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The Relationship Between Parenting Styles and Children's Social Competence in the

Chinese Context

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The Relationship Between Parenting Styles and Children's Social Competence in the Chinese Context

In recent years, preschool children's levels of social competence have been found to be related to parents' childrearing practices. As shown by previous research, parenting styles have a great influence on young children's social and emotional development (e.g., Anthony et al., 2005; Berg, 2011; Farrell, 2015; Suat, 2018). Young children come to meet others in preschool and encounter complex interpersonal demands, which challenge their development of social competence (Anthony et al., 2005). Some researchers indicated that social competence is related to "the ability to develop peer and adult relationships that are necessary to succeed in both academic and non-academic settings" (Mendaz et al., 2002, p. 134). Therefore, a relatively high level of social competence may help build a foundation for children's future success in both academic and non-academic settings. The literature has shown numerous findings on the relationship between parenting styles and young children's levels of social competence. However, limited research has addressed the Chinese context specifically. Since the Chinese context may affect parenting styles culturally and socially, thus influencing young children's development of social competence. Therefore, this study focuses on investigating the relationship between parenting styles and children's social competence in the Chinese context specifically, which can potentially build a foundation for future research in related fields and help improve daily education practices in family education.

Literature Review

Parenting Styles

As defined by Baumrind (1971), parenting style is "a pattern of childrearing that is the result of parents' reactions to children" (Lau et al., 2012, p. 99). Furthermore, he distinguished the three common parenting styles as *Authoritative*, *Permissive*, and *Authoritarian*. Carlo et al. (2007) added that parenting styles could also be characterized in terms of *Responsiveness* and *Demandingness*. Responsiveness refers to "the degree of positive affection presented in parent-child relationships" (p. 148). On the contrary, demandingness refers to "the degree of strictness and behavioral standards expressed by parents for their children" (p. 148).

In brief, authoritative parents set appropriate rules and limits on children's behaviors but allow children's engagement in parent-child communication (Williams, 2013). Akinsola (2010) noted that authoritative parents often create an engaging atmosphere to value their children's opinions, which may aid in cognitive development and foster "a higher sense of social responsibility" (Farrell, 2015, p. 17).

On the contrary, permissive parents rarely enforce rules or boundaries, allow children to make choices for themselves, and discipline the children with unconditional support (Akinsola, 2010; Baumrind, 1971). Although permissive parents maintain a warm relationship with their children, the few demands they place on them demonstrate their childrearing philosophy of shouldering the majority of the responsibility and taking good care of the children. Consequently, children could rarely learn how to take care of themselves (Williams, 2013). Children raised in permissive parenting households are likely to face difficulties in social and emotional development. Farrell (2015) indicated that these children are always emotionally dependent on others due to their insufficient opportunities to explore how to

effectively deal with emotions. Therefore, their inability to cope with emotions might negatively influence their social connections with others (Olowodunoye & Titus, 2011).

Different from the previous two parenting styles mentioned, the authoritarian parenting style focuses on "high expectations of conformity and compliance with rules for children" (Farrell, 2015, p. 12). However, little responsiveness is displayed to their children's emotional needs (Farrell, 2015). They "enforce rules strictly, value obedience, and discourage verbal give and take with their children" (Lau et al., 2012, p. 14). Consequently, the children may struggle with expressing negative feelings or communicating with others effectively (Williams, 2013), which could negatively affect their levels of social competence.

Parenting styles have a great influence on children's development in different aspects. Mayer and Cobb (2000) predicted that parenting styles could probably benefit or hinder young children's future success. However, Berg (2011) pointed out that parents may not be aware enough of how their parenting practices could affect their young children's social and cognitive development. Since parents' beliefs and knowledge on childrearing stem from multiple sources, such as their own experience as children, observations from daily life, and parenting goals (Berg, 2011), many of them may not have adopted proper childrearing approaches in their daily practices.

Parenting Styles in the Chinese Context

Among all the factors affecting parents' childrearing styles, cultural practices could be an essential element (Berg, 2011). As mentioned by Xie et al. (2022), "parental beliefs vary in conceptualizations and implications across cultures" (p. 470), which may stem from specific social-cultural contexts (Goodnow, 2013; Jiang & Han, 2016). According to Farrell (2015),

"perceptions, attitudes, behaviors, belief systems, and relational experiences" should be examined to better understand parenting practices, which are highly affected by the specific cultural context. Previous research has pointed out that Chinese parents always demonstrate a high level of control, and emphasize academic achievements to a great extent (Rao et al., 2003). However, some researchers pointed out that Chinese parents tend to be "warm and loving towards their children" while being "stricter and more controlling of their children's behaviours that Western parents" (Sun & Rao, 2017, p.12). In the Chinese context, parents' childrearing beliefs are highly influenced by traditional Chinese values such as Confucianism, which places a high value on notions such as filial piety, interpersonal harmony, as well as self-cultivation (Lieber et al., 2006; Sun & Rao, 2017). In the social aspect, Confucianism has been argued to be related to the concepts such as "fulfilling social obligations and establishing relationships with others" (Sun & Rao, 2017, p.12). Under the Confucianism philosophy, children are highly expected to be obedient, while parents are expected to "handle all childrearing matters" (Xie et al., 2022). On the other hand, research has pointed out that parenting styles in the specific Chinese context are concerned with parents' adherence to Chinese culture and its values (Xu et al., 2005). The more parents value traditional Chinese notions such as collectivism and filial piety, the higher tendency they may have towards practicing the authoritarian parenting style in their child-rearing beliefs. Therefore, the parenting styles in Baumrind's model (1971) are argued to have some culture-specific meanings in the Chinese context (Sun & Rao, 2017).

Social Competence

Social competence refers to the ability to function effectively in social interactions (Halberstadt et al., 2001) and is "usually defined by people's social skills and peer status" (Berg, 2011, p. 20). Children's social competence could be demonstrated more specifically through their interactions with other children around them. Berg (2011) listed a variety of behaviors in their social interactions, including "initiating and maintaining interactions, understanding and following the rules, solving social problems, regulating emotions, and demonstrating trust in others" (p. 20). As pointed out by Berg (2011), young children's social-emotional development is an essential element of their abilities to "interact with others and create an environment suitable for learning, growing, and development" (p. 17). Children who are more socially competent are more likely to build and maintain positive relationships. Furthermore, children with advanced levels of social competence are more likely to be successful in academics and careers, which promotes physical and mental well-being (Whitbeck et al., 1997). On the contrary, a deficiency in social competence is associated with children's negative behaviours.

