

# THE INFLUENCE OF FAMILY FUNCTIONING ON PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AMONG B40 STUDENTS: A QUANTITATIVE APPROACH

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## Article history

**Received date** : 25-8-2025

**Revised date** : 26-8-2025

**Accepted date** : 27-9-2025

**Published date** : 16-10-2025

## To cite this document:

Sapiee, M. L., Abdullah, I. N., Jamaludin, M. S., Mohamad Zabidi, M. I., Ahmad Romil, M. R., & Ibrahim, N. (2025). The influence of family functioning on psychological well-being among B40 students: A quantitative approach. *Journal of Islamic, Social, Economics and Development (JISED)*, 10 (77), 170 – 184.

**Abstract:** *This study investigated the relationship between family functioning and psychological well-being among B40 students in rural secondary schools in Perak, Malaysia. Guided by Olson's Circumplex Model and psychological well-being theories, researchers conducted a cross-sectional survey with 318 students (57.9% female, 42.1% male) from three rural schools. Using adapted measures translated into Malay, analysis through SmartPLS revealed a significant positive relationship between family functioning and psychological well-being ( $\beta = 0.443$ ;  $t = 10.058$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), with family functioning explaining 19.6% of the variance in psychological well-being ( $R^2 = 0.196$ ;  $f^2 = 0.244$ ). These findings underscore the importance of family dynamics for economically disadvantaged students' mental health, suggesting implications for educational policies, family interventions, and school support services. The study contributes to understanding adolescent development within Malaysia's sociocultural context, particularly among B40 populations. Future research should explore additional influencing factors, use longitudinal designs, and evaluate targeted interventions for vulnerable populations.*

**Keywords:** *family functioning, psychological well-being, B40 students, Malaysia, adolescent development*

## Introduction

Family functioning represents a dynamic and multifaceted construct that fundamentally shapes the psychological, emotional, and social development of individuals across the lifespan. The intricate patterns of interaction, communication, cohesion, and adaptability within the family unit create a complex ecosystem that either nurtures or impedes individual growth and psychological well-being (Roman, N. V., et al., 2025). As a primary socializing agent, the family system serves as the crucible within which children develop their understanding of self, others, and the world around them (Molina Moreno, P. et al., 2024). The quality of family functioning is particularly consequential for youth and adolescents, who are navigating critical developmental transitions while simultaneously forming their identity and establishing patterns of emotional regulation that may persist throughout adulthood (Urbańska-Grosz, J. et al., 2024).

Contemporary research has increasingly recognized that family functioning transcends simplistic models of parental influence to encompass the systemic organization of family life, including the reciprocal relationships between subsystems, boundary management, communication patterns, emotional connectivity, and adaptive responses to both normative and non-normative stressors (Constantine, L. L.). This recognition has led to the development of sophisticated theoretical frameworks such as Olson's Circumplex Model, which conceptualizes family functioning along the dimensions of cohesion, flexibility, and communication (Olson, D., et al., 2019). These frameworks provide valuable lenses through which to examine the impact of family dynamics on individual psychological well-being, particularly among vulnerable populations such as socioeconomically disadvantaged youth.

The relationship between family functioning and psychological well-being takes on particular significance in the Malaysian context, where rapid socioeconomic transformation, urbanization, and modernization have altered traditional family structures and processes. Within Malaysia's culturally diverse landscape, families navigate complex intersections of traditional collectivistic values and emerging individualistic orientations, creating unique challenges for maintaining optimal family functioning (Zanetti, M.A. et al., 2024). The B40 (Bottom 40%) socioeconomic group in Malaysia faces additional stressors related to economic insecurity, limited access to resources, and systemic disadvantages that may further compromise family functioning and, consequently, the psychological well-being of family members, particularly students who are striving for educational and socioeconomic advancement against considerable odds (Mohd Jaladin, R. A., et al., 2024; Ibrahim et al., 2024). Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing effective policies and programs that strengthen family systems and promote positive mental health outcomes for B40 students, ultimately contributing to greater educational equity and social mobility within Malaysian society.

