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EXAMINING GENDER DIFFERENCES IN PERCEIVED
PARENTING STYLES OF ADOLESCENTS IN KLANG VALLEY:
A QUANTITATIVE STUDY

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Abstract:

The present research examined gender differences in perceived parenting styles of adolescents. Sample comprised of 579 adolescents with 316 females and 263 males and was recruited from 6 public schools in Klang Valley. Parental Authority Questionnaire was used for the study. Study reported that both male and females perceived their parents (paternal and maternal) as authoritative, however, there is no significant differences of gender differences in perceived paternal and maternal parenting styles. Findings suggested that Baumrind's parenting typology is applicable in collectivist countries like Malaysia. Therefore, it is implicated that there are more similarities than differences in results between Western countries and Malaysia.

Keywords:

Perceived Parenting Styles, Gender Differences, Adolescence, Quantitative Study

Introduction

Family life, especially life in the home environment, has a significant developmental impact on human development (Thomas et al., 2017). Within a family, parents are regarded as one of the significant socialization agents to nurture and educate their children (Axpe et al., 2019;

Barni et al., 2017; Ghazali, 2011). Parents would be able to educate a general system of norms and cultural values, the acquisition of which facilitates the individuals' ability to function in society via the socialization process with their children (Burnett et al., 2020; Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017; Tam & Chan, 2015). These include prescriptive norms that regulate what we are permitted to do and proscriptive norms that classify what we are prohibited to perform.

Parenting is a complex activity that includes different parental behaviors which could work either separately or by collaborating between both of the parents, to raise their children (Arusubila & Subasree, 2016; Kuppens & Ceulemans, 2019; Maccoby, 2000; Masud et al., 2019; McKee et al., 2008). Therefore, parenting could also be implied as the process of raising children and providing them with protection and care in order to ensure their development in physical, social, emotional and psychological aspects (Bi et al., 2018; Clark, 2020; Desforges & Abouchar, 2003). Most researchers who attempt to describe this broad parental practices and pattern mainly depend on Diana Baumrind's concept of parenting style.

The typology of parenting styles which was empirically developed and conceptualized by Baumrind (1967) aimed to study the interactions between parent-and their children. Based on the two notions, which are responsiveness and demandingness practiced by the parents (Maccoby & Martin, 1983), the term responsiveness basically refers to a combination of parental warmth, nurturance, and support. Sometimes the term positive parenting has been used to describe this same group of responsive parenting practices (Kuppens & Ceulemans, 2018). Parental responsiveness is associated with positive outcomes in children's development such as higher child self-regulation and lower externalizing behavior (Kang & Guo, 2021; Pinquart & Kauser, 2018), higher self-esteem (Gao et al., 2021), and better psychological adjustments (McKinney et al., 2016). Parental demandingness refers to the level of control the parents impose on their children, by implementing and setting family rules and regulations to constraint and discipline their child's behavior. Thus, with appropriate rules and regulations in the family, a positive development can be achieved.

The concepts of the two notions mentioned above were expanded to three major types of parenting styles described in the model, which were authoritarian, authoritative, and permissiveness. Authoritarian parenting style is characterized by high demandingness and low responsiveness of the parents towards their children (Baumrind, 1991; Olla et al., 2018). Authoritarian parents would expect their children to comply with their instructions strictly without any questions (Chang et al., 2003; Olla et al., 2018). Permissive parenting style is characterized by high responsiveness and low demandingness, allowing their children to adjust to their own daily itinerary without many rules and regulations. They tend to have minimum control over the behavior of their children, while they are very responsive to the demands of their children (Boediman & Desnawati, 2019). The last parenting style, which is known as authoritative parenting style emphasized on high responsiveness and high demandingness (Baumrind, 1991; Wianto et al., 2021), in which the parents encompass care, dual-way communication and are highly appreciative to the feedback of their children. Authoritative parents would regulate a set of rules expecting their children to follow, but the demands of authoritative parents are moderated by prior discussion before the implementation of the rules. Therefore, the children would understand the rules clearly beforehand.

