

The Grandparent-Grandchild Relationship and Its Effects on the Development of Young Children's Social Competence

Yan Li*, Tiantian Liu, Ziwei Gao and Huihua He

Department of Education, Shanghai Normal University, China

*Corresponding author: Yan Li, Department of Education, Shanghai Normal University, No. 100, Guilin Road, Shanghai 200234, China, Tel: +862164322000; E-mail: liyan@shnu.edu.cn

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Abstract

Objective: Grandparenting is a widespread phenomenon in Mainland China. In the present study, we examined the grandparents-grandchildren relationship and its influences on preschool children's social competence.

Methods: One hundred and ninety-nine elder adults who live together with their young grandchildren completed Grandparents-grandchildren Relationship Scale with demographic information. The children's social competence were reported by their teachers.

Results: Correlation analyses showed that all dimensions of grandparents-grandchildren relationship were significant correlated with young children's social competence. Regression analyses some significant effects of some dimensions of the relationship of grandparents-grandchildren on children's social competence (intimacy, $\beta=6.137$, $SE=1.170$, $p<0.01$; direction-sharing, $\beta=4.631$, $SE=0.802$, $p<0.01$; avoidance, $\beta=-1.370$, $SE=0.662$, $p=0.04$, and conflict-restriction, $\beta=-5.176$, $SE=0.475$, $p<0.01$).

Conclusion: We can evaluate the relationship of grandparents-grandchildren from 6 dimensions and this relationship could predict the children's social competence: the level of intimacy and direction-sharing could positively predict the children's social competence while the level of avoidance and conflict-restriction negatively predict the children's social competence. Therefore, to enhance children's social competence, we should do something to increase the grandparents-grandchildren's intimacy and direction-sharing, and decrease the avoidant and conflict-restrict relation between the two generations.

Keywords: Grandparent-grandchild relationship; Children; Social competence

Introduction

Grandparents-grandchildren relationship may be qualitatively different from parents-children relationship given different expectations shaping grandparents and parents roles [1]. Recent research pointed out that there are 33.36% Chinese children lived together with their grandparents (2014). That means, grandparenting is a widespread phenomenon in Mainland China. There could be two reasons account for this phenomenon. One is Chinese traditional customs and other is the life pressure of young parents.

Many research found that grandparents play an important role in the development of their grandchildren's personality and behavior [2]. Pong and Chen [3] found that the children who live together with their grandparents do better on their academic tasks. Similarly, Attar-Schwartz, Tan, and Buchanan found that grandparent involvement predicted closer and warmer family relationship reported by adolescents. Additionally, grandmothers' involvement can reduce grandchildren's negative emotion and enhance their social competence [4]. In addition, grandparents' support may also reduce children's aggressive and other externalizing behavior problems [5]. In sum, the relationship between grandparents-grandchildren would influence the

life of all people involved and influence the children's social development.

However, most previous research focused on grandparents and their adolescent grandchildren. Fewer research focus on the relationship between grandparents and their young grandchildren especially when they live together, and how this kind of relationship influence preschoolers' social competence. The present study examined the grandparents-grandchildren relationship and its influences on preschool children's social competence.

Method

Participants

The participants were 199 elder adults (aged from 50-89, 89 females, 5.5% aged 50-55 years; 27.6% aged 56-60; 37.2% aged 61-65; 21.1% aged 66-70; and 8.5% aged 71-81) who live together with their grandchildren aged 4-5 years (103 boys, $M=4.4$ years, $SD=0.41$ years) from different levels of kindergarten in Shanghai, China. These elder adults completed Grandparents-grandchildren Relationship Scale with demographic information. The children's social competence was reported by their teachers (females, ages ranging from 25 to 35 years) (see below).

Measures

Grandparents-grandchildren relationship scale: According to Aldous's [5,6] views of grandparents in intergenerational context and Weiss's [7] theory of social provisions, we designed grandparents-grandchildren relationship scale to assess the relationship of grandparents and grandchildren. It comprises 50 items with 6 factors (intimacy, direction-sharing, avoidance, conflict-restriction, affirmation, and satisfaction) on a 4-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 4=strongly agree). In the present study, the Cronbach alpha

value for this measure was 0.81, for six factors were: 0.62 (intimacy), 0.74 (direction-sharing), 0.76 (avoidance), 0.80 (conflict-restriction), 0.77 (affirmation), and 0.70 (satisfaction).

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted on the 50 items of grandparents-grandchildren relationship scale. Model fit statistics are presented in Table 1. As shown in Table 1, this model provided a good fit to the data with $\chi^2(104) = 246.28$, $p < 0.01$; RMSEA=0.073; NNFI=0.87; CFI=0.90.

	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	RMSEA	NNFI	CFI
Model	246.28	104	2.36	0.073	0.87	0.90

Table 1: Confirmatory factor analysis of grandparents-grandchildren relationship scale.

