

## PEER REVIEW HISTORY

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### ARTICLE DETAILS

<b>TITLE (PROVISIONAL)</b>	The perception on risk factors of child maltreatment in China: A qualitative study among health professionals
<b>AUTHORS</b>	Xu, Tao; Yue, Qing; Wang, Yan; Wang, Shuo; Liu, Wenli; Huang, Xiaoyan

### VERSION 1 - REVIEW

<b>REVIEWER</b>	Sabine Maguire Cardiff University, Wales, UK
<b>REVIEW RETURNED</b>	08-Feb-2019

<b>GENERAL COMMENTS</b>	<p>This study addresses an important issue with regards to the identification and prevention of child maltreatment in China. It has the potential to be of considerable value to policy makers and professionals, but more context is needed, and further details of the methods required. Some of the statements in the discussion overstate the results, and need to be revised accordingly. Detailed comments below.</p> <p>Abstract: Methods – how many were approached? Conclusions: what does ‘perfection of health professionals’ mean?</p> <p>Strengths and limitations: Last point, incorrect grammar, would read better as ‘A limitation of this qualitative study is that it only reflects the population studied’</p> <p>Introduction: First paragraph, sentence relating to ‘financial burden’ – who are you referring to here? The abused individual? The State? It would be helpful to the reader if you could tell us what the statutory definition of maltreatment is in China, and whether or not mandatory reporting is in place. It would also be helpful to know if corporal punishment is legal in China.</p> <p>Methods: Again, to give more context, are these regions mostly urban or rural? It is unclear why ‘5 communities in one city and five townships in one county’ were selected. Were there not cities in each of these regions? Why was only one county, and one city selected?</p> <p>Sampling procedures: spelling error, should read ‘convenience sampling’. The following two sentences do not make sense, and need rewording. Do you mean that you identified which professionals you wished to sample, and then targeted them?? Were the interviews structured? Semi structured? What themes were explored? Was the coding strategy checked by a second researcher?</p>
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	<p>Results: You need to state how many subjects were approached, and what their professional breakdown was. Why were so few subjects recruited from Children’s hospitals? What is a ‘maternal and child health hospital’?</p> <p>Table 1 and Figure 1 – these need more informative titles ‘Child maltreatment happens relatively more frequently in families with poor economic conditions. Children of single parents or in combined families tend to be at greater risk of maltreatment.’ Were these views expressed by the subjects, or is this your opinion? The view that the child is to blame for being unable to protect themselves is an extraordinary one. Did the subjects elaborate on which age children they believed this to be the case?</p> <p>Discussion: First paragraph, last sentence, should read ‘of the child itself’.</p> <p>Social factors, should read ‘ the pace of life and stress on parents has increased’.</p> <p>What does ‘the abnormal education was regarded as a factor, as it weakens children’s ability to protect themselves’ mean? Likewise, the next sentence is opaque. This is a bizarre concept, and I thin the reader will need more information to understand what underpins it.</p> <p>‘In keeping with other studies, we found that a number of characteristics, including lack of skills, patience or responsibility were linked to child abuse.’ If this was a result within your work, it should have appeared within the results, not just in the discussion. Likewise in the next sentence, do you mean reported in the literature, or in your study? It is incorrect to give the impression that all parents who abuse their children ‘tend to have poor control of their impulses and mental health problems’. This is an oversimplification, and not representative of the literature. ‘This study, like many previously, reported a greater risk for parents with a history of childhood abuse’ – this statement is incorrect, as your study did not explore risk factors for abuse within China, rather you simply explored attitudes and views. This needs rewording.</p> <p>‘However, children with several characteristics are more prone to maltreatment, including physical or mental handicaps, premature birth or with low-birth weight, or those attachment and bonding was disrupted at a young age.’ This sentence needs rewording, as it is grammatically incorrect. The final sentence in this paragraph alludes to health professionals ‘show tolerance’ – of what?</p> <p>‘Older children were thought to be at greater risk’ – is this a result from your study? If so, again it needs to be added to the results, and not simply dropped into the discussion.</p> <p>Final sentence of conclusion needs correcting, ‘explored the insight views’ does not make sense, and ‘provide bases’ should read ‘provide basis’.</p>
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<b>REVIEWER</b>	Richard D. Krugman University of Colorado School of Medicine, USA
<b>REVIEW RETURNED</b>	09-Feb-2019

