

**“Soft Building Blocks” of Modern Parent–Child Relationships—Evidence from Systematic Reviews and Comprehensive Meta-Analyses**

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**ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION**

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**Review Stage at time of this submission** - Data analysis.

**Conflicts of interest** - None declared.

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**Amendments** - This protocol was registered with the International Platform of Registered Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Protocols (INPLASY) on 08 July 2024 and was last updated on 08 July 2024.

**INTRODUCTION**

**Review question / Objective** Researchers are concerned that parents' psychological traits (i.e., “the soft building blocks” phrased in the study) could be relevant to the parent–child relationships. To our best knowledge, however, the potential impacts of parents' psychological traits on modern parent–child relationships have not been systematically explored. The current study aims to verify the relationship between parents' psychological traits (e.g., mindfulness, empathy, and playfulness) and modern parent–child relationships via a systematic review, as well as quantitatively tap into the relationship using Comprehensive Meta-Analyses (CMA). Specifically, the current authors focused on (1) examining the correlations between parents' psychological traits (i.e., “soft building blocks”) and the quality of modern parent–child relationships using CMA; (2) comparing the relative importance of these “soft building blocks” of modern parent–child relationships using CMA;

(3) verifying the cultural differences in the impact of parents' psychological traits using CMA; and (4) exploring the other potential demographic factors impacting the given relationship.

**Condition being studied** We evaluated the impacts of parents' psychological traits (e.g., mindfulness, empathy, and playfulness) on the quality of modern parent–child relationships reported by researchers worldwide. In addition, we examined the potential influence of cultural differences (e.g., Western vs. Asian cultures) on the above relationship. Based on these studies, the potential demographic factors (e.g., family with typical vs. special children) impacting the given relationship were explored.

**METHODS**

**Participant or population** Members (parents and/or children) of families from the general population (e.g., those with typically developing children) and those with special needs (e.g., children with

special developmental needs and/or other health conditions).

**Intervention** Studies based on either no intervention (e.g., self-report studies) or intervention relevant (e.g., parental mindful training) to parents' psychological trait/s were included.

**Comparator** 1. psychological participants (e.g., empathy vs. mindfulness); 2. family type (e.g., family with typical vs. special children); 3. cultural background of the family (e.g., Western vs. Asian cultures); 4. the evaluations of the parent-child relationships (e.g., parent-child closeness vs. conflict).

**Study designs to be included** Both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies could be included.

**Eligibility criteria** We reviewed studies that reported the relationship between parental psychological traits and the parent-child relationships. Our inclusion criteria were: (1) peer-reviewed publications in English; (2) studies with self-evaluations or other-evaluations (e.g., children reports) on parental traits and the parent-child relationship; (3) studies examined the given relationship (e.g., correlations); (4) studies reported the relevant statistical results (e.g., Pearson Correlation Coefficients) for conducting the meta-analysis; and finally, (5) all repeating publications using the same set of data were treated as one publication.

**Information sources** We included peer-reviewed publications from electronic databases (e.g., PubMed and Web of Science). If any critical information was lacking from the publications, we contacted the corresponding authors for further details.

**Main outcome(s)** The CMA preliminary results suggested that:

- (1) the "soft building blocks" were positively correlated to parent-child relationship, referencing to random effect model ( $r = [0.308, 0.389]$ );
- (2) Among the soft building blocks, self-compassion has the highest ( $r = [0.406, 0.577]$ ), while empathy has the lowest ( $r = [0.178, 0.231]$ ) impact on the relationship;
- (3) the cultures' impact on the given relationship according to the fixed effect analysis ( $Q = 15.60, p < .001$ ), yet not according to mixed effects analysis ( $Q < 0.01, p = 0.982$ );
- (4) the "relationship type" effect was significant in referencing the fixed effect analysis ( $Q = 477.05, p$

$< .001$ ) but was not significant in referencing the mixed effects analysis ( $Q = 0.61, p = 0.437$ ).

**Quality assessment / Risk of bias analysis** The risk of publication bias will be evaluated using the funnel plot.

**Strategy of data synthesis** We used CMA software to examine the correlation between parents' potential psychological factors and parent-child relationships with the 95% CI. We recorded the sample size and the correlation coefficients (or equivalent information), as well as potential moderating information (e.g., sex ratio and cultural background of participants) for each study.

**Subgroup analysis** We estimated the CMA results based on the overall studies, and conducted comparisons using the CMA Grouping function (e.g., between "soft-building blocks"; between families with typical and non-typical children; and between participants with different cultural backgrounds).

**Sensitivity analysis** We used the "remove one" analysis of CMA to gauge the sensibility of the meta-analysis.

**Language restriction** English.

**Country(ies) involved** China (Institute of Psychology, Chinese Academic of Sciences; Department of Psychology, University of Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing).

**Other relevant information** All reports on the given topic of modern parent-child relationships were recorded, including reports based on Western and Asian countries.

**Keywords** parent-child relationships, mindfulness, empathy, self-compassion, mental well-being, meta-analysis.

#### Contributions of each author

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