

The Influence of Maternal-Paternal Education Level and Parenting Styles in Children's Reading Skills in an Urban Setting in East Malaysia

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Abstract

As more parents achieve a higher education level and are exposed to better parenting behaviors and styles, the changing roles of housekeepers and managing child's education are expected. Millennial parents are reported to hold a stable career, higher economic status, better access to information, and practices of successful parenting. Nonetheless, there are substantive reports of millennial parents still practicing traditional parenting, who had witnessed and experienced its effective practices with older generations. Hence, the current study examined the possible differences between maternal and paternal parenting styles. In addition, a prediction of parental education level and parenting styles on children's reading skills were also investigated. With a total of 109 parent-child dyads, the study was conducted in one of the urban settings in Malaysia. The instruments used in the present study were adapted and adopted from Robinson, Mandelco, Olsen, and Hart (2001) for parenting practices, while the reading test was derived from Lee et al. (2020). Descriptive statistics were utilized to describe on parents' demographic analysis and educational background, while inferential statistics, such as multiple linear regression analyses were conducted to answer RQ2 and RQ3. The results of the study reveal a slight difference between maternal-paternal parenting styles, in which mothers portray more authoritative styles than fathers. Interestingly, only maternal education level predicts children's reading skills and parenting styles of both do not predict children's reading skills. Finally, it can be concluded that an Asian-parenting culture could potentially influence child-rearing styles among the urban parents in this setting.

Keywords: Parenting styles, parents education level, children's reading skills.

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Introduction

Reading is one of the primary sources for children to build and share experiences, of which in return it influences the children's way of thinking and learning. In Malaysia, the Malay language is formally known as an official language. It is taught at all levels of institutions, which include private and public preschools. According to Bronfenbrenner's Bio-Ecological theory and Bandura's theory of social interaction, children need to be mingled and immerse themselves with proper systems and people. By then, children will experience and immerse themselves with the targeted language. Nonetheless, after 65 years of the official language implementation, the Malay language is still facing challenges in its usage. Some children who undergo their primary schools in vernacular schools like Chinese or Indian national-type schools may limit themselves to only practice the Malay language in the classroom (Winskel, 2020). Studies by Peng (2016) and Siew and Mahamod (2021) conclude that internal problems, such as self-motivation, determinism, and external factors, and less effective teaching methods accumulates to reading problems in the Malay Language. Furthermore, Malaysians' reading trends and habits have been consistently dissatisfying (Noraien, 2017 ; Baharuddin et al., 2015). In a recent systematic literature report by Hassan Mohamed et. al (2019), several factors that affect reading habits and reading activities among Malaysians were found to be environmental influences and indirectly affecting the children interest. Hence, the current study explored further on the roles of parents and their education background to enhance children's reading skills. As the nearest individuals in children's cognitive and physical development, parents' ways of parenting and their education background can predict children's reading skills in the Malay language.

Parents' parenting styles are guided with individual values, beliefs, and motivation (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Some parents may able to synchronize both perspectives in raising their children, while others may find it contradictory. As personal attributes are derived from the trait theory, founded with life experience, education, and personal belief, this somehow influences the way individuals choose to live, socialize, and raise children. Similarly, a father who is seen to be more authoritarian and permissive and a mother who is said to be overly involved, authoritarian, and authoritative are two unique individuals found to either compromise or conflict in a child-rearing process (Rousseau & Scharf, 2015). Most

western parenting studies are inclined to and promote authoritative parenting as an ideal way of a child-rearing process, of which it emphasizes on personal and independence characters within individuals and provides more positive outcomes in children and adolescence development (Rose et al., 2018; Smetana, 2017).

Earlier research by Lynch et al. (2006) using the qualitative analysis found parents' education background somehow influences the method either holistic or direct in introducing literacy activities to their children. Parents who hold higher education levels (post-secondary certificate) believe that holistic literacy activities are more effective than direct learning methods. Wiescholek et al. (2018) further examined children's preferences in literacy activities at home and reveal no differences between active or passive literacy activities, while E. Krijnen et al.'s (2021) and Sangawi et al.'s (2015) studies show that there are differences between parental education and literacy activities at home. Educated parents were reported to be more flexible in between parental affection, support, and control over children's learning activities (Geske & Ozola, 2020). To date, ASEAN parenting styles reported the dominance of authoritarian parenting styles as it is founded with cultural influence, government policies, societies expectations and the effectiveness of authoritative and their effects on children's academic goals and outcomes (Foo Koong Hean, 2019; Sangawi et al, 2015).

