

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT ACCORDING TO THEIR DEMOGRAPHICS AT MYANMAR INSTITUTE OF THEOLOGY IN YANGON, MYANMAR

NP Brang San Awng¹

Yan Ye²

Abstract: The major purpose of this study was to investigate the amount of parental involvement from the perspectives of today's university students including the examination of several variables (gender, ethnic background, parents' annual income, parents' education background, and location) to determine if different amount of parental involvement exists according to the students' demographics at Liberal Arts program in Myanmar Institute of Theology, Yangon, Myanmar. A questionnaire was utilized as the primary research instrument. A total of 212 university freshmen studying at Liberal Arts program in academic year of (2016-2017) were selected as the participants in this study. The study found that university students at Liberal Arts program received "moderate involvement" from their parents during their university experiences. In addition, significant differences in university students' perceptions towards parental involvement were witnessed according to their gender and parents' annual income, even though there were no significant differences in university students' perceptions towards parental involvement according to their ethnic background, parents' education background, and location.

Keywords: Demographic Profiles, University Students' Perceptions, Parental Involvement, Liberal Arts Program.

Introduction

Parental involvement is not a new concept in education field. Throughout history, schools have used the parental supports both in and out of the classroom in order to boost students' educational achievement and behavior outcomes. Parental involvement has often been found to influence positively the academic performance of students (Epstein, 2008; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Jeynes, 2011; Kepic, 2006). This extensive and increasing body of literature proposes that any sorts of parental involvement are beneficial at different times in the K-12 level students' academic and social experiences (Epstein, 2008). Though many people argue that parental involvement is no more prevalent as students enroll in a university, several studies

¹ M.Ed. Candidate in Educational Administration, Graduate School of Human Sciences, Assumption University, Thailand.
brangsanawng12@gmail.com

² Ph.D. Director of Educational Research, Statistics and Measurement Center, Graduate School of Human Sciences, Assumption University, Thailand.
norayeyan723@hotmail.com

concerning the increasing level of parental involvement in university education in the 21st century and the perceptions of university stakeholders on how this increasing parental involvement affects the students. The same amount of parents' involvement actions, including their engaging in constant communication with their students, administrators and student affairs professionals in persons or via technology, making their students' academic decisions, and taking student failure personally, create lasting disadvantages for university students' psychological identity development (College Board, 2005; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Lange & Stone, 2001). Furthermore, according to the three triads and triangles, university administrators and student affairs professionals have perceived any parental involvement in university level as problematic (Hill & Taylor, 2004).

In addition, the existing research witnessed higher parental involvement with Asian university students. Therefore, this researcher was interested in investigating university students' perceptions towards their parents' involvement that helped or inhibited their university experiences and whether there are any significant differences in university students' perceptions towards parental involvement according to their demographics.

Objectives:

The followings were the research objectives for this quantitative study.

1. To identify the demographic profiles of university students including their gender, ethnic background, parents' annual income, parents' education background, and location.
2. To determine university students' perceptions towards parental involvement at Liberal Arts program.
3. To compare university students' perceptions towards parental involvement at Liberal Arts program according to their demographics: gender, ethnic background, their parents' annual income, parents' education background, and location.

Literature Review

Parental Involvement Theory

Carney's parental involvement theory (2004) was introduced after she conducted a study on how the parents of university freshmen interact with their university students and the institution and the parents' expectations of involvement over a three-year span, from 2002 to 2004 at a Liberal Arts College in United States of America. Carney's (2004) theory mainly focuses on the five common domains, which the 21st century parents get involved with their university students and the university their students are attending while university students are developing their psychological identity. The five common domains that parental involvement practiced in university students' lives are (1) experiences with faculty, (2) university finances, (3) housing and food service, (4) mental and physical health, and (5) parent-student contact.

Domain (1): *Experiences with faculty* discusses parents' association with their students' university. In experiences with faculty, parents' communication with their students' lecturers, university administrators and student affairs professionals on

behalf of their university students or in purpose of receiving information about their university students' academic and social matters.

