

# Traditional Parenting in a Digital Era: A Malaysian Perspective

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the relevance and limitations of traditional parenting models in addressing the realities of contemporary family life within an increasingly digitalised and multicultural society. Guided by concerns that conventional parenting theories may no longer adequately reflect current social, technological, and cultural contexts, the study explored parents' perceptions of traditional parenting practices and their applicability in modern child-rearing. A qualitative research design was employed, involving in-depth interviews with 36 Malay, Chinese, and Indian parents from four regions of Peninsular Malaysia. Participants were selected using purposive and snowball sampling techniques to ensure diverse perspectives and experiences. The findings indicate that traditional parenting continues to be valued for promoting discipline, moral development, respect for elders, cultural identity, and family cohesion. However, participants also identified significant limitations, particularly regarding harsh disciplinary practices, authoritarian control, limited emotional engagement, and the inability of traditional approaches to address challenges associated with digital technologies and changing social expectations. Parents emphasised the need for greater flexibility, communication, emotional support, and digital supervision in contemporary parenting. Rather than rejecting traditional parenting altogether, most participants advocated a balanced and adaptive approach that integrates traditional values with modern parenting competencies. The study concludes that parenting frameworks must evolve to remain relevant, combining cultural and moral foundations with the skills required to navigate the complexities of twenty-first-century family life.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The twenty-first century has witnessed unprecedented transformations in family life, parenting practices, and child development, driven largely by globalisation, technological advancement, and increasing cultural diversity (Wan Maizon et al., 2026a; Wan Maizon et al., 2026b). These developments have reshaped the contexts within which parents raise their children, creating new challenges and opportunities that extend beyond the assumptions underpinning traditional parenting theories. While conventional parenting models have contributed significantly to understanding parent-child relationships and developmental outcomes, there is a growing need to critically evaluate their relevance and adequacy within the realities of contemporary society. The rapid evolution of social, cultural, and technological environments has exposed several deficiencies in existing parenting frameworks, raising questions about their applicability in addressing the complexities of parenting in a globalised world.

One of the most significant transformations affecting parenting is the pervasive influence of digital technologies. The introduction of digital technologies has redefined the very essence of family life, altering how family members communicate, interact, and maintain relationships. Traditional forms of communication have increasingly been supplemented or replaced by digital platforms, social media applications, and mobile technologies, resulting in a more decentralised family network shaped by continuous connectivity (Onyeator & Okpara, 2019). The accessibility of smartphones, tablets, and internet-enabled devices has created new

opportunities for communication and learning while simultaneously challenging traditional family dynamics (Wan Maizon et al., 2024a; Wan Maizon et al., 2024b). Consequently, parenting now occurs within both physical and virtual environments, requiring parents to navigate an increasingly complex digital landscape. These developments have implications for family cohesion, changing the ways familial relationships are nurtured, maintained, and experienced (Gao et al., 2023).

The influence of digital technologies extends beyond family relationships to significantly affect children's cognitive, emotional, and social development (Abd Hamid et al., 2019). Contemporary children are growing up in environments saturated with screens, interactive media, and virtual experiences, making digital engagement an integral component of everyday life. This constant exposure influences various aspects of child development, including educational engagement, creativity, emotional well-being, and interpersonal skills. As parents navigate this evolving environment, understanding the implications of digital exposure has become essential for fostering healthy child development. Existing literature highlights the complex relationship between screen time, social media engagement, and children's developmental outcomes, revealing concerns related to mental health, cognitive functioning, and social relationships (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2018). Research has also identified challenges associated with cyberbullying, excessive screen time, and exposure to inappropriate online content, all of which require active parental involvement and guidance. Consequently, digitalisation has created a dual landscape of opportunities and risks, demanding parenting approaches that extend beyond the scope of traditional theoretical models.

