

Received: 01 September 2024

Revision received: 25 October 2024

Accepted: 26 November 2024

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www.jestp.com

DOI 10.12738/jestp.2024.2.010 ♦ June 2024 ♦ 24(2) ♦ 138-147

Article

Emotional Behaviours of Chinese and Malaysian Adolescents Under Different Family Parenting Styles

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of parenting styles on adolescents' emotional behaviour within the framework of systems theory, with a particular focus on Chinese and Malaysian Chinese cultural contexts. The dataset comprises five hundred Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) responses and five hundred EMBU questionnaires, collected from three schools in Hefei, China, and two schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The statistical procedures employed include regression analysis, the Hayes PROCESS macro, and comparative tests, all conducted using SPSS version 22.0. The findings reveal significant disparities in parenting styles between the two countries. Chinese mothers exhibited markedly higher scores on the dimension of doting compared to their Malaysian counterparts. Conversely, Malaysian fathers scored significantly higher on the overprotection scale than Chinese fathers. Additionally, Chinese fathers demonstrated lower levels of attentiveness but higher levels of demand toward their children, in contrast to Malaysian fathers, who exhibited elevated levels of overprotection alongside lower tendencies toward punishment and rejection. The study concludes that there are notable gender-based differences in adolescent behavioural issues between China and Malaysia. In China, boys scored higher than girls, whereas in Malaysia, girls surpassed boys in such scores. Parental emotional warmth and empathy were found to be positively associated with improvements in adolescent behaviour, while negative parenting practices—such as harsh discipline, excessive control, and rejection—were linked to the emergence of behavioural problems in adolescents.

Keywords

Juveniles, Emotional Behaviours, Parenting Styles, Adolescents, Family.

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Citation: Bin, W. & Sheibani, S. (2024). Emotional Behaviours of Chinese and Malaysian Adolescents Under Different Family Parenting Styles. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*, 24(2), 138 - 147.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.12738/jestp.2024.2.010>

Introduction

Health-related concerns among adolescents have increasingly emerged as a critical public health issue, exerting a notable influence on national developmental trajectories (Akseer et al., 2020). Adolescents encounter a multifaceted psychological landscape shaped by various factors, including their social milieu, familial relationships, significant interpersonal connections, and pivotal life experiences (Arnett, 2019). Among these influences, the familial context holds particular importance. A supportive family upbringing fosters healthy emotional and behavioural development in adolescents (Smetana, 2017), whereas deficient parenting approaches may precipitate negative consequences, such as psychological trauma (Vafaenejad et al., 2019).

Parental attitudes, behaviours, and strategies exert a considerable impact on the emotional and behavioural well-being of adolescents. In multicultural contexts, parenting styles vary significantly across different nations, necessitating adaptability in parental approaches (Tripon, 2024). The family serves as the cornerstone of individual development, with parents functioning as the primary educators (Zhou & Lu, 2024). Extensive empirical research, both domestically and internationally, underscores the importance of effective parenting in fostering positive character development and enhancing psychological well-being (Gwambe, 2022), whereas inappropriate parenting practices are frequently linked to adverse developmental outcomes (Engdawork et al., 2025). Adolescents' perceptions of their parents' educational styles are indicative of their emotional satisfaction and significantly affect their emotional and behavioural development (Doepke & Zilibotti, 2019). A comprehensive understanding of the relationship between familial upbringing and adolescents' emotional and behavioural challenges, alongside the implementation of targeted interventions, has the potential to substantially promote adolescent well-being (Leijten et al., 2016).

Methods and Materials

Material

The Problem Behaviour Questionnaire

The SDQ, developed by Goodman, was employed in this review. It encompasses four key dimensions: emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, and peer relationship problems, all contributing to the overall difficulty score. A higher score reflects a greater prevalence of social issues among participants. This questionnaire is specifically designed to assess emotional and social difficulties in adolescents.

Parental Parenting Style Questionnaire

The EMBU questionnaire was utilised in this review to assess parental parenting styles. The survey consists of 66 items, applicable to both mothers and fathers. For mothers, the questionnaire measures five dimensions: emotional warmth and understanding, overprotection and excessive interference, denial, discipline, and preference. For fathers, the survey includes six dimensions: warmth, overprotection and excessive interference, denial, discipline, and preference towards children.

