Risk and Protective behaviors of family with youth misbehaviors in a collectivist society: Implications for family counseling

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Abtract

This study examined on the influence of family relationship factors on youth misbehavior among Malaysian secondary students in one state which has illuminated some important findings. In addition, this study investigated whether there are differences to the effect of ethnicity and gender on misbehaviors. Several instruments including Family Assessment Device, adapted Family Time and Routine Index, adapted Religious Practice in Family, adapted Self-Report Delinquency Scale and demographic questionnaires were used. Data were collected from seven secondary schools in the urban area in the state of Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia. There were 286 participants from three ethnic groups (Malay, Chinese, and Indian) who came from different socioeconomic status families. The study found that family problem solving is significantly related to youth misbehaviors. The result also found that Chinese male students were significantly different from the Malay and Indian males on the misbehaviors score. The Chinese male students are found to be prone towards more misbehavior. In addition, this study also obtains other findings that may explain the reasons why there is a significance difference for Chinese male students on total misbehaviors score. Other finding found that there exist more risk factors in Chinese family such as parent-child relationships, behavioral control, problem solving, communication, roles, affective responsiveness, affective involvement, behavior control, and

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compared to male Malays and Indians male students. Implications on family counseling are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Youth misbehaviors are important to the individual, to families, and to the nation in terms of immediate and long term consequences, which include increased instances of psychiatric illness, substance abuse, poor academic and vocational achievement, and violence (Steinberg, 1996). Understanding youths perceptions about misbehaviors is necessary when considering that the youth population aged 10–19 years is over 10 million or about 35 % of the total population 26.26 million (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2005).

The emerging emphasis is to remember that this age group represents a critical period of development. Youths may face challenges as they go through developmental stages and misbehaviors may occur (Steinberg, 1996). They face many changes when making the transition from elementary to middle school, a passage characterized by emerging adolescence and increasing independence. This is the time that parental supervision becomes increasingly important and it is also more difficult to keep track of youngsters who spend more hours outside than home. The tension between the need for supervision and independence often leads to conflicts between the adolescent and his/her parents (Dishion, Andrews, & Crosby, 1995). However, Lauren, and Collins (1994) argued that there were inconsistent research findings about conflict between these two generations. Conflicts usually pertain to chores, finances, appearance, and substance abuse, family relations, school performance, curfew, dating, friends, and sexual behavior (Galambos & Almeida, 1992). Furthermore, the rapid advance in technology such as TV shows, video, and internet give youths more opportunities to access various programs. Some experts believe that too much exposure to violent TV and video shows leads to adolescent aggression (Siegel, Welsh, & Senna, 2003).

This is the period where the adolescent needs the most support and guidance from the family in understanding physiological changes in the body, dealing with developmental identity, achieving independence from the family, knowing how to behave when fulfilling social roles with peers and members of the opposite sex and when completing the requirements of schooling and career. Besides, Youths need to know right and wrong about what they do, see, and hear from the environment. Each of these developments requires the adolescent to adapt to the environment by coping cognitively and behaviorally (Frydenberg & Lewis, 1993), as well as developing spiritual strategies for effective transition and adaptation. Many experts believe youths need other skills such as problem solving and decision making to be able to make a right

conclusion and to arrive at non-aggressive solutions, or they have difficulty interpreting social situations. Researchers have found an empirical link between aggression and deficits in problem solving skills (Dodge, 1980; Dodge & Frame, 1982).

The above development results in some questions to ask families. How does the family negotiate the conflict caused by an adolescent's misbehavior and does the family communicates clearly with one another? Are the family members capable of conveying their differences as well as their closeness, in a manner that is not misunderstood by others (Powers & Welsh, 1999)? How much does the family as a whole show interest in and value the activities and interest of family members (Epstein et al., 1993)? How frequently do families work, play, eat, vacation, and attend religious services together (Rupured & Quick, 1989)?

Thus, there is a need to synthesize the existing literature into a more comprehensive understanding of   family relationship dimensions in adolescent misbehaviors development. It is essential to identify and understand youths' perceptions of how the family influences their decision to become involved in such behaviors. Further exploration is needed in regard to specific   family relationship dimensions which can help the adolescent to develop characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors that can prevent such misbehaviors.

A model of youth misbehaviors prevention among youths has focused on risk factors and protective factors (Hawkins, 1994). Risk factors are individual or environmental vulnerability that increase youth's disadvantage to negative developmental outcomes (Werner, 2000). Risk factors can be found in many different *domains*, sometimes called key systems (Hawkins, 1994) including the individual, peer group, family, school, and community. Each of the domains has characteristics and influences on an individual's behavior. Rutter (1979) states that the presence of one risk factor (i.e. low social status) was more likely to create trouble compared with no risk factors. When youth experience multiple risk factors (i.e. low social status and severe marital discord between their parents) the chance for problem behaviors to happen was higher. Risk factors are elements in the adolescent's life that increase individual vulnerability to harm. Lerner and Galambos (1998) have concluded that individual and context factors (family, peers, school, community) appear pivotal to the development of risk behavior.

Protective factors are the opposite of risk factors. Protective factors play an additional indirect role in the occurrence of adolescent problem behavior by moderating or buffering the impact of risk factors. There is considerable empirical evidence of such moderation (Jessor, 1992). When protection is low, the higher the risk and the greater the involvement in problem behavior, but when protection is high, that relationship is attenuated. Protective factors lower the chance that an adolescent will engage in youth misbehaviors. Jessor (1992) has suggested that some protective factors provide the adolescent strength to avoid youth misbehaviors in life. Some of these protective factors are personal controls such as religious beliefs, high self-esteem, and social control such as social support and authoritative parenting. Some of the risk factors and protective factors with regard to youth misbehaviors are individual, family, peer, school, and community domain. However, in this study discussion is focusing on the family relationship factors that can become the risk or protective factors to youth misbehaviors.

Family Factors

Risk factor

Youth misbehaviors are more likely to develop in a family that has experienced risk factors such as poor family management practices, family conflict, and family history of problem behaviors. Families with poor family management practices tend to exhibit the following characteristics: poor parental monitoring, ineffective discipline, lack of bonding and caring, and unclear family rules, expectation, and rewards (Smith & Stern, 1997).

Poor parental monitoring or supervision is one of the most powerful predictors of adolescent youth misbehaviors (Patterson & Stouthamer, 1984; Smith & Stern, 1997). Monitoring refers to knowing where the Youths are, who they are with, and what they are doing when they are not in sight. Snyder and Patterson (1987) stressed that monitoring becomes important when the child is nine or ten years of age. Steinberg (1987) agreed that monitoring an early adolescent is necessary, especially in the after-school hours. Youths who spend much of their after-school time unsupervised and away from their homes "hanging out" are at high risk for engaging in antisocial activities.

