

**THE INFLUENCES OF PERCEIVED PARENTAL
CARE, PERCEIVED TEACHER CARE AND
CARING THINKING ON MORAL IDENTITY
AMONG ADOLESCENTS WITH
DISCIPLINARY PROBLEMS**

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UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

2021

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by

ANIS BINTI SHAARI

**Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

November 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Alhamdulillah, my gratefulness to the Ultimate Lover, Allah the Almighty, for I finally reach this very page. It is with His love and care that I have been able to wake up, read, think, write, and do every single thing which contributes to the learning and the research completion. This pursuit of knowledge has been wonderful with the unconditional love He has been offering me. I now believe all ups and downs are signs of Allah's Rahman and Raheem.

I owe heartiest appreciation to my supervisors and gurus, Dr. Syed Mohamad Syed Abdullah; Associate Professor Dr. Melissa Ng Lee Yen Abdullah; Associate Professor Dr. Aswati Hamzah; Dr. Siti Hawa Abdullah; Professor Dr. Nordin Razak, Dr. Ahmad Zamri Khairani, Professor Dr. Hairul Nizam Ismail, Associate Professor Dr. Rabiatal-Adawiyah Ahmad Rashid - for the passion and patience in caringly guiding me. Each and every relation has uniquely and qualitatively activated my caring thinking and moral sense of self.

My heartfelt acknowledgement to Universiti Sains Malaysia for sponsoring my journey throughout, under the scheme of USM Global Fellowship. I must also thank all groups and individuals who have directly and indirectly involved in realising this study, including the Ministry of Education, Kedah State Education Department, Baling District Education Department, school principals, counsellors, teachers and all respondents taking part in the study. To those whose names are not mentioned, but have willingly helped me in completing this meaningful study, I truly appreciate your contributions.

As to learn the meaning of this PhD, I continuously get inspiration, care and prayer from my dearly treasured family:

husband and daughter, Mohd Shamsurry and Afaff;

mother and father, Khatijah and Allahyarham Shaari A.B.;

grandmother, Sofiah;

parents-in-law, Azizah and Allahyarham Yahaya;

co-wife and children, Maudah, Nu'man, Nubhan, Iffah, Nuzhan and Nuzman;

siblings, Akmal, Afif, Azli, Noor Aini, Noor Shiah, Noor Azah and Cik Wahidah;

siblings-in-law, Norli, Mustafa, Abdullah, Hisham, Azyanie, Rizal, Wafi and Shida;

nieces, Afiqah, Alia, Adriena, Afrina, Amni, Annur, Adra and Ufairah;

nephews, Faheemi, Aiman, Adham, Syazwan, Haziq, Akif, Annazeef and Annazeem.

Besides, I am indebted to a dear friend, Dr. Seffetullah Kuldaz, who has been the most caring 'mamoustaz' (read: teacher) throughout this journey of wisdom. With the words "Thank me with your PhD", your thoughtfulness has kept me going. I hope that I can really thank you now. My gratitude also goes to my 'sahabat' Berlian Nur Morat, for the companionship, besides all our question-and-answer moments.

On the final note, I humbly dedicate this thesis to my beloved husband, whose love and care are beyond words may describe; to NCR family, whose help has been super wonderful; and to my little Afaff, who shall one day learn the wisdoms this life has got to offer - I pray that this learning continues to spark another learning, for me, for you and for your future siblings, Insya Allah.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACTT	Active Thinking
AFFT	Affective Thinking
APPT	Appreciative Thinking
CA	Cronbach Alpha
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CR	Composite Reliability
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
EMPT	Empathic Thinking
HTMT	Heterotrait-Monotrait
MI	Moral Identity
NORMT	Normative Thinking
PLS-SEM	Partial Least Square - Structural Equation Modelling
PPC	Perceived Parental Care
PTC	Perceived Teacher Care

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**PENGARUH TANGGAPAN KEPEDULIAN IBU BAPA, TANGGAPAN
KEPEDULIAN GURU DAN PEMIKIRAN KEPEDULIAN TERHADAP IDENTITI
MORAL DALAM KALANGAN REMAJA BERMASALAH DISIPLIN**

ABSTRAK

Statistik kes disiplin yang membimbangkan melibatkan remaja di sekolah menengah kebangsaan di Malaysia, khususnya di Kedah, menggambarkan isu identiti moral yang rendah, justeru memerlukan perhatian serius dalam memahami fenomena tersebut. Kebanyakan kajian terdahulu mengkaji identiti moral sebagai faktor kepada konstruk tertentu, menjadikan persoalan terhadap faktor yang menyumbang kepada pembangunan identiti moral suatu jurang yang perlu diberi perhatian. Penemuan lampau yang terhad berkenaan pengaruh persepsi remaja terhadap kepedulian ibu bapa dan guru ke atas identiti moral memotivasi pengkaji untuk memahami dinamika yang wujud antara orang lain dan diri sendiri terutamanya dalam kalangan remaja bermasalah disiplin. Justeru, kajian ini bertujuan mengkaji sama ada tanggapan kepedulian ibu bapa dan tanggapan kepedulian guru mempengaruhi aspek pemikiran kepedulian remaja (pemikiran afektif, pemikiran apresiatif, pemikiran aktif, pemikiran normatif dan pemikiran empatik), yang seterusnya menjadi anteseden kepada identiti moral. Pada masa yang sama, aspek pemikiran kepedulian diandaikan sebagai pengantara dalam hubungan antara tanggapan kepedulian ibu bapa dan identiti moral. Hipotesis yang sama dibangunkan untuk hubungan antara tanggapan kepedulian guru dan identiti moral. Berasaskan kerangka teoretikal yang menggabungkan Model Kendiri Blasi, Teori Kognitif Sosial Bandura, Model Pemikiran Kepedulian Lipman dan Etika Kepedulian Noddings, kajian ini mengaplikasikan tinjauan keratan rentas. Menggunakan teknik persampelan masa-ruang, sejumlah 446 responden yang dikenal pasti terlibat dengan masalah disiplin telah disampel secara rawak dari 23 buah sekolah menengah

