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FILIAL PIETY THROUGH JING SI APHORISMS: PARENTAL INSIGHTS IN TZU CHI DA AI KINDERGARTEN MALAYSIA

Chua Soo Sien^{1*}, Florence Kuek², Ching Thing Ho³

¹ Department of Chinese Studies, Universiti Malaya, Malaysia
Email: s2192075@siswa.um.edu.my

² Department of Chinese Studies, Universiti Malaya, Malaysia
Email: florencekuek@um.edu.my

³ Department of Chinese Studies, Universiti Malaya, Malaysia
Email: cthingho@um.edu.my

* Corresponding Author

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Abstract:

In an era of accelerating modernization, conveying filial traditional familial values among younger generations brings challenges in Malaysia's diverse society. Jing Si Aphorisms' teachings, drawn from Tzu Chi's humanistic education, serve as a culturally embedded moral guide in shaping children's behavior, emphasizing respect, gratitude, and ethical behavior in daily life. This study explores the integration and internalization of Jing Si Aphorisms' teachings on filial piety to young children from parents' perspectives in Tzu Chi Da Ai Kindergarten, Malaysia. Using a qualitative approach, semi-structured interviews and a Nominal Group Technique (NGT) session were conducted to explore the integration of Jing Si Aphorisms teaching and consensus on children's filial attitudes. Eight parents with children aged 5 and 6 were selected through purposive sampling. Interview findings concluded filial piety inculcation through intentional valuesteaching through daily routines, Jing Si Aphorisms methods, home-school collaboration reinforcement, and value-based activities. For NGT results, the concluded themes on Jing Si Aphorism behavioral influence include recital of the Jing Si Aphorism, reflection, empathy, verbal and expression of gratitude, practicing self-living skills, helping with household chores, and abiding by family daily rules of conduct. Notably, findings reveal that consistently integrating Jing Si Aphorisms teaching into daily activities and fostering continuity between home and school moral education cultivates positive filial piety behaviors in children and parent-child relationships. Filial piety behavior, which is most influenced by the teaching of Jing Si Aphorisms, is the verbal expression of gratitude. As such, the findings highlight the significance of culturally contextualized Jing Si Aphorisms in shaping early character development. Therefore, early exposure to value-based approaches in early childhood settings is effectively nurtured through aphorism-based teaching. Similarly, collaborative efforts

between school and home promote holistic moral development effectively. Thus, this study contributes to the discourse on value-based education, providing empirical evidence on how culturally rooted Jing Si Aphorisms values instill moral values in preschool-aged children.

Keywords:

Da Ai Kindergarten, Early Childhood, Filial Piety, Jing Si Aphorism, Nominal Group Technique, Tzu Chi

Introduction

Filial piety (xiao, 孝) is a fundamental value of traditional Asian moral values, especially in Chinese cultural contexts deeply rooted in Confucian philosophy. Confucianism teaches filial piety as cultivating inner respect and gratitude as Ren's virtue, "humanity" or "benevolence". Filial piety involves showing respect and obedience to family members and fulfilling one's duties towards them (Gu, C., & Li, Z., 2023).

However, as Bedford and Yeh (2019) highlight, the traditional norms associated with filial piety can be restrictive, potentially limiting their relevance in diverse sociocultural environments as globalization influences familial expectations. This involves more nuanced aspects of filial piety related to beliefs, values, and affective dimensions that shift across different cultural contexts and developmental stages (Kyeong et al., 2025).

In the Malaysian family system, filial piety is reinforced within the family as a central cultural practice, including obedience and honoring one's parents (Nainee et al., 2016). Tan et al.(2020) found that even amidst modernization, Malaysian Chinese families maintain filial piety through intergenerational transmission in families. However, the comprehension of filial piety is adaptive, characterised by negotiating filial care within family dynamics, influenced by sociocultural contexts such as modernisation and immigration (Cheung et al., 2020).

However, urbanisation in Malaysia correlates with erosion of traditional family values in family structures, transformations in value orientations, prioritising autonomy from collectivism to individualism with lesser cohesion. Filial piety is declining among urban children due to urban environments, modernization, and one-child families. Moreover, parents focus more strongly on academics than emotional connection, which undermines reciprocal filial values. Young children are becoming less attuned to these values, leading to weakened parent-child relationships and diminished moral grounding at home. This transition may undermine conventional family unity, shift parenting approaches, and transform family communication dynamics. These trends underscore the need to comprehend and combat accelerated urbanization's cultural and social implications (Sumari et al., 2020).

