



# Parenting Practices and Parenting Program Preferences of Chinese Immigrant Parents in New Zealand

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## Abstract

Participation in evidence-based parenting programs benefits parents and children, but these programs have limited reach. This study utilized a mixed-method design to investigate the parenting concerns and parenting program needs of Chinese immigrant parents in New Zealand. Parents ( $n = 159$ ) were surveyed about their perceived levels of child adjustment problems, parenting confidence, and parenting risk and protective factors. Parents' knowledge and experience with parenting programs, and their program preferences were also examined. Eight Chinese parenting practitioners were interviewed about parenting challenges, parental concerns, and barriers to program participation of Chinese immigrant parents. Survey results showed that parents who gave their child higher ratings on behavior problems reported less parental self-efficacy, and more parental adjustment, family relationship, teamwork, and parenting difficulties. Parents' knowledge and experience of available parenting programs was low. Barriers to program participation included time constraints, lack of program awareness, cultural and language barriers, and no childcare provision. Parents indicated a preference for a range of delivery options including group-based, seminar, and individually tailored programs. Program features most likely to influence attendance were content that addresses personally relevant issues and children's self-development (such as coping with failure, managing negative emotions, and increasing confidence), and convenient location of program. Practitioners indicated that managing difficult child behavior and maintaining positive parent-child relationships were key parenting challenges. These concerns were linked to cultural expectations about child obedience, academic performance, and parent/grandparent relationships. Findings highlight program preferences that could be offered to meet Chinese immigrant parenting support needs and increase program participation.

**Keywords** Chinese immigrant parents · practitioners · parenting challenges · parenting program preferences

## Highlights

- Parents and practitioners highlighted challenges, concerns, and needs of Chinese immigrant parents.
- Parents who gave higher child behavior problems ratings reported more parenting and family relationship difficulties.
- Identified parenting program, delivery, and content options that could meet Chinese immigrant parenting support needs.

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Evidence-based parenting programs based on social learning principles are an effective treatment for behavior problems in children (Dretzke et al., 2009). The evidence, derived from meta-analyses of randomized controlled trials, shows that these programs substantially improve child behavior problems, parenting practices, and parent mental health (for a review see Scott & Gardner, 2015). However, relatively few parents participate in evidence-based parenting programs (Sanders et al., 2007). Research has highlighted the difficulty of engaging vulnerable families in parenting programs, such as migrant parents from culturally

diverse backgrounds (Ho et al., 2012; Sanders & Kirby, 2012).

Chinese immigrant parents have been identified by researchers and clinicians as one group of parents with barriers to program participation (Ho et al., 2012; Lau et al., 2011). There is some evidence that cultural barriers may partly account for low rates of program engagement. In support of this possibility, Ho et al. (2012) found that among Chinese-American immigrants, low perceived acceptability of parent training was associated with low levels of acculturation and endorsement of parenting practices involving strict discipline and shaming. Other studies have identified specific barriers to engagement regarding the cultural fit between child rearing values and parent training strategies that encourage desirable behavior. For example, the use of praise has been described as problematic for Chinese parents (Crisante & Ng, 2003; Ho et al., 1999), due to beliefs that praising children for attainments will lead to a lack of modesty, self-satisfaction and a decreased desire to improve (Lau et al., 2011).

There are a number of reasons why increased involvement in evidence-based behavioral parenting interventions may be beneficial for Chinese immigrant parents. Research has identified some culturally relevant risk factors for ineffective parental discipline and child behavior problems in Chinese immigrant families. Stress associated with immigration, such as parent-child acculturation conflict (Hou & Kim, 2018), may negatively impact parenting. For instance, Lau (2010) reported that immigrant Chinese parents in the USA, who valued traditional forms of hierarchical control (i.e., maintaining authority through strict control) were more likely to use physical punishment in response to acculturation conflicts. Demands for school achievement, stemming from Chinese parents' endorsement of the goal of knowledge pursuit (Luo et al., 2013), can be another significant source of stress. Lau (2010) also found that children's problems in school were a strong predictor of use of physical punishment. Parent-child conflict in Chinese-American families, about respect and manners, and school, has also been associated with child behavior problems (Chung et al., 2020). Some research has been conducted in the USA to address the cultural responsiveness of parent training for Chinese immigrant parents by focusing on some of these risk factors. For example, Lau et al. (2011) conducted a pilot randomized controlled trial of a behavioral family intervention (i.e., Incredible Years) which was tailored to target risk factors associated with physical discipline in Chinese immigrants. The study provided some insight into the cultural adaptation of evidence-based parenting training for high-risk Chinese immigrant families. However, to make parenting support more widely available to immigrant parents, a public health approach, which blends universal prevention and early intervention

approaches, is needed to the provision of evidence-based parenting interventions (Sanders, 2012).

Sanders and Kirby (2012) have argued that efforts to disseminate parenting programs more widely are more likely to succeed when program developers, researchers, and service providers adopt a consumer focus to their work with families. Using a consumer approach allows parenting interventions to be more responsive to the needs and preferences of target group parents (Sanders & Kirby, 2012). For example, surveys and interviews can be used to find out about the challenges, concerns, and needs of these parents, thus allowing practitioners and program developers to identify barriers and enablers to participation (e.g., cost, timing, program format, and mode of delivery). This data can then be used to make sure that programs are tailored to the needs and preferences of parents (Sanders & Kirby, 2012).

