

**PERCEPTIONS AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN  
PENANG AND KEDAH OF THEIR  
FATHER'S AND MOTHER'S PARENTING**

by

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# TABLES OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
Acknowledgement.....	ii
Tables of Contents.....	iii
List of Tables.....	vi
List of Figures.....	ix
Abstrak.....	x
Abstract.....	xi
<b>1.0 Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background of the study .....	1
1.2 Problem statements .....	6
1.3 Significance of study .....	9
1.4 Research questions.....	11
1.5 Research objectives.....	12
1.6 Scope of the study.....	13
1.7 Ethical Consideration.....	14
1.8 Arrangement of the thesis .....	15
<b>2.0 Literature Review .....</b>	<b>18</b>
2.1 Parenting .....	19
2.2 Equal sharing of parenting between mothers and fathers .....	20
2.2.1 The importance of equal sharing of parenting between mothers and fathers .....	21
2.3 Parental nurturance and involvement .....	25
2.4 How parental nurturance and involvement affects relationship satisfaction .....	31
2.5 How relationship satisfaction influences adolescents' stress and well-being.....	33
2.6 Factors influencing parental nurturance and parental involvement.....	37
2.6.1 Does gender of the parents matter? .....	38
2.6.2 Does gender of adolescents matter? .....	42

2.6.3 Socio-economic .....	44
2.7 Conclusion .....	48
2.8 Conceptual Framework.....	50
<b>3.0 Methodology .....</b>	<b>53</b>
3.1 Research design .....	53
3.2 Participants.....	53
3.3 Procedures.....	56
3.4 Instrumentations.....	58
3.4.1 Background information.....	58
3.4.2 Perceived effective nurturance of fathers and mothers .....	59
3.4.3 Fathers and mothers’ involvement .....	59
3.4.4 Satisfactions level of relationship with fathers and mothers .....	61
3.4.5 Life satisfaction of participants .....	62
3.4.6 Stress level of participants .....	62
3.5 Research hypothesis.....	63
3.6 Pilot study .....	67
3.7 Reliability score of actual data collection.....	68
<b>4.0 Results and Analyses.....</b>	<b>69</b>
4.1 Demography of the participants.....	70
4.2 Fathers and mothers parental nurturance, parental involvement and parents-adolescents relationship satisfaction.....	76
4.2.1 Comparison between fathers and mothers’ parental nurturance .....	77
4.2.2 Comparison between fathers and mothers’ parental involvement.....	78
4.2.3 Relationship between parental nurturance and involvement of fathers and mothers .....	85
4.2.4 Comparison between adolescents relationship satisfaction with their fathers and with their mothers .....	86
4.3 Parental nurturance and involvement influence parent-adolescents’ relationship satisfaction .....	89
4.4 Relationship between parents-adolescents relationship satisfaction and adolescents’ life satisfaction and stress level.....	92
4.4.1 Adolescents’ life satisfaction.....	92

4.4.2 Adolescents' stress level.....	94
4.4.3 Relationship between adolescents' life satisfaction and stress level.....	97
4.5 Factors that influence parental nurturance, involvement, and parents-adolescents' relationship.....	97
4.5.1 Religion as a factor.....	97
4.5.2 Ethnicity as a factor.....	103
4.5.3 Living place as a factor.....	108
4.5.4 Education level as a factor.....	113
4.5.5 Financial status as a factor.....	118
4.6 Comparison between male and female adolescents' perceptions.....	120
4.6.1 Level of parental nurturance.....	121
4.6.2 Parental involvement.....	123
4.6.3 Relationship with their fathers and mothers.....	126
4.6.4 Life satisfaction and stress level.....	130

**5.0 Discussion and Conclusion..... 133**

5.1 Summary of the findings.....	133
5.2 Discussion of the findings.....	140
5.2.1 Discussion of parental nurturance and parental involvement.....	140
5.2.2 Discussion of parents-adolescents relationship satisfaction.....	144
5.2.3 Discussion of adolescents' life satisfaction and stress level.....	145
5.3 Implication of the findings.....	145
5.4 Limitation of the study.....	148
5.5 Suggestions for future studies.....	149
5.6 Conclusions.....	152

**REFERENCES**

**APPENDIX A Application form from Ministry of Education Malaysia**

**APPENDIX B Application letter to Ministry of Education Penang**

**APPENDIX C Application letter to Ministry of Education Kedah**

**APPENDIX D Questionnaires (English version)**

**APPENDIX E Questionnaires (Malay version)**

## LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1.1 Percentage of female in each education level, 2001-2009.....	8
Table 2.1: The percentage of Malaysian's divorce rates .....	34
Table 4.1: Age of the participants.....	70
Table 4.2: Gender of the participants.....	71
Table 4.3: Ethnicity of the participants.....	71
Table 4.4: Religion of the participants.....	71
Table 4.5: Area of origin of the participants.....	72
Table 4.6: Academic achievement (PMR result) of the participants .....	72
Table 4.7: Number of siblings of the participants.....	72
Table 4.8: Number of participants who stay with parents or guardians .....	73
Table 4.9: Education level of the participants' father and mother.....	73
Table 4.10: Employment status of the participants' father and mother .....	74
Table 4.11: Participants' parents' income.....	75
Table 4.12: Parents' marital status.....	76
Table 4.13: A comparison of fathers' and mothers' parental nurturance as perceived by the participants .....	77
Table 4.14: A comparison of fathers and mothers' level of parental nurturance as perceived by the participants.....	79
Table 4.15: A comparison of participants' desired involvement from fathers and mothers among the 20 domains of parenting.....	81
Table 4.16: A comparison of fathers' actual involvement and the adolescents' desired of fathers' involvement in 20 domains of parenting .....	82
Table 4.17: A comparison of mothers' actual involvement and the adolescents' desired of mothers' involvement in 20 domains of parenting.....	84
Table 4.18: Correlation between fathers' parental nurturance and fathers' involvement	85
Table 4.19: Correlation between mothers' parental nurturance and mothers' involvement .....	86
Table 4.20: Comparison between fathers and mothers' relationship with their adolescents .....	87
Table 4.21: Correlation between fathers' parental nurturance and fathers-adolescents' relationship satisfaction .....	89
Table 4.22: Correlation between mothers' parental nurturance and mothers-adolescents' relationship satisfaction .....	90
Table 4.23: Correlation between fathers' parental involvement and fathers-adolescents' relationship satisfaction .....	91
Table 4.24: Correlation between mothers' parental involvement and mothers-adolescents' relationship satisfaction.....	91
Table 4.25: Adolescents' life satisfaction.....	92
Table 4.26: Correlation between fathers-adolescents' relationship satisfaction and adolescents' life satisfaction .....	93
Table 4.27: Correlation between mothers-adolescents' relationship satisfaction and adolescents' life satisfaction .....	93
Table 4.28: Adolescents' level of stress .....	94

