

CULTURAL BELIEFS ON PRACTICES OF MOTHERING IN THE MALAY ARCHIPELAGO: A SCOPING REVIEW

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Abstract. Motherhood is a universally recognized experience transcending time, geography, and cultural boundaries. Children's experiences are influenced by a wide range of cultural ideas and customs, and women play a crucial role in the socialization and rearing of children across all cultures. These cultural beliefs have been shown to influence mothers' practices of mothering or child-rearing and may have implications for maternal and child. Despite the importance of cultural beliefs and practices in shaping mothering experiences, there needs to be more clarity about the range of cultural beliefs and practices of mothering across different contexts and their implications for maternal and child health outcomes. This scoping review aims to map the existing literature on the cultural beliefs and practices of mothering in the Malay Archipelago. Four databases-Jstor Archive, ProQuest, Scopus, and Google Scholar were used in the research, which found three hundred forty-seven (347) articles for eligibility and a total of twenty-five (25) articles were analyzed after the inclusion and exclusion stage in collecting data for review. Findings indicate that mothering practices in the Malay Archipelago were rooted in the cultural beliefs of collectivism and familism, gender roles, modesty and filial piety, and religion. While there are similarities in the cultural beliefs and practices of mothering across different regions of the Malay Archipelago, there are also notable differences. The current scoping review contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of cultural beliefs in shaping mothering experiences and outcomes. In addition, the present study highlights the areas for future research on cultural beliefs and practices of mothering among mothers in the Malay Archipelago.

Keywords: *cultural beliefs, mothering, The Malay Archipelago, scoping review*

Introduction

Mothering, the empowerment of mothers to attain autonomy on how she wants to care for children, is a multifaceted and intricate experience significantly influenced by various cultural beliefs and practices. Society's norms, values, and traditions shape these beliefs and practices, ultimately influencing maternal practices and child outcomes. As Bornstein (2012) noted, cultural beliefs and practices are crucial in shaping maternal practices. Meanwhile, Williams (1981) observes that culture is a "signifying system" where cultural norms and values are transmitted and regenerated, emphasizing the importance of understanding the cultural context in which mothering practices occur. Several researchers have explored cultural variations in parental values, objectives, and practices (He et al., 2021; Cheah, 2016; Cheah et al., 2013). These investigations indicate the importance of understanding and examining parental social cognitions and behaviors within their respective cultural contexts. The cultural context of mothering practices is critical to comprehending maternal behaviors. According to Thomson and Kehily (2011), mothering practices are shaped by the "common culture of motherhood" available to women in their social and cultural context. Additionally, women's understanding of mothering is heterogeneous, depending on their cultural positioning, often molded by their society's "authoritative knowledge" (Tina, 2005). These cultural beliefs and practices also influence the expectations placed on mothers within their societies.

The association between collectivistic and individualistic cultural values has garnered considerable attention among researchers studying mothering. Collectivistic cultural values highlight the significance of family, group harmony, and interdependence, leading to parenting practices that aim to reinforce these values. Conversely, individualistic cultural values prioritize personal independence, autonomy, and self-expression, resulting in parenting practices that focus on fostering these values (He et al., 2021). In a significant meta-analysis conducted by Oyserman et al. (2002), the intricate relationship between individualistic and collectivistic cultural values is explored. The researchers examined fifty (50) existing studies on individualism and collectivism and discovered that cultures traditionally regarded as predominantly collectivistic or individualistic may exhibit less conformity to those labels. For instance, while South Korea has been traditionally classified as a collectivistic culture, the findings indicate that individuals in South Korea may not adhere to collectivistic values to the extent previously assumed. Similarly, although Australia has been commonly regarded as an individualistic culture, the research suggests that individuals in Australia may not display the expected level of individualism. This meta-analysis illuminates the multifaceted nature of individualism and collectivism, demonstrating that these dimensions can coexist within a culture. Understanding these dimensions can help explain differences and similarities among ethnic groups and provide valuable insights into how parenting beliefs and practices are embedded within a broader cultural context.

