

INVESTIGATION OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' FILIAL PIETY CONDUCT AND CULTIVATION MEASURES: A CASE STUDY IN GUANGDONG, CHINA

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ABSTRACT

Children's filial piety is expressed by their sincere and utmost attempt to take care of them and obey to them, which shows the juniors' moral quality in light of treating their relationship with the seniors in the family. Following this line, with the investigative materials in the National Social Science Fund Project, we analyzed how the Guangdong junior high school students behave and think in regard of filial piety, how they learn from one another, and how family harmony can be achieved through carrying out filial conduct. Basically, it is considered that Guangdong youngsters perform well in filial piety, acknowledge and follow the preliminary Chinese people's virtues on family. The issue is that, on one hand, Guangdong youngsters are aware of their need to communicate with parents, but on the other hand, they do not wish to be overly interfered in private affairs. Besides, Guangdong youngsters know the importance of the harmonious family to certain extent, and they have profound love for home life, and are full of youthful vigor. Based on such context, the researchers have proposed the reactive strategies and suggestions for the current problems from society, family, and school in order to strengthen and improve Chinese filial education.

Keywords: Youngsters, filial piety, filial education, China.

Definition of Filial Piety and the Research Overview

Filial piety has been elevated in China for a long history (Khalaila, 2010; Lew et al, 2011; Mao & Chi, 2011; Schwartz et al, 2008). In one of the earliest literary work that defines the terms in China is "Erya", which goes that filial piety is to "Serve one's parents well". In Han Dynasty, Chia-yi's "New Book" classifies it as "the child loves to do what is favorable to his/her parents". In fact, the traditional Chinese filial piety is a kind of compound concepts with abundant implications involving extensive sphere (Chen, 2011; Chen, 2014; Pan, Gauvain, & Schwartz, 2013), and it covers a variety of cultural philosophy, systems, and courtesies. To view from the angle of respectfully taking care of one's parents (Canda, 2013), it mainly includes the following items for those who are filial to: respect one's parents, take care of the parents' late life (Wang et al, 2009; Wendy et al, 2010), serve the parents while they are sick, well establish oneself; criticize their parents in hope of raising their welfare; and looking forwards to a good end of life for parents (Wong et al, 2010). Sine research (Chou, 2010; Dong et al, 2012; Tsai, Chen, & Tsai, 2008; Wang, et al, 2009) proposed that "the filial piety is the virtue superior to others", and "Filial piety is the root of moral norms", although after New China was established, people once criticized filial piety for misunderstanding. However, after reforming, there were new interpretation and reinforcement of propaganda, leading the contemporary China to salute filial piety from the central government to the root public citizens, showing that filial piety has an unshakeable

status in their mind. In this sense, how do the modern youngsters perform in regard of filial piety? How do they treat the seniors in their family? Those issues become the main motivation to explore in this research.

In our country, it can be derived from a long time ago of the origin of the family generation ethics that has been carved in the depth of people's hearts. In addition, when we place the content and the extension of filial piety to the relationship of family generation ethics for definition (Chow, 2009; Huang & Gove, 2012), actually, filial piety refers to taking a good care of parents, and getting obedient to their guidance (Greene, 2010; Hui et al, 2011). The filial heart and filial conduct are performances concerning filial thoughts and behaviors, which can be considered as the original meaning of filial piety. Nevertheless, with age advances, the content of filial piety and family ethics are continuously expanding as well (Shi, 2009). Under such circumstances, mutual learning and win-win outcomes for members in two or multiple generations can lead to mutual enhancement and common improvement among the members in family generation members (Guo & Chi, 2010; Ho et al, 2012; Lai, 2010), and this is what the society today demands on family and each generation. That is, family harmony puts an emphasis on all members of family's harmonious coordination and warm inclusion, which is the root label of a happy family and the highest level of family ethics. Accordingly, a filial heart and conduct, mutual learning and win-win, and family harmony are the three major indicators setting certain corresponding items, and each is set up with Likert Scale answers based on experiences and predictions from low to high scores 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.

