



National Centre for Longitudinal Data

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Parenting Efficacy of Parents of Indigenous Children

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The quality and stability of a child's human relationships in the early years lay the foundation for a wide range of later developmental outcomes.ⁱ In the early years, the most important relationships children have are with their parents. Strategies for supporting parents are recognised as an effective way to improve the health, well-being and development of children. Parenting is influenced by many factors, including the behaviour and characteristics of the child, the health and psychological well-being of the parent and the contextual influences of stress and support. Parenting difficulties are a major source of stress for parents, with parenting self-efficacy shown to be an important buffer against parenting stress.ⁱⁱ

The Parenting Empowerment and Efficacy Measure (PEEM),ⁱⁱⁱ included in *Footprints in Time: The Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children (LSIC)*, aims to measure carers' sense of personal agency with respect to their parenting role. Parents' responses indicate the degree of confidence with which they approach and manage the challenges of raising children, and whether they feel empowered to find and use formal services and informal support systems to achieve their parental goals and help their children thrive.

PEEM was developed during the Pathways to Prevention project: a research–practice partnership between Griffith University, Mission Australia and Education Queensland and was used as a core outcome measure for the Pathways to Prevention family support service. The LSIC wave 5 data collection included a subset of 14 of the 20 PEEM items.

Table 1 shows the questions used in the LSIC PEEM scale and the proportion of primary carers who gave responses of 8 or above on a 10 point scale with 1 being 'this sounds nothing like me' and 10 being 'this sounds exactly like me'.

Table 1: Responses of 8 or above to PEEM questions, per cent

Measure	Per cent scoring 8 or above
I know my children feel secure	96.2
I can make time for my children when they need it	92
I believe my children will do well at school	91.2
I can work out what to do if any of my children have a problem	90.4
I can find services for my children when I need to	89.6
I feel that I am doing a good job as a parent	89.4
I know how to get useful information about how my children's needs change as they grow	86.7
I feel good when I think about the future for my children	86.7
In my family there is more to enjoy than worry about	85.6
I find it easy to talk to people like teachers, doctors and nurses about my children	81.3
I feel good about myself	78.7
I feel good about the way my children behave	77.7
We have clear rules and routines in my family	76.6
I stay calm and manage life even when it's stressful	67

More than half of primary carers provided responses of ten to all but two of the questions; *I stay calm and manage life even when it's stressful* (38.7 per cent) and *I feel good about the way my children behave* (40.9 per cent). The responses to the questions can be combined to form a parenting efficacy score ranging between 14 and 140, where higher scores indicate greater self-reported parenting efficacy. Scores for the *Footprints in Time* carers ranged from 32 to 140 with an average of 125.6 with 15.3 per cent of respondents who answered all questions having 'perfect' scores of 140. While responses are spread across all steps of the scale for each question there is not strong variance on any of them. Similar to questions about life satisfaction, it would be surprising to find a normal distribution for these types of questions.

Further analysis examined the interaction of self-reported parenting efficacy with children's developmental outcomes. The data did not show a significant association with children's learning outcomes but it did show a significant association with children's social and emotional difficulties. A one-point increase in self-reported parenting efficacy scores is associated a 0.04 point decrease in children's social and emotional difficulties scores. As there is a potential 127 point range in parenting efficacy scores, this results in a possible variation of approximately 5 points for the 40 point child social and emotional difficulties score. Children's abilities to interact socially were also significantly associated with self-reported parenting efficacy; a one-point increase in self-reported parenting efficacy is associated with a 0.02 point increase in prosocial skills, resulting in a possible variation of up to 2 points on the 10 point prosocial scale.

The data was also used to determine what factors have an impact on self-reported parenting efficacy scores. Strong Souls (a measure of social and personal resilience), satisfaction with relationships and satisfaction with feeling part of the community were all found to be significantly associated with parenting efficacy scores and between them account for 22.9 per cent of the variance in scores. Higher levels of community safety and better parental health and decreases in financial stress were also found to be significantly associated with parenting efficacy scores but had less impact.

Key Statistics

- **125.6 out of 140 — mean self-reported parenting efficacy score by parents of Indigenous children in LSIC.**
- **0.04 points decrease in children's social and emotional difficulties scores with each one point increase in self-reported parenting efficacy scores.**
- **0.02 points increase in children's prosocial scores with each one point increase in self-reported parenting efficacy scores**

ⁱ National Scientific Council on the Developing Child 2004, *Young children develop in an environment of relationships*, Working paper No. 1, retrieved from <http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu>.

ⁱⁱ Bloomfield, L & Kendall, S 2012, 'Parenting self-efficacy, parenting stress and child behaviour before and after a parenting programme', *Primary health care research and development*, vol. 13, no. 4, pp. 1–9.

ⁱⁱⁱ Freiberg, K, Homel, R & Branch, S 2014, 'The Parent Empowerment and Efficacy Measure (PEEM): a tool for strengthening the accountability and effectiveness of family support services', *Australian Social Work*, vol. 67, no. 3, pp. 405–18.

A more complete version of this research is available in:

Department of Social Services 2014, *Footprints in Time: The Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children—Report from Wave 5*, Department of Social Services, Canberra.