Linking Maternal Self-Efficacy, Mother- and Daughter-In-Law Relationship, and Role of Husband in Taiwanese Families

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationships among mothers- and daughters-in-law, the husband’s role, and maternal self-efficacy in Taiwanese families. The subjects were 509 Taiwanese women with children in kindergarten or the first grade. ANOVA results showed that when daughters-in-law disagreed with their mothers-in-law and their husbands took the side of the mother-in-law, women experience greater conflict with and perceived dominance of their mother-in-law, and their confidence for using parenting strategies and playing a maternal role was significantly lower than those husbands did not intervene, intervened or took their side. Hierarchical regression analysis results indicated that women who experience higher maternal self-efficacy report more companionship and less conflict with their mothers-in-law. When women’s educational years and family income were controlled for, the results showed that support from the husband was not a significant predictor and support from the mother-in-law was a negative predictor of maternal self-efficacy.

Keywords: maternal self-efficacy; mother-/daughter-in-law relationship; husband’s role; family support; Taiwan

A mother’s relationship with various family members has a crucial effect on her self-efficacy. Research has shown that support from family members can be related to a mother’s parenting self-efficacy (Holloway, Suzuki, Yamamoto, & Behrens, 2005; Ozer, 1995). Conversely, women receiving a substantial amount of criticism and little social support may develop an unfavorable self-image regarding the effectiveness of their parenting (Bandura, 1997).

Since time immemorial, the mother- and daughter-in-law relationship has been a difficult problem for families in Taiwanese and Chinese society. Some relationships exist in a state of "false harmony," where a superficial harmony is maintained, but both sides feel tension and hostility toward the other side (Huang & Hsu, 2006). Situated between the two women, the husband plays a crucial bridging role. Kung (1999) metaphorically described the mother and the wife as if they were standing on the two sides of a set of scales, and the weight placed by the husband (son) on each side determines who has the advantage.

Little research has focused on examining the effects of the mother- and daughter-in-law relationship on maternal roles and parenting. This paper reports on the mother- and daughter-in-law relationship in Taiwanese families. The study explored whether a positive mother- and daughter-in-law relationship increases maternal self-efficacy. In addition, it examined whether the husband’s role is a critical factor for the mother- and daughter-in-law relationship and maternal self-efficacy. This information should be useful for counselors who work with members of Taiwanese and Chinese cultures and for educators and professionals who create programs and projects for Taiwanese and Chinese families.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Parenting self-efficacy

Parenting self-efficacy has been defined as parents’ perceptions of their competence in the parental role (Coleman & Karraker, 2000). High parenting self-efficacy has been found to predict parental engagement in children’s activities (Mash & Johnston, 1983), positively responding to a child’s needs (Donovan, Leavitt, & Walsh, 1997), and fewer perceptions of child behavior problems (Johnston & Mash, 1989). Conversely, low parenting self-efficacy appears to be associated with negative effects, feelings of helplessness in the parenting role, the use of corrective disciplinary techniques, and high levels of parental stress (Bugental, Blue, & Lewis, 1989).

Parenting self-efficacy is a potentially central cognitive element of parenting competence (Coleman & Karraker, 2000). Parents’ evaluation of the effectiveness of their parenting is based on their cultural background and perception of successful parenting (Sigel & McGillicuddy-De Lisi, 2002). Local cultural values and the husband’s family values may affect the mother’s self-efficacy. For example, Japanese cultural expectations on the maternal role are high and difficult to meet. Japanese mothers experience pressure from in-laws, insensitive husbands, other mothers, or comments made by professionals in the media (Kazui, 1997). Therefore, Japanese mothers, even highly educated women, rated themselves as being low in self-efficacy (Holloway, et al., 2005). Compared with American mothers, Japanese mothers reported lower levels of parenting self-efficacy (Suzuki, Holloway, Yamamoto, & Mindnich, 2009).

