

RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Qualitative Study on Malaysian Parents' Perspective of Enhancing Children's Creativity

Chee-Seng Tan^{1,*}, Sew-Kim Low¹, Anna Wen-Huey Ong²,
Soon-Aun Tan¹, Sarvarubini a/p Nainee¹, and Su-Wan Gan¹

¹Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR), Kampar, Malaysia

²Tunku Abdul Rahman University of Management and Technology, Setapak, Malaysia

Email: cstan@outlook.my

Abstract: While studies have supported parental influences on children's creativity development, little attention has been paid to understanding parents' perspectives of nurturing children's creativity. This study used a qualitative approach to understand how parents in Malaysia assist their children to develop creativity and to identify challenges encountered along the process. Twenty-nine parents were interviewed individually. Five main themes were identified: creativity involves novel ideas, strategies to encourage the growth of creativity, learning environments, challenges encountered, and the roles of school teachers. Notably, parents agreed that authoritative parenting style and educational online materials are conducive to creativity, while time and financial constraints and exam orientation are the pull factors of nurturing creativity. The results not only extend the literature by adding parents' viewpoints but also offer insights into opportunities and challenges for promoting creativity among children. Specifically, developing affordable online parent-child resources is a promising area for future exploration and research.

Keywords: creativity, financial constraints, parent perspectives, primary school students, Malaysia

Introduction

While many studies have consistently found parents' critical role in children's creativity, it is crucial to understand the development of children's creativity through the lens of parents. Thus, the present study employed a qualitative approach to fulfill this gap. Unlike quantitative studies that are limited to examining the hypothetical effect of the selected variables (e.g., parenting styles), the qualitative approach allows inputs

that are helpful to understand the parental perception of creativity and methods used by parents in Malaysia to promote children creativity, as well as challenges that parents encountered along the process. Moreover, creativity studies in the Malaysian context have shown differences in the perception of creativity (e.g., Tan & Ong, 2019; Tan & Qu, 2012; Tan & Viapude, 2015; Tan et al., 2019; Tan et al., 2020). Therefore, it is critical to understand whether parents in Malaysia perceive creativity as similar to or different from the notion of

creativity proposed in the literature. In the following part, we reviewed literature about parental roles in shaping and cultivating children's creativity.

Parental Roles in Children's Creativity

Creativity is a multifaceted concept and is commonly defined as a behavior or outcome that is both novel and appropriate (Plucker et al., 2004). A large number of studies have shown that creativity is beneficial for human development and performance such as lowering the perception of task difficulty (e.g., Richard et al., 2018) and increasing resilience (Metzl, 2009), happiness (Tan et al., 2019), well-being (Acar et al., 2021; Tan et al., 2021), and sales performance (Lussier et al., 2017), just to name a few. Researchers from different disciplines are thus keen to discover ways to enhance creativity.

Meanwhile, studies on children's creativity have demonstrated parents' crucial role in the development of their children's creativity (e.g., Moltafet et al., 2018). For instance, authoritarian parenting styles have been found to have a negative relationship with children's creativity level (Miller et al., 2012). Parents who practice an authoritarian parenting style tend to have rigid restrictions and high control over children's behaviors. Children are inhibited to explore new things and display their independence in thinking. They are often instructed strictly on what to do and how to do it with no room to apply creative thinking such as looking at problems from different perspectives and solving problems using different and unconventional methods. On the other hand, children of authoritative parents reported high creativity (Mehrinejad et al., 2015). Authoritative parents would provide clear standards for children to follow alongside explanations regarding those standards. Additionally, they would encourage their children to be independent and grant them autonomy by involving them in decision-making. Overall, children who experienced authoritative parenting styles can learn to act confidently and freely in social situations or any activities that they are participating in (Tanhaye-Reshvanlou & Hejazi, 2009). Therefore, children can become more courageous and have more opportunities in exploring new things.

To further examine parental influences, Fearon et al.'s (2013) study focused on parenting styles and parents' creativity. It was found that parents' creativity

has a positive relationship with children's creativity. Specifically, the results suggest that interaction with a creative parent may boost creativity in children. Apart from that, creative parents may have a higher intention in fostering children's creativity. They are more likely to initiate creative activities and provide resources for children to explore their interests and ideas.

Kwaśniewska and Lebeda (2017) analyzed the responses provided by 27 mothers from different professions (e.g., teacher, businesswoman, visual artist) and age cohort (26 to 53 years old) on what they do to stimulate the development of their child/children's creativity. They found four categories of methods: 1) providing opportunities to obtain novelty and diverse experiences, 2) helping their child to develop persistency, 3) supporting attitudes to deviate from others (e.g., making own judgments and decisions), and 4) encouraging imagination and fantasizing.