The current study uses a consumer approach to investigate the parenting support needs of Chinese immigrant parents living in New Zealand. Consistent with the rapid population increase of Chinese immigrants in Western countries, New Zealand has experienced a large growth in Chinese immigrants over the last two decades (Statistics New Zealand, 2020). Many of these parents have immigrated to seek advanced education for their children (Liu, 2017). A number of New Zealand studies have identified academic and school-related concerns of Chinese immigrant parents, such as difficulties with home-school communication (Zhang et al., 2014) and concerns about their child's academic achievement (Guo, 2014). These findings provide a useful starting point for identifying issues that Chinese immigrant parents would like to have included in a parenting program. However, more information is needed about the challenges they face in their parenting role and the type of parenting interventions that are required.

There appears to be no prior research that has surveyed Chinese immigrant parents to help clarify their challenges, concerns, and needs. A small number of consumer surveys with samples of Asian parents provide some insight into barriers and enablers to parenting program participation. For example, a study of 12 Korean immigrant parents in New Zealand (Vaydich & Keown, 2018) found that language barriers, location and timing of services were some of the most frequently cited barriers to accessing a parenting intervention. Cost and program timing were also the most cited barriers in an Australian study by Morawska et al. (2011) of 137 culturally diverse parents (including 48 Asian parents). In contrast, barriers related to culture were identified by a very small minority of parents. The most preferred program delivery methods were group, seminar, television, and individual sessions. Another example is provided by Sumargi et al. (2015) of 273 Indonesian parents with a child aged between 2–12 years. Parents identified

several program topics that were relevant to their needs, including balancing work and family, teaching children to accept failure, and boosting children's self-esteem. Furthermore, the study found that important program features that would influence parents' decisions to participate in a parenting program included convenient location, program includes personally relevant issues, and effective program. Barriers to program participation included lack of program awareness and competing work commitments.

Consumer surveys also need to gather parent reports of child behavior problems and associated family risk and protective factors in order to determine whether to develop or adapt a program for a specific population (Kirby & Sanders, 2012). For example, the study by Sumargi et al. (2015) explored parenting risk and protective factors and the prevalence of child emotional and behavioral problems. Parents reported low levels of child behavior problems, dysfunctional parenting practices, family adjustment problems, and a high level of confidence in managing child misbehavior. However, parents who reported high levels of child behavior problems were more likely to use ineffective parenting strategies for dealing with their child's misbehavior, such as shouting, making the child feel bad or guilty, threatening, but not following thorough. Parents who showed less confidence, felt more stressed, and had less family and partner support in parenting their children, were more likely to use ineffective parenting strategies that have shown to be significant predictors of child behavior problems. The authors stated that the findings indicate the need to provide parenting programs that teach Indonesian parents effective strategies in dealing with child misbehavior.

In addition to consumer research with parents, practitioners can be another valuable source of information about the concerns of specific groups of parents and potential barriers and enablers to program participation and the usefulness of different program delivery methods (Mejia et al., 2015; Morawska et al., 2012). There are some studies with practitioners, which have investigated perceived acceptability of parenting program features (Mejia et al., 2015; Morawska et al., 2012). However, scant research has been conducted with Asian parenting practitioners about the parenting concerns of Asian parents, and the barriers and enablers to program participation. Morawska et al. (2012) collected some data on barriers to participation and program delivery preferences from 98 practitioners who were working with culturally diverse parents residing in Australia. Practitioners indicated that parents preferred more traditional delivery methods (e.g., home visiting and individually tailored programs), and gave lower ratings to self-directed modalities. Practitioners rated many barriers to program participation with the highest ratings given to language and financial cost. This study provided some insight into the views of practitioners who have worked

with culturally diverse parents, however further research is needed with practitioners who have knowledge and experience with specific groups of immigrant parents, such as Chinese immigrant parents.

The goal of our study was to obtain an understanding of the parenting support needs and parenting program preferences of Chinese immigrant families living in New Zealand, with a child aged 5–12 years. We conducted a survey of Chinese immigrant parents to identify: 1) parents' perceptions of emotional and behavioral problems in their child; 2) the levels of modifiable parenting risk factors (perceptions of parenting practices, parenting self-confidence, parental adjustment, parental teamwork, and family relationships); 3) patterns of relationships between parenting factors and child emotional and behavioral problems; 4) parents' knowledge of and experience with parenting programs; 5) barriers to program participation; 6) program features that would influence parents to participate; 7) program delivery methods that parents would find useful; and 8) what topics parents considered important to include in a parenting program. The second phase of the project involved interviews with Chinese parenting practitioners designed to gather qualitative information about parenting challenges, parental concerns, and barriers to program participation of Chinese immigrant parents. We used a mixed method approach as survey methods are useful for gathering a data from a large number of people from a target group with minimal cost and resources, whereas qualitative methods, such as interviews, allow for more in-depth insight into barriers to program participation and how programs might be tailored to meet the needs and preferences of specific target groups (Sanders & Kirby, 2012). The results of this study could be used to tailor evidence-based parenting programs to meet the needs and preferences of Chinese immigrant parents.

