

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND ITS EFFECTS ON SATISFACTION OF PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP

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ABSTRACT

Families and parenting have long been a research concern over the decades. However, little research has been conducted on the pattern(s) of parental involvement in the Malaysian context. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the effects of Malaysian young adults' perceived parental involvement on the satisfaction of parent-child relationship. A questionnaire survey with Father Involvement Scale, Mother Involvement Scale, and Satisfaction of Parent-Child Relationship Scale was carried out on 100 male and 100 female local university and college students aged 18 to 25 years old. The findings show that father expressive and mentoring/advising involvement, and mother expressive involvement predict a better parent-child relationship. Overall, this study gives us a better understanding of the dimensions of Malaysians' parental involvement that promotes better parent-child relationships.

Key words: parental involvement, satisfaction of parent-child relationship, father, mother.

INTRODUCTION

Families and parenting have long been a research concern over the decades. Nevertheless, only in recent years have cross-cultural studies of parent-child socialisation been investigated to understand the diversity of roles that fathers and mothers assume in the family (Benetti & Roopnarine, 2006; Finley, Mira & Schwartz, 2008; Hossain, Roopnarine, Rosnah, Shazia & Sombuling, 2007). This research area gained momentum particularly after the social revolution during the 1960s and the 1970s. The broad social changes appear to affect and restructure the family forms and parental involvement. Although much research has been done in the parenting area, very few studies in Malaysia have been conducted to investigate the differential involvement of the father and the mother to a child's development. Therefore, this study aims to study the effects of different dimensions of parental involvement on the satisfaction of parent-child relationship.

Definitions and Theories: Parental Involvement

Over the years, many researchers have defined parental involvement differently based on the purpose of each study (e.g., Lamb, Pleck, Charnov & Levine, 1987; Mo & Singh, 2008; Singh et al., 1995). Singh and colleagues (1995) noted that parental involvement has been considered a multidimensional construct with multiple domains. A widely used model by Lamb and colleagues (1987) conceptualised three typologies of involvement: (1) interaction – a one-to-one interaction with the child including feeding, playing and reading; (2) accessibility – availability to the child, even if not directly involved; and (3) responsibility – assuming responsibility for child care and welfare.

During the 1950s, Parsons and Bales (1955) proposed that parental involvement could be divided according to the parent's gender: fathers assumed instrumental roles while mothers assumed expressive roles. Expressive roles include functions such as care-giving, sharing leisure activities and companionship whereas instrumental roles consist of functions such as disciplining children and providing income. This division is supported by a dominant theory of sociology called structure-functionalism (Parsons, 1951). The theory of structure-functionalism suggested that individuals in society have separate and distinct roles and the responsibility to complete these roles is necessary for survival. When this concept is applied in the family, fathers and mothers are expected to function differently in order to maintain harmony in the family system. Recently, Finley and Schwartz (2004) found a similar differentiation of parental involvement and have further expanded the two components (the expressive and instrumental involvements) into three: expressive, instrumental, mentoring/advising involvements. Young adults' perceptions of parental involvement have been found to fit these distinctions (Finley et al., 2008).

Drawing on previous works (Parson & Bales, 1955; Finley et al., 2008; Finley & Schwartz, 2004), this study defines parental involvement as the parents' interaction and engagement in a child's life, which promotes some aspects of development. This involvement encompasses three dimensions: (1) expressive involvement – leisure, fun, and play, companionship, sharing activities/interests, care-giving, and promoting emotional, social, physical, and spiritual development; (2) instrumental involvement – developing responsibility and independence, encouraging ethical/moral and career development, providing income, discipline, being protective, and concern about school or homework; (3) mentoring/advising involvement – developing competence, mentoring/teaching, advising, and intellectual development.

