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Exploring the appropriateness of the NEPEM parenting self-assessment among Chinese parents

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ABSTRACT

A parenting self-assessment, based on the National Extension Parent Education Model (NEPEM), is a 160 item questionnaire designed to measure parentsô self-efficacy in relation to six domains of critical parenting practices (i.e., Care for Self, Understand, Guide, Nurture, Motivate, and Advocate). This study explored the applicability of the self-assessment to parents in China. After multistage translation, a convenience sample of 18 Chinese parents living in China was invited to participate in the sample 1 study conducted online to evaluate the applicability of each question. Results of the sample 1 study suggested that 8 of 160 questions be eliminated due to lack of relevance to Chinese culture. The modified version of the self-assessment (152 questions) was distributed to Chinese parents in China through an online survey using SurveyGizmo. Chinese parents were informed of the study through a recruitment letter which was posted on Chinese parenting Web sites, and sent to kindergarten teachers and directors in the geographic areas that had less Internet coverage to reduce the sample bias. Fourteen Chinese parents responded to all the questions on the modified assessment. The two data sets (sample 1 and sample 2 self-assessments) were tested using chi-square analyses to ensure that there were no statistically significant differences between the two groups of individuals who completed the self-assessments. After determining that there were no significant differences between the two groups, data from both groups were combined to create a new data set representing responses from 32 parents. A reliability analysis of the 152 item self-assessment revealed the following Cronbachôs Alphas for the 6 domains: Care for Self, 0.88; Understand, 0.86; Guide, 0.89; Nurture, 0.93; Motivate, 0.92; and

Advocate, 0.84. In conclusion, based on a reliability analysis of 32 cases, this study suggests that the 152-item parenting self-assessment is culturally relevant for Chinese parents living in China.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Parenting is a timeless topic. Societies have always, and will continue to need individuals (e.g., parents, caregivers) committed to the role of protecting, nourishing, and guiding children through their developing years to maturity (Brooks, 2011). Many scholars refer to the process of parenting as being a lifelong commitment; the parenting role extends beyond when children become adults and goes through developmental stages and transitions just as childhood, adolescence, and early adult development. Many people agree that parenting today is more challenging than it used to be, and todayôs parents ñare often uncertain about what is the right thing to do in raising their childrenò (Smith, Cudaback, Goddard, & Myers-Walls, 1994, p.7). This is a result of many factors, such as parents are more isolated from extended families, they are more occupied by work responsibilities, and children are facing more temptations because of the wider use of new technology (Smith et al.,1994).

Cultural background, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, educational attainment, and past experiences influence parenting practices (Brooks, 2011). Thus, like the diversity of the U.S. population, there is great diversity among parenting beliefs, perceptions, attitudes, and practices in the U.S. (Brooks, 2011; Smith et al., 1994). In the United States, the large majority of parenting research studies have been conducted based on values and beliefs of western culture; limited research has been conducted focused on values and beliefs of eastern cultures, including the Chinese culture (Gai & Wang, 2006; Wang, 2010; Yang, 2007).

Literature suggests that a self-assessment tool could be beneficial to Chinese parents to help them become problem-solvers in their daily practices as well as to feel

empowered and confident in their parenting roles (Smith et al., 1994; Kendall, 2004). This study investigates the relevance of a parenting self-assessment tool based on normative parenting practices in the U.S. to Chinese parents raising their children in China.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Based on social learning theory, self-efficacy refers to a belief of oneôs own ability to successfully perform a certain task in a particular setting (Bandura, 1982, 1989). Self-efficacy is predominantly formed based on four factors: personal experiences, including both success and failures; vicarious experiences; emotional arousal; and persuasion. Personal experiences of success or failure are an essential source of self-efficacy (Bandura 1982, 1989). A person with high self-efficacy is more likely to persist on a given task until they achieve success; while a person with low self-efficacy is more likely to give up on the task before they achieve the set goal, even if he/she has the required knowledge or skills. Self-efficacy also relates to the knowledge or skills a person has, as well as environmental conditions such as social support (Bandura 1982, 1989; Kendall, 2005).