Since August, 2013, in the National Social Science Fund Project "Research on Our Country's Change of the Generation Ethics and Family Education Policy", In Guangdong, China, we included two generations-- junior high school students and their parents-- into the survey of their filial piety related conditions. In November, 2013, questionnaire survey was proceeded in some schools, while in February to April, 2014, the results of 230 predictive questionnaires were analyzed. After deleting some items with poor reliability and validity, and modifying some items with unclear expressions, we conducted the questionnaire survey formally in June, 2014. By stratified cluster random sampling method, by selecting one junior high school in Canton, the Guangdong's provincial capital; one in Huizhou City in Pearl River Delta; and one in urban area and one in rural area in the undeveloped Yangjiang region, we formally put into practice the questionnaire survey for the first-, second-, and third-grade students and their parents as well as the grandparents.

Our surveys included case interviews, discussions and seminars, and questionnaire surveys. In order to promise the research validity, we lent the triangulative method in qualitative research to elicit the surveyed data in the process of empirical research, and the surveyed subjects included junior high school students, their parents, and the grandparents. For the structure of the three questionnaires, the contents were basically the same, with design of partially repetitive items in order to examine the verification and falsification. (Limited by the length of this paper, this research mainly presents the survey results of the junior high school students). In 2015, we used Software, SPSS 17.0 to deal with the questionnaire's data, analyzing the data from discussions, interviews, and literature materials. After receiving the returned predictive questionnaires and formal questionnaires, the reliability and validity was checked and verified that the results met the original design.

From the 917 qualified questionnaires returned answered by the junior high schools in the three cities and villages in Guangdong, including 356 Grade 1, 308 Grade 2, and 246 Grade 3 students, which occupy 39.1%, 33.8%, and 27.0%, respectively; including 7 people unknown,

387 boys and 432 girls, which occupy 47.2% and 52.7%; including 97 people unknown, the age is from 11-18 years old, among which the 14 years old are the most with 277 people. To view from the students' family background, for answering the questionnaires, there are 398 fathers and 438 mothers, and 81 others and unknown, which occupy 43.40% and 47.76%, respectively; their age ranges from 31-56 years old, among which 40 years old are the most, 89 people; fathers who work as a labor occupy 26.3%, farmer 11.0%, operator/salesman/service personnel 3.8%; organ officer 2.9%; soldiers/policemen/public security 5.1%, individual operation 29.7%, engineers/doctors/teachers 6.1%, lawyers/agent/free jobs 3.3%, farmers/labors 5.0%; mothers who work as a labor occupy 20.1%, farmer 7.2%, operator/ service personnel 8.8%; organ officer 2.4%; soldiers/policemen/public security 4.3%, individual operation 26.5%, engineers/doctors/teachers 6.4%, lawyers/agent/free jobs 2.9%, farmers/labors 6.4%.

Analysis of the Survey Results

Guangdong Junior High School Students' Performance of Filial Heart and Behavior for the Seniors

Firstly, through the following items, we have obtained some understanding of the junior high school students' realization and attitudes towards being filial to the seniors:

Table 1: Do you agree "If the parents/grandparents treat me well, I will return to them in the future"?

	Extremely Disagree	Disagree	Fair	Agree	Extremely Agree	Number of People
Boys	4.7%	12.5%	19.0%	35.3%	28.6%	385
Girls	4.7%	16.7%	17.4%	36.3%	24.9%	430
Average	4.7%	14.7%	18.1%	35.8%	26.7%	815

$\chi^2=6.617$, $p>0.05$, the difference is insignificant.

Table 2. «The Elder's Right and Interest Protection Act» regulates that the adult children must visit their parents regularly, do you agree?

	Extremely Disagree	Disagree	Fair	Agree	Extremely Agree	Number of people	Number of people
Boys	2.1%	2.3%	7.8%	35.4%	52.5%	385	385
Girls	1.2%	1.2%	4.6%	35.3%	57.8%	430	430
Average	1.6%	1.7%	6.1%	35.3%	55.3%	815	815

$\chi^2=7.764$, $p>0.05$, the difference is insignificant.

Table 3. For the youths who can earn a living but ask for money from their parents, what are your attitudes?

	Extremely Agree	Agree	Fair	Disagree	Extremely Disagree	Number of People
Boys	0.8%	3.9%	10.7%	32.4%	52.2%	383
Girls	0.7%	1.9%	7.9%	25.0%	64.5%	428
Average	0.7%	2.8%	9.2%	28.4%	58.7%	811

$\chi^2=14.424$, $p>0.05$, the difference is insignificant.

