

**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

***SELF-CONCEPT, FAMILY RELATIONSHIP, DEVIANT PEER  
SOCIALIZATION AND EXTERNALIZING BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS  
AMONG AT RISK STUDENTS IN SELANGOR,  
MALAYSIA***

**PATONAH BINTI ZAKARIA**

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MALAYSIA**

**By**

**PATONAH BINTI ZAKARIA**

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

**June 2018**

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## DEDICATION

*This thesis is dedicated to the people who mean a lot to me*

*My beloved Father, Mother, and siblings  
For their love, support and valuable prayers*



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

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AMONG AT RISK STUDENTS IN SELANGOR, MALAYSIA**

By

**PATONAH BINTI ZAKARIA**

**June 2018**

**Chairman : Amna Md Noor, PhD**  
**Faculty : Human Ecology**

The aim of this study was to determine the relationships between self-concept, family relationship, deviant peer socialization and externalizing behavior problem among adolescents with the disciplinary problem in Selangor. This study used a quantitative approach and survey technique by applying descriptive and inferential analysis. Besides that, the study used mediator analysis to measure the mediator effect of self-concept towards the relationship between independent variables and the dependent variables. A total of 400 adolescents aged 13 to 18 years old from eight secondary schools in the state of Selangor were selected for this study. A survey with the self-administered questionnaire was employed to collecting the data and multi-stage cluster sampling were used for the selection of the respondents. The respondents were chosen among students with disciplinary problem assist by teachers. Data were utilized from a set of questionnaire which are consists of social demographic background, family relationship (Family Relationship Characteristics scale), deviant peer socialization (Peer Deviancy Scale), self-concept (Individual Protective Factors Index Questionnaire), externalizing behavior (Aggression Scale and Problem Behavior Frequency Scale). Findings revealed that majority of respondents show the moderate level of self-concept, family relationship, and externalizing behaviors, meanwhile for deviant peer socialization majority of respondents showed that they have low deviant peers. The results of T-test showed that there were significant differences in family beliefs, family structure and deviant peers socialization based on gender and age. There were significant differences in aggressive and delinquent behavior based on gender, while self-concept have significant differences in terms of age. Findings also indicated that family relationship (family cohesion and family structure), self-concept, deviant peer socialization have a significant relationship with the aggressive behavior. Finding also found that family structure and deviant peer socialization shows a significant relationship with the delinquency behavior. The multiple regression analysis showed that predictor variables, namely sex, deviant peer socialization, family structure and self-concept have significantly predict aggressive behavior [ $R^2 = 0.17$ ,  $F(6,701.71) = 17.41$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ] while, significant predictors of delinquency behavior was sex and

deviant peer socialization [ $R^2 = 0.47$ ,  $F(2,363.52) = 119.52$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ]. The results of regression analysis using stepwise method show that the socialization of deviant peers was the most important predictor in predicting aggressive behavior, followed by family structure, self-concept, and sex. Regression analysis also shows that the deviant peer socialization was the most important predictor in predicting delinquent behavior, followed by sex. Mediator test indicated that self-concept is the mediator of the relationship between adolescent's family relationship quality and externalizing behavior. The results of this study have important implications for those involved in school and adolescents systems. Awareness about the influence and impact of self-concept, the family relationship and deviant peer socialization to those involved in adolescents' development system is very important. This knowledge will contribute to the development of more positive externalizing behavior among adolescents, for example in drafting any related program, the self-concept must take into consideration to ensure the enhancement of psychosocial well-being of adolescents will be achieved.

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

**KONSEP KENDIRI, HUBUNGAN KELUARGA, SOSIALISASI RAKAN  
DEVIAN DAN MASALAH TINGKAH LAKU LUARAN DALAM KALANGAN  
REMAJA BERISIKO DI SELANGOR, MALAYSIA**

Oleh

**PATONAH BINTI ZAKARIA**

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Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menentukan hubungan antara konsep sendiri, hubungan keluarga, sosialisasi dengan rakan devian dan masalah tingkah laku luaran dalam kalangan remaja di Selangor. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dan teknik survei dengan menggunakan analisis deskriptif dan inferensi. Di samping itu, kajian ini juga menggunakan analisis pengantara untuk mengukur kesan mediator terhadap hubungan antara pemboleh ubah bebas dan pemboleh ubah bersandar. Seramai 400 orang remaja yang berumur antara 13 hingga 18 tahun dari lapan buah sekolah menengah di negeri Selangor telah terpilih untuk menyertai kajian ini. Pengumpulan data kajian adalah melalui soal selidik yang ditadbir sendiri dan pensampelan kluster pelbagai peringkat telah digunakan dalam pemilihan sampel. Sampel dipilih dalam kalangan remaja yang mempunyai masalah disiplin dengan dibantu oleh guru. Satu set soal selidik yang merangkumi gabungan beberapa skala telah digunakan iaitu latar belakang demografi, hubungan keluarga (*Family Relationship Characteristics*), sosialisasi rakan devian (*Peer Deviancy Scale*), konsep sendiri (*Individual Protective Factors Index Questionnaire*) dan tingkah laku luaran (*Aggression Scale* dan *Problem Behavior Frequency Scale*). Dapatan kajian menunjukkan majoriti responden mempunyai tahap konsep sendiri, kualiti hubungan keluarga, dan tingkah laku luaran yang sederhana, manakala bagi sosialisasi rakan devian majoriti responden mempunyai bilangan rakan devian yang rendah. Hasil analisis ujian-T menunjukkan terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan dalam kepercayaan keluarga, struktur keluarga dan sosialisasi rakan devian berdasarkan jantina dan umur. Disamping itu, terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan dalam tingkah laku agresif dan delinkuen berdasarkan jantina, manakala konsep sendiri berbeza secara signifikan berdasarkan umur. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa hubungan keluarga (perpaduan keluarga dan struktur keluarga), konsep diri, sosialisasi rakan sebaya mempunyai hubungan yang signifikan dengan tingkah laku agresif. Penemuan kajian juga mendapati bahawa struktur keluarga dan sosialisasi rakan sebaya menunjukkan hubungan yang signifikan dengan tingkah laku delinkuen. Hasil analisis regresi berganda menunjukkan faktor peramal unik terhadap tingkah laku agresif adalah