Definitions: Satisfaction of Parent-Child Relationship and Related Theory

Weiss's (1974) theory of social provisions provides a promising conceptual framework of interpersonal relationship (including parent-child relationship). He theorised that people generally look for specific types of social support or social provisions in their relationship with others. He suggested six basic provisions of this relationship: (a) attachment, (b) reliable alliance, (c) enhancement of worth, (d) social integration, (e) guidance, and (f) opportunity for nurturance. He further hypothesised that these provisions are obtained differently in different relationships. For example, a reliable alliance is most often provided by family members whereas friendships offer provisions associated with a community of interests such as social integration.

As one of the important interpersonal relationships in a person's life, the parent-child relationship is commonly described as the socialisation between a parent and child (Sears, 1951). Maccoby (1992) further illustrates "socialisation" as a mutual, reciprocal, relationship-based enterprise between the parent and the child. Other researchers, on the other hand, characterise the parent-child relationship based on the level of positive affect, involvement, communication, identification, anger and resentment (Fine, Moreland & Schwebel, 1983). Additionally, a recent study by Mo and Singh (2008) measured the parent-child relationship by using a composite of five items: (1) parents care about you; (2) family understands you; (3) want to leave home; (4) have fun together and; (5) family pays attention to you.

It appears that previous parenting studies (e.g., Fine et al., 1983; Mo & Singh, 2008) were mostly measuring behaviours that contribute to a positive parent-child relationship. This study, however, intends to measure the "perceived satisfaction" of a parent-child relationship. Furman and Buhrmester (1985) proposed that satisfaction of a relationship provides indexes of the overall nature of the relationships. They also suggested that this perceived satisfaction is important as it may affect subsequent interactions as well as the attitude towards a person. Based on their 1985 study, satisfaction of a relationship is measured according to the overall level of satisfaction, happiness and goodness of the relationship with another person. Therefore, in accordance to Furman and Buhrmester's (1985) measures, this study defines satisfaction of a parent-child relationship as the child's perception of the level of satisfaction, happiness and goodness in terms of the relationship with both his/her parents.

Research Evidence: The Effect of Parental Involvement on Satisfaction of a Parent-Child Relationship

An extensive body of research has provided evidence that a positive parental involvement has some predictive validity for positive child outcomes, for instance, greater mental health as adults (Wenk, Hardesty, Morgan & Blair, 1994), more positive school attitudes in adolescence (Flouri, Buchanan & Bream, 2002), fewer behavioural problems in later childhood (Aldous & Mulligan, 2002), and better educational outcomes (Flouri & Buchanan, 2004). Other studies also found that a higher level of parental involvement was more prone to have securely attached infants (Cox, Owen, Henderson & Margand, 1992), and children who were perceived as being more secure (Caldera, 2004). Furthermore, there is also a link between parent-child relationships and a child's positive outcomes. In a recent study by Hakvoort, Bos, Balen and Hermanns (2010) on a survey of 88 children from 8 to 12 years old from intact families, revealed that the father-child relationship has a significant effect on a child's psycho-social adjustment. The father-child acceptance significantly predicts a child's self-esteem while the father-child conflict also plays a significant role in predicting a child's problematic behaviour. When the children reported higher levels of acceptance and affection with their fathers, a higher level of general self-esteem was reported whereas children who reported higher levels of conflict with their fathers also reported higher levels of problematic behaviour.

In addition, previous research also found that when there were fewer conflicts and much affection in the parent-child relationship, the children showed high levels of self-esteem (Amato & Afifi, 2006; Wilkinson, 2004), low levels of psychological distress (Fishman &

Meyers, 2000), and prosocial behaviour (Schneider, Atkinson, & Tardif, 2001; Sturgess, Dunn, & Davies, 2001). When the quality of the parent-child relationship was characterised by less warmth and much conflict, the children were less satisfied with their lives when they became adults (Nickerson & Nagle, 2004) and showed more externalising problematic behaviour (Sturgess et al., 2001).

