

THE EFFECT OF FATHERING ON FILIAL PIETY AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract

The rise in number of old age institutions and the deterioration in filial piety values have drawn global attention from psychologists. However, little is known about the filial piety status in multiracial nations and the antecedents of filial piety. The primary objectives of this study were to examine: 1) the level of fathering dimensions (involvement, rejection, structure, chaos, autonomy support and coercion), 2) the relationships between the six fathering dimensions and filial piety (reciprocal and authoritarian), and 3) the impact of fathering on reciprocal and authoritarian filial piety. Total of 606 secondary school students aged between 14 to 16 years old from various ethnics in three different states in Malaysia, participated in the current study. Respondents completed a survey questionnaire which comprised of Filial Piety Scale and Parents as Social Context Questionnaire - Child Report. The key findings of the study were: 1) positive fathering dimensions is higher than negative fathering dimensions, 2) all fathering dimensions significantly correlated with reciprocal filial piety, and 3) six fathering dimensions influenced both reciprocal and authoritarian filial piety except the relationship between rejection and coercion and authoritarian filial piety. The present study highlights the importance of father's role in cultivating family values and filial piety in adolescents' life. Hence, the role of father is not only the breadwinner of the family but as the enhancer and preserver of the family traditions and virtues.

Keywords: fathering, filial piety, reciprocal, authoritarian

Presenting Author's biography



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INTRODUCTION

Filial piety is a central family virtue rooted from Confucius philosophy which outlines how an individual should treat their parents and other family members. Its core teaching describes children's absolute loyalty and obedience towards the elderlies in the family. Filial piety is the basis of an individual's moral conduct and social harmony that stresses upon one's life is solely attributed from elderlies and ancestors and hence, the child should show respect and gratitude towards elderlies in the family. Despite providing guideline on the way elderlies should be treated, filial piety also emphasis the importance of conserving family customs and traditions [1]. Though filial piety was originally practiced by Chinese community, it has been now widely pursued by people from other cultural background due to its priceless value.

According to Dual Filial Piety Model [1], filial piety is a dual-dimensional construct which consist of reciprocal filial piety and authoritarian filial piety. Reciprocal filial piety explains the close bond between children and parents with the love and gratitude for parents' efforts in raising them. Reciprocal filial piety is portrayed by the act of gratitude towards parents by providing necessary support when they are alive and honoring them when they passed away [1]. Reciprocal filial piety promotes healthy relationship between parent and child genuinely without any outer force. However, authoritarian filial piety describes the good rapport maintained by children with the elderlies in order to conform to the society or to avoid the social pressure [2].

Malaysia, being a multicultural nation is deeply influenced by filial piety and other traditional family customs. Family related moral or virtues generally have been major part of their lifestyle. The primary beliefs of the customs encourage parents to jointly raise and inculcate family values in their children [3]. When a child is in the transition from childhood to adolescent, proper parental guidance is vital in determining their wellbeing and behavioral adjustment [4]. Adolescents will seek for autonomy support by their family to enable them to search for their identity. The input poured, given by the parents to adolescent would have equal output [5].

Generally, the father is often treated as the head of the household and is expected to mold the children according to their family values such as respect and loyalty towards the elderlies. Fathers play an equal role along with mothers, as they have the responsibility for rearing and nurturing their child and prolonging the family customs in their lineage. The social revolution of 1970s has been reorganized on the role of men and fathers and apparently, new expectations emerged for the role of fathers in their child's growth. The days where fathers were as instrumental providers and protectors are now abolished and they are now expected to play the nurturing role in their child's live [6].

Findings from the earlier studies stated that patterns of the father's care on the child indicate the level of filial piety or obedience shown in elder care practices [7]. Additionally, based on intensive review of literature, many studies identified that the early life experience with both parents will contribute to their behavior towards their parents in old age [7, 8, 9].

The role of a father is very crucial in bringing up a child. The Motivational Model suggested parenting which includes both fathering and mothering as a multidimensional construction. Fathering consists of three positive dimensions and three negative dimensions. The positive fathering dimensions are namely involvement, structure and autonomy support. Rejection, chaos and coercion are regarded as negative fathering. Both this positive and negative fathering were originally paired up as the direct opposite; involvement-rejection,

structure-chaos and autonomy support-coercion. Involvement describes the participation of the father when the child seeks for help. Rejection is a dimension representing an intolerable father whereby the father rejects the child whenever the child seeks for their support. The third dimension is structure whereby the father is looked up as the role model by their children. Chaos denotes the paternal behavior which is unpredictable and unreliable [10]. The following dimension is autonomy support, whereby the father is being supportive as well as gives equal treatment for their children to participate and share their ideas. Coercion is the other way of fathering in which the father plays the sole power holder and the children have to obey his instructions without denying [11].

