

**DEVELOPMENT AND PSYCHOMETRIC PROPERTIES  
OF THE FAMILY LOYALTY QUESTIONNAIRE:  
FAMILY LOYALTY, IDENTITY AND ATTACHMENT  
IN YOUNG ADULTS (FLQ-15)\***

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The present article reports the development, validation, and introduction of the Family Loyalty Questionnaire (FLQ-15), a culturally grounded instrument designed to assess the multidimensional construct of family loyalty among emerging and established adults in Poland. Drawing on family systems theory and the construct of filial piety, the FLQ-15 captures three dimensions of family loyalty: Family Bond, Family Dependence, and Family Obligations. Two independent studies ( $N = 310$  and  $N = 304$ ) were conducted to examine the factorial structure, reliability, and validity of the instrument. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses confirmed a robust three-factor model with satisfactory internal consistency. The results support the multidimensional nature of family loyalty and its relevance for understanding the balance between relational obligations and individual autonomy during emerging adulthood. Results underscore both the adaptive (e.g., identity integration, emotional closeness) and maladaptive (e.g., autonomy suppression, dependency) roles of family loyalty during emerging and established adulthood. The FLQ-15 offers a reliable

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means of examining the psychological implications of intergenerational bonds and obligations, with practical applications in developmental research and therapeutic contexts.

**Keywords:** family loyalty; familism; measurement; identity; attachment styles; emerging and established adulthood

Loyalty is a multidimensional construct that has long attracted scholarly attention due to its impact on individuals' thoughts, emotions, and behaviours, as well as their psychological well-being (Beer & Watson, 2009; Berry et al., 2021). It encompasses devotion, commitment, and perseverance, serving as a foundation for interpersonal respect and trust. Prior research has highlighted the positive dimensions of loyalty, showing its links to prosocial behaviour, altruism, and relational stability (Hildreth et al., 2016). However, loyalty may also manifest in restrictive or maladaptive ways, particularly within close family relationships, where obligations and intergenerational expectations can conflict with autonomy and self-development (Hildreth et al., 2016; Yeh, 2003).

While interpersonal and group loyalty have been examined psychometrically (Beer & Watson, 2009), no standardized tool has been developed to assess family loyalty as a specific and multidimensional construct. The present study addresses this gap by developing an initial version of the Family Loyalty Questionnaire (FLQ) as an item pool and empirical starting point, and by deriving and validating a short, psychometrically optimized form—the FLQ-15—using a data-driven approach. The FLQ-15 constitutes the final instrument proposed for research use. The second research objective was to examine the associations between family loyalty, attachment styles, and identity processes in emerging and established adulthood.

### **Family Loyalty in the Systemic Context**

The conceptual foundation for the FLQ is grounded in family systems theory, particularly the work of Boszormenyi-Nagy and colleagues (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Framo, 1985; Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986; Boszormenyi-Nagy & Spark, 1984; Boszormenyi-Nagy & Ulrich, 1981), who defined loyalty as a sense of solidarity and obligation that binds family members across generations. Loyalty reflects the balance between justice and trust and underpins the relational ethics that organise family life. The perception among family

members that mutual obligations within the family are being respected is conducive to the establishment of a sense of justice. Trust, in this framework, is cultivated when family members feel valued and loved. The capacity to experience mutual justice and trust is hypothesised to emerge during the earliest phases of parent–child interaction.

In order to maintain loyalty, it is necessary for the individual to conform to the group's expectations and obligations. Nonconformity frequently evokes a sense of guilt. Consequently, within a familial environment where an individual deviates from established norms and expectations, guilt is instigated, thereby suppressing any potential rebellious or insubordinate behaviours (Wasilewska & Kuleta-Krzyszowskiak, 2008). In an attempt to understand the phenomenon by which a considerable number of individuals continue to be influenced by family dynamics, thereby perpetuating behavioural patterns and belief systems from preceding generations despite acknowledging their harmful effect on personal well-being, Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark (1973) conducted a study.

Whilst loyalty is often perceived as a positive disposition towards the object of one's allegiance (Wasilewska & Kuleta-Krzyszowskiak, 2008), other researchers have emphasised the psychological complexity of the construct. In their comprehensive review, Berry et al. (2021) defined loyalty as a psychological process influencing behaviour through a fundamental need for belonging. Such behaviours are subsequently rationalised as “appropriate” on the basis of loyalty. Despite its hypothetical nature, this conceptualisation effectively elucidates the intricacies of how loyalty shapes thought and behaviour. Beer and Watson (2009) conducted pioneering psychometric research into interpersonal loyalty from a dispositional perspective by developing and validating the Individual and Group Loyalty Scale (IGLS). The study examined married couples and demonstrated that interpersonal loyalty is a distinct and stable trait, differentiable from other traits such as altruism or agreeableness. The individual and group dimensions of loyalty exhibited a positive correlation with conscientiousness, altruism, and positive emotionality, and a negative correlation with interpersonal distance and avoidant attachment styles (Beer & Watson, 2009). Furthermore, a significant positive correlation was identified between group loyalty and romantic jealousy, which was interpreted as potentially arising from the possessive tendencies of loyal individuals toward those deemed highly significant. This finding emphasises the dual nature of loyalty, which manifests in both a “dark side”, characterised by jealousy or maladaptive behaviours, and a “bright side”, associated with altruistic

and prosocial actions (Beer & Watson, 2009). Thus, family loyalty can be both a source of stability and a potential constraint on individuation and autonomy—highlighting the need for an empirical tool capable of differentiating these facets.

### **Cultural Perspectives on Family Loyalty**

Family loyalty is inherently embedded within cultural contexts. It represents a central component of familism—a value system emphasizing identification, emotional attachment, and mutual obligation within the family system (Wałęcka-Matyja, 2020). The nature of these obligations varies across collectivist and individualist cultures (Hofstede, 2001), reflecting different balances between group cohesion and personal independence.