Self-efficacy is described to perform a particular task, which contains several different domains, according to specific requirements (Bandura, 1989). As a result, when accessing self-efficacy, a ñmultifaceted measure that relates to several distinct and specific behaviorsò should be used (DesJardin, 2006, p.393). It has been shown that the specific behaviors rather than general definitions are more likely to be adapted in different circumstances (Wang,Wiley, & Zhou, 2007).

The measure of self-efficacy also needs to take place in a particular social setting (Bandura, 1989). Since self efficacy is not viewed as ña global, fixed, personality traitò but ñan integral component of a dynamic emergent systemò (DesJardin, 2006, p. 393), the

content being measured needs to depend on a specific situation and target to a specific population (DesJardin, 2006).

Parental self-efficacy is defined as parentsô ñconfidenceò and ñcompetenceò in performing parenting tasks (Bandura, 1989; Kendall, 2005, p. 394). According to Kendall, a large number of studies suggested that parental self-efficacy is a ñcentral correlate of parenting behaviorò, and it ñmay mediate the effects of a number of parent and child variablesò pertaining to parenting (Kendall, 2005, p. 175). Although various scales have been developed from numerous studies conducted on parenting self-efficacy, most studies were targeted to middle-class White, European parents (Kendall, 2005).

Parenting in China

Chinese parents who embrace traditional Chinese values highly value respect to authorities, including elders, teachers, parents, etc. (Chao, 1994; Quoss, 1995; Xu, 2005; & Yan, 2009). Many Chinese parents are even deeply affected by an extreme version of this idea and believe ñthere are no wrong parentsò (Jin, 2007). Literature reveals that based on Confucian philosophy, which is the core of Chinese value system, the authoritarian parenting style is the norm in the traditional Chinese family (Chao, 1994; Quoss, 1995; Xu, 2005). Thus, in China today, there are parents who hold these traditional values, beliefs, and even myths which shape how they parent their children (Gai & Wang, 2006; Wang, 2009).

Changes in the Chinese governmentôs birth policy led to Chinese parents exploration of effective parenting strategies for their childrenôs higher academic achievement. In the early 1980s, the Chinese government implemented the One-Child-

Policy which stated that every married couple was allowed to have only one child (National Population, 2010). Because the Chinese government had just re-established university entrance exam based on academic quality in 1977, many parents felt that they ñhad only one chanceò to potentially change their family conditions and quality of life through education of the next generation. As a result, they started to be committed to prepare their children early for higher school performance because they could not ñtake risks in their childrenôs educationò, and they ñcannot accept failureò in child rearing (Wang, 2009).

In 1994, when Montessori education was introduced into China and a couple of Chinese Montessori teachers trained in the United Kingdom returned home, some parents began to think differently about preparing their child for achieving academically. The Montessori philosophy encourages parents to pay attention to their childrenôs overall wellbeing, not just their academic achievement. The newly trained teachers gave speeches, wrote books, opened classes and even built schools to promote this philosophy. Additionally, they pointed out the negative consequences of overlooking childrenôs social emotional development. For many Chinese parents this was an eye-opening experience, and they looked forward to more information to adopt such new ideas into their daily practices (Wang, 2009).

In recent years, the government of Peopleôs Republic of China has shown increased interest in supporting parents to help their children develop morally, intellectually, physically, socially, and emotionally. The highest education authorities in China, the Chinese Ministry of Education (CMOE) and the Womenôs Federation of China, amended the original *Parent Education Code* to emphasize the recent need of

improving parentsô parenting knowledge and skills through professional intervention (Chinese Family Education, 2008). Additionally, more opportunities and options have been created in Chinese public schools to increase parental involvement in their childrenôs overall development (e.g., social and emotional development) beyond academic success (Wei, 2008). Because traditional Chinese parents are more likely to focus on childrenôs academic achievement and educational development, they may feel inadequate with the increased emphasis on childrenôs overall development (Gai, 2006; Liu, Gai & Wang, 2009; Yang, 2007; Wang, 2010; Wei, 2008). According to a survey conducted in Changchun, 76.5% Chinese parents expressed their eagerness to learn more about parenting (Liu, 1996). Also, in a more recent survey conduct by The Newspaper of Chinese Women, approximately 60,000 couples admitted that they were ñfailureò as parents because they were absent from their childrenôs childhood or they did not have effective skills to raise their children the way they think they should have (Xin, 2007).

