

SCHOOL REFUSAL BEHAVIOR AND DEMOGRAPHY OF CAREGIVERS
AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN XIANYANG CITY IN CHINA

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, who told me that we must constantly learn new knowledge throughout our lives.

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ABSTRACT

Past researches on school refusal behavior have shown a significant correlation between family functioning and school refusal behavior. In China, the issue of having relative as caregiver other than a parent to care for a child is on the rise and past studies have shown that both-parents caregivers are more beneficial to students' mental health than other types of caregivers. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships and identify any significant differences between four types of caregivers and school refusal behavior among primary school students in three primary schools in Xianyang City, Shaanxi Province, China. In this quantitative study, a total of 160 primary school students in Year 6 who were raised by both-parents caregivers, single-parent caregivers, grandparents caregivers and other relative caregivers were involved as samples of the study. The data were collected through a questionnaire survey. Analysis of the data revealed that only the caregiver's occupation was significantly associated with school refusal behavior. In addition, there is no significant relationship between the other demography of caregivers, the gender of students, socioeconomic status level of grandparents caregivers and school refusal behavior. And there is no difference in school refusal behavior across male and female students and four types of caregivers. Overall, this study supports past and current findings on the relationship between demography of caregivers with school refusal behavior. Future research is suggested to investigate the issue of school refusal behavior with different instruments and a wider variety of respondents to enrich the research on this issue.

ABSTRAK

Penyelidikan lalu mengenai tingkah laku penolakan sekolah telah menunjukkan hubungan yang signifikan antara fungsi keluarga dan tingkah laku penolakan sekolah. Di China, masalah mempunyai saudara sebagai pengasuh selain ibu bapa untuk menjaga anak semakin meningkat dan kajian-kajian lepas menunjukkan bahawa kedua-dua pengasuh ibu bapa lebih bermanfaat untuk kesihatan mental pelajar daripada jenis pengasuh yang lain. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji hubungan dan mengenal pasti perbezaan yang signifikan antara empat jenis pengasuh dan tingkah laku penolakan sekolah di kalangan pelajar sekolah rendah di tiga sekolah rendah di Bandar Xianyang, Provinsi Shaanxi, China. Dalam kajian kuantitatif ini, seramai 160 pelajar sekolah rendah pada Tahun 6 yang dibesarkan oleh pengasuh kedua ibu bapa, pengasuh ibu bapa tunggal, pengasuh datuk dan nenek terlibat sebagai sampel kajian. Data dikumpul melalui tinjauan soal selidik. Analisis data menunjukkan bahawa hanya pekerjaan pengasuh mempunyai hubungan yang signifikan dengan tingkah laku penolakan sekolah. Walau bagaimanapun, tidak terdapat hubungan yang signifikan antara demografi pengasuh lain, jantina pelajar, tahap status sosioekonomi pengasuh datuk nenek dan tingkah laku penolakan sekolah. Tambahan pula, tidak terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan dalam tingkah laku penolakan sekolah dalam kalangan pelajar lelaki dan perempuan dan empat jenis pengasuh. Secara keseluruhannya, kajian ini memberikan sokongan terhadap keajian lepas dan kajian ini terhadap hubungan antara empat jenis pengasuh dengan tingkah laku penolakan sekolah. Penyelidikan masa depan disarankan mengkaji isu tingkah laku penolakan sekolah dengan instrumen yang berbeza dan lebih banyak responden untuk memperkaya penyelidikan mengenai isu ini.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

School refusal is a behavior that children avoid to go to school because attend to school leads to uncomfortable feelings, anxiety and stress. A study suggested that parents included truancy in their definition of refusal (Archer et al., 2003). Egger et al. stated the anxiety-based school refusal profile was more associated with depression, separation anxiety disorder, and more significant peer relationship issues. In contrast, the truancy profile (without anxiety) was more related to behavioral disorders, oppositional defiant disorder, and depression (Egger et al., 2003). They also estimated that about 1% -2% of the total population refuse to go to school, although this is at a low level in many estimates. Havik et al. used a self-reporting method in a large sample of 5,465 11 to 15 years old and found that about one child (about 4%) in each class was reported to be absent due to a typical school refusal behavior. The psychiatrist believes that school refusal occurs in early childhood is because children want to be with their parents or caregivers rather than encountering unpleasant situations in school (Havik et al., 2013).