As such, educational institutions play a vital role in revitalizing such cultural virtues. Early initiation of effective character development at an early age is crucial for establishing a foundation of superior education, incorporating values such as integrity, empathy, respect, and responsibility (Aslan, 2024). Children's character education at an early age can be established through the instillation of local wisdom values. Essential values to be instilled and internalized in early childhood behavior include respect for God, integrity, discipline, tolerance, peace, self-confidence, autonomy, cooperation, mutual support, respect, courtesy, accountability,

diligence, leadership, justice, creativity, compassion, caring for the environment, and patriotism (Tussubha, 2020).

In Malaysia, a multicultural nation where Chinese, Malay, and Indian communities coexist, while the advancement of filial piety continues to be significant among Chinese families. Preschools, associated with moral institutions such as Tzu Chi Da Ai Kindergarten in Kepong, are instrumental in transmitting these cultural and ethical values through their character education curriculum. Among the approaches used was the integration of Jing Si Aphorisms, short philosophical teachings by Master Cheng Yen, which highlight precise and meaningful sayings that provide profound guidance for children on living with gratitude, compassion, and responsibility, reflecting a moral education grounded in humanistic culture.

Tzu Chi educational philosophy cultivates humanistic values of respect, gratitude, self-discipline and filial piety into early childhood education, nurturing character development through the application of the Jing Si Aphorisms in daily practices, embedding humanistic cultural and ethical values into daily classroom routines and rituals, underscoring character-building curriculum integration and collaboration efforts between school teachers and parents. Tzu Chi's holistic model, combining home-school collaboration and value-based practices, emphasizes the child's immediate environment in shaping the development of students' character building.

Literature Review

Filial piety (孝, xiao) is a fundamental Confucian principle that emphasizes lifelong obligation to parents, respect, gratitude, and obligation towards one's parents, which has traditionally been emphasized in East Asian societies. In Confucian familism, filial piety denotes the subservience of children to their parents, constituting an essential element of self-cultivation and the political structure (Wesołowski, 2022). The concept originates from Confucian teachings and continues to be a cultural practice deeply embedded in and maintained by the Chinese community in Malaysia (Tan et al., 2020).

Filial Piety in Early Childhood Education

In addition to adult-child connections, the developmental expression of filial piety in early childhood can be observed through modest gestures of appreciation, helping behaviours, respect, and emotional attachment to parents, which may be understood as nascent forms of filial conduct. Although young children may not entirely grasp the abstract concept of filial piety, their behaviours can reflect fundamental attitudes that are pivotal for their moral development (Luo & Gauvain, 2011).

Hence, filial values shape the foundation of children's character development. Children's character education at an early age can be established through the instillation of local wisdom values. Essential values to be instilled and internalized in early childhood behavior include respect for God, integrity, discipline, tolerance, peace, self-confidence, autonomy, cooperation, mutual support, respect, courtesy, accountability, diligence, leadership, justice, creativity, compassion, caring for the environment, and patriotism (Tussubha, 2020). Moreover, values teaching in preschools, emphasising care, respect, and discipline, is deemed crucial for equipping children to succeed as responsible individuals in society (Sigurdardottir, 2019) and fosters social skills and life competence (Manzheliy et al., 2023).

Filial Piety Practice in Early Childhood Education

In preschools, family-oriented and filial values are integrated through educational activities including explicit curriculum components, storytelling, drama, and games to teach respect, affection, responsibility, and traditional customs, which are foundational to filial values (Yalcin, 2020; Manzheliy et al., 2023; Vukobrat, 2025). Through educators' role modeling, implicit communication of values in care, respect, and discipline, through daily interactions and their behavior, supports the notion of filial piety (Sigurdardottir et al., 2019; Lin et al., 2025).

Family Values in Early Childhood Education

Filial values play a crucial role in strengthening family commitment, child development and social competence among preschool aged. Utami et al. (2025) and Manzheliy et al. (2023) consistently highlights that the integration of traditional filial piety principles within family dynamics results in increased parental involvement and commitment to the development and well-being of their children. Ultimately, this commitment extends beyond the provision of fundamental care, encompassing the inculcation of strong moral values, encouragement, and emotional support, therefore fostering a more stable and supportive environment for child development.

