

## CONCEPT ANALYSIS

# The Evolving Concept of Filial Piety in the Philippines

Raymund F. Mamayson, PhD, RN<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

**Background:** Rooted in Confucian ethics, Indigenous traditions, and historical reliance on the family due to limited social safety nets, filial piety had traditionally mandated children's complete responsibility for their aging parents' care in the Philippines. However, profound social and economic transformations, including globalization, migration, and evolving gender roles are increasingly challenging this traditional model.

**Objectives:** This study explored how filial piety is being reinterpreted and practiced within Filipino families to adapt to the realities of the 21st century. Furthermore, it sought to generate new knowledge to inform nursing practice, research, and education regarding culturally sensitive elder care in the Philippines.

**Methodology:** In employing Walker and Avant's eight-step concept analysis process, this study systematically reviewed relevant literature from PubMed, CINAHL, and Google Scholar that was complemented by insights from personal experiences and informal dialogues. This approach clarified filial piety's current understanding and identified its defining attributes, antecedents, consequences, and empirical referents.

**Results:** The analysis revealed that filial piety in the Philippines is a dynamic and multifaceted concept, defined by respect, care, support, obligation, and emotional closeness. While these attributes remain deeply ingrained in Filipino culture, their expression significantly adapted to modern realities. Findings had indicated that geographical dispersion challenges traditional co-residence that consequently require new forms of support like remittances and digital communication. While respect and care for elders remain paramount, families are increasingly open to alternative care models, such as shared caregiving arrangements or professional assisted living facilities, thus reflecting a pragmatic adaptation rather than abandoning the core value. The analysis affirmed its antecedents in Confucian philosophy, indigenous traditions, and historically limited social safety nets. Consequences included strengthened family bonds and a sense of fulfillment, alongside potential risks of elder exploitation and significant caregiver strain.

**Conclusion:** Filial piety profoundly influences caregiving practices for older Filipinos, but its expression dynamically adapts to modern life. This study suggested that prioritizing open communication, collective responsibility even when geographically separated, and flexible care arrangements offered vital opportunities for developing more sustainable and supportive intergenerational care models for Filipino families. These insights may also provide valuable perspectives for other societies navigating similar socioeconomic shifts in traditional family values.

**Keywords:** *Concept analysis, filial piety, Philippines, eldercare*

## Introduction

Filial piety, a core pillar of Confucian ethics (Ho, 1986), involves a deep respect and obedience towards one's parents. Though commonly defined using examples from traditional Chinese families (Bedford & Yeh, 2019), this concept is also deeply ingrained in Filipino society. Rooted in indigenous

traditions (Biana et al., 2016) and reinforced by Spanish colonialism and Catholicism, where a hierarchical structure mirroring the family was introduced and where honoring one's parents and obeying God was emphasized (Elizalde, 2019), it has played a central role in shaping family dynamics and social

<sup>1</sup> Professor, School of Advanced Studies and School of Nursing, Allied Health, and Biological Sciences, Saint Louis University, Bonifacio Street, Baguio City, Philippines; Email: rfmamayson@slu.edu.ph

structures. However, the Philippines, a nation constantly in flux, is witnessing a fascinating reinterpretation and adaptation of how filial piety is understood and practiced.

Several factors had driven this transformation. Modernization and globalization have introduced new ideas about individualism and personal aspirations (Brink, 2017), while challenging the traditional emphasis on absolute obedience. Today, many Filipinos are going abroad for work (Lomibao, 2023). This scenario leads to a geographical separation from parents and a revisiting of their filial responsibilities. Furthermore, women are increasingly becoming a part of the workforce, challenging traditional gender roles within families (Brink, 2017). This situation prompts a reevaluation of parent-child relationships, encouraging a more weighted and reciprocal model. These transformations raise the question: How is filial piety currently being reinterpreted and practiced to adapt to the realities of the 21st century in the Philippines?

### Concept Selection

During the holidays, the author's sprawling ancestral house in Pangasinan buzzed with activity. Aunties bustled in the kitchen, their laughter echoing through the halls. Uncles debated politics on the veranda, their voices a comforting backdrop to the author's childhood days. The author's grandmother, Lola Soling, was the center of this vibrant chaos, with her gentle smile and unwavering dedication holding their multigenerational family together. Witnessing her devotion to her aunt, her siblings, and eventually, her grandchildren, the author grew up understanding the importance of filial piety—the cornerstone of Filipino family life.

One day, a news report flashed on television about the story of the rising challenges faced by families caring for old parents in rural areas. It sparked a familiar pang of concern. The traditional expectation of adult children taking full-time caregiving seemed increasingly strained in the face of modern realities. The question arose: was the concept of filial piety, once a source of strength for Filipino families, becoming a burden in the face of these new challenges?

Back home for a visit, the author noticed a shift in conversations with his family and friends. The nursing home in a nearby town, once viewed with skepticism, was now a viable option for some. For example, a friend who previously resisted the idea was now actively researching facilities for his aging parents. While respect and care for elders remained paramount, how it was expressed seemed to evolve. This situation piqued the author's curiosity further. How were Filipino families adapting this profoundly ingrained cultural value to navigate the complexities of a globalized world? Was the concept of filial piety transforming?

