



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**EFFECTS OF INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES AND EXPOSURE
TO THE NATIONAL POPULATION AND FAMILY
DEVELOPMENT BOARD'S PARENTING
MODULE ON PARENTING OUTCOMES**

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FEM 1997 5

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By

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Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Master of Science Degree in the Faculty of Human Ecology,
Universiti Putra Malaysia.

April 1997



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study would not have been possible without the help and guidance of many people. First and foremost, I owe my gratitude to the members of my supervisory committee, Dr. Rozumah Baharudin (Chairperson), Dr. Bahaman Abu Samah and Dr. Rohani Abdullah. I am thankful to them for their invaluable guidance, ideas, criticism and encouragement throughout this study. In particular, my thanks to Dr. Rozumah for her critical and meticulous reading of draft chapters, and Dr. Bahaman and Dr. Rohani for their constructive comments and helpful suggestions. The three supervisors have done their best to supervise this study, and if there should be any shortcomings, I am wholly responsible for them.

I am grateful to the Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA) for kindly allowing me to conduct the research in the FELDA scheme. My special thanks go to Puan Norhayati Sarif (FELDA HQ), En. Ahmad Tarmizi Allas (Deputy Director at FELDA Serting), En. Aziz Awang, Hajjah Fauziah Aminullah, the managers, staff, settlers and their spouses at FELDA Trolak and FELDA Serting for their warm hospitality and co-operation.

I would also like to thank the National Population and Family Development Board (NPFDB) for granting me study leave to pursue my Master of Science. Special



thanks are also extended to Dr. Raj Abdul Karim for giving me permission to evaluate the parenting module. I am also indebted to my colleagues at the NPFDB. I wish to thank Puan Fatimah Saad for her support, En. Ahmad Nizar Husain and Mr. Ong Soi Wah for facilitating the parenting module, Mr. Kiang Kwee Lai for the secretariat support and Ms Lim Pik Wah for her help with the SPSS programme. Special thanks to Mr. Andy Ramasamy, Sabriah, Zarina, Yati, Askiah, Aizatal, Norma, Rahmah, Kairul Zaman, Rahim and Kamal for the excellent data collection work.

My gratitude to my friends, Mariam, Sen Ee, Ghime and Chak for their true friendship and support. Chak, deserves special mention for her valuable assistance in meticulously and patiently formatting the thesis.

My parents, brothers, sisters, in-laws, nieces and nephews motivated and supported me in my academic pursuit. My deepest appreciation and gratitude to my husband, Jayant, and my two children, Amit and Rayna, for their love, patience and support which has sustained me throughout this study.



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Abstract of thesis submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science.

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APRIL 1997

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The general purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of the National Population and Family Development Board's (NPFDB) parenting module among parents by examining the effects of individual differences (expressed readiness for parenting change and perceptions of parenting self-efficacy) and exposure to the module on parenting outcomes [parenting knowledge, attitudes, practices, and skills (parenting KAPS)]. The Pre-test-Post-test Control Group Design was used for evaluating the parenting module. The 80 respondents were randomly assigned to the experimental and control group. Results of the study showed that parenting KAPS improved significantly from before to after exposure for the experimental group. Generally, it was found that the participants had high perceptions of the module structure, usefulness and relevance of contents to their



needs. Results suggested that individual differences was significantly correlated with parenting knowledge ($r=0.56$, $p<0.05$) and parenting attitudes ($r= 0.46$, $p<0.05$). However, there was no significant correlation between individual differences and parenting practices and skills. Results obtained suggested that exposure to the module was significantly and positively correlated with parenting knowledge ($r=0.57$, $p<0.05$), parenting attitudes ($r=0.56$, $p<0.05$), parenting practices ($r=0.34$, $p<0.05$) and parenting skills ($r=0.26$, $p<0.05$). There was a significant relationship ($r=0.32$, $p<0.05$) between individual differences and general perceptions of the module. The participants' exposure to the parenting module and individual differences was found to have a direct effect on their parenting KAP. However, for parenting skills there was no evidence to conclude that exposure to the module and individual differences explained the variation in parenting skills. The study concluded that the parenting module was effective in changing the parenting KAPS of parents.