However, in China, there are few parenting education and research institutions, and relatively few parenting education professionals and research based parenting curricula to meet the needs of Chinese parents (Gai & Wang, 2006; Wang, 2010; Yang, 2007). Due to the stimulation of market profit, many low quality parenting programs and media products targeted to parents have been produced (Wang, 2010). Many of these services and products do not have a theoretical or evidence basis, and some of them contradict each other. Chinese parents are confused (Wang, 2010). They donôt know what organization or institution to turn to for credible parenting information and advice pertaining to their needs (Gai & Wang, 2006; Wang, 2010).

Ideal parenting programs are based on the ñbest researchò or ña comprehensive review of parent educationò (Goddard & Marshall, 2006). An instrument that measures parental self-efficacy as a result of participating in a parenting intervention would help evaluate the effectiveness of parenting interventions and be informative for professionals (Kendall, 2005). Kendall further indicated that an effective parenting self-assessment tool can increase parentsô awareness of their strengths as a parent, as well as opportunities they have for growth to become more effective in their parenting (2005).

NEPEM Parenting Self-Assessment

NEPEM Parenting Self-Assessment is a widely used parenting self-assessment tool in the United States. The NEPEM Parenting Self-Assessment is based on National Extension Parent Education Model (NEPEM) (Goddard & Dennis, 2004; Smith et al., 1994). The NEPEM model was developed through a thorough review of parenting literature and consensus building among 100 racially and ethnically diverse human development and parenting education faculty and extension specialists, and community based parenting educators across the U.S. (Goddard & Marshall, 2006; Smith et al., 1994). NEPEM includes 6 domains representing 29 critical parenting practices for effective parenting (Smith et al., 1994; Goddard & Marshall, 2006), and provides a framework for many parenting programs developed by Cooperative Extension and other organizations in the United States (Goddard & Marshall, 2006). See Table 1 for the NEPEM Model summary (Smith et al., 1994).

Table 1. NEPEM model summary

Domain	Items	Critical Parenting Practices
Care for Self	34	• Manage personal stress. • Manage family resources. • Offer support to other parents. • Ask for and accept support from others when needed. • Recognize oneôs own personal and parenting strengths. • Have a sense of purpose in setting child-rearing goals. • Cooperate with oneôs child-rearing partners.
Understand	16	• Observe and understand oneôs children and their development. • Recognize how children influence and respond to what happens around them.
Guide	27	• Model appropriate desired behavior. • Establish and maintain reasonable limits. • Provide children with developmentally appropriate opportunities to learn responsibility. • Convey fundamental values underlying basic human decency. • Teach problem-solving skills. • Monitor childrenôs activities and facilitate their contact with peers and adults.
Nurture	39	• Express affection and compassion. • Foster childrenôs self-respect and hope. • Listen and attend to childrenôs feelings and ideas. • Teach kindness. • Provide for the nutrition, shelter, clothing, health, and safety needs of oneôs children. • Celebrate life with oneôs children. • Help children feel connected to family history and cultural heritage.
Motivate	24	• Teach children about themselves, others, and the world around them. • Stimulate curiosity, imagination and the search for knowledge. • Create beneficial learning conditions. • Help children process and manage information.
Advocate	7	• Find, use and create community resources when needed to benefit oneôs children and the community of children. • Stimulate social change to create supportive environments for children and families. • Build relationships with family, neighborhood, and community groups.