kebangsaan di Daerah Baling dan Sik, Kedah. Skala Pembangunan Identiti Moral diedarkan dengan mengambil kira semua aspek pertimbangan etika. Data yang diperoleh dianalisis menggunakan Kaedah Kuasa Dua Terkecil Separa – Permodelan Persamaan Berstruktur (PLS-SEM), khususnya perisian SmartPLS 3.2.7. Dapatan menunjukkan: (1) model pengukuran mempunyai nilai kebolehpercayaan dan kesahan yang tinggi; (2) semua 15 hipotesis untuk hubungan langsung disokong; dan (3) semua 10 hipotesis untuk hubungan tidak langsung turut disokong. Dapatan ini menjawab semua persoalan kajian: (1) Tanggapan kepedulian ibu bapa mempengaruhi aspek pemikiran kepedulian dalam kalangan remaja bermasalah disiplin; (2) Tanggapan kepedulian guru mempengaruhi aspek pemikiran kepedulian dalam kalangan remaja bermasalah disiplin; (3) Aspek pemikiran kepedulian mempengaruhi identiti moral dalam kalangan remaja bermasalah disiplin; (4) Aspek pemikiran kepedulian mengantara hubungan antara tanggapan kepedulian ibu bapa dan identiti moral dalam kalangan remaja bermasalah disiplin; dan (5) Aspek pemikiran kepedulian mengantara hubungan antara tanggapan kepedulian guru dan identiti moral dalam kalangan remaja bermasalah disiplin. Daripada dapatan tersebut, model yang dibangunkan dalam kajian ini dipercayai bermakna untuk menjelaskan proses pembentukan identiti moral dalam kalangan remaja, khususnya mereka yang terlibat dalam kes disiplin dalam konteks sekolah di Malaysia.

**THE INFLUENCES OF PERCEIVED PARENTAL CARE, PERCEIVED TEACHER
CARE AND CARING THINKING ON MORAL IDENTITY AMONG
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ABSTRACT

Deduced as the resemblance of underdeveloped moral identity (MI), the alarming statistics of disciplinary cases implicating adolescents in Malaysian public secondary schools, including those in Kedah, warrants serious attention in understanding the phenomenon. Most past studies examined adolescents' MI as a defining attribute of a construct, leaving the question as to what factors may determine MI remains a gap. Motivated by the limited previous discoveries on how MI is possibly influenced by adolescents' perceptions of parental and teacher care, comprehending the dynamics between others and the self is essential especially among adolescents with disciplinary problems. Hence, this study aimed to examine whether perceived parental care and perceived teacher care influence adolescents' caring thinking aspects (i.e., affective thinking, appreciative thinking, active thinking, normative thinking & emphatic thinking), which in turn posit as antecedents of MI. Simultaneously, aspects of caring thinking were presumed to mediate the relationship between perceived parental care and MI. Similar hypotheses were developed for the relationship between perceived teacher care and MI. Governed by a theoretical framework integrating Blasi's Self Model, Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, Lipman's Caring Thinking Model and Noddings's Ethics of Care, this study employed a cross-sectional survey. Using the time-space sampling technique, 446 respondents identified to involve in disciplinary problems were randomly sampled from public secondary schools in Baling and Sik Districts, Kedah. The Moral Identity Development Scale was administered taking into account all ethical considerations. The obtained data were analysed using the Partial Least

Square – Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) analysis, particularly the SmartPLS 3.2.7 software. Findings indicate: (1) the measurement model appeared to have high values of reliability and validity; (2) all 15 hypotheses for the direct relationships were supported; and (3) all 10 hypotheses for the indirect relationships were supported. These findings therefore answered the research questions: (1) Perceived parental care influences caring thinking aspects among adolescents with disciplinary problems; (2) Perceived teacher care influences caring thinking aspects among adolescents with disciplinary problems; (3) Caring thinking aspects influence the moral identity of adolescents with disciplinary problems; (4) Caring thinking aspects mediate the relationship between perceived parental care and MI among adolescents with disciplinary problems; and (5) Caring thinking aspects mediate the relationship between perceived teacher care and MI among adolescents with disciplinary problems. From such findings, the developed research model is meaningful to elucidate the moral identity formation process among adolescents, particularly of those involved in disciplinary cases in Malaysian school context.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

The term moral basically resembles good traits or virtues that are valued across cultures and time. It enables individuals and societies, at large, to live and flourish in harmony. Of such, developing a moral individual, hence a moral nation is a universal goal aimed by diverse communities in the globe. Equipping people with personal or societal moral values is essential in ensuring mature moral individuals and society members who are capable of meeting moral challenges faced in their ordinary lives (Halstead & Pike, 2006). In a country with collectivist socio-cultural practices, like Malaysia (Kuldas et al., 2014), whether such challenges are able to be addressed with moral decisions and moral actions have long become a matter of concern.

Discussions of current Psychology research highlight that a better understanding of moral action can be obtained by considering the role of the self in morality, which is often referred to as ‘moral identity’ (hereafter MI) (Jia & Krettenauer, 2017). MI or “the degree to which being a moral person is important to an individual’s identity” (Hardy & Carlo, 2011, p. 212), serves as a motivation for an individual to act morally. To illustrate, individuals who believe that moral values like being fair, caring, honest, generous and compassionate are central to their self definition have the tendency to consistently align what they believe in and what they project out. Regardless of the different countries, races and religions, this issue of moral cultivation has become a world-wide resurgence of interest (Anis Shaari & Aswati Hamzah, 2018; Chowdhury, 2016; Walker et al, 2015). Being an important phenomenon at a

global level, the similar goal of each community group marks the essential need to create strategies towards meeting it. Among others, establishing MI amongst people through the education realm has been an undeniably fundamental endeavour.