Impelled by this question, the author began an exploration of the evolving nature of filial piety in the Philippines, hoping to acquire a more thorough understanding of this concept through interviews and informal dialogues, inquiries, and extensive reading of relevant and related studies. The author aimed to illuminate how this core value is being reinterpreted and practiced across generations and how these changes impact caregiving practices for older Filipinos in the modern Philippines. Perhaps, by examining this evolving tapestry of filial piety, the author could contribute to a future where tradition and progress coexist in order to ensure the well-being of elders and their families. In having explored this current adaptation and reinterpretation of filial piety in the Philippines, valuable insights into the complexities of Filipino family life were revealed as tensions between tradition and modernity surfaced.

### Aim of the Analysis

This concept analysis aimed to unveil the evolving nature of filial piety in the Philippines utilizing the process model by Walker and Avant (2019). By dissecting its core attributes, exploring the factors driving its transformation, and analyzing its impact on caregiving practices, this analysis sought to illuminate a better understanding of this critical concept in a rapidly changing Filipino society. The knowledge generated can be instrumental in supporting families, policymakers, and social service providers in navigating the complexities of eldercare in the modern Philippines. Furthermore, this research sought to inform nursing practice by providing insights into the impact of filial piety on caregiving for older adults in order to generate new knowledge for future research on family dynamics and cultural change in the Philippines.

## Methodology

### Concept Analysis Method

Concept analysis, a systematic approach to examining an abstract concept, was utilized in this study. This process involved breaking down a complex idea, providing a clear explanation, offering a precise definition, and comparing it to similar ideas (Foley & Davis, 2017). Walker and Avant's (2019) eight-step concept analysis process was chosen for this analysis due to its methodical approach to clarifying the current understanding of a concept and its practical application within a specific context.

This framework allowed for the systematic exploration of filial piety in the modern Philippines through the following steps: (a) concept selection; (b) determining the aims; (c) identifying the uses; (d) determining the defining attributes; (e) constructing a

model case; (f) constructing additional cases; (g) identifying antecedents and consequences; and (h) defining empirical referents.

A comprehensive review of relevant and related literature was conducted to address these steps. This ongoing process informed each step of the analysis while providing insights into how filial piety is used across various fields and disciplines in past and present contexts. The defining attributes – core characteristics distinguishing filial piety from related concepts like mere respect or obedience, were identified through informal dialogues, analysis of the literature, and reflections on lived experiences, ultimately highlighting common threads and recurring characteristics that distinguish filial piety from related concepts. A model case and additional cases illustrating the evolving nature of filial piety in real-life family situations were then constructed. Antecedents, or factors contributing to the concept's development were determined by examining literature that discussed the origins and reinforcements of this concept in Filipino society. Consequently conditions, or associated outcomes of filial piety, were identified by synthesizing findings from studies that explored the impacts of filial obligations on both older people and their caregivers in a Filipino context. Finally, empirical referents – observable cues indicating the concept's presence, were presented.

The findings from each step were synthesized to create a refined definition of filial piety that accurately reflects its evolving nature within the Philippines. This definition was presented alongside supporting evidence from the literature and the constructed case studies.

### Data Sources

This study investigated the concept of filial piety in the Philippines through a comprehensive review of relevant literature and definitions. Initial conceptual understanding was drawn from online dictionaries, including the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, Cambridge Dictionary, and Open Education Sociology Dictionary.

An extensive review of extant literature was conducted for a deeper exploration of filial piety within the Filipino context. Searches were performed across the PubMed, CINAHL, and Google Scholar databases. The primary keywords used were “filial piety,” “filial obligation,” “Philippines,” and “Filipinos.” Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT) were strategically employed to broaden, to narrow, or to refine the search results.

A focused literature review was conducted on published and unpublished articles concerning filial piety in the Philippines. The

primary inclusion criteria mandated English language and publication within the last five years to ensure contemporary relevance. Seminal or foundational works, if crucial for a comprehensive understanding, were also considered regardless of their publication date. Six articles formed the core of this review, which was further enriched by the author's personal experiences and informal observations, offering insights into the concept's practical manifestations.

## Results

### Uses of the Concept

To comprehensively explore the various applications and interpretations of filial piety, definitions from several authoritative sources were initially examined. The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary defines it as “reverence for parents considered in Chinese ethics the prime virtue and the basis of all right human relations” (Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, n.d.). Similarly, the Cambridge Dictionary emphasizes “the idea that parents, grandparents, and older people should be treated with honor and respect” (Cambridge University Press, n.d.). The Open Education Sociology Dictionary broadens this to “reverence and respect given to one's parents and ancestors” (Bell, 2013).

Historically, the early literature on filial piety heavily emphasized ancestor worship, particularly within a Chinese context, while viewing proper offerings as crucial for securing ancestral guidance and protection (Bedford & Yeh, 2019). This duty, universally shared by emperors and commoners, mirrored the hierarchical family structure where the patriarch governed relatives akin to the emperor ruling his subjects, thereby shaping kinship dynamics and societal roles. More recent research, however, has refined this understanding. Li et al. (2021) identified two distinct dimensions: reciprocal filial piety, which accentuates sincere regard and a lifelong positive bond with parents, and authoritarian filial piety, which concentrated on fulfilling social responsibilities, even at the expense of personal desires.

In the Filipino context, filial piety functions as a fundamental moral compass, guiding individuals to prioritize the needs and well-being of their parents. This translated into concrete actions such as providing financial assistance, assisting with daily duties, and ensuring emotional security. The cultural value of familism, a hallmark of Asian families and a significant characteristic of filial piety (Choi et al., 2021), remains practiced in the Philippines today. Beyond the immediate family, this concept fosters a broader sense of community and intergenerational solidarity. It encourages respect for all older people, not exclusively one's parents, promoting a society that deeply values its senior population.