Parental Involvement in Schools

Parent-school partnerships are vital to reinforce early moral development. Furthermore, family engagement through the collaboration between preschools and families is vital, utilising outreach programme and joint activities to reinforce values both at home and in school, thereby improving the efficacy of value formation (Yalcin et al., 2020; Manzheliy et al., 2023; Bierman et al., 2023). Filial values in preschool are cultivated through deliberate instructional methods and parental engagement. Programmes prioritizing family values and filial piety demonstrated development in children's social skills, emotional health, and life competencies. Hence, the development of these values necessitates cooperation between families and educational institutions, with organised pedagogical conditions and activities (Manzheliy et al., 2023).

Filial Piety in Early Childhood Education Malaysia

In Malaysia, early childhood care and education (ECCE) includes nursery (TASKA) and kindergarten (TADIK or TABIKA) for children aged zero to six years old. National curricula and pedagogical strategies employ a holistic development approach encompassing the primary cognitive, physical, and social-emotional domains, integrating family values into the curriculum framework. This integration is essential, as early life experiences profoundly impact children's social and emotional foundations (Raikes et al., 2023). Thus, ECCE emphasises academic competencies and fundamental family values, consisting of respect, cooperation, and empathy, which are vital for children's holistic growth and societal participation (Buckley et al., 2020).

Despite studies exploring filial piety in East Asian nations, there is a scarcity of research addressing the actual behaviour of preschool-aged children and parental interpretations in filial development. Most research exists on the importance of value inculcation in early childhood; however, there is a lack of studies on how preschool environments contribute to maintaining filial values amid changing family structures. In particular, the integration of Jing Si Aphorisms and parents' perspectives on their children's filial behaviors remains underexplored.

Perspective-Based Filial Piety Scales

Recent research on filial piety assessment explores a perspective-based approach, which employs multidimensional and culturally tailored instruments, analysing expectations and experiences from the children's and parents' viewpoints with a comprehensive understanding of filial piety. Based on Table 1, measurements from a multidimensional perspective recognize behavioural and emotional characteristics, exemplified by the Three-Dimensional Filial Piety Scale and culturally customised instruments for Arab, Latino, and Chinese elderly populations. (Sung, 1995; Shi & Wang, 2019; Fu et al., 2018; Khalaila, 2010). Lum et al. (2016) find that the Contemporary Filial Piety Scale (CFPS) captures both practical and emotional perspectives on filial piety efficiently and psychometrically in reflecting modern Chinese society. Moreover, the Dual Filial Piety Scale (DFPS) widely validates cross-cultural perspectives, such as Polish and Vietnamese, on Authoritarian Filial Piety and Reciprocal Filial Piety to distinguish between obligation-based and relationship-based motivations (Różycka-Tran et al., 2021; Ha et al., 2020). Nevertheless, it is orientated towards quantitative instrumental scales.

Table 1: Comparative Table of Filial Piety Scales

Scales	Dimensions	Aims	Perspectives	Reference
Contemporary Filial Piety Scale (CFPS)	1. Pragmatic Obligations (PO) 2. Compassionate (CR)	Developed 10-item surveys with psychometric, assessing filial piety	Hong Kong youth and adults	Lum, Yan, Ho, & Shum (2016)
Dual Filial Piety Scale (DFPS)	1. Authoritarian Filial Piety 2. Reciprocal Filial Piety	Explores the correlation between filial piety and student attitudes across country, between collectivistic and individualistic culture	Vietnamese and Poland child (cross-cultural)	Różycka et al.(2021); Ha, Le, & Fisher (2020)
Perceived Receipt of Filial Piety Scale (PRFPS)	Perceived receipt of filial piety 1. Social support 2. Life quality	Developed a 10-item questionnaire measuring frequency of parents' perception of a child's filial behavior.	Chinese middle-aged and older adults	Huang & Fiocco (2019)
Filial Piety Representations at Parents' End of Life Scale (FPR-EoL)	Dual Filial Piety 1. Respect and comfort 2. Acceptance of death,	Develop filial piety measurement of adult children whose parents	Adult children of Macao Chinese	Che et al.(2022)

3. Spending final days are in the end-of-life stage.
4. Disclosing bad news.

Research Gaps

Despite an increasing integration of moral education in preschools, empirical studies exploring how young children comprehend, internalize, and practice filial values in childhood settings are scarce, especially from parents' perspectives. Although research on filial piety in older children and adolescents is prevalent, the early developmental stage when moral foundations commence is still lacking. Limited research explores the alignment between school-based moral instruction and parental expectations, in addition to how value-based teachings are effectively integrated into the home setting. In light of these, the efficacy of moral education programs, particularly those prioritizing culturally-rooted virtues involving filial piety, remains inadequately studied from the family's perspective.

