

*Full Length Research Paper*

# The moderating role of composites of cultural values in predicting adolescents' influence on family purchase decisions: A study of Asian cases

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**The role of adolescents in family purchase decision making was explored by means of a survey and related instruments administered to a sample of teenagers in India, South Korea, and Taiwan. The findings suggest that adolescents' characteristics (such as the perceived importance of a product to the adolescent) may be more predictive of their self-perceived influence on family purchase decisions than the tactics they use with their parents. This effect may be more pronounced as a function of composites of cultural values. Specifically, the more a society can be characterized as uncertainty accepting and masculine in nature, the greater the role that adolescent predictors of adolescents' influence may play in family purchase decisions.**

**Key words:** Adolescent influence, Asia, family purchase, societal masculinity, uncertainty avoidance.

## INTRODUCTION

Based on Hofstede's (2001) framework of culture, some researchers have contended that cultural dimensions explain the dynamics of interpersonal influence in family purchase situations (Shoham and Dalakas, 2006; Wang et al., 2007; Su and Wang, 2010). However, when adolescents' influence over family purchase decisions is explained in terms of adolescent factors, evidence on the moderating impact of culture is relatively rare, although this impact is worth further examination (Shoham and Dalakas, 2006). Moreover, cross-cultural research on adolescents' influence has typically discussed the role of long-term orientation, power distance, and individualism (Shoham and Dalakas, 2006; Wang et al., 2007). Recent research has put forward evidence regarding the impacts of Hofstede's (2001) societal masculinity and uncertainty avoidance on the influence tactics that adolescents use with their parents and adolescents' influence over family purchase decisions (Su and Wang 2010). It would be rewarding to examine how these two dimensions affect the contribution of adolescent predictors to adolescents' influence over their parents when purchasing products.

Family purchase decisions have evolved into a complex hybrid theory that includes both individual and joint decision making (Fodness, 1992; Wang et al., 2004). Considerable empirical research has been conducted on the dominant role of the child across the stages of the

family decision-making process (Foxman et al., 1989a, b; Beatty and Talpade, 1994; Wang et al., 2004; Shoham and Dalakas, 2006; Bao et al., 2007; Su and Wang, 2010). Of the factors that explain adolescents' influence on family buying decisions, the influence tactics that adolescents use with their parents are noteworthy and their effectiveness has been discussed in detail (Palan and Wilkes, 1997; Shoham and Dalakas, 2006; Bao et al., 2007). However, in the prior research, the measurement of the influence tactics used by adolescents was based on binary taxonomies (Falbo and Peplau, 1980; Cowan et al., 1984; Bao et al., 2007) consisting of either combined dimensions of influence tactics or fragmented items without conceptual definitions of each tactic category (Cowan and Avants, 1988; Shoham and Dalakas, 2006). Moreover, there was no commonly accepted measure of influence tactics in the previous findings. Therefore, contrasts among the results of the empirical research may not provide sufficient implications for further exploration.

Rather than identifying adolescents' influence tactics, other researchers have identified adolescent-related factors that predict the manifest influence on family buying decisions. These variables include adolescents' product knowledge, product importance, and financial resources (Foxman et al., 1989a; Beatty and Talpade,

1994; Wang et al., 2007). In addition, prior research suggests that the demographic variables of adolescents explain their use of influence tactics (Shoham and Dalakas, 2006). In the same vein, adolescents' characteristics should also determine their use of influence tactics. Hence, adolescents' characteristics may have both direct and indirect (via their influence tactics) effects on the manifest influence on family buying decisions. The predictive power of adolescents' characteristics and influence tactics on manifest influence calls for further comparison, so that the relative value of each predictor can be explored.

Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to investigate the possible moderating effects of societal masculinity and uncertainty avoidance on the overall association among adolescents' influence in the family purchase decision-making process and its predictors across three Asian countries with contrasting levels of uncertainty avoidance and societal masculinity. Furthermore, the relative value of all of the adolescent predictors in creating influence across the stages of the process will provide the empirical evidence to infer whether considering influence tactics as intervening constructs between adolescents' characteristics and manifest influence actually articulates the dynamics of family purchase decisions.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Adolescent influence tactics with parents

Children use influence tactics in family buying decisions to get what they want (Palan and Wilkes, 1997). The influence tactics used in a relationship of social exchange, including interactions within the family, may be considered as the means by which power is applied (Shamdasani et al., 2001). Palan and Wilkes (1997) used content analysis to develop a comprehensive taxonomy of categories of adolescents' influence and tactics with parents that has provided the base for measures in subsequent research (Shoham and Dalakas, 2006; Bao et al., 2007; Su and Wang, 2010): (1) bargaining tactics: creating agreement between children and parents based on mutual benefits; (2) persuasion tactics: convincing parents to resolve a decision conflict in the children's favor; (3) emotional tactics: using emotion directly or indirectly; and (4) request tactics: asking for a particular item to be purchased. They also found that adolescents' influence tactics were effective in creating manifest influence. However, Palan and Wilkes focused on the role of individual behavioral components rather than categories to identify these components. Similarly, recent research has only measured adolescents' influence tactics in terms of selected components patterned after Palan and Wilkes's findings (Shoham and Dalakas, 2006). Hence, the implications of each tactic category for empirical research or practices have rarely been explored.

Some other approaches have followed dimensional systems that are distinct from Palan and Wilkes's categories (Falbo and Peplau, 1980; Cowan et al., 1984; Bao et al., 2007). These systems usually consist of binary combined categories and lack a clear articulation of properly defined concepts for each influence tactic category. For example, Cowan et al. (1984) grouped influence attempts into the following combined categories: bilateral (e.g., reasoning), unilateral (e.g., demanding), direct, and indirect. These combined categories were defined by their features rather than their conceptual definitions. This lack of articulation has been a major obstacle for researchers seeking to make comparisons of previous findings and to design advanced research based on literature reviews. Actually, studies of social influence have developed mature taxonomies with elaborate definitions and measures of each influence tactic in interpersonal relationships (Kipnis et al., 1980; Kipnis et al., 1984; Yukl and Falbe, 1990; Yukl and Tracey, 1992), inter-organizational relationships (Frazier and Summers, 1984), and intra-organizational relationships (Venkatesh et al., 1995).