Despite its many positive aspects, filial piety can also present challenges, acting as a two-edged blade. The inherent emphasis on responsibility can induce significant guilt, particularly for Filipinos working abroad or navigating demanding careers, as they balance filial duties with personal aspirations. This often becomes a substantial source of stress. Furthermore, the traditional interpretation of filial piety frequently assumes a multigenerational household, which is becoming increasingly uncommon due to rapid urbanization and extensive migration patterns.

Consequently, the central aim of this concept analysis was to understand how the uses of filial piety are dynamically evolving. As the landscape of Filipino families continues to change, the emphasis is shifting towards a more flexible interpretation. This evolution necessitates exploring alternative care arrangements, while cultivating more robust informal and formal support networks, and fostering open family communication to navigate evolving expectations and responsibilities effectively.

By meticulously analyzing the diverse applications of filial piety other than encompassing its traditional roots and contemporary adaptations, valuable insights can be gained into the complexities of caregiving in the Philippines. This enhanced understanding can empower families to make informed decisions, guide policy development to strengthen eldercare systems, and ultimately contribute to building a future where honoring cherished traditions harmoniously aligns with the realities of modern Filipino life.

### Defining Attributes

The concept of filial piety in the Philippines is a complex tapestry knit by threads of respect, care, support, obligation, and emotional closeness. While deeply ingrained in Filipino culture, these attributes adapt to changing world realities. This section delves into each of these threads, exploring how they manifest in everyday life and how they are being reinterpreted by Filipinos navigating the complexities of modern family dynamics.

Filipinos highly respect older family members (Felipe-Dimog et al., 2023; Yao, 2020), and this respect for elders is not just passive acknowledgment but an active tapestry of deference and obedience that are expressed through words and actions. For instance, "*pagmamano*," a beautiful tradition among Filipinos in which younger people bow and touch an elder's hand to their forehead, conveys respect for elders and promotes a sense of community (Philippine News Agency, 2023). Handed down through generations, this honoring gesture echoes the Filipino values of strong family ties and a supportive social network. Moreover, conversations with elders are often accompanied by

respectful words like "*po*" and "*opo*" (CBN Asia, Inc., 2022), and their opinions are valued during family gatherings. Disagreements might occur, but they are usually couched respectfully, acknowledging the wisdom that comes with age.

Respect blossoms into care, a fundamental attribute that fosters connection and well-being, manifesting as a nurturing vine that entwines generations. It encompasses more than just physical provision; it extends to emotional responsiveness, where empathy and active listening offer solace and support during worry and distress. Care also involves a profound sense of responsibility, particularly in addressing practical needs like financial security. This reciprocal exchange of love and support, often reinforced by cultural values like familism, emphasizes family obligation (Choi et al., 2021) and creates a dynamic and flowing interplay of mutual well-being. Ultimately, care, as an attribute, embodies looking after one another, ensuring comfort, and providing unwavering support across all aspects of life.

Care is intrinsically linked to support by being the sturdy beams holding up the Filipino family structure. This attribute encompasses practical and emotional assistance, from passing down traditions and knowledge to helping with new challenges and collaborating on major life decisions, valuing the wisdom of older generations. This comprehensive support ensures security and well-being, while binding generations together. Studies show that this includes financial and emotional aid, arranging care, sending gifts, making decisions, and communicating via phone or video (Hossain et al., 2025).

This framework of support often gave rise to obligation which is a deep-rooted sense of duty within family dynamics. While highly regarded, this commitment can also be a source of immense pressure for individuals prioritizing their parents' needs over their own, often involving significant personal and financial sacrifices. This can lead to feelings of pressure (Cabalquinto, 2018) and guilt, especially when geographical distance makes it challenging to meet all expectations. However, this obligation is frequently reciprocal; adult children care for parents, who in turn help their children settle. This two-way street is evident in transnational caregiving experiences, where individuals provide practical, financial, and emotional support to families abroad (Sethi et al., 2022) and also demonstrating that while obligation carries weight, it is often balanced by reciprocal support.

Finally, emotional closeness is the vibrant thread that weaves the tapestry together, as it complements support and obligation. Characterized by shared laughter and heartfelt conversations, it forges strong, transgenerational bonds. This often manifests in ordinary multigenerational households, fostering continuous



companionship and support (One Balete, n.d.). Even when living apart, regular visits and calls ensure this vital connection endures as it reveals the true essence of filial piety: profound love and respect bridging generations for collective well-being. This closeness is also deeply tied to good family relationships, which older Filipinos highly value for maintaining cultural values (Montayre et al., 2022). Though filial expectations may evolve, harmonious relationships and conflict avoidance remain paramount, thereby underscoring the importance of nurturing emotional intimacy for family well-being.

In sum, filial piety in the Philippines is not a static monument but a dynamic tapestry woven from respect, care, support, obligation, and emotional closeness. These attributes manifest in everyday life, from gestures like *"pagmamano"* to shared moments of joy. Modern life, however, necessitates a continuous reinterpretation of these attributes, fostering ongoing adaptation within the Filipino family.

## Cases

### 1. Model Case: The Santos Family's Case of Evolving Filial Piety in a Modern Filipino Family

The Santos family, nestled in a bustling Manila suburb, embodied the changing face of Filipino family life. Amelia (58) and Roberto (62), a retired couple, raised three children: Daniel (35), Luisa (32), and Marco (28). Traditionally, their home would be a haven for multiple generations, but times had changed.

Amelia's health began to falter. Chronic arthritis made daily tasks a struggle, leaving Roberto, though healthy, worried about managing their home and caring for her alone. This situation ignited a complex conversation – how would their modern family navigate the concept of filial piety?

