

## Lesson of Emotions in the Family: The Role of Emotional Intelligence in the Relation Between Filial Piety and Life Satisfaction Among Taiwanese College Students

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This study investigated the relationships between reciprocal filial piety beliefs, emotional intelligence, and life satisfaction among Taiwanese young adults. A total of 481 college students from Taiwan were recruited for the study. Structural equation modelling was employed to analyze the data. The analysis produced the following results. First, reciprocal filial piety was positively related to all of the four types of emotional intelligence: self-emotional appraisal (SEA), others' emotional appraisal (OEA), regulation of emotion (ROE), and use of emotion (UOE). Second, both ROE and UOE had a positive association with life satisfaction whereas SEA and OEA had a nonsignificant association with life satisfaction. Third, the two types of emotional intelligence, ROE and UOE, mediated the relation between reciprocal filial piety and young adults' life satisfaction. The findings suggest that reciprocal filial piety, representing high-quality interaction between children and parents, can facilitate individuals' ability to control and use their emotions, which in turn improves their life satisfaction.

*Keywords:* emotional intelligence, filial piety, life satisfaction

Good parent–child relationships are considered important in developing individuals' emotional intelligence. Perceived warmth and responsiveness in authoritative parenting (Manzeske & Stright, 2009; Morris, Silk, Steinberg, Myers, & Robinson, 2007; Strayer & Roberts, 2004; Olson, Bates, & Bayles, 1990) were found to be linked to various dimensions of trait emotional intelligence, including understanding of emotions, knowledge of emotions, and regulation of emotions (Alegre, 2011; Argyriou, Bakoyannis, & Tantaros, 2016; Asghari & Besharat, 2011). According to Asghari and Besharat (2011), the connection between perceived authoritative parenting and emotional intelligence can be conceptualized through self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985). By satisfying three fundamental psychological needs (competence, relatedness, and autonomy), authoritative parenting characterized by a high degree of support, warmth, and autonomy facilitates children's internalization of their parents' attitudes, the establishment of self-regulation abilities, and the development of emotional competence in children (Asghari & Besharat, 2011). In particular, recent research has focused on children's perceptions of parenting styles as a more

proximate criterion to determine the impact of parenting styles on children.

However, parenting styles are tied to parents' ideas about their children, rather than children's perspective about their relationships with parents. Furthermore, research fails to consider the cultural uniqueness of parent–child interactions in some cultural contexts, for instance, the Chinese cultural context that highly emphasizes the close-knit connections between parents and children (Chao & Tseng, 2002). Therefore, taking a different approach, Chen (2014) proposed that filial piety can serve as a more accurate and proximate variable to represent the culture-specific indicators of parent–child interaction quality from the children's perspective by asking children about their beliefs about parent–child interactions.

Filial piety in Chinese societies is defined as a culture-specific Confucian concept that represents an important virtue and responsibility in children's interactions with their parents (Ho, 1996). Filial piety prescribes how children should care for, respect, and honour their families (Ho, 1996; Wong, Leung, & McBride-Chang, 2010; Yeh & Bedford, 2003). It includes a variety of forms of emotional and material support offered by children to their parents, including love, attentiveness, compliance, and memorialization (Yeh, 2003). Over thousands of years, filial piety has become one of the leading guidelines for maintaining harmonious intergenerational relationships within Chinese families (Yeh, Yi, Tsao, & Wan, 2013). Embedded in the sociocultural context of

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family interdependence (Chao & Tseng, 2002), filial piety has been shown to play a significant role in Chinese individuals' social adaptation and psychological functioning, including life satisfaction (Chen, 2014; Yeh et al., 2013), happiness (Chen, Wu, & Yeh, 2016), and family cohesion (Cheung, Lee, & Chan, 1994; Yeh & Bedford, 2004). However, it is unclear whether filial piety can link to individuals' emotional intelligence. Furthermore, the process by which filial piety links to individuals' psychological outcomes has been neglected by research. Therefore, the present study sought to investigate how filial piety contributes to young adults' life satisfaction by shaping individuals' emotional intelligence.

