

Family Background Profile of Recalcitrant Primary School Students: A Case Study in Johor

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Abstract: This study aims to identify the family background profile of recalcitrant primary school students in Johor, Malaysia. The study involved 10 respondents selected using the purposive sampling technique. In-depth interviews were conducted on the respondents, following which the collected data were then analyzed and categorized into themes and sub-themes. The NVivo software was utilised to align the themes with the transcribed texts generated by the respondents. Findings indicated that the most frequent family background theme which emerged was the use of corporal punishment with a 70% frequency level.

Key words: Family background, nurturing style, disciplinary problems, recalcitrant children, frequent family

INTRODUCTION

Student misconduct is on the rise and has more widespread, particularly among school going children in Malaysia. If this issue continues to be ignored, it will eventually cause the nation to suffer in the future (Yahaya and Latif, 2008). Students who violate the norms of the local community or school institutions are categorized, as aggressive and delinquent students (Yahaya *et al.*, 2008). These students are not merely involved in mischievous behaviours like smoking, truancy, insolence towards teachers, vandalism and fighting with each other but they also tend to be involved in more serious misconduct like involvement in gangs, running away from home, illicit sex and baby abandonment. Moreover, some have become more bold and are involved in serious crimes, such as murder, robbery, rape, prostitution, gambling, drug abuse, drinking, pornography and others (Suboh *et al.*, 2011).

Recent statistics show that crime rates among students has increased dramatically due to factors related to the students family background (Becker and Epstein, 1982). One of the contributing family background factors involves the inappropriate parenting roles and styles. In a seminal study conducted by Bandura and Walters (1959), it was found that delinquent and aggressive teenagers come from families that adopt strict discipline. Parents of these families often use excessive physical punishment as a way to discipline their children. In addition, a parenting style that is too lax can also result in aggressive teenage behaviour (Sayer *et al.*, 2004). Such

families usually could not care less about what is being done by their children and allow the children to act as they please without any restrictions.

Problematic behaviour among school going teenagers has not been address and in fact is currently on the rise. This trend has raised concern among all parties involved in education, particularly parents, teachers, the community and the government. Student misconduct tends to be prominently reported in local newspapers. Therefore, it is timely that this study be conducted to identify recalcitrant children's family environmental factors that influence their aggressive behaviour.

According to Raudzah (Stacer and Perrucci, 2013), the rate of crimes committed by juveniles has increased drastically. In fact, the culture of gangsterism has reached alarming levels. Statistics showed that a total of 137,359 students from a total of 1,408,672 students nation wide are involved in criminal misconduct and bad habits. Statistics on aggressive behaviour in schools released by the Human Development Sector Unit of Student Affairs (2013), showed that in 2012 a total of 4,159 students were involved in bullying, 9,926 involved in delinquency cases and 15,407 were involved in disrespectful or insolence behaviour towards teachers.

Research objectives: The objectives of this research are:

- To identify the family background profile of recalcitrant primary school students
- To identify the characteristics of parents yearned by students

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study, employs a qualitative approach to explore the family background profile of 10 selected recalcitrant primary school students. The students, selected using the purposive sampling technique were interviewed. The transcribed interview data were categorised into themes and sub-themes. The data were analysed using the NVivo software to align the themes with the themes derived from the interview sessions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings of the study indicated that students, as young as 10 years old were involved in misconduct in schools. In general, recalcitrant students come from a low socio-economic family background with family homes ranging from village, terraced and squatter houses (Table 1). The study also showed that 70.0% of parents use physical force in educating children at home. Interviews with the respondents yielded the following information:

- Respondent 1; Saya tidak suka ibu pukul saya (I hate it when my mum hits me)
- Respondent 3; Saya tak suka ayah saya selalu pukul saya (I hate my dad. He always hits me)
- Respondent 6; Saya tidak suka ayah garang pada diri saya (I hate my dad. He is fierce)
- Respondent 8; Saya tidak suka mak saya selalu maki saya (I hate my mum. She always swears at me)

However, 30.0% of the respondents had parents who ignored them at home, causing the children to be engaged in recalcitrant behaviours in schools. This lack of parental attention can be discerned from the following interview data:

- Respondent 4; Saya tidak suka emak saya keluar malam dan lepas tu saya tak suka kalau saya tidur je bising (I hate it when my mum goes out at night. And I hate it when she nags at me for sleeping)
- Respondent 5; Saya tidak suka ibu saya keluar dengan boyfriend (I hate it when my mum goes out with her boyfriend)

Table 1: Family background profile of school students involved in misconduct

Parameters	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	R10	Total
Gender											
Male	-	✓	-	-	✓	-	✓	✓	-	-	4
Female	✓	-	✓	✓	-	✓	-	-	✓	✓	6
Age (years)											
10	-	✓	-	✓	✓	-	-	✓	-	-	4
11	✓	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	✓	✓	4
12	-	-	✓	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	2
Number of siblings											
2	-	-	-	-	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	2
3	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	2
4	✓	-	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	2
5	-	-	✓	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	-	3
8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	1
Position among siblings											
Eldest	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	✓	-	✓	-	4
2	-	-	-	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-	2
3	-	-	✓	-	-	✓	-	✓	-	-	3
7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	1
Marital status											
Married	-	✓	✓	-	-	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	6
Divorced	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	-	✓	-	-	3
Widowed	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Household income (RM)											
<500	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	✓	2
50-1000	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	2
1001-1500	-	-	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	2
1501-2000	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	-	2
2001-2500	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	1
2501-3000	-	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	1
Type of residence											
Squatter house	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	1
Village house	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	8
Terraced house	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Mother's character											
Kind	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	✓	✓	6
Loving	-	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	-	4
Fierce	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	✓	-	-	2
Father's character											
Kind	-	✓	-	-	-	-	✓	-	✓	✓	4
Loving	-	✓	✓	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	3

Table 1: Continue

Parameters	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	R10	Total
Fierce	-	-	✓	-	✓	-	-	✓	-	-	3
Irresponsible	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Parents are responsible											
Yes	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-	-	✓	✓	7
No	-	-	-	✓	-	-	✓	✓	-	-	3
Things that you dislike about your parents											
Using physical force/beatings	✓	✓	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	7
Going out at night	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Making a lot of noise/nagging	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Going out with boyfriends	-	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	1
Engrossed in facebook	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	1
Wish list for parents											
For mothers to be at home	✓	-	-	-	-	-	✓	✓	-	✓	4
For home cooked meals	-	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	-	✓	-	5
For mothers to adorn the head gear	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
No wish list	-	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	1
Favoured characteristics of teaches											
Kind	✓	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	✓	✓	✓	6
Loving/affectionate	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	7
Responsible	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1

- Respondent 9; Saya tak suka ibu saya main facebook (I hate it when my mum becomes engrossed in facebook) respondents wish list for their parents

Analysis of the interview data indicated students involved in disciplinary problems in schools need love and attention from their parents. The respondents expressed their wish list for their respective parents through the following articulation:

- Respondent 1; Saya suka mak saya teman saya dekat rumah. Saya berharap mak saya ada selalu dekat rumah (I love it when my mum accompanies me at home. I wish my mum is always at home)
- Respondent 3; Saya suka ibu saya masak untuk saya. Saya harap ibu saya masak untuk saya selamanya (I love it when my mum cooks for me. I hope she will cook for me forever)
- Respondent 4; mak pakai tudung. Saya suka emak saya selalu masak untuk saya (I like my mum to wear a scarf. I like it when my mum always cooks for me)

The study also found one respondent who was dejected and had no wish list for his parent:

- Respondent 5; Saya tiada harapan pada ibu bapa saya (I do not put any hopes on my parents)

CONCLUSION

Results of the study showed that the most dominant parenting style practiced by the respondents parents was the authoritative style, followed by the uninvolved parenting style. The authoritarian parenting style was the least practiced by the respondents parents. This study

has examined the relationship between several factors and students misconduct in schools and found that parenting styles practiced by the respondents parents and the involvement of these parents in their children's daily school activities, influence the behavior of recalcitrant students.

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