The Malay Archipelago has a rich and diverse cultural heritage shaped by centuries of interactions between indigenous cultures and by the influence of colonial powers such as the Dutch, British, and Spanish. This unique blend of cultural influences has given rise to various beliefs and practices related to family, community, and spirituality, shaping how mothers practice mothering. Despite the richness and complexity of this cultural context, there need to be more comprehensive scoping reviews of the existing literature on the cultural beliefs and practices of mothering in the Malay Archipelago. This study aims to review the literature on mothering in the Malay Archipelago. Specifically, the study identifies key themes and patterns in maternal practices across different cultural contexts.

Materials and Methods

A scoping review is employed to examine the research literature published between 2013 and 2023 on cultural beliefs and practices of mothering in the Malay Archipelago. Literature from the past ten years is considered to ensure the current study incorporates the most up-to-date and relevant research. The review methodology employed in this study was based on the framework developed by Arksey and O'Malley (2005). This framework consists of several steps, including identifying research questions, identifying relevant studies, selecting appropriate studies, charting the collected data, and collating, summarizing, and reporting the results. Furthermore, to enhance the transparency and accuracy of reporting, the study utilized the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. The PRISMA guidelines have been established to improve the quality of data reporting in systematic reviews and meta-analyses, and their application in this study contributes to the comprehensive and reliable presentation of findings (Peter et al., 2020; Tricco et al., 2018; Moher et al., 2009). Three fundamental research questions are constructed to guide the study. There are:

1. What cultural beliefs shape mothering practices among mothers in the Malay Archipelago?
2. What similarities and differences exist in the cultural beliefs and practices of mothering among mothers in different regions of the Malay Archipelago?
3. What are the gaps in the existing literature on cultural beliefs and practices of mothering among mothers in the Malay Archipelago?

Following the establishment of the research questions, the study proceeded by identifying relevant studies and sources of information. The study employed the PCC mnemonic, which stands for "Population", "Concept" and "Context", to guide the search strategy and determine eligibility criteria (Peter et al., 2020). The "Population" element focused on mothers residing in the Malay Archipelago. The "Concept" element pertained to the cultural beliefs and practices associated with mothering, aiming to explore the cultural factors shaping these practices. The search was conducted within the "Context" of the Malay Archipelago, encompassing countries such as Singapore, Brunei, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Timor-Leste. Subsequently, a comprehensive search of academic databases was conducted using appropriate keywords and subject headings aligned with the research questions. The selected information sources included Jstor Archive, ProQuest, Scopus, and Google Scholar. A customized search syntax was created for each database, incorporating the search terms identified using the PCC mnemonic. To ensure transparency and accuracy, filters were applied to include publications between the years 2013 and 2023. This systematic approach to database searching aimed to obtain a comprehensive collection of relevant literature. The *Table 1* provides a summary of the information sources and search terms.

Table 1. Primary search term for suitable articles..

Search directory	Primary search term
JSTOR archive	'Culture' OR 'Cultural Belief'
ProQuest	'Mothering' OR 'Rearing practices' AND
Scopus	'Malay Archipelago' OR 'Malaysia' OR AND
Google Scholar	'Indonesia' OR 'Singapore' OR 'Brunei' OR 'Philippines'

The research selects the article using the following criteria : (i) mothers' cultural beliefs and practices; (ii) parenting practices pertaining to culture, and (iii) mother transmission of cultural ideology. However, the study excludes the population like single mothers, outputs published before 2013, market research, quantitative studies with small sample sizes, studies with incomplete results, and anecdotal reports. The selected data is categorised into the following study elements (*Table 2*). Finally, the data are synthesised to identify common themes and patterns related to the cultural beliefs and practices of mothering.

Table 2. Data charting example.

Study citation	Study design	Sample size	Geographical location	Cultural beliefs	Mothering practices	Other relevant information
Author et al. (Year)	Qualitative	20 participants	Indonesia	Importance of extended family	Co-sleeping with the infant	

Results and Discussion

The search identified 18,798 articles through four selected Jstor Archive, ProQuest, Scopus, and Google Scholar databases. *Figure 1* shows that twenty-five (25) titles were extracted using the Prisma flow diagram used in this systematic review.