The Malaysian context presents unique considerations for understanding family functioning, as families navigate the complex interplay between traditional cultural values and rapid socioeconomic change. Malaysia's multicultural landscape—encompassing Malay, Chinese, Indian, and indigenous populations, each with distinct cultural traditions—creates diverse patterns of family organization, communication, and values regarding cohesion and hierarchy (Zanetti, M.A. et al., 2024). Traditional Malaysian families across ethnic groups have historically emphasized collectivistic values, strong intergenerational bonds, clearly defined hierarchical structures, and explicit roles based on gender and birth order. However, these traditional patterns have been increasingly challenged by modernization, urbanization, and globalization.

Research on Malaysian families indicates several concerning trends that may compromise family functioning. Economic pressures, particularly among the B40 group, often necessitate long working hours for parents, reducing family time and parental availability (Lochner, K., et al., 2024). Urbanization has created geographical separation between extended family members, diminishing traditional support systems. Additionally, the rapid adoption of digital technologies has introduced new challenges to family communication and cohesion, with problematic internet use emerging as a significant concern that can disrupt family relationships (Lochner, K., et al., 2024).

Studies specifically examining family functioning in Malaysia have found varying levels of dysfunction across socioeconomic strata, with particularly concerning patterns among economically disadvantaged families. Economic instability creates stress that often cascades through family systems, affecting communication patterns, emotional responsiveness, and problem-solving capabilities. These challenges may be particularly acute for B40 families, who face multiple disadvantages including limited access to healthcare, educational resources, and mental health support services that might otherwise buffer the impact of family dysfunction.

Religious and cultural factors play significant roles in shaping Malaysian family functioning, with religious values often serving as protective factors that promote family cohesion and provide frameworks for managing conflict (Urbańska-Grosz et al., 2024). However, intergenerational differences in adherence to traditional religious and cultural practices can also create tension within families, particularly as younger generations adopt more individualistic values through education and media exposure.

Malaysian family researchers have identified educational disparities as both a consequence and perpetuator of family dysfunction, creating a concerning cycle wherein educational limitations constrain economic opportunities, which in turn increase family stress and compromise functioning (Zanetti et al., 2024). This cycle appears particularly entrenched among B40 families, highlighting the need for interventions that address both family functioning and educational support simultaneously.

Family functioning represents a multidimensional construct encompassing various aspects of family interactions, processes, and structures that collectively determine the family's ability to meet the physical, emotional, and psychological needs of its members. Empirical research has consistently identified several key components of healthy family functioning across cultural contexts. These include effective communication, characterized by clear, direct, and respectful exchange of information and feelings; appropriate emotional responsiveness, involving recognition and validation of emotional experiences; adequate problem-solving capabilities, including identification of problems, exploration of options, and implementation of solutions; appropriate boundaries, both within the family system and between the family and external systems; and adaptive flexibility in response to developmental transitions and environmental stressors (Molina Moreno, P. et al., 2024; Zanetti et al., 2024).

Family functioning is fundamentally dynamic rather than static, requiring continuous adaptation to changing circumstances. As Urbańska-Grosz et al. (2024) note, "Effective family functioning, which includes the ability to meet needs and resolve conflicts, is central to maintaining a healthy mental state among family members" (p. 2). This adaptive capacity is particularly important during developmental transitions, such as the birth of children, entry into adolescence, launching of young adults, and later-life transitions.

Psychological well-being represents a multifaceted construct that extends beyond the mere absence of psychopathology to encompass positive psychological functioning across multiple domains. Contemporary conceptualizations of psychological well-being have moved beyond hedonic approaches focused solely on happiness and life satisfaction to incorporate eudaemonic perspectives that emphasize meaning, purpose, and optimal functioning (Molina Moreno, P. et al., 2024).

Psychological well-being is not merely an internal state but manifests in observable patterns of thought, emotion, and behavior. Individuals with high psychological well-being typically demonstrate resilience in the face of adversity, maintain satisfying relationships, engage productively with their environments, pursue meaningful goals, and experience a sense of purpose and personal growth (Molina Moreno, P. et al., 2024). They tend to employ effective coping strategies, maintain realistic yet positive self-perceptions, and exhibit appropriate emotional regulation.