Barber (1997) suggested that adequate regulation of Youths measured in terms of supervision, monitoring, and other forms of behavioral control is important. His thesis is that with adequate regulation, children learn self-regulation and are not as susceptible to influence from other forces and thus can avoid engaging in various forms of antisocial behavior.

Another aspect is ineffective discipline which Snyder and Patterson (1987) explained is a complex construct that refers to methods used by family members to discourage behavioral excesses or antisocial behavior in children. Effective methods consist of the accurate definition and labeling of certain behaviors as excessive or antisocial and the consistent tracking of those behaviors over time and across settings. Discipline described as lax or neglectful, erratic or inconsistent, and as overtly harsh or punitive, is predictive of adolescent youth misbehaviors and aggression.

Specifically, Patterson and Stouthamer-Loeber (1984) have shown that parental mismanagement (i.e. harsh and inconsistent discipline) of early oppositional behaviors shapes further aggressive behavior through the process of involving increasingly coercive parent-child interactions. In order to avoid this aversive discipline interaction, parents will often become inconsistent in their discipline and monitoring, resulting in the child's aggressive behavior becoming more established. Likewise, in their extensive analysis of longitudinal studies of antisocial behavior, Loeber and Dishion (1983) found that the most powerful predictors of later youth misbehaviors were parenting variables, specifically those related to harsh, inconsistent discipline, and poor supervision.

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This notion is confirmed by another longitudinal study on youth misbehaviors, funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Youth misbehaviors Prevention (OJJDP). Huizinga, Loeber, and Thornberry (1995) found that parental supervision, attachment to parents, and consistency of discipline are the most common risk factors in influencing youth misbehaviors in high-risk youth.

A study conducted by Jin (2004) has examined the interpersonal experiences and coping strategies of Malaysian students with adults. In this study, 307 primary and secondary school children aged 11–16 years were surveyed to ascertain the differences in their interpersonal experiences that may vary according to their ages. Group comparison analyses of the data indicated that comparatively the secondary school children used more coping strategies such as avoidance, distraction, emotional orientation, and task orientation. This study reported that parents used harsher disciplining methods with the primary school children such as shouting, spanking, and caning whereas the secondary school children reported that their parents used less harsh discipline on them; however, they received less social support from their parents and teachers. Parents find difficulty in getting support from family and friends when having problems with Youths compared to problems they face with primary school children.

Lack of caring and bonding is considered as one of the most consistent findings in the study of the association between family relationship factors and adolescent youth misbehaviors. Barber (1996) reviewed numerous studies and found that youth misbehaviors is associated with families that have low warmth and affection as well as high conflict and hostility. Low level of parental acceptance and affection were also found related to Youths youth misbehaviors.

Similarly, a study done in Malaysia found that a lack of family cohesion is a consistent risk factor in adolescent youth misbehaviors. Hadi (1990, December) found low quality parent-child relationships in 125 girls who were placed in residential treatment for involvement in vice activities. The majority of the girls, 68.7 % (n = 86), were not enjoying harmonious relationships with their parents. Of these, 50 were reported to have parents who were neglectful, 33 reported having parents who were permissive, and 3 have parents who were reported to be sexually or physically abusive.

Barnes, Farrell, and Windle (1987) assessed parent-child relations and identified a model for describing the relationships between parental socialization factors and adolescent alcohol abuse and other deviant behaviors. They reported that the more often Youths perceive their parents as providing support and nurturance (affective involvement), the less often they will regard peers as the more important significant people in their lives and the less they will engage in deviant behaviors.

However, Elliot (1994) did not suggest that parents and children must develop a deep bond to inhibit subsequent delinquent behaviors attributable to family factors. Of course, the adequacy of the parent-adolescent bond will be determined by the perceived quality of the interaction and the psychological characteristics of both the parent and the adolescent. Steinberg (1991) notes that while parental bonding is an important variable of authoritative parenting, it is

not enough for today's family to nurture the Youths, as these youth have to face many potentially problematic situations where parents need to be informed. Similarly, Carnegie (1989) cautions that in giving more independence to Youths, parents must still maintain a context of closeness and continuing involvement in their lives.

Family conflict is another risk factor that endangers the Youths healthy development. Family conflict happens when there is inconsistent or harsh discipline, family discord or abuse. Research findings have consistently supported the relationships between family conflict, hostility, and youth misbehaviors. Current studies have also found that children who grow up in maladapted homes and witness discord or violence will later exhibit emotional disturbance and behavior problems (Simons, Wu, Johnson, & Conger, 1995).

Another family risk factor is a family history of problem behavior. Family involvement in risky activities predicts the involvement of Youths in youth misbehaviors. Perkins-Dock (2001) reviewed several studies which have shown significant correlation between parental criminality and delinquent Youths. Men of the ages 18 to 23 with criminal fathers were approximately four times more likely to have committed violent criminal acts than those with non-criminal fathers (Baker & Mednick, 1984). Additionally, Farrington, (1989) found that the presence of delinquent behavior in siblings also predicted later convictions for violence during the adolescent years.

Youth misbehaviors have been associated with low socioeconomic status families. Findings show that families experiencing economic difficulties may have weakened parental capacity for consistently applying social control (Sampson & Laub, 1993). Similarly, Gordon, Jurkovic, and Arbuthnot (1998) found that economic stresses for many families lead to decreasing parental support and lessened parental involvement as parents spend more time at work. Several studies reviewed by Perkins-Dock (2001) stated that low family income predicted self-reported teen violence as well as convictions for violent offenses and those teenage fathers were more likely to be involved in youth misbehaviors. Thus, children are at higher risk when families experience economic difficulty and poverty (Kumpfer, 1999), or are families of minorities (McLoyd, 1990).

Finally, family composition is frequently associated with youth misbehaviors. The single parent family was found to be another risk factor to adolescent youth misbehaviors. Studies found that children with single or divorced parents were more likely to display several emotional and behavioral problems than children from intact families (Wells & Rankin, 1991).

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Protective factor

Family cohesion is considered as a factor that helps the family to bond together and protect the family members from involvement in risky behaviors (Table 2.1). Cohesiveness in the family exists when there is positive, supportive interaction among family members. This concept is linearly related to individual and family relationship factors (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Family cohesion is defined as the emotional bonding family members have toward one another. Consistent, stable, positive, emotional connections with significant others, such as parents, appear to equip children with important social skills.