However, the fast pace of the world makes people strive hard, revving up the speed in order not to be outdated. While everyone swamped with the accelerating pace of the modern world, the time spent with family has been affected very badly and the responsibilities one should hold on their parents or children are mostly forgotten. The strain presented by the modernized society threatens the basic family relations and culture. The modern lifestyle finally results in erosion of extended family systems and the younger generation did not get a chance to live and feel the value of living with the elderlies in the family [12].

The overall family climate appears to be a vital predictor of adolescent filial piety. Existing studies focus on the role of mother as a whole in adolescent filial piety. There is a paucity of literature on the influence of fathers on adolescent's behavior. Social and educational changes, such as women involvement in job force, have led to heighten interest in the role of fathers in their children's development. Following up this line of exploration, this study sought to show if fathering contributes to adolescent's filial piety. This study was intended to help in filling the gap in knowledge about the impact that fathers can bring on their child's filial behavior [13].

METHOD

Procedure

Permission to conduct study in schools was obtained from Ministry of Education and State Education Department of Selangor, Pulau Pinang and Negeri Sembilan prior to data collection. Nine secondary schools were selected from permitted states. Participation was voluntary; nevertheless a token of appreciation was given to the participants.

Research Samples

This study utilized cluster sampling method to recruit respondents of the study. Six hundred and six secondary schools students from nine secondary schools participated in this study. The respondents were aged between 13 to 17 years old.

Measures

Self-administered questionnaires were used to collect the data of the study. All the measures used in the present study were originally in English language. The scales were translated into Malay language by employing 'back to back' procedure. The translation procedure was conducted several times whereby any inconsistency between the original English version and translated version was identified until an agreement was reached for the final translated Malay version. The translated version was pilot tested and respondents offered no questions about the terms or definitions of words on any item. Being the first language in

public schools, the translated Malay questionnaire was necessary to facilitate the research sample for better understanding of the questions.

Filial piety scale

Respondents' filial attitude towards their parents was measured using the Filial Piety Scale. The scale consisted of 16 items. Respondents were asked to rate each statement on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 6 (*Strongly Agree*) to indicate their agreements toward each of the statements. High score indicated 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 [1].

Parents as Social Context Questionnaire - Child Report (PASCQ)

The 24-item PASCQ was designed to assess parenting (mothering and fathering) based on child's perception. The present study, however, was only focused on the role of fathering. The PASCQ consists of six dimensions: involvement, rejection, structure, chaos, autonomy support and coercion. Involvement, structure and autonomy support are regarded as positive fathering whereas the remaining is negative fathering. A 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Not at all true*) to 4 (*Very true*) was used to measure the frequency of paternal behavior. Total score was created by averaging items' scores of the subscale. The scale yielded Cronbach alpha of .83 in fathering context [14].

Data analysis

Firstly, several statistical analyses were conducted with SPSS version 21. Descriptive analysis was carried out to discover the general distribution of the observed variables. Secondly, correlation analysis was casted to determine the relationship between fathering (involvement, structure, rejection, chaos and autonomy support) and adolescent's filial piety (reciprocal and authoritarian). Lastly, multiple regressions were used to examine the influence of the six dimensions of fathering on reciprocal and authoritarian filial piety, respectively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Correlation among Fathering dimensions and filial piety

Table 1 shows means, standard deviations, and correlation for the tested variables. There were no missing data found.

Pearson correlation test showed that all the six fathering dimensions were significantly associated with reciprocal filial piety. Specifically, the positive fathering was found to have a positive relationship with adolescent's reciprocal filial piety, whereas negative fathering was negatively correlated with reciprocal filial piety.

Similarly, a positive relationship was observed between authoritarian filial piety and the three dimensions of positive fathering. For the negative fathering, chaos, but not rejection and coercion, was negatively correlated with authoritarian filial piety. The result is earlier finding that the turmoil or chaos eventually influences the parent-adolescent relationship in later years [15].