Aside from the parenting styles, there is an interest in investigating the genders of adolescent that are more inclined to perceive a particular parenting style. While research on various

parenting styles and their success exist, less research that investigates the differences in perceptions of maternal and paternal parenting or the association between genders and perceived parenting styles are available (Erola et al., 2016; Spinelli et al., 2020). Several researchers suggest that parents tend to have differential mechanisms towards boys and girls (Hoeve et al., 2011; Ortega et al., 2021; Situmorang & Salim, 2021). However, to date, there is no consensus in the literature about the extent to which parents do treat their sons and daughters differently, in which areas of parenting this mostly occurs, and whether fathers and mothers differ in the extent of gender differentiation.

Studying the relationship between gender of adolescent towards their parents' parenting styles would be crucial to better understand the socialization dynamics in a parental-adolescent relationship as it appears to moderate the relationship between the caregiver and the adolescents' developmental outcomes. For example, a boy may provoke different responses from their social environment compared to girls, as this may be due to the higher social expectations for boys which requires them to be more independent, assertive, competitive, and more mature in their life (Dagnev & Asrat, 2017). Besides, the rebelliousness and aggressiveness of boys tend to be higher compared to girls (Cui & Lan, 2020; Meichenbaum, 2006). Therefore, the parents would be harsher and stricter when they are raising boys. Meanwhile, parents may initiate more of other types of verbal interactions with their daughters because they are more responsive and inclined to share their thoughts with their parents, compared to boys (Adnyani, 2017; Aznar & Tenenbaum, 2015; Leaper et al., 1998; McNaughton & Niedzwiecki, 2000; Nilsson, 2017; Zeng et al., 2016). Girls are generally recognized as being more obedient and would follow the instructions of their parents compared to boys. Therefore, parents tend to be more lenient when they are raising girls. In short, adolescent boys would perceive their parents as authoritarian parents, meanwhile, adolescent girls would perceive their parents as authoritative or permissive parents (Kausar & Shafique, 2008; Olivari et al., 2015; Ortega et al., 2021).

Since the debate between gender-differentiated socialization still remains, this might trigger the parents to have different treatments towards their male and female adolescent children (Hallers et al., 2014; Hiedemann & Joesch, 2005; Mascaro et al., 2017). Different studies specifically reported that the mothers are more focused on verbal interactions such as the amount of talking, being supportive and applying directive speech, while the fathers would be more focused on communicating in language related to achievement, tangible support, punishment and intrusiveness over their actions (Mascaro et al., 2017; Stewart et al., 2019; Vrolijk et al., 2020).

This study aims to narrow the knowledge gap in the local context, and it would be valuable to explore the perceived parenting styles and gender differences in the Malaysian context, in order to enhance our understanding regarding adolescent's perception towards their parents.

In sum, the current study addresses two main aims among Malaysian adolescents, which are:
(1) to identify the pattern of perceived paternal and maternal parenting styles.
(2) to examine any gender differences of perceived paternal and maternal parenting styles.

Methodology

For this study, the survey method was conducted using questionnaire. The cross-sectional survey had been used to examine the different types of perceived parenting styles (paternal and

maternal) perceived by the adolescent. We obtained a total of 579 students from six secondary schools in the Klang Valley area. Once permissions were obtained from the relevant authority, all respondents were given the questionnaire which contained a consent form and whole of the questionnaire set. The researchers personally delivered, explained, and collected the self-administered questionnaires from the respondents. Each respondent was given 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

The questionnaires were divided into several sections, which measured different study variables. The sections are as follows: *Personal background of respondents*. Respondent reported information on their age, gender, ethnicity, and year of study.

The Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) The Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) (Buri, 1991) was used to assess the perceived maternal parenting styles of adolescents. There was a total of 30 items in the measure, with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). PAQ consists of 3 distinct parental styles, which is authoritative, authoritarian and permissive. Each of these types of parenting style consists of 10 questions. A high score obtained on the particular distinct means a relatively high level of particular parenting style was perceived by the adolescents. This measure was reliable with Cronbach's alpha values in this study with values of .767 to .873.