### Filial Piety and Its Psychological Functioning

Earlier work on the effects of filial piety in modern Chinese societies has yielded conflicting results. For example, filial piety has been found to associate with better intergenerational relationships (Lawrence, Bennett, & Markides, 1992) and a low frequency of parent-child conflict (Kim, Kim, & Hurh, 1991). However, filial piety has also been linked to coercive, harsh, or overprotective parenting practices and negative personality orientations in children (Ho, 1994). Yeh (2003, 2006) suggested that these contradictory findings are due to the confounding components of the filial piety construct. According to his *dual filial piety* model (Yeh, 2003, 2006), the construct of filial piety independently includes two distinct elements: reciprocal and authoritarian filial piety. With relatively more negative implications, authoritarian filial piety focuses on obedience, submission, and obligation in the filial piety construct. Authoritarian filial piety requires children to suppress their own desires and obliges children to comply with their parents' will due to parental authority. Children with authoritarian filial piety are required to place great importance on honouring their parents' reputations, fulfilling family responsibilities, and continuing the family line by having offspring (Yeh, 2003, 2006). By contrast, reciprocal filial piety embraces a relatively more positive essence. Reciprocal filial piety emphasizes intimate bonding and affection between parents and children. Children with reciprocal filial piety voluntarily provide emotional, physical, and financial support to their parents in gratitude for the love and care they received from their parents during childhood. Children with reciprocal filial piety respect, care, and look after their parents, and memorialize them when they pass away.

Empirical evidence has consistently shown that reciprocal filial piety is associated with better personal adaptation, particularly life satisfaction, in modern Chinese societies in Taiwan (Chen et al., 2016), Hong Kong

(Chen, 2014), and China (Yeh et al., 2013). Life satisfaction, as an essential element of individuals' subjective well-being (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985), is a cognitive evaluation of individuals' life condition (Huebner, Suldo, & Gilman, 2006), which increasingly become a vital component due to the development of positive psychology (Frisch, 2005; Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005; Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009). Filial piety is closely related to parent-child relationships in Chinese family life and is an important indicator for individuals' life satisfaction. However, the mechanism by which reciprocal filial piety contributes to individuals' life satisfaction remains unresearched.

Reciprocal filial piety, which is driven by the psychological need for interpersonal connection, derives from the Confucian principle of favouring the intimate (Yeh, 2003). Children's affection, sentiments, and positive emotions toward their parents are an important prerequisite for reciprocal filial piety. Reciprocal filial piety, therefore, can be conceptualized as an interaction quality that signifies a positive emotional climate between children and their parents (Chen & Ho, 2012; Chen et al., 2016). During the socialization process, parent-child interactions provide an arena for recognition and the communication of emotional messages and establish guidelines for children about the use of emotions in regular social interactions. As a result, it can be reasonably speculated that reciprocal filial piety facilitates emotion-related competence, which may facilitate life satisfaction.

### The role of emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence has been defined as the capacity for accurately appraising and expressing one's own feelings, recognizing others' emotions, and effectively regulating and using emotions in one's life (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Research has identified two different conceptualizations of emotional intelligence: ability emotional intelligence and trait emotional intelligence. Whereas ability emotional intelligence is measured with ability tests (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2000) and can be trained through interventions, trait emotional intelligence refers to individuals' dispositions and their perceptions of their own emotions and is typically assessed through self-reports (Petrides & Furnham, 2003). Recent empirical evidence has consistently shown that trait emotional intelligence can be connected to life satisfaction among Chinese young adults (Kong & Zhao, 2013; Liu, Wang, & Lu, 2013; Wong & Kong, 2014). However, research on how emotional dispositions have been nurtured from human interaction has been rare. Alegre (2011) proposed that parent-child interactions, given their critical role in individuals' development, may be an important arena that shapes trait emotional intelligence.

Therefore, reciprocal filial piety (i.e., culture-specific beliefs about adult children interacting with their parents based on gratitude, intimacy, and voluntariness), was used in the present study to examine how parent–child interactions associate with the development of trait emotional intelligence among Chinese young adults.

