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The Effects of Family Communication Patterns on Adolescents' Self-Esteem among Higher Education Students

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Abstract
Family communication patterns play a crucial role in shaping the self-esteem of adolescents; however, the previous studies that utilized the Family Communication Patterns (FCP) framework yield inconsistent results and are mainly focused on childhood or adulthood, but the transition stage of adolescent required further examination. Thus, this study aims to investigate the effects of family communication patterns (consensual, pluralistic, protective, and Laissez-faire) on adolescent self-esteem by focusing on university students. The study applied a quantitative research design and utilized purposive sampling to gather 163 valid respondents. The multiple regression results indicated that consensual and pluralistic, which are under the conversation domain of the FCP framework, are the predictors of self-esteem. However, protective and Laiseer-Faiz (conformity domain) do not. The study contributed to the application of FCPT and human communication psychology scholarship. The study urged the parent-focused initiatives to educate families on the value of fostering, encouraging, and open communication at home. Besides, universities can collaborate with external experts to conduct parental outreach programs, promoting the development of healthier family communication styles that indirectly will benefit students' academic engagement and well-being.

Key words: Family Communication Patterns, Self-Esteem, Adolescence, Higher Education, Human Communication

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Introduction

Adolescents' self-concept, which is deeply influenced by family communication dynamics, plays a vital role in their emotional development and behavioral outcomes (Gad et al., 2025). Family communication patterns have been found to play a significant role in shaping children's self-concept, which in turn influences their behavior and well-being in society (KavehFarsani et al., 2020; Mohd Nasir & Tahrir Adli, 2023).

One of the alternatives to explore this family communication pattern is by utilizing Family Communication Patterns Theory (FCPT), which was introduced by Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2006),

where it provides a framework to understand how family communication influences individual development. FCPT identifies two key dimensions, which are conversation orientation, that reflect the openness and frequency of family discussions. On the other hand, conformity orientation, which reflects the emphasis on uniformity, obedience, and family hierarchy (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994). These dimensions combine to form four distinct communication patterns: consensual (high conversation, high conformity), pluralistic (high conversation, low conformity), protective (low conversation, high conformity), and laissez-faire (low conversation, low conformity) (Mohd Nasir & Ku Johari, 2023; Zhan & You, 2024).

Recent research has shown that these family communication patterns significantly influence adolescents' psychological well-being. For instance, a study among Iranian university students revealed that study revealed a significant positive association between conversation orientation and self-esteem in students, and conformity orientation was inversely correlated with self-esteem (Bakhtiari et al., 2024). Families that encourage open discussions tend to foster greater self-worth, autonomy, and emotional expression, compared to families that suppress individuality through rigid expectations (Bi & Wang, 2021).

Self-esteem has long been recognized as a critical component of psychological development, influencing academic, social, and occupational outcomes (Acosta-Gonzaga, 2023; Reitz, 2022). In this context, self-esteem is defined as the degree to which an individual shows appreciation for himself based on conscious, self-assessing feelings and considerations (Abdulghani et al., 2020). For example, Krauss et al. (2020) highlighted that parenting practices, such as warmth, monitoring, and economic security, are associated with self-esteem trajectories. However, these findings, though valuable, are limited in several ways as they only focused solely on Mexican-origin families in the United States, raising concerns about the cross-cultural applicability of their conclusions, especially in collectivist or non-Western societies.

Recent studies have emphasized the importance of examining family communication patterns across diverse cultural settings to better understand their influence on self-esteem and related psychological outcomes. For instance, Mohd Nasir and Ku Johari (2023) found that conversational orientation within families positively contributes to youths' self-concept development, whereas conformity orientation showed more limited associations. Besides, Goel (2025) also found that conversation-oriented communication positively impacts emotional intelligence, whereas conformity-oriented communication had a negative impact on emotional intelligence. However, Vo and Brannon (2025) found differently, where both conversation and conformity family communication patterns predicted the willingness to communicate about health related-topics among immigrant families, which yielded different outcomes and urged researchers to re-examine the phenomena.

Despite these advancements, previous studies that investigate the family communication patterns on immigrant (Vo & Brannon, 2025) and single mothers (Mattson, 2024) have been conducted. However, they often focus on either childhood or adulthood, overlooking the transitional period of young adulthood (Bi & Wang, 2023; Dittman et al., 2025), which warrants to examine on the adolescent among university students. Besides, in Malaysian settings, where collectivist values and unique family structures prevail, research exploring family communication patterns among university students remains interesting to be examined (Sumari et al., 2019; Riza & Mohd Sukri, 2025).