Results from existing studies suggested that parental involvements and parent-child relationships may be tied to a broad range of positive child outcomes (e.g., Aldous & Mulligan, 2002; Caldera, 2004; Cox et al., 1992; Fishman & Meyers, 2000; Flouri & Buchanan, 2004; Flouri, Buchanan & Bream, 2002; Hakvoort et al., 2010; Schneider et al., 2001; Sturgess et al., 2001; Wenk et al., 1994).

However, many of these studies do not specifically indicate what aspect of parental involvement is seen to be most important in affecting a parent-child relationship. Therefore, this study attempts to examine the contributions of perceived parental involvement which are satisfying in a parent-child relationship. Such work is necessary in order to understand what dimensions of involvement children perceive as important for a better parent-child relationship.

Based on the structural division of parental involvement suggested by Parsons and Bales (1955), in which mothers assume expressive roles while fathers assume instrumental roles, the present study predicts that children may perceive this trend to be important for a satisfying parent-child relationship due to social expectations. Eshleman and Bulcroft (2006) point out that social roles such as parental roles are often reinforced by social norms. Therefore, children may perceive that the involvement of their parents should live up to the expectations of society, which then would be considered as adequate. A study by Bouchard and colleagues (2007) also found that the fathers who rated themselves as fairly satisfied and competent in their parental involvement have reported to be most frequently involved in the disciplining of their children and least frequently involved in traditionally feminine tasks such as helping with house chores. Hence it is also of interest in this study to examine whether the fathers' self-perception of their competency and satisfaction in their involvement is similar to those of their children's perception. It is hypothesised that, as compared to the father's expressive and mentoring/advising involvement, the father's instrumental involvement predicts a higher level of satisfaction in a father-child relationship.

Another cross cultural research on adolescents' perception of mothers' parenting strengths and needs revealed that despite the differential attribution of the three racial groups (i.e. White, Black and Hispanic), the findings implied that the mothers are rated favourably when they are more involved in expressive involvement (e.g., leisure, fun, and play, companionship, sharing activities/interests, care-giving, and promoting emotional, social, physical, and spiritual development). For example, these adolescents reflected a feeling of satisfaction when their mothers like being with them (companionship), are honest in expressing feelings to them, teach them to care about others' feelings (emotional development), are religious by setting good examples (spiritual development), and are satisfied with the way they make friends (social development). This study hence predicts that the mother's expressive involvement may contribute to a higher level of a child's perceived satisfaction in a mother-child relationship.

Purpose of the Present Study

The majority of the existing studies of parental involvement focused on Western subjects; far less research exist on the Asian context. Therefore, this study attempts to shed light on the dimensions of parental involvement that is viewed to be important in the Asian context to better understand the expectations of a child in a parental relationship.

Use of Retrospective Reports

The core conceptualisation of this study is parental involvement and satisfaction of parent-child relationship based on the perception of the children, particularly young adults. It is believed that rather than the parents' reported actual behaviour or the quantity of time spent with the child, the long-term impact that parents have on the child is a function of the child's long-term perceptions of parental behaviour (Finley et al., 2008). Studies from Rohner and his colleagues (Khaleque & Rohner, 2002; Rohner & Britner, 2002; Rohner, Chaille & Rohner, 1980; Rohner & Veneziano, 2001) revealed that children's retrospective perception of paternal acceptance-rejection is uniquely associated with their psychological and behavioural adjustments.

Young adults are chosen as respondents in this study for the reason that they are no longer constrained by their parents' or the court's legal control, thus they may be free to speak their mind compared to children or young adolescents (Finley & Schwartz, 2007). Additionally, they are cognitively more mature and are more subjective in giving their views or judgment (Perry, 1999). This study foresees that the retrospective approach enables the young adults to report a "totality" of the parents' involvement during their childhood and adolescence development.