Table 4. When you see the seniors are sick or feel anxious, how do you feel?

	Extremely unhappy	Unhappy	Fair	Sympathetic	Extremely sympathetic	Number of people
Boys	19.2%	28.6%	12.7%	27.8%	11.7%	386
Girls	13.8%	24.0%	12.1%	34.3%	15.9%	432
Average	16.3%	26.3%	12.4%	31.2%	13.9%	818

$\chi^2=13.462$, $p>0.05$, the difference is insignificant.

From the items' statistic results, it is found that Guangdong junior high school students who agree and extremely agree that "If the parents/grandparents treat me well, I will return to them in the future" occupy 62.5%. For 《The Elder's Right and Interest Protection Act》 regulates that the adult children must visit their parents regularly, those who agree and extremely agree occupy over 90%. Lastly, for the youths who can earn a living but ask for money from their parents, the junior high school students that disagree and extremely disagree with it achieve 87%. For the three items, boys and girls do not differ significantly. Finally, when it comes to "when you see the seniors are sick or feel anxious, how do you feel", the youngsters who show extremely unhappy, unhappy, fair, sympathetic, and extremely sympathetic, occupy 16.3%, 26.3%, 12.4%, 31.2%, and 13.9%, respectively. Regardless of expressing unhappiness at 26.3% or sympathy at 31.2%, it shows that the junior high school students have shown their true affection for their parents' getting sick; and, at this point, boys and girls do not significantly differ in respect with their understanding of and inclination to the item. In short, from incorporating the students' interview content and the teachers' opinions, it can be decided that most Guangdong junior high school students possess the thought of being filial to the seniors, with 50% or so demonstrating more apparent inclination to showing filial piety to their parents, but there is also about 20% of them getting astray from appropriate understanding of this issue.

What follows are 4 items selected by this research to look at how the Guangdong junior high school students perform in their filial attitudes towards the seniors:

Table 5. Are you willing to live with the elders (grandparents) in the family?

	Extremel y unwillin g	Unwillin g	Fair	Willing	Extremel y willing	Number of people
Boys	2.1%	2.8%	17.9%	35.5%	41.7%	386
Girls	1.2%	2.1%	16.0%	35.5%	45.2%	431
Average	1.6%	2.4%	16.9%	35.5%	43.6%	817

$\chi^2=3.846$, $p>0.05$, the difference is insignificant.

Table 6. When you know the elders in your family (grandparents) have a difficult living, which action will you take?

	No reaction	Little help	Fair care	Some help	Utmost help	Number of people
Boys	1.3%	1.8%	16.0%	37.5%	43.4%	386
Girls	0.7%	1.4%	10.6%	39.4%	47.9%	432
Average	1.0%	1.6%	13.2%	38.4%	45.9%	618

$\chi^2=7.722$, $p>0.05$, the difference is insignificant.

Table 7. When the elder in your family has his/her birthday, do you show any respect or make celebration for the elder (by special greeting or sending a gift)?

	Never	Once	2-3 times	Mostly	Every time	Number of people
Boys	15.4%	5.5%	17.5%	40.3%	21.2%	382
Girls	16.1%	8.2%	20.7%	34.3%	20.7%	429
Average	15.8%	6.9%	19.2%	37.1%	21.1%	811

$\chi^2=8.976$, $p>0.05$, the difference is insignificant.

Table 8. If the senior ask for your help in how to use the home electronic devices (like how to use the cell phone), are you willing to give him/her a hand?

	Extremely unwilling	Unwilling	Fair	Willing	Extremely willing	Number of people
Boys	0.5%	1.8%	14.6%	29.9%	53.1%	384
Girls	0.5%	1.6%	9.6%	22.2%	66.0%	427
Average	0.5%	1.7%	12.1%	25.9%	59.9%	811

$\chi^2=21.773$, $p<0.05$, the difference is significant.