Today, despite the effort to help enhance people's MI, the responses people have towards the rapid-changing world development have resulted in various deteriorating consequences towards the idea of instilling moral values in the making of humane humans (Rosnani Hashim, 2017). With underdeveloped MI, it is no longer surprising to witness a high achiever who does not care to respect parents and teachers; and a creative student who does not care about the negative effects of vandalising walls and school desks. Even more worrisome, the decline in MI has now become a universal phenomenon in most parts of the world. Its impacts have been vastly reported in various cultures and societies (Cordero Jr., 2013; Masath, 2013; Xu et al., 2019). To illustrate, in New York, youthful gambling, substance use disorders, premarital sex and delinquency are among the interrelated problems faced (Barnes et al., 2005). Canada, too, is affected by the same social problems (Ferentzy et al., 2013) and issues pertaining to moral problems are as well evident in the USA, France, Russia, Sudan, China, Germany and Kenya (Masath, 2013). Additionally, a research conducted by Kavussanu and Ring (2017) in the United Kingdom highlights the doping likelihood among those with insubstantial MI. The list of implicated countries continues to grow and undesirably, this includes Malaysia (Appalanaidu, 2018; Azizi Yahaya et al., 2014; Siti Rafiah Abd Hamid et al., 2018). Immensely concerning the teenage group, increased immoral acts such as misbehaving in class, drug addiction and juvenile delinquency (Adnan Abd. Rashid et al., 2014; Appalanaidu, 2018) have contributed to a real mess to the aim and effort of education in producing such balanced and moral individuals. This decline in MI, especially among adolescents, portrays the vulnerable condition Malaysia is facing.

As everybody is aware, adolescents are important assets of the country in which they are anticipated to contribute towards the development of the country's or the nation's civilisation. Of such hope, moral related issues such as the underdeveloped MI implicating adolescents are deemed to be distracting. Discussing what adolescents go through as they experience the teenage years may allow deeper understanding on the alarming moral issues and further discourse on possible ways to address such issues. Being a crucial period in human development, adolescence is often associated with confusion and conflict. The years of struggles gone through by adolescents are labelled as the storm and stress period of human life (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2013). Erikson (as cited in Santrock, 2008), in his Psychosocial Theory, explains that adolescents have to face the dilemma of leading themselves towards either one of the two extremes: identity and role confusion. It is further clarified that having an identity means the ability of teenagers to relate their individual selves to the world while those who have role confusion are said to have identity diffusion, or unable to see themselves as partly contributing to the world they live in.

The crisis the adolescents have within themselves may cause them to internally develop self-conflict, in which they are confused with the role they are expected to play within the society. The occurrence of conflict could result in aggressiveness in terms of physical and voice, as well as undesirable silent protests in which adolescents choose to quietly show their disagreement over certain rules or expectations (e.g., hunger strike, vandalism, and suicidal attempts). It is hence crucial to note that role confusion and self-conflict are among the internal factors which contribute towards the tendency of adolescents committing moral related behavioural problems. In agreement with Mahmood and Khan (2010), the phenomenon affecting adolescents is in place because

human identities and characteristics are converted into machines of consumption, feeding the desires of our bodies, but always to the detriment of the true desires of our souls, which has led us to a ‘moral and spiritual void’, resulting in a state of human disequilibrium (p. 4).

On that note, a series of questions arise - what fundamentally motivates moral behaviour? What makes people do certain good and unacceptable deeds? What sustains one’s motivation to constantly behave morally? The earlier crucial discussion on human disequilibrium, which reflects adolescents’ role confusion and self-conflict, has possibly suggested that adolescents ought to establish their identities. The capacity to manage the conflicts well and have the ‘good’ identity developed is believed to be the answer to the abovementioned concerns.

Concerning the role identity may play in morality development, an individual’s sense of self which is constructed on moral ground is believed to motivate him or her to consistently project himself or herself as a moral person. Such conjoined concepts of self and morality, according to Blasi (1984, as cited in Lapsley, 2015), is referred to as moral identity. In other words, MI is the degree to which being a moral person is significant to an individuals’ identity (Hardy, Bean & Olsen, 2014). Such identity, in turn, becomes a self-regulatory mechanism which directs individuals’ behaviour or actions (Aquino & Reed, 2002). The idea of MI may help explain adolescents’ involvement in immoral or antisocial activities. As explained by Hardy, Bean and Olsen (2014), research evidences show positive link between MI and prosocial behaviour and in contrast, MI is proven to be negatively linked to antisocial behaviour. In relation with that, MI is therefore argued to be an influential factor in determining one’s moral conduct. This argument is founded on Blasi’s Self-Model

which conceptualises MI as a moral based identity structure that motivates people to consistently manifest the moral values they have internalised as they define their sense of self.

With greater interest in MI as portrayed in the literature (Black & Reynolds, 2016; Hardy & Carlo, 2011; Hardy et al., 2014; Kavussanu & Ring, 2017; Lapsley, 2015; Luyckx et al., 2011), this envisaged research intends to study MI among adolescents, especially those implicated with school disciplinary issues. Theoretically and empirically proven to contribute to adolescents' moral behaviours (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Hardy et al., 2014), the unfound study on MI conducted within the context of Malaysia warrants the need for its investigation. Studied within the scope of Educational Psychology, MI formation is assumed to be possibly contributed by adolescents' caring thinking (Dombayci, Demir, Tarhan & Bacanli, 2011; Dombayci, 2014; Juujarvi, Myyry & Pessa, 2010; Lipman, 2003). To illustrate, in his Caring Thinking Model, Lipman (2003) claims that caring thinking is an intrapersonal form of emotive thinking which allows individuals to carefully regard possible issues or matters of concern before choosing to reason and behave in certain ways. Sharing the same notion, Juujarvi et al. (2010) highlight that gradual development of care-based reasoning capacities when solving moral conflicts is an essential aspect of MI.