Moreover, the incorporation of Jing Si Aphorisms in Malaysian kindergartens and parents' perceptions on the influence of these teachings on their children's character development are seldom explored. Therefore, this study aims to analyze parental insights through Jing Si Aphorism's teaching from Tzu Chi Da Ai Kindergarten to explore how preschool children in Malaysia understand, perceive and practice filial piety. From the lens of parental observations on children exhibiting filial behaviour in a Tzu Chi educational setting, this study contributes to the discourse on moral and character education in early childhood, exploring the influence of Jing Si Aphorisms in shaping children's understanding and enactment of filial values.

Based on Table 1 above, few studies have explored parental perspectives through qualitative research. Hence, using the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) session, interviews, and focus groups with individuals from the target group aids in understanding their emic perspectives on filial piety to enhance a nuanced understanding of filial piety in contemporary, diverse societies. Thus, this study contributes to the gap by combining NGT with thematic interviews to explore parents' views on filial values cultivated and influenced by Jing Si Aphorism teaching in a Malaysian kindergarten.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study aims to explore the cultivation and internalization of filial piety values using the Jing Si Aphorisms from parents' perspectives in Tzu Chi Da Ai Kindergarten, Malaysia.

1. To explore the inculcation of filial piety values using the Jing Si Aphorisms teaching in Tzu Chi Da Ai Kindergarten.
2. To explore how the Jing Si Aphorisms' core values of filial piety influence young children's filial values through parents' perspectives in Tzu Chi Da Ai Kindergarten.
3. To explore and rank parents' views on children's filial behaviors at home

Methodology

Based on the objectives of the study, an integrated qualitative methodology combining semi-structured interviews and the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) is employed to explore parental insights on how Jing Si Aphorism teachings are transmitted, interpreted, and reinforced in Tzu Chi Da Ai Kindergarten and at home. This mixed qualitative approach

explores the diversity of parental experiences and consensus-driven prioritization of key moral behaviors related to filial piety from a breadth and depth perspective. This combination ensures breadth, in ranking filial piety behaviors influenced by Jing Si Aphorism and depth, which is the interpretation of parents to provide practical implications from their children developing filial values through Jing Si Aphorism's influence. The in-depth interview sessions are conducted individually, while the NGT online sessions are completed in groups.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The semi-structured interviews are conducted to elicit parental reflection in depth, enabling cross-verification and triangulation of themes. The interviews thoroughly explore parental reflections, focusing on parents' interpretations of how the teachings of Jing Si Aphorism at Tzu Chi Da Ai Kindergarten influence their children's behavior in cultivating filial piety at home. Semi-structured interview questions focused on their child's behavior on filial piety and gratitude influenced by the Jing Si Aphorism teaching, experiences with the Jing Si Aphorism education, and collaboration with teachers.

The interview employs purposive sampling of eight parents whose children aged 5 to 6 years enrolled in Tzu Chi Da Ai Kindergarten for at least one academic year, with the Jing Si Aphorism teaching curriculum to capture diverse perspectives. Participants from different sociocultural backgrounds were selected to participate in the study. Each parent engaged in a 60-minute semi-structured interview, conducted in person or online, based on availability. Semi-structured physical or online interviews are conducted, depending on parents' availability. Eight parents, comprising four with children aged five in the class and four from the aged six class, also participated in the NGT phase.

Nominal Group Technique (NGT) Session

Nominal Group Technique (NGT) is a methodological process which identifies the shared views of a group on a specific topic. It was originally conceived as a 'participation technique for social planning situations' (Delbecq et al., 1975). The process of NGT is conducted with parents, which is described in Table 2, by introducing, generating ideas, recording brainstorming ideas, discussion, voting, and list prioritizing. Discussion with parents to understand the context and reasoning behind their rankings is held in Step 6. Discussion with parents to understand the context and reasoning behind their rankings is held in Step 6. NGT sessions discover the most practiced behaviour of filial piety by identifying behaviors and parents' perceptions of the ranking of filial piety behaviors.

Following the interviews accordingly, two sessions of NGT were held to identify and prioritize filial behaviors from Jing Si Aphorisms perceived as most impactful by parents. Parents who participated in the NGT session were gathered, and a brainstorming session of the NGT method was implemented to gather ideas on the influential behavior of filial piety. The NGT procedure followed these structured steps based on Table 2.