Another protective factor is communication among family members. Communication has been accepted as essential for understanding youth misbehaviors. There are two types of communication, the intimate that is sharing personal feeling and instrumental is talking about problems and plans for the future influence youth misbehaviors. Hirschi (1969) in a study of self-reported youth misbehaviors among boys found that as the intimate communication between the parent and the child improved, the adolescent's involvement in youth misbehaviors decreased. Cernkovich and Giordano (1987) did not support the relationship of intimate communication to youth misbehaviors but accepted instrumental communication as significantly related to lower levels of youth misbehaviors.

Clark and Shield (1997) supported the findings that types of communication influence level of youth misbehaviors. A study was conducted on 339 primarily Caucasian high school students in a Midwestern city. Youths were administered the Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale (Barnes & Olson, 1985), which was developed to measure the extent of openness or freedom of exchange related to ideas, information, and concerns between parents and their adolescent children. Results indicated that having open communication with either parent is significantly associated with less serious forms of youth misbehaviors. In other words, the less open the level of communication, the more serious the forms of risky behaviors. The greater the problems communicating with either parent, the more significant the inclination toward engaging in more serious forms of youth misbehaviors. In conclusion, good communication with one's parents is significantly associated with less involvement in youth misbehaviors.

Taha et al. (2004) conducted a survey on 274 male and 225 females, mostly Malay Youths among secondary students with conduct problems, the secondary students without conduct problems, and juveniles in residential institutions in Malaysia. Using the Family Assessment Device, this study examined the differences between family relationship factors and internalized and externalized problems among these groups. The study found that secondary students with conduct problems perceived their family relationship factors more negatively than the secondary Youths without conduct problems. This group with conduct problems also scored higher means for all the FAD dimensions which implies a more negative aspect of family relationship factors than the other two groups. Interestingly, juveniles in residential institutions who score higher for internalizing and externalizing problems perceived their family relationship factors less negative than the group with conduct problems. Analysis of variance

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revealed that there was no difference between the adolescent groups with regard to the various functions assessed by FAD except for communication. This result was not as expected because the researchers anticipated higher scores on FAD dimensions for juveniles in the residential institution, yet they scored lower.

Spending time together as a family is another protective factor. The family is the exclusive early environment for most children and the primary environment for nearly all. Garbarino, (1995) in his book "Raising Children in a Socially Toxic Environment," argues that children function not so much as individuals, but as members of families. He added that one of the characteristics of strong families includes spending time together. It takes time to knit a family together and to keep it from unraveling. Eating together, working together on projects, and participating together in community and school activities will make successful families. This notion is supported by Farrington (1989) who say that inadequate engagement in cooperative leisure activity makes violent juvenile behavior more likely.

Problem solving is also a protective factor in family. Family problems come in all shapes and sizes. Issues and conflicts in family may serve as a training process for youths to learn about working toward solution. Experts also agreed that parents play an important role in helping to create the way an adolescent deals with interpersonal problems through their approach to child rearing (Kobak, Cole, Ferenz-Gillies, Fleming, & Gamble, 1993). Adolescent's response to interpersonal differences is of interest because the ability to resolve conflicts is an important aspect of successful adolescent development (Hauser & Bowlds, 1990). Research found that effective families solve problems as they arise; whereas, families that avoid problem solving, or seem incapable of dealing with many of their problems have more difficulties (Epstein et.al.,1993). Bowen (1978) in Family System Theory has described a well-differentiated adolescent as a person who has the ability to act after making a thoughtful judgment and not be influenced by emotion. This ability is demonstrated through using problem solving skills. However, the undifferentiated person acts without thinking and makes decisions based on opinion and attitude of those around him or her.

Malaysian families are experiencing change similar to other families in developed countries such as the United States. UNICEF (2002) has reported that Malaysia is facing increasing cases of child abuse, juvenile misbehaviors, and occasional substance abuse. The migration from rural to urban areas resulted in the family having a more nuclear family living arrangement rather than the extended family arrangement of previous times. At the same time, an increasing number of women have joined the labor force, causing, in some cases, a shortage of parental time for child-rearing and the care of young children. As Edgar (1999) mentioned that the effort to document the family complexity in regards to misbehaviors development is necessary so that a new knowledge base will be gained. In Malaysia, ethnicity determines the varied differences in the socio-cultural and religious diversity of the population. The Malays being the majority in the country are Muslim. The second largest group, the Chinese, is mostly Tao Buddhist. Similarly, the Indian segment of the population who came originally from India, are mainly Hindus. It was observed that religion is highly correlated with ethnicity. Islam was the most extensively professed religion in Malaysia; its percentage increasing from 58.6% in

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1991 to 60.4% in 2000. Malaysia, being a multi-religious nation, other religions such as Buddhism (19.2%), Christianity (9.1%), Hinduism (6.3%) and Confucianism/Taoism/other traditional Chinese religion (2.6%) as showed in Census 2000 (Department of Statistic Malaysia, 2001). A brief information on each ethnic family
are discussed below.

Malay Family

Malays are Muslims in practice and by definition. The Federal Constitution of Malaysia, Article 160(2) defined Malay as a person who professes the religion of Islam habitually speaks the Malay language and conforms to Malay customs. Kling (1995) has suggested three basic foundations for understanding the Malay family and its ideology. The first is the traditional socio-cultural configuration which is known as "adat," second, the impact and accommodation of Islamic religious principles, and lastly, the influence of British colonial legislative laws. Kling (1995) stressed that the direct exposure of family members, especially the younger generation, to foreign familial interaction patterns is influenced by the mass media. The current electronic media brought in an alternative structure of interaction in the family socialization pattern for the younger generation. These created a sort of structural gap in family life.

Malay families regard religion as a part of every family life activity. The belief in the absolute unity of God and his attributes (sifat) constitutes the most fundamental teaching in the Islamic articles of faith. This is frequently recited in the simple formula called "Kalimah Shahadah"– the "sentence of testimony" which also includes the testimony that Muhammad is the messenger of God. Because God has no other similarity, hence God's messenger must be human, chosen by Him in order to reveal His word to mankind (Kling, 1995). The Qur'an, Sunna, and Hadith provide guidelines to address practically every aspect of daily life (Qureshi, 1991).

One of the important tenets in Islam is praying five times a day (solat), an obligatory practice that is performed at dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset, and night fall. Prayer can be performed at the mosque or at home individually or in congregation. The father and sons are encouraged to pray at the mosque. Women can perform prayer in the mosque if they prefer. Usually they will go to the mosque in the neighborhood to pray the congregation prayer led by the imam of the mosque. The mosque is full during sunset and night fall when everybody comes back from work or schools. If the family prays at home usually prayers are led by the most learned person who knows the Qur'an and is carried in a family context (father, grandfather or son). Women can also lead the prayer among the female family members if there is no male family member at home. Usually each praying takes about 5–7 minutes.