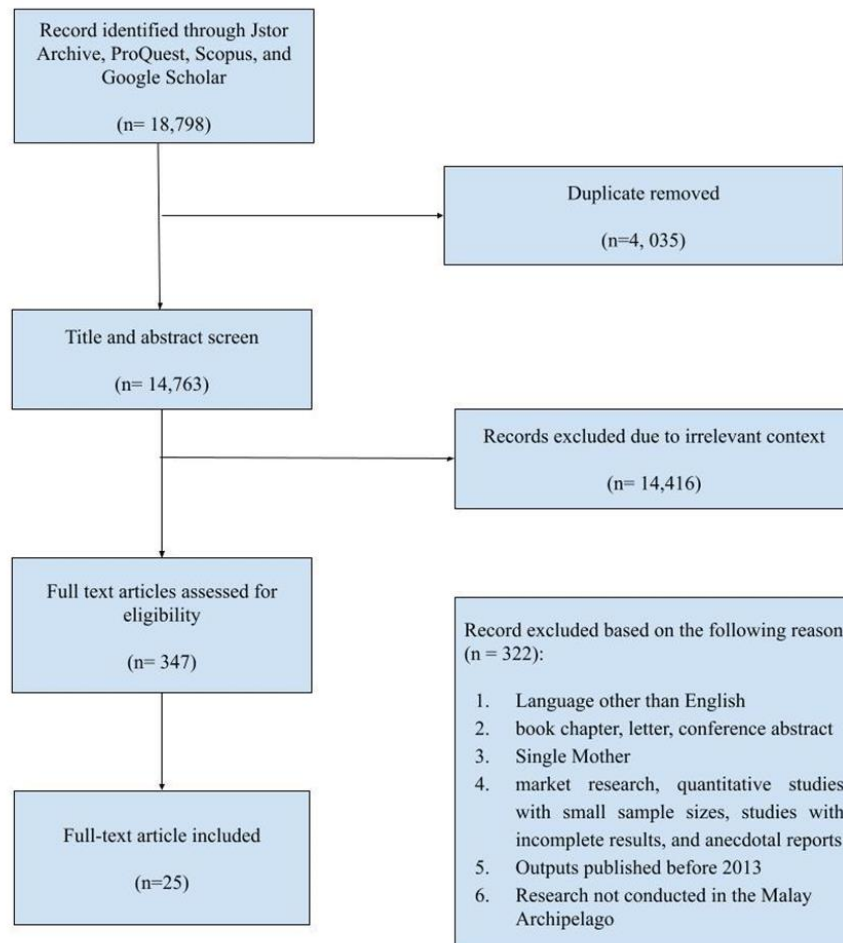


Figure 1. Flow diagram.

Cultural beliefs and practices of mothering

The first objective was to identify the cultural beliefs that shape mothering practices among mothers in the Malay Archipelago. Based on the findings, a general trend of beliefs and practices revolves around social patterns, religion, modesty and filial piety, educational attainment, and gender roles.

Collectivism and familism

Collectivism is a social pattern characterized by individuals perceiving deep interconnectedness within their community, adhering strictly to social norms and regulations, and fulfilling societal obligations or tasks. According to Triandis (2001), members of such a society prioritise collective aims over individual ones and emphasise their interconnectedness with other members of the collective.. Mothering and child-rearing practices in the Malay Archipelago are significantly impacted by collectivism.

Social research has found that many families in Indonesia tend to reside, connect and engage with their original ethnic groupings to build interdependence and give collective aims precedence over individual ones. In the Malay Archipelago, extended family members frequently play a vital part in the upbringing of children. Grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins can provide moms with emotional support while raising their children (Serad, 2012). In their study, Gupta and Sukanto (2020) emphasized that in Indonesia, individuals tend to view themselves as part of a community rather than as independent individuals. There is a prevalent preference for adhering to established social structures within the group. This collectivistic perspective is evident in the family dynamics, where children, as they grow and develop, recognize their duty to care for their parents, exemplifying the practice of filial piety. The strong emotional bond and close relationship between parents and children in Indonesia underscore the significance of collectivist values within the culture.