Table 4.29: Correlation between fathers-adolescents' relationship satisfaction and adolescents' stress level .....	96
Table 4.30: Correlation between mothers-adolescents' relationship satisfaction and adolescents' stress level .....	96
Table 4.31: Correlation between adolescents' life satisfaction and stress level .....	97
Table 4.32: One-way ANOVA between fathers' parental nurturance and religion.....	98
Table 4.33: One-way ANOVA between mothers' parental nurturance and religion.....	99
Table 4.34: One-way ANOVA between fathers' parental involvement perceived by adolescents and their religion.....	100
Table 4.35: One-way ANOVA between mothers' parental involvement perceived by adolescents and their religion.....	101
Table 4.36: One-way ANOVA between the fathers-adolescents' relationship perceived by adolescents and their religion.....	102
Table 4.37: One-way ANOVA between the mothers-adolescents' relationship perceived by adolescents and their religion.....	103
Table 4.38: One-way ANOVA between fathers' parental nurturance and ethnicity ....	104
Table 4.39: One-way ANOVA between mothers' parental nurturance and ethnicity ...	104
Table 4.40: One-way ANOVA between fathers' parental involvement perceived by adolescents and their ethnicity .....	105
Table 4.41: One-way ANOVA between mothers' parental involvement perceived by adolescents and their ethnicity .....	106
Table 4.42: One-way ANOVA between the fathers-adolescents' relationship satisfaction perceived by adolescents and their ethnicity .....	107
Table 4.43: One-way ANOVA between the mothers-adolescents' relationship perceived by adolescents and their ethnicity .....	108
Table 4.44: Comparisons of Kedah and Penang adolescents' perception on their fathers' level of parental nurturance .....	109
Table 4.45: Comparisons of Kedah and Penang adolescents' perception on their mothers' level of parental nurturance .....	109
Table 4.46: Comparison between perception of Penang's adolescents and Kedah's adolescents on fathers' actual involvement .....	110
Table 4.47: Comparison between the desire of Penang's adolescents and Kedah's adolescents towards fathers' involvement .....	111
Table 4.48: Comparison between Perception of Penang's Adolescents and Kedah's Adolescents on Mothers' Actual Involvement.....	111
Table 4.49: Comparison between the desire of Penang's adolescents and Kedah's adolescents towards mothers' involvement .....	112
Table 4.50: Comparisons between Kedah and Penang adolescents' perceptions on their relationship with their fathers .....	112
Table 4.51: Comparisons between Kedah and Penang adolescents' perceptions on their relationship with their mothers .....	113
Table 4.52: One-way ANOVA between the fathers' level of parental nurturance and fathers' education level .....	114
Table 4.53: One-way ANOVA between the mothers' level of parental nurturance and mothers' education level .....	114
Table 4.54: One-way ANOVA between the fathers' level of parental involvement and fathers' education level .....	115

Table 4.55: One-way ANOVA between the mothers' level of parental involvement and mothers' education level .....	116
Table 4.56: One-way ANOVA between the fathers-adolescents' relationship satisfaction and fathers' education level .....	116
Table 4.57: One-way ANOVA between the mothers-adolescents' relationship satisfaction and mothers' education level .....	117
Table 4.58: Correlation between fathers' income and fathers' level of parental nurturance .....	118
Table 4.59: Correlation between mothers' income and mothers' level of parental nurturance .....	118
Table 4.60: Correlation between fathers' income and fathers' parental involvement ...	119
Table 4.61: Correlation between mothers' income and mothers' involvement.....	119
Table 4.62: Correlation between fathers' income and fathers-adolescents' relationship satisfaction .....	120
Table 4.63: Correlation between mothers' income and mothers-adolescents' relationship satisfaction .....	120
Table 4.64: Comparisons of male and female adolescents' perception on their fathers' parental nurturance.....	121
Table 4.65: Comparisons of male and female adolescents' perception on their mothers' parental nurturance.....	122
Table 4.66: Comparison of male and female adolescents' perceptions about the fathers' involvement.....	123
Table 4.67: Comparison of male and female adolescents' perceptions about the mothers' involvement.....	125
Table 4.68: Comparisons between male and female adolescents' perceptions on their relationship with their fathers .....	126
Table 4.69: Comparisons between male and female adolescents' perceptions on their relationship with their mothers .....	128
Table 4.70: Comparison between male and female adolescents' life satisfaction.....	130
Table 4.71: Comparison between male and female adolescents' level of stress .....	130
Table 5.1: Summary of the relationship between the tested variables:.....	134

## LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1.1: Labour force participation rate by sex in Malaysia, 1997-2007.....	7
Figure 2.1: Theoretical framework .....	50
Figure 3.1: Required sample size.....	55

**PANDANGAN TENTANG KEIBUBAAPAN BAPA DAN IBU DI KALANGAN  
REMAJA DI PULAU PINANG DAN KEDAH**

**ABSTRAK**

*Dari segi budaya, ibu dilihat sebagai penjaga utama anak-anak manakala bapa dilihat sebagai pencari nafkah. Dengan peningkatan penglibatan wanita dalam pasaran buruh terutamanya yang bekerja di luar rumah, tanggungjawab keibubapaan yang sama rata antara ibu dan bapa telah menjadi satu aspek siasatan, terutamanya dalam konteks masalah "beban berganda" untuk wanita dalam sebuah keluarga. Berdasarkan sampel 339 pelajar tingkatan empat dari Pulau Pinang dan Kedah, kajian ini menyiasat pandangan remaja terhadap asuhan dan penglibatan ibu dan bapa mereka dengan menggunakan 20 atribut keibubapaan. Ia juga mengkaji perbezaan yang mungkin wujud antara pandangan remaja lelaki dan perempuan terhadap hubungan mereka dengan ibu, bapa, kepuasan hidup dan tahap tekanan mereka. Faktor sosio-ekonomi dan gender yang mungkin mempengaruhi persepsi remaja terhadap asuhan dan penglibatan ibu bapa juga dianalisis. Analisis deskriptif menunjukkan bahawa para responden melaporkan penglibatan ibu adalah lebih berbanding dengan bapa dan hubungan mereka juga lebih rapat dengan ibu mereka. Bagaimanapun, mereka menginginkan penglibatan keibubapaan yang lebih tinggi daripada bapa mereka berbanding dengan apa yang mereka kini menerima. Keputusan keseluruhan menunjukkan bahawa jantina remaja tidak menunjukkan perbezaan secara langsung yang signifikan atas persepsi mereka terhadap asuhan dan penglibatan ibu dan bapa, dan juga hubungan mereka dengan kedua-dua ibu bapa. Walaubagaimanapun, ibu bapa perlu memberikan tahap penglibatan keibubapaan yang sama rata kepada kedua-dua anak lelaki dan anak perempuan kerana anak-anak perempuan melaporkan penglibatan yang lebih rendah daripada ibu bapa terutama bapa mereka. Keputusan juga menunjukkan bahawa corak keibubapaan yang dilaporkan oleh remaja boleh dikatakan menepati jangkaan budaya bahawa ibu ialah penjaga utama. Walau bagaimanapun, penglibatan ibu bapa yang lebih sama rata adalah penting memandangkan wujudnya keinginan anak-anak untuk meningkatkan peranan bapa dalam keibubapaan.*

**PERCEPTIONS OF FATHERS AND MOTHERS' PARENTING AMONG  
ADOLESCENTS IN PENANG AND KEDAH**

**ABSTRACT**

Mothers have culturally been seen as the primary caregivers of children while fathers are seen as principal breadwinners. With women's increased involvement in the labour market especially through working outside of the home, equal distribution of parenting responsibilities between mothers and fathers have become relevant areas of inquiry, especially in the context of the possible problem of "double-burden" for women in the family. Based on a sample of 339 Form Four students from Penang and Kedah, this study investigates how adolescents perceived the parental nurturance and involvement of their mothers and fathers by using 20 domains of parenting. It also assesses possible differences in the way the male and female adolescents perceived their relationships with either parent and their life satisfaction and stress level. The factors of socioeconomic and gender that might be influencing the adolescents perceptions and the parents' nurturance and involvement are also analysed. The descriptive analysis indicates that participants perceived mothers to be more involved compared to the fathers and their relationships are closer with their mothers too. They however, desire higher parenting involvement from their fathers compared to what they currently receive. Overall, the results show that gender of the adolescents has no direct significant differences towards their perceptions on their fathers and mothers' parental nurturance, involvement and their relationship with both parents. However, parents should have the same level of involvement in both the son and the daughter since the daughters are reporting lower involvement from the parent especially their fathers. The results also show that pattern of parenting as perceived by children may be said to conform to the cultural expectation of mothers as primary caregivers. However, it also shows that more equal parenting involvement is important since children appear to desire an increase in the role of fathers in parenting.

# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction**

This chapter introduces this thesis. It starts with the background of this study, followed by the problem statements. The significance of this study will then be highlighted. Next, the research objectives and questions of the study will be stated. Some discussion on research design and the limitations of this study will also be presented in this chapter. The last section of this chapter discusses the arrangement of this thesis.

### **1.1 Background of the study**

Many researchers recognised that parental nurturance and involvement between mothers and fathers are not the same (Adamsons & Beuhler, 2007; Finley, 2008; Gamble, Sri Ramakumar, & Diaz, 2006; Linsey, 1997). Unique roles as carried out by fathers and mothers indicate how gender roles, particularly those related to parenting, are conceptualized and practiced within a society. For instance, certain researchers found that fathers usually tend to be more authoritarian which means fathers provide low warmth but have high firmness and responsiveness to the children (McKinney & Renk, 2008). Mothers on the other hand tend to be more authoritative which means mothers have high warmth, firmness and responsiveness in their parenting styles (Finley, 2008; Simons & Conger, 2007). Fathers are generally seen to be acting as the provider of the family, playing the part of the

disciplinarian figure (Adamsons & Beuhler, 2007), helping their children to gain entrance into society, providing emotional support to their wife, and also protecting the family (Shwalb, Kawai, Shoji, & Tsunetsugu, 1997). Mothers usually place higher value on their children's happiness, try harder to understand their children, and also tend to enjoy the relationship with their children more than fathers do (Shwalb, et al., 1997). Mothers are also found to spend more time with the children. Traditionally, mothers' roles lean towards the act of caring and nurturing (Datta, 2007). They are the caregivers who provide warmth and care for their children (McKinney & Renk, 2008). Fathers are seen to be crucial to the socialization as well as the disciplining of sons (Datta, 2007). A father's parenting affects his children's independence and intellectual skills' development (Golombok, 2004). This is as opposed to mothers who have been found to be greatly involved in all domains of their children's lives except as income providers (Finley, 2008). This highlights an important gender-related issue that will be explored in this research.