Hypotheses

Specifically, this study tested two hypotheses: (1) the father's instrumental involvement (as compared to expressive involvement and mentoring/advising involvement) predicts a higher level of satisfaction in a father-child relationship; and (2) the mother's expressive involvement (as compared to instrumental involvement and mentoring/advising involvement) predicts a higher level of satisfaction in a mother-child relationship.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A single survey was conducted to obtain the data for this study. Voluntary participants of 18 to 25 years old were approached via convenient sampling. The independent variable consists of the perceived parental involvement (fathers and mothers) while the dependent variable was the satisfaction of parent-child relationship.

Participants

The participants consisted of 100 male and 100 female students from public universities (i.e., Universiti Sains Malaysia, Universiti Malaya, and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia) and a private university college (Sunway University College) in Malaysia. The students were aged between 18 and 25 years old ($M = 21.07$, $SD = 1.75$). There were 22 Malays (11.0%), 162 Chinese (81.0%), and 16 Indians (8.0%). In terms of religion, there were 22 Muslims (11.0%), 33 Christians (16.5%), 120 Buddhists (60.0%), 11 Hindus (5.5%) and 14 participants (7.0%) who had other religions (see Table 1). All of the 200 participants (100%) were from intact families and reported as single. The rationale for recruiting only participants from intact families is that Parsons and Bales (1955) once stated: In a “normal” nuclear family with a complement of father, mother and their immediate children, the father will play the role of the instrumental leader, and the mother will be the expressive leader.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Participants in the Study

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Race		
Malay	22	11.0
Chinese	162	81.0
Indian	16	8.0
Religion		
Muslim	22	11.0
Christian	33	16.5
Buddhist	120	60.0
Hindu	11	5.5
Others	14	7.0
Marital Status		
Single	200	100.0
Family Status		
Intact	200	100.0

Procedure

A brief explanation of the study was given to the participants and written consents were obtained. Participants were given approximately 15 minutes to complete the questionnaires. Participants were also allowed to withdraw from the study at any point of time without prejudice.

The questionnaire consisted of three sections. Section One had eight demographic questions designed to elicit information about the subject’s age, gender, race, religion, current educational status, marital status, family status, and parents’ working status. Section Two comprised the Father Involvement Scale and the Satisfaction of Father-Child Relationship Scale whereas Section Three consisted of the Mother Involvement Scale and the Satisfaction of Mother-Child Relationship Scale.

Measurements

Reported Father and Mother Involvement.

Young adults' reports of father and mother involvement were measured using the Father Involvement Scale (Finley & Schwartz, 2004) and Mother Involvement Scale (Finley et al., 2008). These two scales consisted of similar content except for the terms "father" and "mother" stated accordingly. The scales consisted of 20 domains of parenting (e.g. intellectual development, providing income, care-giving, discipline etc.) which were selected from the review and critique by Hawkins and Palkovitz (1999). These domains can be categorised into three subscales: (1) expressive involvement – care-giving, companionship, sharing activities, emotional development, social development, spiritual development, physical development, and leisure, play and fun (i.e. domains 2, 3, 5, 6, 11, 13, 15, 20); (2) instrumental involvement – discipline, being protective, providing income, school/homework, ethical/moral development, developing responsibility, career development, and developing independence (i.e. domains 4, 7, 8, 9, 12, 16, 18, 19); and (3) mentoring/advising involvement – intellectual development, developing competence, mentoring/teaching, and giving advice (i.e. domains 1, 10, 14, 17). A sample item from this scale reads, "_____ developing competence", for which the participants were required to provide a reported involvement rating in the left-hand column. The prompt for reported involvement reads, "How involved was your mother/father in the following areas of your life and development?"

These scales had excellent internal consistencies (Finley et al., 2008). For the reported father involvement, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were .91 for expressive involvement, .90 for instrumental involvement, and .88 for mentoring/advising involvement (Finley et al., 2008). For the reported mother involvement, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were .86 for expressive involvement, .80 for instrumental involvement, .82 for mentoring/advising involvement (Finley et al., 2008).