From Item 6-8's statistic results, it is demonstrated that the junior high school students who intend to live with the elders in the family (grandparents) occupy 89%, those who know the elders in their family (grandparents) have a difficult living can offer some or utmost help take up 84.3%, and those who can show their reverence to the elder most of the time or every time when the elder in your family has his/her birthday take up 58.2%. In the three items, boys and girls do not differ significantly. Finally, the senior ask for help in how to use the home

electronic devices (like how to use the cell phone), those who are willing and extremely willing to give him/her a hand take up 25.9% and 59.9%, and those who are extremely unwilling, unwilling, and fair take up 0.5%, 1.7%, and 12.1%. Among them, girls are significantly more willing than boys. In general, over 70% of Guangdong junior high school students put filial piety into practice in the family by taking some trivial yet pleasing filial behaviors at home, though few junior high school students "Do Not" or "Seldom" perform filial piety, which shows extreme selfishness and arbitrariness.

Guangdong Junior High School Students' Performance in Mutual Learning and Win-win with the Seniors

Mutual learning and win-win refer to the mutual learning and making progress together among the family generation members. In this set of surveys, we have designed 6 items, including attitude inclination, behavioral performance, and behavioral evaluation.

Table 9. Do you agree "Home is both a place for living and learning/communication"?

	Extremely Disagree	Disagree	Fair	Agree	Extremely Agree	Number of people
Boys	1.6%	5.7%	21.2%	45.7%	25.8%	387
Girls	1.6%	.9%	20.6%	46.2%	30.6%	431
Average	1.6%	3.2%	20.9%	45.9%	28.4%	818

$\chi^2=18.737$, $p<0.05$, significant difference

Table 10. What is your viewpoint on "The old generation has a lot of outstanding virtues worthy of our learning"?

	Extremely Disagree	Disagree	Fair	Agree	Extremely Agree	Number of people
Boys	2.8%	2.6%	22.5%	47.7%	24.4%	386
Girls	0.5%	1.9%	24.5%	49.5%	23.6%	428
Average	1.6%	2.2%	23.6%	48.7%	23.9%	814

$\chi^2=9.290$, $p>0.05$, insignificant difference

Table 11. When you have something important, will you talk to or report to the seniors?

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Basically	Always	Number of people
Boys	10.9%	25.4%	32.1%	23.8%	7.8%	381
Girls	15.7%	26.2%	30.1%	22.4%	5.6%	426
Average	13.4%	25.9%	31.0%	23.1%	6.6%	807

$\chi^2=8.238$, $p>0.05$, insignificant difference

Table 12. Do you tell the parents about your learning condition in daily time?

	Never	Seldom	Sometim es	Number of people
Boys	38.4%	54.1%	7.6%	331
Girls	42.9%	51.8%	5.3%	359
Average	40.7%	53.0%	6.4%	690

$\chi^2=3.307$,
insignificant
p>0.05,
difference

Table 13. If you have a close boyfriend, are you willing to tell the parents?

	Extremely unwilling	Unwilling	Fair	Willing	Extremely willing	Number of people
Boys	8.7%	28.8%	39.6%	16.6%	6.3%	365
Girls	8.7%	24.5%	39.3%	18.8%	8.7%	423
Average	8.7%	26.5%	39.5%	17.8%	7.6%	788

$\chi^2=4.966$, p>0.05, insignificant difference.

Table 14. In your leisure time, are you willing to read books/magazines and discuss the content with the seniors?

	Extremely unwilling	Unwilling	Fair	Willing	Extremely willing	Number of people
Boys	4.2%	11.2%	38.7%	27.8%	18.2%	385
Girls	2.8%	9.1%	31.6%	37.2%	19.3%	430
Average	3.4%	10.0%	34.9%	32.8%	18.8%	815