Parenting Styles and Children's Social Competence

Social competence development affects young children's social well-being to a great extent, and parenting styles play a vital role in developing children's social skills and building their social competence (Altay & Gure, 2012; Hoffman & Youngblade, 1999; Kazemi, Ardabili & Solokian, 2010; Laukkanen et al., 2014; Schultheiss, 2009). Previous studies have shown that parenting styles could predict young children's well-being in various domains, including social competence as well as other important aspects (e.g., Anthony et al., 2005). To date, previous research has shown a strong connection between young children's social skill

levels and parenting styles: children who demonstrate high levels of communication and trust with their parents have higher levels of social skills (Engels et al., 2001).

The authoritative, permissive, and authoritarian parenting styles are associated with different levels of social competence in children of different age groups (Berg, 2011). McGillicuddy-De Lisi (2007) pointed out that children reared in the authoritative parenting style show higher levels of social competence and are always more friendly and cooperative, with less internalizing and externalizing behavioral problems compared to those from non-authoritative parenting styles. Additionally, there is a beneficial association between authoritative parenting style and social development "across social classes and ethnic groupings" (p. 16).

On the contrary, several studies reveal that authoritarian and permissive parenting may lead to children's negative social outcomes, such as decreased social behaviors (e.g., Johnson et al., 2006; Knafo & Plomin, 2006; Wang et al., 2007). Findings of related research have consistently indicated that children from authoritarian families "tend to perform moderately well in school and be uninvolved in problem behaviors", however, they may have "poorer social skills" (p. 18). Children from permissive families have better social skills, but they also have more problem behaviors and are less likely to perform well in school.

Research Objectives, Questions, and Hypotheses

This study intended to investigate the relationship between parenting styles and children's social competence in the Chinese context, specifically. The study also aimed to show how parenting practices had a big impact on children's social competence growth,

which may help parents and teachers understand the significance and influence of family variables, especially parenting styles, and better alter their regular childrearing routines.

Based on the purpose of the study, three research questions were raised and addressed. The questions are:

1. What are the dominant parenting styles adopted by Chinese parents for rearing young children in this research?

2. What levels of social competence are Chinese young children rated by their parents in this research?

3. What is the relationship between Chinese parents' dominant parenting styles and young children's levels of social competence in this research?

Firstly, it was hypothesized that participants tended to adopt the authoritarian parenting style as the dominant one more frequently than permissive or authoritative parenting styles due to the Chinese culture which was greatly affected by Confucianism (Lieber et al., 2006; Sun & Rao, 2017).

Secondly, it was believed that children's levels of social competence varied since different children were nurtured using various parenting styles, and children who demonstrated better social skills in daily practices would be rated higher by their parents in terms of their levels of social competence.

Thirdly, after calculating and categorizing the participants into the corresponding dominant parenting style groups, then rating the social competence levels of the participants' children, it was hypothesized that there was a relationship between the three dominant parenting styles (authoritative, permissive, and authoritarian) and young children's level of

social competence. Additionally, it was believed that children from dominant authoritative homes would be more socially competent than those from dominant authoritarian or permissive households.

Methodology

Participants

Considering enough statistical power, a minimum of 100 participants were required because the study used the quantitative approach to data analysis. If the sample size was too small, the true effect may not be seen directly. Since the study conducted statistical analysis after data collection, such as regression models, group comparisons, One-way ANOVA, and Post-hoc analysis, at least 100 participants were required to avoid some problems of grouping and the missing data. The study focused on children from three to eight years old. Therefore, participants who had at least one child aged from three to eight were recruited for the research. As a result, the study sought the participation of around 100 Chinese parents who had at least one child between the ages of three and eight.

Their social-economic origins, religions, genders, nationalities, or other variables were not limited. Each household included in the research only had one parent and one child. Before gathering data, an ethical application was sent to The Education University of Hong Kong's Human Research Ethics Committee. Non-probability convenience and snowball sampling techniques were used in the study. People who had children between the ages of three and eight got the questionnaire, which was then forwarded to other people who qualified. Before any data was collected, all participants provided their written

consent. Everyone who participated in the research had the option to pause or end their involvement at any time. There was a guarantee of confidentiality for all information.

Measures and Instruments

The research was quantitative, and the instrument was a questionnaire survey. Beaty (2009) claims that the use of surveys reduces the possibility of imposing personal opinions and viewpoints during the research process. The online survey was made by Qualtrics and distributed via email or certain messaging applications, such as WhatsApp and WeChat. Two published questionnaires with high reliability and validity were cited in the questionnaire design. The first was the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ) (Robinson et al., 2001), which is often used in both Western and Chinese contexts (Chen et al., 1997; Ren & Pope, 2015; Wu et al., 2002; Zhou et al., 2004). The SCBE-30, or Social Competence and Behavior Evaluation, was the second (LaFreniere & Dumas, 1996). It was chosen for two factors. First, it is a highly reliable, consistent, and stable instrument (Chen & Jiang, 2002). Second, it is rather brief and simple for parents to finish.

The questionnaire's measures were all translated into Chinese using the traditional forward-and-back translation techniques (Foster & Martinez, 1995). The translation procedure involved three skilled research assistants. The first assistant converted the things from written English to Chinese. The second helper translated the Chinese things back into English while being blind to the originals. The back-translated English version and the original version were compared by the third helper to spot any differences. The three assistants had a conversation to settle all disagreements at the final stage.

The questionnaire was divided into three parts: Section A had 8 items; Section B contained 32 items; and Section C contained 30 items. On a scale from "1" to "5" and "1" to "6", parents scored their parenting practices and the social competence of their kids respectively based on the daily experiences. In the two corresponding sections, "1" represented the lowest frequency while "5" and "6" represented the highest. Based on their responses, points were calculated for both their parenting styles and their children's social competence in the sub-scales. Among the three mean scores of three parenting styles, the highest one suggested that participants belong to the respective dominant parenting style group. For social competence, the higher the mean score of the sub-category was, the higher the child's social competence level was.

Family Background Information

The first part asked for basic demographic data about the respondents and their families, including the age, profession, and educational background of the parents. Eight questions on the respondent's basic personal information and family background were asked, including the region, gender, age, and education level of the parents as well as their job status and monthly household income.

Parenting Styles

The Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ) (Robinson et al., 2001) was used in the second section of the questionnaire. Previous research showed that the scale was highly validated, and it was reliable in both previous studies and this study ($\alpha = .87$). Participants were asked to rate their viewpoints on their parenting practices on a Likert scale from "1" to "5" (1 = never, 5 = always) as part of an online survey designed to evaluate

parents' perspectives. Each participant fitted into one of the three dominant parenting types that are frequently applied in real-world situations. After calculation, the answers to the questionnaire questions showed which dominant parenting styles they seemed to apply. Therefore, the participants were categorized into the dominant parenting style group accordingly. The grouping of the items is shown below (Table 1).

