



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

***RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTAL ATTACHMENT, PARENTAL  
DIFFERENTIAL TREATMENT, SIBLING RELATIONSHIP, PEER  
ATTACHMENT AND POSITIVE WELL-BEING AMONG ADOLESCENTS  
IN THE KLANG VALLEY, MALAYSIA***

**KOGILAVANI A/P RAJENDRAN**

**FEM 2018 34**



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IN THE KLANG VALLEY, MALAYSIA**

By

**KOGILAVANI A/P RAJENDRAN**

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

**March 2018**

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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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**March 2018**

**Chairman : Associate Professor Rumaya Juhari, PhD**  
**Faculty : Human Ecology**

The positive development view emphasizes the possibility of adolescents to follow a positive development based on strengths, positive qualities and favorable environments. Therefore identifying the protective factors that could affect positive well-being of adolescents is essential. The aim of the study is to examine the relationship between parental attachment, parental differential treatment, sibling relationship and peer attachment with positive adolescent well-being. The study also aims to examine the role of gender as moderator for links between parental attachment, parental differential treatment, sibling relationship and peer attachment with positive adolescent well-being. The study involves participation of 400 Form 1 students from government schools in the state of Kuala Lumpur and Selangor. Four instruments which are Positive Youth Development Scale, Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment, Sibling Relationship Questionnaire and Inventory of Differential Experience were used in this study. The descriptive analysis showed that adolescents positive well-being was affected by parent's age, mother's years of education and family monthly income. Gender difference was found among girls and boys on positive well-being where girls had higher positive well-being compared to boys. The result also showed that there are six predictor variables contributing to adolescent positive well-being. The study also found that gender moderated the relationship between paternal attachment, maternal differential affection, paternal differential affection, paternal differential control, sibling relationship and peer attachment with adolescent positive well-being. This study shows the protective factors that could contribute to higher positive well-being among adolescents. The findings of the study is in line with the theories formed the theoretical framework of this study, whereby family and peer are important factors in shaping adolescents' positive well-being. This study had provided information on factors that can help adolescent's positive

development. Identifying these factors will provide insight on what events or experiences will reduce the likelihood of negative outcomes and increase the likelihood of positive outcomes. These information of contributing factors on adolescent positive well-being would provide opportunities to develop programs to help enhance positive development of adolescents in Malaysia.



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

**HUBUNGAN DI ANTARA IKATAN KEIBUBAPAAN, PERBEZAAN LAYANAN IBUBAPA, HUBUNGAN ADIK BERADIK, KETERKAITAN RAKAN SEBAYA DAN KESEJAHTERAAN POSITIF ANAK REMAJA DI LEMBAH KLANG, MALAYSIA**

Oleh

**KOGILAVANI A/P RAJENDRAN**

**Mac 2018**

**Pengerusi : Profesor Madya Rumaya Juhari, PhD**  
**Fakulti : Ekologi Manusia**

Perspektif perkembangan positif menekankan kemungkinan untuk remaja mengikuti perkembangan yang positif berdasarkan kekuatan, kualiti yang positif dan persekitaran yang menggalakkan. Oleh itu mengenal pasti faktor-faktor perlindungan yang boleh memberi kesan kepada kesejahteraan positif remaja adalah penting. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji hubungan di antara ikatan keibubapaan, perbezaan layanan ibubapa, hubungan adik beradik & keterkaitan rakan sebaya dengan kesejahteraan positif anak remaja. Kajian ini juga bertujuan untuk mengkaji peranan jantina sebagai moderator untuk menghubungkan ikatan keibubapaan, perbezaan layanan ibubapa, hubungan adik beradik dan keterkaitan rakan sebaya dengan kesejahteraan positif remaja. Kajian ini dilakukan terhadap 400 pelajar Tingkatan 1 sekolah kerajaan di negeri Kuala Lumpur dan Selangor. Kajian ini menggunakan empat instrumen iaitu Skala Pembangunan Positif Belia, Inventori Ikatan Keibubapaan dan Rakan Sebaya, Soal Selidik Hubungan Adik Beradik dan Inventori Perbezaan Pengalaman. Analisis diskriptif menunjukkan bahawa kesejahteraan positif remaja adalah dipengaruhi oleh umur ibubapa, tahap pendidikan ibu dan pendapatan bulanan keluarga. Kesejahteraan positif juga didapati melalui perbezaan jantina di antara kanak-kanak perempuan dan kanak-kanak lelaki, di mana kanak-kanak perempuan mempunyai kesejahteraan positif lebih tinggi berbanding kanak-kanak lelaki. Kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa enam pembolehubah peramal menyumbang kepada kesejahteraan positif remaja. Kajian ini juga mendapati bahawa jantina menjadi moderator bagi hubungan di antara ikatan keibubapaan, perbezaan layanan ibubapa, hubungan adik beradik & keterkaitan rakan sebaya dengan kesejahteraan positif anak remaja. Kajian ini menunjukkan faktor pelindung yang boleh menyumbang kepada kesejahteraan positif yang tinggi di kalangan remaja. Dapatan kajian ini menyokong implikasi teori bahawa keluarga dan rakan sebaya adalah penting bagi kesejahteraan positif di kalangan remaja. Kajian ini telah menyediakan maklumat mengenai faktor-faktor yang boleh membantu perkembangan positif. Menenalpasti faktor-faktor ini akan memberi gambaran apakah peristiwa atau pengalaman akan mengurangkan kemungkinan hasil negatif dan meningkatkan kemungkinan hasil positif. Maklumat ini mengenai faktor penyumbang positif kesejahteraan remaja yang akan memberi peluang untuk membangunkan program untuk membantu meningkatkan perkembangan positif remaja di Malaysia.

