

# Comparative Analysis of Parenting Styles and their Impact on Children's Well-Being: A Cross-Cultural Perspective in Malaysia, China, and Taiwan

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**Abstract:** *Introduction:* This research provides an in-depth comparative analysis of parenting styles and their associated communication patterns in Malaysia, Taiwan, and the Chinese mainland. It also explores how they affect children's well-being through social and emotional development. The study examined the evolving parenting styles in four areas: language and verbal communication, non-verbal communication, gender roles and gendered communities, and family communication.

*Methods:* A comprehensive literature search focused on journal articles published between 2018 and 2023. The scientific databases employed for this search encompassed reputable platforms such as Web of Science (WOS), Scopus, PubMed, and Google Scholar.

*Results:* In the language and verbal communication domain, this research offers insights into how parents utilize language as a tool for discipline and emotional expression, indicating a gradual transition in communication styles from authoritarian to democratic. Non-verbal communication sheds light on the nuanced yet impactful ways emotions and norms are conveyed, encompassing eye contact and body gestures. Gender roles and gendered communities unveil a shift in perspectives from traditional to more egalitarian. As these countries or regions progress socially and economically, a transformation in the perception and implementation of gender roles is observed, influencing parenting strategies and children's self-concept. This paper amalgamates these aspects within the realm of family communication to underscore the growing influence of mutual communication and open dialogue in enriching parent-child relationships.

*Conclusion:* The paper concludes that parenting styles are evolving with changing social norms, indicating the adaptability and responsiveness of parents to dynamic social dynamics, ultimately proving advantageous to children's development.

**Keywords:** Family communication, gender roles, language and verbal communication, non-verbal communication, wellbeing.

## INTRODUCTION

Children started receiving education and care mostly from their families, including their parents and relatives. Children learn to recognize the values of their parents, which shape their views and behaviors, as parents are the primary persons responsible for ensuring their children's physical, spiritual, and social well-being. In addition, culture impacts parenting practices, where parents' parenting methods are frequently influenced by their ethnic origins and experiences. The practice or state of being a parent has been described as nurturing, protecting, and educating a kid throughout the cycle of growth [1].

Parenting style is often defined as an assortment of parenting behaviors and perspectives that parents utilize most frequently and consistently across settings to regulate the behavior of their kids that is influenced

by the patterns of supervision, responsiveness, affection, and discipline. Most scholars agreed with Baumrind's (1971) definition of parenting styles, including authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive [2]. An authoritarian parent is more distant to the child = which is very demanding and permits low degrees of autonomy. In contrast, an authoritative parent is attentive to the child, is highly demanding, and enables autonomy. Meanwhile, Maccoby and Martin (1983) classified permissive parenting styles into permissive-indulgent and permissive-indifferent parenting styles. Permissive-indulgent parents, also known as permissive parents, are deeply involved in their children's lives and are extremely responsive. In contrast, permissive-indifferent parents, also known as uninvolved or neglectful parents, lack engagement and exhibit a low degree of responsiveness and demandingness in their children. Collective and individualistic civilizations have all three of these parenting methods [3].

In general, studies that have dealt with cross-cultural comparisons in different countries in the field of

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parenting style are limited. For example, in one such limited study, Bornstein and colleagues in 2013 examined salient features of parenting in the United States, France, and Japan as three countries with different cultures. In this research, visual and vocal exchange between mother and baby (nurturing, social exchange, and didactic stimulation) was considered, and the findings showed the important effects of culture on the parenting style of mothers in these three countries. American mothers showed a higher level of object stimulation than French or Japanese mothers. American and Japanese mothers showed similar levels of social stimulation, whereas American mothers engaged in more social stimulation than French mothers. However, mothers were very similar in how they engaged their infants in tactile-kinesthetic play and responded in a nurturing or imitative manner [4]. Like the study of Bornstein and his colleagues, the present study can fill the lack of research in this field and achieve useful findings.

According to the stated content, this research aims to investigate the parenting style in Malaysia, Taiwan, and the Chinese mainland and what changes have been made over time according to the social and economic developments in these regions. This research considers parenting style from the perspective of language and verbal communication, non-verbal communication, gender roles and gendered communities, and family communication. Then, it is checked what differences exist in these three regions in terms of these parenting variables and how these differences affect children's well-being (i.e., social and emotional development). The hypotheses of the research are:

- 1) Authoritarian and permissive parenting styles are related to the lower level of social and emotional development of children.
- 2) Authoritative parenting style is related to a higher level of social and emotional development of children.

## **METHODS**

A literature search was conducted on the Web of Science (WOS), Scopus, PubMed, and Google Scholar platforms by entering the keywords related to the topic, such as Parenting Styles, Well-being, Language and Verbal Communication, Non-Verbal Communication, Gender Roles, and Gendered Communities, Family Communication in Malaysia, Taiwan, and China. The years of publication for the journal articles used in this

review were between 2018 and 2023, except for classic literature. The present study included research that met the following criteria: (a) included a sample of young people with an average age of 6 to 18 years, (b) the analyzed outcome variable was the child's social and emotional development, (c) the predictor variables were parenting style and family communication patterns and (d) the research design was cross-sectional/comparative, cohort/longitudinal, qualitative or quantitative. Thesis dissertations, technical reports, abstract-only publications, and case reports were excluded from this review article. Furthermore, the journal articles' titles, abstracts, and full texts were reviewed carefully before being analyzed and reported in this review article. As this is a review article of documents that are in the public domain, no ethical approval is required. The comparative analysis systematically compares parenting styles in Malaysia, Taiwan, and the Chinese mainland, highlighting key differences and similarities. The focus is on examining how cultural, social, and historical factors shape parenting practices in these regions. The analysis discusses variations in communication styles, expectations of children, and the impact of parenting approaches on child development and behavior. Overall, it provides a comprehensive overview of the distinctive parenting styles observed in each country, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the cultural influences on parenting.

## **RESULTS**

### **Language and Verbal Communication**

A healthy and functional family encourages a variety of experiences to minimize feelings of suppression among individuals. Communication is very vital in family functioning. Communication within the family creates the identity and demonstrates standards such as kindness, gratitude to families, tolerance with others, and the capacity to conduct discipline, among other duties [5]. Interaction within a family should be used to encourage and discipline children. The findings indicate that conversation between parents and children about parenting and sharing is a daily activity. Parenting and sharing communication should begin at a young age to meet the family's special needs, namely establishing fundamental principles in children while providing strategies to cope with and minimize different opportunities for children's disruptive behaviors that may develop as they communicate with others. Parents must retain their reputation by acting according to their word. Besides, the efficacy of parental communication

is heavily influenced by parental figures who serve as role models for children [6].

