

In: A Closer Look at Parenting Styles ... ISBN: 978-1-53617-410-6
Editor: Nicolette V. Roman © 2020 Nova Science Publishers, Inc.

Chapter 11

**CONSTRUCTING AND VALIDATING A
JAPANESE VERSION OF THE INTENSIVE
PARENTING ATTITUDE QUESTIONNAIRE
(J-IPAQ) AND INVESTIGATING ITS
RELATIONSHIP WITH PARENTING BEHAVIOR**

*Sonoko Egami**

Department of Developmental and Clinical Psychology,
Shiraume Gakuen University, Tokyo, Japan

ABSTRACT

Intensive mothering is the idea that child-rearing is primarily a maternal responsibility and that mothers are to devote their time, energy and money to their children. In developed countries including the United States, this concept has negative effects on mothers (e.g., lower life satisfaction and greater depression and stress). To address this maternal problem concerning parenting and the development of children in Japan,

* Corresponding Author's Emails: egami@shiraume.ac.jp; puchitan@syd.odn.ne.jp.

there is a need to investigate the effects of “intensive parenting attitude” on parenting behavior. The aim of this study was to construct and validate a Japanese version of the Intensive Parenting Attitude Questionnaire (IPAQ) and examine its correlation with parenting behavior. It was based on written responses of 824 mothers. The results showed that each sub-scale of IPAQ affected any one of the mothers’ six parenting behaviors: “involvement and monitoring,” “positive responsivity,” “respect for will,” “overprotection,” “inconsistency” and “harsh discipline.” The first half of these behaviors are positive parenting, which lead to higher social and academic development of children, the latter half are negative and cause children’s problematic behavior.

Keywords: parenting, intensive parenting attitude, mother, parenting behavior

INTRODUCTION

“Parenting” as a theme has fascinated researchers, academics, practitioners, therapists and parents themselves around the world. Topics related to parenting include the determinants of parenting, parenting outcomes, and the best ways of parenting. Belsky (1984) suggested three main determinants of parenting (personal psychological resources of parents, characteristics of the child, and contextual sources of stress and support) and many scholars have tried to demonstrate his theory. As for parenting style, Baumrind stated that an “authoritative” parenting style, which has a high responsiveness and high demand or expectation placed upon children, is crucial for the socioemotional development of children (Baumrind, 1967, 1991). Regarding parenting behavior, for example, “time-out” has been controversial in Western countries (Morawska and Sanders 2011). Attachment theory proposes that secure attachment in children requires parents’ responsivity, consistency and, more recently, emotional availability (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall 1978; Biringen 2000). On the other hand, “helicopter parenting,” which is parents’ over-involvement in their emerging adults’ or college-aged children’s life, is a hot research theme in many studies in psychology (LeMoyne and Buchanan 2011; Reed,

Duncan, Lucier-Greer, Fixelle, and Ferraro 2016). Naturally, there is a big difference in what is required for the range of children's developmental stages, however, discussion about good parenting has changed with the times, and there are cultural differences.

Some studies have showed interesting and meaningful results concerning the cultural differences between the U.S. and Japan. Azuma (1994) suggested that the U.S. mothers of preschoolers taught letters and numbers more directly than Japanese mothers. It seemed that Japanese mothers thought that their children learned "naturally." More recently, Kazama, Hirabayashi, Karasawa, Tardif, and Olson (2013) showed that Japanese mothers with four-year-olds had more ambiguous parenting than U.S. mothers, and that parenting did not encourage the development of four-year-olds' theory of mind and emotional understanding of others. In Japan, there has been much research using domestic data. Some recent studies developed a parenting scale (Itani 2010; Matsuoka, Okada, Tani, Ohnishi, Nakajima, and Tsujii 2011; Ito, Nakajima, Mochizuki, Takayanagi, Tanaka, Matsumoto, Ohtake, Harada, Noda, and Tsujii 2014). A distinctive feature of the ideal mother in Japan, however, is always staying with her children and devoting love, attention, energy, time and resources to them (Kashiwagi 1998). Moreover, "parent" almost means "mother" in many blogs, columns, conversations, and even studies.