On that note, an adolescent's caring thinking, thus MI is believed to be the result of his or her dynamic interaction with the contexts he or she is exposed to. As the research pays attention to the realm of education, it is the perception of parental and teacher care that the researcher chooses to focus on, for both parents and teachers mutually play the role as the main educators, or the interpersonal caring thinking resources, closest to the adolescents under study. In this study, such an occurrence is best explained by the Social Cognitive

Theory. Besides, the parental and teacher care as conceived by adolescents, according to the Ethic of Care Theory, correspondingly contribute to their likelihood to think caringly, thus developing their sense of MI (Gilligan, 2014; Noddings, 1999, 2010, 2012).

In view of the alarming problems which are possibly implicated by the underdeveloped MI (Hardy, Bean and Olsen, 2014), it is worth to investigate MI and its antecedents among Malaysian adolescents involved in school disciplinary problems. To base the investigation, a theoretical framework has been established connecting premises from few theories and models - Blasi's Self Model, Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, Lipman's Caring Thinking Model and Noddings's Ethics of Care. In a nutshell, the current study is to examine whether MI is influenced interpersonally by both perceived parental care and perceived teacher care with intrapersonal aspects of caring thinking being the mediating factors.

1.2 Research Background

Education is claimed to have failed in its function if there is no positive change observed in the learners' moral, other than intellectuality (Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, 2014). In a larger view, the civilization of certain groups of people is of utmost importance when it comes to the purpose of education. Not only knowledge is meant to be acquired and mastered, yet to be manifested and exercised accordingly. In other words, education does not solely revolve around academic achievement, yet also the inculcation of morality in individuals' character building (Lickona, 1997).

Hence, shaping adolescents' MI is believed to be essential, as claimed by Hardy et al., (2014). Its importance has been translated into various education programmes or agenda, in which the ultimate aim is to promote better well-beings. In other words, education is not merely a process of enabling human beings to regurgitate the knowledge they have acquired yet to humanise them. As a hub that aims for holistic excellence (as projected in the National Education Philosophy), the Ministry of Education of Malaysia (2017) is making effort to develop and put in place an education environment that encourages the growth of premier knowledge centres and individuals who are competent, innovative with high moral values to meet national and international needs.

1.2.1 Current Educational Practice

While believing that the ultimate purpose of education is to grow students' character, Syed Mohd Naquib al-Attas sees the country as being affected with the domination of belief that education is here to serve the country's economic growth (Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, 2014). This intellectual confusion portrays how the society values grade attainment instead of the importance of character building. The education philosophy which is to create and develop human beings in a fundamental and comprehensive manner has been an elusive effort with the increase of such confusions.

The current existing educational practices are believed to have overlooked the importance of the affective aspect when education is rather valued in terms of physical grades and credits (Rosnani Hashim et al., 2014). It is undeniable that the aspirations of the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015 - 2025 (Ministry of Education, 2017) do emphasise quality of education which includes the process of harnessing thinking and inculcating values.

However, the practice does not practically conform to the written aspirations when the current education is still associated with its traditional view that learners are still highly anticipated to achieve good grades (Anis Shaari & Aswati Hamzah, 2018; Rosnani Hashim, 2017).

A research conducted by S. M. Abdul Quddus and Khairil Izamin Ahmad (2015) concludes that Malaysian education governance is more oriented towards “knowledge shopping” than “identity formation.” The result implies how the country is still inclined towards producing learners of grade certification rather than shaping individual intellect and selves. This impacts not only teachers at school, but parents at home where the primary focus of educating children has been placed on academic excellence, putting lesser attention to the importance of generating individuals and society with moral. In a way, despite the contributions of several other factors, the idea of focusing too much on producing scorers in meeting the economic needs may unfortunately result in decadent implications among some individuals, including adolescents.

1.2.2 Understanding the Emergence of Moral Identity and its Possible Factors

In view of the challenged educational effort in promoting moral growth among individuals (especially adolescents), it is worth to investigate the factors which may predict their MI. Thus, understanding the chronology of moral development theories is believed to be essential in order to comprehend how MI comes into the picture and is seen as the most suitable variable that warrants a study.

Historically, in brief, the predominant theory of moral development has been Kohlberg's (1969) cognitive development theory (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Kocabiyik & Kulaksizoğlu, 2014; Lundberg, 2014) which is developed as the extension of Piaget's (1932) developmental stage theories. Focusing on the cognitive function of a human being, Kohlberg's theory suggests that moral reasoning influences moral action. In this theory, moral reasoning is divided into levels namely Pre-Conventional Morality, Conventional Morality and Post-Conventional Morality and these levels are further divided into various stages (Table 1.1). Not much later, the Neo-Kohlbergian Approach which is theorised by Rest (1979) propagates that moral judgement is conceptualised within the cognitive notion but rather than stage-based, schema concepts are used to express moral reasoning (Kocabiyik & Kulaksizoğlu, 2014). On the contrary, believing that cognitive capacity does not influence moral actions, Hoffman (1975) theorises that moral emotions control moral motivation, which in turn predicts moral behaviour (Kocabiyik & Kulaksizoğlu, 2014; Lundberg, 2014).

