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A Comparative Study of Filial Piety and Life Satisfaction among Ningbo, Zhuhai, and Macau*

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Abstract

Filial piety (FP) and life satisfaction were being studied among Ningbo, Zhuhai (the Mainland China) and Macau region of China. A total of 1252 undergraduate students were recruited from these three cities. FP is significantly different between eastern (Ningbo) and southern (Zhuhai) China, while FP is not significantly different between the Mainland China and Macau. FP is significantly associated with life satisfaction among these regions. Life satisfaction is significantly different between the Mainland and Macau, as well as eastern (Ningbo) and southern (Zhuhai) China. The results have a practical implication that educators can teach filial piety to students and ask them to respect, obey, and take care of their parents. As students show FP to their parents, their life satisfaction will increase.

Keywords: Filial Piety, Life Satisfaction, Comparative Study

Filial piety (FP) is a combination of social attitudes and social behaviors for children with parents, including cognition, emotion, will and behavior (Yang et al., 1989; Yeh and Bedford, 2003). The main practical connotations of Chinese filial piety in the traditional Chinese classics are mainly composed of the following fifteen aspects: Devotion to parents, obedience to parents, admonishment, care parents with courtesy, inheritance, prominently known, affection, entertainment, making parents worry-free, care on the side, foster parents, the love of themselves, fertility of next generation, the ritual of the funeral, doing things with courtesy (Yang et al., 1989).

Whether filial piety will be diminished or weakened with modernization, at present some research conclusions are not consistent. Some studies believe that contemporary filial piety declines (Cheung & Kwan, 2009; Li et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2010); others do not support this conclusion (Huang & Chu, 2012; Yeh et al., 2013). The reasons for the inconsistency may be: (1) the existing researches are carried out in the Chinese mainland and the Hong Kong and Taiwan regions of China, the modernization processes of politics and economy of Hong Kong,

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Taiwan, and the Mainland are differences, which may cause people to have conceptual differences in the degree of the filial piety (Yeh et al., 2013). (2) there are regional differences in Mainland China, which may lead to inconsistencies in research findings. (3) various research methods may lead to different conclusions, for instance, a case study (Liu, 2013), quantitative research (Cheung & Kwan, 2009; Yeh et al., 2013). Based on the evidence of these previous studies, we proposed the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Filial piety will be significantly different between the Mainland China and Macau region of China.

Hypothesis 2: Filial piety will be significantly different between eastern (Ningbo) and southern (Zhuhai) China.

Filial Piety and Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction can be defined as an individual's cognitive evaluation of his or her whole quality of life (Pavot & Diener, 2008). Filial piety is closely related to the formation of life satisfaction. The research found that when children voluntarily respect and support their parents, their happiness will increase; but if children are expected to respect and support their parents, they will greatly reduce their happiness (Lu et al., 2006). In other words, when children inwardly agree with the concept of filial piety, they will have a positive impact on personal life, and hence increase their life satisfaction. This result also reflects the characteristics of filial piety change: from the external social standardization of filial piety to the internalization into individual's filial attitude. Based on the previous findings, we proposed the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Filial piety will be significantly associated with life satisfaction among these regions.

Hypothesis 4a: Life satisfaction will be significantly different between the Mainland and Macau region of China.

Hypothesis 4b: Life satisfaction will be significantly different between eastern (Ningbo) and southern (Zhuhai) China.

Current Study

Although some researchers have studied the comparative study on FP between the Mainland, Taiwan, and Hong Kong (Yeh et al., 2013), few researchers have probed the study on FP between the Mainland and Macau. And to the best of our knowledge, we are the first one to study the relationship between FP and life satisfaction between the Mainland and Macau. Moreover, we are using two cities' data (one in Ningbo, and one in Zhuhai) in the Mainland, to conduct the comparative study with Macau. We would like to probe whether there are any regional differences between the Eastern and Southern China on FP and life satisfaction.

Method

Participants and procedure

Data were collected in several universities; one in Ningbo, one in Zhuhai, two in Macau. Data collected in Ningbo and Zhuhai were using www.wjx.cn, an online data collection site, while data collected in Macau were using paper and pencil format. All the participants are university students. In Ningbo and Zhuhai, teachers distributed the link to their students and asked them to fill it out online, in Macau, teachers distributed 320 questionnaires. From the forms distributed, 300 questionnaires were returned, yielding a 93.8% response rate. Their ages ranged from 18 to 23 ($M=20$, $SD=1.48$). In Ningbo and Zhuhai, there were 354 and 598 college students answered the online survey respectively, their ages ranged from 18 to 23 ($M=20$, $SD=1.35$ for Ningbo and $M=20$, $SD=1.09$ for Zhuhai)

Measures

Filial Piety. We used a 14-items self-developed Filial Piety Scale, based on Yang's practical connotations (1998). Participants rated items on a 5-point scale ranging from 1= Never to 5= Always (e.g., Have you taken care of your parents?) Cronbach's alphas for Filial Piety Scale were .80 for both Mainland and Macau.

