



PERCEIVED PARENTING STYLE, FILIAL PIETY, AND ETHNIC DIFFERENCES IN  
RELATION TO FAMILY COHESION AMONG YOUNG ADULTS IN  
MALAYSIA

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Perceived Parenting Style, Filial Piety, and  
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among Young Adults in Malaysia  
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## FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH FAMILY COHESION

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## FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH FAMILY COHESION

### Declaration

We declare that the material contained in this paper is the end result of our own work and that due acknowledgement has been given in the bibliography and references to ALL sources be they printed, electronic or personal.

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## FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH FAMILY COHESION

### Approval Form

This research paper attached hereto, entitled “Perceived Parenting Style, Filial Piety, and Ethnic Differences in Relation to Family Cohesion among Young Adults in Malaysia”, prepared and submitted by Chiain Jia Kie, Mong Qi Ying, Quah Yi Wei in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Social Science (Hons) Psychology is hereby accepted.

\_\_\_\_\_

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## FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH FAMILY COHESION

### **Abstract**

In Malaysia, as a collectivist, multi-ethnic country, young adults' well-being is shaped by family cohesion. Family ties were also affected by modernisation and changes in family structure. Therefore, factors that are linked to family cohesion have been highlighted in this study. Relationships between perceived parenting style, filial piety and ethnic differences with family cohesion among young adults in Malaysia who aged 18 to 39 were examined. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted by using the purposive sampling method and recruited 119 participants who were aged 18 to 39. The standardised instruments include the FACES III, the Cohesion subscale, the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ), and the Dual Filial Piety Scale (DFPS). Pearson correlation analysis was applied to study the relation between perceived parenting style, filial piety and ethnic differences with family cohesion. The results showed that authoritative, permissive, and reciprocal filial piety (RFP) were positively associated with family cohesion, while authoritarian parenting was negatively associated. There is no significant relationship between authoritarian filial piety with family cohesion. The study also indicated a significant difference between Malay, Chinese and Indian participants in family cohesion by one-way ANOVA, with Malay participants reporting having higher family cohesion than Chinese and Indian participants. The significance of parental warmth and reciprocal intergenerational values in strengthening family cohesion was highlighted in the study. Lastly, theoretical contributions and practical implementations are also offered by the implementation of the Family Systems Theory to this study, which can provide insights for parents, counsellors, educators and policymakers to strengthen family relationships in Malaysia's multicultural context.

*Keywords:* Perceived parenting style, filial piety, ethnic differences, family cohesion, young adults

*Subclass:* HQ503-1064 The family. Marriage. Home

# FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH FAMILY COHESION

## Table of Contents

	Page
List of Tables	i
List of Figure	ii
List of Abbreviations	iii
Chapter	
1 Introduction	1
Background of Study	1
Statement of the Problem	4
Research Questions	7
Research Objectives	7
Research Hypotheses	7
Significance of the Study	8
Conceptual Definitions	10
Family Cohesion	10
Perceived Parenting Style	10
Filial Piety	11
Ethnicity	11
Young Adult	11
Operational Definitions	11
Family Cohesion	11
Perceived Parenting Style	12
Filial Piety	12
Ethnicity	12
Young Adult	12

## FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH FAMILY COHESION

2	Literature Review	13
	Family Cohesion	13
	Parenting Style and Family Cohesion	14
	Filial Piety and Family Cohesion	15
	Ethnicity and Family Cohesion	16
	Theoretical Framework	17
	Conceptual Framework	19
3	Methodology	20
	Research Design	20
	Research Subject	20
	Research Population	20
	Research Location	21
	Sample Size	21
	Sampling Method	22
	Inclusive and Exclusive Criteria	22
	Ethical Clearance	24
	Research Procedure	25
	Research Instrument	25
	Demographic Information	26
	Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scale III	26
	Parental Authority Questionnaire	27
	Dual Filial Piety Scale	28
	Pilot Study	28
	Reliability	29
	Data Analysis	30

## FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH FAMILY COHESION

4	Result	32
	Data Cleaning	32
	Test of Normality	32
	Histogram	32
	Quantile to Quantile (Q-Q) plot	33
	Skewness and Kurtosis	33
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test	34
	Summary for Tests of Normality	35
	Descriptive Statistic	36
	Demographic Characteristic	36
	Topic-specific Characteristic	37
	Inferential Statistic	38
	Correlation Analysis	38
	One-Way ANOVA Analysis	39
5	Discussion and Conclusion	42
	Discussion	42
	Permissive Parenting Style and Family Cohesion	42
	Authoritarian Parenting Style and Family Cohesion	43
	Authoritative Parenting Style and Family Cohesion	44
	Reciprocal Filial Piety and Family Cohesion	45
	Authoritarian Filial Piety and Family Cohesion	46
	Ethnic Differences and Family Cohesion	47
	Implication	48
	Theoretical Implication	48
	Practical Implication	50

## FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH FAMILY COHESION

	Limitations and Recommendations	51
	Conclusion	53
References		55
Appendix A	Correlation between Variables	70
Appendix B	G*Power	71
Appendix C	Ethical Approval Letter	72
Appendix D	Survey Recruitment Poster	74
Appendix E	Questionnaire	75
Appendix F	Reliability Test for Pilot and Actual Study	82
Appendix G	Histogram	84
Appendix H	Q-Q Plot	86
Appendix I	Skewness and Kurtosis	88
Appendix J	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test	89
Appendix K	Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Analysis	89
Appendix L	One-Way ANOVA	90

**List of Tables**

Tables		Page
3.1	Reliability of Instruments in Pilot (n = 30) and Actual Study (n = 119)	30
4.1	Skewness and Kurtosis	34
4.2	Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test	35
4.3	Demographic Characteristics of the Participants (n = 119)	36
4.4	Frequency Distribution of Variables (n = 119)	37
4.5	Correlations for Study Variables	39
4.6.1	One-Way Analysis of Variance of Family Cohesion by Ethnicity	40
4.6.2	Kruskal-Wallis Test	40
4.6.3	Dunnett's T3 Post Hoc Comparison of Family Cohesion by Ethnicity	41
4.7	Summary of Findings	41

**List of Figure**

Figure		Page
2.1	Conceptual Framework	19

**List of Abbreviations**

## Abbreviations

AFP	Authoritarian Filial Piety
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
APS	Authoritarian Parenting Style
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
DFPS	Dual Filial Piety Scale
FACES III	Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale III
FPS	Authoritative Parenting Style
K-S Test	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test
LPPKN	Lembaga Penduduk dan Pembangunan Keluarga Negara
PAQ	Parental Authority Questionnaire
PPMC	Pearson Product-Moment Correlation
PPS	Permissive Parenting Style
Q-Q plot	Quantile-quantile plot
QR code	Quick Response code
RFP	Reciprocal Filial Piety
SERC	Scientific and Ethical Review Committee
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
URL	Uniform Resource Locator
UTAR	Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman
WAST	Women Abuse Screening Tool

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

#### Background of the study

In Malaysia, family plays a central role in shaping the lives and values of young adults. However, in the contemporary era, the traditional family structure is undergoing significant changes due to rapid societal and generational shifts. With the advancement of modernisation, urbanisation, and globalisation, the family structure and lifestyle experienced by today's young adults have significantly changed from those of previous generations (Aziz & Yusoff, 2012). As family structures evolve, this may reduce or enhance emotional closeness, communication, and support among family members, thereby affecting family cohesion. Family cohesion refers to the emotional bond and closeness among family members (Olson et al., 1983; Olson, 2011). Therefore, it is crucial to raise awareness of the importance of family cohesion. More importantly, individuals need to understand how to actively cultivate it, as it helps enhance harmony, security, mutual support, and stronger interpersonal relationships within the family. As Malaysia is a diverse and multi-ethnic country, family cohesion is also related to cultural values, parenting styles, and communication styles.

Due to the changing of family structure and cohesion, focusing on young adults who are undergoing a significant developmental transition is important. In the Malaysian context, young adults refer to individuals between the ages of 18 and 39 (Khoo et al., 2021). Young adults need to balance their social and family expectations with personal aspirations as they are in a crucial developmental stage (Yau et al., 2021). This developmental period is marked as an important transition, including pursuing higher education, entering the workforce, leaving the family home, establishing intimate relationships, and more (Almeida et al., 2024; SM & Latipah, 2024). These transitions can either strengthen or weaken the emotional bond

between young adults and their families, thereby influencing family cohesion. As the future workforce and key contributors to Malaysia's society, the resilience, mental health, and social stability of young adults are vital. Strong family cohesion can serve as a protective factor in these aspects (Hadebe & Ramukumba, 2020). Therefore, identifying the factors that are associated with family cohesion during this phase of life is both timely and essential.

One of the factors related to family cohesion is the perceived parenting style. Studies have shown that parenting style significantly relates to the emotional climate of the family (Kapetanovic & Skoog, 2020). Perceived parenting style refers to how children interpret and internalise their parents' behaviours, attitudes, and discipline strategies during their development (Israr & Mazhar, 2025). According to Baumrind (1966), there are three primary parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. Authoritative parenting is characterised by high responsiveness and reasonable discipline, encouraging open communication and autonomy. In contrast, authoritarian parenting involves strict rules and limited emotional engagement, often discouraging open communication. Permissive parenting is overly indulgent, rarely sets rules for their children, and responds to any of their children's requests to reduce conflict. In Malaysia's multicultural setting, parenting styles may vary across ethnic groups due to differing cultural values and norms (Masiran, 2022), making it essential to examine how such variations are related to family cohesion.

In addition to parenting style, filial piety is another factor that associates with family relationships, particularly in Asian societies. Rooted in Confucian philosophy, filial piety is a value that emphasises the need to respect, obey, and care for parents and elders (Tan et al., 2020). It is commonly categorised into two dimensions: reciprocal and authoritarian (Yeh & Bedford, 2003). Reciprocal filial piety is driven by emotional bonds, gratitude, and voluntary support between children and their parents, promoting open communication and enhancing intimacy. Authoritarian filial piety emphasises obedience, responsibility, and submission to

parental authority, which can maintain family order but may also cause emotional alienation (Yeh & Bedford, 2004; Yeh et al., 2013). As education, social media, and individualism have reshaped the values of young adults, understanding how these factors are linked to family cohesion is crucial to exploring the changing dynamics of families.

Another influencing factor is ethnicity, which in Malaysia encompasses not only race but also diverse languages, religious beliefs, cultural practices, and family structures (Muslim, 2022). Generally, Malay families tend to emphasise obedience and religious morals, while Chinese families are deeply influenced by Confucian ideals of filial respect, and Indian families tend to place greater emphasis on close bonds and interdependence, allowing for more emotional expression (Salehuddin & Winskel, 2016). However, these patterns are not fixed, as modernisation and interethnic interactions can reshape traditional family norms and levels of family cohesion (Ting, 2022). Despite this complexity, empirical research in Malaysia that explores whether ethnicity affects family cohesion among young adults remains limited.

In summary, family cohesion is a crucial aspect of family functioning and social stability in Malaysia, as it significantly impacts the psychological health and development of young adults (Sumari et al., 2019). With the advent of urbanisation and globalisation, family emotional ties in Malaysia are being weakened, which has different impacts on the Malay, Chinese, and Indian communities (Rahman & Uddin, 2017). Although parenting style, filial piety, and ethnicity are known to relate to family dynamics, limited research has investigated their association with family cohesion in the Malaysian context. Therefore, this study seeks to fill that gap by examining how perceived parenting styles, filial piety, and ethnic differences are related to family cohesion among Malaysian young adults.

### **Statement of the problem**

Family cohesion has been studied in the past, but most of the research focuses on it as a predictor rather than an outcome variable (Bian et al., 2024; Chen et al., 2022; Ghazanfari et al., 2023; Lai & Chen, 2023; Lei et al., 2021; Zahra & Saleem, 2021; Zeng et al., 2021). This highlights a gap in understanding the role of perceived parenting styles, filial piety, and ethnic differences in relation to family cohesion. Although family cohesion is critical in fostering resilience and promoting intergenerational solidarity, research in Malaysia remains limited, particularly in exploring how parental behaviour and cultural practices are linked with this important aspect of family closeness.

According to the National Health and Mortality Survey 2022, about 25% of young Malaysians experienced symptoms of depression and anxiety, with lack of family support identified as a key contributing factor (Institute for Public Health, 2022). In addition, the increase in domestic violence is also a serious problem in Malaysia. According to the Ministry of Women, Family, and Community Development, in 2024, there were 7,116 cases of domestic violence in Malaysia, a three-year high (Lee et al., 2025). This increase has also raised concerns about family well-being and safety. Such violence not only threatens the physical and mental safety of family members but also seriously undermines family cohesion (Brockstedt et al., 2025; Rose et al., 2023). These worrying trends also highlight the urgent need to examine the current state of family cohesion among young adults in Malaysia.

Malaysia's collectivist culture traditionally emphasises family unity and the prioritisation of collective needs over individual desires. However, a variety of factors have led to a significant decline in family cohesion in recent social transformations. One of the major factors contributing to the weakening of family connectedness is the increasing number of young families experiencing divorce (Khairil, 2024). This growing phenomenon disrupts family stability in both emotional and relational impact. It frequently leads to decreased

parental participation, worse communication between generations, and weakening ties that go beyond the couple, typically having a significant impact on children, extended family members, and the overall family dynamic (Andrews, n.d.).

Moreover, a rise in dual-income families (Malay Mail, 2025) due to unstable finances (Mohlatlole et al., 2018) and nuclear families' demands (Lembaga Penduduk dan Pembangunan Keluarga Negara, 2019) may also disrupt family closeness, especially among the younger generation. When both parents need to be engaged in full-time employment, and working time constraints frequently result in less quality time spent with children, this will weaken the emotional attachment within the family. Similarly, the shift from extended family to nuclear family structures restricts the daily engagement of grandparents or other relatives. Nowadays, as young families become more independent and their time spent with family becomes limited, their emotional bonds and time together are decreasing, which may ultimately affect the cohesion of the entire family.

Another emerging issue threatening family cohesion is rapid urbanisation (O'Neill, 2025), which has dramatically changed traditional family structures and living patterns. This is because urban life often requires longer work hours, higher living costs, and increased commuting time, which will reduce family time and affect communication and emotional intimacy. In addition, it will also lead to a breakdown in family communication (Noorshahrizam, 2022). Young couples are more likely to experience heightened pressures related to financial instability and a lack of preparation to start forming a family (Mohlatlole et al., 2018). These factors not only affect the spousal relationships but also damage the overall sense of unity, trust, and emotional support within the family system, ultimately reducing family cohesion.