jantina, sosialisasi rakan devian, struktur keluarga dan konsep sendiri [ $R^2 = 0.17$ ,  $F(6,701.71) = 17.41$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ], manakala faktor peramal tingkah laku delinkuen yang signifikan, adalah jantina dan sosialisasi rakan devian [ $R^2 = 0.47$ ,  $F(2,363.52) = 119.52$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ]. Hasil analisis regresi menggunakan kaedah *stepwise* menunjukkan bahawa sosialisasi rakan devian merupakan prediktor unik yang paling penting dalam meramalkan tingkah laku agresif, diikuti oleh struktur keluarga, konsep sendiri dan jantina. Hasil analisis regresi juga menunjukkan sosialisasi rakan devian merupakan prediktor unik yang paling penting dalam meramalkan tingkah laku delinkuen, diikuti dengan jantina. Ujian mediator menunjukkan konsep sendiri adalah mediator hubungan antara hubungan keluarga dan tingkah laku luaran remaja. Hasil kajian ini memberikan implikasi penting bagi mereka yang terlibat dalam sistem sekolah dan remaja. Kesedaran tentang pengaruh dan impak konsep sendiri, faktor hubungan kekeluargaan dan sosialisasi rakan sebaya devian terhadap mereka yang terlibat dalam sistem pembangunan remaja adalah sangat penting. Pengetahuan ini akan dapat menyumbang kepada peningkatan tingkah laku luaran yang lebih positif dalam kalangan remaja contohnya dalam merangka program yang berkaitan perlu mengambil kira konsep sendiri bagi memastikan kesejahteraan psikososial remaja dapat dicapai.



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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 29 June 2018 to conduct the final examination of Patonah binti Zakaria on her thesis entitled "Self-Concept, Family Relationship, Deviant Peer Socialization and Externalizing Behavior Problems Among At-Risk Students in Selangor, Malaysia" 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 Master of Science.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SCT	Social Cognitive Theory
WHO	World Health Organization
APA	American Psychological Association
EDA	Exploratory Data Analysis
SD	Standard Deviation
HAKAM	National Human Rights Society Malaysia
EB	Externalizing Behavior
MOHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
SMK	Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
IV	Independent Variable
DV	Dependent Variable
MV	Mediator Variable
N	Population size
S	Sample size
df	Degree of Freedom
t	t-value (from t-distribution)
r	Correlation Coefficient
Beta	Standardized Coefficient (Beta)
F	F statistics distribution
R <sup>2</sup>	Regression Determinant Coefficient
p	Statistical significant

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction

Adolescence is generally described as an age where various changes happening in their lives and families. The previous studies showed that adolescents risk where the shifting period from childhood to adolescence is a crucial times because it was the beginning of various forms of behavioral problems (Lippold, Powers, Syvertsen, Feinberg, & Greenberg, 2013; Bradshaw, Waasdorp, Goldweber, & Johnson, 2013; Ttofi & Farrington, 2012). Due to these changes, the prevalence rates of problematic behavior increases during the early age of adolescents, then afterward beginning to decline and become constant, and subsequently decelerating (Lahey et al., 2000).

The problematic behavior among the adolescent usually showed by their externalizing behavior. The topic on behavior problem has gained considerable amount of attention from the various scholars (Cartwright-Hatton, McNally, White & Verduyn, 2005; Byrd, Kahn, & Pardini, 2013; Kimonis, Branch, Hagman, Graham, & Miller, 2013; Feilhauer, Cima, & Arntz, 2012). In general, behavior problems is classified into two different classes which are internalizing and externalizing behaviors (Brendgen et al., 2011; Crosnoe et al., 2010; Latzman, & Clark, 2013)

As mentioned before, internalizing and externalizing behaviors are two types of behaviors problem that are either discussed together or separately, depending on the interest and the need of researchers. Although many studies have been conducted previously, the coverage of these issues was different from time to time since some researchers preferred to discuss them together, while others distinguished the two problem behaviors separately. Internalizing behaviors are actions that are focused toward the self, which may hurt oneself without lashing out at others. The symptoms of internal behavior that are commonly occurred to an individual are like depression, fear, substance misuse and alienation (Perle et al, 2013). In contrast, externalizing behaviors involve harming others which can be exhibited by aggression, violence, deviance and criminal behaviors (Jianghong, 2004). According to Achenbach and Edelbrock (1978), the principle of externalizing problem behavior refers to a set of behavioral problems which are aggressive behavior and delinquency behavior, exhibited by teens' outer behavior that responds negatively to their external environment. Previous studies have shown evidence that the prevalence of behavioral and emotional problems increases during adolescence. Based on studies in Asian countries, there was an escalation in the frequentness of problem behaviors among children and adolescents (Amstadter et al., 2011; Farbstein et al., 2010; Khan et al., 2009; Leung et al., 2008; Mullick & Goodman, 2005; Srinath et al., 2005; Syed, Hussein, & Mahmud, 2007; Woo et al., 2007).

In Malaysia, the behavioral problems were also debated years ago. When discussing the issues on adolescent, there are several categories of behavioral problems often committed by these groups, including crime related to property, crime related to people, drug uses, traffic, fire arms, and other social problems (e.g., runaway from homes, and out-of-wedlock pregnancy). Past studies stated that the behavioral problems include sexual activities, substance abuse, illegal racing, and throwing new born in dumpsters (Mohamad, Sumari, & Mahmud, 2013). Bahor & Ismail (2018) also relate out-of-wedlock pregnancy as a result of sexual activities among adolescents group and statistic shows 28.8% of adolescents aged between 10 and 19 were experiencing out-of-wedlock pregnancy.