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

**Rumaya Bt Juhari, PhD**

Associate Professor  
Faculty of Human Ecology  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
(Chairman)

**Rojanah bt Kahar, PhD**

Senior Lecturer  
Faculty of Human Ecology  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
(Member)

**Syuhaily bt Osman, PhD**

Senior Lecturer  
Faculty of Human Ecology  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
(Member)

---

**ROBIAH BINTI YUNUS, PhD**

Professor and Dean  
School of Graduate Studies  
Universiti Putra Malaysia

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Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Chairman  
of Supervisory  
Committee: Associate Professor Dr. Rumaya bt Juhari

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Member  
of Supervisory  
Committee: Dr. Rojanah bt Kahar

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Member  
of Supervisory  
Committee: Dr. Syuhaily bt Osman

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

n, N	Number of Respondents, Total Population
SD	Standard Deviation
SS	Sum of Squares
MS	Mean Squares
r	Correlation
R <sup>2</sup>	Determination Coefficient
Adj R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted Determination Coefficient
SEE	Standard Error of Estimation
β	Beta
p	Significance

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

The positive development approach provides an alternative view in the developmental literature in addressing the issue of risky and problematic behaviour (Lerner, Lerner, Lewin-Bizan, Bowers, Boyd, Mueller & Napolitano, 2011). This view emphasizes the possibility of adolescents following positive development based on their strengths, skills, and conducive environments. Adolescents who have positive development not only have less problematic behaviours but also show an expanded tendency to actively make contributions to their positive well-being (Lerner et al., 2011). Over the past two decades, this positive perspective on adolescent development has been reinforced (Geldhof, Bowers, Boyd, Mueller, Napolitano, Schmid & Lerner, 2013).

A study by Lee (2010) showed that the number of Malaysian adolescents having stress and depression increased from 13% in 1996 to 20.3% in 2006. Wong and Lua (2011) found the prevalence for mild anxiety and depression at 12.9% and 11.3% respectively in the year 2011. In addition, statistics from the Royal Malaysian Police revealed that 1.43% of 2010 disciplinary related offenses were recorded in schools (Unicef, 2011). Department of Statistics Malaysia (2016) have stated that adolescents involved in property related crimes were 36%, drugs were 29.7% and people related crimes were 13.4% in the year 2015.

These statistics above show high level of social problems involving adolescents in Malaysia which need to be given some attention. It is evident that adolescents in Malaysia are facing more emotional problems and falling into depression, anxiety, and aggression. One of the reasons could be the poor parenting factor that leads to such negative developments (Hoeve, Dubas, Eichelsheim, Laan, Smeenk & Gerris, 2009). Research has shown the importance of familial and social relationships on the positive development of adolescents (Youngblade, Theokas, Schulenberg, Curry, Huang, & Novak, 2007). It was found that number of positive familial and social characteristics are related to adolescent adjustment, self-esteem, academic success, social competence and lower levels of both externalizing and internalizing behaviors in adolescents. Having a positive development is essential as it would help adolescents lead meaningful and fulfilling lives to enhance what is best in themselves. Therefore it is important to identify the contributory factors that would lead to positive development of Malaysian adolescents.