To integrate more of the research findings on adolescents' influence, Palan and Wilkes's (1997) category-based approach is an appropriate approach to adopt since their conceptual scope for each category is more equivalent to the specific influence tactics found in other mature taxonomies than other approaches. This study followed Palan and Wilkes's categories, but it also provided more support for their construct validity and reliability, as these were initially identified by content analysis and therefore needed to be refined for quantitative research.

### Adolescents' characteristics

Our literature reviews filtered and summarized the main characteristics of adolescents, except for demographic factors, that affect adolescents' influence across the two stages of the family purchase decision-making process, namely the initiation stage and the search/decision stage (Beatty and Talpade, 1994), and via the adolescents' use of influence tactics. These were defined as product importance (that is, the importance of the product to the adolescent) and self-assessed knowledge. In addition, we extended the predictors to include brand-choice importance (that is, the importance of brand choice to the adolescent) and dependence on parents, which reflects parental power over their adolescent children (Su and Wang, 2010).

### *Perceived importance of product to the adolescent*

Product importance is defined as an ongoing concern about a product or service category (Laurent and Kapferer, 1985). This factor is viewed as a motivational

variable that forces adolescents to exert their influence (Beatty and Talpade, 1994). Past findings support the proposal that a product's importance to adolescents facilitates their influence on family buying decisions (Wang et al., 2007; Foxman et al., 1989a; Beatty and Talpade, 1994).

### ***Perceived importance of brand choice to the adolescent***

The product-importance predictor focuses on the product purchase decision-making process on an ongoing base (Mittal and Lee, 1988) or on recognizing the want for the product. This predictor may explain adolescents' influence at the initiation stage more than their influence at the search/decision stage (Su and Wang, 2010). Brand-choice importance provides the adolescents' motivation to make the right choice on a situational basis (Houston and Rothschild, 1977; Bloch and Richins, 1983; Zaichkowsky, 1985) or to ensure that better purchase decisions are made (Mittal and Lee, 1988). Therefore, during the family purchase decision-making process, brand-choice importance should have a more positive impact on adolescents' influence at the search/decision stage than at the initiation stage (Su and Wang, 2010). We adopted both types of importance (that is, product importance and brand-choice importance) so that the role of these two factors in predicting adolescents' influence at the various stages of the decision-making process can be better demonstrated.

### ***Adolescents' dependence on parent(s)***

Bao et al. (2007) found that the parental power positively affects positively children's use of bilateral influence tactics that require interaction (Cowan et al., 1984) but negatively affects children's manifest influence on family buying decisions. However, some deficiencies emerged in their development of these hypotheses. In detail, the dimensions included in their measurement of parental power were referent, legitimate, and expert power. Prior research has viewed these dimensions as the contents of social power, which refers to all of an agent's personal characteristics that give him/her the ability to influence others (French and Raven, 1959). This base of power is then transformed into the tactics that the agent chooses to use to change the behavior or decisions of others (Dahl, 1957; Kohli and Zaltman, 1988; Venkatesh et al., 1995; Farrell and Schroder, 1999). In other words, the parents' base of power tends to explain their use of influence tactics rather than how their children influence them (Palan and Wilkes, 1997).

Rather than the base of power that pertains to a person's characteristics, an agent's dependence on a target, which indicates the extent to which the agent

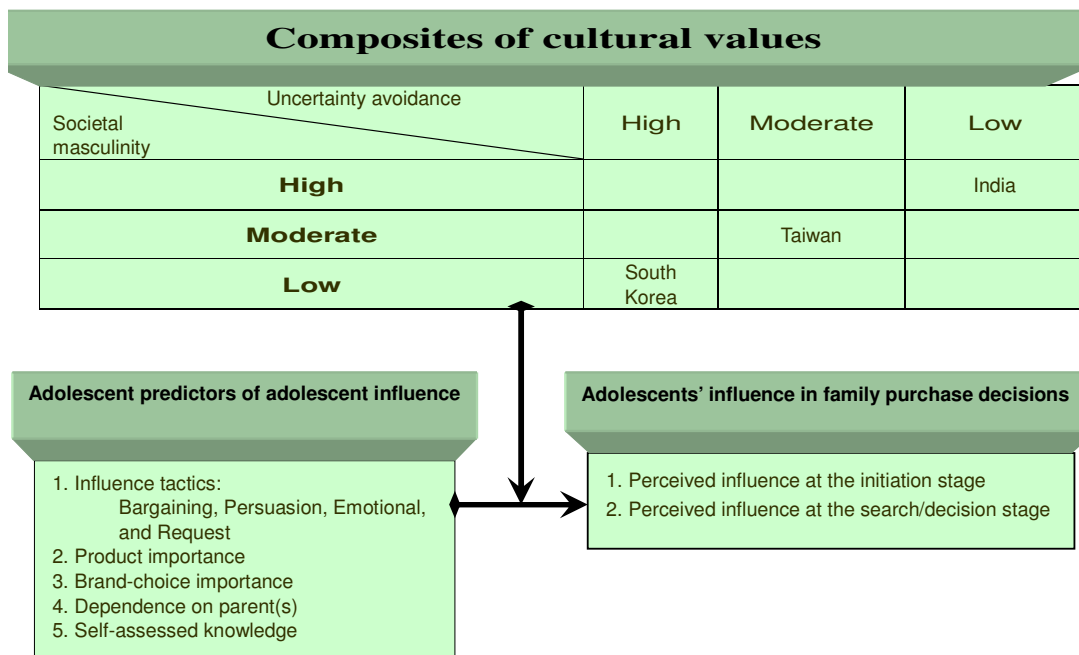
relies on the target to obtain his or her goals (Keith et al., 1990), should be a more appropriate measure of the target's power, as perceived by the agent, in a dyadic relationship (Emerson, 1962; Frazier and Summers, 1986; Shamdasani et al., 2001). We applied this construct because it covers economic and noneconomic components of reliance (Bao et al., 2007) and because it impacts on adolescents' influence over family purchase decisions more than adolescents' reliance on their parents' financial resources (Beatty and Talpade, 1994; Foxman et al., 1989a). Furthermore, past studies have mostly contended that an agent's dependence on a target predicts the agent's choice of influence tactics (Kale, 1989; Frooman, 1999; Somech and Drach-Zahavy, 2002). Adolescents' dependence on their parents appears to play a greater role in predicting adolescents' influence on family buying decisions than the base of parental power.

