

ROLE OF RECIPROCAL FILIAL PIETY IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND FILIAL BEHAVIOR AMONG MALAYSIAN ADOLESCENTS

Sarvarubini Nainee¹, Tan Soon Aun, Tan Chee Seng

Department of Psychology and Counselling, Faculty of Arts and Social Science, Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, Jalan Universiti, Bandar Barat, 31900 Kampar, Perak,
¹ sarvarubini@utar.edu.my

ABSTRACT

Filial piety is a central quality of cultural practices in a family which includes obedience and honoring of one's parents and it is considered as the fundamental element to practice in the Malaysian family system. Of late, the young generation perceives caring for the elderly as a burdensome task, which can be observed by the rising number of old folks centers. Parenting styles strongly predict the obligation of filial piety among young adolescents. Generally, adolescents who are more filial may be more attached to their parents. Filial piety formed among this group of people can be traced to how they were brought up in their family which affects the individual's self-obligation towards their parents. Recognizing the influence of parenting on the filial behavior of adolescents, the present study addressed the importance of parents' involvement in influencing filial behavior among Malaysian adolescents. This study involved a total of 405 school students aged between 14 to 17 years old, selected from two urbanized and metropolitan cities of Peninsular Malaysia using a cluster sampling method. A self-administrated questionnaire was used to collect the data of the study. The findings of the study indicate that parental involvement (father and mother) significantly correlates with reciprocal filial piety and filial behavior. Moreover, reciprocal filial piety correlated significantly with filial behavior. The present study denotes that reciprocal filial piety plays a mediating role in the relationship between parents' involvement (father and mother) and filial behavior. Therefore, parental warmth and support are important to promote and enhance filial practices at home among adolescents.

***Keywords:** reciprocal filial piety, filial behavior, parental involvement*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Statistics provided by the National Population and Family Development Board (LPPKN) 2011 showed that approximately 675,000 or one in three Malaysian elderly (33%) from age 60 and above are abandoned and do not receive financial support from their children (New Straits Times, 2011). The number of admissions to the nine Rumah Seri Kenangan welfare homes between 2008 and 2011 for abandoned senior citizens had increased with time by 1 per cent each year (Department of Social Welfare, 2011). This situation can be prevented if every child fulfills their filial responsibility as parents prefer to receive care and support from their own children. Filial piety is a core principle in parenting especially in a collectivistic society.

Filial behavior is an act of respect and responsibilities one should carry towards their parents and the elderly. Filial piety is one of the topmost ethics practiced widely throughout Asia by Asians regardless of ethnicity and culture. Alongside culture and ethnic differences, parenting style also plays a major role in filial behavior (Gadeyne, Ghesquiere, & Onghena, 2004). Recent developments in the field of parenting and family studies have pointed out that parenting style determines whether or how well filial piety is imparted to the child (Yeh & Bedford, 2004).

Across multiple studies (Liu, Li, Yeh, & Huang, 2011; Hair, Jager, & Garrett, 2002; Steinberg & Silk, 2002), the filial behavior of a child is derived from the child's affection towards their parents. This means that family bonding and attachment are crucial factors to determine adolescents' sense of filial responsibility towards their parents. Liu et al. (2011) used snowball sampling in a study carried out on 128 Taiwanese young adults who resided with their three-generation family and the findings indicated that young adults who received care from their parents had higher scores for filial piety affection. It was also found that parents' warmth and positive support will promote filial behavior among adolescents (Cheah, Ozdemir, & Leung, 2012). Furthermore, parent-children relationship has been associated directly with the endorsement of filial piety (Gadeyne et al, 2004; Li, Zou, Liu & Zhou, 2014).

Past studies have substantiated the links between parenting style, parental behavior, filial attitude and behavior (Cheah et al., 2012; Chen, 2014; Chen, Bond, & Tang, 2007). Most existing literature treated filial piety as a potential factor in predicting other possible variables (Chen, 2014) and less is known about the predictors of filial behavior (Cheah et al , 2012). This present study provides a mediator model to explain the adolescents' filial behavior. Moreover, filial piety studies have only been well established and documented among the Chinese population especially in China, Taiwan and Hong Kong. There is no published study regarding filial piety among the Malay and Indian population specifically adolescents in Malaysia. In line with that, this current study aims to examine potential parental factors as the predictor of filial behavior among multi-ethnic adolescents in Malaysia. This study is important to extend the previous findings and fulfill the knowledge gap.