Method

Sampling Method and Inclusion Criteria

This review was conducted from May 2023 to June 2024 across three secondary schools in Hefei, Anhui, and two schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Exclusion Criteria: 1) Respondents who declined to provide consent for participation after multiple explanations of the study's purpose. 2) Respondents who could only be contacted through a single method after at least two attempts, and those who could not be reached via multiple methods after at least two interviews. Initially, 687 SDQ questionnaires and 649 corresponding EMBU questionnaires were collected. After excluding incomplete or unsuitable responses, the final sample included 500 SDQ questionnaires and 500 corresponding EMBU surveys.

Data Collection Procedure

The procedure for distributing and collecting questionnaires was as follows: After obtaining consent from the students' parents and explaining the purpose and procedures to the teachers, students, and parents, psychology professionals prepared and numbered each set of questionnaires. Each number was assigned to a specific student.

Students completed the student questionnaire during class time and then took the parent questionnaire home for their parents to complete. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Data Analysis Method

This study utilised multiple questionnaires for both adolescents and their parents to complete. To mitigate typical methodological biases, a single-factor test was conducted on the scales employed in this review. All data analyses were performed using SPSS 22.0, which included difference tests, regression analysis, and the Hayes PROCESS macro program.

Results and Discussion

Results

Sample Characteristics

Adolescent students aged 14-16 were selected from three schools in Hefei, China, and two schools in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Following the acquisition of consent from teachers, parents, and students, 500 SDQ (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire) questionnaires were gathered. The sample consisted of 240 Chinese students (114 boys and 126 girls), of whom 31 were only children and 209 were not only children. Additionally, 260 Malaysian students were included (120 boys and 140 girls), with 34 being only children and 226 not being only children. The Chinese and Malaysian student samples represented 48% and 52% of the total sample, respectively. In total, 500 students participated in the study, with an equal division between Chinese and Malaysian students—240 Chinese students (114 boys and 126 girls) and 260 Malaysian students (120 boys and 140 girls). [Table 1](#) provides detailed information on the sample variables, including gender, only-child status, and family type

Table: *Distribution of Test Samples.*

Country	Characteristic	Number of People	Percentage (%)
China	Gender		
	Boys	114	47.5
	Girls	126	52.5
	Whether Only Child		
	Yes	31	12.9
	No	209	87.1
	Family Type		
	Complete	203	84.6
	Dissociation	37	15.4
	Recombination	0	0
Malaysia	Gender		
	Boys	120	46.2
	Girls	140	53.8
	Whether Only Child		
	Yes	34	13.1
	No	226	86.9
	Family Type		
	Complete	233	89.6
	Dissociation	24	9.2
	Recombination	3	1.2
	Single Parent	0	0

Tests on Differences in Adolescent Problem Behaviours by Country Type and Gender

To examine differences in various dimensions of adolescent problem behaviours across country type, gender, and their interaction, a two-way ANOVA was conducted. Results indicated significant main effects of

country on adolescent behaviour problems ($F(1, 496) = 20.36, p < 0.001$) and over-interfered problems ($F(1, 496) = 90.01, p < 0.01$), but no significant main effect of gender. The interaction between country and gender was significant for behaviour problems ($F(1, 496) = 6.63, p < 0.05$) and over-interfered problems ($F(1, 496) = 10.07, p < 0.01$). There were no significant main effects of country or gender for emotional problems ($F(1, 496) = 2.7, p > 0.05$), hyperactivity problems ($F(1, 496) = 7.66, p > 0.05$), and total difficulty score ($F(1, 496) = 33.8, p > 0.05$). Specifically, in China, boys scored higher than girls on behaviour and over-interfered problems, whereas in Malaysia, girls scored higher than boys on these dimensions. Results obtained from a two-way ANOVA analysis established effects of country of origin on both adolescent behaviour problems and over-interfered problems [Table 2](#). Behaviour and over-interfered problems showed significant variations between gender and country interactions. However, gender alone did not produce significant results in the study. The breakdown of results is provided in [Table 2](#) with complete information about F-values and statistical significance.

Table 2: Analysis of Variance for Two Factors (Country and Gender).

