

## Family Resources in Determining Maternal Mental Health and Parenting Style in Predicting Child Behavioral Problems

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**Abstract.** This study examines the effect of family resources in predicting maternal health and her parenting style resulting in behavioral problems in children. The study is based on a sample of 40 mothers with children ages between 7-12 years old from surrounding Klang Valley. The hypothesis could be that children behavioral problems are due to the maternal parenting style. Inadequacy in family resources predicts directly or indirectly the mental health of mothers and her parenting style. This could be due to the direct effects of family resources on the maternal mental health.

Key words: family resources, maternal health, parenting style, child behavior

**Abstrak.** Kajian ini meneliti pengaruh sumber daya keluarga dalam memprediksi kesehatan ibu dan gaya pengasuhannya yang menghasilkan perilaku bermasalah anak. Sampel ( $N = 40$ ) adalah ibu dengan anak berusia antara 7-12 tahun dari daerah Klang Valley. Hipotesisnya adalah perilaku bermasalah anak disebabkan oleh gaya pengasuhan ibu. Kurangnya sumber daya keluarga memprediksi secara langsung atau tak langsung kesehatan mental para ibu dan gaya pengasuhannya. Ini mungkin disebabkan oleh pengaruh langsung sumber daya keluarga terhadap kesehatan mental ibu.

Kata kunci: sumber daya keluarga, kesehatan ibu, gaya pengasuhan, perilaku anak

Children are part and parcel of unit family. The dynamics of the family greatly influence children behavior. The inter-parental interactions and conflicts could be an indirect influence on the children behavior. Children behavior are learned and conditioned through time. There is an increasing concern about inter-parental conflict on children's behavior. Furthermore, marriages are most discordant during the child rearing years (Belsky & Pensky, 1988), particularly during infancy and early childhood (Belsly & Rovine, 1990). Thus, during the child rearing years, interpersonal relationship between spouses, intra-family support and childcare are the resources needed in the family. Inter-parental support is associated with the development of children's behavior whereas inter-parental conflict is more closely associated with children behavior problems (Emery & O'Leary, 1984). There are wide ranges of children's behavior problems especially externalizing disorders (e.g. aggression and non compliance) but also internalizing disorders (e.g. depression). Thus, the resources needed in a family could indirectly influence the children's behavior.

Currently, most mothers are employed and need a housemaid to carryout her duties. Formally, recom-

mendation is made that mothers should not go out to work and daycare should be abolished (World Health Organization Expert Committee on Mental Health, 1951) Subsequent research indicated that neither maternal employment nor daycare constitute major risk factor for children (Zigler & Gordern, 1986). There are evidences that poverty makes good family function more difficult, and hence it plays a role in the causal chain leading to conduct disorders.

Subsequently, mothers who are full-time housewives needed support too, especially when there are a number of children in the family. The role of mother hood could be very stressful. This could be due to the suggestion that the quality of father-child relationship is more consistently associated with the quality of inter-parental relationship as compared to the quality of the mother-child relationship. This is because the paternal role is less well articulated and defined by social convention (Belsky, Youndblade, Rovine, & Volling, 1991) than the maternal role. Generally, fathers have fewer opportunities to acquire and practice the skills central to care giving activities than mothers and thus benefited from spousal cooperation and support (Parke & Tinsley, 1987) Thus, a fathers cooperation and support are