Domain (2): *University finances* refer to parents' involvement with their university students' financial matters, which includes parents' involvement in their university students' financial aid application process, parents' financial donations to university, and parents' financial assistance to their university students in every financial aspect during the university years. This parents' financial assistance is an example of how parents have become over-involved in their adolescent students' lives; many universities face challenges reducing parental dependence among their students.

Domain (3): *Housing and food service* explores parental involvement in university students' accommodation and food matters. This area of parental involvement, housing and food service started since kindergarten continuously practice in university level. In this domain, parents' involvement with their university students' choice of residence, parents' contact with residence or their university students about room maintenance, peers concern, and food concern are included. This housing and food matter of university students is one of parents' most serious concerns about their university students' university experience (Carney, 2004). Furthermore, this continuous parental involvement with students' housing and food concerns is a root cause of producing lack psychological identity development of university students.

Domain (4): *Mental and physical health* that parents get involved in university students' lives include parents' reactions on their university students' mental and physical sickness, financial assistance for their university students' well-being, health expenses and insurance, informing the residence or university about their sons or daughters' previous health concerns, and discussions with their university students about sex, drugs, alcohol, and physical exercise.

Domain (5): *Parent-student contact* focuses on parents' communication with their university students in person or via technology which include parents' contact with their university students in purpose of receiving updated academic, personal, social, and financial information. As phone connections and social networks have become accessible in most areas from different distances in the 21st century, constant contact between parents and their university students via technology becomes more practical (Carney, 2004). This availability of technological communication has potential to bring unpredictable amounts of parental involvement on university students' lives (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

Background of Liberal Arts Program in Myanmar Institute of Theology

Myanmar Institute of Theology, originally known as Baptist Divinity School, was founded in June 1927, on Seminary Hill, Insein Township, Yangon division, Myanmar. Currently Dr. Samuel Ngun Ling, PhD is serving as the President. Myanmar Institute of Theology is currently offering seven programs including two Ph.D. programs, four Master program and a bachelor Liberal Arts program, which was inaugurated in the year 2000.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 is the conceptual framework of this study based on the theory presented above.

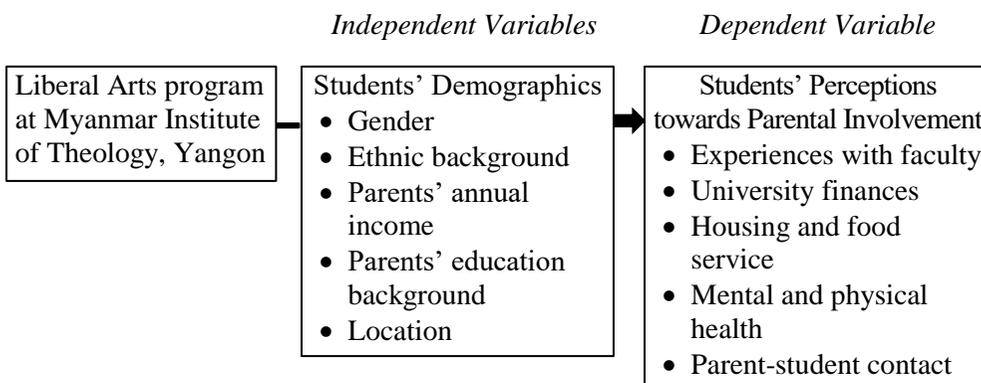


Figure1: Conceptual Framework of This Study

Procedure

This research was designed as a quantitative and comparative study. The research questionnaire included two sections. All two hundred and twelve university freshmen studying in academic year of 2016-2017 at Liberal of Arts program in Myanmar Institute of Theology were selected as the participants of this study to express their perceptions on parental involvement in the research questionnaire.