Therefore, the current study sought to examine how reciprocal filial piety is connected to emotional intelligence and how both work together to contribute to individuals' life satisfaction. The present study filled the gap in the literature by investigating the mediating role of emotional intelligence in the relation between family factors and psychological outcomes. We hypothesized that reciprocal filial piety can be positively linked to four different dimensions of emotional intelligence (Mayer & Salovey, 1997) — namely, self-emotional appraisal, others' emotional appraisal, regulation of emotion, and use of emotion — and that consequently contributes to higher life satisfaction among Chinese young adults. Similar to positive effects of authoritative parenting on emotional intelligence (Asghari & Besharat, 2011), reciprocal filial piety may also help shape individuals' emotional intelligence by satisfying three components in self-determination theory. Reciprocal filial piety entails children's provision of care, assistance, and support to their parents out of gratitude and love. Therefore, children with strong reciprocal filial piety believe their filial behaviours are voluntary (autonomy) and motivated by strong emotional bonding to repay their parents (relatedness); they also believe that they are capable of repaying their parents emotionally, physically, and financially (competence). Through interacting with parents based on reciprocal filial piety beliefs, adult children have more opportunities to receive “lessons of emotions” in the family — for example, to feel their own emotions to their parents, to be sensitive to their parents' emotional needs, to express emotions to their parents, and to control their emotions when necessary in order to interact harmoniously with their beloved parents. Therefore, the intrinsic nature of reciprocal filial piety may help adult children to develop self-regulation abilities and gain emotional competence, which subsequently leads to higher life satisfaction.

It should be noted that authoritarian filial piety was not included in the hypothesized model for the following reasons. First, according to previous research (Chen, 2014; Leung, Wong, Wong, & McBride-Chang, 2010; Yeh et al., 2013), there was a lack of theoretical and empirical links between authoritarian filial piety and life satisfaction. Second, in contrast to the strong emotional elements implied in reciprocal filial piety, authoritarian filial piety that emphasized conformity and compliance due to role requirements may be more relevant to children's cognitive appraisal and reasoning about the hierarchical

relationships with their parents, suggesting that has relatively little logical connection to emotional intelligence. Third, past research has found that reciprocal filial piety has been used individually in the model to test its effects on psychological adjustment (Yeh, Tsao, & Chen, 2010). Therefore, the present study also only includes reciprocal filial piety individually in our hypothesized model.

## Method

### Participants

Six hundred Taiwanese college students were recruited for the study from two universities with which the author was affiliated during the 2014 to 2015 academic year. Participants were invited to join the research and answer the questionnaires in class. The researcher first introduced the title and the purpose of the study, and participants signed the consent form before proceeding to the questionnaire. There were 481 questionnaires in total at the end. The response rate was 80%. The final sample consisted of 239 (49.7%) males and 242 (50.3%) females, with an average age of 19.9 years ( $SD = 1.43$ ). The participants completed the questionnaires within approximately 20 min, and their voluntariness and anonymity were guaranteed. Each participant who filled out a questionnaire received a NT\$50 coupon as an incentive.

### Measures

**Background information.** The background information collected from the participants included their age, gender, and educational level of their parents.

**Reciprocal filial piety.** The Reciprocal Filial Piety (RFP) Scale was used to measure college students' reciprocal filial piety beliefs (Yeh & Bedford, 2003). This scale contains eight items, which assess attitudes toward providing physical and financial care and support for parents and being grateful to them for one's upbringing. Sample items are “Pay more attention to parents' health” and “Be grateful to my parents for raising me.” All items were measured on Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (*extremely unimportant*) to 6 (*extremely important*). A higher score represented a higher level of filial piety. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for the RFP scale was .88.

**Emotional intelligence.** Emotional intelligence was assessed with the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (Wong & Law, 2004). The scale is divided into four ability dimensions, and each subscale has four items: (a) self-emotional appraisal (SEA), (b) others' emotional appraisal (OEA), (c) regulation of emotion (ROE), and (d) use of emotion (UOE). SEA measured

the ability to understand one's emotions in depth and to express emotions naturally. Sample items are "I have a good sense of why I have certain feelings most of the time" and "I really understand what I feel." OEA assessed participants' emotional ability in perceiving and understanding the emotions of people related to them. Sample items are "I am a good observer of others' emotions" and "I am sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others." ROE measures a person's ability to regulate his or her emotions, which supports rapid recuperation from emotional suffering. Sample items are "I am able to control my temper and handle difficulties rationally" and "I can always calm down quickly when I am very angry." UOE relates to the ability to make use of emotions to inform one's activities and performance in daily life. Sample items are "I would always encourage myself to try my best" and "I always set goals for myself and then try my best to achieve them." The items were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores indicated a higher level of emotional intelligence in the various dimensions. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the scale is .80, which shows a good reliability of the measure of emotional intelligence, as in Hsu's (2006) study. In addition, the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficients of SEA, OEA, ROE, and UOE are .88, .93, .85, and .80, respectively.