If the issue of weakening family cohesion remains unaddressed, it is likely to have a series of impacts on both individuals and society as a whole. This problem can lead to

reduced emotion regulation, increased mental health issues, negatively impact academic performance, and erode self-confidence (Chen et al., 2022; Ding, 2025; Mphaphuli, 2023). Given Malaysia's strong emphasis on family and community values, the erosion of family cohesion could further damage the stability of social structures and cultural continuity (Sumari et al., 2019). Studies have shown that low family cohesion is associated with an increased risk of anxiety, depression, and stress in young adults (Augustine et al., 2022; Bian et al., 2024). As Malaysia navigates modernisation, a decline in family cohesion may threaten the preservation of core cultural values, ethnic identity, and social solidarity (Roman et al., 2025).

Globally, perceived parenting styles and family dynamics differ greatly between cultures, especially between collectivist and individualistic countries. A more individualistic cultural attitude is reflected in the parenting techniques of numerous Western countries, which usually put a high value on one's own autonomy, freedom of speech, and independence (Migration Translators, 2019; Rudy & Grusec, 2006). However, there is still an absence of studies on how perceived parenting styles are associated with family cohesion, especially in non-Western, multiethnic countries like Malaysia.

Despite these relevant findings, there are limitations in studies that have yet to bring together all the variables in a single study to explore parenting style, filial piety, and ethnic differences in relation to family cohesion. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the extent to which parental behaviour and cultural practices are associated with family cohesion among young Malaysian adults. In addition, the study aims to examine whether significant differences in family cohesion exist across ethnic groups, specifically Malay, Chinese, and Indian. By addressing these gaps, the research aims to provide a more comprehensive and culturally aware understanding of the dynamics associated with family cohesion in Malaysia's multiethnic society.

**Research Questions**

1. What is the relationship between perceived parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive) and family cohesion among young adults in Malaysia?
2. What is the relationship between filial piety (reciprocal, authoritarian) and family cohesion among young adults in Malaysia?
3. Are there significant differences in family cohesion among Malay, Chinese, and Indian young adults in Malaysia?

**Research Objectives**

1. To examine the relationship between perceived parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive) and family cohesion among young adults in Malaysia.
2. To examine the relationship between filial piety (reciprocal, authoritarian) and family cohesion among young adults in Malaysia.
3. To examine whether there are significant differences in family cohesion among Malay, Chinese, and Indian young adults in Malaysia.

**Research Hypotheses**

H1a: Permissive parenting style is negatively associated with family cohesion among young adults in Malaysia.

H1b: Authoritarian parenting style is negatively associated with family cohesion among young adults in Malaysia.

H1c: Authoritative parenting style is positively associated with family cohesion among young adults in Malaysia.

H2a: Higher levels of reciprocal filial piety are positively associated with family cohesion among young adults in Malaysia.

H2b: Higher levels of authoritarian filial piety are negatively associated with family cohesion among young adults in Malaysia.

H3: There is a significant difference in family cohesion among young adults of different ethnic backgrounds. (Malay, Chinese, Indian).

### **Significance of the study**

This study holds considerable importance for both theoretical and practical reasons, particularly in understanding the interplay between parenting styles, filial piety, and family cohesion among young adults in Malaysia's multicultural context. Besides that, this study also provides insights and concepts on the contributions that could be made by several private and government sectors, such as parents, counsellors and educators for family dynamics or Lembaga Penduduk dan Pembangunan Keluarga Negara (LPPKN) on any policy implications.

Firstly, this study bridges the gap between parenting styles and filial piety. As parenting style is explained mainly in child development outcome and filial piety, it is more towards cultural, moral and intergenerational support contexts. Earlier studies by Gu and Li (2023) and Israr and Mazhar (2025) have examined parenting styles and filial piety separately. Therefore, this study fills the gap by integrating them into a single framework to have a better understanding of how they are associated with family cohesion. By doing so, this study will provide a more complete view of how different parenting approaches, such as authoritative, authoritarian and permissive, may interact with cultural expectations of filial duty to link with family bonds.

Secondly, addressing the decline of traditional family support systems. In Asian countries, filial piety is highly valued among every ethnic group, although the prevalence of "empty nest syndrome" in Malaysia for nearly years is not explicitly stated by any

professional and authorised sources. However, the ageing population in Malaysia is increasing as there will be 15% of the population expected to be aged 60 years old and above (Abdullah et al., 2024). Therefore, this research indicates that the prevalence of ‘empty nest syndrome’ in the Malaysian population may increase and may develop into a serious issue and influence individual well-being. Studies have shown that low family cohesion is associated with an increased risk of anxiety, depression, and stress in young adults (Augustine et al., 2022; Bian et al., 2024). As Malaysia navigates modernisation, a decline in family cohesion may threaten the preservation of core cultural values, ethnic identity, and social solidarity (Roman et al., 2025).

Thirdly, this study also enhances the understanding of ethnic differences in family dynamics. Malaysia’s multicultural society, which includes Malay, Chinese and Indian cultures, each with its distinct cultural norms, may influence parenting and filial expectations. The study also compares how these ethnic groups perceive family roles, offering insights into why certain communities may face higher familial stress. According to Ghani et al. (2016), the research stated that Indian women reported 58% of domestic violence cases in Women Abuse Screening Tool (WAST) screenings, followed by Malays who reported 32.5% and Chinese who reported 10% of domestic violence. So, these findings can guide culturally tailored counselling and social interventions to improve family stability.

On the other hand, this study offers valuable insights for multiple sectors in order to foster stronger family relationships. From parents’ perspectives, they may gain awareness of how different parenting styles are associated with family cohesion, closeness, and emotional bonding with young adults. Moreover, educators, counsellors or social workers could identify cultural and generational differences in filial expectations and provide social support systems tailored to families by using the findings of the study. They may also mediate conflicts and promote healthy family interactions. Furthermore, this study also may provide insights and

ideas for policymakers, The Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, which is a ministry of the government of Malaysia that is responsible for social welfare of children, women, family, older people, community and so on, that could raise awareness of similarities and differences in family dynamics across Malay, Chinese and Indian communities by fostering intercultural appreciation. Hence, the minister may develop strategies or design targeted intervention programs using the findings that could promote healthy family relationships and support networks among young adults of multi-ethnicity in Malaysia.

Overall, this study is significant due to the advancement in academic knowledge on family dynamics and provides actionable insights for each sector to improve family relationships in a multicultural, rapidly urbanising society in Malaysia. By examining the relationship of parenting styles, filial piety, and ethnic differences, this study could fill the gap of previous research and inform culturally relevant policies and intervention programs that aimed to foster family cohesion among young adults in Malaysia.

## **Conceptual Definition**

### ***Family Cohesion***

According to Olson (2011), family cohesion refers to the emotional bond and closeness between family members. It includes commitment, help, support, and trust among members. It reflects how well family members connect and work together as a unit.

### ***Perceived Parenting Style***

According to Baumrind (1966), he divided parenting styles into three main types, namely authoritative (high control, high responsiveness), authoritarian (high control, low

responsiveness), and permissive (low control, high responsiveness), each of which has different consequences for children's physical and mental development.

### ***Filial Piety***

Filial piety is a culturally embedded psychological concept that encompasses how children should treat their parents. filial piety is divided into two types: reciprocal filial piety (RFP), which stems from love and gratitude between children and parents, and authoritarian filial piety (AFP), which is based on children's obligation and obedience to their parents. (Yeh & Bedford, 2003).

### ***Ethnicity***

The concept of ethnicity is multidimensional, referring to the classification of individuals based on shared characteristics such as race, culture, history, language, and social background (Nagaraj et al., 2009). In Malaysia, the major ethnic groups comprise Malays, Chinese, and Indians.

### ***Young Adult***

Young adults generally refer to individuals between the ages of 18 and 39 who are transitioning from adolescence to adulthood (Khoo et al., 2021).

## **Operational Definition**

### ***Family Cohesion***

The Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale III (FACES III), developed by Olson et al. (1986), is used to assess family cohesion. Higher scores on the cohesion subscale indicate stronger emotional closeness among family members.

### ***Perceived Parenting Style***

This study assessed perceived parenting style using the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) developed by Buri (1991). The questionnaire was developed based on Baumrind (1966) parenting style theory and measures three different parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. The highest mean score on the subscale indicates that it is the perceived dominant parenting style.

### ***Filial Piety***

In this study, filial piety is measured with the Filial Piety Scale (DFPS; Yeh & Bedford, 2003). The total score for Reciprocal Filial Piety (RFP) and Authoritarian Filial Piety (AFP) was calculated separately, with higher scores indicating a stronger endorsement of the respective filial piety dimension.

### ***Ethnicity***

For this study, the concept of ethnicity involves categorising according to the three major ethnic groups in Malaysia: Malay, Chinese, and Indian.

### ***Young Adult***

This study focuses on Malaysian young adults between the ages of 18 and 39 years.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

#### Family Cohesion

Family cohesion refers to the relationship among family members that fit well together and keep united effectively (Olson et al., 1983). It highlights how closely people relate to one another, share emotional experiences, and maintain the bonds within the family. According to the Circumplex Model, four levels of family cohesion fall on a continuum that ranges from disengaged, representing a lack of emotional closeness, to separated, connected, and enmeshed, which means the highest degree of closeness (Olson, 2000). In Malaysia, family cohesion is significantly influenced by social norms, cultural values, and traditional practices. The influence of Malay, Chinese, and Indian traditions emphasises collectivism, respect, and duty for elders, which contribute to strengthening family members' reliance on one another. Strong family bonds are often expressed through shared rituals, such as reunion meals, holiday celebrations, and religious ceremonies, which help affirm a sense of shared responsibility and collective well-being.

However, recent challenges have been brought about by modernisation, urbanisation, and changing family patterns, such as the growing trend toward dual-income and nuclear families, which effectively influence family cohesion in Malaysia. As social norms change, young people will increasingly move to urban cities to pursue education, careers, and personal development, which can lead to physical separation from their families and put strain on traditional interaction patterns. Despite these shifts, there are still societal expectations to keep the family together. Advances in technology make it possible to communicate beyond geographic barriers, allowing emotional bonds to remain strong even in a situation of physical separation. Especially, events like the COVID-19 pandemic have brought attention to the value of family cohesion in Malaysia (Li, 2024). This is because

cohesive families were able to provide emotional support, adjust to new routines, and retain a feeling of stability throughout movement control orders and social restrictions. As a result, Malaysia has further realised the importance of family cohesion.

### **Relationship between Parenting Style and Family Cohesion**

Parenting is a critical factor related to the development of individuals' personality, as well as their emotional and social competencies, especially during young adulthood. Among the several dimensions of parenting, parenting style has received considerable attention due to the impact on the development of young adults, which is linked to their interpersonal capabilities, educational achievements, mental well-being and behavioural issues (Lei, 2023). Moreover, parenting style structures daily family interactions. Consequently, parenting styles are associated with variations in family cohesion.

According to Spitz and Steinhausen (2023), their study investigates developmental changes in perceived family adaptability and cohesion, as well as the associations between constructs and parental behaviour. This study implements a large multi-wave sample with 619 participants, which was conducted in Switzerland. It spans through Switzerland, spanning the transition from adolescence to young adulthood, and employs standardised family functioning and parenting behaviour measures. Moreover, the findings indicate that perceived parental acceptance (warmth) and low psychological control were associated with higher levels of family cohesion. Hence, warm and supportive parenting appears to be correlated with higher family cohesion.

Similarly, this review, conducted by Roman et al. (2025), is a systematic review of recent empirical and intervention literature across countries to examine the factors and programs that strengthen family cohesion across cultures. The findings are organised around four core dimensions of family cohesion, which are emotional bonding, adaptability,

communication, and support. Other than that, findings also highlighted both common patterns and culturally specific mechanisms and stated that parenting practices that combine warmth and appropriate control are consistently associated with higher family cohesion. Furthermore, the review emphasises cultural variation in how control and expectation are interpreted, so the same parenting behaviours may yield different cohesion outcomes across ethnic groups.

In summary, the studies converge on the importance of warmth in parenting as a central factor associated with family cohesion, while the studies also recognise the role of control when implemented appropriately. However, the studies also suggest how cultural contexts relate to parenting behaviours and how effectively they promote cohesion.

### **Relationship between Filial Piety and Family Cohesion**

Filial piety refers to culturally shaped beliefs and motivations concerning children's obligations, respect and care for parents. The Dual Filial Piety Model distinguishes reciprocal filial piety (RFP) and authoritarian filial piety (AFP). Moreover, filial piety is associated with family cohesion by motivating supportive behaviours and its links with perceptions of parenting and family roles (Lim et al., 2022).

According to Mai and Le (2023), the study focused on clarifying the relationship between filial piety and perceived family happiness with a quantitative survey of 385 adult offspring in a collectivist Vietnamese context. The findings showed that the RFP positively predicted family happiness. In contrast, AFP negatively impacted life satisfaction, particularly when moderated by individual independence. Both forms coexist but exert contrasting effects on family harmony. As family happiness in collectivist cultures tends to be interdependent, it emphasises relational harmony and mutual support. Furthermore, this study highlighted filial piety's dual nature, showing RFP strengthens emotional closeness, promotes family closeness, whereas AFP reduce personal happiness by imposing hierarchical demands.

Likewise, Wang et al. (2025) examine how parental involvement and autonomy support predict reciprocal filial piety and subsequent filial behaviours associated with family closeness among Malaysian adolescents. By using a quantitative survey of adolescents to measure, the study would examine parenting styles, filial piety, and family emotional warmth. Based on the findings, supportive parenting that balances involvement with autonomy fosters reciprocal filial piety, which mediates the relationship between parenting and filial behaviours, promoting caregiving, emotional warmth, and closeness in families. This demonstrates culturally embedded parenting styles that encourage filial attitudes, also associated with stronger family emotional bonds and cohesion.

In summary, these findings highlight that culturally embedded parenting approaches encouraging reciprocity and mutual respect strengthen intergenerational relationships, whereas authoritarian forms of filial piety may relate to lower individual well-being despite their intent to preserve family cohesion.