Conceptually, family loyalty closely aligns with *filial piety*, which has evolved from a culturally specific Confucian norm into a cross-culturally validated psychological construct (Bedford & Yeh, 2019; 2021). The Dual Filial Piety Model (DFPM; Yeh, 2003) distinguishes between Reciprocal Filial Piety (RFP) and Authoritarian Filial Piety (AFP). The Reciprocal Filial Piety (RFP) is characterized by mutual affection and care rooted in interpersonal relational needs. The Authoritarian Filial Piety (AFP) is defined by hierarchical respect and deference derived from a need for social belonging and collective identity. The emphasis placed on parental authority and expectations by the AFP is frequently at the expense of individual autonomy and self-determination. It has been demonstrated that children raised in authoritarian environments tend to exhibit lower levels of self-esteem, encounter greater academic struggles, and demonstrate a more limited capacity to resist the influence of their parents. This has been shown to result in lower levels of independence. Conversely, individuals who have been socialised within reciprocal contexts have been shown to exhibit higher levels of self-esteem, superior academic performance, and enhanced life satisfaction. Each dimension has distinct implications for psychosocial adaptation and psychological functioning, as noted in various empirical studies (Różycka-Tran, Jurek, Truong, & Olech, 2021; Truong et al., 2020). DFPM provides a valuable parallel for understanding the multidimensionality of family loyalty: while RFP reflects emotionally grounded attachment, AFP captures obligation-based dependence. Similarly, the FLQ conceptualizes family loyalty as a construct that integrates both adaptive and constraining forms of relational commitment.

Cross-cultural research confirms that family loyalty possesses universal features, yet its expression depends on cultural norms and expectations (Różycka-Tran et al., 2024; Różycka-Tran, Jurek, Olech, & Dmochowski, 2021; Różycka-Tran & Lewandowska-Walter, 2024). This underscores the importance of developing a tool that is not only psychometrically robust but also culturally adaptable.

### **Family Loyalty, Identity, and Attachment in Emerging and Established Adulthood**

The study of family loyalty frequently examines its influence on individual development, interpersonal relationships, and broader social functioning, particularly within family systems and intergenerational contexts (Beer & Watson, 2009; Berry et al., 2021; Boszormenyi-Nagy & Spark, 1973; Hildreth et al., 2016; Yeh, 2003). This construct plays a pivotal role in shaping personal identity and psychological well-being. The polarity of “dark” and “light” facets of interpersonal loyalty emphasizes the necessity to evaluate a more extensive array of interpersonal variables and developmental trajectories in order to elucidate the diverse manifestations of loyalty.

Arnett’s (2004) conceptualization of *emerging adulthood* delineates a developmental phase spanning ages from 18 to 29, characterized by significant identity exploration and emotional turbulence, particularly with regard to familial loyalty. This period is often driven by the navigational challenges entailed in the management of conflicting loyalties between familial and personal expectations, reflecting the tension between vertical (familial) and horizontal (peer and partner-related) loyalties. Recent developmental models further distinguish a subsequent phase of established adulthood, typically emerging in the late twenties and thirties, marked by increased role stability, long-term commitments, and greater consolidation of identity (Mehta et al., 2020). From this perspective, the resolution of loyalty conflicts initiated during emerging adulthood becomes particularly salient, as patterns of family loyalty established earlier may either support or constrain the transition into stable adult roles. Thus, the negotiation of familial loyalty represents a key developmental task linking emerging and established adulthood and plays a crucial role in the formation and consolidation of both personal and social identity. Unresolved loyalty conflicts during these phases may undermine psychological well-being.

Familism, defined as a cultural value emphasizing strong identification and attachment to the family unit (Sabogal et al., 1987), is instrumental in maintaining mental health (Miluska, 2014). Empirical studies have indicated that adherence to familial values among Latino youth (primarily adolescents) is correlated with reduced alcohol consumption and delinquency (Germán et al., 2009). Conversely, individuals experiencing parentification—that is to say, the assumption of adult responsibilities at an early age—may encounter disrupted identity development and subsequent functional impairments (Borchet et al., 2018). Research consistently links identity processes with loyalty. Van Vugt and Hart (2004) proposed that social identity is a fundamental determinant of group loyalty, stabilizing groups that might otherwise disintegrate. Hildreth et al. (2016) advanced the conceptualization of loyalty as both a moral attribute and a universal cultural script, intrinsically linked to identity, and influencing information processing and behaviour. The present findings underscore the intricate relationship between the formation of identity and the development of interpersonal loyalty, thus underscoring the necessity for further exploration into the dynamics between these two phenomena.

The pursuit of interpersonal belonging and the formation of attachments have been identified as pivotal motivators for relational behaviours (Leary et al., 2013). It is a well-documented fact that loyalty is commonly perceived as fidelity to significant relationships; as a consequence, it is plausible that belongingness needs are associated with loyalty behaviours. Attachment theory, which was initially developed to explain the bonds between infants and their caregivers (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1969), has been extended to encompass adult relationships, including familial, platonic, and romantic connections (Feeney, 2002; Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Contemporary research identifies two primary attachment dimensions: anxiety and avoidance (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016). *Anxiety* is defined as the experience of apprehension concerning the potential for abandonment and the concomitant desire for proximity (Allen et al., 2022). Avoidance, on the other hand, is characterized by a reluctance to engage in intimate relationships and a tendency to rely on others (Allen et al., 2022). The exploration of the associations between loyalty and these attachment dimensions has the potential to elucidate the internal working models of self and others, which are inherently linked to various expressions of loyalty.

Building on these theoretical insights and the identified need for an operational measure that captures both adaptive and constraining dimensions of family loyalty, the present study aimed to develop and empirically validate a

psychometrically robust instrument—the Family Loyalty Questionnaire (FLQ). The construct of family loyalty can be understood as a multidimensional system of relational commitments that encompasses both affective (*bond*), behavioural (*obligations*), and motivational (*dependence*) components. These components jointly define the balance between autonomy and interdependence within family systems. This conceptualization provides the foundation for the operational model tested in the present study.