Abstrak thesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi syarat keperluan Ijazah Master Sains.

**KESAN PERBEZAAN INDIVIDU DAN PENDEDAHAN KEPADA
MODUL KEIBUBAAPAN LEMBAGA PENDUDUK DAN
PEMBANGUNAN KELUARGA NEGARA
TERHADAP DAPATAN KEIBUBAAPAN**

Oleh

ANJLI PANALAL K DOSHI

APRIL 1997

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Secara umumnya kajian ini bertujuan untuk menentukan keberkesanan Modul Keibubapaan Lembaga Penduduk dan Pembangunan Keluarga Negara (LPPKN) dengan meneliti kesan perbezaan individu (persediaan untuk perubahan caragaya keibubapaan dan perspesi keberkesanan keibubapaan) dan pendedahan kepada modul pada dapatan keibubapaan (pengetahuan, sikap, amalan, dan kemahiran keibubapaan). Rangka bentuk penyelidikan Pra-uji dan Pos-uji dengan Kumpulan Kawalan telah digunakan untuk menilai modul keibubapaan. Sejumlah 80 responden telah dibahagikan secara rawak kepada dua kumpulan, eksperimental dan kawalan. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa pengetahuan, sikap, amalan dan kemahiran keibubapaan telah meningkat dengan signifikan selepas pendedahan jika dibezakan dengan sebelum pendedahan kepada modul bagi kumpulan eksperimental.



Secara umum, didapati bahawa peserta mempunyai persepsi yang tinggi terhadap struktur modul, kegunaannya dan kerelevanan kandungan modul dengan keperluan mereka. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa perbezaan individu mempunyai korelasi yang signifikan dengan pengetahuan keibubapaan ($r=0.56$, $p<0.05$) dan sikap keibubapaan ($r=0.46$, $p<0.05$). Walau bagaimanapun tidak terdapat korelasi yang signifikan antara perbezaan individu dengan amalan dan kemahiran keibubapaan. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa pendedahan kepada modul mempunyai korelasi yang positif dan signifikan dengan pengetahuan keibubapaan ($r=0.57$, $p<0.05$), sikap keibubapaan ($r=0.56$, $p<0.05$), amalan keibubapaan ($r=0.34$, $p<0.05$) dan kemahiran keibubapaan ($r=0.26$, $p<0.05$). Perbezaan individu dan persepsi umum mengenai modul juga menunjukkan perkaitan yang signifikan ($r=0.32$, $p<0.05$). Pendedahan peserta kepada modul dan perbezaan individu didapati mempunyai kesan langsung terhadap pengetahuan, sikap dan amalan keibubapaan. Bagaimanapun, bagi kemahiran keibubapaan, tidak terdapat bukti untuk menyokong kesimpulan bahawa pendedahan kepada modul dan perbezaan individu dapat menerangkan variasi dalam kemahiran keibubapaan. Kajian ini membuat kesimpulan bahawa modul keibubapaan berkenaan adalah berkesan dalam mengubah pengetahuan, sikap, amalan, dan kemahiran keibubapaan.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

During the last two decades, Malaysia has undergone rapid economic and social changes due to urbanisation and industrialisation. Consequently, these changes have brought about changes in all areas of family life and have fundamentally affected the relationships between husbands and wives, and between parents and children. As a result, the pattern of family life today is radically different from the pattern that existed before these changes took place. Some examples of these changes are the replacement of the extended family by the nuclear family, greater mobility, weakening of family ties, fewer children, greater distances between family members, increased stress and competition, less time with each other and paid care of young children.

As such, development has no meaning if the economy progresses while the family unit disintegrates. The conditions of the family unit have an immediate and critical impact on the quality of life of every individual, and therefore, the society and nation. What is the use of material wealth when the society is burdened with social and emotional problems? Therefore, conscious and positive efforts must be undertaken to strengthen the family institution to meet the challenges of rapid change.