One of the stark gaps in the existing studies related to parenting or gender roles is that most of them have been conducted in the West and among Western population (Linsey, 1997; Ryan, Martin, & Brooks-Gunn, 2006; Sheeber, et al., 2009; Wendy, Ramakumar, & Diaz, 2006; Wille, 1995). Research on parenting nurturance and involvement within Asian and Malaysian families are still very few. Yet, socio-cultural context of Asian families, including how gender is perceived in the families, may influence parenting styles and parenting practices. This study explores this issue further by looking at the possible differential parenting roles carried out by mothers and fathers in the context of Malaysia. More specifically,

mothers and fathers' nurturance quality and specific involvement in certain domains are assessed and compared in this study. This research looks into the difference between the two sexes i.e. fathers and mothers.

Parental nurturance and involvement are also likely to influence children's satisfaction with the relationship they have with their fathers and mothers. Good quality of parenting and high level of involvement may lead to higher level of satisfaction among the children. Good and satisfying relationships may lead to high level of life satisfaction and low level of stress. Literatures have shown that there are different effects on the children from different nurturing and parental involvement at home (Finley, 2008; Wille, 1995). For instance, the involvement of fathers may greatly influence the outcome of the children's development. The more fathers are actively involved in parenting, the better the outcome will be for children's social and emotional development (Golombok, 2000). Examining the long-term consequences of fathers' involvement and/or their non-involvement has the potential to address the highly important issues of outcomes for children (Finley & Schwartz, 2004). This study looks at how parental nurturance quality and involvement can influence their children's relationship satisfaction level and eventually their life satisfaction and the stress level.

Gender of the adolescents is also an issue of concern in the discussions about parental nurturance and involvement. For one thing, although early adolescence is generally defined around 11 or 12 years old (Coleman, 1980); it may be different depending on the gender of the children. Girls usually experience

puberty around 14 years old, while boys experience their puberty latest by around 16 years old (Coleman, 1980). Gender differences rarely have been considered in exploring the perceptions of adolescents towards parental nurturance and parental involvement (Paulson, 1994). Yet, boys and girls may experience puberty and other aspects of life differently and this in turn influence their perception of fathers and mothers' parenting and eventually their satisfaction with both sexes of parents. This is another aspect of gender that is going to be explored in this study.

Earlier, it has been mentioned how general categories of culture (e.g. Western vs. Eastern) may influence gender roles and parenting practices within that particular society. There may also be more specific cultural aspects. Indeed, Pinderhughes, Doge, Pettit, and Bates, (2000) highlighted the importance of certain cultural aspects including socioeconomic status, ethnicity and beliefs on parenting, patterns and practices including stress and cognitive emotional processes. In their study, they found that the lower the income of a family, the higher the level of stress faced by the parents and eventually the higher the amount of harsh and punitive parenting practices. This study further explores the issue by examining how socio-demographic factors can be related to parental nurturance and involvement.

The above discussion leads to some important questions to be answered. For instance, how fathers and mothers' nurturance and involvement can affect the adolescents' perceptions on the relationship satisfaction and how the relationship indirectly influences the adolescents' life satisfaction and stress level? How socio economic background such as ethnicity and religion can be elements of culture that

can influence the adolescents' perceptions of their parents' parental nurturance and involvement? What are the different perceptions of male and female adolescents towards their fathers and mothers' parental nurturance, involvement and their relationship satisfaction? How gender roles, particularly those related to parenting, are conceptualized and practiced within the context of Malaysian society? Some of these questions will add gender dimensions to this study.

The main rationale of this study is to understand more about parenting issues especially in the context of Malaysia. Studying parental nurturance and involvement can focus on the providers, who are the parents, or the receivers, who are the children. This study focuses on the parental involvement as perceived by the children.

The objective of the current study is to examine the parenting trends in two of the states in Malaysia; namely Penang and Kedah. This study examines the degree of parenting responsibilities in the family and the perception of the adolescents on this subject. This study also analyzes the differences in the level of involvement in parenting between fathers and mothers. Other than the differences in parenting involvement between the sexes, this study also investigates the effects of parental nurturance and involvement on the parents-adolescents' relationship satisfaction and the indirect effects on the adolescents' overall life satisfaction and stress level.

Adolescence can be categorised as early adolescence, middle adolescence and late adolescence. According to Dekovic (1999) in his research to examine the

factors that might occur for variations in the level of parents-adolescents' conflict, he defined early adolescence as the age 12 to 13 years old, middle adolescence as 14 to 15 years old, and late adolescence as 16 to 18 years old. Late adolescence is particularly important since this is the stage where relationships between parents and children are very important. This is also the stage where children are more mature and can make more accurate judgement about parental nurturance and involvement. They are also at the right level to understand the complexity of the survey. In addition, most of them are still staying at home and can be argued as still more attached to their parents compared to university or college students. With this research, we can further understand the issue related to fathers and mothers' parenting with adolescents.