In a quantitative study conducted by Inayati et al. (2012) in Indonesia, 215 participants were examined to explore the relationship between maternal beliefs about infant feeding and breastfeeding practices among infants with mild malnutrition on Nias Island. According to Nias culture, there is a belief that a pregnant mother's nursing can harm the fetus by reducing its food intake, as communicated by traditional healers in Sirombu, Nias. They also suggest that continuing to breastfeed during pregnancy may lead to the birth of a slender child (afuo), ill (mofokho-fokho), or mentally retarded (bodo). Furthermore, they discourage sick women from breastfeeding. These cultural myths within the social context hinder a mother's ability to breastfeed, affecting newborn feeding practices. Similarly, Gibson (2020) mixed-method study in the Komodo District of eastern Indonesia focused on dietary diversity and fish consumption among mothers and their children in fisher households. The study revealed that cultural beliefs about the benefits and risks of fish for children influenced the dietary choices of women, who are typically the primary caretakers in these households. However, both the mothers and children exhibited lower dietary diversity than recommended for achieving micronutrient adequacy, leaving them susceptible to hidden hunger. The study highlights the importance of educating mothers to address these issues and promote improved nutritional practices. The diversity of mothering practices in Malaysia is deeply rooted in cultural, traditional, and religious beliefs. Different ethnic groups in Malaysia have unique practices and beliefs guiding their motherhood approach. For instance, Muslim women in Malaysia observe 40 days of rest after giving birth, rooted in Islamic beliefs. During this period, they avoid strenuous activities and consume foods and herbs that promote healing and replenish their bodies. Ghani and Salehudin (2018) study of traditional beliefs and practices on Postpartum Recovery among one hundred (100) mothers aged 20 to 49 on the East Coast of Peninsular Malaysia discovered that the majority of families are deeply ingrained in the cultures of these ethnic groups and are often passed down from generation to generation. According to the participants, they adopt the practices of their parents and grandparents because they believe their ancestors were more knowledgeable about postpartum practices. This demonstrated that family customs influenced the methods and knowledge of postpartum care.

In Filipino culture, the significance of family and community is deeply ingrained, influencing the values and beliefs held by parents towards their children. According to Selin (2013), family is considered the focal point of Filipino society. As a result, Filipinos highly prioritize and actively foster strong interpersonal connections,

particularly within the family unit. In this context, Filipino mothers typically assume the role of primary caregivers and nurturers for their children. They are expected to offer emotional and moral support to their families, manage household responsibilities, and ensure their children receive a good education and exhibit proper behavior. Often, this involves working long hours and making personal sacrifices to provide for their families and establish a stable home environment. One of the most prominent values in Filipino culture is “utang na loob,” which emphasises a sense of indebtedness and gratitude towards those who have helped them in the past. This value is significant for Filipino mothers, who often make significant sacrifices for the well-being of their children. This value is often expressed through a willingness to make sacrifices for the well-being of their children, such as working long hours or giving up personal aspirations. Another significant value for Filipino mothers is “hiya,” which is a sense of shame or embarrassment from failing to live up to social expectations or losing face in front of others. This value can motivate Filipino mothers to strive for excellence in parenting and household duties to maintain a strong community reputation (Chao and Tseng, 2002). Parents' beliefs about children serve as a fundamental starting point for understanding parenting practices. The way parents interact with their children is influenced by their perceptions of children and their notions of childhood and child-rearing. In the Filipino context, parents are often characterized as having an authoritarian parenting style, which places emphasis on strictness, respect for authority, and obedience. This approach aims to instill discipline and a sense of responsibility in children, viewed as crucial for success in Filipino society. However, there is a growing recognition of the significance of a more democratic and participatory parenting approach. This approach values children's autonomy and encourages them to express their opinions and ideas, acknowledging their active role in decision-making processes. This evolving perspective recognizes the importance of nurturing children's independence and fostering their ability to think critically and engage in meaningful dialogue.

In Singapore, collectivist values are reflected in various aspects of life, including family dynamics, education, and social interactions. As a result, Singaporean mothers often prioritise the needs of their family and community over their desires. Breastfeeding, a significant aspect of motherhood, is not an exception to this cultural trend. A study by Jia Choo and Ryan (2016) explored ten first-time mothers' experiences regarding breastfeeding in Singapore. The study found that Singaporean mothers often receive support from their family, friends, and community to initiate and continue breastfeeding. For instance, mothers received assistance from their mothers, who played a significant role in providing practical support, such as helping with household chores and caring for the baby. In addition to practical support, social attitudes and beliefs also played a significant role in supporting mothers to continue breastfeeding. Breast milk is considered an intimate activity that fosters positive feelings of bonding with the baby, and successful breastfeeding is perceived as an achievement. Additionally, the research discovered that first-time mothers in the community received support from fellow mothers who shared their own experiences and provided advice and encouragement. Although lactation rooms are available in public spaces in Singapore, the study revealed that societal attitudes towards breastfeeding can impact a woman's decision and her ability to initiate and sustain breastfeeding. Some women may feel self-conscious or uneasy about breastfeeding in public settings, while others may face societal pressure to adhere to conventional

standards of modesty. These factors can influence a woman's confidence and willingness to breastfeed outside of private spaces.