Table 1

Grouping of items in the adopted Parenting Styles and Dimension Questionnaire (PSDQ)

Question	Item
Authoritative	
1	Responsive to the child's feelings or needs.
3	Takes the child's desires into account before asking the child to do something.
5	Explains to the child how we feel about his/her good and bad behavior.
7	Encourages the child to talk about his/her troubles.
9	Encourages the child to freely express him/herself even when disagreeing with parents.
11	Emphasizes the reasons for rules.
12	Gives comfort and understanding when the child is upset.
14	Gives praise when the child is good.
18	Takes into account the child's preferences in making plans for the family.
21	Shows respect for the child's opinions by encouraging him/her to express them.
22	Allows the child to give input into family rules.
25	Gives the child reasons why rules should be obeyed.
27	Has warm and intimate times together with the child.
29	Encourages the child to talk about the consequences of his/her own actions.
31	Explains the consequences of the child's behavior.
Authoritarian	
2	Uses physical punishment as a way of disciplining the child.
4	When the child asks why he/she has to conform, states: because I said so.
6	Spanks when the child is disobedient.
10	Punishes by taking privileges away from the child with little if any explanations.
13	Yells or shouts when the child misbehaves.

16	Explodes in anger towards the child.
19	Grabs the child when being disobedient.
23	Scolds and criticizes to make the child improve.
26	Uses threats as punishment with little or no justification.
28	Punishes by putting the child off somewhere alone with little if any explanations.
30	Scolds and criticizes when the child's behavior doesn't meet our expectations.
32	Slaps the child when he/she misbehaves.
Permissive	
8	Finds it difficult to discipline the child.
15	Gives into the child when he/she causes a commotion about something.
17	Threatens the child with punishment more often than actually giving it.
20	States punishments to the child and does not actually do them.
24	Spoils the child.

Levels of Social Competence

The Social Competence and Behavior Evaluation - Short Version (SCBE-30)

(LaFreniere & Dumas, 1996) was used in the final section to assess the social competence of

the respondents' children (see Appendix B for the questionnaire design). Previous research

showed that the scale was highly validated, and it was reliable in both previous studies (e.g.,

Chen & Jiang, 2002) and this study ($\alpha = .92$). Three 10-item factors were included in the 30-

item scale: Anger-Aggression (AA), and Anxiety-Withdrawn (AW), and Social Competence

(SC). Using six response options (1 = never, 6 = often), parents graded their kids' social

competence based on how they acted on a regular basis. The results were anticipated to vary

since different children are nurtured using various parenting styles. The grouping of the items

is shown below (Table 2).

Table 2

Grouping of the items in the Social Competence and Behavior Evaluation - Short

Version (SCBE-30)

Question	Item
Anxiety-Withdrawn	
1	Maintains neutral facial expression (doesn't smile or laugh)
2	Tired
6	Worries
8	Timid, afraid (e.g., avoids new situations)
9	Sad, unhappy, or depressed
10	Inhibited or uneasy in the group
13	Inactive, watches other children play
15	Remains apart, isolated from the group
21	Doesn't talk or interact during group activities
23	Goes unnoticed in a group
Anger-Aggression	
3	Easily frustrated
4	Gets angry when interrupted
5	Irritable, gets mad easily
11	Screams or yells easily
12	Forces other children to do things they don't want to do
17	Hits, bites or kicks other children
19	Gets into conflicts with other children
26	Hits teachers or destroys things when angry with teachers
29	Opposes the teacher's suggestions
30	Defiant when reprimanded
Social Competence	
7	Takes pleasure in own accomplishments
14	Negotiates solutions to conflicts with other children
16	Takes other children and their points of view into account
18	Cooperates with other children
20	Comforts or assists another child or children in difficulty
22	Attentive towards younger children
24	Works easily in groups
25	Shares toys
27	Helps with everyday tasks
28	Accepts compromises when reasons are given

Data Collection Procedure

The intended participants got the questionnaire and consent form along with the

information sheet (see Appendix A) over the Internet. Within a week, parents were requested

to complete and turn in the questionnaire. Following the gathering of quantitative data, the

study classified the dominant parenting practices of the participants, examined the social

competence of their children, and drew connections between dominant parenting practices and social competence in children.

Data Analysis

The purpose of this study was to look at the connection between parenting styles and children's social competence. The statistical program, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28, was applied during the data analysis procedure. The data were put into the software in the correct required format for processing. The analysis primarily focused on percentage counting and some descriptive statistics, such as the frequency distribution, mean, and standard deviation.

To respond to the first research question, "What are the dominant parenting styles adopted by Chinese parents for rearing young children in this research?", the percentages were calculated together with the mean scores and standard deviations for each parenting style.

To answer research question two, "What levels of social competence are Chinese young children rated by their parents in this research?", the mean scores and standard deviations of the children's levels of social competence in each sub-scale were calculated. This allowed researchers to determine the social competence levels at which young children are rated by their parents in this research.

A correlation analysis was completed to answer the study's third research question. The relationship between the two variables is shown in scattered graphs below. Following the correlation analysis, a one-way ANOVA between subjects and a Post-hoc Test were used to

examine the differences in children's social competence levels among three dominant parenting style groups (authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive).

Results

The study aimed to examine the relationship between three dominant parenting styles and children's levels of social competence in the Chinese context. The following results address the research questions mentioned in the previous part.

Characteristics of Demographic

In the context of this quantitative research, a total of 106 Chinese parents completed the questionnaire. The sample included 34 male participants, accounting for 32.1% of the total, and 72 female participants, representing 67.9% of the sample (see Table 3). In terms of age, the sample comprised 22 individuals between the ages of 18 and 30 (20.8%), 38 individuals between the ages of 31 and 40 (35.8%), 34 individuals between the ages of 41 and 50 (32.1%), and 12 individuals over the age of 51 (11.3%) (see Table 3). With respect to the highest education level, 41 participants held secondary school qualifications (38.7%), 20 held sub-degree qualifications (18.9%), 35 held bachelor's degrees (33.0%), and 10 held postgraduate degrees (9.4%) (see Table 3). The majority of participants (72 individuals) held full-time jobs, representing 67.9% of the sample, while 6 held part-time jobs (5.7%), and 28 were not engaged in either full-time or part-time employment (26.4%) (see Table 3). In terms of monthly household income, 81 participants reported less than $25000 (76.4%), 15 reported between $25000 and $50000 (15%), 6 reported between $50000 and $80000 (5.7%), and 4 reported more than $80000 (3.8%) (see Table 3). In terms of geographical location, 89 participants resided in Mainland China (84.0%), 14 resided in Hong Kong (13.2%), and 3

resided in other regions of China in addition to Mainland China and Hong Kong (2.8%) (see

Table 3).

With respect to the gender of the participants' children, 57 were male (53.8%), and 49

were female (46.2%) (see Table 3). In terms of age, the children ranged from 3 to 8 years old,

with 9 children aged 3 years (8.5%), 6 aged 4 years (5.7%), 8 aged 5 years (7.5%), 13 aged 6

years (12.3%), 5 aged 7 years (4.7%), and 65 aged 8 years (61.3%) (see Table 3).

