

Parenting Behaviour Amongst Mixed-Marriage Parents in Sarawak

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Abstract

The study determines the parenting behaviour (authoritarian, authoritative and permissive) of mixed-marriage parents (N=185) living in Sarawak. Mothers and fathers who intermarried [Malay-Bumiputra (n=97), Chinese-Bumiputra (n=49) and Bumiputra-Bumiputra (different ethnics, n=39)] were purposively selected and interviewed for the study. Parenting behaviour was assessed using a 21-item scale (Edwards, 2000). Findings show that a larger proportion of the respondents practice authoritarian parenting, followed by the permissive style. Respondents with lower levels of marital quality and family income, and longer marital duration are more likely to employ authoritarian style of parenting. On the other hand, parents who are younger in age and received less social support tended to be more permissive than other parents in the study. Findings may suggest that mixed-marriage parents are more likely to be strict and demanding when interacting with their off-springs. Personal and family factors must be considered when explaining the parenting style of mixed marriage parents.

Introduction

Socializing a child into the world is a major task of every parent. Enacting this primary function is even more strenuous in a mixed marriage or intercultural family, whereby the task is inviting a unique experience for both parents and child. In an intercultural family, parenting demands a delicate balancing act to ensure that the process will benefit all parties involved. Moving from one culture to the other may strain the parent-child relationship since the children are always in the mode of struggling to fit into the new mixed culture (Olson and DeFraine, 2000). Differences in philosophy, values and beliefs often

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lead to misunderstanding in major areas of a child's life such as educational and disciplinary styles, and parent-child relationship (Romano, 2001). Nevertheless, in an intercultural family, parents provide unique and interesting options for the child in exploring the elements of both cultures as well as the blend of those cultures. Raising a child into a monocultural, bicultural or monolingual or bilingual individuals are among basic issues faced by intercultural parents. Jones (1996) noted that differences in culture and religion inculcate distinctive attitudes towards marriage, parenting, the family and also divorce. Living in a bicultural or biracial family tend to regulate married couples behaviour to each other, as parents with their children, as relative with their own parents, with parents of the spouse, as well as with others related to them (Maretzki, 1977).

Literature on intermarriage is scarce particularly in the context of parent-child relationship. In Malaysia, intermarriages can be traced back to the historical evidence when Sultan Mansor Shah of Malacca wedded Princess Hang-Li-Po from China. However, to date, no literature can be found on parenting among intermarriage parents in the country. Considering the urgent needs for such information, the present study aims to explore on the matter. Thus, the central question being addressed in this study is what approach do parents of mixed marriage family use in child rearing? Of special interest to this study is the parenting behavior of mixed marriage parents residing in Sarawak. Being the largest state in Malaysia, Sarawak is an ethnically diversified nation. Besides the three main ethnic groups, namely Iban (30.1%), Chinese (26.7%) and Malay (23.0%), there are also 27 distinct aboriginal ethnic groups in the population (Malaysia Census and Housing Report, 2000). Thus, focusing on Sarawak for such study is quite appropriate.

Although parenting is very much influenced by the developmental phases of a growing child, specific ways of handling the child depend widely on the basis of cultural norms and individual variations (Mann & Waldron, 1977). The cultural dimension of parenting and child nurturing usually raises issue among mixed marriage couples (Mann & Waldron, 1977). In a mixed marriage family, every developmental stage may turn into a potentially stressful situation between the parent and the child. Conflicts may arise when the culturally different parents adhere to various prescriptions on how to shape the child to a certain desired behaviour (Mann & Waldron, 1977). For instance, independency, autonomy, power, skill mastery, values, and peer relations may have different meaning in different cultural context. Parents in mixed marriage families may adopt their own parenting styles due to the influence of their family of origin, spouse's cultural practices or a mixture of both. Parental attitudes and values conflict may also be inconsistent, which could be detrimental to a child's development, specifically with regard to identity formation.

