

Study on the Influence of Family Education Quality on Parent–Child Relationships

Li Yong

Graduate University of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar 999097, Mongolia

Abstract: With the rapid development of society and the intensification of educational competition, the significance of family education has become increasingly prominent. The family is not only the starting point of a child's socialization but also the key environment for personality formation and mental health. The quality of family education directly affects the harmony of parent–child relationships and the holistic development of children. Based on the interdisciplinary perspectives of education, psychology, and sociology, this paper employs literature review, questionnaire survey, and interview methods to examine how family education quality influences parent–child relationships. The results reveal that (1) family education quality is significantly and positively correlated with parent–child relationship quality; (2) parental educational beliefs, communication patterns, and emotional support are the key determinants; and (3) socioeconomic status, educational resources, and family culture mediate the depth and quality of parent–child interactions. Finally, this paper proposes strategies for improving family education quality from the perspectives of educational policy, family guidance, and social support systems.

Keywords: Family Education Quality, Parent–child Relationship, Education, Socialization, Emotional Communication.

1. Introduction

Family education is the starting point of individual learning and the foundation for both school and social education. As family structures have become smaller and single-child households more widespread, the quality of parent–child relationships has emerged as a key factor affecting children's socialization and mental health. In recent years, public discourse has frequently highlighted issues such as “educational anxiety,” “parent–child conflict,” and “family education involution,” whose roots often lie in imbalances in the quality of family education.[1]

The quality of family education is reflected not only in how parents foster their children's knowledge and skills, but also in broader factors such as emotional communication, educational philosophy, pedagogical methods, and the family atmosphere. As the most central interpersonal bond within the family system, the harmony or disharmony of the parent–child relationship directly determines a child's sense of security, attachment patterns, and self-identity. This paper aims to systematically examine the interactions between the quality of family education and the parent–child relationship by drawing on macro-level educational theory, micro-level psychological mechanisms, and structural factors from sociology.[2]

2. Core Concepts and Theoretical Foundations

2.1. Definition of Family Education Quality

Family education quality refers to the overall performance of a household in terms of educational philosophy, methods, emotional atmosphere, educational investment, and resource allocation. It reflects the cumulative effect of family education. High-quality family education should balance cognitive development with emotional nurturing, fostering a child's individual abilities and social adaptability in a coordinated way.[3]

2.2. Definition of the Parent–Child Relationship

The parent–child relationship refers to the interactions between parents and children on emotional, behavioral, communicative, and value-oriented levels. It is the core bond through which family members depend on and influence one another. Its quality is generally expressed through dimensions such as trust, understanding, support, and cooperation.[4]

2.3. Theoretical Foundations

Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977): This theory argues that children acquire behaviors primarily through observing and imitating their parents. Parental educational styles and emotional responses become reference standards for children's social development.

Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969): This theory posits that a secure attachment is the cornerstone of a healthy parent–child relationship, and that such an attachment forms when parents respond consistently and sensitively to a child's needs.

Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1986): This framework views the family as the “microsystem” of a child's development, and suggests that variations in family education quality exert systematic effects within broader social and cultural contexts.[5-7]

Humanistic Education Theory (Rogers, 1961): This theory emphasizes that understanding, respect, and emotional resonance are essential for educational success. A positive parent–child relationship is regarded as a prerequisite for individuals to achieve a coherent self-identity.[8]

3. Analysis of the Relationship Between Family Education Quality and Parent–Child Relationships

3.1. The Impact of Educational Philosophy on Parent–Child Relationships

Research shows that parents' educational philosophy

determines the direction of family education. Traditional “achievement-above-all” or “authoritarian discipline” approaches tend to heighten tension in parent–child relationships. By contrast, educational philosophies centered on respect, equality and cooperation enhance trust and communication between parents and children. Differences in educational philosophy not only influence educational practices but also determine whether parents are able to understand and accept their children’s individual differences.