### **Relationship between Ethnicity and Family Cohesion**

Ethnicity captures shared values, norms, family practices and social expectations that shape how families organise roles, communicate and provide support among family members. When ethnicity is treated as an independent variable, researchers examine how each ethnic group's culture differs from others in its levels and expression of family cohesion. These differences may arise from religion, collectivist norms, parenting expectations, and intergenerational obligations. As Malaysia is an Asian collectivist culture, it prioritises family harmony, interdependence, and collective well-being over individual autonomy.

According to Rogers et al. (2024), family cohesion may be affected in a collectivist society where individualism and autonomy may be less valued. However, the construct of cohesion may change based on cultural values and how the values impact children's

perceptions of their parents' behaviours. In collectivist culture, families often consider children as obedient, and parents' excessive control over their children's behaviour can lead to a high level of rebellion that would affect family cohesion (Gorla et al., 2024). On the other hand, based on the study of Kotlaja (2018) that examined 12 to 15-year-olds grade 7 to 9 students, across 26 nations (7 collectivist countries and 19 individualist countries), the findings indicates that deviance behaviour was shown to be more closely associated with low levels of parental monitoring and connection in nations with individualistic cultural orientations as compared to collectivist ones.

In conclusion, the impact of parental behaviours on family cohesion cannot be fully understood without considering the cultural context. Collectivist societies emphasise obedience and parental authority, which may strengthen cohesion but also risk provoking rebellion when control becomes excessive. In contrast, individualist societies prioritise autonomy, where cohesion is more dependent on supportive monitoring and open parent-child connections. Together, these findings suggest that family cohesion is not a fixed construct but one that is related to cultural values, highlighting the importance of adopting a culturally sensitive perspective when examining family dynamics.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Family systems theory, developed by Murray Bowen, offers a valuable framework to explain that individuals cannot be understood in isolation but rather as part of a broader family unit (GenoPro, n.d.). Family systems theory emphasises the human functioning that focuses on the interconnectedness of family members and the environments in which they live and are embedded (Watson, 2012). This viewpoint is highly relevant to perceived parenting style, as the way children perceive and understand their parents' actions is associated with the patterns of family interaction. This theory highlights the interaction and

connection among family members and their relationships with individual behaviour and emotional well-being (Helm, 2023). Additionally, a change in one family member's behaviour or emotional condition might have consequences for the whole family (Helm, 2023). It adopts a holistic viewpoint, stating that rather than looking at people separately, the family should be viewed as a whole.

The theory also aligns closely with filial piety, especially in collectivist cultural contexts like Malaysia (Yusof, 2011). Malaysia is a country with deeply embedded collectivist cultural values that are rooted in both social and family life, which typically prioritise the needs of the family above individual needs. High levels of filial piety can be associated with better intergenerational ties and promote family closeness. Values such as respect, care, and responsibility toward elders are fundamental to family harmony and likely to be continued by the next generation. This aligns with the theory's view that family members are interconnected and work together harmoniously, as highlighted in the multigenerational transmission process in shaping stable family dynamics (Quirk, 2023).

Moreover, ethnic differences in family cohesion can also be understood through Family Systems Theory. It highlights how every family functions within a larger cultural context that influences the roles, values, and interactional patterns. Malaysia is a multicultural country where various ethnic groups coexist. Cultural norms regarding parenting, communication, and intergenerational interactions are frequently different among ethnic groups. These cultural standards relate to how families establish boundaries, settle conflicts, and preserve emotional ties. Therefore, ethnic differences are linked to the theory that families function within broader social and cultural settings; it is impossible to understand individuals in isolation from the system (GenoPro, n.d.).

## Conceptual Framework

**Figure 2.1**

*The conceptual framework of “Perceived Parenting Style, Filial Piety, and Ethnic Differences in Relation to Family Cohesion among Young Adults in Malaysia”.*

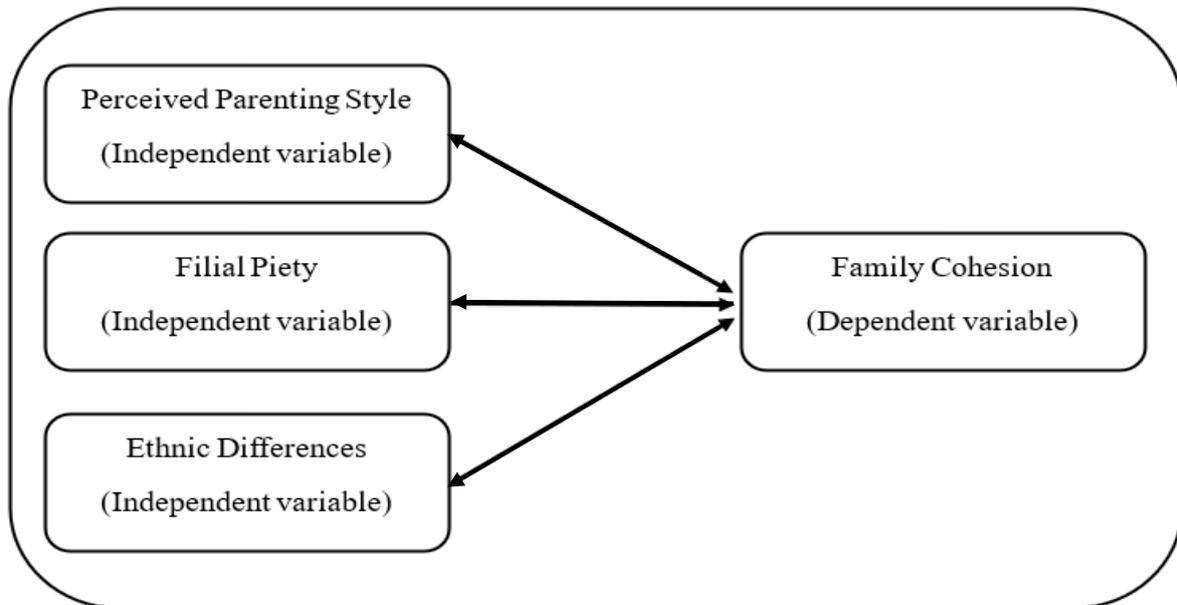


Figure 2.1 illustrates the interrelationship between four variables, which are perceived parenting style, filial piety, ethnic differences, and family cohesion. The independent variables consist of perceived parenting style, filial piety, and ethnic differences, while the outcome variable is family cohesion. This research aims to examine the extent to which perceived parenting style, filial piety, and ethnic differences are associated with family cohesion among the target population, while also analysing the direction of the relationships between these variables.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Methodology**

##### **Research Design**

This study adopts the quantitative survey research method. This method provides a structured way for data collection and analysis. Using this method helps to effectively identify patterns, test the relationship between variables, and draw research conclusions based on it (Ghanad, 2023). In addition, this study employed a cross-sectional research design, that is, only one-time data collection was carried out for participants. The design can effectively reduce time and cost (Wang & Cheng, 2020). At the same time, it is also suitable for exploring the relationship between young adults' perception of parenting style, filial piety, ethnic group and family cohesion. In order to ensure the convenience and access of participants, the research questionnaire was distributed through online social media platforms.

##### **Research Subject**

###### ***Research Population***

The target population for this study was Malaysian young adults aged 18 to 39. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2025), this age group falls within the working-age population (15-64 years old), accounting for 70.10% of the total population, or approximately 24 million people. According to the 2024 Malaysian Population Statistics (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2024), the 20-39 age group accounts for approximately 10 million people, nearly half of the working-age population. Therefore, the 18-39 age group constituted a significant portion of the country's population.

### ***Research Location***

This study was conducted in Malaysia, including Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah, and Sarawak. As each region has a different number of ethnic groups, this study was not limited to specific states, but gathered responses online throughout the entire Malaysia. It is to ensure a broad representation across different geographical areas.

### ***Sample Size***

According to Israr and Mazhar (2025), the correlation coefficient between the three parenting styles, permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative, with family cohesion was .47, -.63, and -.40, respectively (refer to Appendix A). However, because limited studies on the association between filial piety, ethnicity, and family cohesion, it was not possible to predetermine the exact correlation coefficient. Therefore, this study refers to Guilford's Rule of Thumb to estimate the strength of the relationship. According to Guilford and Fruchter (1973), a correlation of .40 to .70 is considered a moderately strong relationship (refer to Appendix A); hence, this study adopted a correlation coefficient of .40 to represent the expected strength of the association among filial piety, ethnicity, and family cohesion.

As the correlation values for variables range from .40 to .63, this study selects the smallest plausible effect size ( $\rho = .40$ ) to calculate the sample size to prevent underpowering the findings. The actual sample size to be included in this study was calculated using the computer software, G\*Power 3.1.9.4. The parameter employed was a two-tailed test; the effect size,  $\rho$ , was .40, an alpha level of .05, with a power of .95 (refer to Appendix B). The findings indicate a minimum sample size of 71 was needed. To enhance the reliability and generalizability of the results, an additional 50% of responses were included in the calculation, resulting in a minimum target sample size of 107 participants.

The data collection process began on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2025 and ended on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2025. Initially, a total of 157 responses were collected during this process. But 38 participants were removed due to incomplete responses in the questionnaire and failing to pass the attention checker. Therefore, only 119 valid responses remain in the main study. Among them, 45 were male (37.80%), and 74 were female (62.20%). The average age of the participants was 22.87 years, ranging from 18 to 35 years ( $SD = 3.15$ ). With respect to ethnicity, 34.50% were Chinese participants ( $n = 41$ ), 33.60% were Malay ( $n = 40$ ), and the remaining 31.90% were Indian respondents ( $n = 38$ ).

### ***Sampling Method***

A purposive sampling method from the non-probability sampling technique was adopted in this study to recruit the target participants. It indicated that only individuals who possessed specific characteristics that met the research objective were qualified to participate in this study (Campbell et al., 2020; Memon et al., 2025). This method was able to improve the efficiency and relevance of data collection by focusing solely on the specific groups of individuals that were most relevant to the study (Ahmed, 2024). Additionally, the survey form of this study was created using Qualtrics. To carry out the data collection process, the link and QR code generated by Qualtrics were then uploaded to various social media platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, Rednote, WeChat and Facebook. These platforms were chosen because of their widespread use among young adults in Malaysia.

### ***Inclusive and Exclusive Criteria***

Inclusive criteria refer to specific characteristics that participants must possess to qualify for the study (Capili, 2021). In this study, the inclusion criteria were designed to

ensure that participants closely reflected the study's focus on family cohesion. This study set four inclusion criteria:

1. Malaysian citizens aged between 18 and 39.
2. Both parents are alive and legally married, ensuring that participants came from an intact family structure.
3. Both parents were from the same ethnic background. This criterion was established to maintain consistency in parenting styles, values, and cultural background within the family.
4. Individuals from dual-income households (both parents employed or contributing to household income). When both parents are busy at work, they may spend less time with other family members, which might influence the family cohesion.

Exclusive criteria are the conditions that disqualify individuals from participating (Capili, 2021). In this study, the exclusion criteria are to reduce confounding factors that could affect the study variables. Below are the five exclusive criteria set for the research:

1. Non-Malaysian citizens.
2. Individuals who are below 18 years old or above 39 years old do not fit the definition of young adults in this study.
3. Individuals whose parents have passed away or have divorced. The death or change of family members can lead to shifts in family structure, potentially leading to different perceptions or experiences of family cohesion than those in intact families.
4. Individuals who have a hybrid ethnicity. It is to avoid the differences in cultural norms, values, and parenting styles within a family.
5. Individuals from single-income households (only one parent employed or contributing to household income). This criterion is set because the amount of

time spent together with family members differs from that of a dual-income family. It is to ensure a more consistent and comparable dataset.

The inclusive and exclusive criteria were carefully set to ensure that participants met the research objectives. By clearly stipulating who can or cannot participate in the research, the research can be focused on the intended group. In this way, the collected data were consistent with the variables that the research study on, especially when exploring the relationship between perceived parenting styles, filial piety, ethnicity, and family cohesion.

### *Ethical Clearance*

This study received ethical approval from the Scientific and Ethical Review Committee (SERC) of Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) to ensure that all research activities adhere to ethical standards and requirements (Appendix C). Every participant received information on the purpose and content of the study, as well as their respondent's rights. This study allowed participants to stop or end the survey at any moment without facing any consequences because their participation was completely voluntary. Before the questionnaire began, the researchers obtained informed consent from the participants. In order to protect the privacy of participants, all information gathered was processed anonymously and kept strictly confidential. The relevant information was stored safely and only accessed by the research team. The above procedures aim to ensure that this study is conducted responsibly and with respect. It is also to foster trust with participants and promote honest responses.

### **Research Procedure**

This study obtained ethical approval from UTAR's SERC with a reference number of U/SERC/78-616/2025. Malaysian young adults aged 18 and 39 who met all the inclusion criteria mentioned above were the target participants of this research. In order to participate, respondents must be able to read and understand English and utilise a smartphone. Before starting the formal data collection, researchers conducted a pilot study, which included 30 people who fit the inclusion criteria. This process was to identify and resolve the possible problems in the research method before the formal research begins, thereby saving time and costs (Kunselman, 2024).

In addition, the online survey was created by using Qualtrics, and a QR code and link were uploaded to various social media platforms. Researchers had also designed a survey recruitment poster that included the QR code and URL link to encourage participation (Appendix D). The survey began with an informed consent form detailing the research purpose, participant rights, and data confidentiality measures. Participants then completed demographic questions and standardised scales regarding perceived parenting styles, filial piety, and family cohesion. Once data collection was complete, researchers screened and cleaned the responses, excluding missing or incomplete responses and those who answered the attention checker incorrectly. Only complete and eligible responses were retained for further analysis. Data analysis was carried out by using IBM SPSS Statistics 23, a computer software package.

### **Research Instrument**

Three validated instruments were used in this study to measure the perceived parenting style, filial piety, ethnic differences and family cohesion. All the items were in English. The questionnaire was compiled and separated into a few sections as follows.

### ***Demographic Information***

The participants' demographic information, such as gender, age, ethnicity, parental marital status, parental ethnic background, parental employment status, and whether parents are still alive, was collected in this study (refer to Appendix E).

### ***Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale III***

The Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scale III (FACES III) was developed by Olson (1986). It allowed researchers to measure family cohesion and family adaptability. This scale consists of a total of 20 items and is rated using a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 represents almost never, and 5 represents almost always. The FACES III is divided into two subscales, with 10 odd-numbered items measuring Family Cohesion and 10 even-numbered items measuring Family Adaptability.

