

Adolescent's Perception of Father's Leadership Style in the Family

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Abstract

A father's leadership style plays an important role in educating their young and building a happy family. Generally, there are three types of leadership styles for a family, authoritative (democratic), authoritarian (control) and laissez faire (permissive). Nevertheless there are some fathers who fail to properly lead their families and do not have the capacity to be exemplary towards their young due to their nature being coarse, ill-tempered, inconsiderate, irresponsible, unconcerned or indifferent, autocratic, dislike for discussion with their young and so on. Therefore, this research is conducted to study adolescents' perception of their father's leadership style. It is designed as a survey study with questionnaire as the main research instrument. Research respondents total 454 form four students randomly selected from five schools in Hulu Langat district of Selangor. Data obtained from questionnaires are descriptively analyzed using SPSS version 22. Research results find that item 'my father gives me freedom to choose my own friends so long as they invite me to goodness' scored the highest mean value (mean=3.53), followed by item 'my father gives me the freedom to choose my own ambition and career with his guidance' (mean=3.51). These findings show that authoritative leadership is more used by fathers in this research. The implications of this research may assist fathers to strengthen their leadership style in bringing up their adolescents to build their potential for excellence.

Keywords: Leadership style; Father; Perception; Adolescents; Authoritative.



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1. Introduction

The family unit is an important component in the process of building a society and state. The existence of a state is not complete without the family institution as it shapes the form of society to be built (Bunsong, 2018; Dasig, 2017; Lin and Yang, 2017; Melani *et al.*, 2015; Osahenvemwen and Odiase, 2016; Ratna *et al.*, 2007; Somsai *et al.*, 2015; Wartika *et al.*, 2015). In this regard, parents are important individuals in the family institution. They are responsible in playing a joint role to shape their offspring and build a happy family.

According to Nor (2001), parents' leadership style plays an essential role in determining family happiness. Parents' leadership style here refers to their practice of educating their young, including ways of bringing up, nurturing them, exercising control over them, communicating and interacting with them and so on (Ishak, 2004; Saahar *et al.*, 2017). Their style of leadership determines their way of raising their young in a happy atmosphere, cheerful, healthy, emotionally stable and able to socialize and relate to others. In addition, parental bond and control help to shape a good personality as well as an accurate self-concept among their young (Masuo and Cheang, 2017; Oetomo *et al.*, 2016; Zakiyah and Ismail, 2010).

Discussion of parental leadership style revolves around three main styles, which are authoritative (democratic) style, authoritarian (control) and 'laissez faire' (permissive) (Azizi Yahaya. and Mohd Sofie, 2010; Balan and Rahimah, 2008; Baumrind, 1966; Edano *et al.*, 2017; Eggen and Kauchak, 1994; Ganesen and Noraini, 2014; Mansouri and Mhunpiew, 2016; Slaby and Guerra, 1988). According to Eggen and Kauchak (1994), characteristics of authoritative style are being firm but loving and consistent. Parents in this category love to explain to their young and constantly give assistance and support. Thus, it is clear that the democratic way means firmness in control and educating in a good discussive and consultative way with the young.

The second parental leadership style is authoritarian. Its characteristics are directing and compliance to directives. Parents in this category are less friendly and do not encourage discussion to achieve mutual agreement (Eggen and Kauchak, 1994). Parents who practise this leadership style exercise high level of control but are less responsible. In addition, authoritarian parents direct or order the children on what must be done but do not feel responsible to explain the reason for the directives. They are very demanding and not responsive in fact they prefer their young to submit and obey. If a youngster disobeys, it will be punished. Open discussion or two-way instruction

between parents and their young is not encouraged because parents hold the opinion that youngsters may not questions, only accept and follow what they say (Balan and Rahimah, 2008). Therefore, eventhough parents want the best for their young, they are strict in telling and arranging their lives.

The third parental leadership style is '*laissez faire*' or permissive. Such parents follow a permissive style in giving their young full or absolute freedom. They seldom have any expectations or make any demands on their young (Eggen and Kauchak, 1994). It was stated by Ganesen and Noraini (2014), that '*laissez faire*' or permissive leadership style show that parents give the minimum of attention, are lenient in control and rules, and are less concerned towards their young. This group of parents give less attention to all or any behaviour of their youngsters.

Parents face conflict in choosing the best leadership style for their young. Sometimes leadership style is influenced by genetic, knowledge and environment factors. Parents who were exposed to authoritarian leadership style, for example, are prone to imitate their own parents' style of upbringing. Some change their leadership style for another because they do not want their young to become like them, that is, frequently under parental control. Clearly, leadership style is an important aspect in the family which determines a proper life development for youngsters. Thus, this research is conducted to identify adolescents' perception of the leadership style tendencies of their parents in the family. This finding may create awareness in fathers to always improve their leadership style in the family.