In a comprehensive review of adolescent issues that take into account the risk factors, studies have found that early adolescence, defined as the period between 11-14 years of age which is extra tangible than the rest of this period as adolescents would

experience changes in their feelings, cognition and body at the same time (Lerner, 2005; Lerner & Steinberg, 2009; United Nations Children's Fund, 2011) and these changes are deemed to contribute to affecting the positive well-being of adolescents (Koepke & Denissen 2012; McElhaney & Allen 2012). Accordingly, it is observed that most psychological issues start before age 14 and they have increased in the recent two decades (United Nations Children's Fund, 2011). In addition, one of the adjustments that adolescents have to face during this period is the transition into middle school which oftentimes involves moving from smaller to larger school environments and disruptions in established peer and adult networks. In Malaysia, the transition from primary to secondary school occurs at the age of 13. The changes that occurs during this period can influence adolescents' positive well-being. Therefore this study focuses on the early adolescence period specifically on adolescents aged 13.

Parents are the most influential figures in the adolescent developmental process and evidence shows the family makes up an adolescent's predominant direct environment and that their influence remains crucial throughout childhood and into adolescence (Buckley & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2010; Nokali, Bachman & Votruba-Drzal, 2011). Studies have shown that problems related to relationships at home involving parents and siblings can be factors affecting the positive development of adolescents (Brogaard, 2016; Lim, Baharuddin & Tan, 2013; Williams & Steinberg, 2011). Warm, supportive and effective parenting is generally related to more positive outcomes in adolescents in terms of social and emotional competence, behavior, and academic achievements (Denham et al., 2009; Wise, 2003).

According to research, parental attachment (Gallarín & Alonso-Arbiol, 2012; Guinn, 2015) and parental differential treatment (Coldwell, Pike, & Dunn, 2008; Jenkins, Rasbah & O'Connor, 2003) can be influential factors for adolescent's positive well-being. It was found that strong parental attachment is related to adolescent's positive well-being (Brogaard, 2016; Williams & Steinberg, 2011). Studies have also found that adolescents who perceived their parents to respond positively would show higher positive well-being (Lim, Baharuddin & Tan, 2013; Restifo, Akse, Guzman, Benjamins & Dick, 2009). Perceived partiality may become problematic giving rise to jealousy and other negative emotions, which in turn would influence positive well-being of adolescents (Boyle, Jenkins, Georgiades, Duku, & Racine, 2004; Feinberg & Hetherington, 2001).

One of the most long-lasting relationships in one's life is sibling relationship. Warm, nurturing, and supportive sibling relationships play an crucial role in the development of adolescents' social and emotional competence as well as ability to resolve conflicts in a constructive manner (McHale, Updegraff & Whiteman, 2012). Research has begun to examine sibling relationships and the influence it has on development and the life span (Conger & Little, 2010).

Social factors such as peer interaction is also seen as a factor that could affect the positive development of adolescents (Lim, Baharuddin & Tan, 2013; Strohmeier, Fandrem & Spiel, 2012). This is mainly because the friendships gradually deepen in terms of the level of intimacy, acceptance, trust, and commitment during adolescence (Pitman & Scharfe, 2010; Schnyders, 2012). Peer relationships is both a unique and important predictor adolescent adjustments (Kingery, Erdley, Marshall, Whitaker & Reuter. 2010; Parker, Rubin, Erath, Wojslawowicz & Buskirk, 2006). Study have found that adolescent's depressive symptoms are associated with less intimacy and warmth in the relationship, and negative feedback-seeking among close friendships. (Borelli & Prinstein 2006; Burk & Laursen 2005). Having supportive and close relationship with peers are seen to be important for adolescent positive well-being.

Studies have found existence of gender difference in adolescent positive well-being among boys and girls (Davis, 2000; Gross, 2014; Lansford, Skinner, Sorbring, et al., 2012) and that girls have better adaptation capabilities compared to boys and have fewer behavioural problems (Babinski, Sibley, Ross & Pelham, 2013; Garaigordobil, Maganto, Perez & Sansinenea, 2009). Gender is also seen as a potential moderator for adolescent positive well-being (Albert, 2003).

It is essential to identify factors that may influence positive development (well-being) of early adolescents to ensure that they are given proper guidance to lead a better accomplished life that would facilitate a successful transition from childhood through adolescence and into adulthood. Therefore, in this study, the aim is to determine predictors of adolescent positive well-being. In addition, the study explores the moderation role of gender on the relationship between the dependent variable (adolescents positive well-being) and independent variables (parental attachment, parental differential treatment, sibling relationship and peer attachment).

