

Development and Preliminary Psychometric Evaluation of the Malaysian Inclusive Parenting Scale

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ABSTRACT:

Inclusive education requires families to sustain equitable participation and learning beyond school, yet culturally grounded measures of inclusive parenting remain limited. This study conducted a preliminary psychometric evaluation of the Malaysian Inclusive Parenting Scale (IPS-M) among 248 parents. The instrument represents four dimensions: inclusive attitudes toward children's needs, emotional and social support, support for inclusive learning at home, and collaboration with teachers and the community. Data were screened in IBM SPSS Statistics 29, and the final reflective measurement model was evaluated in SmartPLS 4.1 using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, average variance extracted, the Fornell-Larcker criterion, the heterotrait-monotrait ratio, and variance inflation factors. All constructs demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency and convergent validity. Fornell-Larcker results supported construct distinctiveness, although one HTMT value of 0.924 indicated unresolved overlap between emotional-social support and home-learning support. Overall, the findings provide preliminary construct-level psychometric evidence for the IPS-M as a culturally grounded, multidimensional measure for research on family-level inclusive practices in Malaysia.

Keywords: inclusive education, inclusive parenting, Malaysia, PLS-SEM, psychometric evaluation

1. Introduction

Inclusive education is increasingly understood as an ecological endeavour that extends beyond school placement and classroom instruction. Families influence children's acceptance of

diversity, access to learning, emotional security, and participation in school and community life. International guidance likewise positions parental attitudes and family-community participation as important conditions for

meaningful inclusion (UNESCO, 2020). Recent evidence shows that parents' engagement with school professionals affects the consistency and quality of support received by children in inclusive settings (Koskela & Sinkkonen, 2025), while community participation can determine whether inclusion is sustained beyond the classroom (Meresman, 2014).

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory provides a useful foundation for examining this family role. Child development is shaped by nested and interacting systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1974, 1976, 1986). Parenting beliefs and practices operate within the microsystem, whereas relationships among parents, teachers, schools, and community services form a mesosystem that can either support or restrict participation. From this perspective, inclusive education is not solely a school responsibility; it is jointly constructed through everyday family practices and connections across settings.

In this study, inclusive parenting is defined as a multidimensional set of beliefs and practices through which parents promote acceptance, belonging, equitable learning opportunities, and participation. Four complementary dimensions are proposed. Inclusive attitudes toward children's needs represent parents' acceptance of difference and willingness to support participation among children with diverse abilities and backgrounds. Such attitudes are associated with children's social acceptance and inclusive orientations (Hadjidakou et al., 2025; Santilli et al., 2022; Sümer Dodur & Yüzbaşıoğlu, 2025). Emotional and social support includes reassurance, encouragement, empathy, opportunities for interaction, and assistance in navigating exclusion. Family emotional support is consistently associated with self-efficacy, well-being, and social adjustment (Cheng & Lai, 2023; Qian et al., 2024; Berger et al., 2024; Li et al., 2026).

Support for inclusive learning at home concerns access to resources, responsive learning assistance, and opportunities that accommodate children's differing needs. A supportive home-learning environment contributes to social-

emotional competence and engagement (Li et al., 2023; Geduld, 2024; Liu et al., 2024; Hanefar et al., 2026; Otero-Mayer et al., 2026). Collaboration with teachers and the community captures communication, shared decision-making, and the mobilisation of external support (Amjad et al., 2026). Effective home-school partnerships are associated with stronger engagement and socio-emotional functioning (Johnson et al., 2025; Reaves et al., 2022; Kely & Wakabayashi, 2020). These dimensions therefore represent both within-family processes and interactions between the family and its wider educational ecology.

Measurement remains a central limitation in this field. Much research examines parental attitudes, involvement, or support as separate constructs, while few instruments assess inclusive parenting as an integrated family-level practice. Instruments developed in other cultural settings may also overlook Malaysian family structures, linguistic diversity, educational expectations, and community relationships. Malaysia's multicultural context makes cultural grounding particularly important because parental involvement is shaped by individual, institutional, and societal factors (Cerna et al., 2021; Dan et al., 2025; Mezzanotte, 2022). A coherent measure would support comparable research, needs assessment, programme development, and evaluation of family-focused inclusion initiatives.

