

# Why I Trust My Father? : In the Eyes of Malaysian Adolescents

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**Abstract**—This study aims to investigate how much both son and daughter trust their father and what are the underlying reasons they trust their father. The results revealed five main reasons why Malaysian adolescents trust their father. Those reasons are related to the role of father, father-child relationship, father's characteristics, father's nurturing nature and father's attitude and behavior. A total of 1022 students (males = 241, females = 781) from one of public university in Sabah, Malaysia participated in the study. The participants completed open-ended questionnaires developed by Kim (2008), asking how much the adolescents trust their father, and the reasons why they trust their father. The data was analysed by using the indigenous psychology method proposed by [1]. Findings of this study revealed the pattern of trust towards father for both Malaysian male and female adolescents. The results contributed new information about Malaysian adolescents' trust towards their father from the indigenous context. The implications of finding will be discussed.

**Keywords**—Adolescent, Father-child relationship, Indigenous Psychology, Trust.

## I. INTRODUCTION

TRUST involves two or more parties, which consist of the trustor and the trustee. On a daily basis, people encounter numerous interpersonal interactions in which trust is essential [2], [3]. The same concept goes to a father-child relationship which also involves trust in order to live and cooperate [4]. Basic trust starts from the home which is a process involved parents-child relationship and it continues to develop and extended to larger social and interpersonal interactions such as in school, college, work place and the community to name others [5].

Parents play an important role in an adolescent's life simply because they are the closest person to them while growing up and thus. Part of that, a father has a crucial role for his children because a father is associated with his children's

development in terms of social, intellectual and other psychological elements in a child's life [6], [7]. Parents "provide unique resources not provided by peers or other adults" [8]. At an adolescent stage, the role of a parent is significant role as at this stage they are exploring new social needs than any other stages of their life. Reference [6] mentioned that the adolescents' closeness towards their father was associated with close relationship with the father, admire their father, father as a source moral support, advice and practical help.

Different cultures has different concept of interpersonal relationship which indirectly explain the concept of trust. Examples of concept used in some East Asian countries is the concept of *Jung* (attachment) by the Korean [9], concept of *Guanxi* (relationship) in Chinese [10], the concept of *Amae* in Japan [11], and the concept of *Asih*, *Asah* and *Asuh* in Indonesia [12]. As such, it is interesting to know how much Malaysian adolescents trust their parents and what the underlying reasons they trusted their parents are.

## II. METHODOLOGY

### A. Participants

Data were collected from 1,022 undergraduate students (males= 241, females= 781) from one of the public universities in Malaysia with the age range of 19 years old to 31 years old.

### B. Measures

Data were collected using a 5-point scale close-ended question (1= not at all to 5= very much) and an open-ended questions developed by Kim (2008) [13]. The question were "How much do you trust your father?" and "Based on your relationship with your father, state the reasons why you trust your father?"

### C. Data Analysis

The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics to report the degree of trust between males and females. Chi-square test was employed to test association between gender and the adolescents' reason for trusting their father. Qualitative thematic analysis was used on the open-ended question using the indigenous psychology method proposed by Hayes (2000) [1]. for a more contextual understanding of adolescents' trust towards their father. At least a group of three people performed the categorization together to ascertain the emerging categories.

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### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### A. How much do Malaysian Adolescents Trust their Father?

Table I shows that more than half male (68.4%) and female (68.6%) trusts their father very much. The explained that there is no significant difference in the means score of trust towards father between male ( $M=3.549$ ,  $SD=.788$ ) and female ( $M=3.517$ ,  $SD=.884$ ) respondents. Mean measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale response.

TABLE I  
RESPONSES IN PERCENTAGE ON HOW MUCH THE ADOLESCENTS TRUST THEIR FATHER ACROSS GENDER

Responses	Female		Male		Total
	n (%)	M (SD)	n (%)	M (SD)	n (%)
Very much	530 (68.6)	3.52 (.88)	162 (68.4)	3.55 (.79)	692 (68.5)
Much	170 (22.0)		54 (22.8)		224 (22.2)
Somewhat	31 (4.0)		11 (4.6)		42 (4.2)
Little	26 (3.4)		9 (3.8)		35 (3.5)
Not at all	16 (2.1)		1 (0.4)		17 (1.7)

#### B. Basis of Adolescents' Trust towards their Father

The thematic analysis resulted in five main categories in which were identified as the basis of respondent's trust towards their father. Table II demonstrate the five main themes emerged which are: (i) Father-Child Relationship: biological, closeness, love towards father and mutual trust; (ii) Father's Characteristics: honest and sincere, sacrifice, kind, concern and understanding, experienced, open, idealistic and logic; (iii) Father's Role: responsible, raise-up, educate, provider, and head of family; (iv) Nurturant: father's support and help, protector, and father's love and care; and (v) Father's Attitude and Behaviour: attitude and behaviour, never lie, trustworthy and strict.