## **Parenting Styles & Language and Verbal Communication**

### ***Parenting in Malaysia***

The principle of independence versus dependency is the fundamental cultural distinction between Western and Asian cultures. The United States and Europe are examples of independent or individualist cultures in which the focus is on one's own goals, whereas in interdependent or collectivist societies such as Asia, family, and common aspirations take precedence over personal desires. As a result, parenting practices in Western cultures encourage self-expression, independence, competitiveness, and self-sufficiency, whereas parenting practices in Asian cultures demonstrate obedience, conformity, respect for elders, and social interdependence. Because Asian parents value interdependence more than Western parents, parents in the earlier cultural groupings exhibit more authoritarian beliefs than those in the latter.

Malaysia is renowned for its diverse society, in which the Malays coexist with other significant ethnic groups such as Chinese and Indians, and together with minorities and mixed groups, they form a complex culture. Similarly, diversity influences parenting through distinct childrearing strategies and interactions between parents and children, as well as among family members. Parental dedication and legitimacy given to children are strengthened because of revitalizing interaction within the family setting. Parents must serve as speakers in conveying messages that lead to the formation of a noble character in their children [6]. Communication inside the family has the longest length when compared to communication in schools and communities. The communication patterns that are practiced in the home daily have a strong influence on children's behavior patterns [7].

In Malaysia, most Malaysian parents, especially the modern generation, have employed the democratic parenting style, which is an authoritative parenting style in the sense that it encourages effective, open, and transparent communication when they communicate with their children. Open communication among parents and children can also help to reduce at-risk youth conduct while also increasing their emotional adaptation [5]. Malaysian parents regard persuasive communication as an appropriate method to use in parenting and sharing activities. Persuasive

communication helps to develop enthusiasm, motivation, and self-confidence for youngsters to avoid crime. Subtle messages are conveyed by parents as persuaders to children, whereas Malaysian parents tend to present themselves as close friends who interact with affection and love [6].

Warmth and attentiveness were significantly connected with excellent developmental outcomes in children, particularly good inhibition capacity development, whereas kids who had less responsive parents showed greater levels of oppositional behavior [7]. Harsh parenting behaviors like shouting, name calling, repeated negative directives, visible demonstrations of wrath, and threats have been defined as a type of emotional abuse or psychological maltreatment, and it can have an impact on children's control of their emotional skills [1]. A child may grow more emotionally unstable or experience profoundly upsetting feelings because of parental verbal aggression.

### ***Parenting in Taiwan***

Like most traditional Chinese families, Taiwanese parents used to be authoritarian parents who have a high level of demandingness and a low level of warmth or responsiveness [8]. Parents are the rules, and they have high expectations of children and make plans for children to follow; children's emotions, opinions, and thoughts are not considered. Parents tend to control children's lives in the name of "love", but from the ways they speak and deliver, most children feel controlled, demanding, cold, and not loved and cared for. The language and verbal communication that authoritarian parents apply are strict, hush, and critical; it's difficult to sense the care or warmth from parents and generally creates fears and gaps in parents-children relationships. Authoritarian parents tend to use negative language unconsciously when speaking with children. It can cause significant negative impacts on children's social and emotional health if no further explanation is given. Negative words diminish children's self-esteem, increase anxiety, and the chance of verbal abuse cycle [9]. In 2019, the Child Welfare League Foundation of Taiwan surveyed junior and high school students and found that nearly 30% of teenagers have suffered from parents' verbal violence, more than 60% of them felt angry and sad [10]. The words parents say to children like, your grades are not as good as your peers or siblings, you are so stupid by doing this, talk smart, don't be so quiet, don't talk back or curse the children with FX words can bring deep trauma to children and carry to adolescence. 70% of teenagers felt that verbal violence causes the greatest

damage, and 2 to 3% of teenagers felt like it hurt themselves. A retrospective Surveys of survey among adults also showed that more than 70% of adults cannot recover from verbal violence from their parents when they are kids.

Following the changes in the social environment, economic status, and the influence of Western culture, authoritarian parenting has rarely been applied in Taiwan in recent years. 80% of parents (who have children within 6 years old) don't want to copy the parenting style from the last generation [11], and the younger generation refuses to be helicopter parents [12]. Parenting styles in Taiwan have changed. Parents still have great expectations of children but listen to and respect their opinions and ideas. Instead of speaking sharply, parents are highly urged to use positive language when communicating with children. Words like "please" and "thanks" are used when parents ask children to do things as instructed. Parents avoid using words like "I told you so," "no or don't," "you must do," etc.... to underneath children or reject children directly. The implementation of positive language and verbal communication enhances children's confidence, prevents tension between children's relationships, and assists in developing children's social and emotional health.

### ***Parenting in The Chinese Mainland***

Patriarchy was a social system that existed throughout the feudal era in the Chinese mainland. Under this social system, men had the primary power. The most important belief in this system was that the older person, or the older generation, should be respected. In this cultural context, honorific language has become a common and necessary part of Chinese life. Salutations contain words that mean respect, support, and encouragement [13]. In Chinese society, the level of use of honorifics reflects an individual's level of education and personal qualities. Failure to use or misuse salutations is a sign of rudeness and can often offend others. In the Chinese mainland, salutation is both a form of etiquette and a way of identifying professionals.

However, in Chinese families, parents' language and verbal communication with children need to be determined on a case-by-case basis. In families with an authoritative parenting model, parents often communicate using statements that consult the child, such as "Can I put this toy away for you?" or "Can we have steak tonight?". Some research suggests that in authoritative parenting models, parents' use of

salutations or similar warm words to their children (including offering understanding support and encouragement) enhances children's well-being, as well as their relationships with peers and social adjustment [14]. However, the study also points out that families with authoritarian parenting styles often use statements with connotations such as command, rejection, denial, and put-downs, which can lead to reduced well-being in children, resulting in consequences such as children not relating easily to their peers and being less socially adjusted [14].