### ***Self-assessed product knowledge***

Adolescents' subjective knowledge has been considered as an ability variable, and it reflects the self-perceived confidence of adolescents (Brucks, 1985; Beatty and Talpade, 1994; Park et al., 1994). In particular, this variable is more easily measured and predicts adolescents' influence better than objective knowledge (Brucks, 1985; Foxman et al., 1989a; Beatty and Talpade, 1994). Although the effect of this factor on adolescents' influence is doubtful since it has received less empirical support (Wang et al., 2007), this study incorporates it as a predictor because it should increase the overall association between the set of adolescent predictors of adolescents' influence and the set of dependent variables.

### ***Uncertainty avoidance and societal masculinity as moderating factors in predicting adolescents' influence***

Due to its consistently supported validity and reliability, Hofstede's five-dimensional typology of cultural values (Hofstede and Bond, 1988; Hofstede, 2001) is now commonly used as the base in cross-cultural studies (Søndergaard, 1994; Hofstede, 2006). Traditional research has incorporated cultural values, such as power distance (that is, a value that accepts the unequal distribution of power), individualism (that is, a value that pursues self-interest rather than group goals), and long-term orientation (that is, a value that prefers thrift and persistence), into frameworks discussing adolescents' influence over family purchase decisions (Shoham and Dalakas, 2006; Wang et al., 2007). Moreover, comparisons have often been based on data collected from countries that are very different in terms of these dimensions (e.g., Eastern and Western countries).



**Figure 1.** Conceptual framework.

Subcultures from the same culture were often assumed to be similar or identical, and thus most researchers have ignored other cultural values.

Su and Wang (2010) highlighted the above constraints on previous research and proposed empirical support for effects of uncertainty avoidance (that is, a value that avoids unstructured situations) and societal masculinity (that is, a value that prefers assertiveness and material success) on adolescents' influence that had rarely been examined before. Extending Su and Wang's research, which was conducted in East Asia, we speculate and examine the moderating role of these two cultural values in the association between adolescent predictors of influence and adolescents' influence in a conjoint decision-making process in Asian families. We collected data in India, Taiwan, and South Korea because these three countries share similar collectivist values and parent-child relationships (cf. Rose et al., 2003) but are also distinguishable in terms of uncertainty avoidance and societal masculinity (Hofstede and Bond, 1988; Hofstede, 2001).

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS

Our conceptual framework is shown in Figure 1. We posit that the overall association among adolescent factors and adolescents' influence will be moderated by the two cultural values we are interested in, namely uncertainty avoidance and societal masculinity. Among the countries and regions of Asia, India, Taiwan, and South Korea provide a great contrast in terms of their uncertainty

avoidance and societal masculinity scores. They are appropriate proxies of uncertainty avoiding cultures and masculine cultures on various levels, thus ensuring variation in our moderator. The upper part of Figure 1 summarizes the alternative composites of these two dimensions of cultural values (that is, uncertainty avoidance and societal masculinity) and compares India, Taiwan, and South Korea (Hofstede and Bond, 1988; Hofstede, 2001). The figures shows that, out of the three countries, India has a low level of uncertainty avoidance (score = 40) and a high level of societal masculinity (score = 56), Taiwan has a moderate level of uncertainty avoidance (score = 69) and a moderate level of societal masculinity (score = 45), and South Korea has a high level of uncertainty (score = 85) and a low level of societal masculinity (score = 39). Our framework not only balances the roles of micro-level factors (that is, adolescent predictors of adolescents' influence) and macro-level factors (that is, cultural values) in explaining behavioral outcomes (Ralston et al., 2009), but also integrates the dimensions of cultural values into a joint moderating variable that is more convincing than a variable based on any single dimension.

Uncertainty avoidance is a measure of the intolerance of risk and a belief in an absolute "truth" that strictly shapes parent-child relations within families (Hofstede and Bond, 1988, Hofstede, 2001). Generally, in families in a higher uncertainty avoidance culture, children are overly protected by their parents, obey tight rules (Hofstede, 2001) and experience more conflicts with their parents (Dmitrieva et al., 2004) and thus feel more depressed (Greenberger and Chen, 1996; Shek, 1997).

Shek, 1997). Both the limited autonomy given to children by their parents and the filial norms in interactions with parents that are embedded in a higher uncertainty avoidance culture restrict children's participation in the family purchase decision-making process (Su and Wang, 2010). Conversely, children from a lower uncertainty avoidance culture have more autonomy and are encouraged by their parents to expose themselves to new and unknown situations (Hofstede, 2001). Consequently, their parents are more willing to share their decision-making authority with them (Su and Wang 2010). Moreover, Su and Wang (2010) have found that adolescents from Korea (that is, a culture that has a high level of uncertainty avoidance in this study) have less influence over family purchase decisions than their counterparts in Taiwan (that is, a culture that has a moderate level of uncertainty avoidance in this study). This empirical evidence reinforces our speculation that a high uncertainty avoidance culture that is characterized by rigid and parent-dominated relations between parents and children is more likely to suppress the impacts of adolescent predictors of adolescents' influence over family purchase decisions than an uncertainty accepting culture.

On the other hand, the dominant values of a masculine culture emphasize professional success and impersonal things (Paik et al., 1996). Children from a masculine society learn to be aggressive, ambitious, competitive, and materialistic (Hofstede and Bond, 1988; Hofstede, 2001). Therefore, they may attempt to gain attention and show their achievements by consuming attractive products (Belk, 1985). Moreover, masculine people enjoy having status and showing-off their purchases (Hofstede, 2001). Parents are likely to pass on the same values of consumption to their children, and this, in turn, reinforces the children's materialism. Accordingly, in a highly masculine culture, the adolescent factors that predict adolescents' influence on family buying decisions should play a more important role, since adolescents in such a society are more sensitive to the social implications of purchases and push for their goals by exerting influence on their parents. In contrast, people from a less masculinity culture, in which societal values focus on intrinsic satisfaction, caring for others, and quality of life (Paik et al., 1996), tend to be interpersonal-oriented and to define achievement in terms of close relationships (Hofstede and Bond, 1988; Hofstede, 2001). Their children therefore learn to be modest and less aggressive (Hofstede, 2001). Moreover, it is likely that they would follow their parents' preference for necessities such as homemade or useful products (Hofstede, 2001). Therefore, in a low masculinity culture, adolescents are less sensitive to the social implications of purchases and less motivated to influence their parents' buying decisions. In other words, our predictors should have a less facilitating effect on adolescents' influence.