$\chi^2=12.572$, p>0.05, insignificant difference

From the statistics above, we can see that Guangdong junior high school students who agree and extremely agree with "Home is both a place for living and learning/communication" occupy 45.9% and 28.4%, among which girls who extremely agree take up 30.6%, significantly higher than boys' percentage. For "the old generation has a lot of outstanding virtues worthy of our learning", those who agree and extremely agree with occupy 48.7% and 23.9%, presenting that most children respect the old generation's good moral virtues. However, in free time, those who are unwilling, fair, and willing to read books/magazines and discuss the content with the seniors take up 10.0%, 34.9%, and 32.8%, all lower than that in the previous two items. Concerning "When you have something important, will you talk to or report to the seniors", those who show seldom, sometimes, and basically do occupy 25.9%, 31.0%, and 23.1%, respectively. When it comes to "Do you tell the parents about your learning condition in daily time", the results show that Never, Seldom, and Sometimes take up 40.7%, 53.0%, and 6.4%; while If you have a close boyfriend, are you willing to tell the parents, the results tell us that unwilling, fair, and willing occupy 26.5%, 39.5%, and 17.8%. The last two items' results show that the junior high school students are not willing to communicate and learn with the parents, while the percentage occupies higher in regard of confiding they have a close opposite sex friend. Generally speaking, on one hand, Guangdong junior high school students hope to communicate with parents and wish their parents can understand their material demand and spiritual need, but do not expect their parents to overly interfere their own affairs. On one side, Guangdong junior high school

students know the importance of learning from the old generation, but on the other side, they are unwilling to obey to the seniors' opinions completely. In addition, with the coming of their adolescence period which inputs pressures from rebellious emotions and school work, a lot of juveniles are short of dynamics to practice mutual learning and win-win with their parents, which is consistent with the traits of age in respect with students in adolescence period revealed by the developmental psychology.

Guangdong junior high school students' understanding of and evaluation on family harmony

What family harmony emphasizes is the harmonious, coordinative, and warm inclusive status among all family members. In recent years, both the central and local party administration have forcefully propagated a harmonious society's and harmonious family's implications, so the junior high school students are no strange to it. This part mainly relates to inquiry to the junior high school students' understanding of the harmonious family as well as their evaluation on the family.

Table 15. Do you agree "Love is sun and dew, kinship nothing but all"?

	Extremel y Disagree	Disagree	Fair	Agree	Extremel y Agree	Number of people
Boys	1.6%	1.3%	10.9%	49.2%	37.0%	386
Girls	0.2%	1.9%	10.9%	49.5%	37.5%	432
Avera ge	0.9%	1.6%	10.9%	49.3%	37.2%	818

$\chi^2=5.611$, $p>0.05$, insignificant difference

Table 16. Do you feel your family is a competent "Harmonious Family"?

	Totally not	Not	Fair	Basically yes	Totally yes	Number of people
Boys	2.9%	6.3%	18.0%	51.6%	21.4%	384
Girls	2.6%	6.7%	18.6%	46.2%	26.0%	431
Average	2.7%	6.5%	18.3%	48.7%	23.9%	815

$\chi^2=6.409$, $p>0.05$, insignificant difference

Table 17. Do you feel your family life is happy?

	Extremely unhappy	Unhappy	Fair	Happy	Extremely Happy	Number of people
Boys	2.4%	1.8%	24.9%	50.0%	20.9%	382
Girls	0.7%	4.7%	23.5%	35.8%	35.3%	425
Average	1.5%	3.3%	24.1%	42.5%	28.6%	807

$\chi^2=35.407$, $p<0.001$, significant difference

Table 18. Do you think what is the most important element in a happy family?

	Love each other, share with one another	Sufficient materials and abundant wealth	Shared interest and a lifetime accompany	No interference but only freedom and ease	Establish of glory and achievement by new generation better than the last generation	Health, longevity, and a happy mood	Number of people
Boys	39.1%	2.4%	3.4%	1.3%	4.5%	49.3%	381
Girls	38.6%	.9%	5.1%	1.9%	1.9%	51.6%	430
Average	38.8%	1.6%	4.3%	1.6%	3.1%	50.6%	811

$\chi^2=9.966$, $p>0.05$, insignificant difference

From the tables above, it can be seen that Guangdong junior high school students who agree and extremely agree that "Love is sun and dew, kinship nothing but all" stand for 49.5% and 37.2%, respectively. Then, regarding "Do you feel your family is a competent 'Harmonious Family'", those who express Fair, basically yes, and totally yes occupy 18.3%, 48.7%, and 23.9%, showing 70% of the junior high school students feel satisfactory with their family life. When they were asked practically about "Do you think what is the most important element in a happy family", the first two items that were answered the mostly are "Health, longevity, and a happy mood" and "Love each other, share with one another", with percentage at 50.6% and 38.8%. As a whole, the new generation in Guangdong has certain understanding and experiences of a harmonious family, they have higher satisfaction with harmony in their own family, love both home and life, and full of youthfulness and vigor. Part of the junior high school students' understanding of family harmony and a happy life is limited, confined to the unclarity of the standard of a happy family along with concentrating all their might to get admission to a famous university.