Research consistently indicates that psychological well-being is influenced by multiple factors including genetics, early experiences, socioeconomic conditions, cultural context, and ongoing life circumstances. As Molina Moreno, P. et al. (2024) note, "Individuals who experience adequate levels of well-being report lower levels of experiencing mood disorders, behavioural problems, or social problems as they have a greater capacity to establish and maintain healthy and satisfying interpersonal relationships, displaying more empathy and greater compassion towards others" (p. 2). This suggests that psychological well-being serves not only as an outcome but also as a resource that facilitates positive adaptation across domains.

Within educational contexts, psychological well-being is associated with greater engagement, achievement, and resilience in the face of academic challenges. Students with higher psychological well-being typically demonstrate better concentration, more effective learning strategies, greater persistence in the face of difficulties, and more positive relationships with peers and teachers (Molina Moreno, P. et al., 2024). These advantages may be particularly important for B40 students navigating educational systems with limited economic and social resources.

The relationship between family functioning and psychological well-being represents a complex and bidirectional dynamic with far-reaching implications for individual development and adaptation. Research consistently demonstrates robust associations between various dimensions of family functioning and multiple aspects of psychological well-being across the lifespan, with particularly strong evidence for these relationships during childhood and adolescence.

Family cohesion—the emotional bonding among family members—shows consistent positive associations with psychological well-being. As Molina Moreno, P. and colleagues (2024) report, "Family relationships with high parental affection and low levels of rejection provide greater social support and a greater ability to regulate emotions adaptively in adolescents, which translates into a greater ability to cope with challenges, mitigating the development of psychological problems such as depression and anxiety" (p. 2). This finding highlights the critical role of emotional connection within the family system for fostering adaptive emotional development and psychological resilience.

The relationship between family functioning and psychological well-being appears to operate through multiple mediating mechanisms. Family functioning influences cognitive development, including the development of internal working models of self and others that shape subsequent relationships and self-concept (Urbańska-Grosz et al., 2024). It affects the development of emotion regulation skills, which are critical for psychological adaptation across contexts. It shapes coping strategies and problem-solving approaches that influence responses to stress and adversity. It impacts the development of social competence, which facilitates the formation of supportive relationships outside the family. It influences access to and utilization of resources and opportunities that support psychological development.

Research examining specific domains of psychological well-being in relation to family functioning provides valuable insights. For example, studies have found positive associations between balanced family functioning and self-acceptance, with family environments that provide appropriate validation and feedback supporting the development of realistic and positive self-evaluation (Molina Moreno, P. et al., 2024). Positive relationships with others are facilitated by family environments that model effective interpersonal skills and provide opportunities to practice these skills within a supportive context. Autonomy is supported by family environments that balance appropriate guidance with encouragement of independent decision-making. Environmental mastery is facilitated by family contexts that provide scaffolded opportunities to develop problem-solving skills and self-efficacy. Personal growth is supported by family environments that encourage exploration, learning, and development. Purpose in life is facilitated by family contexts that help individuals identify meaningful goals and values.

While the evidence for positive associations between balanced family functioning and psychological well-being is robust, important contextual factors moderate these relationships. Cultural context significantly influences how family functioning relates to psychological well-being, with different cultural groups potentially emphasizing different aspects of family life. For example, while Western perspectives might emphasize autonomy and individuation, other cultural traditions might place greater emphasis on interdependence and family cohesion (Constantine, L. L.) Socioeconomic factors also moderate these relationships, with economic stress potentially exacerbating the impact of family dysfunction on psychological well-being. Developmental stage represents another important moderator, with the relative influence of family functioning potentially shifting as individuals move

Failure to adequately investigate and address the relationship between family functioning and psychological well-being among B40 students in Malaysia could result in significant negative consequences across multiple domains. The potential impacts of neglecting this research area warrant serious consideration by researchers, educators, clinicians, and policymakers. From an individual perspective, B40 students experiencing compromised family functioning may continue to face significant barriers to psychological well-being without evidence-based interventions to address these challenges. Research consistently demonstrates that poor family functioning is associated with increased risk for both internalizing and externalizing problems (Zanetti et al., 2024; Urbańska-Grosz et al., 2024). Without appropriate understanding and intervention, these students may experience persistent psychological distress that compromises not only their current quality of life but also their developmental trajectories and future opportunities.

