

Mothering as a Predictor on Filial Piety among Malaysian Adolescents

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Filial piety is an important value based on Confucian philosophy that emphasizes the virtue of respect towards parents and elderlies. As a priceless virtue, the tradition of filial piety has been adopted by many people regardless of the beliefs and ethnicity. Parents particularly mothers' play an important role in sowing filial piety to their offspring. Mothers' involvement in the upbringing of their children influences the degree of filial piety the children have towards elderlies. In line with that, this study explored the influence of mothering dimensions (involvement, rejection, structure, chaos, autonomy support, and coercion) on reciprocal and authoritarian filial piety among Malaysian adolescents. This study involved 594 secondary school students aged between 13 to 17 years old, selected by using cluster sampling method from three states of Peninsular Malaysia. A quantitative method with a self-administrated questionnaire was used to collect the data of the study. Pearson correlation analysis was performed and the findings of the study specified that all mothering dimensions significantly correlated with reciprocal filial piety. Conversely, only three mothering dimensions were associated with authoritarian filial piety. Multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine the influence of mothering on reciprocal and authoritarian filial piety. Findings indicated that involvement and autonomy support predicted reciprocal filial piety. Moreover, involvement was found to have a significant impact on authoritarian filial piety. This study suggests that mothers' care and involvement are vital in enhancing filial piety among youngsters.

Keywords: mothering, reciprocal, authoritarian, filial piety

While medical advancement has created a longer life span for humanoid, it brings the need for the caretaking of elderlies by the younger generations. Although the health quality of the elderlies has improved, these senior citizens will eventually go through an age of decline where they become

dependent on the help of others. Hence, the child has now added responsibility by providing support for their aging parents. However, the notion of taking care of elderly parents is not something alien for the Asian community as youngsters are accustomed to the value of being obedient

and faithful to their parents and caretakers which is known as filial piety (Ge, 2021).

Filial piety is a fundamental family guideline practiced widely in Chinese culture to show their respect to parents and elderlies. Confucian philosophy stresses that children must show their gratitude toward their parents. Children need to obey and take care of their parents when they are old. Filial practices also emphasize that children need to honor their parents even after they pass away (Wong et al., 2010). Apart from being an ideology and guideline, filial piety has become the social practice among the Chinese community. Filial piety encourages the children to show respect, harmonize the family, show affection and carry out family traditions (Ge, 2021; Ogawa, 2002).

The Confucian origin filial piety is now being a guideline for people regardless of cultural backgrounds in their family system to monitor the way children treat their parents. In multi-racial countries like Malaysia, filial piety is displayed in various ways of respectful acts towards the elderly by giving 'salam', bowing and placing both palms together, and bowing down the head (Ingersoll-Dayton & Saengtienchai, 2009).

According to Dual Filial Piety Model (Yeh & Bedford, 2003), filial piety is a multidimensional construct. Filial piety can be explained with two dimensions which are reciprocal filial piety and authoritarian filial piety. Reciprocal filial piety describes children conserve good relationships with parents merely because of love and gratitude for being raised with love by parents. Recent researches proved that reciprocal filial piety plays a major influence in determining adolescent's life satisfaction (Wong et al., 2010). On the other hand, authoritarian filial piety

explains children uphold good rapport to conform to and overcome the fear of social pressure.

The involvement of parents is known as the most important factor in cultivating filial values among young people, particularly adolescents because parents are among the closest people in their social circle. Adolescence is a period where an individual experienced a lot of changes to building their identity. Any exposures given to them no matter it is positive or negative will be quickly grasped by them (Santrock, 2012). This would place the parents with a big responsibility in educating and disseminating the family traditions and values to build positive characters in adolescents. Many research (Gershoff et al., 2010; Yang, et al., 2014; Karre & Mounts, 2012) highlighted the role of parents in building up adolescent's positive behavioral outcomes, such as showing respect and maintain the family traditions and customs. Existing literature indicates that filial piety was not inherited, but learned through early parent-child interaction.