Generally, parenting behaviour can be divided into three broad styles, namely authoritarian, authoritative and permissive (Baumrind, 1965). Authoritarian parents are more parent-centered when dealing with their children. They are considered as strict and controlling parents, thus they value obedience, and expects the child to respect authority and tradition. These parents are also very regimented in their styles and put high emphasis on adult domination. In addition, authoritarian parents tend to evaluate a child's behaviour and attitudes with absolute standard. Chinese parents tend to believe that this type of parenting is an effective way of training and governing a child (Chao, 1994). It is also noted that some cultures such as Latin American, Asian, Middle Eastern and many Europeans adhere to more authoritarian parenting based on patriarchal systems.

On the contrary, authoritative parents emphasize both on high control and positive encouragement of the child's autonomous and independent striving (Baumrind, 1965). This type of parents is also known as democratic parents. The parents may display characteristics such as controlling but flexible, demanding but rational, warm and responsive to child's communication. Authoritative parenting tend to nurture the development of a healthy psychological orientation toward work (Steinberg, Mounts, Lamborn & Dornbush, 1994). Thus, authoritative parenting influences not only how a child behaves in early years but also how a child deals with responsibility, as exhibited in adolescence. However, authoritative parenting is not the norm among various ethnic groups in the world. Most of the parents such as Asian, Hispanics and African American utilized authoritarian style (Greenfield & Suzuki, 1998).

The third style, permissive parenting, is very much child centered, noncontrolling and nondemanding in disciplining children (Baumrind, 1965). Permissive parents tend to accept child's impulses, desires and actions as well as consult with child on family policies. In the permissive family, children are encouraged to participate in the decision making, express opinion and ideas, ask 'why' and at least make an attempt to negotiate with the parents (Ramona, 2001). This type of lenient and permissive parenting behaviour is normally found among American, Anglo, Scandinavian and Polynesian parents.

The present study purports to provide information on the current scenario of parenting behaviour amongst mixed marriage parents living in the state of Sarawak, taking into account the background characteristics of the parents, child and family contexts as well as the family processes variables. In addition, the study aims to determine factors that uniquely determined different parenting behaviour among mixed marriage families. Figure 1 depicts the conceptual framework for the study.

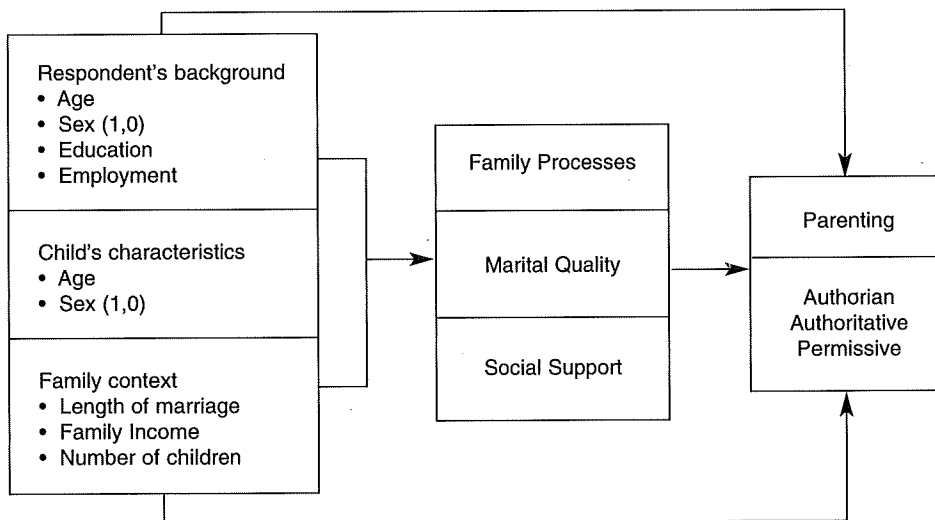


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of “Parenting Behaviour of Mixed Marriage Parents in Sarawak”