### **Development and Validation of the Family Loyalty Questionnaire (FLQ): The Need for a Data-Driven Approach**

Although Boszormenyi-Nagy's theoretical contributions established loyalty as a cornerstone of family systems theory (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Spark, 1973), empirical measurement of family loyalty within this framework has remained limited, with existing instruments focusing primarily on related or adjacent constructs rather than loyalty itself (Beer & Watson, 2009; Berry et al., 2021; Wałęcka-Matyja, 2020). Instruments such as the Individual and Group Loyalty Scale (Beer & Watson, 2009) addressed interpersonal loyalty but did not capture its culturally specific family dimensions. Moreover, cross-cultural studies suggest that loyalty is not reducible to a single dimension, but instead reflects complex, context-dependent structures (Różycka-Tran, Jurek, Olech, & Dmochowski, 2021; Wałęcka-Matyja, 2020). For these reasons, a data-driven methodology was adopted with regard to scale refinement and model testing. While the initial item generation was theory-informed, the final structure of the instrument was derived empirically. Specifically, the FLQ was developed within the Polish cultural context (Jarlińska, 2023). The initial 42-item pool was generated through a theory-informed and qualitative process, combining (a) a review of key theoretical sources (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Spark, 1984; Wasilewska & Kuleta-Krzyszowski, 2008) and (b) content analysis of interviews conducted with five young adults discussing loyalty conflicts and intergenerational expectations. Subsequently, data-driven analyses were used to refine the scale, reduce the number of items, and determine the optimal factor structure.

The initial exploratory factor analysis (EFA) revealed two robust and distinct dimensions: *constructive loyalty*—characterized by attachment, continuity of traditions, mutual support, and shared values, and *destructive loyalty*—characterized by control, fear of rejection, lack of autonomy, and prioritiza-

tion of family demands over individual needs (Jarlińska, 2023). The preliminary version of the FLQ comprised 42 items, encompassing both positive and negative aspects of loyalty, in order to reflect the complexity of the construct. After analysis, items with factor loadings below .40 or with cross-loadings exceeding .30 were removed, resulting in a refined 37-item version of the FLQ. This step ensured conceptual clarity and improved discriminant validity among factors, while retaining adequate representation of each theoretical domain.

The initial validation of the FLQ (Jarlińska, 2023) supported a two-factor solution distinguishing constructive and destructive aspects of loyalty. While this model reflected the theoretical foundations of family systems theory and psychodynamic perspectives, it did not provide the most parsimonious or psychometrically robust representation of the construct. We therefore re-analysed the 37-item dataset using updated factor-retention criteria and a stricter item-screening procedure, which suggested a more parsimonious multidimensional structure and motivated the design of Study 1. Building on this refinement, two empirical studies were conducted: Study 1—pilot study ( $N = 310$ ) and Study 2—validation study ( $N = 304$ ). These studies aimed to establish the factorial structure, reliability, and validity of the FLQ-15, including its associations with identity and attachment styles.

### STUDY 1: PILOT STUDY

In line with contemporary methodological standards, the present study adopted a data-driven re-examination of the original pool of items. The aim was twofold: (a) to verify whether the two-factor theoretical model remained optimal, and (b) to explore whether a shorter, more culturally adaptable structure could be identified. Contemporary psychometric research demonstrates that carefully constructed short-form scales can increase practicality, facilitate cross-cultural applications, and reduce participant burden, provided that rigorous procedures are followed to safeguard reliability and validity (see Smith et al., 2000).

## **Method**

### ***Participants***

The study included 310 participants (180 women, 58.1%, and 130 men, 41.9%), aged 18–39 years ( $M = 27.55$ ,  $SD = 8.10$ ). Educational attainment ranged from secondary education ( $n = 179$ , 57.7%) to higher education ( $n = 131$ , 42.3%). Most participants lived independently ( $n = 204$ , 65.8%), whereas 106 (34.2%) lived with their family of origin. Contact with the family of origin was reported as daily ( $n = 133$ , 42.9%), several times per week ( $n = 109$ , 35.2%), several times per month ( $n = 53$ , 17.1%), or none/occasional ( $n = 11$ , 3.5%). Most participants were in an informal ( $n = 150$ , 48.4%) or formal relationship ( $n = 67$ , 21.6%), while 93 (30.0%) were single. Fifty-eight participants (18.7%) were raising at least one child.

### ***Procedure and Data Collection***

The study received ethical approval as part of a broader research project from the Ethics Committee of the University of Gdańsk (opinion no. 31/2025/WNS). Participants were recruited using a convenience sampling approach through online announcements inviting adults to voluntarily take part in a study on family relationships. Participation was anonymous and not incentivized. Data was collected online using Google Forms. Participants were informed about anonymity and provided informed consent prior to participation.

### ***Measures***

Family loyalty was assessed using the 37-item version of the Family Loyalty Questionnaire (FLQ; Jarlińska, 2023). Participants rated each item on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*definitely not*) to 5 (*definitely yes*). The instructions clarified that ‘family’ referred to people connected to the participant since early life (e.g., parents, grandparents, siblings, and other close relatives).

### ***Statistical Analysis***

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with oblique rotation (Oblimin) was used to examine the latent structure of the scale. Factor retention was based

on a combination of criteria: (a) eigenvalues  $\geq 1$ , (b) inspection of the scree plot, and (c) factor interpretability. Items were considered for removal if they showed primary factor loadings below .40, if their retention reduced subscale reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ), or if they impaired factor interpretability. After item screening, a follow-up EFA was conducted on the retained item set to re-examine and refine the emergent factor structure. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and McDonald's omega. For omega, we report the model basis explicitly: for each subscale we used a one-factor model; for the full 15-item questionnaire we used a bifactor model with a general factor and three group factors, and we report both omega total ( $\omega_t$ ) and omega hierarchical ( $\omega_h$ ). All analyses were conducted in R version 4.4.1 (R Core Team, 2025) using the packages psych (Revelle, 2015), GPArotation (Bernaards & Jennrich, 2005), nFactors (Raiche & Magis, 2025), and tidyverse (Wickham et al., 2019).

## Results

### *Item Reduction*

Item reduction refers to applying pre-specified removal rules based on the initial EFA output; the subsequent EFA conducted on the retained items served to re-establish the final factor structure and obtain interpretable loadings. The initial EFA revealed a three-factor structure of the questionnaire. Applying the item-reduction rules led to the removal of 22 items due to low primary loadings or adverse effects on internal consistency (Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18, 23, 24, 26, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, and 36). The full list of item statements is available in the OSF repository (file KLR.xlsx, sheet "Items"). We retained the remaining 15 items for further analysis and ran a second EFA to verify the final structure.