It is not uncommon for primary school students in China to refuse to attend school. Because they are afraid of violence in school or on their way to school, they are afraid of poor grades, they are afraid of not having peers in school, and they also are afraid of being bullied by peers. "School refusal is defined as the behavior of staying home and away from school due to severe fear or anxiety." Said by King and Bernstein

(King NJ et al., 2001). It is a complex syndrome may lead to crime, social chaos and educational failure, and it can be influenced by the child 's personality, the situation at school, and the circumstance of the family.

In China, families are faced with the challenges of industrialization. As part of the process of industrialization, more than 120 million people moved from rural areas to urban centers (Chen et al., 2000). The migration of parents with their children brings huge challenges to the family. The days of men earning money and women keeping their houses are gone. Fathers and mothers have to balance their parenting work while working separately. Many men have to step out of traditional concepts, make masculine compromises, and share caregiver work of children with their working wives (Choi & Y. Peng, 2016). Despite of their busy work schedule, parents spend time with their children after working hours.

However, due to the rapidly changing economic environment in China, the role of parents is also changing. Some parents have moved from the countryside to the cities in search of work, thus leaving their children in the caring of their grandparents, some children are cared for by relatives. In 2009, a report of nearly 66 million Americans stated that three out of every 10 American households had at least one person in each of those three households providing unpaid care as a family caregiver (Collins & Swartz, 2011). The changes in the structure of care for children (students) affect them in a number of ways, some psychological, some socio-emotional and some behavioral. Chinese researchers have found that children being left with grandparents in primary school affects the level of education. Children who are left with other relatives or grandparents rather than parents in primary school are more likely to experience poor self-rated and mental health (Liang & Sun, 2020).

With the development of society and the renewal of attitudes, there has been a

breakdown in marriage-bound family relationships, an increase in divorce rates year on year, and an increase in the number of single-parent families, with children raised by mothers or fathers alone. Currently, there are more than 20 million single-parent families in China, 70% of which are single-parent families (Ministry of Civil Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2013). Past research on school refusal behavior has shown that single-parent families have significantly more family problems than two-parent families in terms of role performance and communication (Bernstein & Borchardt, 1996).

Because of the influence of Chinese cultural factors, working parents are more willing to choose the help of grandparents than paid childcare services. People with more traditional values may think that grandparents are more trustworthy than nurseries to take care of their children (Arpino et al., 2014). This change has taken place in the past 20 years so that many children are left in the countryside, where they are left by their parents to be raised and educated by their grandparents (Chen et al., 2000).

At the same time, as many grandparents have become one of the mainstays of the family as educators and caregivers of children in recent years, the challenges faced by families with grandparents as educators and caregivers have increasingly become economic and social issues. This issue has gradually become the focus of many studies focus on children's mental health, as grandparents as educators and caregivers have increasingly become an issue that cannot be ignored by society as a whole. Grandparents play an indispensable and important role in the family caregiving of young people (Nyland et al., 2009). Because grandparents provided most of the care for their grandchildren and the grandparents who are not living together are also widely involved in parenting (Chen et al., 2011). Meanwhile, grandparents can indirectly and directly influence the educational level and mental health of their grandchildren through many ways (Zeng & Xie, 2014).

In addition to caring factors, many scholars also explored gender differences in mental health. Although Kearney, Eisen and Silverman (1995) point out that in terms of gender, school refusal behavior is relatively evenly balanced between boys and girls. Reid (2014) found that research over the past decade continues to consistently show that the majority of students who refuse and skip school are male students rather than female students. In 2016, González et al. found that there is no difference in school refusal scores in a study. But after that in another research, they analyze the results of the school refusal scale and conclude that boys scored significantly higher than girls (González et al., 2016, González et al., 2018).

Socioeconomic status (SES) is also a hot topic of research in children's mental health. It includes not only income but also education level, and a consensus in an area or a country about social position and social class. Some scholars believe that low socioeconomic status is associated with a lower success rate in education (Sheridan & McLaughlin, 2016). This harmful stress in childhood can lead to lasting effects on learning, behavior and health (Shonkoff et al., 2012). Even though school refusal is equally distributed in socioeconomic status (SES) according to a study from Kearney and Albano (2000). However, in urban cities, unexplained absenteeism is higher among children at lower socioeconomic levels (McCluskey et al., 2004). Some researchers studied the grandparents' involvement in child caregiving and analyzed grandparents' age and occupation status, which is similar to socioeconomic status (Pearson et al., 1997). It draws great attention of the author of knowing the relationship between socioeconomic status of grandparent as caregiver and school refusal behavior.

