

# Research on Senior Children's Disclosure Behavior of the Yi Nationality in China

Xiaohong Liu<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Education, Southwest University, Chongqing, China

Correspondence: Xiaohong Liu, Faculty of Education, Southwest University, Chongqing 400715, China. Tel: 86-188-8331-6803. E-mail: zoeliu0812@gmail.com

Received: July 8, 2014 Accepted: July 28, 2014 Online Published: July 29, 2014

doi:10.5539/ass.v10n16p201

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ass.v10n16p201>

## Abstract

This study selected 57 infants, who were 5-6 years old and lived in Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, China, as research objects, using the event sampling observation approach to record children's disclosure cases as original materials. The results demonstrate that: Chinese Yi senior children show disclosure behavior average 0.5 times per person per day; the content of disclosure behavior is always related to their own self-interests; the main motivation of senior children's disclosure behavior is to ask for help; most disclosure cases happened in free and game background; there are significant gender difference of senior children's disclosure behavior. In the end, the author analyzed the causes of these differences, and put forward some relevant suggestions according to the research results.

**Keywords:** disclosure behavior, motivation, gender, content, senior children, the Yi nationality

## 1. Introduction

Disclosing other children's faults is a kind of interactive behavior between children and teachers when they believe their rights have been infringed by peers, or they found peers breaking the rules or teachers' requirements and expectations with the goal of stopping or changing their peers' behaviors (Liu, 1999). Tattling is a typical behavior during children's socialization process, as well as a good chance for education. It has been reported that about 60% of kids will disclose peers' faults to teachers when they think they broke the rule or infringed their rights, some of them show 5 times of disclosure behavior per day (Early Childhood Education BBS of Shandong, 2007). And many teachers do not know how to deal with kids' disclosure behavior. However, with the exception of some early childhood educators, most of the current researches on children's disclosure behavior in China are focused on the categorization, causes, and characteristics of disclosure behavior, and exploring the coping strategies. Moreover, most of the researches involved long age groups, such as 3-7 and 4-7 years old children. But lack of researches only pointed to senior children's disclosure behavior. Furthermore, studies on the Yi nationality children's disclosure behavior haven't shown so far. So in order to strength researches in this area, the study intends to reveal the main substance, motivation and occurring context of senior children's disclosure behavior by observing and recording cases of tattling, and to discuss whether or not motivation or gender differences exists. In this way, the author aim to promote teachers better understanding of the Yi children's disclosure behavior and dealing with it more effectively.

## 2. Methods

This study selected 57 children, 5-6 years old, from a senior class of a public kindergarten in Leibo county of Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, China as research objects, and interviewed their teachers. The research subjects are composed of 31 boys and 26 girls. There are 3 teachers, all female, and all of them are worked over 3 years.

This research mainly adopts event sampling observation, in time for March 4th to March 8th, 2013, Monday to Friday (except noon nap time), to do observation in the kindergarten. The researcher collected a total of 146 of the Yi senior children's disclosure behavior through a "simple description" way as a non-participant, and interviewed teachers during free time. The data was coded to five dimensions of disclosure behavior including counts, content, motivation, gender and activity background, and was analyzed by SPSS17.0.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Chinese Yi Senior Children Show Disclosure Behavior Average 0.5 Times per Person per Day

It took one week long collecting these effective cases. The total number of the Yi senior children's disclosure behavior is 146 made by 57 children during 5 days. Therefore, it is easy to get the mean counts of children's disclosure behavior by calculating with these data, which is 0.5 times per person per day. In addition, based on the analysis results of chi-square of the collected data (Table1),  $P=0.485>0.05$ . That is, there is no significant difference existing among different dates.