## Method

### Participants

Convenience sampling was used to recruit participants by distributing print and online advertisements to community outlets, such as schools, extracurricular groups for Chinese children, Chinese churches and community organizations, and online Chinese parenting forums. Participants were 159 Chinese immigrant parents living in New Zealand, with at least one child between the ages of 5 - 12 years ( $M = 7.99$ ,  $SD = 2.14$ , 58.4% boys). The sample comprised 129 mothers with a mean age of 38.38 years ( $SD = 5.37$ ), and 27 fathers with a mean age of 41.81 years ( $SD = 6.03$ ). The majority of the participants came from mainland China and spoke Mandarin. Around half of the participants had lived

in New Zealand for more than ten years, and nearly one-third for less than 5 years. The majority were married ( $n = 149$ ) and held a university qualification ( $n = 115$ ). Almost half of the participants reported a moderately high annual income ( $> NZ\$75,000$ ) and less than one-third were employed full-time.

Parenting practitioners were recruited through local Chinese community service agencies within the Auckland (New Zealand) urban area. Participants were eight Chinese female practitioners aged 34 to 61 years old ( $M = 42.50$ ,  $SD = 8.67$ ) who spoke Mandarin, and were born in Asia (six from mainland China, one from Hong Kong, and one from Singapore). Seven practitioners were social workers who worked in local Chinese community agencies with Asian families, and one practitioner was a counselor who provided family support for Chinese immigrants. On average, the practitioners had four years ( $SD = 3.30$ ) experience conducting the Triple P – Positive Parenting Program with Chinese families.

## Measures

In the survey parents provided information about their family background and personal information, such as family income and parent education. Parents were asked to report their perceptions of the target child's behavior problems and their confidence in dealing with these difficulties, parenting practices, and family adjustment problems. Parents were asked about their knowledge of and participation in parenting programs, participation barriers, and preferences for parenting program content, features, and delivery formats.

### Child Adjustment, Parenting and Family Relationship Variables

We used a version of the Child Adjustment and Parent Efficacy Scale (CAPES) that had been validated for use in a Chinese cultural context (Guo, 2015), to examine children's emotional and behavioral problems (Child Adjustment scale) and parents' confidence in managing these behaviors (Parent Self-efficacy scale). The Child Adjustment scale contains 23 items with a 4-point scale ranging from 0 (*not true of my child at all*) to 3 (*true of my child very much*). The Parent Self-efficacy scale includes 18 items with a 10-point scale ranging from 1 (*certain I can't do it*) to 10 (*certain I can do it*). In the current study, the internal reliability was good for Child Adjustment ( $\alpha = 0.90$ ) and Parent Self-efficacy ( $\alpha = 0.95$ ). A version of the Parenting and Family Adjustment Scale (PAFAS) that had been validated for use in a Chinese cultural context (Guo et al., 2017), was utilized to assess parenting practices (15-item Parenting scale) and family adjustment problems (11-item Family adjustment scale). The Family adjustment scale has three factors: Parental adjustment, family relationships, and

parental teamwork. Items are rated on a 4-point scale from 0 (*not true of me at all*) to 3 (*true of me very much*). Internal reliabilities were good for the Parenting scale:  $\alpha = 0.77$ ; Parental adjustment:  $\alpha = 0.76$ ; Family relationships:  $\alpha = 0.78$ ; and Parental teamwork:  $\alpha = 0.73$ .

## Knowledge and Experience of Parenting Programs

A modified version of the Parenting Program Questionnaire (PPQ; Morawska et al., 2019) was used to investigate parents' knowledge and experience of parenting programs, and their parenting program preferences. Parents were asked the following questions from the current support category of the PPQ (Morawska et al., 2019). The questionnaire listed nine parenting programs (e.g., Triple P), and parents were asked to indicate whether they participated in any of the listed programs during the past 12 months. Parents who had previously attended one of the programs were then asked to rate the perceived usefulness of the program on a 5-point scale from 1 (*not at all useful*) to 5 (*extremely useful*). Parents were also asked to indicate reasons they had not attended a parenting program from a list of 16 options, such as "too expensive" (see Table 3).

## Parenting Program Preferences

Questions about future program participation, and preferred program delivery modes and features were drawn from the preferences for parent support category of the PPQ (Morawska et al., 2019). Parents were asked to rate the likelihood of participating in a parenting program in future on a 4-point scale from 1 (*not at all likely*) to 4 (*extremely likely*). Preferred program delivery formats (e.g., television and group programs) were examined using a list of 12 options (see Table 4) and preferred parenting program features were assessed from nine options (e.g., different delivery formats and convenient location). Parents rated the usefulness of each delivery format on a 4-point scale from 1 (*not at all useful*) to 4 (*extremely useful*) and the influence of program features on their decision to participate, on a 5-point scale from 1 (*no influence*) to 5 (*a lot of influence*). Parents were also asked to rate the importance of including 23 parenting program topics (see Table 5 for a list of topics) in a parenting program, such as increase child's social skills, using a 5-point scale from 1 (*not at all important*) to 5 (*extremely important*). Thirteen of the topics were based on a questionnaire used by Sumargi et al. (2015). Six topics were derived from parenting topics used in a survey of New Zealand fathers (Frank et al., 2015). The remaining topics, such as teaching child time management skills, encourage the child to participate in after school tutorials, and communication with schools, were added given their potential relevance for Chinese immigrant parents (Guo, 2015; Guo, 2014; Zhang et al., 2014).

## Procedure

Ethical approval was obtained from The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee for the parent survey and practitioner interviews. Written informed consent was obtained from the practitioners. The parent survey was completed anonymously either on paper ( $n = 61$ ) or online ( $n = 98$ ). We provided Mandarin translations of the survey. The translations of the CAPES and PAFAS were available from previous research (Guo et al., 2017), whereas the PPQ was translated by the first study author and back-translated by an accredited Chinese-English translator.