<b>GENERAL COMMENTS</b>	<p>This is now a five year old qualitative survey of 95 health professionals in China. The authors do a reasonable job in their analysis but missing from the paper is a description of the child protection system, if any, in China. What are the laws governing health professionals responsibilities in child protection? What forms of abuse are crimes that either do or do not get prosecuted? Are health professionals supposed to report their suspicions to</p>
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	someone who will intervene? If so, to whom, and is the intervention effective? If not, why should they bother? In summary, the paper's Results need to be put into context of the wider child protection system in China
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### VERSION 1 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

Reviewer(s)' Comments to Author:

Reviewer: 1

Reviewer Name: Sabine Maguire

Institution and Country: Cardiff University, Wales, UK

Please state any competing interests or state 'None declared': None declared

Please leave your comments for the authors below

This study addresses an important issue with regards to the identification and prevention of child maltreatment in China. It has the potential to be of considerable value to policy makers and professionals, but more context is needed, and further details of the methods required. Some of the statements in the discussion overstate the results, and need to be revised accordingly. Detailed comments below.

Q:Abstract: Methods – how many were approached?

R: 102 subjects were approached. We have added this to the results section.

Q:Conclusions: what does 'perfection of health professionals' mean?

R: This was a spelling mistake. We already changed into: the perception of health professionals.

Q:Strengths and limitations: Last point, incorrect grammar, would read better as 'A limitation of this qualitative study is that it only reflects the population studied'

R: Thank you. We have revised this point accordingly.

Q:Introduction: First paragraph, sentence relating to 'financial burden' – who are you referring to here? The abused individual? The State?

R: Thank you. We have made changes to the para. : It also leads to a huge financial burden on individuals, families and the country.

Q: It would be helpful to the reader if you could tell us what the statutory definition of maltreatment is in China, and whether or not mandatory reporting is in place. It would also be helpful to know if corporal punishment is legal in China.

R: The definition of child maltreatment in China is the same with that of WHO, which we already stated in the first paragraph of the introduction: constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligent treatment, commercial and/or other exploitation that occurs to children. In addition, in the second paragraph, we cited a recent literature review reported the prevalence of different maltreatment in China.

We added some contents in the third paragraph: In the “Anti-domestic Violence Law”, any forms of maltreatment including corporal punishment are prohibited. Under the regulation of this law, healthcare professionals at all levels, and other related stakeholders, have the legal responsibility to report any potential child maltreatment case.

Q: Methods: Again, to give more context, are these regions mostly urban or rural? It is unclear why ‘5 communities in one city and five townships in one county’ were selected. Were there not cities in each of these regions? Why was only one county, and one city selected?

R: Thank you. We have added more context to the methods section. Because in each province, there are on average 10-14 prefectures. There are several urban areas (city) and several rural areas (county) in each prefecture. There are numerous communities in each city and numerous townships in each county. So we used a multistage sampling method to select study sites and participants.

Q: Sampling procedures: spelling error, should read ‘convenience sampling’. The following two sentences do not make sense, and need rewording. Do you mean that you identified which professionals you wished to sample, and then targeted them??

Were the interviews structured? Semi structured? What themes were explored? Was the coding strategy checked by a second researcher?

R: Thank you. We have made correction to the spelling error. In addition, we added on more content to clarify the sampling and data collection procedures. Please refer to the revised method section for the added information.

Q: Results: You need to state how many subjects were approached, and what their professional breakdown was. Why were so few subjects recruited from Children’s hospitals? What is a ‘maternal and child health hospital’?

R: Thank you. 102 health care workers were approached and 95 completed the interview. We have provided the professional breakdown information in table 1: doctors, nurses and managers. For doctors, all of them are child health care/pediatricians. Because there are only a few specialized children’s hospitals in the study areas, so there were few subjects. This also reflects the profile of children’s hospital proportion in China. In China, we have 3097 maternal and child health hospitals at all level (data of the year 2016), but only 99 children’s hospital (data of 2015). Maternal and child health hospitals provide antenatal care, delivery, postnatal care, child and adolescent health care services, with outpatient and inpatient services.

Q: Table 1 and Figure 1 – these need more informative titles

R: We have revised the titles accordingly. Thank you.

