

## REPORT OF RESEARCH RESULT

- 1. Title: The Experiences of Older Parents and Adult Children on Filial Piety: The Case of Singapore**
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- 3. Summary: Include the outline and conclusions of the research**

*Background:* Filial piety (*Xiao*) has long been a central moral principle shaping parent-child relationships and the expectations to care for older parents in the Asian cultures. Previous studies have argued that many Asian cultures including Singapore no longer maintained the traditional family caregiving given the societies modernize with profound changes in demographics, family structure and economic environment. Those societal transformations seem to water out the dominance of traditional values and modify or even undermine the role of family specifically children's obligation of care for parents in the modern societies.

*Aims:* However, little is known about how the socio-cultural contexts shape the contemporary filial piety and eldercare. The current study explored the lived experiences of filial piety from older parents and their adult children in Singapore. In particular, this study focused on the construction of the concept of contemporary filial piety including the interpretation, meanings, motivations, filial expectations, filial practices, filial discrepancies and struggles of practicing filial piety while intersecting with the specific socio-cultural contexts.

*Methodology:* A total of 16 dyads of older parents and adult children (mean age for older parents = 74 years old, adult children = 44 years old) participated the in-depth interviews individually to elicit their lived experiences on filial piety. A dual analysis plan consisting of thematic analysis and dyadic analysis was applied to identify the themes in this study.

*Results:* The results highlighted three salient themes from the lived experiences of older parents and adult children. The first theme is the transformation of the conceptualization of filial piety, which suggests that the contemporary filial piety has new benchmarks and placed reciprocal aspect of filial piety as a priority. The second theme is the attunement to the evolving filial expectations and practices under the sociocultural changes. The third theme is the reconciliation of the filial discrepancy and ambivalence, which reflected both parents and children's struggles, complicated feelings and coping strategies.

*Conclusion:* These findings reveal that the specific sociocultural contexts have reconstructed the concepts of filial piety and placed the priorities of the attributes of filial piety distinctly. The contemporary older parents and adult children no longer upheld the same benchmarks of filial piety and attuned themselves to the new standards so as to adapt the evolving filial expectations, filial practices and filial discrepancies. The findings suggest that future research and eldercare professionals should be more culturally sensitive on the contemporary conceptualization of filial piety, as well as provide the necessary support to the families to better adapt the transformation of filial piety and intergenerational support in the modern society.

#### **4. Aim of Research**

This study aimed to explore the evolving nature of filial piety, interpretation and meanings of contemporary filial piety from the experience of older parents and their adult children within the specific sociocultural contexts in Singapore. In particular, the present study focused on examining the motivations of caring for the older parents in the modern society. This study also examined the evolving expectations and practices on filial piety, and if there are any discrepancies between expectations and reality, as well as its coping strategies of discrepancies.

#### **5. Method of Research & Progression**

An explorative qualitative design with using in-depth interviews was adopted in this study. A purposive sampling was carried out in the restructured hospital to identify a total of 16 dyads of older parents and their adult children for the semi-structured interviews until the data saturation. Each participant was invited to attend one individual interview to elicit their lived experience. Data was transcribed and analyzed in the software of NVivo 12 via the thematic analysis and dyadic interview analysis. Overall, three major age cohorts of older parents were recruited in this study including young-old, middle-old and oldest-old groups. The mean age of older parents was 74 years old, ranging from 60 to 95 years old. Adult children with a mean age of 44 years old, ranging from 21 to 72 years old were also invited for eliciting their experiences.

#### **6. Results of Research**

Overall, this study identified three major themes from the narratives of the older parents and their adult children on their experiences of filial piety. The first theme of “*transforming the conceptualization of filial piety*”, which suggests

that filial piety is fluid and contextualized concept constructed by the specific sociocultural contexts. The core values of filial piety are still endorsed; however, the priority of practicing filial piety has shifted to reciprocal filial obligations. A new benchmark of demonstrating filial piety has been evolved and expanded, for instance, placing emphasis on emotional support and commodification of care. Despite the transformation of the concept, the underlying motivation of filial support is derived from the love, affection and a sense of interconnectedness.