As mentioned above, there is little known on the current trend paternal and maternal styles of parenting in Malaysia. As more current research applied local cultural and new values of parenting responsiveness and demandingness, the millennial parents' levels of education may manipulate to the new direction of parenting styles for young children and implicate their children's reading skills specifically. Essentially, this study examined three variables, namely, paternal-maternal parenting styles, their education background, and its prediction to their children's reading skills in the Malay language. Hence, three research questions were developed for this study.

1. Is there any significant difference between maternal and paternal parenting styles?
2. Do maternal and paternal education levels significantly predict private preschoolers' reading skills?
3. Do paternal and maternal parenting styles predict children's reading skills?

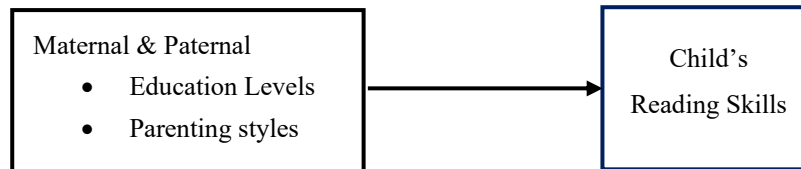


Figure 1. Summary of the flow of the current study

Literature Review

Parenting Styles and Education Level of Millennial Parents

The dynamics of millennial parenting expended in accordance with education, knowledge about parenting, and technology. These combinations improve the principles of demandingness and responsiveness proposed by a traditional parenting researcher, Baumrind, in 1967. Previous generations learned parenting with trial and errors and the cultural influence of parental roles seems to share significant influence either in traditional or millennial parents. As life gets more challenging and demanding, parents nowadays still raise question if their way or parenting should change (Burns & Gottschalk, 2019), especially when it comes to enhancing children's cognition and socio-emotion before the children's enter their adolescence years.

Earlier studies of parenting in Malaysia by Zahyah (2004) and Chi, Baharuddin, and Hossien (2012) reported the dominant styles of parenting were permissive by the Malays and authoritative by the Chinese parents. Another interesting finding by Zainudin et al. (2012) reported that there is a significant association between parenting styles for primary school children school performance where an army type father prefers authoritarian and non-army type prefers permissive parenting. Ruziana (2022) in her systematic analyses presented trends in parenting research among Malaysian, which were mostly on parenting styles involving 24 studies on parenting styles. Although the parenting styles topic is the most researched, nonetheless, the focus on young children and children is still outnumbered. The majority of parenting styles research is proven to implicate adolescence and young teenagers' academic performances and school achievement (Hassan & Sen, 2018 & Ishak et al., 2012), predicting

delinquency (Amran & Basri, 2020), self-control and emotional abuse (Keshavarz & Baharudin, 2013). Volumes of findings from these empirical reports validate that effective parenting styles secure children's future.

While Foo Koong Hean (2019) reveals on Singaporean parents who were reported to be influenced by government policies, ease of communication, and competitive environment. For instance, the meritocracy system may influence their parenting practices. Another important synthesis by Sim and Chin (2014) and Cheung and Lim (2021) reported that a combination of authoritative and authoritarian parenting practices by mothers and fathers is positively linked to academic grades. While in Indonesia, among the highest population in world, parenting practices among Indonesian parents are highly influenced by traditional cultural values and show a slight significant difference from other counterparts, such as Malaysia and Singapore. Riany, Meredith, and Cuskelly (2017) in their systematic review analysis about parenting research found two studies in relation with education. In the first study, authoritative parenting was suggested by the authors that is to encourage school children to embark more positively in reading activities (Rena, Abedalalaziz, & Chin, 2013) while the second highlights the importance of positive parenting to increase children's independence behaviors (Agnes & Sofronoff, 2015). In short, the Asian parents value the family roles dictated by religion, customs, and traditions and they emphasize that children's schooling purposes are for them to be excellent, motivated by parental demands, competitive, and become the family pride (Bingham et al., 2017 ; Kumpfer et al., 2016).