**Life satisfaction.** In this study, the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985) was employed to measure the global life satisfaction of young college students. The Chinese version consists of five items rated on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). A higher score indicated greater life satisfaction. A sample item is "I am happy with my life." Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient of the scale was .81. The results of confirmatory analysis conducted by Sachs (2003) have revealed that the scale assessed a unidimensional construct with good validity among Chinese populations.

## Data Analysis

Data imputation was employed to replace the missing data by SPSS (Beale & Little, 1975). There was little missing data. The missing rate for each variable ranged from <1 to 1%. The results of Little's missing completely at random test showed that variables were missing completely at random,  $p > .05$ . We computed each mean variable of the participants who reported their answer and then attributed that to all participants who did not report their results.

Next, structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to test our hypothetical model with an Amos 21.0 software package (Arbuckle, 2008). First, confirmatory factor analysis with Kline's (2005) two-step modelling procedure was

conducted to verify the relations among observed variables and their corresponding latent constructs. Random item parcelling, one of the SEM techniques (Bandalos & Finney, 2001), is widely used to produce aggregate-level observed variables that contain the sum (or average) of multiple items. When we analyzed the models on the basis of parcelled data, the results revealed that all of the various resources had fewer correlated residuals and sampling errors (Little, Cunningham, Shahar, & Widaman, 2002). Six variables were included in the analysis: (a) reciprocal filial piety, (b) self-emotional appraisal, (c) others' emotion appraisal, (d) regulation of emotion, (e) use of emotion, and (f) life satisfaction.

After parcelling, the original eight items for reciprocal filial piety were randomly assigned to four indicator scales, with each indicator composed of two of the original items. Two indicator scales were created for the latent variable consisting of the four types of emotional intelligence, with each indicator including two items. The five items for life satisfaction were randomly parcelled into three indicator scales, with two indicators including two of the original items each and one containing the remaining original item. Next, the structural model was tested to evaluate the hypothetical mediation effect.

In the next step, we estimated the measurement models and the structural model utilizing maximum likelihood estimation and used  $\chi^2/df$ , Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and root mean square residual (SRMR) to estimate the model fit. Previous research has shown that model fit is acceptable when  $\chi^2/df$  falls between 2 and 3 (Kline, 2005), CFI and TLI values are greater than .90 (Bentler, 1990; Bentler & Bonett, 1980), and RMSEA and SRMR values are lower than .05 (Byrne, 2010).

The bootstrapping method was employed to test the mediating effects. This method is more reliable than Baron and Kenny's (1986) causal-step method because it has the ability to assess the stability of parameter estimates even if the assumptions of a large sample and multivariate normality are not tenable (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The bootstrap process was repeated 2,000 times, and a 95% confidence interval was adopted for this test. The indirect effects in this study were considered significant when the upper (1,950th) and lower (50th) bounds of the interval excluded zero.

## Results

### Preliminary Analysis

First, we conducted analyses of variance (ANOVA) to measure whether main variables such as reciprocal filial piety, emotional intelligence, and life satisfaction varied as a function of the demographic variables of gender,



age, or parental educational level. The results revealed that the only demographic variable to have an effect on the main variables was gender. Therefore, only gender was controlled in our hypothetical structural model.

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and correlation matrix of all variables. The zero-order correlations between reciprocal filial piety beliefs, emotional intelligence, and life satisfaction were in line with the relationships anticipated by our research hypothesis. The emotional intelligence variables SEA, OEA, ROE, and UOE were not only positively and significantly associated with reciprocal filial piety,  $r_s = .14, .16, .09,$  and  $r = .23$ , respectively;  $ps < .05$  but also positively and significantly correlated with life satisfaction,  $r_s = .20, .14, .28,$  and  $.23$ , respectively;  $p < .01$ . In addition, reciprocal filial piety was significantly and positively correlated with life satisfaction,  $r = .24, p < .001$ .