The effect of social support on parenting is conditioned by how it is evaluated by the recipient (Payne & Jones, 1987). The recipient evaluates social support depending on who the provider is, the circumstances under which the support is provided, and the quality of support (Pierce, Lakey, Sarason, Sarason, Joseph, 1997). Using the social cognitive approach, Suzuki et al. (2009) examined the correlation between women’s parenting self-efficacy and the support provided by their husbands, relatives, and friends, and found that support from the husband was the only significant predictor of parenting self-efficacy. Liu and Chen (2010) found that Taiwanese women who were first-time as mothers perceived high social support related to their self-efficacy. However, this study did not mention the resource of social support. In Taiwan, 22% of families are three-generational families that live with the husband’s parents (National Statistics R. O. C. Taiwan, 2006). A large proportion of Taiwanese women rely on their mother-in-law for instrumental support. Previous research has not explored the influence of support from mothers-in-law on women’s parenting self-efficacy.

Mother- and daughter-in-law relationship

Taiwanese and Chinese people classify interpersonal relations into groups of “insiders” and “outsiders.” They are more accommodating with insiders, fulfil mutual obligations and responsibilities, and do not ask for favors in return; however, with outsiders, they are stricter regarding what is given and what is taken (Yang, 2001). A daughter-in-law should be considered a member of the family; however, because of the lack of blood ties and emotional ties developed through the upbringing process which to base the relationship, the family-in-law may see her as an outsider (Kung, 1999). According to cultural customs, this outsider must follow numerous traditional norms, including obeying her in-laws, taking care of her in-laws when they are sick or elderly, and showing filial piety toward her in-laws (Chen, 2006). These cultural norms contradict the equality and independence that modern women seek (Kao & Lu, 2006). Research by Chen (2006) found that the higher education level of the woman, the more she disagreed with these traditional norms.
Yang (2001) discovered that the concept of “belonging to your husband once you are married” is still held by mothers-in-law of the older generation, whereas daughter-in-laws of the younger generation do not consider the husband’s home to be their own. The mother- and daughter-in-law relationship no longer relies on the “duty of norms” to be maintained, but instead is built on genuine feelings.

The potential conflict between the mother- and daughter-in-law is obvious. Kung (1999) interviewed 18 pairs of mothers- and daughters-in-law. Daughters-in-law felt it to be insufferable when their mothers-in-law interfered with their parenting, invaded their personal privacy, and showed bias toward the mother-in-law’s own children. On the other hand, the mothers-in-law were displeased with the manner in which their daughters-in-law used money, cared for their children, and did housework. However, these conflicts were not expressed through argument or criticism, but instead through “implicit conflict”, meaning that a superficial harmony is maintained while a negative relationship characterized by defense, rejection, passiveness, and isolation toward the other exists below the surface (Huang & Hsu, 2006).

This implicit conflict can be attributed to the importance of a harmonious family in Taiwanese and Chinese society. In addition, according to family rankings, the mother-in-law has a higher status and greater authority within the family than the daughter-in-law does. In addition, filial piety is considered a virtue. Therefore, when faced with conflict, the daughter-in-law typically chooses obedience, silence, or evasion (Kung, 1999).

Although previous research in Taiwan on the mother- and daughter-in-law relationship has focused primarily on negative aspects such as conflict and authority, Tsai and Chen (2004) found that when the mother-in-law participated in parenting, it relieved the stress felt by working women and improved their quality of life. Over time, the family structure has transformed from a father–son-centered (patrilineal) structure to a husband–wife-centered (matrimonial) structure. In the past, the ideal mother- and daughter-in-law relationship was of a master–slave order, and the mother–daughter bond was a hierarchical relationship that followed rules of ethics. Presently, more equal and flexible cooperation modes, such as a “sisters bond” and “work partner bond,” have been added to the ideal mother- and daughter-in-law relationship (Hsu & Huang, 2006). According to a literature review, this study summarized that the mother- and daughter-in-law relationship consists of conflict, authority, support, and companionship.

Role of the husband

Of all possible sources of support, it is the supportiveness from the husband that is most highly related to a mother’s parenting self-efficacy (Holloway, et al., 2005; Ozer, 1995). Holloway et al. (2005) used a stepwise regression analysis and found that women’s satisfaction with their husband’s supportiveness contributed significantly more than other relatives’ support did to a women’s parenting self-efficacy. Women reported feeling less stressed when their husbands helped with housework, thereby enabling them to be more warm and patient with their children.