Overview of the Present Study

The main goal of the present study is to provide insights into the development of children's creativity in the Malaysian context by shedding light on what parents perceive creativity (e.g., do parents think creativity is important?) as well as assistance (e.g., scarcity of resources) or guidance needed by parents to promote the creativity of their children. The findings are valuable for researchers and educators to design programs that assist parents in sparking the creativity of children.

The present study focused on primary school students as parents play a more important role in this population than in secondary school students. Furthermore, compared to preschoolers, primary-school-age children begin to have a better sense of practicality. In other words, these children not only focus on novelty but also pay attention to the usefulness of ideas. Both novelty and usefulness are essential components of creativity (Tan & Ong, 2019).

Method

Participants

Purposive sampling was used to recruit parents who have a child aged 9 to 10 years old for the interview sessions. The participants were then recruited through a snowballing method where interested parents introduced their friends who have children aged 9 to

10 years. Considering that parenting practices may be guided by one's language and cultural belief, five mothers and five fathers were recruited from the three main racial groups in Malaysia (i.e., Chinese, Malay, and Indian) respectively with the exception that only four Indian fathers were recruited. Either mother or father, but not both, was to be recruited from one family to allow the freedom of expression without any constraints. When most of the participants gave the same responses, the data was saturated. In total, 29 parents ($M_{\text{age}} = 42.47, SD = 5.80$, 12 participants did not report their age) took part in the study. Table 1 shows the sociodemographic information of the participants. These 15 mothers and 14 fathers provided diverse experiences and perspectives regarding parenting practices and (children's) creativity in an individual interview session.

Design and Procedure

A qualitative and descriptive research design was employed to explore and understand the parents' meanings on how they assist their children to develop creativity. This approach provides parents with a flexible structure to express their views and is appropriate in collecting the subjective views of the participants (Brown & Lloyd, 2001).

Ethics approval was granted by the university's Scientific and Ethical Review Committee. The interview sessions were conducted by six individual researchers who were involved in the study. Before conducting the interviews, the interviewers were briefed on the procedure of conducting in-depth interviews following an agreed schedule. The interview sessions were conducted one to one by each researcher and face-to-face or through video conferencing using Skype. All interview sessions took place from 45 to 90 minutes and were conducted in a private room to allow the respondents to voice their thoughts freely without any interruptions. The interviewers briefed the interviewees about the objective of the study, confidentiality, and data protection. The interviewers also obtained informed consent from all interviewees. To elicit the experiences of the participants, the researchers used probes and impromptu questions to draw the implicit details and meanings from the participants. Open-ended questions were employed in the interviews to explore information on parenting practices and the difficulties parents faced when they are nurturing children's creativity. Probing questions were also used to clarify and obtain

further information. All participants agreed to have the interview audio recorded. Important notes were taken by the researchers during the interview as a backup for the audio recording. A small token was given to the interviewees at the end of the interview sessions.

Before the data collection, the research team met to discuss and design an interview guide serving to identify the core topics with the reference of the parenting and creativity literature. The guide was designed to explore the strategies employed by Malaysian parents in nurturing children's creativity, as well as the major difficulties faced by parents throughout the process. The topic guides were also used to design the interview questions that address the objectives of the study. Six parents—one mother and one father from the Chinese, Indian, and Malay groups, respectively—participated in the pilot test of the interview questions. Modifications were made based on the pilot test results. Five semistructured questions were then finalized for the main study:

1. What is creativity to you?
2. How do you encourage your child to be creative?
3. How do you enhance your child's creativity?
4. What are the difficulties you encountered in promoting your child's creativity?

How do you think the current school system can be improved to encourage the growth of your child's creative thinking?

Data Analysis

The audio recording was transcribed by an independent research assistant who was not involved in the study to maintain credibility and impartiality. The transcripts were distributed to the four researchers in the team to read through all the data independently to familiarize themselves with the data. The data were analyzed to find clusters of meaning and development of codes. As multiple coders were involved in the coding, a codebook was developed to define the codes and to maximize coherence among coders. The coders had regular meetings to identify the relationship between the categories and to develop common themes using an inductive approach. The team and inter-rater comparability of the themes helped to minimize researchers' bias thus enhancing the confirmability of the themes categories (Glaser, 2001).