Satisfaction of Parent-child Relationship.

The scale for reported satisfaction of parent-child relationship was taken from The Network of Relationship Inventory (NRI) (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985). This inventory consists of 30 questions which assess 10 relationship qualities (e.g. affection, intimacy, conflict etc.) for individuals who have close relationship with the respondents (e.g. mother, father, and siblings). These 10 relationship qualities consist of three questions each. Satisfaction of relationship, which is one of the relationship qualities, is used to measure the perceived level of satisfaction of father- and mother-child relationship in this study. A sample item of this scale is, "How happy are you with the way things are between you and this person?" Ratings are done on standard five-point Likert scales. The anchor points are the same on all scales, ranging from 1 (*little or none*) to 5 (*the most*). A high score indicates a higher level of satisfaction of parent-child relationship. Responses to the three items assessing each relationship quality were summed for each relationship. Psychometric analyses have reported good internal consistencies on these scales, with a Cronbach's alpha of .80 (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985).

RESULTS

Linear Regression between Reported Parental Involvement and the Satisfaction of Parent-Child Relationship

To analyse which of the three dimensions of perceived parental involvement predicts the satisfaction of parent-child relationship, multiple linear regression analyses were conducted. The dependent variable was the satisfaction of parent-child relationship and the independent variables were the three dimensions of parental involvement (i.e., expressive, instrumental, and mentoring/advising).

When it came to the father's involvement in the father-child relationship, all three dimensions of perceived father involvement together significantly accounted for 38% of the variance in predicting the satisfaction of father-child relationship, $F(3, 196) = 39.79, p < .01$ (see Table 2). Specifically, the father expressive involvement and mentoring/advising involvement showed the strongest relationship with the satisfaction of a father-child relationship. This indicates that the more fathers were involved in expressive and mentoring/advising involvement, the greater level of satisfaction of a father-child relationship was reported.

Table 2. A Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Dimensions of Reported Father Involvement in Predicting Satisfaction of Father-Child Relationship (N = 200)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Father Expressive Involvement	.53	.12	.36**
Father Instrumental Involvement	.14	.13	.10
Father Mentoring/Advising Involvement	.26	.12	.21*

Note. $R^2 = .38$ ($p < .01$)

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

To further delineate the aspects of the father's expressive and mentoring/advising involvement in predicting the satisfaction of the father-child relationship, another multiple linear regression was conducted. For the father expressive involvement, the dependent variable was the satisfaction of a father-child relationship whereas the independent variables were the eight aspects of the father's expressive involvement. The results indicate that all eight aspects of a father expressive involvement accounted for 41% of the variance in predicting the satisfaction of a father-child relationship, $F(8, 191) = 16.70, p < .01$ (see Table 3). Specifically, the aspects of emotional development, care-giving, and companionship showed the strongest relationship with the satisfaction of a father-child relationship. This indicates that the more fathers were involved in the aspects of emotional development, care-giving, and companionship, the greater level of satisfaction of a father-child relationship was reported.

Table 3. A Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Aspects of Reported Father Expressive Involvement in Predicting Satisfaction of Father-Child Relationship (N = 200)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Emotional development	.18	.07	.18**
Social development	-.04	.06	-.04
Spiritual development	.02	.05	.03
Physical development	.07	.06	.07
Leisure, fun, play	.04	.06	.04
Sharing activities/interest	.06	.07	.07
Care-giving	.29	.07	.31**
Companionship	.22	.07	.23**

Note. $R^2 = .41$ ($p < .01$)

** $p < .01$.

For father mentoring/advising involvement, the dependent variable was the satisfaction of father-child relationship whereas the independent variables were the four aspects of father mentoring/advising involvement. The results indicated that all four aspects of father mentoring/advising involvement accounted for 37% of the variance in predicting the satisfaction of father-child relationship, $F(4, 195) = 28.22$, $p < .01$ (see Table 4). Specifically, the aspects of intellectual development, and mentoring/teaching showed the strongest relationship with the satisfaction of father-child relationship. This indicates that the more fathers were involved in the aspects of intellectual development, and mentoring/teaching, the greater level of satisfaction of a father-child relationship was reported.