Table 1. Square statistics of the counts of the Yi senior children's disclosure behavior among different dates

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Observed Number	36	33	27	25	25
Number Expected	29.2	29.2	29.2	29.2	29.2
Residual Error	6.8	3.8	-2.2	-4.2	-4.2

#### 3.2 The Content of the Yi Senior Children's Disclosure Behavior Is Always Related to Their Own Self-Interests

On the basis of the study of Shaoying Xing and Hongyan Jia (2002), the content of children's disclosure behavior includes three aspects that are related to their own self-interests, in connection with peers' interests and refer to the class or rules. The results of recorded cases state clearly that the substance of Yi senior children's disclosure behavior from most common to least common is: related to their own self-interests 75 times (51.4%), refer to the class or rules 55 times (37.6%) and in connection with peers' interests 16 times (11.0%). So the content of the Yi senior children's disclosure behavior is always related to their own self-interests (Table 2).

Table 2. Frequency statistics of the content of the Yi senior children's disclosure behavior

Content	Related to Self-interests	Connected with Peers' Interests	Refer to the Class or Rules	Total
Frequency	75	16	55	146
Rate (%)	51.4%	11.0%	37.6%	100%

#### 3.3 The Main Motivation of the Yi Senior Children's Disclosure Behavior Is to Ask for Help

In this study, based on the research of Jingbo Liu and Cuimei Yang (2007), the motivation of children's disclosure behavior was divided into 5 kinds. That is, seeking help, seeking rewards, penalizing peers, seeking truth and seeking justice. According to the results of chi-square non parameter statistics of the collected data, significantly difference (progressive significance is  $0.000<0.01$ ) exists in the motivation of the Yi senior children's disclosure behavior, and the main motivation is seeking help (Table 3). In addition, the Yi senior children's disclosure behavior motivation from most common to least common is: seeking help 81 times (55.5%), penalizing peers 27 times (18.5%), seeking justice 21 times (14.4%), seeking truth 12 times (8.2%), and seeking rewards 5 times (3.4%).

Table 3. Square statistics of the motivation of the Yi senior children's disclosure behavior

	Seeking Help	Seeking Rewards	Penalizing Peers	Seeking Truth	Seeking Justice
Observed Number	81	5	27	12	21
Number Expected	29.2	29.2	29.2	29.2	29.2
Residual Error	51.8	-24.2	-2.2	-17.2	-8.2

#### 3.4 Most Disclosure Cases of the Yi Senior Children Happened in Free and Game Background

The life in kindergarten can be divided into four types, that is, teaching activities, living activities, games and free activities (Li & Xiao, 1997; Liang, 2002; Zheng & Li, 2005). Differences have been found in the Yi senior children's disclosure behavior under different activity background through the analysis of the collected data. I found that disclosure behavior occurred in free activities and games more frequently, less frequently during

teaching and living activities. The details are as follows: 74 times in free activities (50.7%), 46 times in games (31.5%), both 13 times in teaching and living activities (8.9%) (Table 4).

Table 4. Frequency statistics of the Yi senior children's disclosure behavior under different activity background

Activity Background	Teaching Activities	Living Activities	Games	Free Activities	Total
Frequency	13	13	46	74	146
Rate (%)	8.9%	8.9%	31.5%	50.7%	100%

### 3.5 There Are Significant Gender Difference of the Yi Senior Children's Disclosure Behavior

Among those 146 cases collected, 97 cases are made by boys, besides 49 cases are girls. Chi-square test found that there was significant gender difference (Figure 1). That is, the proportion of boys is higher than girls:  $X^2 = 15.780$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $X^2(1) 0.01 = 6.63$ ,  $P < 0.01$ .