Accordingly, this study conducted a preliminary psychometric evaluation of the Malaysian Inclusive Parenting Scale (IPS-M). It examined whether the proposed four-factor reflective measurement model demonstrates acceptable internal consistency, convergent validity, discriminant validity, and collinearity among Malaysian parents. The study addresses the need for a theoretically grounded and culturally relevant instrument for examining inclusive practices within families and across home-school-community relationships.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design and Instrument Development

A cross-sectional instrument-development design was used. The IPS-M was developed through a synthesis of literature on inclusive education, parental involvement, emotional and social support, home learning, family-school partnerships, and ecological systems theory. The four proposed constructs were defined before item writing to ensure that each item represented a specific conceptual domain. The domains were: (1) Inclusive Attitudes toward Children's Needs, (2) Emotional and Social Support Practices, (3) Support for Inclusive Learning at Home, and (4) Collaboration with Teachers and the Community. The overall framework was informed by ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1974, 1976, 1986) and culturally responsive approaches to parenting programmes (Ontai & Mastergeorge, 2006).

The questionnaire comprised a demographic section and four construct-specific sections. All construct items used a five-point Likert response scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree); higher scores indicated stronger endorsement of the relevant inclusive attitude or practice. Six experts in inclusive education, educational psychology, and family studies reviewed the initial items for relevance, clarity, comprehensibility, and cultural appropriateness. Minor wording revisions were made following this review.

The expert review focused on qualitative judgements of item relevance and representativeness rather than numerical content-validity indices. Reviewers examined whether each statement reflected its intended dimension, was understandable to Malaysian parents, and was appropriate across diverse family and educational contexts. Ambiguous wording was revised, conceptually overlapping statements were refined, and culturally inappropriate expressions were removed or modified before field administration.

2.2 Participants and Procedure

Parents residing in Malaysia were recruited through non-probability voluntary-response sampling. The online questionnaire was distributed through social media and parent networks using Google Forms. Participation was anonymous and voluntary. Of 288 submitted responses, 248 met the analytical criteria after responses with extensive missing data, duplicate patterns, or non-compliance with questionnaire instructions were removed. The sample size was considered adequate for evaluation of the PLS-SEM measurement model based on contemporary guidance (Hair et al., 2021). Participants received information about the study objectives, procedures, confidentiality, and voluntary participation before giving consent. No personally identifiable information was collected, and the research team managed the data securely for academic purposes.

2.3 Data Analysis

IBM SPSS Statistics 29 was used for data cleaning, demographic summaries, missing-value checks, outlier screening, and examination of skewness and kurtosis. SmartPLS 4.1 was then used to conduct a preliminary construct-level evaluation of the final reflective measurement model. Assessment focused on Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), the Fornell-Larcker criterion, the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT), and variance inflation factors (VIF). The evaluation followed established PLS-SEM recommendations (Hair et al., 2021). Because the purpose was to examine the overall performance of a prespecified measurement model rather than to provide exhaustive item-level validation or test causal structural relations, the findings are interpreted as preliminary measurement evidence.

3. Results

3.1 Participant Characteristics

The final sample comprised 248 parents. Women represented 85.08% of participants and men 14.92%. The largest age group was 617-626 years (40.32%), and 50.40% of participants held a

bachelor's degree. Table 1 summarises the demographic profile.

Table 1. Participant Characteristics

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	37	14.92
	Female	211	85.08
Age	617-626 years	44	17.74
	617-626 years	100	40.32
	617-626 years	68	27.42
	51 years and above	36	14.52
Highest education	Bachelor's degree	125	50.40
	Master's degree	20	8.07
	PhD	4	1.61
	SPM/STPM	46	18.55
	Diploma	50	20.16
	Other	3	1.21
Years married	<5 years	40	16.13
	617-626 years	59	23.79
	617-626 years	86	34.68
	>20 years	63	25.40
Number of children	0	6	2.42
	1	40	16.13
	2	60	24.19
	3	67	27.02
	4	38	15.32
	5	23	9.27

Variable	Category	n	%
	6	10	4.03
	7	4	1.61
Previously heard of inclusive parenting	Yes	89	35.89
	No	100	40.32
	Not sure	59	23.79

3.2 Distributional Characteristics

Absolute skewness values below 2 and absolute kurtosis values below 7 indicate no severe departure from normality (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013; West et al., 1995). Construct-level skewness ranged from -0.65 to -0.97 and kurtosis from 0.29 to 1.20. The negative skew reflects

relatively strong endorsement of inclusive attitudes and practices, but the values did not indicate extreme distributional problems. Although PLS-SEM does not require multivariate normality, these results support stable descriptive and measurement-model evaluation.