Table 4. A Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Aspects of Reported Father Mentoring/Advising Involvement in Predicting Satisfaction of Father-Child Relationship (N = 200)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Intellectual development	.42	.07	5.94**
Developing competence	-.02	.06	-.37
Mentoring/teaching	.21	.06	3.51**
Advising	.05	.07	.67

Note. $R^2 = .37$ ($p < .01$)

** $p < .01$.

As for the mother's involvement in the mother-child relationship, all three dimensions of perceived mother involvement together significantly accounted for 33% of the variance in predicting the satisfaction of mother-child relationship, $F(3, 196) = 32.81$, $p < .01$ (see Table 5). Specifically, the mother expressive involvement showed the strongest relationship with the satisfaction of the mother-child relationship. This indicates that the more mothers

were engaged in expressive involvement, the greater level of satisfaction of a mother-child relationship was reported.

Table 5. A Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Dimensions of Reported Mother Involvement in Predicting Satisfaction of Mother-Child Relationship (N = 200)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Mother Expressive Involvement	.62	.12	.49**
Mother Instrumental Involvement	.14	.15	.12
Mother Mentoring/Advising Involvement	-.01	.13	-.00

Note. $R^2 = .33$ ($p < .01$)

** $p < .01$.

To further delineate the aspects of mother expressive involvement in predicting the satisfaction of mother-child relationship, another multiple linear regression was conducted. The dependent variable was the satisfaction of mother-child relationship whereas the independent variables were the eight aspects of mother expressive involvement. The results show that all eight aspects of mother expressive involvement accounted for 36% of the variance in predicting the satisfaction of mother-child relationship, $F(8, 191) = 13.60$, $p < .01$ (see Table 6). Specifically, the aspects of companionship and sharing activities or interests showed the strongest relationship with the satisfaction of mother-child relationship. This indicates that the more mothers were involved in companionship and sharing activities or interests, the greater level of satisfaction of a mother-child relationship was reported.

Table 6. A Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Aspects of Reported Mother Expressive Involvement in Predicting Satisfaction of Mother-Child Relationship (N = 200)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Emotional development	.07	.07	.08
Social development	-.03	.07	-.04
Spiritual development	.10	.06	.12
Physical development	.10	.06	.12
Leisure, fun, play	.02	.07	.02
Sharing activities/interest	.15	.08	.17*
Caregiving	.06	.08	.05
Companionship	.27	.07	.30**

Note. $R^2 = .36$ ($p < .01$)

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

DISCUSSIONS

The aim of the present study was to assess the effects of different dimensions of parental involvement on satisfaction of a parent-child relationship.

The results show that a father's expressive involvement and mentoring/advising involvement as compared to an instrumental involvement significantly predict greater satisfaction of a father-child relationship. This finding does not support the first hypothesis which predicted that the father's instrumental involvement would have a greater effect on the satisfaction of a father-child relationship. On the contrary, it appears that even though fathers perceive satisfaction in their instrumental involvement, as suggested in Bouchard and colleagues' (2007) study, children do not necessarily see this involvement as an important contributor to a satisfying relationship with their fathers.

The findings indeed reveal that the more fathers engaged in expressive and mentoring or advising involvement, the higher the level of satisfaction of the father-child relationship was reported. Specifically, further analysis on the domains elucidates that when fathers were more concerned about their children's emotions, care-giving, accompanying them, guiding them in intellectual development, and teaching or mentoring them, young adults felt good about the relationship with their fathers.