### *Exploratory Factor Analysis*

The EFA on the 15 retained items supported a three-factor solution: Family Bond (FB), Family Dependence (FD), and Family Obligations (FO). Table 1 reports descriptive statistics and factor loadings for the final set of items.

**Table 1***Descriptive Statistics and EFA Loadings for FLQ-15 Items Based on Pilot Study*

Item FLQ-15	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Skew.	Kurt.	Factor loadings (EFA)		
					Family Bond	Family Dependence	Family Obligations
1.	2.15	1.16	0.71	-0.45		<b>.67</b>	
2.	3.99	1.16	-1.06	0.23	.38		<b>.44</b>
3.	2.48	1.16	0.38	-0.67		<b>.81</b>	
4.	3.90	1.12	-0.73	-0.42			<b>.69</b>
5.	3.76	1.12	-0.73	-0.13	<b>.68</b>		
6.	2.34	1.13	0.47	-0.67		<b>.74</b>	
7.	3.54	1.10	-0.57	-0.30			<b>.46</b>
8.	1.92	1.18	1.08	0.07		<b>.49</b>	
9.	2.93	1.40	-0.04	-1.31			<b>.73</b>
10.	3.08	1.16	-0.23	-0.76	<b>.65</b>		
11.	3.45	1.07	-0.48	-0.32			<b>.42</b>
12.	3.71	1.16	-0.70	-0.29	<b>.80</b>		
13.	2.48	1.40	0.44	-1.16		<b>.41</b>	
14.	3.32	1.26	-0.35	-0.91	<b>.64</b>		
15.	3.76	1.19	-0.65	-0.59	<b>.66</b>		

*Note.*  $N = 310$ . Oblimin rotation was applied. Primary factor loadings ( $\geq .40$ ) are shown in bold. Loadings  $< .30$  are suppressed to enhance table clarity.

The Family Bond factor reflects emotional attachment to the family, endorsement of family values, and involvement in family life. It captures the extent to which individuals perceive their family as central to their identity and experience emotional closeness and a desire to maintain strong family relationships. Items with the highest loadings on this factor include Item 12 (“I feel a strong attachment to my family”;  $\lambda = .80$ ) and Item 5 (“My family is the most important to me”;  $\lambda = .68$ ), both reflecting strong emotional ties to the family. In the final FLQ-15, the FB subscale consists of Items 5, 10, 12, 14, and 15. The second factor (Family Dependence) includes items such as Item 3 (“I often give up on plans or satisfying my needs if I feel it would go against my family”;  $\lambda = .81$ ) and Item 6 (“I withdraw from actions if I feel they contradict family principles”;  $\lambda = .74$ ), reflecting difficulty in autonomous decision-making due to familial influence. This factor concerns the extent to which an individual relies on emotional, financial, or physical support

from the family and may involve expectations for support in both everyday duties and challenging life circumstances. High dependence may result in stronger ties but also hinder individual independence. The final subscale comprises Items 1, 3, 6, 8, and 13.

The Family Obligations factor captures a perceived sense of duty and responsibility toward family members, particularly parents, stemming from feelings of gratitude and reciprocity for past sacrifices. This factor reflects beliefs about the obligation to support the family's well-being, including caregiving, assistance during crises, and contributions to family functioning. Items with high loadings on this factor include Item 9 ("I feel I owe a debt to my parents who sacrificed a lot for me";  $\lambda = .73$ ) and Item 4 ("My parents sacrificed a lot for me";  $\lambda = .69$ ), both expressing a sense of indebtedness and moral obligation. The FO subscale consists of Items 2, 4, 7, 9, and 11. For transparency, we report eigenvalues and variance explained by each factor, as well as inter-factor correlations. The eigenvalues were 3.13 for FB, 2.59 for FD, and 1.77 for FO. These factors explained 20.9%, 17.3%, and 11.8% of the variance, respectively, accounting for 49.9% of the total variance. Inter-factor correlations were moderate to strong:  $r$  (FB, FD) = .38,  $r$  (FB, FO) = .61, and  $r$  (FD, FO) = .50. This pattern indicates that while the three factors are clearly distinguishable, they are also meaningfully related, consistent with the conceptualization of family loyalty as a multidimensional yet coherent construct.

Together, these three components integrate into an overarching stance toward the family. High family loyalty can strengthen family ties but may also shape individual behavior by prioritizing family needs over personal goals. The complete Family Loyalty Questionnaire (FLQ-15) is presented in the supplementary material.

### ***Reliability***

Reliability of the FLQ-15 indicated satisfactory to high internal consistency. Subscale reliability (one-factor model) was as follows: FB Cronbach's  $\alpha = .84$ , McDonald's  $\omega$  (total) = .86; FD Cronbach's  $\alpha = .76$ , McDonald's  $\omega$  (total) = .83; FO Cronbach's  $\alpha = .78$ , McDonald's  $\omega$  (total) = .81.

For the full FLQ-15 (bifactor model), reliability indices were: Cronbach's  $\alpha = .89$ , McDonald's  $\omega$  (total) = .93, and McDonald's  $\omega$  (hierarchical) = .60. This pattern suggests that while the general family loyalty factor accounts for a substantial portion of reliable variance ( $\omega_h$ ), specific subfactors also make meaningful contributions, as reflected in the higher  $\omega_t$  value.

### *Preliminary Conclusions*

This transition from a two- to a three-factor model reflects a conceptual shift: from a primarily psychodynamic framing, emphasizing intrapsychic conflict, toward a systemic-relational framing that differentiates qualitatively distinct modes of loyalty expression. Analyses revealed that the negative dimension of loyalty, originally treated as unidimensional, was better represented by two distinct components: FD, reflecting lack of autonomy and excessive reliance on the family system, and FO, referring to perceived duties, expectations, and indebtedness. Alongside these, a positive factor FB captures attachment, continuity of traditions, and mutual support.