## **1.2 Problem statements**

Although fathers are as capable as mothers in parenting, it is almost always mothers who stay at home to tend to their sick offspring, who bring them to the doctor, who make sure they take their bath and brush their teeth, and who engage the service of babysitters on occasions. These mothers may do it by choice or they may do it due to societal expectations placed upon them. This issue becomes more problematic if mothers and fathers are both working and yet the roles of caretakers are still mainly played by the mothers. Indeed research has shown that in families where both parents are employed, mothers still do more than fathers.

Although traditionally more mothers stay at home to care for their family, more and more of them go out to work now. Women's participation in the labour force has increased very much since 1970. The figure below shows the labour force participation rate of women in Malaysia.

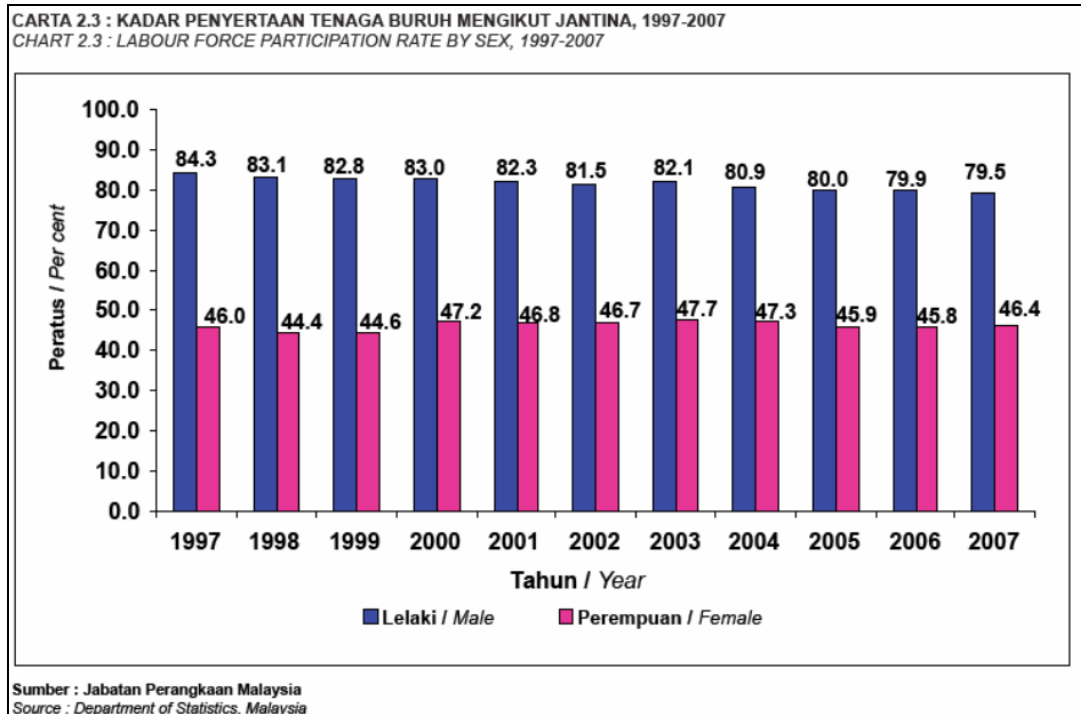


Figure 1.1 Labour force participation rate by sex in Malaysia, 1997-2007

Two factors contribute to this development. One is economic, the other - education. Due to economic necessity brought about by the increase in cost of living and the uncertainty in the world's economic climate, insufficient family income drives women to join the labour force, acting as equal earners for their families. In addition, increased education opportunities also lead more women to actively seek employment and build careers to satisfy their intellectual needs. The statistic below shows the percentage of female Malaysians' participation in education.

Table 1.1 Percentage of female in each education level, 2001-2009

Education level\Year	2001 (%)	2002 (%)	2003 (%)	2004 (%)	2005 (%)	2006 (%)	2007 (%)	2008 (%)	2009 (%)
Primary	48.7	48.7	48.6	48.6	48.6	48.6	48.6	48.6	48.5
Secondary	50.4	50.4	50.3	50.1	50.0	49.8	49.8	49.8	49.9
Post secondary	66.9	66.7	66.9	66.4	66.1	65.3	65.1	66.0	65.1
College	47.9	50.1	50.0	49.2	49.5	49.3	49.7	49.7	49.7
University	57.8	58.8	60.9	60.6	61.2	61.4	61.7	61.3	60.1

Source: Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, Malaysia

Female participation especially in post secondary and university level of education are actually higher than male in Malaysia. In certain circumstances, due to their educational achievements and economic pressure, some women may also end up as the sole breadwinner of the family or the higher earner in their family as compared to their husbands.

In this regard, women are catching up with men in the role of financial providers for the family. While more and more women share the role of providing for the family with their husbands, their husbands may not be as ready (or willing) to share their roles as caregivers for the home. For many working women, housework and child-rearing continue to be their main tasks. Although today, working women spend equal time working outside the home as compared to the male counterpart, men still spend inadequate time in sharing chores at home especially in matters related to parenting. This gradually contributes to the situation of double-burden for women. Double-burden in this context means the burden of work or career plus the burden of house chores and child parenting. Role conflict and role overload generate considerable stress for dual-career and dual earner families. Both men and women experience work or family conflict, but women experience a greater degree of

conflict and role overload than men do. The signs of this role overload include guilt, stress, fatigue, questions on competency or the lack thereof, and professional burnout (Hamner & Turner, 2001). Women feel pressured to care for their infants and at the same time be employed outside the home (Wille, 1995). We need to further understand the level of parental involvement especially the ones experienced by fathers and why their participation is not on par as their working wives.