Furthermore, another problem which closely related to adolescents group was juvenile offenders. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2016), between 2014 and 2015 the number of juvenile offenders seems to be declined by 10.3% from 5,096 cases in 2014 to 4,569 in 2015, however, it was reported that there was 12.4% increase in repeated offenses from 2014 which involved 371 cases to 417 cases in a year later. In addition, according to the same statistical report, it was revealed that property-related crimes had the highest percentage of child offenders within two consecutive years which were 36.0 % in 2015 and 42.9 % in 2014, and followed by drug use (29.7%) and people-related crimes (13.4%) in 2015.

As mentioned by Department of Statistics Malaysia (2016), although statistics on juvenile's offenders seems to decline between 2014 to 2015, based on statistical records from Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA, 2018), it was stated that the admission of prison inmates among Malaysia citizen under juvenile category was increased gradually from 454 cases in 2015 to 549 cases in 2017. On the other hand, based on the record from the Prisons Department, the statistics reported that there was a significant increase in the detention admission to a rehabilitation center which was from 772 in 2015 to 1,198 in 2017 and among them males showed higher rates than females (MOHA, 2018). Table 1.1 shows that the report issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs (2018), which shows some criminal offenses based on sex conducted by adolescents in 2016. The table stated that drugs and property-related crimes were among the highest acts conducted by these two groups of adolescents, and among them, males conduct highest criminal rates than females.

**Table 1.1: Children with ages group of 13-15 and 16-17 years old that involved in crime by type of crimes and sex, 2016**

Type of Crimes	13-15 years old			16-17 years old		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Property-related crimes	460	13	473	1133	35	1168
People-related crimes	139	1	140	484	8	492
Minor offence act	22	0	22	56	0	56
Infringement of supervision terms	1	0	1	8	0	8
Drug	197	12	209	1123	105	1228
Gamble	3	1	4	31	2	33
Weapon/ Fire arms	14	0	14	32	5	37
Traffic	31	2	33	201	2	203
Escape from an approved school	1	0	1	7	0	7
Others (e.g., in prohibited area, owned pornographic material etc.)	72	6	78	351	68	419
<b>Total</b>	<b>940</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>975</b>	<b>3,426</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>3,651</b>

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, 2018

In addition, in 2017, the Ministry of Education highlighted that about 402 schools nationwide were identified as having disciplinary issues example crime, bullying and truancy among its students and closely being monitored and among them, about 91 schools fall under the 'hotspot' category (Shahar, 2017). Thus, this increment showed that the phenomenon of externalizing behavior among adolescents is critical and it certainly causing great worries to all the parties. Arum and Ford (2012) also mentioned that the behavioral dilemmas among students that increase rapidly and affecting school discipline not only happened in Malaysia but around the world. Child misbehavior may be the norm for some people but a disorder to others. In reality, behavioral disorders are much more serious than they seem to be.

In discussing adolescent externalizing behavior, it is important to know its origin and its contributing factors. Prior research has highlighted several factors that influencing the externalizing behavior problems among adolescents. Among these factors, Vandell (2000) stated that parent and peer relationships are the two major socializing factors that influence the upbringing of children and adolescents. Such finding has been observed across different cultures, contexts and countries (Lee & Yoo, 2015; Viner et al., 2012). Previous findings showed that the family factor is very diverse and there are a lot of family dimensions that have a potential to influence the antisocial behavior. Jasmina & Watson (2009) found that supportive and functional families play an essential role in children life that prompt to numerous opportunities which stimulate them to the externalizing actions especially aggression and delinquency behaviors. In



addition, youth involvement in delinquent behavior might be decreased by four times when they having the great relationship with their parents, contrasted to their comrades who did not possess a good bonding with their parents (Stouthamer-Loeber et al., 2002; Johnson, Giordano, Longmore, & Manning, 2016). Indeed, there is definite evidence that family relationship has a crucial impact on the present and future development of children's conduct and well-being.

In addition, peer socialization also has a direct relationship with delinquent behavior. Friendship is a stage in interpersonal relationship where those concerned share mutual interests and feelings at a particular level, which meant that if the adolescent is attracted to a negative kind of friendship, it will lead to delinquent conducts and other forms of dysfunctional behaviors. Past study also mentioned the relationship between peers influence and problem behavior. For example, study by Ismail, Ahmad, Ibrahim and Nen (2017) stated that the external factors which are peer influence are important predictor to behavior problems than internal factors such as individual and family factors. This study was supported by other studies which indicated that peer factors contribute to various misconduct activities (Snyder et al., 2012; Dishion & Tipsord, 2011; Benson & Buehler, 2012).

Besides that, individual factors, such as self-concept, are very important elements to be considered for they may also influence adolescent behavior. In fact, a few studies have mentioned that individuals who have a weak self-concept have a higher chance of being involved in behavior misconducts. Conversely, those who have a stronger self-concept will have better behaviors. For example, study by Tekinarslan and Kucuker (2015) in Turkish children aged 9 to 13 years old stated that there was negative significant relationship between self-concept and problem behaviors. Parker, Martin, Martinez, Marsh, and Jackson (2010) when compared with other groups, adolescents are especially susceptible to fluctuations in self-concept. Even within the context of adolescence, when peer relations become increasingly important, sociability self-concept appears to vary across individuals (Bokhorst, Sumter, & Westenberg, 2010). Thus, self-concept is an important construct that should be addressed in this study.

## **1.2 Problem statement**

Adolescents are important entities that will represent the country in future. Based on the statistics in Malaysia, up to 2017, approximately 9.5 million children under the age of 18, currently living in this country (Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, 2017). Based on this statistic it was clearly stated that these groups covered large numbers of the country population. Along with that, there were various issues concerning them, especially issues of problem behaviors not only in Malaysia but all around the world. For example, in 2015, more than 31 million American youth under the age of 18 were arrested under juvenile court jurisdiction and 28.1% of every 1,000 juveniles in the population were delinquency cases such as person offense, property offense, drugs and public order (Hockenberry, Sarah, Puzzanchera, & Charles, 2018).

