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Measurement invariance in the assessment of parenting practices: A cross-cultural comparison of China and the United States

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Abstract

Assessing parenting practices in a culturally informed manner is critical to clinical practice when working with families. Although many parenting measures have been translated into Chinese, limited evidence for measurement invariance is available. The present study aims to assess the measurement invariance of positive and negative parenting practices across Mandarin-speaking families living in Mainland China and English-speaking families living in the United States. Three thousand seven parents of children ages 6-12 years (770 English-speaking: parent $M_{\text{age}} = 35.15$ years, $SD = 7.96$; child $M_{\text{age}} = 9.50$ years, $SD = 4.27$; 2,237 Chinese-speaking: parent $M_{\text{age}} = 38.46$ years, $SD = 4.42$; child $M_{\text{age}} = 9.40$ years, $SD = 1.78$) completed the Multidimensional Assessment of Parenting Scale as a part of two separate research protocols. Multiple-group confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) were used, and the source of invariance at the factor and item levels was examined. CFA revealed that a seven-factor solution was feasible across both samples, as evidenced by configural and metric invariance. We found a lack of scalar invariance; thus, we constructed a partial scalar invariance model and presented latent means, correlations, and variances of the seven subscales. Item-level parameter estimates and content analyses revealed potentially different item interpretations of the measure. The lack of scalar invariance suggests that researchers should not use mean differences (e.g., from simple t tests) for cross-cultural comparisons using common parenting questionnaires. Instead, we recommend analyzing data utilizing latent variable modeling (e.g., structural equation modeling) and future directions for improving measures as part of larger efforts for promoting inclusive parenting science. (PsycInfo Database Record (c) 2023 APA, all rights reserved).

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