The weight of obligation fell heavily. Daniel, the eldest, lived closest, juggling a demanding job and a young family. He offered daily support with errands and chores, but the thought of his parents moving in strained his limited resources. Luisa, a nurse working abroad, sent money regularly but carried the guilt of physical distance. Technology bridged the gap with video calls, yet a void remained. Marco, the youngest, felt conflicted. Launching a business venture demanded long hours, and he worried about disappointing his parents if he could not offer the level of direct care they might expect.

The Santos family exemplified the evolution of filial piety. Respect and care for Amelia remained paramount, but their modern realities challenged the traditional model of a single child taking full responsibility. Open communication became

their saving grace. They explored alternative solutions – part-time caregivers, nursing homes – ideas once unthinkable were now openly discussed. They acknowledged the limitations of a single child carrying the entire burden.

Ultimately, a combined approach emerged. Daniel and Luisa contributed financially to support a live-in caregiver, ensuring professional care for Amelia while keeping her in their familiar home. Marco, though geographically distant, committed to frequent video calls and visits, prioritizing emotional closeness despite the physical separation.

The Santos family's story highlighted the importance of open communication and flexibility in navigating the evolving concept of filial piety. Finding a balance between honoring traditions and adapting to changing realities was crucial for ensuring parents' and children's well-being in this modern Filipino family.

### 2. Related Case: The Dela Cruz Family - Sharing the Caregiving Load

The Dela Cruz family resides in a rural province, contrasting the Santos family's suburban life. Maria (70), the family matriarch, lives with her only daughter, Celia (45), and Celia's husband, Rafael (48). Unlike the Santos family, theirs is a multigenerational household, reflecting a more traditional approach to filial piety.

Celia, a teacher, juggles her career with caring for Maria. Rafael, a carpenter, readily assists with household chores and errands. Maria, despite some age-related stiffness, remains relatively independent. However, the physical demands of caregiving are starting to strain Celia.

Recognizing this, the Dela Cruz family explored a more collaborative approach. They approached their extended family, and to their delight, Celia's siblings readily agreed to help. On weekends, there is a rotating schedule where aunts and uncles take turns visiting Maria and offering respite and companionship. This shared responsibility ensures Maria receives consistent care while alleviating the burden on Celia and Rafael.

The Dela Cruz family exemplifies a successful adaptation of filial piety. They retain the core values of respect and care for elders but distribute the responsibility amongst a more comprehensive family network. This case demonstrates the flexibility of the concept, acknowledging the limitations of single caregivers and leveraging the strength of the community.

### 3. Borderline Case: The Reyes Family - Strained Relationships and Filial Piety

The Reyes family dynamic is a complex web of strained relationships and guilt. Carlos (65) and Ising (62) find themselves living alone after their only son, Eduardo (38), migrated to Canada years ago. While Eduardo remits money regularly, their relationship has become distant due to past conflicts.

Carlos and Ising's health is declining. Ising has dementia, and Carlos struggles to manage her care alone. He desperately wants Eduardo to return and fulfill his filial obligations, but reaching out feels like an admission of failure. On the other hand, Eduardo grapples with guilt over the distance and the resentment he harbors towards his parents.

This situation presents a challenge to the concept of filial piety. Past issues overshadow respect and care. The traditional expectation of a child returning to care for aging parents clashes with Eduardo's desire for independence and a new life abroad.

The Reyes family's story highlights the potential pitfalls of a rigid interpretation of filial piety. Without open communication and a willingness to address underlying issues, the core values of respect and care can become casualties, leaving both parents and children emotionally isolated.

#### **4. Contrary Case: The Pineda Family - Individualism over Tradition**

What the Pineda family symbolizes is in stark contrast to the emphasis on filial piety. Manuel (61) and Linda (59) raised their daughter, Rosalinda (35), to be independent and self-sufficient. As a successful lawyer, Rosalinda has a busy career and a life built in a different city.

As Manuel and Linda age, they prioritize maintaining their independence. They have invested in a nursing home, a concept they view as proactive planning rather than a burden on their daughter. Rosalinda respects their decision and visits regularly, but her life revolves around her career and social circle.

The Pineda family represents a significant departure from traditional filial piety. Respect for elders exists, but the emphasis is on individual autonomy and self-reliance. This approach challenges the notion of obligation and prioritizes personal aspirations over traditional caregiving roles.

#### **5. Illegitimate Case: The Mendoza Family - A Chosen Family Steps Up**

The Mendoza family defies conventional definitions. Andres (68), a gay man with no biological children, built a life with his partner, Leon (65). They have considered each other as family for

decades. As Andres' health deteriorates, Leon faces the challenges of eldercare.

Despite the absence of a blood tie, Leon embodies the spirit of filial piety. He provides unwavering care for Andres, ensuring his comfort and well-being. Their chosen family, a close-knit circle of friends, rallies around them, offering emotional support and practical assistance.

In sum, the Mendoza family's story pushes the concept's boundaries. It demonstrates how respect, care, and support can transcend traditional familial structures. Their situation highlights the evolving nature of family bonds and the importance of chosen relationships in navigating older person care.

#### **Antecedents**

Filial piety in the Philippines is a deeply rooted concept. More than just a cultural ideal, it is a dynamic aspect of everyday life. This section explores the historical and cultural underpinnings that have shaped filial piety into a cornerstone of Filipino family life, including Confucian philosophy, traditional family structures, and the practical realities of limited social safety nets. These factors collectively cultivated a profound sense of respect, obligation, and responsibility toward elders in Filipino society.