Modesty and filial piety

Modesty is an essential cultural trait in the Malay Archipelago, especially for women. Mothers must demonstrate and educate their children on the importance of modest behaviour and dress. In the Malay Archipelago, respect for elders and authority figures is an important cultural trait. Mothers are supposed to teach their children to respect others, particularly seniors and those in positions of power. According to Riany et al. (2017), the Indonesian parental value of "Tata krama" encompasses guidelines for appropriate behaviour, speech, and polite conduct. It serves as a societal norm governing social interactions among community members. Parents play a vital role in instilling these values in their children from a young age, emphasizing the importance of behaving in a respectful and considerate manner. Modesty is fundamental to both Indonesian, Malaysian and Muslim conceptions of femininity. Hartono et al. (2017) explores how 14 Indonesian Muslim mothers encourage their children to read anti-Islamic advertisements in Semarang, Indonesia. Even though mothers were concerned about the detrimental impact of an immoral billboard, they embraced the chance to encourage aurat and modesty. They established a foundation for good Muslim citizenship and sexual morality. The study by Kamaludin et al. (2022) indicated that many Malay mothers in Malaysia felt that sex education was unnecessary, in contrast to Indonesian Muslim moms. This is owing to the belief that sex education is taboo and uncomfortable and the worry that it may encourage children's curiosity, discouraging parents from including it in the child-rearing process. Family, religious, and social influences frequently impact these ideas. In addition, qualitative research of nine (9) focus groups in Malaysia conducted by Mohammad et al. (2013) revealed that Malay women were highly concerned about Islamic regulations regarding female modesty. They frequently factored the sexualisation of breasts into their overall comprehension. Women are prohibited by religious law from exposing their skin in the company of men (except for the face and hands). These fears have dissuaded many Malay women from breastfeeding in public. The study recommends that nursing photos of Muslim women be included in promotional materials to make it culturally acceptable behaviour, but they must also adhere to Islamic law.

The Perspectives of Malaysian Chinese Retired Parents and Children on Filial Piety Malaysia Filial piety is characterised as children's reverence, care, and obedience towards their parents. The concept can be traced back to Confucian teachings and has been maintained by the Chinese population in Malaysia. Although the practice of filial piety in its original form has evolved in response to external causes such as population shifts and modernisation, internal factors such as family teachings and cultural traditions have maintained the value's significance and relevance. They expected their children to be at home or to speak with them more whenever they were free because emotional support is the foundation of support for retired parents in this day and age. It is difficult for outsiders to meet this need, which the children can only meet (Mikane et al., 2011). They tend to repress their wants, anxiety, and tenderness and learn to let it go to meet the expectations of their children. This tendency is consistent with Chinese culture, in which people tend to keep their views to themselves to avoid offending others and are generally more reluctant to communicate their inner thoughts. The perspectives and activities of Chinese fathers and mothers through the lens of Confucianism.

Religion

Religion plays a crucial role in shaping parenting practices in the Malay Archipelago, which is often considered a fundamental element of the local value system (Volling et al., 2009). The influence of religion on mothering practices can be both positive and negative. On the one hand, religion can promote social harmony and cooperation by strengthening communal relationships and fostering social cohesion. For instance, Islamic teachings emphasise the importance of maternal love, respect, and compassion for children, which can encourage nurturing and caring parenting practices among Muslim mothers. On the other hand, specific religious manifestations can adversely affect family dynamics. For example, some religious beliefs and practices may reinforce gender stereotypes, leading to an unequal distribution of power and resources within the family. Additionally, some religious ideologies may encourage authoritarianism, repressing individual autonomy and free will, particularly among women and children. Religion has a significant influence on breastfeeding practices and postnatal care customs within the Malay Archipelago. In particular, the predominantly Muslim Malays consider breastfeeding as encouraged by their faith, leading them to breastfeed for longer durations compared to the Chinese population, who traditionally have different beliefs regarding breastfeeding (Ishak et al., 2014). Additionally, Yusoff et al. (2018) conducted a study exploring the practices of postnatal care among the Malay, Chinese, and Indian communities. They identified similarities in the practices aimed at facilitating women's recovery and restoring their health during a defined confinement period after childbirth. However, slight differences were observed due to the diverse ethnic backgrounds and cultural beliefs inherited by each group, as well as the influence of other religions on postnatal practices. In these communities, the elderly with religious knowledge play a crucial role in transmitting cultural practices and beliefs related to postnatal care. Furthermore, among the Bidayuh, an indigenous group in Sarawak, Malaysia, breast milk is perceived as a divine gift that brings pride and happiness, fostering a strong commitment to continue exclusive breastfeeding despite any challenges that may arise.