Importantly, this structure resonates with cross-cultural research on filial piety, where both two- and three-factor models have been reported (Różycka-Tran, Jurek, Olech, & Dmochowski, 2021; Yeh, 2003), underscoring the complexity of negative dimensions and their diverse functional implications.

### **STUDY 2: VALIDATION STUDY**

The primary objective of Study 2 was to confirm the three-factor structure of the Family Loyalty Questionnaire—Short Form (FLQ-15) using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). A secondary objective was to evaluate the construct validity of the FLQ-15 by examining its relationships with theoretically related psychological constructs. In line with the assumptions outlined in the introductory section, it was hypothesized that dimensions of family loyalty would be positively associated with filial piety, attachment dimensions, and identity integration. Specifically, all three dimensions of the FLQ-15 were expected to show positive correlations with reciprocal and authoritarian filial piety, reflecting a universal dimension of loyalty. Moreover, it was assumed that stronger Family Bond (FB) would be associated with lower levels of attachment anxiety and avoidance, whereas stronger FB and lower levels of Family Obligations (FO) and Family Dependence (FD) would be associated with higher levels of identity integration. Together, these analyses aimed to provide evidence for the convergent and discriminant validity of the FLQ-15, confirming that its dimensions capture distinct yet theoretically consistent patterns of relational functioning.

## Measures and Procedure

### *Participants*

The sample comprised 304 participants (210 women, 69.1%; 89 men, 29.3%; 4 non-binary individuals, 1.3%), aged 18–29 years ( $M = 21.70$ ,  $SD = 5.27$ ). Most participants had primary or secondary education ( $n = 245$ , 80.6%), whereas 59 (19.4%) had higher education. Regarding their place of residence, 110 participants (36.2%) lived in a large city, 64 (21.1%) in a city with 150,000–500,000 inhabitants, 24 (7.9%) in a city of 50,000–150,000, 42 (13.8%) in a city or town with fewer than 50,000 inhabitants, and 64 (21.1%) in rural areas. The size of the family of origin ranged from 1 to 18 members ( $M = 4.42$ ,  $SD = 1.23$ ). Most mothers had higher education ( $n = 211$ , 69.4%), while 93 (30.6%) had primary or secondary education; for fathers, 160 (52.6%) had higher education and 144 (47.4%) had primary or secondary education.

### *Procedure*

The positive opinion of the Ethics Committee, referred to in Study 1, was also obtained for Study 2. Similarly to Study 1, participants were recruited through convenience sampling via online advertisements and university communication channels, inviting voluntary and anonymous participation without compensation. The procedure was the same as in Study 1, plus instruments for validity testing. Data were collected online using Profitest.

### *Measures*

Family loyalty was measured using the Family Loyalty Questionnaire—Short Form (FLQ-15) developed in Study 1. The FLQ-15 assesses three dimensions of family loyalty: Family Bond, Family Dependence, and Family Obligations, capturing both adaptive and maladaptive expressions of loyalty within the family system.

To assess filial piety, the Dual Filial Piety Scale—Polish version (DFPS-PL; Yeh & Bedford, 2003; Różycka-Tran, Jurek, Olech, & Dmochowski, 2021) was used. The DFPS-PL distinguishes between two dimensions: Reciprocal Filial Piety (RFP), reflecting emotionally grounded care and mutual affection, and Authoritarian Filial Piety (AFP), reflecting obligation-based respect and hierar-

chical family relations. In the present sample, reliability indices were satisfactory for DFPS-PL: RFP:  $\alpha = .88$ ,  $\omega_t = .89$ ; AFP:  $\alpha = .76$ ,  $\omega_t = .78$ .

Attachment styles were assessed using the Revised Experiences in Close Relationships Scale (ECR-R; Lubiewska et al., 2016). The abbreviated Polish version recommended by the authors was employed. It consists of 16 items rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*) and measures two dimensions of adult attachment: attachment anxiety and closeness in relationships. In the present study, reliability was as follows for two ECR-R dimensions:  $\alpha = .88$ ,  $\omega_t = .89$  for Anxiety;  $\alpha = .86$ ,  $\omega_t = .87$  for Closeness.

To assess personal identity development, the Identity subscale from the Erikson Psychosocial Stages Inventory (EPSI; Rosenthal et al., 1981) was used in the Polish adaptation by Michałek-Kwiecień (2022). The subscale comprises 12 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) and measures the overall level of identity integration and coherence. The reliability in the presented study for EPSI Identity was as follows:  $\alpha = .74$ ,  $\omega_t = .88$ .

### Statistical Analysis

We conducted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using the Maximum Likelihood with Robust Standard Errors (MLR) estimation method in R version 4.4.1 (R Core Team, 2025) with the lavaan package (Rosseel, 2012). We tested a three-factor model (FB, FD, FO) and compared it to a one-factor model. The choice of a correlated three-factor CFA model, rather than a higher-order or ESEM model, was intentional. This approach aligns with the study's aim to verify the distinctiveness of the three theoretically derived sub-dimensions of family loyalty while maintaining theoretical parsimony and comparability with previous research. At the same time, the potential presence of a general factor was examined indirectly through bifactor-based reliability indices ( $\omega_t$ ,  $\omega_h$ ). Model fit was evaluated using the chi-square statistic ( $\chi^2$ ), the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI), the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) with its 90% confidence interval, and the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). Following Hu and Bentler (1999), CFI/TLI  $\geq .95$ , RMSEA  $\leq .06$ , and SRMR  $\leq .08$  indicate good fit. At the same time, we acknowledge that less strict cutoffs (CFI/TLI  $\geq .90$ , RMSEA/ SRMR  $\leq .08$ ) are often considered acceptable in applied research (Brown, 2015). We inspected modification indices (MI) to

evaluate potential residual covariances but prioritized theoretical parsimony and cross-study comparability. Reliability ( $\alpha$ ,  $\omega$ ) was computed as in Study 1 (subscales: one-factor; total scale: bifactor).