Previous studies found that behavior problems during childhood may impact individual later on in the adolescence and when entering adulthood stage. A longitudinal study in the United States found that adolescents' externalizing behaviors, peer delinquency, illegal drug use, and neighborhood crime are all factors that predict violence perpetration in adulthood (Brook, Brook, Rubenstone, Zhang, & Saar, 2011). While there were plenty of children who managed to overcome the problem of misconduct when they grew up, yet there are a lot of children who still suffer from chronic mental health problems, having academic difficulties in school, trouble to find long-term employment, and engaging in illegal activity (Sourander et al., 2005, 2008). Also, regardless of the developmental course of externalizing behavior, which cause the long-term effect such as substance use, anxiety, and mood disorder in adulthood (Reef, Diamantopoulou, van Meurs, Verhulst, & van der Ende, 2011).

In Malaysia, a series of study that have been carried out recently have been gaining attention because of rising in criminality rates such as pornography, destructive behaviors, truancy (Mey, 2009, 2010; Veloo & Kim, 2014), and drug addiction (Ghani, Zamani, Rahman, Zainal, & Sulaiman, 2008; Mohamed, Marican, Elias, & Don, 2008) among Malaysian youth, as a results the concern for juvenile delinquency has increased (Nasir, Zamani, Khairudin, & Wan Shahrazad, 2011; Nasir, Zamani, Yusoff, & Khairudin, 2010; Tunggak, Ngadi, Naim, 2015). In some cases, these changes can contribute to the emergence of externalizing problems such as aggressive behaviors to peers (Estevez, Murgui, Musitu, & Moreno, 2008a; Verona, Javdani, & Sprague, 2011). For example, the bullying case seems to increase in secondary schools from 0.06% of cases in 2015 to 0.11 % cases in 2016. According to the Education Ministry, there was a steep rise in the number of bullying cases from 2,825 in 2014 to 3,448 in 2016 ("HAKAM Report: Bullying in Malaysian Schools," 2018). Despite the fact that it has become an old-age dilemma, this concern is something that all parties must look upon as a serious matter.

In addition, although the discussion on this issues were widely studied, Pace and Zappulla (2011) found that most of these studies had a different focus, either emphasizing the general notion of externalizing acts, or specifically researching the particular component of actions such as aggressiveness, misconduct, and substance usage (Schwartz et al. 2010). Based on findings from previous studies and statistics, showing that issues related to externalizing behavior problems among adolescents are still increasing consistently, there was also a possibility for continuity in externalizing behaviors across the lifespan. Therefore, this study focused on externalizing behavior problems among adolescents particularly in secondary school students.

Realizing the need to study about externalizing behavior problems, this study was designed to uncover which factors might contribute to the externalizing behavior problems. Thus, this study comprises of four main variables which are family relationship quality, deviant peer socialization, self-concept and externalizing behavior problems (aggressive and delinquency). Many factors that contribute to externalizing behavior have been recognized by previous scholars, however, environmental factors proved to be the most critical aspects of adolescents' behavior. Also, the things that they learn as they develop into an adult will stay with them in their entire life, especially those matters that are related to family and peers.

Today's social phenomenon shows that the problems occurred particularly in adolescents are the result of a failure of a well-functioning family institution. A study by Eichelshiem et al., (2010), indicates that family factors, such as the parent-adolescent relationship, play an important role in fostering or reducing problem behaviors. A huge amount of research conducted in the United States have verified that there was an association between parenting bonding and misbehavior activities among adolescents (Criss, Shaw, Moilanen, Hitchings, & Ingoldsby, 2009) and low family cohesion and parent-child conflict (Boots et al., 2011; Klahr, Rueter, McGue, Iacono, & Burt, 2011). Similarly, studies in Malaysia also stated that the family relationship has the greatest impact on adolescent delinquency (Piang, Osman, & Mahadir, 2017) and high attachment between parents-adolescents lead to low involvement in antisocial behavior (Yaacob, Idris, & Wan, 2015). Although the previous research has discussed a lot about the family factors and their contribution to the adolescent's well-being, however, the domains that have been used were varied, depending on the needs for each study. Even in Malaysia, most of the studies were focused on parenting style aspects in the family (Bakar, Ahmad, Dolah, Halim, & Anuar, 2012; Hong, Baharudin, & Hossain, 2012; Wong, 2014; Kiadarbandsari, Madon, Hamsan, & Mehdinezhad Nouri, 2016). This study uses other domains of family relationships which are family cohesion, family belief and family structure which also denote as an important part in family relationships that influences behavioral problems. This problem is worrying because it bring negative effects on psychological, physical, economic growth and individual development, families, communities and the country.

Furthermore, peer socialization is also an important factor affecting externalizing behavior. Accordingly, peer influence has been prove to has a great influence on students' behavioral tendencies and overall growth, in either positive or negative ways. For example, past studies had demonstrated that peers influence were related to truancy behavior (Ahmad, Madon, & Ibrani, 2000; Suseladevy, 2004). In some studies, evidence regarding the socialization process has been found, where the socialization process refers to the direct influence of deviant peer group on the adolescent antisocial behavior, that is, adolescents who are involved in antisocial activities influenced by their antisocial peers (Keijsers et al., 2012; Negriff, Ji, & Trickett, 2011; Thomas & McGloin, 2013; Tarter et al., 2011). Pokhrel, Sussman, Black, & Sun (2010) claimed that identification with delinquent peer groups was a predictor of physical and relational aggression. Also, according to Nasir et al. (2011), family, peer and school environments either directly or indirectly contributed to these risky behaviors. Given that the family relationship and peers socialization were proven to be greatly influenced adolescents' externalizing behavior problems, thus, this factor should be examined further in conjunction with other variables.