Although this scale consists of two subscales, this study was solely focused on family cohesion. Some studies support that the Family Cohesion subscale can be utilised independently. Multiple study shows that the Cohesion subscale in FACES III demonstrates a high internal consistency compared to the Adaptability subscale, suggesting that the Cohesion subscale is more stable and reliable in measuring the same construct (Ide et al., 2010; Olson, 1986; Tutty, 1995). Furthermore, a Malaysian study on the psychometric properties of FACES III has revealed that it has a clear two-factor structure, with Factor 1 being cohesion and Factor 2 being adaptability, and this study also noted a lower reliability for adaptability, suggesting cohesion-only usage is more appropriate (Cong et al., 2021).

Therefore, this study used only the 10 items from the Family Cohesion subscale. These subscales included items such as 'Family members ask each other for help.' The total score for the subscale ranged from 10 to 50, with higher scores indicating stronger family cohesion. The score can be categorised into four groups, which were 10–34 (disengaged), 35–

40 (separated), 41–45 (connected), and 46–50 (very connected). The reliability of the Cohesion Subscale in FACES III had also been demonstrated to have strong reliability in past studies, with a Cronbach Alpha value ( $\alpha$ ) of .77 (Olson, 1986), .89 (Ide et al., 2010), and .88 (Israr & Mazhar, 2025).

### ***Parental Authority Questionnaire***

The Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) was developed by Buri (1991). It was designed to measure the parenting style as perceived from the child's perspective. The PAQ consists of 30 items, rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The PAQ is divided into three subscales, each measuring a different parenting style. Each subscale has ten items. Example items of permissive subscales included, "While I was growing up, my parents felt that in a well-run home, the children should have their way in the family as often as the parents do.", item of authoritarian subscales included, "My parents felt that wise parents should teach their children early, just who is the boss in the family.", and item of authoritative subscales included, "As I was growing up, my parents directed the activities and decisions of the children in the family through reasoning and discipline.". Scores for each subscale ranged from 10 to 50, with the highest score on the subscale representing the parenting style perceived by the participant. The PAQ had demonstrated good reliability in previous research, with Cronbach's alphas ( $\alpha$ ) of .74 (authoritative), .73 (authoritarian), and .62 (permissive) (Hassan & Sen, 2018). Furthermore, Wan and de Vries (2023) reported strong reliability, with  $\alpha = .86, .88, \text{ and } .78$ , corresponding to authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting styles, respectively. These studies were conducted in Malaysia, and the research population was young adults; hence, this supports the suitability of the PAQ for this study.

### ***Dual Filial Piety Scale***

The Dual Filial Piety Scale (DFPS) was developed by Yeh and Bedford (2003). It was mainly used to assess participants' filial piety beliefs. This scale consists of 16 items and is rated on a 6-point Likert scale. With 1 representing 'strongly disagree' and 6 representing 'strongly agree'. The DFPS measures two dimensions of filial piety, which are reciprocal filial piety (RFP) and authoritarian filial piety (AFP). Odd-numbered items evaluated RFP (e.g., "Be concerned about my parents' health."), while even-numbered items reflected AFP (e.g., "Do whatever my parents ask right away."). Each dimension had a score range of 8 to 48, where higher scores indicated greater participant agreement with the associated filial piety belief. The scale had demonstrated good reliability in previous studies. For example, Tan et al. (2019) reported that the Cronbach's alpha values for RFP were  $\alpha = .79$  and for AFP were  $\alpha = .70$ . Similarly, the study by Nainee et al. (2021) also achieved the same Cronbach's alpha value, further confirming the reliability of the DFPS. As both studies were conducted in the Malaysian context, this further supported the use of the scale in this research.

### **Pilot Study**

A pilot study is a small-scale experiment based on the main research, the purpose of which is to test whether the research design can work smoothly before the formal research is carried out (Spurlock, 2018). At this stage, the main goal was to identify and solve problems that may arise in the research process, so as to save money, time and resources (Kunselman, 2024). The pilot study also helped to evaluate the feasibility of the research process, the credibility and clarity of the research tools, and verify the effectiveness of online questionnaire distribution and recruitment methods (Lowe, 2019). The results of the pilot study provided important feedback for researchers, helped researchers identify potential

challenges, improved questionnaires as needed, and improved the overall efficiency and effectiveness of research methods (Ying & Ehrhardt, 2023).

Bujang et al. (2024) pointed out that the pilot study of the survey research requires at least 30 participants to collect enough data to evaluate the internal consistency of the scale. Therefore, this study conducted a pilot study with 30 participants who met the inclusion criteria. The data collection period was from 18<sup>th</sup> October 2025 to 24<sup>th</sup> October 2025. The questionnaire was distributed through online social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, WeChat and RedNote. It takes about 5 to 10 minutes for each participant to complete the survey form.

### **Reliability**

The reliability test was analysed for both the pilot study and the actual study by using IBM SPSS Statistics version 23 software. According to Menon et al. (2025), a reliability test with the Cronbach's Alpha value,  $\alpha$ , of .70 and above indicates an acceptable internal consistency. The result for all scales in both pilot and actual study falls above the threshold of .70, showing an acceptable level of reliability (Appendix F). A summary of the reliability test for both the pilot study and the actual study is shown in Table 3.1 below.

**Table 3.1***Reliability of Instruments in Pilot (n = 30) and Actual Study (n = 119)*

Instrument	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha Value ( $\alpha$ )	
		Pilot Study (n = 30)	Actual Study (n = 119)
Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scale	10	.77	.89
III (FACES III) - Cohesion Subscale			
Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ)	30	.72	.71
Permissive Parenting Style (P)	10	.73	.70
Authoritarian Parenting Style (A)	10	.88	.89
Authoritative Parenting Style (F)	10	.85	.85
Dual Filial Piety Scale (DFPS)	16	.78	.74
Reciprocal Filial Piety (R)	8	.83	.86
Authoritarian Filial Piety (A)	8	.71	.80

*Note. n = sample size***Data Analysis**

All data collected via Qualtrics was processed and analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 23. Data cleaning was performed first, with only complete responses that met all inclusion criteria being retained for analysis. Data normality was analysed using histogram, quantile-quantile (Q-Q) plot, skewness and kurtosis values, as well as the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Descriptive statistics were then performed to summarise participant demographic characteristics, including gender, age, ethnicity, and so on. These statistics provided demographic information and metrics such as frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum values for key study variables.

Following this, inferential statistics were then performed to address the research questions. This research utilised the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) to understand the relationship between perceived parenting styles, filial piety, and family cohesion. This method can also identify the strength and direction of associations between continuous variables. Lastly, since ethnicity is a categorical variable, one-way analysis of variance (One-Way ANOVA) was used to analyse and compare differences in family cohesion across racial groups.

## Chapter 4

### Result

#### Data Cleaning

A total of 157 responses were collected initially by using Qualtrics. During the data cleaning process, 38 responses representing 24.20% of the initial data set were excluded. Among those excluded cases, 17 participants failed to answer the attention checker correctly, and 21 were excluded due to incomplete responses. From these incomplete response cases, six participants were discontinued from the FACES III, 12 left the PAQ incomplete, and three failed to finish the DFPS. After performing data screening, 119 valid responses remained for further analysis.

#### Test of Normality

Normality testing refers to a statistical process that was applied to examine whether the sample data came from a population that was normally distributed (Paramasivam et al., 2024). In this research, the normality was tested by using five ways, which include histogram, Quantile-Quantile (Q-Q) plots, skewness and kurtosis, and the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test.

#### *Histogram*

In this study, the histograms for the variables of permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative parenting style and authoritarian filial piety have displayed a bell-shaped and symmetric curve with a single peak centred around the mean, showing normal distribution. However, the family cohesion and reciprocal filial piety show a left-skewed histogram, indicating there is a higher concentration of scores at the upper end of the scale, which also suggests more participants report higher family cohesion and reciprocal filial piety (refer to

Appendix G). Overall, this result suggested that the histogram assumption for the parenting style and authoritarian filial piety was met successfully, but there is a violation of the normality assumption for the family cohesion and reciprocal filial piety.

#### ***Quantile to Quantile (Q-Q) plot***

The results of the Q-Q plot for all variables in the present study show no violation of the normality assumptions. This showed that the observed value for all variables was closely packed along the diagonal line, indicating that they were normally distributed (refer to Appendix H).

#### ***Skewness and Kurtosis***

The summary of skewness and kurtosis values for all the variables in this study is presented in Table 4.3. Skewness values ranging between -2 and +2 are considered acceptable, while for the kurtosis value, the acceptable threshold falls within the range of -7 to +7 (Byrne, 2010, & Hair et al., 2010). According to Table 4.3, all the variables presented the skewness and kurtosis values fall within the acceptable threshold, proving the normality assumption was met for skewness and kurtosis in this study (refer to Appendix I).

**Table 4.1***Skewness and Kurtosis*

Variable	Skewness	Kurtosis
Family Cohesion	-.72	.11
Parenting Style		
Permissive (PPS)	.00	-.46
Authoritarian (APS)	-.02	-.88
Authoritative (FPS)	-.64	.67
Filial Piety		
Reciprocal (RFP)	-1.44	4.76
Authoritarian (AFP)	.28	-.17

***Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test***

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test is a statistical procedure that is used to assess whether the dataset is normally distributed. According to Mishra et al. (2019), the null hypothesis of the K-S test stated that the sample came from a normally distributed population. Hence, a non-significant result, meaning  $p > .05$ , shows that it fails to reject the null hypothesis.

Suggesting that the sample data do not significantly deviate from the population's normal distribution, and hence the data can be considered normally distributed. As presented in Table 4.4, the *p-values* of the family cohesion and filial piety (reciprocal and authoritarian) were smaller than .05, which means there was a significant difference between the sample dataset and population, indicating there was a violation of the normality assumption in the K-S test. On the other hand, the K-S test result for the parenting style (permissive, authoritarian and authoritative) shows no violation with a *p-value* that was greater than the significance level of .05 (refer to Appendix J). Overall, the normality assumption was met for parenting style only, but not for family cohesion and filial piety in the K-S test.

**Table 4.2***Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test*

Variable	Statistic (D)	<i>p-value</i>
Family Cohesion*	.13	< .01
Parenting Style		
Permissive (PPS)	.06	.20
Authoritarian (APS)	.07	.20
Authoritative (FPS)	.07	.20
Filial Piety		
Reciprocal (RFP)*	.11	< .01
Authoritarian (AFP)*	.13	< .01

\* Violate K-S test

***Summary for Tests of Normality***

A histogram, Q-Q plot, skewness and kurtosis and K-S test have been utilised in this study to evaluate the normality of the dataset. With the result presented above, all the variables in parenting style (permissive, authoritarian and authoritative) show no violation across all the normality indicators, confirming that the variables were normally distributed. Besides, the authoritarian filial piety reports a violation of the K-S test only, and the family cohesion and reciprocal filial piety have also shown a violation of both the histogram and the K-S test normality assumption. However, according to Ghasemi and Zahediasl (2012), the study mentioned that the result of the K-S test should not be considered seriously when testing normality due to its low power. Furthermore, all the variables in this study fulfilled at least three out of five normality assumptions, showing that all of them were normally distributed. In conclusion, none of the variables show a violation of more than two normality indicators, suggesting that the normality assumption was met in this research.

## Descriptive Statistic

### *Demographic Characteristic*

This study consists of 119 Malaysians with ages ranging from 18 to 35, with a mean of 22.87 years old ( $SD = 3.15$ ). In total, 45 participants were male (37.80%), while 74 were female (62.20%). The sample reflected a relatively balanced ethnic distribution, with Malays consisting of 40 responses (33.60%), Chinese consisting of 41 responses (34.50%) and Indians consisting of 38 participants (31.90%). A summary of the demographic information of the sample is illustrated in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.3**

*Demographic Characteristics of the Participants (n = 119)*

	<i>n</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min.	Max.
Age			22.87	3.15	18	35
Gender						
Female	74	62.20				
Male	45	37.80				
Ethnic						
Malay	40	33.60				
Chinese	41	34.50				
Indian	38	31.90				

*Note.* *n* = sample size; *M* = mean; *SD* = standard deviation; Min. = minimum; Max. = maximum

***Topic-specific Characteristic***

This study employed three validated scales to assess the key variables, which were family cohesion, parenting style and filial piety. The mean score for family cohesion was 38.53 ( $SD = 6.97$ ). As for the family cohesion, most of the participants fall within the separated family cohesion ( $n = 38$ ), followed by connected ( $n = 35$ ), disengaged ( $n = 29$ ), least respondents reported very connected ( $n = 17$ ).

For parenting style, the mean score for permissive parenting style was 31.72 ( $SD = 5.77$ ), authoritarian parenting style was 32.18 ( $SD = 8.02$ ), and authoritative parenting style was 36.42 ( $SD = 6.56$ ). With regard to filial piety, reciprocal filial piety showed a higher mean score of 40.85 ( $SD = 4.99$ ), whereas authoritarian filial piety recorded a lower mean score of 28.07 ( $SD = 7.15$ ), respectively. Table 4.2 presents the descriptive statistics, including the mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum scores for all study variables among young adults in Malaysia.

**Table 4.4***Frequency Distribution of Variables (n = 119)*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min.	Max.
Family Cohesion	38.53	6.97	20	50
Permissive Parenting Style (PPS)	31.72	5.77	17	45
Authoritarian Parenting Style (APS)	32.18	8.02	13	48
Authoritative Parenting Style (FPS)	36.42	6.56	14	49
Reciprocal Filial Piety (RFP)	40.85	4.99	16	48
Authoritarian Filial Piety (AFP)	28.07	7.15	8	44

*Note.* *M* = mean; *SD* = standard deviation; Min. = minimum; Max. = maximum

## **Inferential Statistics**

### ***Correlation Analysis***

This study employed the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) to examine the relationship between study variables and test the research hypothesis. Table 4.5 reveals the findings of the correlation analysis between each variable (refer to Appendix K).

**H1a: Permissive parenting style is negatively associated with family cohesion among young adults in Malaysia.** Findings showed that there was a low positive correlation between family cohesion and permissive parenting style,  $r(117) = .31, p < .01$ . This finding contradicts H1a.