Table 1.1

Kohlberg's Moral Development Stages (Hilton & Southgate, 2007)

Level	Stage	Social orientation	Characteristics
Pre-conventional <i>(elementary school level)</i>	1	Obedience and punishment	Behaves according to socially acceptable norms because they are told to do so by some authority figure (e.g., parent or teacher). This obedience is compelled by the threat or application of punishment
	2	Individualism, instrumentalism and exchange	Incorporates a view that right behaviour means acting in one's own best interests
Conventional <i>(generally found in society)</i>	3	"Good boy/girl"	Exhibits an attitude which seeks to do what will gain the approval of others
	4	Law and order	Oriented to abiding by the law and responding to the obligations of duty
Post-conventional <i>(not reached by the majority of adults)</i>	5	Social contract	Shows an understanding of social mutuality and a genuine interest in the welfare of other
	6	Principled conscience	Based on respect for universal principle and the demands of individual conscience

Of such early moral theoretical foundation, Narvaez and Lapsley (2009) and Lundberg (2014) state that recent research portray no statistically significant causal link between individuals' cognitive ability to reason morally and his or her moral behaviour. Past studies, too, fail to verify more than a moderate relationship between moral emotions and moral behaviour (Lundberg, 2014; Narvaez & Lapsley, 2009). Similar claims are also made by Kocabiyik and Kulaksizoğlu (2014) in their article indicating that cognition and emotions alone are not able to explain consistent moral actions by themselves.

As the moral development theories evolve, the low capacity of each construct - moral reasoning and moral emotion – in predicting moral behaviour has become a factor which leads to greater interest in the role of identity in morality (Hardy & Carlo, 2011). Consequently, moral scholars such as Blasi (1980, 1983), Rest (1983), and even Kohlberg himself (Kohlberg & Candee, 1984), see the necessity to identify factors which may bridge the gap between moral reasoning and moral action (Hardy & Carlo, 2011; Hardy, Walker, Olsen, Woodbury, & Hickman, 2014). As agreed by many, MI is one of the constructs that links moral judgements to moral actions (Hardy et al., 2010; Hardy & Carlo, 2011; Hardy, Bean & Olsen, 2014; Hardy et al., 2014).

Given that MI has been theoretically and empirically proven to influence moral behaviours or actions (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Davis & Carlo, 2018; Hardy et al., 2010; Hardy, Bean, & Olsen, 2014; Hardy et al., 2014; Kavussanu & Ring, 2017), it is believed that it could best explain the inevitable psycho-social problems among the society members, particularly the decline of moral values among adolescents in Malaysia (Appalanaidu, 2018; Tan & Appalanaidu, 2017; Zainol Abidin Ishak et al., 2017). As described by Hardy et al. (2014), MI is predictive of high prosocial behaviour and low antisocial behaviour in

adolescents. Therefore, the tendency of adolescents of behaving undesirably is possibly the result of their underdeveloped MI.

In accordance with that, looking into factors affecting MI is vital. Classifying according to the dichotomies of perspectives to MI (i.e., Character/ Personological Perspective and Social Cognitive Perspective), Hardy and Carlo (2011) list several factors that may determine one's MI. From the character perspective, the factors include (1) individual characteristics (i.e., academic achievement, prosocial moral reasoning and empathy); (2) developmental context (i.e., religious involvement and effective parenting); and (3) opportunities for moral action (i.e., community service). As for the social cognitive perspective, moral schema (or one's mental image of what it means to be a moral person and event representations for specific morally relevant behaviours) makes up a construct that influences a person's MI formation.

Meanwhile, from an educationist perspective, Noddings (1997) perceives 'care' as the pedagogical pre-requisite of moral education. With the aim of equipping students with MI, it is argued that education ought to be managed around the themes of care in which students should be guided to care for self, intimate others, global others, animals, plants, the environment, instruments and objects, as well as ideas. Sharing the same opinion, Gilligan (2014) believes that 'care' guides people in acting carefully in the human world. Of such, Noddings (1997) propagates that care may decrease violence and at the same time increase responsibility. This notion is agreed by Collier (2005) as he adds that caring concerns values and it allows education to be reclaimed as a moral action. This justifies the need of establishing caring thinking among individual adolescents as it is perceived to be influential in their MI development. Correspondingly, individuals' care is seen to be essentially nurtured

caringly as Noddings (1997) states “to nurture caring in our children, we have to show, first, that we care for them” (p. 37). Such statement explains the necessity of both parental and teacher care in cultivating caring thinking and MI in adolescents.

Learning from the factors determining MI as listed by Hardy and Carlo (2011), together with the idea of care in predicting one’s moral self, the researcher comes to a point of departure that care may be said to ultimately base those factors outlined by Hardy and Carlo (2011). Despite the different perspectives to MI, one’s care to care about oneself and one’s care towards others are believed to stand as the foundation of one’s MI establishment. To illustrate, empathy is an affective-based human element which is rooted from the idea of care (Lipman, 2003). Other social-based factors, too, like effective parenting, family environment and social experiences reflect the requirement of care in such interpersonal contexts. Therefore, MI among adolescents is believed to be best studied within the framework of care constituting its factors. Since MI capitalises on both moral and identity lines of inquiry and research, this study seeks to establish a theoretical framework based on ethical theory, psychological theory and ethics of care to investigate the relationship among adolescents’ perceived parental care, perceived teacher care, caring thinking and moral identity (MI).