Kung (1999) studied the triangular relationship among mothers-in-law, daughters-in-law, and husbands (sons). Data from the interviews showed this triangular relationship to be an issue of dynamic balance, and that the key player is the husband (son), who is situated between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law. When the husband (son) actively and skillfully handles disputes between mothers- and daughters-in-law in a neutral manner, tension can be relieved. However, if the son consistently takes the side of the mother-in-law, the daughter-in-law is required to be tolerant; if he unconditionally agrees with the daughter-in-law, the mother is disgruntled and complains. Although some
The primary purpose of this study was to examine the effect of the mother- and daughter-in-law relationship on maternal self-efficacy. The hypotheses are that positive relationships (support and companionship) are related to high self-efficacy, and negative relationships (conflict and dominance) reduce self-efficacy. The second purpose was to determine whether the mother- and daughter-in-law relationship and maternal self-efficacy differ according to the status of the husband. Finally, this study explored the relationships among support from the husband, the mother- and daughter-in-law relationship, and maternal self-efficacy.

**METHOD**

**Subjects**

A total of 509 women with children in kindergarten or the first grade participated in this study and were recruited through their children’s schools. The age range of the subjects was 22 to 55 years old, and the average age was 35.39 years (SD=4.98).

Fifty-seven percent of the subjects had a college degree or other type of higher education, 72% had a job, and 81.3% had two or more children. The mean family monthly income reported was between NT$40,000 to $60,000 (approximately US$1,333 to $2,000).

**Instrumentation**

**Demographic Questionnaire.** The subjects provided basic background information pertaining to their and their husband’s age, years of education, employment status, monthly family income, and number of children as well as the husband status (When you and your mother-in-law disagree, your husband 1 = does not intervene, 2 = takes the side of your mother-in-law, 3 = intervenes, 4 = takes my side), support from the husband (How often does your husband help with housework and take care of the children? 0 = never helps, 1 = sometimes helps, 2 = often helps), and frequency of residence with their mother-in-law ( 0 = do not live together, 1 = sometimes live together, 2 = live together every day).

**Maternal Self-Efficacy.** Two scales were used in the present study. The Parenting Self-Efficacy Scale (PSE) was devised by Holloway, Suzuki, Yamamoto, and Behrens (2005). The PSE consists of two subscales: the Parenting Strategy subscale and Child Outcomes subscale. The Parenting Strategy subscale is a 10-item index of a mother’s sense of self-efficacy in using certain strategies (e.g., listening, explaining, praising, and controlling emotions) toward the child. The Child Outcomes subscale originally has preschool, first grade, and second grade versions. Ten items from the preschool and first grade versions were used in the current study. The items elicit a mother’s sense of efficacy in teaching their children age-appropriate tasks (e.g., being polite, continue trying, and getting along with other children). An example item is “How confident do you feel that you can teach your children to stay neat and clean?” Each item on the two subscales is answered on a 6-point scale, with response options ranging from not at all confident (1) to very confident (6). After factor analysis and removing items with factor loadings below .4, each subscale contained nine items. The scores in the subscales are computed by averaging the scores across items on each subscale. Higher scores indicate higher self-efficacy when using strategies and managing child outcomes. Cronbach’s alpha coefficients are .95 and .97 for the two subscales.
The Maternal Role Efficacy Scale is based on the Parenting Sense of Competence Scale (PSOC) devised by Johnston and Mash (1989). Seven items were selected from the PSOC and used to assess the degree of mothers’ self-esteem in playing a maternal role. Each item is answered on a 6-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6). An example item is “Being a mother makes me tense and anxious.” Several items are reverse scored, and higher scores indicate higher self-efficacy in maternal roles. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient is .83.