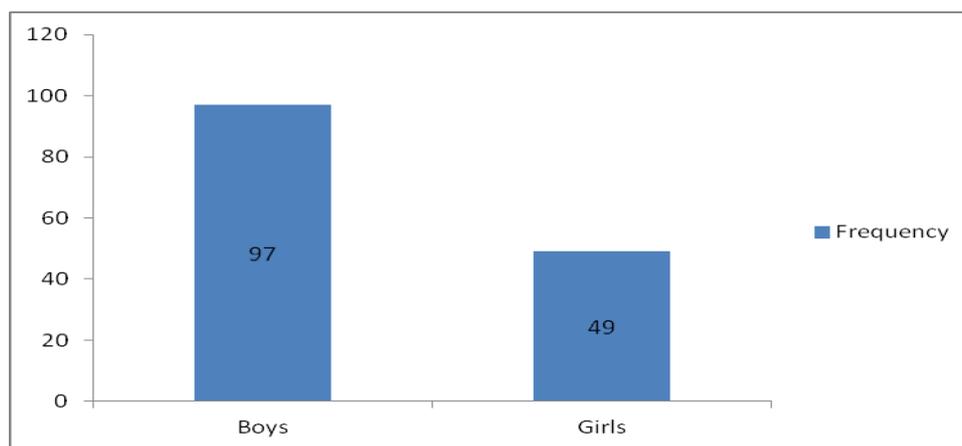


Figure 1. Gender difference of the Yi senior children's disclosure behavior

## 4. Analysis and Discussion

### 4.1 Analysis on the Mean Frequency of Chinese Yi Senior Children's Disclosure Behavior

As this study states Chinese Yi senior children show disclosure behavior average 0.5 times per person per day, which is extraordinarily different from the existing researches of Han nationality children (Liu & Yang, 2007; Zheng & Li, 2005; Xing & Jia, 2002). For example, a study of Shaoying Xing and Hongyan Jia indicated that the mean frequency of Chinese children's disclosure behavior is 0.1 times per child per day. In another word, the mean frequency of Chinese Yi senior children's disclosure behavior is as 5 times as ordinary Han Children. Two reasons are supposed to explain the distinction between the two nationalities. First of all, as is known to us all, money plays a significant role on education development. Due to backward economy, the condition of kindergartens in Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture is not very good. For instance, a great shortage of resource materials is a serious problem to most of early childcare institutes there. Consequently, the number of children is so legion in one classroom that there's bound to be conflict. As a result, the Yi children show more disclosure behavior than Han.

### 4.2 Analysis on the Content of the Yi Senior Children's Disclosure Behavior

As most researches have revealed, this study states that the Yi senior children's disclosure behavior is always in connection with their own self-interests. According to Piaget (1950), the young child is unable to decenter, that is, to shift his attention from one aspect of an object or situation to another. This inability appears to underlie the preoperational child's egocentric thought and immature moral judgment. For instance, the egocentric child fails to take his auditor's point of view into account during communicative activity (Rubin & Schneider, 1973). That's why the Yi senior children and average Han children's disclosure behavior is always related to themselves.

#### *4.3 Analysis on Motivation of the Yi Senior Children's Disclosure Behavior*

##### *4.3.1 Seeking Help Is the Main Motivation of Senior Children's Disclosure Behavior*

It has been found that the primary motivation of children's disclosure behavior is to ask for help (Xing & Jia, 2002; Liu & Yang, 2007), which is the same as the results of this study. I believe that the main reason is that the interpersonal communicating abilities of kids are not strong enough to deal with conflicts with companions. So that they are always turning to teachers for help to protect their own rights.

##### *4.3.2 Seeking Rewards Is the Smallest Proportion among the Motivation of the Yi Senior Children's Disclosing Behavior*

It has been previously reported that seeking rewards accounted for a large proportion of the motivation of children's disclosure behavior (Liu & Yang, 2007; Zeng, 2010). However, in my study it is the smallest portion of motivation for tattling? I knew from the daily communications with teachers and through classroom observation that teachers did not take an "encouraging education" approach to mentoring the children. Once a teacher states: "there are too many kids in a classroom! It doesn't work by teachers' gentle words. Only loudly criticism, holding a stick and knocking it on the desk could make kids be quiet." (Teacher L). Instead, teachers use oral criticism or even corporal punishment as the main means to achieve the purpose of education. Teachers just told children what was wrong and what was not allowed to do, while ignored to tell them what was right or who did well. In addition, teachers rarely praised the kids; hence I believe that the kids did not expect to be awarded by disclosing peers' faults.