Positive parenting which includes parental warmth, parental support, discipline, and parental supervision or monitoring has been demonstrated throughout the years (Nainee et al., 2015; Youngblade et al., 2007). Fathers' nature to be overprotected over their child makes the child be easily pulled away and not attached with their father. On the other hand, the nature of the mother is warm and supportive, makes the child gets attached easily with their mother. This explains how positive mothering significantly influences the behavior of adolescents which includes filial behavior (Youngblade et al., 2007).

Mothers play an important role in managing and correcting their children's behavior. Being one of the most influential

people in children's life, mothers are highly responsible for propagating moral and family values in their children. According to Bowlby's Theory of Attachment, children need to get a close, warmth and continuous relationship with their mother for the children to grow emotionally and socially healthy. The support received from mothers in the earlier day will influence the children to honor and support their parents during their old age (Bowlby, 1970; Guo et al., 2020). Previous research conducted in Hong Kong stated that filial behavior shown by adolescents was influenced by the interaction of mother-child and maternal control (Wong et al., 2010).

According to The Motivational Model (Skinner et al., 2005), mothering is a multidimensional subject and it is made up of six features, namely involvement, rejection, structure, chaos, autonomy support, and coercion. The latter six dimensions are used to identify the style of mothering and the intensity of their role in the development of a child. Involvement is the topmost dimension of mothering and it can be expressed as the acceptance and warmth portrayed by mothers when the child seeks comfort. The second dimension is rejection which is the direct opposite of the first dimension; involvement. Rejection describes the mothers who dislike their child and expressed it by being harsh and criticizing their child (Rohner, 1986). Structural mothering is a dimension whereby the mother provides a clear guideline and supports the child's behavior. Structural mothers are often treated as a role model by the children in their life. The dimension of chaos denotes the maternal behavior which is inconsistent and unpredictable (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Matheny et al., 1995). The last two dimensions are autonomy support and coercion, respectively. Autonomy support describes

the mothers who allow their children to explore and express their ideas. The children are treated equally and given chance to share their thoughts on the important issues of family. Coercion is a mothering style where the mothers are strict and demands the child to be obedient. Coercion is the reversed style for autonomy support and is often linked to bad parenting (Skinner et al., 2005).

Across numerous studies, the warmth, support, and involvement of mothers appear to be one of the major factors in predicting adolescents behavior and attitude (Hair et al., 2002; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Many studies have been conducted on filial piety, but limited study has been done to test the role of mothering on adolescent's filial piety. Hence, it is important to investigate the association of a mother's support and adolescent's filial piety. As a whole, the objective of the study was to determine the relationship between mothering (involvement, rejection, structure, chaos, autonomy support, and coercion) and adolescents' filial piety (reciprocal and authoritarian).

Specifically, this study aims to:

1. Identify the correlation between mothering dimensions (involvement, rejection, structure, chaos, autonomy support, and coercion) with reciprocal filial piety and authoritarian filial piety respectively.
2. Identify the unique predictor of adolescents' filial piety both reciprocal and authoritarian

Conceptual Framework

Filial piety focuses on the respect and lifelong loyalty given by the children for the elderly in the family (Lee, 2017; Trommsdorff, 2006). The dual Model of Filial Piety proposed that filial piety can be

classified in two dimensions namely reciprocal filial piety and authoritarian filial piety (Shi & Wang, 2019; Yeh & Bedford, 2003). Both of the filial piety has been examined in the present study.

Generally, parents play an important role in socializing their children towards adopting any particular behavior or values. Parenting which includes the involvement of both father and mother is one of the strongest influences on children’s filial piety (Cottle et al., 2001; Zhang & Chen, 2020). The present study focused on the mothers’ role in predicting adolescents’ filial piety. The subject of mothering covers a total of six features or dimensions; specifically, involvement, rejection, structure, chaos, autonomy support, and coercion. These six dimensions were the basis for two assessments of parenting style and parent-

child report and it is suitable for use with children and adolescents. The six dimensions of mothering were adapted from the Motivational Model (Skinner et al., 2005).

The conceptual framework in Figure 1.1 of the present study was developed to illustrate the relationship between the six dimensions of mothering (involvement, rejection, structure, chaos, autonomy support, and coercion) on reciprocal filial piety. The framework also shows the effect of mothering dimensions on authoritarian filial piety. The independent variables (IV) in this study are mothering dimensions which cover mothers’ involvement, rejection, structure, chaos, autonomy support, and coercion. The dependent variables (DV) in this study are reciprocal filial piety and authoritarian filial piety.

