

Predictors of Conduct Problems Amongst School-Going Adolescents in West Malaysia

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Abstract

This study aims to determine factors [(self: background characteristics, academic orientation, party orientation, peer pressure; family: family happiness, quality of parental behavior, family functioning; school: relationship with school & school climate)] related to conduct problems among school-going adolescents in Malaysia. Sample comprises 2432 adolescents aged 13-18 years old, selected purposively from rural and urban schools representing the four zones in the country. Data were collected using structured questionnaire; administered in groups at the respective schools. Conduct problem was assessed using a 31-items self-developed Likert scale. Findings revealed that gender, party orientation, peer orientation, family happiness, relationship with school and school climate are predictive of adolescents conduct problems at alpha 0.05. Findings suggest that multiple factors influence the way the adolescents behaved. However, self-factor tend to be more dominant than other factors included in the analyses. The implication of self and other factors are therefore of significance in prevention and intervention strategies that promote positive behavioral development among adolescents.

Key words: conduct problem, adolescents, self, family, school

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INTRODUCTION

Conduct problems amongst school-going adolescents have been a major national concern in recent years in Malaysia. Although some would argue on the degree of severity of the problem, there is an urgent need for employing strategies to combat the widespread of such antisocial phenomenon amongst adolescents. But formulating effective strategies demands a solid understanding of factors contributing to conduct problems. The present study was conducted to determine what factors [(specifically, self: background characteristics, academic orientation, party orientation, peer pressure; family: SES, family happiness, quality of parental behavior, family functioning; school: relationship with school and school climate) uniquely predict conduct problems amongst adolescents who are currently enrolled in school.

The selection of which variables to be included in the present analyses was influenced by the ecological perspective on human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Buboltz and Sontag, 1993) and past findings. Proponents of the ecological perspective highlighted the importance of understanding the growing individual in the contexts or environments in which he or she is embedded. In addition, considering the influence of multiple factors within the ecosystem of the adolescence is deemed important. Utilizing the ecological model, the present study focuses its analyses on the adolescents within their micro-, meso-, exo-, chrono- and macro systems.

At the microsystems level, adolescents living with both biological parents are less likely to be involved in antisocial behaviours as compared to adolescents from single parent family (Acock & Demo, 1994). Juvenile delinquency, school drop-out and failure, violence and drug abuse are among common antisocial behaviours committed by adolescents from father absent households (Amato & Stolba, 1993; Downey, 1994). Adolescents living in high-density neighbourhood have significantly higher risk of antisocial behaviour (Upchurch, Aneshensel, Mudgal, & McNeely, 2001). Furthermore, Perkins and Luster (1998) found that individual with low academic ability, low parental monitoring, low attachment to school, living in economically distressed neighbourhood and higher peer pressure are more likely to be engaged in risk-taking, antisocial behaviour. Moving into the exosystem, the availability of community support such as social control in providing advise and guidance, by religious groups, community leaders and members of neighbourhood could help to prevent the occurrence of antisocial behaviour among the adolescents. A study by Pandiani, Steven and Lucille (2001) found that community development agencies, children protection program, juvenile justice program and special education program have been shown to contribute significantly to emotional and behavioural development of adolescents. The regulatory system that serves as blueprints for school to operate represents key element at the macro level. The school climate which includes disciplinary system, curriculum as well as extra curriculum activities and school culture are in accord with the rules and regulations of the Ministry of Education.

Numerous studies have documented myriad of manifesting factors associated with conduct problems amongst adolescents. Among those are self (e.g., poor self-control), family (e.g., unhappy climate, low parental discipline), peers (e.g., peer orientation, expectation), and school (e.g., location, school climate) (Cernkonvich & Giordano, 1992; Cheung, 1997; Elliot, 1994; Ketterlinus & Lamb, 1994; Mushinki, 1996; Schiamberg,