Despite the profound changes brought about by digitalisation and globalisation, many existing parenting theories remain grounded in assumptions developed during earlier historical periods. Parenting has long been recognised as a multifaceted and dynamic endeavour, yet many traditional parenting models demonstrate a limited capacity to adapt to contemporary social realities (Sanvictores & Mendez, 2022). A major deficiency of conventional parenting frameworks lies in their static nature and their inability to accommodate rapidly evolving societal conditions. Developed within contexts characterised by relatively stable social structures and limited technological influence, these models often fail to address the complexities associated with technological advancements, global interconnectedness, and changing societal norms (Crosnoe et al., 2014). As a result, they provide insufficient guidance for parents navigating the challenges of twenty-first-century family life. Another critical limitation of traditional parenting models concerns their lack of cultural sensitivity and inclusivity. Many established parenting theories were developed within specific cultural settings and implicitly assume that parenting practices and developmental outcomes are universally applicable. However, parenting is deeply influenced by cultural beliefs, traditions, values, and social expectations. Families from diverse cultural backgrounds may adopt different approaches to discipline, communication, education, and child-rearing practices (Abd Hamid et al., 2024). The inability of many traditional parenting models to adequately account for cultural diversity limits their relevance and applicability across multicultural societies (Gorman & Balter, 1997). Consequently, these models often fail to resonate with families whose experiences and cultural realities differ from those upon which the theories were originally based.

The deficiencies of conventional parenting models become even more apparent when considering the pervasive influence of technology on contemporary family life. Existing theories rarely address challenges associated with digital parenting, including screen time management, online safety, social media engagement, and the impact of digital technologies on child development (Modecki et al., 2022). As digital technologies increasingly shape children's educational, social, and recreational experiences, parents are required to assume new responsibilities as digital mediators, educators, and protectors. The absence of technological considerations within traditional parenting frameworks creates a significant theoretical gap, leaving parents with limited guidance on how to effectively navigate digital environments while supporting their children's well-being. Beyond technological and cultural limitations, existing parenting models also exhibit deficiencies in addressing mental health considerations. Effective parenting requires not only the provision of physical and developmental support but also the promotion of emotional resilience and psychological well-being among both parents and children. However, many conventional frameworks place limited emphasis on mental health dimensions, thereby overlooking a critical aspect of family functioning. In an era characterised by increasing social pressures, technological influences, and changing family structures, emotional well-being has become a central concern

within parenting. The failure of traditional models to adequately incorporate mental health considerations restricts their ability to provide a holistic understanding of parenting in contemporary society.

Furthermore, some parenting theories continue to emphasise prescriptive and normative ideals that define what constitutes “good” or “effective” parenting. While such guidelines may provide useful benchmarks, they often fail to acknowledge the diversity and complexity of real-world parenting experiences. This overemphasis on idealised parenting practices may inadvertently contribute to parental guilt, stress, and anxiety when families are unable to conform to prescribed standards (Carbines et al., 2017). Parenting is inherently dynamic and context-dependent, yet many traditional frameworks offer limited flexibility in accommodating the unique circumstances, challenges, and strengths of individual families. The increasing multiculturalism characteristic of globalised societies further highlights the shortcomings of conventional parenting models. Families today frequently navigate multiple cultural influences, values, and identities, creating what has been described as a multicultural paradox in parenting (Masiran, 2021). This paradox reflects the tension between preserving cultural heritage and adapting to the norms and expectations of broader society. As globalisation facilitates greater intercultural interaction and mobility, parents face the challenge of balancing diverse cultural influences within the family environment. Cultural identity serves as a critical factor shaping parental beliefs, expectations, and child-rearing practices, influencing areas such as discipline, educational aspirations, and the transmission of cultural values across generations (Bornstein, 2012).