Table 2: Description Of NGT Procedures

Step	Procedures	Description
1	Introduction	Moderator explicates the objective, to identify how their children express filial piety, which has been influenced by the teaching of the Jing Si Aphorisms.
2	Silent Idea Generation	In a five- to ten-minute period, each participant responds to filial piety behaviours that the child exhibits the most from Jing Si Aphorism teaching and records as many ideas as possible.
3	Round-Robin Sharing	The facilitator records all ideas on the screen while each individual shares one idea at a time.
4	Clarification	The group deliberates and elaborates on each concept to ensure that all members comprehend it. Similar responses are clustered.
5	Voting	Each participant assigns scores and prioritizes them to top eight ideas, with ranking 5 being the most significant and 1 being the least significant.
6	Aggregation	A prioritized list of perceptions is generated after summing up the scores and short discussions are held.

Findings

Semi-Structured Interviews

Through interviews with parents, the transmission of the Jing Si Aphorisms is categorized into four themes: intentional teaching of values through daily routines, the Jing Si Aphorisms method, filial attitudes strengthened by home-school practices and value-based activities. Parents reflect on how Jing Si Aphorism influences their children's filial piety behaviors and attitudes. Subsequently, data were analysed using thematic analysis using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step method. Initial codes were grouped into themes aligned with daily routines, teaching methods, home-school practices and value-based activities. The themes were cross-verified among parents' narratives to ensure trustworthiness.

Intentional Teaching of Values through Daily Routines

Respect and discipline are instilled using the intentional teaching of Jing Si Aphorism values through daily routines, such as daily rituals of morning greetings, bowing, meal chants, body wiping chants, and the rooster of duties. Through structured gratitude practices and teacher modeling, children learn respect, gratitude, responsibility and take positive action on filial piety. Accordingly, the Jing Si Aphorisms are recited and contemplated during each assembly. Daily rituals in Tzu Chi Da Ai Kindergarten include the morning recital of the Jing Si Aphorisms, greeting teachers at each lesson, singing and songs chanting, meal chants, body wiping chants, washing bowls after meals, and following the duty roster. All to instill respect and discipline. Participant 3 shared, "He will chant before eating dinner at home." Meanwhile, Participant 4 noted his child will serve them before dinner starts and willingly wash the bowls after meals.

The transformative role through Jing Si Aphorisms Method

Jing Si Aphorism's teaching methods are used to guide moral reasoning, which is embedded in lessons and daily interactions. The Jing Si Aphorisms teachings include experience, storytelling, reflection, still thoughts, application and practice of the Jing Si Aphorisms. For

example, teachers incorporate storytelling lessons based on the Jing Si Aphorisms, narrating the process of the mother delivering her child. Participant 6 narrates that her child asked, “Mummy, are you in pain while delivering me?” This sparks an emotional bonding conversation between mom and child.

Reinforcement Filial Attitudes Strengthened by Home–School Practices

Parent-Child Communication Books are distributed twice a week to reinforce value-based activities and lessons at home. It bridges the school and home environments between teachers and parents to jointly reinforce moral behaviors through shared reflections and consistent modeling. In school, teachers will conduct a sharing session with the children based on the parent's handwritten reflection in Parent-Child Communication Books.

“The communication book helps us understand what is taught and to reflect on children’s behavior and to continue it at home when I need to write down my children’s progress.” Participant 1 stated that they will read the Jing Si Aphorisms handbook with their children at home. One of the principles for instilling effective character education values is engagement with families and community members as partners, which are crucial in the character-building effort. (Lickona et al., 2007). Hence, the role of home-school consistency is implemented. Notably, this offers a better implementation of filial piety when parents also employ the same aphorisms to educate their children and reinforce values learned in school.

Value-Based Activities

Structured values activities like “Filial Piety Day” and role-playing had instilled filial piety values. Correspondingly, children express values through performances during “Filial Piety Day.” Moreover, Participant 3 listened to his son practice sign language by singing a song entitled “Filial Piety Cannot Wait” and singing to his grandmother.

During that day, parents are also reminded to reflect on their own aging parents by writing a letter to their parents, inculcating filial piety. For instance, a birthday celebration with a tea serving ceremony at home as a gesture of respect to parents in the house, inculcates these values thoroughly. This allows children to grasp the meaning of filial piety. Participant 3 reflected that during that day, she received a handwritten card from her child and her child massaged her leg following the teacher's leading, it was carefully massaged which warmed her heart.

Nominal Group Technique (NGT) Session

During the discussion and clarification process, a list of filial piety behaviors was compiled, as shown in Table 3. Meanwhile, in the voting session, parents identify the prioritized filial piety behaviors exhibited by their children from the eight provided items, the results of which are shown in Table 4.