Table 2. NEPEM model: means and standard deviations of number of items, and mean rating by experts of content validity

Categories and Priority Practices	No. Items	M	SD
Care for Self			
• Manage personal stress.	27	3.5	.5
• Manage family resources.	15	3.3	.6
• Offer support to other parents.	12	3.5	.7
• Ask for and accept support from others when needed.	14	3.7	.6
• Recognize oneôs own personal and parenting strengths.	13	3.8	.4
• Have a sense of purpose in setting child-rearing goals.	10	3.3	.8
• Cooperate with oneôs child-rearing partners.	10	3.5	.8
Understand			
• Observe and understand oneôs children and their development.	33	3.7	.6
• Recognize how children influence and respond to what happens around them.	18	3.3	.7
Guide			
• Model appropriate desired behavior.	11	3.4	.6
• Establish and maintain reasonable limits.	20	3.4	.6
• Provide children with developmentally appropriate opportunities to learn responsibility.	11	3.5	.6
• Convey fundamental values underlying basic human decency.	11	3.7	.6
• Teach problem-solving skills.			
• Monitor childrenôs activities and facilitate their contact with peers and adults.	11	3.7	.6
	15	3.5	.6
Nurture			
• Express affection and compassion.	13	3.5	.6
• Foster childrenôs self-respect and hope.	15	3.7	.6
• Listen and attend to childrenôs feelings and ideas.	13	3.7	.7
• Teach kindness.	11	3.8	.5
• Provide for the nutrition, shelter, clothing, health, and safety needs of oneôs children.	15	3.5	.8
• Celebrate life with oneôs children.	13	3.7	.5
• Help children feel connected to family history and cultural heritage.	15	3.7	.6
Motivate			
• Teach children about themselves, others, and the world around them.	16	3.5	.6
• Stimulate curiosity, imagination and the search for knowledge.			
• Create beneficial learning conditions.	12	3.9	.4
• Help children process and manage information.	10	3.8	.5
	10	3.7	.5
Advocate			
• Find, use and create community resources when needed to benefit oneôs children and the community of children.	10	3.9	.4
• Stimulate social change to create supportive environments for children and families.	10	3.8	.4
• Build relationships with family, neighborhood, and			

community groups.	14	3.9	.3

The Parenting Self-Assessment based on NEPEM represents all six NEPEM domains: Care for Self, Understand, Guide, Nurture, Motivate, and Advocate (Goddard & Dennis, 2004; Smith, 1994). It was decided that a content validity test should be conducted to determine whether NEPEM ñcovered a representative sample of the behavior domainsò that were measured (Edgmon & Goddard, 1996, p. 643). Accordingly, 84 of individuals known for their expertise related to parenting research, theory and practice were invited to participate in the study, 32 agreed to participate and eventually 23 completed it and returned the questionnaire (response rate was 27%). The response options were ñpoorlyò=1, ñsomewhatò=2, ñadequatelyò=3, and ñvery wellò=4. The range of the content validity rating was from 3.3 to 3.9 (Edgmon & Goddard, 1996). Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations of the respondentsô overall ratings of each priority practice scale (Edgmon & Goddard, 1996, P. 645).

The NEPEM Parenting Self-Assessment was chosen as the first trial of the investigation for Chinese population due to two reasons. Firstly, it was proved to be a promising parenting self-assessment tool in the U.S. context. Secondly, a few areas literature suggested that Chinese parents need to work on matching some domains of NEPEM. For example, Gai and Wang (2006) suggested that as social competition intensifies, many Chinese parentsô work pressure increased, which resulted in a series problems of family functioning. The first domain of NEPEM Care for Self including the practices such as ñmanaging personal stressò, ñmanaging family resourcesò, supporting other parents and accept othersô supporting (Smith et al., 1994) would be a good solution for this type of problems facing Chinese parents. Also, Yang (2007) pointed out that in current society, most families have one child and the child usually is the center of family.

It caused the parents overindulging their children while the children relying on the parents heavily and tend to have very low self-control, inter-personal and problem-solving skills (Yang, 2007). NEPEM domain Guide including practices such as ñestablish and maintain reasonable limitsò, ñteaching problem-solving skillsò, ñmonitor childrenôs activities, and facilitate their contact with peers and adultsò (Smith et al., 1994) might be a good solution for this problem. In addition, in traditional Chinese society, extended families and neighbors are important resources for parenting support; however, as urbanization dramatically increasing recently, such informal support for children and parents was significantly decreased (Gai & Wang, 2006). A new support system would be crucial for supporting parents and families. NEPEM domain of Advocate could effectively help Chinese society to build a formal community system through practices such as ñfind, use and create community resources when needed to benefit oneôs children and the community of childrenò, ñstimulate social change to create supportive environments for children and familiesò, and ñbuild relationships with family, neighborhood, and community groupsò.