Family processes and parenting behavior

Conceivably, individuals in mixed marriage families need special strength and determinations to survive in their unique environment (Wehrly, 1996). Mixed marriages are different in term of context from other types of marriages. Couples who intermarried need to recognize their differences and find their own way of dealing with their uniqueness. Mixed marriage couples need to be tactful in managing their cultural differences, compromise the negative differences and focused on the positives elements in their unique type of marriage (Romano, 2001). Furthermore, the differences in basic values and belief systems will significantly complicate family processes for couple living in a culturally different marriage. To establish a healthy and satisfying family life, the differences need to be dealt with through acceptance, resolution and tolerance but not ignorance (Romano, 2001). Such effort will eventually help in the formation of a functional and well-balanced mixed marriage family.

Two important family process variables which become the focus in this study are marital quality and social support. Previous study revealed that marital quality is predictive of parental well-being as well as the parent-child relationship (Shek, 2000). A more satisfying marital relationship is expected to enhance family and marital adjustment, quality of life and parent-child relationship. Marriage is a social arrangement as well as interpersonal agreement between two individuals (Davidson, 1992). However, the relationship with the family of origin, the extended family, friends and other available social network, has considerable effects on the social development of a couple. The immediate or extended family networking provides emotional and social connection especially in time of need. The unavailability of social support from family members will make mixed marriage couples feel isolated from their family and to some extend their culture of origin (Watts & Henriksen, 1999).

Benson (1981) found that individuals whose spouses are of different cultural background encounter problems in their family relationships either with their family of origin or with their in-laws. Problems which may be encountered include ridicule from family members and friends, difficulty in building effective social networks and bringing up as well as nurturing their offspring. In addition to the interference from external problems, mixed marriage couples may also face problems internally, especially related to cultural, race and ethnic issues. A high commitment to one's own culture of origin may cause them to reluctantly adapt to the lifestyles of the other spouse. Such a situation may create a separate social network for both of the intermarried couples (Benson, 1981), which could lead to ineffective communication and conflict between them. Inevitably, problematic marital relationships may lead the couple to parent ineffectively.

The lack of a caring support group or an effective social networking may intensify the feeling of loneliness and strangeness especially during crisis. Furthermore, mixed marriage couples would have extra difficulties keeping their marriage viable and functional when there is a non-supportive social environment (Davidson, 1992).

The influence of parental, child and family contextual characteristics on parenting behavior

According to Belsky (1984), parenting behaviour is generally determined by multiple factors within a family ecosystem. There are three main contributors in shaping parenting behaviour, namely parent's personal characteristics, sources of stress and support, and characteristics of the child. Belsky suggested that parent's personal attributes are the most important factor in contributing to parenting behaviour, followed by family contextual factors and the child's characteristics. Belsky hypothesized that positive and healthy personality as well as psychological well-being of the parents enable them to provide sensitive and stimulating parental care for their child development. The early experiences that the parents had while growing up may shape their current parenting behaviour. Because an individual spent a major portion of their early lives within a family context, it is significantly important to recognize the influence of one's cultural origin on his or her socialization process. Cultural variations in terms of parenting practices may be alarmingly unique to just that particular culture. The unique experience in any mixed marriage family may imply that issues regarding similarities as well as differences in the parents' cultural influences while growing up may indeed determine the way they parent their own children. A number of local studies also found that parent's personal characteristics such as years of education, self esteem, parenting knowledge have significant contribution to parenting behaviour (Rozumah & Jan, 1998; Rozumah, 1996). These given variables are moderated by personal experiences, beliefs and values one held as a product of the socialization process inborn within each culture.