In the past, because of the three-generation traditional family structure which consisted of grandparents, parents and children, younger couples learned from their parents how to bring up their children and there was greater support in child-rearing from the extended family and friends (Abdullah, 1993; Chiam, 1994a; Rozumah, 1995). The dissolution of extended families and the increase of nuclear families headed by single parents are some of the pressing issues in today's world. The increasing numbers of women joining the workforce and the rising cost of living which has forced more parents to work longer hours, have greatly limited the hours parents have left to care for the needs of their children. It has also made the task of parenting increasingly more complex and difficult.

The women's labour force participation rate has increased from 37% in 1970 to 47% in 1990, and is projected to increase to 52% by the year 2000 (Sixth Malaysia Plan, 1991). For most working women, participation in the labour force has not brought about emancipation within the family (Van Roy, 1994). Rather, it has imposed on them the dual burden of economic and family responsibilities.

Although the extended family system was the norm once, almost 71% of families in Malaysia today are nuclear compared to 63% ten years ago, that is, in 1984/1985 (Raj Karim, 1993). Migration, industrialisation, urbanisation and education are among the main contributory factors that have accelerated the formation of nuclear families. Nuclear families, overwhelmed by the pressure to look for more material gain in order to meet the needs of modern living and pressures

of childbearing and child-rearing/parenting, find it difficult to adapt themselves to the situation. This often leads to ineffective family relationships and parenting skills, which have been associated with upward trends in social dysfunctions/problems such as school dropouts, juvenile crime, child abuse, drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence and divorce.

Individuals need to be prepared for marriage and parenthood. This is because both marriage and parenting are very complex and challenging responsibilities that affect not only individuals and family members but also the society as a whole. According to Bahr (1989), difficulties in becoming a parent are due to the addition and modification of roles, and the fact that the transition to parenthood is irrevocable, abrupt, and often begins with little relevant training.

Parenting, which is a process that involves interaction between parent and child, is a major responsibility, if done conscientiously (Woititz, 1992). The effectiveness of this process is very important as it can influence the growth and development of the child. “As the twig is bent” the saying goes, “so grows the tree.” The way parents raise a child will, to a great extent, shape the sort of person she will become. How then should a child be reared? There is no consensus on the best method but it is undisputed that the atmosphere parents create in the home and the child-rearing styles they practice are crucial to a child’s personality development and socialisation.

Raising children has never been completely free from anxiety. Yet, today, it seems that child-rearing has become even more complex and difficult. It is possible that parenting today may not be as easy as that experienced by our older generation because of the tremendous changes in our environment. The extent to which parents succeed in carrying out their parenting responsibilities depends on the context in which the parents and the child interact (Belsky, 1984). According to Belsky, parenting behaviour is determined by characteristics of the parent, characteristics of the child and the context in which the parent-child relationship is evolving. A child is more likely to experience low quality parenting if his parents lacked personal resources, his family is in high levels of stress and he is perceived by his parents as difficult to care. On the other hand, parenting that is sensitively attuned to children's capabilities will promote desired developmental outcomes, including emotional security, social competence and intellectual achievement.

Family life is bound by the social, economic and ideological circumstances of particular times and places (Skolnick & Skolnick, 1994). Most of today's modern families are unprepared for the challenges that lie before them in the new found lifestyles, and for single parent families this becomes more profound. Past child-rearing/parenting styles are no longer adequate for modern day living. Child-rearing is not an easy task or responsibility. In fact, it is not only the most important role in the world but also the most difficult to carry out (NPFDB, 1993). And, parents are seldom provided with the knowledge and training for this most important role unlike

other professions such as teachers and doctors. It is for this reason that parenting training becomes a greater need.

There is considerable evidence that families contribute to their members' competence and socialisation by providing the natural framework for the emotional and financial support essential for the growth and development of its members. Families, as the basic unit in society, are responsible for developing 'human beings' who are responsible, religious, ethical and disciplined. However, families are also experiencing tremendous pressures and stress due to rapid social change. The statistics on social problems such as rising rates of marital breakdown, domestic violence, drug abuse, child abuse and teenage runaways indicate increasing pressures on families. These problems are symptoms of bigger issues such as family instability and incompetent parenting (Husna & Abdullah, 1991).