Research Question

This pilot study examined if the NEPEM Parenting Self-Assessment is reliable for Chinese parents raising children in China.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Iowa State University (ISU). IRB approval documentation can be found in Appendix.

Participants

This study involved two steps in data collecting. Two samples of Chinese parents were taken. All participants in this study were parents who were born in China, currently living in China, and who have parents who are both Chinese. The study focused on Chinese parents who had children between the ages of 3 to 7 years. Children in this age range would typically attend kindergarten in China if they go to school (Gu, 2008). Table 3 shows the participantsô demographic information.

Table 3. Demographic information

Categories	Sample 1 N=18	Sample 2 N=14	Total N=32
Age			
• Younger than 25			
• 25-34	12	11	23
• 35-44	6	4	10
• 45-54			
• Older than 54			
Highest Level of Education			
• Middle school graduation or less			
• High school graduation	1	3	4
• Some college	11	6	17
• Bachelorôs degree	4	2	6
• Masterôs degree	2	3	5
• Ph.D.			
• Other			
My household annual income (Yuan) (1Yuan = 0.15 US Dollar)			
• Below 10,000			
• 10,000 - 49,999	2	5	7
• 50,000 - 99,999	6	5	11
• 100,000 - 499,999	9	4	13
• 500,000 - 999,999	1		1
• 1,000,000 ï 4,999,999			
• Higher than 5,000,000			

Instrument

In this study, Chinese parents were asked to complete the 160-item questionnaire, the NEPEM Parenting Self-Assessment, as well as respond to a series of demographic questions. Study participants were asked to respond to a five-point-Likert-type scale for each of the 160 questionnaire items: (1) very not true of me; (2) somewhat not true of me; (3) not sure; (4) somewhat true of me; (5) very true of me. Demographic questions pertained to participantsô gender, age, education, income, geographic region, and the age of their child(ren). The first step of this study (sample 1 study) also contains two additional questions: if each question is understandable, and if each question is applicable for Chinese parents. The second step of this study (sample 2 study) eliminated the questions that showed not applicable for Chinese questions by the first step, containing 152 questions of NEPEM Parenting Self-Assessment and demographic questions.

Translation

Three native Chinese speakers who study and work at a mid-western university, who have been in the United States for several years, and who have completed the human subject training at this samemid-western university assisted in translating the NEPEM Parenting Self-Assessment, demographic questions, consent document and recruitment letters from English to Chinese. One individual translated the instruments into Chinese and the other two individuals back-translated the instruments from Chinese to English. The back-translated documents were compared with the original English versions and were approved by the Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research at the university.

Media

The Internet is a primary way people in China receive and communicate information. Access to the Internet is available in Chinese peopleôs homes, schools, and workplaces, as well as in Internet bars which are open to anyone, in each city, town, and most villages in China (The CNNIC Report, 2009; Zhang, 2010). According to a report published in 2010, 99.3% of towns and 91.5% of villages in China have connected to the Internet (Zhang, 2010). To take advantage of the prevalence of Internet usage in China, this study was conducted online through SurveyGizmo, an online survey tool (http://www.surveygizmo.com/).

It is important to note that Internet coverage in China is uneven (The CNNIC Report, 2009; Zhang, 2010). In order to reduce the bias of sampling for the survey, a letter was sent to 8 kindergarten teachers or directors in the geographic areas that had less Internet coverage (i.e., Provinces of Guizhou, Anhui, Yunnan, and Gansu). Contact information for the kindergarten teachers and directors was gathered from school Web sites and teachersô online bulletin boards. A letter was prepared and emailed to teachers and directors requesting that they assist with this study by informing parents of the children in their classrooms about this study. Contacting teachers and directors to assist in recruiting parents for the study was done purposively to try and reach parents who lived in geographic areas that have less Internet coverage. The letter explained that parents could access the survey through a local Internet bar. Additionally, each person that responded to the survey was encouraged to share information about the study with their friends and relatives who had children between the ages of 3-7 years.