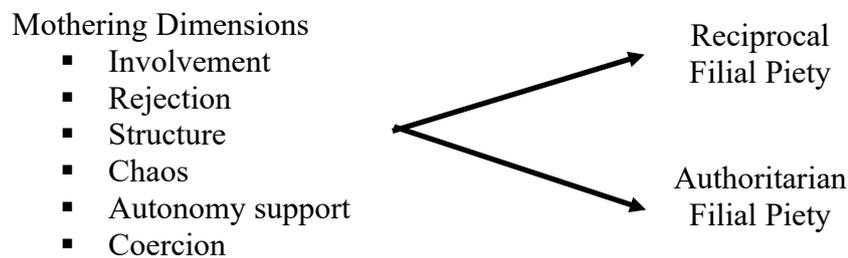


Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework

Method

Procedure

Letter to seek permission to conduct studies in school were sent to the Ministry of Education and Education Department of Selangor, Pulau Pinang, and Negeri Sembilan before data collection. Once the permission was granted, the secondary school students from the selected eight schools in the above-mentioned states were invited to participate in the study.

Participation was voluntary; however, students were given some token of appreciation for participating.

Research Samples

This study utilized a cluster sampling method to recruit respondents of the study. A total of 594 school-going adolescents aged between 13 to 17 years old ($M=15.03$, $SD=1.03$) from eight secondary schools located at Selangor, Pulau Pinang, and Negeri Sembilan participated in this

study. Among the students, 54% of them were females and the remaining 46% were males. A total of 48.1% of respondents were Malays, followed by Chinese (27.3%), Indians, (22.6%) and other ethnicities (2%). More than half of the respondents were Muslims.

Measures

Self-administered questionnaires were used to collect the data of the study. All the measures used in the present study were originally in the English language. The questionnaires were translated to the Malay language by employing a back-to-back translation procedure. The rationale is because the Malay language is used as the first language in all secondary national schools. The questionnaire was translated to the Malay language to facilitate the research sample for a better understanding of the questions. However, the translated version was pilot tested and respondents offered no questions about the terms or definitions of words on any item.

Filial piety scale. The Filial piety scale (Yeh & Bedford, 2003) was used to measure respondents' filial attitude towards their parents. A 16-items measure consists of two sub-scales measuring both reciprocal and authoritarian filial piety. The response ranged from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 6 (*Strongly Agree*) to indicate respondents' agreement towards each of the statements. A high score indicates a high tendency on the particular dimension of filial piety. The scales yielded a coefficient alpha between .69 for reciprocal filial piety and .79 for authoritarian filial piety.

Parents as Social Context Questionnaire - Child Report (PASCQ: Pierce et al., 1991). PASCQ was used to assess parenting based on a child's perception. PASCQ consists of 24 items assessing six parenting dimensions with four items for

each dimension namely involvement, structure, rejection, chaos, coercion, and autonomy support. A 4-point Likert scale rating from 1 (*Not at all true*) to 4 (*Very true*) was used to measure the frequency of maternal behavior. A total score was created by averaging items' scores of the subscale. Cronbach alpha for each subscale was .62 to .83.

Data Analysis

This study used SPSS version 21 to analyze the data of the study. Several statistical analyses were conducted. First, descriptive analysis was carried out to explore the general distribution of the variables understudied. Next, correlation analysis was performed to determine the relationship between mothering (involvement, structure, rejection, chaos, coercion, and autonomy support) and adolescents' filial piety (reciprocal and authoritarian). Lastly, multiple regression analysis was used to examine the impact of six mothering dimensions on reciprocal and authoritarian filial piety.

