Author's response to reviews

Title: Agreement between parents and adolescents on emotional and behavioral problems and its associated factors among Chinese school adolescents: a cross-sectional study

Authors:

jiana wang (jiana0818@163.com)
li liu (liul@mail.cmu.edu.cn)
hui wu (wuhui@mail.cmu.edu.cn)
xiaoshi yang (yangxs@mail.cmu.edu.cn)
yang wang (allylove666@yahoo.com.cn)
lie wang (liewang@mail.cmu.edu.cn)

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Prof. Raffy Mar Gella:

Thanks a lot for those comments on my paper (MS: 1510778420918727). I revised my paper as the reviewers advised and submitted the revised manuscript. Now, I would like to give a point-by-point response to the comments.

Answer to Reviewer’s comments:

Reviewer: 1

Abstract

Q1. Please briefly describe the analyses conducted to assess parent-adolescent agreement.

Answer: Thank you very much for your advice. I have added the briefly description in the abstract section (page2, line14-15). If you think it was not enough, I will look forward to your further advice.

Q2. According to Cohen’s convention for effect sizes, a correlation of 0.6 would be generally considered as indicating “high” correlation (i.e., high agreement).

Answer: Thanks a lot for this great comment. I changed my expression in the abstract sections (page2, line18). If you think it was not enough, please kindly let me know.

Q3. In the Results section of the abstract, add “in the family” after “…. low levels of cohesion and organization and high levels of conflict.”

Answer: Thanks very much for this question. I changed its expression in the abstract section (page3, line1). If you do not feel satisfied with my revision, I am looking forward to your further advice.

Q4. The “Implications and Contribution” section after the abstract seems out of place. This section should be shortened and incorporated into the “Conclusions” section in the abstract.

Answer: Thanks a lot for this comment. I shortened and incorporated this section into the “Purpose and Conclusions” section in the abstract. If you think it was not enough, I will look forward to your further advice.

Introduction:

Q5. A few articles that are relevant for this topic were not reviewed and referenced in this paper. Below are some of these articles. The authors might want to
conducted a more thorough literature review, incorporating more articles in this area to fully develop a rationale for conducting this study and the importance of the study.


**Answer:** Thanks very much for this great advice. Additional information was showed in the introduction section (page4, line12-16; page5, line7-11; page6, line11-14). If you think it was not enough, I am looking forward to your further advice.

**Q6.** More information is needed about why the specific associated factors (i.e., gender, age, negative life events, parent-child relationship, family environment) for parent-child disagreement were examined and how they affect cross-informant discrepancies. More discussion of this will help provide a stronger and more fully-developed argument for examining these factors.

**Answer:** Thanks a lot for this great advice. I have added some information in the instruction sections (page4, line19-21; page5, line1, 3-12). If you think it was not enough, I will look forward to your further advice.

**Q7.** The 6th sentence in the 1st paragraph is awkward. The authors might want to consider rewording it to something like “However, it is unclear the extent to which parents are aware of their children’s diverse behaviors and have the same threshold as their children when rating on emotional and behavioral problems.”

**Answer:** I am sorry to make you confused and I changed my expression in the instruction sections (page3, line20-21; page4, line1).

**Methods:**

**Q8.** Please provide more information on the sample characteristics, e.g., the socioeconomic status of the sample (e.g., parental education attainment,
Thank you very much for your advice. In our population, the socioeconomic status (SES) was indicated by parents’ highest education level according to the study of Weine et al. 1995. Education levels were divided into three groups: the junior high school level; the senior high school level; the college level or higher. 32.3% of adolescents’ families had low SES, and 47.3%, 20.4% had middle and high respectively. 43.2% of adolescents’ families had monthly household income above 1500 yuan/person. If you think it was not enough, I will look forward to your further advice.

Q9. What is the class size of the classrooms in the schools?
Answer: Thank you very much for this question. There are generally 50 students in each classroom.

Q10. The authors stated that 2426 questionnaires were returned, and 274 were excluded due to incorrect information or missing data. Subtracting 274 from 2426 does not yield a number of 2199, which is the final sample specified in the study. Please clarify.
Answer: I felt very sorry for this mistake. I carefully checked this point and revised the mistake (page8, line6). 274 was the number of students not returning the questionnaires. We are very sorry for this point. If the change is not sufficient, we will be greatly appreciated for your further advices!

Q11. The CBCL was completed by parents. What percentage of the CBCL was completed by mothers vs fathers or other caregivers/guardians?
Answer: Thank you very much for this great comment. We did not identify CBCLs completed by fathers versus mothers. For this point, we felt very sorry. If you want to give us more advice, we will really appreciate it.

