

## **Adult Children's Expectations of Parental Support in Times of Adversities: Marital Relations as an Intervening Factor?**

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In today's cohorts, despite the trends towards nuclear families and changing family structure, family support network, especially parental support, is found to be critical for coping with risks (i.e. poverty, marital dissolution or victimisation) and life adversities (i.e. poverty, death or disability). Not only the relationship between social support and health is evident throughout the life course, the health of adults and older adults is predicted by contemporaneous levels of social support. While past studies on parent-child relationship focused on material/practical support from parents to adult children who are suffering problems or a crisis, others found that parents tend to provide more non-instrumental aid such as emotional support, advice, and companionship when children are in distress and often do so over geographical distance or with limited material resources. However, we know little about the scope of parental support adult children expect from their parents and there is still a lack of research that looks into relationship quality among adult children as a factor for adult children's expectation of support from parents. Thus, the aims of this study include: 1) to document the range of support adult children expect from their parents in times of needs; 2) to examine whether expectations of parental support is related to marital adjustment of adult children and, 3) to examine if the relationship between expectation of parental support and marital adjustment is a function of ethnic background. Data from a sample of 432 adult female children from Malay and Chinese ethnic backgrounds in the central zone of Peninsular Malaysia was examined using mixed between-within subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) and logistic regression. A set of standardised, self-administered questionnaire was used for data collection. Result from ANOVA revealed that adult female children's expectation for parental support tend to change across the different type of situations for both Malay and Chinese samples. Logistic regression analysis showed that, controlling for socio-demographic characteristics, there is a greater likelihood to expect support from parents among those with higher marital quality than those who reported lower marital quality; while Malay female adult children were almost 2 times more likely to expect parental support during the time of need than Chinese female adult children. The findings indicate that parents were viewed as potential source of support as problematic situations arise in the adult children's life. It also provides empirical support that marital relation is a factor effecting adult children expectation of parental support, especially for daughters. Specifically, the findings suggest that poor marital relationship among adult children was a risk factor that reduced the likelihood to seek aid and support from parents that might

mitigate their problems. Besides, this study documented a cultural aspect of parental support and how it interacts with marital relationships. Therefore, the role of older parents as an expected source of support during critical family-life events of adult children not only should be acknowledged in the social policy but the barriers and circumstances that discouraged individual help-seeking behaviour should be identified. Social innovations for sustaining reciprocity between generations and social inclusion will be discussed.