In addition, the second theme of “*attuning to evolving filial expectations and practices*” is identified. In the context of neoliberal society of Singapore, both older parents and their adult children developed different filial expectations and practices ranging from the attitudinal, instrumental, and emotional aspects. For instance, filial expectations were varied from the tangible (i.e. physical care, financial support) to intangible support (i.e. respect, regular chatting, emotional support), and across different age cohorts. Besides, both older parents received, or adult children provided various types of actual filial practices to one’s parents such as spontaneous filial acts (attitudinal), accompanying parents to see doctors (instrumental), or chatting with parents (emotional). Notably, both generations experienced challenges of practicing filial piety in the modern society such as competitive society or high costs of living, etc, which limit the opportunities and resources of practicing filial piety. Consequently, both generations reconstructed the expectations, practices and meanings of filial piety and attuned themselves to the evolving filial expectations and practices to better adapt the modern society.

The third theme of “reconciling of the filial discrepancy and ambivalence” is also observed in this study. The dyadic analysis by integrating both versions of older parents and adult children at the descriptive and interpretative levels uncovered the complexities of the concept of filial piety. Besides the filial expectations and filial practices, a dimension of filial discrepancy should be considered. Both parties might experience a great deal of discrepancies, struggles or ambivalences featured with various feelings, which might further influence their well-being. Notably, the quality of intergenerational relationship could be reflected through the filial accomplishment: whether one’s filial expectations could be fulfilled by actual filial support. In general, the intimate intergenerational relationship could be reflected by sufficient filial accomplishment, which means that filial support received from children highly exceeded parent’s expectation. In contrast, the distant relationship could be reflected by inadequate filial accomplishment, which filial support received/provided from children fell behind parent’s expectation. Despite the filial discrepancies, both generations often acknowledged the sociocultural

changes and challenges of practicing filial piety, and thus reconstructed filial expectations and practices to reconcile the discrepancies.

## **7. Future Areas to Take Note of, and Going Forward**

Overall, the present study provides several implications on the theory, policy and practices. a) Theoretical Knowledge: Theoretically, this study is one of the novel studies to uncover the complexity and the socio-cultural impact on the construction of the concept of filial piety under the highly globalized and neoliberal society in Singapore. It captured the interpretation of the concept, transformations, motivations, meanings, and practices of filial piety in the modern society. In particular, the underlying motivation of providing filial piety and eldercare is derived from the social interconnectedness, love and affection. It also provides insights on the importance of promoting the affective and reciprocal intergenerational relationship in the contemporary society. Methodologically, this study expanded the applicability of dyadic interview analysis into the area of intergeneration support. It serves as an alternative analytic tool to uncover the realities of filial piety among older population (i.e. unspoken disappointment towards children, filial discrepancy).

b) Policy Implications: This study suggests the age-sensitive programs in the community given that different age cohorts might develop different filial expectations and preferred eldercare. For example, the financial literacy programs (i.e. retirement/saving plans) for young-old parents who strive to be financially independent. This study sensitives the professionals on the importance of prioritizing resources and providing proper eldercare intervention for the groups in need, and at the multi-level collaboration.

c) Practice Implications: This study revealed the importance of enhancing eldercare professionals and social work professionals' perspectives and sensitivity on the current filial values and practices. For example, the fluid nature of filial piety (intertwined with one's age, time, place, care needs, etc). Meanwhile, it will be good to formulate more services and programs to support the older adults and families. For instance, counseling service to support those oldest-old parents and caregivers of adult children who may have some potential intergenerational conflicts arise from their wider filial discrepancies towards each other and increasing care needs).

## **8. Means of Official Announcement of Research Results**

The findings of this report is planned to circulate to the Ministry of Health (MOH) and the Agency of Care (AIC), which are the significant

governmental department and statutory board to manage the public healthcare system, develop eldercare policy, and advance the service models to better serve the seniors in Singapore. It is important to share the findings with the MOH and AIC so as to facilitate a better understanding on the current situation of Singapore and revisit the current policy and support in the eldercare and family services at the macro level.

In addition, the manuscripts of this study focusing on the findings of the experiences of filial piety will be proposed to submit to the Journal of Family Relations (Q1) and Journal of Gerontological Social Work (Q2). The findings of the qualitative research skills focusing on the dyadic analysis of integrating the versions of older parents and adult children will be proposed to submit to the Research on Social Work Practice (Q1). Acknowledgments of the MSIWF Grant will be included in the potential academic journals. Once again, my sincere gratitude for the enormous support of the MSIWF Grant and all the committees.