To analyse the data, the SPSS software version 16 was used, in which both descriptive and inferential statistics were used. The descriptive statistics was comprised of mean, standard deviation, and T-test to determine the level of inferential statistics.

Result

Demographic Profile

There was a total of 579 students participating in this study, with 263 males (45%) and 316 females (55%). The age of adolescents who participated in this study ranged from 15 years old to 18 years old. The mean age of the participants was about 16 years old. The ethnicity distribution of the participants is 334 Malays, 170 Chinese, 55 Indians and 20 from other ethnic backgrounds. The total participants of the current study were initially comprised of 600 participants, however, only 579 participants were taken into account due to the missing data which resulted in the other participants for being omitted from this study.

A total of 579 respondents participated in the survey, with 45.4% being males and the rest 54.6% being females. The reported age range was from 14 to 18 years old (mean=15.6, standard deviation=0.99). The ethnicity distribution was 57.7% Malay, 29.4% Chinese 9.5% Indian and 3.5% others.

Table 4.1 Adolescent's Characteristics (n=579)

Variable	n	%
Gender		
Female	316	54.6
Male	263	45.4
Age (years)		
15 and below	136	27.3
16-17	555	72.0

18 and above	4	0.7
<i>Mean</i>	15.6	
<i>S.D.</i>	0.9	
<i>Minimum</i>	13	
<i>Maximum</i>	18	
<hr/>		
Ethnic		
Malay	334	57.7
Chinese	170	29.4
Indian	55	9.5
Other	20	3.4

Note: S.D. = standard deviation

Patterns of Perceived Paternal and Maternal Parenting Styles

According The first objective of this study is to investigate the patterns of perceived paternal and maternal parenting styles of adolescents. Standard scores were applied to divide respondents into one of the parenting styles typologies. The scores are useful and beneficial to summarize and compare scores across different kinds of rating scales or subscales obtained by using the following formula (Coolidge, 2006):

$$\text{Standard score} = \frac{\text{raw score} - \text{mean}}{\text{standard deviation}}$$

Therefore, respondents with a higher standardized score in the authoritarian subscale as compared to the other subscales were categorized in the authoritarian parenting style. Similarly, respondents with a higher standardized score in the authoritative subscale were categorized in the authoritative parenting style, while respondents with a higher standardized score in the permissive subscale were categorized in the permissive parenting style.

Table 4.2 Patterns of Perceived Paternal and Maternal Parenting Styles

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Perceived Paternal Parenting Styles		
Authoritarian	109	18.8
Authoritative	369	63.8
Permissive	101	17.4
Perceived Maternal Parenting Styles		
Authoritarian	106	18.3
Authoritative	419	72.4
Permissive	54	9.3

The first objective of the study is to investigate the patterns of perceived paternal and maternal parenting styles of adolescents. Table 4.2 presents the patterns of perceived paternal and maternal parenting styles. As stated earlier, the standard scores were adopted to determine the preferences of the perceived paternal and maternal parenting styles. For perceived paternal parenting styles, more than half (63.3%) of the respondents reported the dominant style that their father has adopted to be the authoritative parenting style. On the other hand, the number of respondents perceived their father as having an authoritarian and permissiveness parenting styles are almost the same, which are 18.8% and 17.4%, respectively. Meanwhile, for perceived

maternal parenting styles, nearly the majority (72.4%) of the respondents reported the dominant style that their mother has demonstrated was the authoritative parenting style. On the other hand, about 18.3% of respondent responded that their mother demonstrated an authoritarian parenting style, and only 9.3% of respondent reported their mother as demonstrating permissiveness parenting styles. As such, the current study reported that the majority of the adolescents reported their parents parenting styles as being authoritative, followed by authoritarian and permissiveness.