## Results

### *Confirmatory Factor Analysis*

The three-factor model demonstrated acceptable (but not optimal) fit according to the less stringent cutoff criteria recommended for applied research (Brown, 2015):  $\chi^2(87) = 216.66$ ,  $p < .01$ ; CFI = .911; TLI = .893; RMSEA = .070, 90% CI [.059, .081]; SRMR = .062. It also outperformed the one-factor model ( $\chi^2(90) = 334.72$ ,  $p < .01$ ; CFI = .833; TLI = .805; RMSEA = .095, 90% CI [.085, .105]; SRMR = .072). All items showed significant and sufficiently high factor loadings ( $> .50$ ) on their intended factors (see Table 2). The FB latent factor was highly correlated with FD ( $r = .70$ ) and strongly correlated with FO ( $r = .82$ ). The correlation between FD and FO was also substantial ( $r = .69$ ).

In line with the prior empirical findings, we additionally tested a two-factor model in which FD and FO items were specified to load on a single latent factor (FD–FO), while FB was retained as a separate factor. This solution corresponds to the structure reported in earlier work and reflects the possibility that the FD and FO dimensions may represent closely related manifestations of a broader construct. However, the two-factor model showed clearly inferior fit compared to the three-factor solution:  $\chi^2(89) = 311.81$ ,  $p < .001$ ; CFI = .875; TLI = .853; RMSEA = .082, 90% CI [.072, .093]; SRMR = .067. Although all factor loadings were statistically significant and of acceptable strength, overall model fit fell below commonly accepted thresholds for adequate fit and was markedly worse than that observed for the three-factor model, both in terms of incremental fit indices and absolute misfit (RMSEA).

At the same time, we acknowledge that the model does not meet more stringent cutoff values often recommended for excellent fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Modification indices (MI  $> 10$ ) suggested several potential cross-loadings (e.g., FB  $\rightarrow$  item #9, FD  $\rightarrow$  item #7, FO  $\rightarrow$  item #1), which were not freed to preserve simple structure and because they lacked clear theoretical justification. Instead, we examined three residual covariances motivated by item content overlap: item #3  $\sim\sim$  item #6 (FD items), item #7  $\sim\sim$  item #9 (FO items), and item #5  $\sim\sim$  item #7 (cross-subscale overlap).

Consistent with Brown's (2015) recommendation to evaluate model fit holistically and to consider theoretically justified local modifications, the revised three-factor model showed improved fit compared to the pre-specified model ( $\chi^2(84) = 179.82$ ,  $p < .001$ ; CFI = .934; TLI = .918; RMSEA = .061, 90% CI [.050, .073]; SRMR = .057). Importantly, the substantive conclusions regarding factor structure, factor loadings, and inter-factor correlations were unchanged. Therefore, in line with Brown (2015), we interpret and report the pre-specified three-factor model in the main text, while presenting the revised model as evidence of the stability and robustness of the solution.

**Table 2**

*Descriptive Statistics and Standardized Factor Loadings of the Three-Factor CFA Model of the Family Loyalty Questionnaire (FLQ-15) in the Validation Study*

Item FLQ-15	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Skew.	Kurt.	Factor loadings (CFA)		
					Family Bond	Family Dependence	Family Obligations
1.	2.31	0.96	0.40	-0.32		.62	
2.	3.94	0.99	-0.87	0.46			.63
3.	2.33	1.04	0.57	-0.38		.68	
4.	3.77	1.11	-0.69	-0.24			.70
5.	3.81	1.06	-0.78	0.16	.79		
6.	2.49	1.03	0.35	-0.57		.76	
7.	3.27	1.04	-0.30	-0.44			.56
8.	2.14	1.02	0.69	-0.10		.50	
9.	2.84	1.32	0.11	-1.15			.57
10.	3.18	1.13	-0.28	-0.73	.68		
11.	3.12	0.98	-0.27	-0.55			.55
12.	3.89	1.14	-1.00	0.27	.87		
13.	2.23	1.20	0.65	-0.60		.55	
14.	3.24	1.19	-0.31	-0.86	.64		
15.	3.79	1.23	-0.91	-0.22	.69		

*Note.*  $N = 304$ .

### *Reliability*

All three subscales showed satisfactory to good internal consistency when tested as one-factor models, supporting their use both individually and as part of the global family loyalty score. Cronbach's alpha and McDonald's omega values ranged from .73 to .88 (FB:  $\alpha = .85$ ,  $\omega = .88$ ; FD:  $\alpha = .75$ ,  $\omega = .80$ ; FO:  $\alpha = .73$ ,  $\omega = .77$ ). For the total scale (bifactor model), reliability was  $\alpha = .89$ ,  $\omega_h = .70$ , and  $\omega_t = .93$ , indicating that a substantial proportion of reliable variance can be attributed to the general family loyalty factor ( $\omega_h$ ), while additional reliable variance reflects the specific subdimensions (as captured by  $\omega_t$ ).

### *Validity Evidence Based on Relations with Other Variables*

To assess the validity of the instrument, the correlations between the three subscales of the FLQ-15 and other theoretically related variables were computed. The results are presented in Table 3. All subscales were positively correlated with RFP and AFP, confirming the alignment of the direction and strength of the relationships with theoretical expectations. The FB subscale showed a small but statistically significant positive correlation with closeness in romantic relationships and a positive correlation with the sense of identity, while showing a negative correlation with relationship anxiety.

**Table 3**

*Correlations Between FLQ-15 Subscales and External Constructs*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Pearson's <i>r</i>		
			FB	FD	FO
Family Bond (FB)	3.58	.91	–		
Family Dependence (FD)	2.30	.75	.59***	–	
Family Obligations (FO)	3.39	.76	.64***	.56***	–
Reciprocal Filial Piety	5.60	.94	.72***	.44***	.63***
Authoritarian Filial Piety	2.86	.90	.60***	.74***	.58***
Anxiety	3.65	1.33	-.14**	.10	.04
Closeness (lack of avoidance)	5.47	.98	.23***	-.10	.06
Identity	3.27	.76	.22***	-.08	.09

Note. *N* = 304.