Table 2. Construct-Level Descriptive Statistics and Distribution

Dimension	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Inclusive attitudes	3.71	0.62	-0.65	1.20
Emotional and social support	3.85	0.64	-0.97	1.10
Inclusive learning at home	3.68	0.67	-0.87	1.08
Teacher-community collaboration	3.62	0.74	-0.72	0.29

3.3 Measurement Model

The final four-factor reflective measurement model was evaluated using construct-level reliability and validity criteria. Cronbach's alpha exceeded 0.70 for every construct, with values ranging from 0.868 to 0.896. Composite

reliability ranged from 0.905 to 0.927, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. AVE values ranged from 0.658 to 0.762 and therefore exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.50, supporting the convergent validity of the four dimensions (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Saidi & Siew, 2019).

Table 3. Internal Consistency and Convergent Validity

Dimension	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
Inclusive attitudes	0.876	0.915	0.730

Dimension	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
Emotional and social support	0.896	0.923	0.707
Inclusive learning at home	0.868	0.905	0.762
Teacher-community collaboration	0.894	0.927	0.658

The square root of AVE for each construct was greater than its correlations with the other constructs, satisfying the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Table 4). HTMT values were below 0.90 for all construct pairs except Emotional and Social Support versus Support for Inclusive Learning at Home (HTMT = 0.924; Table 5). This value indicates that discriminant validity for that pair is not unequivocally established under the 0.90 rule. The overlap is theoretically

plausible because both constructs represent family-based supportive practices. Nevertheless, their content remains conceptually distinguishable: one concerns affective and social processes, whereas the other concerns learning facilitation and access to learning resources. Future validation should test the HTMT confidence interval and examine cross-loadings and item wording before treating the distinction as conclusive.

Table 4. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Construct	1	2	3	4
1. Inclusive attitudes	0.854			
2. Emotional-social support	0.791	0.841		
3. Inclusive learning at home	0.728	0.825	0.873	
4. Teacher-community collaboration	0.632	0.691	0.692	0.811

Table 5. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratios

Construct	1	2	3	4
1. Inclusive attitudes	-			
2. Emotional-social support	0.858	-		
3. Inclusive learning at home	0.825	0.924	-	
4. Teacher-community collaboration	0.712	0.771	0.785	-

VIF values ranged from 1.414 to 4.031 and remained below 5, suggesting that severe multicollinearity was not present (Hair et al., 2021). Overall, the results support the internal

consistency and convergent validity of the four-factor model, while identifying one construct pair that requires further discriminant-validity investigation.

4. Discussion

4.1 Interpretation of the Construct-Level Measurement Findings

At the construct level, all four IPS-M dimensions demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency and convergent validity. The Fornell-Larcker pattern supported the distinctiveness of the four dimensions, while the HTMT result identified one area of overlap between emotional-social support and home-learning support. Taken together, the findings provide preliminary support for the proposed four-factor measurement structure while also indicating that further independent replication and additional validity testing are warranted before the scale is treated as fully established.

4.2 Interpretation of the Four-Factor Structure

The findings support a multidimensional account of inclusive parenting. Inclusive attitudes provide the value base through which parents recognise difference and participation rights. Emotional and social support represents the relational processes that sustain belonging and coping. Home-learning support reflects the practical adaptation of learning opportunities and resources. Collaboration represents the family's interface with teachers, schools, and community services. This configuration is consistent with ecological theory because the first three dimensions operate primarily within the family microsystem, while collaboration captures mesosystem connections across settings. The model also prevents inclusive parenting from being reduced to parental acceptance alone. Attitudes may be supportive without being translated into accessible learning opportunities or sustained communication with teachers. Conversely, practical support may occur even when parents have limited understanding of inclusive principles. Treating the dimensions separately therefore allows researchers and practitioners to identify specific strengths and support needs. The significant interconstruct correlations are expected because the dimensions contribute to a shared higher-level concept, but

the pattern generally indicates related rather than redundant processes.