Family contextual factors such as family income, number of children (Rozumah, 1996) and marital communication (Rozumah & Luster, 1996) stimulate effective parenting. Harmonious relationship of married couples may lead them to parent effectively. In order to achieve such stability, the importance of overall social support (emotional, instrumental and social expectation) for the couples in both their marriage as well as parenting is highly needed. Other elements in the family social context may also influence the family processes. For example, the ethnic origin of both parents may influence the process of values inculcation in the children.

Belsky's model of the determinants of parenting also draw attention to the importance of child's characteristics in effective parenting. Past studies have found inconsistency in the result of the effect of child's age and gender on parenting among parent (Hannan & Luster, 1991; Menaghan & Parcel, 1991; Rozumah, 1996).

Methodology

This paper focuses on findings from N= 185 intermarried respondents from the State of Sarawak which is a subsample of a larger exploratory study on mixed marriage family in Malaysia. The original study involved a total of 659 respondents from Peninsular Malaysia and Sarawak, focusing on various aspects of intercultural marriage such as motivational factors, family adjustments, marital conflict and parenting.

Sample

Sample for the study consists of 185 mix-marriage parents from the Northern, Central and Southern zones of Sarawak. Specifically, the districts selected for the study were Limbang, Lawas, Miri, Bintulu, Kapit, Sibul, Sarikei, Sri Aman and Kuching. The number of respondents involved in the study according to the areas selected is as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Distributions of the respondents

Zone	Division	Mix-marriage parents n (%)
North	Limbang, Lawas, Bintulu, Miri	46 (24.9)
Central	Kapit, Sibul, Sarikei	84 (45.4)
South	Sri Aman, Kuching	55 (29.7)
		185 (100.0)

Purposive sampling technique was utilized to identify the respondents who met the following criterion: 1) Parents (either husband or wife) who have a spouse of different race; 2) Residing in Malaysia and, 3) Have at least one child aged 5 to 18 year-old. The selected respondents were interviewed face-to-face at their convenient time based on a standardized questionnaire.

MEASURES

Social support

Respondents interviewed in the study were asked to identify individuals (number and relationships) who provide them with help and support since the day they decided to intermarry. The average number of individuals indicated by the respondents was used as an index to categorize the level of support received by the respondents. Respondents who scored less than the group mean were rated as having low level of social support, while those higher were reported as receiving high level of social support.

Marital quality

Marital quality was assessed using the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (Shumm, 1986) modified by Rumaya (1997) for respondents from the local context. Respondents were given the choice to rate their perception on 4 items related to their level of satisfaction based on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Extremely dissatisfied to 7 = Extremely satisfied). Possible scores on the scale ranged from 4 to 28. The scale demonstrated a high level of internal consistency with an alpha value of 0.88.

Parenting behaviour

Parenting behaviour among the mixed marriage parents was measured using a scale developed by Edwards (2000). Consistent with Baumrind (1965) parenting styles concept, the 21-item Likert scale comprised three dimensions, which aimed to measure three general parenting behaviours, namely authoritarian (7 items), authoritative (7 items) and permissive (7 items). The authoritarian subscale evaluates the rigidity of parents in controlling and shaping a child's behaviour. The authoritative subscale focused on the responsiveness, nurturant and level of acceptance of child's behaviour among parents. On the other hand, permissive subscale measured degree of responsibility the child has in making their own decision and actions, and parents emphasis on disciplining their children. The responses were based on the score of 1 = Usually yes and 0 = Usually no. Raw score obtained were computed into standard score or Z-score to determine the mixed marriage parents general type of parenting behaviour. The subscale which have the highest accumulated z-score would be the respondents general parenting behaviour. The Z-scores were used to ensure consistency in the mean and standard deviation, which enable comparison of scores from distributions that are different from one-another (Salkind, 1997). Reliability assessment of the parenting behaviour scale yielded an alpha coefficient of 0.66.

The respondents' background characteristics included variables such as parent's age, sex, year of education and employment status. Variables included in the child characteristics are child's age and sex. While the family context dimensions consist of variables such as the length of marriage, family income and number of children.