Gender Differences between means of Perceived Paternal and Maternal Parenting Styles

Multiple purposes can be applied for t-test which can be used for various purposes, one of them is to analyse the differences in means of two groups. In the present study, t-test was used to compute the mean difference of gender differences in parenting styles with regard to the gender of child and differences in perceived parenting styles. Table 4.3 reports the mean difference between male and female adolescents for the perceived paternal and maternal parenting styles. The present study reported that male adolescent perceived their father as authoritative (M = 34.93, SD =5.56), followed by authoritarian (M = 31.02, SD =6.48) and permissiveness (M = 30.44, SD =5.28). Meanwhile, male adolescent perceived their mother as authoritative (M = 35.55, SD =5.63), followed by authoritarian (M = 31.41, SD =6.56) and permissiveness (M = 30.58, SD =5.88). For female adolescent, similar result was reported as the male adolescent. They tend to perceive their father as authoritative (M = 34.08, SD =6.37), followed by authoritarian (M = 30.95, SD =6.28) and permissiveness (M = 29.92, SD =5.28). Also, female adolescent perceived their mother as authoritative (M = 35.19, SD =5.78), followed by authoritarian (M = 31.53, SD =6.18) and permissiveness (M = 29.92, SD =5.78). Overall, both male and female found that their parents adopted more authoritative parenting styles, follow by permissiveness parenting styles and authoritarian parenting styles, for both father and mother.

Nevertheless, there is no statistically significant in the mean difference between male and female on authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive paternal and maternal parenting styles. Overall, both male and female found that their parents adopted more authoritative parenting style, follow by permissiveness parenting style and authoritarian parenting style, for both father and mother.

Table 3: Gender Differences Between Means of Perceived Paternal and Maternal Parenting Styles

Variable	Male (n=263)	SD	Female (n=316)	SD	95% CI	t	df	sig
Perceived Paternal Parenting Styles								
Authoritarian	31.02	6.48	30.95	6.28	[-.98, 1.11]	.13	577	.90
Authoritative	34.93	5.56	34.08	6.37	[-.13, 1.84]	1.69	577	.09
Permissive	30.44	5.28	29.92	5.28	[-.37, 1.41]	1.15	577	.25
Perceived Maternal Parenting Styles								

Authoritarian	31.41	6.56	31.53	6.18	[-1.16, .93]	-.22	577	.83
Authoritative	35.55	5.63	35.19	5.78	[-.58, 1.29]	.74	577	.46
Permissive	30.58	5.88	30.06	5.78	[-.44, 1.47]	1.06	577	.29

Note: * $p < .05$

Discussion

The first objective covers the patterns of perceived paternal and maternal parenting styles by adolescents. Mainstream thinking and scientific research on parenting have been guided and dominated by the Western studies, and the majority of the research reported that the authoritative parenting style is the most prevalent type of parenting styles in the Western societies, whereas the authoritarian style in the Eastern societies (Mousavi & Juhari, 2019; Sahithya et al., 2019).

Nevertheless, the first results presented in this study indicated that the dominant perceived paternal and maternal parenting styles in Malaysia is authoritative parenting. This is in line with previous local studies which supported that authoritative paternal and maternal parenting styles are the most frequent parenting styles adopted by the Malaysian parents (Asnawi et al., 2017; Ghannad et al., 2018). This means in other words; Malaysian adolescents are receiving high levels of demands and warmth from their parents simultaneously.

A similar result was reported in Malaysia, as both Malaysian fathers and mothers perceived as authoritative by their adolescent children (Lin & Lian, 2011). When the parents were able to provide a nurturing, affectionate and supportive environment for their adolescents, it would enhance their coping capability in their life. Different rules and demands would be required to be complied by their adolescent children. Thus, Malaysian parents are still being perceived as authoritative even though they exhibit firmness in regulating the behaviours of the children.

This finding is not surprising as more and more adolescents perceived their parents as adopting the methods of authoritative parenting style frequently and this is the common parenting style reported in the context of Malaysia, rather than the authoritarian parenting style (Ho et al., 2019; Masiran, 2022). It seems that the authoritarian parenting style falls short in responding to the needs left by the Asian communities, who are structurally pluralistic because these cultures (Asian cultures of different communities) over emphasize obedience and collective identity. A control dimension plays a key role in these cultures, but it seems that the impact is getting weaker and latent in the Malaysian context, which is slightly different with what was reported in the previous study, which is that the authoritarian parenting style is the manifested parenting style reported in the context of the Asian region.