The seeds of filial piety were sown in the fertile ground of Confucian philosophy (Ho, 1986), which permeated Filipino culture for centuries. Its core tenets of respect for hierarchy and filial obligations (Elizalde, 2019) strongly resonated within this collectivist society. Older people, seen as the anchors of the family unit, commanded immense respect. From a young age, children were taught that their primary duty lay with their parents, an obligation manifested through countless acts of service and unwavering devotion.

Further nurturing this concept of filial piety is the enduring structure of the Filipino family. Even today, multigenerational households remain a prevalent feature of Filipino life (One Balete, n.d.). Traditionally, and still quite common, multiple generations coexist under one roof, fostering unbreakable bonds. This physical proximity instilled a deep sense of responsibility in younger generations. They directly witnessed the sacrifices made by their parents, internalizing the expectation that they would one day reciprocate that care.

Lastly, the historical reality of limited social safety nets in the Philippines (Gonzales & Manasan, 2002) further solidified the family's role as the primary source of support in old age. Unlike

Western societies with robust social security systems (Atkinson & Hills, 1991), Filipinos have historically relied heavily on their kin for financial security and healthcare assistance (Lasco et al., 2021). This ingrained the understanding that individual well-being as adults was intrinsically linked to the well-being of their parents. Fulfilling filial obligations was not merely a cultural expectation but a practical necessity to ensure future security.

Thus, filial piety in the Philippines is a complex tapestry woven from the threads of respect, obligation, and a shared sense of responsibility. Understanding these antecedents is crucial to appreciating the enduring legacy of this concept in Filipino families, even as the social and economic landscape continues to evolve in the face of modernity.

### Consequences

Filial piety carries multifaceted consequences within Filipino families. This section explores the many-sided consequences of filial piety in Filipino families, highlighting how this deep-rooted cultural cornerstone fosters a profound sense of fulfillment and strong familial bonds while presenting potential challenges such as caregiver strain and, in some cases, vulnerability to exploitation.

One of the most profound consequences of filial piety is the cultivation of strong family bonds. The emphasis on respect for elders fosters an unwavering support system and a deep sense of belonging (Tanskanen & Danielsbacka, 2019). Individuals, raised with the understanding that their family is their bedrock, navigate life's challenges with the assurance of their elders' unwavering backing. This deep well of love and support becomes a sanctuary, offering solace and strength.

Fulfilling filial obligations can also bring adult children a profound sense of fulfillment and purpose. Witnessing the sacrifices made by their parents instills a strong sense of responsibility to repay that debt of gratitude (Bedford & Yeh, 2021). Acts of service, ranging from daily errands to financial contributions, become imbued with deeper meaning. This sense of purpose, particularly for those who may not find similar fulfillment in their careers, can be a significant source of satisfaction. However, an overemphasis on obligation can also have unintended consequences.

Paradoxically, the respect accorded to elders can sometimes create a power imbalance, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation. Driven by a warped sense of duty, some adult children might manipulate or financially exploit their parents (Chan & Stum, 2021). This dynamic can lead to heartbreaking scenarios where older individuals hesitate to express their

needs or desires, fearing they will burden their children or feel a profound betrayal if someone exploits their vulnerability (Spring Hills, 2024).

Another significant consequence of filial piety is the potential for caregiver strain. Those juggling professional and personal lives often find maintaining a balance between the demands of caring for aging parents a continuous source of stress (Committee on Family Caregiving for Older Adults et al., 2016). Feelings of resentment and guilt can arise when the burden of care feels overwhelming. This highlights the delicate balance between the cherished act of caring and its potential to negatively impact caregivers' well-being.

In essence, the consequences of filial piety are complex. While it powerfully nurtures strong family bonds and a sense of fulfillment, it also presents challenges related to the potential for exploitation and significant caregiver strain.

### Empirical Referents

Empirical referents are measurable indicators of the concept's occurrence (Walker & Avant, 2019). Filial piety in the Philippines, while deeply rooted in tradition, is increasingly tested by the realities of a globalized world. Understanding its essence requires peering through a multifaceted lens, examining real-world examples, research studies, and sociological data. This section delves into the empirical referents of this complex concept.

Based on the insights from the studies, the concept of filial piety in the Philippine context is measured through a range of observable indicators across its defining attributes of respect, care, support, obligation, and emotional closeness.

Years of sociological studies have documented the transformation of Filipino family structures. Once predominantly characterized by multigenerational households where adult children directly cared for their parents under the same roof, the landscape is shifting. Globalization and economic opportunities abroad (Brink, 2017) now often beckon younger Filipinos, creating a geographical disconnect that challenges traditional, co-resident caregiving practices. For instance, research by Lomibao (2023) for the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas meticulously analyzes the impact of migration on those left behind, highlighting its potential effects on practices such as filial piety. This geographical dispersion necessitates new ways of manifesting filial obligations, making direct measurement of "presence" more complex. Empirically, this is observed through the prevalence of remittances and financial support from abroad (Hossain et al., 2024; Sethi et al., 2022) and the frequency and

type of digital communication such as video and phone calls maintained by geographically distant family members.