1.3 Research Problem

Adolescents who are not adhering to moral principles of a society or institution can be ascribed to their underdeveloped moral identity (MI) (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Davis & Carlo, 2018; Hardy et al., 2014; Kavussanu & Ring, 2017). This notion suggests that adolescents with underdeveloped MI have the tendency to involve in disciplinary problems in schools

such as bullying, smoking, truancy, vandalism, breaking of trust and mischief behaviours. In 2008, 112 366 secondary school students in Malaysia were recorded to involve in disciplinary cases while in 2012, a total of 107 191 cases were reported (Tan & Appalanaidu, 2017). Despite the decline, the number of cases increased to 132, 068 in the year 2017 (Appalanaidu, 2018). The details of cases are as shown in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2

Disciplinary Cases in Malaysian Public Secondary Schools in 2017 (astroawani.com)

Disciplinary cases	Number of cases
Truancy	67053
Impolite/ Rudeness	14509
Time wasting	13415
Self-untidiness	10946
Smoking related cases	8514
Criminal cases	6917
Mischief behaviour	5825
Bullying	2795
Pornography related cases	2266
Vandalism	1868

These cases implicated all states in Malaysia and Kedah is not an exception. Viewing the problem from the context where the study was conducted, a research by Zainol Abidin Ishak et al. (2017) reported that the disciplinary misbehaviour among secondary school students in Kedah was at a high level. To illustrate, a case study conducted by Lee et al. (2017) revealed that 85 percent of 1200 secondary school students sampled in Kedah confessed their involvement in minor indiscipline behaviour, followed by 53 percent in moderate indiscipline behaviour and 15 percent in serious indiscipline behaviour. In relation with that, in 2017, the Ministry of Education identified at least 10 secondary schools in Kedah to have high disciplinary and drug related cases (Absha Atiah Abu Bakar & Mohd. Isa Hamzah, 2019; edubestari.com, 2020). These empirical findings are among instances which

together witness and contribute to the increment of disciplinary cases in Kedah. As shared by Unit Sistem Sahsiah Diri Murid (SSDM) of Kedah State Education Department (2020), the number of disciplinary cases increases from 589 in 2017 to 3237 in 2018; and further hikes up to 13787 in 2019. Such phenomenon may turn worse should it be left unattended. The immense number of cases implies the need of serious attention in understanding the scenario. As this research presumes that undesirable behaviours are the resemblance of underdeveloped MI (Davis & Carlo, 2018), the statistics indicate that adolescents in Malaysian public secondary school, including those in Kedah, are probably implicated with moral identity development issue.

In relation with that, most past studies examining adolescents' morality issues tend to focus on moral behaviour rather than adolescents' MI (Carlo, 2013; Massath, 2013). The few studies have investigated MI either as an independent variable (Black & Reynolds, 2016; Hardy, Bean, & Olsen, 2014; Hardy et al., 2014; Kavussanu & Ring, 2017; Vahedi & Yari-Sis, 2016), a mediator (Hardy et al., 2010; Teng et al., 2017) or a moderator (Guo et al., 2019; Hardy, Bean, & Olsen, 2014; Wang et al., 2019) directed at a behaviour, belief, or performance. In other words, MI is conceived to be an antecedent or a defining attribute of a construct. This conception hereby leaves this inquiry unclear: What are the factors that affect MI among adolescents? The question as to what may determine MI remains a gap.

In search of the answer to what factors influencing MI, it has been discovered that both parents (Kapetanovic et al., 2019; Patonah Zakaria et al., 2018) and teachers (Aldridge et al., 2016) play imperative roles. These two entities represent the environmental or situational factors in predicting the adolescents' MI. Given that an individual's identity is not only made of the situational factors (Bandura, 1986, as cited in Hardy & Carlo, 2011), the

element of self (Blasi, 1983) is also an aspect to be taken into account. To comprehend this dynamic of self and social aspects in the issue of moral development, Gilligan (2014) and Noddings (2014) highlight the importance of care and caring relations. Care serves as a basis of moral development when elements like affect, empathy and appreciation motivate people to think, feel and thus act morally. These intrapersonal elements intersect well with Lipman's (2003) caring thinking concept, which proposes that certain thinking aspects like affective thinking, active thinking, normative thinking, appreciative thinking and empathic thinking, help enhance an individual's moral. Caring thinking views both cognitive and affective aspects as inseparable, and this is congruent with Blasi's (1983) and Noddings' (2014) propagations on moral enhancement by which thoughts and emotions equally motivate a person's behaviour.

Therefore, adolescents' perceived parental and teacher care are presumed to influence their caring thinking and MI as they undergo the self-conflict period. Past research show that care and caring relations serve as central elements between adults (i.e., parents and teachers) and children in nurturing the latter caring thinking, thus embrace moral life as the main goal of education (Noddings, 1997). In other words, how adolescents perceive the care that they receive from parents and teachers may influence their caring thinking for others as well as their MI (Carlo, 2013). As Bergman (2004) propagates, an individual learns how to care is by first being cared for. Considering perceived care from significant others (i.e., parents and teachers) and caring thinking aspects as predictive of adolescents' MI, comprehending the nexus and its underlying mechanisms is seen indispensable (Juujarvi et al., 2010).

Nonetheless, such hypothetical relationship between the discussed variables (perceived parental care, perceived teacher care, caring thinking aspects and moral identity) is

limitedly supported by empirical research, particularly among adolescents with disciplinary problems in schools. To date (to the moment when the literature searches were conducted – beginning 2015 to 2019), literature searches conducted using Google Scholar and the subscribed databases (EBSCOHost–Academic Search Complete, Emerald Insight, ProQuest, SAGEjournals, ScienceDirect & Scopus), with the keywords “moral identity” and “caring thinking” get combined (using certain strings depending on the databases), show negative results - implicating either scarcity of or unreported empirical studies on such proposed relationships. However, previous research explaining how adolescents’ perceived parental and teacher care may influence their MI (Colby & Damon, 1992; Doyle & Doyle, 2003; Hardy & Carlo, 2011; Hardy et al., 2008; Hart et al., 1998; Hart et al., 1999; Pratt et al., 2003) serve as bases in guiding the direction of this current research, especially among adolescents with disciplinary issues. The relationships between these variables which are presumed to be mediated by the adolescents’ caring thinking (Casey, 2014; Davis and Carlo, 2018; Juujarvi et al., 2010; Kavussanu & Ring, 2017; Stoeber & Yang, 2016; Xu et al., 2019) shed light in studying the current hypothetical associations, hence addressing the dearth of studies examining caring thinking dimensions as the mediating factors.