The first section of the questionnaire was for collecting the demographics of university students. The second section was designed to evaluate the university students' perceptions towards parental involvement during their university experiences and to compare their perceptions according to their selected demographics through (1) experience with faculty, (2) university finances, (3) housing and food, (4) mental and physical health, and (5) parent-student contact. For this section, there were a total of 33 statements under five domains of parental involvement. Statements 1-4 were provided to seek domain (1) *Experience with Faculty*. Statements 5-11 were provided to seek domain (2) *University Finances*. Statements 12-18 were provided to seek domain (3) *Housing and Food*. Statements 19-25 were provided to seek domain (4) *Mental and Physical Health* and Statements 26-33 were provided to seek domain (5) *Parent-Student Contact*. The participants answered the statements in the questionnaire based upon their perceptions towards their parents' involvement with their university experiences by choosing five rating scales mentioned as following: (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Undecided, (4) Agree, and (5) Strongly Agree. To determine university students' perceptions towards parental involvement, a score of 5 or the scale of 4.51-5.00 meant the respondents' perceptions on their parents' involvement was very high (Highly Involved), while a score of 1 or the scale of 1.00-1.50 meant the respondents' perceptions on their parents' involvement was very low (Not Involved), to the related statements in the questionnaire. The details of interpretation of scores and scale of the participants' perceptions levels were displayed in Table 1.

Table 1: Interpretation of Questionnaire Part II

Agreement Level	Scale	Score	Interpretation
Strongly Agree	5	4.51 - 5.00	Highly Involved
Agree	4	3.51 - 4.50	Moderately Involved
Undecided	3	2.51 - 3.50	Neutral
Disagree	2	1.51 – 2.50	Fairly Involved
Strongly Disagree	1	1.00 – 1.50	Not Involved

Frequency and Percentage were used to analyze the data of Objective I, the demographic profiles of the participants including their gender, ethnic background, parents' annual income, parents' education background, and location. *Mean and Standard Deviation* were used to analyze the data of Objective II, university students' perceptions towards parental involvement during their university student experience at Liberal Arts program. *t-test and One-Way ANOVA Multiple Comparison* were utilized for Objective III, which compare the significant differences of university students' perceptions towards parental involvement during their university student experiences at Liberal Arts program according to their demographics. Specifically, *t-test* was utilized to examine the comparison of significant different perceptions of university students on parental involvement according to their gender, ethnic background, and location and *One-Way ANOVA* was used in order to compare significant differences of the participants' perceptions towards parental involvement according to their parents' annual income and education background.

Findings

Research Objective One:

Among 212 participants in the study, 87 (41%) were males and 125 (59%) were females. 60 (28%) respondents were from the majority ethnic group and 152 (72%) were from the minority ethnic groups. 92 (43.4%) participants were from families with low income while 97 (45.8%) respondents were from families with medium income; only 23 (10.8%) respondents were from high-income family backgrounds. Moreover, 103 (48.6%) respondents' parents received just basic education, while 84 (39.6%) respondents' parents earned bachelor's degrees and 25 (11.8%) respondents' parents attained master's degrees or PhDs. Out of 212 university freshmen at Liberal Arts program, 100 participants (47.2%) came from outside of Yangon division to study at Liberal Arts program in Yangon and 112 participants (52.8%) were originally from Yangon division.

Research Objective Two:

As Table 2 showed, the overall total mean score of five parental involvement domains perceived by the university students at Liberal Arts program in Myanmar Institute of Theology according to their experience of being involved by their own parents was 3.59, which means the participants generally received moderate involvement from their parents during their university experiences at Liberal Arts program. The highest mean score of university students' perceptions on their parents' involvement was 3.87 in Domain IV: Mental and Physical Health, which meant the participants received

moderate involvement from their parents in domain IV. In addition, the lowest mean score of the participants' perceptions on their parents' involvement was 3.01 in Domain I: Experiences with Faculty, which meant the participants received the right amount of parental involvement in domain I. the detail information is provided in the following table.