Parenting quality and parent-children relationships influence the children's emotional and psychological well-being (Chan, 1996). Adolescents' wellbeing are most closely related to the actual support the adolescents receive from their parents (Noller & Callan, 1991). Within the Malaysian context, are both the fathers and mothers equally sharing the responsibilities of nurturing? There is still a lack of study on parental involvement within the Malaysian context. Research on parental involvement in terms of gender analysis in Malaysia is even scarcer. In light of this situation, it is pertinent to investigate the women's and men's roles in parenting. With the increased equality in economic contribution to the family, is child-rearing also becoming more equal? Have the defined roles of mothers and fathers changed? In other words, what is the role of men and women today in the sharing of parenting responsibilities?

### **1.3 Significance of study**

This research filled a niche of the gaps of knowledge about how gender roles, particularly those related to parenting, are conceptualized and practiced within

the society of Malaysia. With women's increased involvement in the labour market especially through working outside of the home, the equal distribution of parenting responsibilities between mothers and fathers have become relevant areas of inquiry, especially in the context of the possible problem of "double-burden" for women in the family. It is important to have fathers to share the parenting role with mothers. Equal sharing will help to improve the parenting quality. It will also reduce the mothers' burden, both physically and mentally. Through this research, we can gain a deeper understanding on the parenting involvement of fathers and mothers. It can also help us to identify the different effects of both parenting styles. This will help to raise awareness on the importance of sharing equal responsibility between mothers and fathers in parenting.

In addition, this study on the nurturance and involvement of parents as perceived by adolescents will contribute to the basic understanding of the satisfaction of the adolescents. A comparison between the nurturance and involvement of individual parent can also be made. It contributes to a more holistic understanding of gender studies. Other than that, comparisons between perceptions of male and female adolescents also contribute to gender studies. With this research done in Malaysia, it contributes to the reservoir of knowledge on parental nurturance, parental involvement, parents-adolescents' relationships satisfaction, and also adolescents' life satisfaction and stress level.

## **1.4 Research questions**

This study sets to answer six research questions as stated below:

- 1) What are the levels of parental nurturance of, involvement of and relationship satisfaction with fathers and mothers, as perceived by Malaysian adolescents?
- 2) What are the levels of parental nurturance of, involvement of fathers and mothers, as perceived by Malaysian adolescents influence their satisfaction with the relationships they have with their parents?
- 3) How do satisfaction with the relationships with fathers and mothers as perceived by Malaysian adolescents, affect their life satisfaction and level of stress?
- 4) How do socio-economic background (ethnicity, religion and living location, financial status and education level) of the parents influence the level of parental nurturance, involvement of fathers and mothers and their relationship satisfaction, as perceived by Malaysian adolescents?
- 5) How does gender of adolescents influence the level of parental nurturance, involvement of and relationship satisfaction with fathers and mothers, as perceived by Malaysian adolescents?
- 6) How does gender of adolescents influence the level of life satisfaction and level of stress?

## **1.5 Research objectives**

The main objective of this study is to examine the level of parental nurturance and involvement of the fathers and mothers and how these levels of nurturance and involvement influence the parents-adolescents' relationships satisfaction. It is also to examine how the parents-adolescents' relationships satisfaction influences the adolescents' life satisfaction and stress level. Below are the sub-objectives of this study:

- 1) To examine the levels of parental nurturance of, involvement of and relationship satisfaction with fathers and mothers, as perceived by Malaysian adolescents.
- 2) To examine how the levels of parental nurturance of, involvement of fathers and mothers, as perceived by Malaysian adolescents influence their satisfaction with the relationships they have with their parents.
- 3) To examine how satisfaction with the relationships with fathers and mothers as perceived by Malaysian adolescents, affect their life satisfaction and level of stress.
- 4) To examine how socio-economic background (ethnicity, religion and living location, financial status and education level) of the parents influence the level of parental nurturance, involvement of fathers and mothers and their relationship satisfaction, as perceived by Malaysian adolescents.

- 5) To examine how gender of adolescents influence the level of parental nurturance, involvement of and relationship satisfaction with fathers and mothers, as perceived by Malaysian adolescents.
- 6) To examine how gender of adolescents influence the level of life satisfaction and level of stress.

### **1.6 Scope of the study**

The scope of this study is to concentrate on the perception of the adolescents. The study focuses on adolescents at their age of 16 to 17 years-old. Therefore, level of involvement from both mothers and fathers can only be based from children's perspective. The result and analysis of the study is also subject to the expression of the participants who are adolescents but not the parent.

The language of the questionnaire is only in English version or Malay version. For Chinese participants who are weak in their understanding of English and Malay language, the researcher helped in translating the questionnaire verbally to them.

This study only covers minor of parental nurturance and major of the level of parental involvement and the influence of the both parental nurturance and parental involvement towards the parent-adolescents' relationship satisfaction level. In addition, it will also cover the influence of the level of parental nurturance and parental involvement towards adolescent' life satisfaction and stress level. From the

demographic of the subject group, the research will lay out the basic ethnography of the subject group included the basic family background of the subject.

### **1.7 Ethical Consideration**

The study has been carried out among form four students from Penang and Kedah's high school. Due to the concern of consent, the researcher had gone through the proper procedure set by Malaysia government on getting the permission to carry out the research. Firstly, the researcher wrote to Malaysia Education Department and applied for Educational, Planning and Research Division (EPRD)' approval. Subsequently with the approval from the EPRD of Education Department, the approval from the Education Department of Penang and Education Department of Kedah was obtained. Secondly, the researcher met the principals of the schools involved to explained about the research and seek for their agreement upon the study.

The researcher gives full cooperation to the school arrangement and respect their decision on their decision whether to let their students take part in the study. When meeting with the students, the research also pay respect to the teacher in the class. Before the survey was conducted, the researcher explained the objectives of the study to the participants and informed the participants that they have the rights not to take part in the study. The researcher also assured the participants of the confidentiality of the research which include that the personal details of the participants would be kept confidential and all the questionnaires are not labelled connected to their identity.