Q: 'Child maltreatment happens relatively more frequently in families with poor economic conditions. Children of single parents or in combined families tend to be at greater risk of maltreatment.' Were these views expressed by the subjects, or is this your opinion?

R: There are views expressed by the subjects. We have provided the quotations from the interview.

Q: The view that the child is to blame for being unable to protect themselves is an extraordinary one. Did the subjects elaborate on which age children they believed this to be the case?

R: This is not the authors' or the subjects' view. We have reworded the expression. The original sentence is: children are victims, and cannot be blamed for the maltreatment suffered. The subjects' expression was that some children's own factors such as temper, diseases etc, may be a risk factor for maltreatment. We should understand this and help these children, not blame them. The subjects did talk about a few maltreatment cases that the boy was physically abused and blamed because he swam in a pond even there was a clear forbidding sign.

Q: Discussion: First paragraph, last sentence, should read 'of the child itself'.

Social factors, should read 'the pace of life and stress on parents has increased'.

R: Thank you. We have made corrections accordingly.

Q: What does 'the abnormal education was regarded as a factor, as it weakens children's ability to protect themselves' mean? Likewise, the next sentence is opaque. This is a bizarre concept, and I think the reader will need more information to understand what underpins it.

R: The first point is about child's own factors. So we deleted it and incorporated into the next paragraph. The second point is our suggestions for health care workers. So we deleted it and incorporated this view into the suggestion following the paragraph.

Q: 'In keeping with other studies, we found that a number of characteristics, including lack of skills, patience or responsibility were linked to child abuse.' If this was a result within your work, it should have appeared within the results, not just in the discussion. Likewise in the next sentence, do you mean reported in the literature, or in your study? It is incorrect to give the impression that all parents who abuse their children 'tend to have poor control of their impulses and mental health problems'. This is an oversimplification, and not representative of the literature. 'This study, like many previously, reported a greater risk for parents with a history of childhood abuse' – this statement is incorrect, as your study did not explore risk factors for abuse within China, rather you simply explored attitudes and views. This needs rewording.

R: Thank you. We have reworded these sentences. These points you mentioned are findings of literature. We have made this clear by putting a reference number on them.

Q: 'However, children with several characteristics are more prone to maltreatment, including physical or mental handicaps, premature birth or with low-birth weight, or those attachment and bonding was disrupted at a young age.' This sentence needs rewording, as it is grammatically incorrect. The final sentence in this paragraph alludes to health professionals 'show tolerance' – of what?

R: Thank you. We have revised the sentence. The final sentence is revised as: health professionals misunderstood the underlying reasons by blaming children instead of perpetrators, and show tolerance to maltreatment such as corporal punishment.

Q: 'Older children were thought to be at greater risk' – is this a result from your study? If so, again it needs to be added to the results, and not simply dropped into the discussion.

R: We deleted the paragraph about age.

Q: Final sentence of conclusion needs correcting, 'explored the insight views' does not make sense, and 'provide bases' should read 'provide basis'.

R: Thank you. We have made changes according to your suggestion.

Reviewer: 2

Reviewer Name: Richard D. Krugman

Institution and Country: University of Colorado School of Medicine, USA

Please state any competing interests or state 'None declared': None declared

Please leave your comments for the authors below

This is now a five year old qualitative survey of 95 health professionals in China. The authors do a reasonable job in their analysis but missing from the paper is a description of the child protection system, if any, in China.

Q: What are the laws governing health professionals responsibilities in child protection? What forms of abuse are crimes that either do or do not get prosecuted? Are health professionals supposed to report their suspicions to someone who will intervene? If so, to whom, and is the intervention effective? If not, why should they bother? In summary, the paper's Results need to be put into context of the wider child protection system in China.

R: We have added on some content about the laws in China in the introduction section (the second paragraph). According to the "Anti-domestic Violence Law", any forms of maltreatment including corporal punishment are prohibited. Under the regulation of this law, healthcare professionals at all levels have the legal responsibility to report any potential child maltreatment case to the policy. This is a relatively new policy issued from 2016 and currently there have been no national project to evaluate the effectiveness.