In the Philippines, religion holds significant influence over parenting practices, particularly in rural areas where traditional values and beliefs remain deeply rooted. Strong faith in God plays a crucial role in child-rearing as it helps inculcate moral values and ethics in children. Parents who have a deep religious faith are more inclined to raise their children to be God-fearing individuals, emphasizing values such as respect, honesty, and hard work (Lanzarrote et al., 2013). Moreover, religion serves as a protective factor for low-income Filipino mothers who are exposed to community violence. Studies by Jocson and Ceballo (2020) reveal that religiosity and familism act as buffers against psychological distress. Participating in organized religious activities expands mothers' social support networks beyond their immediate family and neighbors, fostering a sense of safety and security. As a result, many Filipino mothers, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, turn to their faith as a source of solace and assistance when faced with community violence and other stressors. Although religion can promote social harmony and cooperation by strengthening communal relationships and fostering social cohesion, it is essential to note that specific religious manifestations can also negatively affect family dynamics, such as promoting authoritarianism, reinforcing gender stereotypes, and suppressing individual autonomy. In Indonesia, for example, "Tata krama" refers to a parental value that emphasises proper behaviour and

speech, instilled in children early on and becomes a societal norm. This can lead to more conservative parenting styles that may restrict parents and children from experiencing a more open world. Such belief has turned parents into authoritarian parents, where children are often punished spiritually when disobeying their parents (Riany et al., 2017). Additionally, a study on 200 postnatal mothers in Ipoh, Malaysia, found a misconception that vaccine ingredients are prohibited in Islam, leading to a strong perception that vaccines are not halal. This misconception, coupled with the fear of autism, has resulted in vaccine resistance among some Malaysian families. Likewise, A quantitative study conducted by Purnama et al. (2022) on 414 families in Indonesia investigated whether parenting styles and religious beliefs affect child behavioural problems and whether digital literacy is mediating. The study found that many parents in Indonesia hold conservative thoughts due to their strong adherence to religious beliefs, which can limit their openness to change. This, in turn, can impact the behaviour of both parents and children, potentially resulting in a less open world. The study suggests that digital literacy can mediate the effects of parenting styles and religious beliefs on child behavioural problems, offering a potential avenue for intervention.

Gender role

The practices of motherhood can be significantly influenced by cultural beliefs about gender roles, which dictate appropriate behaviours, expectations, and responsibilities for mothers based on gender (Pakaluk and Price, 2020). In collectivist cultures like the Malay Archipelago, community needs are prioritised over individual needs, and mothers and fathers play complementary roles in child-rearing. Mothers are seen as significant nurturers and spend more time responding to their children's needs, while fathers are protective (Pakaluk and Price, 2020). Meanwhile, fathers traditionally serve as breadwinners and authoritarian figures. Indonesia is characterized by a patriarchal culture, although the Minangkabau culture distinguishes itself by valuing the central role of mothers. Within Minangkabau customs, the *bundo kanduang*, or biological mother, holds a significant position as the main pillar in traditional household structures, with control over economic resources such as rice fields and farms. Women in this culture also possess voting rights in *musyawarah*, as emphasized by Rajo Penghulu (cited in Tharhar, 2017). Consequently, mothers play a prominent role in educating their children, given the husband's role as a *mamak* in his mother's family. A quantitative study by Sandhi et al. (2020) conducted in Yogyakarta City, Indonesia, highlights that Islamic teachings assign the responsibility of supporting breastfeeding to fathers under all circumstances. The Quran verse 2:233 suggests a two-year period for breastfeeding. In exploring cultural and ideological norms in Indonesia, Rahayu and Lim (2016) found that mothers play a critical role in supervising their children's internet usage. Indonesian Muslim mothers actively manage and mediate their children's online activities to ensure alignment with Islamic principles. Families with stronger religious beliefs seek to reinforce their faith to counter potentially "un-Islamic" internet and media content, while less devout Muslims may view online media as beneficial and broadening horizons. Additionally, Afiyanti and Solberg (2015) study conducted in rural Indonesia reveals that mothers accept their societal role and prioritize their family's needs over their own personal, sexual, educational, social, and economic aspirations.