### **Comparative Analysis of Language and Verbal Communication**

There are significant differences in parenting styles between Malaysia, Taiwan, and the Chinese mainland. Malaysian parents focus on communication and interaction within the family, Taiwanese parents gradually shift to more positive language and communication styles, while Chinese parents' parenting styles are influenced by Confucianism and patriarchy. These parenting styles differ in terms of interaction, communication, and expectations of children within the family and have different impacts on children's development and behavior.

### **Impact on Children's Social and Emotional Development**

Parenting styles have a significant impact on children's social and emotional development. The Malaysian parenting style focuses on communication and interaction within the family, encouraging effective communication and open dialogue. This parenting style helps to build a child's identity and develops values such as kindness, gratitude, tolerance, and discipline. The warmth and attentiveness of Malaysian parents are closely associated with good developmental outcomes for children, demonstrating increased inhibitions and reduced antagonistic behaviors.

In contrast, the authoritarian parenting style of Taiwan's past negatively affected children's social and emotional development. Excessive expectations, control, and strict verbal communication styles may lead children to feel stressed and resentful and even cause a disconnect in the parent-child relationship. However, in recent years, more and more Taiwanese parents have shifted to a more positive, listening, and respectful communication style, which helps children develop self-confidence and social skills.

Chinese parenting styles are influenced by patriarchy. In an authoritative parenting style, parents

use statements asking for the child's opinion, contributing to the child's well-being and social adjustment. However, in authoritarian parenting styles, parents' use of commanding, rejecting, and demeaning language may negatively affect children's well-being and social competence.

Parenting styles have a significant impact on children's social and emotional development. Warmth, listening, and positive communication styles help children develop positive self-perceptions, self-confidence, and social skills. On the contrary, excessive control, pressure, and negative verbal communication styles may hurt children's well-being and parent-child relationships. Therefore, parents should emphasize positive communication and respect for their children's views in parenting to promote their social and emotional well-being.

### **Nonverbal Communication**

According to Lunenburg (2010), humans interact nonverbally just as much as they do verbally [15]. Nonverbal communication provides a great deal of knowledge, and diverse nonverbal communication parts provide diverse information about someone's feelings and thoughts. Nonverbal communication is also useful in situations where speech is not permitted. When speech is not permitted, the sender may interact with the receiver through nonverbal cues, making it possible to communicate through gestures with the hands, facial expressions, body posture, and other forms of body language. Meanwhile, in situations where speech is accessible, nonverbal cues can be employed to improve and increase the effectiveness of communication. Nonverbal communication is made up of four components that include kinesics, proxemics, paralanguage, and chronemics. Overall, kinesics is concerned with body movement, motions, stances, gaze, and facial expressions, while paralanguage is defined as the tone, way of voice, or pitch utilized to convey the idea along with proxemics, which correlates to the spatial connection reflected in distance-related behavior [16]. Facial expressions are a kind of kinesics that conveys a lot of signals. Facial expressions are usually associated with emotions since the muscles of the face are activated to react when someone is experiencing an emotion that is made up of six universal expressions that are sadness, pleasure, fear, anger, surprise, and disgust, known as common expressions throughout the world. Caretakers' oral or symbolic behaviors that cause emotional distress to the kid constitute some of the most obtrusive and

unpleasant types of stressful circumstances in a child's everyday existence.

## **Parenting Styles & Nonverbal Communication**

### **Parenting in Malaysia**

The importance of the atmosphere surrounding communication is related to how clear the ideas that are clarified in conversations are. In low-context societies such as the UK, the message is communicated directly and explicitly, embodied in words that are spoken or written. Cultures with high contexts, like Malaysia, use less direct spoken language, emphasizing interpersonal relationships, feelings transmitted, and nonverbal communication interpretation. Culture is an additional significant variable in molding one's behavior, and it will be carried down from future generations as passed along by the ancestors [17].

Culture has a significant impact on nonverbal as well as verbal interaction. In Malaysia, smiling represents one of the most common facial expressions used in everyday life, constantly associated with pleasant emotions such as enjoyment, warmth, and friendliness. Most Malaysians believe that smiling at people demonstrates good manners and positive emotions that demonstrate a person's regard for others, which is commonly taught to their children by Malaysian parents. However, gender variations in nonverbal cues exist. Studies have shown that men and women have different nonverbal signs. Women use their hands and face more frequently than men to convey their feelings and thoughts, while men are less chatty than women. Women and men react differently to nonverbal clues.

In comparison to men, women are more aware of and receptive to nonverbal cues [16]. It has also been discovered that the level of sensitivity of men and women may generate disparities in interpreting nonverbal messages that resulted in boys and girls prefer to communicate more with moms than fathers. Past research has shown that female teenagers disclosed more often to their significant others than boys and moms were able to forecast their responses with greater precision than fathers. In conclusion, if successful communication is shown to have a positive impact on the family, the study also demonstrates that inadequate communication has an unfavorable effect on the whole family. In terms of paralanguage, in which tone, way of voice, or pitch is utilized to convey the idea, Malaysian parents employed speech clarity and

pleasing voice tone as well as a joyful accent when communicating with their children. They commonly use the words "please", "thank you", and "can you" when they are conveying a message or communicating with their children. In addition, Malaysian children have been taught by their parents not to point their fingers at others when they communicate with others and to show respect to others. According to the research, voice intonation is important in fostering relationships with people. In addition, when it comes to serious matters, downcast eyes, hands on hips, or tapping on the arm are only a few of the nonverbal ways they communicate with their kids to show their demandingness or emotions [16].

### ***Parenting in Taiwan***

The abovementioned parenting styles in Taiwan have moved away from authoritarian parenting. The demandingness (the expectations and the rules) has remained, but the responsiveness (the sense of children's needs and mutual communication) has taken the lead. To achieve the intended communication, the power of nonverbal influence is way more important than verbal language [18]. Body language is the most direct expression to let the other party know the feeling. Children can easily sense the pressure and are afraid to express their thoughts and opinions when they are with authoritarian parents. The serious tone of voice, the angry faces with tightening lips, and the hands on the hips of authoritarian parents when speaking to children create distance and fear. With the promotion of raising children with love, care, respect, and no corporal punishment, parents of the new generation in Taiwan are learning to use body language to express their love, care, and respect for children in communication. Hugging is a powerful body language that reflects parents' responsiveness toward children. Children feel secure and loved from the hugs of their parents [19]. Giving hugs and kisses to children to express parental love and encouragement is raising a lot compared to prior generations.