Table 3: Description of Parental Perceptions of Filial Piety Behaviors

	Filial Piety Behavior	Descriptions
1	Reciting of Jing Si Aphorisms	Children cite suitable aphorisms to guide or justify their actions and decisions.
2	Self-Regulations and Reflection	Children demonstrate self-regulation when they encounter sibling or parent conflicts. They will reflect on their own and

3	Empathy	others' behavior, such as confessing and apologizing to their parents. Children understand their parents' feelings; they are sensitive and considerate. They empathize with their parents' hard work and help reduce their parents' burden.
4	Verbal Expression of Gratitude	Children express feelings of appreciation through words using thankful language.
5	Gratitude Action	Children express affection to parents through actions, such as hugging, saying "I love you" with stronger emotional expression and family closeness.
6	Practice Self-Living Skills	Children learn to care for themselves, such as folding their own clothes and organizing items in school bags.
7	Help with Household Chores	Children voluntarily assist with chores or daily routines at home.
8	Abide by the Family's Daily Rules of Conduct	Children using soft tone, patience, and abiding by family rules and daily behavioral norms, by displaying obedience

Table 4 below summarizes the ranked parental perceptions of filial piety behaviors based on the NGT consensus. The data were tabulated by assigning each participant's scores to ranked items, which is from 1, lowest to the highest rank, with the cumulative scores identifying the most filial piety behaviors.

Table 4: The Ranked Parental Perceptions of Filial Piety Behaviors Based on NGT Consensus

Elements	Voter								Total score	Percentage	Rank Priority	Voter Consensus
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8				
Reciting Jing Si Aphorisms	4	3	3	3	5	3	4	5	30	75	6	Suitable
Self-Regulations and Reflection	3	3	5	2	4	5	3	2	27	67.5	8	Suitable
Empathy	4	4	5	2	4	5	3	4	31	77.5	5	Suitable
Verbal Expression	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	39	97.5	1	Suitable
Gratitude Action	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	38	95	2	Suitable

Practice Self-Living Skills	4	5	4	4	5	5	5	3	35	87.5	3	Suitable
Helping with Household Chores	3	4	3	4	4	4	3	4	29	72.5	7	Suitable
Self-Regulations and Reflection	4	5	4	4	5	3	5	3	33	82.5	4	Not Suitable

Based on Table 4 above, although all item constructs are within the optimal range, in this analysis, “Self-Regulations and Reflections” ranks last, which might not be suitable, with 67.5% agreement. Considering the findings of this study, the percentage of items agreeable should exceed 70%. Based on the analysis results, seven items exceed 70% consensus, suggesting filial piety behaviors which are acceptable by parents.

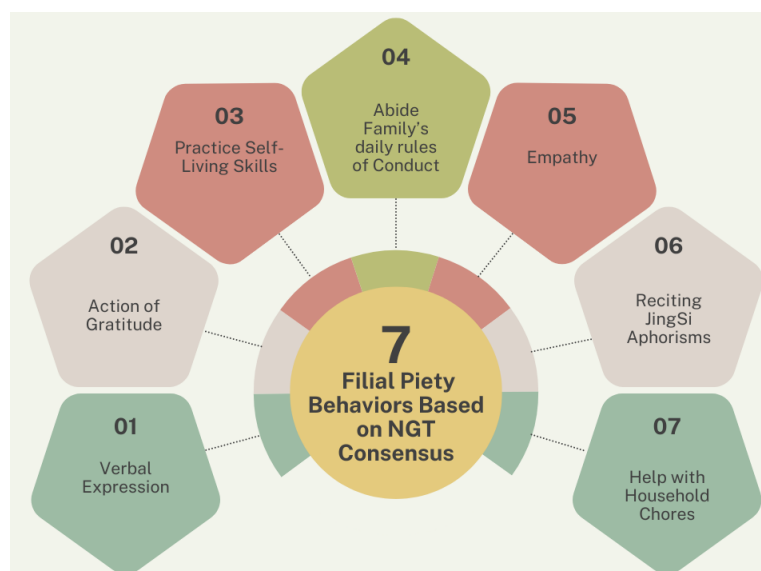


Figure 1: Seven Filial Piety Behaviors Based on NGT Consensus

According to Figure 1, seven filial piety behaviors which are acceptable and agreed by the parents are shown based on ranked priority. Based on Table 5 below, the first priority of ranking is verbal expression of gratitude, followed by action expression of gratitude, practicing self-living skills and abiding by the family’s daily rules of conduct. All are reflected in traditional culture to obey parents’ rules. As a result, children enhanced their empathy towards parents and willingly helped them. They also applied and quoted the Jing Si Aphorisms at home. Meanwhile, helping out with household chores is the second-lowest priority, while the last ranking, self-regulation and reflection, is the least applied by children. This is likely attributed to the inconsistency in children's willingness to help.