2. Literature Review

Past research on parental leadership style such as by Azizi Yahaya. and Mohd Sofie (2010), Wahl and Metzner (2012) and Taylor *et al.* (2004), studied the role of upbringing in the shaping of youngsters' behaviour. A study by Zakiyah and Ismail (2004) found that delinquent behaviour in youngsters is to some extent due to weak control by parents. Another study by Nor (2001) on the relation between youngsters' delinquent behaviour and style of upbringing found that students' breach of discipline in school is significantly related to parental style of leadership.

Tung and Yeh (2014) who studied parental leadership style and the way of feeding youngsters, found that an authoritative style was more effective in overcoming the problems of obesity and youngsters' health. Si *et al.* (2018) studied the relation between style of parental leadership and youngsters' creativity. Studies by Nik *et al.* (2012), Mohamad Rizuan bin Abdullah (2013), Azizi Yahaya. and Mohd Sofie (2010), Spera (2006) and Turner *et al.* (2009) examined the aspect of parental leadership style on academic achievement and motivation of youngsters. (Hamidah Binti Sulaiman, 2013) studied parental style of leadership and emotional intelligence of adolescents. Norhaniyanti (2011) researched on parental leadership style and adolescent learning and social problems.

Past research shows that parental leadership style has a relationship with youngsters in certain aspects such as in breaches of school discipline, health and diet problems, creativity, academic achievement and emotional intelligence. This clearly shows that parents play an important role in choosing the most effective style of leadership to educate their young in order to sustain a prosperous and happy life for them (Cross, 1979).

Although much has been researched on parental leadership style, few specifically focus on a fathers' role in the family such as done by Amla *et al.* (2010) who studied the level of a father's involvement in the learning development and self-concept of adolescents. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to specifically study adolescents' perception of the father's leadership role in the family. Study of a father's leadership style is an aspect which requires attention because the father is the head of the family and leader who will guide the family to happiness or misery. The findings of this research are important for fathers to identify weaknesses which need improvement toward effective family leadership, particularly in giving happiness and prosperity to their young.

3. Research Methodology

This research is designed as a survey study. The main research instrument is questionnaire. 454 reserach respondents were randomly selected among Form Four students of five secondary schools in Hulu Langat District of Selangor. The five secondary schools were randomly selected using the 'Fishbowl Draw' technique between the months of March to July 2016. The selected schools are Sekolah Agama Menengah Hulu Langat, Batu 10, Cheras, Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah, Jalan Cheras, Kajang, Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Jalan Reko, Kajang, Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Taman Tasik, Jalan Tasik Tambahan Ampang and Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Bandar Seri Putera, Persiaran Seri Putera 1, Bandar Seri Putera, Kajang. Data obtained in questionnaires was descriptively analysed using SPSS version 22. Before the actual research was administered, a pilot study was conducted to test the reliability of research instrument. 30 students of Sekolah Agama Menengah Hulu Langat, Selangor were selected to represent adolescents in this pilot study. By this method, the variable 'Adolescents' Perception of Father's Leadership Style'' achieved an alpha cronbach value of 0.742. This shows that the research instrument has a good and acceptable consistency and reliability.

4. Research Results and Discussion

The demographic background shows that the majority of respondents involved in this research are male students (52.9%, 240 persons). Female students made up 47.1% (214 persons). The frequency distribution and percentage of respondents based on gender are as in the following table:

Table-1. Gender

Gender	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Male	240	52.9%
Female	214	47.1%
Total	454	100.0%

Source: 2016 Questionnaire

Findings show that the majority of respondents in this research are aged 16 years (86.6%, 393 persons), followed by 17 years (12.6%, 57 persons) as well as ages 14 and 15 years respectively (0.4%, 2 persons). The reason for this is that most of the selected students are from among form four students with an average age of 16 years. The frequency distribution and percentage of respondents based on age are as in the following table:

Table-2. Age

Age	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
14	2	0.4%
15	2	0.4%
16	393	86.6%
17	57	12.6%
Total	454	100.0%

Source: 2016 Questionnaire

The majority of research respondents still have parents living together with them (89.4%, 406 persons), followed by students with divorced parents (7.3%, 33 persons) and students whose parents are deceased (3.3%, 15 persons). Frequency distribution and percentage of respondents based on marital status of parents are as in the following table:

Table-3. Marital Status of Parents

Status Of Parents	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Living Together	406	89.4%
Divorced	33	7.3%
Deceased	15	3.3%
Total	454	100.0%

Source: 2016 Questionnaire

In summary, the majority of research respondents are male students aged between 14 and 17 years and have parents living together with them. Only 7.3% of them have divorced parents.