The use of eye contact when speaking and giving full attention during the conversation with children not only enhances the quality of communication but also is a way to show parents' love, care, and support [20]. Body language can easily be detected whether the person has been distracted or not. Parents in Taiwan have promoted spending quality time with children, like helping them with their homework or doing activities together, and full attention is essential. In this fast-paced, busy generation, most parents seem to have their cell phones in their hands all the time and are not

aware that it's a negative sign of body language. Parents need to put down their cell phones a bit when doing activities; playing on the phones can be interpreted as parents do not care about or neglect their activities with children. Using the stickers of mobile messaging apps can be an effective nonverbal communication for parents to display their care, love, emotion, or thoughts to youth. The app Line is commonly used in Taiwan. It has various cute characters with numerous emotions and actions. Parents can directly express their feelings by simply sending out the stickers.

### ***Parenting in the Chinese Mainland***

Similarly to the case of language and verbal communication, the Chinese mainland has been known as a "nation of manners" since ancient times. Etiquette is not only a matter of language but also of non-verbal communication. Certain gestures have a different meaning in the Chinese mainland than in other cultures. For example, the Chinese like to express respect and friendliness through the act of bowing and to express recognition through smiling and nodding. This body language is an outward expression of the Chinese culture's 'etiquette' and reflects the Chinese cultural connotation of friendliness and respect.

We can see that within the Chinese cultural context, there is a rule of non-verbal communication that has been passed down for millennia. However, this rule is not widely applied in family education. In the authoritative parenting model, parents will try to keep a level gaze when conversing with their children, which means that they will squat down to communicate with their children. In addition, they avoid pointing their finger at the child. Parents who adopt the authoritative parenting model are more likely to acknowledge their children with a smile. Research has shown that using appropriate non-verbal communication skills can help build trusting relationships with children and enhance their well-being [14]. The situation is less positive in authoritarian parenting. Firstly, parents with authoritarian parenting styles often point their fingers at children and demand what they must do. It is important to note that this gesture is impolite behavior in Chinese culture. In addition, authoritarian parents often cross their arms over their chests and look down at their children when confronted with them. Some studies suggest that this posture represents parental defense [21]. In other words, this posture represents the parent's refusal to communicate with the child. The child will lack opportunities to communicate when confronted with a defensive parent. On the other hand,

it will be difficult for the child to build a trusting relationship with the parent due to the parent's defensive or impolite behavior. Ultimately, this will reduce the child's sense of well-being [21].

### **Comparative Analysis of Nonverbal Communication**

Even though culture has had a significant impact on verbal and nonverbal communication through generations, the parents in these three countries have realized the importance of nonverbal cues in communication, especially with their children, where they implemented authoritative parenting styles in the sense of non-verbal communication. Parents in these three countries are attentive to the children with highly demanding and enable autonomy during conversation. For example, in Malaysia, parents teach their children to use common non-verbal cues like smiling during communication, which is associated with pleasant emotions such as enjoyment, warmth, and friendliness. Most of the majority believed that smiling at people demonstrates good manners and emotion for others. Besides, Malaysian parents have implemented speech clarity and pleasing voice tone as well as joyful accents when communicating with their children, as well as taught them not to point their finger at others when they communicate with others. However, when it comes to serious matters, Malaysian parents will still implement or use downcast eyes, hands on hips, or tapping on the arm when they communicate with their kids to show their demandingness or emotions. Taiwan has gone away from authoritarian parenting, where responsive communication styles that emphasize children's needs and mutual communication have taken the lead. Parents in Taiwan have started to learn to use body language to express their love, care, and respect for children in communication, which includes hugging, giving eye contact, and kissing, which is a very powerful body language that reflects parents' responsiveness toward children. Besides using nonverbal communication cues, parents in Taiwan have promoted spending some quality time with children, like helping them with their homework or doing activities together, and full attention is essential. In the Chinese mainland, there are different types of parenting styles in terms of nonverbal communication had been applied. However, most of them had implemented parenting styles similar to those in Taiwan and Malaysia, which are authoritative when communicating with their children. Parents or citizens in the Chinese mainland just like to express respect and friendliness through the act of bowing and to

express recognition through smiling and nodding, which is an outward expression of the Chinese culture's 'etiquette.' In addition, they will try to keep a level gaze, which means that they would squat down to communicate with their children and avoid pointing their finger at the child, yet be more likely to acknowledge their children with a smile. However, some of the parents will still be using the authoritarian parenting style that will still be pointing their fingers, crossing their arms over their chest, as well as looking down at their children, and demanding what they must do, which is impolite behavior in Chinese culture.

### **Impact on Children's Social and Emotional Development**

Nonverbal communication abilities are essential in every society for social achievement and psychological wellness. The way parents react to their children's emotional manifestations determines the extent to which a kid feels connected to a parent and may, therefore, affect a child's interpersonal perspective as well as their perception of future adult relationships. Understanding and responding to a child's nonverbal cues, which can indicate a desire for assistance, signal interpersonal distress or function by parents, is critical for parents to successfully manage their children's impact, physiology, and behavior, preserve them from risk, and provide advice on how to react to environmental events [6]. Children's nonverbal interpersonal abilities are molded by their guardian's reactions through socialization, observational learning, modeling, and mimicking. Research has shown that children are more resilient when their parents react consistently and attentively to their child's nonverbal cues, which helps to create a personal sense of authority and discover ways to sustain relationships efficiently.

Additionally, a mother's maternal contact and nonverbal vocalizing enhance the synthesis of oxytocin and activate brain systems among kids, indicating an aura of safety and contributing to the growth of physiological balance and social connectivity. Furthermore, children's somatizing issues, such as clinically inexplicable migraines, have been connected to parents' dismissive or harsh reactions to their children's conveying negative feelings. Children who have not developed efficient ways to communicate their feelings nonverbally, as well as to effectively read the nonverbal expressions of others, may be unprepared to deal with the requirements of socializing as well as might trigger violent behaviour. In other words,

nonverbal communication processing deficiencies have been found to be linked to depression and social anxiety in young people and teens [22].

### **Gender Roles and Gendered Communities**

The traditional belief that women have family-specific roles, domestic duties, and communal commitments is the fundamental reason they lack representation in the workforce. Men are prone to be seen as overseeing contributing resources for a family, according to traditional beliefs about men's and women's social roles, while women are more economically dependent. This is partly due to men's social role as family breadwinners, while women commonly take up the job of family carer [23].