Surveys conducted by various institutions further illuminate the complexities of filial piety. On the one hand, Filipinos overwhelmingly express a strong attachment to the concept, consistently valuing the importance of respect and care for elders (Felipe-Dimog et al., 2023). This deep cultural value often creates dilemmas for younger adults balancing personal aspirations with filial duties. On the other hand, these same surveys reveal a growing openness to alternative caregiving models. Filipinos, particularly senior citizens, are increasingly receptive to exploring options like assisted living facilities, retirement homes (BusinessMirror, 2022), or hiring caregivers. This acknowledges the limitations of traditional models in a changing world and suggests a pragmatic adaptation of filial piety. These attitudes are measured through survey responses indicating preferences for care arrangements to non-traditional care options.

The role of government policies in shaping the landscape of filial piety cannot be ignored. While a robust social safety net remains nascent compared to Western nations, initiatives like the “*Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2010*” (Presidential Communications Office, 2010) offer some financial assistance to older Filipinos. Analyzing such policies provides insights into the government’s evolving approach towards eldercare, recognizing the need to complement the traditional system of filial piety with additional support mechanisms. The existence and utilization of these policies serve as empirical referents, indicating how societal structures adapt to support or supplement traditional family-based care. Measurement here includes analysis of policy implementation and the uptake of government-provided elder support programs.

Ultimately, while challenges abound, the enduring commitment to core values expressed through respect, care, and adaptation ensures the legacy of this rich cultural tradition. The empirical

referents for filial piety in the Philippines are therefore observed in the evolving family structures, changing attitudes towards eldercare, the implementation of governmental policies, and through specific behavioral indicators such as the provision of financial and instrumental care, communication patterns, and reported feelings of obligation and commitment.

### Definition of the Concept

Based on the analysis, the refined definition of filial piety in the contemporary Philippines is *a dynamic and reciprocal commitment to the well-being of older family members, characterized by deeply ingrained respect, flexible expressions of care, and emotional, financial, and practical support, and a negotiated sense of familial obligations that adapts to individual capacities, modern societal changes, and geographical distance, fostering emotional closeness and intergenerational solidarity.*

In building upon the understanding of filial piety developed through the examination of its core attributes and illustrative cases, a conceptualization is now presented. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual model developed using the Walker and Avant framework, which visually represents the dynamic nature of filial piety among Filipino families. It also illustrates how various antecedents, such as Confucian philosophy, indigenous traditions, and limited social safety nets, lay the groundwork for the core concept. These antecedents contributed to the defining attributes of filial piety: deeply ingrained respect, flexible expressions of care, practical support, a negotiated sense of familial obligation, and emotional closeness. These attributes, in turn, led to both positive and negative consequences, including strong family bonds, a sense of fulfillment and purpose, the risk of elder exploitation, and caregiver strain. The model highlighted how these elements interact to shape the understanding and practice of filial piety in contemporary Filipino society.

**Figure 1.** *The Evolving Concept of Filial Piety in the Philippines*





## Discussion

This concept analysis defined filial piety in the contemporary Philippine context as a multifaceted and adaptive construct encompassing respect, care, support, obligation, and emotional closeness. Its antecedents were deeply rooted in Confucian philosophy (Ho, 1986; Elizalde, 2019), traditional multigenerational family structures (One Balete, n.d.), and the historical context of limited social safety nets (Gonzales & Manasan, 2002; Lasco et al., 2021), fostering a profound sense of responsibility towards elders. This aligned with broader understandings of filial piety in Asian cultures, as seen in the concept analysis by Xiao et al. (2024) on filial piety among Chinese and Chinese-American (CCA) families, which, in turn, also identified filial obligation as a cultural gene, familial solidarity, and societal expectation of birthright as antecedents.

Observable behaviors and attitudes empirically evidenced the defining attributes. Care and support manifested as financial and instrumental aid alongside consistent communication (Hossain et al., 2025; Sethi et al., 2022). This resonates with Xiao et al.'s (2024) findings that familial material and emotional support are key attributes of filial piety. Obligation was a reciprocal dynamic between adult children and parents. Emotional closeness was seen in co-residence and efforts to maintain family harmony (Montayre et al., 2022; One Balete, n.d.). Similarly, Xiao et al. (2024) identified obedience and pious reverence as attributes that aligned with the emphasis on respect and deference in the Philippine context (Felipe-Dimog et al., 2023).

The consequences of filial piety were dual. It fostered strong family bonds (Tanskanen & Danielsbacka, 2019) and a sense of fulfillment and purpose among those who fulfill their filial duties (Bedford & Yeh, 2021). However, it can also create vulnerabilities leading to elder exploitation (Chan & Stum, 2021) and significant caregiver strain (Committee on Family Caregiving for Older Adults et al., 2016). These consequences, particularly caregiver burden, psychological and physical well-being, and quality of life, were also highlighted in Xiao et al.'s (2024) analysis of filial piety among CCA families, thereby underscoring common challenges across cultures influenced by this concept.

Empirical referents highlighted these dynamics. Global migration transforms caregiving practices and emphasizes remittances and digital communication (Brink, 2017; Lomibao, 2023). Evolving attitudes show openness to alternative care models (BusinessMirror, 2022), complemented by government policies, such as the "Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2010" (Presidential Communications Office, 2010). This dynamic

interplay underscored filial piety's adaptation within modern Filipino society. Further research is needed to quantify the impacts of these evolving forms of filial piety on both elder and caregiver's well-being and to also bridge the gap in nursing knowledge regarding culturally sensitive care.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

This analysis has explored the evolving concept of filial piety in the Philippines. It is a multifaceted concept woven from respect, care, support, obligation, and emotional closeness. While deeply ingrained in Filipino culture, these attributes adapt to changing world realities. The emphasis is shifting towards a more flexible interpretation, with open communication and a shared understanding of responsibility becoming crucial to navigating filial piety in modern Filipino families.