Given these gaps, this study aims to examine university students' perception on family communication patterns (protective, consensual, pluralistic, and laissez-faire) and self-esteem among Malaysian university students.

Literature Review

Family Communication Patterns: Theoretical Framework

This study relies on the theory of the Family Communication Patterns (FCP), which was originated by Koerner and Firzpatrick (2002). The theory indicated that patterns in family communication are primarily predicted by two overlapping dimensions, conversation orientation and

conformity orientation. Conversation orientation is an aspect of encouraging unfettered discussion in an open manner among family members. While conformity orientation is the extent to which families emphasize uniformity and agreement at the level of attitudes, values, and beliefs, and hierarchical structure and adherence to prevailing norms, the two dimensions combined identify the communicative climate that shapes family life and individual psychosocial development. Figure 1 below illustrates the FCP framework, which was adapted from Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2006, p. 57).

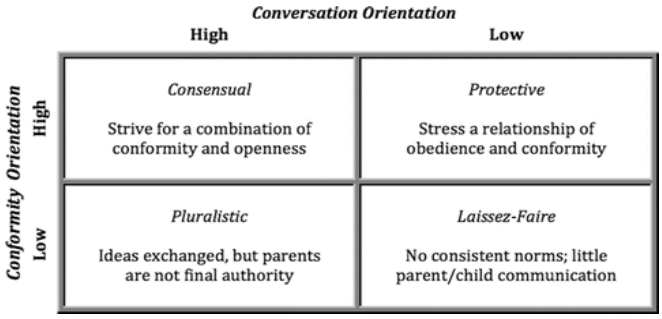


Figure 1: Family communication patterns (adapted from Koerner and Fitzpatrick, 2006)

Bakhtiari et al. (2024) demonstrated that family communication patterns significantly predict behavioral health outcomes, including self-esteem, among university students in Iran, further highlighting the relevance of these patterns in non-Western contexts. Moreover, Zhan and You (2024) reported that family communication styles play a pivotal role in shaping adolescents' self-efficacy and prosocial behaviors.

Hypothesis Development

Consensual Family Communication Patterns

Families high in both conversation and conformity orientation are labeled as consensual families (Allen, 2016), and they are usually ambivalent. A consensual family communication pattern makes room for children to communicate with their parents, but emphasis is placed on children's obedience to their parents' authority (Gyasi et al., 2023). In consensual families, communication is a blend of wanting to maintain authority and communicating openly. Parents are really interested in the opinions and ideas of their children; however, they still believe that they need to be the decision-makers for the family (Samek & Reuter, 2011). To solve the dilemma, parents will listen carefully to their children and take time to discuss the reasoning behind their decisions, as well as the values and beliefs that support them. This consensual approach cultivates a culture in which children are open to listening and fosters understanding and synchronization with the family's core values. As a result, children within consensual families will appreciate family conversation and tend to internalize and replicate the parents' belief systems (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002; Mattson, 2024).

Besides, Aloia (2022) found that parent-adolescents' satisfaction with the relationship is supported by consensual communication patterns. When communication openness is paired with obedience to rules, it encourages an environment in which there is respect and support for one another. This openness makes individuals easily express their feelings and thoughts without limitations, thereby raising relatedness and happiness. Such a dynamic not only promotes emotional closeness, but also enhances problem-solving ability, as members of the family's contribution is equally valued in working towards shared objectives.

Sholeh and Juniarti (2022) also highlighted that consensual family communication encourages adolescents to project their thoughts and feelings freely, simultaneously respecting the authority of parents. This parenting communication style creates a warm atmosphere in which female adolescents, in particular, are allowed to participate in decision-making activities such as pursuing education. Although the parents might possess final authority, they engage in mutual sharing of ideas, reflecting a

sign of emotional closeness and fostering confidence and independence among adolescents (Roman et al., 2025). Thus, the study hypothesized that:

H1: As consensual communication patterns become more prevalent in families, adolescents are more likely to develop higher self-esteem.