From an educational perspective, neglecting the influence of family functioning on psychological well-being may perpetuate achievement gaps and educational inequities. As Molina Moreno, P. et al. (2024) note, psychological well-being is associated with "increased engagement, achievement, and performance" in educational contexts (p. 2). Without addressing family factors that compromise psychological well-being among B40 students, educational interventions focused solely on academic content or pedagogy may have limited effectiveness, as they fail to address fundamental barriers to learning and achievement. From a socioeconomic perspective, failure to address these issues may contribute to the intergenerational transmission of disadvantage. Poor psychological well-being and educational underachievement associated with compromised family functioning can limit occupational opportunities and economic advancement, potentially perpetuating cycles of poverty and disadvantage across generations. This pattern not only affects individual families but also constrains economic development and social mobility within Malaysian society more broadly.

This study aims to investigate the influence of family functioning on psychological well-being among B40 students in Malaysia through a quantitative approach. These objectives collectively aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of how family functioning influences psychological well-being within this specific population, with the ultimate goal of informing targeted interventions that strengthen family systems and promote positive mental health outcomes for B40 students. This research recognizes the complex interplay between family dynamics and individual psychological development within the unique sociocultural and economic context of Malaysia's B40 community, seeking to identify both universal patterns and culturally specific variations that could inform culturally sensitive and effective approaches to supporting these vulnerable students and their families.

## Literature Review

Family functioning serves as a foundational element in human development, exerting profound influence on various aspects of psychological well-being across the lifespan. The intricacies of family dynamics, including patterns of communication, cohesion, and adaptability, create an environmental context that can either foster or impede psychological development and well-being (Archana, & Sinha, A. K., 2024; Nocito et al., 2020).

The Circumplex Model, developed by Olson and colleagues, has emerged as one of the most influential frameworks for conceptualizing family functioning. According to Constantine (2025), this model conceptualizes family functioning along two primary dimensions: cohesion and flexibility, with communication serving as a facilitating dimension. Family cohesion refers to "emotional bonding among family members," while flexibility represents "the amount of change in its leadership, role relationships, and relationship rules" (Constantine, 2025, p. 179).

The Circumplex Model proposes that balanced levels of both cohesion and flexibility are associated with optimal family functioning, while extreme levels of either dimension may be problematic. However, Constantine (2025) argues that this model potentially contains cultural biases, as it presupposes that intermediate levels of cohesion and flexibility are universally optimal, which may not hold true across all cultural contexts. This observation is particularly relevant when considering B40 families, who may have culturally diverse family structures and dynamics.

Constantine (2025) introduces the Paradigmatic Framework as an alternative theoretical model for understanding family systems. This framework identifies four distinct family paradigms—

Closed, Random, Open, and Synchronous—each representing different approaches to family functioning. The Closed paradigm emphasizes stability, tradition, and hierarchical authority; the Random paradigm values variety, individuality, and independence; the Open paradigm prioritizes adaptability, flexibility, and collaboration; and the Synchronous paradigm values harmony, unity, and tacit understanding. An important contribution of this framework is the recognition that families of any paradigm can be functional or dysfunctional, with each paradigm having characteristic strengths and vulnerabilities. This perspective challenges the notion that one particular family structure or style is inherently superior, offering a more culturally inclusive approach to understanding family functioning.

Recent studies investigating the relationship between family functioning and psychological well-being have utilized diverse samples. Nocito et al. (2020) examined 140 parents and their 70 adolescent children in Italy, employing various self-report measures to assess family functioning, basic psychological needs, well-being, and parental educational practices. The study included participants primarily from nuclear families, with parents' educational backgrounds ranging from middle school to university degrees. Archana and Sinha (2024) conducted research in southern India with 265 young adults aged 18-26 years. Their sample comprised 64.5% females and 35.5% males, with the majority (81.5%) coming from nuclear family structures and pursuing undergraduate education (73.2%). This study is particularly relevant as it was conducted in a developing country context, potentially sharing socioeconomic similarities with environments where B40 students reside. Paulin et al. (2024) examined psychological well-being and family functioning among heterosexual couples with adolescent children following identity-release gamete donation or standard IVF in Sweden. Their sample included 205 parents (mothers and fathers) with adolescent children between 13-17 years old. Although this study focused on a specific family formation context, it offers insights into how genetic relatedness (or lack thereof) influences family dynamics and psychological well-being.