Based on the former researches, this study aimed to investigate the relationship between school refusal behavior, four types of caregivers, socio-economic status of grandparent caregivers and gender of primary school students in Xianyang city, Shaanxi Province, China.

1.2 Background of the Study

According to reports in some large and medium-sized cities in China, the number one problem in coming to the children's psychological counseling clinic is "not going to school" caused by emotional disorders, and the number is increasing year by year (Cheng Guang-wen & Zeng Jing, 2010). After reviewing the literature, King et al. (2001) believed that about 1%-5% of all school-age children and adolescents refused to go to school, and the incidence in middle school students was about 1%, preferably between 5-7 years old and 10-11 years old. School refusal behavior is not only conducive to the growth and development of children and adolescents, but also has a profound negative impact on family functions and social development. Not only that, but school refusal behavior will also increase the risk of mental illness in children and adolescents (King NJ et al., 2001).

Family is the most important place for the socialization of children, and family is a vital factor influencing the problematic behavior of children. With the development of the social economy, the types of family structures have become more diversified. In addition to small families living with both parents, normal family structures such as extended families living with grandparents or children were left live with other relatives are becoming more common (Liang & Sun, 2020).

Parents can influence the growth and development of children and most studies choose to consider positive or negative parenting behaviors that can have an impact on children's mental health. Negative parenting is associated with poor outcomes for children's development. Such adverse effects include increases in depression, anxiety, school refusal, and other externalizing problems (Barber, 1996; Piquart, 2017). Also, parents' psychopathological problems can influence children's school refusal behavior. One study found that more than half of school-refusing adolescents had a family history

of psychiatric disorders (Marin et al., 2019). A study on the mental health of children reported that children growing up in biological families are less likely to suffer from trauma. Children from single/divorced families are more likely to be diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder than children from other types of families (Behere et al., 2017).

Due to the immigration of parents towards the urban city in China, children's life also has been changed. They are left cared by different caregivers. In addition to parents and grandparents, single-parent and other relatives would also take on the task of caregivers. There are considerable evidences that unstable families contribute to the vulnerability of offspring in terms of social functioning. Moreover previous studies revealed that children left cared for by other caregivers rather than parents would have worse performance in school (Liang, 2016; Zhang et al., 2014).

Although grandparents are the non-mainstream form of child-caring, they are still an essential factor in a child's development that is almost equivalent to mainstream parental education (Gray, 2005). As working modes and types change, it becomes increasingly difficult to meet the demands for flexibility in a common family where the father earns money and the mother takes care of the family. In China, 85% of working-age women are employed (Chen et al., 2000). Full-time jobs have long been common in cities, although in rural areas women can combine agricultural work with childcare. However China's internal migration has been severely disrupted as parents have left the countryside in search of day jobs in the cities (French, 2005). Due to this kind of immigration, children are left with grandparents (Zhang, 2005). In China, some research analyses have shown that grandparents' childcare burden is conducive to family needs, as reflected by family characteristics, family members' and mothers' work activities (Chen et al., 2000).

Stine Møllegaard, Mads Meier Jæger (2015) suggested that grandparents can affect grandchildren's educational success through non-economic resources such as social standing and education level of grandparents. Pursuing the attention of important others (for instance: grandparents) can lead to school refusal behavior (González et al., 2020).

Besides the caregiver issue in China, gender also is an essential factor when researchers study children. According to a study on children's behavior problems in the capital city of China, the scores were lower in girls than boys (Yu-feng et al., 1989). The higher proportion of boys who refuse to go to school and seek medical treatment may be related to the fact that boys are naughty and difficult to tame, while girls have a better avoidance personality (Chen Yuxia et al., 2016). Thus, this study is aimed to explore gender differences in school refusal behavior.