Pluralistic Family Communication Patterns

Families who are under the category of high conversation and low conformity orientation are labeled as *pluralistic* families (Hurst et al., 2022). Pluralistic family communication patterns usually are open, free-flow, and democratic (Aleti et al., 2015). This parenting communication style leads to family discussions in which opinions are criticized because the family espouses them. Parents are receptive to adopting the opinions of their children and incorporating them into family decision-making processes. It is because their emphasis on freedom of exchange of ideas and freedom from explicit pressure to obey or confirm that these families are usually low in conflict avoidance and openly settle their disputes with one another, engage in positive patterns of conflict resolution, and generally can resolve their disputes (Lertsuwan & Hale, 2018).

Sayed and Sinha (2024) showed a positive sign of pluralistic families demonstrating a greater tendency for open conflict discussion and cooperative conflict resolution methods. Additionally, Umennuihe et al. (2023) found a strong link between family communication patterns and adolescents' conflict management styles. This is further strengthened by the Hurst et al. (2022) that a pluralistic family communication style significantly affects adolescent sexual self-efficacy.

Bi and Wang (2021) found that pluralistic family environments are advantageous to adolescents' life satisfaction. In pluralistic families, adolescents are more likely to express personal feelings and be open to one another while communicating without hesitation or boundaries. This openness, in turn, reduces opportunities for communication breakdowns that could be harmful to their general well-being. Hence, the study formulated that:

H2: As pluralistic communication patterns become more prevalent in families, adolescents are more likely to develop higher self-esteem.

Protective Family Communication Patterns

Families who are under the category of high conformity and low conversation are also known as protective families (Samek & Rueter, 2011). In protective family communication patterns, parents emphasize obedience and respect for authority, discouraging open dialogue. The dominant family figure makes most decisions, and children are expected to conform without questioning (Tambunan et al.,2024). Protective family communication patterns usually are authoritarian, which aligned with the study of Hussain et al. (2025), where protective parenting style have significant impact on the adolescent self-esteem and emotional regulation. Protective parents believe that they should be making the decision for their family and children, and they tend to see little value in the reasoning of their children (Krauss et al., 2019). Although the environment may appear stable, such characteristics can hinder adolescents from fully expressing themselves, with silence potentially serving as a coping mechanism.

Adolescents who are from protective families are expected to follow the established norms to avoid conflict. This is because communication is not practiced or emphasized often; therefore, poor conflict skills are likely to arise in these households (Zhu et al., 2025). Eventually, adolescents from protective families might end up having low self-esteem when it comes to making decisions as adults later (Farmakopoulou et al., 2024; Zhao et al., 2023). Relating to protective families, their ideas and justifications are rarely honored or considered, and this can negatively impact the growth of important socio-emotional skills. As a result, they may struggle with expressing themselves, managing their emotions, and being empathetic. The absence of validation and effective communication may lead them to censor themselves and lower their self-esteem (Boele, 2019).

To recapitulate, while protective families provide structure and order through the imposition of clear rules and expectations, the children are dissuaded from sharing their views or participating in

family decision-making, which can stifle the development of confidence, emotional intelligence, and proper communication skills. Hence, the study formulated that:

H3: As protective communication patterns become more prevalent in families, adolescents are more likely to experience lower self-esteem.

Laissez-Faire Family Communication Patterns

Families low in both conversation and conformity orientation are labeled as laissez-faire (Hamon & Schrodt, 2012). Laissez-faire is a style of family communication in which there is no dialogue or uniformity, and families are emotionally estranged from one another (Umennuihe et al., 2023). In laissez-faire families, it is typically relaxed and indifferent, addressing just a few matters. Parents in laissez-faire families believe that every individual should have their own choices, unlike in the pluralistic families, they are usually not interested in inquiry about their children's choices. This has somehow resulted in emotional detachment among the family members. Laissez-faire families have minimal focus on conformity and communication, which means individual interests are not frequently restricted by family expectations. Consequently, disagreement between opposing interests is not prevalent (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002; Mattson, 2024).