Understanding the interaction between cultural identity, values, and parenting practices is essential for comprehending contemporary family dynamics. Parents increasingly seek to foster a sense of cultural belonging among their children while simultaneously preparing them to participate in multicultural and globalised societies. This balancing act presents both challenges and opportunities. On one hand, multicultural parenting may involve navigating conflicting cultural expectations, parenting philosophies, and identity-related tensions. On the other hand, it offers opportunities to cultivate cultural awareness, adaptability, inclusivity, and appreciation for diverse perspectives (Masiran, 2021). However, many traditional parenting theories provide limited guidance on how families can effectively manage these multicultural realities, further underscoring their deficiencies within contemporary contexts. Hence, these limitations suggest a growing disconnect between traditional parenting models and the realities of parenting in today's globalised world. The combined influences of digitalisation, multiculturalism, technological advancement, and evolving social expectations have created parenting challenges that extend beyond the explanatory scope of many conventional frameworks. Therefore, there is a pressing need to critically examine the deficiencies of traditional parenting models and evaluate their capacity to address contemporary parenting realities. By identifying these shortcomings, this study aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of parenting in the twenty-first century and provide a foundation for the development of more inclusive, adaptable, and contextually relevant parenting frameworks capable of supporting families in an increasingly interconnected world.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative research design to obtain an in-depth understanding of parenting experiences, perceptions, and practices within contemporary multicultural and digital contexts. To ensure the inclusion of participants with relevant knowledge and diverse perspectives, a combination of purposive and snowball sampling techniques was employed. Purposive sampling enabled the targeted selection of participants who met the study's criteria, while snowball sampling facilitated access to additional participants through referrals, thereby enriching the diversity of experiences represented in the study. The research was conducted exclusively in Peninsular Malaysia due to the substantial presence of the country's three major ethnic groups—Malays, Chinese, and Indians—which provided a suitable context for exploring multicultural influences on parenting. A total of 36 parents were interviewed across four geographical regions of Peninsular Malaysia, namely the Northern, Central, Southern, and East Coast regions, with equal representation of Malay, Chinese, and Indian participants in each region. This sampling strategy ensured balanced ethnic representation and enabled meaningful cross-cultural comparisons. Consistent with qualitative research principles, the sample size was considered adequate to generate rich, contextualised insights and achieve data saturation, where no substantially new themes or perspectives emerged from the interviews. Rather than seeking statistical generalisation, the study prioritised depth of understanding, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of participants' lived experiences

and perspectives on parenting in an increasingly digital and multicultural society. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Research Ethics Committee prior to data collection (Ethics Approval Code: REC/02/2025 (ST/MR/23)). All participants were informed of the study's purpose and procedures, and their participation was voluntary. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process.

## FINDINGS

The findings revealed that participants overwhelmingly viewed traditional parenting as an important mechanism for instilling discipline, obedience, responsibility, and moral behaviour among children. Parents believed that children require clear boundaries, guidance, and correction in order to develop into respectful and responsible individuals. Traditional parenting practices were seen as particularly valuable in helping children distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, develop self-control, and understand the consequences of their actions. Interestingly, although participants came from different cultural backgrounds, religious traditions, and social contexts, many expressed similar views regarding the importance of discipline, respect, and moral development in child-rearing. While their parenting practices and the ways in which these values were communicated to children varied according to cultural and religious expectations, there was considerable agreement on the significance of guiding children towards socially appropriate behaviour and responsible adulthood. This finding suggests that cultural and religious differences may shape the expression of parenting practices, but do not necessarily preclude common concerns about children's character development and social adjustment. The following statements illustrate this perspective:

“Strict discipline, obedience, and basic respect for everyone are important. The majority of traditional parenting practices are still useful and continue to play a significant role in parenting today.” (Khor, Chinese, male, 31, Terengganu)

“Children should know the difference between right and wrong, and they should be corrected when they do something inappropriate [...] They become aware that certain behaviours should not be practised.” (Sharmila, Indian, female, 31, Negeri Sembilan)

“Children are able to learn through the examples and guidance they receive, helping them become better individuals.” (Tan, Chinese, female, 50, Johor)

“Strict parenting, like traditional parenting where parents may scold their children or give them various responsibilities, actually has its benefits. For example, children become more responsible and more aware of their duties and the consequences of their actions.” (Husna, Malay, female, 27, Johor)

“In traditional parenting, I instil values such as respecting elders, not hurting others, and being honest. We must educate children from a young age to become righteous individuals.” (Vijayan, Indian, male, 38, Kedah)

Another major theme concerned the role of traditional parenting in preserving cultural traditions, family values, and religious beliefs. Participants emphasised that parenting extends beyond behavioural management and includes the transmission of identity, cultural heritage, and spiritual values across generations. Family traditions, religious practices, respect for elders, and intergenerational relationships were considered important elements of child development. Participants stated:

“Children are raised by their grandparents, with an emphasis on religious practices and respecting older family members.” (Lim, Chinese, male, 38, Negeri Sembilan)

“We emphasise discipline, respect for elders, and the importance of family values and culture.” (Ng, Chinese, male, 40, Negeri Sembilan)

“We celebrate cultural traditions and festivals, read bedtime stories, teach respect for elders, encourage our children to greet their grandparents, use polite language, show appreciation, and spend time together through family outings and shared meals.” (Ooi, Chinese, female, 37, Johor)

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“We emphasise prayer.” (Ranitha, Indian, female, 38, Terengganu)

“As for traditional practices, the most important thing I emphasise with my children is prayer.” (Fadzli, Malay, male, 47, Terengganu)

“Yes, I strongly emphasise traditional values. In terms of advice and values, we nurture our children ourselves and do not rely on gadgets or teachers to do it for us.” (Sakinah, Malay, female, 49, Kedah)

The findings further indicate that many parents relied on advice, storytelling, communication, and personal example as important parenting strategies. Participants believed that children learn effectively through continuous guidance, explanations, and observing the behaviour of significant adults. Participants explained:

“Giving advice through moral and exemplary stories.” (Lim, Chinese, female, 57, Johor)

“Giving advice through moral and exemplary stories.” (Tan, Chinese, female, 50, Johor)

“Usually, if we explain properly why they need to follow these practices, they will listen.” (Ng, Chinese, male, 40, Negeri Sembilan)

“Children are not hesitant to share things with us.” (Kamala, Indian, female, 38, Terengganu)

“I advise my child regularly and constantly remind them. I always tell them to be careful and cautious because the world today is becoming increasingly dangerous.” (Maisarah, Malay, female, 33, Terengganu)

“In terms of traditional parenting practices, I usually use advice. I advise my children on what they should and should not do and explain the consequences of their actions.” (Rubiah, Malay, female, Terengganu)

Participants frequently highlighted the importance of family routines, shared activities, and intergenerational involvement in child-rearing. Traditional parenting was associated with creating stable family environments that promote emotional security, cooperation, and social connectedness. Participants shared:

“We practise eating together as a family, maintaining consistent routines, encouraging outdoor playtime, and involving multiple generations in child-rearing [...] At first, my children did not always appreciate routines or family rules, but over time I noticed they became more comfortable, cooperative, and confident. They especially enjoy spending time with their grandparents and aunts.” (Chen, Chinese, female, 38, Negeri Sembilan)

“I also teach my daughter about discipline, such as eating together as a family, going to bed early at around 8 p.m., and not throwing tantrums.” (Chong, Chinese, female, 26, Kedah)

A particularly strong theme concerned the belief that punishment remains a legitimate component of parenting when applied appropriately. While participants varied in the extent to which they used physical discipline, many believed that some form of corrective action is necessary when advice and guidance fail to achieve behavioural change. Importantly, punishment was generally viewed as a last resort rather than a primary parenting strategy. Participants stated:

“Using the cane and giving advice [...] It was quite difficult at the beginning, but over time it became a habit. My child is now able to listen and understand what is allowed and what is not.” (Saraswathy, Indian, female, 35, Negeri Sembilan)

“I try not to be overly gentle. If she makes a mistake, I will correct her.” (Rabiatul, Malay, female, 35, Johor)

“In Islam, we are allowed to use the cane when a child is seven years old and above. However, it is not about caning whenever we like; it is only as a reminder.” (Basirah, Malay, female, Johor)

“It is still necessary. There needs to be a balance.” (Tan, Chinese, male, 38, Kedah)

“So far, I have not used a cane, but I have threatened to do so.” (Hegagayatri, Indian, female, 33, Kedah)

"Parents play a major role in shaping children and teaching them what is right and wrong. In shaping my own child, I do use punishment, including caning." (Juwita, Malay, female, 37, Kedah)

"I do keep a cane, and I still have one now. However, I do not use it anymore." (Roslah, Malay, male, Terengganu)

"Caning can still be used if necessary. First, we advise them, and if that does not work, then caning may be required." (Maisarah, Malay, female, 33, Terengganu)

