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Note: The published version of this paper is available as follows:

Shek DTL. Chinese Version of Self-report Family Inventory. In: Michalos AC, eds. *Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Well-being Research*. 2014 ed. Springer; 2014:887-890. doi: 10.1007/978-94-007-0753-5_3551.

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Alex C. Michalos

Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Well-Being Research

10.1007/978-94-007-0753-5_3551

Chinese Version of Self-Report Family Inventory

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Without Abstract

Synonyms

[Assessment of family functioning in Chinese people](#)

Definition

The Chinese Self-Report Family Inventory is a translated scale which attempts to assess perceived family functioning in Chinese families. This is an update of Shek (2014).

Description

Assessment of Family Functioning

The Self-Report Family Inventory (SFI) was developed by Beavers and colleagues (1985) to evaluate one's perceived family style and competence. Beavers' original SFI consisted of 44 items (1985). A shortened version containing 36 items was further developed by Beavers and colleagues (1990). The SFI has been widely adopted to evaluate family functioning across different age groups and cultures (Shek, 1998c).

Previous studies have indicated that the SFI has acceptable psychometric properties. A series of studies conducted by Beavers and colleagues (1990; 1991) have supported the reliability of the measure, although the reliabilities of some subscales might not be very high. In addition, Green's study (1987) supported the concurrent and construct validities of the SFI. Tutty (1995) reviewed different scales measuring family functioning and claimed that the psychometric properties of the SFI "are supported by good concurrent validity with other family functioning measures and excellent internal consistency" (p. 103).

However, two limitations of the SFI should be noted. First, the dimensionality of the 36-item SFI is still inconclusive in available research findings. In several studies conducted by Hampson and colleagues (1989; 1991), six factors of the SFI were extracted, including "family health, conflict resolution, communication, cohesion, leadership, and emotional expression". In Beavers and Hampson's study (1990), the SFI demonstrated a five-factor structure, which included "health/competence, conflict, cohesion leadership, and emotional expressiveness". They further stated that "the scale measures some consistent themes of family life across many different samples" (p. 59). Nonetheless, in Teja and Stolberg (1993)'s study, a one-factor solution was supported, which mainly reflecting the dimension of family health.

The second limitation is that the SFI is often used in Western contexts, mostly in English speaking countries. It can be conjectured that the factors considered to be critical to family functioning in Western cultures might differ from those in the Chinese context. For instance, Chinese societies may not heavily emphasize mutual respect between members of a family. In addition, the five cardinal relations ("wu lun") occupy key positions in Chinese history. For example, wives are expected to obey their husbands ("chu jia cong fu"). Similarly, children are taught to follow their fathers' words ("fu ming nan wei, bu gan bu cong" – a person should not refuse to take his or her father's orders). In addition, as Beavers and Hampson (1990) concluded, emotional expression is viewed as a very important element of a healthy family environment in Western cultures, while in the traditional Chinese culture, self-suppression and forbearance on family matters are strongly valued. In a Chinese family, open discussion about the family or the elderly's behavior is not encouraged. Thus, compared to Western people who are used to express emotions about their family, Chinese people may lack the awareness and capacity to discuss or describe their family. Chinese people might perceive family competence differently, and possess a less differentiated view towards family functioning (Shek, 1998c, 2001b).

The Chinese Self-Report Family Inventory (C-SFI)

Shek firstly translated the SFI into Chinese (1998c) and further conducted three validation studies using the C-SFI (Shek & Lai, 2001). The results of Study 1 (N = 361 adolescents) demonstrated the internal consistency, convergent validity and construct validity of C-SFI. Study 2 revealed that the C-SFI scores of a clinical group (N = 281) were discriminated from those of a nonclinical group (N = 451). The results of Study 3 (N = 3,649 secondary school students) showed that the C-SFI was internally consistent and possessed concurrent and construct validities in different adolescent samples. Findings of factor analyses suggested a two-factor structure of the scale, including "Family Health" and "Family Pathology". In addition, related findings also showed the consistent two-factor structure among groups defined by gender and grade. The result was inconsistent with the previous findings suggesting five or six dimensions of the SFI (Shek, 2001b).

In another study involving 858 Chinese parents and 429 children (Shek, [1998c](#)), the C-SFI scores collected from both parents and children supported the internal consistency of the C-SFI. Consistent with the theoretical predictions, family functioning perceived by different subsamples was significantly linked to adolescent developmental outcomes, such as school adjustment, problem behavior, and psychological well-being (Shek, [1997](#)). Findings of factor analyses suggested a two-factor solution consisting of “Family Health” and “Family Pathology”, which was reliably reproduced in random subsamples and in both parent and adolescent samples (Shek, [1998c](#)). Although previous findings suggested five to six dimensions of the SFI, this study extracted two factors of the C-SFI. Further efforts are needed to verify the dimensionality of the original SFI.

In a longitudinal study involving Chinese parents (N = 756) and adolescent children (N = 378), the C-SFI scores of parents and children were collected at two time points in a year. The C-SFI was demonstrated to be internally consistent in parents and children on both occasions. In line with the theoretical hypotheses, perceived family functioning collected from parents and their children concurrently showed to be related to self-esteem, life satisfaction, general psychiatric morbidity, hopelessness, and purpose in life on two occasions. Longitudinal and prospective analyses using predictors collected at time 1 to criterion variables measured at time 2 suggested bidirectional relationships between discrepancies in perceived family functioning and psychological well-being of the adolescent participants (Shek, [1998a](#)). In addition, the results also showed that the differences between parents’ and their children’s perceived family functioning were concurrently connected to adolescent self-esteem, purpose in life, life satisfaction, hopelessness, and general psychiatric morbidity on both occasions. Longitudinal and prospective analyses suggested bidirectional relations between discrepancies in adolescent psychological well-being and perceived family functioning (Shek, [1998b](#)). Finally, factor analysis findings revealed two dimensions of the measure. The two factors, “Family Health” and “Family Pathology”, could be reproduced in different samples on various occasions (Shek, [2001a](#)). Some studies showed that family functioning assessed by the C-SFI was often closely associated with adolescent problem behavior, school adjustment and psychological well-being, which further established the convergent validity of the measure (Shek, [2002](#)). In a recent study conducted by Yang, Gao and Sin (2017), the findings based on students with special educational needs provided support for the psychometric properties of the SFI, including its factor structure.

The above studies involving different Chinese adolescent samples clearly demonstrate sound psychometric properties of the C-SFI. The available research findings clearly show that the C-SFI is a reliable and valid scale with two stable dimensions.

Cross-References

[Chinese Culture](#)
[Chinese Family Assessment Instrument](#)
[Family Functioning and Well-Being](#)
[Family Quality of Life](#)
[Marital Adjustment](#)
[Marital Quality](#)

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