Socioeconomic status (SES) is one of the most widely studied structures in social sciences. A growing body of evidence supports an association between family's socioeconomic status and adverse mental health outcomes, while more positive psychological outcomes (such as optimism, self-esteem and perceived control) are associated with higher socioeconomic status. Lower socioeconomic status is associated with higher levels of emotional barriers and behavioral disorders, including social issues, symptoms of criminal behavior, and inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity (Russell et al., 2016). Low socioeconomic status and encounters with adversity are related to decreased educational success (Sheridan & McLaughlin, 2016). Childhood experiences and environmental influences can have lasting effects on psychology and behavior (Shonkoff et al., 2012). In the process of the whole education, children living in poverty are more likely to be absent from class (Li et al., 2003). Based on the former researches on the phenomenon of grandparent play the role of nonprofit caregiver to meet the need of many families, this study is focusing on the relationship of grandparent caregiver's socioeconomic status and school refusal behavior.

The analysis of these variables is not only helpful for further understanding of school refusal behavior, but also helpful for families that may have school refusal behavior to take measures.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

School refusal behavior makes children conflict with their family members, schools and communities, affecting their social and mental health. Refusing to go to school may be a child's emotional problem and is closely related to the unresolved parenting relationship. In social stratification studies, the traditional two-generation method is commonly used, and it is believed that parents will influence children, but these studies have not mentioned the influence of other family members, especially grandparents (Mare, 2011).

Past researches on school refusal behavior are often related to demography of students' age, grade and family type (two parents or single parent). Research suggests that single-parent families may be over-represented in school-refusal samples and that serious family problems occur more often in single-parent families than in two-parent families (Bernstein & Borchardt, 1996). Although the types of caregivers other than parents have changed, no research has been conducted to analyze the differences in school refusal behavior between the four types of caregivers which are both-parents, single parent, grandparent and other relatives (Liang & Sun, 2020). There is a growing body of articles and researches on the impact on children of grandparents taking on the role of caregivers or participating in their education, but there is no research study on relationships between grandparents and school refusal behavior (Nyland et al., 2009; Smith & Palmieri, 2007; Solomon & Marx, 1995; Zeng & Xie, 2014). There is a considerable amount of research involving primary school children, but not much

research comparing the school refusal behavior of boys and girls to the type of caregivers (Chen et al., 2016).

These findings prompted this study, which focused on research discussing more previously undiscussed variables such as the four types of caregivers, the socioeconomic status of grandparent caregivers.

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are to examine the relationship between demography of four types of caregivers (both-parents, single-parent, grandparents and other relatives), gender of students and socioeconomic status of grandparent caregiver and school refusal behavior:

- i. To determine any significant relationships between demography of caregivers (both-parents, single-parent, grandparents, relatives), gender of children (students), and school refusal behavior among primary school students.
- ii. To identify any significant differences in school refusal behavior among primary school students across four types of caregivers.
- iii. To identify any significant differences in school refusal behavior among primary school students across male and female students.
- iv. To identify any significant relationships between socioeconomic status

level of grandparent caregivers and school refusal behavior among primary school students.

1.5 Research Questions

The study aims to answer following research questions:

- i. Are there any significant relationships between demography of caregivers (both-parents, single-parent, grandparents, relatives), gender of children (students), and school refusal behavior among primary school students?
- ii. Are there any significant differences in school refusal behavior among primary school students across four types of caregivers?
- iii. Are there any significant differences in school refusal behavior among primary school students across male and female students?
- iv. Are there any significant relationships between socioeconomic status level of grandparent caregivers and school refusal behavior among primary school students?

1.6 Research Hypotheses

A hypothesis is an educated guess or prediction that indicates what the researcher thinks the result will be before conducting the research (McMillan, 2000). In this study, the following null hypothesis was tested at the 0.05 alpha significance level. The hypotheses of this study as according to the research questions are as follows:

H₀1: There is no significant relationships between demography of caregivers (both-parents, single-parent, grandparents, relatives), gender of children (students), and school refusal behavior among primary school students.

H₀2: There is no significant differences in school refusal behavior among primary school students across four types of caregivers.

H₀3: There is no significant differences in school refusal behavior among primary school students across male and female students.

H₀4: There is no significant relationships between socioeconomic status level of grandparent caregivers and school refusal behavior among primary school students.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The results and conclusions of this study provide demographic information (occupation, income, and education level) involving four types of caregivers, the socioeconomic status of grandparents' caregivers, and the relationship between student gender and school refusal. The difference in school refusal behavior among students being nurtured by the four kinds of caregivers. This research will benefit all relevant personnel. First of all, this research will increase people's awareness of refusal to study and avoid predictive problems in advance. Secondly, it will also be meaningful to society and the country. It will formulate suitable policies for families in need, and the school can also provide active assistance to students and families who refuse to study.