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F Value
Behaviour Problems				
Country	96.35	1	96.35	20.36
Gender	4.34	1	4.34	1.31
Country*Gender Interaction	29.167	1	29.167	6.63
Total	328	500		
Over-Interfered Problems				
Country	38.30	1	38.31	90.01
Gender	4.567	1	4.567	1.08
Country*Gender Interaction	42.813	1	42.813	10.07
Total	8300	500		
Emotional Problems				
Country	2.70	1	2.70	0.536
Gender	3.741	1	0.74	0.147
Country*Gender Interaction	5.039	1	5.09	0.999
Total	8643	500		
Hyperactivity Problems				
Country	7.667	1	7.66	0.227
Gender				
Country*Gender Interaction				
Total	11144	500		
Total Difficulty Score				
Country	33.087	1	33.087	0.570
Gender	61.169	1	61.169	10.054
Country*Gender Interaction	252.214	1	252.214	0.347
Total	28601.594	496		

Test on Contrasts in Nurturing Styles among China and Malaysia by Youngsters' Orientation

To examine differences in parenting styles between China and Malaysia, country was treated as the independent variable, with each aspect of parenting style as the dependent variable. Independent sample t-tests were conducted to assess behavioural differences. The results revealed significant differences between Chinese and Malaysian mothers in their preferential treatment of children ($t = 14.49, p < 0.0001$), with Chinese mothers demonstrating greater favouritism towards their children than Malaysian mothers. Similarly, Chinese and Malaysian fathers differed significantly in their use of harsh punishment ($t = 3.38, p < 0.001$), favouritism towards children ($t = 10.26, p < 0.001$), denial ($t = 6.95, p < 0.001$), and overprotection ($t = 10.26, p < 0.001$). Chinese fathers tended to adopt stricter and more partial approaches compared to their Malaysian counterparts, who exhibited more overprotective behaviours.

In China, significant gender differences were found in mothers' overprotection ($t = -3.19, p < 0.0001$) and favouritism towards children ($t = 2.41, p < 0.05$), indicating that boys received more overprotection, while

girls were favoured more. In Malaysia, similar gender differences were observed in mothers' overprotection ($t = 1.92$, $p < 0.05$), with boys receiving more protection. Regarding fathers, significant gender differences were noted in China for overprotection ($t = 3.23$, $p < 0.05$), and in Malaysia for overprotection ($t = 3.7$, $p < 0.0001$), with both suggesting that boys received more protection. No significant gender differences were found regarding harsh punishment by Chinese fathers, whereas Malaysian fathers were harsher towards boys ($t = 3.38$, $p < 0.0001$). Both Chinese and Malaysian fathers exhibited a preference for boys over girls ($t = 2.43$, $p < 0.05$; $t = 2.5$, $p < 0.05$), and Chinese fathers had significantly higher denial scores for boys compared to girls ($t = -4.67$, $p < 0.0001$), though this difference was not significant in Malaysia. The study revealed substantial parental variations between Chinese and Malaysian mothers and fathers, particularly in their treatment of children, with preferential treatment and protective behaviours being more pronounced towards male children in both countries. Detailed comparisons of the data are presented in Table 3, which highlights the differences in parenting approaches between China and Malaysia.

Table 3: Comparison of Differences in Parenting Styles by Children's Gender ($M \pm SD$).

Factor	Nation	Totality	Boy	Girl	t
Mother					
Overprotection	China	31.3 \pm 6.41	12.23 \pm 6.7	19.42 \pm 6.9	-3.19
	Malaysia	31.95 \pm 7.5	8.68 \pm 2.78	19.38 \pm 3.4	1.92
Preference for Children	China	12.23 \pm 6.7	22 \pm 11.27	19.23 \pm 6.2	2.41
	Malaysia	8.68 \pm 2.78	19.23 \pm 6.2	19.38 \pm 3.4	1.92
Father					
Overprotection	China	10.22 \pm 1.73	10.97 \pm 2.9	9.33 \pm 2.76	3.23
	Malaysia	8.12 \pm 2.77	11.38 \pm 2.6	10.4 \pm 2.04	3.7
Harsh Punishment	China	10.97 \pm 2.9	10.22 \pm 1.73	8.12 \pm 2.77	3.38
	Malaysia	9.33 \pm 2.76	11.38 \pm 2.6	10.4 \pm 2.04	3.7
Preference for Children	China	10.4 \pm 2.04	10.96 \pm 1.6	11.46 \pm 2.9	2.43
	Malaysia	11.38 \pm 2.6	9.9 \pm 2.23	11.3 \pm 2.33	2.5
Denial	China	10.4 \pm 2.04	9.96 \pm 1.37	7.72 \pm 2.64	-4.67
	Malaysia	11.38 \pm 2.6	9.9 \pm 2.23	11.3 \pm 2.33	-4.97
Overprotection	China	11.46 \pm 2.9	10.96 \pm 1.6	11.46 \pm 2.9	1.789
	Malaysia	9.64 \pm 2.47	11.46 \pm 2.9	11.3 \pm 2.33	3.375

