



## Research Article

# Parenting Efficacy and Health-promoting Behaviors for Children of Mothers from Native and Multicultural Families in Korea



Sophia Jihey Chung, MSN, RN,<sup>1</sup> Kyung-Sook Bang, PhD, RN<sup>2,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> College of Nursing, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA, USA

<sup>2</sup> College of Nursing, The Research Institute of Nursing Science, Seoul National University, Seoul, South Korea

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## SUMMARY

**Purpose:** The aim of this study was to examine the levels of parenting efficacy and health-promoting behaviors for children of mothers, and to explore the relationships between parenting efficacy and the behaviors of mothers from native and multicultural families in South Korea.

**Methods:** Data was collected by a self-report questionnaire completed by 258 mothers who had 6-month to 36-month-old children attending kindergartens or multicultural family support centers located in Seoul and in Gyeonggi Province, South Korea.

**Results:** No significant difference in parenting efficacy was found, depending on the maternal country of origin. However, Chinese mothers performed health-promoting behaviors more frequently for their children than Korean and Vietnamese mothers did ( $F = 6.87, p < .001$ ). The significant positive correlations between parenting efficacy and maternal health-promoting behaviors for children were found, regardless of maternal country of origin ( $r = .57, p < .001$  for Korean,  $r = .42, p < .001$  for Chinese, and  $r = .40, p < .001$  for Vietnamese mothers).

**Conclusions:** Since maternal health-promoting behaviors were different depending on the native country of the mothers, maternal country of origin should be considered in designing programs for improving maternal health-promoting behaviors for their children. In addition, increasing the level of parenting efficacy can be an effective way for improvement of maternal health-promoting behaviors.

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## Introduction

The number of multicultural families, Korean men or women with non-Korean partners, has increased in recent years in South Korea. During the first decade of this century, the percentage of newly formed multicultural families by marriage in Korea rose to 10.5% in 2010 from 4.6% in 2001 [1]. Although since 2010, the percentage of newly formed multicultural families dropped slightly to 8.7%, the number of multicultural families is on the rise [1]. The majority of multicultural families are composed of a Korean husband and non-Korean wife [2]. As the number of multicultural families rose, the number of children from multicultural families also increased [1]. Because mothers in multicultural families experience difficulties with child-rearing [3,4,5], the concerns about maternal behaviors for the children has been increasing, as maternal behaviors may influence the health status of the children.

Maternal health-promoting behaviors should be examined for improving children's health. Maternal behaviors for their children are important because their behaviors influence the health status of the children, which can affect the rest of their children's lives [5,6]. Parenting efficacy, which relates to the parents' competence and confidence in handling problems related to child rearing [7], has been examined as a contributing factor to maternal behaviors. Many studies have supported that parenting efficacy and maternal behaviors are positively associated [5,8,9]. The health-promoting behaviors of mothers—mothers' motivated efforts to expand positive potential health for the best health status of their children [10]—are also known to be related to maternal parenting efficacy [10]. Considering the significant relationships between parenting efficacy and the mothers' health-promoting behaviors for children, it is necessary to examine the parenting efficacy and health-promoting behaviors among mothers from multicultural families.

Parenting efficacy and health-promoting behaviors of mothers from multicultural families may differ from care provided by mothers from the native culture. In some instances, mothers from

\* Correspondence to: Kyung-Sook Bang, PhD, RN, College of Nursing, Seoul National University, 103 Daehak-ro, Jongno-gu, Seoul, 110-799, South Korea.

E-mail address: [ksbang@snu.ac.kr](mailto:ksbang@snu.ac.kr)

multicultural families, who face cultural differences between mainstream culture and their own [11], have been observed to experience difficulties with childrearing [12]. Those difficulties may, in turn, influence maternal parenting efficacy [13,14]. Several maternal behaviors differ, based on the mother's native country. For example, Min et al. [15] reported that mothers' understanding of and preparation of baby food often resulted in a behavioral difference. Thus, examining the health-promoting behaviors for the children of mothers from multicultural families is important for improving the health status of children, especially infants and toddlers.

Despite the increasing number of multicultural families in Korea, parenting efficacy and health-promoting behaviors of mothers from multicultural families in Korea have been less focused on, compared to studies examining native Korean mothers. In addition, little is known about the difference of mothers from native Korean and multicultural families. Unless the similarities and the differences of maternal behaviors are clarified, appropriate interventions cannot be provided, which may influence the health status of children. Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine the level of parenting efficacy and health-promoting behaviors for children of mothers from native and multicultural families in Korea and to explore the relationships between parenting efficacy and health-promoting behaviors. In this study, the definition of "multicultural family" is limited to the most common type in Korea: a family consisting of a Korean husband, an Asian immigrant wife, and their children.