Next, this study also sought to identify differences in variables in terms of age and sex. Given male students consistently show more externalizing problem behaviors than females (Bongers et al., 2003; Cox, 2014; Rescorla et al., 2007), possible sex differences also were taken into account. Furthermore, even though the family has been repeatedly identified as an important factor, it is unclear whether it can explain the offenses of males and females, respectively, and whether this influence will have a different impact for males relative to females (Hoeve et al., 2009, 2012; Wong et al., 2010). Also, Weerman and Hoeve (2012) suggested that focusing on sex differences in the influence of peers on externalizing behavior is important because it may offer

insights into the sex gap in crime. Similarly, there was inconsistency in past findings to determine the age differences in the studied variables. For example, according to Alpatani (2015), the crimes rates were higher among early adolescents, while, a study by Cox (2014) found that age was not a significant predictor to adolescent's behavior problems. In addition, a few studies demonstrated that parental influences (Lac et al., 2009), peer influences (Cox, 2014; Capaldi, Kim, & Owen, 2008) and self-concept (Wei & Marder, 2012) showed significant differences across the adolescent's ages. Thus, this study also considers both sex and age groups as important elements that must be included in this study.

The present study also examined the self-concept as the mediator between family relationship quality and deviant peer socialization with externalizing behaviors. According to Gage and Lierheimer (2012), the self-concept among adolescents is not static but is a fluid construct influenced by social interactions with peers and adults. In addition, Razali & Azah (2013), stated that there was a positive relationship between parents-child communications with adolescent's self-concept. Furthermore, family and peer relationship plays an important part in the development of adolescent self-concept which lack of parent support and being avoidance by peers contribute to low self-concept and as results arise of negative emotion and behavior problems (Chen et al., 2011). Past study also found that the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship was positively associated with adolescents' self-esteem (Parsa, Yaacob, Redzuan, Parsa, & Esmaeili, 2014; Esmaeili & Yacoob, 2012), which turned to aggressive behavior (Simon, Paternite, & Shore, 2001).

Prior investigations have shown that externalizing behaviors can be explained by the presence of family relationships and peers socialization with adolescents, however, the association between family relationship, deviant peer socialization and externalizing behavior is mediated by self-concept has rarely been studied. Meaning that the study on self-concept and its effect on the relationships between family relationship, deviant peer socialization, and externalizing behaviors especially in Malaysia is still scarce. Nonetheless, most researchers used different approaches to study these factors, such as investigating them separately. Also, previous researchers did not clearly clarify the extent of the contribution that social psychology and environmental factors have on the students' externalizing behavior problems. In order to fill this gap, the present researcher believed that self-concept embraces significant elements that must be investigated in this study. In addition, this study is related to social psychology by conducting research on human behavior in which the social context such as family and peer influence would affect how person view themselves (self-concept), thus affect the externalizing behaviors.

The main objective of the present research is to determine the relationship between environmental features (e.g., family relationship quality along with deviant peer socialization) in accounting for the externalizing behavior problems among adolescents. In addition, the other purpose of this research is to determine the mediating effect of self-concept on the relationship between family relationship quality and deviant peer socialization with adolescent externalizing behaviors. Therefore, five research questions were addressed in this study:

### 1.3 Research Questions

Based on the research problems, this study was conducted to answer the following questions:

- 1) What are the levels of family relationship quality, deviant peer socialization, self-concept, and externalizing behaviors (aggressive behavior and delinquency) of adolescents?
- 2) Are there any significant differences in family relationship quality, deviant peer socialization, self-concept and externalizing behaviors (aggressive behavior and delinquency) according to socio-demographic factors?
- 3) Are there any significant relationships between family relationship quality, deviant peer socialization, self-concept, and externalizing behaviors (aggressive behavior and delinquency)?
- 4) Which factors uniquely predict externalizing behaviors (aggressive behavior and delinquency) among adolescents?
- 5) Does self-concept mediate the relationship between family relationship quality, deviant peer socialization and externalizing behaviors (aggressive behavior and delinquency)?

### 1.4 Research objectives

#### Main objective:

To determine the relationships between self-concept, family relationship quality, deviant peer socialization and externalizing behaviors among adolescents in Selangor.

Based on the research questions addressed in this study, five specific objectives were formulated as follows:

#### Specific Objectives:

- 1) To identify the levels of family relationship quality (cohesion, belief and structure), deviant peer socialization, self-concept, and externalizing behaviors (aggressive behavior and delinquency) of adolescents.
- 2) To determine the differences between adolescents' family relationship quality (cohesion, belief and structure), deviant peer socialization, self-concept and externalizing behaviors (aggressive behavior and delinquency) in terms of sex and age.
- 3) To determine the relationships between family relationship quality (cohesion, belief and structure), deviant peer socialization, self-concept and externalizing behaviors (aggressive behavior and delinquency) of the adolescents.

- 4) To determine which factors uniquely predict externalizing behaviors among adolescents.
- 5) To determine the mediating effect of self-concept on the relationships between family relationship quality (cohesion, belief and structure), deviant peer socialization and adolescent externalizing behaviors.

### 1.5 Hypotheses

Several hypotheses were formulated based on the specific objectives (objectives 2, 3, 4 and 5) of the present study. The hypothesis could be defined as a tentative explanation of the research problem, a possible outcome of the research, or an educated guess about the research outcome (Sarantakos, 2012). The hypotheses in this study were derived based on past studies. In this study, the alternative hypothesis was developed, considering there were many past studies showing that there were significant differences or relationship between the studied variables.