While the refined understanding of filial piety is grounded in the unique Filipino experience, the processes of negotiation and adaptation observed within these traditional values due to modernization and globalization offer significant insights. These insights can resonate with and potentially inform discussion in other societies facing similar socioeconomic transformations.

Building on this foundation, the implications for nursing practice are significant. Nurses working with Filipino families can benefit significantly from a deeper understanding of filial piety. This understanding can be applied in several key areas. For example, when performing assessments, nurses can inquire about family dynamics and cultural expectations, as knowing the role of filial piety can help nurses determine potential challenges and areas needing aid and support for Filipino patients and their families.

Moreover, open, bias-free, and multiculturally-sensitive communication is vital. Nurses can encourage families to discuss their expectations and concerns regarding caregiving openly. Facilitating conversations between family members about alternative care options or sharing responsibilities can be beneficial. Likewise, nurses can educate Filipino families about available resources and support systems. This could include information about assisted living facilities, respite care options, or government programs for senior citizens.

Furthermore, nurses can advocate for policies that support Filipino families in navigating older persons' care by pushing for accessible and inexpensive care options or supporting the legislature to strengthen older adults' social safety nets.

Finally, interdisciplinary collaboration and partnership with non-government, community-based, and senior citizen organizations can help ensure comprehensive care for Filipino

families. Patients and their caregivers' physical, emotional, and social needs can be addressed through such collaboration.

Filial piety will evolve further as the Philippines continues to steer its path in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. By encouraging collective responsibility, reciprocal communication, and a devotion to the best interest of all family members, this persisting cultural value can remain a source of strength and love for Filipino families today and in the years to come.

## References

- Atkinson, A. B., & Hills, J. (1991). Social Security in Developed Countries: Are There Lessons for Developing Countries? In *Social Security in Developing Countries* (pp. 81–111). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198233008.003.0003>
- Bedford, O., & Yeh, K.-H. (2021). Evolution of the Conceptualization of Filial Piety in the Global Context: From Skin to Skeleton. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.570547>
- Bedford, O., & Yeh, K.-H. (2019). The History and the Future of the Psychology of Filial Piety: Chinese Norms to Contextualized Personality Construct. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00100>
- Bell, K. (Ed.). (2013). Filial piety. <https://sociologydictionary.org/filial-piety/>
- Biana, H., Jabar, M., Yabut, H., & Regadio, C. J. (2016). Teaching Philippine Indigenous Cultures Teaching Philippine Indigenous Cultures Modules for Higher Education Institutions. DLSU Social Development Research Center. <https://www.dlsu.edu.ph/wp-content/uploads/pdf/sdrc/books/ubcheamodule-sept262016.pdf>
- Brink, T. (2017). The Effects of Modernization: Smart, Working Women and Filial Piety in Ageing Singapore [Student Thesis, University of Twente]. [https://essay.utwente.nl/71853/1/VandenBrink\\_BA\\_BMS.pdf](https://essay.utwente.nl/71853/1/VandenBrink_BA_BMS.pdf)
- BusinessMirror. (2022, July 26). Nursing Homes in the Philippines | Business Mirror. <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2022/07/26/nursing-homes-in-the-philippines/>
- Cabalquinto, E. C. (2018). I Have Always Thought of My Family First: An Analysis of Transnational Caregiving Among Filipino Migrant Adult Children in Melbourne, Australia. *International Journal of Communication*, 12, 1–19. <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/download/9661/2470>
- Cambridge University Press. (n.d.). Filial piety. Cambridge Dictionary | English Dictionary, Translations & Thesaurus. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/filial-piety>
- CBN Asia, Inc. (2022, July 6). 5 Most Popular Filipino Culture and Values – Which One Do You Love Most? CBN Asia | Proclaiming Christ and Transforming Lives through Media, Prayer Counseling, Humanitarian, and Missionary Training. <https://www.cbnasia.org/blog/2022/07/06/5-most-popular-filipino-culture-and-values-which-one-do-you-love-most/>
- Chan, A. C. Y., & Stum, M. S. (2021). A Family Systems Perspective of Elder Family Financial Exploitation: Examining Family Context Profiles. *Journal of Applied Gerontology*, 41(4), 945–951. <https://doi.org/10.1177/07334648211056927>
- Choi, Y., Kim, T. Y., Lee, J. P., Tan, K. P. H., Noh, S., & Takeuchi, D. (2021). Upholding Familism Among Asian American Youth: Measures of Familism Among Filipino and Korean American Youth. *Adolescent Research Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40894-020-00148-9>
- Committee on Family Caregiving for Older Adults, Board on Health Care Services, Health and Medicine Division, & National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2016). *Family Caregiving Roles and Impacts*. In R. Schulz & J. Eden (Eds.), *Families Caring for an Aging America*. National Academies Press. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK396398/>
- Elizalde, M. D. (2019). Beyond Racial Divisions: Bridges and Intersections in the Spanish Colonial Philippines. *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints*, 67(3-4), 343–374. <https://doi.org/10.1353/phs.2019.0020>
- Felipe-Dimog, E., Tumalak, M.-A. J., Garcia, A., Liang, F.-W., Silao, C. L., Hsu, M.-T., Saragih, I. D., & Sia-ed, A. (2023). Caring Behavior of Filipinos toward their Elderly Family Members. *Acta Medica Philippina*. <https://doi.org/10.47895/amp.vi0.6880>
- Foley, A. S., & Davis, A. H. (2017). A Guide to Concept Analysis. *Clinical Nurse Specialist*, 31(2), 70–73. <https://doi.org/10.1097/nur.0000000000000277>
- Gonzales, E., & Manasan, R. G. (2002). Social Protection in the Philippines. In E. Adam, M. von Hauff, & M. John (Eds.), *Social Protection in Southeast & East Asia* (p. 407). Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/01443.pdf>
- Ho, D. (1986). Chinese Patterns of Socialization: A Critical Review. In M. Bond (Ed.), *The Psychology of the Chinese People* (pp. 1–37). Oxford University Press.
- Hossain, M. S., Pope, N. D., Benner, K., & Choi, Y. J. (2025). Nature and Challenges of Transnational Family Caregiving: A Scoping Review. *Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work*, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/26408066.2025.2456751>
- Lasco, G., Yu, V. G., & David, C. (2021). The Lived Realities of Health Financing: A Qualitative Exploration of Catastrophic Health Expenditure in the Philippines. *Acta Medica Philippina*, 56(11), 5–15. <https://doi.org/10.47895/amp.vi0.2389>
- Li, W. W., Singh, S., & Keerthigha, C. (2021). A Cross-Cultural Study of Filial Piety and Palliative Care Knowledge: Moderating Effect of Culture and Universality of Filial Piety. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.787724>
- Lomibao, N. F. (2023). *The Impact of Migration in the Philippines: What About Those Left Behind?* BSP Research Academy,

