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Parenting in Singapore: Insights to the Culture-Specific Functions of Styles and Practices

Cheung Hoi Shan

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About this webinar

- Examine the types of parenting styles and practices in local research
- How is parenting related to children's development, particularly in terms of control and warmth?
- Reports findings from a recent systematic review on parenting studies in Singapore
- Some forms of control, even the more punitive ones, may have a positive connotation
- Implications for practice, interventions and policies

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Why parenting?

- Parents are the first socialisation agents in a child's life
- Parents as a key part of the microsystem, alongside peers and school
- Parent-child relationship and family processes are important for children's (long-term) development

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What are parents' roles in child socialisation?

- Process through which children acquire characteristics that are valued in their society
- Parents facilitate directly or indirectly
- Directly: Through parenting styles and practices
- Parenting styles and practices may take different forms or serve different functions according to culture

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Form vs. function

- Same form, different functions across cultures
  - Authoritativeness linked to better academic performance among European Americans (Steinberg et al., 1994)
- Different forms, same function
  - Authoritarianism linked to better academic performance in Hong Kong (Leung et al., 1998)
- How does form and function in multi-cultural Singapore look?
  - Asian child-rearing values vs. the “new school” way

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Key research questions

1. What are the parenting styles and practices that have been examined in research in Singapore? (in relation to control and warmth)

2. How are the styles and practices related to child developmental outcomes, compared to other Asian and Western contexts?

Developmental outcomes include intrapersonal, interpersonal, behavioural and academic

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Search strategy

- Databases: PsycINFO, Web of Science, PubMed, Scopus, PERIND, Singapore Periodical Index
- Keywords

  (Parent* OR Mother* OR Father*) **OR**
  (Parenting style* OR Parenting practi* OR parenting behavior*) **OR**
  (Child* OR Adolescen* OR Teen*) **AND**
  Singapore*

- Database search was carried out between 27th and 31st May 2019, updated in Aug 2020

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Selection criteria

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Children ages 3 to 17	Non-Singapore samples
At least one parenting variable	Special needs population
At least one child outcome	Adoptive parents
All publication years	Did not report empirical data from primary studies
	Studies not published in English

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Identification
Records identified through database searching (n = 2,624)
Records after duplicates removed (n = 1,647)

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Full-text articles assessed for eligibility (n = 63)
Articles excluded, with reasons (Total n = 39)
Age of participants (n = 3)
Atypical population (n = 4)
Dissertation (n = 1)
Relevant variables not measured (n = 30)
Unclear variables (n = 1)

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Relevant variables not measured (n = 30)
Unclear variables (n = 1)
Articles identified through forward and backward searches (n = 3)
Articles included for review (n = 27)

Summary of the 27 studies reviewed

Category	Description	No. of studies
Study design	**Correlational**	**21**
	Longitudinal	6
Informants	**Child only**	**21**
	Both parent and child	5
	Mother only	1
Developmental phase	Pre-school	2
	Middle childhood	9
	Adolescence	**18**
Child outcomes	**Intrapersonal**	**12**
	Interpersonal	4
	Behavioural	**15**
	Academic	6

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Parenting constructs in Singapore

Parenting styles	Parenting practices
Authoritative	**Active mediation**
Authoritarian	**Restrictive mediation**
Permissive	**Behavioural control**
Parental warmth	**Psychological control**
Parental attitude	Parental involvement
	Monitoring
	Intrusiveness
	Parental sensitivity
	Physical punishment

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Parenting styles

- Authoritative, authoritarian, permissiveness (and warmth)
- A constellation of **attitudes** towards the child that are communicated to the child (Darling & Steinberg, 1993)
- Represents an emotional climate
- All local studies on parenting styles used the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ)
- Centred around **parental control** and **responsiveness**

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Baumrind (1971); Maccoby & Martin (1983)

Control and warmth also underpin the Parental Acceptance-Rejection Theory (PARTheory; Rohner et al., 2015)

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Findings on authoritative parenting

Intrapersonal	Interpersonal	Behavioural	Academic
Higher self-esteem[1]	Better relationships[1]	Less aggressive[3]	Not related to self-perceived academic ability[4]
Greater self-reliance[1]	Good social skills[2]	Less anxious/ depressed[3]	Greater interest in school[1]
Lower sense of inadequacy[1]	Aware of others' emotions[2]	Less withdrawn/ depressed[3]	Better attitude towards school[1]
Use emotions in a positive way[2]		Fewer delinquent behaviours[3]	Enhanced mastery and performance goals[4]

[1]Ang (2006)
[2]Chong & Chan (2015)

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[3]Pang et al. (2013)

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Authoritative-style parenting has a positive connotation.