The development of reading literacy is not only determined by a cognitive process, but also requires a social process, indirectly embedded in parents, siblings, peers, and teachers' relationships with a child who learns to read as stipulated in the Bronfenbrenner theory. Early days witnessed education to get rid of poverty problems and secure better standards of living. Through education, individuals are promised to live with better and earn a stable income, of which these indirectly affect their socio-economic status. This statement reflects Bourdieu's (1990 and 2002) concept of habitus that is defined as a system of shared disposition that generate perception, appreciation, and actions. The habitus is generated by experience and it shapes further experience. The habitus concept is further extended to literacy experience, when highly educated parents prioritized a similar or greater literacy activity at home and other places. Myberg and Ro sen (2009) incorporated the Bourdieu (2002) concept of habitus

into their research. The analysis reveals a positive and significant relationship between parents' education and children's reading ability, while numbers of books, early literacy activities, and emergent literacy abilities mediate the relationship. Other studies that are consistent with the above study are by Dubow, Boxer, and Huesman (2009) and Hsieh, Dopkin, Stright, and Yen (2017) conclude that parents' education fits the undone matters in schools and it predicts children's success in later years. On the other hand, parents who live in a lower socio-economic status, getting a lower income and a low education level are associated with authoritarian parenting with a colder treatment; more controlling mother-child interaction and negatively correlated with academic achievement (Smetana, 2017 & Azad, Blacher, & Marcoulides, 2014). In contrast with these findings, Pinquart and Kauser (2018) and Khalida and Junaid (2017) found in their studies that authoritarian is still reported to be effective in a collective society where education is seen important. These contrasting findings offers more research in order to understand the nature of authoritative-authoritarian parental understanding, especially when it relates to children's reading achievement.

Children's Reading Skills in Malay Language, Parents Education Level, and Parenting Styles.

As children in Malaysia grow up in bilingual or multilingual contexts, they learn to speak, read, and write in more than one language. Uniquely, each language (the Malay, Chinese, and Tamil language) has different orthography and utilises different graphemes to sound units. These situations may create confusion for children where they learn languages and scripts that are entirely unrelated and distinctive in their language characteristics, for instance grammatical difference between Malay and Chinese languages (Winskel, 2020). The vast differences in grammatical, orthography, and lexical of these languages also negatively implicate the Malay language either in academic or non-academic purposes, especially among non-Malays children. Empirical reports also highlight that parents preferably choose the English language and native language for their daily conversation and academic purposes, including the English medium of instruction in kindergartens (Rahman & Singh, 2021). The choices made by parents may negatively implicate their children's reading skills in the Malay Language.

Learning the Malay language to some children is probably only for the purpose to earn credit and pass the National Examination. On the other hand, the Malay language comes with a high influence of dialect, code mixed, and code switch. Some parents may use the Malay language at home, but the use and usage of the language is highly influenced by the local dialect that over time may affect their children's language learning in the classroom. Hypothetically speaking, parents' education could have an intertwined positive or negative relationship with children's reading skills in the Malay language. Educated parents raise their child in a high academic environment plus they are capable to engage in a variety of children activities (Techman, 1987). Undeniably, Polderman (2015) and Myberg and Ro sen (2008) also highlight an intergenerational transmission of educational success; this could be explained with social mobility, parents and child's motivation and other perks. Hence, it is interesting to understand the mechanism of Malaysians' paternal and maternal parenting reaches a mutuality in a child rearing process and its impact on children's reading skills in the Malay language.

Method

Study Design

The current study employed a quantitative approach using a cross-sectional method. A survey on parenting styles was distributed to one hundred nine (109) parents in an urban setting in one of the Malaysian states and the survey was self-administered. The purpose of choosing self-administered survey was to increase the response rate within a short period of time, especially when the pandemic COVID-19 hit the educational system specifically.