Connection Examination of Nurturing Styles and Juvenile Issue Ways of Behaving in China and Malaysia

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to investigate the relationship between parental nurturing styles and adolescent behavioural issues in China and Malaysia. The results revealed significant findings: emotional warmth exhibited a negative correlation with both emotional and behavioural problems in both populations, with China showing a stronger negative correlation ($r = -0.80$) compared to Malaysia ($r = -0.10$). Further details of these correlations can be found in Table 4.

Chinese Sample

Mothers:

- Emotional warmth and parental understanding were significantly negatively correlated with adolescents' psychological and behavioural challenges, including emotional problems ($r = -0.80$, $p < 0.01$), behavioural difficulties ($r = -0.90$, $p < 0.01$), issues of excessive interference ($r = -0.80$, $p < 0.01$), hyperactivity ($r = -0.89$, $p < 0.01$), and overall difficulty scores ($r = -0.92$, $p < 0.01$).
- Harsh punitive practices demonstrated significant negative correlations with adolescents' emotional problems ($r = -0.47$, $p < 0.01$), behavioural difficulties ($r = -0.47$, $p < 0.01$), excessive interference ($r = -0.50$, $p < 0.01$), hyperactivity ($r = -0.51$, $p < 0.01$), and total difficulty scores ($r = -0.53$, $p < 0.01$).
- Excessive parental interference and overprotection exhibited significant positive associations with emotional issues ($r = 0.63$, $p < 0.01$), behavioural problems ($r = 0.71$, $p < 0.01$), over-interference ($r = 0.69$, $p < 0.01$), hyperactivity ($r = 0.66$, $p < 0.01$), and composite difficulty scores ($r = 0.71$, $p < 0.01$).
- Parental denial was significantly positively correlated with emotional challenges in adolescents ($r = 0.30$, $p < 0.01$), behavioural disturbances ($r = 0.38$, $p < 0.01$), excessive interference ($r = 0.34$, $p < 0.01$), hyperactivity

($r = 0.33$, $p < 0.01$), inattention ($r = 0.35$, $p < 0.01$), and overall difficulty scores ($r = 0.35$, $p < 0.01$).

- Parental favouritism or preference for specific children was significantly positively associated with adolescents' emotional difficulties ($r = 0.29$, $p < 0.01$), behavioural issues ($r = 0.40$, $p < 0.01$), peer communication problems ($r = 0.38$, $p < 0.01$), hyperactivity ($r = 0.25$, $p < 0.05$), and cumulative difficulty scores ($r = 0.37$, $p < 0.01$).

Fathers:

- Emotional warmth and parental understanding exhibited significant negative correlations with adolescents' emotional issues ($r = -0.80$, $p < 0.01$), behavioural challenges ($r = -0.90$, $p < 0.01$), excessive interference ($r = -0.80$, $p < 0.01$), hyperactivity ($r = -0.90$, $p < 0.01$), and overall difficulty scores ($r = -0.90$, $p < 0.01$).
- Harsh disciplinary practices were significantly positively associated with adolescents' emotional disturbances ($r = 0.80$, $p < 0.01$), behavioural problems ($r = 0.91$, $p < 0.01$), over-interfered tendencies ($r = 0.84$, $p < 0.01$), hyperactivity ($r = 0.88$, $p < 0.01$), deficits in multifunctional attention ($r = 0.88$, $p < 0.01$), and total difficulty scores ($r = 0.95$, $p < 0.01$).
- Excessive parental interference and protective behaviours were significantly positively correlated with adolescents' emotional difficulties ($r = 0.78$, $p < 0.01$), behavioural concerns ($r = 0.88$, $p < 0.01$), over-interfered issues ($r = 0.85$, $p < 0.01$), hyperactivity ($r = 0.86$, $p < 0.01$), and cumulative difficulty scores ($r = 0.88$, $p < 0.01$).
- Parental denial was significantly positively associated with adolescents' emotional problems ($r = 0.54$, $p < 0.01$), behavioural issues ($r = 0.65$, $p < 0.01$), hyperactivity ($r = 0.64$, $p < 0.01$), excessive interference ($r = 0.63$, $p < 0.01$), and overall difficulty indices ($r = 0.66$, $p < 0.01$).
- Expressed parental preference for particular children showed significant positive correlations with adolescents' emotional concerns ($r = 0.41$, $p < 0.01$), behavioural difficulties ($r = 0.56$, $p < 0.01$), excessive interference ($r = 0.48$, $p < 0.01$), hyperactivity ($r = 0.52$, $p < 0.01$), and total difficulty levels ($r = 0.50$, $p < 0.01$).
- Parental overprotection demonstrated a significant positive association with adolescents' issues of excessive interference ($r = 0.15$, $p < 0.05$).

Malaysian Sample

Mothers:

- Emotional warmth and parental empathy revealed a significant negative association with adolescents' over-interference issues ($r = -0.10$, $p < 0.05$).
- Harsh disciplinary approaches showed significant positive correlations with adolescents' over-interfered behavioural difficulties ($r = 0.20$, $p < 0.01$) and their overall difficulty scores ($r = 0.18$, $p < 0.05$).
- Elevated levels of parental interference and overprotection were significantly positively associated with adolescents' emotional disturbances ($r = 0.18$, $p < 0.01$), behavioural problems ($r = 0.16$, $p < 0.05$), excessive interference ($r = 0.17$, $p < 0.01$), and total difficulty indices ($r = 0.23$, $p < 0.01$).
- Parental rejection was significantly positively correlated with adolescents' emotional challenges ($r = 0.18$, $p < 0.01$), behavioural difficulties ($r = 0.13$, $p < 0.05$), excessive interference ($r = 0.26$, $p < 0.01$), and overall difficulty levels ($r = 0.23$, $p < 0.01$).
- Demonstrated parental preference for specific children was significantly positively associated with adolescents' difficulties in peer communication ($r = 0.22$, $p < 0.01$) and their cumulative difficulty scores ($r = 0.16$, $p < 0.01$).

Fathers:

- Emotional warmth and parental understanding were significantly negatively associated with adolescents' emotional difficulties ($r = -0.80$, $p < 0.01$), behavioural issues ($r = -0.90$, $p < 0.01$), over-interfered concerns ($r = -0.80$, $p < 0.01$), hyperactivity ($r = -0.80$, $p < 0.01$), and overall difficulty scores ($r = -0.90$, $p < 0.01$).
- Harsh punitive approaches exhibited significant positive correlations with adolescents' peer communication challenges ($r = 0.22$, $p < 0.01$) and total difficulty scores ($r = 0.17$, $p < 0.05$).
- Excessive parental interference and protective behaviours were significantly positively linked to adolescents' behavioural difficulties ($r = 0.13$, $p < 0.01$) and cumulative difficulty scores ($r = 0.15$, $p < 0.01$).

- Denial on the part of parents was significantly positively correlated with adolescents' emotional problems ($r = 0.19$, $p < 0.01$), over-interfered behaviours ($r = 0.30$, $p < 0.01$), and total difficulty indices ($r = 0.31$, $p < 0.01$).
- Parental preference for particular children demonstrated significant positive associations with adolescents' emotional challenges ($r = 0.41$, $p < 0.01$), behavioural concerns ($r = 0.56$, $p < 0.01$), excessive interference ($r = 0.48$, $p < 0.01$), hyperactivity ($r = 0.52$, $p < 0.01$), and overall difficulty levels ($r = 0.50$, $p < 0.01$).
- Overprotective parenting was significantly positively related to adolescents' emotional problems ($r = 0.16$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 4: Correlation between Adolescent Problem Behaviours and Parental Parenting Styles.