In regard to "parenting," "intensive parenting" which almost means "intensive mothering" has recently been controversial in Western countries. "Intensive mothering" is an ideology which holds that mothers' emotion, energy, time, and money should be concentrated on their children (Hays 1996). It was first discussed in the U.S. context, but has also been investigated in Canada and France (Christopher 2012; Loyal, Sutter Dallah, and Rasclé 2017). For example, Wall (2010) highlighted that middle-class well educated mothers were convinced of and overly focused on the relationship between intensive parenting and children's brain development. As a result, they were often worn out and felt guilty. These results mainly concerned middle-class or upper middle-class Caucasian housewives with children; however, Christopher (2012) showed that working mothers constructed their own accounts about good mothering, which were better for

both them and their children than the mainstream idea of intensive mothering. Elliott, Powell and Brenton (2015) also suggested that African-American single mothers embraced intensive mothering without much support and resources. Moreover, McCormack (2005) explored how welfare mothers justified their receiving assistance by espousing the intensive mothering idea. In this way, even mothers who may fall out of the hegemonic mainstream of “intensive mothering” deeply embraced the image of “good mothering.” Many researchers have recently shown the influence of “intensive mothering” using qualitative methods (i.e., interviewing) (e.g., Christopher 2012; Elliot, Powell, and Brenton 2015; McCormack 2005; Wall 2010). Yet, Liss Schiffrin, Mackintosh, Miles-McLean, and Erchull (2013) recognized a need to construct the Intensive Parenting Attitude Questionnaire (IPAQ) and to quantitatively show the effect of “intensive mothering,” pointing out that all extant studies were qualitative. The IPAQ consists of five dimensions; “essentialism,” “fulfillment,” “stimulation,” “challenging,” and “child-centered.” Each domain includes the following items; “*Although fathers are important, ultimately children need mothers more,*” “*Being a parent brings a person the greatest joy he or she can possibly experience,*” “*It is important for children to be involved in classes, lessons, and activities that engage and stimulate them,*” “*Parenting is exhausting,*” and “*Children should be the center of attention,*” respectively.

Hereafter, a number of studies with this scale appeared as follows. Rizzo, Schiffrin and Liss (2013) raised the possibility that maternal intensive parenting attitude was harmful to mental health outcomes. In particular, the belief that women are naturally the essential parent was related to poorer life satisfaction, and that parenting is challenging was related to greater depression and higher stress. Subsequently, Schiffrin, Godfrey, Liss, and Erchull (2015) found that maternal intensive parenting attitude was related to one of the maternal parenting styles – anticipatory problem solving behavior that indicating overparenting (Segrin, Woszidlo, Givertz, Bauer, and Murphy 2012), enrollment in structured activities including creative and physical activities with child outcomes consisting of motor skills, language usage and subjective happiness. They showed that intensive parenting attitudes were related to anticipatory problem solving behavior and

structured activities via anticipatory problem solving behavior; however, there was no evidence of improved child outcomes. The study is interesting and insightful in terms of the strong impact of intensive parenting attitudes on maternal parenting.

As mentioned previously, the ideology that the ideal of “good parenting” is equivalent to “good mothering” is to be always with children and a mother is responsible for parenting has also been prevalent in Japan (Kashiwagi, 1998; Ohinata, 2000). The Japanese gender gap index (GGI) has been the lowest among the developed countries especially in politics (World Economic Forum 2018). In terms of the division of labor by gender, even now half of Japanese women leave their job because of their first child’s birth (Cabinet Office 2018). However, the socioeconomic structure has dramatically changed recently in Japan. For example, the lifetime employment system and the seniority-wage system collapsed; neither system is now common in Japan. In addition, the number of double-income couples has increased, and parental leave has become common in Japan. These changes should lead to gender equality, since both men and women have the two domain, work and family. Despite this, most of those who take parental leave are women (Cabinet Office 2018). Although the work sphere has become more equal, the family sphere including chores and child-rearing is still considered to be women’s tasks (Kazui 1997; Ohno 2012). In particular, many previous studies have suggested that Japanese people think extremely highly of mother–child bonding and maternal devotion to their children (Ohinata 1988). For example, Japanese mothers not only make lunchboxes for their children, but this has also evolved into “*Kyaraben*,” which is a character-themed lunchbox (Occhi 2016). Thus, Japanese women might impose pressure on themselves concerning their parenting due to myths about motherhood (Egami 2005). The myth of motherhood was defined by Ohinata (2000) as “an irrational belief that maternal love for her child is both instinctive and noble.” Thus, it seems this belief has distorted the real feelings and life perspective of mothers.

Then, how would belief in “intensive parenting” affect Japanese mothers? Egami (2005, 2007) studied the influence of the belief in “maternal love,” which is defined as maternal “unconditional” love for children, on

mothers' emotion regulation and expression toward their children. As a result, in the case of mothers of fast-growing children, adherence to maternal love positively affected their emotion regulation, but its effect was negative for mothers of slow-growing children. This is because mothers of fast-growing children likely feel rewarded and calm toward their children. However, mothers of slow-growing children may feel exhausted and ashamed and be unable to control their negative feelings. Also, for couples who both gave higher ratings concerning their belief in maternal love, the mothers evaluated their responsiveness as high, whereas for couples who were inconsistent in their belief in maternal love, and in which the fathers rated it higher and the mothers lower, the mothers reported lower responsiveness (Egami 2013). These results showed that husbands' strong belief in maternal love drove their wives into a corner, especially for mothers who did not endorse the belief in maternal love. Recently, Egami (2017) suggested that, among Japanese mothers, adherence to maternal love and devotion to their children is stronger than their endorsement of the gender division of labor.