Q12. How were the parents instructed to complete the CBCL? Were they specifically asked not to communicate with their child when completing the questionnaire? This may affect the parent-child agreement.
**Answer:** Thank you very much for this important question. We try our best to ensure that parent and self-reports were completed independently. Adolescents were asked to write the questionnaire excluding CBCL at school and it was collected on the spot, and then parents completed CBCL at home. The informants were requested to complete the questionnaires without consulting each other. However, it was hard to avoid that some respondents communicated with each other, which might have affected informant agreement. I also added the description in the limitation section (page16, line17-20). If you want to give us more advice, we will really appreciate it.

**Q13.** Were the adolescents and parents compensated for their participation in the study?

**Answer:** Thank you very much for this question. We gave every participator a small gift in reward.

**Q14.** What are the Cronbach’s alphas for the internalizing and externalizing scales of the CBCL and the YSR for the current sample? Given that subscales, in addition to the total scale, were examined in the study, the Cronbach’s alphas for the subscales need to be described.

**Answer:** Thank you very much for this great advice. I have added the information about the Cronbach’s alphas for the internalizing and externalizing scales of the CBCL and the YSR (page9, line3-4; 10-11). Since the scorings of the CBCL and YSR are divided according to age (<12/≥12) and gender, I only gave the range of the Cronbach’s alphas in the method section (page, line). If you think the change is not sufficient, we will be greatly appreciated for your further advices!

**Q15.** The authors only utilized a single item for assessing parent-adolescent relationship and parental expectations, respectively. Please justify the use of single item for these two constructs and the validity and reliability of the single-item measurement.

**Answer:** Thank you very much for this great question. At the beginning of the design, we have considered to use specific scales to estimate the two factor.
There are too many items included in YSR and FES in addition to other information. Considering the length of the questionnaire and ensuring the response rate, finally we used one question to assess both factors. Someone also used a single item like this to assess the factor they wanted to know (e.g., Korkeila et al. 2004; Wu H et al. 2009). We mainly aimed at preliminary explored the associated factors impacting on the cross-informant agreement. I will carefully consider your advice for this important problem in the follow up research in order to make results be more accurate. Please forgive me for my poor statistical skill and I am eager to study how to analyze the validity and reliability of the single-item measurement. If you think it was not enough, I will look forward to your further advice.

Q16. What are the Cronbach’s alphas for the seven subscales of the FES used in this study?

Answer: Thank you very much for this great advice. I have added the information about the Cronbach’s alphas for the subscales of the FES (page10, line19). If you think it is not enough, we are very grateful to get more advice.

Q17. In the “statistical analysis” section, the authors stated that “All variables related to parent-adolescent discrepancies in univariate analysis (p<0.25) were entered into the model.” Is p<0.25 correct? Please clarify.

Answer: Thanks a lot for this comment. In this study we wanted as more as possible factors to enter into multiple-factor analysis aiming at reducing false negative results. Therefore we changed the standard of P value from <0.05 to < 0.25 to make more factors in univariate analysis be able to enter into linear regression analysis. Previous studies also use it in the statistics [e.g., Sun W, et al. 2007]. If the explanation is not sufficient, we will be greatly appreciated for your further advices!

Results:

Q18. The SD of 54.9 for the mean difference between the total problems of YSR and CBCL seems really large. Please check and clarify.

Answer: I felt very sorry for my mistake. I carefully checked the results and revised this mistake (page11, line19). We are very sorry for this point. If the change is not
Q19. Table 2: Did the authors examine the two-way interaction between informant and gender?

Answer: Thank you very much for this great comment. I have tested the two-way interaction between informant and gender and age and it was shown in the result section (page12, line4-8) and table 3. If you think it is not sufficient, we will be greatly appreciated for your further advices!

Q20. Table 4: Please indicate the significance level of the results

Answer: Thanks a lot for this advice. I have added the significance level in the section of results. If you think it is not enough, please kindly let me know.

Discussion:

Q21. In a recent article, Rescorla et al. (2013) reported a correlation of 0.46 between the CBCL and YSR in a sample of 1022 participants in China (Wang et al. [2005]), which is lower than the mean correlation of 0.60 reported in this study. Please comment on this. In addition, Rescorla et al. (2013) found that in Denmark, a non-Eastern culture, the parent-child agreement is as high as 0.58, comparable to the correlation of 0.60 reported in this study. I am curious to know the authors’thoughts and comments on this finding.

Answer: Thanks a lot for your great advice. I have added the comparable information with the research of Wang et al. 2005 in the discussion section (page14, line5-10). I have also carefully read the study of the Denmark research of Bilenberg and found that its study population included population and clinically based samples in 1999 which might increase the agreement degree and its sampling and statistics was different from our study. Therefore, considering these unmatching factors, I did not compare our results with this study findings. If you think it was not enough, I am looking forward to your further advice.

