FAMILY ECOLOGY AND ADOLESCENTS PREMATURE PREGNANCIES: MULTIPLE CASE STUDIES OF MALAYSIA

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Brofenbrenner’s theory on Human Ecology postulates that human interaction with their environment produces certain types of behaviours. This paper examines the effect of social ecology, in particular the family ecology, on girls’ sexual misconduct which later contributed to them being pregnant out of wedlock. The data were from two qualitative studies that involved 15 juvenile girls, who were under the care of two state institutions - the Taman Seri Puteri and, the Henry Gurney School. Findings from both studies supported the theory’s premise, which is, unfavourable conditions of family environment is detrimental to its members behaviours, in particular children. The studies found that family ecology, such as poverty, parent’s abandonment and violence in the family, depressing parent’s marital relationship, broken family, and ineffective parent-child communication lead to child involvement in premature sexual behaviour, and later bruising their development when the misconduct contributed to their pregnancy. The findings have significant implication on the National Child Protection Policy. The existing policy needs to take into account the importance of a family-based intervention program to respond to the social ill.

Keywords: Family ecology, out of wedlock pregnancy, premature pregnancy, adolescent girls, family-based intervention programs