Semi-structured interviews (between 20–60 minutes) were conducted in Mandarin by the first author, with each of the eight practitioners in their workplace. Practitioners were asked to give their views regarding the parenting challenges and concerns of Chinese immigrant parents. They were also asked to for their views about common barriers for Chinese immigrant parents to participating in a parenting program. Interviews were audio-recorded for later transcription and data analysis. Participants received a 20-dollar grocery voucher to thank them for their time.

## Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics are presented for child adjustment, parenting, and family relationships variables in Table 1, and parenting program experiences and preferences in Tables 3–5. For the CAPES and PAFAS, the percentage of missing values for most subscales was below 8%, except for the CAPES Parent Self-efficacy (23.86%). Missing data was missing not at random (MNAR) for four scales (CAPES Parent Self-efficacy, PAFAS Parental Adjustment, PAFAS Family Relationships, and PAFAS Parental Teamwork) due to parents not answering any questions on these scales. Pair-wise exclusion was used in the statistical analysis of the CAPES and PAFAS scales to retain the maximum available data. Some participants did not answer all of the parenting preference questions, so the  $n$  for each question varies and is shown in the tables. Pearson's correlations were used to identify relationships between child adjustment and parenting

and family factors (see Table 1). To further explore relationships between parenting factors and child adjustment problems, parents were categorized into low or high levels of child behavior problems based on a median split of the CAPES Child Adjustment scores. We conducted a series of  $t$ -tests to compare the two groups on parenting variables (e.g., parental self-efficacy, dysfunctional parenting practices, parental adjustment, family relationships, and parental teamwork, and the seven items of the PAFAS Parenting scale which assess inconsistent and coercive parenting (see Table 2). Spearman's Rho correlations were used to identify relationships between parent preference and program barrier variables and child adjustment and parenting and family relationships variables, with missing data excluded pairwise.

We analyzed the interview data using an inductive approach described by Thomas (2006), which involves the following process: (1) Closely reading the transcripts and identifying meaningful statements related to the topics; (2) creating themes by grouping similar statements together; (3) reducing the number of statements coded into more than one category and removing statements not related to the interview topics; (4) developing a scheme with main themes and their descriptions. All transcripts were read several times by the first author (YW), and a subsample was read by the second (LK) and third authors (NF), to identify themes. After discussion a coding framework was developed and the transcripts were coded by YW. To increase reliability, text assigned to each theme was reread by LK and NF and a final list of themes was achieved through discussion.

## Results

### Survey Results

#### Child Adjustment and Parenting Variables

Table 1 shows that, on average, children in the sample had a low level of adjustment problems. Parent self-reports indicated a high level of self-efficacy in dealing with children's emotional and behavioral problems, and low levels of

**Table 1** Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Child and Parent Variables

Variable	Score range	$n$	$M$	$SD$	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 CAPES child adjustment problems	0-69	142	15.02	9.66	–					
2 CAPES parent self-efficacy	18-180	116	154.33	22.76	–0.67**	–				
3 PAFAS dysfunctional parenting practices	0–45	145	11.68	6.01	0.50**	–0.44**	–			
4 PAFAS parental adjustment	0–12	150	2.73	2.27	0.55**	–0.51**	0.57**	–		
5 PAFAS family relationships	0–12	152	2.11	2.31	0.50**	–0.50*	0.50**	0.68**	–	
6 PAFAS parental teamwork	0–9	146	2.21	2.05	0.29**	–0.32**	0.35**	0.54**	0.65**	–

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$



**Table 2** Parenting Variables by Level of Child Adjustment Problems

Parenting Variable	CAPES child adjustment problems						<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	High level			Low level					
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
CAPES parent self-efficacy	42	143.76	19.31	66	164.36	12.29	-6.17	<0.001	1.27
PAFAS dysfunctional parenting practices	53	14.85	5.35	80	9.46	5.67	5.45	<0.001	0.98
PAFAS parental adjustment	56	3.86	2.10	82	1.66	1.81	6.57	<0.001	1.12
PAFAS family relationships	57	3.30	2.46	81	1.10	1.66	5.87	<0.001	1.05
PAFAS parental teamwork	52	2.77	2.20	82	1.76	1.82	2.89	0.005	0.50
PAFAS dysfunctional parenting practices (items)									
Shouting or becoming angry	57	1.79	0.92	82	1.09	0.83	4.69	<0.001	0.80
Arguing with the child	58	1.57	0.94	82	1.18	0.89	2.47	0.015	0.43
Not following through on threats	58	1.60	1.04	82	1.07	1.14	2.81	0.006	0.49
Making the child feel bad or guilty	58	1.55	0.80	82	1.10	1.03	2.82	0.006	0.49
Give in and do the task myself	58	1.28	0.85	81	1.19	0.92	0.59	0.557	0.10
Give into the child's demands	58	0.91	0.90	82	0.56	0.83	2.38	0.019	0.41
Spanking	57	0.91	0.89	82	0.52	0.82	2.65	0.009	0.46

dysfunctional parenting practices, parental adjustment difficulties, family relationships problems, and parental teamwork problems. Results of the Pearson correlation analysis indicated that children's adjustment problems were significantly correlated with parenting and family relationship variables. Medium to strong positive correlations were found between child adjustment problems and dysfunctional parenting practices, parental adjustment, family relationships, and parental teamwork. Parental self-efficacy was negatively associated with child adjustment problems.

