Reviewer's report

Title: Child neglect in one-child family from Suzhou City of Mainland China

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Reviewer: Lil Tonmyr

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Child neglect in one-family from Suzhou City of mainland China
It was with great interest I read this paper and I hope you will continue to develop the findings through further analyses. The findings are clearly important for policy making. I enjoyed reading the paper. However, I have some few comments many are of editorial nature. The editorial comments are just suggestions that are hopefully helpful. I have italicised issues that needs to be addressed.

Abstract

Background
1st sentence - I'm not sure what "social situations" means to refer to in the context of this first sentence. This is a little vague.

2nd sentence does not add much that is not mentioned in the third sentence. Maybe you could restate lack of research in the area in more general terms in China.

3rd sentence change aimed to aims.

Methods
1st sentence add “was conducted” to the end of the sentence.

The age of the sample does not match the age of the sample in the introduction. Please clarify which one is right age group, 7-10 years or 6-9 years old.

Results
Please use the term supervisory neglect throughout the document.

Second sentence, please add -s to odds ratios.

Please rewrite sentence: “younger mothers” Children who experience educational neglect were more likely to come from households with young or unemployed mothers.

The following sentence Children of mother; replace “have supervision neglect” with “who experienced supervisory neglect”.

Next sentence starting Mothers and fathers…replace “children with” to “who experienced”. In the same sentence, "in addition” do you mean in addition to mothers and fathers that have a higher education? Or do you mean to use it as another way of saying “also.”
Conclusion

Please add “one child families” before in China in the second sentence.

Introduction

Please through out the paper change supervision to supervisory neglect.

Please be consistent in language you use caregiver, caretaker and parent.

Please simplify the following sentence: Despite its negative effects and accordingly, warranting active research, there is a scarcity of data on child neglect in China.

The sentence starting additionally…I suggest a new paragraph.

Please change: “Did child neglect still…” to “Does child neglect…”, “If the neglect was…” to “If neglect is…” and “what kind of factors was correlated to the neglect” to “what kind of factors are correlated with neglect”

Some comment as in abstract, please verify age group you are analysing. Furthermore remove in this study from the end of the sentence.

Remove “The” (first word) from the last sentence in the introduction and remove –s on neglect.

Methods

Add ‘s to the following sentence: Only one school refused to participate in the study because the study period coincided with the school’s sports meetings.

Please change “Therefore, a total of 2230 children’s caregivers in 4 primary schools were recruited into the study, which involved filling a self-administered questionnaire survey.” to “Therefore, a total of 2230 children’s caregivers in 4 primary schools were recruited, which involved filling out a self-administered questionnaire.”

Remove, Class before teacher.

Reword “then put it in an envelope and then returned the sealed envelope to children’s teachers.” to “then placed it in a sealed envelope and returned it to the children’s teachers.”

Following sentence remove “finally”.

Do all the children in the final sample belong to the Han ethnic group or is there a number missing which is meant to indicate the number of children from this group? Also can you say something about this ethnic group? Is this the majority of the population in this region of China?

Last sentence before “measure” please add “was” and was only accessible to
Measures

Please clarify the time frame you are using for child neglect last year prevalence or childhood prevalence.

Please change “Physical neglect refers to caregivers not taking care of children’s basic needs…” to “child’s basic needs…”

Please change “Educational neglect stands for the parental failure to give the educational opportunity…” to “Educational neglect the parental failure to provide educational opportunities…”

Please change “Emotional neglect refers to the parental failure to give children an emotional environment that a…” to “Emotional neglect refers to parental failure to provide children with an emotional environment that a…”

Please change “Caregivers were asked to indicate how often they had conducted the listed neglectful behavior with a 4-point Likert scale (1=never, 2=occasional, 3=usual, 4=constant) in the past one year.” To “Caregivers were asked to indicate how often they had conducted the listed neglectful behaviors with a 4-point Likert scale (1=never, 2=occasional, 3=usual, 4=constant) the past year.”

Please consider replacing: “The scores of the subscales were sum of their corresponding items…” with “The scores of the subscales represented the sum of their corresponding items…”

Please change: (the reversed items were reverse-scored). to “reversely scored”

Please be consistent with language use supervisory neglect instead of safeguard neglect. In the same sentence please write educational neglect.

Please add some information on child’s personality. It is mentioned in the results but not described among the measures.

Please provide more information about the clinical records, validity etc. Who is providing this information?

Can you please expand further on why these age groupings were used for the mothers. In North America when we discuss young mothers we would probably consider younger than age 21 as young.