The questionnaires were kept by the researcher in a safe looked place. The storage of data in the computer was also kept in the researcher's personal data storage devices with no access by any other party. The data been used on the analysis purpose and for the thesis writing will not expose the participants' identification as well. The researcher also is very careful in handling the data or to use them in any publication or to present them in any conference. The researcher applied for the permission according to the rules set by the Malaysia Education Department whenever the researcher going to present the data in any kind of seminar paper or conference paper.

## **1.8 Arrangement of the thesis**

This thesis is presented in five chapters. Chapter one is the introduction chapter which provides basic background regarding the study. In addition to the background of the study, problem statements and the significance of the study are presented. Following that, research questions and the research objectives were laid out. The research design and the limitations of this study are briefly discussed. The final part of this chapter is the summary of arrangement of this thesis.

Chapter two is the literature review of the study. This chapter is divided into eight sections. The first section is the literature review, looking into the introduction of parenting and some previous research that has been done. The second and third sections are the literature on parental nurturance and involvement. Then the factors which affect parental nurturance and involvement are discussed.

The fourth and fifth section is to understand more about the literature regarding mothers and fathers' parental nurturance and involvement respectively. The sixth section is the discussion on the influence of parental nurturance and involvement towards parents-adolescents' relationships. The seventh section examines the effect of the parents-adolescents' relationships satisfaction on the adolescent life satisfaction and stress level. The final section covers the theoretical framework of the study and also states the hypothesis of the study.

Chapter three is the methodology of the study. It presents the study design, the procedure of the instruments and the descriptions of the participants of the study. There are mainly two parts in this chapter; part one involves the report on the pilot study and the other section on the actual part of the study.

Chapter four is the data analysis chapter. This chapter presents analysis of the data collected from the survey using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). This chapter consists of the analysis of the participants' demography, the results of the fathers and mothers' nurturing parenting and parental involvement respectively, the parents-adolescents' relationships satisfaction, and also the adolescents' life satisfaction and stress level. For each of these variables, the factors of gender, socio-economic background (race and religion), urban or rural background, parents' income and also the parents' education level are analysed. Finally, the analysis of relationships between various variables is also presented.

The final chapter is the chapter on discussion and conclusion. This chapter summarises the survey results and compares them with outcomes from previous

research. From the results and discussion, this chapter lays out the status of the hypothesis; whether they are to be rejected or accepted. Finally, the conclusion of the study is made.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

This chapter reviews relevant literature and previous studies related to this research. The chapter begins by introducing the concept of parenting. However, before moving on to more theory-related literature, an important discussion related to equality in parenting is presented. This section serves as the background issue related to this research.

The next section concentrates on two more specific parenting concepts which are the focus of this research; parental nurturance and parental involvement. The chapter also discusses the effects of relationship satisfaction on the adolescent's level of well-being and stress.

Last but not least, this chapter presents the factors that can potentially influence parental nurturance and involvement. Two of these factors are related to the gender dimensions of this study. One is the gender of the parents. Discussion on how gender of the parents influences parental nurturance and parental involvement is provided here. The other gender-related aspect is the gender of the children. Again, discussion on how the gender of the children influences parental nurturance and parental involvement is provided here. Next, socio-economic background and culture as related to parenting are discussed. The last two sections focus on the theoretical framework and the hypothesis of the current research.

## 2.1 Parenting

According to the Oxford dictionary, parent is defined as a person's father or mother: the parents of the bride/bridegroom and also his or her adoptive parents. Parents in general, can be categorised into biological parents, step parents, and adopted parents (Bornstein, 2002). Parenting refers to the process of influencing and guiding the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development of a child (Brooks, 2008). Although parenting essentially involves fathers, mothers and also children, this process or state can also be performed by grandparents, siblings, peers, relatives, teachers, friends, and others (Brooks, 2008). Some parents would share their responsibility of nurturing their children with their own parents, other extended family members and also child-care centres. Parenting in this study refers to the involvement of the father and mother in their child daily life. This study focuses on the parental nurturance quality of biological fathers and mothers of the children and how such quality can influence relationship satisfaction, well-being and stress of the children.

Many scholars agree that parents are the most important contributors to children's development (Golombok, 2004). They are the single most important influence and resource in a child's life (Brooks, 2008). This makes parenting a very crucial issue throughout a person's life (Luster & Okagaki, 2005).

Parental style shapes children's behaviour, characteristics and attitudes (Golombok, 2004). A positive parent-child relationship is the foundation for raising children well (Maccoby, 1980). Maccoby and Martin (1983) further explained that

love and security are exemplified in the importance of the parent-child relationships, after all it is the first relationship that a child has. They form the basis for all future relationships and also determine the healthy development of the child's personality (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). A child's life and experiences are enriched by the interaction with these two important male and female role models. Good parenting styles will lead to positive parent-child relationship and this will increase the intimacy between parents and children (Hamner & Turner, 2001).