As shown in Table 2, the results of the t-tests indicated that compared to parents of children with low levels of behavior problems, parents of children with high levels of behavior problems reported significantly higher levels of dysfunctional parenting ( $d = 0.98$ ), more problems in parental adjustment ( $d = 1.12$ ), family relationships ( $d = 1.05$ ), and parental teamwork ( $d = 0.50$ ), and lower levels of parental self-efficacy ( $d = 1.27$ ). There were significant differences between the two groups of parents in the reported frequency of six of the seven dysfunctional parenting strategies. Compared to parents who reported low levels of child adjustment problems, parents who reported high levels of child adjustment problems were more likely to shout or become angry with their child ( $d = 0.80$ ), argue with their children about their misbehavior ( $d = 0.43$ ), make threats to their child without following through ( $d = 0.49$ ), make their child feel bad or guilty for misbehaving ( $d = 0.49$ ), give in to their child's demands when s/he became angry or upset ( $d = 0.41$ ), and spank their child ( $d = 0.46$ ). There was no statistically significant between-group difference on the extent to which parents gave in to the child's demands by doing the task themselves ( $d = 0.10$ ).

### Knowledge and Experience of Parenting Programs

Seventy-two percent ( $n = 96$ ) of parents had not participated in any of the nine listed program options in the last 12 months. Of the parents who had participated in a program, the Triple P Parenting Program was the most frequently reported. All parents who had previously attended a parenting program indicated that the programs were useful and that they were likely to participate in a program in the future. Whereas 83.2% of parents who had never attended a parenting program before indicated that they were likely to participate in one in the future.

As shown in Table 3, the most prevalent barriers to participation in a parenting program were not being aware of the availability of any programs, followed by lack of time and inconvenient timing of services. Approximately 23% of parents identified cultural barriers to participation, such as using culturally inappropriate strategies and not being able to understand the language. Lack of access to childcare ( $\rho = -0.25$ ,  $p = 0.007$ ) was more frequently endorsed by parents who reported more child adjustment problems. While parents who reported less parenting confidence were more likely to indicate transport problems ( $\rho = 0.29$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ) and lack of family support ( $\rho = 0.39$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) as barriers to participation. Lack of family support was also more likely to be rated by parents who reported more family relationship problems ( $\rho = -0.28$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

### Parenting Program Preferences

Table 4 shows that the top-six delivery formats rated as very useful by parents were group program, seminar, individually

**Table 3** Frequency of Parent Reported Barriers to Participation in Parenting Programs

Barriers	Yes	
	<i>n</i>	%
Not aware of any programs	99	75.6
Lack of time	83	63.4
Inconvenient timing of services	74	57.4
No access to childcare	62	48.1
Inconvenient location of services	61	47.3
Competing work interests	58	45.7
Not recommended by friends	53	41.1
Culturally inappropriate strategies used	30	23.3
Not able to understand the language	29	22.5
Transport difficulties	26	20.5
Learning parenting strategies from elders	26	20.3
Too expensive	24	19.0
Family members not supportive of my attendance	11	8.5
No need to because partner/relative/house maid takes care of child	9	7.0
No concern about child's behavior	7	5.4
Uncomfortable accessing a parenting program	5	3.9

Participants could choose more than one barrier. The total *n* who answered each item (yes or no) ranged from 127 to 131

tailored program, self-directed program, home visit, and religious organization access (e.g., attend a program at your church or temple). Parents who reported higher levels of child adjustment problems and lower self-efficacy were more likely to rate intensive delivery methods including home visits ( $\rho_{child\ adjustment} = 0.40, p < 0.001$ ;  $\rho_{self-efficacy} = -0.31, p < 0.001$ ) and individually tailored programs ( $\rho_{child\ adjustment} = 0.31, p < 0.001$ ;  $\rho_{self-efficacy} = -0.23, p = 0.018$ ), as useful program delivery formats. A self-directed program with phone support was more likely to be rated as useful by parents who reported higher levels of child adjustment and family relationship problems ( $\rho_{child\ adjustment} = 0.28, p = 0.002$ ;  $\rho_{family\ relationships} = -0.23, p = 0.006$ ). The top five program features that would influence parents to participate were the program addresses personally relevant issues, followed by being held in a convenient location, the program has been demonstrated to be effective, trained practitioners conduct the program, and resources are professionally produced and presented. Parents who reported higher levels of child adjustment problems and lower levels of parental self-efficacy were more likely to be influenced to participate in a program that encourages parents to set and achieve own goals ( $\rho_{child\ adjustment} = 0.30, p < 0.001$ ;  $\rho_{self-efficacy} = -0.26, p = 0.01$ ). A program that addresses personally relevant issues was another influential program feature for parents who gave lower ratings on self-efficacy ( $\rho = -0.20, p = 0.041$ ).