**H1b: Authoritarian parenting style is negatively associated with family cohesion among young adults in Malaysia.** The result indicated a weak negative relationship between family cohesion and authoritarian parenting style,  $r(117) = -.23, p < .05$ . Therefore, H1b is accepted.

**H1c: Authoritative parenting style is positively associated with family cohesion among young adults in Malaysia.** According to the result from Table 4.5, it indicated that an authoritative parenting style had a moderate positive correlation with family cohesion,  $r(117) = .47, p < .01$ . Hence, H1c is supported.

**H2a: Higher levels of reciprocal filial piety are positively associated with family cohesion among young adults in Malaysia.** Findings indicated that reciprocal filial piety was found to be a moderately positive relationship with family cohesion,  $r(117) = .62, p < .01$ . As a result, H2a is accepted.

**H2b: Higher levels of authoritarian filial piety are negatively associated with family cohesion among young adults in Malaysia.** The results from Table 4.5 reported that authoritarian filial piety shows no significant correlation with family cohesion,  $r(117) = .00, p = .98$ . Accordingly, H2b contradicts the findings.

In conclusion, the findings from PPMC supported H1b, H1c and H2a; however, the results show a contradiction with H1a and H2b (refer to Table 4.7).

**Table 4.5**

*Correlations for Study Variables*

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Family Cohesion	1					
2. Permissive Parenting Style (PPS)	.31**	1				
3. Authoritarian Parenting Style (APS)	-.23*	-.38**	1			
4. Authoritative Parenting Style (FPS)	.47**	.44**	-.25**	1		
5. Reciprocal Filial Piety (RFP)	.62**	.25**	-.23*	.56**	1	
6. Authoritarian Filial Piety (AFP)	.00	-.07	.38**	.22*	-.08	1

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

### *One-Way ANOVA Analysis*

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to examine whether there is a significant difference in family cohesion among Malays, Chinese, and Indians.

**H3: There is a significant difference in family cohesion among young adults of different ethnic backgrounds (Malay, Chinese, Indian).** According to Table 4.6.1, the results indicated that family cohesion differed significantly across ethnic groups,  $F(2,116) = 6.66, p < .01$ . A Levene's test was conducted to test the homogeneity of variance prior to the ANOVA.

However, the results of Levene's test showed significant,  $F(2,116) = 4.85, p = .01$ , indicating a violation of the assumption of equal variances. Therefore, this study conducted the nonparametric Kruskal–Wallis test to assess the robustness of the results. Table 4.6.2

indicates the result from the test, which showed a significant difference in family cohesion across the three ethnic groups,  $H(2) = 11.50, p < .01$ , successfully rejected the null hypothesis that the distribution of family cohesion is the same across all ethnic groups.

Following the results, a post-hoc test named Dunnett's T3 test was conducted to determine the specific group differences. Table 4.6.3 reveals that the mean of family cohesion of the Malay participants ( $M = 41.50, SD = 4.80$ ) was significantly higher than Chinese participants ( $M = 37.85, SD = 6.98, p < .05$ ) and Indian participants ( $M = 36.13, SD = 7.86, p < .01$ ). However, the results show no significant difference in family cohesion between Chinese and Indian participants ( $p = .67$ ) (refer to Appendix L). Therefore, H3 is accepted.

**Table 4.6.1**

*One-Way Analysis of Variance of Family Cohesion by Ethnicity*

Variable	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i> (2, 116)	<i>p-value</i>
Malay	40	41.50	4.80	6.66	< .01
Chinese	41	37.85	6.98		
Indian	38	36.13	7.86		

*Note.* *n* = sample size; *M* = mean; *SD* = standard deviation;  $p < .05$  indicates a significant mean difference

**Table 4.6.2**

*Kruskal-Wallis Test*

Variable	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Mean Rank	<i>H</i> (2)	<i>p-value</i>
Malay	40	41.50	4.80	74.78	11.50	< .01
Chinese	41	37.85	6.98	54.89		
Indian	38	36.13	7.86	49.96		

*Note.* *n* = sample size; *M* = mean; *SD* = standard deviation;  $p < .05$  indicates a significant mean difference

**Table 4.6.3***Dunnett's T3 Post Hoc Comparison of Family Cohesion by Ethnicity*

Comparison	Mean Difference	SE	<i>p</i> -value
Malay - Chinese	3.65*	1.33	.02
Malay - Indian	5.37*	1.49	< .01
Chinese - Indian	1.72	0.23	.67

*Note.* SE = standard error;  $p < .05$  indicates a significant mean difference

**Table 4.7***Summary of Findings*

Hypotheses	Decision
H1a: Permissive parenting style is negatively associated with family cohesion among young adults in Malaysia.	Not Supported
H1b: Authoritarian parenting style is negatively associated with family cohesion among young adults in Malaysia.	Supported
H1c: Authoritative parenting style is positively associated with family cohesion among young adults in Malaysia.	Supported
H2a: Higher levels of reciprocal filial piety are positively associated with family cohesion among young adults in Malaysia.	Supported
H2b: Higher levels of authoritarian filial piety are negatively associated with family cohesion among young adults in Malaysia.	Not Supported
H3: There is a significant difference in family cohesion among young adults of different ethnic backgrounds. (Malay, Chinese, Indian).	Supported

## Chapter 5

### Discussion and Conclusion

#### Discussion

##### *Permissive parenting style and family cohesion*

This proposed hypothesis contradicts with our findings and shows that permissive parenting style is positively associated with family cohesion. There are inconsistent findings with a recent study that indicated permissive parenting style has contributed to weaker family cohesion as children perceived overly indulgent, low maturity, lack of structure and discipline within the family (Israr & Mazhar, 2025). Besides that, some parents would choose to avoid conflicts rather than resolving them, leaving the issues unaddressed, which can accumulate tension and reduce emotional closeness over time.

However, there are past studies that also indicate high warmth, and low psychological control are associated with high levels of family cohesion (Matejevic et al., 2014; Spitz & Steinhausen, 2023). Parents who use permissive parenting style with a high level of warmth and acceptance may have indulged young adults' excessive material and emotional needs, satisfying unreasonable demands, which can also strengthen family bonds. They may perceive this indulgence as a sign of parental affection, support which reinforces family cohesion. Moreover, findings from Metwally (2018) shows that permissive parenting style has a positive correlation with openness personality traits, which indicates that young adults are more likely to have an open communication style when they feel safe and supported to have open conversations with family members. While young adults were raised by a family member's supportive environment, family cohesion will be strengthened, and conflict will be reduced over time (Roman et al., 2025).

Furthermore, permissive parenting has a low level of psychological control, and this tends to minimise conflict, punitive discipline, which reduces the probability of engaging in

conflicts between parents and children. The reduction in conflict will be more likely to contribute to higher levels of family cohesion, as it reduces misunderstanding and maintains high harmony among family members. On the other hand, self-efficacy is one of the reasons that causes permissive parenting style to be positively associated with family cohesion (Wen et al., 2022). When young adults possess strong self-efficacy, this autonomy is experienced as trust and empowerment rather than a lack of structure. They believe that they can manage and maintain their own behaviour and choices, these young adults would be less likely to misuse the freedom that is provided by permissive parents. They will develop a sense of responsibility, problem-solving skills and independence as permissive parents trusting children able to self-regulate, which promotes unity and family cohesion (Agbaria & Mahamid, 2023).

Overall, the results of this study, as well as some related studies, have indicated that permissive parenting style is positively associated with family cohesion among young adults in Malaysia. Indulgence, openness, low psychological control, supportive environment and self-efficacy can contribute to a higher level of family cohesion. As a result, upon results of the present study show that a high level of warmth and a low level of psychological control can contribute to trust, belongingness among family members, as well as enhance a high level of family cohesion.

#### ***Authoritarian parenting style and family cohesion***

Authoritarian parenting style is found to be negatively associated with family cohesion among young adults in Malaysia, which aligns with the proposed hypotheses. Authoritarian parenting style encourages strict rules, limited emotional engagement and discourages open communication. This indicates young adults may perceive low warmth and high psychological control among family members whereas resulting in low family cohesion.

According to Israr and Mazhar (2025), the findings of this study stated that authoritarian parenting style was significantly negatively associated with family cohesion, which contributed to weaker family closeness and less social interaction.

According to Sanvictores & Mendez (2022), authoritarian parenting style is more towards having high standards, less nurturing, and high expectations of parents, which could lead to higher levels of aggression. Young adults will often exhibit well-behaved behaviors due to the consequences of misbehavior, which may result in punishments from authoritarian parents. Additionally, young adults may struggle in this environment with strict parental rules and punishment, experiencing negative emotions towards family, which may contribute to low family cohesion.

Furthermore, authoritarian parenting emphasizes obedience and control while minimizing emotional responsiveness. When young adults were raised in this environment, they often felt misunderstood, unsupported, and rejected by their parents. The absence of warmth undermines the emotional bonds that form the basis of family cohesion. Without perceived warmth and emotional availability, family cohesion is hard to sustain over time.

As a result, supporting literature and our study has proved that authoritarian parenting style is significantly negatively associated with family cohesion among young adults in Malaysia. Authoritarian parenting style lower family cohesion, with low warmth and high psychological control towards young adults in Malaysia by implementing high expectations, high standards, low emotional bonds and an unsupported family environment among family members.

### ***Authoritative parenting style and family cohesion***

Hypothesis 1c proposed that authoritative parenting style is positively associated with family cohesion among young adults in Malaysia. The findings of our study have found a

significant result that supports this proposed hypothesis. Previous studies had stated that authoritative parenting style is characterised by high warmth, responsiveness and appropriate discipline, which is consistently associated with higher family cohesion (Baumrind, 1966; Roman et al., 2025). According to Awiszus et al. (2022), authoritative parenting style is associated with better overall outcome, high emotional regulation and lower behavioural issues that contribute to children and adolescents' mental health, which is able to strengthen family ties.

Authoritative parenting will have a set of consistent and reasonable rules while encouraging young adults to have open discussion, problem-solving and emotional expression (Tiwari, 2022). As a result, young adults will feel heard, supported, trusted and respected by parents, which strengthens family closeness. In Malaysia's collectivist culture, where it values familial harmony, interdependence and respect, which fits in line with authoritative parenting style by combining relational warmth and reasonable discipline (Sumari et al., 2019). Young adults raised in an authoritative home therefore experience a healthy combination of freedom and guidance, reducing conflicts and increasing mutual understanding, which leads to stronger cohesion across family members.

Therefore, the proposed hypothesis fits in line with the present study, which authoritative parenting style will enhance and increase family cohesion among young adults in Malaysia. High warmth, high responsiveness and reasonable control contribute to higher family cohesion and underscore the importance of a healthy balance between warmth and control.

### ***Reciprocal filial piety and family cohesion***

This proposed hypothesis stated that higher levels of reciprocal filial piety (RFP) are positively associated with family cohesion among young adults in Malaysia, which shows

significant results in our present study. According to Hsieh et al. (2025), offspring raised in a reciprocal mode that emphasizes maintaining relationships and open communication with parents, prioritizes personal practice over obligations and views filiality as authentic care rather than sacrifice. Based on the findings of Chung et al. (2024), higher RFP was positively correlated with life satisfaction, as life satisfaction often reflects the quality of personal and family relationships. Therefore, this provides a reason that RCP tend to report greater well-being, in which may reflect better family cohesion.

Besides that, the Malaysian social cultural context blends collectivist Asian values and norms with modern autonomy, which RFP fits in well with young adults' desire to take care of their parents willingly rather than out of pressure (Lim et al., 2022). RFP arises from genuine affection and appreciation for parents' sacrifices, so young adults can maintain respectful communication, offer emotional or practical support and maintain a strong connection in family life. In addition, the voluntary reciprocity reduces conflict and strengthens relational satisfaction among family members, allowing families to sustain in a warm and united environment.

Overall, young adults with higher levels of RFP are more likely to engage in maintaining emotional bonds, positive relationships that can foster a cohesive family environment. As a result, the proposed hypothesis has been proved to align with the present study, as higher levels of RFP are positively associated with family cohesion among young adults in Malaysia.

### ***Authoritarian filial piety and family cohesion***

Hypothesis 2b was found to be rejected, as higher levels of authoritarian filial piety (AFP) are negatively associated with family cohesion, and have been presented to be insignificant in the present study. According to Chen (2014), AFP was stated with better

parent-child relationships and family quality of life, as well as greater happiness. This may contribute to higher levels of family cohesion, in which young adults may acknowledge that some degree of compromise is needed to maintain harmony, resulting in positive effects of AFP.

As AFP emphasizes obedience, responsibility and submission to parental authority, many young adults today may perceive these behaviors as cultural obligations rather than emotional burdens. They may follow strict filial norms but view obedience as a culturally expected behavior rather than something that harms their sense of closeness. Additionally, Malaysia as a collectivist country, young adults may have seemingly expected to get used in obeying out of obligations, which has been deeply influenced by the collectivist culture, as it may not negatively affect young adults' well-being (Yang et al., 2024). They may perceive this as a normal family function, in which AFP would not affect family cohesion.

Overall, findings from past studies may have stated how AFP is negatively associated with family cohesion results are insignificant. Collectivist cultures may be one of the reasons that influence how young adults perceive AFP, therefore resulting in a non-significant relationship in many Malaysian samples.

### ***Ethnic differences and family cohesion***

The present study has been supported by the findings, which indicate a significant difference in family cohesion among different ethnic groups. Malay participants reported a higher level of family cohesion compared to Chinese and Indian groups. There is no significant difference between Chinese and Indian participants.

One of the reasons that Malay participants report a higher level of family cohesion is due to the Islamic teachings that highlight the importance of harmony in family relationships, fulfilling responsibilities and being supportive, which reinforces family cohesion among

Malay families (Muhammad et al., 2024). On the other hand, Malay families often live in a larger household, more interconnected family networks, rather than only focus on the nuclear family; therefore, Malay family members are more likely to have stronger and strengthen family cohesion compared to Chinese and Indian households. According to a study of Keshavarz and Baharudin (2009), Malay parents have a significant role in managing children's behaviors, as in the influence on Western culture, which emphasizes values of harmony, sharing and compassion, which contributes to higher family cohesion. Hence, the combination of religious values and strong family networks helps to explain the results on Malay participants who have higher family cohesion.