Although the results of this study have limitations, the discussion of these new viewpoints will help relevant scholars to gain an in-depth understanding of refusal behavior, and allow family members to increase their care and help children who refuse to study.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

The concept of theoretical models of inter-generational communication is mostly based on the intergenerational relationship between parents and their children, and focusing on the influence of parents on their children (or by either father or mother, respectively). Mare (2011) pointed out in the influential article that the two-generation model may not be enough to capture all the different ways in which family member influences children. In the typical extended family situation in China, other members besides parents, especially grandparents, have a profound influence on most children's lives. So, we use Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and Bowlby's attachment theory as guides in this study.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory

The ecological systems theory states that human development is influenced by different types of environmental systems. It helps people to understand why a person grows up the way they do and what the future holds for that person. The theory identifies five environmental systems that interact with individuals. These are the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem and the chronosystem. Each system has its own role to play in shaping and developing the individual. The

microsystems are the groups that most directly and immediately influence a child's development: family, school, religious institutions, community and peers. The second level is the Mesosystem, which is the interconnection between Microsystems. The Exosystem then deals with the connection between the social environment, in which the individual has no active role, and the immediate environment. Next, the Macrosystem describes the culture in which the individual lives. Finally, the Chronosystem is a model of environmental events and the entire life course as well as the socio-historical environment (Ashiabi & O'Neal, 2015). All five system includes four types of caregivers and their demography information, socioeconomic status of grandparent caregiver and supports this study.

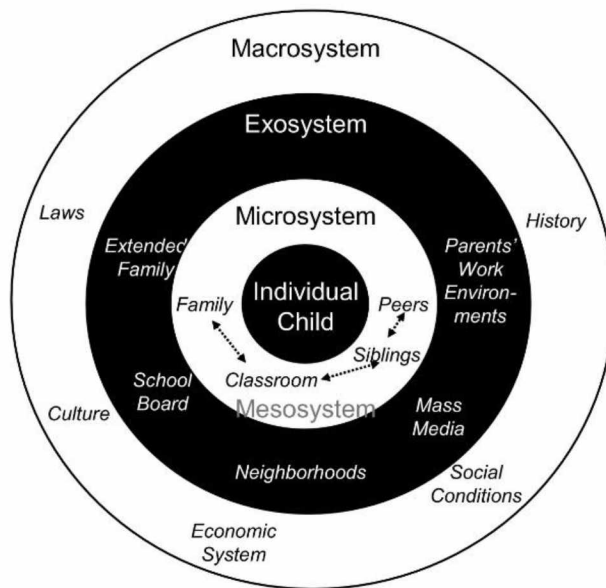


Figure 1.1 Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory

Bowlby's Attachment Theory

According to Bowlby's attachment theory, attachment begins to develop in nursing time and continues until the child is several years old. In addition, most

children have chosen more than one attachment partner by the age of 18 months, which may include grandparents and other non-profit caregivers (Howes C et al., 1999).

Myers, Jarvis, and Creasey (1987) implemented attachment behavior to mothers and non-surrogate grandmothers in young children in a separate play experiment, and concluded that grandmothers can act as attachment figures and influence children's development in society. In addition, most of grandparents as caregivers and educators of their grandchildren, conforms to the standard attachment to a partner, grandparents could be determined as the caregivers and educators of the grandchildren, partner's children in addition to the parents of attachment, because they are in addition to emotional input for children, also provide physical and emotional care for children, and in children during the whole growth continues to play a role (Howes C et al., 1999).

Thus, this theory supports grandchild (students) as an attachment with grandparent caregiver and other caregivers. This attachment may influence school refusal behavior of grandchild (students).

1.9 Conceptual Framework

This study was conducted in the city of Xinyang in China. It aimed to identify correlations and differences between the independent and dependent variables. The independent variables are four types of caregivers (both parents, single parent, grandparents, relatives). The dependent variable is school refusal behavior of primary school students. Figure 1.2 illustrates the conceptual framework of this study.