Parenting Style	Adolescent Behaviour Problems	Peer Communication	Hyperactivity
Mother (China)			
Emotional Warmth	-0.8*	-0.89*	-0.02
Harsh Punishment	-0.47*	-0.51*	0.08
Over-interference	0.63*	0.66*	0.18
Denial	0.30*	0.33*	0.18
Preference	0.29*	0.25	0.06
Mother (Malaysia)			
Emotional Warmth	-0.1*	-0.02	-0.1
Harsh Punishment	0.2*	-	0.18*
Over-Interference	0.18*	0.23*	0.16
Denial	0.18*	0.26*	0.13*
Preference	-	0.22*	-
Father (China)			
Emotional Warmth	-0.8*	-0.8*	0.05
Harsh Punishment	0.8*	0.88*	0.12
Over-Interference	0.78*	0.86*	0.1
Denial	0.54*	0.63*	0.19
Preference	0.41*	0.52*	0.09
Overprotection	-0.75*	0.15	0.16*
Father (Malaysia)			
Emotional Warmth	-0.8*	-0.8*	0.09
Harsh Punishment	0.91*	0.88*	0.04
Over-Interference	0.88*	0.86*	0.13*
Denial	0.65*	0.63*	0.17*
Preference	0.56*	0.52*	0.16
Overprotection	-0.79*	0.02	-0.09

*Significant correlation ($p < 0.05$ or $p < 0.01$)**Relapse Examination of Nurturing Styles and Juvenile Issue Ways of Behaving in China and Malaysia**

To examine the impact of Chinese and Malaysian nurturing styles on adolescent behavioural issues, a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted, with gender and country as control variables in the initial step. Subsequently, the 11 dimensions of paternal and maternal nurturing styles were incorporated into the regression model. The findings reveal that maternal relationship styles significantly influence adolescent problem behaviours. Emotional warmth and harsh punishment were found to have negative effects, while preference, interference, and denial exhibited positive influences on problem behaviours. The model explained 62% of the variance in adolescent problem behaviours. Further details of this analysis can be found in [Table 5](#).

Table 5: Regression Analysis of Adolescent Problem Behaviours and Their Mothers' Parenting Styles.

Model	Predictor	B	β	t	ΔR^2	ΔF
Model 1 (Control Variables)	Nation	-0.426	-0.213	-4	0.003	0.68
	Gender	0.015	0.007	0.26		
	Mother Preference	0.115	0.12	2.74		
	Mother Harsh Punishment	-0.513	-0.513	-8		
Model 2 (Mother Dimensions)	Mother's Emotional Warmth	-0.454	-0.45	-12		
	Mother Interference	0.216	0.216	5.8		
	Mother Denial	0.236	0.236	3.32	0.62	158.02

Interpretation: The regression model indicates that maternal parenting styles significantly predict adolescent problem behaviours. Maternal emotional warmth and harsh punishment negatively predict problem behaviours ($\beta = -0.45$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = -0.513$, $p < 0.001$), while preference, interference, and denial positively predict the total score of problem behaviours ($\beta = 0.115$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.216$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.236$, $p < 0.001$). The model accounts for 62% of the variance in adolescent problem behaviours. The statistics reveal that paternal emotional warmth and overprotection have negative effects on adolescent problem behaviours, whereas excessive interference and punishment lead to positive behavioural outcomes. The examined factors account for 67.3% of the explained variance in adolescent problem behaviours. Further details can be found in Table 6, which presents the regression outputs.

Table 6: Relapse Examination of Juvenile Issue Ways of behaving and Their Dads' Nurturing Styles in China and Malaysia.

Model	Predictor	B	β	t	ΔR^2	ΔF
Model 1 (Control Variables)	Nation	0.082	0.041	1.24	0.004	1.03
	Gender	0.14	0.07	2.65		
Model 2 (Father Dimensions)	Father's Emotional Warmth	-0.17	-0.17	-4		
	Father Excessive Interference	0.469	0.469	8.2		
	Father Denial	0.024	0.024	0.63		
	Father Overprotection	-0.241	-0.241	-7		
	Father Preference	0.058	0.058	1.71		
	Father Harsh Punishment	0.242	0.242	3.8	0.673	169.67

Interpretation: The regression model demonstrates significant predictions of adolescent problem behaviours based on father's parenting styles. Father's emotional warmth and overprotection negatively predict problem behaviours ($\beta = -0.17$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = -0.241$, $p < 0.001$), while excessive interference and harsh punishment positively predict the total score of problem behaviours ($\beta = 0.469$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.242$, $p < 0.001$). The model accounts for 67.3% of the variance in adolescent problem behaviours.