Children's social competence scale: Children's social competence scale is 72-items measure designed by Chung [8] to assess children's social competence development according to the Preschool Behavior Q-set [9]. It represented seven statistically derived factors: achievement-orientation (16 items), autonomy (12 items), directiveness (11 items), getting along with others (11 items), approach-orientation (8 items), dependability (8 items), and emotional expression (6 items). The present study measured preschoolers' social competent development using revised Children's social competence scale. The revised scale consists of 64 items that require individuals to rate the extent to which statements are representative of themselves, on a 9-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 9=strongly agree). In the

present study, the alphas were 0.91 (achievement-orientation), 0.82 (autonomy), 0.85 (directiveness), 0.88 (getting along with others), 0.77 (dependability), and 0.61 (emotional expression). Because the alpha for approach-orientation was relatively low, following an item analysis, we removed approach-orientation (8 items), producing an alphas of 0.93 for the revised version.

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted on the 50 items of Children's Social Competence Scale. Model fit statistics are presented in Table 2. As shown in (Table 2), this model provided a good fit to the data with $\chi^2(174) = 574.05$, $p < 0.01$; RMSEA=0.076; NNFI=0.83; CFI=0.86.

	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	RMSEA	NNFI	CFI
Model	574.05	174	3.29	0.076	0.83	0.86

Table 2: Confirmatory factor analysis of children's social competence scale.

Results

Correlation analyses

Correlation analyses indicated a number of significant relationships (Table 3). Firstly, intimacy, direction-sharing, affirmation, and grandparents-grandchildren relationship scale's total score were all positively related with achievement-orientation, autonomy, directiveness, getting along with others, dependability, and emotional expression. Secondly, avoidance and conflict-restriction were negatively related with achievement-orientation, directiveness, getting along with others, dependability, and emotional expression. Thirdly, satisfaction was positively related to achievement-orientation, directiveness, getting along with others, dependability, and emotional expression. Finally, four factors (intimacy, direction-sharing, affirmation, and satisfaction) were positively correlated with children's social competence scale total score and the other two factors (avoidance and conflict-restriction) were negatively correlated with children's social competence scale total score.

Regression analyses

Our regression analyses revealed some significant effects of some dimensions of the relationship of grandparents-grandchildren on

children's social competence (intimacy, $\beta=6.137$, $SE=1.170$, $p < 0.01$; direction-sharing, $\beta=4.631$, $SE=0.802$, $p < 0.01$; avoidance, $\beta=-1.370$, $SE=0.662$, $p=0.04$, and conflict-restriction, $\beta=-5.176$, $SE=0.475$, $p < 0.01$).

Discussion

The present aimed to examine the relationship of grandparent and grandchild and its effects on the development of grandchildren's social competence during the preschool years. Firstly, to test grandparents-grandchildren relationship, we designed a grandparents-grandchildren relationship scale and demonstrated its validity. In addition, we investigated the relationship between grandparents-grandchildren relationship and young children's social competence, and found that all dimensions of grandparents-grandchildren relationship were significant correlated with young children's social competence. Finally, we found that some dimensions of grandparents-grandchildren relationship can effectively predict children's social competence.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Intimacy	0.332**	0.179*	0.462**	0.503**	0.172*	0.471**	0.523**
Direction-sharing	0.388**	0.166*	0.515**	0.584**	0.264**	0.542**	0.603**
Avoidance	-0.467**	-0.052	-0.417**	-0.456**	-0.295**	-0.545**	-0.548**
Conflict-restriction	-0.525**	-0.053	-0.471**	-0.546**	-0.288**	-0.518**	-0.604**
Affirmation	0.414**	0.164*	0.444**	0.569**	0.188*	0.528**	0.573**
Satisfaction	0.526**	0.090	0.504**	0.674**	0.290**	0.612**	0.671**
Grandparents-grandchildren relationship scale	0.659**	0.154*	0.682**	0.798**	0.379**	0.778**	0.855**

Note: 1=achievement-orientation, 2=autonomy, 3=directiveness, 4=getting along with others, 5=dependability, 6=emotional expression, 7=Children's social competence scale. * Indicates significance at p<0.05. **p<0.01

Table 3: Correlations between grandparents-grandchildren relationship scale and children's social competence scale (N=199).

The results of the present study support the position that grandparents-grandchildren relationship is a significant factor in young children's social competence. A study found that grandparents may provide support to the parents of these young children, and thus indirectly influence and promote grandchildren's social competence [4]. Another study showed that informal involvement of grandparents is associated with reduced adjustment difficulties among children [10]. Early childhood social adjustment is marked by the emergence of patterns of social competence (e.g., Angold and Egger [11,12] Consistent with previous findings [4,10], our results imply that grandparents-grandchildren relationship plays an important role in young children's social competence. Moreover, our findings go beyond the previous findings. Specially, we found that positive grandparents-grandchildren relationship (i.e. intimacy and direction-sharing) enhances young children's social competence, whereas negative relationship (i.e., avoidance and conflict-restriction) hinder and restrain children's social competence. A main explanation is that grandchildren can benefit from grandparents' socio-cultural resources. Grandparents provided considerable emotional, financial, and informational support to grandchildren [13,14]. That is, grandparents influenced the development of young children's social competence.

Conclusion

According to the CFA, the self-designed grandparents-grandchildren Relationship scale is validate. We can evaluate the relationship of grandparents-grandchildren from 6 dimensions, and this relationship could predict the children's social competence: the level of intimacy and direction-sharing could positively predict the children's social competence while the level of avoidance and conflict-restriction negatively predict the children's social competence. Therefore, to enhance children's social competence, we should do something to increase the grandparents-grandchildren's intimacy and direction-sharing, and decrease the avoidant and conflict-restrict relation between the two generations.

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