Table 1
Demographics of Participants

No.	Code	Gender	Age	Role	Ethnicity	Occupation	Spouse Age	Spouse Occupation	Children's Gender (Age)
1	FC3	Female	NA	Mother	Chinese	NA	NA	NA	Male (NA)
2	FC4	Female	43	Mother	Chinese	Tutor	53	Businessman	Male (15), Male (12)
3	FI1	Female	44	Mother	Indian	NA	48	Lorry driver	Male (11)
4	FI5	Female	36	Mother	Indian	Housewife	42	Engineer	Male (9)
5	MI3	Male	38	Father	Indian	Engineer	35	Doctor	Female (9)
6	FC2	Female	43	Mother	Chinese	Grab car driver	NA	NA	Male (12)
7	FI2	Female	36	Mother	Indian	Secretary	38	Businessman	Male (10)
8	FM5	Female	34	Mother	Malay	Sales assistant	41	Security guard	Female (12)
9	MM3	Male	46	Father	Malay	Optometrist	42	Housewife	Male (12)
10	IM2	Male	46	Father	Indian	NA	43	Housewife	Male (12)
11	FM4	Female	47	Mother	Malay	Lecturer	56	Businessman	NA (12)
12	MM2	Male	50	Father	Malay	NA	46	Teacher	Male (8)
13	FM3	Female	NA	Mother	Malay	NA	NA	NA	NA
14	MM1	Male	NA	Father	Malay	Lecturer	NA	NA	NA
15	FC5	Female	NA	Mother	Chinese	NA	NA	Engineer	Male (9)
16	FI3	Female	NA	Mother	Indian	NA	NA	NA	Male (NA)
17	FI4	Female	NA	Mother	Indian	NA	NA	NA	Male (NA)
18	MI4	Male	NA	Father	Indian	NA	NA	NA	Female (NA)
19	MI5	Male	NA	Father	Indian	NA	NA	NA	Female (NA)
20	FC1	Female	50	Mother	Chinese	NA	50	NA	Male (10)
21	FM1	Female	41	Mother	Malay	NA	42	HR manager	Female (10)
22	FM2	Female	37	Mother	Malay	NA	38	Full-time Ph.D. student	Male (10), Male (13) Female (7)
23	MC1	Male	40	Father	Chinese	NA	38	NA	Female (10)
24	MC2	Male	37	Father	Chinese	NA	37	Teacher	Male (12), Male (10)
25	MC3	Male	54	Father	Chinese	Sales manager	53	Clerk	Female (10)
26	MC4	Male	NA	Father	Chinese	NA	NA	NA	NA
27	MC5	Male	NA	Father	Chinese	NA	NA	NA	Female
28	MI1	Male	NA	Father	Indian	NA	NA	NA	NA
29	MM4	Male	NA	Father	Malay	NA	NA	NA	NA

Note: NA = not available.

The thematic analysis was performed following the five stages of the qualitative analysis process proposed by Huberman and Miles (2002), which are i) familiarization (looking through the data), ii) coding (organizing of data), iii) creating themes (identifying a relationship between categories), iv) reviewing themes (look for coherent pattern), and v) defining the theme (comparison of themes).

Upon constant comparison of the themes across all the cases, five themes emerged individually. They included understanding the concept of creativity, ways to encourage creativity, types of the learning environment, challenges encountered, and the role of school teachers. The final results of the theme were guided by the research questions, and triangulation of the data was done by checking the participants' responses with the participants to obtain confirmation of their responses and findings from the previous studies (e.g., Kwaśniewska & Lebuda, 2017).

Reflexivity

Bias was a possibility for the authors to bring into the study. The authors were well aware of the importance of

promoting children's creativity and the concern that the Malaysian school teaching and learning environment is not conducive to the growth of children's creativity. They realized the frustration of how the school children were taught to memorize facts instead of generating creative and innovative ideas. Throughout the research, the authors kept a reflective journal for regular, private explorative, and expressive writing to enable them to differentiate their concerns and interests from the real learning situations in schools. This assists the authors to shift their understanding of creativity (author's assumption) to the parents' comprehension of creativity (the parents' concern and struggle).

Results

Based on the common participants' responses, five major themes were revealed. The actual responses of the participants were quoted to sufficiently show their views, opinions, and experiences. The major themes are summarized in Figure 1.