"If the issue becomes very serious, I may use a stricter approach." (Rubiah, female, Terengganu)

"At home, I still keep a cane. It is mainly there as a symbol and reminder for the children not to challenge or defy parental authority." (Maisarah, Malay, female, 35, Negeri Sembilan)

"Traditional parenting practices are still acceptable because they help children develop good values and attitudes as they grow up." (Kanagambigai, Indian, female, 40, Terengganu)

"The foundation comes from the teachings of previous generations and traditional parenting. We can modify it slightly to suit current circumstances, but the foundation must remain." (Ravichandran, Indian, male, 50, Kedah)

While participants acknowledged the value of traditional parenting in transmitting discipline and values, many distinguished between constructive traditional practices and harsh disciplinary approaches that were common in previous generations. Participants frequently described experiences of excessive physical punishment, emotional pressure, comparison with peers, coercion, and authoritarian control. These practices were perceived as potentially damaging to children's emotional well-being and psychological development. Parents highlighted that older generations often relied heavily on fear-based parenting, where obedience was achieved through punishment rather than understanding. Participants believed that such approaches may produce short-term compliance but can also create fear, resentment, emotional distress, and trauma. The following statements illustrate these concerns:

"Being overly worried and relying on caning as a form of punishment." (Goh, Chinese, male, 35, Terengganu)

"They will become afraid of making mistakes and behave well because they fear being punished with the cane." (Hoe, Chinese, male, 51, Terengganu)

"Traditional parenting practices such as caning and punishing children when they make mistakes without providing them with any explanation." (Lim, Chinese, male, 38, Negeri Sembilan)

"Comparing children with their siblings or peers and using physical punishment as a disciplinary method." (Ooi, Chinese, female, 37, Johor)

"Forcing children to fulfil their parents' dreams rather than pursuing their own dreams or passions." (Kamala, Indian, female, 38, Terengganu)

"In the past, my parents used to compare their children with others. However, nowadays I believe this practice can negatively affect children emotionally because comparisons can hurt their feelings." (Kanagambigai, Indian, female, 40, Terengganu)

Several participants explicitly referred to the possibility of childhood trauma resulting from harsh parenting practices.

"In the past, our parents would simply hit us. They would use whatever was available, whether it was a clothes hanger, a pipe, or anything else they felt like using." (Basirah, Malay, female, Johor)

"Locking children up as punishment for wrongdoing was something that happened during my younger years." (Suguneswary, Indian, female, 52, Terengganu)

"I think extremely harsh practices should not be carried out, such as using chilli as a form of punishment. It can leave deep psychological trauma in children." (Maisarah, Malay, female, 35, Negeri Sembilan)

Based on the interviews, there is perception that some traditional parenting practices are no longer suitable within today's rapidly changing social and digital environment. Participants argued that children today are fundamentally different from previous generations due to greater exposure to technology, social media, information, and changing societal expectations. Consequently, parenting approaches that were effective in the past may no longer produce the same outcomes. Parents frequently criticised excessive control, limited communication, gender bias, emotional distance, and authoritarian decision-making. Participants explained:

"Favouring boys over girls is no longer relevant and should be completely abolished, with all children being treated equally." (Khor, Chinese, male, 31, Terengganu)

"Overly strict discipline and making decisions on behalf of children." (Ng, Chinese, male, 40, Negeri Sembilan)

"Excessive control and limited communication." (Chen, Chinese, female, 38, Negeri Sembilan)

"In the past, children were often forced to comply through threats. I think that aspect of traditional parenting is outdated." (Hoo, Chinese, female, 36, Kedah)

"I cannot apply those practices to my own children today. They are growing up in a different era and would not accept them." (Suguneswary, Indian, female, 52, Terengganu)

Participants further emphasised that children today require greater emotional support and communication than previous generations.

"Children nowadays are different; they are more sensitive and more dependent on emotional support." (Chong, Chinese, female, 26, Kedah)

"In the past, fathers rarely hugged their children and seldom showed affection. I do not think it is a good practice because children need love and affection from their parents." (Fadzli, Malay, male, 47, Terengganu)

The emergence of digital technologies further challenged the relevance of conventional parenting approaches. Participants argued that parents require new competencies related to digital supervision, technology management, and online safety, areas largely absent from traditional parenting models.