To summarize, based on our reasoning, the more

masculine and the less uncertainty avoiding the culture, the stronger the overall association between adolescent factors and adolescents' influence over family buying decisions. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed for the current study:

Indian adolescents (that is, from a composite culture of low uncertainty avoidance and high masculinity) will show the strongest overall association between the predictors of adolescents' influence (that is, influence tactics, product importance, brand-choice importance, dependence on parents, and self-assessed knowledge) and adolescents' influence on family purchase decision making (that is, at the initiation stage and the search/ decision stage), followed by Taiwanese adolescents (that is, from a composite culture of moderate uncertainty avoidance and moderate masculinity) and then South Korean adolescents (that is, from a composite culture of high uncertainty avoidance and low masculinity).

## METHODOLOGY

### Sampling and data collection

There is no commonly accepted age range for adolescence in the related research. The present study followed Beatty and Talpade's (1994) design, which defines an adolescent as a person in the 16 to 19 age group, in order to match our cluster sampling at the campuses of senior high schools, colleges, and universities in India, Taiwan, and South Korea. Moreover, the limited age range of our participants eliminates variations in their experiences caused by age-related transitions in decision-making competence during adolescence (Mann et al., 1989). The author's graduate students and overseas supporters approached suitable teenagers and conducted the formal survey by class in New Delhi, Ahmedabad, Taipei, and Seoul. The participants were asked to think of a joint decision made during the past year that they were familiar with and to describe how they influenced their cohabiting parent(s) in the initiation and the search/decision stages of the decision-making process (Beatty and Talpade, 1994). To ensure that both an adolescent-parent interaction in a buying center and a deliberation in the decision-making process had occurred, the author selected a product or service purchased from a range of categories (Foxman et al., 1989a; Beatty and Talpade, 1994; Wang et al., 2007; Su and Wang, 2010) that was (1) for family use or had important benefits for the family, (2) an infrequent purchase, and (3) available from various suppliers and criteria, without a normal choice among the involved family members. In total, 670 questionnaires were distributed. The final dataset consisted of 605 usable responses, yielding a high response rate of 90.3%, which minimized the effect of non-response rate on the author's interpretation (Guinn, 1980).

The background characteristics of the sample are summarized in Table 1. The table shows that 26.1% (that is, 158 usable responses) of the sample was collected in India, 40.8% (that is, 247 responses) in Taiwan, and 33.1% (that is, 200 responses) in South Korea. Most of the participating adolescents were female (54.9%), 19 years old (33.7%), currently studying at college (46.6%), from a double income family (62.8%), and the children of mature couples (52.9%). With regard to parental profiles, most of the respondents' parents had senior high school diplomas (37.2%) and occupations in business and industry (41.8%). Moreover, the main product category selected by the respondents was PC/laptop/printer/scanner or related products (33.2%). These sample backgrounds

**Table 1.** Background profile of respondents.

<b>Variable and Category</b>	<b>Percentage (N = 605)</b>
<b>Nationality</b>	
India	26.1
South Korea	33.1
Taiwan	40.8
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	45.1
Female	54.9
<b>Age</b>	
16	17.4
17	28.0
18	20.9
19	33.7
<b>Current educational level</b>	
Senior high school	32.4
College	46.6
University	21.0
<b>Main financial resource of the family</b>	
Both parents	62.8
One parent	37.2
Current family lifecycle stage*	
Young parents	2.0
Mature parents	33.3
Mature couple	52.9
Senior couple	11.7
<b>Highest educational level of household head</b>	
Junior high school or below	11.7
Senior high school	37.2
College	17.8
University	24.7
Graduate school	8.6
<b>Occupation of household head*</b>	
Housekeeping	4.8
Business and industry	41.8
Government agency	14.3
Faculty/teacher	3.0
Professional	14.3
Workers	9.3
Other	12.3
<b>Product/service purchased</b>	
Stereo/TV/VCR or related product	15.9
Furniture	6.9
Digital or video camera	12.4
Motorcycle	12.1
Car	3.5

**Table 1.** Cont'd.

PC/laptop/printer/scanner or related product	33.2
Telephone/fax or related product	3.8
Group package tour	2.3
Body-building equipment	0.7
Other	9.3

Missing observations were omitted when calculating percentages. \*: Less than 100% due to rounding error.

largely fit the demographic distributions of the three countries.

### Operational measures

All of the measures in the current study were gathered from adolescents' responses because they provide higher measurement reliability than parents' responses (Bao et al., 2007). Moreover, even in a cross-cultural context, there is a high level of consistency between the answers provided by children and their parents (Wang et al., 2007).

### Adolescent predictors of adolescents' influence

A measuring scale for assessing the frequency of four adolescent influence tactics was developed with reference to the ideas in Palan and Wilkes's study (1997). The subscales included bargaining (four items), persuasion (eight items), emotional (five items), and request (four items), with a scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). The participants were asked to report how much they had relied on each tactic category with their parent(s) in their selected case of a family buying decision.

To demonstrate the adolescents' self-assessed knowledge about the product or service category in their individual cases, we used items developed by Park et al. (1994), with minor adaptations, using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (very little) to 5 (very much). The participants were asked to report on the extent to which they felt they knew about the selected product or service category in general, compared to friends and acquaintances and compared to experts.

Using subscales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), we measured the participants' perceptions of the importance of the following dimensions, which were adapted from Mittal and Lee's (1988) measures: product importance (three items) and brand-choice importance (three items). The participants were asked to rate how important they considered the product or service category to be in their particular cases. With regard to adolescents' dependence on their parent(s) during their life, measuring items developed by Ross et al. (1997), with minor adaptations, were used in this study (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). These items reflect the value to adolescents of benefits derived from their relationship with their parent(s) and the difficulty of obtaining those benefits from their parent(s).

