

FAMILY SUPPORT AND LIFE SATISFACTION AMONG MALAYSIAN ELDERLY: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF PERCEIVED FILIAL PIETY

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Abstract

Filial piety, which refers to showing respect to parents, has wielded a vital effect on the relationship between family support and the life satisfaction of elderly. However, the mechanism behind this effect is still unclear. To address this gap in the existing literature, the present study aims to investigate the effect of family support on life satisfaction through the mediating role of perceived filial piety among Malaysian seniors. This study employed a cross-sectional design involving 154 seniors aged 60 and above residing in Ipoh, Malaysia. An online survey method was used to collect data from the participants. The SPSS version 21 software was used for descriptive data analysis (means, standard deviations, frequencies, percentages) to describe the sample's characteristics and the study's main variables. SPSS was also used to analyze the correlations between the understudied variables (H1). Mediation analyses were made to estimate the mediating effect of perceived filial piety in the relationship between family support and life satisfaction among seniors (H2). Results indicated that the correlation was significant among the variables. To respond to H2, after controlling age and gender, the effect of family support on life satisfaction was mediated via perceived filial piety. Family support was found to have a significant effect on perceived filial piety and perceived filial piety also significantly predicted life satisfaction. After controlling the effect of perceived filial piety, the direct effect of family support on life satisfaction continues to exist. The indirect effect of family support on life satisfaction through perceived filial piety was found to be significant. The findings suggest that the effect of family support on elderly life satisfaction may be related to their perceived filial piety. Results indicate that improving family social support increases the life satisfaction of seniors. Perceived filial piety will be an added advantage to improve the life satisfaction of seniors.

Keywords: Life satisfaction, elderly, filial piety, family support

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The world is experiencing growth in the number and proportion of older persons in their population, especially in Asian countries. On that note, Malaysia is among the country which is undergoing a silver tsunami (Won et al., 2019) with the percentage of the elderly in the population projected to triple or quadruple in twenty years. The percentage of the population aged 65 years and older was 3.3% in 1970, is currently 6.2%, and is predicted to reach 14.5% by 2040 (Department of Statistics Malaysia 2017). The silver tsunami is a widely used metaphor to describe the ageing population. These age demographic transitions might bring higher social and economic to the nation if not well-prepared. In regards to that, researchers have shifted their attention to the elderly health-related issues and studied the subjects that could improve their health, for instance, life satisfaction. These might be precautionary steps taken to ensure successful ageing for the present adults in the nation.

Life satisfaction is essential for successful ageing. Life satisfaction includes an individual's appraisals and evaluations of their own lives. The evaluation includes cognitive judgement, such as life satisfaction, and emotional responses to ongoing life. Knowing the elderly life satisfaction and its contributing factors is important to prepare for a productive happy society in the upcoming ageing population (Diener et al., 2018).

Many factors might contribute to the life satisfaction of the elderly. The influencing factors of life satisfaction have been widely studied in previous research but the studies which focus on the elderly group are still scarce. Social support has long been considered as an important factor in life satisfaction (Diener & Seligman, 2002). In a traditional society, nearly all the needs of an individual are fulfilled within the family.

Attachment to family plays a determining role in an individual's well-being. In line with that, family is the closest person in touch especially when a person turns old. The family includes the spouse, children and grandchildren. A longitudinal study stated that both receiving and providing support between older parents and their children enhanced the elderly satisfaction towards life (Toyoshima & Nakahara). On the other hand, another study on spouse support also proves that the amount of support received by an elderly from their spouse can determine their happiness and common evaluation of their living (Thomas, 2010).

When it comes to the life satisfaction of the elderly; the bond, care and their adult children play an important role besides social support. The respectful bonding and care of the child towards the elderly parents is called filial piety. Filial piety is a principle of family value initiated from Confucius's teaching and has been practised widely in Asian countries. Traditionally, filial piety in the Chinese refers to a range of behavioural prescriptions, including showing respect, being obedient, honouring the ancestors, and continuing the family lineage are among the practices suggested by filial piety. Research suggests that one's a person ages, their priority goes to their children

and the world goes around them. When they receive good treatment from their children (filial piety), it generates happiness which subsequently promotes their SWB (Cheng & Chan, 2006).

Although there are previous studies on life satisfaction, however, in view of the period of the study, the fast-growing numbers of elderly people in Malaysia and current changes in the socioeconomic surroundings, we believe we must have a more updated study to plan for proper elderly policy to be implemented. Hence, this study was conducted to determine the association between family support and the Malaysian elderly life satisfaction with filial piety as moderator.

2.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Participants

The present study employed a purposive sampling method to recruit respondents to the study. The sample of the study consisted of 154 Malaysian elderly aged 60 and above years old from Ipoh, Malaysia. Only elderly aged 60 and above with good cognitive ability are recruited for this study. Their cognitive ability is measured by The Short Portable Mental Status Questionnaire (SPMSQ). About 58.4% of the respondents were female. A total of 47.4% of respondents were Chinese, followed by Malay (41.6%) and Indians (11%).

Measures

Self-administered questionnaires were used to collect the data for the study. The pre-screening process was done by using The Short Portable Mental Status Questionnaire (SPMSQ). Those who qualify are requested to sign the consent form and asked to answer a questionnaire which consist of questions on demography, Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS; Zimet et al., 1988), Perceived Filial Piety Scale (Chang et al., 2014), and Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985) All the measures used in the present study were originally in the English language and they were translated to Malay, Chinese and Tamil language by employing a back-to-back translation procedure. The translation is done to ensure the participant able to answer in their preferred language.