For instance, Sawitri et al. (2024) observed that in laissez-faire families, the absence of shared experience and meaningful interaction is a dominant characteristic. Social facts are neither imposed nor openly discussed, which generates minimal resistance to parental authority. Due to the lack of emotional support and guidance, adolescents develop a weak sense of identity in the family, which negatively influences their emotional attachment and security. For some, such emotional detachment can lead to infants or young children feeling abandoned, ignored, or unimportant. When adolescents grow up in Laissez-faire parenting environments, they may exhibit externalizing behaviors such as aggression, defiance, or disruptive behavior (Zhang et al., 2025). The biggest factor is due to the family's overall disengaged nature, absence of clear boundaries, and low emotional support. Thus, the child's behavioral issues may escalate in the long run, reaffirming emotional detachment and irresponsibility. Therefore, the following hypothesis is formed:

H4: As laissez-faire communication patterns become more prevalent in families, adolescents are more likely to experience lower self-esteem.

Figure 2 presents the conceptual framework of the study.

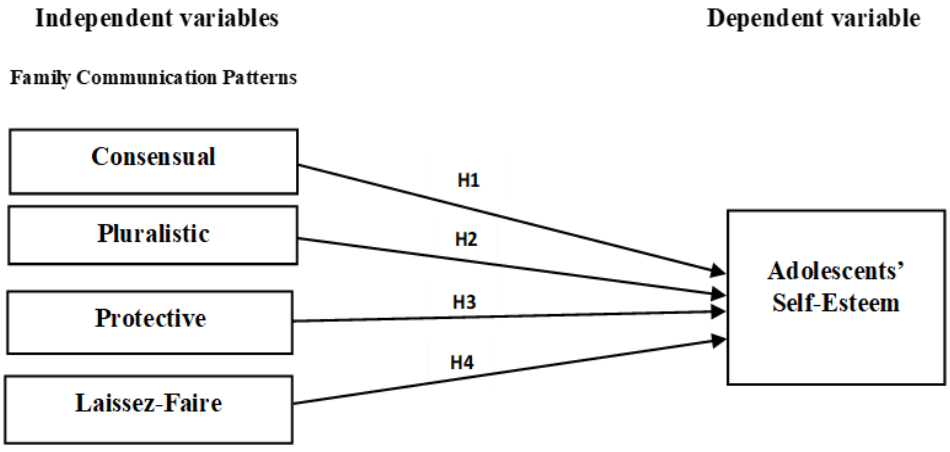


Figure 2: Proposed conceptual framework

Research Methodology

Research design

This study adopts a quantitative research design. Quantitative research design allows for the collection of numerical and unchanging data, which is statistically analyzed to explain phenomena and test hypotheses (Mohajan, 2020).

Sampling procedure

The target group for this study includes individuals aged between 18 and 29 years old who are currently pursuing their studies at higher education institutions in Malaysia. This age range is significant since it marks the transitional phase from adolescence to young adulthood (Arnett, 2000), a time when personal identity and self-esteem are still being shaped, often influenced by ongoing interactions within the family.

A purposive sampling technique, classified under non-probability sampling, was applied. This method is suitable when the goal is to gather information from individuals who possess specific traits or characteristics relevant to the research (Etikan et al., 2016). So, for this study, researchers included a screening question, "How many family members do you have?" and those who answered "no family members or zero" were excluded. Researchers used the G-power analysis to determine the designated sample size (Kang, 2021), and the minimum required sample is 129 (predictors: 4; effect: 0.15; power: 0.95), and the current study has 163 valid sample which is sufficient.

Measurement

The instrument comprised four Sections. Section A comprised the demographic profile of the respondents. Section B is consisted 4 items for pluralistic that were adapted from (Bi & Wang, 2021). Besides, the 5-item for consensual style was adapted from Gyasi et al. (2023) and Syazwani & Amin (2022). For Section C, 5 items for laissez-faire were adapted from (Padilla, 2021; Effiong & Usoroh, 2020), and protective items were adapted from Mustaffa et al. (2021) and Effiong & Usoroh (2020).

To measure the self-esteem (Section D), 5 items were adapted from Al-Ariqi & Sharyan (2022) and Effiong & Usoroh (2020). All the items were measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). This scale format helps capture respondents' preferences, sentiments, perspectives, and behaviors.

Data collection procedures

To collect the data for this research, an online survey was used. The questionnaire was created with Google Forms and shared via several digital platforms, including WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, Telegram, and email. The study guarantees anonymity and confidentiality, where participants were informed through a consent form about their rights and the voluntary involvement in this research study. The data were collected from May to June 2025.