The family relationships, deviant peer socialization, and self-concept are hypothesized to be significantly related to adolescents externalizing behavior. Among the foundations of forming alternative hypotheses in this study, Fosco, Stormshak, Dishion, and Winter (2012) stated that family relationships have an important role to control the adolescent involvement in antisocial behavior, substance use, and deviant peer affiliation. Furthermore, a study by Cutrín, Gómez-Fraguela, and Luengo (2015), mentioned that the family factors and delinquent friends were significantly associated with the antisocial behavior, as well as there was a positive correlation between juvenile delinquent friends and juvenile delinquent activity among adolescents (Moreira & Mirón, 2013). Lo and Cheng (2018) stated that low self-concepts have often been regarded as a motivation for violent behavior.

The analysis of these hypotheses also included an examination of gender and age, since previous research has suggested that these factors may influence the family relationship (Weerman et al., 2015), deviant peer socialization (Weerman & Hoes, 2012), self-concept (Bokhorst, Sumter, & Westenberg, 2010; Cole et al., 2001; Hergovich, Sirsch, & Felinger, 2004) and externalizing behaviors (Lo & Cheng, 2018). Besides that, the based on a theoretical framework on the relationship between self-concept, environmental factors (family and deviant peers) and externalizing behavior, through social cognitive theory by Bandura (2001), stated that these variables have a reciprocal relationship to each other. Thus, the alternative hypothesis was constructed for this study.

*Objective 2: To determine the differences between adolescents' family relationship quality (cohesion, belief and structure), deviant peer socialization, self-concept and externalizing behaviors (aggressive behavior and delinquency) in terms of socio-demographic factors.*

*H<sub>a</sub>1:* There are significant differences in family relationship quality in terms of socio-demographic factors.

*H<sub>a</sub>2:* There are significant differences in deviant peer socialization in terms of socio-demographic factors.

*H<sub>a</sub>3:* There are significant differences in self-concept in terms of socio-demographic factors.

*H<sub>a</sub>4:* There are significant differences in externalizing behaviors in terms of socio-demographic factors.

*Objective 3: To determine the relationships between family relationship quality (cohesion, belief and structure), deviant peer socialization, self-concept and externalizing behaviors (aggressive behavior and delinquency) of the adolescents.*

*H<sub>a</sub>5:* There are significant relationships between family relationship quality and externalizing behaviors (aggressive behavior and delinquency) of the adolescents.

*H<sub>a</sub>6:* There are significant relationships between deviant peer socialization and externalizing behaviors (aggressive behavior and delinquency) of the adolescents.

*H<sub>a</sub>7:* There are significant relationships between self-concept and externalizing behaviors (aggressive behavior and delinquency) of the adolescents.

*Objective 4: To determine which factors uniquely predict externalizing behaviors (aggressive behavior and delinquency behavior) among adolescents.*

*H<sub>a</sub>8:* There is a significant relationship between aggressive behavior and predictor variables namely sex, age, family relationship quality, deviant peer socialization, and self-concept.

*H<sub>a</sub>9:* There is a significant relationship between delinquency behavior and predictor variables namely sex, age, family relationship quality, deviant peer socialization, and self-concept.

*Objective 5: To determine the mediating effect of self-concept on the relationships between family relationship quality, deviant peer socialization and adolescent externalizing behaviors.*

$H_{a10}$ : Self-concept will mediate the relationship between family relationship quality and externalizing behaviors (aggressive and delinquency).

$H_{a11}$ : Self-concept will mediate the relationship between deviant peer socialization and externalizing behaviors (aggressive and delinquency).

## **1.6 Significance of study**

There has been a lot of previous researchers that studied internal and external behaviors. In spite of that, the focus of these studies were slightly different over time. First of all, the study focused on the investigation of the two domains that affect external behaviors which are environmental factors (e.g., quality of family relationship and socialization with deviant peers) and personal factors (e.g., self-concept) towards the changing behavior of adolescents, externally.

Secondly, the present researcher believe that this research is important as it may assist in the collaborations of practitioners such as educators, counselors and policy makers in order to strengthen the policies for the adolescent group. For example, the outcomes of this research may be used for identifying each level of family relationship quality, deviant peer associations and externalizing behaviors of Malaysian adolescents. Thus, it would give a better picture on the current scenario, especially on the externalizing behaviors among adolescents. Then, knowledge from this research may also be used in the school institution, where it can provide a guideline for conducting certain programs later on.

Thirdly, findings from this study may create awareness in the family institution, in that, families should give more attention toward the changes in adolescent behaviors. In addition, this research may be an eye opener to the community as it can provide information regarding the current behaviors of adolescents. Indeed, the present study attempted to increase knowledge and provide extra information on the trends and causes of behaviors in Malaysian adolescents. Therefore, the current researcher believes that there is a growing need to examine the coexistence of family factors, peer influence and self- concept in influencing externalizing behaviors.

Lastly, the findings from the present research were anticipated to be parallel with previous investigations especially regarding the significance of family relationships and deviant peer associations of adolescents on the development of externalizing behavior problems. Thus, this study may increase parents' and teacher's awareness of the importance of creating a secure environment conducive to the prevention of students' behavioral problems. Moreover, this study can also offer some benefits to the adolescents themselves, being the main contributors to this research. This study



believes that awareness within the individual about his own behavior, self-concept, and the kinds of friends he hangs out with will also increase.