1998; Vazsonyi & Flannery, 1997). Family processes factors such as parental monitoring, parental control and attachment between parents and adolescents may hinder conduct problems behaviour amongst the adolescents (Epstein, Botvin, Diaz & Schinke, 1995). Elliot (1994) stressed on economic hardship, while Tygart (1991) claimed that large family size promotes antisocial behaviour amongst adolescents. On the other hand, social isolation, poor parental monitoring, and inconsistent parental discipline were found to trigger such behaviour as well (Elliot, 1994). School factors were also found capable in instigating antisocial behaviour. Cheung, (1997) and Vazsonyi and Flannery (1997) indicated that low commitment towards learning, poor teacher-student relationships and association with peers who are also antisocial will influence adolescents to behave in similar manner. Based on the ecological theory and past findings, the conceptual framework for the present study is as illustrated in Figure 1. The study hypothesizes that self, family and school factors could influence adolescents' development singly, as well as collectively.

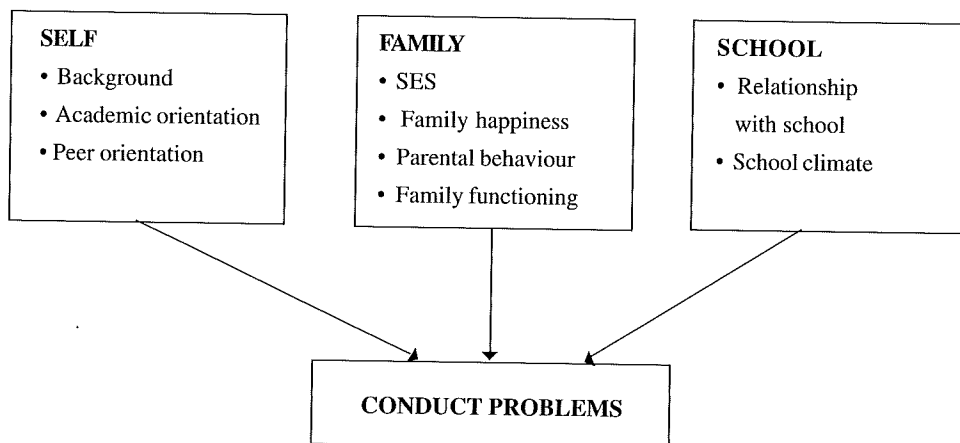


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for Predictors of Conduct Problems amongst School-Going Adolescents in Malaysia

METHOD

Sample

Sample for the study comprises 2432 adolescents aged 13-18 years old, selected purposively from rural and urban schools representing the four zones (North, South, East and West) in Malaysia. An important sampling criterion was that the respondents have committed at least one misconduct behaviour during the first nine months of the year (2000) the study was conducted. The school disciplinary records were used to identify the respondents who met the specified criteria.

Data were collected using structured questionnaire administered in groups at the respective schools. The questionnaire was divided into three sections, namely, 1). Self, which includes background characteristics, academic orientation, party orientation

and peer pressure orientation, 2). Family, which consists of socio-economic status, family happiness, quality of parenting behaviour and family functioning, and, 3). School factor, which includes relationship with school and school climate.

Measures

Academic Orientation

The respondents' academic orientation was measured using four items adapted from Chen and Dornbush (1998). These items assess respondents' perceptions on the importance of education and school activities. Example of an item on the scale is, (1) 'Amongst the friends you hang out with, how important is it for you (a) to get good grades', and (b) 'to be involved in school activities?'. Higher score indicates higher emphasis on education and involvement in school activities. Reliability assessment of the scale yielded an alpha coefficient of 0.43.

Peer Orientation

Three different aspects on peer influence namely, party orientation, peer pressure and behavioural expectations were utilized to measure peer orientation of the adolescents. These items are adapted from Chen and Dornbush (1998).

i) Party Orientation

Party orientation consists of two items to determine the perceived degree of importance for the respondents to having fun, acting wild and having special opposite-sex friend. Higher scores imply higher tendency for the respondents to be involved in wild activities, to have fun and have special girlfriend or boyfriend. Students were asked to indicate 'Among the friends you hang out with, how important is it for you: i) to have fun and act wild, and ii) to have a steady boyfriend or girlfriend (opposite sex)'. Internal consistency for the scale was calculated to be at 0.42.