\*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

## DISCUSSION

The objective of the present study was to develop and validate the Family Loyalty Questionnaire (FLQ-15) as a tool for assessing family loyalty in emotional, instrumental, and normative contexts. The findings from the pilot and validation studies confirm the theoretical and structural validity of the Family Loyalty Questionnaire (FLQ-15). The instrument demonstrates good reliability and significant correlations with other psychological variables, consistent with the theoretical assumptions. The findings support its utility in research on family loyalty within the context of interpersonal relationships and individual functioning.

### Factor Structure and Nature of the FLQ-15 Subscales

The factor analysis confirmed that the FLQ-15 has a three-factor structure composed of the following scales: FB, FD, and FO. In the present case, items were selected based on high factor loadings, strong internal consistency, and adequate representation of each construct. Importantly, the retained items refer explicitly to family-related behaviours and obligations rather than to broader intrapsychic dynamics, thereby increasing their cultural generalizability and ecological validity. The final FLQ-15 thus balances theoretical refinement (see Boszormenyi-Nagy & Framo, 1985; Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986; Boszormenyi-Nagy & Spark, 1984; Boszormenyi-Nagy & Ulrich, 1981; Różycka-Tran, Jurek, Olech, & Dmochowski, 2021; Yeh, 2003) with methodological pragmatism: it distinguishes three coherent factors while maintaining brevity, reliability, and cross-cultural applicability. The high internal consistency of the individual subscales, confirmed by Cronbach's alpha and McDonald's omega coefficients, indicates the tool's measurement precision.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was utilized to validate the three-factor model of the FLQ-15, thereby demonstrating an acceptable model fit. Convergence of fit indices, such as the comparative fit index (CFI) and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), indicated adequate fit, and the results of the single-factor analysis suggested that omitting the multidimensional structure would significantly deteriorate model fit. This finding lends support to the theoretical underpinnings that justify the delineation of three distinct subscales. From a theoretical standpoint, the three-factor model shifts the interpretation of loyalty from a dichotomous, psychodynamic framework

toward a systemic-relational perspective that distinguishes between qualitatively different expressions of loyalty. In particular, the division of the negative pole into *dependence* and *obligations* enables a more nuanced understanding of the tensions between autonomy, indebtedness, and relational cohesion. This distinction is consistent with broader cross-cultural research on filial piety, where both two- and three-factor structures have been identified (Różycka-Tran, Jurek, Truong, & Olech, 2021; Yeh, 2003). The three-dimensional structure of the FLQ-15 appears similar to other scales, such as the Three-Dimensional Filial Piety Scale: family role norms, balance of interests, and good affection (Shi & Wang, 2019). From a methodological perspective, the re-analysis of existing data demonstrated that the previous two-factor model was not optimal, whereas the three-factor solution yielded higher factor loadings, improved reliability indices, and a more interpretable structure. Importantly, the development of a short-form version (FLQ-15) responds also to the increasing demand for brief, psychometrically robust measures that reduce participant burden without compromising validity (Smith et al., 2000). By retaining items with strong psychometric properties and clear family-related content, the FLQ-15 achieves both parsimony and cultural adaptability.

### **Construct Validity and Associations with Attachment and Identity**

The validation results confirmed the expected correlations of the FLQ-15 with other instruments measuring family loyalty, attachment, and personal identity. The observed correlation with the DFPS-PL (Różycka-Tran, Jurek, Olech, & Dmochowski, 2021) suggests that family loyalty may possess a universal character, although its manifestations may vary depending on cultural context. The findings also confirmed the hypothesized relationships between dimensions of family loyalty and attachment styles. The present study found that a strong sense of family bond was associated with lower levels of attachment anxiety and avoidance. This finding is consistent with the results of previous studies, which indicated that a secure family bond supports the development of stable interpersonal relationships (Lubiewska et al., 2016). Adaptive loyalty expressions, such as a strong sense of family bond, may be more closely associated with secure attachment orientations. Maladaptive expressions (FD and FO) showed weaker or non-significant associations with attachment dimensions, suggesting these aspects may reflect context-specific familial pressures and obligations or socialization patterns rather than enduring at-

tachment orientations. The lack of strong correlations between maladaptive aspects of family loyalty (FD, FO) and attachment styles may do not undermine the validity of FLQ-15 but highlight its capacity to distinguish between relationally contingent versus dispositional aspects of loyalty. This highlights the distinct nature of the “dark side” of family loyalty and supports further investigation into situational, cultural, and relational moderators.

As predicted, the results also indicated associations between loyalty processes and identity development. Adaptive loyalty expressions, such as a strong sense of family bond, may support the formation of a more integrated and coherent sense of identity among young people. The results of the study indicate that individuals who possess a robust sense of familial connection are distinguished by a stable self-concept, a pursuit of affiliation, and a sense of security in interpersonal relationships. Hildreth et al. (2016) advanced the argument that loyalty constitutes a component of core identity, as well as a cultural script embedded in relational schemas. This suggests that loyalty comprises both a personal and an interpersonal element of identity.

Conversely, an excess of familial pressure to achieve high standards may result in social isolation among young adults in the absence of strong, healthy bonds with close family members. This condition, termed *hikikomori* in Japanese, is characterized by an inability to engage in the conventional developmental tasks associated with emerging adulthood (Teo & Gaw, 2010). These include the transition from the family home to independent living and the commencement of employment. Social withdrawal can be understood as a response to expectations that prove challenging to fulfil. The attainment of independence is known to be hindered by a combination of factors, including a competitive and high-pressure environment in which the individual is raised, as well as underdeveloped paternal relationships and maternal overprotection (Szluz, 2018). The observed correlations between identity synthesis and diffusion and the dimensions of family loyalty support the convergent validity of the FLQ-15.

It is a commonly held view that loyalty constitutes a form of fidelity towards significant relationships. Therefore, it can be deduced that the need for belonging may be linked to behaviours that demonstrate loyalty. The fundamental need for belonging has been demonstrated to motivate individuals to express loyalty in order to fulfil this need (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Berry et al., 2021). It is an established fact that identity coherence, social bonding, and attachment security are significant factors in supporting psychological well-being and positive life outcomes (Helliwell & Putnam, 2004; Luyckx et

al., 2008; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). The hypothesis that adaptive features of family loyalty play a synergistic role in psychological balance and development is one that merits further investigation.