Keshavarz and Baharudin (2009) also stated that Chinese and Indian families in Malaysia may not significantly differ in family cohesion because both groups have different cultural expectations. Chinese parents tend to treat older children in a more strict manner and put high expectations on controlling their emotions and impulses, but Chinese families also emphasizes filial piety, collectivism and hierarchy; Indian parents prefer to emphasize respect, obedience and good academic success in their children. Indian girls' children are prevented from expressing assertive behaviors and autonomy. Therefore, Chinese and Indian families may not result significant difference in family cohesion among young adults in Malaysia.

## **Implications**

### ***Theoretical Implication***

In this study, Family systems theory, developed by Murray Bowen in 1978, was employed to investigate the interconnected roles of perceived parenting style, filial piety, and ethnic differences in shaping family cohesion among young adults in Malaysia. The research findings offer several contributions to the understanding of family functioning within the

theoretical framework of Bowen's Family Systems Theory. First of all, the significant correlation between parenting style and family cohesion shows that a person's behaviour and perception, such as how an individual views the behaviour of their parents, are closely related to a broader family interaction model. This is consistent with the theoretical view that when the behaviour of a member of the family changes, it will affect the emotional climate and cohesion of the whole family system (Helm, 2023).

Beyond that, the results contribute to a theoretical knowledge of how filial piety influences the family cohesion of young adults from a family systems theory perspective. It is consistent with the theory, indicating that there is an interconnection between family members, hence members can influence one another. Besides, it was also matched with the multigenerational transmission process in promoting stable family cohesion (Quirk, 2023). For instance, the findings imply that reciprocal filial piety strengthens intergenerational relationships and fosters family harmony. This finding supports the idea that attitudes and behaviour with respect, care, as well as responsibility toward elders, come from the family dynamics but are not apart from them.

In addition, family cohesion shows significant differences across different ethnic groups, indicating that family functions are related to the broader cultural environment, and these cultural backgrounds affect the interaction mode within the family. This result helps to fill the gaps in existing knowledge and illustrates how Bowen's theory can be meaningfully extended to a multicultural society like Malaysia, in which different cultural traditions shape the family process in their own unique ways.

Nevertheless, the findings found that several of the hypotheses were not supported. For example, the results found that permissive parenting showed a positive but not negative association with family cohesion. Also, the study did not find any statistically significant association between authoritarian filial piety and family cohesion within the sample set.

These gaps suggest that the theory is useful but may not fully account for all dimensions in a multicultural context. Highlighting that future studies should focus on additional influences, such as cultural norms, individual differences, or situational influences that may alter these relationships.

As a result, the expansion of theory highlights areas within the theoretical framework that can be improved to enhance the accuracy. Additionally, it highlights the complexities of family dynamics in various cultural contexts by identifying consistencies and inconsistencies.

### ***Practical Implication***

This study's findings provide various potential applications in family-oriented interventions, education, and community campaigns targeted to young adults in Malaysia. First of all, the results show that authoritative parenting is linked to stronger family cohesion, supporting the need for parenting initiatives that promote warmth, open communication, and balanced discipline. Hence, professionals and family practitioners could include these practices in workshops and parenting support sessions to help strengthen the bond between parents and children. This is because they are the ones who guide the process of development to build family relationships and foster harmonious family environments.

Moreover, the findings emphasize the importance of promoting reciprocal filial piety in a collectivist context, Malaysia. Professionals and family counsellors can structure and develop programs to promote mutual respect, care, and responsibility between parents and children. In fact, workshops, family activities, or counselling sessions may be conducted to help young adults understand and value intergenerational obligations. Helping them to improve communication and emotional closeness among the family members. Such initiatives would foster family harmony, ensuring that family members support one another and make constructive contributions toward the overall functioning of the household.

Furthermore, research findings on ethnic differences in family cohesion suggest that a culturally sensitive approach should be taken when planning interventions. Policymakers, educators, and social workers need to consider the different cultural values and norms that influence parenting and filial behaviours, tailoring strategies to each ethnic group. For instance, community programmes or school-based initiatives that encourage family bonding can therefore incorporate cultural expectations. In addition, ensuring the interventions are relevant and effective across diverse populations, especially in Malaysian settings.

In conclusion, these practical applications illustrate that by encouraging positive parenting practices, promoting reciprocal filial values, and recognising cultural differences. Therefore, the overall family cohesion and healthier relational dynamics can be facilitated. Following this, the strategies will not only benefit individual emotional well-being but also contribute to the resilience and stability of the whole family unit.

### **Limitations and Recommendations**

To better interpret the findings, it is essential to consider the limitations for future study. The first limitation is that this research relies heavily on self-reported questionnaires. It might lead to potential bias due to memory inaccuracies and social desirability bias. Participants may respond unintentionally with what they think is suitable and socially acceptable rather than their actual experiences. Such biases could affect the accuracy of the results, especially when participants are asked about sensitive topics such as ethnic differences. To address this limitation, future research could employ multi-informant reports by collecting data not only from participants but also from parents, siblings, or peers to cross-check their responses. Research indicated that a multi-informant perspective provides a considerable enhancement in predictive validity compared to single-informant data (Izquierdo-Sotorrío et al., 2016).

The sampling strategy is another limitation in this study, which affects the generalizability of the results. The majority of participants came from certain institutions or demographic backgrounds, which potentially limits the applicability of the research findings (Ahmed, 2024). To strengthen generalisability, future studies could benefit from using stratified sampling to ensure a more thorough comprehension of the phenomenon being studied. By dividing the population into different strata or subgroups based on criteria such as gender, age range, socioeconomic backgrounds, or educational levels. Each subgroup must be included in the sample to ensure adequate representation (Reddy & Khan, 2023). This method would help to improve overall representativeness and provide a broader generalisability of the study's findings.

Apart from that, the next limitation is that this research lies in the use of a cross-sectional research design, as it conducts data collection from a single sample at a point in time. This makes it difficult to identify the directionality of the relationships between variables and to observe how these relationships change over time (Taris et al., 2021). A possible adjustment is to adopt a longitudinal research design, tracking participants across multiple time points. By measuring both predictor and outcome variables at many points in time allows for the study of changes in one variable that predict changes in another.

Last but not least, a key limitation of this study is that the  $r$ -value used for the G-Power sample size calculation was estimated based on Guilford's rule of thumb due to limited past literature reporting the correlation between the variables. Thus, it is possible that the estimated correlation may not accurately represent the actual correlation in the population. Leading to an over- or under-estimation of the required sample size and affecting the study's statistical power. To mitigate this limitation, it is recommended to collect empirical correlations from similar populations, allowing for better estimate accuracy, improving the reliability of the results, and increasing the accuracy when determining a sample size.

## Conclusion

This study sets out to examine the relationships between perceived parenting styles, filial piety and ethnic differences with family cohesion among young adults in Malaysia. This study address three research objectives: (1) To examine the relationship between perceived parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive) and family cohesion among young adults in Malaysia, (2) To examine the relationship between filial piety (reciprocal, authoritarian) and family cohesion among young adults in Malaysia, (3) To examine whether there are significant differences in family cohesion among Malay, Chinese and Indian young adults in Malaysia. Family system theory is applied to contribute to a deeper understanding of human functioning on parental behaviour and cultural expectations shape family cohesion in Malaysian context.

A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design was implemented to collect data from 119 Malaysian young adults from different ethnic backgrounds (Malay, Chinese, Indian), aged between 18 to 39, through purposive sampling via various platforms. Questionnaires that comprised validated instruments, including FACES III Cohesion Subscale, the Parental Authority Questionnaire and the Dual Filial Piety Scale. An inclusion criterion is set to ensure an unbiased and reliable dataset reflective of young adults' experiences of family cohesion in Malaysia. Therefore, selected participants were based on the consistency of family backgrounds, such as both parents are still alive and married, both parents come from the same ethnic background, and dual-income parents.

The study found that authoritative parenting was positively associated with family cohesion, while authoritarian parenting showed a negative relationship. Unexpectedly, permissive parenting style shows a positive association with family cohesion, which suggests that parental warmth and low psychological control result in a higher family cohesion among Malaysian young adults. Besides that, RFP has shown a strong positive association with

cohesion, whereas AFP was not significantly related. Moreover, Malay participants show higher levels of family cohesion compared to Chinese and Indian participants, which shows no significant related between these two groups. Therefore, findings of the present study have highlighted the importance of parental warmth and reciprocity within the Malaysian cultural context in fostering family ties.

However, several limitations should be considered. Firstly, the reliance on self-reported questionnaires may have the risk of having memory errors and social desirability bias. Secondly, the purposive sampling method limits the generalisability of the findings to a broader Malaysian population. Thirdly, the cross-sectional design prevents establishing causality or tracking changes over time. Lastly, the estimation of sample size was based on an estimated correlation, which may affect the study's statistical power. Hence, future research should consider multi-informant data, stratified sampling, longitudinal designs and more accurate power calculations.

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## Appendix A

## Correlation between Variables

## Perceived Parenting Style

Israr, J., & Mazhar, S. (2025). Parenting styles, personality traits and family cohesion among adults. *International Journal of Social Sciences Bulletin*, 3(6).

doi:10.5281/zenodo.15591704

Table 3  
Pearson Product Correlational Analysis among Study variables(N=408)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Perceived parenting styles								
1 Authoritative	-							
2 Authoritarian	-.30**	-						
3 Permissive	-.37**	.55**	-					
Personality Traits								
4 Extraversion	.47**	-.60**	-.30**	-				
5 Agreeableness	.70**	-.77**	-.52**	.78**	-			
6 Conscientiousness	.59**	.40*	-.66**	.41*	.76**	-		
7 Neuroticism	-.32*	-.77**	-.69**	.32*	.34*	.73**	-	
8 Openness to experience	.62**	.53**	.65**	.37*	.62**	.59**	.60**	-
9 Family cohesion	.47*	-.63**	-.40*	.44*	.43**	.56**	.71**	.

Note: \*\*Correlation is significant at the level of 0.01 (2 tailed).

## Filial Piety &amp; Ethnicity

## Guilford's Rule of Thumb

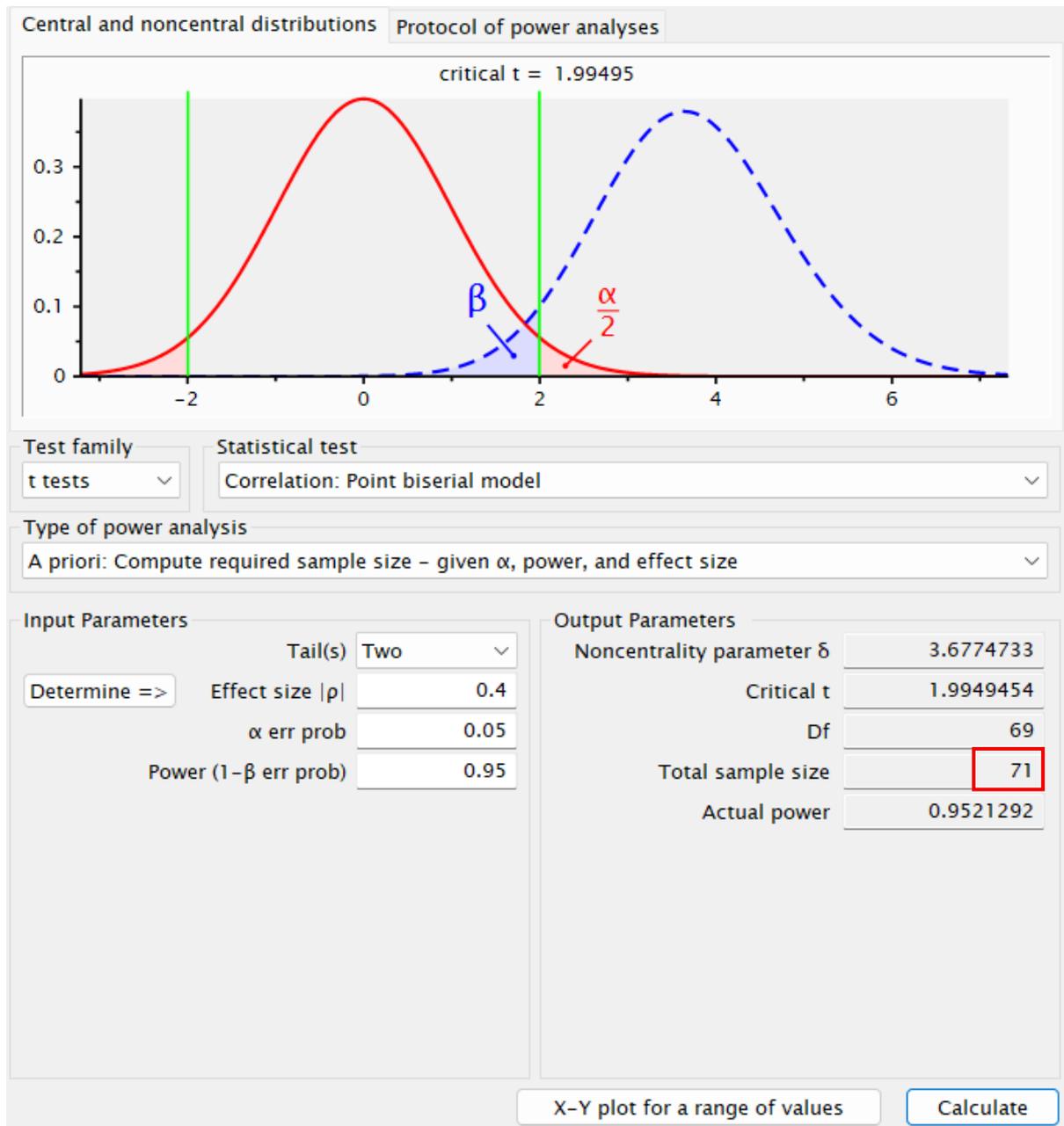
Guilford, J. P., & Fruchter, B. (1973). *Instructor's manual to accompany fundamental statistics in psychology and education*. McGraw-Hill.

Table 1  
Guilford's (1973) Rule of Thumb for Interpretation of correlation coefficient (r)

r	Interpretation
< 0.2	Negligible positive/negative correlation
0.2-0.4	Low positive/negative correlation
0.4-0.7	Moderate positive/negative correlation
0.7-0.9	High positive/negative correlation
> 0.9	Very high positive/negative correlation

## Appendix B

### G\*Power



## Appendix C

### Ethical Approval Letter



**UNIVERSITI TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN** DU012(A)  
Wholly owned by UTAR Education Foundation Co. No. 578227-M

Re: U/SERC/78-616/2025

6 October 2025

Dr Lee Wan Ying  
Head, Department of Psychology and Counselling  
Faculty of Arts and Social Science  
Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman  
Jalan Universiti, Bandar Baru Barat  
31900 Kampar, Perak.