Table 5: The Ranked Priority of Filial Piety Behaviors Based on NGT Consensus

Items / Elements	Rank Priority	Voter Consensus
Verbal Expression	1	Suitable
Action of Gratitude	2	Suitable
Practice Self-Living Skills	3	Suitable
Abide Family's daily rules of Conduct	4	Suitable
Empathy	5	Suitable
Reciting Jing Si Aphorism	6	Suitable
Help with Household Chores	7	Suitable
Self-Regulations and Reflection	8	Not Suitable

Based on the perspectives from parents, the Jing Si Aphorisms on filial piety are reinforced in home environments. It implies that 97.5% of parents agreed children had increased awareness and verbal expression.

Increased Awareness and Verbal Expression of Respect

The item that ranked the highest in the NGT sessions was “Child verbally expresses gratitude to parents,” with a total score of 39. Parents observed that their children began using polite and respectful language, such as “thank you,” more frequently after being exposed to the Jing Si Aphorisms in school. NGT groups unanimously reported that their children now say “thank you” without prompting and express gratitude more intentionally in relation to the Jing Si Aphorisms and activities taught in school.

The findings are supported by the interview narratives. Participant 1 shared that her children expressed gratitude by saying “Thank you, mummy for cooking my favorite curry; thank you for tying up my hair so nicely; thank you for accompanying me to grow up,” even without being told. Meanwhile, Participant 2 observed that her children expressed gratitude towards their grandparents by saying, “I love you, grandma.” Moreover, Participant 4 shared that their children displayed love verbally by saying, “You all are working hard, I love you, daddy and mummy.” Similarly, Participant 4 experienced children saying, “Thank you, daddy, for having adequate money to bring me to the place to play.” It is significantly different from the situation prior to the initiation of education. This behavior is perceived by parents as a direct influence of repeated exposure to the Jing Si Aphorisms.

Deepened Emotional Bond Between Parent and Child

The second most frequently ranked theme among parents was the noticeable change in “children’s expressions of gratitude by action,” promoting emotional bonding. Participant 4 expressed that “Every night she will give me a hug and massage my back before I sleep.” Participant 5 experienced her child foot bathing their legs. After the event of Filial Piety Day, it becomes more frequent. “On that day, my child had a chance to footbath me instead of his father. I can see how detailed he follows the steps to massage gently on my legs. Hence, after going back home, he takes a bucket himself filled with water and footbaths his father. He will also massage me when I have a headache and massage my leg at night.” This action was attributed to frequent exposure to aphorisms, “Be grateful, repay kindness to our parents every day,” and “Do more good deeds to repay your parents’ kindness. Many parents shared that moral teaching using the Jing Si Aphorisms created more opportunities for meaningful conversations and thus enhanced emotional connection and bonding.

Practicing Self-Living Skills

The third-ranked theme among parents was having children be self-reliant with independent living, learning to care for their daily habits, such as folding their own clothes and organizing items in school bags and blankets. This is aligned with the Jing Si Aphorisms: “Able to self-care can ease parents’ hearts.” Participant 3 mentioned that “My son will fold his blanket his own way, learnt in school during napping time. So, he will teach me, her sister and even my maid the correct way of folding blankets.” Meanwhile, Participant 6 stated that “My son starts to pack up his own bags by himself without my help. He will also tuck in his shirt neatly when he goes to school.”

Participant 7 also expressed, “She will pack up her bag compared to last time, which needs me to remind her.” By applying the Jing Si Aphorisms, “Knowing how to take care of ourselves will ease parents’ minds,” the majority of parents observed that their children can take good care of themselves, which eases their minds and allows them to worry less about their children.

Demonstrating Respect through Actions

The fourth-ranked theme among parents is abiding by the family’s daily rules of conduct. Participant 8 shared, “My children do not need a long time to know about what should or should not do, she understands and listens to it, it makes me less nagging.” Many revealed that they are more accepting of house rules or things not to do. This is influenced by the school routine discipline and the Jing Si Aphorism, instilling in children to be more obedient and more respectful to their parents. In other words, the children expressed empathy towards their parents.