A key indicator of the pressure faced by families is the increasing rate of marriage breakdowns and subsequent divorces, and an increase in single parent families. Statistics provided by the Federal Territory Islamic Religious Affairs Council (JAWI) show that the number of divorce cases involving Muslim couples between 1991 and 1995 (March) had increased. In 1991, there were 506 divorce cases, and it increased to 609 cases in 1992. In 1993, there were 673 cases and the number went up to 733 in 1994. Within the first quarter of 1995, there were 104 divorce cases in the Federal Territory.

A study by the National Population and Family Development Board (NPFDB) in 1992 reveals that of 26,877 families studied, about 2,537 families or 9.4% consist of single parent families (Raj Karim, 1993). The increasing number of single parent families, the majority of which are female headed, has raised concern regarding the adequacy of this type of family structure to meet the needs of family members, especially children. Often, the parent who is parenting alone experiences considerable emotional stress. The trauma of divorce often means the child has to leave one parent and sometimes adjust to a step-parent as well as other children brought into the new family created by a new marriage. Such changes can be a traumatic experience for the child. But, children also suffer in homes where their parents are together but in conflict.

Family breakdown has perhaps its most telling symptom in violence (Van Roy, 1994). According to statistics released by the Social Welfare Department (Social Welfare Department, 1995), there were 511 cases of child abuse reported in 1990, increasing to 970 (1992) and decreasing to 852 (1993). In almost 50% of these cases, the parents were the abusers. The number of abandoned babies was 55 in 1992, it decreased to 41 in 1993 and increased to 49 in 1994. Although the cases of child abuse and abandoned babies may be the result of increased vigilance and greater public awareness, the suspicions that these are the result of the abject failure of parenthood have to be confronted.

Instability in families also leads to numerous social problems among youth, such as drug abuse, school dropouts, teenage runaways, loafing, smoking and juvenile crimes. A study commissioned by the Ministry of Youth and Sports in 1994 found that about 70% of the youth interviewed said they smoked, some admitted they took drugs (14%), consumed liquor (25%), viewed blue films (40%), read pornographic materials (39%), engaged in premarital sex (18%), gambled (28%) and committed theft (16%) (Shamsudin, 1994). The number of juveniles involved in juvenile crimes has multiplied from 1,922 cases in 1962 to 3,965 cases in 1992 (Umi Kalthum, 1994). The 1991 report on discipline among school children found that of 6,860 primary school children studied, about 27% had disciplinary problems and 58.7% of the 1,360 secondary school students had disciplinary problems (Umi Kalthum, 1994).

The two most important factors probably contributing to these phenomena is the family's inability to adjust and cope with the changes in the environment and incompetent parenting (Husna, 1994). More and better parent education as well as increased responsibility on the part of parents will help. Parents need to be more sensitive and competent. Parental competency may be characterised by the knowledge of a variety of strategies for guiding children's growth and development (Bigner, 1994). Parents need to learn how to handle situations, how to respond and communicate with their children as well as look out for signs that their children are

having problems. All families should be empowered with parenting knowledge and skills to enable them to nurture their children well.

These social trends in our society must be given serious consideration especially since the country is forging ahead to achieve the aims of Vision 2020 (a forward looking strategy to develop Malaysia into an industrialised country). Nine central strategic challenges have been identified, where two of them relate directly to the family. The family institution will play an important role in:

1. “Establishing a fully caring society and a caring culture, a social system in which society will come before self, in which the welfare of the people will revolve not around the state or the individual but around a strong and resilient family system.”
2. “Creating a psychologically liberated, secure, and developed Malaysian Society with faith and confidence in itself, justifiably proud of what it is, of what it has accomplished, robust enough to face all manner of adversity. This Malaysian Society must be distinguished by the pursuit of excellence, fully aware of all its potentials, psychologically subservient to none, and respected by the peoples of other nations.”

Strong moral, educated and emotionally stable families are the prerequisite and foundation of a progressive and harmonious nation. In our strive to achieve the objectives of Vision 2020, the family institution will be faced with many challenges. Changes and transformation within the family as a result of socio-economic development requires that parents be well-equipped with adequate knowledge and skills to meet the challenges of the future. The problems faced by adults and children