The literature consistently demonstrates a significant relationship between family functioning and psychological well-being across diverse samples and contexts. Family cohesion, in particular, emerges as a robust predictor of psychological well-being, with higher levels of cohesion associated with greater well-being across multiple dimensions. Family relationship problems consistently show negative associations with psychological well-being, highlighting the detrimental impact of conflict and tension within the family system. The findings regarding family adaptability are less consistent, with some studies finding no significant relationship with psychological well-being. This inconsistency may reflect cultural variations in the importance of adaptability or methodological challenges in measuring this construct. The mixed results suggest that "the relationship between these variables can be multifaceted and depending on the specific dimensions being studied, it may vary" (Archana, & Sinha, A. K., 2024, p. 645). Parental practices, particularly autonomy support versus psychological control, appear to play a crucial role in the relationship between family functioning and psychological well-being. Autonomy-supportive practices facilitate well-being, while controlling practices hinder it. This finding aligns with Self-Determination Theory, which posits that the satisfaction of basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) is essential for psychological well-being.

A significant gap in the literature concerns the influence of socioeconomic context on the relationship between family functioning and psychological well-being. While studies have examined these relationships in various cultural contexts, few have specifically focused on lower-income populations such as B40 students. Economic hardship may introduce unique

stressors that influence family dynamics and psychological well-being in ways not captured by existing research. Archana and Sinha (2024) note that "the studies on young adults in the context of family and their psychological wellbeing were relatively less" (p. 639), highlighting the need for more research on this demographic. This gap is particularly pronounced for B40 students, who may face additional challenges related to economic hardship, limited access to resources, and systemic disadvantages. There is limited research on interventions aimed at enhancing family functioning to promote psychological well-being. Nocito et al. (2020) suggest that "parent-training and psycho-education projects could be carried out to make parents aware of parental practices as antecedents of malaise and dissatisfaction of their children" (p. 25), but empirical evaluations of such interventions are lacking. Research on effective interventions would be particularly valuable for B40 students, who may have limited access to mental health resources.

Existing research often focuses on specific dimensions of family functioning (e.g., cohesion, adaptability) without considering the holistic nature of family systems. Constantine (2025) introduces the Paradigmatic Framework as a more comprehensive approach to understanding family functioning, but empirical applications of this framework are limited. Future research should employ more comprehensive measures of family functioning that capture the complexity of family systems. The literature consistently demonstrates a significant relationship between family functioning and psychological well-being across diverse samples and contexts. Family cohesion and communication emerge as particularly important dimensions of family functioning that promote psychological well-being, while family relationship problems consistently show negative associations with well-being. Parental practices, particularly autonomy support versus psychological control, play a crucial role in this relationship.

The discussion leads to the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis: family functional has a positive and insignificant relationship with psychological well-being.

The literature has guided the investigators to frame the conceptual framework for this investigation, as depicted in figure 1.



**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework**

## Methods

### Study Design

This research was implemented across three secondary educational institutions in rural Perak, Malaysia. For ethical considerations, the specific names of these schools were kept confidential. The investigation employed a cross-sectional research approach utilizing survey methodology to gather unbiased and accurate information, aligning with recommendations by Sekaran and Bougie (2016). The research instrument was formulated through comprehensive review of

existing scholarly literature focused on psychological well-being and family functioning. To enhance research quality and ensure cultural appropriateness, the questionnaire underwent translation from English to Malay language using the back-to-back translation methodology as suggested by Lomand, T. (2016). The distribution of questionnaires followed a purposive sampling targeting secondary school students in grades 3 and 4 in rural B40 communities in Perak. The sample size of 318 may have been determined based on population parameters and access to this specific demographic. It should be noted that comprehensive student information was unavailable due to confidentiality protocols established by the agency management, which necessitated the use of purposive rather than random sampling techniques. The survey instrument was structured into two primary sections. The first section measured family functioning using 7 items adapted from Olsen and Gorell's (2003) framework. The second section assessed psychological well-being through 5 items derived from Ryff's (1989) established measures. Both sections utilized a 5-point Likert scale measurement system ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Additionally, demographic information including gender, race, age, and parental characteristics (occupation and income) was collected. For data analysis, the research utilized SmartPLS software, which was selected for its capacity to generate latent variable scores, effectively manage small sample sizes, process non-normally distributed data, and evaluate complex research frameworks (Hair, Hult, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2017; Henseler, Ringle, and Sinkovics, 2009). Unlike traditional regression methods that only handle observed variables, SEM can analyze latent constructs (such as psychological well-being and family functioning) that cannot be directly measured but are represented by multiple indicators.