ii) Peer Pressure

The respondents were asked on the degree of pressure they received from their peers to be involved in hypothetical antisocial behaviour. An example from this four items scale is, 'Your friends asked you to hang out over the weekend since your parents will not be at home.' Responses on this scale ranges from (1) absolutely never to (2) absolutely yes. Higher score showed that students have higher pressure from their peers to be involved in antisocial situation. Cronbach alpha for this scale is shown at 0.61.

iii) Behaviour Expectation

Behaviour expectation was measured using five items that draw on the perception of the respondents' peers with regards to the expected age to be involved in antisocial

activities. The respondents were asked to indicate from 'younger than the age of 14 years' to 'never' on items such as, 'Among your peers when is it expected for you and your friends to start smoking?'. Lower score implies younger age expected by peers for the respondents to commit antisocial activities.

Family Happiness

Respondents were asked to rate their family happiness using a single item ranging from 1 = most unhappy to 4 = very happy. Higher scores entail higher level of happiness in the respondents' family.

Parental Behaviour

Respondents' perception on the quality of parenting they received from either parent (father or mother) was assessed using a 38 items scale (Schaefer and Heilburn, 1976), comprising four subscales: Rejection-control, companionship, physical affection and withdrawal. Examples of items in the scale are : i) 'My parent does not like the way I behave, ii) 'My parent is always interested in me and support me through-out', iii) 'My parent is confident in expressing their love and affection for me', and iv) 'My parent avoids me whenever he/she is frustrated with me'. Higher scores on the scale reveal higher level of support that the respondents received from either parent. This scale yields an alpha of 0.64.

Family Functioning

Family functioning was measured using the 'General Functioning' subscale of the "Family Functioning Device (FAD) (Epstein, Bishop, & Levin, 1978). Examples of items on the scale are: i) 'Planning family activities is difficult because we misunderstood each other', ii) 'In time of crisis we can turn to each other for support', and iii) 'It is difficult for our family to make decision'. Higher scores on the 12 items (6 positive and 6 negative items) scale suggest higher level of family functioning. Cronbach alpha for the scale was found to be at 0.63.

Relationship with School and School Climate

Relationship with school was measured by asking the respondents to indicate the extent to which they like or dislike their school. On the other hand, an item of a 5-points Likert scale was used to measure the respondents' level of satisfaction towards the school climate [(i.e., discipline system, teachers, counseling system, peer guidance and school culture (i.e., students relationship with teachers, students-students and teachers-parents relationships)]. Higher scores on the satisfaction scale item indicate that the respondents are experiencing conducive school climate.

Conduct Problem

Using a 4- points Likert, self-developed 31 items scale, respondents were asked to report on the frequency of their involvement in antisocial activities during the first nine

months of the year the study was conducted. The scale focuses on the frequency (1=never to 4=always) of involvement in misconduct behaviors by the respondents. Higher scores on the scale indicate that the respondents admitted having serious conduct problems. Cronbach alpha for the scale was found to be 0.92.

RESULTS

Self-Factors

Background Characteristics

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the respondents involved in the study. Most of the respondents are males (76.9%) of Malay (77.8%) descend with Islam (78.4%) as their religion. Their age spanned between 15 to 16 years old (overall: mean= 15.35, s.d.= 1.16; urban: mean== 15.34, s.d.= 1.21; & rural: mean= 15.36, s.d.= 1.09). Overall the respondents live with their biological parents (79.1) and have an average of five siblings.

The study also found that more than half (54.7%) of the respondents are middle child with regard to their ordinal position in the family (urban area = 53.0% & rural area = 57.0%). On the average, the respondents come from families with an income of RM1563 per month; with urban (mean=RM1909) sub-sample obtaining higher income than rural sub-sample (mean=RM1056).

Academic Orientation

The group mean score was used to classify respondents into having high or low academic orientation. A large proportion of the respondents were found to have low level of academic orientation (refer to Table 2). This finding reveals that the conduct problem adolescents in the study do not place education (overall=46.5%; urban=46.5%; rural=46.4%) and involvement in school activities as highly important.