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

A vast array of research have been conducted on adolescent positive well-being, however there are still number of research gaps that need to be filled. Firstly, most research conducted on parent adolescent relationships are either parents as a whole or focus on either parent (Hamzah, Suandi, Hamzah & Tamam, 2014; Sandhu, 2014). Mothers and fathers play different roles in raising their children (Gezova, 2015). Hence, identifying the influence of maternal and paternal attachments independently will provide deeper understanding of parental involvement on adolescent positive well-being.

Secondly, differential parental treatment being an important factor for adolescents' positive well-being, have mostly been conducted in western countries (Hart & Legerstee 2010; Meunier, Bisceglia & Jenkins, 2012) and there are not many in the Asian context. Based on the few studies that have been conducted in the Asian countries (eg; Maes, 2009; Ng, Mofrad & Uba, 2014), the result showed contradicting result with western studies where no significant relationship between differential treatment and positive well-being was found. Studying the influence of parental

differential treatment in the Malaysian context would provide an understanding of whether adolescents' positive well-being can be affected by the perception of differential treatment of parents towards their children. This would provide a better understanding of the family process in Malaysia.

Sibling relationships and peer attachment are also seen as influential factors on adolescent development however, most of the past research have focused on negative outcomes and positive development is for the most part neglected (Feinberg, Sakuma, Hostetler & McHale, 2013; Finan, 2016; Giletta, Scholte, Prinsein, Engels, Rabaqlietti & Burk, 2012; Gorrese, 2016). In order to promote healthy family and societal functioning, preventing health risk behaviors such as substance abuse and fostering the psychological health and social competence of adolescents, it is important to strengthening sibling and peer relationships (Feinberg et al., 2013). Hence, this study examines the importance of sibling relationship and peer attachment on the positive development of adolescents.

In the positive youth development framework, gender differences is seen as a factor that could influence adolescent's positive well-being. Gender differences are significant in the studies that have been conducted (Gross, 2014; Lansford, Skinner, Sorbring, et al., 2012; Lerner, 2005). Moreover, research have found that gender can be an important moderator of the relationship between familial and social relationships and adolescent positive well-being (Albert, 2003). However, empirical findings to date have been inconsistent and contradictory with regard to the specific role gender plays in adolescent positive well-being (Albert, 2003; Conger, Williams, Little, Masyn & Shebloski, 2009). Thus, this study examines gender as a moderation factor for the relationship between parental attachment, parental differential treatment, sibling relationships and peer attachment on adolescent positive well-being.

Research is still needed to assess outcomes on adolescent positive well-being not only from the standpoint of the absence of problems but also taking into account positive indicators of well-being (Pace & Zappulla, 2009). Thus, it is essential to identify the indicators for positive well-being and based on the research gaps mentioned above, this study identified factors that may contribute to the positive well-being of adolescents. It aimed to address the following questions:

1. What are the factors that can contribute to adolescent positive well-being?
2. Does gender moderate relationships between parental attachment, parental differential treatment, sibling relationships and peer attachment with adolescent positive well-being?



### **1.3 Significance of the Study**

Identifying the predictive factors of adolescent positive well-being will provide insight on what events or experiences that will reduce the probability of negative outcomes and increase the likelihood of positive outcomes, and ultimately clarify the factors required to implement an effective adolescent development program.

The findings of the study would also be useful in providing information on the relationship between family interaction and adolescent positive development. Parental differential treatment has been found to affect the relationship between siblings which is also related to the level of adjustment of adolescents in western countries. Identifying the influence of parental differential treatment in the Malaysian context will provide information on whether it is a factor that needs to be acknowledged in promoting positive adolescent well-being.

This study will be informative for parents to understand importance of positive relationship with children to have better development prospects. This research may provide awareness on the relationship between adolescents, parents, siblings, and peers on their development. This would provide opportunities to conduct positive development programmes that would enhance the positive well-being of adolescents in the future.

The findings of the study can also be used as potential input for social work and assist other professionals. Social workers and other helping professionals usually work with and also assist individuals and families. Therefore, it is important that they better understand the ways in which parents, siblings and peers can influence adolescents' positive well-being. It is essential for us to also understand how differential parenting is related to unproductive parenting, and the degree to which the parenting behaviour can be changed. Knowing this will allow social workers to work with families in a much more appropriate manner and develop the skills necessary to understand the problem and help parents deal with them.

Lastly, it is hoped that this study on differential parental treatment is also significant for future studies. This area of research has captured the interest of researchers for decades although not many have been conducted in the Asian context (Maes, 2009; Ng, Mofrad & Uba, 2014) as most studies were conducted in western countries (Daniels & Plomin, 1985; Kothari, 2011). Cultural difference may be an important factor influencing how parenting is conducted. Differential parenting studies gives us the opportunity to understand the differences within family processes.