In the Malay families, parents are considered to be clear authority figures and are obeyed without question unless these parents encourage behaviors that are against the tenet in religion. Parents have greater responsibility in teaching right and wrong to the children. The family is considered the starting point for learning and internalizing the teachings of the religion and the

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culture. Spiritual growth is considered important in the development of the children. Family members are constantly involved in common activities that help build and strengthen family bonds. Caring for one's parents is considered an honor and a blessing. Mothers are particularly honored and children are taught that "paradise lies at the feet of mothers." Fathers are considered to have more responsibilities in terms of income and providing for the basic needs of the children such as school and food.

Behavior, for example, is regulated by the traditional values of "budi" (etiquette) and "bahasa" (language). The term "budi bahasa" summed up the kind of proper behavior an individual should display both in the private family life and in public. This is much in line with morality (akhlak) and is enjoined by Islamic teaching (Kling, 1995). Islam forbids activities such as anything that brings harm to oneself and others. Forbidden activities include gambling, drug abuse, drinking alcohol, murder, premarital sex, killing, homosexuality, adultery, and eating pork. All these are considered great sins in Islam. The degree of tolerance within the moral and legal ordinance is clearly defined in terms of the ruling (hukm). The degree ranges from "haram" (absolutely forbidden) to "makruh" (not forbidden, but not encouraged either). Each individual is responsible for what he is doing.

Modern life has opened up the Malay family to exogenous influences. Those who traditionally lived in rural areas have migrated to the cities in searching for better opportunities. Media have exposed the family to global culture which portrays "Western" behavior to the young. Parents who are already conditioned by traditional norms find it difficult to accept their children acquiring the "Western" pattern of behavior. Some may not really reject but the majority, however, prefer the traditional and religious teaching (Kling, 1995). Thus, Malay values such as unity, sharing, and caring for others continues to be emphasized.

Chinese Family

Chinese Malaysians generally can be categorized into English-speaking and Chinese-speaking individuals. The former received their formal education mainly in English and the latter in Chinese. Generally, the English-speaking Chinese are more westernized than their Chinese-speaking kin (Carlson, Kurato, Ruiz, Ng, & Yang, 2004).

According to Ho (1981), in the traditional Chinese family, the socialization of children is influenced by two interesting concepts. "Yang-yu" refers to rearing or nurturing. Parents are more indulgent and more nurturing with younger children. The second concept, "Chiao-yang" refers to parental responsibility for children's education. The first concept emphasizes the guidance of proper development of character toward morality rather than psychological orientation. Parents are blamed if they fail to bring up children properly. The concepts of "Yang-yu" and "Chiao-yang" have influenced the expectation of socialization of children in the Chinese families.

Parent-child interaction in Chinese families changes as the age changes. Parents tend to be lenient towards infants and young children below six years of age because they were regarded

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as being too young to "understand things" (tung-shih). However, parents can be strict and even harsh toward older children. Older children must learn to control or inhibit the impulses of earlier years. Thus, difficulties and conflicts are more likely to be encountered in middle-childhood and early adolescence when increasing expectation is placed on the child to conform to parental demands. However, the period of adolescence has not been found to be marked by the "storm and stress" as is typically observed in contemporary western societies (Ho, 1981).

In Chinese families, parents tend to control their children than their Western counterpart. Dependency is encouraged when reaching the age of "tung-shih." Major decisions in career and marriage require parental approval. Filial piety is demanded even after the death of parents. Shek (1998) found that there is clear gender differentiation in parenting of children. Families rely more on induction when disciplining daughters than disciplining sons. With sons, families use more power assertion and love withdrawal. Boys experienced restrictive treatment and demanding teaching by the father and stronger autocratic discipline by both parents than did the girls.

The general agreement among the Chinese community in Malaysia is that students in Chinese medium schools frequently are more disciplined, are more respectful of their elders, are more aware of and value their Chinese cultural beliefs and practices, are more hardworking, and achieve better academic results (Carlson et al., 2004).

Indian Family

In an Indian family, religion plays an important role. A majority of Indian-Malaysians are Hindus. Hinduism's ethical restraint has a defined code of conduct, relational behavior, and socialization goals for family life. These codes of conduct are used as guidelines to relational behavior and particularly provide deterrents, especially to delinquent behavior.

Krishnan (2004) elaborated several ethical restraints in the Indian family that influence the behavior in the family. The first is "ahimsa" or non-injury to any living creature. It requires complete abstinence in terms of mind, mouth, and hand. Respect for elders is to be shown in verbal and non-verbal behavior. Another restraint is "satya" which refers to truthfulness or refraining from lying. In addition, "Asteya" is restraint from stealing, misappropriation of physical property, and entering into debt. Parents encourage "Brahmacharya," a divine conduct which commands controlling lust. Premarital love or sex is not allowed before marriage. Another restraint is "daya" or compassion. Honesty is referred to as "arjava" and a sense of caring and sharing called "mitahara" is also instilled in the family. Two additional concepts "Karma" and "Dharma," are important in family socialization. "Karma" is destiny, the belief the present state is the result of previous actions. Poor parenting results in negative outcomes for the family. "Dharma" is the ultimate law that brings prescribed roles to the world.

The Indian family structure is patriarchal, patrilineal, and patrilocal (Sheth, 1995). The father is the dominant figure in the family. The female is subordinate to the male. Her life depends on the father, then her husband and then to her eldest son. Children are expected to be

good, respectful, and bring honor to the family through high achievement. Independence is not encouraged and is seen as a threat to the parents. Parents treat their sons and daughters differently. Female children are more protected. Assertive behavior and autonomy is not encouraged, especially in girls. The children are encouraged to be patient, control themselves, and not yield to passion (Sala, 2002).

Malaysians generally believe that families are the primary source for children's learning and good behavior. Practicing religious tenets and achieving high academic success are signs that the family is doing well. Moreover, family cohesiveness and relational interdependency among family members are greatly recommended. Generally, parents are consulted before opinions are formed and decisions are made. This is a form of respect to the elders which preserves the unity of the family. In this society men are assumed to be the primary income earners, and although female employment activity rates have increased in recent years, the burden of caring for the family continues to be disproportionately placed on women's shoulders (Doling & Omar, 2002). Although a number of studies conducted in several parts of the world explore the link between family relationship factors and youth's misbehavior, research on Malaysian youths is still limited. There continues to be a need for Malaysian researchers to examine family context factors in today's families. In light of this information gap, the decision to examine the role of family functioning to misbehaviors is vital. Thus, understanding more about the Malaysian adolescent's involvement and knowing the risk and protective factors in family can provide a foundation for establishing specific intervention especially for counselors in cross-culture contexts.