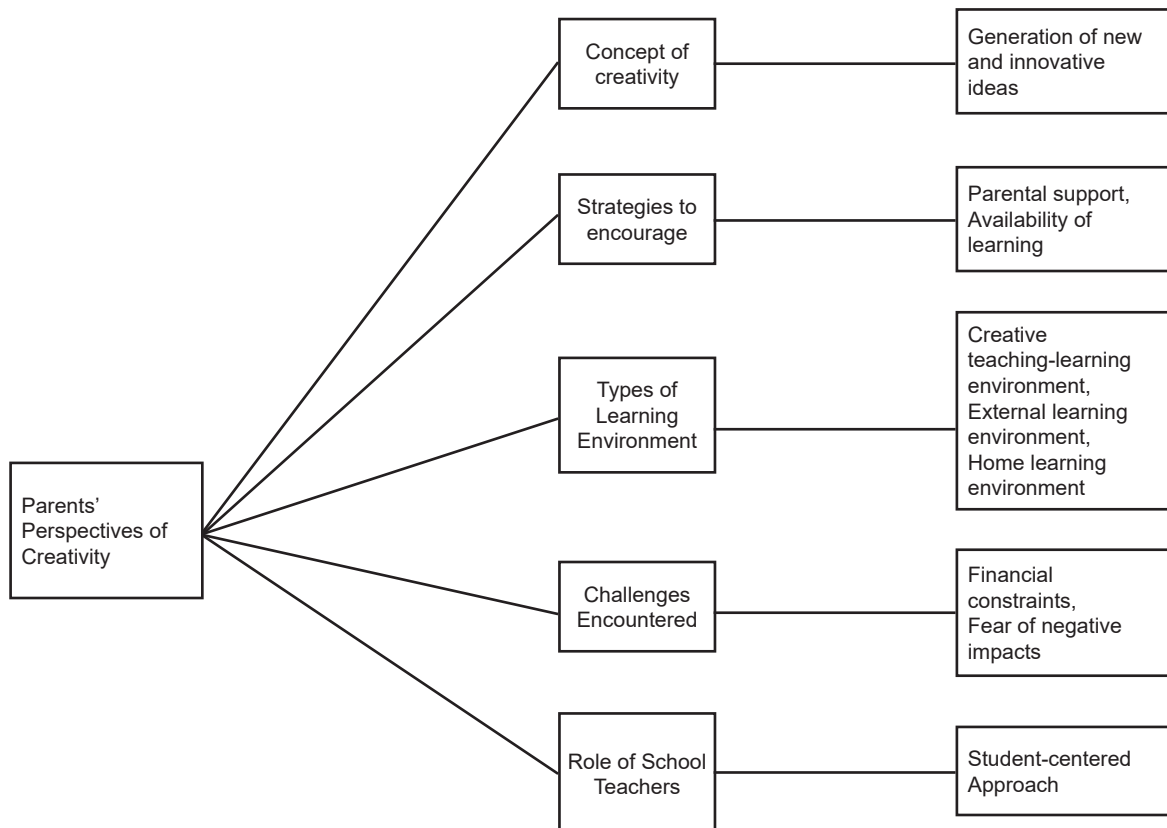


Figure 1. Thematic mapping of the results.

Creativity Involves New Ideas

All the interviewed participants (i.e., parents with school-going children) have a common understanding of the concept of creativity. They shared the same perception that creativity refers to the generation of new and innovative ideas. It embraces originality and makes life more interesting. Specifically, parents expressed that a creative child may not follow the routine and tends to have his or her idea, which is different from others. In addition, participants also opined that creativity and innovation skills are important in preparing their children to meet the demands of the ever-changing world. For example, one of the participants commented,

Creativity is the creation of novel and innovative ideas to produce new things. To be creative, children need to think from different perspectives and create diverse thinking patterns. Creativity and innovative skills are necessary for our children's future success in facing today's world's competition and complex problems.

Strategies to Encourage the Growth of Children's Creativity

Parental Support

Most of the parents revealed their need to encourage their children to be creative and to support them through their parenting style and monitoring. They employed an authoritative parenting style responsive to their children's needs while providing adequate control in optimally facilitating the development of their children's creativity. All of them indicated the importance of providing strong emotional and social supports to their children through parental connectedness with the warm and harmonious relationship among the family members. A parent shared the following feeling:

I spend quality time with my children as I am also a working mother. I listen to my children's opinions, giving them the chance to express and talk about their feelings. I want them to have a sense of belongingness. I allow them the freedom of expression and to explore new things as long as it does not harm them.

In addition, parents supported their children to embrace creativity by involving themselves in their children's activities such as playing imaginary word games, monopoly word cards, and Lego. Specifically, they would guide and assist their children in completing a given task. They would also show their appreciation upon completion of tasks by praising and rewarding their children, for instance, in a sharing by one parent as follows:

I get my son to read a book of his choice then I get him to analyze the plot of the story and to derive the moral of the story. He is free to express his opinion and the character of the story. I will encourage him to explain how he derived those opinions and in this way, I am helping him to acquire his decision-making skills based on the information obtained from the story.