Reliability Analysis

Table 1 displays the results of the reliability test, which was conducted based on 30 respondents as per the central limit theorem in statistics (Islam, 2018). The Cronbach's alpha of consensual, pluralistic, and self-esteem has good reliability as the alpha value is greater than 0.70, as suggested by Taber (2018). For protective patterns, the initial reliability was below the threshold. After reviewing item statistics, the item for pro 1 was removed because of the negative impacts on overall consistency. After revision, the Cronbach's alpha increased to 0.663, and the laissez-faire pattern has the value of 0.639, which is still considered acceptable (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Table 1: Reliability Analysis

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha (N=30)	No. of items	Item(s) deleted
Consensual	0.722	5	none
Pluralistic	0.740	4	none
Protective	0.663	4	PRO 1
Laissez-Faire	0.639	5	none
Self-esteem	0.933	5	none

3.6 Normality Analysis

Based on Hatem et al. (2022), the kurtosis and skewness measures are used to see if the indicators fulfilled the normalcy assumptions. Table 2 shows that there was no violation of the skewness and kurtosis assumptions, with values falling within the permitted range, skewness and kurtosis values between -2 to +2 (with 95% confidence interval) are acceptable (Hair et al., 2022), and the data is normal and able to perform regression analysis.

Table 2: Normality analysis

Variables	Skewness	Kurtosis
Consensual	-0.380	0.208
Pluralistic	-0.405	0.027
Protective	0.450	0.353
Laissez-Faire	0.260	-0.056
Self-esteem	-0.663	-0.083

Results

As shown above in Table 3, more than half of the respondents were females (61.3%), while males accounted for 38.7%. Besides, more than half of the respondents are between 21-23 years old 54.0% and are made up of Malay 53.9%. More than half of the respondents from private universities, 68.1% and, have a Bachelor's Degree (71.8%), which indicates that the respondents are well-educated and can make vice decision.

Table 3: Demographic profile of respondents (N=163)

Variable(s)	Category	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	63	38.7
	Female	100	61.3
Age (years old)	18-20	45	27.6
	21-23	88	54.0
	24-26	22	13.5
	27-29	5	3.1
	>29	3	1.8
Race	Malay	88	54.0
	Chinese	44	27.0
	Indian	8	4.9
	Others	23	14.1
Type of university	Public	52	31.9
	Private	111	68.1
Education	Foundation/Pre-University	11	6.7
	Diploma	34	20.9
	Bachelor's Degree	117	71.8
	Postgraduate degree	1	0.6

Multiple regression analysis

The Durbin-Watson value is 2.004, which is between 1 and 3, indicating that there are no autocorrelations. The value of R is .421, indicating that there is a medium effect between the family communication patterns and adolescent self-esteem. The R-square value is 0.177%, meaning that 17.7% of the total variation in students' self-esteem was explained by the four family communication patterns (consensual, pluralistic, protective, and laissez-faire).

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.421[a]	0.177	0.156	4.589	2.004

a Predictors: (Constant), ScoreLZ, ScorePLU, ScorePRO, ScoreCSS
b Dependent Variable: ScoreSE

Table 5 showed that the significance p-value is lower than 0.001. This indicates that the regression model has a high level of statistical significance, showing that the family communication patterns explain a considerable percentage of the variation in the self-esteem of Malaysian higher education institution students. This significance is also reflected in the moderately significant F value, 8.489.

Table 5: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA[a]) for Multiple Linear Regression

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	*p*
Regression	715.127	4	178.782	8.489	<.001[b]
Residual	3327.622	158	21.061		
Total	4042.748	162			

a Dependent Variable: ScoreSE
b Predictors: (Constant), ScoreLZ, ScorePLU, ScorePRO, ScoreCSS

Table 6 indicates that consensual communication (β = 0.303, t = 2.526, p = 0.0013) and Pluralistic (β = 0.331, t = 2.419, p = 0.017) have a positive and significant effect on adolescent self-esteem. Thus, H1 and H2 were supported. Although protective (β = -0.048, t = -0.428, p = 0.669) has a negative relationship, which aligned with the H3 that when the protective communication pattern prevails, it will decrease self-esteem, but it was insignificant. Laissez-faire (β = 0.070, t = 0.599, p = 0.550) does not have a significant effect on self-esteem. Hence, H3 and H4 were rejected.