Preliminary conclusions, corresponding strategies, and suggestions

According to the analytical results of the survey on Guangdong junior high school students filial piety performance, the author holds that their filial piety can be generalized as "walking at the cross section": To view vertically, Guangdong youngsters' filial virtue has undergone more than 10 years' development of children and student stages, so they can already grasp the filial piety's basic implication and the behavioral requirement. Consequently, with continuously contacting with the healthy and ill family ethic thoughts in the society, they have been heading towards a good or at least better direction, or we may say they are sincere, kind, and respectful to the seniors with an innocent heart. Nevertheless, due to the temptation and failure of family moral education, along with separation of school moral education from family moral education, the youngsters' filial heart and behaviors are hindered in this regard, and some youngsters tend to behave immorally in respect with selfish and arrogant attitudes, and bullying the elders in the family. Next, to view horizontally, Guangdong youngsters come from divergent families and family traditions, they live in divergent communities, study in different schools, and grow up in significantly different environments; as a result, for filial piety they have perceived, the influence is significant different. They show a variety of filial hearts and behaviors, diverse patterns of mutual learning and win-win, and various forms of family harmony. In the cross-section of filial virtue linger part of the youngsters-- at certain

time and space, some perform well in filial virtue, while others behave poor, although both are natural consequences.

As the great Chinese philosopher Mencius once said, "the Nation underlies the world, while the family underlies the nation". Also, the ancient people said, "A harmonious family flourishes everything", and "Filial piety is superior to all virtues", all proving that since ancient times, Chinese have learned the importance of filial piety. Today, although economy and society have highly developed, filial piety is indispensable between the relationship of family and society (Yeh et al, 2013; Zhan et al, 2008; Zhan et al, 2011). After well recognizing the important role of filial piety, society, family, and school should thus improve education for the younger generation sufficiently.

In the first place, social work should be enhanced. Since reform, Chinese urban and rural inhabitants' moral standard has kept on raising on a whole, but the unbalanced development of civil moral, work moral, and family moral exist. That is, more problems are found in the family moral domain in the way the citizens' filial heart as well as filial behaviors are declining. For example, some people transact holy love with sex, lack care and love to the spouse and family, fail to take responsibility of waiting on the elders and provide family education to the children, have living habits harmful to their health, damage the public profit in the neighborhood, and other problems involving family morals. Unquestionably, we should put an emphasis on family moral construction from the party administration level to strengthen propaganda of family morals in the whole society, as well as promoting the family civilization work in the civilized cities/counties and units.

Secondly, parents' consciousness should be awakened. Since family the where filial virtue takes place, parents' performance in filial piety has profound impact on children. To view from the analytical results of the survey on junior high school students' parents in this paper, the realistic conditions of part of Guangdong junior high school students' parents' feeling of seeing the seniors' getting sick or upset, whether they are willing to live with the elders in the family, and the like are not as satisfactory as we expect, some individual items' scores are all lower than the children's. Therefore, the parents should improve their own filial piety performance, and lead the family to put filial virtue into practice by respecting and taking care of the old grandparents. Noticeably, some parents have filial heart and behaviors, but they ignore to cultivate their children's; or some old people indulge the children for thinking they are too little, so they often interfere the parents to teach the kids. All should be corrected.

Lastly, there is one point for the organization of school-family cooperation needs everyone's care and attention. Nowadays, youngsters lack enough living experiences and bear a huge schoolwork stress, so they often feel confused about how to be filial, and have a restricted understanding of family harmony and happy life. On the other hand, their parents or grandparents cannot explain or teach those problems, so if the teachers can practically describe the issues by linking the relative theories, together with the parents' modeling and patient guiding, it must be helpful for the children to have a correct understanding, and raise the children's family moral standard. In such case, the moral education in the kindergarten, the primary and the junior high school play a critical role in influence the youngsters' moral development, so the teachers should utilize the school education field to guide the students to learn to return to the seniors' like their parents' devotion to cultivating them from the trifles of doing housework.

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