### Adolescents' perceived influence

This study used measuring items developed by Beatty and Talpade (1994), with minor adaptations to conform to the study's interpersonal context, to ascertain the adolescents' perceived influence at the initiation and the search/decision stages. The participants described their experiences based on their perception of their impact on their parents' opinions or behavior during the two stages of their family purchase cases. A 5-point Likert-type scale was used

(1 = very small, 5 = very large).

### Refinement and validation of measures

The scales were refined by eliminating items from their respective scales or subscales if doing so led to a higher Cronbach's alpha (Venkatesh et al., 1995). Following this step, the items that captured multidimensional constructs were factor analyzed with Promax rotation (due to the expected intercorrelations between the factors), and the theoretical number of factors was set accordingly. The results of the first round of analyses showed that all of the items of adolescents' perceived influence at the two stages loaded strongly (>0.63) on their intended stage and weakly on the other stage. However, one item of perceived product importance, three items of persuasion tactics, one item of emotional tactics, and two items of request tactics failed to load strongly on the intended dimensions and weakly on other dimensions. We therefore deleted these and then reanalyzed the remaining items. The final factor structures demonstrated no mixed loadings and met the requirements (loadings >0.56). This provided evidence of the convergence of the items with respect to their corresponding underlying dimensions and their distinction from unrelated dimensions, thereby confirming both the convergent and the discriminant validity of our instruments (Venkatesh et al., 1995). The final Cronbach's alpha values of all of the dimensions and separate constructs ranged from 0.60 to 0.79, which demonstrated the acceptable reliability of the scales (Hair et al., 1998).

To ensure the construct validity of the measurement under more conservative tests, separate confirmatory analyses were performed on the variables associated with the influence tactic categories, adolescents' perceived influence at the two stages, and exogenous constructs (that is, perceived importance, dependence on parent(s), and self-assessed knowledge), respectively. As a result, the  $p$ -values of  $\chi^2$  indicated that all of the models were considered insignificant ( $p > 0.1$ ), showing that all of the theoretical factor structures existed. Other measures of fit demonstrated that all of the models had the following values: GFI >0.90, AGFI >0.90, CFI >0.97, SRMR <0.08 and RMSEA <0.07. These values suggested that the data fitted the proposed models very well considering our sample size and the number of items in each model (Hair et al., 2006). Furthermore, all of the measures loaded significantly ( $p < 0.001$ ) on their theoretical constructs and the confidence interval around the correlation between any two constructs did not include 1, thus demonstrating convergent validity (Garbarino and Johnson, 1999) and discriminant validity (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988).

## RESULTS

### Correlation analyses

The correlation matrix with the mean, standard deviation, and reliability of each factor in Table 2 provides the note

worthy results of the initial analysis without considering the role of culture. In particular, the effects of adolescents' influence tactics and their characteristics are revealed. First, among the categories of influence tactics used with parents, the most popular category was bargaining tactics (mean = 3.05). These tactics were also the most useful in influencing parents, since they positively correlated with adolescents' perceived influence at the initiation stage ( $r = 0.268$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and the search/decision stage ( $r = 0.269$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) more than the other tactics, followed by persuasion tactics and reason tactics, which correlated weakly with adolescents' perceived influence at both stages. Emotional tactics were the least preferred tactics (mean = 2.48) and did not correlate with adolescents' perceived influence at either stage. Furthermore, product importance correlated positively with adolescents' perceived influence more at the initiation stage ( $r = 0.222$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) than at the search/decision stage ( $r = 0.107$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), which supported our speculation that product importance affects influence more at the former, rather than the latter, stage. In contrast, brand-choice importance correlated positively with perceived influence more at the search/decision stage ( $r = 0.278$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) than at the initiation stage ( $r = 0.249$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), thus supporting our speculation regarding the role of brand-choice importance in explaining influence at the former rather than the latter stage. Self-assessed knowledge appeared to correlate positively with influence at both the initiation stage ( $r = 0.149$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and the search/decision stage ( $r = 0.229$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and dependence on parent(s) also correlated positively with influence at both the former stage ( $r = 0.196$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and the latter stage ( $r = 0.197$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), suggesting that the predictive power of these two constructs in this study was justified. Finally, the significant and high coefficient of correlation between adolescents' influence at the two stages ( $r = 0.423$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) suggests that once adolescents affect family purchase decisions at the initiation stage, their influence may be effective throughout the whole process.

In order to explore whether adolescents' characteristics affect a buying decision directly or via the use of influence tactics, we were also interested in the correlations between the predictors. Overall, the correlations between influence tactics were significantly positive ( $p < 0.001$ ), except for that between bargaining and request; this suggests that adolescents normally utilize a combination of influence tactics. The exception also suggests that adolescents discriminate between bargaining and request in family purchase decisions. Out of all of the categories of influence tactics, only bargaining demonstrated most significantly positive but weak correlations with other adolescent predictors. This suggests that adolescents' use of bargaining tactics is facilitated limitedly by product importance ( $r = 0.170$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), brand-choice importance ( $r = 0.282$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), self-assessed knowledge ( $r = 0.226$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and dependence on parents ( $r = 0.132$ ,

$p < 0.001$ ). Adolescents' use of emotional tactics appears to be fostered slightly by self-assessed knowledge ( $r = 0.184$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). These results imply that adolescents' characteristics may explain the use of bilateral tactics rather than the use of unilateral ones. Noticeably, adolescent factors related to confidence, such as subjective knowledge, may slightly increase the possibility of trying the three other influence tactics. Our findings extend the typical focus of research in the field, which favors the direct effect of subjective knowledge on adolescents' perceived influence but usually receives less support (Foxman et al., 1989a; Beatty and Talpade, 1994; Wang et al., 2007).

### Hypothesis testing

A canonical correlation analysis was used to examine the association between the predictor set of variables (that is, adolescents' influence tactics and characteristics) and the criterion set of variables (that is, adolescents' influence at the initiation stage and the search/decision stage). Its results not only confirmed the relative contribution of each predictor to adolescents' perceived influence at the two stages by providing more evidence, but also the moderating effect of culture on the predictors-influence association. We treated respondents' age, gender, and parental educational level, all of which affect influence (Wang et al., 2007; Beatty and Talpade, 1994; Su and Wang, 2010), as control variables and found that none of them correlated with adolescents' influence at an acceptable level (that is, greater than  $\pm 0.30$ ) (Hair et al., 1998). Their slight effects on adolescents' influence can be ignored, and they were therefore not included in our canonical models, which focused on the predictors being examined. As shown in Table 3, all of the first canonical functions that produced the highest canonical correlations were significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) in the overall sample (Wilks' lambda = 0.776), the Indian group (Wilks' lambda = 0.634), the Taiwanese group (Wilks' lambda = 0.760), and the South Korean group (Wilks' lambda = 0.849).