Dear Dr Lee,

#### **Ethical Approval For Research Project/Protocol**

We refer to the application for ethical approval for your students' research project from Bachelor of Social Science (Honours) Psychology programme enrolled in course UAPZ3013/UAPZ3023. We are pleased to inform you that the application has been approved under Expedited Review.

The details of the research projects are as follows:

No	Research Title	Student's Name	Supervisor's Name	Approval Validity
1.	Perceived Parenting Style, Filial Piety, and Ethnic Differences as Predictors of Family Cohesion Among Young Adults in Malaysia	1. Chiain Jia Kie 2. Mong Qi Ying 3. Quah Yi Wei	Dr Sarvarubini a/p Nainee	6 October 2025 – 5 October 2026

The conduct of this research is subject to the following:

- (1) The participants' informed consent be obtained prior to the commencement of the research;
- (2) Confidentiality of participants' personal data must be maintained; and
- (3) Compliance with procedures set out in related policies of UTAR such as the UTAR Research Ethics and Code of Conduct, Code of Practice for Research Involving Humans and other related policies/guidelines.
- (4) Written consent be obtained from the institution(s)/company(ies) in which the physical or/and online survey will be carried out, prior to the commencement of the research.

**Kampar Campus** : Jalan Universiti, Bandar Barat, 31900 Kampar, Perak Darul Ridzuan, Malaysia  
Tel: (605) 468 8888 Fax: (605) 466 1313  
**Sungai Long Campus** : Jalan Sungai Long, Bandar Sungai Long, Cheras, 43000 Kajang, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia  
Tel: (603) 9086 0288 Fax: (603) 9019 8868  
**Website**: www.utar.edu.my



Should the students collect personal data of participants in their studies, please have the participants sign the attached Personal Data Protection Statement for records.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,



**Professor Dr Zuraidah Abd Manaf**  
Chairman  
UTAR Scientific and Ethical Review Committee

c.c    Dean, Faculty of Arts and Social Science  
        Director, Institute of Postgraduate Studies and Research



## Appendix D

## Survey Recruitment Poster

# FYP Survey Recruitment

“Research Topic”

**Perceived Parenting Style, Filial Piety, and Ethnic Differences As Predictors Of Family Cohesion Among Young Adults In Malaysia.**



We are Y3S3 students pursuing the Bachelor of Social Science (Honours) in Psychology programme. This survey is conducted as part of our Final Year Project (FYP), and we are honoured to invite you to participate in this online study.

**Description**





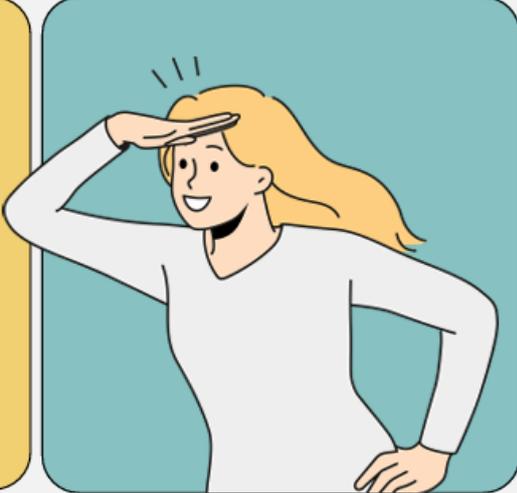
**General Requirements**

- 🇲🇾 Malaysian
- 👤 Aged 18–39 years
- 👨👩 Both parents are alive and married
- 👨👩 Both parents are of the same ethnic background
- 💼 Dual-income family background

**Survey Form**



[https://utarpsy.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_805I4CtUCvgfgWi](https://utarpsy.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_805I4CtUCvgfgWi)



Name	Contact Number	Email
Chiain Jia Kie	0167587464	jiakie23.chiain@utar.my
Mong Qi Ying	0123620826	qiyingmong@utar.my
Quah Yi Wei	01123450591	evangeline0617@utar.my



**Enquiry**



**Appendix E**  
**Questionnaire**

# FYP\_Family Cohesion

---

Start of Block: Introduction

Department of Psychology and Counselling  
Faculty of Arts and Social Science  
University Tunku Abdul Rahman

## **Introduction**

Title of Project: Perceived Parenting Style, Filial Piety, and Ethnic Differences As Predictors Of Family Cohesion Among Young Adults In Malaysia.

NOTE: This consent form will remain with the UTAR researchers for their records. I understand I have been asked to take part in the research project specified above by UTAR students for the purpose of their final year project. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the Explanatory Statement, which I keep for my records.

## **Procedures and Confidentiality**

All information provided will remain as private and confidential. The information given will only be reported as group data with no identifying information and only use for academic purpose.

End of Block: Introduction

---

Start of Block: Block 1 (Personal Data Protection Notice)

**PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION NOTICE**

Please be informed that in accordance with Personal Data Protection Act 2010 (“PDPA”) which came into force on 15 November 2013, Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (“UTAR”) is hereby bound to make notice and require consent in relation to collection, recording, storage, usage and retention of personal information.

**Notice:**

1. Personal data refers to any information which may directly or indirectly identify a person which could include sensitive personal data and expression of opinion. Among others it includes:

- a) Name
- b) Identity card
- c) Place of Birth
- d) Address
- e) Education History
- f) Employment History
- g) Medical History
- h) Blood type
- i) Race
- j) Religion
- k) Photo
- l) Personal Information and Associated Research Data

2. The purposes for which your personal data may be used are inclusive but not limited to:

- a) For assessment of any application to UTAR
- b) For processing any benefits and services
- c) For communication purposes
- d) For advertorial and news
- e) For general administration and record purposes
- f) For enhancing the value of education
- g) For educational and related purposes consequential to UTAR
- h) For replying any responds to complaints and enquiries
- i) For the purpose of our corporate governance
- j) For the purposes of conducting research/ collaboration

3. Your personal data may be transferred and/or disclosed to third party and/or UTAR collaborative partners including but not limited to the respective and appointed outsourcing agents for purpose of fulfilling our obligations to you in respect of the purposes and all such other purposes that are related to the purposes and also in providing integrated services, maintaining and storing records. Your data may be shared when required by laws and when disclosure is necessary to comply with applicable laws.

4. Any personal information retained by UTAR shall be destroyed and/or deleted in accordance with our retention policy applicable for us in the event such information is no longer required.

5. UTAR is committed in ensuring the confidentiality, protection, security and accuracy of your personal information made available to us and it has been our ongoing strict policy to ensure that your personal information is accurate, complete, not misleading and updated. UTAR would also ensure that your personal data shall not be used for political and commercial purposes.

**Consent:**

6. By submitting or providing your personal data to UTAR, you had consented and agreed for your personal data to be used in accordance to the terms and conditions in the Notice and our relevant policy.

7. If you do not consent or subsequently withdraw your consent to the processing and disclosure of your personal data, UTAR will not be able to fulfill our obligations or to contact you or to assist you in respect of the purposes and/or for any other purposes related to the purpose.

8. You may access and update your personal data by writing to us at

- [jiakie23.chiain@1utar.my](mailto:jiakie23.chiain@1utar.my) (Chiain Jia Kie)

- [qiyiming@1utar.my](mailto:qiyiming@1utar.my) (Mong Qi Ying)

- [evangeline0617@1utar.my](mailto:evangeline0617@1utar.my) (Quah Yi Wei)

---

Page Break

**Acknowledgement of Notice**

By clicking, "I Agree" below, you acknowledge that:

1. You have read and understood the information provided above.
2. You are voluntarily agreeing to participate in this research study.
3. You understand that you may withdraw at any time without penalty.
4. You are above 18 years of age and below 39 years of age.
5. You are a Malaysian citizen.
6. You are able to read and understand English.
7. You do not have any severe mental health conditions that would affect your ability to participate.

Please select one of the options below to indicate your choice:

I agree, have been notified and that I hereby understood, consented per UTAR above notice. (1)

I disagree, my personal data will not be processed. (2)

---

End of Block: Block 1 (Personal Data Protection Notice)

---

Start of Block: Block 2 (Part A: Demographic Information)

**Part A: Demographic Information**

The following section includes questions about your demographic information. This information is important for understanding the composition of the study sample and will be used solely for

research and statistical analysis purposes. Your responses will remain strictly confidential, and all data will be reported in a way that ensures your anonymity.

Please answer each question as accurately as possible.

---

Nationality

- Malaysian (1)
- Non-Malaysian (2)

---

Gender

- Male (1)
- Female (2)
- Non-binary / third gender (3)
- Others: (Please Specify) (4)

\_\_\_\_\_

---

Age

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Race

- Malay (1)
  - Chinese (2)
  - Indian (3)
  - Others: (Please Specify) (4)
- 

Current Parental Situation

- Two-parent family (1)
  - Single parent family (2)
  - Both parents are deceased (3)
  - One parent is deceased (4)
  - Others: (Please Specify) (5)
- 

Current Parental Marital Status

- Married (1)
  - Widowed (2)
  - Divorced (3)
  - Others: (Please Specify) (4)
-

Parents' Ethnic Background

- Both parents from the same ethnic background (1)
  - Parents from different ethnic backgrounds (2)
  - Others: (Please Specify) (3)
- 

---

Parents' Employment Status / Contribution to Household Income

- Both parents are employed or contributing to household income (1)
  - Only one parent employed or contributing to household income (2)
  - Neither parent employed or contributing to household income (3)
  - Others: (Please Specify) (4)
- 

End of Block: Block 2 (Part A: Demographic Information)

---

Start of Block: Block 3 (Part B: Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale III)  
(FACES III) (Family Cohesion Subscale)

**Part B: Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale III (FACES III) (Family Cohesion Subscale)**

For each of the following statements, choose the number of 5-point scale that best describes how that statement applies to your family.

End of Block: Block 3 (Part B: Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale III) (FACES III) (Family Cohesion Subscale)

---

Start of Block: Block 4 (Part C: Parental Authority Questionnaire) (PAQ)

**Part C: Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ)**

Instructions: For each of the following statements, select the number of the 5-point scale that best describes how that statement applies to you and your parents. Try to read and think about each statement as it applies to you and your parents during your years of growing up at home. There are no right or wrong answers, so don't spend a lot of time on any one item. We are looking for your overall impression regarding each statement. Be sure not to omit any items.

End of Block: Block 4 (Part C: Parental Authority Questionnaire) (PAQ)

---

Start of Block: Block 5 (Part D: Dual Filial Piety Scale) (DFPS)

**Part D: Dual Filial Piety Scale (DFPS)**

Instruction: People are different in their opinions about their parents. Below are 16 statements about the way people treat their parents. Please read each statement carefully and rate its importance according to your own feelings using the following scale. The survey concerns just personal opinions, so there is no standard answer for any of these statements. Please mark the number that best represents your value. If there is a big difference in your interaction with your father and with your mother, please choose the parent with the most influence on you as the main target in answering all items.

End of Block: Block 5 (Part D: Dual Filial Piety Scale) (DFPS)

---

End of Survey

## Appendix F

## Reliability Test for Pilot and Actual Study

## Pilot Study

## Actual Study

## Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scale III (FACES III) – Cohesion Subscale

## Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.773	10

## Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.888	10

## Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ)

## Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.716	30

## Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.710	30

## Permissive Parenting Style (P)

## Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.728	10

## Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.702	10

## Authoritarian Parenting Style (A)

## Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.880	10

## Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.887	10

**Pilot Study****Actual Study**

Authoritative Parenting Style (F)

**Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.849	10

**Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.851	10

Dual Filial Piety Scale (DFPS)

**Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.778	16

**Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.740	16

Reciprocal Filial Piety (RFP)

**Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.833	8

**Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.855	8

Authoritarian Filial Piety (AFP)

**Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.713	8

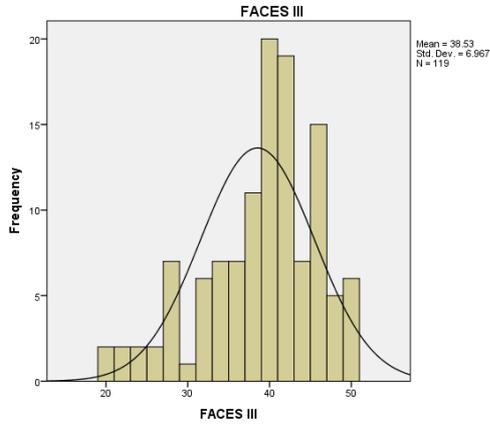
**Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.802	8

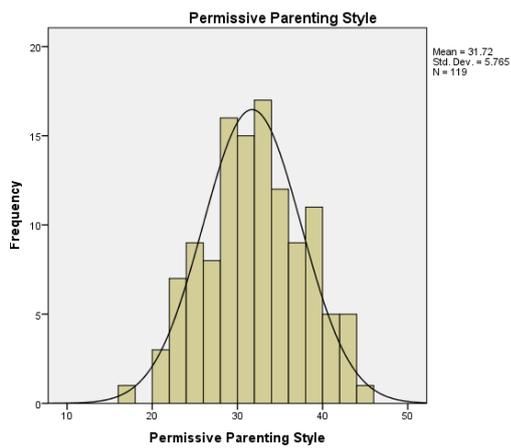
## Appendix G

### Histogram

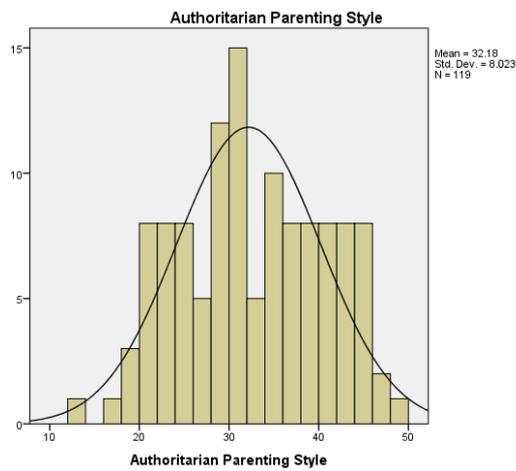
#### Family Cohesion



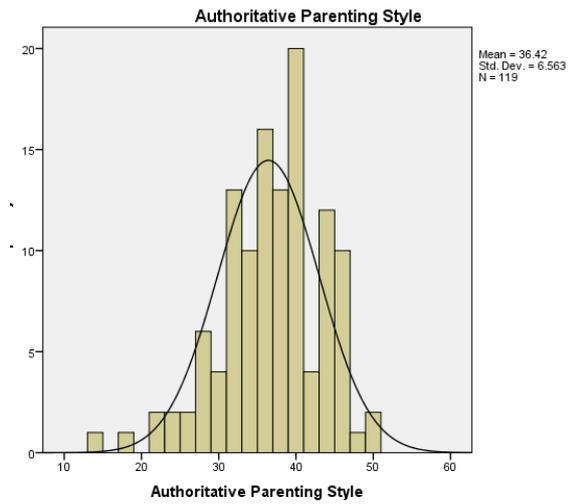
#### Permissive Parenting Style (PPS)