Although Egami (2005, 2007, 2013, 2017) raised the possibility of the influences of maternal belief about motherhood on their parenting styles, there has been no study in Japan on intensive parenting attitudes that includes many dimensions of the recent parenting ideology in Western countries other than belief in maternal love. On top of that, there has been no study concerning correlations of intensive parenting attitude with maternal general parenting behaviors (positive or negative). Moreover, all studies using IPAQ showed only correlations but no predictive relationship. A longitudinal procedure should reveal the effect of intensive parenting attitude on maternal general parenting behaviors. How much does IPAQ apply to Japanese mothers? Do Japanese mothers score higher on IPAQ than counterparts from other countries? What aspect assessed within IPAQ do Japanese mothers embrace especially? Does IPAQ predict the maternal parenting behaviors using Japanese data?

Therefore, Study 1 was conducted to construct a Japanese version of IPAQ (J-IPAQ) using Japanese mothers' responses and to compare maternal endorsement of intensive parenting in Japan with mothers in the U.S. Study

2 examined whether any significant predictive relationship was shown by J-IPAQ to maternal general parenting behaviors including both positive and negative parenting, controlling for any maternal perceived social support that could affect maternal parenting behavior (Belsky 1984; Turner and Avison 1985). This is because it is thought that social support has a strong influence on maternal parenting (Belsky 1984; Simons and Johnson 1996). Thus, Study 2 uses longitudinal data to examine the prediction of intensive parenting attitudes to maternal parenting behavior and to assess test–retest reliability, and includes the same participants as Study 1.

METHODS

The IPAQ is a questionnaire used in many studies for mothers with infants, toddlers and preschoolers (Liss et al., 2013; Rizzo, et al., 2013; Schiffrin et al., 2015) because this group of mothers has the greatest need to care for and raise their children. Consequently, this study was also applied to these mothers (i.e., with children aged 6 and under). Since this is the first research on intensive parenting in Japan, it was aimed broadly across regions and so was performed using an internet research company.

Participants and Procedure

Participants in Study 1 consisted of 1648 Japanese mothers aged 20–49 years [mean (M) = 34.1, standard deviation (SD) = 5.19]. They were educated for 9–21 years (M = 14.2, SD = 1.83). The majority were married (97.3%) and the rest were single (divorced or never married; 2.7%). Most participants (63.9%) were housewives, and the rest were full-time workers (21%), part-time workers (13.9%) or freelancers (1.2%). Their annual income level was selected from 1 (less than ¥ 2 million) to 9 (more than ¥ 20 million). Most (27.3%) were in class 3 (¥ 4 million to less than ¥ 6 million), followed by class 2 (¥ 2 million to less than ¥ 4 million 18.1%) and then class 4 (¥ 6 million to less than ¥ 8 million; 14.9%). At that time, Japanese

average annual income level was ¥ 5.6 million, so most respondents of this study fall into the average income family category. Of the 1648 mothers, 824 agreed to participate in Study 2 – the reduced numbers were due to the research budget. Participants were asked to complete the questionnaire via an internet research company in both Study 1 and Study 2. Study 1 was conducted at the end of November 2017 and Study 2 at the end of April 2018.

Measures

Background Variables

Respondents were asked about their socio-demographic characteristics in both Study 1 and 2. Age, number of family members, education level, income level and type of employment were included.

J-IPAQ

Liss et al. (2013) constructed the IPAQ, which contains five categories: “essentialism,” “fulfillment,” “stimulation,” “challenging” and “child-centered.” “Essentialism” is the idea that mothers should perform parenting exclusively. “Fulfillment” means maternal endorsement of the delight and rewards of parenting. “Stimulation” is the notion that parents need to optimally develop their children’s intellect. “Challenging” is difficulty and exhaustion with parenting. “Child-centered” refers to the child-centric lives of parents based on the steadfast belief that children must be the center of parents’ lives. After obtaining permission from M. Liss, IPAQ was translated into Japanese. Then, a translation agency back-translated IPAQ into English, and the correctness of meaning of the scale was checked. Similar to IPAQ, J-IPAQ had 25 items, rated from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) – the higher the score, the greater the degree of each dimension of intensive parenting. This scale was used for both Study 1 and 2. Cronbach alpha of “essentialism” was 0.74 (Study 1) and 0.76 (Study 2) and correspondingly “fulfillment” was 0.73 and 0.78, “stimulation” was 0.54

and 0.53, “challenging” was 0.64 and 0.67 and “child-centered” was 0.67 and 0.73.