## Results

### Characteristics of the respondent

**Participants' Profile Summary** The study sample consisted of 318 secondary school students from rural Perak, Malaysia, with a gender distribution of 57.9% female and 42.1% male participants. The racial composition was predominantly Malay (99.4%), with minimal representation from Chinese and other ethnicities (0.3% each). All participants were adolescents in grades 3 and 4, with 64.5% being 15 years old and 35.5% being 16 years old. Regarding parental employment, more than half (52.2%) of the participants' parents were self-employed, while 37.1% worked in government sectors and 10.7% were employed in private organizations. The household income distribution revealed that the majority of participants (47.4%) came from families earning between RM501-RM1000 monthly, followed by 24.5% with incomes between RM0-RM500, and 23.8% earning RM1001-RM1500. The remaining participants reported higher family income brackets: 9.4% each in the RM1501-RM2000 and RM3001 and above categories, 6.3% in the RM2001-RM2500 range, and 3.5% earning between RM2501-RM3000 monthly. This demographic profile indicates that the study primarily captured Malay adolescents from rural areas with relatively modest household incomes.

Participants' Profile	Sub-Profile	Percentage
Gender	Male	42.1
	Female	57.9
Race	Melayu	99.4
	Cina	0.3
	Lain-lain	0.3

Age	15 years old	64.5
	16 years old	35.5
Parents Jobs	Government	37.1
	Private	10.7
	Own	52.2
Parents Income	RM0 – RM500	24.5
	RM501 – RM1000	47.4
	RM1001 – RM1500	23.8
	RM1501 – RM2000	9.4
	RM2001 – RM2500	6.3
	RM2501 – RM3000	3.5
	RM3001 and above	9.4

### Reflective measurement model

Based on Table 2, all outer loading values recorded the values as suggested by Hair et.al (2017) which exceeded the value of 0.708. For internal consistency reliability, the defective CR value is >0.708.

**Table 2:** Reflective measurement model values

Indicator	Convergent Validity	Internal Consistency Reliability	
	Outer Loadings	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
A1	0.771	0.877	0.832
A2	0.796		
A3	0.706		
A4	0.735		
A5	0.700		
A6	0.749		
B1	0.733	0.810	0.708
B2	0.752		
B3	0.753		
B4	0.757		
B5	0.787		

Source: Questionnaire

Table 3 shows the results of the validity and reliability of the construct. The value of the Heterotrait-monotrait correlation ratio (HTMT) for each construct is less than 0.90 (Hair et al., 2017; Henseler et al., 2009), shows that the construct has met the criteria of discriminatory validity (Hair et al., 2017; Henseler et al., 2009). The value of the secret interval for each construct indicated in brackets falls below 1 (Hair et al., 2017), indicating that the construct has met the minimum standard of discriminant analysis.

**Table 3: Discriminant analysis decisions**

Constructs	Family Functional
Psychological	0.565
Well-Being	(0.379;0.523)

Note. The values in the parenthesis are the values of confidential interval at 5% and 95%.

### Construct Analysis

Table 4 shows variance inflation factor analysis and descriptive statistics. These results found that the mean values of all constructs ranged from 3.6103 to 3.8689, indicating that some respondents saw levels of family functional and psychological well-being between (3) to (7). On the other hand, the value of the variance inflation factor for the relationship between independent variable (i.e., family functional) and dependent variable (i.e., psychological well-being) is lower than 5.0, indicating that the data does not have serious collinearity problems (Hair et al., 2017).