Practicing Daily Acts of Filial Piety

The children began practicing daily acts of filial piety by helping with chores and serving. Participant 2 shared that the children help to serve the food and prepare the utensils for the parents. Meanwhile, Participant 3 mentioned that her child helps to wash the toilet floor. “I thought he was playing with water in the toilet and was surprised to find out he was washing the toilet floor.” It is crucial for children to learn to demonstrate gratitude and filial piety through engaging in family chores from an early age (Li et al., 2018). Many parents experienced their children willingly helping to complete household chores; however, it is ranked second-last due to inconsistency and the willingness of parents to allow their children to help. The participant 8 mentioned, “He will help to wash the dishes after the food is prepared; however, I will not let him help totally, I will wash the other half.”

Reflection and Self-Correction in Behavior

This is the last-ranked theme among parents, as parents reflect that not all their children can practice this. Hence, it is not suitable to be an item to reflect on the influence of the action of filial piety. Participant 2 mentioned, “My son will say sorry to me when he does something wrong.” Participant 6 stated, “My son wanted to give water to his brother upstairs but was stopped by his grandmother, hence he threw temper by throwing things, then after I calmed him down, he said he will not throw his temper again.”

Conclusion

This study explores the integration of Jing Si Aphorisms in the curriculum of Tzu Chi Da Ai Kindergarten Malaysia to instill filial piety in early childhood learners, and to gain parental insights on the value formation process. Based on the research findings, all core objectives

were achieved. The inculcation of filial piety through daily routines, intentional teaching of Jing Si Aphorisms teaching and value-based activities has an influence on children's positive filial piety behaviors. Jing Si Aphorisms were embedded in daily routines through greetings, songs, storytelling, creating consistent moral reinforcement throughout the school day.

From parents' perception, the inculcation of Jing Si Aphorism's teachings on filial piety brings behavioral impact on children. It had positively enhanced children's awareness of verbal respect, emotional expression, and being more self-disciplined. Observations and parental discussions showed that children exhibited behaviors aligned with filial piety, which is expressing gratitude, respect, and care toward parents. It also fosters respectful behavior at home, practicing daily acts of filial piety and reflection and self-correction in behavior. This suggests that filial values emphasized in Tzu Chi's moral education are bringing positive character building on filial piety, which is a fundamental value in Chinese culture.

The integration of NGT and semi-interview sessions provides a broader and more comprehensive view of how parents perceive their child's filial piety as influenced by the Jing Si Aphorisms. Through parents and teachers' collaborative effort, the Parent-Child Communication Book, serves as a medium of reinforcement for children to apply the values at school and home, resulting in an effective and meaningful transmission of filial piety in children's daily lives. Simultaneously, the findings support the role of value-based early education in character development and emphasize the importance for sustained collaboration between parents and educators.

Contribution of the Study

This study contributes to educational research that provides empirical evidence on how culturally rooted Jing Si Aphorisms values can instill moral values in preschool-aged children. Moreover, it offers an alternative character education model for values-based learning in early childhood education within multicultural societies for educators and parents. The integrated values in Jing Si Aphorism reinforce filial piety's relevance as a cultural preservation of traditional living values within a modern, urban Malaysian context. Hence, this study highlights the importance of school-home synergy in reinforcing moral development through aligned language, rituals, and values with parents' involvement for effective character building.

Recommendations

The study supports the efficacy of Jing Si Aphorisms in imparting filial piety, however challenges emerged. While teacher training is sufficient, however educators deliver differently in Jing Si Aphorism in varied manners. Hence, standardized professional development modules integrating Jing Si Aphorism into teaching strategies should be included in teacher training.

Continuous parent school engagement exerts a positive influence on children. Parents engage in more profound conversations with their children, which fosters emotional bonds among them. Parents were provided with the Jing Si Aphorism handbook to establish consistency of value education at home; nevertheless, they should become acquainted with specific Jing Si Aphorisms to align with the Jing Si Aphorism set of values. Workshops designed to educate parents on positive parenting provide beneficial results; however, increasing their frequency could strengthen the consistency of value implementation within the home context.

For future research, longitudinal impact involving long-term development of filial behavior for longer duration over one year, could be explored to gather significant influence on children's behaviour thoroughly. Exploratory research could also be done among the same cohort throughout elementary school to monitor the long-term evolution of filial behavior. Furthermore, comparative studies on outcomes between Tzu Chi-affiliated and secular kindergartens can be analysed to investigate disparities in moral development across various educational environments. Furthermore, a replicable moral education curriculum framework could be developed further using Jing Si Aphorisms for broader implementation across diverse school settings.

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