RESULTS

Background characteristics

As noted, sample for the present study comprised of 185 mixed marriage parents with at least one child aged 5-18, and who are currently living in Sarawak (refer Table 1). A majority (52.4%) of the respondents represent intermarriage between Malay and Bumiputra (MQ), while the rest (26.4%) are between Chinese and Bumiputra (CQ), and Bumiputra and Bumiputra (21.2%) of different ethnicity (QQ). There was almost an equal number of fathers (50.8%) and mothers (49.2%) interviewed for the study. Most (76.2%) of the parents are still actively working in paid employment. Overall, the mean age for the child focused on in the study is 11 years ($sd=3.91$). For the focus child, there are more male (53.3%) children included in the study as compared to female children.

The average family income for the overall sample is RM2,000 per month. Respondents in this sample have been married for an average of 15 years and have a mean household size of 5 people. Among the parents, it is noted that CQ parents have the highest mean age (mean=39, $sd=7.66$), earned the highest family income (mean=RM2,686.47, $sd=RM1,873.41$) and have the longest marital duration (mean=16.81, $sd=7.70$) compared to the other two types of intermarried parents (MQ & QQ). Malays - Bumiputra (MQ) parents were found to have achieved lower levels of education (mean=9.65, $sd=3.94$), earned lesser total income per month (mean=RM1,787.00, $sd=RM1958.95$) and have smaller household size (mean=5.33, $sd=2.24$) compared to CQ and QQ parents.

Table1: Background characteristics

Variables	Total (n=185)		Malay-Bumiputra (n=97)		Chinese-Bumiputra (n=49)		Bumiputra-Bumiputra (different ethnic) (n=39)	
	n (%)	Mean (sd)	N (%)	Mean (sd)	n (%)	Mean (sd)	n (%)	Mean (sd)
Respondents' Background								
Age								
<35	69 (37.3)	38.81	39 (40.2)	38.91	16 (32.7)	39.79	14 (35.9)	38.64
36-45	81 (43.8)	(7.52)	40 (41.2)	(7.68)	23 (46.9)	(7.66)	18 (46.2)	(6.99)
45	35 (18.9)		18 (18.6)		10 (20.4)		7 (17.9)	
Education								
<6	32 (17.3)	10.31	24 (24.7)	9.65	7 (14.3)	10.63	1 (2.6)	11.54
7-12	109 (58.9)	(3.83)	55 (56.7)	(3.94)	28 (57.1)	(4.06)	26 (69.2)	(2.85)
>12	44 (23.8)		18 (18.6)		14 (29.6)		12 (28.2)	
Sex								
Male (1)	94 (50.8)		49 (50.5)		28 (57.1)		17 (43.6)	
Female (0)	91 (49.2)		48 (49.5)		21 (42.9)		22 (56.4)	
Employment status								
Employed (1)	141 (76.2)		69 (71.6)		37 (76.6)		35 (89.5)	
Not employed/ Housewife (0)	44 (23.8)		28 (28.4)		12 (23.4)		4 (10.5)	
Child Characteristics								
Age								
<9	54 (29.2)	11.83	28 (28.9)	11.85	15 (38.5)	10.74	11 (22.4)	12.65
10-14	79 (42.7)	(3.91)	44 (45.3)	(3.79)	15 (38.4)	(3.95)	24 (49.0)	(4.01)
5	52 (28.1)		25 (25.8)		9 (23.1)		14 (28.6)	
Sex								
Male (1)	97 (53.3)		54 (55.2)		22 (56.8)		23 (46.9)	
Female (0)	85 (46.7)		43 (44.8)		17 (43.2)		26 (53.1)	
Family Contexts								
Total income (RM)								
<RM1,000	54 (29.2)	2207.41	42 (43.8)	1787.00	5 (10.2)	2686.47	7 (17.9)	2640.38
RM1001-RM2000	57 (30.8)	(1944.54)	29 (30.2)	(1958.95)	16 (32.7)	(1873.41)	12 (30.8)	(1802.19)
RM2001-RM3000	34 (18.4)		13 (13.5)		15 (30.6)		6 (15.4)	
<RM3000	40 (21.6)		13 (12.5)		13 (26.5)		14 (35.9)	
Length of marriage								
<10	37 (20.0)	15.90	16 (16.5)	16.38	10 (20.4)	16.81	11 (28.2)	13.56
10 -15	61 (33.0)	(7.21)	36 (37.1)	(7.01)	10 (20.4)	(7.70)	15 (38.5)	(6.77)
15	87 (47.0)		45 (46.4)		29 (39.2)		13 (33.3)	
Household size								
<4	53 (28.6)	5.64	23 (23.7)	5.89	17 (34.7)	5.33	13 (33.3)	5.41
5-7	105 (56.8)	(2.27)	56 (57.7)	(2.41)	27 (55.1)	(2.24)	22 (56.4)	(1.89)
>7	27 (14.6)		18 (18.6)		5 (10.2)		4 (10.3)	
Family process								
Marital quality								
Low (4-16)	7 (3.8)	23.60	5 (5.2)	23.30	2 (4.1)	23.88	0 (0.0)	24.00
High (17-28)	178 (96.2)	(3.72)	92 (94.8)	(4.17)	47 (85.9)	(3.31)	39 (100.0)	(2.97)
Social support								
Low	114 (61.6)	2.64	56 (57.7)	2.71	33 (67.3)	2.63	25 (64.1)	2.49
High	71 (38.4)	(2.18)	41 (42.3)	(2.02)	19 (32.7)	(2.24)	14 (35.9)	(2.40)
Parenting								
Authoritarian	73 (39.4)		42 (43.3)		18 (36.7)		13 (33.3)	
Authoritative	50 (27.1)		19 (19.6)		12 (24.5)		19 (48.7)	
Permissive	62 (33.5)		36 (37.1)		19 (38.8)		7 (17.9)	