### Testing the Measurement Models

We verified the factorial validity of the latent constructs through confirmatory factor analyses. Three measurement models were tested for this purpose: one for reciprocal filial piety beliefs, one for the emotional intelligence variables (SEA, OEA, ROE, and UOE), and the last for life satisfaction. For the reciprocal filial piety model, the model fit values were  $\chi^2 = 1.25, df = 1, \chi^2/df = 1.25, CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.00, RMSEA = .023,$  and  $SRMR = .005$ ; for emotional intelligence, the model fit values were  $\chi^2 = 46.69, df = 34, \chi^2/df = 1.37, CFI = 1.00, TLI = .99, RMSEA = .028,$  and  $SRMR = .016$ . For life satisfaction, the model fit values were  $\chi^2 = 1.84, df = 2, \chi^2/df = 0.92, CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.00, RMSEA = .000,$  and  $SRMR = .009$ . All of the factor loadings in the two models were significant,  $ps < .01$ . Both models exhibited acceptable model fit.

### Testing the Hypothetical Structural Model

Given the results of the preliminary analysis, the gender variable was controlled in the subsequent analysis. The

model fit of the hypothetical structural model was acceptable,  $\chi^2 = 187.601, df = 83, CFI = .97, TLI = .96, RMSEA = .051,$  and  $SRMR = .060$ . All loading estimates were significant,  $ps < .01$ , indicating that the measurements of these factors were acceptable.

Two competing models, including the direct effect model and the indirect effect model, were also examined. For the direct model, the model fit values were  $\chi^2 = 38.44, df = 17, CFI = .99, TLI = .98, RMSEA = .059,$  and  $SRMR = .038$ . For the indirect model, the model fit values were  $\chi^2 = 195.70, df = 84, CFI = .97, TLI = .96, RMSEA = .053,$  and  $SRMR = .064$ . These results indicated that the proposed hypothetical model was an optimal model.

The structural paths between reciprocal filial piety beliefs, emotional intelligence, and life satisfaction are shown in Figure 1. The effect of reciprocal filial piety was positively significant on SEA, OEA, ROE, and UOE,  $\gamma = .20, p < .01; \gamma = .27, p < .01; \gamma = .28, p < .01; \gamma = .38, p < .001$ , respectively. Both ROE and UOE had a significant positive effect on life satisfaction,  $\beta = .26$  and  $\beta = .67$ , respectively;  $ps < .001$ , whereas SEA and OEA had a nonsignificant effect on life satisfaction. Moreover, the direct path from reciprocal filial piety to relationship satisfaction was also significant,  $\gamma = .34; p < .01$ . The percentages of variance accounted in SEA, OEA, ROE, and UOE were 2, 2.4, 4.1, and 6.7%, respectively. The amount of variance for life satisfaction accounted by other variables in the model was 29%.

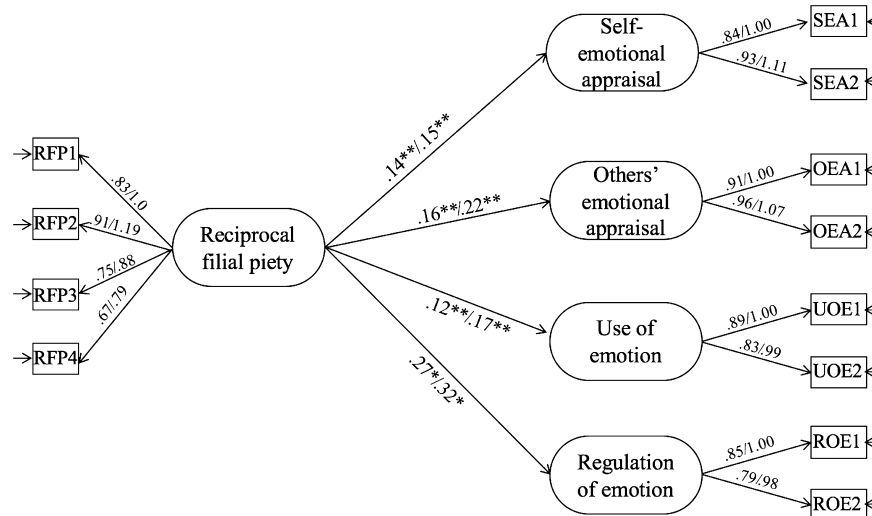
We used the bootstrapping method in Mplus 7.11 to verify the hypothetical mediating effects in order to get more tenable results (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The indirect effect from reciprocal filial piety to life satisfaction was significant through ROE, estimate = 0.02,  $SE = 0.01, p < .05, 95\% CI [0.00, 0.05]$ , and UOE, estimate = 0.11,  $SE = 0.03, p < .01, 95\% CI [0.06, 0.16]$ . The results indicated that reciprocal filial piety indirectly contributed to life satisfaction by facilitating stronger emotional intelligence in the form of ROE and UOE.