One of the purposes of this research is to see the father's leadership style based on the adolescent's view or perception. Thus questionnaires were distributed to the adolescents for the researcher to summarize on the leadership style of respondents's fathers. Research findings show that the item with the highest mean value is 'My father gives me freedom to choose my own friends so long as they can invite me to goodness' (mean=3.53), followed by the item 'My father is someone who is concerned and responsible for me' (mean=3.51) and 'My father gives me the freedom to choose my ambitions and career with his guidance' (mean=3.51). The item 'My father allows me to play games, gadgets, computer and laptop as long as I do not neglect my prayers (solah) and studies' (mean=3.38) scored third highest place based on mean value.

Table-4. Adolescent's Perception of Father's Leadership Style

No.	Statement	Percentage (%) & Frequency (N)				Mean
		Very Untrue of Myself	Not True of Myself	True of Myself	Very true of Myself	
1	My Father gives me freedom to choose my own friends so long as they can invite me to goodness	1.1% (5)	2.6% (12)	38.8% (176)	57.5% (261)	3.53
2	My Father gives me freedom to choose my ambitions and career with his guidance	0.9% (4)	4.4% (20)	37.9% (172)	56.8% (258)	3.51
3	My Father is someone who is concerned and responsible for me	0.9% (4)	4.8% (22)	36.6% (166)	57.7% (262)	3.51
4	My Father allows me to play games/ gadgets/ computer/ laptop so long as I do not neglect my prayers (<i>solah</i>) and studies	2.2% (10)	7.0% (32)	41.6% (189)	49.1% (223)	3.38
5	My Father gets angry if I disobey his orders	5.5% (25)	24.0% (109)	49.3% (224)	21.1% (96)	2.86
6	My father gives me the freedom to make my own decisions	6.4% (29)	22.9% (104)	53.3% (242)	17.4% (79)	2.82
7	My father supports all my actions whether good or bad	18.7% (85)	48.0% (218)	27.8% (126)	5.5% (25)	2.20
8	My Father is not sensitive to my abilities	22.9% (104)	46.3% (210)	24.2% (110)	6.6% (30)	2.15
9	My father does not care whom I make friends with	26.0% (118)	40.7% (185)	25.3% (115)	7.9% (36)	2.15
10	My father likes to control me	25.1% (114)	44.7% (203)	22.5% (102)	7.7% (35)	2.13
11	My father is bossy	27.5% (125)	41.4% (188)	24.0% (109)	7.0% (32)	2.11
12	My father makes decisions without discussing with me	30.0% (136)	45.6% (207)	18.3% (83)	6.2% (28)	2.01

Source: 2016 Questionnaire

A democratic or authoritative leadership style is the most practised by fathers in this research. This is proven by 96.3% of respondents who agree to the item 'My father gives me freedom to choose my own friends so long as they can invite me to goodness' (mean=3.53) which scored the highest mean value. This finding shows that fathers care about who their adolescent makes friends with. They only allow their adolescents to make friends with someone who can lead them to goodness, and ask them to stay away from persons who may invite to evil and moral decline. This matter is taken seriously by fathers in this research because many adolescents lose direction or purpose in life due to the influence of friends. A study by Idris (1997) found that adolescents' involvement in free sex is due to the influence of friends. In addition, a study by Salasiah *et al.* (2012) also found that the problem of unmarried pregnant adolescents is also due to peer influence. This shows the role of parents is important to help adolescents not to be easily influenced by peers in matters which may spoil their future. 94.7% of research respondents agree with the item 'My Father gives the freedom to choose my own ambition and career with his guidance' with a mean value =3.51. This style conforms to the authoritative leadership style whereby parents are tolerant about their adolescents exercising their own choices but at the same time guide them so that they will not make mistakes. This is parallel with the view of Eggen and Kauchak (1994) who stated that parents with an authoritative leadership style have high expectations of their young but constantly give them assistance and support. Giving support and guidance is necessary for adolescents to achieve success. This statement is supported by Zulkifli *et al.* (2011) who found that communication and discussion between parents and adolescents contribute to 74.5% of good academic achievement.

In addition, the democratic or authoritative approach is clearly practised by fathers in this research when 94.3% of respondents agree with the item 'My Father is someone who is concerned and responsible for me' (mean=3.51). This finding is parallel with the research by Amla *et al.* (2010) who found that fathers are responsible for providing physical facilities and amenities as well as support for mothers in bringing up children. The aspect of fulfilling responsibility for the family is very important and emphasized in Islam, especially in the terms of providing maintenance and basic life necessities. Al-Tharairah and Mahmud Ahmad (2008) and Elia. (2000) stated that fathers bear the responsibility of seeking sustenance and providing maintenance for family members. This matter is consistent with al-Quran which obliges fathers to provide maintenance according to his ability (al-Quran 65:7).