## **2.2 Equal sharing of parenting between mothers and fathers**

Both mothers and fathers are involved in parenting. Parents have responsibilities not only for their child's physical needs, such as for food and safety, but also for their mental and social development. When both parents are involved in caring for the children, there is the greatest sense of fulfilment (J. Brooks, 2008). In United States, mothers and fathers are uniquely influencing the child by playing different roles (Adamsons & Beuhler, 2007; Finley, 2008). According to Golombok (2004), in Indonesia, the importance is on the number of parents involved rather than the gender of the parents. Therefore, in a heterogeneous family, the sharing of responsibility in parenting is crucial. The father and mother should both play their roles and be responsible for the child. However, according to the literature, fathers are still not really much involved in parenting. Folbre (2001) coined the term 'prisoner of love' to the state of relationship that mothers have with their children. England (2005) explained, though the care of mother and father often spring naturally, but gender norms would often assign the child care responsibilities to

mothers, hence, mothers cultivate greater caring for their children than fathers would. This gives more space and flexibility for fathers to venture outside the household. Such phenomenon is one way to understand fathers' lesser involvement in their children's lives; knowing they can count on the mothers' willingness in supporting their children (England, 2005). This phenomenon is also caused by the mothers' attitudes towards their spouses' ability in carrying out parenting tasks (Wille, 1995). Ultimately, mothers often become the prisoner of their love for their children, while fathers continue to cultivate more financial power to dominate the economical status of the family. Such entanglement of love and domination has been identified by Hartmann (1981) as what makes the family "an arena of struggle" for both women and men (Zinn, 2000). It is precisely due to such struggle that this study shows how it has affected the relationships of the parents with their children.

### **2.2.1 The importance of equal sharing of parenting between mothers and fathers**

Equal sharing in the responsibility of parenting is not just a benefit to the child but also the mothers. A finding of the research done by Hallett and Gilbert (1977) on university women's perception of their future marital patterns of work and family integration showed that women desire for career committed men and also emotionally supportive men. Those mothers that have less support from their spouses are at the higher level risk of maltreatment (Dubowitz, 2006). The sharing of domestic labour and childcare by fathers is a strategy for relieving the role overload of working mothers. Data show that 90 percent of wives and 82 percent of husbands agree that when both work full time, they should share household and

child care equally (Hamner & Turner, 2001). Due to the impact and role conflicts experienced by employed mothers on sharing the financial burden of the family, it is important that fathers should share equal responsibility on the household and child-rearing which is traditionally treated as mothers' responsibility. Research indicates that children develop best when their fathers as well as their mothers, combine warmth and nurturance with strength, protection, and specified limits (Hamner & Turner, 2001).

It is very important that both the father and mother have one-to-one time spent with the children (Wall & Arnold, 2007). Ryan, Martin and Brooks-Gunn (2006) found that children of two supportive parents consistently scored higher in cognitive tests. They carried out research on European mothers and fathers to examine parenting patterns and also the impact of those patterns on the children's cognitive outcomes. Two hundred and seven fathers and mothers were videotaped with their child during 24-month birthday-related home visits. Six parenting scales - sensitivity, cognitive simulation, positive regard, negative regard, intrusiveness, and detachment - were examined. The results of the study are that the parenting scales were remarkably similar for mothers and fathers overall. In addition, scoring higher for cognitive test, they also found that supportive-parent pairs' children may have interpersonal skills and emotional wellbeing. This wellbeing actually indirectly produces positive child outcome through good parental relationship. At the same time, the parents also enjoys higher quality relationships (Ryan, et al., 2006). The combination of a playful father and a responsive, verbal mother provides significant facilitation of cognitive development (Hamner & Turner, 2001).

The advantages of having a supportive parent are to be compounded by the presence of another supportive parent (Ryan, et al., 2006). According to Gamble (2006), the democratic styles of interaction are actually increasing the likelihood of shared perspective in parenting. It is very vital for practitioners to include both parents' behaviours in improving their parenting skills (Ryan, et al., 2006). Mothers and fathers are both crucial to involve and share the responsibilities equally.

Furthermore, division of labour based on perceived gender roles in the family have existed over the centuries, (Wharton, 2005). This division stratified men and women in different aspects in their work and family lives, which causes the separation of the work between both women and men (Wharton, 2005) in the public and private spheres. Productive, economically valuable and public activity is assigned to men as breadwinners in the family. On the other hand, reproductive, social and private activity is assigned to women as caregivers since they are given the ability to give birth (Jackson, 2008). Historically, women bear the biological fact of reproduction, which is to give birth. This biological responsibility allocated parenting task for the mothers. On the other hand, men were assigned tasks and other activities to suit their perceived greater physical strength (Chafetz, 206; Wharton, 2005).

Conventionally, fathers used to be the breadwinners and mothers used to be full time housewives, responsible for the tasks of taking care of the children. Women used to sacrifice their ambitions to support their husbands' career. Therefore, they have fulltime responsibilities on household and child rearing tasks

such as cooking, cleaning, providing emotional support and entertaining the husband and children at home (Wharton, 2005).

During the industrial revolution, men were mainly occupied; thus women started to step into factories and work (Goldin, 2009; Tilly, 1994). Women including mothers have experienced greater transformation in their economic role (Oppenheimer, 1997). The transformation sets women to be the target of employment for factories but with long working hours and low salary. Therefore, a lot of the work roles were set up with women in mind such as factory operators. However, women's roles are still known as "mothers" and "homemakers", while men's roles maintain to be "workers" and "breadwinners" (Chafetz, 2006; Epstein & Hollifield, 1996; Wharton, 2005).

Currently a mother's responsibility is no longer restricted to just taking care of the family and staying at home to carry out parenting and household duties. Since some of the fathers earn insufficiently for the family to survive throughout the life which requires high expenses, there are many working mothers (Datta, 2007; Phonix, Woollett, & Lloyd, 1991). Other than looking for own career satisfaction, it is undeniable that some mothers are forced to contribute with the economic setup that the family income is not enough to cover their expenses. There are a number of reasons for a mother to be employed. Mothers may be working to get income, to explore new world, to utilize training, not merely for financial reasons. So, while fathers remain as breadwinners, mothers are also working to support the family financially (Bianchi, 2009). Therefore the parenting trend has changed. Mothers no