STUDY OVERVIEW

This study sought to address two questions. First, identify the family relationship factors that influence youth misbehavior The family relationship factors were problem solving, communication, roles, affective responsiveness, affective involvement, behavior control, and general functioning, family time, religious belief, and religious practice. Second, investigation on whether differences in misbehaviors exist for Malaysian youths grouped by gender and ethnicity. In addition to the findings, this study was to identify which of the family relationship factors can be considered as the risk and protective factors to youth misbehaviors. Thus, it is interesting to examine these findings because within the Malaysian society–the Malays, Chinese, and Indians–all practice more characteristics of collectivist culture rather than individualist culture. This is best explained in terms of the culture-common concepts or *etic* and the culture-specific concepts or *emic*. Therefore, investigating the influence of family relationship factors on youth misbehaviors helps to suggest a prevention models for the families in such a heterogeneous collectivist culture.

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METHOD

Participants and procedures

Data were collected from seven secondary schools in an urban area located in Seremban district, in the state of Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia. There were 286 participants (male = 157 and female = 137) from various ethnic groups (Malay = 138, Chinese = 83, Indian = 73) with different levels of family socioeconomic status (lower socioeconomic = 106, middle socioeconomic = 129, high socioeconomic = 50). A cross-sectional survey research design was used. The samples were selected using purposive sampling within a stratified school framework for the high risk groups and systematically selected respondents within each strata using random starting point for the non-high risk groups.

This study use the Family Assessment Device (Epstein et al., 1983) , which measure the effectiveness of   family relationship factors :problem solving, communication, roles, affective responsiveness, affective involvement, behavior control, and general functioning). Second is the Family Time and Routine Index (McCubbin et al., 1996) which measure the family time spent together and routines: child routine, couple's togetherness, meals together, parent-child togetherness, family togetherness, relative connection, family chores, and family management. Third, the adapted Religious Practice (Regnerus, 2003) in Family was to assess the importance of religious and practices such as the importance of religion in life, the frequency of prayer, and the frequency of attending religious activities. Subscales of misbehaviors acts include substance abuse, property violation, school disciplinary action, force and other items not included in any other subscales, such as running away and watching pornography.

In analyzing the data, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to find the strength of relationship and magnitude. Stepwise regression was applied to investigate which is the best fit to the model in explaining the relationship between   family relationship dimensions and adolescent youth misbehaviors. A two-way ANOVA was used to determine interactions among gender and ethnic groups in relation to the youth misbehaviors level.

FINDINGS

Participants Profile

The descriptive data reported in this study are based on 286 respondents who were living with both parents as presented in Table 4.1. The sample consisted of 54.2% (n = 155) males and 45.8% (n = 131) females, of whom 62.5% (n = 179) were 16 years of age (*M* = 15.62, *SD* =.50). In terms of ethnicity groups, the sample explained the general population of Malaysia, with the Malays forming the majority 48.6% (n = 139) followed by the Chinese 28.3% (n = 81), and then the Indians 23.1% (n = 66). With regard to religion, there was no large difference within an ethnicity group, because mostly the Malays are Muslim, some of the Chinese are Buddhist and

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generally the Indians are Hindu. Within this sample a few Chinese and Indians reported that they are Christians.

The results show a total of 286 respondents reported that they live with both parents. Of these 98.3% (n = 281) live with both of their biological parents and a few others with a stepfather or stepmother. For the level of education, there are six levels, less than high school, some high school, high school graduate, some college, bachelor degree, and graduate degree (Master's and PhD). Some parents' highest education level was at less than high school. This is the third largest group. The percentage was 11.9% (n = 34) for father and 16.2% (n = 47) for mother. Less than high school level refers to those who have completed school at the elementary level or less. With greater emphasis on the importance of education by the government and awareness of the people, more students go to secondary school. However, some may chose to stop schooling for several reasons such as finding a job to support their family. Reports show that more mothers than fathers were at the some high school level.

Parents with high school graduates were the largest group. Over two–fifths of all parents were at this level with 41.3% (n = 116) for fathers and 44.4% (n = 127) for mothers. This means that these parents have passed the Malaysian Education Certificates (SPM) the main national examination.

Many kinds of occupations were reported for parents. This includes job such as laborers, clericals, production operators, drivers, technicians, supervisors, teachers, police, army, nurses, business, executives, professionals, retired, and housewives. Only one–fourth of the fathers were in the highly skilled areas such as business, executives or professional. In addition, the majority of mothers were housewives 57.7% (n = 165). Reports show that the majority of the fathers spent 8–16 hours at home daily. The mothers spent more than 16 hours at home daily which is expected because many of them are housewives. Therefore, this report indicated that the mothers spent more time at home than the fathers.

The level of socioeconomic status of the family was the parents' levels of education and parents' occupations. Results show that the majority of the respondents' families were in the middle socioeconomic status 45.1% (n = 129) and next is low socioeconomic status families with 37.7% (n = 106). The number of high socioeconomic status families is not many (17.8%) compared to the other two groups.

 Family relationship Dimensions Profile

In this section, descriptive statistics, means, and standard deviations are reported and discussed for scores on   family relationship dimensions (i.e. Family Assessment Devices, Family Time and Routine, and Religion in Family) and the youth misbehaviors level (Self-Report Misbehaviors Scale). The family relationship factors scores for three instruments were transformed so that the magnitude and direction ranged from 1.00 (unhealthy) to 4.00 (healthy).

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Family Assessment Device: The means and standard deviations of the subscales are discussed. Problem solving has a mean score of 3.09, communication has a mean score of 3, roles, with a mean score of 3.01, affective responsiveness with a mean score of 2.88, the lowest score is affective involvement, with a mean score of 2.85, and behavior control has a mean score of 2.98. General functioning, which assesses the overall health of the family, has the highest score with a mean of 3.12. Overall the means and standard deviations of the subscales of this sample are not very different. There was not much variability in the scores. The closeness of the means and standard deviations may indicate that these heterogeneous collectivist cultures share the same values and beliefs regarding the ways the family should function in these dimensions.

The Adapted Family Time and Routine Index: The means and standard deviations of subscales are discussed. On a 4–point Likert–type scale with 1 = False to 4 = True. Results show that the subscales ranged from 2.64 (relative's connection) to 3.47 (family chores). Child routines had a mean score of 2.88 Similarly, couple's togetherness has a mean score of 2.90. Next, meals together have a mean score of 2.96. Both parent-child togetherness and family togetherness have a mean score of 2.84. Under relative's connection, a mean score of 2.64 was reported. For family chores, respondents reported a mean of 3.47. This is the highest mean reported. Similarly, family management has a mean score of 3.33. The total mean family time and routine was 2.77.