## VERSION 2 – REVIEW

<b>REVIEWER</b>	Dr Sabine Maguire Cardiff University, Wales, UK
<b>REVIEW RETURNED</b>	18-Mar-2019

<b>GENERAL COMMENTS</b>	<p>With regards to responses, you have still failed to explain to the authors that the definition of maltreatment that you give in the first sentence of the introduction, is the one which is utilised in China. This needs to be stated explicitly.</p> <p>Re the population studied, please add the word 'rural' in brackets after the word 'county' which will give the readers a better context for the sample. While you have offered some more information regarding methods, I am still unclear if these were structured, or semistructured interviews. Also, the interview schedule, including prompts, should be added as an online appendix. The details regarding the differences between 'maternal and child health' hospitals and 'children's hospitals' needs to be added to the methods. I suggest something like 'maternal and child health hospitals provide the majority of secondary care for children, with Children's hospitals offering tertiary care. Thus only one children's hospital served the population that were being interviewed.' Where is figure 1?</p> <p>The titles, while slightly more informative, are grammatically incorrect. I advise you to ask a native English speaker to go through the whole manuscript for spelling/ grammatical errors, as there are many throughout.</p>
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<b>REVIEWER</b>	Richard D. Krugman University of Colorado School of Medicine Kempe Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Chd Abuse and Neglect Denver, CO USA
<b>REVIEW RETURNED</b>	28-Mar-2019

<b>GENERAL COMMENTS</b>	<p>The authors have done a nice job of responding to the reviewer concerns. There are many typographical errors in the paper (hence the "minor revision" tick above, but once this is dealt with, I am comfortable with acceptance.</p>
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## VERSION 2 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

Reviewer: 1

Reviewer Name: Dr Sabine Maguire

Institution and Country: Cardiff University, Wales, UK

Please state any competing interests or state 'None declared': None declared

Q: With regards to responses, you have still failed to explain to the authors that the definition of maltreatment that you give in the first sentence of the introduction, is the one which is utilized in China. This needs to be stated explicitly.

R: We revised the sentence in the second paragraph as “ In China, child maltreatment, as defined by WHO, was not recognized as a social problem until the early 1990s, but prevalence has been increasing”.

Q: Re the population studied, please add the word 'rural' in brackets after the word 'county' which will give the readers a better context for the sample.

R: Yes, we added the “rural”accordingly. And also we put a word “urban”after the word “city”, with to make it more clearly understood.

Q: While you have offered some more information regarding methods, I am still unclear if these were structured, or semistructured interviews. Also, the interview schedule, including prompts, should be added as an online appendix.

R: We have addressed this in the Data collection part that, “The study collected qualitative data using in-depth interviews with a semi-structured interview outline. The themes included current situation of child maltreatment, reasons for children to be maltreated, and suggestions on healthcare worker’s role in maltreatment prevention.” The interview outlines was co-developed by the first, fifth and sixth author. We are currently refining the interview tools and applying for a second stage study on this topic. Currently the authors are not willing to share the tools. We will consider to share them in the future publications. Hope you can understand and support our decision.

Q: The details regarding the differences between 'maternal and child health' hospitals and 'children's hospitals' needs to be added to the methods. I suggest something like 'maternal and child health hospitals provide the majority of secondary care for children, with Children's hospitals offering tertiary care. Thus only one children's hospital served the population that were being interviewed.'

R: Thank you for the comments. We think this might fit well in the results part rather than the method part. So we added this sentence “Maternal and child health hospitals provide the majority of secondary care for children, with children's hospitals offering tertiary care. Thus only one children's hospital served the population were interviewed ”to the first paragraph of the Results.

Q: Where is figure 1?

R: Figure 1 was submitted as a separate file as requested by the editor. It should be in the final PDF files.

Q: :The titles, while slightly more informative, are grammatically incorrect. I advise you to ask a native English speaker to go through the whole manuscript for spelling/ grammatical errors, as there are many throughout.

R: Thank you. We have asked a second native English speakers to help with the language problems as much as possible. Her name is included in the Acknowledgement.



Reviewer: 2

Reviewer Name: Richard D. Krugman

Institution and Country: University of Colorado School of Medicine, Kempe Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Chd Abuse and Neglect, Denver, CO USA

Please state any competing interests or state 'None declared': No competing interests.

Q: The authors have done a nice job of responding to the reviewer concerns. There are many typographical errors in the paper (hence the "minor revision" tick above, but once this is dealt with, I am comfortable with acceptance.

R: Thank you. We have asked a second native English speakers to help with the language problems as much as possible. Her name is included in the Acknowledgement.