3.2. Educational Methods and Emotional Support

Family educational methods are generally classified as democratic, authoritarian, or permissive. A democratic approach fosters children’s self-esteem and sense of responsibility, thereby encouraging positive emotional attachment. Authoritarian education, lacking emotional support, often provokes rebellious attitudes and weakens the emotional bond between parent and child. Studies have found that emotional support functions as a mediating variable between educational method and the quality of the parent–child relationship.

3.3. Communication Quality and Parent–child Conflict

Effective parent–child communication is not just the exchange of information; it also embodies emotional understanding and psychological alignment. Communication imbalances often lead to misunderstanding, blame and indifference, resulting in estrangement within the family. Surveys indicate that 90% of parent–child conflicts stem from inadequate or improper communication. Parents who are able to listen, empathize and provide feedback can significantly improve the quality of interactions.

4. Influence of Social and Cultural Factors

Socio-Economic Status (SES) Differences

Family education quality is closely linked to SES. Families with higher SES have advantages in educational resources,

cultural capital and time investment, making it easier to establish positive educational interactions. Families with lower SES, constrained by economic and time pressures, are more likely to adopt utilitarian or emotionally driven educational behaviors, which undermines the stability of parent–child relationships.

Family Structure and Intergenerational Cultural Differences

Only-child families often exhibit educational tendencies of “over-attention” and “high expectations,” centering the child within the family and leading to parental stress and concurrent parent–child conflict. In three-generation households, differences in values between generations may also weaken consistency in parent–child education.

Social Transition and Educational Anxiety

Under the dual pressures of social competition and educational reform, parental anxiety about education has increased significantly, affecting both educational behavior and emotional stability. Such anxiety undermines parent–child trust through a “control–resistance” dynamic, making the relationship more tense.[9]

5. Research Methods and Data Analysis

This study employs an empirical approach combining questionnaires and interviews, using a random sample of 200 families in a city in northern China. The survey encompasses families from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds, with children aged 6–16. The questionnaires consist of the Family Education Quality Scale (FEQS) and the Parent–Child Relationship Evaluation Scale (PCRS), with a total of 48 items rated on a five-point Likert scale. In addition, 20 families took part in semi-structured, in-depth interviews to supplement the quantitative findings with contextual insights.

5.1. Sample Characteristics

Among the 200 valid questionnaires, boys made up 52% and girls 48%. Regarding parents’ occupations, civil servants and public-sector employees accounted for 34%, enterprise employees for 41%, and self-employed or freelance workers for 25%. A majority of parents (56%) held a bachelor’s degree.

Table 1. “Sample Basic Information” (N = 200):

Item	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Child’s gender	Male	104	52
	Female	96	48
Parent’s occupation	Civil servant / public-sector	68	34
	Enterprise employee	82	41
	Self-employed / freelance	50	25
Parent’s education level	Associate degree or below	44	22
	Bachelor’s degree	112	56
	Graduate degree or above	44	22

Note: These data come from a 2024 field questionnaire survey of 200 families in a northern Chinese city.

5.2. Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Tests

The scales demonstrated high overall reliability: Cronbach’s α for the FEQS was 0.87 and for the PCRS was 0.90, both meeting the standards for high reliability. The average score for family education quality was 3.84 (SD = 0.56) and the mean parent–child relationship score was 3.91 (SD = 0.49), indicating generally high levels with some

variability.

5.3. Correlation Analysis

Using Pearson correlation analysis, the study found a significant positive correlation between family education quality and the parent–child relationship ($r = 0.68, p < 0.01$). At the dimensional level, emotional support ($r = 0.71$), communication quality ($r = 0.66$) and consistency of

educational philosophy ($r = 0.64$) showed the strongest correlations with the parent-child relationship; whereas

educational anxiety and authoritarian educational style were significantly negatively correlated ($r = -0.45$, $p < 0.01$)

Table 2. Correlation analysis between family education quality and the parent-child relationship (N = 200)

Variable	Family education quality	Emotional support	Communication quality	Consistency of educational philosophy	Educational anxiety	Authoritarian parenting	Parent-child relationship
Family education quality	—	0.79**	0.74**	0.70**	-0.48**	-0.42**	0.68**
Parent-child relationship	0.68**	0.71**	0.66**	0.64**	-0.45**	-0.43**	—

Note: $p < 0.05$; $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed test).