### **Parenting Styles & Gender Roles and Gendered Communities**

#### ***Parenting in Malaysia***

Women in Malaysia had similar experiences. In comparison to men, despite Malaysia's rapid post-independence industry and educational gains, women's labor force participation rates remain modest and low. In Malaysia, labor force participation suggests that after women leave the labor force, they do not always return. Women showed higher rates of participation at younger ages throughout the ages of 20 and 24 and 25 and 29, which fell after reaching a peak, while men's labor force participation peaks between the ages of 25 and 29 and remains consistent throughout the rest of their lives before falling between the ages of 55 and 59 after retirement [24]. In ancient Asian society, power is typically distributed according to gender, age, and generation. The family's decision is made by the eldest male member. This dominant structure, commonly known as patriarchy, was prevalent in Malaysian families of many racial backgrounds.

Meanwhile, in terms of financial knowledge, women have less financial understanding and inferior financial conduct than men, according to a substantial body of literature. Men are more likely than women to use credit cards and make investments in stocks or bonds, whereas men are said to be more self-assured and eager to make risky financial judgments. Gendered financial role patterns that youngsters experience throughout time become internalized norms that influence their future expectations and behavior [25].

When gendered role patterns get internalized, persons frequently act based on the beliefs, attitudes,

and expectations that underpin these patterns without even realizing them. Malaysian fathers automatically encourage their sons to place importance and gain financial resources. It might additionally clarify why men tend to be more preoccupied with financial matters and regard money as an indicator of power than women, whereas women, in general, play communal and emotionally active roles, which foster the development of caring, nurturing, and affectionate characteristics. Men, in other words, tend to play agentic roles, resulting in increased independence, control, ambition, and dominance [25]. Men's preference for independence and autonomy may also contribute to greater male views towards money and its accumulation. In this sense, Malaysian society and families might place boys and girls on separate "money tracks" to prepare youngsters for adulthood by offering girls "dependence training" and boys "independence training". According to a recent Malaysian study, a woman's function is regarded more in the context of family concerns. According to past studies, 90% of Malaysian women prioritized family over work, as well as women who ought to uphold their femininity, be subservient to their husbands, and be keen to adjust when needed, even within modern Malaysia.

However, being exposed to global media may have called into question the supremacy of patriarchy as a prevalent feature of Malaysian culture. Malaysian family systems have changed dramatically in the last decade. Malaysian parents have started to be more sensitive and responsive, and they have started to realize the importance of parental involvement in nurturing their children. They started to share their responsibility in terms of spending quality time and helping each other in their children's education and development. Past research has shown significant maternal care was linked to a lower risk of depression, eating problems, and behavioral problems, whereas minimal maternal care was linked to self-handicapped, a psychological approach in which people prevent effort in the expectation of preventing potential failure from harming self-esteem. In other words, high levels of paternal care are related to a lower risk of social anxiety and liquor abuse or dependence, whereas an absence of paternal care indicates impostor syndrome, in which the individual denies their accomplishments.

#### ***Parenting in Taiwan***

In a traditional agricultural society, parents generally prefer to have boys more than girls because boys can help with work in the families. Boys can bring value to



families and make the families' values grow, expand, and continue. On the other hand, girls can bring less value to their families and eventually will move out and be someone else's family members when they marry. As a result, traditionally, parents invest most of their resources in boys and wish they could bring honor to the families. As mentioned above, the society in Taiwan has changed; gender inequality is diminished in terms of family roles, workplaces, and so on; the sense of gender equality is climbing; parents of the new generation are open-minded about the genders of newborns [26]. Parents of the current generation are more willing to support and make investments in girls than before. The resources that they give to their children are the same, regardless of gender. However, when it comes to the ways of raising and educating children, parents have different expectations, rules, and responsibilities toward boys and girls because of gender stereotypes.

Gender role ideology makes parents raise their children based on their sexes and not on who they are and what they like and want to be. Parents have purchased clothes (pink for girls and blue for boys) and toys (dolls for girls and dinosaurs for boys) and decorate the room in respect of children's sex before they are born; the norm of gender roles has been set following society's stereotype. As mentioned above, parents will expect boys to bring honor to families when they grow up, but they will not be putting this kind of pressure on girls. Parents will make strict rules and expect more discipline on boys than girls. When the boys fall, parents tend to tell them not to cry and stand up on their own because they need to be strong. Society expects males to be strong, brave, and responsible to be able to support the family; thus, parents have the same expectations for the boys and have educated boys in this norm since they are little [27]. Boys are deemed to be muscular and outgoing and must like cars, sports, dinosaurs, and outdoor activities. Girls are deemed to like to wear skirts, like pinkish color, and play dolls. Gender equality in supporting children has been reached, but the gender stereotype on gender roles has remained and been developed from parents to children during the parenting road.

### ***Parenting in the Chinese Mainland***

As mentioned above, patriarchy is a social system that has existed in the Chinese mainland for over 2,000 years. Male superiority is an important part of this system [28]. Women were inferior for this long period.

They did not get to participate in social work and had to depend on men. Women were unable to choose marriage either. Arranged marriages, polygamous marriages, child marriages, and other institutions destroyed women's lives for a long time. The social status of women did not improve before the Chinese mainland's reform and opening. Studies have shown that in the pre-reform and opening-up of the Chinese mainland, although the government had banned polygamy and arranged marriages, polygamy, and arranged marriages still existed in some less economically developed areas [29]. The situation improved after the introduction of the reform and opening-up policy, but at the beginning of the 21st century, child marriages were still practiced in very few economically backward areas [30]. In recent years, the Chinese mainland has made great efforts to improve the social status of women by providing them with jobs and maternity allowances to safeguard and support their social status. Public opinion in the Chinese mainland is increasingly concerned about the current situation of Chinese women, and more and more women are trying to pursue the life they want [31]. Following the improvement of the social status of women, parenting styles have been changed in different regions depending on the economic development status.