- 1–20. <https://www.bsp.gov.ph/Pages/MediaAndResearch/PublicationsAndReports/Discussion%20Papers/DP202301.pdf>
- Merriam-Webster, Incorporated. (n.d.). Filial piety. Merriam-Webster: America's Most Trusted Dictionary. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/filial%20piety>
- Montayre, J., Neville, S., Wright-St Clair, V., Holroyd, E., & Adams, J. (2019). Older Filipino immigrants' reconfiguration of traditional filial expectations: a focus ethnographic study. *Contemporary Nurse*, 56(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10376178.2019.1640621>
- One Balete. (n.d.). There's a Reason Why More Families Are Moving into Vertical Compounds - One Balete | New Manila, Quezon City Luxury Condo For Sale. <https://onebalete.com.ph/blog/theres-reason-families-moving-vertical-compounds>
- Philippine News Agency. (2023, August 4). Strengthening filial piety, shared values for harmonious society | Philippine News Agency. <https://www.pna.gov.ph/opinion/pieces/729-strengthening-filial-piety-shared-values-for-harmonious-society#:~:text=Filial%20piety,%20deeply%20ingrained%20in,community,%20nation%20and%20the%20world.>
- Presidential Communications Office. (2010, February 15). Republic Act No. 9994: Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2010. *Official Gazette*. <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2010/02/15/republic-act-no-9994/>
- Sethi, B., Williams, A., & Leung, J. L. S. (2022). Caregiving Across International Borders: a Systematic Review of Literature on Transnational Carer-Employees. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology*, 37(4), 427–461. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10823-022-09468-w>
- Spring Hills. (2024, May 19). Understanding Elder Financial Exploitation. Spring Hills: Personalized Healthcare and Senior Living Services. <https://www.springhills.com/resources/elder-financial-exploitation>
- Tanskanen, A. O., & Danielsbacka, M. (2019). *Intergenerational Family Relations: An Evolutionary Social Science Approach*. Routledge Taylor & Francis Group. [https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/id/7b9ea84a-fc5c-43c9-976a-8c054c76b6a1/9781138091870\\_text.pdf](https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/id/7b9ea84a-fc5c-43c9-976a-8c054c76b6a1/9781138091870_text.pdf)
- Walker, L., & Avant, K. (2019). *Strategies for Theory Construction in Nursing* (6th ed.). Pearson. (Original work published 2005)
- Xiao, C., Patrician, P. A., Montgomery, A. P., Wang, Y., Jablonski, R., & Markaki, A. (2024). Filial piety and older adult caregiving

among Chinese and Chinese-American families in the United States: a concept analysis. *BMC Nursing*, 23(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12912-024-01789-0>

Yao, J. (2020). "Elderly" Seniors Vs. "Youthful" Seniors: Attributions and Reshaping of Aging Expectations. *The Qualitative Report*. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2020.4095>

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Raymund F. Mamayson, PhD, RN** is a distinguished professor at Saint Louis University, where he serves both the School of Nursing, Allied Health, and Biological Sciences (SONAHBS) and the School of Advanced Studies (SAS). A proud alumnus of SLU, he earned his BS in Nursing, Master in Nursing (Gerontological Nursing), and PhD in Nursing from the same institution. He is currently the Level 4 Department Head of the SONAHBS Nursing Program. He brings a wealth of expertise in older person care, critical care, emergency and disaster management, oncology, palliative care, and research methodologies. His commitment to advancing gerontological nursing is evident in his scholarly work, published in esteemed journals. He also serves the research community as an ethics reviewer for the SLU Research Ethics Committee and as a peer reviewer for leading nursing journals.

## Competing Interests

The author declares that he has no competing interests.

## Declaration of the Usage of AI

While preparing this work, the author utilized Grammarly as an assistant for proofreading and ensuring grammatical accuracy and Google Gemini as a generative AI tool to aid in optimizing sentence structure. After using these tools/services, the author critically reviewed and thoroughly edited the content, taking full responsibility for the manuscript's content.

*“Nursing research is not just about knowledge generation—it is about transforming care, shaping policy, and amplifying the voices of the vulnerable.”*

— **Dr. Erlinda C. Palaganas**