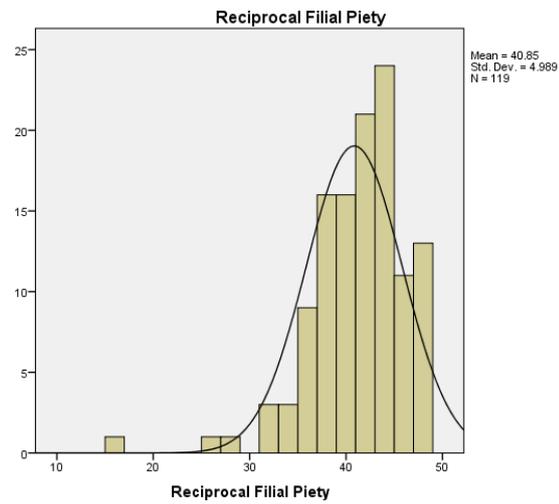
#### Authoritarian Parenting Style (APS)



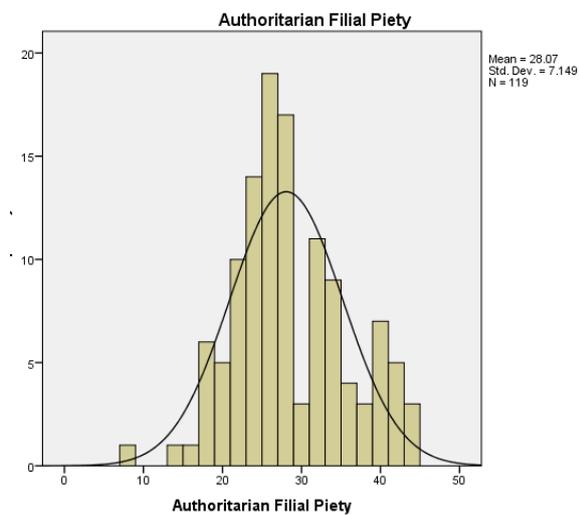
**Authoritative Parenting Style (FPS)**



**Reciprocal Filial Piety (RFP)**



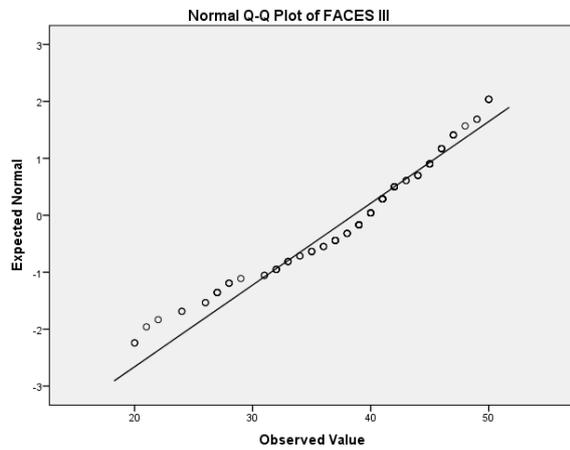
**Authoritarian Filial Piety (AFP)**



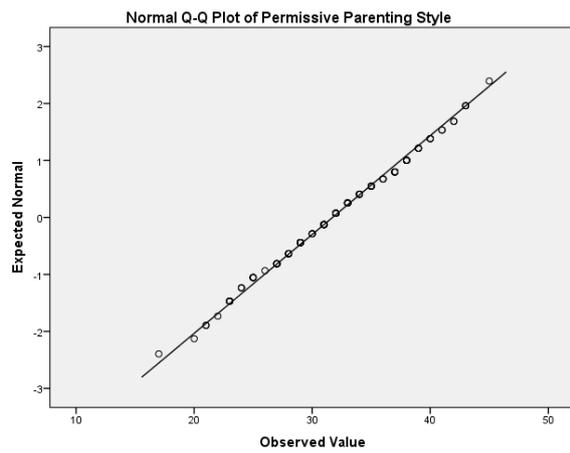
**Appendix H**

**Q-Q Plot**

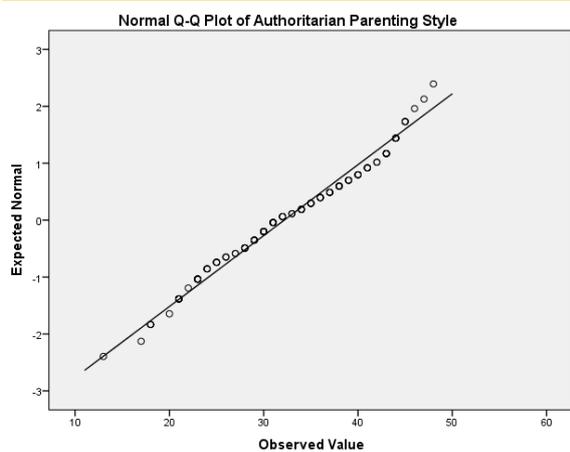
**Family Cohesion**



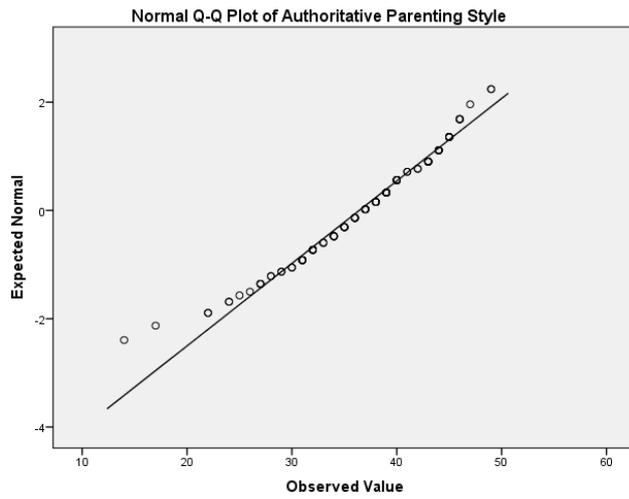
**Permissive Parenting Style (PPS)**



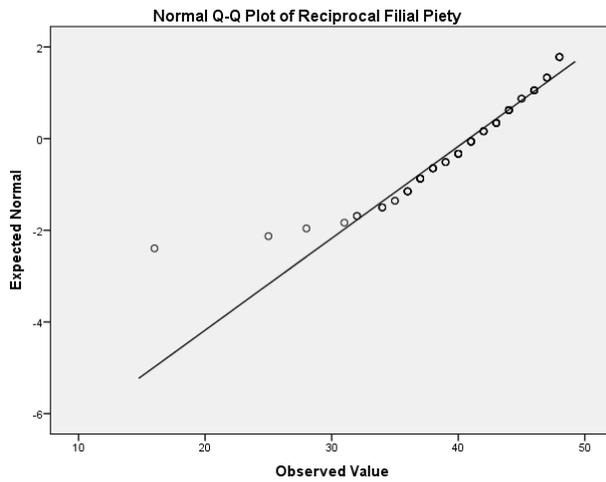
**Authoritarian Parenting Style (APS)**



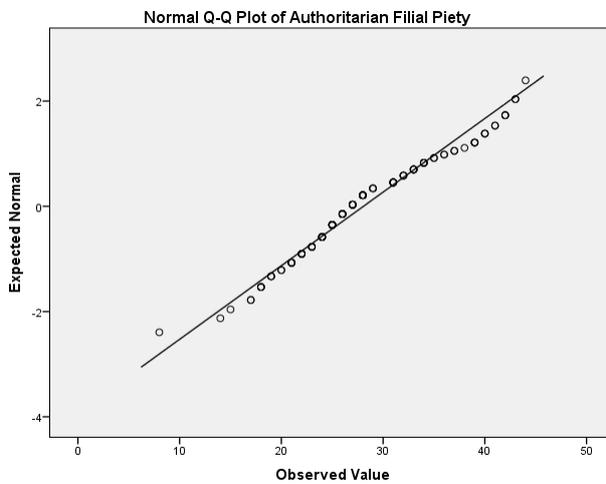
**Authoritative Parenting Style (FPS)**



**Reciprocal Filial Piety (RFP)**



**Authoritarian Filial Piety (AFP)**



Appendix I

Skewness and Kurtosis

			Statistic	Std. Error
FACES III	Mean		38.53	.639
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	37.26	
		Upper Bound	39.79	
	5% Trimmed Mean		38.84	
	Median		40.00	
	Variance		48.539	
	Std. Deviation		6.967	
	Minimum		20	
	Maximum		50	
	Range		30	
	Interquartile Range		9	
	Skewness		-.723	.222
	Kurtosis		.110	.440
Permissive Parenting Style	Mean		31.72	.528
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	30.68	
		Upper Bound	32.77	
	5% Trimmed Mean		31.71	
	Median		32.00	
	Variance		33.236	
	Std. Deviation		5.765	
	Minimum		17	
	Maximum		45	
	Range		28	
	Interquartile Range		8	
	Skewness		.000	.222
	Kurtosis		-.457	.440
Authoritarian Parenting Style	Mean		32.18	.735
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	30.72	
		Upper Bound	33.63	
	5% Trimmed Mean		32.23	
	Median		31.00	
	Variance		64.367	
	Std. Deviation		8.023	
	Minimum		13	
	Maximum		48	
	Range		35	
	Interquartile Range		13	
	Skewness		-.019	.222
	Kurtosis		-.882	.440
Authoritative Parenting Style	Mean		36.42	.602
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	35.23	
		Upper Bound	37.61	
	5% Trimmed Mean		36.71	
	Median		37.00	
	Variance		43.076	
	Std. Deviation		6.563	
	Minimum		14	
	Maximum		49	
	Range		35	
	Interquartile Range		8	
	Skewness		-.637	.222
	Kurtosis		.674	.440
Reciprocal Filial Piety	Mean		40.85	.457
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	39.94	
		Upper Bound	41.75	
	5% Trimmed Mean		41.20	
	Median		41.00	
	Variance		24.892	
	Std. Deviation		4.989	
	Minimum		16	
	Maximum		48	
	Range		32	
	Interquartile Range		6	
	Skewness		-1.436	.222
	Kurtosis		4.763	.440
Authoritarian Filial Piety	Mean		28.07	.655
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	26.77	
		Upper Bound	29.37	
	5% Trimmed Mean		27.99	
	Median		27.00	
	Variance		51.114	
	Std. Deviation		7.149	
	Minimum		8	
	Maximum		44	
	Range		36	
	Interquartile Range		9	
	Skewness		.278	.222
	Kurtosis		-.173	.440

## Appendix J

## Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

## Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Sum of FACES III	.132	119	.000	.950	119	.000
Sum of Permissive Parenting Style	.055	119	.200*	.991	119	.621
Sum of Authoritarian Parenting Style	.071	119	.200*	.976	119	.033
Sum of Authoritative Parenting Style	.070	119	.200*	.972	119	.013
Sum of Reciprocal Filial Piety	.113	119	.001	.908	119	.000
Sum of Authoritarian Filial Piety	.126	119	.000	.973	119	.018

\*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

## Appendix K

## Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Analysis

## Correlations

		FACES III	Permissive Parenting Style	Authoritarian Parenting Style	Authoritative Parenting Style	Reciprocal Filial Piety	Authoritarian Filial Piety
FACES III	Pearson Correlation	1	.312**	-.226*	.473**	.618**	.002
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001	.014	.000	.000	.983
	N	119	119	119	119	119	119
Permissive Parenting Style	Pearson Correlation	.312**	1	-.380**	.435**	.246**	-.074
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001		.000	.000	.007	.427
	N	119	119	119	119	119	119
Authoritarian Parenting Style	Pearson Correlation	-.226*	-.380**	1	-.247**	-.225*	.379**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.014	.000		.007	.014	.000
	N	119	119	119	119	119	119
Authoritative Parenting Style	Pearson Correlation	.473**	.435**	-.247**	1	.563**	.217*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.007		.000	.018
	N	119	119	119	119	119	119
Reciprocal Filial Piety	Pearson Correlation	.618**	.246**	-.225*	.563**	1	-.082
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.007	.014	.000		.373
	N	119	119	119	119	119	119
Authoritarian Filial Piety	Pearson Correlation	.002	-.074	.379**	.217*	-.082	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.983	.427	.000	.018	.373	
	N	119	119	119	119	119	119

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

## Appendix L

### One-Way ANOVA

#### ANOVA

Mean of FACES III

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	590.183	2	295.092	6.663	.002
Within Groups	5137.464	116	44.288		
Total	5727.647	118			

#### Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Mean of FACES III

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
4.850	2	116	.009

#### Kruskal-Wallis Test

Ranks			
	Race	N	Mean Rank
Mean of FACES III	Malay	40	74.78
	Chinese	41	54.89
	Indian	38	49.96
	Total	119	

#### Test Statistics<sup>a,b</sup>

	Mean of FACES III
Chi-Square	11.497
df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.003

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: Race

#### Hypothesis Test Summary

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of Mean of FACES III is the same across categories of Race.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	.003	Reject the null hypothesis.

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

**Multiple Comparisons**

Dependent Variable: Sum of FACES III

Dunnnett T3

(I) Race	(J) Race	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Malay	Chinese	3.646 <sup>*</sup>	1.329	.023	.40	6.89
	Indian	5.368 <sup>*</sup>	1.485	.002	1.73	9.01
Chinese	Malay	-3.646 <sup>*</sup>	1.329	.023	-6.89	-.40
	Indian	1.722	1.678	.666	-2.37	5.82
Indian	Malay	-5.368 <sup>*</sup>	1.485	.002	-9.01	-1.73
	Chinese	-1.722	1.678	.666	-5.82	2.37

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.