Instruments

Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ)

PSDQ was used as the data collection tool. The PSDQ was initially introduced by Robinson, Mandelco, Olsen, and Hart (1995) as the Parenting Practices Questionnaire. In

2001, Robinson and the team modified the original instrument of 62 items to 32 items using Structural Equation Modelling on 1900 parents of preschools and school-aged children. Like the original, three primary parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive) are maintained, as suggested by Baumrind (1967). The questionnaire in the current study was designed to report maternal and paternal parenting styles. The 32 items were measured with a 5-level Likert scale (1 = never to 5 = always). The original reliability for PSDQ was distributed into 3 dimensions, namely, Authoritative = 0.91 with 27 items, Authoritarian = 0.86 with 20 items, and Permissive = 0.75 with 15 items. In addition, other studies have recorded reliability values ranging from 0.625 to 0.884 for authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive (Fu Yixiao et al., 2013). Since all studies reach reliability values above 0.80, the PSDQ, is thus a valid and reliable measure of parenting styles for Malaysian parents. As for the inter-observer and inter-tester reliability during the actual data collection process, data were reviewed regularly to optimize the scoring in reading assessment. The teachers were also trained during the reading assessment period.

Reading Skills Assessment (RSA)

RSA is utilized to measure a six-year-old child's basic reading skills. As stipulated in the National Standard Preschool Curriculum for preschools, three essential literacies were introduced: Reading, writing, and Mathematics. Specifically for reading skills, by the end of the preschool year, the child should attain basic skills in reading, such as identifying alphabets, upper and lower case, skills in reading open and closed syllables, and light reading activities. Two basic reading skills were measured to meet the objectives of the study: Letter Name Knowledge (LNK) and Open and Closed Syllables (OCS). An alternate form reliability was conducted to ensure that the items were valid before testing. The alternate-form reliability indices of these timed assessment measures were high. For Letter Name Knowledge (LNK) and Open Closed syllables (OCS), the r value range is above 0.85 reported in the actual study (Lee et al., 2020) and the current reliability for LNK is 0.83 and OCS is 0.85. The LNK assesses alphabets in two forms; lower and upper case. Twenty-six alphabets were presented in a random order for each form, arranged in 2 lines with 13 letters in a row. The test was scored based on the total number of letters named correctly. The range of scores is between 0 to 26. Each child was given 40 seconds to complete the task and the correct letter names

were recorded. In the second assessment, Open and Closed Syllables (OCS) measured part of phonological awareness that involves in manipulating syllable sounds of the words. The children must sound the syllable correctly so that they do not face difficulties decoding the word and reading it. There are two different techniques in completing the task, either to sound the alphabet or to spell. Both techniques were acceptable for the study. There were 12 OCS presented to the children. The measure was scored based on the correct reading of the syllables. The range of the score is between 0 to 12. The child was given 60 seconds to complete the task.

Participants

The participants of the study consisted of 109 parents (maternal and paternal reports) on their parenting styles. The parents may come from different socio-economic status but they reside in the same urban areas. There were also 109 children aged six years old who participated in the reading skills assessment. The respondents were from eight private kindergartens, in which these private kindergartens agreed to participate in the study. These sampling were taken randomly in the list of private kindergarten registered under the Malaysian Ministry of Education. Although these private kindergartens are operationalized independently, they are still based on the stipulated National Standard Preschool Curriculum. Other non-formal learning activities are introduced in addition to the existing curriculum. The private kindergarten was chosen with two justifications; (i) a private kindergarten is a child learning center that comprises of multiple backgrounds, such as races, parents' SES, education level, and multiple use of language. All these factors could shed more understanding in early childhood research, (ii) during the pandemic, the majority of public preschools were closed to visitors. Only a few were open and these preschools were opened on alternate days. Unlike private kindergartens, some of them were operationalized due to business interest and the parents were the frontliners who must work during pandemic. Although the researcher was given a permission to enter and conduct the research, but a stricter regulation and SOP needed to be adhered.

Research Procedures

The data were collected from the middle of February to April 2020 at the selected private kindergarten centers. First, the kindergarten administrators were contacted to get the permission to conduct the research. Once the permission was obtained, the administrator assigned one teacher to assist the researcher in selecting the respondents from the name list. The assigned teacher was treated as a 'peer researcher.' The peer researcher was briefed on the overall test procedures and provided an advice to the researcher in relation to the respondents' conditions and needs during the reading test. Ten children were randomly selected (using odd numbers) from the name list by the researcher. The names were presented to the peer researcher for validation and verification. After the validation and verification process and the children's full names, and the parents were notified for a parental consent and permission to sit for the reading test.