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations among Variables

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Involvement	3.33	0.60	1						
2. Rejection	2.19	0.68	-.25***	1					
3. Structure	3.21	0.63	.56***	-.18***	1				
4. Chaos	2.42	0.70	-.19***	.49***	-.12**	1			
5. Autonomy Support	3.31	0.59	.59***	-.34***	.58***	-.24***	1		
6. Coercion	2.61	0.62	-.05	.46***	.07	.45***	-.17***	1	
7. Reciprocal	42.98	4.06	.41***	-.18***	.33***	-.19***	.47***	-.09*	1
8. Authoritarian	35.43	5.47	.38***	-.06	.32***	-.09*	.31***	.04	.55***

Note. *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

Predictors of Reciprocal and Authoritarian Filial Piety

Two multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine the influence of the six fathering dimensions on Malaysian adolescent's reciprocal and authoritarian filial piety, respectively. Table 2 shows the results of the regression analyses.

Analysis on reciprocal filial piety showed that the six fathering dimensions explained 24.5% of the variance of adolescent's filial piety. Moreover, the results indicated that father's involvement ($\beta = .191$) and autonomy support ($\beta = .324$), but not other dimensions, significantly predicted reciprocal filial piety of adolescents. Autonomy support appeared to be the strongest predictor to reciprocal filial piety.

The six dimensions of fathering in total explained 15.7% of the variance of authoritarian filial piety. Among the six dimensions of fathering, however, only involvement ($\beta = .260$) was found to have significant effect on authoritarian filial piety.

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	.252	.245	33.759***			
Involvement				.191***	4.112	.000
Rejection				.025	.568	.570
Structure				.034	.732	.465
Chaos				-.076	-1.772	.077
Autonomy Support				.324***	6.579	.000
Coercion				-.009	-.218	.828
<i>Authoritarian Filial Piety</i>						
Predictors						
Model	.163	.157	29.287***			
Involvement				.260***	5.300	.000
Rejection				n.s	-	-
Structure				.123*	2.526	.012
Chaos				-.001	-.039	.969
Autonomy Support				.083	1.635	.103
Coercion				n.s	-	-

Note: Reciprocal Filial Piety: $F(6,600) = 33.759, p < .001$

Authoritarian Filial Piety: $F(4,602) = 29.287, p < .001$

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

CONCLUSION

Parenting has been found to play an important role in children development. Little attention, however, has been paid to the relationship between parenting and filial piety. The present study is aimed to minimize this gap by exploring the relationship between fathering and filial piety.

Consistent with past findings [15, 16] that warm and caring parenting is positively associated with reciprocal filial piety, our results showed that father's involvement and autonomy support have positive effect on adolescents' reciprocal filial piety. Father's involvement and autonomy supports that perceived by adolescents reflect positive behavior and interaction of adolescents in their family [17]. Reciprocal filial piety emphasizes the values of respect, gratitude and attends to their parents as a repay and fulfills their filial responsibilities for the care and guidance provided by parents [16, 18]. As a result, a strong and positive parent-child relationship promotes interaction between parents and children in addition to create mutual love and care. The love and care received by children, in turn, promotes positive reciprocal filial piety [16,19]

On the contrary, our results also showed that father's involvement and structure have positive effect on authoritarian filial piety. In other words, adolescents tend to experience responsibility to demonstrate filial piety if they can depend on their fathers when they need help. Note that, however, studies on filial piety have shown that authoritarian filial piety is detrimental to adolescents' performance. For instance, existing literature stated that authoritarian filial piety negatively influences both self-esteem and social competence [20, 21]. In their study on the relationship between personality and filial piety, whereas another research [1] found that authoritarian filial piety was negatively associated with Openness and Extraversion. Given that both Openness and Extraversion and their higher order factors (i.e., Plasticity) have positive effect on creativity [22], it is possible that father's involvement and structure could be detrimental to adolescents' creative performance through authoritarian filial piety.

The most important finding of the present study is that father's involvement may have dual role on adolescent's development. It is interesting and theoretically important for future studies to investigate the moderating role of filial piety on the relationship between father's involvement and adolescents' development.

Taken together, our results indicate that positive, not negative, fathering is essential to the development of adolescents' filial piety. Moreover, the three dimensions of the positive fathering impacts filial piety differently. Specifically, autonomy support and structure are conducive to reciprocal filial piety and authoritarian filial piety respectively, while involvement has impact on the types of filial piety.

The main limitation of the present study is that only the role of fathering was investigated. Consequently, the impact of mothering is not clear. Researchers are encouraged to replicate the findings of the present study and investigate the role of mothering. The influence of parenting on filial piety is insufficiently comprehensive unless the effects of both fathering and mothering are examined. In addition, the present study only demonstrates that

there is association between positive fathering and filial piety. The results, however, say very little about the underlying mechanism. Future studies, therefore, are suggested to further explore the process underlies the relationship between involvement and filial piety. Despite of these limitations, this exploratory study offers insights into the role of fathering on adolescents' filial piety in a multiracial context.

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