Table 3

Characteristics of Demographic

Variable	N=106	Percentage
Gender		
Male	34	32.1%
Female	72	67.9%
Age		
18-30	22	20.8%
31-40	38	35.8%
41-50	34	32.1%
≥51	12	11.3%
Highest Education Level		
Secondary School	41	38.7%
Sub-degree	20	18.9%
Undergraduate	35	33.0%
Postgraduate	10	9.4%
Employment Status		
Full-time	72	67.9%
Part-time	6	5.7%
Others	28	26.4%
Monthly Household Income		
Less than $25000	81	76.4%
Between $25000-$50000	15	14.2%
Between $50000-$80000	6	5.7%
More than $80000	4	3.8%
Region		
Mainland China	89	84.0%
Hong Kong	14	13.2%
Others	3	2.8%
Gender of Child		

Male	57	53.8%
Female	49	46.2%
Age of Child		
3	9	8.5%
4	6	5.7%
5	8	7.5%
6	13	12.3%
7	5	4.7%
8	65	61.3%

Note. "Others" refers to other parts of China excluding mainland China and Hong Kong.

Parents' Parenting Styles

Based on the survey results, parents in this study adopted different types of parenting styles, with the majority practicing authoritative parenting as their dominant style. Participants rated themselves using an online questionnaire, resulting in a mean score for each parenting style. Among the three mean scores, the highest one indicated the parenting style that the participants tended to practice as their dominant style, as they mostly agreed with the statements in that category.

Table 4

Dominant Parenting Styles of the Respondents

Dominant Parenting Styles	N=106	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Authoritative	91	85.8%	3.68	.75
Authoritarian	5	4.7%	2.14	.70
Permissive	10	9.4%	2.55	.67

As presented in Table 4, authoritative parenting was the most common dominant style among participants, with 91 respondents (85.8%, M=3.68) obtaining the highest mean score in this category. Permissive and authoritarian parenting styles followed, with 10 (9.4%, M=2.55) and 5 participants (4.7%, M=2.14), respectively.

Children's Social Competence

Table 5

*Social Competence of the Respondents' Children*

Social Competence	Mean	Std. Deviation
Anxiety-Withdrawn	2.62	.86
Anger-Aggression	2.36	.89
Social Competence	3.82	.96

The findings of this study, as presented in Table 5, indicated that the children of the participating parents scored highest in the sub-category of Social Competence (M=3.82). The second highest score was observed in the Anxiety-Withdrawn sub-category (M=2.62), followed by the Anger-Aggression sub-category (M=2.36). Overall, the results suggested that Chinese children in this study were rated by their parents as having higher levels of social competence than anxiety-withdrawn and anger-aggression behaviors.

The Relationship Between Dominant Parenting Styles and Children's Social Competence

This study examined the relationship between dominant parenting styles and children's levels of social competence through correlation analysis. The results revealed different relationships between dominant parenting styles and children's level of social competence through conducting the Correlation Analysis. It was shown that dominant authoritative parenting style (M= 3.68, SD= .75) had a positive correlation with children's level of social competence (M= 3.83, SD= .96), r = .65, p ≤ .01, n=106. Specifically, as illustrated in Figure 1, parents who reported a higher mean score in dominant authoritative parenting tended to have children with higher social competence scores.

Figure 1

Relationship Between Dominant Authoritative Parenting and Children's Social Competence
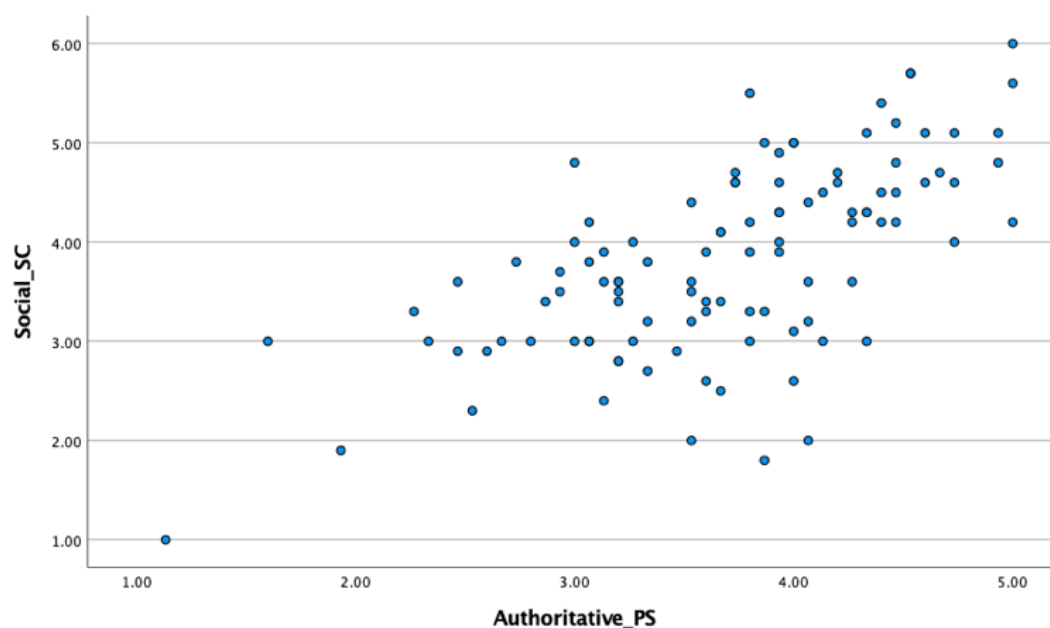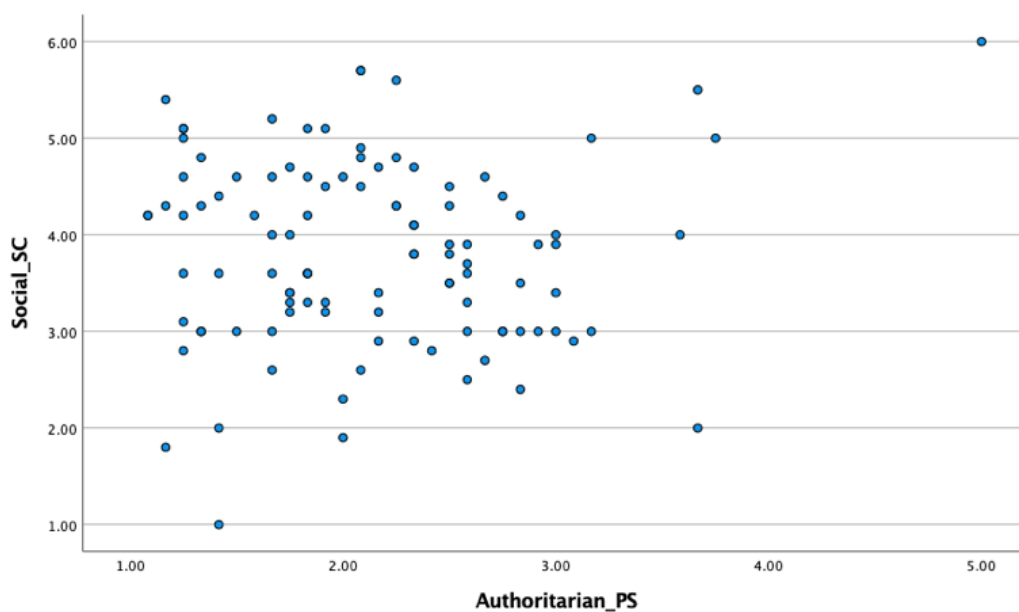
Note. A significant correlation between dominant authoritative parenting and children's social competence was observed.