Party Orientation

Based on the group mean, respondents were categorized into high and low in relation to their party orientation. Although a little more than half (56.4%) of the respondents reported having low party orientation, the proportion (43.7%) that rated having fun, acting wild and having a special girl/boy friend as important is quite astonishing. The study did not find any significant difference ($t = -0.14$, $p > .05$) for this variable between the sub samples (urban mean = 4.83, rural mean: = 4.83).

It is interesting to note however, that results from correlational analysis showed that there is significant correlation between gender (1=male, 0=female) and overall party orientation. This information reveals that male adolescents in the study are less interested in school related activities and, have a higher tendency to act wild and having special friend. Adolescents who have higher party orientation also perceived that the quality of their family function is low ($r = -.14$, $p \leq .001$). These finding may imply

Table 1: Background characteristics of the respondents

Variables	“(%)		
	Overall	Urban	Rural
Age			
13-14	639(26.3)	410(28.3)	229(23.3)
15-16	1460(60.0)	813(56.1)	647(65.8)
17-18	333(13.7)	225(15.5)	108(10.9)
<i>Mean:</i>	15.3	15.3	15.3
<i>s.d.</i>	1.16	1.21	1.09
Gender			
Male	1869(76.9)	1130(78.0)	739(75.2)
Female	561(23.1)	317(22.0)	244(24.8)
##missing	2	1	
Race			
Malay	1892(77.8)	1085(74.9)	807(82.6)
Chinese	293(12.1)	192(13.3)	101(10.3)
Indian	237(9.7)	12(11.2)	75(7.6)
Others	9(0.4)	8(0.6)	1(0.1)
Religion			
Islam	1904(78.4)	1085(74.9)	808(82.4)
Buddhist	263(11.0)	172(11.9)	96(9.8)
Hindu	210(8.6)	141(9.7)	64(6.5)
Christian	44(1.8)	33(2.3)	11(1.1)
Sikh	8(0.2)	6(0.4)	2(0.2)
##missing	3	0	
Number of siblings			
1	62(2.5)	39(2.7)	23(2.4)
2-5	1495(61.5)	922(63.7)	573(58.2)
6-10	812(33.4)	452(31.3)	360(36.6)
>10	63(2.6)	35(2.3)	2(2.8)
<i>Mean</i>	5.0	4.8	5.3
<i>s.d.</i>	2.34	2.28	2.39
Birth order			
Older	538(22.1)	337(23.3)	201(20.4)
Middle	1328(54.7)	767(53.0)	561(57.0)
Younger	503(20.7)	306(21.2)	197(20.0)
Singleton	61(2.5)	36(2.5)	25(2.6)
##missing	2	2	

Note. s.d. == standard deviation

Table 2: Academic Orientation

Variables	“(%)		
	Overall (n=2432)	Urban (n=1448)	Rural (984)
Academic Orientation			
Low	1129(46.5)	672(46.5)	456(46.4)
High	1299(53.5)	776(55.5)	526(53.6)
<i>Mean:</i>	12.5	12.5	12.6
<i>s.d.</i>	2.03	2.02	1.03
Missing	4	-	2

Note. s.d. == standard deviation

that misconduct adolescents placed fun party related activities as greater in importance than school related activities, and tended to come from families with low levels of functioning. Further information reveals that these adolescents do not like their school very much ($r = -.16$, $p \leq .001$) and have low level of satisfaction with their school climate ($r = -.17$, $p \leq .001$).

T-test result showed no significant difference between rural and urban adolescents with regard to party orientation. However, results of zero-order correlations showed that akin to urban adolescents, rural male ($r = -.09$, $p \leq .01$) adolescents seemed to have stronger tendency for fun, wild party activities and to have special friends. These adolescents also perceived their family as less happy ($r = -.08$, $p \leq .01$) with low level of functioning ($r = -.09$, $p \leq .01$) and poor parental stimulations ($r = -.18$, $p \leq .001$). The respondents also reported having low interest in school ($r_{\text{rural}} = -.15$, $p \leq .001$ and $r_{\text{urban}} = -.18$, $p \leq .001$) and unsatisfied with their school climate ($r_{\text{rural}} = -.15$, $p \leq .001$ and $r_{\text{urban}} = -.18$, $p \leq .001$).