Before the reading skills assessment was carried out, the researcher met with all the children in their respective classrooms for a 'meet and greet session'. The researcher introduced her name and purpose of her presence at the kindergartens. After that, each child took about 5 to 8 minutes to complete the task, depending on their ability. As for the parents, the questionnaires were given to the parents whose child was selected before the reading skills assessment was carried out. A consent form was presented in the questionnaire, and the purpose of the research and its objectives were also presented. The parents were requested to respond to the questionnaire within a week, and once the parents' consent and permission were gathered, the reading skills assessment for their children was conducted individually.

Results

Table 1 reveals the respondents' demographic information in terms of age range, education levels, and working sectors. As for the age range, the majority ($n = 48$) of the participating mothers were from 31 to 35 years old. The fathers' age was identified to be slightly higher that is between 36 to 40 years old ($n = 44$). In general, the fathers' age was slightly older as compared to that of mothers. For education levels, three distinctive qualifications were

recognized, namely, post-secondary, tertiary, and post-graduate. More than 70 parents (either mother or father) were reported to have completed their tertiary education and with 11 mothers and 8 fathers hold post-graduate certificates. In sum, most of the participated parents for this study were highly educated parents.

Table 1. *Respondents' Demographic Information*

Variables		Maternal		Paternal	
		<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Age Ranges	25 - 30	5	4.6	-	-
	31 -35	48	44.0	41	37.6
	36 - 40	41	37.6	44	40.4
	41 - 45	15	13.8	21	19.3
	46 & above	-	-	3	1.8
Education levels	Post - secondary	19	17.4	23	21.1
	Tertiary	79	72.5	78	71.6
	Post-graduate	11	10.1	8	7.3
Working sectors	Public	23	21.2	19	17.4
	Private	59	54.1	63	57.8
	Self-employed	9	8.3	24	22.0
	Housewives	8	7.3	-	-
	Pensioner	-	-	1	0.9
	Housewife with online business	10	9.2	-	-
	Others	-	-	2	1.8

Paternal and Maternal Parenting Styles

Table 2 shows the three parenting styles practised by the preschool parents. A paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare parenting styles employed by fathers and mothers of private preschool children. There are significant differences in authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles mean scores. The first difference is the authoritative mothers ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 0.47$) and authoritative fathers ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.58$), $t(108) = 7.03$, $p = 0.000$. The second difference is the authoritarian mothers ($M = 2.51$, $SD = 0.58$) and authoritarian fathers ($M = 2.30$, $SD = 0.63$), $t(108) = 4.088$, $p = 0.000$. There is no significant difference between fathers and mothers for permissible parenting. These results suggest that mothers of private kindergarten children practise authoritative and authoritarian parenting more frequently than fathers.

Table 2. *Maternal and Paternal Parenting Styles*

PARENTING STYLES	Paternal		Maternal		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>			
AUTHORITATIVE	4.00	0.58	4.28	0.47	7.031	108	0.000
i) Connection	4.09	0.65	4.37	0.52			
ii) Regulation	3.93	0.74	4.26	0.60			
iii) Autonomy	3.97	0.67	4.20	0.57			
AUTHORITARIAN	2.30	0.63	2.51	0.58	4.088	108	0.000
i) Physical Coercion	1.98	0.74	2.13	0.74			
ii) Verbal Hostility	2.21	0.76	2.52	0.75			
iii) Non-reasoning	2.72	0.82	2.87	0.78			
PERMISSIVE	2.44	0.57	2.50	0.69	1.165	108	0.247

Prediction of Maternal and Paternal Education Levels on Children's Reading Skills.

An examination of Table 3 reveals that maternal and paternal level of education predicts children's reading skills in the Malay language. Maternal levels of education shows a significant prediction towards children's reading skills according to ANOVA statistics [$F(2, 106) = 2.946, p < .05$]. Based on the result of the standard regression analysis, the degree of prediction on children's reading skills was found to be $R = .229$ and the variance of dependent variable is $R^2 = .053$. Observing from these coefficients, it could be concluded that only maternal levels of education predict the dependent variable.