"Parenting in the past was very manual and had many loopholes." (Fadzli, Malay, male, 47, Terengganu)

Despite criticisms of harsh traditional parenting practices, participants generally did not advocate abandoning traditional parenting altogether. Instead, a strong theme emerged around the need for flexibility, adaptation, and balance. Many parents described adopting a hybrid approach that combines traditional values with contemporary parenting strategies. This approach resembles what several participants described as a "carrot and stick" philosophy, whereby parents remain firm when necessary while also emphasising communication, understanding, emotional support, and digital guidance.

Participants stated: "Not really; some traditional practices may simply need to be adjusted rather than completely removed." (Chen, Chinese, female, 38, Negeri Sembilan)

"Parents should not be overly controlling." (Kamala, Indian, female, 38, Terengganu)

"Discipline should no longer rely on harsh methods but instead be carried out through communication and understanding." (Yamunaa, Indian, female, 34, Negeri Sembilan)

"There are times when you can be gentle and times when you need to be firm." (Basirah, Malay, female, Johor)

“Not all traditional practices are outdated. Values such as respecting parents, respecting elders, and maintaining the family's reputation are still important.” (Chong, Chinese, female, 26, Kedah)

The findings also reveal how parents integrate traditional values with digital parenting practices.

“Parents can decide what applications they are allowed to use on their devices.” (Hoo, Chinese, female, 36, Kedah)

“Gadgets have their own appropriate time and place. I am strict about setting time limits.” (Ravichandran, Indian, male, 50, Kedah)

“I do not allow my children to open social media accounts when they are younger.” (Shukriyah, Malay, female, 51, Kedah)

“We can give children access to gadgets, but there must be limits.” (Maisarah, Malay, female, 33, Terengganu)

Participants generally agreed that parenting in the digital era requires a balance between authority and empathy, discipline and communication, as well as monitoring and autonomy. Rather than replacing traditional parenting values, modern parenting was viewed as an evolution of those values, adapted to contemporary social realities. This theme suggests that the future of parenting may lie not in choosing between traditional and modern approaches, but in integrating the strengths of both to meet the developmental needs of children in an increasingly complex and digitalised world.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

A prominent theme emerging from the interviews concerned the continuing relevance, yet increasing limitations, of traditional parenting practices within contemporary society. Participants generally acknowledged that traditional parenting approaches have historically played a crucial role in fostering discipline, moral values, respect for authority, social responsibility, and family cohesion among children. Further, parents recognised that many traditional parenting principles continue to offer valuable contributions to child development, particularly in nurturing positive character traits, reinforcing ethical behaviour, and strengthening intergenerational relationships. These findings suggest that traditional parenting should not be viewed as entirely obsolete, as its foundational values remain relevant in promoting children's socialisation and moral development. Indeed, participants frequently described traditional parenting as providing an essential behavioural and value-based foundation upon which contemporary parenting practices can be built. Importantly, although participants came from diverse cultural backgrounds, religious affiliations, and social norms, their perspectives revealed a remarkable degree of commonality regarding the fundamental goals of parenting. Regardless of these differences, parents consistently expressed a desire to raise children who are respectful, responsible, morally grounded, and capable of contributing positively to society. This shared commitment suggests that while parenting practices may vary across cultural and religious contexts, the underlying aspirations and values guiding child-rearing remain largely universal. Consequently, traditional parenting principles continue to resonate across diverse groups because they address common developmental goals that transcend cultural boundaries, providing a shared framework for fostering children's character, well-being, and social competence.