5.4. Regression Analysis

Taking the parent-child relationship as the dependent variable and using family education quality, parental educational level, household income and educational anxiety as independent variables, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted. The results show that family education

quality has the strongest predictive effect on the parent-child relationship ($\beta = 0.52$, $p < 0.001$), followed by parents' educational level ($\beta = 0.27$, $p < 0.01$), whereas educational anxiety is a significant negative predictor ($\beta = -0.31$, $p < 0.01$). The model's explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.61$) indicates that these variables collectively explain 61 % of the variance in the parent-child relationship.[10]

Table 3. Regression analysis results of family education quality and parent-child relationship

Independent variable	Unstandardized coefficient B	Standardized coefficient β	t-value	Significance (Sig.)
Family education quality	0.45	0.52	7.32	0.000***
Parents' educational level	0.23	0.27	3.89	0.001**
Family income	0.08	0.1	1.67	0.097
Educational anxiety	-0.26	-0.31	-4.15	0.000***
Constant	1.12	—	2.54	0.012*
Model R^2		0.61		

* Notes: *** indicates $p < 0.001$; ** indicates $p < 0.01$; * indicates $p < 0.05$.

5.5. Qualitative Interview Analysis

The interviews show that families with higher-quality education tend to share the following features:

Parents uphold positive, egalitarian educational philosophies and place importance on communication and emotional companionship;

The family atmosphere is democratic, and children are respected when expressing their opinions and emotions;

Parents are attentive to their children's psychological needs beyond academic guidance.

Conversely, in families with higher levels of educational anxiety, overcontrol and emotional repression are common, with parents often using academic performance as the primary criterion for evaluation. This leads children to develop rebellious attitudes and emotional distancing.

Taken together, the quantitative and qualitative results indicate that family education quality significantly enhances the harmony and stability of parent-child relationships via an "emotional support → interactive communication → educational consistency" pathway, whereas educational anxiety and authoritarian parenting diminish this effect.[11]

6. Paths and Strategies for Enhancing Family Education Quality

Philosophical Dimension: Establish a Child-Centred Educational Perspective

Education should shift from a focus on merely "producing talent" to fostering the "whole person," respecting the laws of child development and advocating educational principles grounded in understanding, companionship and growth.

Behavioural Dimension: Optimize Educational Methods and Communication Patterns

Promote democratic family education: parents should balance authority with equality, using active listening and joint decision-making to build cooperative relationships.

Emotional Dimension: Strengthen Emotional Support and Psychological Care

Emotional exchange is the bond that sustains parent-child relationships. Parents should pay attention to their children's emotional expressions and encourage self-expression and psychological independence.

Social Support Dimension: Build a Family Education Support System

Government should improve the implementation mechanisms of the Family Education Promotion Law; schools should offer courses on family education guidance; and social organizations can provide psychological counselling and parent-training services, forming a "home-school-society" support network.

7. Conclusion and Implications

This study demonstrates that family education quality is a key factor influencing parent-child relationships. High-quality family education-characterized by sound educational principles, effective communication and emotional support-can significantly enhance the harmony and stability of parent-child relations. Future research could deepen in the following areas:

Develop evaluation systems for family education quality that align with Chinese cultural contexts;

Explore the interactive effects of educational anxiety, family structure and intergenerational culture on parent-child relationships;

Encourage the development of a family education ecology in which multiple stakeholders participate.

High-quality family education not only shapes healthy parent-child relationships but also contributes to social harmony and the nation's future.

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