Table 6: Hypothesis Testing

Model	**Unstandardized Coefficients**		**Standardized Coefficients**	***t***	***p***	**95% Confidence Interval**	
Independent Variables	**B**	**Std. Error**	**Beta**			**Lower Bound**	**Upper Bound**
(Constant)	8.716	3.003		2.903	0.004	2.785	14.647
Consensual	0.303	0.120	0.237	2.526*	0.013	0.066	0.540
Pluralistic	0.331	0.137	0.230	2.419*	0.017	0.061	0.602
Protective	-0.048	0.111	-0.033	-0.428	0.669	-0.267	0.172
Laissez-faire	0.070	0.116	0.045	0.599	0.550	-0.160	0.300

Note: * $p < 0.05$; 1-tailed

Discussion

The significant value for both consensual and pluralistic communication patterns demonstrated a significant and positive relationship with self-esteem, which supports H1 and H2. This aligns with findings of Mohd Nasir and Ku Johari (2023), that the conversation orientation family communication pattern is a component where both consensual and pluralistic patterns show an abundance of and contribute to the self-concept, satisfaction, and emotional intelligence (Aloia, 2022; Goel, 2025). When adolescents grow up in families that encourage open dialogue and respect individual viewpoints, their competence and relatedness needs are more likely to be fulfilled. Thus, the support for H1 and H2 confirms that family communication patterns with high conversation orientation (e.g., consensual and pluralistic) nurture individuals with higher life satisfaction and cooperative conflict resolution (Bi & Wang, 2021; Sayed & Sinha, 2024).

The results for both protective and laissez-faire were not statistically significant, thus H3 and H4 are not supported. This aligned with the findings of Goel (2025), where the conformity-oriented communication had a negative impact on emotional intelligence. While overparenting and high conformity orientation which relate closely to protective and laissez-faire patterns were expected to hinder psychological needs fulfillment and thereby reduce self-esteem (Segrin et al., 2022), the study found that both protective and laissez-faire communication patterns was not significantly associated with self-esteem which supported the notion that adolescents from protective families might end up having low self-esteem when it comes to making decisions (Farmakopoulou et al., 2024; Zhao et al., 2023).

This suggests that while high-conformity and low-conversation patterns may correlate with parental control or disengagement, their effects on adolescents' psychological needs and self-esteem are more complex than thought. The lack of significance in this study of protective and laissez-faire communication patterns could be attributed to differences in culture since the study was conducted in Malaysia. The lack of significant findings is also reflected in the R-square, where the proportion of total variation in students' self-esteem which explained by all four family communication patterns was found to be about 17.7%, which confirms that self-esteem is affected by other factors that are not covered in the current research.

Conclusion & Recommendations

To recapitulate, this study investigated the family communication patterns influence on self-esteem among young adolescents. The major findings concluded that consensual and pluralistic family communication patterns positively and significantly affect self-esteem, while protective and laissez-faire family communication patterns were found not significant related to self-esteem.

Theoretical Implications

This study has successfully contributed to a deeper understanding of how the FCP framework, specifically the four communication styles, namely consensual, pluralistic, protective, and laissez-faire (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002) influence adolescents' self-esteem. The findings revealed both positive and negative associations, providing clearer insights into which family communication styles are more likely to foster higher or lower levels of self-esteem in adolescents. Through this theoretical lens, it is hoped that the results will serve as a valuable reference for future research, aiding scholars in further exploring how varying communication patterns impact family relationships. According to FCPT, families that exhibit pluralistic and consensual communication styles are more likely to nurture higher levels of self-esteem in young adolescents. In contrast, families characterized by protective and laissez-faire patterns tend to report lower self-esteem in young adolescents.

Practical implications

This study provides crucial practical insights for understanding how family communication patterns can affect students in higher education settings. The results demonstrate that parents' communication styles have a significant impact on their kids' development of self-esteem, even as they enter young adulthood. Many parents might not be aware that their child's confidence and emotional development can be hampered by protective or laissez-faire communication styles, which are characterized by little openness or emotional detachment. As a result, it is crucial to develop parent-focused initiatives, such as seminars, workshops, and awareness campaigns, to educate families on the value of fostering candid, encouraging, and non-judgmental communication in the home. Families may build a better foundation that promotes students' self-worth (An et al., 2024) and emotional health by giving parents practical ways to move toward more pluralistic or collaborative communication approaches.