Q22. How well do the findings of this study generalize to other Chinese societies such as Hong Kong and Taiwan? Please provide your thoughts and comments on this.
Answer: Chinese mainland cultural context is greatly different from Hong Kong and Taiwan. Hong Kong was the colony of England before 1997 and was westernized in many aspects. Moreover, Chinese mainland have carried out the implementation of the “One Child Policy” in 1970s. It also made a different family status between mainland and the other two districts. Therefore, our study findings only generalize to Chinese mainland population. We will seek opportunities to investigate the objects of Hong Kong and Taiwan and compare the similarities and differences between them. If you think it was not enough, I will look forward to your further advice.

Q23. If parents completed the CBCL while communicating with their child, this may contribute to the high correlation between the YSR and CBCL. This should be discussed as a limitation of the study.

Answer: Thanks a lot for your import advice. I added the information into the limitation section (page16, line17-20). If you think it was not enough, I will look forward to your further advice.

Minor Comments:

There are syntax and grammatical errors and unclear sentences throughout the paper. I think overall the paper would benefit from editing and re-wording throughout to improve the readability of the paper. Below is a partial list of some of these errors and awkward sentences and my suggestions. I strongly encourage the authors to carefully revise and proofread the whole manuscript.

Abstract:

Q24. In the 2nd sentence, “parents-adolescent” should be “parent-adolescent.”

Answer: I am sorry for my mistake and I changed my expression according to your advice in the abstract sections (page2, line6). If you think it was not enough, I will look forward to your further advice.

Q25. The 3rd sentence could be re-written as “This cross-sectional study was conducted in November and December of 2010.”

Answer: I am sorry for my mistake and I changed my expression according to your
advice in the abstract sections (page2, line8). If you think it was not enough, please kindly let me know.

Q26. Under the “Implications and Contribution” section, “an important role on” should be “an important role in.”

Answer: I incorporated this section according to your advice and deleted this phrase but I feel sorry again for my carelessness.

Introduction:

Q27. To be more specific and clear, the 4th sentence in the 1st paragraph could be re-written as “The Achenbach’s scales include child behavior checklist (CBCL) completed by parents or teachers and the youth self-report (YSR) completed by adolescents themselves to assess emotional and behavioral problems in youths aged 11-18 years.”

Answer: Thanks a lot for this careful modification. I have changed the expression according to your advice in the introduction section (page3, line16-19).

Q28. The sentence starting in line 9 could be rewritten as “Therefore, both parents and adolescents are needed to obtain a comprehensive assessment of emotional and behavioral problems among adolescents.”

Answer: Thanks a lot for this careful modification. I have changed the expression according to your advice in the introduction section (page4, line3-5).

Q29. Line 12-13, “used both informants” instead of “used both the two informants”

Answer: I am sorry to make you confused. I changed my expression in the instruction sections (page4, line7).

Q30. Line 17: few studies “found,” instead of “in”

Answer: I am sorry to make you confused. I changed my expression in the instruction sections (page4, line11).

Q31. Line 19: “a” higher level or higher level”s”

Answer: I am sorry to make you confused. I changed my expression in the
Q32. Line 20: change to “while a reverse pattern occurred in clinical samples”

**Answer:** I am sorry to make you confused. I changed my expression in the instruction sections (page4, line18).

Q33. Line 21: “It has been well established…”

**Answer:** I am sorry to make you confused. I changed my expression in the instruction sections (page5, line1).

**Reviewer: 2**

**Major Compulsory Revisions**

**Q1.** The authors should summarize findings from the Rescorla et al. (2013) report of CBCL-YSR cross-informant agreement in 25 societies, including China (N = 27,861). Although Rescorla et al. did not present most results separately by society, some findings are. For example, Table 4 indicates that the mean CBCL-YSR r across 17 problem scales in China was .45, placing it 17th out of 25 societies when ranked from smallest to largest mean cross-informant r. Table 4 also shows that Chinese parents and adolescents, on average, had strong agreement on mean item ratings (.82), as did the other 24 societies. In short, this comprehensive study is very relevant to the current manuscript and the authors should contextualize their work with respect to these international findings.

**Answer:** Thanks very much for this great advice. Additional information was showed in the introduction and discussion section (page4, line12-14; page6, line11-14). If you think it was not enough, I am looking forward to your further advice.