#### **1.4 Objective of the Study**

This study aims to examine the factors that would contribute to adolescence positive well-being. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To examine the relationship between parental age, parental years of education and family monthly income with adolescent positive well-being.
2. To determine the differences in positive well-being between genders (male, female).
3. To determine the relationship between parental attachment, parental differential treatment, sibling relationships, and peer attachment with positive adolescent well-being.
4. To determine the contributing factors of adolescent positive well-being.
5. To determine the moderation role of gender on the relationships between parental attachment, parental differential treatment, sibling relationships and peer attachment with positive adolescent well-being.

#### **1.5 Research Hypotheses**

Based on the literature review and research objectives, the alternative hypotheses were constructed. The alternative hypotheses for objective 4 are as follows:

- Ha1: Secure maternal attachment is significantly related to high adolescent positive well-being.
- Ha2: Secure paternal attachment is significantly related to high adolescent positive well-being.
- Ha3: High maternal differential affection is significantly related to high adolescent positive well-being.
- Ha4: High paternal differential affection is significantly related to high adolescent positive well-being.
- Ha5: High maternal differential control is significantly related to low adolescent positive well-being.
- Ha6: High paternal differential control is significantly related to low adolescent positive well-being.
- Ha7: Strong sibling relationship is significantly related to high adolescent positive well-being.
- Ha8: Secure peer attachment is significantly related to high adolescent positive well-being.



The alternative hypotheses for objective 5 is as follows:

Ha9: Maternal attachment, paternal attachment, maternal differential affection, paternal differential affection, maternal differential control, paternal differential control, sibling relationship and peer attachment are significant predictors of adolescent positive well-being.

The alternative hypotheses for objective 6 are as follows:

Ha10: Gender significantly moderates the relationship between maternal attachment and adolescent positive well-being.

Ha11: Gender significantly moderates the relationship between paternal attachment and adolescent positive well-being.

Ha12: Gender significantly moderates the relationship between maternal differential affection and adolescent positive well-being.

Ha13: Gender significantly moderates the relationship between paternal differential affection and adolescent positive well-being.

Ha14: Gender significantly moderates the relationship between maternal differential control and adolescent positive well-being.

Ha15: Gender significantly moderates the relationship between paternal differential control and adolescent positive well-being.

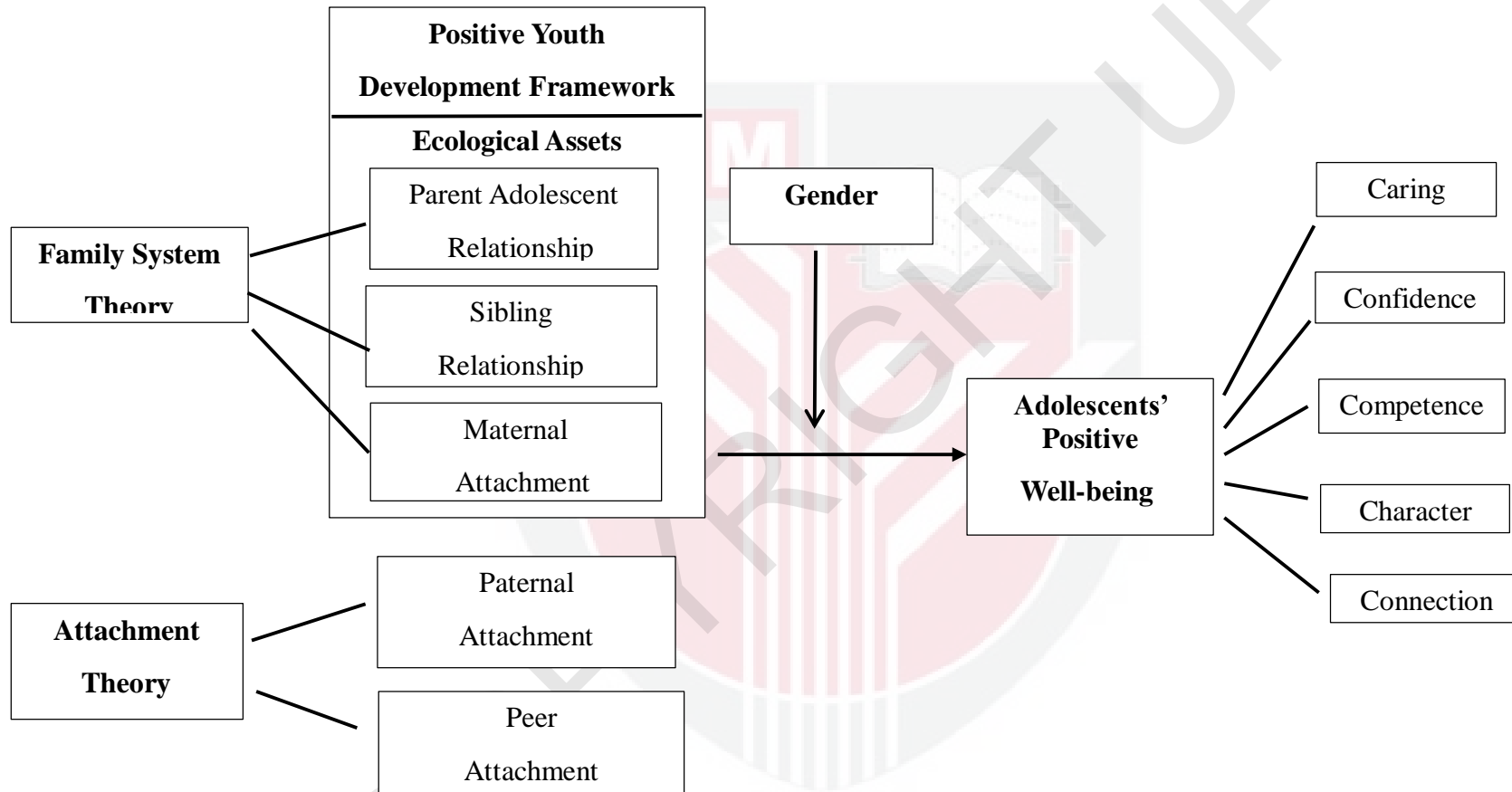
Ha16: Gender significantly moderates the relationship between sibling warmth and adolescent positive well-being.