Relationship with the Mother-In-Law. The 20-item Relationship with the Mother-In-Law scale was developed by Lin (2011) and used to measure how the daughter-in-law perceived her relationship with her mother-in-law. Each of the items is rated on a 6-point Likert scale, with possible responses ranging from none to the most. Principle component factor analysis with varimax rotation for all items yielded a four-factor solution: Support, Companionship, Conflict, and Dominance. Item loadings ranged from .52 to .94, and these factors explained a total of 72.9% of the variance. Support represents assistance, guidance, encouragement, and comfort from the mother-in-law. Companionship items include chatting, having fun, doing housework together, going shopping, and receiving compliments. Conflicts include disagreeing, arguing and quarrelling with the mother-in-law. Dominance represents the dominant role of the mother-in-law, as evidenced in behaviors such as giving orders, being forceful, and being reproachful. The scores from the subscales are computed by averaging the scores across items on each subscale. The internal consistency reliability is high, with Cronbach’s alpha coefficients being .90, .87, .80, and .94 for the Support, Company, Conflict, and Dominance subscales, respectively.

RESULTS

Demographic Variables, Mother- and Daughter-In-Law Relationship, and Maternal Self-Efficacy

To test the relationships between demographic variables and mother-in-law variables, Pearson correlation analyses were conducted. As shown in Table 1, mothers’ year of education and family income were significantly positively related to companionship and negatively related to conflict in the relationship. In addition, mothers’ years of education and family income were significant and positively associated with all three maternal self-efficacy variables (Table 2).

Numerous significant correlations existed between the frequency of living together with a mother-in-law and mother- and daughter-in-law relationship variables, such as Support ($r = .19$), Companionship ($r = .18$), and Conflict ($r = .13$). However, the frequency of living with a mother-in-law was not significantly associated with maternal self-efficacy variables (Table 2).

Table 1: Correlations between Demographic Variables and the Mother- and Daughter-In-Law Relationship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Companionship</th>
<th>Conflict</th>
<th>Dominance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subjects’ educational years</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.16**</td>
<td>-.11*</td>
<td>-.10*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family income</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.12**</td>
<td>-.12**</td>
<td>-.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of living together</td>
<td>.19**</td>
<td>.18**</td>
<td>.13**</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of support from husband</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.11*</td>
<td>-.14**</td>
<td>-.25**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p < .05$  ** $p < .01$
Table 2: Correlations between Demographic Variables and Maternal Self-Efficacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Parenting strategy</th>
<th>Child outcomes</th>
<th>Maternal role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mothers’ educational years</td>
<td>.23**</td>
<td>.12**</td>
<td>.19**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family income</td>
<td>.21**</td>
<td>.14**</td>
<td>.23**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living with mother-in-law</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of support from husband</td>
<td>.17**</td>
<td>.13**</td>
<td>.13**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05  **p < .01

Husband’s Role, Mother- and Daughter-in-Law Relationship, and Maternal Self-Efficacy

Regarding the husband’s role, this study examined the frequency of support provided by a subject’s husband as well as the side that the husband took when the subjects disagreed with their mothers-in-law. The correlation analysis results showed that when the subjects’ husbands were more involved in housework, they perceived more companionship, as well as less conflict and dominance from their mother-in-law. In addition, they had more confidence in their parenting strategy, child outcomes, and maternal role (Tables 1 and 2).

Because the husband status was a categorical variable, a series of one-way analyses of variance was conducted to test the difference between the mother- and daughter-in-law relationship and maternal self-efficacy according to the husband status. As Table 3 shows, subjects whose husbands intervened when the mother-in-law and subject did not agree perceived significantly more support and companionship from their mother-in-law than did those whose husbands did not intervene. Among subjects whose husbands took the side of the mother-in-law, perceived conflict with the mother-in-law and dominance of the mother-in-law were significantly higher than those husbands did not intervene, intervened and took their side. Among subjects whose husbands took the side of the mother-in-law, confidence in using parenting strategies and playing a maternal role was significantly lower than those husbands did not intervene, intervened and took their side.