Belief in Maternal Love

Egami (2005, 2007) constructed the “adherence to maternal love” scale to assess belief in motherhood. It contains 13 items rated from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). This scale describes the tendency to accept and obey blindly the traditional maternal role and sociocultural belief in “desirable mothers.” For example, “*For their children, mothers can bear almost anything*” and “*It is natural for women to bring up children, because they are suited as caregivers*” – the higher the score, the greater the degree of belief in maternal love. This scale was used only in Study 1 to test the validity of J-IPAQ. Cronbach alpha of the scale was 0.89.

Negative and Positive Feelings about Child-Rearing

Negative and positive feelings about child-rearing were assessed using the scale of Aramaki and Muto (2008). This has 16 items rated from 1 (not at all) to 4 (extremely), which includes three factors: “a sense of being burdened,” “anxiety” and “positive feelings” – the higher score, the greater the degree of each domain of feelings. This scale was used only in Study 1 to test the validity of J-IPAQ. Cronbach alpha for “a sense of being burdened” was 0.81, for “anxiety” was 0.86 and for “positive feelings” was 0.67.

Expectation of Early Education

Maternal expectation of early education was assessed using the scale of Shimizu and Sagara (2011). This scale includes 25 items rated from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (agree) and consists of two factors: “learning aspect” and “psychological aspect.” The higher the score, the greater the degree of each domain of significance by mothers. This scale was only in Study 1 to test the validity of J-IPAQ. Cronbach alpha for “learning aspect” was 0.86 and for “psychological aspect” was 0.83.

Social Support

Social support was assessed using a Japanese version of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (Zimet et al. 1988). The Japanese version was constructed by Iwasa et al. (2007). This scale indicates the degree of participants' perceived social support from their family, friends and significant others. Participants answered 12 questions rated from 1 (very strongly disagree) to 7 (very strongly agree). This scale was used as a controlling variable for mothers' parenting behavior. This scale was used only in Study 2 to test the validity of J-IPAQ. Cronbach alpha of the scale was 0.94.

Parenting Behavior

Parenting behavior was measured only in Study 2 using the Positive and Negative Parenting Scale (PNPS) constructed by Ito et al. (2014). The PNPS includes 35 items, grouped into "involvement and monitoring," "positive responsivity," "respect for will," "overprotection," "inconsistency" and "harsh discipline." They are rated from 1 (very slightly or not at all) to 4 (extremely). The higher the score, the greater the degree of each dimension of parenting behavior. Because the PNPS was designed for parents with a child aged from elementary school to junior high school, the item expression was changed to suit preschoolers' parents in the present study. For example, the word "school" was changed to "preschool or kindergarten." Then, permission from the creator of the scale was obtained. Cronbach alpha for "involvement and monitoring" was 0.85, for "positive responsivity" was 0.82, for "respect for will" was 0.61, for "overprotection" was 0.62, for "inconsistency" was 0.81 and for "harsh discipline" was 0.85.

RESULTS

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

First, a confirmatory factor analysis procedure was conducted to determine whether the five-factor model of IPAQ was appropriate for

Japanese mothers. The same analysis was also used for the PNPS. All analyses were performed using AMOS 25.

Model 1 of IPAQ was a five-factor model using all 25 items. Model 2 was also a five-factor model. However, according to the analysis results, the following five items were deleted: “Both fathers and mothers are equally able to care for children” (1), “Parenting is not the most rewarding thing a person can do” (10), “Women are not necessarily better parents than men” (16), “It is harder to be a good parent than to be a corporate executive” (22), and “To be an effective parent, a person must possess wide range of skills” (23). The goodness-of-fit indices for each model are shown in Table 1. The model fit increased after deleting items from the original model, and Model 2 was adopted. Internal consistency of J-IPAQ after deleting the five items was generally high, as mentioned in the Methods section except for “stimulation.”

Table 1. Model fit statistics for confirmatory factor analyses concerning J-IPAQ

Measures of fit	Models	
	Model 1	Model 2
χ^2	2181.70	1228.48
df	266	160
p -value	0.000	0.000
GFI	0.898	0.928
AGFI	0.875	0.905
CFI	0.777	0.854
RMSEA	0.066	0.064
AIC	2299.70	1328.48

For PNPS, Model 1 (original model) was a seven-factor model including 35 items. Model 2 was seven-factor model with eight items eliminated. The goodness-of-fit indices for each model indicated Model 2 gave a better fit [$\chi^2(309) = 1116.620$ ($p < 0.001$), GFI = 0.902, AGFI = 0.880, CFI = 0.906, RMSEA = 0.056, AIC = 1254.620, CAIC = 1648.898] than Model 1 [$\chi^2(545) = 2801.956$ ($p < 0.001$), GFI = 0.819, AGFI = 0.791, CFI = 0.781, RMSEA = 0.071, AIC = 2971.956, CAIC = 3457.660]. Thus, Model 2 was selected.