Availability of Learning Resources

To further encourage and facilitate the growth of children's creativity, most of the parents provided their children with learning materials such as crossword puzzles, coloring books, and challenging games that allow their children to explore their hidden talents and potential. Parents believed that children can experiment with their new ideas when playing Lego, origami, and drawing and that such materials or activities can inspire children to persevere in their tasks. For example, a parent commented,

I don't provide my child with expensive toys but will provide them with learning resources where they can express and explore their ideas. For example, when my daughter has completed her drawing I encourage her to talk about the object she has drawn and the color she has chosen. She is free to exhibit her artistic creation in the study room.

Creative Teaching-Learning Environments

External Learning Resources

In addition to learning materials, most of the parents acknowledged the benefits of an environment in aiding the growth of children's creativity. Some of the parents would send their children to art and music classes, bring them to museums and exhibitions, or

allow them to take part in school camps during the school holiday. Through these learning environments, the children can actively explore, create, and discover creative activities. One parent stated,

Every place can be a learning environment when I can teach my child about connecting ideas anytime. For instance, when I saw something in the environment, I will elaborate on it. Through these learning environments, I hope to increase my child's interest and curiosity about a specific thing.

Home Learning Environment

Parents also paid similar attention to the internal environment. They provided online learning materials and parental guided YouTube programs at home thus exposing their children to independent and observational learning. Some parents provided their children with self-learning and exploring educational materials that can be purchased through the Internet. Educational application (apps) such as language, mathematics, science, history, arts, and technology did encourage their children to have broader views and to think critically before making decisions. Furthermore, some of the parents allowed their children the flexibility to reuse recycling materials in creating new toys or repairing their broken toys. They permitted their children to collaborate and play with their friends in their housing children's playground in which the children were allowed to initiate their activities without the fear of making a mistake. Children were also encouraged to participate in any educational outing organized by their schools. For example, a mother commented,

I allow my children to create their own playing resources and to explore their own environment. One of my children even repaired his own bicycle chains by using recycle materials learned through lessons obtained from YouTube. I was very proud of him and I motivate him to use recycled materials in future

Challenges Encountered

Financial Constraints

One of the challenges encountered by some of the interviewed parents was financial constraints. With

the availability of a massive range of digital learning resources, parents had to make difficult choices in purchasing effective self-centered learning materials for their children. A parent shared that finance was a challenge for her in purchasing learning materials for her children:

Normally when my children ask for things that are not within my budget that is the problem. I need to explain to them and they are willing to accept the rejection but I felt miserable having to tell them we will get those things some other time.

Fear of the Negative Impact

Technology is like a double-edged sword where if the tool is wrongly utilized it can stifle creativity. Some of the parents expressed their fear of overproviding intellectual stimulations, which may lead to more externalizing problems such as being dependent and low in independent and creative thinking. For instance, being overdependent on technology may stifle cognitive development whereby with a click of the button, a child is deprived of the opportunity to analyze the problematic situation for the solution. In addition, although attending music and art classes may spark creativity, parents think that joining too many activities may harm their children. The dilemma leads the parents to encounter a parent-child conflict. A mother commented,

My children start to bargain with me of the time allocated for them to surf the net and when they were supposed to attend to their school work. If I forced them they become very emotional. As you know, sometimes they complained it is boring for them to attend the art classes. I am in a dilemma whether to force them to attend the classes since the fee has been paid.

Balance Striking

The challenge of balancing time for working and raising children is often framed as a parenting problem. In the developed 21st century where both parents are typically employed full time, they usually encounter the need to handle multiple competing roles that may influence family functioning. Some parents commented that after a day's work, they were cognitively and emotionally exhausted to engage themselves in their

children's activities and were thus less responsive in nurturing interaction with their children. The following examples were provided by the participants.

Time management was my biggest challenge. Sometimes there are weekends where I am engaged with work and I am unable to spend time with my son. My wife has to take care of the housework and my son is left alone doing his own thing.

Spending long hours at work also refrains parents from spending sufficient quality time in assisting their children to discover and unleash their creative potential. Moreover, when parents are physically and emotionally drained after a hard day's work, they encounter difficulty in switching roles from an employee to a parent when accompanying their children. With reduced opportunities for involvement in their children's daily routines and activities, parents find themselves distant from their children (Giallo et al., 2013).

Roles of School Teachers

Most participants revealed that the education system is too exam oriented where teachers are required to complete explicitly planned learning activities. There is a lack of flexibility in the pedagogical learning environment where students are required to follow the teacher's direction in completing tasks even though there are other possible strategies. In addition, the high pupil-teacher ratio results in a teacher-centered teaching approach where interaction between teachers and students is limited. The classroom learning environment is more individualistic when there are limited opportunities for children to work collaboratively with peers.