Please add and change: “by local bureau of social security in order to monitor the children’s physical and mental health.” to “by local the bureau of social security in order to monitor the child’s physical and mental health.”

Please change: “(whether or not the mother has physical or psychological illness in the past two years); parental education (whether or not the parents obtained the degree of higher education), family structure (family with three generation, nuclear family, single mother or father); and” to “(whether or not the mother had a physical or psychological illness in the past two years); parental education
(whether or not the parents obtained a degree of higher education), family structure (families with three generations, nuclear family, single mother or father); and"

Please change: “Family with three generation” refers to the child living with his/her biological parents and grandparents, and it was usual among Chinese families due to the traditional family culture.” to “Families with three generation” refers to the child living with his/her biological parents and grandparents, and was common among Chinese families due to the traditional family culture.” Furthermore is it still common? Should was be replaced with is?

The income variable is unusual; often it’s analyzed as below or above a poverty line. Please expand on why this choice was made.

Statistical analysis

Remove the, write: Binominal logistic….

Results

Remove “the” and change to supervisory: “Of 2044 children, 20% have experienced the supervision”.

Please be consistent when listing subtypes of neglect in a sentence. (physical neglect, emotional neglect OR physical and emotional neglect). Regarding consistency: at times through this document the prevalence estimate is after the word neglect and sometimes before (i.e. physical neglect (4%) or physical (4%) neglect.

Please change: “in one child family of Suzhou. Table 2 shows the distribution of prevalence of subtypes of neglects by the child’s and family characteristics.” To “in one child families of Suzhou. Table 2 shows the distribution of the prevalence of subtypes of neglect by child and family characteristics.”

Please change: “After simultaneous adjustment for the child’s and family” to “After simultaneous adjustment for child and family”

Please change: “have children with educational neglect. Mother’s health…” to “have children who experienced educational neglect. Mother’s health…”

Please add: mothers with a college education.

Please add neglect to the end of the sentence: educational (OR 0.49; 95% CI 0.28 to 0.87), and medical (OR 0.44; 95% CI 0.28 to 0.71) neglect.

Please refer to Tables 1 and 2 in the results and not to Tables 2 and 3.

Please add sample size to both tables.

Please add if the proportions are significantly different in Table 1.

Please add percentages to the total column I Table 1.
Table 1 title add –s to subtypes.

Discussion

Please change: “child neglect in one-child family, including…” to “child neglect in one-child families, including”

Please change: “we used the measurement which has been developed and validated in Chinese population to assess the child neglect in one-child family in the study.” to “we used a measurement which has been developed and validated in the Chinese population to assess child neglect in one-child families.”

Please reword: “The results showed that it is supervision neglect was the most prevalent type of neglect (20%), followed by emotional (15%), physical (11%) neglect, medical (7.7%) neglect, and the educational neglect (6.0%) were the least common. Sedlak & Broadhurst [2] have reported the education neglect in U.S. children were the most frequent subtype (0.6%), followed by physical (0.5%) and emotional (0.3%) neglects.” to “The results show that supervisory neglect was the most prevalent type (20%), followed by emotional (15%), physical (11%), medical (7.7%), and educational neglect (6.0%). Sedlak & Broadhurst [2] have reported educational neglect in U.S. children as the most frequent subtype (0.6%), followed by physical (0.5%) and emotional (0.3%) neglect.”

I was also curious whether you could find a better source of comparison, considering that the Chinese source is parental report meanwhile the NIS using a proxy informant. Professional reporting tends to underreport children’s experiences of maltreatment.

Please reword: “The ordering of the prevalence or proportion of neglect subtypes was seemingly different between the one-child family in Mainland China and families which may have more than one child in U.S. where the one-child family policy has never been implemented in the country. This result might imply that parents from one-child family consider the child as their “only hope”, thereby putting greater efforts to make them culturally desirable or physically fit, but neglecting their children’s emotional needs. However, it seemed difficult to compare the neglect prevalence of this study with that in other studies due to the different measurement we used.” to “The ordering of the prevalence or proportion of neglect subtypes were seemingly different between the one-child families in Mainland China and families which may have more than one child in United States. This result might imply that parents from one-child families consider the child as their “only hope”, thereby putting greater efforts to make them culturally desirable or physically fit, but neglecting their children’s emotional needs. However, it is difficult to compare the neglect prevalence in this study with that in other studies due to the different measurements we used.”

Please clarify, is the Israeli data applicable to neglect or maltreatment?