Overall the means and standard deviations of the subscales of this sample are moderate. This shows that the respondents perceived that their families have spent time with family members on the above scales to a moderately healthy degree. There was not much variability in the scores. Similarly, in the scores of the FAD, the closeness of the means and standard deviations may indicate that these heterogeneous collectivist cultures share the same values and beliefs regarding the time the family should spend together.

The Adapted Religious Practice in Family (Regnerus, 2003).subscales is discussed. The total religious belief score has a mean of 3.68. The result for religious practice, interestingly, shows that the mean for personal prayer is 3.41 which is greater than the number attending services or activities which is 3.27. The total religious practice score has a mean of 4.15. Thus, this result shows that respondents reported their religious practice to be more important than their religious belief.

Overall means and standard deviations of the subscales of this sample are also moderate. This shows that the adolescent perceives that religious belief and practice in the family as moderately important in life. Furthermore, in the collectivist culture, the practice of the groups can bring a sense of unity to the community and obedience to the family errands. Thus, not performing the religious practices may at times bring shame to the family. In the collective culture, avoiding behaving in a way that could bring shame to their family is important.

Self–Reported Misbehaviors Scale: The means and standard deviations of the adapted Self-Reported misbehaviors Scale subscales are discussed. Responses on misbehaviors activities ranged from 1.19 (runaway) to 1.52 (school). School disciplinary has the highest mean of 1.52.

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Pornography had a mean score of 1.42. Force had a mean score of 1.32. Similarly, property violations have a mean score of 1.30. Substance abuse has a mean score of 1.28. The least is runaway, with a mean score of 1.19. The total mean score for all misbehaviors forms is 1.31.

The overall means and standard deviations of the subscales for the six misbehaviors subscales are low. Although the misbehaviors score for the sample as a group is low, within the sample, all the risky behaviors from skipped class to carrying weapons were committed by some of the respondents. Interestingly, the pornography subscale is the second highest score after the school disciplinary action subscale score. This indicates that there was interest among the youths to engage in watching pornography through the internet and videos. This is also an important finding because it may relate to other crimes such as sex crimes and sex assault. Compared to other misbehaviors, which can be seen such as truancy or fighting, pornography can be a private activity. However, it can become addictive and prevent youths from enjoying more productive entertainments.

The Relationship Between family relationship dimensions and Youth misbehaviors

The stepwise regression procedure indicates that problem solving is the smallest subset of predictor variables which have the strongest R^2 relationship to the criterion variable. In the first step, gender accounts for 10% of the variation in total misbehaviors score ($R^2 = .10$). Variables that enter in block 2 account for an extra 7% (17–10) of the variance in total misbehaviors score. Therefore, gender appeared to be a stronger predictor of misbehaviors than did problem solving. The *F*-ratio represents the ratio of improvement in the prediction that results from fitting the model. For the initial step, the value of $F(1,167) = 18.68$ on the total misbehaviors score was significant at $p < 0.05$. The next step the value of $F(2,167) = 16.64$ on the total misbehaviors score was significant at $p < 0.05$. Therefore, this study accepts the research hypothesis 1 and reject null hypothesis which predicted that there were linear relationships between youth misbehaviors levels and family relationship factors dimensions. This is because problem solving was found to be a significant predictor of misbehaviors among the youths ($p < 0.05$).

Youth misbehaviors between Gender and among Three Ethnic Groups

A two-way ANOVA was conducted to evaluate the effect of three ethnic groups and gender on total youth misbehaviors score. The means and standard deviations on total youth misbehaviors score for Youths grouped between gender and ethnicity are presented in Table1.1. The two-way ANOVA analysis yielded significant main effects for both gender $F(1,270) = 30.39$, and three ethnic groups, $F(2, 270) = 5.29$. Similarly, a significant interaction between gender and three ethnic groups, $F(2, 270) = 3.50$, was found (Table1.2).

Because the interaction between gender and ethnicity was significant, this study ignored the gender and ethnicity main effect and instead examined the ethnicity simple main effects, that is, the

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differences among three ethnic groups for males and females separately (Green, Salkind, & Akey, 2000). To control for Type I error across the two simple main effects, alpha was set at .025. There was no significant difference between ethnicity for females F (2, 264) = 1.98, p = .14, but there were significant differences for males F (2, 264) = 6.55, p = .002.

Table 1.1. Two-way ANOVA between Gender and Ethnicity on Total Youth misbehaviors Score

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Main Effects					
Gender	5.65	1	5.65	30.39	.00**
Ethnicity	1.97	2	0.98	5.29	.01**
Gender x Ethnicity	1.30	2	0.65	3.50	.03*
Error	49.09	264	0.19		
Total	520.45	270			

*$p < 0.05$ **$p < 0.01$

The significant simple main effects of ethnicity were further analyzed by pairwise comparisons to identify differences in means for males. Total youth misbehaviors scores for Chinese males (M = 1.65) were found to be significantly different from the Malay males (M = 1.41). This indicates that the Chinese males were involved more in youth misbehaviors when compared to the Malay males. Similarly, the Chinese males were found to differ significantly from the Indian males (M = 1.28) in total youth misbehaviors score which means that the Chinese males were involved in youth misbehaviors to a greater extent than Indian males. However, there was no significant difference in total youth misbehaviors score between the Malay and the Indian males (p =.53) (Table 1.2).

Table 1.2. Pairwise Comparison within Male Group across Ethnicity on Total Youth misbehaviors
Score

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Gender	Ethnicity (I)	Ethnicity (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	SE	*p* [s]
Male	Malay	Chinese	-.23	.09	.02**
		Indian	.13	.09	.53
	Chinese	Malay	.25	.09	.02**
		Indian	.38	.11	.00**

**p < 0.05
[s] Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni

Therefore this study rejects the null hypothesis, which stated that there were no significant differences in the total youth misbehaviors score between gender and across ethnicity groups and accepts the alternative hypothesis.

In addition, this study also obtains other findings that may explain the reasons why there is a significant difference for male Chinese on total youth misbehaviors score. Findings show that 35.7% (n = 18) Chinese males came from families with a low socioeconomic status, the largest group within the Chinese males. Thus, many of Chinese males' parents were having either less than high school or some high school. Chinese males who came from middle socioeconomic families are 19% (n = 15) and from high socioeconomic status families, 8% (n = 2). The number of Chinese males in this study, did not reflect the true number of Chinese males that goes to secondary schools in Seremban, Negeri Sembilan. Some Chinese families send their children to the Chinese private secondary schools located in Seremban. The Chinese private secondary schools use Mandarin as the medium of instruction and follow the Ministry of Education guidelines. Although the majority of Chinese males came from low socioeconomic status families which may be associated with youth misbehaviors, no further analysis was done to examine ethnicity when controlling for socioeconomic status. ANCOVA analysis could not be utilized because of the skewedness of the dependent variable. Future analysis using Kruskal-Wallis is suggested.