In the overall sample, the canonical correlation of 0.456 between the criterion set and the predictor set was greater than 0.40 and was thus considered "more important" (Hair et al., 1998). This value was higher than the correlation coefficients for the original variables taken in pairs, and it implies that, without considering culture, a possible positive correlation exists between adolescent predictors and adolescents' perceived influence at the two stages. Moreover, the redundancy index of the criterion variate (14.77%) was much higher than that of the predictor variate (4.47%), indicating that the adolescent predictor variate accounts for a sufficient amount of the variation in the criterion set and provides a realistic measure of the predictive ability of this relationship (Hair et al., 1998). Additionally, variables with a canonical loading greater than  $\pm 0.40$  (that is, more important) or



**Table 2.** Correlation matrix of factors

Factor	Mean	SD	B♦	P	E	R	PI	BI	SK	DP	IIS	ISDS
B	3.05	0.80	(0.62)♦									
P	2.61	0.83	0.278***	(0.73)								
E	2.45	0.84	0.195***	0.482***	(0.64)							
R	2.80	1.09	0.063	0.275***	0.218***	(0.74)						
PI	3.41	0.76	0.170***	0.071	-0.056	-0.090*	(0.69)					
BI	3.54	0.83	0.282***	0.105**	0.075	0.050	0.194***	(0.72)				
SK	3.04	0.70	0.226***	0.084*	0.184***	0.093*	0.100*	0.281***	(0.60)			
DP	3.50	0.81	0.132***	0.074	0.041	0.075	0.104*	0.257***	0.143***	(0.73)		
IIS	3.60	0.74	0.268***	0.080**	-0.045	0.035	0.222**	0.249***	0.149***	0.196***	(0.71)	
ISDS	3.51	0.82	0.269***	0.100**	0.020	0.084**	0.107***	0.278***	0.229***	0.197***	0.423***	(0.79)

SD = Standard deviation. ♦The constructs are indicated as follows: B = Bargaining, P = Persuasion, E = Emotional, R = Request, PI = Product importance, BI = Brand-choice importance, SK = Self-assessed knowledge, DP = Dependence on parent(s), IIS = Influence at the initiation stage, ISDS = Influence at the search/decision stage. ♦: The diagonal values are Cronbach's alpha. \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$  (two-tailed).

ever greater than  $\pm 0.50$  (that is, practically significant) (Hair et al., 1998) reflect the relationship between the linear combination of bargaining tactics (factor loading = 0.698), product importance (factor loading = 0.430), brand-choice importance (factor loading = 0.685), self-assessed knowledge (factor loading = 0.492), and dependence on parent(s) (factor loading = 0.511) predictors, and the linear combination of adolescents' perceived influence at both the initiation stage (factor loading = 0.847) and the search/decision stage (factor loading = 0.840). Compared to bargaining tactics, which were the most effective, emotional tactics appeared to be the least effective tactics (factor loading = -0.033). This result echoes previous findings (Kim et al., 1991; Palan and Wilkes, 1997; Shoham and Dalakas, 2006), and is generally consistent with the results summarized in Table 2. This advanced analysis provided clearer and stronger indexes by which to judge the overall relationship between the two sets of variables.

In the same vein, the first canonical function of each cultural group revealed the predictors-influence association in various composite levels of uncertainty avoidance and societal masculinity. As shown in Table 3, all of the functions derived from the subsamples exceeded the thresholds of acceptance measures that were required to analyze the canonical function from the overall sample, thus justifying the speculated linkage connecting these sets of variables and the roles played by adolescent predictors. Overall, the separate function was in accordance with the overall function, except on two points. The South Korean adolescents' use of persuasion tactics may be "more important" for creating adolescents' perceived influence at the two stages (factor loading = 0.451), whereas the effect of product importance on the Indian adolescents' influence over their parent(s) in family buying decisions appeared to be "unacceptable" (factor loading = 0.281) given the minimal loading level of  $\pm 0.30$  (Hair et al., 1998). Consistent with the finding

based on the overall sample, bargaining tactics were the most effective tactics and emotional tactics the least effective across all groups.

Our main purpose was to examine the moderating role of composite levels of uncertainty avoidance and societal masculinity in the predictors-influence association. The Indian group's function produced the highest canonical correlation (0.589), followed by the Taiwanese group's function (canonical correlation = 0.397), and the South Korean group's function (canonical correlation = 0.373). The ranking order of canonical correlation was in accordance with our hypothesis: a composite of high uncertainty acceptance (that is, low in uncertainty avoidance) and high masculinity reinforces the overall contribution of the predictors to adolescent influence. For advanced evidence, the results of Fisher's Z transformations showed statistically significant differences on the canonical correlation of all of the relationships. To sum up, we accept the following: (1) The canonical correlation of the

**Table 3.** Analysis of the first canonical functions for the adolescent predictors and adolescents' perceived influence in the process of family purchase decision making.

Canonical function	India (n = 158) C.L. (S.C.)	Taiwan (n = 247) C.L.(S.C.)	South Korea (n = 200) C.L.(S.C.)	Total (N = 605) C.L.(S.C.)
<b>Adolescent predictor</b>				
<b>Influence tactic:</b>				
Bargaining	.631 (.527)	.632 (.401)	.717 (.563)	.698 (.481)
Persuasion	.115 (.110)	.284 (.029)	.451 (.153)	.235 (.108)
Emotional	-0.119(-0.318)	0.050(-0.202)	0.114(-0.158)	-0.033(-0.276)
Request	0.278 (0.157)	0.136 (0.086)	0.232 (0.044)	0.155 (0.110)
Product importance	0.281 (0.135)	0.478 (0.213)	0.435 (0.319)	0.430 (0.209)
Brand-choice importance	0.588 (0.167)	0.646 (0.339)	0.586 (0.402)	0.685 (0.368)
Dependence on parent(s)	0.660 (0.454)	0.395 (0.325)	0.466 (0.293)	0.511 (0.291)
Self-assessed knowledge	0.425 (0.324)	0.652 (0.442)	0.349 (0.070)	0.492 (0.248)
Shared variance (%)	19.29	21.59	20.69	21.56
Redundancy (%)	6.7	3.4	2.87	4.47
<b>Adolescents' perceived influence</b>				
The initiation stage	0.729 (0.456)	0.851 (0.640)	0.884 (0.631)	0.847 (0.599)
The search/decision stage	0.906 (0.737)	0.804 (0.566)	0.832 (0.532)	0.840 (0.586)
Shared variance (%)	67.57	68.56	73.65	71.17
Redundancy (%)	23.47	10.8	10.22	14.77
Eigenvalue	0.532	0.187	0.161	0.262
% of Eigenvalue	94.648	63.309	91.474	92.251
Wilks' lambda	0.634***	0.760***	0.849**	0.776***
Canonical correlation	0.589	0.397	0.373	0.456