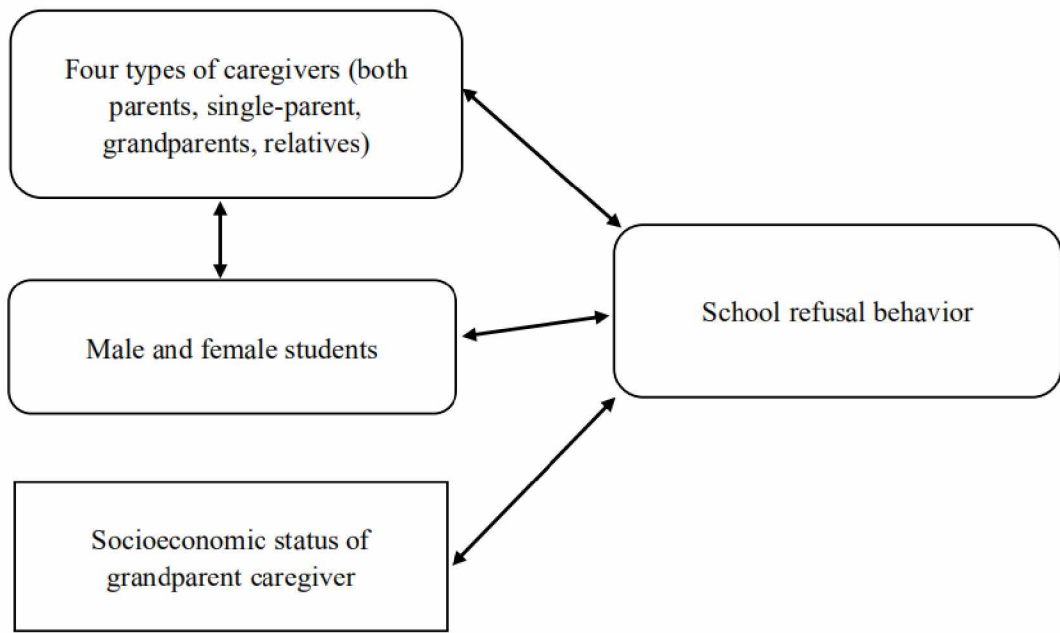


Figure 1.2 Conceptual framework of the study

The relationship was determined between demography of caregivers (both-parents, single-parent, grandparents, relatives), gender of children (students), and school refusal behavior among primary school students. This study also investigated any significant differences in school refusal behavior among primary school students across male and female students, to investigate the relationship between socioeconomic status level of grandparent caregivers and school refusal behavior of grandchildren (students) in the primary school. School refusal assessment scale-revised (children) that translated by author into Chinese was used to measure school refusal behavior of students (Kearney, 2006).

1.10 Scope of the Study

The scope of the study was limited to school refusal behavior and four types of caregivers (both-parents, single parent, grandparent and other relatives), and their demography information such as occupation, education level and income, the gender of the child, and socioeconomic status of grandparent caregiver.

1.11 Delimitation of the Study

The samples of this research were chosen among the six-grade students in three primary schools in Xianyang city, Shaanxi province, China. Therefore, the findings were not appropriate to generalize to other countries or areas.

There were two instruments that translated by author used in this study. The first one is the modified Kuppuswamy scale (adapted to China's national conditions) which is one of the key explanatory variables of this study which is collect the demographic information of caregivers. The three items of the modified Kuppuswamy scale (adapted to China's national conditions) separately are occupation, education level and income. School Refusal Assessment Scale-Revised (Children) is a 24-items long form was used to determine children's school refusal behavior.

The conclusions gained from this research are subjected to a number of limitations. The study was conducted with primary school pupils in Year 6 and their caregivers, caregivers were asked to fill in the first six questions of the questionnaire, on which was a survey about their relationship with the child, and their demographic information, as they knew more about themselves than the child. Then it is the sixth

six-grade students who have to fill in the 24-question school refusal assessment-revised (children), since the students are the key in the emergence of school refusal behavior and they know their own psychological situation very well. However, because each child's perception is different, each child's response would be different.