Findings are also obtained for the Family Assessment Device dimensions. The Family Assessment Device Dimensions scores for Chinese males are lowest *(M = 11.63)* compared to the other two ethnics groups, Malay *(M= 11.61)* and Indian *(M= 11.82)*. The Family Assessment Device scores for all the ethnic groups are presented in Figure 1. Figure 1 shows that Chinese males have lower scores for most of the Family Assessment Device dimensions. Figure 2 shows that Chinese males' family time and the problem solving family relationship factors dimension were among the lowest scores compared to the other two ethnic groups. For problem solving, the mean for Chinese males *(M = 2.63)* is lower than Malay males *(M = 3.14)* and Indian males *(M = 3.43)*. The highest score for male Chinese is the religious belief *(M = 3.28)*. However, when compared to Malay males *(M = 3.91)* and Indian males (M = 3.63), Chinese males are still the lowest. The family time for Chinese males *(M = 2.57)* is lower than Malay males *(M = 2.76)* and Indian males *(M = 2.92)*.

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In Figure 2 adapted Family Time and Routine subscales is presented. The figure shows Chinese males perceived their family as giving them too much time on family chores such as youths helping with housework ($M = 3.27$) and family management ($M = 3.16$), yet lowest time spent with parent-child relationships ($M = 2.45$) and meal togetherness ($M = 2.55$). This is interesting when compared with male Indians who have high scores for family chores ($M = 3.57$) and family management ($M = 3.31$), while the parent-child relationship is also high ($M = 3.27$). This figure shows that the parent-child relationship is important at this stage.

This may explain why the Indian group has the lowest mean for total youth misbehaviors score. This behavior indicates that the Chinese males spend more time in family chores and their families also spend more time in setting limits and monitoring the whereabouts of the youths (family management) but they are also perceived lacking of parent-child relationships.

Figure2: Means for Family Time and Routine Subscales for Male Group by Ethnicity

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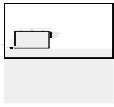
Figure2: Means for Family Time and Routine Subscales for Male Group by Ethnicity

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show that two-third of the secondary school students (66.8%) reported that they were not involved in misbehavior activities. Those who were involved in risky behaviors indicated that they were involved in breaking the school rules more than anything else. Truancy and cheating on examination had the highest mean ($M = 1.52$). Then followed watching pornography ($M = 1.42$), using force ($M = 1.32$), property violation ($M = 1.30$), substance abuse ($M = 1.28$) and running away ($M = 1.19$). The risky behaviors in the survey involved both status offenses (school, runaway, drinking alcohol, vandalism, pornography) and criminal offenses (property, substance abuse and force). Although no criminal arrests were made, the students' self-report of misbehaviors indicated that there were some youths in the schools who had engaged in criminal offenses.

Interestingly, for the misbehaviors subscales, pornography was the second highest score after school for both genders. This is a worrisome finding because it suggests that more youths in secondary school are exposing themselves to risky behaviors in their lives. Urban youths are

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facing greater risk with the advancement of technology in the cities and at home. Easier access to such materials through cyber cafés, magazines, and video shops give greater opportunities for the youths. This is consistent with Hadi's (2004, December) finding in Malaysia that there were more youths involved in pornography than before.

The level of family relationship dimensions can be considered moderate except for a few dimensions in some ethnic groups. More attention should be paid to these dimensions because family connectedness and a strong emphasis on the nature of the relationship between parents and children are highly valued in Malaysian society. Two of the family relationship dimensions, affective responsiveness and affective involvement, scored the lowest compared to others. This may indicate that the Malaysian families are less focused on emotional aspects in the family. This finding is consistent with findings of several local researchers who found that emotional neglect among youths was a major problem facing Malaysian youths (Chong, 2004, July 16; Boosting, 2004, May 23, Penjenayah, 2004, Mac 1). As Walsh (2003) stressed, family members need to be provided with material and emotional support. These are some of the protective factors that can help the family grow and achieve healthy family functioning, which is important because adolescent misbehaviors increase when the family functioning is poor.

The problem solving dimension was found to be the stronger predictor of youth misbehavior. This is an interesting finding because previous studies in Malaysia did not find that problem solving was a predictor of misbehaviors. They found that lack of family supervision, discipline and control, lack of father's role model, lack of mother's love and care (Suppiah, 1984, April), and communication (Taha et al., 2004) were stronger predictors. This finding may indicate that there is an issue with relationships in the family. The family may have less time to communicate with youths on matters pertaining to their needs. It may also indicate that today's youths need more help than did youths 10 years ago because now youths, especially those living in urban areas, are exposed to various opportunities, information, and interaction. It may be true that when a family does not attempt to listen and help to solve the adolescent's problems, the adolescent can experience emotional neglect (Chong, 2004, July 16).

Dodge (1980) and Dodge and Frame (1982) found that youths need skills such as problem solving and decision making to be able to come to the right conclusion and arrive at non-aggressive solutions. Researchers have found an empirical link between aggression and deficits in problem solving skills (Klein, et al. 1997). Results of the current study supported the theoretical framework (Bowen, 1978) that describes how family interaction patterns in the family influence other family members to act in the same manner. Thus, if one family member uses aggression as a way to solve a problem, then constructive problem solving may not be the culture of the family.

Gabarino (1995), McCubbin et al. (1996), Larson and Richards (1994), and Meadows and Blacher (2002) have all suggested that organization of time and routine as well as belief and practice of religion in the family, may help to promote healthy family functioning, which is an important implication to problem solving. These practices can serve as a training ground for youths to develop interpersonal problem solving skills. The family plays an important role in

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helping to shape an adolescent's interpersonal problem solving skills when the adolescent is deals with arising conflicts (Rutter, 1998). Therefore, as an aspect of parenting, today's families needs to encourage youths to look more seriously at problem solving (Kobak et al., 1993).

Other probable reasons for the higher misbehaviors among Chinese youths were harsh discipline (family management), lack of bonding and caring, and less time spent together (low family togetherness and parent-child relationship). Low scores for family togetherness ($M = 2.55$) and relative connection ($M = 2.48$) may become an important indication of misbehaviors. This is consistent with a previous study by Loeber and Dishion (1983) which found that the most powerful predictors of later misbehaviors were parenting variables, specifically those related to harsh, inconsistent discipline. This is supported by Patterson and Stouthamer-Loeber (1984) who found that parental mismanagement (i.e. harsh and inconsistent discipline) of early oppositional behaviors shapes further aggressive behavior involving increasingly coercive parent-child interactions.