Nowadays the school focuses too much on academic achievement and becomes exam-oriented where the teachers are rigid in their teaching method. For example, when I tried to explain a scientific topic to my son he complained that the teacher will not accept the explanation as we were not taught the way. Sometimes my son finds certain topics very boring and uninteresting and he will be punished if he refused to attempt those exercises.

Student-Centered Pedagogical Approach

All the parents opined that the school learning environment must be more student centered. The schools should encourage a constructivist teaching approach where students should be provided with learning activities that allow them to explore alternatives and work collaboratively with their peers. The teachers need to use different teaching resources such as videos, audios, animations, and other interactive learning materials besides conducting more outdoor learning activities instead of confining the students in the classrooms most of the time. For this, a participant commented,

There should be more outdoor learning where students learn to see, play and organize their ideas in the real world. These will help the children to understand better and remember things easily. These activities will help to create and promote creativity. The school can organize learning camps during school holidays and provide group competitions.

Discussion

Using a qualitative perspective, the present study explored Malaysian parents' understanding of children's creativity. Analysis of the interview responses identified five main themes: creativity involves news ideas, strategies to encourage the growth of creativity, types of learning environments, challenges encountered, and the roles of school teachers.

The first theme revealed parents' perception and conceptualization of creativity. Interestingly, consistent with the literature, parents indicate that novelty is a crucial component of creativity. In other words, a child is deemed as creative by parents if he or she can generate something unique or different from the existing ones. However, it is important to emphasize that originality alone is insufficient for creativity. Indeed, researchers argue that a creative product (e.g., solution) should not only be original but also be able to overcome the problem at hand (e.g., Tan & Ong, 2019). Likewise, usefulness was not mentioned by parents participating in the present study. Such ignorance of usefulness could be due to the difference between researchers' and parents' definitions of creativity. Researchers in

future studies shall further explore this possibility and take action to minimize the discretion if any. After all, the distinction between stimulation provided by parents and the assessment used by researchers is harmful to the development of children's creativity. Meanwhile, the second explanation is that parents pay more attention to originality than usefulness. Put differently, while both originality and usefulness are important, parents believe that originality shall receive more emphasis than the latter at this stage. Hence, it is an intriguing direction for future research to investigate if focusing on originality first and usefulness later is more effective in stimulating children's creativity than one focusing on the two components concurrently.

Next, the second theme disentangles strategies employed by parents to encourage the growth of creativity. Participants indicated that the authoritative parenting style is conducive to the growth of creativity. Specifically, the parents we interviewed are responsive to their children's needs while providing adequate control over them. Some parents advocated autonomy for their children to participate in their favorite activities. Parents would also offer guidance and supports or even complete the tasks with their children. In addition, parents used some learning materials (e.g., coloring books, challenging games) to promote independent and divergent thinking in their children. The results not only highlight the importance of parenting but also provide additional evidence to the positive relationship between the authoritative parenting style and children's creativity found in most quantitative studies.

Furthermore, the learning environment plays a role in promoting creativity. As revealed in the third theme, parents believed that some environments are conducive to creative development. For instance, parents reported that art and music classes, as well as museums and exhibitions, could encourage creative thinking and allow children to express their curiosity and ideas. The results correspond to the literature that a supportive environment is critical to the development of creativity (e.g., Richardson & Mishra, 2018). Interestingly, our findings also revealed the essential role of the online environment. Specifically, some parents used online resources such as parental guided YouTube programs for their children to learn knowledge beyond the textbooks. Such observational learning not only expands children's knowledge database but also encourages children to experiment with their ideas

with their parents. The latter makes children feel secure to explore new things which indirectly improves the parent-child relationship.

On the other hand, parents also identified some pull factors that are detrimental to children's creativity. Financial constraint, for example, is one of the obstacles parents encountered. In particular, parents who were unable to afford materials or courses requested by children were worried that the lack of resources may hinder children from further sharpening their creative ability. In addition, parents also indicated that long working hours have hindered them to spend quality time with their families. As a result, those parents have fewer opportunities to provide guidance and supports to their children in exploring new ideas. The results are consistent with the findings of parents with the low socioeconomic status being unable to support their children academically as they lacked essential resources such as time and money (Davis-Kean & Sexton, 2009; Zhang et al., 2018).

