

# REDICTORS OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF ADOLESCENTS FROM URBAN AND RURAL AREAS IN MALAYSIA

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### ABSTRACT

This study is intended to identify social responsibility of adolescents from both urban and rural areas and their unique predictors. Sample comprised of 935 daily secondary schools adolescents ages between 16 to 17 years residing in the urban and rural areas in Kedah, Kelantan, Johor, Sabah, and Selangor. Data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire comprising several measures: Social Self-Efficacy Scale (Muris 2001), Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (Armsden and Greenberg 1987), a modified version (Afriani and Rozumah 2011) of Social and Personal Responsibility Scale (Conrad and Hedin 1981). Findings revealed that adolescents from rural areas have higher social responsibility than those from urban areas. Sex, social self-efficacy, and mother and peer attachments were predictive of social behavior of adolescents from both urban and rural adolescents. The study concludes that personal and family factors play significant roles in shaping adolescents' social responsibility behavior. Findings imply that any efforts in cultivating social responsibility in adolescents should consider factors within the proximal context of the adolescents.

Keywords: Social Responsibility, Adolescents, Attachment Relationships, Social Self-Efficacy, Urban, Rural

### ABSTRAK

Kajian ini mengenal pasti tanggungjawab sosial remaja dari kawasan bandar dan luar bandar dan prediktor uniknya. Sampel terdiri daripada 935 remaja sekolah menengah harian berumur antara 16 hingga 17 tahun yang tinggal di kawasan bandar dan luar bandar di Kedah, Kelantan, Johor, Sabah dan Selangor. Data dikumpul dengan menggunakan soal selidik tadbir-sendiri yang mengandungi beberapa alat pengukuran: Skala Sosial Keberkesanan-kendiri (Muris 2001), Inventori Kerapatan Ibu Bapa dan Rakan (Armsden dan Greenberg 1987), versi yang diubah suai (Afriani dan Rozumah 2011) Skala Sosial dan Tanggungjawab Peribadi (Conrad dan Hedin 1981). Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa remaja dari kawasan luar bandar mempunyai tanggungjawab sosial yang lebih tinggi daripada mereka yang dari kawasan bandar. Jantina, keberkesanan-kendiri sosial, dan kerapatan ibu dan rakan sebaya adalah prediktor tingkah laku sosial remaja dari bandar dan luar bandar. Kajian ini menyimpulkan bahawa faktor personal dan keluarga memainkan peranan penting dalam membentuk tingkah laku tanggungjawab sosial remaja. Penemuan ini memberi implikasi bahawa sebarang usaha untuk memupuk tanggungjawab sosial dalam kalangan remaja perlu mengambil kira faktor-faktor proksimal dalam konteks remaja.

Kata Kunci: Tanggungjawab Social, Remaja, Hubungan Kerapatan, Efikasi Kendiri, Bandar, Luar-Bandar

### INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a demanding stage in life. In addition to completing various developmental tasks, adjustments to new environments and responsibilities are expected during this life stage. Achieving success in these early life demands will lead adolescents to better future outcomes. Numerous studies have focused on adolescents, but most tend to study on negative outcomes such as their involvement in drugs, bullying and vandalism (Rokiah, Muhammad Fuad, and Zaidah 2010; Rozumah et al., 2005). Henceforth, this deficit-approach in understanding adolescents may fail to acknowledge the potentials that existed in adolescents. Thus, this study was conducted to probe into the strengths aspect of adolescents development specifically, social responsibility.

A socially responsible adolescent in this study refers to a person who is concerned with the welfare and respects of others, as well as avoid negative behaviors and uphold positive values. Social responsibility is well recognized as an important developmental task and has become an integral part in adolescent's identity development towards becoming a productive adult in the future (Santrock 2008). Productive adults are the outcome of adolescents who successfully embraced social responsibility and feel belong to the community in which they live in. Furthermore, social responsibility is related to adolescents' achievement orientation (Nakamura and Watanabe-Muraoka 2006) which subsequently foster good conduct (Youniss, McLellan, and Yates 1997). Social responsibility could also be perceived as personal investment in the well-being of others and society as a whole. In other words, adolescents who have attained social responsibility would be more responsive and supportive of developmental efforts at all levels (i.e., social, political issues, integrity of action and active participation).