♦: S.C. = Standardized coefficients; C.L. = Canonical loadings. \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

Indian group's function was greater than that of the Taiwanese group's function ( $Z = -24.266$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ); (2) The canonical correlation of the Indian group's function was greater than that of the South Korean group's function ( $Z = -24.636$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ); and (3) The canonical correlation of the Taiwanese group's function was greater than that of the South Korean group's function ( $Z = -2.616$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This suggests that the moderating effect speculated in our hypothesis is completely supported by our findings.

## DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

### An overview

This study yielded insights into the role of composites of uncertainty acceptance and societal masculinity in facilitating the overall association between adolescents' influence in the family purchase decision-making process and the predictors of adolescents' influence. Based on Hofstede's framework and related research, our design, with data collected across Asian cultures, extends the scope of the research from a model of how cultural

values typically articulate adolescents' influence over family buying decisions in terms of single dimension to a more elaborate and specific model explaining adolescent consumers' behavior, together with the moderating effects of uncertainty avoidance and societal masculinity which have rarely been discussed before. Moreover, the inconstant findings with previous studies, which are possibly due to an East-West cultural gap, will be elaborated as follows.

### Implications of this research

Methodologically, the current findings provide better clarification of the match between adolescents' perceived influence at the two stages and the adolescent predictors. Furthermore, the results of this study justify the distinction between product importance and brand-choice importance, which demonstrates the theoretical effect of enduring involvement on influence at the initiation stage and the effect of situational involvement on influence at the search/decision stage. As for the role that adolescents' self-assessed knowledge plays in family buying decisions, this study not only supports the effect of

subjective knowledge on adolescents' perceived influence, for which there has been less evidence in previous research (Beatty and Talpade; 1994; Foxman et al., 1989a), but also confirms, with marginal evidence, that adolescents' subjective knowledge predicts their use of various influence tactics. Although the results of the canonical analyses on the overall sample and the subsamples consistently indicate that the use of most adolescent tactics may not be as effective as other predictors in creating influence over family purchase decisions, the connecting strength of the predictors-influence relationship appears to differ across the cultures. Instead of values such as power distance, individualism, and long-term orientation that have been discussed in typical research, we combined uncertainty avoidance with societal masculinity to form a joint moderator that has demonstrated stronger "explaining power." This suggests that as a society becomes more masculine and more uncertainty accepting, the predictors of adolescent influence may contribute more to achieving their goals in conjoint buying decisions. The findings pertaining to our hypothesis have provided us with insights into the relative values of various adolescent influence tactics and other predictors in changing parents' opinions, attitudes, or behaviors. Our findings may serve as a basis upon which more cross-cultural studies on adolescents' influence can be developed and proposed.

Our findings also afford evidence to clarify whether adolescents' characteristics determine the use of particular influence tactics to create influence or affect buying decisions directly. We can balance the conflicting viewpoints that are advocated in previous literatures. In detail, our findings suggest that adolescents' use of bargaining tactics, whose items are mainly considered to be bilateral tactics (Cowan et al., 1984), is more likely to be predicted by adolescents' characteristics and parental power, whereas the use of other tactics is less likely to be predicted by the same set of factors. In other words, the relational situation, personal motives, and self-confidence of adolescents encourage them to influence purchase decisions through interactions with their parents (Cowan et al., 1984). Furthermore, our findings echo previous arguments (Kim et al., 1991; Palan and Wilkes, 1997; Shoham and Dalakas, 2006; Bao et al., 2007) and provide stronger evidence to confirm that bargaining tactics are the most effective tactics for adolescents to use in order to achieve favorable outcomes, whereas emotional tactics are the least effective. Previous research on social influence across contexts has generally advocated the use of reasoning, since this approach convinces the target of the agent's competence (Kim et al., 1991; Rao et al., 1995) and interpersonal skills (Ferris and Judge, 1991; Wayne et al., 1997).

Moreover, our finding based on the overall sample also supports prior research, which concluded that, for children, the most effective tactic was the most popular one and the least effective tactic was the least used (Shoham

and Dalakas, 2006). This finding has led us to shift the focus to the importance of the parents' definition of the decision situation in determining the effectiveness of adolescents' influence tactics and to the reason why the effectiveness of rational approaches has generally been supported by typical research. Derived from Gardner and Martinko's (1988) framework, children's use of an influence tactic only works when it matches their parents' definition of the decision situation and their chosen tactic is therefore considered to be acceptable. The more parents perceive their children to be similar to them, the more favorable an impression they will have of their children (Ferris and Judge, 1991; Gardner and Martinko, 1988; Kristof-Brown et al., 2002; Wayne and Liden, 1995; Wayne et al., 1997). Previous research on general social influence and adolescents' influence has suggested that effective adolescent influence tactics may duplicate their parents' influence tactics, which may reflect how parents normally define the context of a family purchase decision (Gardner and Martinko, 1988; Cowan and Avants, 1988; Palan and Wilkes, 1997; Shamdasani et al., 2001). Our finding implies that adolescents may follow a "trial and error" approach to retain and use the tactics that correspond to their parents' definition of the decision situation and to avoid those tactics that result in failure (Venkatesh et al., 1995). In other words, adolescents' preference for the reasoning approach and their avoidance of the emotional approach may be an outcome of inter-generational influence through the socialization process.