In earlier studies, it was implied that the fathers rarely interacted with the children within the family (Cardinali et al., 2019; Craig, 2006). Usually, their interaction would be mediated via their spouse to their children. But the present finding contradicts with what was reported in the previous researches and points out that the father showed more connection and warmth with girls compared to their other children. This shift in the parenting style of the father and mother for their children signifies that both parents, especially the fathers are becoming more involved, responsive, and caring towards their adolescent children. The ideas suggest that the parenting style of the fathers is harsher for adolescent boys compared to girls may not be applicable in the Malaysian context. Generally, the mothers are perceived as more nurturing, caring and are more rational with their children. In previous studies, it has also been shown that mothers tend

to use more reasoning with their children (Tollossa & Nelson, 2021; Zhang et al., 2017). This suggests that the mothers and children (sons and daughters) relationship now seem to be based on friendship rather than on control.

As stated earlier, the authoritarian parenting style is prevailing in the Asian context due to the elements of filial piety, which entails children's suppression of their wishes and compliance with the parental wishes because of the parents' physical, financial, or social seniority (Chao, 1995). Nevertheless, this study implies that the induction in Malaysian parenting is being transformed from the traditional context as they are giving explanations for the appropriate behaviours and are not prioritizing the need of showing high support, respect for autonomy and positive control which goes together and reflects an authoritative parenting style (Kol, 2016; Lastar & Rathakrishnan, 2014; Lynn & Ting, 2019). In contrast with the traditional authoritarian filial piety, reciprocal filial piety encompasses of the children's emotional and spiritual attendance and them taking care of their parents out of their gratitude, for their efforts in raising them which is more suitably reflected in the context of Malaysia (Cheah et al., 2017).

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 (Nainee et al., 2016). However, the traditional filial piety which features the unique aspects of this unidirectional obligation of the children to their parents could be understood as it may have a universal application by transformation, as it had revolved into the reciprocal filial piety as mentioned earlier. As supported by different studies (Sun et al., 2019), reciprocal filial piety also emphasized in the terms of the obedience and respect towards the elderly, but it allowed the children to express their opinions towards their parents (Wang et al., 2021). Different contemporary Malaysian studies have supported that reciprocal filial piety would share the similar features with the authoritative parenting styles, and it is widely accepted by the Malaysian parents' and adolescents (Cheah et al., 2017; Nainee et al., 2016; Tan et al., 2019). As such, it is concurrently supported by the results of this study, which is that the authoritative paternal and maternal parenting styles are widely adopted by Malaysian's parents and are perceived by their adolescent children.

The least prevalent parenting styles adopted by Malaysian parents in this study is the permissive parenting style. They adopt a free-for-all attitude and have very little rules that are in place. They tend to fulfil all their children's requests as long as it is within their capacity, which resulted in these children to typically end up being spoilt and pampered (Kohn, 2017; Parent et al., 2011). According to Baumrind (1966, 1967), permissive parents often attempt to behave in a non-punitive, acceptant, and affirmative manner towards the child's impulses, desires, and actions. The parents tend to present themselves as a resource for their adolescents' children when they are in need, not as the ideal for them to emulate, nor as an active agent responsible for shaping or altering their ongoing or future behaviour (Masitah & Pasaribu, 2022; Uji et al., 2014).

There are a few explanations which might contribute to permissive parenting being the least prevalence type of parenting reported among teenagers. Traditionally, collectivistic parents in contrast have socialization goals that target at being hardworking and obedient (Chao, 2001). Various contemporary studies (Huang et al., 2019; Ren & Edwards, 2015; Yip et al., 2019) indicated that Asian context mostly values conformity, compliance to the societal norms, and emphasize on the emotional self-control, without doubting the elders' status in the family.

Asian parents are frequently labelled as “authoritarian” by many researchers (Huang et al., 2019; Ma, 2017; Ren & Edwards, 2015; Wood & Kennison, 2017).