**Table 4** Parents' Preferred Delivery Formats and Program Features

Program design		<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Delivery formats	Group program	141	2.81	0.90
	Parent seminar	141	2.76	0.85
	Individually tailored program	141	2.72	1.02
	Self-directed	140	2.59	0.94
	Home visits	141	2.55	1.00
	Religious organization access	141	2.53	1.07
	Workplace access	141	2.46	0.95
	Radio segment	140	2.43	0.82
	Self-directed with telephone assistance	140	2.41	0.97
	Television program	141	2.40	0.77
	Newspaper article	140	2.36	0.85
	Web-based program	140	2.34	0.87
	Features	Program addresses personally relevant issues	138	3.78
Program is held in a convenient location		140	3.72	1.22
Program has been demonstrated to be effective		139	3.59	1.12
Trained practitioners conduct the program		141	3.55	1.18
Resources professionally produced and presented		138	3.50	1.10
Program is free or very low cost		140	3.49	1.33
Participants are encouraged to set and achieve own goals		138	3.33	1.13
Program is tailored to the needs of the individual parent		142	3.32	1.21
Different delivery formats are available		141	2.92	1.15

As shown in Table 5, parents rated most topics as very important to include in a parenting program. The topics given the highest ratings were teach children to cope with failure, help children to cope with negative emotions, increase children's confidence, teaching time management skills, and increase children's social skills. Encouraging your child to participate in after-school tutorials was more likely to be rated as an important topic by parents who gave higher child adjustment problem ratings ( $\rho = 0.32, p < 0.001$ ) and parents who reported more dysfunctional parenting practices ( $\rho = 0.30, p < 0.001$ ).

## Interview Results

The challenges and concerns of Chinese immigrant parents were coded into three topics. The first topic was children's behavior problems at home, and included the themes disobedience, daily routines and disruptive behaviors.

**Table 5** Rank Ordered Mean Ratings of Topics that Parents Considered Important to have in a Parenting Program

Topics	<i>n</i>	M	SD
Teach child to cope with failure	141	4.43	0.82
Help child to cope with negative emotions such as anger	142	4.41	0.80
Increase child's confidence	141	4.25	0.95
Teach child time management skills	142	4.23	0.93
Increase child's social skills	141	4.16	0.94
Manage parental anger when child misbehaves	141	4.14	1.03
Encourage child to be more independent	142	4.13	1.01
Promote child's positive relationships with peers	138	4.09	0.92
Manage difficult child behavior, such as disobedience, temper tantrums	142	3.99	1.06
Computer and electronic devices use	142	3.97	1.12
Support child to do his/her homework	142	3.97	1.09
Build a positive relationship with your child	142	3.96	1.14
Teach child to respect their elders	142	3.90	1.17
Encourage child do well in school	142	3.80	1.05
Cope with stress	140	3.76	1.15
Spend time as a couple	140	3.68	1.25
Communicating with child's teachers and school	142	3.65	1.06
Balance work and family life	141	3.65	1.25
Take care of yourself as a parent	141	3.58	1.18
Teach child practical skills, for example home maintenance, household chores	142	3.56	1.23
Support partner as a parent	141	3.56	1.17
Reduce sibling rivalry	141	3.50	1.33
Encourage child to participate in after school tutorials	141	2.90	1.33

Children's behavior problems at home were a key issue, including disobedience, fighting with siblings, and tantrums. Difficulties establishing daily routines around sleeping and eating were another major challenge. Some practitioners explained parental concerns about disobedience by referring to cultural influences. As one practitioner said: "I think Chinese parents pay much attention to disobedience. They think that anything other than unquestioning obedience means that the child is naughty. This may be related to our cultural background. We like obedient children." Other practitioners reported that parenting challenges related to child disobedience and daily routines, were linked to disagreements and inconsistencies between parents and grandparents about managing the child's behavior. This is illustrated by the following quote: "Parents want their children to eat at certain times and avoid giving children a snack before mealtimes. Grandparents, however, do not think this is important and will give snacks anyway. This leads to conflicts around mealtimes." The second topic was about school related issues, including the themes

academic performance, home-school communications, and difficulties getting on with peers. Most practitioners identified that Chinese parents had concerns about school related issues, including children's academic performance and their interaction with peers (e.g., being bullied). Due to concerns about academic performance, Chinese parents tended to send their children to after-school classes or arrange extra homework. These academic demands often led to further parenting challenges, such as getting children to comply with requests to complete homework. The third topic was parenting challenges and included the themes parent-child communication and acculturation difficulties. Communication difficulties between parents and children was a concern mentioned by four practitioners. As one practitioner said: "Some parents prefer to set up harsh rules and strict boundaries for their children. This results in difficult communication between parents and children." Acculturation challenges regarding acceptable parenting practices in New Zealand were mentioned by five practitioners. For example, one practitioner stated: "Chinese parents prefer to use physical punishment because their parents disciplined them this way. However, parents are not allowed to do this in New Zealand. Thus, Chinese parents often ask me how to deal with child behavior problems." Practitioner views about the challenges and concerns of Chinese immigrant parents provide some further leads about issues to address in parenting program content.

Practitioners mentioned some of the same barriers as parents, including lack of awareness about parenting programs, lack of access to child care, lack of time, transportation difficulties, and language barriers. In addition, some practitioners stated participation was hindered by parenting beliefs and attitudes, such as, behavior problems would disappear as the child matures, and negative attitudes toward seeking parenting support from outsiders.

## Discussion

This study is one of the first community surveys of Chinese immigrant parenting support needs and preferences for program features and delivery methods. It is also one of the few studies that has been conducted with both Chinese immigrant parents and Chinese practitioners about parenting challenges, concerns, and needs. New information about program content and barriers to participation was provided from both parent and practitioner perspectives.