Table 2: Summary of Overall University Students' Perceptions towards Parental Involvement During Their University Experiences (N=212)

Parental Involvement	Mean	S.D.	Interpretation
Domain 1	3.01	.92	Neutral
Domain 2	3.66	.66	Moderately Involved
Domain 3	3.60	.73	Moderately Involved
Domain 4	3.87	.70	Moderately Involved
Domain 5	3.82	.69	Moderately Involved
Total	3.59	.58	Moderately Involved

Research Objective Three:

As seen in Table 3, the probability significance of difference was .002 in the comparison of university students' perceptions towards parental involvement during their university experiences and their gender, which was smaller than .05 level of significant. The research hypothesis was accepted, as there was a significant difference among university students' perceptions towards parental involvement according to their gender. Specifically, the results found that female university students received more involvement from their parents than male students.

Table 3: Comparison of University Students' Perceptions towards Parental Involvement During Their University Experiences According to Gender

Gender	N	Mean	S.D.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Male	87	3.45	.53			
Female	125	3.69	.60	3.097	210	.002*
Total	212					

* <.05

As seen in Table 4, the probability significance of university students' perceptions towards parental involvement according to ethnic background was .331, which was higher than .005 level of significant. Therefore, there was no significant difference in university students' perceptions towards parental involvement according to their ethnic background and the research hypothesis was rejected in this case.

Table 4: Comparison of University Students' Perceptions towards Parental Involvement During Their University Experiences according to Ethnic Background

Ethnic Background	N	Mean	S.D.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Majority Ethnic Group	60	3.66	.58			
Minority Ethnic Groups	152	3.57	.59	.974	210	.331
Total	212					

As showed in Table 5, the probability significance of university students' perceptions towards parental involvement according to their parents' annual income was .000, which was smaller than .005 level of significant. Therefore, there were significant differences in university students' perceptions towards parental involvement according to their parents' annual income and the research hypothesis was accepted in this case.

Table 5: Comparison of University Students' Perceptions towards Parental Involvement During Their University Experiences according to Parents' Annual Income (N=212)

Parents' Income	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	29.702	2	14.851		
Within Groups	43.129	209	.206	71.967	.000*
Total	72.831	211			

* <.05

Furthermore, according to the Post-Hoc Multiple Comparison of University Students' Perceptions towards Parental According to Parents' Annual Income in Table 6, the university students from high-income families received much more parental involvement than the university students from middle-income families and low-income families during their university experiences at Liberal Arts program.

Table 6: Multiple Comparison of University Students' Perceptions towards Parental according to Parents' Annual Income (N=212)

(I) Parents' Annual Income	(J) Parents' Annual Income	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
Low	Medium	-0.029	.906
Low	High	-1.218	.000*
Medium	High	-1.188	.000*
High	Low	1.218	.000*

* <.05

In addition, as mentioned in the following Table7 and 8, the data analysis of One-way ANOVA for the comparison of the participants' perceptions towards parental involvement according to their parents' education background witnessed the probability significant value .106 (bigger than .005) and the data analysis result for the comparison of the students' perceptions on parental involvement according to their location showed .616 (bigger than .005 level of significance). Therefore, both comparisons rejected the research hypothesis and there was no evidence of significant differences in the participants' perceptions towards parental involvement according to their parents' education background and location.

Table 7: Comparison of University Students' Perceptions towards Parental Involvement During Their University Experiences according to Parents' Education Background (N=212)

Parents' Education Background	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.545	2	.772		
Within Groups	71.287	209	.341	2.264	.106
Total	72.831	211			

Table 8: Comparison of University Students' Perceptions towards Parental Involvement During Their University according to Their Location (N=212)

Location	N	Mean	S.D.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Yangon	112	3.57	.53			
Out of Yangon	100	3.61	.64	.502	210	.616
Total	212					

Discussion

1. Demographic Profiles of University Students

In this study, the numbers of female university freshmen exceeded the numbers of male university freshmen at Liberal Arts program in Myanmar Institute of Theology, Yangon, Myanmar. The only possible reason for this variation could be the female university freshmen's Liberal Arts program entrance exam qualification rate in academic year of 2016-2017.