Life Satisfaction Scale. We used a 20-items Life Satisfaction Scale, developed by Kern et al. (2015). Participants rated items on a 5-point scale ranging from 1= Never to 5= Always (e.g., I feel happy) Cronbach's alphas for Life Satisfaction Scale were .94 for the Mainland and .90 for Macau.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlation for the two variables are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, Intercorrelations between Study Variables

	Ningbo (<i>N</i> =354)	Zhuhai (<i>N</i> =598)	Macau (<i>N</i> =300)
1. Filial Piety	40.63 (SD=7.59)	47.08 (SD=6.84)	41.52 (SD=7.46)
2. Life Satisfaction	69.44(SD=13.99)	74.29 (SD=12.26)	69.37 (SD=11.01)
Correlations (0.52*)	0.64**	0.44**	0.40**

*three places in total *N*=1252, $p < .01$; ** $p < .01$

Hypotheses Testing

We used independent T-test to test whether filial piety would be significantly different between the Mainland China and Macau, or would be different between Ningbo and Zhuhai. The data analysis has indicated that filial piety is not significantly different between the Mainland and Macau ($F=1.26$, $p > .05$). However, filial piety is significantly different between Ningbo and Zhuhai ($F=6.88$, $p < .01$). Hence, hypothesis 1 was objected, while hypothesis 2 was supported.

We used linear regression to test whether filial piety would be significantly associated with life satisfaction among these regions. Filial piety is significantly associated with life satisfaction among these regions ($F=474.27$, $p < .001$). FP explains 27.5% variance on life satisfaction (corrected $R^2 = 0.274$). Hypothesis 3 was supported.

Again, we used independent T-test to test whether life satisfaction would be significantly different between the Mainland China and Macau, or would be different between Ningbo and Zhuhai. The data analysis has indicated that life satisfaction is significantly different between the Mainland China and Macau ($F=19.33$, $p < .001$). Hypothesis 4a was supported. Moreover, life satisfaction is significantly different between eastern (Ningbo) and southern (Zhuhai) China ($F=9.57$, $p < .01$). Hypothesis 4b was supported.

Discussion

Our findings indicated that the result was inconsistent with the previous findings (Yeh et al., 2013). Filial piety doesn't have any significant differences between the Mainland and Macau region of China. Mostly likely undergraduate students in Macau have a similar perception on filial piety as their counterparts in the Mainland. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first research paper to study filial piety and life satisfaction in eastern and southern China. One thesis studied the filial piety between city's and village's high school students in Henan province (Qi, 2018). Undergraduate students in Zhuhai (southern) gained higher scores in filial piety and life satisfaction than their counterparts in Ningbo (eastern). And there are significant differences between these two regions of China. China is a big country and consists of 56 ethnic groups. They have different cultures, dialects, living and education habits. It is not surprising that their perceptions of filial piety or life satisfaction are different between eastern and southern undergraduate students in China, even though most of them are Han ethnic group.

Besides filial piety or life satisfaction alone, FP is significantly associated with life satisfaction. It has a practical usage in daily life nowadays. As educators, we can teach filial piety to students, explain to them why we need to respect, obey, and take care of our parents. As they respect, obey, and take care of their parents, their level of life satisfaction will be enhanced. Undergraduate students have formed their self and become young adults, and their filial piety has started to form or already formed. If we can start to teach filial piety from kindergarten to college

years, students will have a positive perception on filial piety and feel that this is their responsibilities to respect, obey, and take care of their parents. Hence, their level of life satisfaction will increase. Moreover, undergraduate students have higher filial piety will have higher life satisfaction. Among these three groups, undergraduate students in Zhuhai have highest FP and hence have highest life satisfaction than their counterparts in Ningbo and those in Macau.

Limitations and Future Research Direction

Although the results have new insights addition to previous research, there are some limitations to our research. Firstly, we used Chinese students only in our research, the generalizability of our results to other populations and cultures are limited. In future research, researchers may contact the same study to other populations and cultures. Secondly, we used a survey, which may lead to social desirability bias. Future research may use multiple research methods to reduce social desirability bias.

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