**Table 4. Analysis of variance inflation factor and descriptive statistics**

Constructs	Min	Standard Deviation	Variance Inflation Factor
			Psychological Well-Being
Family Functional	3.6103	0.82705	1.000
Psychological Well-Being	3.8689	0.73648	

### Structural Model Measurement

Table 5 shows that 19.6 percent of variance in Psychological Well-being was explained by Family Functional for the direct relationship model. This means that 80.4 percent of the variance in Psychological Well-being is explained by other factors that were not the focus of this study. The  $R^2$  value of 0.196 indicates that this model has a moderate effect. Furthermore, the hypothesis test showed that Family Functional correlated significantly with Psychological Well-being ( $\beta = 0.443$ ;  $t = 10.058$ ), therefore supporting H1. The high t-value (10.058) indicates a strong statistical significance in this relationship, confirming that family functioning has a substantial positive impact on the psychological well-being of the students in the study.

Further, the effect measure ( $f^2$ ), the appropriate model (SRMR value) and the predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ) are tested. The value of  $f^2$  for the relationship between family functional and psychological well-being is worth 0.244, respectively, thus higher than 0.15 (Hair et al., 2017), indicating that it has a moderate effect. The average balance value of the standard root (SRMR) is 0.083, which is lower than 0.1, indicating that this model is suitable. The value of  $Q^2$  for SI is 0.084, which is higher than zero, which indicates that the model has relevant forecasts.

**Table 5: Structural model measurement analysis decisions**

Hyphotesis	Relationship	$\beta$	t	$R^2$	Result
H1	Family Functional $\rightarrow$ Psychological Well-being	0.443	10.058	0.196	Accepted

Note. Significant at \*  $t > 1.68$  (one tail testing)

### Conclusion and Discussion

The primary objective of this study was to examine the relationship between family functioning and psychological well-being among B40 students in rural secondary schools in Perak, Malaysia. The results provided strong empirical support for the hypothesis, demonstrating that family functioning has a significant positive relationship with psychological well-being ( $\beta = 0.443$ ;  $t = 10.058$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). This finding is substantiated by the  $R^2$  value of 0.196, indicating

that approximately 19.6% of the variance in psychological well-being can be attributed to family functioning. While this represents a moderate effect size ( $f^2 = 0.244$ ), it nonetheless underscores the considerable impact that family dynamics have on adolescents' psychological health. These findings align with and extend previous research in this domain. The significant positive relationship between family functioning and psychological well-being corroborates the work of Molina Moreno, P. et al. (2024), who emphasized that "family relationships with high parental affection and low levels of rejection provide greater social support and a greater ability to regulate emotions adaptively in adolescents" (p. 2). Similarly, our results support Archana and Sinha's (2024) findings that family cohesion serves as a robust predictor of psychological well-being across multiple dimensions.

This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of family functioning and psychological well-being in several significant ways. First, it provides empirical validation of the Circumplex Model within the Malaysian context, specifically among B40 students. As noted by Constantine (2025), this model conceptualizes family functioning along the dimensions of cohesion and flexibility, with communication serving as a facilitating dimension. Our findings suggest that these dimensions remain relevant in understanding family dynamics within Malaysia's culturally distinct environment.

However, our results also raise important questions about the cross-cultural applicability of theoretical models of family functioning. Constantine's (2025) critique that the Circumplex Model potentially contains cultural biases by presupposing that intermediate levels of cohesion and flexibility are universally optimal warrants further consideration. The strong relationship between family functioning and psychological well-being observed in our predominantly Malay sample (99.4%) suggests that cultural factors may influence how family dynamics impact well-being.

The Paradigmatic Framework introduced by Constantine (2025), which identifies four distinct family paradigms—Closed, Random, Open, and Synchronous—may offer a more culturally sensitive approach to understanding family functioning in the Malaysian context. Future research could explore which paradigms are most prevalent among Malaysian B40 families and how these paradigms relate to psychological well-being outcomes.

The practical application of these theoretical insights lies in their potential to inform interventions that strengthen family systems and enhance psychological well-being among B40 students. The significant relationship between family functioning and psychological well-being suggests that family-centered interventions could be particularly effective in promoting mental health among this vulnerable population.

In the Malaysian context, where rapid socioeconomic transformation, urbanization, and modernization have altered traditional family structures, interventions should be sensitive to the unique challenges faced by B40 families. As noted by Zanetti et al. (2024), Malaysian families navigate complex intersections of traditional collectivistic values and emerging individualistic orientations. Effective interventions would acknowledge these cultural dynamics while addressing the specific stressors associated with economic insecurity.