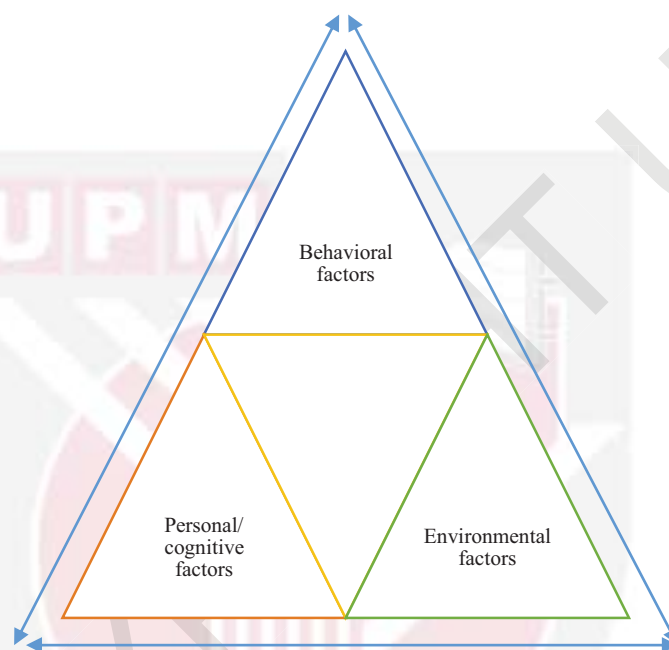
## 1.7 Theoretical framework

The overarching theory employed by this study was the social cognitive theory (SCT) proposed by Albert Bandura to study the factors that influence the externalizing behavior problems among adolescents. Around the 1970s, a complete framework was introduced by Albert Bandura to provide knowledge about human behavior through the viewpoint of social cognitive approach. In 2001, Bandura further discussed the social-cognitive-theory, in which underscores the viewpoint that people learn through observations and imitations of other people's actions. In the past decades, this theory has postulated the diverse variables that intervene in the learning of externalizing behavior patterns. Specifically, the environment, personality, and psychological maturation must converge to form memory structures and processes that, in turn, influence cognitive strategies that are used in various social situations (Bandura, 2006; Clemente, Espinosa, & Vidal, 2009; Contreras, Molina, & Cano, 2011). According to this model, individuals choose certain strategies as a function of their capacity, self-efficacy, expectations of success, or internal norms such as attitudes and moral values (Bandura, 2001).

Bandura explained the social cognitive theory in terms of the triadic reciprocal causation in which certain systems assume that human actions result from the reciprocal relationships among three variables namely, personal factors, environmental factors and behavior factors. In general, this theory postulates that personal factors interact with environmental conditions to develop person actions. Based on aforementioned theory, there were two fundamental measures for human beings to acquire knowledge which are over personal experiences and observations of people's behaviors. Furthermore, SCT is a very unique feature where it emphasis on social influence and also emphasis on external and internal social reinforcement.

SCT considers the unique way because individuals acquire and maintain behavior, while also considering the social environment in which individuals perform the behavior. The theory takes into account a person's past experiences, which factor into whether behavioral action will occur. These past experiences influences reinforcements, expectations, and expectancies, all of which shape whether a person will engage in a specific behavior and the reasons why a person engages in that behavior. The goal of SCT is to explain how people regulate their behavior through control and reinforcement to achieve goal-directed behavior that can be maintained over time. Bandura believed that people possess capabilities to use these cognitive capacities, and that they have some ability to select or to restructure their environment. In reaction to this theory, the self-concept is the most important motivational predictors of the behavioral outcomes. Several researchers believed that self-concept consists of two constructs that relate to one another: the evaluation on individual capacities to accomplish particular duties or to hold specific traits (henceforth regarded to as self-confidence) (Shave son, Hubner, & Stanton, 1976).

Figure 1.1 displays the theoretical framework used in this research, the Theory of Social Cognitive by Albert Bandura (1977), in which indicates three continuous interactions between personal, behavioral, and environmental influences. Through SCT, an individual's behavior develops by interacting with the environment and personal factors which for this study it refers to the interaction between environmental factors (family relationship quality and deviant peer socialization) and self-concept towards externalizing behaviors.



**Figure 1.1: The Theoretical Framework from “Bandura’s Triadic Reciprocal Determinism”**

Bandura’s social cognitive theory proposes that environmental factors, internal characteristics, and behaviors do possess an intertwining relationship. It could be suggested that environmental factors, such as other people labeling adolescents’ behavioral/emotional disorders, are internalized into a negative self-concept; hence, they act out negative behaviors. Previous study found that there was a relationship between the self to the behavior outcomes of adolescents (Schwartz et al., 2006; Schwartz, Côté, & Arnett, 2005) and family relationships (Guo, 2015; Shi et al., 2017). Meanwhile, the direct relationship between family factors and peer deviant with problems behavior also have been found in the previous study (Connell, Cook, Aklin, Vanderploeg & Brex, 2011). Overall, the social cognitive theory emphasizes that procurement, maintenance, and behavior change are the result of three forms of interactions that is personal influence, behavior acts, and environmental influences. In this study, the relationship between the three factors above was explained by the relationship between family relationship quality and deviant peer socialization (environmental factors), self-concept (personal/cognitive factors) and externalizing behavior (behavioral factors) that embodied in the current study.

## 1.8 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework of the study intends to present the overall position of the variables studied includes antecedent variables, independent variables, dependent variables and the mediator variable. The conceptual framework was developed according to the theoretical framework of the study. This study was conceptualized to determine the degree of the relationships between certain variables experienced by adolescents. This study consist of antecedent variables which are socio-demographic factors (age and sex), independent variables (family relationship quality and deviant peer socialization), dependent variables are externalizing behaviors (aggressive and problematic) and mediator are self-concepts. Figure 1.2 illustrates the conceptual framework of the study. The conceptual framework demonstrates the differences between the quality of the family relationship, deviant peer socialization, externalizing behaviors and self-concept in terms of socio-demographic factors (age and sex). Plus, it also demonstrates the relationships between the independent variables (family relationship quality and deviant peer socialization), mediator variable (self-concept) with the externalizing behaviors (aggressive behavior and delinquency). Besides that, all the variables are combined to determine the unique predictors of adolescent's externalizing behaviors. Lastly, this study also postulated that self-concept would mediate the relationships between family relationship quality and deviant peer socialization with externalizing behaviors.