Table 3: Means, Standard Deviations, and F Values for Husband Status in the Mother-Daughter-In-Law Relationship and Maternal Self-Efficacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Not intervene</th>
<th>2. take the side of the mother-in-law</th>
<th>3. intervene</th>
<th>4. take my side</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>2.84(1.20)</td>
<td>2.81(1.45)</td>
<td>3.24(1.30)</td>
<td>2.73(1.30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companionship</td>
<td>3.11(1.15)</td>
<td>2.71(1.20)</td>
<td>3.45(1.19)</td>
<td>3.21(1.22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>2.51(1.00)</td>
<td>3.31(1.24)</td>
<td>2.40(1.00)</td>
<td>2.71(1.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominance</td>
<td>2.23(1.21)</td>
<td>3.23(1.41)</td>
<td>1.95(1.02)</td>
<td>2.09(1.22)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mother-in-law relationship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maternal Self-efficacy</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Child outcomes</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>4.66(0.60)</td>
<td>4.28(0.78)</td>
<td>3.63(1.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companionship</td>
<td>4.70(0.84)</td>
<td>4.88(0.65)</td>
<td>3.18(0.91)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>4.67(0.67)</td>
<td>4.69(0.74)</td>
<td>3.71(1.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominance</td>
<td>4.69(0.74)</td>
<td>4.30**</td>
<td>3.49*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05  **p < .01  ***p < .001

Effect of Mother-Daughter-In-Law Relationship and Support from Husband on Maternal Self-Efficacy

A hierarchical regression was performed to test the relative influence of the mother- and daughter-in-law relationship and support from the husband on maternal self-efficacy. Because mothers’ years of education and family income were significantly correlated with numerous maternal self-efficacy variables, they were treated as controlled variables. The support from husband variable

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was calculated according to the frequency of the husband’s assistance in doing housework and input stepwise into the regression model. Table 4 shows the final models. Support, companionship, and conflict with the mother-in-law significantly predicted the parenting strategy and child outcomes variables. Support and companionship also predicted the maternal role variable. The results indicated that mothers who perceived less support, more companionship, and less conflict from their mothers-in-law felt more confident in using parenting strategies and in teaching their children to accomplish tasks. Mothers who felt less support and more companionship from their mothers-in-law also had greater self-confidence in their maternal role. However, the husband’s role was not a significant predictor for all maternal self-efficacy variables.

### Table 4: Predicting Maternal Self-Efficacy When Controlling for Mothers’ Years of Education and Family Income (Final Model)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Parenting strategy</th>
<th>Child outcomes</th>
<th>Maternal role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>-.15**</td>
<td>-.26***</td>
<td>-18**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companionship</td>
<td>.39***</td>
<td>.47***</td>
<td>.23***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>-.21***</td>
<td>-.19**</td>
<td>-.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominance</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>-.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband role</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

### DISCUSSION

This study found several mother- and daughter-in-law relationships that significantly predicted maternal self-efficacy. In accordance with the hypothesis, the more companionship and the less conflict women perceived from their mothers-in-law, the higher the level of maternal self-efficacy that they reported. In other words, when the mother- and daughter-in-law relationship is in a friend-like state and amicable, where the members can chat, do housework, go shopping, and have fun, mothers are more confident in their maternal role, using parenting strategies, and teaching their children to accomplish various tasks. However, when the mother- and daughter-in-law relationship involves disagreement and arguing, mothers show less confidence in using parenting strategies and in child outcomes, but this does not affect their judgment of their maternal role.

The negative influence of a supportive mother- and daughter-in-law relationship on maternal self-efficacy was unexpected. It may be that unwelcomed help from a mother-in-law may leave women with fewer opportunities to use parenting strategies or to teach their children to accomplish tasks. Another possibility is that women who often require assistance from others may not be confident in their work and their maternal role. Although previous research treats support from relatives as a benefit for parenting self-efficacy (Suzuki et al., 2009), the range of people considered relatives was too wide, even including a daughter-in-law’s own mother and aunts. Kung(1999) interviewed 18 daughters-in-law and found that their greatest aggravation was excessive interference in parenting by mothers-in-law. In numerous cases, children are spoiled by the mother-in-law, and mothers are unable to discipline the children by using their own methods (Kung,1999). It is evident that too much support from mothers-in-law may be a source of stress and restriction for women in Taiwan.
The dominant role of a mother-in-law was not a significant predictor of maternal self-efficacy when women’s years of education and family income were controlled for. Women who perceive dominance from their mothers-in-law in their relationship typically feel that their mothers-in-law override them. In this study, a significant negative correlation existed between mothers’ years of education and a dominant relationship. The more education a woman had, the less likely her mother-in-law was to force or scold her. Numerous research findings support the suggestion that education facilitates improving the status of Taiwanese women in their husband’s family (Chen, 2006; Williams, Mehta, & Lin, 1999). The traditional mother- and daughter-in-law relationship is becoming more equal because of changes in women’s education.