According to Selin (2013) and Liwag et al. (1998), it is commonly observed that Filipino mothers assume the primary role in managing the household and providing

daily care for their children. Ochoa (2014) conducted a qualitative study on parental socialisation of moral behaviours in poverty-stricken Filipino families and found that corporal punishment is considered a normative socialisation practice in Filipino culture. Mothers are aware that their children may learn from their behaviours and, thus, are cautious about what they do in front of their children. According to Ochoa (2014), younger children are subjected to more stringent monitoring and corporal punishment than older children, and mothers are influenced by gender when making decisions about their parenting practices; they aim to protect their daughters from harm and shield their sons from negative influences. Ochoa (2014) also found that mothers and children attribute misbehaviours differently. In Singapore, a study by Shan and Hawkins (2014) compared the involvement of fathers and mothers in childcare and found that mothers were typically the primary caregivers and preferred by children over fathers. Fathers, on the other hand, viewed their role as primarily providing financial support for the family and showed less involvement in childcare. Despite the increasing female participation in the workforce since 1970, mothers in Singapore continue to shoulder the main responsibility for childcare. In Malaysia, Hossain (2013) discovered that different ethnic groups in the country followed their respective cultural principles in parenting. Malay mothers emphasized domesticity, purity, and a submissive role within the family, while Chinese children were taught filial piety, and Indian families adhered to a patriarchal structure. However, across these different ethnic groups, the father was generally expected to be the head of the household and engage in socializing with his children. Traditional parenting behaviors among Malaysian Indians were often influenced by the Laws of Manu, a Hindu belief emphasizing patriarchy and the concept of *pativrata*. This concept assigned mothers to care for their children, husbands, and other family members, with a more ancillary role in decision-making. Family values and religious beliefs continue to be significant foundations for successful and morally grounded parenting in many Malaysian families.

Educational attainment

The cultural beliefs and values of mothers in the Malay Archipelago have influenced their attitudes towards educational attainment. Historically, some traditional Malay communities did not prioritise education for girls as they were expected to become wives and mothers. However, recent studies show that many mothers now recognise the importance of education for their children's future success and quality of life. Despite this, gender roles and societal expectations continue challenging girls' educational attainment in the region (Afiyanti and Solberg, 2015). In Brunei Darussalam, mothers play a crucial role in ensuring their children's academic success, influenced by cultural and social norms based on Islamic teachings. Mothers are expected to be nurturing and unselfish in their child-rearing, competitive, and successful at work. Although mothers identify as primary caregivers, they often delegate some of their responsibilities to others, such as grandmothers and immigrant workers. They also adopt a stricter personal teaching approach at home and enrol their children in enrichment and extra classes (Rahman, 2020). Similar to the Western perspective, Singapore also reflects the prevalence of intensive mothering ideology, which is a global cultural phenomenon. According to this ideology, mothers bear the primary responsibility for their children's education and actively seek educational information to ensure their children's well-being and success. The influence of maternal responsibility in children's education also affects mothers' intentions towards investing in education. Surprisingly, a study by Chae (2022)

found that the phenomenon of motherhood competition operates similarly in both Singapore and Western countries, despite the cultural differences between them. This suggests that the notion of striving for excellence and seeking the best opportunities for children is a shared aspect of motherhood across different cultures. Meanwhile, a recent qualitative study in Malaysia explored the intergenerational transmission of Chinese Foochow and the connection between family language policy and language-ethnicity dimensions. The study found that school language has more significant economic and academic value for children's careers. While grandparents and parents continued to speak their heritage language, they did not force their children to speak the Foochow language (Ong and Ting, 2022).