Data Analysis Plan

The current study used SPSS version 21 to analyse the data of the study. Several stages of statistical analysis were conducted. First, data were subjected to descriptive analysis to explore the respondent background and the general pattern of the variables studied. Secondly, a correlation analysis was presented to examine the relationship between perceived filial piety, family support and life satisfaction. Lastly, mediating analysis with bootstrapping was conducted to determine the mediation effect of perceived filial piety on the relationship between perceived family support and life satisfaction among the Malaysian elderly.

3.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS

Correlation among Perceived Filial Piety, Family support and Life Satisfaction

Table 1 shows the mean values, standard deviations, and correlation for the variables. No missing value was found. Pearson correlation analysis showed that perceived filial piety, family support and life satisfaction have significant associations. The significant relationships provide preliminary support for our hypotheses.

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Inter-correlations between Study Variables (N=154)

	1	2	3
Perceived filial piety	-		
Family support	.588***	-	
Life satisfaction	.586***	.477***	-
<i>Mean</i>	22.942	21.370	29.234
<i>SD</i>	5.106	3.914	9.068

Note. *** $p < .001$.

The Mediating Role of Perceived Filial Piety in the Relationship between Family Support and Life Satisfaction. Hayes's (2013) SPSS macro PROCESS (Model 4) with bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval (CI) based on 10,000 bootstrap samples was used to examine the hypothesized mediating model. Family support was treated as a predictor, perceived filial piety as a mediator, and life satisfaction as the outcome variable. The indirect effect is considered statistically significant when the CI does not contain zero (Hayes, 2017). For this mediation analysis, age and gender were controlled.

The effect of family support on life satisfaction was mediated via perceived filial piety. Family support was found to have a significant relationship with perceived filial piety ($B = .77$, $SE = .09$, $p < 0.001$). Perceived filial piety is also significantly associated with life satisfaction ($B = .53$, $SE = .09$, $p < 0.001$).

On the other hand, after controlling the effect of perceived filial piety, the direct effect of family support on life satisfaction continues to exist ($B = .30$, $SE = .12$, $p < 0.001$). The direct effect of family support on life satisfaction through perceived filial piety was

found to be significant ($B = .71$, $SE = .11$, $p < 0.001$). The indirect effect of family support on life satisfaction via perceived filial piety was significant ($B = .41$, $SE = .08$, $p < 0.001$).

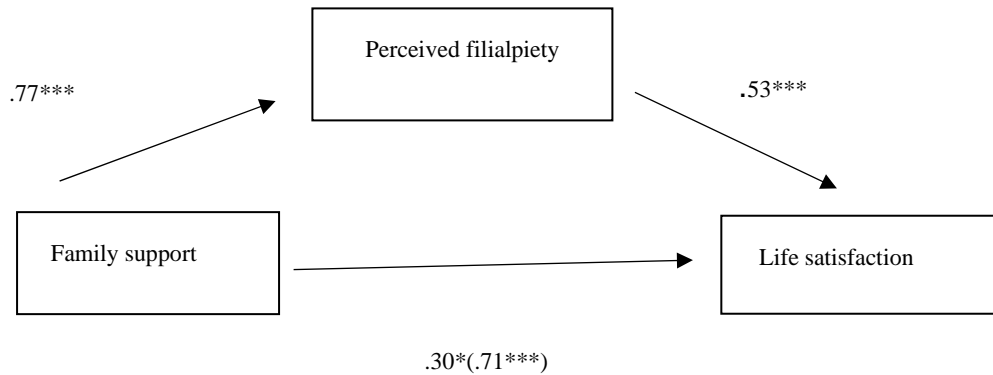


Figure 1 Mediation model showing the effects of family support and perceived filial piety on life satisfaction. $N = 154$.

The values shown are unstandardized coefficients. The total effect of family support is shown in parentheses. *** $p < .001$

■ 4.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study investigated the relationship between family support and the elderly life satisfaction. To further understand how perceived social support from a family is associated with life satisfaction, we took perceived filial piety as the mediator.

Our study revealed that family support was positively related to the life satisfaction of old aged people. This study provides empirical support that support from family is vital whereby it increases the satisfaction towards the life of the elderly. The mediation analysis further proved that perceived filial piety mediated the linkage between perceived family support and the life satisfaction of the elderly, with age and gender being the controlled variables. Below, we elaborate on more possible explanations for the results.

Hypothesis 1, which assumed that the elderly perceived higher social support from family would be more satisfied with their life, was supported. This finding is consistent with our expectations and also similar to past studies. Family has been a pillar of strength for every individual especially when they aged. The support from family can be in simple interactions such as eating meals together could impact the quality of life of the elderly (Huang & Fu, 2021). Support/efficacy theory further indicates that family relations affect overall health status and also the satisfaction of life because relationships instil a sense of self-worth (Wang et al., 2020).

Hypothesis 2, assumes perceived filial piety mediates the relationship between family support and life satisfaction. The hypothesis was supported. The present study sheds light on the underlying mechanism of the relationship between the perceived social support from family and the life satisfaction of the elderly. The results support the notion that perceived filial piety plays a mediating role in family support and the elderly life satisfaction link.

Conclusion

The present study validates that both family support and filial piety help improve the life satisfaction of aged people. In other words, this study shows the importance of family and cultural factors. Specifically, the results not only offer empirical evidence of the beneficial effect of social support from family on the elderly life satisfaction but also provide insights into the core processes of the association. In particular, the findings highlight the necessity of continuously disseminating and cultivating filial piety value for a healthier family and ageing process.

Ethics statement

All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the Scientific and Ethical Review Committee of Universiti Sains Malaysia and Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia. Consents were obtained from all participants included in the study.

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