Results and Discussion

Correlation among Mothering dimensions (Involvement, Structure, Rejection, Chaos, Coercion and Autonomy support) and filial piety (reciprocal and authoritarian)

Table 1 shows means, standard deviations, and correlation for the variables. There were no missing data found. Pearson correlation analysis showed that all the mothering dimensions were significantly associated with reciprocal filial piety. Three dimensions namely involvement, structure, and autonomy support have a positive relationship with reciprocal filial piety whereas rejection, chaos, and coercion have a negative relationship with reciprocal filial piety. On the other side,

involvement, structure, autonomy support has a positive relationship with authoritarian filial piety. However, there was no significant correlation between rejection, chaos, and coercion with authoritarian filial piety.

The present study indicates rejection, chaos, and coercion have a negative relationship with reciprocal filial piety. Consistently, previous research also emphasizes that when children are in transition to adolescence, adequate parent support is needed to mold the behavior of the children. The chaos and turmoil between parent-child relationships will influence and affect the child's feedback towards their parents (Wong et al., 2010). The findings also support the existing developmental literature showing that

mothers' involvement strongly correlates with adolescent's filial act (Chen et al., 2000; De Goede et al., 2009; Nainee et al., 2015). Children or adolescents who maintain good rapport with their parents in earlier days would be more used to comply with demands to have harmonious relationships and filial piety towards their parents who have raised them (Guo et al., 2020; Yeh & Bedford, 2003).

The current finding also indicates that mothers' autonomy support significantly correlates with both reciprocal and filial piety. The results were fortified by research conducted among Taiwanese students which stated that maternal autonomy support strongly attributes to the reciprocal filial piety of the students who are mainly adolescents (Chen et al., 2015).

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations among Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.Involvement	3.47	0.55	1						
2.Rejection	2.18	0.67	-.30***	1					
3.Structure	3.30	0.58	.52***	-.20***	1				
4.Chaos	2.41	0.69	-.14***	.46***	-.90*	1			
5.Autonomy support	3.35	0.58	.58***	-.36***	.52***	-.24***	1		
6.Coercion	2.68	0.59	-.18***	.45***	-.025	.44***	-.24***	1	
7.Reciprocal	42.91	4.08	.44***	-.20***	.32***	-.16***	.44***	-.16***	1
8.Authoritarian	35.30	5.46	.34***	-.047	.27***	-.06	.27***	-.30	.52***

Note. *** $p < .001$; * $p < .05$

Predictors of Reciprocal and Authoritarian Filial Piety in Adolescents

Table 2 shows the findings of regression analysis for reciprocal filial piety and authoritarian filial piety. Multiple regressions were conducted to identify the significant predictors of adolescent's reciprocal and authoritarian filial piety.

Two regression analyses were conducted on reciprocal and authoritarian filial piety respectively. The mothering dimension on reciprocal filial piety was entered into the model. The adjusted R² value explained that all the six variables tested for the mothering dimension explained 24.3% of the variance of adolescents' reciprocal filial piety. The results also showed that

mothers' involvement and autonomy support had significantly contributed to reciprocal filial piety of adolescents. Involvement ($\beta=.263, p<.001$) appeared to be a stronger predictor than autonomy support ($\beta=.237, p<.001$) on reciprocal filial piety.

Further, mothering dimensions on authoritarian filial piety were also entered into the model. The adjusted $R^2 =.125$ revealed that mothers' involvement, structure, and autonomy support explained only 12.5% of the variance of authoritarian filial piety. The findings indicated that out of six dimensions tested, only involvement ($\beta=.234, p<.001$) and structure ($\beta=.102, p=.031$) showed a significant impact on authoritarian filial piety.

Similarly, an earlier study reported that children with higher levels of maternal warmth reported portraying better reciprocal filial behavior compared to those with less maternal warmth (Wong, et

al, 2010). Parental warmth and autonomy support have been found to predict their children's positive behavior towards which includes filial behavior (Hart et al., 1992; Huntsinger & Jose, 2009; Russell & Russell, 1996). Besides that, the findings were consistent with a recent study by Chen et al. (2015) which stated that reciprocal filial piety of adolescents stemmed from supportive involvements and relationships with parents.

The results were strengthened by earlier research among Taiwanese adults which pointed out that good maternal parenting has an influence on the mother-child relationship and further facilitates the reciprocal and authoritarian filial act by children. Children who have a close relationship with their mother will display better filial behavior towards their parents and the elderlies. The child-mother relationship also strongly predicts their efforts to inherit and uphold the family's customs and traditions (Chen et al., 2015).