In general, this study aims to examine the mediating role of reciprocal filial piety in the relationship between parents' involvement and filial behavior. Specifically, this study also addressed the following research questions:

1. Is there a relationship between parental involvement (father and mother), reciprocal filial piety and filial behavior among adolescents in Malaysia?
2. Does reciprocal filial piety mediate the relationship between parental involvement and filial behavior among adolescents in Malaysia?

2.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Samples

The present study employed a cluster sampling method to recruit respondents of the study. The sample of the study consisted of 405 school-going adolescents aged between 14 to 17 years old ($M= 15.06$, $SD= 1.01$) from six secondary schools located in Selangor and Negeri Sembilan. About 55% of the respondents were female. A total of 51.6% of respondents were Malay, followed by Chinese (28.1%), Indians (19.8%) and other races (0.5%).

2.2 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 and they were translated to Malay language by employing back-to-back translation procedure. The questionnaire used Malay as it is the national language used in national secondary schools in Malaysia.

2.3 *Filial Behavior Scale (FBS).*

The Filial Behavior Scale (Chen et al., 2007) was used to measure adolescents' filial behavior. The scale consisted of 25-items rating on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*almost always*). Respondents were required to indicate how often they display each of the filial behaviors in their daily lives. A high score (derived by averaging the score of 25 items) indicates a higher likeliness to carry out filial behavior. The coefficient alpha for the scale was 0.852.

2.4 *Filial Piety Scale.*

The Filial Piety Scale (Yeh & Bedford, 2003) was used to assess respondents' filial attitude towards their parents. The original scale consisted of 16 items with two sub-scales measuring reciprocal and authoritarian filial piety. However, this study only utilized and focused on reciprocal filial piety sub-scale. A 6-point scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 6 (*Strongly Agree*) indicates respondents' agreement towards each of the statements. The scale yielded a coefficient alpha of 0.78.

2.5 *Parents as Social Context Questionnaire - Child Report (PASCQ).*

Parents as Social Context Questionnaire - Child Report (PASCQ: Pierce, Sarason, & Sarason, 1991) was used to measure both father and mother involvement. PASCQ consists of 24 items measuring six parenting dimensions with four items for each dimension namely involvement, structure, rejection, chaos, coercion and autonomy support. This study only focused on parental involvement. Respondents were asked to respond to each item on a 4 point Likert scale rating from 1 (*Not at all true*) to 4 (*Very true*). The total score was created by averaging items' scores of the subscale. Cronbach alpha for the scale was 0.83 (father involvement) and 0.82 (mother involvement).

2.6 Data Analysis

The current study used SPSS version 21 to analyse the data of the study. Several stages of statistical analysis were conducted. First, data was subjected to descriptive analysis to explore

the general pattern of the variables studied. Secondly, a correlation analysis was presented to examine the relationship between parental involvement (father and mother), reciprocal filial piety and adolescents' filial behavior. Lastly, mediating analysis with bootstrapping was conducted to determine the mediation effect of reciprocal filial piety on the relationship between parental involvement (father and mother) and filial behavior among Malaysian adolescents.

3.0 FINDINGS

3.1 Correlation among Parents' Involvement, Reciprocal and Filial Behavior

Table 1 shows the mean values, standard deviations, and correlation for the variables. No missing value was found. The absolute values of skewness and kurtosis were less than three and eight, respectively, suggesting that the variables are normally distributed (Kline, 2005). Pearson correlation analysis showed that both father and mother involvements were significantly associated with reciprocal filial piety and filial behavior. Moreover, reciprocal filial piety was significantly correlated with filial behavior. The significant relationships provide preliminary support for our hypotheses.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations among Variables

Variables	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	1	2	3	4
1. Father Involvement	3.28	0.63	-1.01	0.89	1			
2. Mother Involvement	3.42	0.58	-1.10	1.10	.67***	1		
3. Reciprocal	42.88	4.02	-1.20	1.82	.41***	.48***	1	
4. Filial Behavior	3.76	0.46	-0.54	-0.11	.53***	.60***	.68***	1

Note. Reciprocal: reciprocal filial piety. *** $p < .001$

3.2 The Mediating Role of Reciprocal Filial Piety in the Relationship between Parent Involvement and Filial Behavior

Hayes's (2013) SPSS macro PROCESS (Model 4) with bias corrected bootstrap confidence interval (CI) based on 5,000 bootstrap samples was used to examine the hypothesised mediating model. Parental involvement was treated as predictor, reciprocal filial piety as mediator, and filial behavior as outcome variable. The indirect effect is considered statistically significant when the CI does not contain zero (Hayes, 2013).