1.12 Definitions of Terms

To clarify the key words in this study, the relevant terms are defined below.

i. Caregiver

A caregiver is a person who looks after a child with the consent of a parent or guardian, whether implicit or express, and may include, for example, a foster parent, grandparent or aunt. Furthermore, it is a non-profit helper which is different from the broad sense of babysitter. If there is no parent or guardian, the caregiver shall be appointed by the court as the guardian, if necessary, and shall be referred to the local legal services (Newman et al., 2020). In 2009, almost 66 million Americans reported that three out of every 10 households in the United States had at least one person in each of the three households providing unpaid care as a family caregiver (Collins & Swartz, 2011). When researchers study on children' development in many ways, caregivers have the almost the important impact on children as parents. Moreover, individuals usually have multiple roles in their lives, such as family roles and professional roles (Raina et al., 2004). Although we do not refer to parents as caregivers in order to distinguish between parents and babysitters, in practice parents often take on the responsibilities and duties of caregivers as well.

In this study, the four types of caregivers are both-parents, single parent, grandparents and other relatives. They assume, actively or passively, the responsibility of raising and educating children and have no labor relationship with the children's parents or guardians.

ii. Socioeconomic status (SES)

Socioeconomic Status (SES) measures the work experience, economic and social position of an individual or family and it is one of the subjects of study in the social sciences (Santiago et al., 2011). Socioeconomic status is an important factor affecting the health, nutritional status, mortality and morbidity of the population (Wani, 2019). Family financial pressures or personal financial constraints can lead to emotional distress, depression and poor academic performance of students (Mistry et al., 2009).

In this study, socioeconomic status including monthly income, education level and occupation and the modified Kuppuswamy scale (adapted to China's national conditions) was used to measure socioeconomic status. Only the socioeconomic status of grandparent caregiver is analyzed. In this research, the ranking of socio-economic status, in descending order, was "lower class", "upper lower class", "lower middle class", "upper lower class" and "upper class" (Wani, 2019).

iii. School refusal behavior

School refusal behavior is characterized by the symptoms of internalization and externalization, and the child actively refuses to go to school or has difficulty staying in class (Kearney et al., 1995). The initial symptoms of school refusal are barely

noticeable. Symptoms may begin after a holiday or after illness. Some children have difficulty going back to school after a weekend or a holiday. The causes of school refusal may be related to stressful events that occur at home, at school, or among fellow students. Some children leave home in the morning, have problems approaching school, and are unable to go to school. Other children refuse to make an effort to learn in school. Symptoms that occur include fear, crying, tantrums, and self-harm, usually occurring in the morning and improving if the child is allowed to stay at home. The longer the child is out of school, the more difficult it is (Fremont W. P., 2003).

In this study, school refusal behavior is defined as students who refuse to go to school or refuse to make an effort on class. School refusal assessment-revised (children) was used to measure this behavior in students.

iv. Primary school student or grandchildren

Primary school students in China are comprised of boys and girls from 6-12 years old and most of the teachers were teaching students in the Chinese language. In 1999, the Chinese Ministry of Education began designing a new basic education curriculum for the 21st century. All children who have reached the age of six should enter primary school, and in places where materials are scarce, children's entry into primary school can be delayed until the age of seven (Ding & Zeng, 2015).

In this study, primary school students were selected from three schools in Xianyang city, Shaanxi province, China, in the six-grade, aged 11-12. They are under caring of their parents, grandparents or other relatives. The term grandchildren or grandchild refers to students in this study who were selected as samples in this study.

1.13 Summary

The focus of this study was to identify the relationship between four types of caregivers (both-parents, single-parent, grandparents, and other relatives) and school refusal behavior in primary school. It also aimed to find out the difference in school refusal behavior across four types of caregivers, and the differences in school refusal behavior across male and female students, to find out the relationship between socioeconomic status level of grandparent caregiver and school refusal behavior in the primary school. The socioeconomic status of grandparents caregivers in this study including monthly income, education level and occupation. The findings from this study would be used to inform the association between grandparents caregivers and school refusal behavior in China.

This chapter addresses the study introduction, research background, problem statement, purpose of the study, research objectives, research questions, research hypothesis, the significance of the study, the scope of the study, theoretical framework, conceptual framework, delimitations of the study, and definitions of the terms used in this study. The first chapter describes school refusal behavior, the four types of caregivers for students, and socioeconomic status, all of which information will be used in the questionnaire. There are many factors that would influence school refusal behavior. However, this study will focus on the student's four types of caregivers, the student's gender, the demographic of four types of caregivers, and the socioeconomic status level of the grandparents caregivers.

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