In contrast, the quantitative results did not reveal any significant relationships between dominant authoritarian (M= 2.14, SD= .70) parenting style and children's level of social competence (M= 3.83, SD= .96), r = .06, p > .05, n=106. Similarly, no significant relationship was shown between permissive parenting styles (M= 2.55, SD= .67) and children's level of social competence (M= 3.83, SD= .96), r = .08, p > .05, n=106. As shown in Figure 2 and 3, there were no significant correlations observed between parents' mean scores in dominant authoritarian or permissive parenting styles and their children's social competence scores in this study.
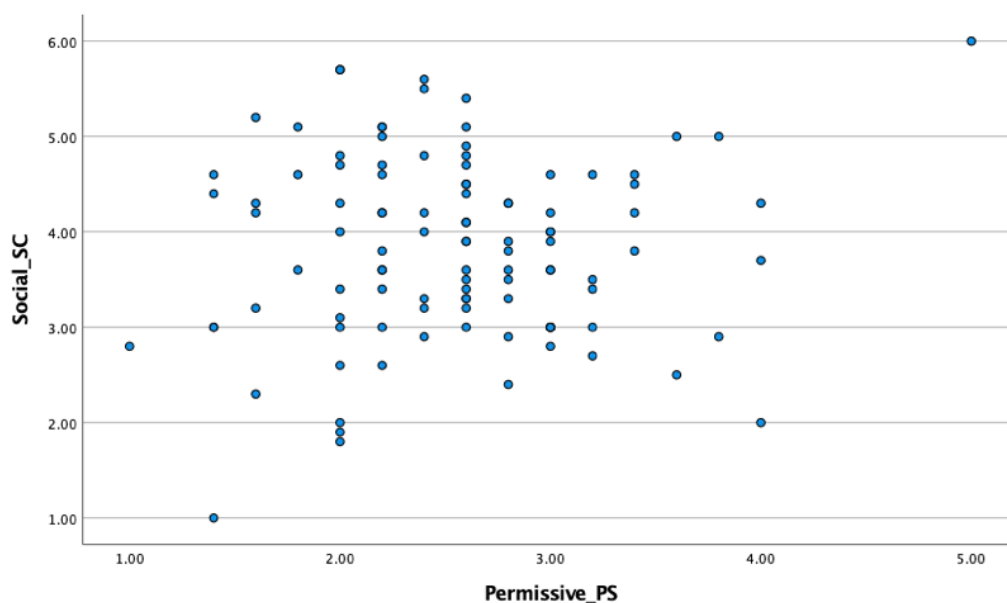
Figure 2

Rleationship Between Dominant Authoritarian Parenting Style and Children's Social Competence

Note. No significant correlation between dominant authoritarian parenting and children's social competence was observed.

Figure 3

Rleationship Between Dominant Permissive Parenting Style and Children's Social Competence

Note. No significant correlation between dominant permissive parenting and children's social competence was observed.

Relationships were found between the three dominant parenting styles and children's social competence. The one-way ANOVA among subjects was conducted to see whether there was a difference among the three groups with different dominant parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive). There was no significant difference in Anxiety-Withdrawn (M=2.62, SD= .86) and Anger-Aggression (M=2.36, SD= .89) among the three dominant parenting style groups because the p-value levels for the three dominant parenting style groups were above 0.05 [F (2, 103) = 1.03, p= .36, eta squared = .020] and [F (2, 103) = 1.81, p= .17, eta squared = .034]. However, there was a significant difference in Social Competence among the three dominant parenting style groups because the p-value was below 0.05 [F (2, 103) = 7.94, p< .001, eta squared = .134]. In addition, a Tukey post-hoc Test revealed that there was a significant difference in children's social competence levels in dominant authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles. The above results suggested that dominant parenting styles have an effect on children's level of social competence. Specifically, parents practicing dominant authoritative parenting caused children to have higher levels of social competence, while dominant authoritarian parenting influenced children to be less competent at social skill levels.

Table 6

Comparison of Children's Mean Score of Social Competence in Each Category

Category	Mean	Std. Deviation
Dominant Authoritative		
Anxiety-Withdrawn	2.58	.87
Anger-Aggression	2.30	.89
Social Competence	3.96	.92
Dominant Authoritarian		
Anxiety-Withdrawn	2.72	1.26

Anger-Aggression	2.44	1.19
Social Competence	2.56	1.15
Dominant Permissive		
Anxiety-Withdrawn	2.98	.48
Anger-Aggression	2.86	.68
Social Competence	3.26	.35

Discussion

Parents' Responsiveness and Demandingness

It was hypothesized that parents would show and describe themselves in different levels of responsiveness and demandingness. The results showed that the most frequently used dominant practice is the authoritative parenting style (M=3.68, SD= .75), followed by the permissive (M=2.55, SD= .67) and authoritarian styles (M=2.14, SD= .70). Adopting different parenting styles in their childrearing practices, parents presented different levels of responsiveness and demandingness. Authoritative parents tended to show a balanced level of responsiveness and demandingness, while permissive parents were child-driven and rarely gave or enforced rules. Different from the previous two parenting styles, authoritarian parents tended to provide high demand and low levels of responsiveness to their children (Carlo et al., 2007).

In Chinese culture, parents' childrearing beliefs are highly influenced by Confucianism, which emphasizes filial piety, interpersonal harmony, and self-cultivation. Therefore, Chinese parents were hypothesized to practice authoritarian parenting style as the dominant one more frequently than other parenting styles (Lieber et al., 2006; Sun & Rao, 2017). However, the results of this study indicated that Chinese parents tended to practice authoritative parenting styles (M=3.68, SD= .75) more frequently than permissive (M=2.55,

SD= .67) or authoritarian (M=2.14, SD= .70) styles. This may be due to the influence of Western cultures on parental beliefs because of globalization and multiculturalism (Piko & Balázs, 2012; Shalini & Acharya, 2013; Tang et al., 2018). As researchers summarized, Chinese parents' educational and parenting goals have been changing constantly, partially resulting from "the considerable industrialization and Westernization in recent years" (Sun & Rao, 2017, p.16) as a consequence of globalization.

