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Title
The Sustainability of Early Childhood Education in Chinese Teachers’ Perspective: Evidence from a National Validation Study

Author / Presenter Information
- Xinxin Liu, doctoral candidate, liuxinxin728@163.com, East China Normal University, China
- Yong Jiang, Professor, jyong191@163.com, East China Normal University, China
- Hui Li, Professor, philip.li@mq.edu.au, Macquarie University, Australia

Keywords
- sustainability
- early childhood education (ECE)
- rating scale
- development and validation
- evaluation

Abstract
- The rationale for the study
In recent years, the Chinese government has issued policies and regulations aimed at addressing China’s long-standing problems of low enrollment opportunities and high tuition fees for early childhood education (Li, et al., 2016; Zhou, et al., 2021). An increasing number of families have benefited from enhanced early education services, and supply and demand have reached an initial balance. However, this balanced is to be broken by another pressing developmental crisis: the population of China is ageing rapidly and threatening its sustainable development (Yang & Zhang, 2021). The Chinese government has dramatically changed its fertility policy to optimise the population structure to tackle this challenge. In 2016, it stopped the one-child policy that had lasted for more than 30 years and encouraged each family to have two children. Still, the two-child policy lasted only six years and was replaced by the ‘three-child policy’ (encouraging each family to have three children) in 2021 (Hong, et al., 2022). This change of birth policy is bound to impact the development of ECE. For instance, an increased birth means more demand for ECE services and more need for teachers (Hou & Liu, 2020; Hua, 2017). Therefore, one might doubt whether this new ‘three-child policy’ will break the supply-demand balance and bring some threats to the sustainable development of ECE in China. This study aimed to explore these threats through a national validation study of the Sustainability of Early Childhood Education Rating Scale (SECERS).

- Purpose(s) of the study
This study aims to construct the Sustainability of SECERS from the perspective of teachers, and then to evaluate the sustainability of ECE nationwide.

- Brief description of methodology including that used for data analysis
First, the psychometric properties of SECERS were analysed by item analysis, exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis to explore and verify the construct validity and reliability of the SECERS. Second, a latent profile analysis was used to generate the latent profile of Chinese kindergarten teachers’ evaluation.
Third, teachers’ main predictors of ECE were examined by hierarchical regression analysis.

- **Summary of findings, conclusion, and implications**

This study aimed to evaluate the sustainability of ECE from the perspective of teachers, whose perspectives are important as key stakeholders in ECE evaluation. First, the three constructs of SECERS: sustainability in ecology, sustainability in management, and sustainability in policy, were reliable and valid. Second, we identified four profiles of teacher evaluation that reflect the four levels of sustainability of ECE. Teachers’ background and location have a significant influence on the sustainability of ECE evaluation and also reflect various social factors that affect the sustainable development of ECE.

This study is the first national survey to develop and validate a scale to evaluate the sustainability of ECE from a teacher’s perspective. This has positive implications for improving the quality and sustainability of ECE in China and policy formulation in other regions.

- **References**