Results (see Figure 1a) showed that adolescents who received warm parenting style from their father (i.e., high father involvement) tend to have high reciprocal filial piety, $B = 2.68$, $SE = 0.30$, $t = 9.07$, $p < .001$. Moreover, reciprocal filial piety also significantly predicted filial behavior, $B = 0.06$, $SE = .004$, $t = 15.19$, $p < .001$. Father involvement was found to have a significant effect on filial behavior, $B = 0.39$, $SE = 0.03$, $t = 12.34$, $p < .001$. After controlling the effects of reciprocal filial piety, the direct effect of father involvement on filial behavior continues to exist, $B = 0.22$, $SE = 0.03$, $t = 7.83$, $p < .001$. More importantly, the indirect effect of father involvement on filial behavior through reciprocal filial piety was found to be significant, $B = 0.17$, $SE = .02$, 95% CI = [.13, .23].

Similarly, mother involvement was found to have a significant effect on reciprocal filial piety, $B = 3.37$, $SE = 0.31$, $t = 10.87$, $p < .001$. Reciprocal filial piety also significantly predicted filial behavior, $B = 0.06$, $SE = .004$, $t = 13.78$, $p < .001$. Moreover, mother involvement significantly predicted filial behavior, $B = 0.48$, $SE = 0.03$, $t = 15.09$, $p < .001$.

The direct effect of mother involvement on filial behavior was observed after controlling the effect of reciprocal filial piety, $B = 0.29$, $SE = 0.03$, $t = 9.51$, $p < .001$. The indirect effect of mother involvement on filial behavior through reciprocal filial piety was found to be significant, $B = 0.20$, $SE = .03$, 95% CI = [.15, .25] (see Figure 1b).

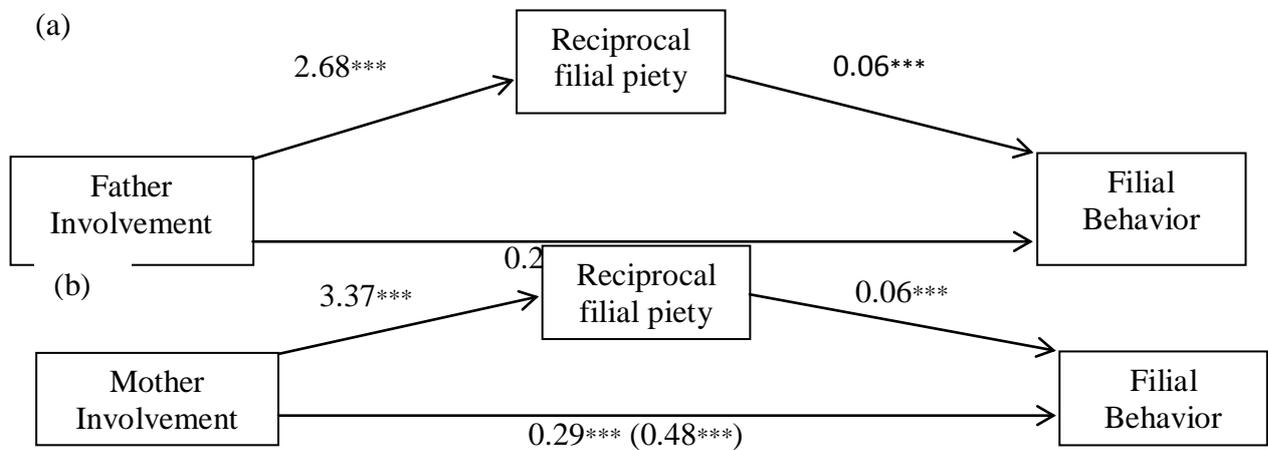


Figure 1. Mediation model showing the effects of (a) father involvement, (b) mother involvement, and reciprocal filial piety on filial behavior. $N = 405$. Values shown are unstandardised coefficients. Total effect of parental involvement was shown in parenthesis.