When it came to the mother's involvement in the mother-child relationship, the results support the second hypothesis and indicate that the mother's expressive involvement as compared to instrumental and mentoring/advising involvement significantly predicts a greater satisfaction of the mother-child relationship. These findings are supported by Beckert and colleagues' (2007) study which reveal that a higher level of satisfaction of the mother-child relationship was perceived when mothers engaged in a more expressive involvement with their children. Particularly, when their mothers shared activities or interests and accompanied them, children felt good and were more satisfied about their relationship with their mothers. These findings are logical seeing that mothers are generally the main care-givers and might have more time for the children; therefore, children would expect them to be more involved in companionship and the sharing of activities.

This study has several strengths. Firstly, the scales that are used in this study – the Father Involvement Scale, the Mother Involvement Scale, and The Network of Relationship Inventory - have high reliability and validity. Secondly, the questionnaire survey with closed-ended questions facilitates not only the process of scoring but also results interpretation. In addition, this study is also one of the few studies that look into the effects of parental involvement in the satisfaction of a parent-child relationship. Therefore, this study provides some base level data for local parenting research and for future comparison. In particular, the use of the retrospective report in this study provides uniquely valuable information regarding the young adults' long-term perception of parental involvement in their lives instead of the parents' report on the level of involvement.

Nevertheless, the findings of the present study should also be considered in the light of several limitations. Firstly, the sample in this study is not representative of the current Malaysian population due to over-representation of Chinese respondents. Secondly, the use of university samples raises generalisability issues and may have screened out young adults from lower educational backgrounds or those with intellectual, social, or emotional challenges. Thirdly, although the use of the retrospective report allows young adults to reflect on their parental involvement from a more "mature" perspective, this method is also

vulnerable to recall biases (Ebner-Premier et al., 2006). Lastly, there may be a possibility that the young adults' reports of their parents' past involvement are affected by their current relationship with their parents. Therefore, these limitations should be kept in mind when interpreting the results.

Accordingly, several suggestions for future research can be made. Firstly, an equal sample size of races should be considered so that the results would be more representative of the Malaysian population. Secondly, future research can also examine whether similar findings would emerge in young adults from other backgrounds (i.e. a lower educational background, social or emotional challenges, low socio-economic status, etc.). Thirdly, a future study may also investigate the behaviour or specific types of activity that contribute to each of the involvement domain. For instance, spiritual involvement may include talk about the meaning of life, weekly religious meeting attendance, shared values and beliefs.

In addition, as this study has set a base level data on perceived parental involvement based on young adults from intact families; it is recommended that future work examine young adults from other family forms (i.e. dual career family, single parent family, and divorced family). Indeed, Schwartz and Finley's (2005) study found that the level of father involvement not only varied by family forms (i.e. intact and divorced families) but is also moderated by ethnicity. Therefore, future research may also consider replicating Schwartz and Finley's (2005) study in the local context given that Malaysia is a multi-racial country. Lastly, examining young adults from divorced families could be an important focus, seeing that the divorce rate in Malaysia is on the rise (Chan & Mohamed Sarif, 2008).

The present study has several important implications for parenting research and programmes. First of all, the findings enhance the existing knowledge of young Malaysian adults' long-term perception of their parents' involvement. Thus, future parenting programmes or workshops can increase parents' awareness of the importance of their involvement in the area of expressive functions (for both parents) and mentoring or advising (for fathers). This could help them to further improve their relationship with their children. Besides, more informative workshops or talks on how to interact with their children in those significant domains (e.g. companionship, emotional development, sharing activities etc.) that predict better parent-child relationship could also be organised to further enhance the involvement that parents have in their children's development.

To conclude, this study summarises that young adults felt good about their relationships with their parents when fathers were more involved in expressive and mentoring/advising functions, and when mothers were more involved in expressive functions. In particular, the level of parental companionship appears to be the key in predicting the satisfaction of a parent-child relationship. Since the present study is one of the few studies that researched on the different dimensions of parental involvement and the effects on satisfaction of a parent-child relationship, more studies are warranted, especially in examining children from different backgrounds.

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