Moreover, parenting styles are influenced by various factors, such as parents' socio-economic backgrounds, gender, age, and highest education levels (Altay & Gure, 2012; Hoffman & Youngblade, 1999; Kazemi, Ardabili & Solokian, 2010; Laukkanen et al., 2014; Schultheiss, 2009). Another important factor that may influence the results is the age of the participants' children. As the effects of parenting practices may be more significant on older children due to their longer exposure time to their parents' parenting styles, the unbalanced distribution of target children's age groups in this study (N=65, 61.3% aged 8) may have affected the results.

Children's Social Competence

Parents rated their children's social competence levels based on their daily performance in social interactions. The results revealed that the participants' children had higher levels of social competence (M=3.82, SD= .96) than the Anxiety-Withdrawn (M=2.62, SD= .86) and Anger-Aggression (M=2.36, SD= .89) sub-categories. This suggests that the parents rated their children as having strong social skills, such as communication and cooperation, compared to the other sub-categories. Additionally, it was observed that some children may experience feelings of anxiety or withdrawal in social situations, as indicated by

the Anxiety-Withdrawn sub-category score. Similarly, some children may display behaviors associated with anger and aggression in social situations, as indicated by the Anger-Aggression sub-category score. These findings provide insights into the social competence levels of Chinese children, highlighting the importance of promoting positive social interactions and addressing potential negative behaviors.

The Relationship Between Parenting Styles and Children's Social Competence

It was hypothesized that there was a relationship between the three common dominant parenting styles (authoritative, permissive, and authoritarian) and young children's level of social competence. Additionally, it was believed that children from dominant authoritative homes would be more socially competent than those from authoritarian or permissive households. The results supported the hypothesis that children from dominant authoritative families were more socially competent (M=3.96, SD= .92) than those from permissive (M=3.26, SD= .35) or authoritarian (M= 2.56, SD=1.15) families.

Both the literature and the results showed that there was a significant positive relationship between the dominant authoritative parenting style and children's level of social competence since children are always provided with balanced levels of responsiveness and demandingness and their levels of social skills benefit from positive communication and trust with their parents, with less internalizing and externalizing behavioral problems compared with children from permissive or authoritarian households (McGillicuddy-De Lisi, 2007). This finding suggested that authoritative parenting may promote the development of children's social skills, such as communication, cooperation, and problem-solving ability.

However, regarding the dominant permissive and authoritarian parenting styles, there were no significant relationships between dominant authoritarian parenting style or permissive parenting style and children's level of social competence observed in this research. These findings suggested that dominant authoritarian and permissive parenting styles may not be as influential in promoting children's social competence as the authoritative parenting style. Besides, as the sample sizes of dominant permissive and authoritarian parenting styles were relatively small due to the limitations of snowball sampling, the relationship between parenting styles and children's levels of social competence may not be directly shown in this study, which may count for the result of the study as well.

Implications

The study investigated the relationship between dominant parenting styles and young children's levels of social competence in the Chinese context, which may help parents and educators realize the great impact of parenting styles on children's levels of social competence. The findings of the study could potentially help solve relevant problems in family education. It could help parents and other practitioners in this field understand the significance and influence of family variables, especially parenting styles, thus better altering their regular childrearing routines and improving the education practices in daily life. Besides, it may raise the awareness of balanced levels of responsiveness and demandingness in family education and its influence on children's social competence development.

In addition, the current study provides valuable insights into Chinese parents' dominant parenting styles and their children's social competence, highlighting the importance of considering cultural and other factors in understanding parental beliefs and practices. It may

inform the directions of future studies and creates a foundation for future research, allowing scholars and researchers to explore further this topic based on the study's findings. For instance, researchers may investigate why the authoritative parenting style has a positive relationship with social competence levels, or how parenting styles influence children's social competence levels in the specific Chinese context.

Limitations of the Research

However, there could be some potential issues with the design of the study. Since the three parenting styles are multi-faceted, parents tend to implement one particular style while adopting other aspects of the remaining two styles simultaneously (Perepletchikova & Kazdin, 2005). Therefore, the boundary between different parenting styles may not be clear enough to distinguish different relationships between a specific parenting style and children's level of social competence.

Another aspect that may lead to some limitations of the research was the sampling. Due to the limitations of snowball sampling, the sampling sizes differentiated among groups. For example, the participants reporting practicing the dominant authoritative parenting style took up 85.8% of the 106 respondents, while there were only 9.4% of the participants who adopted the permissive parenting style and 4.7% of the participants adopting the authoritarian parenting style as the dominant one. As the sample size was not big enough in dominant permissive and authoritarian groups, some relationships may not be seen obviously or clearly.

In addition, the demographic distribution of the participants was unbalanced as well. The majority of the respondents were from mainland China, while some were from Hong Kong, and a few of them were from other parts of China excluding the two regions mentioned

previously. This could influence the results and findings of the study because parents in different regions may adopt diverse parenting styles in accordance with their different cultural backgrounds.

Conclusion

To conclude, the study investigated the relationship between dominant parenting styles and children's level of social competence in the Chinese context specifically. In summary, parents applied different parenting styles as the dominant ones. In this study, the most frequently used dominant parenting style was the authoritative parenting style, followed by the permissive and authoritarian parenting styles. On the other hand, Chinese young children were rated differently by their parents in terms of their social competence levels. Last but not least, it was found that there was a relationship between the three dominant parenting styles (authoritative, permissive, and authoritarian) and young children's level of social competence. Moreover, young children from authoritative families were more socially competent than those raised in the other two dominant parenting styles. In addition, it was shown that there was a significant positive relationship between the dominant authoritative parenting style and children's level of social competence, which may result from the fact that children from dominant authoritative households could benefit a lot from the positive rapport with their parents who provided a balanced level of responsiveness and demandingness. Regarding the dominant permissive and authoritarian parenting styles, no significant relationships between the two variables (dominant parenting styles and children's level of social competence) were observed in this study, which may result from the limitations of the snowball sampling. As a result, it is beneficial for parents to provide a balanced level of

responsiveness and demandingness in their daily childrearing practices, thus solving some

relevant problems and issues in family education. However, due to some limitations of the

study, further research on this topic is needed to conclude a more significant relationship

between parenting styles and children's levels of social competence in the Chinese context

specifically.

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Appendix A

Consent Form for the Participants

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

1. **Consent to Participate for Data Collection Site/ School**

   The Project Investigator must prepare a set of Consent forms / Information sheets for school/ data collection sites so that the school / organization is aware of the research study and agrees in writing to allow the Project Investigator to run the study in the school/ organization.