Parents in this study reported low levels of child adjustment problems, dysfunctional parenting practices, parental adjustment problems, family relationships, parental teamwork problems, and a high level of parental self-efficacy to deal with child adjustment problems. These findings are consistent with Sumargi et al. (2015) who



found similar patterns in their sample of Indonesian parents. The results of the correlation analysis suggest that the low levels of dysfunctional parenting practices and parental adjustment problems found in this sample may be due partly to having few challenges related to child emotional and behavioral problems and having good relationships and support from family members. These findings are compatible with other studies with Indonesian and Australian parents showing relationships between parenting protective factors and child behavioral problems (Sanders et al., 2007; Sumargi et al., 2015).

The present study also supports findings from other research that indicates associations between parenting risk factors and child adjustment difficulties (Sanders et al., 2007; Sumargi et al., 2015). Parents who gave their child higher ratings on behavior problems reported less parental self-efficacy, and more parental adjustment, family relationship, and teamwork difficulties. They also reported more frequent use of inconsistent and coercive strategies when dealing with child misbehavior (e.g., shouting, arguing, threatening but not following through, making the child feel bad or guilty). These ineffective parenting strategies have been found to be significant predictors of child behavior difficulties (Scott & Gardner, 2015) and highlight the need to provide parenting programs that teach Chinese immigrant parents effective strategies for dealing with child misbehavior. Behavioral family interventions teach parents positive child behavior management skills (e.g., praise and rewards, clear expectations for behavior) as an alternative to coercive, dysfunctional parenting practices (Scott & Gardner, 2015). Recent research evidence provides support for the effectiveness of this type of intervention for increasing the parenting skills of Chinese immigrant parents (Wei et al., 2023).

In order to attract parents to participate in an intervention, preferences for program delivery formats and features need to be taken into account. Two of the most preferred parenting program delivery formats, group program and parent seminar, are group-based delivery formats. These results support the suggestion by Kim et al. (2010) that parents from collectivist cultural-backgrounds may prefer group-based delivery formats. Conversely, other program types including individually tailored and self-directed programs were among the top four preferred delivery methods. More intensive measures of program delivery (including home visits and self-directed programs with phone support) were more likely to be preferred by parents who gave higher ratings on child adjustment problems and parents with lower perceived self-efficacy or family relationship difficulties. Overall, the findings suggest that a range of program delivery methods should be offered, in order to cater to different parent needs and to reduce barriers to Chinese immigrant parent involvement. Our findings for preferred

program features are consistent with parenting surveys conducted with Indonesian and Canadian parents (Lee et al., 2014; Sumargi et al., 2015), who also found that the most preferred features were having an effective program with personally relevant content, that is held in a convenient location. Thus, the results suggest that the desire for high quality, content relevant programs that work is common to parents cross-nationally. Similar to Gonzalez et al. (2023) we found that parents who had greater concerns about their child's behavioral and emotion problems indicated a preference for program features adapted to their own needs, such as setting and achieving their own goals.

With regards to program content, parents showed a high level of interest in most of the listed parenting topics. Consistent with a survey of Indonesian parents (Sumargi et al., 2015), the parenting topics regarded as the most important by parents in this study were those relevant to child self-development, such as teaching children to cope with failure, helping children to cope with negative emotions, increasing children's confidence, and teaching children time management skills. Our findings also indicated that Chinese immigrant parents may place less emphasis on some parenting topics related to child academic success, such as encouraging children to participate in after-school tutorials. One possible reason might be that some parents had shifted their values about the importance of after-school academic activities as a result of acculturation. Conversely, parents who gave higher ratings on child adjustment problems and lower ratings on parent self-efficacy were more likely to endorse inclusion of content on encouraging children to participate in after-school tutorials in a parenting program. However, parent ratings for encouraging their child to do well in school and supporting their child to do their homework were rated as important topics to include in a parenting program. The ratings were backed up by practitioner comments regarding parental concerns about academic performance and parenting challenges around homework completion. These results support the argument that Chinese immigrant parents endorse pursuing knowledge as an important goal for their child's development consistent with the Confucian emphasis on diligence and persistence in the acquisition of knowledge (Luo et al., 2013).

Data provided by both parents and practitioners indicated that managing difficult child behavior, such as disobedience, was concerning to parents and viewed as important to address in a parenting program. Practitioner feedback suggested that parental challenges regarding disobedience were linked to cultural expectations for unquestioning child obedience and grandparents who undermined parents' rules for managing the child's behavior. The Confucian principle of filial piety, which emphasizes children's respect and honor of their parents (Luo et al., 2013),

might provide an explanation for these patterns. Consistent with this notion, Leung and Fung (2014) suggested that grandparents might think that parents (i.e., the grandparents' children) should follow their ways of disciplining their grandchildren.

Parent-child relationships was another topic where there was convergence between the views of parents and practitioners. Parents indicated that the topic building a positive relationship with your child was important to include in a program. Practitioner comments indicated that maintaining positive parent-child relationships was challenging for some parents, including communication difficulties due to enforcing strict family rules, and use of harsh parenting strategies, while refraining from expressing warmth towards their child. These parenting practices may be influenced by the Confucian concept, Guan, which stresses the responsibility of parents to support their child to achieve development goals (Luo et al., 2013). Some authors suggest that Chinese parents believe that praise and positive attention would spoil their children and prevent them from working hard, whereas firm control and strict discipline ensures children achieve success (Lim & Lim, 2004).