Table 3. *Maternal and Paternal Levels of Education and Children's Reading Skills*

Variables	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient B (β)	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	B	SE			
Constant	47.980	11.539		4.158	<.001
Paternal education	-6.118	5.447	-.116	-1.117	.267
Maternal education	13.163	5.433	.251	2.423	.017

Constant = 47.980, $F(2, 106) = 2.946, p < .001, R^2 = .053$

Prediction of Maternal and Paternal Parenting Styles on Children's Reading Skills.

Table 4 examines seven dimensions paternal parenting styles' influence on children's reading skills in the Malay language. None of the paternal parenting dimensions shows significant values. The ANOVA statistics analysis reveals [$F(7, 101) = 0.599, p < .001$].

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Based on the result of the standard regression analysis, the prediction towards children's reading skills was $R^2 = .040$. Looking at these coefficient analyses, the paternal parenting styles do not predict the children's reading skills in the Malay language.

Table 4. *Paternal Parenting Styles and Children's Reading Skills*

Variables	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient B (β)	t	p
	B	SE			
Constant	90.556	24.586		3.683	<.001
Authoritative					
Connection	-9.465	6.557	-.184	-1.444	.152
Autonomy	4.097	5.689	.100	.720	.473
Regulation	-1.097	5.145	-.030	-.213	.832
Authoritarian					
Physical coercion	-7.640	5.586	-.207	-1.368	.174
Nonreasoning	1.479	3.821	.045	.387	.699
Verbal hostility	1.048	5.133	.029	.204	.839
Permissive	-.269	5.113	-.006	-.503	.958

Constant = 90.556, $F(7,101) = 0.599$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.040$

Table 5. *Maternal Parenting Styles and Children's Reading Skills*

Variables	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient B (β)	t	p
	B	SE			
Constant	46.494	31.11		1.494	.138
Authoritative					
Connection	-3.628	6.391	-.069	-.568	.571
Autonomy	1.097	6.149	.023	.178	.859
Regulation	4.814	6.399	.106	.752	.454
Authoritarian					
Physical coercion	-6.406	4.850	-.174	-1.321	.190
Nonreasoning	6.536	3.690	.188	1.771	.080
Verbal hostility	-2.584	4.628	-.071	-.558	.578
Permissive	3.047	3.977	.077	.766	.445

Constant = 46.494, $F(7,101) = 1.232$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.079$

The finding obtained by doing a multiple linear regression analysis is concerned with whether seven dimensions of maternal parenting styles predict children's reading skills in the Malay language. The ANOVA statistics shows no significant values [$F(7, 101) = 1.232$, $p < .001$]. The result of the standard regression analysis explains that the variance in children's reading skills is $R^2 = .079$. Looking at these coefficient values, it could be concluded that maternal parenting styles do not predict the dependent variable well.

Discussion

The current study was framed based on the postulation that parents' education levels and parenting styles may predict children's reading skills in the Malay language based on the previous literature (Checa et al., 2019). Since, the majority of the western findings focus on learning and teaching English, the current study specifically chose the Malay language as it is an official language and the first language in Malaysia. The findings from the current study add to and extend the previous literature on parental contributions to children's reading skills, especially in the Malay language at a young age. The discussion section is set according to the research questions of this study.

Parenting Styles: Maternal and Paternal Differences

The findings of the current study are consistent with previous literature showing significant differences between paternal and maternal aspects in child-rearing involvement (Zahiyah, 2004). Although Malaysia is experiencing a rapid modernisation, socio-cultural influence in child-rearing, children education, and household chores are expected to be handled by mothers (Hossain, 2014). The current finding reveals a different pattern of paternal parenting compared to previous literature (Zainuddin et al., 2012), in which the fathers are inclined to adopt permissible parenting. Indirectly, it can be concluded that the majority of fathers in this study portrayed authoritative parenting styles. To date, most authoritarian fathers are no longer evident in family dynamics as presented in Table 2, yet Hossain (2014) reported exciting research findings on differences between rural parents who are more engaged, more time invested, and involved in child-related tasks than urban fathers. Similarly, for maternal parenting styles, Table 2 reveals that millennial mothers in Selangor preferably practice authoritative parenting than other parenting styles. Several studies by Rozumah and Luster (1998), and Lyu, Li, and Xie (2019) comparably reported that quality of care and child-rearing by mothers for children aged 6 to 8 years contribute significantly to the overall development of a child across cultures, and that quality of care is referred to as authoritative parenting. Seonhyung and Sunhee (2021) are also convinced that a high maternal affection promotes a better child's self-regulation and initiates interest to play with peers among three

to five years old children.