2. **Guidelines on Obtaining Consent for Minor Participants**

   Please note the following guidelines on obtaining consent for minor participants (extracted from the HREC Operational Guidelines, paragraph 29):

   The following guidelines for obtaining consent should be adopted if the research participants are minors:

   - *For children aged below 9, only the signature of their parents/guardians is required; completion of the task, after verbal explanation of its nature by the researcher, provides implied consent by the child;*
   - *For children aged 9 to 15, signature of both the children and their parents/guardians is required; and*
   - *For adolescents aged 16 to 17, signature of the adolescents is required and consent from their parents/guardians is optional for studies involving minimal risk.*

3. **Language of the Information Sheet**

   (a) Information Sheets should be written in simple language which is comprehensible to a non-specialist. A good rule of thumb is that the Information Sheet should be readable by a Grade 6 student.

   (b) Please be concise and indicate clearly in what procedures a participant will be involved.

   (c) Please do not include too many technical details that are not necessary to participants.

   (d) Typically one page should be sufficient for providing appropriate and adequate information on the project for purposes of informed consent.

   (e) If the consent form and information sheet are to be presented to participants/ parents in Chinese, please also provide a Chinese version to HREC for review, and ensure that there is consistency between the English or Chinese version.

Consent Form and Information Sheet for Parents

THE EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG
Department of Early Childhood Education

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
A Survey of Parenting Styles and Children's Social Competence

I _____ hereby consent to participate in the captioned research supervised by Dr. LI YIXUN Annie and conducted by Ms. HOU HUIYING, who is a student of the Department of English Language Education in The Education University of Hong Kong.

I understand that information obtained from this research may be used in future research and may be published. However, my right to privacy will be retained, i.e., my personal details will not be revealed.

The procedure as set out in the **attached** information sheet has been fully explained. I understand the benefits and risks involved. My participation in the project is voluntary.

I acknowledge that I have the right to question any part of the procedure and can withdraw at any time without negative consequences.

Name of participant   _____

Signature of participant   _____

Date   _____

INFORMATION SHEET

A Survey of Parenting Styles and Children's Social Competence

You are invited to participate in a project supervised by Dr. LI YIXUN Annie and conducted by Ms. HOU HUIYING, who is a student of the Department of English Language Education in The Education University of Hong Kong.

The research aims to find out the relationship between parenting styles and Chinese children's levels of social competence. You are chosen to participate in the research project as the parents of your primary one or two children.

There will be 100 Chinese parents included in this study, whose contact details are obtained from the school invited to participate in this study. The project will draw on data from the following source and how you might be involved is described as follows:

Survey: The researcher will distribute questionnaires to recruited parents to understand their parenting practices and their children's levels of social competence. You will be asked to complete the questionnaire and submit it online through Google Forms within one week. The questionnaire takes around 30 minutes to complete. If you are interested in the result of the study, the researchers can provide you with a summary of the results after completing the data analysis. There is no direct benefit for you, but the data collected will provide valuable information for the study of parenting styles and children's social competence.

There will be no potential risks or discomfort involved in the project. All information obtained in this project will only be used for research purposes and remain strictly confidential. Your participation in the project is voluntary. You have every right to withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences. All information related to you such as your name and age, will remain confidential and will be identifiable by codes known only to the researcher.

The research results of this project may be published in the form of thesis, peer-reviewed journals or presented in academic seminars and conferences.

If you would like to obtain more information about this study, please contact Ms. HOU HUIYING at telephone number   or her supervisor Dr. LI YIXUN Annie at telephone number

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research study, please do not hesitate to contact the Human Research Ethics Committee by email at hrec@eduhk.hk or by mail to Research and Development Office, The Education University of Hong Kong.

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study.

HOU HUIYING
Principal Investigator

香港教育大學

幼兒教育學系

參與研究同意書

一項有關父母教養方式與兒童社會能力的調查

茲同意本人＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿參加由李宜遜博士負責監督，侯慧穎女士負責執行的研究項目。她是香港教育大學英語教育學系的學生。

本人理解此研究所獲得的資料可用於未來的研究和學術發表。然而本人有權保護自己的隱私,本人的個人資料將不能洩漏。

研究者已將所附資料的有關步驟向本人作了充分的解釋。本人理解可能會出現的風險。本人是自願參與這項研究。

本人理解我有權在研究過程中提出問題，並在任何時候決定退出研究，更不會因此而對研究工作產生的影響負有任何責任。

參加者姓名:　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

參加者簽名:　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

日期:　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

有關資料

一項有關父母教養方式與兒童社會能力的調查

誠邀閣下參加由李宜遜博士負責監督，侯慧穎女士負責執行的研究計劃。
她是香港教育大學英語教育學系的學生。

該研究旨在找出父母教養方式與中國兒童的社會能力水平之間的關系。閣下被選為小學一年級或二年級兒童的父母，參與該研究項目。

將有 100 名中國家長參與這項研究，他們的聯系方式是由被邀請參與這項研究的學校提供的。本計劃資料蒐集來源及閣下將會如何參與其中描述如下：
　　問卷調查：研究人員將向參與計劃的的家長發放問卷，以了解他們的育兒實踐和孩子的社會能力水平。閣下將被要求在一周內完成問卷並通過谷歌表格在線提交。問卷大約需要 30 分鐘來完成。如閣下對是次調查的結果感興趣，研究者在完成數據分析後，會提供一份總結。是次研究並不為閣下提供個人利益，但所收集數據將對研究父母教養方式與兒童社會能力的問題提供寶貴的資料。

本項目中不存在潛在風險或不適。所有獲得的資料將僅用於本項目，並得到嚴格的保密。閣下的參與純屬自願性質。閣下享有充分的權利在任何時候決定退出這項研究，更不會因此引致任何不良後果。凡有關閣下的資料將會保密，一切資料的編碼只有研究人員得悉。

本項計劃研究成果可能會發表於論文、同行評審期刊或學術研討會議中。

如閣下想獲得更多有關這項研究的資料，請與侯慧穎女士聯絡，電話
　　　或聯絡她的導師李宜遜博士，電話

如閣下對這項研究的操守有任何意見，可隨時與香港教育大學人類實驗對象操守委員會聯絡（電郵：hrec@eduhk.hk；地址：香港教育大學研究與發展事務處）。

謝謝閣下有興趣參與這項研究。

侯慧穎
首席研究員

Appendix B

Questionnaire Design

A Survey of Parenting Styles and Children's Social Competence
一項有關父母教養方式與兒童社會能力的調查