*** $p < .001$

4.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Generally, this study aimed to examine the mediating role of reciprocal filial piety in the relationship between parents' involvement (father and mother) and filial behavior among Malaysian adolescents. Results of the present study indicate that: (1) parents' involvement (father and mother) has a significant outcome on reciprocal filial piety; (2) parents' involvement (father and mother) has a significant outcome on filial behavior; and (3) reciprocal filial piety significantly predicts filial behavior. In other words, both parents' involvement (father and mother) and reciprocal filial piety contribute to adolescents' filial behavior and reciprocal filial piety mediates the relationship between parents' involvement and filial behavior among adolescents.

A correlation analysis was presented to examine the relationship between parental involvement (father and mother) and reciprocal filial piety. As hypothesised, parental involvements significantly contribute to reciprocal filial piety. The present findings were generally in line with the previous study among students in Hong Kong which suggested that parenting style is associated with reciprocal filial piety and further contributes significantly to life satisfaction (Chen, 2014). The present finding is also consistent with that of Cheah et al. (2012) who found that a child's perceptions of the mother's warm and supportive behaviors are a mediator for children's filial emotions and behaviors towards their mother.

In relation to adolescents' filial behavior, the current findings highlighted that the involvement of both father and mother contributes significantly to the filial behavior of adolescents. Results of the current study is also parallel with the previous study which was conducted among Malaysian adolescents to investigate the role of perceived parental warmth and support in predicting filial behaviors from their age, perceived parental investments, and

positive filial emotions toward their parents (Cheah et al., 2012). Similarly, earlier studies stated that parental warmth and support strongly influence the filial behavior among adolescents (Chen, Liu & Li, 2000; De Goede, Branje & Meeus, 2009).

The current finding also complements the existing developmental literature showing that reciprocal filial piety is associated with a child's filial action and attachment towards the elderly (Chen, 2014). Moreover, another study was conducted among young adults in Kuala Lumpur to investigate filial piety as a determinant in providing care for the elderly people. The study highlighted that filial responsibility was high among those who had experienced a good relationship with their parents (Beh & Folk, 2013). A mutual healthy relationship between parents and children in a family shape the filial behavior towards others across the life span (Cheah et al., 2012). The consistency of the present findings and earlier research studies indicates that filial behavior is interwoven with reciprocal filial piety and suggests that reciprocal filial piety is a strong predictor for filial actions.

As predicted, the mediation analysis indicated that reciprocal filial piety mediates the relationship between parents' involvement (father and mother) and filial behavior. The results are in line with the findings of studies conducted among young adults in Taiwan which stated that reciprocal filial piety mediates the relationship of supportive parenting and parents-adolescent relationship. The study further proved that parenting is associated with young adults' filial piety (Chen, Wu & Yeh, 2015).

The results of this study should be interpreted with caution given its limitations. First, the study was based on a sample from two metropolitan and urbanized cities in Peninsular Malaysia to represent Malaysian adolescents. Future studies should broaden the scope with more cities to represent Malaysian adolescents' filial behavior. Moreover, the sample composed of national school students. Future studies can expand the examination to other populations, such as private school students or adolescents from rural areas or poor background. In addition, it is recommended that future studies should also include samples from Sabah and Sarawak to represent Malaysian adolescents.

Besides that, this study focused on young adolescents because of the age of the adolescents we targeted. It is possible that filial behavior might differ among older adolescents. Earlier research has stated that there may be a brief swing at puberty in the parent-child relationship quality and that would actually affect the result (Santrock, 2014). Older adolescents were not taken as samples in the present study because the students were having their public examination at the time of the study and were not allowed to take part in the study by the authorities. Furthermore, mediation findings could not show the causal relationship but it is able to provide the evidence for a causal relationship. A better way to test the causal relationship is by conducting a longitudinal study.