Table 3: Party Orientation

Variables	“(%)		
	Overall (n=2432)	Urban (n=1448)	Rural (984)
Party Orientation			
Low	1369 (56.3%)	644 (44.5)	418 (42.5)
High	1063 (43.7%)	804(55.5)	566 (57.5)
<i>Mean:</i>	4.83	4.83	4.83
<i>s.d.</i>	1.45	1.48	1.44

Note. s.d. == standard deviation

Peer Pressure Orientation

Using the group mean score (8.82) as a basis for classification, the study found that more than half (53.3%) of the respondents admitted experiencing peer pressure. Correlational analyses showed significant correlations between some of the independent variables (background characteristics and family process) and respondents' score on the peer pressure scale. Male (dummy variable; $r = .13$, $p \leq .001$) adolescents especially those who are younger with regard to birth order ($r = .05$, $p \leq .001$) tended to experience more peer pressure. Adolescents with higher scores on the peer pressure scale also appeared to score higher on the party orientation ($r = .28$, $p \leq .001$) scale. In addition, these adolescents tended to come from families with less effective functioning ($r = -.14$, $p \leq .001$). Furthermore, they reported having lower satisfactions in their relationships with their school ($r = -.14$, $p \leq .001$). Similar findings with regards to these variables were found amongst the urban and rural sub samples.

Table 4: Peer Pressure Orientation

Variables	“(%)”		
	Overall (n=2432)	Urban (n=1448)	Rural (984)
Peer Pressure Orientation			
Low	1133 (46.6)	673 (46.5)	459 (46.7)
High	1299 (53.4)	775 (53.5)	525 (53.5)
Mean	8.82	8.84	8.78
s.d.	2.56	2.56	2.57

Note. s.d. == standard deviation

Predictors of Conduct Problems Among School Students

Multiple regression analyses were computed for the overall sample and sub samples to determine what factors uniquely predict conduct problems. Variables included in the three regression models were limited to those that were significant at the bivariate levels: Self (gender, academic orientation, party and peer pressure orientations); family process (happiness, quality of parenting, family functioning); and school (relationship with school, school climate). Results are presented in Table 3 to 5.

Overall Sample

The findings show that the adolescents' personal profiles are significantly related to their conduct problem scores. Male adolescents with low academic orientation, have higher tendency for fun, wild activities and have a special girl/boyfriend, and experiencing higher level of peer pressure are more likely to be involved in antisocial activities. Together these variables explained 23% ($F = 100.57$, $p \leq .001$) of the variance for conduct problems amongst respondents in the study.

Additional analyses show that peer pressure is the strongest predictor of conduct problem among adolescents in overall sample followed by gender, party orientation, climate, family happiness, relationships with school and family functioning. All of these variables contributed 23% of the variance in conduct problems.

Table 5: Predictor Of Conduct Problems (Overall Sample)

Variables	β
1. Peer Pressure Orientation	.29***
2. Gender	.18***
3. Party Orientation	.12***
4. School Climate	-.09***
5. Family Happiness	-.06***
6. Relations With School	-.07***
7. Family Relations	.04*
	$R^2 = .23$
	$F = 100.57***$

Note : $p=.05^*$, $p=.01^{**}$, $p=.001^{***}$

Urban Sub sample

Peer pressure orientation variable once again emerge as a unique predictor for conduct problem followed by gender, party orientation, school climate, family happiness and relationship with the school. These variables contributed 21% ($F=64.18$, $p \leq .001$) of the variance in the dependent variable. These findings indicate that peer pressure is an influential factor for rural adolescents involvement in antisocial activities. Male adolescents with stronger inclination for fun, acting wild and have a special friend, were found to have poor relationship with schools and less satisfied with their school climate. These adolescents also tended to rate their family as having low level of happiness.

Table 6: Predictor Of Conduct Problems (Urban Area)

Variables	β
1. Peer Pressure Orientation	.25***
2. Gender	.21***
3. Party Orientation	.16***
4. School Climate	-.09***
5. Family Happiness	-.07***
6. Relations With School	-.07***
	$R^2 = .21$
	$F = 64.18***$

Note : $p=.05^*$, $p=.01^{**}$, $p=.001^{***}$

Rural Sub sample

As expected, peer pressure orientation turned out to be the strongest predictor of conduct problem; with school climate, gender, relationship with school, family happiness and party orientation trailing subsequently. Collectively these variables accounted for 26% ($F= 56.50, p \leq .001$) of the variance in conduct problems. These findings indicate that on the whole factors that influence rural adolescents are almost similar to those coming from urban areas.