The extent to which adolescents embraced the value of being socially responsible is shaped by their own personal and family characteristics. Past studies found that personal characteristics such as sex (Eagly and Fabes 1986; Nakamura and Watanabe-Muraoka 2006; Scales, Blyth, Berkes, and Kielsmeier 2000), level of self-esteem, and self-efficacy (Thomaes, Bushman, Stegge, and Olthof 2008) would shape adolescents' social conscientious differently. For example, some studies (Nakamura and Watanabe-Muraoka 2006; Scales et al., 2000) found that female adolescents tend to exhibit greater level of socially responsible behavior as compared to males.

Meanwhile, family characteristics such as parent-child attachment relationships remain important throughout adolescents' developmental process. As



past theory and research have highlighted, it is important to understand adolescents within the ecosystems in which they interact (Bronfenbrenner 1979; Bronfenbrenner and Morris 1998; Hurtup and Van Lieshout 1995). From the ecological perspective as aptly pointed out by Bronfenbrenner (1986) social address is not the only factor that influences the way a person behaves, but what goes on within that address. Earlier studies (e.g., Belsky 1984; Bronfenbrenner and Morris 1998) have provided an ample evidence on the vital influence of factors within the ecology (near and far environment) of an individual on his developmental outcomes, such as characteristics of himself (personal) and his family social contexts as well as the way he was or is parented. In short, to successfully inculcate the value of social responsibility among adolescents, it is deemed necessary to investigate on the interplay between the characteristics of the adolescents, the social contexts in which his family is embedded, and the parent-child (adolescents) interaction in shaping social responsibility behavior.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

To date, little is known on the extent of social responsibility engagement amongst the adolescents in Malaysia, including its unique predictors. Therefore, it is of interest to the present study to determine the levels of social responsibility among a representative sample of urban and rural adolescents in Malaysia, and its contributing factors (i.e., personal characteristics: sex, social self-efficacy, peer attachment; family social contexts: mother and fathers' age, number of children, and mother and father attachments). Based on this general objective above, the study addressed two specific objectives: 1). to identify rural and urban adolescents' perception of their social responsibility, and 2). to determine what factors uniquely predict the adolescents' social responsibility

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Sample

A total of 935 Secondary Four (16 to 17 years) students from urban (n=517) and rural (n=418) areas were recruited from daily government secondary schools in the state of Kedah, Kelantan, Johor, Sabah, and Selangor. The respondents were selected using the probability proportional to size (PPS) cluster sampling technique. This technique enabled sample selection to be proportionate to the population of the selected states and its localities. A summary of the descriptive characteristics of the respondents is discussed in the results section.

### **Procedures**

The selected schools received a study packet consisting of a letter, consent form and information pertaining to the study. Prior to data collection, permission from Ministry of Education Malaysia, State Education Departments, and Principals of each schools were obtained. Using a self-administered questionnaire, respondents were asked to report on their personal and family demographic profiles, social self-

efficacy, parents and peer attachments, and social responsibility. The questionnaire was administered in groups at the respective schools of the identified respondents.

### Measures

### Adolescents' Personal Characteristics

Adolescents' personal characteristics are based on their report on sex, social self-efficacy, and peer attachment. Social Self-efficacy was assessed based on the adolescents' responses to a list of 7 items on the Social Self-Efficacy Scale (Muris 2001) pertaining to one's ability to negotiate social situations and produce successful social interactions. A sample item from the scale is, "How well can you become friends with other youth?" All items were rated from 1(Not Very Well) to 5(Very Well). Adolescents' scores were determined by summing up all individual item scores. Higher scores indicate higher social self-efficacy.

Adolescents' peer attachment was assessed using the Peer subscale from the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) (Armsden and Greenberg 1987). The Peer subscale comprised 25 items and assessed adolescents' attachment to peers on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (never true) to 5 (always true). A sample item from the scale is, "I like to get my friends point of view on things I'm concerned about". Total scores were calculated by summing all items after reverse scoring negative worded items. Higher scores indicate closer attachment to peers.