## Methods

### Study design

A cross-sectional study was used to examine the health-promoting behaviors for children of native Korean, Chinese, and Vietnamese mothers living in South Korea.

### Setting and sample

The participants of the research included (a) native Korean mothers who had 6-month to 36-month-old children attending preschools in the City of Seoul and in Gyeonggi Province (the suburbs of Seoul), South Korea, and (b) Chinese or Vietnamese mothers married to Korean men, visited multicultural family support centers located in the same neighborhood within a district, and had a 6-month to 36-month-old child who attended a preschool. If mothers had two or more children aged 6–36 months, they were asked to focus on the child who attended the selected preschool.

Using G\*power 3.1 with effect size of 0.25 (medium), alpha at .05, power at .8, the total sample size is 158. Considering the dropout rate, the minimum sample size per group was 80. In total, 300 questionnaires were distributed and 273 were returned. After excluding the questionnaires with incomplete answers, there were 258 mothers who participated in this study: 91 Korean, 87 Chinese, and 80 Vietnamese.

### Measurements/instruments

The revised Parenting Sense of Competence and the Behaviors to Promote Children's Health were used to examine parenting efficacy and maternal health-promoting behaviors for their children. To aid the comprehension of the mothers from multicultural families, the questionnaire was translated into Chinese and Vietnamese by two translators who speak Chinese and Korean, or Vietnamese and Korean. Two independent translators reviewed the translated versions of the questionnaires. The time needed to respond to all the questions was about 20 minutes.

### Parenting efficacy

Gibaud-Wallston and Wandersman [16] developed the Parenting Sense of Competence (PSOC). The original PSOC has 17 self-reported items for measuring the competency of parents in raising their children. The translated and revised PSOC [17] includes a total of 13 items, 9 items for parenting efficacy and 4 items for the role of parents. In an earlier study, Kim and Lee [18] used only nine items for parenting efficacy to examine the level of parenting efficacy of mothers from multicultural families. Possible answers range from 1 "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree". A higher score indicates higher parenting efficacy. The Cronbach's alpha for revised PSOC with Korean mothers was .78 [17]. The Cronbach's alpha for revised PSOC, containing nine items for parenting efficacy, with a sample of mothers from multicultural families was .93 [18].

### Health-promoting behaviors for children

The Behaviors to Promote Children's Health developed by Kim et al. [19] was used to measure health-promoting behaviors of mothers for their infants and the toddlers. This tool contains 35 items, consisting of 7 criteria: safety (6 items), emotional support/endeavor (7 items), activity/rest (4 items), prevention of illness (5 items), wearing proper clothing (3 items), nutrition (5 items), and cleansing (5 items). Possible answers range from 1 to 4. Averages for each criterion were calculated with higher scores indicating that mothers more frequently perform the health-promoting behaviors for their children. The internal consistency of the original study was .88 [19].

### Data collection/procedure

Approval from the Institutional Review Board was obtained from Seoul National University, and permissions were obtained from the principals of selected preschools or the presidents of centers, after the purpose and process of the study was explained. Consent from participants was obtained onsite prior to data collection. Mothers who were willing to participate in the study were informed that they could discontinue their participation in the study at any time. Mothers were given study packets, including demographic questionnaires and other instruments, and were asked to return the completed questionnaires to the researcher.

### Data analysis

Data were analyzed using PASW Statistics for Windows, Version 18 (SPSS Inc. Chicago, IL, USA). Descriptive statistics were used to explain the characteristics of participants. Analysis of variance was used to compare health-promoting behaviors for infants and toddlers of mothers from native and multicultural families in Korea. Tukey's test was also used to explore which group of maternal behaviors was significantly different. Analysis of covariance was used to examine differences in health-promoting behaviors of mothers for children after controlling for significantly different demographic characteristics. To identify the relationships between parenting efficacy and health-promoting behaviors for children, Pearson's correlation was used.

## Results

### Demographic characteristics of the mothers

The demographic characteristics of the mothers are summarized in Table 1. Among the 258 mothers in this study, 91 were Korean, 87 were Chinese, and 80 were Vietnamese. Maternal age,

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