Please add –s to results. The results of the present study showed that boys were less likely to experience physical neglect than girls. This finding is also interesting
because, as far as i know, boys are more likely to experience harsh physical neglect than girls in Western countries such as the US. It might be worth while to make this comparison.

Please remove other: This result is in concordance with other previous reports that parental perception of the child as a problem was an important risk factor for child neglect [19].

Please change: “Another study reveals that 68% of children with body dysmorphic disorder were emotional neglected [20]. Interestingly, child’s cognitive impairment may suffer from emotional neglect in present study. It is consistent with the previous report indicating that children with physical and cognitive disabilities were 3.4 times more likely to be maltreated than their nondisabled peers [21].” to “Another study reveals that 68% of children with body dysmorphic disorder were emotionally neglected [20]. Interestingly, this study suggests that child’s cognitive impairment may suffer from emotional neglect. This is consistent with the previous reports indicating that children with physical and cognitive disabilities were 3.4 times more likely to be maltreated than their nondisabled peers [21].

Please reword: “Our results also indicate that children of younger mother were at higher risk of experiencing educational neglect. Although we did not find other studies supporting this finding, this may be related to the level of experience and maturity of younger mothers, making them fail in giving adequate education to their child. This would need to be investigated further. Maternal health problem was protective from childhood supervision neglect in the study. In contrast, it had been reported in previous studies that mothers with mental health problems were at risk of maltreating their children [21]. Furthermore, maternal education was associated with almost all neglect subtypes, which corroborate previous findings [22] that neglectful mothers…” to “Our results also indicate that children of younger mothers were at higher risk of experiencing educational neglect. Although we did not find other studies supporting this finding, this may be related to the level of experience and maturity of younger mothers, resulting in the failure to provide adequate education for their child. This finding warrants further investigation. Maternal health problems were protective from childhood supervisory neglect in this study. In contrast, previous studies have reported that mothers with mental health problems were at risk of maltreating their children [21].

The findings, regarding the maternal age needs to be addressed further considering the wide confidence interval. These findings need to be interpreted with caution.

Please add low: “Furthermore, maternal low education was associated with almost all neglect subtypes, which corroborate previous findings [22] that neglectful mothers…”

It may be useful to put all findings regarding the mother’s level of education together.
Please clarify what is meant by father’s feature.

Please change position of low in the sentence: Finally, low family income was associated with medical neglect. This is in contrast to other studies [10, 23], in which poverty was not associated with physical neglect.

I don’t know that this comparison above works as you seem to be comparing low family income and medical neglect in your study with low family income and physical neglect in other studies. Please change the comparison to be more appropriate.

Please change: However, the family structure was not associated with child neglect in one-child families in this study.

The following sentence is unclear, please clarify. The only child in their families is precious and the difference among different family structures may be narrowed.

Conclusion

Please correct: “In conclusion, the child supervision and emotional neglect was the most common, while the education neglect was the least among these neglect subtypes in the one-child family of China which deserve greater attention. In support of previous reports, child’s gender,” to “In conclusion, child supervisory and emotional neglect were the most common, while educational neglect was the least common among these neglect subtypes in one-child families in China. This deserves greater attention. In support of previous reports, a child’s gender,”

Please reword: “…in one-child family, by taken into account the observed family socio-demographic characteristics as potential predictors of child neglect. Further studies are also required to investigate whether intervention programs that target at improving these elements would improve the childhood neglect and its subtype. Moreover, in present study, the majority of children (above 99.9%) were the “only child” in their family under the rigorous birth control policy in urban area of Mainland China. Therefore, it is impossible to make the comparison between the one-child family and families with more than one child. It seemed also difficult to compare the neglect prevalence with that of other studies when different measures for neglect were used.” To “…in one-child families, by taking into account the observed family socio-demographic characteristics as potential predictors of child neglect. Further studies are also required to investigate whether intervention programs that target improving these elements would improve the childhood neglect and its subtypes. Moreover, in the present study, the majority of children (above 99.9%) were the “only child” in their family under the rigorous birth control policy in urban area of Mainland China. Therefore, it is impossible to make the comparison between the one-child families and families with more than one child. It is also difficult to compare the neglect prevalence with that of other studies given that different measures for neglect were used.”

I think more limitation of this study needs to being highlighted, for instance, unwillingness to disclose neglectful behavior on the part of the parents.
References

Please add –s to References.

Please update reference list to more recent research, many sources are more than 20 years old. For instance, Howard Dubowitz work is missing.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I have no competing interest.