Sample 1 Study

The sample 1 study instrument included a Likert-type scale for the 160 NEPEM Parenting Self-Assessment questions, a briefdemographicsection, as well as two additional questions for each of 160 questions in which respondents were asked to provide a response of ñyesò or ñnoò. The additional questions focused on the applicability and clarity of each question, and were included to test the social validity (Wolf, 1978) of the 160 questions in the Parenting Self-Assessment. A convenience sample of 18 parents who met the study criteria was contacted and invited to participate in the sample 1 study.

Sample 2 Study

The sample 2 study instrument included a Likert-type scale for the 152 NEPEM Parenting Self-Assessment questions, after eliminating 8 questions which showed not applicable for Chinese parents from the sample 1 study, as well as a brief demographicsection. Results of the data submitted through SurveyGizmo associated with the online Parenting Self-Assessment revealed that 378 respondents opened the survey, 22 respondents agreed to participate, and 14 respondents completed and submitted ratings on all 152 questions of the Parenting Self-Assessment. The response rate was 5.8%, and the completion rate was 3.7%. In addition, the sample 2 study participants (14 parents) were from 8 provinces compared to sample 1 participants (18 parents) who were from 3 provinces.

Statistic Analysis

Statistics analysis were conducted on data from both samples. Six two-sample chi-square tests were conducted to determine whether or not there were statistically significant differences between the participantsô demographic information in sample 1 and sample 2 (e.g., age, income, education. The six two-sample chi-square test if there is statistical difference of different categories of the demographic information between sample 1 and sample 2, such as if there is statistical difference of people whose age are from 25 to 34 between sample 1 and sample 2. Because the frequency of some levels were less than 5, which violated the traditional assumption of chi-square, some levels were combined. The tests were hand calculated based on the formulas as following (Heckert & Filliben, 2003):

$$\chi^2 = \sum_{i=1}^{K} \frac{\left(K_1 R_i - K_2 S_i\right)^2}{R_i + S_i}$$

$$K_1 = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^{K} S_i}{\sum_{i=1}^{K} R_i}}$$

$$K_2 = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^{K} R_i}{\sum_{i=1}^{K} S_i}}$$

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

Results of the sample 1 study revealed that the NEPEM Parenting Self-Assessment was socially applicable for Chinese parents. Questions would have been eliminated from the sample 2 study if 25% or more of the respondents in sample 1 indicated that they did not understand the question. Based on this criterion, no questions were eliminated due to not being understood. This same criterion was applied to the applicability of each question to Chinese parents. Based on this criterion, eight questions were eliminated, leaving 152 questions for the sample 2 study. Table 4 lists the eight questions that were determined to not be applicable to Chinese parents.

Table 4. Questions determined not applicable to Chinese parents

NEPEM Domain	Question	Not Applicable to Chinese Parents Rate
Nurture	We have a family project to help other people.	27.78%
Nurture	I make sure my childrenôs teeth are checked regularly by a dentist.	27.78%
Advocate	When there is a problem in the community, I get involved to help solve it.	33.33%
Advocate	I participate in parent support or parent education groups.	27.78%
Advocate	I talk and share ideas with other people about making our community a better place for children.	44.44%
Advocate	I volunteer to help in community or neighborhood projects that will benefit children.	38.89%
Advocate	I am an active member of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) at my childrenôs school.	33.33%
Advocate	I volunteer in the school or during after-school programs.	33.33%

Six two-sample chi-square tests were conducted to determine whether or not there were statistically significant differences between sample 1 and sample 2 participantsô demographic information. Table 5 lists the frequencies associated with sample 1 and sample 2 demographic information and corresponding χ^2 values.