TABLE II  
CATEGORIES AND SUB-CATEGORIES BASED ON RESPONSES ON WHY DO ADOLESCENTS TRUST THEIR FATHER

No.	Main Categories	Sub-categories	n (%)
1.	Father's Role	Educate Responsible Bring Up / Raise Up Provider Head of family	278 (30.25)
2.	Father-Child Relationship	Biological relationship Closeness Love towards father Mutual trust	228 (24.81)
3.	Father's Characteristic	Concern and understanding Kind Honest and sincere Idealistic, logic and experienced Sacrifice	157 (17.08)
4.	Father's Attitude & Behaviour	Never Lie Strict Trustworthy Attitude and Behaviour	133 (14.47)
5.	Nurturing	Protect Father's Love Father's Support and help	123 (13.38)

Of all reasons, father's role (30.25%) was identified by Malaysian adolescents as the main reason they trust their father. The result portrays Malaysian context in terms of family role structures in which a father or the husband in a household is seen as a dominant figure and play a role as the head of the house.

#### C. The Association of Trust Towards Father by Gender: Father's Role

Both males and females reported that a father's role among others are educating, responsible (dependable), and raise them up. The Chi-square (Table III) was found not significant  $\alpha=.05$  with Pearson  $\chi^2=2.65$ ,  $df=4$ ;  $p=.617$  which indicates that there were no significant association between gender and trust towards father in terms of father's role. Nowadays, it is common for both father and mother working. Even so, in Malaysia the father is always expected to be the one responsible as the main breadwinner or provider for the family, educates their children, bears responsible for the wellbeing of the family, and raising up his children as part of his role.

TABLE III  
CATEGORIZATION AND ASSOCIATION OF TRUST TOWARDS FATHER RESPONSES BY GENDER: FATHER'S ROLE

Category and sub-categories	Male			Female			$\chi^2$	p
	n	Exp. Freq. (n)	Percent (%)	n	Exp. Freq. (n)	Percent (%)		
Father's Role	20	18.4	27.03	49	50.6	24.02	2.654	.617
Educate	12	16.2	16.22	49	44.8	24.02		
Responsible	15	14.4	20.27	39	39.6	19.12		
Bring Up / Raise Up	17	14.1	22.97	36	38.9	17.65		
Provider	10	10.9	13.51	31	30.1	15.20		
Head of Family	10	10.9	13.51	31	30.1	15.20		
Total	74	74.0	100.00	204	204.0	100.00		

\*Significant at  $\alpha=.05$

Note: Percentages shown are calculated using the total number of responses rather than the total number of respondents.

#### D. The Association of Trust Towards Father by Gender: Father-Child Relationship

TABLE IV  
THE ASSOCIATION OF TRUST TOWARDS FATHER BY GENDER: FATHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIP

Category and sub-categories	Male			Female			$\chi^2$	p
	n	Exp. Freq. (n)	Percent (%)	n	Exp. Freq. (n)	Percent (%)		
Father-Child Relationship	2	23.8	42.86	5	62.2	35.76	1.745	.627
Biological Relationship	7			9				
Closeness	1	16.6	20.63	4	43.4	28.48		
Love Towards Father	3			7				
Mutual Trust	1	11.3	17.46	3	29.7	18.18		
	1			0				
Total	6	63.0	100.00	2	29.7	17.58		
	3			9				
				1	165.			
				5				

\*Significant at  $\alpha=.05$

Note: Percentages shown are calculated using the total number of responses rather than the total number of respondents.

When a Chi-square test (Table IV) was done to determine the association of trust towards father responses by gender in terms of father-child relationship, it was found to be not significant (Pearson  $\chi^2 = 1.75$ ,  $df=4$ ;  $p=.627$ ) at the significance level of  $\alpha=.05$ .

Most frequent responses for both males and females was more on consanguinity (male= 42.86%, female= 35.76%) and the closeness (male= 20.63%, female= 28.48%) of their relationship with their father. This showed the pattern of emotional bond between Malaysian father-child relationships.

#### E. The Association of Trust Towards Father by Gender: Father's Characteristics

There were five sub-categories reported under the father's characteristics theme (Table V). Nevertheless, there was no association between father's characteristics and gender (Pearson  $\chi^2 = 1.731$ ,  $df=4$ ;  $p=.785$ ) at the significance level of  $\alpha=.05$ . These findings suggest that a secure father-child attachment (trust) was associated with positive father characteristics. Perhaps, among others the key to be a trusted father in Malaysia are kind, concern and understanding father as reported in this study.