Table 2

Predictors of Reciprocal and Authoritarian Filial Piety among Adolescents in Malaysia

	R ²	Adj R ²	F	B	t	p
<i>Reciprocal Filial Piety</i>						
Predictors						
Model	.250	.243	32.684***			
Involvement				.263***	5.663	<.001
Rejection				.017	.380	.704
Structure				.063	1.416	.157
Chaos				-.058	-1.374	.170
Autonomy Support				.237***	4.951	<.001
Coercion				-.031	-.735	.463
<i>Authoritarian Filial Piety</i>						
Predictors						
Model	.129	.125	29.257***			
Involvement				.234***	4.726	<.001
Rejection				n.s	-	-

Structure	.102*	2.162	.031
Chaos	n.s	-	-
Autonomy Support	0.86	1.740	.082
Coercion	n.s	-	-

Note. Reciprocal Filial Piety: $F(6,587) = 32.684, p < .001$

Authoritarian Filial Piety: $F(3,590) = 29.257, p < .001$

*** $p < .001$; * $p < .05$

Conclusion

The advancement of medical technology has improved the health quality and expanded the lifespan of the people. Although the health quality improves, it is a child’s responsibility to give support and take care of their parents and the elderly in the family in their late life. Filial piety is one of the utmost family values that strongly emphasizes the role of children in respecting and honoring the elderly in the family (Yeh & Bedford, 2003). This study investigated the role of mothering on reciprocal and authoritarian filial piety among Malaysian adolescents. Generally, there were a total of six dimensions of mothering examined in this study namely involvement, rejection, structure, chaos, autonomy support, and coercion.

Results of the correlation analysis indicate that: (1) involvement, structure, and autonomy support have a positive relationship with reciprocal filial piety; (2) rejection, chaos, and coercion have a negative relationship with reciprocal filial piety ;(3) involvement, structure, and autonomy support have a positive relationship with authoritarian filial piety; and (4) rejection, chaos and coercion have no relationship with authoritarian filial piety. In other words, all six dimensions of mothering have a significant relationship with reciprocal filial piety whereas only three dimensions have a relationship with authoritarian filial piety. Multiple regressions were conducted to examine the predictors of reciprocal and authoritarian

filial piety among Malaysian adolescents. The findings indicate that the tested six mothering dimensions explained 24.3% of the variance of reciprocal filial piety and 12.5% of authoritarian filial piety of the sample.

These results recognize the relationship between mothering and adolescent’s filial piety towards the elderly. Mother’s involvement, structure, and autonomy support have a positive relationship with both reciprocal and authoritarian filial piety. This indicates that mothers play a vital role in cultivating the child’s filial behavior. The study implies is that filial value is an important virtue practice by humankind regardless of the culture one belongs to. The current study revealed that mothering plays as a strong predictor to cultivate filial virtue in children. Hence, the parents particularly mothers need to be aware of the impact of their involvement in bringing up a child. Practically, study on filial piety is useful in improving the family value quality for those who are beginning a family. By pointing out the factors that contribute to the filial piety of a child; the parents can work on improving the factors.

This study attempted to find the role of mothering on reciprocal and authoritarian filial piety among Malaysian adolescents. However, several limitations should be stressed and taken into consideration. Firstly, the sample of the study focused on students of national schools. The findings may not be generalized for all adolescents. Therefore, future studies should consider

this. Secondly, this study only focused on six dimensions of mothering as predictors of adolescent filial piety although many other significant possible variables can influence filial piety. Further research with more variables and refined filial piety measurements could shed light on this priceless topic of filial piety. Thirdly, knowing that mothering plays a strong influence on adolescent's filial behavior, variables of fathering should also be included in a future study to provide us a richer understanding of filial piety. Future research should consider including other variables like family factors and socio-economic status. Besides, further studies can be conducted by comparing different age groups or different geographical areas.

Regardless of all these limitations, this study has facilitated filling the knowledge gap on mothers' role in uplifting filial piety in new generations. The findings provide evidence to support and highlight the important role played by mothers in educating filial piety in their children.

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