

Ethnic minority parents want customized advice, research shows

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Over the last decade, parents have become increasingly aware of the importance of a child's physical and mental development in their early years. As a result, there has been a significant rise in parents' demand for evidence-based knowledge of child-rearing.

However, few studies have focused on the needs and preferences of

ethnic minority groups when it comes to [family](#) education programs.

In a recent study published in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, researchers from China and the Czech Republic interviewed 24 parents from minority regions of Inner Mongolia and examined their preferences and needs concerning guidance on child-rearing.

Dr. Jinjin Lu from Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University in China, and corresponding author of the study, says, "During the interviews, many parents mentioned that Inner Mongolia's unique location and rich natural resources had drawn their attention to how the [environmental factors](#) could influence children's growth.

"The parents were curious to know, for example, whether the geomagnetic field could influence a child's physical and mental well-being.

"It seemed that the parents were eager for more specific knowledge on family education in Inner Mongolia."

Evidence-based family education

Apart from the influence of geographical features, the parents from Inner Mongolia were also concerned with issues including children's health, their acquisition of soft skills, and how they could make a smooth transition from kindergarten to primary school.

After the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Promotion of Family Education was implemented in 2021, parents, community workers, and early childhood teachers have worked harder to create evidence-based early childhood programs, as much of the existing advice and information on child-rearing in China is based on Chinese cultural

norms and family traditions.

To ensure evidence-based programs are as effective as possible, it has become necessary to understand parents' preferences and needs concerning parental knowledge and family education.

Dr. Lu says, "Despite their access to a wide range of information sources, the parents we spoke to from minority regions of Inner Mongolia wanted more guidance on evidence-based parenting programs.

"Theoretical parenting advice can often be boring and obscure, so parents say they would prefer easy-to-understand guidance supported by data."

Recognizing specific needs

When asked why parents from Inner Mongolia were chosen for the study, Dr. Lu explains, "China is a multi-ethnic country, but most existing studies focus solely on Han Chinese families. It is, therefore, a relatively new practice to study the parenting styles and family education programs of other ethnic groups."

According to Dr. Lu, most participants were eager to acquire knowledge and skills that could help them facilitate their children's growth with evidence-based information.

"The results of the study suggest that policymakers and teachers should be fully aware of the local situations when designing or intervening in family education programs.

"They should also have a thorough knowledge of the local culture and the [parents'](#) needs before offering specific advice on child-rearing."

Dr. Lu also called for more scholars to pay attention to family [education](#) in disadvantaged or underdeveloped areas in the future.

More information: Jinjin Lu et al, Parental Knowledge, Preference and Needs of Child-Rearing Family Programmes: A Case in Chinese Inner Mongolia Minority Region, *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* (2022). [DOI: 10.3390/ijerph20010434](https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20010434)

Provided by Xi'an jiaotong-Liverpool University

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