TABLE V  
THE ASSOCIATION OF TRUST TOWARDS FATHER BY GENDER: FATHER'S CHARACTERISTICS

Category and sub-categories	Male			Female			$\chi^2$	p
	n	Exp. Freq. (n)	Percent (%)	n	Exp. Freq. (n)	Percent (%)		
Father's Characteristic								
Concern and Understanding	8	6.0	34.78	33	35.0	24.63	1.73	.785
Kind	4	5.4	17.39	33	31.6	24.63		
Honest and Sincere	5	5.0	21.74	29	29.0	21.64		
Idealistic, Logic and Experienced	4	3.5	17.39	20	20.5	14.93		
Sacrifice	2	3.1	8.70	19	17.9	14.18		
Total	23	23	100	134	134	100		

\*Significant at  $\alpha=.05$

Note: Percentages shown are calculated using the total number of responses rather than the total number of respondents.

#### F. The Association of Trust Towards Father by Gender: Father's Attitude and Behaviour

TABLE VI  
THE ASSOCIATION OF TRUST TOWARDS FATHER BY GENDER: FATHER'S ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOUR

Category and sub-categories	Male			Female			$\chi^2$	p
	n	Exp. Freq. (n)	Percent (%)	n	Exp. Freq. (n)	Percent (%)		
Father's Attitude and Behaviour								
Never Lie	12	10.3	48.00	43	44.7	39.81	5.792	.122
Strict	3	5.5	12.00	26	23.5	24.07		
Trustworthy	3	5.3	12.00	25	22.7	23.15		
Attitude and Behaviour	7	3.9	28.00	14	17.1	12.96		
Total	25	25.0	100.00	108	108.0	100.00		

\*Significant at  $\alpha=.05$

Note: Percentages shown are calculated using the total number of responses rather than the total number of respondents.

The sub-categories reported under the category of father's attitude and behavior are never lie, strict, trustworthy and attitude and behaviour respectively. However, when a Pearson

Chi-square analysis was done to determine the association between gender and father's attitude and behavior resulted there was no association between father's attitude and behavior and gender (Pearson  $\chi^2 = 5.792$ ,  $df=3$ ;  $p=.122$ ) at the significance level of  $\alpha=.05$ .

This indicates that both male and female have a similar pattern when it comes to trusting father in terms of father's attitude and behavior. In Malaysia a father is expected to have great attitude and behavior as a role model for the family.

#### G. The Association of Trust Towards Father by Gender: Nurturant

Table VII shows the association between gender and nurturant father. The result showed non-significant association between gender and trust towards father in terms of nurturant father (Pearson  $\chi^2 = .594$ ,  $df=2$ ;  $p=.743$ ). Table 4.8 showed trust towards father in term of nurturant for the three sub-categories were similar between males and females. The result indicated that by being the protector, loving, supporting and helping father is important in forming father-child trust regardless of gender. Emotional and social supports are seen as important factor in father-adolescent relationship in Malaysia.

TABLE VII  
THE ASSOCIATION OF TRUST TOWARDS FATHER BY GENDER: NURTURANT

Category and sub-categories	Male			Female			$\chi^2$	p
	n	Exp. Freq. (n)	Percent (%)	n	Exp. Freq. (n)	Percent (%)		
Nurturant								
Protect	15	14.2	45.45	38	38.8	42.22	.594	.743
Father's Love	9	10.7	27.27	31	29.3	34.44		
Father's Support and Help	9	8.0	27.27	21	22.0	23.33		
Total	33	33.0	100.00	90	90.0	100.00		

\*Significant at  $\alpha=.05$

Note: Percentages shown are calculated using the total number of responses rather than the total number of respondents.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

This study resulted in five main reasons for Malaysian adolescents to trust their father. Those reasons are related to the role of father, father-child relationship, father's characteristics, father's nurturing nature and father's attitude and behavior. Both male and female adolescents reported to trust their father very much. Overall, father's role was found to be the most reason why adolescent trust their father thus similar pattern was found for both male and female adolescents. The second most frequent responses as a basis for their trust towards father was father-child relationship, followed by nurturing, father's characteristics and father's attitude and behavior respectively. Both males and females reported that father's role and father-child relationship being the first and second important factors in their trust formation towards their father. Father's characteristics came as the third factors for females as compared to males fall as the fifth factor. This showed that females look upon their father's characteristics as a basis of their trust towards father. The fourth most frequent responses on their trust towards father for both females and males is their father's attitude and

behavior. Nurturing came as the least frequent responses for females and the third frequent responses for the males respectively. It will offer valuable information to parents in terms of the expectations of their children in their parenting style and will reduce any conflicts and social friction, originated from the lack of trust between adolescent-parents, particularly in father-adolescent relationship.

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