Discussion

Characteristics of Problem Behaviour of Chinese and Malaysian Adolescents

Significant differences in the manifestation of problem behaviours among adolescents in China and Malaysia have been observed, particularly in relation to gender disparities. Chinese boys display considerably higher levels of behavioural issues and challenges with over-interference compared to girls (Yu et al., 2022). Male adolescents tend to face greater difficulties in peer interactions, reflecting pronounced gender differences in peer-related problems (Wright et al., 2023). These distinctions may be attributed to physiological changes during adolescence, where boys typically exhibit more aggression and rebellion (Zughira & Salmanb, 2019). Additionally, cultural expectations for gender roles vary significantly: boys are often encouraged to be assertive and independent, while traditional Chinese norms emphasise male leadership within the family. Such societal expectations can create psychological pressures on boys, potentially contributing to higher rates of problem behaviours compared to girls (Yaffe, 2023).

In contrast, Malaysian adolescents show a different pattern. Malaysian girls exhibit higher levels of behavioural problems and over-interference compared to boys, with these differences reaching statistically significant levels. This finding is consistent with reports from the Malaysian National Joint Teachers' Conference, which highlighted difficulties in disciplining female middle school students due to behavioural issues (Eggum et al., 2022). Malaysian girls may experience greater peer pressure, as they tend to be more sensitive and nurturing during adolescence, factors that contribute to their vulnerability to peer-related and other social problems (Vogel, 2020). Overall, understanding these gender-specific manifestations of problem behaviours is essential for the development of effective intervention strategies tailored to the unique socio-cultural contexts of Chinese and Malaysian adolescents.

The Effect of Parental Nurturing Styles on Young adult Issue Ways of behaving in China and Malaysia

There are significant differences in parental nurturing styles between China and Malaysia. Chinese mothers tend to score significantly higher on measures of adoration towards their children compared to Malaysian mothers. This aligns with research suggesting that excessive parental indulgence may not foster optimal mental health outcomes for children (Naz, 2023). In Chinese families, factors such as fathers' excessive interference, overprotection, and denial are notably higher for boys than for girls. Fathers, often regarded as authoritative figures within Chinese cultural practices, are typically responsible for enforcing discipline and guidance (Xu, 2021). Adolescent boys, in particular, are more prone to social difficulties, prompting fathers to adopt stricter disciplinary measures, including corrective and rejection-based approaches (van Sluijs et al., 2021). Harsh parenting practices, particularly those from fathers, pose a significant risk to adolescent mental health and are strongly associated with problematic behaviours (Peng et al., 2021).

The Influence Mechanism of Family Education Style on Adolescent Problem Behaviours in China and Malaysia

In Malaysia, fathers score significantly higher on the overprotection factor compared to their Chinese counterparts, particularly evident in their treatment of girls. This divergence may stem from Chinese fathers being less nurturing and supportive than mothers, who typically exhibit more attentive behaviours. During adolescence, a period marked by substantial physical and psychological changes, teenagers require increased support and understanding from family members, with less emphasis on punitive measures and more focus on warmth and reassurance (van Sluijs et al., 2021). Such a nurturing environment helps mitigate the occurrence of problem behaviours by fostering a sense of familial warmth and support, which is particularly crucial during the developmental challenges of adolescence.

Conclusion

Significant gender differences in adolescent problem behaviours are observed between China and Malaysia. In China, boys tend to exhibit higher levels of problem behaviours, particularly in over-interference, which is linked to physiological differences during adolescence where boys are generally more aggressive and defiant. Social expectations also influence this, with boys pressured to embody assertiveness and independence, reflecting cultural norms of male leadership in the family. In contrast, Malaysian teenagers show a different pattern, with girls displaying higher levels of behavioural issues than boys. This aligns with studies highlighting challenges in managing female middle school students, who tend to be more sensitive and vulnerable to peer pressure during adolescence. Across both countries, parental warmth and understanding play crucial roles in reducing adolescent behavioural problems. Positive parenting practices improve adolescent outcomes, while negative styles such as harsh discipline, excessive interference, and rejection significantly contribute to the development of problem behaviours.

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