Note. Sd= standard deviation, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Family processes

Family processes among the mixed marriage parents were assessed using two variables, namely marital quality and social support. Findings from the study showed that almost all (96.2%) of the parents were found to have high level of marital quality. Nevertheless, a large proportion (61.6%) of the parents reported receiving low level of social support from their social network. These findings tend to suggest that the mixed marriage parents in the study experience satisfying and supportive relationships only with their spouses, but not with their social network. Low level of social support is an undesirable element in the ecology of mixed marriage families. The presence of good social support could prevent mixed marriage parents from feeling alienated from their family and culture of origin (Watts & Henriksen, 1999).

Findings on the subsamples showed that Malay-Bumiputra (MQ) couples tend to perceive lower level of marital quality (mean=23.30, sd=4.17) as compared to the other two types of mixed marriage parents (CQ: mean=23.88, mean=3.31; QQ: mean=24.00, sd=2.97). As for social support, Bumiputra-Bumiputra (different ethnic) was found to have lower level of social support (mean=2.49, sd=2.40) compared to Malay-Bumiputra (mean=2.71, sd=2.02) and Chinese-Bumiputra couples (2.63, sd=2.24) .

Parenting behaviour

Results presented in Table 1 show that a large proportion (39.5%) of fathers and mothers in the study practice authoritarian parenting, followed by permissive (33.5%) and authoritative (27.1%) parenting. In other words, mixed marriage fathers and mothers in the study tend to be more rigid in disciplining and educating their children. They normally set regulations for their children and usually make decisions for their children as well as expect their children to conform to their decision.

The study found that a bigger percentage (43.3%) of the Malay-Bumiputra (MQ) couples practiced authoritarian parenting. On the contrary a larger proportion (38.8%) of the Chinese-Bumiputra (CQ) intermarried parents practiced permissive parenting, while the Bumiputra-Bumiputra (QQ) couples from different ethnic groups (48.7%) were found to exhibit authoritative parenting to their children.