**Table 1** Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations of the Main Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Reciprocal filial piety belief	–	–	–	–	–	5.24	0.61
2. Self-emotional appraisal	.14**	–	–	–	–	2.98	0.74
3. Others' emotional appraisal	.16**	.32**	–	–	–	2.86	0.87
4. Regulation of emotion	.09*	.32**	.28**	–	–	2.51	0.89
5. Use of emotion	.23**	.32**	.27**	.32**	–	2.72	0.78
6. Life satisfaction	.24**	.20**	.14**	.28**	.42**	4.63	1.18

Note:  $N = 481$ .

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .



**Figure 1** Mediation model of reciprocal filial piety, emotional intelligence (self-emotional appraisal, others' emotional appraisal, regulation of emotion, and use of emotion), and life satisfaction. The first number indicates the standardized estimate, the second number the unstandardized estimate. Although not shown in the figure, gender as a controlled variable was correlated with reciprocal filial piety and contributed to four aspects of emotional intelligence and life satisfaction in the model. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

## Discussion

Our findings have some theoretical and practical contribution. First, most previous research used parenting styles to explore the effect of family factors on individuals' emotional intelligence. However, the construct of parenting styles fails to consider the cultural uniqueness of parent-child interactions and ignores children's beliefs about their parent-child interactions from the children's perspective. The present study examined one type of filial piety, reciprocal filial piety, to more accurately represent Chinese adult children's beliefs about their interaction quality with their parents and how it helps shape one's emotional intelligence. Furthermore, despite the positive implication of reciprocal filial piety on individual psychological outcomes in research, the mechanism is still unclear. The present study empirically examined and supported the mediating role of emotional intelligence in the relation between reciprocal filial piety and life satisfaction. Our findings suggest that Chinese young adults who interact with their parents based on intimacy, reciprocity, and gratitude tend to have better emotional intelligence, including better emotional appraisal and emotional regulation, so that they have better life satisfaction.

Consistent with previous findings (Chen, 2014; Yeh et al., 2013), our results show that reciprocal filial piety is positively associated with Taiwanese young adults' life satisfaction. The positive relationships found between four different dimensions of trait emotional intelligence and life satisfaction are also in accordance with the findings of earlier research on Chinese societies

(Kong & Zhao, 2013; Liu et al., 2013; Wong & Kong, 2014).

Consistent with the positive effects of authoritative parenting (Asghari & Besharat, 2011), adult children with strong reciprocal filial piety tend to have better emotional intelligence, including better ability to appraisal their own and others' emotions, and to use and control their own emotions. This association can be explained by self-determination theory. The nature of reciprocal filial piety, including voluntariness, intimacy, and desire to repay parents echoes the three components in self-determination theory: autonomy, relatedness, and competence, respectively. Children with reciprocal filial piety believe they are able to repay their parents (competence) voluntarily (autonomy) out of gratitude and love for their parents (relatedness). As a result, reciprocal filial piety can help trigger self-regulatory capacity in emotions due to the strong emotional foundation implied in reciprocal filial piety. When endorsing reciprocal filial piety, adult children have more opportunities to experience "lessons of emotions" through parent-child interaction, and such lessons can relate to individuals' emotional intelligence. Those with reciprocal filial piety may have more "practices" to be aware of their own emotions to their parents as well as their parents' emotions, and to control and use their emotions successfully when getting along with their beloved parents. Those practices eventually help shape individuals' emotional competence and consequently contribute to life satisfaction.