### Family Social Contexts

Information on family social contexts was collected based on adolescents report on their parents' age, number of children and attachments to their parents. Attachment to parents was measured using the Parent subscales of the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) (Armsden and Greenberg 1987). The Parent subscale comprises two sets of inventory, i.e., for mother, and father. A sample item from the scale is, "My Mother/Father expects too much from me". Higher scores indicate closer attachment to mother/father.

### Social Responsibility

The adolescents' social responsibility was assessed using a modified version (Afriani and Rozumah 2011) of the Social and Personal Responsibility Scale (Conrad and Hedin 1981). The scale includes 21 items rated from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). A sample item from the scale is, "I am like some youths who feel bad when they let people down who depend on them". The respondents' scores were determined by summing up all individual item scores after reversed coding negative items. Higher scores represent higher social responsibility.

### Reliability

Table 1 presents the alpha coefficients of all the measures that were utilized in the present study. Across groups, all measures reported coefficients values ranging from moderate to high. Thus, the measures adequately capture the intended study variables.

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Table 1	1:	Reliability	of M	easures
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	Urban	Rural
Social Responsibility	0.656	0.636
<b>Mother Attachment</b>	0.869	0.880
Father Attachment	0.880	0.879
Peer Attachment	0.835	0.850
Social Self-Efficacy	0.652	0.550

## Data Analysis

The data was initially screened using exploratory data analysis (EDA) in order to detect errors, identify outliers and explore its normality distribution. Analyses using descriptive statistics were conducted to provide information on the respondent's profile, family social contexts, and social responsibility. Pearson correlation was also calculated to explore the magnitude and direction of relationships between the study variables. In addition, multiple regressions were computed to determine the variables that uniquely predict the respondent's social responsibility.

#### RESULTS

## Summary of Respondents Characteristics

A total of 55.3% of the urban adolescents were females while 44.7% were males. Similarly, more than half (63.2%) of the rural respondents were females, and the rest (36.8 %¬) were males. Respondents from urban and rural areas came from various ethnic and religious backgrounds. Most of the urban adolescents were Malays (45.8%), followed by Chinese (38.3%) and Indians (11%). Likewise for rural adolescents as a large number (67%) of them were Malays, Chinese (11.2%) and Indians (5.5%). A large number of urban and rural respondents were found to have middle-aged parents. The mean age of urban respondents' mother was 45.54(SD. =5.33) and father 49.23(SD. =5.94), respectively. Meanwhile, the average age of rural respondents' mother was 44.23(SD. =5.82) and father 48.67(SD. =6.45), respectively. Quite a large proportion (67.8%) of the urban respondents (M=3.73, SD. =1.63) and of rural (62.5%) respondents (M=4.21, SD. =1.85) came from a moderate size family wherein number of children ranged from three to five. Due to the inability of the respondents to provide an accurate report on family income, this information was excluded from the present analysis.

### Descriptive Findings

At the initial stage of the analysis, mean differences of the major variables of interest across locality were examined. As presented in Table 2, rural adolescents reported stronger attachment relationships to mother, father, and peers than their urban counterparts. Additionally, rural adolescents were found to have higher social responsibility compared to urban adolescents. However, no significant differences in self-efficacy between urban and rural adolescents were reported.

Variables	Locality	N	Mean	SD	t-value
Q:_1 Q_1CCC	Urban	517	23.85	3.84	1 27
Social Self-efficacy	Rural	418	24.16	3.62	-1.27
Peer Attachment	Urban	517	86.17	11.09	2.4*
Peer Attachment	Rural	418	87.98	11.89	-2.4*
Mother Attachment	Urban	512	88.97	13.44	-2.9***
Mother Attachment	Rural	413	91.66	14.03	-2.9****
Father Attachment	Urban	480	87.54	13.85	-1.93*
Father Attachment	Rural	394	89.37	14.06	-1.93**
Social Dognanaihility	Urban	517	67.24	5.51	-3 14***
Social Responsibility	Rural	418	68.38	5.54	-3.14