Finally, the current education system focuses too much on academic results and gives teachers very limited flexibility in their teaching pedagogy. To adhere to the teaching plan, teachers have no choice but to require students to follow instructions and ignore alternatives in completing tasks given. The majority of our participants recognized that this one-way teaching inhibits diversity that gradually decreases children's motivation to search for different possibilities. The concern is in line with past studies that support children to be given some control and freedom over their learning, as well as a safe learning environment for them to take risks and experiment with their ideas (Richardson & Mishra, 2018).

Overall, the present study offers both theoretical and practical insights into the development of children's creativity. Theoretically speaking, our findings highlight the need for going beyond the impact of parenting style. Nevertheless, researchers are recommended to incorporate other parental dimensions such as socioeconomic status and work-life balance in their research to identify the unique impact of each dimension in contributing to children's creativity. On the other hand, our results reveal the strategies commonly used by parents in Malaysia to boost creativity among primary school students. The findings not only can serve as a reference for young parents who lack ideas on how to cultivate creativity but also offer suggestions to policy makers on the role they can

play in encouraging students' creativity. For example, flexible working hours may be considered for working parents to allocate time for their children.

Despite the strengths indicated above, the present study contains some limitations that ought to be addressed. First, although the researchers had recruited a similar number of fathers and mothers, it is noteworthy that only the mother or the father of a family was interviewed. Some of the participants indicated that their spouse plays a complementary role in encouraging their children to unleash creativity. For instance, when a child is going to explore new things, the mother would provide emotional support while the father would walk the child through the process. It is believed that both mother and father may hold different perspectives on creativity and its development. Future studies, therefore, may replicate the present study and interview both parents to understand if there is any interaction between mother and father. Second, the sample only comprised the three major ethnic groups. As Malaysia is a multiethnic country, the findings are premature to generalize to other racial groups. Furthermore, the sociodemographic background was not taken into consideration in the present study. As revealed by our participants, financial pressure is one of the barriers for the parents to nurture the creativity of their children. Hence, it is intriguing and meaningful to explore and understand the differences between families with high and low socioeconomic status, as well as between families in urban and rural areas in the efforts of enhancing overall children's creativity.

Conclusion

Individual interviews with parents of primary school children in Malaysia revealed that development of creativity receives great attention especially the originality dimension. Parents actively cultivate their children's creativity using online learning materials and providing supportive environment. On the other hand, parents are concerned with the negative impacts of their financial constraints and the exam-oriented education system on creativity development. These qualitative findings are helpful for guiding future studies on children's creativity. For instance, it is essential to explore whether and how family income hinders children's creativity and how to buffer the negative influence.

Author's contributions

Conceptualization, C.-S.T.; methodology, C.-S.T., S.-K.L., A.W.-H.O., S.-A. T., S.N., and S.-W.G.; formal analysis, S.-K.L.; investigation, C.-S.T., S.-K.L., A.W.-H.O., S.-A. T., S.N., and S.-W.G.; data curation, C.-S.T., S.-K.L., A.W.-H.O., S.-A. T., S.N., and S.-W.G.; writing—original draft preparation, C.-S.T., S.-K.L., and A.W.-H.O.; writing—review and editing, C.-S.T. and S.-K.L.; project administration, C.-S.T.; all authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding

This project was funded by the Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman Research Fund (IPSR/RMC/UTARRF/2017-C2/T02) awarded to the first author.

Institutional Review Board Statement

All procedures followed were in accordance with the ethical standards of the responsible committee on human experimentation (institutional and national) and with the Helsinki Declaration of 1975, as revised in 2000 (5). Ethics approval was granted by the Scientific and Ethical Review Committee (Ref: U/SERC/05/2018).

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

Data Availability Statement

Due to the nature of this research, participants of this study did not agree for their data to be shared publicly, so supporting data are not available.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