Table 7: Predictor of Conduct Problems (Rural Area)

Variables	β
1. Peer Pressure Orientation	.36***
2. School Climate	-.13***
3. Gender	.13***
4. Relationship With School	-.08***
5. Family Happiness	-.08***
6. Party Orientation	.07*
	$R^2 = .26$
	$F = 56.50***$

Note : $p = .05^*$, $p = .01^{**}$, $p = .001^{***}$

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Findings from the present study are consistent with theories and past findings that indicate the associations of various factors with adolescents' conduct. Gender, party and peer orientations, family happiness, relationship with school, and school climate were found to be predictive of adolescents conduct problems at alpha .05. Self-factor however, tended to be more dominant when other factors are statistically controlled. Recognizing the implication of self factor is deemed imperative for past findings indicated serious negative impact of conduct problems on adolescents' psychosocial development (Wilson & Howell, 1995; Bemak & Keys, 2000). Additionally, conduct problems adolescents are more likely to be drawn into crime and other anti-social related activities as they grow older (Anderman & Kimweli, 1997; Prochnow & DeFrozon, 1997).

Effective prevention and intervention strategies are therefore important to encourage school-going adolescents towards positive behavioural development. Unger and Jennifer (2001) believe that effective prevention and coping skills training programs for adolescents may help to prevent the increase in health-risk behaviors that typically accompany rapid industrialization and cultural change in developing nations. Furthermore, the outcomes associated with adolescents conduct problems have not only serious consequences for the youth but also may negatively affect their family and society in general (DiClemente et.al 2001).

Research showed increasing tendency of conduct problems amongst secondary school students in West Malaysia and will worsen without intervention. These recent conduct problems involving students includes fighting, gangsterism, drug abuse, truancy, internet abuse and many more. A plausible reason for this is being adolescents, the students feel the need to be different from their peers and try to challenge the school authorities. Truancy is the main conduct problem amongst secondary school students in this study. This phenomenon has been occurring for a long period of time and often leads up to many other conduct problems. Conduct problems are often a symbolic way for students' to express their conflicting desires or indicating their lack of positive skills regarding self-expression.

Students' self factor is another factor that is closely related to conduct problems. Students with low academic orientation and have little interest towards their studies have greater tendency towards conduct problems. Students who are easily influenced by their peers are also exposed to conduct problems. Furthermore, the mass media also play a greater role in influencing students' conduct. Reading materials, violence seen on television programmes and VCDs can also lead students to commit antisocial behaviors.

A family with conducive interactional processes can hinder children from becoming wild and having behavioral problems. The family process discussed here includes family happiness, parenting behavior and family functions. Apart from the family, well functioning support system such as the PTA (Parent-Teacher Association), police force and community members play a role in preventing student conduct problems. Combined efforts of all the pertinent support systems will strengthen the existing school disciplinary system.

In this study, the school climate is seen in the context of school culture, school disciplinary system and practices including the policy constructed by the Malaysian Education Ministry. School culture is sculpted by the social relationship within and outside the school environment that consists of teacher-student relationship, student-student relationship and also the relationship between the school authorities and parents. The relationship between these three parties can create a conducive environment or otherwise which will in turn prevent or worsen student conduct problem. The school disciplinary system is influenced by factors such as the teachers, the level of regulation clarity, the degree of punishment, rules enforcement and collaboration between the disciplinary body and the counselling system. Establishing these factors will strengthen the school disciplinary system through providing effective control over students' behavior.

School characteristics are also among the highlighted aspect in understanding conduct problems. School characteristic includes school location, teacher-student ratio, student population and school infrastructure. School location, number of teachers, student population and school facilities provide stimulation and produce different degrees of student supervision. A situation where the school location is unsuitable and poorly equipped can influence students to become involved in conduct problems. Few number of teachers compared to a large student population brings about to poor student supervision by the school authorities.