Subjects whose husbands intervened in disagreement between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law perceived more support and companionship in the mother- and daughter-in-law relationship than did those whose husbands did not intervene. However, among women who felt that their husbands took the side of their mothers-in-law, the percentage of negative mother- and daughter-in-law relationships involving conflicts or perceived dominance by the mother-in-law was higher. These results are consistent with qualitative research findings. Kung (1999) stated that amicable mother- and daughter-in-law relationships are the product of the husband communicating with both sides. In families with unhealthy mother- and daughter-in-law relationships, the husband typically has an evasive attitude, which deepens prejudice and creates more misunderstandings between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law.

In addition, the frequency of the husband helping with housework and caring for children is significantly and positively related to companionship and negatively related to conflict and dominance. Therefore, the husband assisting with housework or intervening in a dispute can be considered helpful in improving the mother- and daughter-in-law relationship.

This study found that, among subjects whose husbands took the side of the mother-in-law, self-efficacy in parenting strategies and the maternal role were significantly lower than those in the other groups. Although this study did not define the factors causing disagreement between mothers- and daughters-in-law, evidence showed that childrearing and parenting problems cause the most disputes (Kao & Wang, 1986). When women discipline their children and their husbands agree their mothers-in-law interfere, women may choose to yield. This long-term denial may cause women to have less confidence in their maternal role.

According to correlation analysis, support from the husband was significantly associated with maternal self-efficacy. However, when mothers’ years of education and family income were controlled for, support from husbands was not a significant predictor of maternal self-efficacy. This result is different from that shown in previous research. Suzuki et al. (2009) found that low parenting self-efficacy in Japanese mothers is partially attributable to their low levels of satisfaction with support from their husbands. This may be because of measurement differences. In this study, mothers assessed the frequency of their husband’s support, whereas Suzuki et al. (2009) measured mothers’ level of satisfaction with the quantity and quality of child-rearing support provided by their husbands. In addition, the results indicated that the influence of mothers’ level of education and family income is stronger than the influence of support from husbands on maternal self-efficacy. Women who have a higher level of education and income may be more capable and confident in themselves. The amount of support from the husband does not have a strong influence on highly confident women.

The mother- and daughter-in-law relationship and living together with a mother-in-law are associated. The more time a mother- and daughter-in-law spend living together, the more support and companionship from the mother-in-law are received by the daughter-in-law. However,
conflicts also occur. In this study, 41.8% of the women lived with their mothers-in-law every day. In Western society, young couples are encouraged to live apart from their in-laws to develop autonomy (Duvall, 1954). In Eastern society, young couples are sometimes requested to live with their in-laws so that they can easily care for each other. Although the results of this study showed that the frequency of living with a mother-in-law was not related to maternal self-efficacy, it is still crucial to learn how to interact positively with in-laws.

Previous research regarding topics on the mother- and daughter-in-law relationship was conducted primarily using qualitative interviews. This study entailed quantitative research. These data have critical implications for educators, counselors, therapists, and other professionals. Education departments should consider adding courses about interacting effectively with in-laws for Taiwanese and Chinese families. Counselors and therapists should be more prudent when looking at the complex and delicate family relationship that Taiwanese and Chinese women are in.

This study examined the associations among the mother- and daughter-in-law relationship, the husband’s role, and maternal self-efficacy. The results provide baseline information for further research. It is unclear why social support from the mother-in-law and the husband did not have a positive effect on maternal self-efficacy as expected. Future studies should investigate this and be more detailed in categorizing the various types of support (i.e., emotional support or substantial support, who received support from whom, and the satisfaction of the recipient).

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