In brief, the empirical scarcity tells a lack of a framework or a model that could explain the antecedents influencing caring thinking and how caring thinking influences MI especially amongst adolescents with school disciplinary problems. The extent to which the aim of getting adolescents’ morality enhanced has been actualised remains an unclear issue, mainly due to the dearth of an accurate assessment of the aim (Hardy & Carlo, 2011). This raises further issue in comprehending factors contributing to students’ MI development. To meet this concern calls for the current research to be embarked. It is anticipated to facilitate a

better understanding of MI and its predictive constructs among Malaysian adolescents, particularly of those involved in disciplinary cases.

1.4 Research Objectives

Alarmed by the issue, the implications of the linking attempt between perceived parental and teacher care, caring thinking and moral identity are warranted to be uncovered. Thus, this research aimed to investigate the influences of perceived parental care, perceived teacher care and caring thinking on MI. Henceforth, the specific objectives of this research were as follow:

1. To investigate the influences of perceived parental care on caring thinking among adolescents with disciplinary problems.
2. To investigate the influences of perceived teacher care on caring thinking among adolescents with disciplinary problems.
3. To investigate the influences of caring thinking on MI among adolescents with disciplinary problems.
4. To investigate the mediating influences of caring thinking on the relationship between perceived parental care and MI among adolescents with disciplinary problems.
5. To investigate the mediating influences of caring thinking on the relationship between perceived teacher care and MI among adolescents with disciplinary problems.

1.5 Research Questions

Derived from the research objectives, this study intended to answer the following questions:

1. What is the influence of perceived parental care on caring thinking (affective thinking, appreciative thinking, active thinking, normative thinking & emphatic thinking) among adolescents with disciplinary problems?
2. What is the influence of perceived teacher care on caring thinking (affective thinking, appreciative thinking, active thinking, normative thinking & emphatic thinking) among adolescents with disciplinary problems?
3. What is the influence of caring thinking (affective thinking, appreciative thinking, active thinking, normative thinking & emphatic thinking) on MI among adolescents with disciplinary problems?
4. What is the mediating influence of caring thinking (affective thinking, appreciative thinking, active thinking, normative thinking & emphatic thinking) on the relationship between perceived parental care and MI among adolescents with disciplinary problems?
5. What is the mediating influence of caring thinking (affective thinking, appreciative thinking, active thinking, normative thinking & emphatic thinking) on the relationship between perceived teacher care and MI among adolescents with disciplinary problems?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study has been seen to be significant in several ways. It is indeed an endeavour to contribute to the extension of the body of knowledge in educational field, specifically in

the area of Educational Psychology. Attempting at addressing remarkable gaps in the area of moral identity and care studies, the anticipated contributions of this study are discussed conceptually/ theoretically, contextually, empirically, methodologically as well as in terms of practice.

1.6.1 Conceptually/ Theoretically

The limited discussion focusing on MI and how it is related to the idea of care in the existing literatures needs to be addressed. The empirically developed scale to measure caring thinking and MI among adolescents is also seen a necessity, thus justifies the need of a valid model to explain such conceptual understanding as highlighted in the limited literatures (Hardy & Carlo, 2011). The intentions of this study which are to seek for factors contributing to adolescents' MI and caring thinking; and later to propose a model explaining whether care and caring thinking influence adolescents' MI would hopefully help to fill such gaps. The theoretical framework which is based on Blasi's Self Model, Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, Lipman's Caring Thinking Model and Noddings's Ethics of Care is believed to be an innovation in governing the model development. Even though the mentioned theories and models have been widely applied in moral related studies, their profound combination is novel when it comes to placing care and caring thinking as the antecedents of moral identity development.

1.6.2 Contextually

The findings obtained from this research is also hoped to be impactful in providing insightful data related to adolescents' moral identity and caring thinking, particularly of those involved in disciplinary cases in Malaysian context. As stated earlier in the statement of

research problem, Malaysia is among many implicated countries that has to face the moral decline issue. Considering the diversity in Malaysian citizen background (Abdul Shakour Preece & Adila Juperi, 2014), developed moral identity and caring thinking among the people are extremely crucial as to allow unity and harmony to take place (Ministry of Education, 2017). Having known the profile of adolescents' moral identity and caring thinking may enable Malaysian education stakeholders to strategise the betterment of the country's moral outcomes among its people.

1.6.3 Empirically

As mentioned earlier, most research conducted (which pertain to MI) posit MI as either an independent variable (Black & Reynolds, 2016; Hardy, Bean, & Olsen, 2014; Hardy et al., 2014; Kavussanu & Ring, 2017; Vahedi & Yari-Sis, 2016), a mediator (Hardy et al., 2010; Teng et al., 2017) or a moderator (Guo et al., 2019; Hardy, Bean, & Olsen, 2014; Wang et al., 2019). This tells that MI is often studied with the aim of investigating its influence on other constructs. Learning that MI positively correlates with moral behaviour, the question what may possibly determine MI remains a gap. This study is attempted in the light of filling the loophole, especially in confirming empirically whether parental and teacher care predict adolescents' caring thinking, thus influence their MI.

1.6.4 Methodologically

The current research applies a quantitative research approach to meet the research objectives. Since there is a lack of sufficient studies in the context of Malaysia to empirically examine the antecedents of moral identity, the quantitative method using rigorous data analysis techniques provides methodological contribution to the studies of MI in Malaysia.

Employing a quantitative research approach enables the researcher to gain insights from a large number of respondents which may enhance the generalisability of the findings.