In economically developed areas, parents tend to raise their children through authoritative parenting, as men and women have equal access to employment opportunities in economically developed areas of the Chinese mainland, and there is no significant difference between women's and men's occupational performance. However, in less economically developed areas, parents tend to adopt authoritarian or uninvolved parenting styles because of their living style. Traditional farming is the most common living style in less developed regions. Farming is not fully mechanized agricultural production; manual methods of sowing, nurturing, and eventually harvesting crops are needed. Men have a physical advantage in this type of work. This makes women seem "useless". As a result, some parents in these areas adopt uninvolved parenting styles because they believe that their daughters are not worth the resources invested in their upbringing. In addition, authoritarian parenting styles are adopted because these parents believe that women can only be dependent on men for survival, and they lack labor skills. Therefore, only by raising their daughters to be submissive can they ensure that they can still survive after marriage. Parents with this belief will gender-

degrade their children, forbid them from having free minds, and teach them that they are born inferior. Studies have shown that women who live in uninvolved parenting cannot socialize and explore the meaning of life and their worth. They don't just lack a sense of well-being; they don't even know what it is. They may feel that there is no point in thinking about happiness or pursuing it. As a result, girls tend to be submissive to their parents' opinions; they are afraid to have their own opinions because having them means being blamed and demeaned. They have the same experience of happiness as women with an uninvolved parenting style.

For boys, the Chinese parenting style is one of authoritative parenting or permissive parenting. In economically developed areas of the Chinese mainland, men and women have the same employment opportunities. Therefore, parents of boys will think similarly to parents of girls that it is more beneficial for children to follow an authoritative upbringing. However, in less economically developed areas, parents of boys are more likely to raise their children in a permissive way. One of the main reasons for this is that in less economically developed areas, higher productivity means the power of speech. The fact that men are more productive means that they are more likely to be the ones who make the decisions. Parents in these areas believe that since gender has already determined their children to be the ones who hold the most resources, they do not have to make demands on their children. They even believe that because of the superiority of their gender, boys have the power to make the rules and that they are right no matter what they do [28]. There is evidence that tolerant parenting is associated with higher levels of well-being for boys due to low parental demands. However, this may come at the cost of low achievement and behavioral problems for boys [32].

### **Comparative Analysis of Gender Roles and Gendered Communities**

Looking at the transitions of gender roles in Malaysia, Taiwan, and the Chinese mainland above, it seems like feminine power is getting more attention and respect than ever before. The traditional gender role ideology is fading. Even though certain areas have yet to be changed, the voices of gender equality are getting louder in these three countries. The gender ideology has gradually shifted from traditional to transitional or even egalitarian. In a way, it has influenced the parents of families in Malaysia, Taiwan,

and the Chinese mainland. Traditionally, fathers only focused on earning money in all three countries and ignored household tasks, children's education, and development; they now have paid more attention to their family members. Females are no longer the dependent roles of the households; mothers have to go out to work and make monetary contributions to the families. Parents in Taiwan no longer put all the resources on boys and have to treat their children equally since girls can contribute to families as well as boys. Family resources have been equally distributed to children and not based on gender, even though certain gender role stereotypes still exist. Except for the less economically developed or rural areas in the Chinese mainland, the majority of regions have practiced gender equality in parenting. Both demandingness and responsiveness of parenting styles toward children are becoming similar and not differentiated by gender. The enhancement of gender role equality in society results in positive parenting outcomes.

### **Impact on Children's Social and Emotional Development**

Gender roles and gendered communities of the families are deeply influenced by parents. As mentioned, parents play vital roles and are the foundation of families. Parents' attitudes and norms of gender roles can be transmitted to their children and have lifelong effects on their children, especially on how they view and identify themselves, thus affecting their social interaction. As an example, in rural areas of the Chinese mainland, when a girl is raised in a male-dominated society and views herself as less valuable to the family, it's easy for her to have a similar belief and to look down on herself as she grows up. The lack of confidence and self-abasement can impact the girl's social and emotional health and thus jeopardize her well-being tremendously. She may be afraid to interact with others, not trust self-judgements, and be always dependent and easily manipulated by others. In addition, as with the male-dominated society, boys can naturally be spoiled by permissive parenting and have the habit of being taken for granted as they grow. Parents contribute most of the family resources to boys with great expectations, but the results could be disappointing due to the attitude and behavior that have developed in childhood. Parenting in a gender-equal way is essential, especially when a family has both girls and boys in the household. Children can easily sense the different treatments from their parents and make comparisons. The feeling of unfairness may

damage the parent-child relationship or even among siblings. As a result, positive views of gender roles and gendered communities in parenting are essential for developing the social and emotional well-being of children.

### **Family Communication**

Family communication is frequently brought up in discussions on the role of the family in modern society. Parents are the foundation of a healthy family atmosphere. Communication between family members and siblings has also been found to influence decision-making processes, and clear interaction between parents and children can lead to a very positive and efficient engagement [22]. Parents that use two-way communication will allow their children to become closer to them. This situation may provide the child with adequate opportunity to express their viewpoint or to approach their parents for advice on their concerns. On the other hand, establishing one-way communication that emphasizes parental authority as the primary element of engagement may lead to a less favorable outcome.

### **Parenting Styles & Family Communication**

#### ***Parenting in Malaysia***

McLeod and Chaffee (1972) developed the quadrant-based family communication pattern paradigm, which includes permissive, pluralistic, prohibitive, and protective communication patterns. The first aspect is permissive, which is defined as one in which the parents exercise little control over their children's perceptions and behaviors, which indicates that only parent-child communication is used in the decision-making process where very little interaction is necessary. These families reflect complete independence and are perceived to be less concerned. A prohibitive pattern is a variety of parental control that fails to enable children to participate in making choices, whereas when it comes to deciding, parents frequently tell their kids what to think [22]. This communication pattern shows that interaction between parents and children is one-way rather than two-way. Another pattern of family communication is open family communication, often known as pluralistic communication. Pluralistic families foster open conversation about ideas and decision-making. Pluralistic parents are more open-minded and focused on preserving mutual understanding among all family members, which is a more relationship-concept-oriented pattern characterized by parents encouraging

their children to determine anything based on their consent and removing any restrictions on their capacity to express themselves. The final type will be protective communication with a communication style that combines control and encouragement toward any concern. When children in this sort of family are set on deciding, they will receive counsel from their parents, but they will still have the option to make their personal decisions. Protective family ideals allow children to think freely, but parents will retain the authority to govern their children's behavior by maintaining a family hierarchy. The essence of this protective tendency can be seen in situations where parents enable their children to voice their opinions and feelings, but the final decision is frequently dependent on parental approval [22].