References

- Acar, S., Tadik, H., Myers, D., Van der Sman, C., & Uysal, R. (2021). Creativity and well-being: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Creative Behavior*, 55(3), 738–751. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jocb.485>
- Brown, C., & Lloyd, K. (2001). Qualitative methods in psychiatric research. *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment*, 7(5), 350–356. <https://doi.org/10.1192/apt.7.5.350>
- Davis-Kean, P. E., & Sexton, H. R. (2009). Race differences in parental influences on child achievement: Multiple pathways to success. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, 55, 285–318. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/mpq.0.0023>
- Fearon, D. D., Copeland, D., & Saxon, T. F. (2013). The relationship between parenting styles and creativity in a sample of Jamaican children. *Creativity Research Journal*, 25, 119–128. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10400419.2013.752287>
- Giallo, R., Treyvaud, K., Cooklin, A., & Wade, C. (2013). Mothers' and fathers' involvement in activities with their children: Psychosocial factor and the role of parental self-efficacy. *Journal of Early Child Development and Care*, 183, 343–359. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2012.711587>
- Glaser, B. G. (2001). *The grounded theory perspective: Conceptualization contrasted with description*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.
- Huberman, A. M., & Miles, M. B. (2002). *The qualitative researcher's companion*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kwaśniewska, J. & Lebuda, I. (2017). Balancing between roles and duties—The creativity of mothers. *Creativity: Theories – Research – Applications*, 4(1), 137–158. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ctra-2017-0007>
- Lussier, B., Grégoire, Y., & Vachon, M.-A. (2017). The role of humor usage on creativity, trust and performance in business relationships: An analysis of the salesperson-customer dyad. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 65, 168–181. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2017.03.012>
- Mehrinejad, S. A., Rajabimoghadam, S., & Tarsafi, M. (2015). The relationship between parenting styles and creativity and the predictability of creativity by parenting styles. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 205, 56–60. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.09.014>
- Metzl, E. S. (2009). The role of creative thinking in resilience after hurricane Katrina. *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts*, 3(2), 112–123. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0013479>
- Miller, A. L., Lambert, A. D., & Neumeister, K. L. S. (2012). Parenting style, perfectionism, and creativity in high-ability and high-achieving young adults. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 35(4), 344–365. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0162353212459257>
- Moltafet, G., Firoozabadi, S. S. S., & Pour-Raisi, A. (2018). Parenting style, basic psychological needs, and emotional creativity: A path analysis. *Creativity Research Journal*, 30, 187–194. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10400419.2018.1446748>
- Plucker, J. A., Beghetto, R. A., & Dow, G. T. (2004). Why isn't creativity more important to educational psychologists? Potentials, pitfalls, and future directions in creativity research. *Educational Psychologist*, 39, 83–96. http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15326985ep3902_1
- Richard, V., Lebeau, J. C., Becker, F., Inglis, R. E., & Tenenbaum, G. (2018). Do more creative people adapt better? An investigation into the association between creativity and adaptation. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 38, 80–89. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2018.06.001>
- Richardson, C., & Mishra, P. (2018). Learning environments that support student creativity: Developing the SCALE. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 27, 45–54. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2017.11.004>
- Tan, C.-S., & Ong, A. W. H. (2019). Psychometric qualities and measurement invariance of the modified self-rated creativity scale. *Journal of Creative Behavior*, 53(4), 593–599. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jocb.222>
- Tan, C.-S., Ong, A. W. H., Tan, S. A., & Cheng, S. M. (2020). Psychometric evaluation of the Malay version self-rated creativity scale among secondary school students in Malaysia. *Current Psychology*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-020-00772-7>
- Tan, C.-S., & Qu, L. (2012). Generality and specificity: Malaysian undergraduate students' self-reported creativity. *International Journal of Creativity & Problem Solving*, 22(2), 19–30.
- Tan, C.-S., Tan, S.-A., Cheng, S.-M., Hashim, I. H. M., & Ong, A. W.-H. (2019). Development and preliminary validation of the 20-item Kaufman Domains of Creativity Scale for use with Malaysian populations. *Current Psychology*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-019-0124-8>
- Tan, C.-S., Tan, S.-A., Hashim, I. H. M., Lee, M.-N., Ong, A. W.-H., & Yaacob, S. N. B. (2019). Problem-solving ability and stress mediate the relationship between creativity and happiness. *Creativity Research Journal*, 31(1), 15–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10400419.2019.1568155>
- Tan, C.-S., & Viapude, G. N. (2015, June 6). *The best-known creator in the eye of Malaysian undergraduates* [Paper presentation]. 7th International Conference on Humanities and Social Sciences “ASEAN 2015: Challenges and Opportunities,” BP Samila Beach Resort, Songkhla, Thailand. Tan, C.-Y., Chuah, C.-Q., Lee, S.-T.,

- & Tan, C.-S. (2021). Being creative makes you happier: The positive effect of creativity on subjective well-being. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(14), Article 7244. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18147244>
- Tanhaye-Reshvanlou, F., & Hejazi, E. (2009). Understanding the relationship between parenting style and academic motivation and academic achievement of high school students. *Journal of Scholar Behavior*, 39, 1–14.
- Zhang, D., Zhou, Z., Gu, C. Lei, Y., & Fan, C. (2018). Family socio-economic status and parent-child relationships are associated with the social creativity of elementary school children: The mediating role of personality traits. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 27, 2999–3007. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-018-1130-4>