1.6.5 Practice

In terms of practice, this research is hoped to give an impact on the process of teaching and learning – especially to parents, teachers and adolescents. The study is expected to give such a new paradigm to be practised in Malaysian homes and classrooms. It is crucial to stress that Malaysian education needs to be improved especially in producing moral individuals. Individual and collective adolescents are important assets to themselves, to the community they live in and to the country they serve. Therefore, they need to be empowered not only with criticalness and creativity, but also with caring thinking. The findings of this study are anticipated to provide insights and understanding on how perceived parental and teacher care, as well as caring thinking are able to facilitate adolescents' moral identity development.

1.7 Definition of Terms

Discussed in this segment are the conceptual and operational definitions of the related key terms as to aid the readers' understanding.

1.7.1 Moral Identity

Moral identity or MI has been depicted as a kind of self-regulatory mechanism that motivates moral action (Blasi, 1984; Damon & Hart, 1992; Erikson, 1964; Hart et al., 1998, as cited in Aquino & Reed, 2002). It helps regulate one's moral behaviour through the belief

that one must project one's developed self-conception. Such an identity is in consensus with Erikson (1964) and Aquino and Reed (2002) that MI ought to be explained in a two-fold manner- internalisation and symbolisation. Internalisation, or the degree to which moral principles are central to one's self-concept, concerns the private or personal aspect of the self (Hardy et al., 2010). As the name implies, it reflects the intrapersonal moral conception of a person. On the other hand, symbolisation reflects the extent to which moral principles are expressed outwardly to others, and concerns the public or social aspect of the moral self (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Hardy et al., 2010). Being the dependent variable of the study, MI stands as the anticipated result of care and caring thinking. In agreement with Aquino and Reed (2002), moral identity in this study operationally refers to a self-regulatory mechanism which is made of a cluster of moral traits (like caring, compassionate, fair, friendly, generous, helpful, hardworking, honest, and kind), which may be activated or suppressed by contextual, situational, or even individual-differences variables. It is measured using the Moral Identity Scale which was developed by the researcher herself.

1.7.2 Perceived Parental Care

Noddings (1997) defines care as the pedagogical pre-requisite of moral education, and regards care as a means and an ends to education method. To add to that, Collier (2005) believes that care enables education to be reclaimed as a moral action, for it concerns values and how it is socially constructed. Thus, care can basically be seen as the foundation of love, friendship, commitment, interpersonal understanding, human tenderness and compassion (Sharp, 2014). Being one of the central themes of the study, the researcher agrees with Noddings (1997) and Collier (2005) that care is a fundamental concept within the education realm, which ought to be viewed as two sides of the same coin – referring to both the

educational process and its outcome. Of such, among the main stakeholders to play the role are the parents at home. As stated by Syahrwan Azan Ngadmid and Zuraini Jamil@Osman (2017), parents are the first environmental factor that contributes to children's moral growth. Norzihani Saharuddin (2017) agrees that parents ought to function as care agents towards their children's moral development. In lieu of that, perceived parental care in this study is operationalised as an extent to which adolescents perceive their parents to be the closest individuals who care, support them with love and provide them enough guidance (Kuldas, 2018).

1.7.3 Perceived Teacher Care

Attempting to determine whether teacher care is perceived as a form of interpersonal caring thinking resources which contributes to adolescents' caring thinking and moral identity, their care is conceptually believed to help instil values in such a socially constructive manner (Collier, 2005; Sharp, 2014). To Noddings (1992), a teacher is perceived to be caring when he or she connects to the student in an attitude that facilitates engrossment (accepting students' feelings and acknowledging the relevance of students' experiences), commitment (seeking involvement in the cared for), and a motivational shift to the cared-for student (views the world through the eyes of the students). In line with Noddings (1992), perceived teacher care in this research is measured through which adolescents conceive their teachers to be caring, appreciating and encouraging (Kuldas, 2018).

1.7.4 Caring Thinking

Caring thinking, according to Lipman (2003), brings about a two-fold meaning – (1) to think solicitously about something which matters and (2) to be concerned about one's

manner of thinking. Considering caring thinking as the third component (together with creative and critical thinking) of high level thinking, which Lipman (2003) refers to as multidimensional thinking, caring becomes a kind of thinking through certain cognitive operations like “scanning for alternatives, discovering or inventing relationships, intuiting connections among connections and gauging differences” (p. 264). In this research context, caring thinking encompasses both the domains of cognitive and affective, as how Lipman (2003), Sharp (2014) and Gilligan (2014) propagate (that emotion plays essential roles in one’s cognitive acts). Without acknowledging the affective factors, thinking would be uninteresting, flat and incomplete. It is agreed with Lipman (2003) that caring thinking be regarded as part of high order thinking as it requires attention being paid to social and aesthetic dimensions of one’s inquiry or thought processing (Sharp, 2014). In line with that, this research measures the concept of caring thinking using Lipman’s (2003) five thinking subdimensions:

1.7.4.1 Affective Thinking. As stated by Lipman (2003), affective thinking refers to an individual’s awareness of his or her emotion(s) when he or she comes across any stimuli. It is the sense the individual makes of the world around him or her in relation to what he or she feels is valuable, ethically or morally right; what he or she feels as appropriate remedial or supportive action, and what he or she envisions as the ideal. As illustrated by Lipman (2003), “one hates, one behaves destructively; one loves, one behaves amicably” (p. 267). In other words, positive emotional response to something or someone may bring about desirable behaviour. Correspondingly, when individuals are able to temper their antisocial emotions, they are likely able to mitigate the undesirable antisocial conducts. From Lipman’s (2003) explanation and the researcher’s understanding, affective thinking in this study reflects adolescents’ control of emotion(s) as they respond to certain life occurrences. As they