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[1]Ang (2006)
[4]Sim & Chin (2014)

Findings on authoritarian parenting

Intrapersonal	Interperesonal	Behavioural	Academic
Lower self-esteem[1]		More aggressive[3]	No difference in attitude towards school (Malays only)[1]
Greater sense of inadequacy[1]		More anxious/ depressed[3]	High maternal authoritarian + High paternal authoritativeness = better grades[4]
Greater negative self-talk[2]		More withdrawn/ depressed[3]	
Authoritarian mothers: More adolescents were well-adjusted Authoritarian fathers: Fewer adolescents were well-adjusted[1]			

[1]Ang & Goh (2006)
[2]Chong & Chan (2015)

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Authoritarian mothers: More adolescents were well-adjusted Authoritarian fathers: Fewer adolescents were well-adjusted[1]			

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Authoritarian-style parenting has mixed outcomes.

[1]Ang & Goh (2006)
[4]Sim & Chin (2014)

Findings on permissive parenting

Intrapersonal	Interpersonal	Behavioural	Academic
Use emotions in a positive way[2]	Better social skills[2]	More aggressive[3]	Poorer attitude towards school[1]
Maternal permissiveness: Higher self-esteem[1]	Greater awareness of others' emotions[2]		

[1]Ang (2006)
[2]Chong & Chan (2015)

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Findings on permissive parenting

Intrapersonal	Interpersonal	Behavioural	Academic
Use emotions in a positive way[2]	Better social skills[2]	More aggressive[3]	Poorer attitude towards school[1]
Maternal permissiveness: Higher self-esteem[1]	Greater awareness of others' emotions[2]		

Permissive-style parenting has mixed outcomes.

[1]Ang (2006)
[3]Pang et al. (2013)

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Parenting practices

- Behaviours undertaken to achieve specific socialisation goals
- Children infer parenting style through practices
- **Behavioural control**: Regulate child's behaviour through rules, rewards, discipline
- **Psychological control**: Parental control of children's emotions and behaviour through psychological manipulation of the relationship
- **Active mediation**: Proactive parental communication with children regarding media use
- **Restriction mediation**: Parental rules surround media use

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Findings on parental control

	Intrapersonal	Interpersonal	Behavioural	Academic
Behavioural control			Not related to school conduct[1]	Better academic achievement[1]
Psychological control	More internalising symptoms[2]	More externalising symptoms[2]	Not related to school conduct[1]	Poorer academic achievement[1]

[1]Stright & Yeo (2014)
[2]Hong et al. (2017)

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Findings on parental control

	Intrapersonal	Interpersonal	Behavioural	Academic
Behavioural control			Not related to school conduct[1]	Better academic achievement[1]
Psychological control	More internalising symptoms[2]	More externalising symptoms[2]	Not related to school conduct[1]	Poorer academic achievement[1]

Parental warmth was linked to both psychological and behavioural control (Stright & Yeo, 2014)

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[1]Stright & Yeo (2014)
[2]Hong et al. (2017)

Findings on parental mediation of internet use

	Disclose personal information	Meet acquaintance in person	Pathological internet use	Self-regulation
Active mediation	Less[1,2]	Less[1,2,5]		Greater online self-regulation and emotion regulation[6]
Restrictive mediation	Greater[1]	Less[2,5]	Less[3]	Greater online self-regulation and emotion regulation[6]
	Less, because of increase in privacy concern[2]			

[1]Shin & Kang (2016)
[2]Liu et al. (2013)
[5]Liau et al. (2005)

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Findings on parental mediation of internet use

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	Less, because of increase in privacy concern[2]			

[3]Chng et al. (2015)
[6]Chen & Chng (2016)

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Key patterns about local parenting

- Parenting that respects the child's autonomy with the goal of preserving the relationship will likely do well (e.g., authoritative style, behavioural control, active mediation)
  - Interactions marked by verbal give-and-take and warmth (in the case of authoritative-style practices)
  - In line with self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), or "western" outlook?
  - Highlights the importance of the emotional meaning of practices, and how they are perceived by children
  - We are not that different from "Western parenting" in this respect

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Key patterns about local parenting

- Parenting that restricts the child's autonomy may not be bad – contextual effects are important
  - Adherence to "Asian" parenting goals and values?
  - Note that psychological control was related to parental warmth
  - Age of the child (e.g., restrictive mediation)
  - Gender of the parent (e.g., maternal authoritarianism)
  - Ethnicity of the child (e.g., no effect of authoritarian parenting on Malays) – but note that ethnic comparisons are rare
  - The child outcome in question – intrapersonal vs. behavioural

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Limitations and future directions

- The local studies all took the etic approach
  - Indigenous parenting?
  - Ethnic differences?
- Studies focused mostly on adolescents, are correlational in nature with excessive use of self-reports
  - Longitudinal, mixed-methods
- Few studies focused on parental warmth/emotional climate
  - How is it expressed and perceived in this cultural context?

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Implications for practice

- Review the use of interventions to ensure that they are in line with contextual factors and local familial practices
- Strict, “authoritarian” control may be fine in some cases
- But the underlying meaning conveyed must be positive, underscores the importance of communication in tandem with the practices
    - E.g., use of harsh discipline or authoritarian style practices

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