Parents Education Level and Its Prediction to Child's Reading Skills.

The findings in Table 3 reveal the influence of parents' education levels on their 6 years old children in developing reading skills in the Malay language. As previous studies denote the importance of early education for young children regardless of parents' educational attainment, Table 1 reveals relevant information of the respondents, more mothers reported completing their tertiary education level than the secondary level. About ten percent of the mothers also pursued post-graduate studies. Hence, all mothers and fathers in this study received adequate education requirements and should raise awareness on the importance of education. The regression analysis shows that only maternal education level predicts children's reading skills, and this finding is consistent with that of previous studies, which marked important contributions of mothers' academic qualifications to their child's academic achievement (Muhd. Idris et al., 2020; Najma & Awan, 2020). Flouri and Hawkes (2008) also highlight the positive relationship between maternal expectations of their children's education in adolescence life. In recent study, Xiofeng, Wenhui, and Aibao (2018) stated that the absence of mothers regardless of any education level leaves a greater impact compared with the absence of fathers. Although the analysis did not provide the relationship of paternal education level with children's reading skill, another study by Aski and Farouk (2012) shows imperative findings of fathers' involvement and engagement with children education significantly impacts the child's confidence, problem solving skills, and emotional securities. In short, the parents' education level would assist them to plan better academic expectations. Although fathers' academic qualification does not predict children's reading skills, nonetheless the involvement of fathers to immerse children in reading literacy is mutually agreed by researchers (E. Krijnen, 2020).

Paternal and Maternal Parenting Styles and Its Prediction on Child's Reading Skills.

Tables 4 and 5 reveal the findings on the influence of parenting styles towards children's reading skills. The ANOVA statistics for both paternal and maternal shows parenting styles

do not predict children's reading skills. The finding of this study is inconsistent with that of an earlier parenting styles study reported by Carreteiro, Justi, and Figueira (2016) who found positive contributions of paternal and maternal parenting in a child's behavior, intellectual level, and reading process.

There are several limitations that influence the results of this study. First, having more respondents can provide a clearer picture concerning parental education's influence on reading skills among 6-year-old children. More older children aged 8 to 12 should be able to reflect their parents' parenting styles and its effect on their reading performances in several required skills. Second, time constraints and the threat of pandemic in the study area also contributed to the small number of respondents who participated in this study. It is also recommended to investigate preferred literacy activities carried out with children since the Malay language and English language are valued at a different rate by parents. It is also interesting to observe parents' engagement in literacy activities, particularly those who live in rural areas, especially among fathers.

Conclusion

The dynamic of modern family structure affects the way parents interact with their children. This study was conducted to observe the influence of parents' education level and parenting styles on children's reading skills in the Malay language. Highly educated mothers potentially have a positive influence on children's academic achievement with more authoritative to authoritarian parenting being practiced at home. However, paternal roles in children's academic achievement are reported insignificant and most fathers are reported with authoritative to permissive styles in rearing the children. There are a few implications derived from this study. First, this study provides a theoretical implication when it further relates to the influence of habits that are formed within family members who valued reading. This could be a further extension for the Bio-Ecological theory by Bronfenbrenner (1977), in which reading habits and academic excellence within a microsystem is potentially affecting children's reading achievement. Even though there are no significant predictors of both parenting styles and children's reading skills, volumes of research validate the effectiveness

of authoritative parenting styles to children's achievement in reading. Thus, millennial parents should consider embarking on authoritative parenting at the point where it may regulate certain demands and responses to suit the child's needs. While for the practical implication, the mothers could utilize their education attainment to improve children's reading skills in the Malay language via an effective communication, for instance, joining a reading program that co-regulates efforts from teachers, other parental peers, and children.

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