The elevated HTMT value between emotional-social support and home-learning support deserves particular attention. Parents may experience encouragement, learning assistance, and responsive adaptation as part of the same everyday caregiving process. This cultural and behavioural proximity does not by itself invalidate the theoretical distinction, but it shows that future item refinement is necessary. Replication should compare alternative models, test measurement invariance across mothers and fathers or major demographic groups, and use confidence-interval-based HTMT inference. The collaboration dimension broadens family-level inclusion by recognising that parents frequently coordinate resources across systems. Previous work has similarly shown that inclusive education depends on active home-school partnerships and system-spanning collaboration (Çelik & Tomris, 2024; Masondo & Mabaso, 2025; Tryfon et al., 2019). In multicultural settings, families may mobilise these resources through different linguistic, social, and community pathways (Bajrami, 2019; Peng et al., 2026). The IPS-M therefore offers a framework for examining how Malaysian families enact inclusion both within the home and through relationships with external institutions.

4.3 Implications and Limitations

The IPS-M provides researchers with a structured measure for studying family-level inclusive practices and their associations with children's educational participation, social adjustment, and developmental outcomes. For practitioners, dimension-level profiles may help identify whether support is most needed in parental understanding, emotional-social practices, home learning, or school-community collaboration. At the programme level, the scale could inform needs assessment and evaluation of parent education or family-support initiatives. Its use for individual screening or high-stakes decisions is not recommended until additional criterion-related and predictive validity evidence is available.

Several limitations qualify the findings. The cross-sectional design does not establish temporal stability or sensitivity to change. Voluntary online recruitment produced a non-probability sample that was predominantly female (85.08%), limiting generalisability to fathers and other caregivers. Exclusive reliance on self-report may have increased social-desirability and common-method bias. Criterion validity, predictive validity, test-retest reliability, measurement invariance, and associations with child outcomes were not examined. The factor structure was also not cross-validated in an independent sample using an alternative factor-analytic approach. Finally, the HTMT result of 0.924 indicates unresolved overlap between two dimensions. Future studies should recruit more representative samples, conduct independent-sample factor-structure testing, use longitudinal and multi-informant designs, refine overlapping content where necessary, assess measurement invariance, and evaluate whether IPS-M scores predict meaningful child and family outcomes.

5. Conclusion

The IPS-M conceptualises inclusive parenting through four related dimensions: inclusive attitudes toward children's needs, emotional and social support, support for inclusive learning at home, and collaboration with teachers and the community. Evidence from 248 Malaysian parents supported internal consistency and convergent validity for all four constructs. The Fornell-Larcker results were satisfactory, while one HTMT value identified a specific area for further refinement. The scale should therefore be regarded as a promising, culturally grounded measure with preliminary psychometric support rather than a fully established or diagnostic instrument. With independent replication and

additional validity testing, the IPS-M may support research and programme evaluation aimed at strengthening inclusive practices across Malaysian homes, schools, and communities.

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None.

7. Author Declaration

Originality: The authors confirm that this manuscript is original, has not been published previously, and is not currently under consideration for publication by another journal.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that they have no known financial or personal conflicts of interest that could have influenced the research reported in this manuscript.

Informed Consent: All participants provided informed consent before completing the anonymous questionnaire.

Ethics Statement: Formal ethical approval was not obtained for this study. The study involved a minimal-risk, anonymous online questionnaire completed voluntarily by adult participants. Before accessing the questionnaire, participants received information about the study purpose, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and their right to discontinue at any time, and informed consent was obtained. No personally identifiable information or sensitive clinical data were collected.

Data Availability: The data are not publicly deposited. Requests for access may be directed to the corresponding author and will be considered subject to participant confidentiality and applicable institutional data-management requirements.

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