However, despite recognising these strengths, participants consistently highlighted the growing inadequacies of traditional parenting models in responding to the realities of modern family life. Many argued that conventional parenting approaches were largely developed within social contexts characterised by limited technological exposure, stronger parental authority, and relatively stable community structures. In contrast, contemporary children are raised within highly digitalised, interconnected, and rapidly changing environments that present challenges fundamentally different from those experienced by previous generations. Participants noted that traditional parenting models were primarily designed to regulate children's behaviour within physical environments, whereas children today increasingly operate across both physical and virtual spaces, requiring new forms of parental engagement and supervision (Yan et al., 2024). Consequently, parenting approaches that rely predominantly on authority, obedience, and direct monitoring were perceived as insufficient for addressing contemporary concerns such as online safety (Roth et al., 2024), cyberbullying (Mustikasari et al., 2023), digital

addiction (Qian et al., 2024), social media influences on behaviour and identity formation (Hayes et al., 2021), and the growing importance of digital literacy and digital citizenship (Zhang, 2025).

The findings further revealed a perceived disconnect between traditional parenting practices and the lived experiences of contemporary families. Participants consistently emphasised that children today possess unprecedented access to information, digital technologies, and diverse perspectives through online platforms and social networks. This increased access has altered traditional parent-child dynamics by shifting children from passive recipients of parental guidance to active consumers, creators, and disseminators of information. As a result, many participants observed that children frequently possess technological competencies and digital knowledge that may surpass those of their parents. This transformation has fundamentally changed the nature of parental authority and necessitated a greater emphasis on communication, negotiation, collaboration, and mutual understanding within family relationships (Ergin & Essau, 2025). Consequently, parenting approaches based primarily on control, coercion, or punishment were viewed as increasingly ineffective in influencing children's attitudes, behaviours, and decision-making processes in the digital age (Kurt, 2023).

Another significant finding concerned the growing importance of parental flexibility and adaptability. Across the interviews, participants repeatedly stressed that effective parenting can no longer be based on rigid adherence to a single parenting style or fixed set of practices. Instead, parenting was described as a dynamic and evolving process that requires continuous adjustment in response to children's developmental stages, personalities, emotional needs, social environments, and digital experiences. Participants advocated a balanced parenting approach that integrates guidance, supervision, emotional support, communication, and age-appropriate autonomy. Such an approach was perceived as more capable of responding to the complexities of contemporary childhood than conventional parenting models that emphasise uniformity and compliance. These findings suggest that successful parenting increasingly depends on parents' ability to adapt their practices to changing circumstances while maintaining consistent values and expectations.

Collectively, these findings provide empirical support for existing scholarly arguments regarding the limitations of traditional parenting frameworks in contemporary contexts. While traditional parenting models continue to offer important insights into discipline, authority, family relationships, and moral development, they often fail to adequately address the complexities introduced by digital technologies, multicultural realities, and rapidly evolving social environments (Xu et al., 2022). Participants' accounts therefore suggest the need for a more adaptive and contextually responsive parenting framework that retains the strengths of traditional parenting while incorporating competencies required for navigating contemporary challenges. Rather than advocating the abandonment of traditional parenting principles, participants generally supported their modification and integration into more flexible approaches capable of responding to the realities of modern childhood.

These findings also resonate strongly with Bauman's concept of Liquid Modernity, which characterises contemporary societies as increasingly fluid, uncertain, and subject to constant transformation (Lunde et al., 2022). Within such conditions, social institutions, family relationships, and parenting practices can no longer rely on fixed assumptions or static modes of operation. Instead, parenting must evolve continuously in response to emerging technological, cultural, and social developments. Participants' repeated emphasis on flexibility, adaptability, and responsiveness reflects an emerging understanding that effective parenting in the twenty-first century requires more than the preservation of authority and discipline alone. Rather, it demands the capacity to navigate uncertainty, embrace change, and respond proactively to the shifting realities that shape children's lives. In this regard, the findings underscore the necessity of rethinking conventional parenting models and developing more dynamic frameworks that can support families within increasingly complex, multicultural, and digitally connected societies.

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## Authors' Declaration

The authors declare no conflict of interest. Although Muhammad Haziq Zaini and Siti Nur Fathanah Abd Hamid are husband and wife, their involvement in this research was conducted in a professional, ethical, and impartial manner. The study was undertaken objectively, and no personal relationship influenced the research design, data collection, analysis, interpretation, or reporting of the findings. All conclusions and recommendations presented in this study are based solely on empirical evidence and scholarly judgment.

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