: Positive parenting refers to high quality parental of behaviour that performed high level of warm, autonomy support and structure towards their children (Skinner et al., 2005).

Operational definition: It refers to preadolescents' perception on positive parenting was assessed by three dimensions of parenting practices (i.e., warmth, autonomy support and structure) in the Parents as Social Context Questionnaire (Skinner et al., 2005). High aggregation average scores indicated higher level of positive parenting.

1.8.4 Parental Socialization Goals

Conceptual definition: Parental socialization goals refer to the parental values and expectations on children development outcomes (Darling & Steinberg, 1993).

Operational definition: Parental socialization goals in this study refer to collectivism socialization and child-centered goals.

1.8.4.1 Collectivism Socialization Goal

Conceptual definition: Collectivism socialization goal is defined as parental expectation regarding the performance of harmonious interpersonal relationships and obedience of children within a group (Chao, 2001).

Operational definition: Collectivism socialization goal refers to respondents' scores on Collectivism Subscale from Socialization Goals Questionnaire (Li et al., 2010). Higher average scores on the scale indicated greater parental desires on collectivism socialization goal.

1.8.4.2 Child-centered Goal

Conceptual definition: Child-centered goal refers to parental desires for independence and self-expression skill among children (Chao, 2001).

Operational definition: Child-centered goal refers to respondents' scores on the child-centered goal subscale of Parental Beliefs Scale (Padmawidjaja & Chao, 2010). Higher average scores on child-centered goal scale indicated greater parental desires on fulfilling children's needs.



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