Disciplinary problems amongst students are found to be very complex. This situation can be seen in terms of the variety of conduct problems involved, level of seriousness of the problem, as well as factors leading to occurrences of conduct problems. The ecological approach taking into account student ecosystem can determine the cause and solutions to curb conduct problems. The school authorities can become a motivator towards merging the efforts with various parties. School institutions should play an active role by utilising all the existing school systems within and outside school. The reason is certainly obvious, that students spend most of their waking hours in school.

Based on the current research, conduct problems amongst students can be solved through various ways. There are five main systems involved here: School, support system, student, family and external influences which have been determined as being able to play an important role in approaching this problem. In the school context, aspects which needs to be given extra attention are school systems (school disciplinary system, counselling system and school administration system), teachers, school characteristics and curriculum. Among the steps which can be taken by the school authorities include: acknowledging efforts by disciplinary teachers; increasing the number of school counsellors based on the student population; increasing the quality of school management and administration by introducing habits which are more standardised and professional, having equal number of male and female teachers; increasing the level of school safety by fencing the school compound and providing the school with security guards; and balancing students' academic curriculum with students' self development.

The PTA committee, the police force and community members are a part of the support system which can help to provide a strong school disciplinary system. Close collaborations between these institutions and the school authorities are thought to be able to enhance a safe and friendly school climate as well as creating a conducive learning environment. Among the steps which can be taken include: increasing parent involvement in childrens' school activities in order to lessen the problem related to the children; appointing school social workers; and increasing community spirit and creating a loving community.

Students who abide by the school rules can produce a conducive studying environment. To produce disciplined and charismatic students, various steps can be taken such as: focusing on the balance development of IQ (Intelligent Quotient), EQ (Emotional Intelligent Quotient) and AQ (Aqidah Intelligent Quotient), and recognising students' strength and potential from an early stage to create a suitable intervention by the school authorities. Apart from that the family is the main institution for students. To enhance the role of the family institution, several actions can be taken among which are increasing parenting workshops designed to suit their children's age, increasing close teacher-parent relationship through programs involving parents in classes, and having frequent parent-teacher meetings according to their children's respective classes.

The mass media is also influential to students. It acts by influencing students to imitate behaviours which are against the school rules. In order to curb this problem, the following steps can be taken: the enforcement of rules by local authorities towards cyber café owners who allow students to have access to pornographic websites,

activating academic programs relating to school topics, and revising the filtering of printed and electronic materials to suit the targeted group.

There are several limitations of the present study worth noticing. A first limitation concerns the sample selection whereby respondents selected must have had committed at least one misconduct behaviour during the first nine months of the year the study was conducted. The question arises as to whether the degree and types of misconduct amongst the respondents are in the same or wide-ranging. An extremely problematic student may differ in characteristics from the one demonstrating a mild behavior problem. Thus, future research may need to consider the severity of the discipline problem which could have important influence on the outcomes of the study.

A second limitation of the study is with regard to the group administered questionnaire in the respondents schools. Although the school may facilitate the process of identifying the respondents, grouping the misconduct students (whom may already be stigmatized by their peers) together at one time may instigate an uncomfortable feelings amongst them. This uncondusive situation could affect the students responses on the questionnaire. Furthermore, the students comprehension on the questionnaire may be limited due to the fact that students with behavioral problems especially those who are more problematic normally lag in academic, and subsequently, this could affect the quality of their responses to the research questions. There is therefore, a need to consider a face-to-face interview in future research. Last but not least, the purposive sampling technique could be a limitation in generalizing the findings of the study.

The study supports the use of the human ecological theory in understanding the phenomenon of conduct problems amongst school-going adolescents. Scrutinizing each different levels of the systems within the ecosystem of an adolescent may enhance opportunities for adults — parents, teachers, neighbors, members of the community and policy makers, to understand and view adolescents from a multiple perspectives, hence promoting an integrative and comprehensive approach in planning and strategizing programs and activities for adolescents. To sum, the present study has successfully explained why some school students are involved in socially inappropriate behavior and why some do not.

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