Ha17: Gender significantly moderates the relationship between peer relationship and adolescent positive well-being.

## **1.6 Theoretical Framework**

This section discusses the main theoretical framework that guides this study (Figure 1.1). The Positive Youth Development Framework, Family System Theory, and Attachment Theory provides a basic theoretical foundation for this study. The aim of positive youth development framework is to enhance and sustain the effective, healthy development of young people (Benson, Scales, Hamilton, Sesma, Hong & Roehlkepartain, 2006).

Positive Youth Development Framework believed that the core tenet of positive development is to recognizing the low risk negative behavior and negative societal factors are a part of healthy youth development (Benson et al., 2006; Silbereisen & Lerner, 2007; Lerner, Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas, Phelps, Gestsdottir, Naudeau, Jelcic, Alberts & Ma, 2005). The Positive Youth Development Framework is operationalised by the 5C's (caring, competence, character, connection and confidence) (Lerner et al., 2005) which is the outcome that represents the positive development and well-being of an individual.



**Figure 1.1 : Theoretical Framework**

Physical, social, and emotional developments occur during adolescence. It is the process through which adolescents develop emotional, social, and cognitive skills and abilities required to navigate life (Almquist, Brekke, Croymans, Fruechte, Matlack, McAndrews, Morreim, Ogg-Graybill, Piehl, Walker, & Zurche, 2015). According to the positive youth development view, it is important to help adolescents achieve their full potential to prevent them from engaging in problematic or risky behaviours (Almquist et al., 2015).

In addition to individual characteristics, factors that can contribute to adolescent positive well-being are the influences gained from people surrounding them such as parents, siblings, and peers which is known as the ecological asset in the positive youth development framework. Family and peers are seen as protective factors that can influence adolescents' positive well-being (Benson, Scales, Hamilton & Sesma, 2007). Therefore recognizing parental, sibling, and peer relationships and their influence on adolescent positive well-being is important for adolescents' positive developmental (Bornstein, Davidson, Keyes & Moore, 2003). Family System Theory and Attachment Theory helps to provide a better understanding on the role family and peers plays in influencing adolescents' positive well-being.

In the positive youth development framework, gender difference is seen as a factor that could affect adolescent positive well-being and is significant in the studies that have been conducted (Lerner, 2005). Girls are reported to have higher positive youth development and lower risk behaviours. Furthermore, research have found that gender can be an important moderator of the relationship between familial and social relationships and adolescent positive well-being (Albert, 2003). Gender differences in their daily activities and relationships with others may influence their positive well-being. Therefore, this study takes into account gender as a moderating variable to analyze if it has any role in the relationship between adolescent positive well-being with parental attachment, parental differential treatment, sibling relationships, and peer attachment.