One of the goals of this study was to identify parents' knowledge of and experience with parenting programs. It was found that 72% of parents had not participated in any parenting program over the last 12 months, with lack of awareness of programs a key reason for non-participation. However, 83% of these parents revealed that they were likely to attend a parenting program in the future. These findings suggest a high level of interest in parenting programs among Chinese immigrant parents that could partly be addressed by better program promotion. Parents also identified practical barriers including lack of time and inconvenient timing of services, consistent with findings from similar research in Canada, Indonesia, and among parents from culturally diverse backgrounds in Australia (Lee et al., 2014; Morawska et al., 2011; Sumargi et al., 2015). Nearly one-quarter of participants rated language barriers and use of culturally inappropriate strategies as reasons for non-participation in a parenting program. These findings are in contrast to the studies by Morawska et al. (2011) of Australian parents from culturally diverse backgrounds, and by Sumargi et al. (2015), of Indonesian parents, in which culture-related barriers were reported by only a few parents. A possible reason why more parents in the current study mentioned culture and language barriers could be partly due to the number of recent immigrants in the sample. Nearly half ( $n = 14$ ) of the parents who identified language as a barrier and one third ( $n = 11$ ) of the parents who mentioned cultural barriers had lived in New Zealand for less than five years. Like parents, practitioners also suggested cultural and language barriers, no childcare access, and inconvenient location as obstacles to program

participation. In addition, practitioners mentioned barriers cited by other researchers (Lee et al., 2014) including beliefs that behavior problems would disappear as the child matures and negative attitudes toward seeking parenting support from outsiders. Our finding that there were some differences between parents and practitioners in the factors that influence Chinese parent engagement in parenting programs supports the recommendation by Mytton et al. (2014) that program developers should obtain the views of both participants and program deliverers during program evaluation.

The findings of the present study have a number of implications for promoting parenting programs to Chinese immigrant parents and tailoring program content to meet their parenting support needs. The survey results showing a lack of awareness about parenting programs indicate the need for better program promotion. Our results suggest that possible ways to achieve this would be to give parents specific information in advertisements about program content likely to be of interest to Chinese immigrant parents, to mention that the program has a strong evidence base, parents can set and achieve their own goals, and that the program will be held in a location convenient to parents. Advertisements should contain messages about optimizing child outcomes and avoid implying that the program will fix parental shortcomings.

With regard to program content, in addition to the topics mentioned earlier, practitioners need to be aware of parenting beliefs of some Chinese parents that may pose a barrier to using positive parenting strategies. For example, practitioners indicated it is hard for some parents to praise their child and to spend quality time with their child, due to the belief that harsh parental control and restrained parental warmth helps their child to work hard. As suggested by Haslam & Mejia, 2017, when harsh physical punishment is considered normative, practitioners can discuss parents' childhood experience with physical punishment and their ideal parenting style, rather than point out their traditional parenting strategies are wrong (Haslam & Mejia, 2017). Practitioners can also present positive parenting strategies as options for parents to try and can encourage parents to start using positive strategies, such as affection, at a level comfortable for them (Haslam & Mejia, 2017). Where parents have concerns about their child's academic performance, practitioners could help them think about how they might implement parenting strategies to address their worries. For example, practitioners could encourage parents to set up homework rules and routines, and use clear, calm instructions to implement homework routines. When teaching parents new parenting strategies practitioners might need to consider grandparent/parent conflicts about applying child behavior management tactics. Inter-dependency among family members is typical in Chinese culture, with

grandparents supporting their adult children by raising their grandchildren (Xie & Xia, 2011). One way to facilitate consistency between parents and grandparents could be to invite grandparents to attend the program (Haslam & Mejia, 2017).

There are some limitations to the consumer survey, probably due to having a convenience sample. As the sample mainly consisted of parents of children with low levels of behavior problems, the findings may not represent parents of children with behavior difficulties who are often targeted for inclusion in parenting programs. However, the sample size was sufficient to conduct the statistical analyses as planned and to detect medium to large correlations between child and parent variables. Another limitation is that most participants were well educated with moderately high levels of family income, which may limit the generalization of the study results to parents with lower levels of income and education. With nearly half the participants recruited from churches, one of the preferred delivery formats may have been biased towards access to a religious organization. These limitations reduce the generalization of the results and future research should recruit a larger, more diverse sample, and target parents with concerns about their child's misbehavior. A limitation of the practitioner interviews is the small number of participants and findings may not be generalizable to other Chinese parenting practitioners in New Zealand. To obtain a more complete view of parenting experiences and challenges of Chinese immigrant parents, focus groups or interviews could be held with Chinese parents.

In conclusion, the consumer survey provides valuable insights regarding child adjustment and parenting practices of a sample of Chinese immigrant families living in New Zealand. While parents reported low levels of child adjustment problems, dysfunctional parenting practices, and family adjustment problems, the study also provides valuable data regarding Chinese immigrant parents' support needs and program preferences. New insights were gained from practitioner interviews about parenting concerns of Chinese immigrant families and barriers to participation, from the perspective of Chinese practitioners, and their knowledge and experience of working with Chinese immigrant parents.

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### Compliance with ethical standards

**Conflict of interest** The authors Yun Wei, Louise Keown and Nike Franke declare that they have no conflict of interest. The Triple P – Positive Parenting Program is developed and owned by The University of Queensland (UQ). Royalties from the programme are distributed to the Parenting and Family Support Centre (PFSC), School of

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**Ethical approval** The authors assert that all procedures contributing to this work comply with the ethical standards of The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee and as laid down in the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki and its later amendments.

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