Section A: Personal and Family Background Information
第一部分：個人及家庭背景資料

1.	Gender 性別：	☐ Male 男 ☐ Female 女
2.	Age 年齡：	☐ 18-30 years old 18-30歲 ☐ 31-40 years old 31-40歲 ☐ 41-50 years old 41-50歲 ☐ 51 years old or above 51歲或以上
3.	Education level 教育水平:	☐ Primary school or lower 小學及以下 ☐ Secondary school 中學 ☐ Sub-degree 副學士 ☐ Undergraduate 學士 ☐ Postgraduate 碩士及以上
4.	Employment status 工作情況：	☐ Full-time 全職 ☐ Part-time 兼職 ☐ Others 其他 _____
5.	Monthly household income 月收入:	☐ Less than $25000 低于$25000 ☐ Between $25000-$50000 在 $25000-$50000 之间 ☐ Between $50000-$80000 在 $50000-$80000 之间 ☐ More than $80000 多于 ¥80000
6.	Region 地區:	☐ New Territories 新界 ☐ Kowloon 九龍 ☐ Hong Kong Island 港島 ☐ Outlying Islands 離島
7.	Gender of the child 子女性別:	☐ Male 男 ☐ Female 女

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8. Age of the child 子女年齡:	❑ 5 years old 5歲 ❑ 6 years old 6歲 ❑ 7 years old 7歲 ❑ 8 years old 8歲

Section B: Parenting Styles (Adapted from Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire)

第二部分：父母教養方式

Instruction: The following questions contain a list of behaviors that parents may exhibit when interacting with their children. Use the following rating scale to rate how often you exhibit this behavior with your child.

以下是一些有關教養子女的方法，請根據您的情況，評定您會做出下列每一項行為的頻密程度。

	Never 1 從不	Once in a while 2 很少	About half of the time 3 間中	Very often 4 常常	Always 5 總是
1. Responsive to the child's feelings or needs. 能回應孩子的感受及需要。					
2. Uses physical punishment as a way of disciplining the child. 以體罰作為懲罰孩子的方式。					
3. Takes the child's desires into account before asking the child to do something. 在要求孩子做事前顧及他們的想法。					
4. When the child asks why he/she has to conform, states: because I said so. 當孩子詢問他們為甚麼必須服從的時候，對孩子回答說：「因為我說的。」					
5. Explains to the child how we feel about his/her good and bad behavior. 向孩子解釋我們對他的行為好壞有怎樣的感受。					
6. Spanks when the child is disobedient. 當孩子不聽話的時候打屁股。					
7. Encourages the child to talk about his/her troubles. 鼓勵孩子談及他們的煩惱。					
8. Finds it difficult to discipline the child. 覺得難以管教孩子。					
9. Encourages the child to freely express him/herself even when disagreeing with parents. 即使跟孩子意見分歧，亦鼓勵他們表達自己的想法。					

10. Punishes by taking privileges away from the child with little if any explanations. 在沒有充分的解釋下，把孩子原本享有的特權拿走，藉以懲罰孩子。					
11. Emphasizes the reasons for rules. 著重規距背後的理由。					
12. Gives comfort and understanding when the child is upset. 當孩子難過的時候給予安慰及諒解。					
13. Yells or shouts when the child misbehaves. 當孩子做錯的時候，對著孩子吼叫。					
14. Gives praise when the child is good. 當孩子表現好的時候給予讚賞。					
15. Gives into the child when he/she causes a commotion about something. 當孩子對一些事情有所驅動，我會向他屈服。					
16. Explodes in anger towards the child. 對孩子爆發怒氣。					
17. Threatens the child with punishment more often than actually giving it. 我以懲罰作為恐嚇多於實際行動。					
18. Takes into account the child's preferences in making plans for the family. 當我為家庭進行計劃時，我會顧及孩子的喜好。					
19. Grabs the child when being disobedient. 當孩子不聽話的時候狠狠抓住他們。					
20. States punishments to the child and does not actually do them. 我向孩子提出懲罰，但卻沒有真正地進行。					
21. Shows respect for the child's opinions by encouraging him/her to express them. 我鼓勵孩子表達自己的想法以示尊重他/她的意見。					
22. Allows the child to give input into family rules. 讓孩子對家規提供意見。					
23. Scolds and criticizes to make the child improve. 為了令孩子進步，我責罵及批評他。					
24. Spoils the child. 溺愛孩子。					
25. Gives the child reasons why rules should be obeyed.					

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對孩子說明必須遵守規矩的原因。					
26. Uses threats as punishment with little or no justification. 在沒有充分的理由下，我以威脅作為懲罰。					
27. Has warm and intimate times together with the child. 我與孩子有一個溫暖及親密的時刻。					
28. Punishes by putting the child off somewhere alone with little if any explanations. 在沒有充分的理由下，以拖延孩子作為懲罰。					
29. Encourages the child to talk about the consequences of his/her own actions. 鼓勵孩子討論行為的後果。					
30. Scolds and criticizes when the child's behavior doesn't meet our expectations. 當孩子未能達到我的要求，我會責罵或批評他。					
31. Explains the consequences of the child's behavior. 向孩子解釋行為的後果。					
32. Slaps the child when he/she misbehaves. 當孩子行為不當的時打耳光。					

Section C: Level of Social Competence (Adapted from Social Competence and Behavior Scale)

第三部分：兒童社會能力

Instruction: The following questions contain a list of behaviors that children may exhibit when interacting with others. Use the following rating scale to rate how often your child exhibits this behavior.

以下是一些有關子女社會能力的問題。請根據您的情況，界定您會做出下列每一項行為的頻密程度。

	Never 1 從不	Rarely 2 很少	Sometimes 3 有時	Often 4 常常	frequently5經 常	Always 6 總是
1. Maintains neutral facial expression (doesn't smile or laugh) 保持中立的面部表情（不微笑或者大笑）						
2. Tired 疲憊的						
3. Easily frustrated 容易受挫的						
4. Gets angry when interrupted 被打斷時會發怒						

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5. Irritable, gets mad easily 脾氣暴躁，輕易發怒					
6. Worries 擔心					
7. Takes pleasure in own accomplishments 以自己的成就感到快樂					
8. Timid, afraid (e.g., avoids new situations) 膽小的，害怕的（例如，避免新的情況）					
9. Sad, unhappy, or depressed 悲傷的，不快樂的，或憂鬱的					
10. Inhibited or uneasy in the group 在團體中受到抑制或感到不安					
11. Screams or yells easily 容易尖叫或大喊大叫					
12. Forces other children to do things they don't want to do 強迫其他兒童做他們不喜歡的事情					
13. Inactive, watches other children play 不活躍，看其他兒童玩耍					
14. Negotiates solutions to conflicts with other children 與其他兒童協商以解決衝突					
15. Remains apart, isolated from the group 孤立無援，與團體隔絕					
16. Takes other children and their points of view into account 考慮到其他兒童和他們的意見					
17. Hits, bites or kicks other children 攻擊、咬或踢其他兒童					
18. Cooperates with other children 與其他兒童合作					
19. Gets into conflicts with other children 與其他兒童發生衝突					

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