Another factor which may be related to the delinquent behavior among Chinese males is associated with the social class of this group. Eighteen out of forty–two Chinese males came from families with a low socioeconomic status. This is a consistent finding that males of low socioeconomic status were significantly different to males in middle and high socioeconomic status. This result indicates that low socioeconomic status is associated with misbehaviors. Similarly, previous findings show that families experiencing economic difficulties may have weakened parental capacity for consistently applying social control (Kumper, 1999; Sampson & Laub, 1993). Similarly, Gordon et al. (1998) found that for many families economic stresses lead to decreasing parental support and lessened parental involvement as parents spend more time at work.

It is interesting to examine why parent-child relationships and family togetherness are low when the majority of mothers are housewives. It may be an issue of quality time in the family. This is consistent with the suggestion made by Meadows and Blacher (2002) and Larson and Richards (1994) that spending time as a family is important in achieving healthy family functioning. Furthermore, a lack of bonding with their families may cause youths to spend more time hanging out with peers, lessening the potential for family time. Hence, the present study found that misbehaviors among male Chinese youths may be attributed to several interrelated factors such as lack of bonding and caring, harsh discipline especially to sons.

As a conclusion, problem solving may become either risk or protective factor to youth misbehaviors. It can become a risk factor to misbehavior that when family have low ability to resolve and find solutions and making decisions while confronting problems faced by the family members and otherwise. Problem solving may become a protective factor in family when it teachers youth to learn about working to solutions which may through religion, behavior controls, good communications and affective response or involvement. When there many risk factors in the family such as lack of parent child relationships, harsh discipline, lack of religion belief and practices, low involvement of positive emotions, too much of family chores and spending more time on family management with less of caring on them, there are greater tendency for youth to involve in misbehaviors. This study has found the relationships.

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IMPLICATION FOR FAMILY COUNSELING

The present study demonstrates several important insights for those working with youth misbehaviors in the context of a heterogeneous collectivist culture. The ways in which risk factors and protective factors in families contribute to the development of misbehaviors is important to consider. Gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic differences in relation to misbehaviors and family relationships dimensions offer other interesting areas to be studied. The results have implications for counselors especially those involved with families are discussed below.

First, emphasizing problem solving as an important family relationship dimension is necessary for families. Problem solving skills are vital to youths. The study found that problem solving dimension to be stronger predictor of misbehaviors. Research has found that behavior can be modified by focusing on thinking processes rather than on the behavior itself. Some families may spend more time using harsh discipline rather than using problem solving solutions that develop the thinking of the youths. This finding implies a necessity to enhance problem solving in families (Shultz, 1999). Research found that understanding the youth's social cognition has become a springboard from which to study why some youths are socially competent and others are not. This approach to childrearing should be considered because cognitive thinking skills play a crucial role in the social adjustment of both parent and child. Thus, it has particular relevance for the primary prevention of later, more serious problems.

Third, the family counselor, being the only profession exclusively focused on solving problems of the family, should influence parents and youths in various ways. Problem solving skills should be taught and be learned. Success at solving problems is crucially dependent on psychological factors such as the confidence, concentration, and courage of the individuals. Besides, problem solving skills need to be included in family programs at schools and community. The counselors in collaboration with other teachers exhibit and develop problem solving skills in the context of cultural differences. Understanding the differences in problem solving skills between gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic subgroups may give better solutions to the misbehaviors problem. Therefore, counselors can help by empowering youths with problem solving skills, thus contributing to resiliency. Problem solving through dialogue is an area in which schools rarely recognize achievement or give credit. Many schools spend more time on fact-based drill than on real life problem solving situations. Developing the students' intellectual skills through approaches that address multiple dimensions of learning for secondary students in Malaysia is warranted.

Fourth, protective factors such as problem solving can become a risk factor when there are other family relationship dimensions become risk factors such as low religious belief and practices, lack of caring and less spending time with youths as well as low socioeconomic status families. For these families in particular and other socioeconomic status families in general, appropriate parenting classes with government financial support may provide more information on the misbehaviors issues and how the families can cope with the problems. By understanding

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these dynamics, school counselors could learn more about strategic interventions for these families. Additionally, when working with clients who have misbehaviors problems, mental health counselors may be able to listen with careful understanding. With this understanding, better ways to deal with the problems of various groups can be developed.

Counselors and other school staff members should be more understand and sensitive as to how to approach in a heterogeneous collectivist culture. It demands flexibility and skills when working across different culture or the culture-specific concept or *emic* of these collectivist groups in terms of family relationships. It is clearly important for schools counselor to have good working relationships with the families of their students. In a multicultural setting, however, this work involves more intention and more sensitivity. While, the dominant culture of school in Malaysia, which run largely on Malay, it clearly that counselor must reach out to promote and to bring many families of other ethnic into the school, literally and symbolically. They must create bi-directional link that respect the values and characteristic of each family as very important member to the school community. Further, this will able the counselor to understand the dynamic of the family of each family that comes from different background. As the family therapy theories have in common, with the most fundamental being the focus on the system, the system in the family as well as other system that may influence on the family.

Finally, comprehensive study of risk and protective factors for all levels including individual, peers, family, schools, and community should be conducted in the context of Malaysia so that risk factors can be reduced and protective factors developed. This could help parents establish a support network to assist them in rearing youths in today's society. Collaboration among several agencies such as police, schools, parents, companies, teenagers, and their communities would help support prevention on a broader scale.

In conclusion, research on risk and protective factors in the family for Malaysian culture is vital, particularly, as the number of youths involved in misbehaviors is increasing and thereby raises questions on the role of family in influencing this social issue. It is not possible to view the family in isolation because the family is imbedded within the community. Thus, additional research is needed to examine further the influence of family functioning as well as gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status to misbehaviors. Knowing the findings of this study promotes the effort to establish healthy family functioning which may well increase the quality of family life among the society. Subsequently, it can increase the public understanding of the importance of family and its impact of misbehaviors. Currently, Malaysia places great emphasis on the preservation of values that can strengthen the institution of the family to achieve Vision 2020, a national aspiration plan for Malaysia to become a fully developed country, a strong and resilient family system is identified as one of the nine challenges to be met.

The importance of research in this area helps to understand the effect of family's risk and protective factors on youth misbehaviors. As the world becomes more connected through technological advancements, issues facing the family in one country might be similar to what is happening in other parts of the world. Families everywhere share similar concerns and needs regarding youth misbehaviors. Researchers need to look for qualities that are universal (etic)

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among families as well as acknowledging the differences that exist in the families (emic). In terms of *etic* and *emic*, recognizing behavior from the point of view of people in other cultures can broaden as well as support the intervention models to reduce misbehaviors.

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