According to the findings, from a total of 212 university students, the majority of university students were from the minority ethnic groups (152 out of 212) and 60 students were from the majority ethnic group. A possible reason for this variation could be because of the institution's Christian organizational background and the majority populations of the minority ethnic groups are Christians.

The majority of university students were from medium-income families. 97 out of 212 participants were from medium-income families while 92 were from low-income families and 23 were from high-income families. The majority of participants in this study were from medium-income families for the majority of Myanmar citizens are from middle class with medium income (Shein Thu Aung, 2013).

According to the findings, from a total of 212 university students, the majority of the participants' parents only finished high school. A possible reason for this variation could be because of the 8888 nationwide Pro-Democracy protests in 1988, Myanmar. All schools and universities in Myanmar were closed for four years started from 1988. As the majority of today's university freshmen's parents finished their high school between 1986-1989, many of them might lost the opportunity of continuing university education because of the protests and political instability around Myanmar.

According to the findings, from a total of 212 university students, the majority of the participants were from Yangon division. Two possible reasons for this variation could be English language skill gaps between students from Yangon and out of

Yangon and attachment level between parents and their children in Myanmar (Yin, 2016).

2. University Students' Perceptions towards Parental Involvement

According to the participants' perceptions on Domain I in this study, parental involvement level with the school faculty was flexible. As a previous literature stated that parents do not want their university students informed about their interaction with the school faculty, (Merriman, 2006) the participants in this study could probably not notice the actual involvement level of their parents with their school faculty.

In addition, the participants perceived that they were "moderately involved" by their parents in Domain II, III, IV, and V. the result of this study supported the statement of Carney (2004) "parents of Color are more likely to be involved in every aspect of their students' lives than Caucasian parents because of the cultural differences in family involvement. The amount of overall parental involvement the participants currently received was considered as parental over-involvement in university level, which already had a potential to hinder the university students' psychological identity development (Carney, 2004; King, 2007). According to Chung & Ho (2016), students' resiliency is the major key that motivates them to do well despite the lack of support from parents and teachers. Moreover, even though, very low parental involvement in domain IV was witnessed in the previous studies, the participants in this study perceived over-parental involvement in it. Therefore, an effective action on current parental involvement in Myanmar has to be taken urgently.

3. Differences in the university students' perceptions towards parental involvement according to their demographics.

3. Comparison of University Students' Perceptions towards Parental Involvement according to Their Demographics

After testing the research hypothesis, it was assumed that there were significant differences in university students' perceptions towards parental involvement according to their gender and parents' annual income. The finding for first demographic verified the existing literatures. Previous researchers discussed that parents of female university students would be more involved with the institution and the students because they might have different perceptions on psychological identity development for female students (Carney, 2004; King, 2007). Moreover, according to previous research, female university students seek more emotional support (Edelman, 2013) and parents of female university students communicate more frequently with their student than parents of male students (Carney, 2004). However, the finding of comparison in the participants' perceptions on parental involvement according to their parents' annual income was surprising because it seems to contradict the literature on parental involvement with university students, which suggests that university students do not receive different amount of parental involvement according to parents' income (King, 2007).

On the other hand, there were no significant differences in the participants' perceptions on parental involvement according to their ethnic background, parents' education background, and location. All the participants in this study seemed to perceive the same amount of parental involvement during their university experiences

regardless of their ethnic background and location even though Carney (2004) and King (2007) found significant differences by race and location on students' perceptions towards parental involvement. While the racial backgrounds (African American, Native, Latino, and Asian) in previous studies represented different cultures and different countries, the ethnic background in this study only based on local ethnicities around Myanmar that only represented Myanmar parents' parenting nature. That could be a possible reason of there is no significant differences in the students' perceptions towards parental involvement according to their ethnic background and location. As no information was found that related parental educational attainment and parental involvement in higher education, no significant differences in university students' perceptions towards parental involvement according to their parents' education background. Therefore, it is assumed that parents' education background does not reflect on their involvement with their university students (Carney, 2004; King, 2007), even though parents' education background had huge influence on students' development in K-12 level (Ye & Jiang, 2004).

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