Correlations between the independent variables and parenting behaviour

Results from a zero-order correlational analysis indicated that male respondents tend to report higher level of marital quality compared to female respondents ($r=0.15$, $p<.05$) (see table 2). This finding may indicate that fathers in mixed marriage are more satisfied with their marriage, relationship with spouse and expression of affection in the marriage. On the other hand, household size was positively correlated with social support ($r=0.16$, $p<.05$). This means parents who have bigger household size also tend to perceive more social support from their friends, family members and other institutions.

Fathers and mothers who reported practicing authoritarian parenting were found to have bigger household size ($r=0.27$, $p<.05$) compared to other parents in the study. On the other hand, authoritative parenting tend to be practiced more by parents who are not working outside the home ($r=-0.29$, $p<.05$). Permissive parenting tends to be more common among parents who are younger ($r=-0.42$, $p<.001$) and received higher level of social support ($r=-0.36$, $p<.01$) than other parents in the study.

Results of cross tabulation analyses revealed that both marital quality ($c2=11.07$, $p<.01$) and social support ($c2=13.65$, $p<.001$) were significantly associated with the parenting behaviour of the mixed marriage respondents (see Table 2). The results indicate that parents who have less supportive social networks tend to employ permissive parenting style with their children. Those who experienced higher levels of marital quality and social support were found to practice a more conducive parenting, i.e., the authoritarian parenting style. In other words, parenting behaviour practiced by mixed marriage parents depend on the quality of the couples marital relationship and the social support received from their networks.

Table 2: Correlations between background, family process and parenting behaviour

Variables	r				
	Marital quality	Social support	Parenting		
			Authoritarian	Authoritative	Permissive
Respondents background					
Age	0.09	-0.06	-0.05	0.06	-0.42***
Sex (1,0)	0.15*	0.03	-0.18	0.04	0.13
Education	0.12	0.11	0.08	-0.06	0.00
Occupation (1, 0)	0.13	0.04	-0.03	-0.29*	-0.05
Child Characteristics					
Age	0.00	-0.02	-0.05	0.09	0.05
Sex (1,0)	0.04	-0.07	0.16	-0.00	-0.21
Family Contexts					
Length of marriage	0.05	-0.07	0.15	0.03	-0.08
Total monthly income	0.08	0.01	0.08	-0.12	-0.19
Number of household	0.10	0.16*	0.27*	0.03	0.02
Family Process					
Marital quality	-	0.01	0.11	-0.04	0.02
Social support	0.01	--0.04	0.17	-0.36**	
n (%)					
Parenting	Marital quality		Social support		
	Low	High	Low	High	
Authoritarian	7 (100.0)	66 (37.3)	34 (29.8)	39 (54.9)	
Authoritative	0	49 (27.7)	32 (28.1)	18 (25.4)	
Permissive	0	62 (35.0)	48 (42.1)	14 (19.7)	
	$\chi^2=11.07^{**}$ Df (2)		$\chi^2=13.65^{***}$ Df (2)		

Note. * $p<.05$, ** $p<.01$, *** $p<.001$

Predictors of mixed marriage parents' parenting behaviour

Multiple regressions analyses were carried out to examine the relative influence of the respondent's background and family processes on the different parenting behaviours of the mixed marriage parents (see table 3). Stepwise forward selection procedure, was used in the analyses. Results of the analyses showed that only two of the regression models turn out to be significant: Authoritarian parenting model and permissive parenting model.

The overall results show that the authoritarian regression model performance is modest, $F=4.99$, $p<.01$ (see table 3). Stepwise forward selection method indicated that total monthly income is the strongest predictor for authoritarian parents, followed by length of marriage. Findings from the study suggest that parents with lower level of marital quality and family income tend to be more adult-oriented rather than child-centered, value obedience and respect for authority in their parenting behaviour. Together, all the variables accounted for 10% of the variance in the authoritarian parenting scores.