Table 5. Chi-squares testing the differences between the respondentsô demographic information between the sample 1 study and the sample 2 study

Categories	Frequency of Sample 1	Frequency of Sample 2	χ^2
Age			
• 25-34	12	11	.16
• 35-44	6	4	2.45
Highest Level of Education			
• Some college or lower	12	9	1.70
• Bachelorôs degree or higher	6	5	.38
My household yearly income (Yuan)			
• 99,999 or lower	8	10	.92
• 100,000 or higher	10	4	12.60

Table 6. Reliability analysis of the NEPEM Parenting Self-Assessment by NEPEM domain

N=32

NEPEM Domain	Cronbachôs Alpha	Number of Items
Care for Self	.881	34
Understand	.855	16
Guide	.885	27
Nurture	.928	39
Motivate	.915	24
Advocate	.836	7

Since the degree of freedom of this analysis was 2, the critical value would be 5.99 (Heckert & Filliben, 2003). Besides one category of income, (100,000 or higher), statistical analysis of all the other categories of the respondentôs information revealed that there were no statistically significant differences between the demographics of sample 1

and sample 2. Thus, the two data sets were combined to test the reliability of the instrument according to each NEPEM domain. Cronbachôs Alphas for the six NEPEM domains were as follows: Care for Self, 0.88; Understand, 0.86; Guide, 0.89; Nurture, 0.93; Motivate, 0.92; and Advocate, 0.84.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

Social Validity

Social validity refers to the use of evaluative feedback from key informants to guide evaluation, intervention, and other types of curricula development (Wolf, 1978). Social validity refers to respondentsô understanding of the aims, processes, and outcomes of a particular practice (Lindo & Elleman, 2010) and if that understanding is supported by the culture and values of the respondents. Validity is an important issue that should be considered when selecting study instruments. The NEPEM Parenting Self-Assessment is theoretically promising and has been the focus of previous published studies (Goddard & Dennis, 2004; Smith et al., 1994; Wang, Wiley, & Zhou, 2007).

However, for this study, it was not assumed that the NEPEM Parenting Self-Assessment was valid for Chinese parents. The purpose of this study was to take an exploratory step toward determining if the NEPEM Parenting Self-Assessment could be used or modified to be a valid tool for use with Chinese parents. To explore the validity of the NEPEM Parenting Self-Assessment, a sample 1 study was conducted. During the study Chinese parents were asked to respond to statements indicating whether or not each of the 160 questions included in the NEPEM Parenting Self-Assessment were understandable, as well as applicable to Chinese parents. 18 respondents participated in the initial sample 1 study. Results of the sample 1 study revealed that each of the 160 questions included in the NEPEM Parenting Self-Assessment were understood by respondents. However, eight of the questions were determined not to be applicable to Chinese parents. Six of these eight questions were associated with the NEPEM domain, ñAdvocateò. Questions from this domain included: ñI talk and share ideas with other

people about making our community a better place for childrenò; and ñI volunteer to help in community or neighborhood projects that will benefit childrenò. This finding confirms previous studies related to Chinese culture that revealed a very small presence of community-based family education and activities for families (Gai & Wang, 2006; Wang, 2010), especially in the cities (Gai & Wang, 2006).

Combining Data from Sample 1 and Sample 2

Due to the low response rate for the study, and the finding that there were no statistically significant differences between the demographics of the two data sets, data from sample 1 and sample 2 were combined to test the reliability of the instrument.

Reliability

The fundamental assumption of reliability is that respondents concur on the ñcategorizationò and the rating system, as well as that they can use the system ñcoherentlyò (Wang, Wiley, & Zhou, 2007, p. 778). Internal consistency reliability for each domain of the NEPEM ParentingSelf-Assessment was examined by the Cronbachôs alpha co-efficient as following: Care for Self (34 items), 0.88; Understand (16 items), 0.86; Guide (27 items), 0.89; Nurture (39 items), 0.93; Motivate (24 items), 0.92; and Advocate (7 items), 0.84. Based on the criteria that the value of 0.7 is satisfactory, all six domains of the NEPEM Parent Self-Assessment were considered reliable for Chinese parents.