This research finds that 90.7 % of respondents agree with the item ‘My father allows me to play games, gadgets, computer and laptop as long as I do not neglect my *solah* (prayers) and studies ’ (mean=3.38). Parallel with the technology era, it is difficult for fathers to prevent their young from playing games, using gadgets and surfing the internet in today’s world in which mostly everything is around the cyberworld and technology. Preventing the young from using technology and the cyberworld is like making the adolescent become a “frog under coconut shell” and not in keeping with the times. This is one of the frequently debated hot issues. Parents are in a dilemma whether to allow or prevent their young from using internet or gadgets at home. The reality is that parents are currently faced with youngsters who are obsessed with technology (Mohamad Khairi *et al.*, 2016).

Signaling to adolescents so that they do not neglect their *solah* (prayers) and studies is a good effort in preventing them from being carried away with the cyberworld and neglecting their responsibilities as Allah’s servants and as students of school or university. This conforms to the authoritative style as fathers practising it may compromise but at times are firmly in control (Eggen and Kauchak (1994).

Research results also find that a number of fathers practise the authoritarian leadership style. 70.4% of research respondents agree with the item ‘My father gets angry if I disobey his orders’ (mean=2.86). This is followed by 30.3% who agree with the item ‘My Father likes to control me’ (mean=2.13), 31% agree with the item ‘My Father is bossy’ (mean=2.11) and 24.5% agree with the item ‘My father makes decisions without discussing with me’ (mean=2.01). These conform to characteristics of an authoritarian leadership style as the father likes to control, gives orders, gets angry if disobeyed and does not discuss with his adolescent before making decisions. A father who chooses this style of leadership does not think it necessary to discuss with his adolescent as the latter must comply with whatever decision made by parents (Balan and Rahimah, 2008).

Another study explains clearly why the authoritarian style is not so good to practise. This is proven in a study by Bronte-Tinkew *et al.* (2006) which found that this leadership style is closely related to negative characteristics in adolescents such as drug abuse and delinquency. Adolescents were found to develop traits such as negative thinking, are frequently rebellious, vengeful, worried, anxious, reserved, shy, having low self-concept and less motivated to be independent (Azizi Yahya. *et al.*, 2010).

Research results also finds that some fathers practise a permissive leadership style. 70.7% of respondents agree with the item ‘My Father gives me freedom to make my own decisions’ (mean=2.82), followed by 33% of respondents who agree with the item ‘My Father supports all my behaviour, whether right or wrong’ (mean=2.20) and 33.2% of respondents agree with the item ‘My Father does not care with whom I make friends with’ (mean=2.15). This finding shows that the father allows full or absolute freedom to the adolescent to make decisions, behave and to choose his friends. This also shows that the father gives little attention to his adolescent or could not care less (Ganesen and Noraini, 2014).

Past research shows that the permissive leadership style is not so good to practise because of its negative effects on adolescents. This is proven in a study by Tur-Porcar (2017) who found that the permissive style may cause adolescents problems of internet addiction due to absence of control and neglect. Another study by Slaby and Guerra (1988) found that the permissive style causes the young to be easily involved in deviant behaviour and delinquency due to lack of control and much environmental influence. This will produce adolescents who love unfettered freedom, are less matured, less self-reliant and have less sense of responsibility. If this matter is left unchecked in the family, adolescents will grow up not having good morals and may fail in life.

On the whole, this research finds that many fathers practise an authoritative leadership style (mean value between 3.38 – 3.53) but some fathers also practise the authoritarian style (mean value is between 2.01-2.86) and permissive style (mean value between 2.15-2.82). Results of discussion explain that parents should avoid practising the authoritarian and permissive styles because of the bad effects on their adolescents. A study by Ebrahimi *et al.* (2017) proved that these latter styles gave rise to depressed feelings and desire to commit suicide Nunes and Mota (2017) among adolescents. Parents need to learn various techniques in the authoritative style which enable developing pro-social skills in adolescents Aranguren and Bertella (2016), make them more energetic, diligent, have a high level of curiosity, dedicated and able to control themselves (Baumrind, 1966). This matter needs to be given due attention so that parents may change the way they bring up their adolescents so that can avail themselves the vast opportunity to achieve excellence in their future life.

5. Conclusion

Research results find that most fathers practise the authoritative (democratic) leadership style and not many fathers practise the not so good leadership styles, namely the authoritarian and permissive styles. This explains that fathers realize that they are leaders of their families and this needs to be exposed so that they are more inclined to practise the authoritative leadership style because many studies show that it has good effects on adolescent development to achieve success in life, in comparison to the authoritarian and permissive leadership styles.

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