Indeed, this study contributes to the mapping of a feasible structure that concludes that bargaining tactics alone may play the intervening role in connecting adolescents' characteristics and their adolescents' perceived influence. The study therefore offers more practical implications than previous research based on binary taxonomies (Cowan et al., 1984; Kim et al., 1991; Bao et al., 2007). Likewise, our findings strongly support the argument that all of the adolescents' characteristics predict adolescents' influence well without having to consider their use of the other three categories of influence tactics. These findings are thus consistent with models that did not incorporate any construct of influence tactics (Foxman et al., 1989a; Beatty and Talpade, 1994; Wang et al., 2007). Therefore, this study elaborates the reason why prior models that either incorporated or excluded the use of influence tactics may be able to coexist.

Another issue for discussion is derived from our findings regarding the role of adolescents' dependence on their parents, which reflects parental power. Corresponding to Bao et al.'s (2007) findings, the more our respondents depended on their parents; the more likely they were to apply bargaining tactics that are considered bilateral (Cowan et al., 1984; Kim et al., 1991; Bao et al., 2007). However, contrary to Bao et al.'s marginally significant effect, our result suggests that parental power may increase adolescents' influence over buying decisions. These ambiguous results can be attributed to

the theoretical base adopted for developing hypotheses in previous research. First, Bao et al. reasoned that parental power would diminish adolescents' power and therefore limit their use of unilateral tactics. This process neglected the literature that contended that power should be discussed in relative rather than absolute terms. Those who feel powerful do not necessarily feel less dependent on their partner in an interdependent relationship (Frazier and Summers, 1984; Gardner and Martinko, 1988; Frooman, 1999; Somech and Drach-Zahavy, 2002). In other words, adolescents' relative power, rather than their absolute power, would predict their choice of influence tactics. The role of parental power should be considered a factor in shaping the adolescents' definition of the situation during an exchange, which determines their influence attempts (Gardner and Martinko, 1988). The more adolescents perceive their parents' power, the higher their level of self-awareness; thus, they prefer to use tactics of self-promotion or ingratiation (Schlenker, 1980), by which they attempt to be seen as competent or likeable (Jones and Pittman, 1982). These desired images are associated with the behaviors included in bilateral tactics, such as bargaining, reasoning, and positive affective (Cowan et al., 1984; Kim et al., 1991; Bao et al., 2007). In a relationship of high interdependency, the highly dependent party tends to select influence tactics that maintain smooth, harmonious, and long-term dyadic exchanges (Kale, 1989). To sum up, parental power plays its role by lifting the level of adolescents' self-awareness rather than weakening their power.

### **An East-West contrast**

In addition to the arguments on relative power, there may be two other potential explanations for the inconsistent findings regarding the effect that parental power has on influence. These explanations are associated with the gap of power distance and long-term orientation that were popular in East-West cultural contrasts. First, as discussed, children's power and parental power may coexist, although they both partly explain the children's use of influence tactics with their parents. The effect of parents' power on children's influence on buying decisions may not diminish this influence at the two stages. Since we found that children's use of bargaining tactics was explained positively by their dependence on their parents and that bargaining tactics are effective, parental power may only have an indirect effect on children's desired outcomes via the use of effective tactics. In other words, in our Asian cultures, which have a higher power distance than the American culture (Hofstede and Bond, 1988; Hofstede, 2001), adolescents perceive stronger parental power than their American counterparts, and their reinforced self-awareness drives them to choose an inter-active tactic, which is considered to be more effective in an interdependent relationship, to influence their

parents (Kim et al., 1991). Moreover, in the process of parents' impression formation, the desired consequences of children's influence tactics are determined by the congruence between the parents' definition of the situation and the children's influence attempts (Gardner and Martinko, 1988; Shoham and Dalakas, 2006). Asian parents perceive their power more than their American counterparts, and they consider their children's use of interactive tactics legitimate and hence are more likely to be convinced by their children.

Second, compared with the United States, Asian cultures are generally characterized by a higher long-term orientation, which emphasizes the future, thrift, and persistence (Hofstede and Bond, 1988; Hofstede, 2001). Parents from such cultures normally tend to consider their children's needs due to future honor to be gained from their children's successes. Therefore, their children may perceive that they have more influence in family purchase decisions than children in the United States (Bond et al., 1987; Wang et al., 2007). The fostering effect of long-term orientation may possibly weaken the negative effect of parental power on children's influence and change its theoretical direction dramatically, thus providing a potential reason for this noteworthy phenomenon in Asian cultures.

### **LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

There are limitations to the current study that are noteworthy and require advanced endeavors in the future to overcome them. First, compared with the subscales of specific influence tactics in the empirical research on general social influence, the tactics introduced into the popular taxonomy of research on adolescents' influence have been limited. Our study utilized the category levels of Palan and Wilkes's (1997) framework to measure the means that adolescents employ to influence their parents. Although more compatible with the taxonomy used in social influence studies, these categories and their corresponding measuring items are still ambiguous. Therefore, a complete taxonomy of influence tactics, consisting of well-defined, measured by multi-items, exhaustive, and mutually exclusive tactics used by parents and children, is needed to summarize and contrast findings across studies.

Although our hypothesis was supported, some of our findings that are inconsistent with previous findings in non-cross-cultural contexts require more explanation. For example, in our Asian cases, adolescents' dependence on their parents, which reflects parental power, was found to reinforce the overall effect of the predictors on their influence. Although we have proposed a possible explanation for this based on the long-term orientation of Asian cultures, this prominent finding is contrary to the findings of prior research conducted in Western regions and needs more support. It would be advisable in the future to collect data from countries that, on a single

dimension, contrast greatly with each other, so that the effect of each dimension on adolescents' influence can be clarified with more confidence (Su and Wang, 2010). Furthermore, other frameworks that contain additional cultural dimensions, such as the GLOBE study (House and Javidan, 2004), can provide future research with a comprehensive infrastructure to address related issues. Accordingly, the theoretical and managerial implications of future findings will be articulated.

Indeed, this study has improved the measurement of parental power by measuring children's dependence on their parents. In other words, we focused on the target's power rather than on the agent's power. However, as emphasized in this study, measuring an agent's power in a relative perspective considers the effect of bilateral power, which ensures that a balanced view of highly interdependent or close relationships is obtained. Future research should also examine how children's relative power is measured in terms of relative dependence.

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