Table 2: Study Variables Differences across Urban and Rural Adolescents

Note. p\*<0.05, \*\*0.01, \*\*\*0.001, M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation

## **Correlation Findings**

Table 3 presents the correlational findings of the present study. Results revealed that sex (dummy coded as 0=male, 1=female), social self-efficacy, and mother, father, and peer attachments have significant relationships with urban adolescents' social responsibility. Since the relationships are significant, the findings tend to indicate that greater social responsibility is more likely to be present among female adolescents in the urban areas. Furthermore, urban adolescents with greater social self-efficacy are more likely to be more socially responsible. In addition, urban adolescents with strong attachment to parents and peers tend to be more socially responsible than adolescents with poor attachment relationships.

Similar findings were revealed for rural adolescents, where sex, social self-efficacy, and attachments relationships to parents and peers were found to significantly correlate with adolescents' social responsibility. Findings indicate that female adolescents from rural areas tend to have greater social responsibility. Moreover, adolescents from rural areas with high self-efficacy and strong attachment to their parents and peers are more socially responsible. In addition, number of children in the family had positive and significant relationship to the development of rural adolescents' social responsibility. This indicates that rural adolescents who come from large families tend to be more socially responsible.

Table 3: Pearson correlations for adolescents' personal characteristics, and

	Social responsibility		
Variables	Urban	Rural	
	r	r	
Adolescent's Personal Characteristics			
Sex (0, 1)	0.09*	0.13**	
Social self-efficacy	0.25**	0.30*	
Peer attachment	0.29**	0.33**	
Family Social Context			
Mother's age	0.01	0.07	
Father's age	-0.06	-0.02	
Number of children	0.05	0.11*	
Mother attachment	0.18**	0.20**	
Father attachment	0.15**	0.14**	

family social context with respondent's social responsibility

Note. p\*<0.05, \*\*0.01

## **Predictors of Social Responsibility**

Multiple regression analysis using forced-entry procedure was conducted to predict adolescents' social responsibility. All the personal and family social context variables were included in the regression analysis. Of all eight variables, four variables were revealed to be uniquely predicting adolescents' social responsibility in the urban area: adolescents' sex, social self-efficacy, and mother and peer attachments (see Table 4). The regression model was highly significant (F = 11.05, p  $\leq .001$ ) and accounted for 17% of the variance in adolescent's social responsibility score. These findings suggest that female adolescents with higher social self-efficacy and secure attachment with their mothers and peers tend to be more socially responsible compared to male adolescents in urban areas.

Variables	Social responsibility (Urban	
	Standardized coefficient (	
Sex	0.124**	
Social Self-efficacy	0.195***	
Peer attachment	0.229***	
Mother's Age	0.054	
Father's Age	110	
Number of Children	.028	
Mother attachment	.162*	
Father attachment	043	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.157	
$\mathbf{F}$	11.05***	

Table 4: Predictors for urban adolescents' social responsibility

Note. \* $p \le .05$ , \*\* $p \le .01$ , \*\*\* $p \le .001$ 

As presented in Table 5, results obtained for rural adolescents were almost similar to the urban sample. Out of all (8) the variables entered into the regression analysis, four (sex, social self-efficacy, and mother and peer attachments) were found to be unique predictors to the adolescents' social responsibility. The linear combination of these variables was highly significant (F = 11.80,  $p \le .001$ ). The model accounted for 21% of the variance in adolescents' social responsibility score. Results indicate that female adolescents from rural areas with higher level of social self-efficacy, and have greater attachment with their mothers and peers, tend to exhibit better social responsibility than their male counterparts from rural areas.