#### *4.4 Analysis on the Activity Background of the Yi Senior Children's Disclosure Behavior*

##### *4.4.1 Disclosure Behavior Occurred Most Often in the Context of Free Activities*

Many previous reports (Zheng & Li, 2005; Zhao, 2007; Hou, 2007) show that children's disclosure behavior happens most often in free activities in kindergarten, which is in agreement with this study.

##### *4.4.2 Disclosure Behavior Occurs Often in the Context of Games*

This is different from the existing results. Research by Liping Hou (2007) demonstrated that disclosure behavior occurred the least in games. According to the existing studies, games are the most favorite activities of kids, which offer an enormous amount of materials for them to play with. In this way, children usually concentrate on games and neglect disclosure though peers provoked them occasionally (Zheng & Li, 2005).

From the author's understanding, the results of existing researches reflect general situations. Yet the limited condition of the kindergarten selected as well as the specifics of the Yi nationality cause that the result of this part is not consistent with the current studies. Learning from interviews and daily communication with teachers "there are too many kids in our class, meanwhile only 3 teachers are in charge of morning or afternoon classes respectively. Sometimes I feel dizzy and frustrated when children make noises." (Teacher L). Considering with both the specific circumstances observed and the interviews of the teachers, I concluded one main reason why disclosure behavior happened so often in games. That is, lack of resources including space and materials for games. 57 kids sitting in 6 rows, what made the small classroom to be full and very crowded. Therefore, it easily triggered disclosure events because of the shortage of spatial resources during the indoor games. Secondly, limited materials for games are also an important reason why disclosure events caused. Only 3 children's slides, a dozen of rocking horses and limited number of "snowflake" toys are available for 57 children playing with together at the same time. Therefore, it's understandable that kinds of contradictions and conflicts occurred for fighting for toys.

#### *4.5 Analysis on Gender Difference of the Yi Senior Children's Disclosure Behavior*

Combining with the achievements of existing research and the interviews of teachers, the author thought reasons why boys were more likely to disclose peers' faults than girls could be analyzed through the following two aspects:

##### *4.5.1 Internal Factors*

Firstly, boys are usually more active and naughty than girls, thus easily entering to conflicts in interaction with peers. Bases can be found in existing studies, for example, a Study of Xiaoying Wang focused on the characteristics of peer interactions of children aged 3-6 years old showed peer relationships of girls in games were better than boys. Most girls liked cooperative games and responded actively. While boys' negative reaction to peers was significantly more than girls. Secondly, in general, boys are more outgoing than girls, accordingly they dare to reflect problems to teachers and ask them to help solve problems. A research based on observation of interaction between teachers and kids found that: for individual, a naughty boy is more likely to attract

teachers' attention than a quiet girl, as well as easily to interact with teachers (Yang & Wu, 2000).

#### 4.5.2 External Factors

Gender stereotype is one of the reasons leading to those senior boys more likely to disclose peers' faults than girls. Gender stereotype is defined as "brief characterization for different groups of gender. And it often appears to be rigid views that are fixed for male or female characteristics." (Zheng, 2005). Generally, boys thought to be more active, naughty and mischievous than girls, correspondingly girls seem to be born more quiet, cute and obedient than boys. Influenced by the social atmosphere, children are encouraged to grow and develop in accord with the common concept of the public. Consequently, senior boys are usually more active than girls, more easily to conflict with peers, and show more disclosure behavior than girls.