**Q2.** The Rescorla et al. (2013) literature review includes a short summary of cross-informant agreement findings from the Wang, Zhang and Leung (2005) (rs = .35-.60) study, which the authors did not include in their literature review. The Wang et al data were used in the Rescorla et al (2013) multicultural analyses, but more detailed findings based on those data were presented in Chinese by Wang et al. in 2005. Clearly, these findings are also very relevant to the current manuscript and should be summarized in the literature review.
Answer: Thanks a lot for this great advice. I have summarized some information about this Chinese study in the introduction and discussion section (page4, line15-16; page14, line5-7). If you think it was not enough, I am looking forward to your further advice.

Q3. The authors state that they used the 1991 version of the CBCL and YSR, even though their data were collected in 2010 and the 2001 versions of these instruments were available in Chinese at that time. The authors should explain the reason they did not use the most current version of the checklists. They also should state what translation they used, whether a back-translation was done and approved by the U.S. authors of the instrument, and whether they obtained a license to duplicate and distribute >2000 CBCLs and YSRs, as copying the forms without such a license is a violation of copyright.

Answer: Thank you very much for this great comment. The 1991 version of the CBCL and YSR have been widely used in western country and China, and the 2001 versions were little used and the number of items was different from the 1991 ones. We also considered to use the newer version and tried to connect with professor Achenbach and Liang to get the license of copyright since as we know the copyright of CBCL and YSR Chinese version of 2001 was owned to the professor Liang in Chinese University of Hong Kong but failed before carrying out our investigation. Many studies supported the good reliability and validity of the Chinese CBCL and YSR of 1991 version. It has been applied in public from a manual of mental health assessment scale edited by Wang et al. in China and we didn’t need to translate and back-translate the instrument. Therefore, we decided to continue to use the 1991 version in order to using the instrument and comparing the results with other population more easily.

Discretionary Revisions

Q4. On p. 10, the authors state that they tested informant and gender differences using t-tests on CBCL-YSR discrepancies. I think it would be better to use a 2 x 2 ANOVA with informant as a within-subjects factor. This would allow examination
of possible informant x gender interactions and facilitate reporting of effect sizes, which are not currently included in the manuscript. Inspection of Table 2 suggests these ESs would be very small (e.g., ds of about .10-.15). It might also be good to include age as a variable in such an ANOVA, as gender or informant effects might vary as a function of age (e.g., for younger vs. older adolescents).

**Answer:** Thank you very much for this great comment. We learned a lot from your advice and added 2 x 2 ANOVA in the statistics section (page11, line2-4), the result section (page12, line4-8) and table 3 according to your advice. If you think it is not sufficient, we will be greatly appreciated for your further advices!

**Q5.** The results on p. 11 could be described in somewhat more detail, particularly the interesting findings related to the family variables.

**Answer:** Thanks a lot for this question. I have added detail information about parental and family variables in the results section (page12, line9-15). If you think it was not enough, please kindly let me know.

**Q6.** On p. 12, the authors describe a correlation of .60 as “moderate.” According to Cohen’s (1988) benchmarks, correlations > .50 are considered large. In the field of cross-information agreement an r of .60 is quite high. I therefore suggest the authors restate this conclusion.

**Answer:** Thanks a lot for this great advice. I have changed the expression according to your advice in the discussion section (page2, line18; page13, line12-13).

**Q7.** On p. 13, the authors state on lines11-12 that there were gender differences in discrepancies but results presented on p. 10 and in Table 2 not make these evident. Table 2 is confusing, but were it presented in the context of ANOVA results, the reader would have a clearer idea of what was found.

**Answer:** I am sorry to make you confused. The gender differences in discrepancies were presented in Table 5 which indicated that gender (girl versus boy) have a negative effect on the discrepancy of the total problems. Table 2 only showed the
differences in CBCL or YSR mean scores between gender but not showed the effect on discrepancies. If you think it was not enough, please kindly let me know.

Q8. On p. 13 the authors use the term “more discrepancies” several times, but I think they must be referring to “larger discrepancies.” This locution and many other problematic English language usage issues should be addressed at a later stage in the revision process.

Answer: I am sorry to make you confused due to my poor English language usage. I have changed all these erroneous use you pointed in the whole text (page15, line3,7). I will carefully revise other problems about language usage at a later stage in the revision process. I really appreciate your guidance and help for me.

Q9. The last sentence of the manuscript (p. 15) is very confusing. I am not sure what point the authors are trying to make.

Answer: I am sorry to make you confused and I have changed the expression to make it more clear (page17, line10-14). If you think it was not enough, I am looking forward to your further advice.

These changes are made with considering reviewers’ comments. If the change is not sufficient, we are looking forward for further advices!

I will carefully proofread the whole manuscript and edit and re-word it about the whole problems and about language usage to improve the readability of my paper at a later stage in the revision process. I really appreciate your guidance and help for me.

Thanks in advance!

Best wishes,
Sincerely
Jiana Wang, Lie Wang