Validation of the Chinese Empathy Questionnaire for Pre-school Children

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Abstract

Empathy plays an important role in children’s early social-emotional development. However, there are not many instruments available for measuring the different aspects/levels of empathy in preschool children. Moreover, few studies examined the validity of the existing measures for empathy in Chinese children. The present study tested the Chinese version of the Empathy Questionnaire (EmQue) upon a group of Chinese preschool children (N = 182) aged from 2 to 6 years. The Chinese EmQue is a parent-report translated from Dutch that assesses the behavioral manifestations of three distinct levels of empathy: emotion contagion, attention to others’ feelings, and prosocial behaviors among preschool children. Confirmatory factor analysis showed satisfactory goodness-of-fit indexes for a three-level structure with 19 loading items. The results of concurrent validity showed that the three levels of empathy were functioning differently in the early social-emotional development. We could conclude that the 19-item Chinese EmQue is a valid, reliable instrument for measuring empathy in 2- to 6-year-old children in the Chinese context.

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