### 5. Countermeasures and Suggestions

#### 5.1 To Grasp the Opportunity for Education

To distinguish different types of motivations of the Yi senior children's disclosure behavior. Firstly, considering the main motivation was seeking help, that children were accustomed to rely on teachers' power to solve problems, people should pay more attention to cultivate their independence and the ability to solve problems by themselves. For example, a boy who was playing with toy bricks, when suddenly a girl in the classroom came and destroyed what the boy had constructed. Then the little boy turned to the teacher for help. Faced with this kind of problems, teachers should encourage children to resolve conflicts through negotiation or other ways all by themselves rather than solve the problem immediately. Secondly, teachers and parents should treat it seriously that some children use tattletale aiming to penalize peers. If a child wants the culprit to be punished, teachers and parents should let him/her know that punishment is not the only way to correct peers' faults, while positive ways like reasoning and role-modeling could be better. If a child disclosed others' faults due to jealous or revenge, parents and teachers should be patient to communicate with him/her, to know their thinking, and to carry out targeted counseling to promote his/her physical and mental development. Finally, for the situation that motivation of seeking awards was less than other types, teachers and parents should use encouraging education method properly to foster kids' self-confidence and arouse their enthusiasm, instead of using punishment. As Comenius (1632/1999) pointed out in his book *Great Didactic of Comenius*, there's a way to keep discipline more effective than penalty, which is to set an example with praise, or to take competition.

#### 5.2 To Strengthen the Educational Environment of Kindergartens

One method is to downsize the class or increase the number of teachers to coordinate the ratios of teachers and young children. The significant reason why the Yi senior children are always disclosing peers' faults in free activities is that the waiting time in transition process is too long caused by the too large class scale and unbalanced ratios of teachers and kids. Therefore, reducing class size and coordinating the ratios of teachers and children can improve the situation. In this study, the frequency of the Yi senior children's disclosure behavior occurred in games is second most common. It's mainly caused by the serious lack of space and play materials. So to strengthen the hardware construction including area (both indoor and outdoor), outdoor facilities, classroom layout, etc. of kindergartens is a necessary requirement to make the situation better.

#### 5.3 To Adjust the Time of Boys and Girls Entering Kindergartens

There is significant gender difference of the Yi senior children's disclosure behavior. Based on the fact that both physical and mental development of boys is later than girls, the author makes a bold idea to help solve the problem. That is, to adjust the enrollment time of boys and girls to ease the contradiction that unbalances development between boys and girls. For example, adjusting the minimum age of boys entering kindergarten to be 4 years old, meanwhile keeping girls unchanged to be 3 years old.

### References

- Comenius, J. A. (1632/1999). *Great Didactic of Comenius* (Rengan, Fu, Trans.). Beijing: Education Science Publishers.
- Hou, L. P. (2007). Activity Types and Disclosing Behavior of Young Children. *Early Childhood Education (Education Science)*, 9, 50.
- Li, J. M., & Xiao, X. N. (1997). *Kindergarten Education*. Beijing: Beijing Normal University Press.
- Liang, Z. S. (2002). *Pre-school Education*. Beijing: Beijing Normal University Press.
- Liu, J. B. (1999). *Interaction Behavior between Teachers and Young Children*. Nanjing: Nanjing Normal University Press.

- Liu, J. B., & Yang, C. M. (2007). Analysis on Motivation of 5-7 Years Old Children's Disclosing Behavior. *Early Childhood Education (Education Science)*, 9, 34-38.
- Rubin, K. H., & Schneider, F. W. (1973). The Relationship between Moral Judgment, Egocentrism, and Altruistic Behavior. *Child Development*, 44(3), 661-665. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1128027>
- Xing, S. Y., & Jia, H. Y. (2002). Primary Study of 3-7 Years Old Children's Disclosing Behavior. *Journal of Teachers College of Shanxi University*, 1, 77-79.
- Yang, L. Z., & Wu, W. J. (2000). *Social Development and Education of Young Children*. Shenyang: Liaoning Normal University Press.
- Zeng, N. (2010). A Brief Analysis of Senior Children's Disclosing Behavior and Motivation. *Journal of Educational Development (Second Half)*, 10, 36-37.
- Zhao, Y. (2007). Analysis on the Characteristics and Causes of Preschool Children's Disclosing Behavior. *Journal of Lincang Teachers College*, 9, 22.
- Zheng, M., & Li, C. (2005). Analysis of 4-5 Years Old Children's disclosing Behavior. *Investigation and Study*, 1, 34-38.
- Zheng, X. R. (2005). *Gender and Education*. Beijing: Education Science Publishers.

### Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>).