Beliefs and practices across different regions of the Malay archipelago

There are commonalities in ideas and practices around motherhood across the Malay Archipelago, even though different cultures contribute to distinct mothering practices. To begin, the importance of the family unit must be considered when discussing mothering customs in any of these areas. It is required of mothers to put the welfare of their family ahead of all other concerns at all times. Mothers are instructed, beginning at a young age, to place their children and other family members at the centre of their lives and give them the utmost attention. Second, showing reverence for one's ancestors is an essential cultural norm. Children are instilled with the values of respecting their elders and providing for their needs as they age. This notion is represented in mothering traditions, where it is common for mothers to be expected to care for their parents and children. Thirdly, there is a continued emphasis on conventional gender roles in these places. While males are traditionally the primary providers of financial support for their families, mothers are expected to take on the primary role of caring for their children. This old conception of gender roles is not frequently questioned, although firmly embedded in the culture. Last but not least, filial piety is a cultural value shared by all these areas. Children are expected to respect and obey their parents and other adults in authority over them. It is expected of mothers that they will instil these values in their children and be an example of filial piety. This value is expressed in mothering activities.

Nevertheless, mothers in these places hold various cultural ideas and engage in culturally informed actions towards motherhood. Religion is one of the most influential factors contributing to developing mothering practices. The Catholic religion has a significant impact on the traditional family values and mothering traditions that are upheld in the Philippines. There is a connection between the concept of motherhood and religious beliefs and rituals, such as going to church with one's family on Sundays. Second, compared to other locations, Singapore is more individualistic, which can affect the cultural ideas and practices associated with mothering. Conversely, Indonesia and Malaysia have cultural contexts that emphasize collectivism, where the well-being and needs of the family take precedence over individual interests. Additionally, the level of modernization and development in these regions can influence the cultural beliefs and practices associated with mothering, shaping the way mothers navigate their roles and responsibilities within the family and society. For instance, working mothers in metropolitan regions may be more likely to rely on day-care and nannies. Still, extended family members may be more likely to assist the family in rural settings. In conclusion, cultural variety can affect the beliefs and practices associated with mothering. Because of the greater racial and ethnic diversity of the people in Indonesia and Malaysia

compared to those of Singapore and the Philippines, different ethnic groups in these countries can have distinctive cultural beliefs and practices about motherhood.

Conclusion

A scoping assessment was conducted to investigate the cultural beliefs of women in the Malay Archipelago regarding the various mothering behaviours they engage in with their children. The review found that twenty-five (25) studies fulfilled the inclusion requirements. The research was carried out in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, and the Philippines, all contributing to the significant findings regarding the cultural beliefs and practises of mothering prevalent among mothers in the Malay Archipelago. According to the study, some cultural ideas and practices associated with motherhood prevalent throughout the Malay Archipelago include collectivism, familism, modesty, filial piety, educational attainment, community support, and religion. Most mothers in this region have the habit of placing “we” ahead of individual goals, and extended family members play an essential role in developing the children in their care. As they get older, children are supposed to demonstrate filial piety to their parents and care for them. Regarding specific behaviours, postpartum recovery practices that were thoroughly searched in literature might vary from one ethnic group. However, in certain societies, nursing is seen as necessary and is even seen as a gift from God to the new family. The study also highlighted some cultural barriers to specific activities, such as the hush surrounding sex education among Malay mothers due to the influence of familial, religious, and social factors. This culture silences mothers’ way of educating their children.

It is essential to acknowledge the knowledge gap that women who belong to ethnic minorities in the Malay Archipelago have, such as language barriers, trouble accessing resources, and discrimination that can hinder these mothers’ ability to mother their children effectively. For mothers who are members of ethnic minorities and speak a language other than English, it may be challenging to access healthcare services and receive suitable guidance on parenting and child-rearing techniques. This might result in the mother experiencing emotions of isolation and frustration, which can severely impact her mental health and her capacity to parent. In addition, the cultural beliefs and behaviour associated with motherhood might vary from ethnic group to another. These variations can affect the mother’s feeling of identification and belonging within their society. It is essential to get an understanding of these behaviours and beliefs to provide assistance to and empower ethnic minority moms so that they may successfully parent their children and prosper within their communities.

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Conflict of interest

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest involve with any parties in this research study.

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