Educational institutions could implement family engagement programs that recognize the bidirectional relationship between family functioning and student well-being. Such programs might include parent education workshops focused on effective communication, problem-

solving strategies, and emotional responsiveness—key components of healthy family functioning identified in the literature (Molina Moreno, P. et al., 2024; Zanetti et al., 2024).

The findings of this study have several important implications for practitioners working with B40 students and their families. First, educational professionals should recognize the significant impact of family dynamics on students' psychological well-being and, by extension, their academic performance. As noted by Molina Moreno, P. et al. (2024), psychological well-being is associated with “increased engagement, achievement, and performance” in educational contexts (p. 2). School counselors and psychologists could implement screening procedures to identify students experiencing family dysfunction and provide targeted support. This might include individual counseling, family therapy referrals, or participation in school-based programs designed to enhance resilience and coping skills.

Policy implications include the need for integrated approaches that address both educational and family needs simultaneously. As Zanetti et al. (2024) observed, educational disparities can be both a consequence and perpetuator of family dysfunction, creating a concerning cycle wherein educational limitations constrain economic opportunities, which in turn increase family stress and compromise functioning. Breaking this cycle requires coordinated interventions across multiple systems. Community-based organizations serving B40 populations could develop programs that strengthen family functioning through parent education, support groups, and resource provision. Religious institutions, which play significant roles in shaping Malaysian family functioning (Urbańska-Grosz et al., 2024), could be engaged as partners in promoting healthy family dynamics through culturally resonant approaches.

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of this study. First, the cross-sectional design precludes causal inferences about the relationship between family functioning and psychological well-being. Longitudinal research would provide valuable insights into how these variables influence each other over time and across developmental transitions. Second, the sample was predominantly Malay (99.4%) and limited to students in grades 3 and 4 from three rural secondary schools in Perak. This limits the generalizability of findings to other ethnic groups, age ranges, and geographical regions within Malaysia. Future research should include more diverse samples to better represent Malaysia's multicultural population.

Third, reliance on self-report measures may introduce response biases, particularly given the sensitive nature of questions about family functioning. Multi-informant approaches that include parent and teacher perspectives would provide more comprehensive assessments of both family dynamics and student well-being. Fourth, while the study identified a significant relationship between family functioning and psychological well-being, the  $R^2$  value of 0.196 indicates that 80.4% of the variance in psychological well-being is explained by factors not examined in this study. Future research should explore additional variables that might influence psychological well-being among B40 students, such as peer relationships, school climate, and individual resilience factors.

Future studies could also explore potential mediating and moderating variables in the relationship between family functioning and psychological well-being. For example, research might examine whether specific coping strategies mediate this relationship or whether factors such as religious involvement moderate the impact of family dysfunction on psychological outcomes. Intervention studies that evaluate the effectiveness of programs designed to enhance

family functioning and promote psychological well-being among B40 students would provide valuable evidence for practitioners and policymakers. Such research should include both quantitative and qualitative components to capture the complex dynamics of family systems and individual responses to intervention.

This study provides compelling evidence for the significant positive relationship between family functioning and psychological well-being among B40 students in rural Malaysian secondary schools. The findings contribute to our understanding of how family dynamics influence adolescent development within Malaysia's unique sociocultural context, particularly among economically disadvantaged populations. The moderate effect size observed in this relationship ( $f^2 = 0.244$ ) suggests that family functioning represents an important, though not exclusive, determinant of psychological well-being. This highlights the need for holistic approaches that address multiple factors influencing student mental health, while recognizing the central role of family systems. Theoretical implications include validation of existing models of family functioning within the Malaysian context, while raising important questions about cultural variations in optimal family dynamics. Practical implications span educational, clinical, community, and policy domains, emphasizing the need for integrated approaches that strengthen family systems and support student well-being simultaneously. As Malaysia continues to navigate rapid socioeconomic transformation, understanding and addressing the challenges faced by B40 families becomes increasingly important for promoting educational equity and social mobility. This research contributes to that effort by illuminating the critical relationship between family functioning and psychological well-being, providing a foundation for future research and intervention.

### Acknowledgement

We would like to thank the Geran Penyelidikan DKPU USAS for supporting this research.

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