The Family System Theory provides information that it is necessary to study family relationships as well as the process that play within these relationships. Family is known as a system comprising interrelated elements and they have regular interactions (Morgaine, 2001). The Family System Theory views family as a structure of related parts or subsystems (Strong, DeVault & Cohen, 2008). This study focuses on the parent-child and sibling subsystems which provides the information and understanding of dynamics between parents-adolescents and siblings relationships.

The elements of the system are the members of the family and there is a predictable pattern of interaction that emerges in it (Morgaine, 2001). Each action of the members would affect other persons in the family. Family exerts a powerful influence on the behaviour and feelings of a person. Family members are mutually influential as they share physical and emotional closeness. The family system theory is useful in examining and interpreting the complex interactions that exist within families. An

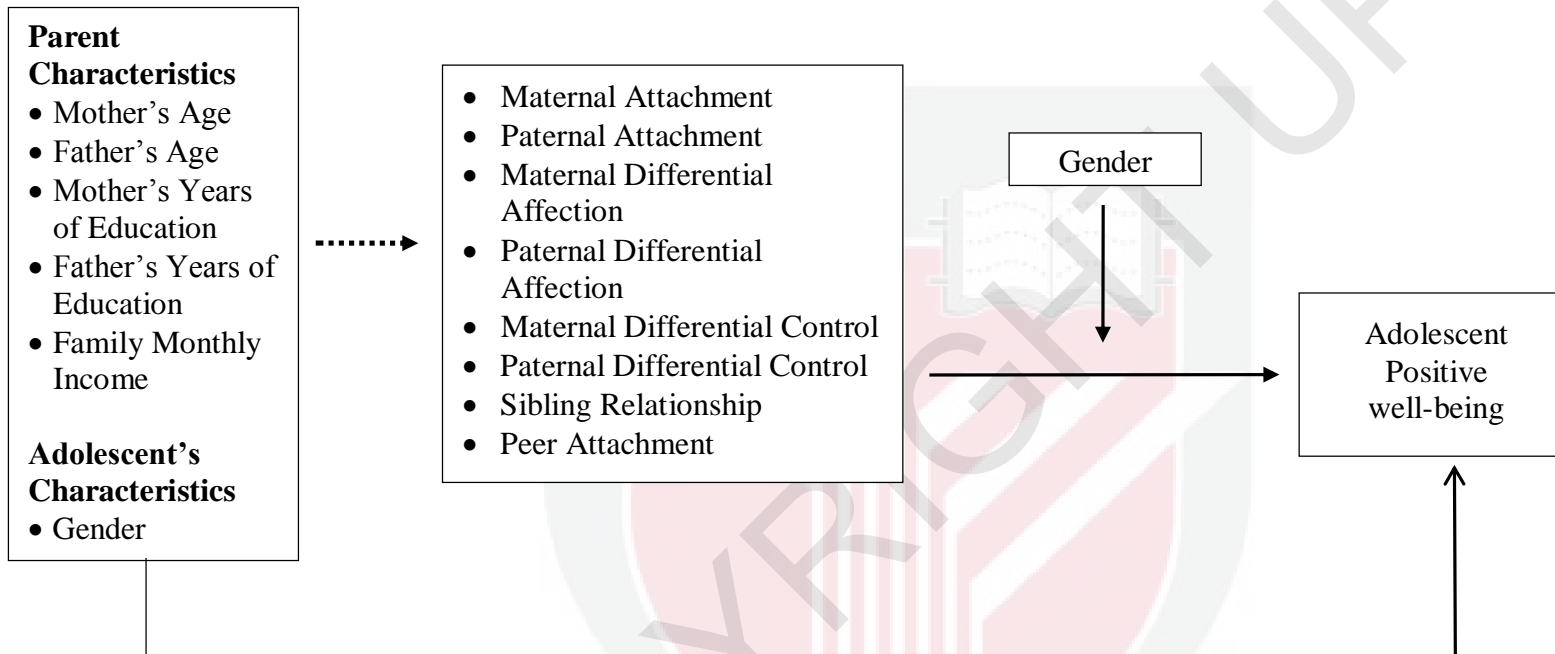
individual's action or behaviour is usually caused by multiple different factors and also the outcome of interactions among family members (Morgaine, 2001).

The Attachment Theory presented by Bowlby (1982) states that attachment with parents and peers can sufficiently influence the well-being of adolescents. Howard and Medway (2004) illustrated that attachments and close relationship may be relevant in understanding the well-being of adolescents. An attachment behaviour is defined as any kind of behaviour that is performed by a person achieving an intended proximity to an identified individual whom the one sees as better able to cope with the world (Becker-Weidman, 2009). Adolescents who have strong attachments with parents and peers tend to report better well-being (Furnivall, 2011).