The mediating role of trait emotional intelligence between family factors and psychological outcomes has

also been supported by other studies. For example, Alegre and Benson (2010) indicated that trait emotional intelligence mediated the relation between parental behaviour and adolescents' psychological adjustment. Sillick and Schutte (2006) also showed that the relation between perceived parental love and adult happiness was mediated by emotional intelligence. Our results found that two of the four different dimensions of emotional intelligence — emotional regulation and use of emotion to facilitate performance — work as mediators in the relation between reciprocal filial piety and life satisfaction. Since reciprocal filial piety is driven by strong bonding and intimacy, adult children with reciprocal filial piety provide a high degree of emotional attentiveness to their parents. Such parent–child interactions, which emphasize thoughtfulness, care, and understanding, may offer a good arena in which children may develop emotional intelligence. By maintaining emotional closeness with their parents, adult children with reciprocal filial piety have opportunities to practise the abilities of regulating their own emotions and using emotions to facilitate harmonious parent–child interactions. Consequently, high trait emotional intelligence contributes to greater life satisfaction in young adults.

It should be noted that two other emotional intelligence characteristics in the present study, namely, self-emotional appraisal and others' emotional appraisal, were not strongly associated with individuals' life satisfaction. According to previous literature (Bonanno et al., 2007; Rottenberg, Gross, & Gotlib, 2005; Rottenberg, Kasch, Gross, & Gotlib, 2002), those who are highly sensitive to their own emotions and others' emotions may be emotionally vulnerable and therefore at risk for some psychological symptoms (e.g., depression). Therefore, while reciprocal filial piety can positively link individuals' abilities to expressing their own emotions and recognizing others' emotions, such association did not strongly contribute to better life satisfaction. However, the zero-correlation between life satisfaction and SEA and OEA were still positively significant in Table 1. It is also possible that the effects of SEA and OEA on life satisfaction exist, but are suppressed by the effects of these two other emotional intelligence characteristics in the model.

### Limitations and Future Directions

Several limitations of the present study should be kept in mind. First, due to the cross-sectional design of the study, our results do not support causal inferences about relations between latent variables (Hong & Ho, 2005). Therefore, caution is advised when interpreting the findings. Our results suggest that reciprocal filial piety contributes to life satisfaction through shaping individuals'

emotional intelligence. However, it is possible that these relations are reciprocal. For instance, people who are more satisfied with their lives may have greater emotional competence, or higher emotional intelligence may promote stronger reciprocal filial piety. Future studies might consider using longitudinal data to further clarify the causal directions of the associations identified in the present study. Second, the study utilized convenience sampling instead of random sampling. Therefore, our results may apply to university students in Taiwan only and not be generalizable to the population as a whole. In addition, filial piety beliefs may vary according to developmental stage, educational level, and/or gender. For example, Yeh et al. (2013) found that reciprocal filial piety was positively associated with a higher level of education and with female gender. The sample characteristics should thus be kept in mind when interpreting our results. Last, since there was little missing data in the present study, we only adopted mean imputation to fill out the missing data. However, future studies should consider using an expectation maximization algorithm as a better choice to handle missing data.

### Implications

This study suggested that Chinese young adults with strong reciprocal filial piety enjoy higher life satisfaction due to higher trait emotional intelligence. Reciprocal filial piety, founded on intimate bonding, closeness, and affection between parents and children, should thus be advocated to help promote individuals' ability to express and control their emotions, recognize others' emotions, and use emotions to facilitate performance. Moreover, abilities to effectively utilize and regulate their emotions can further contribute to greater life satisfaction. For those young adults who are not satisfied with their life due to lack of emotional competence, educators and practitioners may encourage them to develop high quality parent–child interaction that echoes reciprocal filial piety. By developing a positive emotional climate with their parents through voluntarily caring for them, young adults learn to properly use and control their emotions, which subsequently links to greater life satisfaction.

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