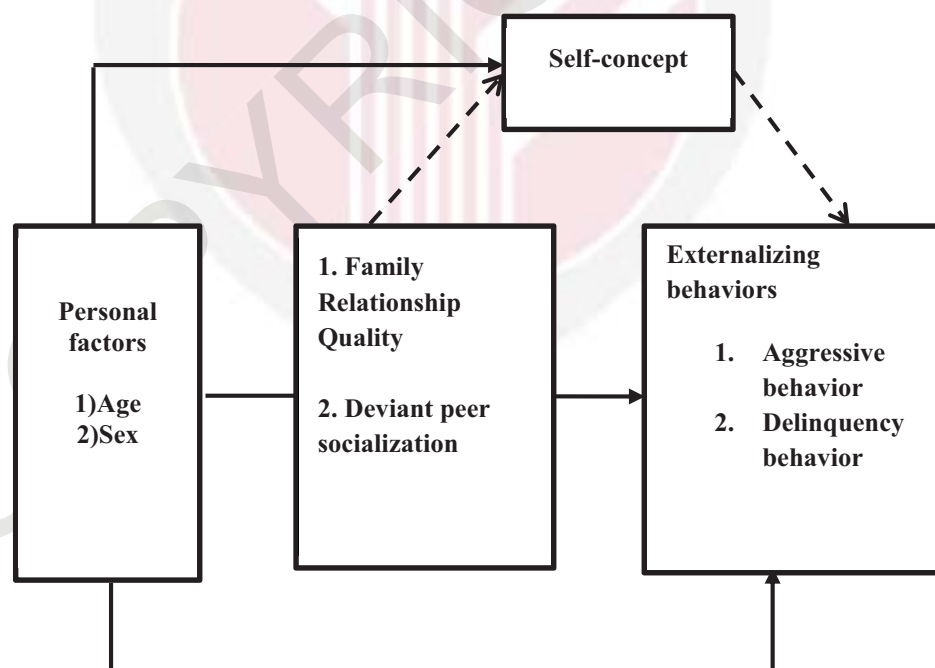


Figure 1.2: The Conceptual Framework of Family relationship qualities, deviant peer socialization, self-concept and externalizing behavior

## **1.9 Terminology Definitions**

This section describes the meanings of the variables, operationally and conceptually. The definitions of the study variables are as follows:

### **1.9.1 Adolescent**

*Conceptual definition:* Adolescent refers to a person aged 10 to 19 years, who is going through the period in human growth and development that occurs after childhood and before adulthood (World Health Organization (WHO, 2004)).

*Operational definition:* Adolescent pertains to a 13 to 18-year-old student in secondary school who was undergone disciplinary actions and is staying in Selangor.

### **1.9.2 Family Relationship Quality**

#### **Family cohesion**

*Conceptual definition:* “Family cohesion was defined as the emotional bonding that family members have toward one another” (Olson, Russell, & Sprenkle, 1982, p. 69-83).

*Operational definition:* The respondent’s score on The Family Relationship Characteristics Scale (Tolan, Gorman-Smith, Huesmann & Zelli, 1997).

#### **Family beliefs**

*Conceptual definition:* Family morals are beliefs that families have about right and wrong, and good and bad. Morals are the foundation of discipline. Discipline teaches children to make good choices, to cooperate, and follow the rules. Family values are the moral guidelines that family members believe have worth. When a belief has worth it has value (Thomas, 2014).

*Operational definition:* Beliefs are represented as the values shared by the family and the meanings attached to family relations and interactions through the respondent’s score on The Family Relationship Characteristics Scale (Tolan, Gorman-Smith, Huesmann, & Zelli, 1997).

## **Family structure**

*Conceptual definition:* Family structure can be defined in terms of parents' relationships to children in the household (e.g., biological or no biological), parents' marital status and relationship history (e.g., divorced, separated, remarried), the number of parents in the family, and parents' sexual orientation (Wise, 2003).

*Operational definition:* Family structure is measured in terms of the family relationship characteristics scale which represents organization, predictability of expectations, and dependability of family roles through the respondent's score on The Family Relationship Characteristics Scale (Tolan, Gorman-Smith, Huesmann, & Zelli, 1997).

### **1.9.3 Deviant peer socialization**

*Conceptual definition:* "Deviant peer influence occurs when a youth perceives the group's norms for behavior and displays those behaviors, and then the peer group positively reinforces that behavior" (Jussim & Osgood, 1989, p. 98-112).

*Operational definition:* The respondent's score on the Peer Deviancy Scale (Multisite Violence Prevention Project, 2004). High score indicate the higher level of peer deviancy.

### **1.9.4 Self-concept**

*Conceptual definition:* "Self-concept is the individual's belief about himself or herself, including the person's attributes and who and what the self is" (Baumeister, 1999, p. 1-20).

*Operational definition:* The respondent's score on the Self-Concept—Individual Protective Factors Index (Phillips & Springer, 1992).

### **1.9.5 Externalizing behaviors**

#### **Aggressive behavior**

*Conceptual definition:* "Social psychologists define aggression as behavior that is intended to harm another individual who does not wish to be harmed" (Baron & Richardson, 1994, pg. 526).

*Operational definition:* The respondent's score on the Aggression Scale (Orpinas & Frankowski, 2001).

### **Delinquency behavior**

*Conceptual definition:* "Juvenile delinquency refers to adolescent acts and activities that are contrary to the norms of society, national and religious laws, such as stealing, robbing, raping, committing adultery, drug abuse and disobedience to both parents" (Ghafani, 2007).

*Operational definition:* The respondent's score on the Problem Behavior Frequency Scale (Jessor, & Jessor, 1977).

### **1.10 Summary**

This chapter began with the introduction which discussed the issues of the study scenario and the impact of externalizing behaviors on adolescents and the society. According to the statistics that were reported in the problem statement, there is a need to study the factors that contribute to the growth of externalizing behavior among adolescents in Malaysia. Therefore, from the research questions some objectives and hypotheses were developed. The conceptual framework, theoretical framework, definition of terms, and significance of study were also presented in this chapter. The present research is important because it can provide information and serve as a guideline to teachers, schools and other interested parties.

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