In spite of these limitations, the significance of this study lies in examining the old family practices empirically. This research demonstrates that filial piety is potentially a multidimensional area to be studied. This study has suggested that reciprocal filial piety mediates the relationship between parents' involvement and adolescent's filial behavior. To develop a complete understanding of the role of filial piety as a mediator, future research should include other important variables such as life satisfaction as a dependent variable to be tested on the mediator.

REFERENCES

- Beh, L.S., & Folk, J. Y.(2013). A study of filial piety practice in Malaysia: Relationship between financial well-being and filial piety. *African Journal of Business Management*, 7(38), 3895-3902. doi: 10.5897/ajmbm10.424
- Cheah, C. S. L., Ozdemir, S. B., & Leung, C. Y. Y. (2012). Predicting the filial behaviors of Chinese-Malaysian adolescents from perceived parental investments, filial emotions, and parental warmth and support. *Journal of Adolescence*, 35, 628-637. doi:10.1016/j.adolescence.2011.07.001
- Chen, X., Liu, M., & Li, D. (2000). Parental warmth, control, and indulgence and their relations to adjustment in Chinese children: a longitudinal study. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 14, 401–419.
- Chen, X.C., Bond, M.H., & Tang, D.(2007).Decomposing filial piety into filial attitudes and filial enactments, *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 10(4), 213-223. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-839X.2007.00230.x
- Chen, W.W., (2014).The relationship between perceived parenting style, filial piety, and life satisfaction in Hong Kong. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 28(3), 308-14. doi:10.1037/a0036819
- Chen, W.W., Wu, C.W., & Yeh, K.H. (2015). How parenting and filial piety influence happiness, parent–child relationships and quality of family life in Taiwanese adult children. *Journal of Family Studies*, 3, 1322-9400.doi: 10.1080/13229400.2015.1027154
- De Goede, I. H. A., Branje, S. J. T., & Meeus, W. H. J. (2009). Developmental changes in adolescents' perceptions of relationships with their parents. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 38, 75–88.
- Department of Social Welfare. (2011). *Senior citizen and family institution*. Retrieved from http://www.jkm.gov.my/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=61&Itemid=68&lang=en
- Gadeyne, E., Ghesquiere, P., & Onghena, P.,(2004).Longitudinal relations between parenting and child adjustment in young children. *Journal of Clinical and Adolescent Psychology*, 33,347-358
- Hair, E., Jager, J., & Garrett, S. (2002). *Background for community-level work on social competency in adolescence: A review of antecedents, programs, and investment strategies*. Washington, DC: Child Trends.
- Hayes, A. F. (2013). *Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Kline, R. B. (2005). *Principles and practice of structural equation modeling* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Lang, F. R., & Schutze, Y. (2002). Adult children's supportive behaviors and older parents' subjective well-being: A developmental perspective on intergenerational relationships. *Journal of Social Issues*, 58(4), 661-680
- Li, X., Zou, H., Liu, Y., & Zhou, Q. (2014). The Relationships of Family Socioeconomic Status, Parent-Adolescent Conflict, and Filial Piety to Adolescents' Family Functioning in Mainland China. *Journal of Child Family Studies*, 23, 29-38. doi:10.1007/s10826-012-9683-0
- Liu, B.S., Li, C.Y., Yeh, K.H., & Huang, H.C. (2011). Differences in filial behavior in multi generation families that live together. *Journal of Nursing Research*, 19(1), 25-34. doi: 10.1097/JNR.0b013e31820b0f3c.
- Liu, Y. L. (2013). Autonomy, filial piety, and parental authority: A two-year logitudinal investigation. *Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 174(5), 557-581. doi: 10.1080/00221325.2012.706660
- One out of three abandoned by children. (2011, December 6). *New Straits Times*
- Pierce, G.R., Sarason, I. G., & Sarason, B.R (1991). General and relationship-based perceptions of social support: Are two construct better than one? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 61(6), 1028-1039
- Santrock, J.W. (2014) *Adolescent* (15th ed.). New York, NY: McGrawHill Education

- Steinberg, L., & Silk, J. S. (2002). *Parenting adolescents: Handbook of parenting*. New Jersey: Erlbaum.
- Yeh, K. H., & Bedford, O. (2004). Filial piety and parent-child conflict. *International Journal of Psychology, 39*, 132-144.