### **Strengths and Limitations of the Study**

The present study has several notable strengths that underscore both its scientific and practical value. The primary significance of the concept under discussion is theoretical, in the sense that it contributes to the development of measurement tools within the domain of family loyalty. The FLQ-15, developed and validated through this research, represents a modern instrument that accurately captures the three primary dimensions of family loyalty: family bond, family dependence, and family obligations. In undertaking this study, the research team have addressed a significant gap in the extant literature on the subject, thereby enabling systematic psychological exploration of this complex phenomenon.

Furthermore, a significant accomplishment of the study is the identification of both adaptive and maladaptive dimensions of family loyalty. Examining these two facets—positive and developmentally supportive versus negative and socially isolating—enhances our understanding of how family loyalty can affect psychological well-being and the social and personal integration of individuals. This distinction is of crucial importance for future research in the field of loyalty, and has potential applications in therapeutic interventions, where components of loyalty that are maladaptive can be addressed.

The study's cultural context also merits attention. Although the research was conducted within a single national setting, this strong cultural grounding should be considered both a strength and a limitation. The FLQ-15 was developed within a cultural context characterized by relatively strong family bonds and pronounced intergenerational obligations, and its applicability to more individualistic cultural contexts cannot be assumed without further validation. In the Polish context, the coexistence of robust emotional bonds and pronounced intergenerational obligations reflects the tension between collectivistic family norms and increasing individualization characteristic of post-transition societies. This interpretation is consistent with broader evidence on cultural change in post-transition societies, which increasingly combine collectivistic family values with growing individual autonomy—a pattern described in value transition theory (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). Such cultural

dynamics may foster hybrid forms of loyalty that integrate traditional obligations with growing autonomy needs. Accordingly, the present findings provide a meaningful foundation for advancing cross-cultural research on family loyalty. Future cross-cultural studies could examine how these dimensions assessed by the FLQ-15 manifest in societies with differing value orientations, such as collectivistic versus individualistic cultures, thereby offering a more comprehensive understanding of the cultural dynamics underlying family loyalty.

Notwithstanding the study's merits, it is imperative to acknowledge its limitations when interpreting the results. Importantly, the research was cross-sectional in nature, which limits the ability to make causal interpretations of relationships between family loyalty and constructs such as attachment or identity. The implementation of longitudinal studies could provide a better insight into the temporal dynamics underlying these relationships.

Another limitation pertains to the representativeness of the sample. The study involved a specific age group, namely emerging and established adults, from a single cultural background, and both samples were obtained through convenience sampling, which limits the generalizability of the findings. In addition, detailed background information on participants was not collected. As these variables may be relevant for understanding family system dynamics, their absence should be considered when interpreting the results. Future studies should include more diverse samples in terms of age, gender, socioeconomic status, cultural background, and family structure. This would facilitate the acquisition of a more comprehensive understanding of family loyalty.

Furthermore, the tools employed in the study, including the FLQ-15 and other scales, relied on self-report, which introduces the potential for cognitive biases, such as social desirability. The inherent subjective nature of self-assessment has the potential to compromise the reliability of the data obtained. Future research could benefit from integrating multiple methods, such as interviews, observations, or external evaluations, to produce a more comprehensive picture.

Finally, the study primarily focused on examining relationships among family loyalty, attachment, and identity, without including other potential influential variables, such as social norms, past experiences or family structure. Family loyalty is embedded in cultural norms, and its expression varies across contexts (Różycka-Tran, Jurek, Truong, & Olech, 2021; Różycka-Tran et al., 2024; Różycka-Tran & Lewandowska-Walter, 2024). While all data in the present study were based on self-report, future research could incorporate observational (family interaction tasks, observation) and external evaluation

(parent or partner report) methods to validate findings and reduce potential bias. Including temperament in future studies could also help elucidate the interplay between innate predispositions and socialized loyalty behaviours. If these variables included in future studies, a more holistic view of the factors that shape family loyalty and family dynamics could be obtained.

### **Practical Implications**

The expansion of our understanding of family loyalty and resilience in the context of emerging and established adulthood—and consequently identity formation—can facilitate a more scientific grasp of this critical period in human development, which is characterized by substantial change and life-shaping decisions (Arnett, 2000; 2004; Mehta et al., 2020). A review of the extant literature indicates that this area remains underexplored, thus indicating the need for further investigation of these processes in the developmental context.

The results of the study have practical applications in both therapy and daily life. It is posited that a comprehensive understanding of the findings can facilitate enhanced insight into the decisions made by young adults and the family environments that either promote or impede their development and life planning. The verification of the relationships between family loyalty and constructs such as attachment or identity has the potential to enhance comprehension of how family loyalty influences emotional development and social adaptation, particularly during emerging adulthood. Findings have clear implications for psychotherapy and family counseling. Awareness of maladaptive loyalty patterns can inform interventions aimed at promoting autonomy, mitigating excessive obligations, and supporting identity formation. Clinicians can use FLQ-15 to identify relational dynamics that hinder healthy development, thereby improving psychosocial outcomes. It is imperative to comprehend the dynamics of family loyalty in order to ascertain the areas in which families can provide support to young individuals in their personal and social development.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

In conclusion, the study results indicate that the FLQ-15 is a valid and reliable tool for measuring family loyalty across three core dimensions: bonding, dependence, and obligation. The confirmation of its external validity with

regard to other psychological constructs underscores its potential for future research on family relationships, attachment, and identity development. The present study aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the concepts of loyalty and family resilience within the context of emerging and established adulthood and identity formation. These unique life stages are of particular interest in this study, and the insights gained from this research may have significant applications in a variety of fields. Research in this area may also have practical applications in therapy and everyday life, helping to better understand young people's decisions and the impact of the family environment on their development and choices.

### **CRedit Author Statement**

ALEKSANDRA LEWANDOWSKA-WALTER (35%): conceptualization, methodology, writing (original draft, review and editing), supervision.

NIKOLETA JARLIŃSKA (25%): conceptualization, methodology, validation, writing (original draft).

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