Table 5: Predictors for rural adolescents' social responsibility

Variables	Social responsibility (Urban)		
	Standardized coefficient (β)		
Sex	0.138**		
Social Self-efficacy	0.272***		
Peer attachment	0.216***		
Mother's Age	0.111		
Father's Age	125		
Number of Children	.055		
Mother attachment	.224*		
Father attachment	139		
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.191		
F	11.80***		

Note.  $p \le .05, p \le .01, p \le .001$ 



### **DISCUSSIONS**

Research often portrayed that rural adolescents are more exposed to social disorganization and eventually become involved in unhealthy behaviors, such as substance use (Nasim, Fernander, Townsend, Corona, and Belgrave, 2011) and community violence (Edwards 1999). Nonetheless consistent with cultural values uphold and strongly practice particularly by rural Malaysians, results of the present study showed that adolescents from the rural area tend to possess better social responsibility than those from the urban area. This finding is supported by past research which indicated that rural adolescents tend to build a strong connection with their community and appreciate the rural lifestyle (Petrin, Farmer, Meece, and Byun 2011). It should be noted that, adolescents' abilities, beliefs and values are reflected by the environment that they live in an ongoing transactional process (Bergman, Magnusson, and El-Khouri 2003).

From the multivariate findings, adolescents' personal and family social contexts characteristics were found to be related to the adolescents' social responsibility. These findings seemed to suggest that adolescents' personal characteristics (i.e., sex, social self-efficacy, and peer attachment) and family social context (i.e., mother attachment) played significant roles in fostering the development of social responsibility. The findings were consistent with past research where female adolescents were reported to have greater sense of social responsibility than males (Nakamura and Watanabe-Muraoka 2006). As suggested by Nakamura and Watanabe-Muraoka, females may have more awareness on responsibility than their counterparts, thus are more attentive to social problems within the society.

Furthermore, this study found that adolescents with high social self-efficacy are more socially responsible. Results were in line with past research that emphasized the importance of social self-efficacy as one of the essential self-regulatory factors that facilitate adolescents to deal with various developmental outcomes (Estévez, Murgui, and Musitu 2009). Adolescents with high social self-efficacy are less likely to be involved in antisocial behavior and are more likely to develop better social responsibility.

Other than social self-efficacy, this present study underscores the importance of peer attachment relationships in adolescents' social development. Way (2011) noted that social and emotional support given by peer throughout adolescence will strongly contribute to adolescents' social outcomes. Consistent with earlier research on the significant influence of mothers as primary caregivers (Bowlby 1988), mothers from both urban and rural subsamples were found to have significant impact on the development of adolescents' social responsibility. These findings parallel results from the study conducted by NICHD Early Child Care Research Network (2006) which indicated that adolescents who experienced secure attachment during the early years were more likely to develop a good foundation in their later life.

### **CONCLUSION**

Conceptually, adolescents' social responsibility is predicted by multi dimensions, those of which discussed in this study were adolescents' personal (i.e., sex, social self-efficacy, and peer attachment) and family social contexts (mother attachment) characteristics. Thus, understanding potential influences on adolescents' social responsibility could be useful not only for parents, but also educators, community, and policy makers. This research provides evidence on the influence of parents and peers on adolescents' social responsibility. This information may help to increase parents' awareness on the needs to improve their quality of parental attachment in order to foster adolescents' social responsibility behavior. Additionally, the findings have implications for policy makers in formulating family policy and planning parenting programs.

The present study also points to the importance of social self-efficacy in enhancing adolescents' social responsibility. Social self-efficacy and social responsibility are important in the development of successful adolescents. Therefore, prevention and intervention programs for urban and rural areas may need to include strategies on the development of social self-efficacy as one of its focus which could subsequently help to promote the sense of social responsibility among adolescents. The Malaysian government in particular, Ministry of Youth and Sports may consider designing social program such as volunteering program, social service and other community based program that is deemed crucial in improving adolescents' social responsibility.

The current findings should be interpreted with several limitations in mind. First, this study used self-report measures in order to obtain information related to the adolescents'. Thus, the reliability of the information obtained depended solely on the honesty of the respondents. In addition, this is a cross sectional study. The sample was collected at one particular time and thus underlying interference cannot be determined. Hence, future study could be improved by conducting longitudinal method in order to obtain more in-depth information on the development of social responsibility in adolescents.

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