Most Asian families, including Malaysia, have a socio-oriented communication pattern that prioritizes vertical interaction ideas, obedience, parental control, and restriction to certain external information [5]. As a result, parents who follow this pattern are more prone to adopt a restrictive approach rather than safeguarding their children just when necessary. This communication pattern shows that communication between parents and children is one-way rather than two-way. However, the trends of family communication have evolved over the years. In Malaysia, the concept-oriented pattern that is permissive and pluralistic patterns is highly implemented. This implies that concept-oriented family communication, with no transformation into micro-dimensions, is more likely to be executed by parents than the socio-oriented pattern in a prohibitive family pattern, which had a very low average implementation in the family. This leads to the conclusion that many Malaysian parents are open-minded by providing their children with complete freedom to choose their way of life. However, when it comes to choosing a life mate, Malaysian parents tend to have concerns about certain rules and norms that their children must follow, which emphasizes obedience to parents and the significance of respecting norms and standards that were socially created in society without even questioning or discussing the reason behind it. The protective family pattern is distinguished by the parent's high level of encouragement while also exerting control over the child. In terms of selecting a life partner, this means that while the final decision will still be made by the children, that decision should be based on the parents' ideas and considerations [22]. Although this pattern emphasizes rigorous obedience to parents' protection to avoid such disputes, the element of encouragement

in this pattern allows children to make their own decisions as long as they follow the guidelines provided by parents. When discussing parental communication about marriage and choosing a life partner, it is concluded that parental communication that emphasizes parents' total control is no longer practiced among Malaysian families. Results showed that children reared in an open home have a better level of self-confidence and are more adaptable in their social lives, whereas their parents or families have a greater likelihood to be open to accepting children's opinions, inclined to tolerance, and prepared to accommodate children's behaviors.

### **Parenting in Taiwan**

Because of the traditional cultural background, communication of the majority of Taiwanese families of past generations is unidirectional. Words of authoritarian parents are the golden rules that cannot be against. The communication, in a way, is like parents direct and instructing, and children follow. Children of authoritarian parents are under high pressure from the expectations and the plans that parents have been made for. If children talk back, that means disobedience and disrespect of parents. To avoid family arguments, most children tend to follow their parents' instructions even though they disagree with them. Parents think that they are doing what is best for their children, but children can only see monopolization and control [33]. The lack of communication between parent-child has enlarged the generation gap that parents feel their children have misbehaved and are difficult to communicate with, and children think parents don't understand them and are resistant to talk to parents because they feel it's useless [34]. Authoritarian parents, in a way, have created children's reliance and are not able to judge or make decisions on their own because they have been following the instructions since they were born. In addition, it pushes children away from their parents so that children cannot feel their parents' love and increases tensions because of the misunderstanding.

Parents in the new generation implement mutual communication so that they learn the importance of listening to their kids and making further explanations to their children on why they made rules; instead of giving instructions to follow, they make suggestions. Children have the autonomy to decide, and at the same time, they must be responsible for their own decisions. The role of parents is to be with children whenever they needed. Mutual respect is developed when both parties step into each other's shoes to understand each other

through bidirectional communication. Advancements in technology have developed new ways for family members to have more chances to communicate with each other in this fast-paced society [35]. The use of communication software shortens the distances between each other. As previously mentioned, family members can use stickers, emoticons, or emojis to express words or feelings that they cannot say on their faces because of shyness. In addition, people get to read the words before delivering the messages, which decreases the chances of conflicts; people tend to say things impulsively when angry and regret later. Parenting is continuously learning, and it's important for parents to modify mindsets and to learn together with children to be involved with their lives to have a better understanding of what they are facing, thus improving the quality of family communication.

### **Parenting in the Chinese Mainland**

Xiao (Filial Piety) and Ti (Brotherly Obedience) were the two core values of family life throughout the 2000 years of the Chinese Empire (221 BC - 1911 AD). Confucianism, the dominant ideology, made filial piety the ultimate cornerstone of the entire social order. During the Western Zhou period, from about 1045 to 771 BC, the initial usage of the word 'xiao' referred mainly to rituals for deceased parents and ancestors. Later, Confucianism in the early Warring States period (475 BC-221 BC) held that 'filial piety' was expressed as obedience and respect for one's parents. It is defined primarily as the filial obedience of children to their parents. Filial piety was an important criterion for evaluating individuals in Chinese history. Thus, for dozens of centuries, parents have continually taught their children to treat their elders with filial piety and obedience, an act that is central to the measurement of their children's moral values. Brotherly obedience ("ti") is the attitude toward elder brothers; "ti" emphasizes the relationship between relatives of the same generation and how to get along. In the concept of 'ti', younger family members are expected to obey and respect older family members of the same generation. As a result, both filial piety and brotherly obedience are often found in Chinese culture [28].

Based on the historical background and cultural values, traditional Chinese require children to show obedience and respect for the opinions of their parents, especially their fathers [28]. From this perspective, parenting in feudal-era families was 'authoritarian' and uncommunicative. Not only was there no communication between children and parents but there was also a lack of communication between children. As mentioned

above, Ti (Brotherly Obedience) requires younger children to obey and respect their peers [28]. Therefore, historically, in the Chinese mainland, there has often been a lack of communication between siblings as well, with older children often expressing themselves in a commanding manner to younger children and younger children not having the power to express or fulfill their wishes.

Currently, with the Chinese mainland's gradual modernization and integration into globalization, traditional family ethics and values are challenged. People have begun to rethink traditional family communication methods. Different family communication patterns are established based on the economic development of the regions. In developed cities, parents are more likely to use authoritative parenting to communicate with their children. As described above, parents in authoritative parenting styles give children more warmth and respect, both in verbal and non-verbal terms. As a result, children started to feel respected emotionally and fulfilled socially under the authoritative parenting style. Not only do they have a higher sense of well-being, but they also perform better academically [36]. However, children in rural and poor areas are still influenced by the culture of filial piety and brotherly obedience, and they practice the authoritarian parenting style. They believe in the judgments of elders rather than younger ones. Parents make decisions for their children without considering their wishes, which is often accompanied by tragedy. Studies have shown that children in these areas are now more likely to drop out of school at junior high school for financial reasons (to make money for their families), even though the Chinese government waived all tuition fees until high school 20 years ago [37]. In addition, parents in these areas have excessive expectations of their children's filial behavior. When they are older, they force their children to stay and live in their hometowns to take care of themselves. In the process, parents will emphasize the justification of their behavior by trying to instill a culture of filial piety and brotherly obedience in their children. One study showed that this behavior once led to a child having an emotional breakdown and killing his parents [38].