Limitations

The findings are limited in several ways. First, the study experienced a very low participation rate. There were only 18 respondents in the sample 1 study and 14 respondents in the sample 2 study. This may be due to several reasons, such as the questionnaire format (online survey), length of the survey (160 questions, plus additional two questions for each item), and short time frame to recruit study participants (approximately one month). Also, the restrictions of childrenôs age of participants (parents of 3 to 7 years old) excluded many parents. In addition, several participants questioned if there would be subsidy for the participants, which usually considered being a standard to access the creditability of online studies. It did not carry into execution due to the IRB restrictions. Second, the gender of the respondents was unbalanced; fewer fathers participated compared to mothers. Seven fathers (21.8 %) and 25 mothers (78.2 %) participated in this study. Additionally, due to the low response rate for completing the sample 1 and sample 2 self-assessments, the data from both assessments were combined to test the reliability of the instrument. Even after combining the data sets, the total number of respondents was considerably low, thus, a shortcoming of the results of the reliability analysis. The above factors limit the generalizability of the findings.

Future Study

There is a dearth of research related to parental self-efficacy among Chinese parents. This study began to explore the potential reliability and validity of the NEPEM Parenting Self-Assessment. Future studies are need to more rigorously test the NEPEM Parenting Self-Assessment tool with a larger number and random sample of Chinese parents. Below are several suggestions for further exploration of the NEPEM Parenting

Self-Assessment and its use with Chinese parents. First, Lindo and Elleman (2010) suggest that three factors should be examined regarding the social validity of an assessment tool: the goal, process, and outcome. Although this study explored a small number (N= 32) of Chinese parentsô perceptions about their parenting practices, these three factors could be further explored to better assess the social validity of the NEPEM Parenting Self-Assessment. For example, the similarities and differences between the goals of American and Chinese parenting practices could be identified. Second, professionals who are currently working in the parenting education field in China could be invited to be part of a study focused on testing the content validity of the NEPEM Parenting Self-Assessment. Third, a reliability analysis of the NEPEM Parenting Self-Assessment needs to be conducted on a larger, random sample of Chinese parents. It could be based on a study targeted on parents and professionals in China for more strategies to investigate parenting perspectives in China. In addition, a shorter version of NEPEM Parenting Self-Assessment, which is particularly suitable for Chinese parents, could be developed based on corrected item-total correlations.

Conclusion

Findings from this study suggest that the NEPEM Parenting Self-Assessment is somewhat reliable for use with Chinese parents. However, caution is needed based on the low response rate and small number of study participants, as well as the lack of a random sample. Despite these limitations, the modified NEPEM Parenting Self-Assessment that was developed in this study shows potential for helping Chinese parents self-assess their

parenting practices. Identifying areas of strength and areas for growth in parenting is a key initial step to improving parental self-efficacy.

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APPENDIX: IRB APPROVAL DOCUMENT

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Institutional Review Board
Office for Responsible Resear
Vice President for Research
1138 Pearson Hall
Ames, Iowa 50011-2207
515 294-4566
FAX 515 294-4267

Date: 9/22/2010

To: Jialin Shen
3110 Aspen Rd
Ames, IA 50014

CC: Dr. Kimberly Greder
1086 LeBaron Hall

From: Office for Responsible Research

Title: Determining the Appropriateness of Using NEPEM (National Extension Parent Education Model) Parent Self Assessment among Chinese Parents of 3-7 Year-Olds

IRB Num: 10-358

Submission Type: New **Exemption Date:** 9/22/2010

The project referenced above has undergone review by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and has been declared exempt from the requirements of the human subject protections regulations as described in 45 CFR 46.101(b). The IRB determination of exemption means that:

- **You do not need to submit an application for annual continuing review.**
- **You must carry out the research as proposed in the IRB application**, including obtaining and documenting informed consent if you have stated in your application that you will do so or if required by the IRB.
- **Any modification of this research should be submitted to the IRB on a Continuing Review and/or Modification form, prior to making any changes**, to determine if the project still meets the federal criteria for exemption. If it is determined that exemption is no longer warranted, then an IRB proposal will need to be submitted and approved before proceeding with data collection.

Please be sure to **use only the approved study materials** in your research, including the **recruitment materials and informed consent documents that have the IRB approval stamp**.

Please note that you must submit all research involving human participants for review by the IRB. **Only the IRB may make the determination of exemption**, even if you conduct a study in the future that is exactly like this study.