Furthermore, these findings underscore the need to integrate family background assessments into student counseling services. In other words, counselors can identify students who come from protective or laissez-faire communication backgrounds, as these individuals may face greater challenges in self-expression and self-worth. Moreover, tailored interventions such as self-esteem enhancement workshops and peer support programs can be developed to support these students effectively. Ultimately, the practical implication of this study can assist counselors in recognizing students' family communication patterns, enabling them to implement targeted interventions that foster healthy self-esteem development.

Last but not least, the study's results show the importance of going beyond academic support to address the emotional and psychological needs of students. Educational institutions can design and implement student support services that acknowledge the role of family dynamics in shaping students' mental health and academic performance. Initiatives such as peer support groups, mentorship programs, and campus-wide awareness campaigns can provide students with safe spaces to build confidence and share their experiences. In addition, universities can collaborate with external experts to conduct parental outreach programs, promoting the development of healthier family communication styles that indirectly benefit students' academic engagement and well-being.

Limitations and future research

First, the sample was limited to students from higher education institutions in Malaysia, excluding adolescents who are not currently enrolled in formal education. As a result, the findings may not be generalizable to the broader adolescent population. Future research should involve a more diverse

and representative group of participants. Instead of relying solely on purposive sampling like in this study, approaches such as stratified random sampling or quota sampling would help ensure that individuals from different backgrounds are included. By doing so, the findings would reflect a broader and more realistic picture of how family communication patterns affect young people across Malaysia, not just university students.

In addition, this study mainly focused on university students aged 18 to 29 years old. While this age group is certainly important, future studies could benefit from including a wider age range. For example, exploring how these family communication patterns affect younger adolescents, like secondary school students or mature young adults, who have entered the workforce or are pursuing postgraduate studies, would provide a more complete understanding of how self-esteem develops across different life stages.

Since this study relied on self-reported questionnaires, there is always a chance that some responses were influenced by personal bias or misunderstandings. To overcome this, future research should consider using a mixed-methods approach, combining surveys with interviews, focus groups, or longitudinal research. These methods allow researchers to dive deeper into individuals' experiences and emotions, providing a richer, more personal perspective on how family communication shapes their self-esteem across time.

Although the study found that the four family communication patterns can contribute to self-esteem, it was only able to explained the 17.7% of the variance. Thus, future studies can include other factors that might play a role in this family communication relationship, such as family structure, social media usage (Ling et al., 2023), self-disclosure (Chan et al., 2026), emotional regulations, digital pro-social behaviour (Zhan & You, 2024) and resilience (Boumis et al., 2023) that could influence how communication within the family affects various outcomes related to youth and contribute to the human communication scholarship.

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Appendix

Consensual (adapted from Gyasi et al., 2023; Syazwani & Amin, 2022)

1. I feel comfortable sharing my thoughts and feelings with my parents.
2. I am encouraged to express my opinions, even if they differ from those of my parents.
3. In my family, keeping unity and agreement is very important.
4. My parents usually make the final decisions after hearing what other members have to say.
5. When disagreement happens in the family, we talk it out, but the final decision usually reflects my parents' point of view.

Pluralistic (adapted from Bi & Wang, 2021)

1. I find it easy to discuss problems with my parents.
2. I discuss my beliefs/values with my parents.
3. I am rarely afraid to ask my parents for what I want.
4. I usually tell my parents about my thoughts.

Protective (modified from Mustaffa et al., 2021; Effiong & Usoroh, 2020)

1. My parents always showed a positive attitude when discussing children's matters. *(deleted)*
2. I rarely discuss problems/matters with my parents.
3. My parents' opinion is an order in my life.
4. My parents prefer me to listen to their advice in life.
5. My parents try to change my personality.

Laissez-Faire (modified from Padilla, 2021; Effiong & Usoroh, 2020)

1. I rarely tell my parents what I was thinking or feeling.
2. My parents rarely question my circle of friends/peers
3. My decisions are rarely questioned by my parents.
4. I rarely spend time communicating with my parents.
5. My parents give me freedom to do the things I like.

Self-Esteem (adapted from Al-Ariqi & Sharyan, 2022; Effiong & Usoroh, 2020)

1. Overall, I am satisfied with myself.
2. I feel that I have several good qualities.
3. I can do things as well as most other people.
4. I feel that I am a person of worth.
5. I take a positive attitude toward myself.