Why are there such serious consequences when authoritarian parenting patterns meet a culture of filial piety and brotherly obedience? It is because healthy family communication patterns have been disrupted. It is theorized that parents should do the following when communicating with their children: firstly, not to shame, criticize, and lecture their children; secondly,

not to rely too heavily on punishment; and thirdly, not to dictate without discussion [39]. Our reading of the culture of filial piety and brotherly obedience above reveals that giving orders without discussion and shaming children are characteristics of both authoritarian parenting and the culture of filial piety and brotherly obedience. It has been shown that the attitudes of parents and children in family communication can determine the level of trust and dependence of both parties on the communication and thus affect happiness. At the same time, happiness can also have an impact on the willingness of both parties to communicate. The more authoritarian the parents are in their communication, the lower the happiness of the children; the lower the happiness, the more reluctant the children are to communicate with their parents [40]. Therefore, I believe that parents should choose an authoritative parenting style to communicate with their children, as it is more conducive to their children's well-being and lifelong development, both in terms of communication style and willingness to communicate.

### **Comparative Analysis of Family Communication**

The trend in parent-child communication has moved from one-way communication to mutual and bidirectional communication in Malaysia and Taiwan, as well as economic development regions in the Chinese mainland. Under the influences of Western culture and the development of economic status, authoritarian parenting's ways of communication (giving instruction rather than communicating) are unfavorable in these countries. In Malaysia, the concept-oriented pattern is implemented in family communication. In Taiwan, parents have enforced mutual communication so that children's opinions and ideas are being listened to, and children are encouraged to be autonomous and responsible for their own lives. In the Chinese mainland, family communication is improved in economic development regions where parents care about children's emotions when communicating. However, in rural areas, one-way communication is implemented; authoritarian parenting in family communication is applied because of historical and cultural backgrounds.

### **Impact on Children's Social and Emotional Development**

Positive and healthy family communication can help to enhance the parent-child relationship and thus keep children from hiding anything from their parents in adolescence and adulthood. Children are more likely to

talk to parents if parents react with warm and gentle feedback. Healthy family communication, in a way, can unite members of a family, tightening the relationship between each family member. Healthy family communication tends to create a positive atmosphere in the household, thus directly affecting the interrelationship among family members. Healthy family communication can also advance children's interpersonal relationships and thus have an optimistic social and emotional status. Communication in an authoritative parenting style can display parents' love and care in response to children's emotions and necessities but also in a moderate monitoring way at guiding children to develop anatomy and building responsibilities of their lives. Positive skills of verbal, nonverbal, and gender roles and gendered communities mentioned in prior sections all have strengthened family communication and thus developed the well-being of children.

## DISCUSSION

This research was conducted with the aim of investigating and comparing parenting styles and related communication patterns in Malaysia, Taiwan, and the Chinese mainland. The findings showed that, in general, in all three of these regions, the style of parenting and the way parents communicate with their children, as well as the culture of the community and the family, have changed from a traditional and authoritarian attitude to a position based on dialogue and listening. This process has positive effects on the social and emotional development of children.

This finding is consistent with cross-cultural studies conducted in the past, which showed that the parenting style in Western and individualistic countries is more authoritative and dialogue-based than in non-Western and collectivist countries [4, 41]. Although it has been shown before that in collectivist cultures, an authoritarian parenting style is presented [42], the findings obtained in this study show that due to social and economic changes, parenting style is also moved towards authoritative and democratic methods. Hong and his colleagues 2012 also examined the parenting styles of fathers in Chinese families in Malaysia and showed that the proportion of respondents practicing authoritative parenting styles (37.0%) was the highest, followed by authoritarian (34.0%) and permissive (29.0%) [43].

These changes in the parenting style have made the social and emotional development of children more

mature. Previous research has also shown that authoritarian parenting style is related to higher emotional and social development in children [44, 45]. Sarkhoni (2016) found a link between authoritative parenting style and higher emotional intelligence in adolescents [46].

As can be seen, authoritative parenting is related to the higher social and emotional development of children. Therefore, families should pay more attention to this issue. It is suggested that in future studies, by conducting cross-cultural comparisons, the variables that play a mediating role in the relationship between parenting styles and children's well-being will be identified.

## CONCLUSION

Parents have communicated with their children in different approaches based on the parenting styles they have implemented. The similarities and differences in communication of verbal, nonverbal, gender roles and gendered communities and families of Malaysia, the Chinese mainland, and Taiwan are discussed and explored in the report. The ways parents communicate with their children can affect children's social and emotional well-being at various levels. In Malaysia, democratic communication styles were prevalent, and communication was effective and open, promoting children's independence and self-confidence. The high-context culture emphasizes conveying positive emotions through non-verbal elements such as smiling. Parents in Taiwan moved from a harsh parenting style that often communicates with negative words to a communication style that is positive and respectful of their children's opinions, and the use of non-verbal language, such as hugging and eye contact with children, has also enhanced the quality of communication. Chinese parents' parenting styles are influenced by Confucianism and patriarchy; respect for elders and honorific language is applied in communication. Non-verbal cues such as bowing and smiling reflect friendliness and respect with different parenting styles. In terms of gender roles and parenting styles, Malaysia faces gender inequality, and despite improvements in education, the proportion of women in the labor force is still limited. Taiwan has made progress in gender equality, but stereotypes still exist in parenting. In the Chinese mainland, historical patriarchy influences parenting styles, which are currently changing in economically developed regions. The overall family communication patterns of Malaysia, the mainland, and Taiwan have moved to mutual

communication, leading to positive outcomes for parent-child relationships. In Malaysia, conceptually orientated communication is prevalent, promoting openness and acceptance of children's views. In Taiwan, authoritarian styles were discarded, and more mutual understanding communication was used. In the Chinese mainland, parenting styles in economically developed areas shifted towards an authoritative style, promoting warmth and openness in communication with children.

Parenting styles and communication patterns significantly impact children's social and emotional development. Warm, positive verbal and non-verbal communication, notions of gender equality, and respect for children's views have led to positive outcomes, whereas overly controlling and negative communication and gender stereotyping or prejudice can have adverse effects. As social norms and values change, parents in these countries have adapted their communication styles to open, friendly, mutual, and responsive ways to create a caring and supportive environment for their children's well-being and development.

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