In summary, a theoretical framework is presented (Figure 1.1) based on the three theories discussed above (Positive Youth Development Framework, Family System Theory and Attachment Theory). Parent child subsystem and sibling subsystem of the Family System Theory provides the understanding of the relationships and process that plays between these relationships. Attachment Theory provides the understanding on the level of attachment between parents and peers can influence adolescents' positive well-being. Family and peers are seen as ecological development assets in the Positive Youth Development Framework that influences positive development of adolescents which comprised of the 5C's (caring, competence, character, connection and confidence).

## **1.7 Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework of this study is based on the Positive Youth Development Framework, Family System Theory, and Attachment Theory. The Positive Youth Development Framework states that recognizing low risk negative behaviours are a part of healthy adolescent development (Benson et al., 2006; Lerner et al., 2011; Silbereisen & Lerner, 2007). The Family System Theory provides an understanding of the parent-child and sibling subsystems and how they contribute to adolescent positive well-being (Strong, DeVault & Cohen, 2008). The core idea of the Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1982) emphasizes that the attachments with parents and peers can be contributing factors for positive well-being. Therefore, in this study, parental attachment, parental differential treatment, sibling relationships, and peer attachment are postulated to contribute to positive adolescent well-being. This study also examines the moderation role of gender on such relationships.



**Figure 1.2 : Conceptual Framework**

## **1.8 Definition of Terminology**

### **1.8.1 Early Adolescence**

Conceptually: Adolescence is a period in which it links between childhood and adulthood. It begins with biological, cognitive and emotional changes and ends with social transformation (Lerner, 2005). Early adolescence refers to the ages between eleven to fourteen years old (Lerner & Steinberg, 2009)

Operationally: Adolescents' who resides with both parents who has at least one sibling were selected from public school in the central region covering the 13-year-old age group in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur and the state of Selangor.

### **1.8.2 Adolescent Positive Well-being**

Conceptually: Adolescent positive well-being is described as a result of unified effects of the five components of Positive Youth development, which are, confidence, competence, connection, caring, and character (Lerner et al., 2005).

Operationally: Adolescent positive well-being is operationally defined as the scores of respondents on the Positive Youth Development Scale (Lerner, 2005). This scale demonstrates a comprehensive perspective of youth psychosocial well-being with higher scores associated with higher positive well-being.

### **1.8.3 Maternal Attachment**

Conceptually: A relational bond existing between a mother and child is referred as a maternal attachment (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). The levels of trust, communication, and alienation represent the presence of maternal attachment

Operationally: Maternal attachment is scored based on respondents' scores on the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA). The scale measures attachment relationship between adolescents and their mothers. Higher scores on the IPPA mother scale indicate greater attachment security with the mother.

### **1.8.4 Paternal Attachment**

Conceptually: A relational bond that exists between a father and child is referred as a paternal attachment (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). The paternal attachment is produced through a sense of security and safety of the adolescents derived from the acts of the fathers.



Operationally: Paternal attachment is score based on the scores of respondents on the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) which measures an attachment relationship between adolescents and their fathers. Higher scores on the father scale of the IPPA indicate greater attachment security with the father.

#### **1.8.5 Parental Differential Treatment**

Conceptually: Parental differential treatment (PDT) is defined as the unequal treatment of siblings by parents (Daniels & Plomins, 1985).

Operationally: Based on respondents' scores on the Sibling Inventory of Differential Experience (Daniels & Plomins, 1985) which indicates the respondent's perceived differential treatment of parents towards their children. A higher score for differential affection indicates the individual perceive to receive more affection from parents compared to their sibling while that for differential control indicates the individual perceive to be controlled more by their parents compared to their sibling.

#### **1.8.6 Sibling Relationship**

Conceptually: Sibling relationship is a term defining the degree of affection and companionship shared by siblings. Young adolescents often provide one another with warmth and support during this period of development (Buhmester & Furman, 1990).

Operationally: Sibling relationship is operationally defined as respondents' scores on the Sibling Relationship Questionnaire (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985) with high scores demonstrating strong sibling relationships.

#### **1.8.7 Peer Attachment**

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

Operationally: Based on respondents' scores on the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987) which measures an attachment relationship between adolescents and their peers, peer attachment is measured. Higher scores on a peer scale of IPPA indicate greater attachment security with peers.

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