On the other hand, results of stepwise forward selection method revealed that the strongest predictor for permissive parenting is parent's age, followed by length of marriage and social support received by the respondents ($F=9.02$, $p<.001$). These indicate that parents who are younger in age, had longer marital duration and less supportive social networks tend to be more permissive in nurturing their children.

Table 3: Predictors for different types of parenting behaviour

Variables	Parenting, β	
	Authoritarian Stepwise	Permissive Stepwise
Respondents background		
Age	-	-0.54***1
Sex (1,0)	-	-
Education	-	-
Occupation (1, 0)	-	-
Child Characteristics		
Age	-	-
Sex (1,0)	-	-
Family Contexts		
Length of marriage	0.21*2	0.28*2
Total monthly income	-0.24*1	-
Number of household	-	-
Family Process		
Marital quality	-	-
Social support	-	-0.25*3
R²	0.10	0.27
F	4.99**	9.02***

Note. * $p<.05$, ** $p<.01$, *** $p<.001$

Discussion and Conclusion

This study is one of the few that explored aspects of parenting behaviour in the context of mixed marriage. Beside that, the study also examined the family processes (marital quality and social support) as well as its relationship with parenting behaviour among mixed marriage parents. In accordance with the limited data and literature available, this study constitutes an initial effort towards understanding diverse and mixed group of parents and families.

Analyses of the statistical findings suggest that mixed marriage couples experienced low level of social support. On the contrary, marital quality has been rated satisfactory by most of the mixed marriage respondents. Such a phenomenon may be due to the problems and crisis that mixed marriage couples had with their family-of origin or in-law during the beginning stage of their relationship with the spouse of different race, thus creating non-supportive networks and weak bonding between mixed marriage couple and their social networks. As a couple, they however endure a very fruitful relationship.

With the existent of a weak social network between respondent and their family members, respondents put high hopes on their spouse and marital relationship. It is found in the study that although mixed marriage respondents have a less supportive social environment, they are very satisfied with their marital relationship and expression of affection by their spouse. In other words, spouse or marital relationship play an important role as a source of social and emotional support for both the partners in the mixed marriage.

Another interesting finding of the study is that majority of the mixed marriage parents practice authoritarian parenting on their children. This may be because of the different cultural background and dissimilarity on the details of disciplining, guiding and nurturing their children as a whole, had made them more controlling in emphasizing the cultural identity and practices for their offspring. Mixed marriage parents who exhibit authoritarian parenting may aim to make sure that the child would not lose the identity of the original culture and hold on to the values and belief system of both the intermarried parties. Parents with a spouse of different cultural background or race may tend to be more strict and rigid in term of disciplining their children to conform to certain norms and values of the family. Another possible explanation would be that these parents may still uphold the traditional eastern values that promote obedience among children.

The result of the present study also revealed significant association between marital quality and social support with parenting behaviour. Parents who are more authoritarian had reported higher level of satisfaction in their marital relationship. Interestingly, permissive parents tend to have received lower level of social support from their social network. Parents who received less supportive emotional and non-emotional resources tend to adhere to a more lenient and non demanding behaviour towards their children.

Findings from advanced statistical analyses showed that marital quality is more important in promoting authoritarian parenting behaviour among mixed marriage parents. Besides that, family related variables such as length of marriage and total family income also contribute to a more authoritarian parenting behaviour. Findings also suggest that age

and level of social support of the mixed marriage parents are found to be predictive of permissive parenting. Multivariate analyses revealed that the influence of parent's age were more illuminating compared to social support received by the parents in contributing towards permissive parenting.

In conclusion, it can be suggested that personal and family factors must be considered when explaining the parenting style of mixed marriage parents. Consideration on the influence of family processes variables such as marital quality and social support is pertinent when developing parenting programmes for mixed marriage parents.

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