The findings of this study did not reveal significant gender differences in all of the perceived paternal parenting styles. This result supports the findings of other studies (Sharma & Pandey, 2015). Gender differences in perceiving paternal parenting style are mostly insignificant especially in the Asian context (Khan, Tufail & Hussain, 2014) as both males and females in a collectivist culture view their fathers and mothers as important figures in their life (Almazan et al., 2020; Chi, Rozumah & Ziarat, 2012; Wang et al., 2018).

There is no doubt that a child needs both a mother and a father, and it is not just about the family’s solidarity, but the children need both the nurturing styles that most mothers bring to the family as well as a more challenging and real-world based style to enhance their physical, intellectual and social growth to help them have a better knowledge of our societal value system. Recent research has reported that parents of infants would exhibit a gender bias in favour of their sons, as the parents believe that the son would be able to have a better achievement compared to a daughter. It seems that from a young age, parents have lower expectations of their daughters compared to their sons.

Nevertheless, this study reported contradicting result among adolescent children towards their parents. Parents nowadays widely believe that girls and boys should be treated equally to one another, no matter how society views them or how “protected” the parents feel for a girl (Axinn et al., 2011). Therefore, the parents would instil fair treatment by enforcing the same demands and expectations, such as allowing them to go to events together, such as a party or to hang out with their friends. Girls should not be limited to things that they can do because of their gender. How an adolescent socializes should depend on their behavior and responsibility.

By treating both daughters and sons similarly, it may reduce the sense of inferiority to their siblings because of the standards, expectation and goals the parents instill on them. So, as the parents are aware and conscious of gender biases, the expectations, standards, and hopes enforced are the same between their children. Without the preferential to any gender, it allows the adolescents to feel the sense of fairness and equality, which may be helpful for them to build a positive self-identity, as the parents do not judge them based on their gender, but merely based on their abilities (Kowal et al., 2017; Malti et al., 2020).

Limitation and Recommendation

Despite these interesting results, the present study consists of certain limitations like all other research studies. Firstly, the sample was made up exclusively of secondary school students, who were aged under 18 years old. Consequently, we must be cautious when generalizing our findings to older emerging adults and those who are entering their tertiary education or entering the workforce early. Future studies should strive to include a larger sample that is representative of older adults and broaden the age range to include the entire emerging adult age range. The second limitation is that, even though the present study had distinguished between the maternal and paternal parenting styles, we could not determine the effect of co-parenting style in accordance with the sex of the parent exercising it (the father or the mother) to their adolescents. Linked to the above, a third limitation is that the parents’ perspectives of their parenting styles were not included in the study. Taking the viewpoint of other stakeholders involved in the relationship into account, it would have enabled us to triangulate the

information and gain a more complete and comprehensive view of the family relations present in each case. Future studies may therefore include the parents' views in the analyses and explore the children's perspectives of their mothers' and fathers' parenting styles separately, in order to come to a more in-depth understanding of the family dynamics during this period. The final limitation is the fact that the study was cross-sectional in nature, preventing us from establishing the direction of causality in the relationships observed. Future studies should consider using longitudinal designs, which would enable causal relations to be determined more accurately.

Implication and Conclusion

Despite these limitations, the current study has shown important implications. To our knowledge, this study would let us further understand the perception of the adolescents towards their parents, and it is very helpful to further understand the adolescents' expectations for behavioural autonomy and beliefs in the legitimacy of parental authority, the links between parenting styles and parent-adolescent conflict and also the cohesion in gender differences (Branje, 2018). The findings of this study extend existing research and suggest that prevention and intervention efforts are needed to primarily target the reduction of non-authoritative parenting styles, the promotion of acquiring appropriate levels of autonomy expectations, endorsement of parental authority, and the adolescents' children perceiving that the parents are applying gender equality between their children. The concept of the traditional proverb which indicating traditional parenting strategies for raising children, which is "sons to be raised in frugality and daughters in abundance." This saying indicates that a son would grow up to be a responsible and solid man when parented strictly, whereas, a daughter would grow up into an elegant lady who can resist all materialistic temptations even when they are pampered are less related in the Malaysian parenting context. Future research should examine other possible mediating paths and sample a wider range of cultural contexts to explore the relationship between the adolescent's development and their family functioning.

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