



Full length article

The Current Development Trends and Challenges of Family Education in China

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Article Info

Received: 09.11.2024

Accepted: 12.12.2024

Available online: 28.02.2025

Keywords:

family education, parent-child interaction, educational methods.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.59857/MQHA5711>

ABSTRACT

As an important component of national education in China, family education is closely related to school education and social education. This article explores the current status, core connotations, and functional positioning of contemporary family education research through literature review, and analyzes the existing problems and development directions. Research has shown that family education plays an important role in children's growth process, and faces many challenges. This study will contribute to improving the effectiveness and targeting of family education.

1. Introduction

The vast majority of a child's time is spent at home (Guryan, Hurst, and Kearney, 2016.), as shown in Figure 1, so family education has a significant impact on children. As the first classroom for children's growth, family education has a profound impact on their morality, values, behavioral habits, and other aspects (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003). The famous Soviet educator Lev Vygotsky once emphasized: "School education without family education, family education without school education, cannot complete the extremely detailed and complex task of cultivating people." In recent years, with the development of society and the change of educational concepts, the importance of family education has become increasingly prominent. However, there are still many problems in family education in practice, and there is an urgent need for systematic research and scientific guidance. This article explores the current research status, core connotations, practical issues, and future development directions of contemporary family education through a review of existing literature.

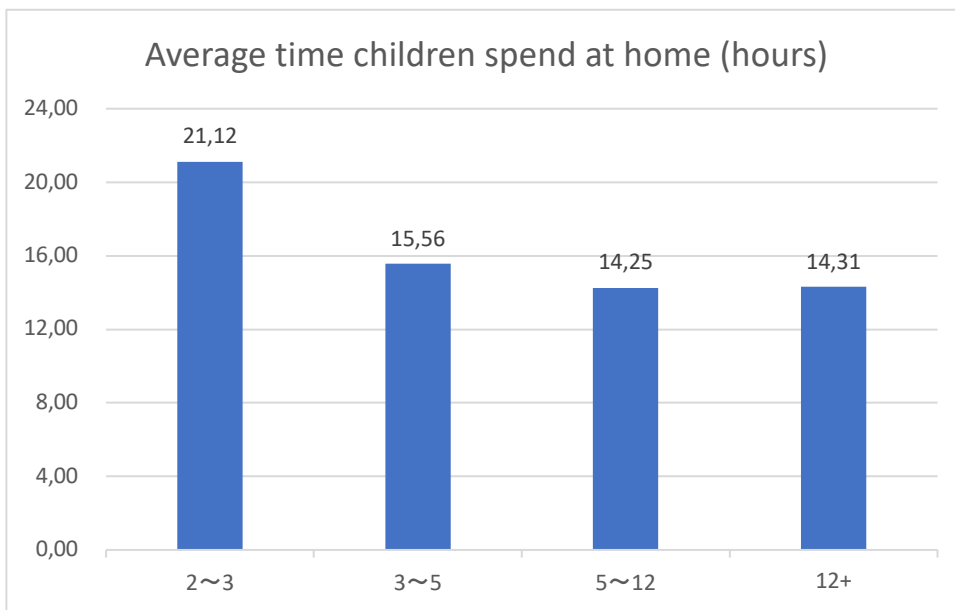


Figure 1. Duration of staying at home for children of different age groups

2. Characteristics of Family Education

Family education refers to the education and cultivation activities carried out by family members for children (Utomo and Alawiyah 2022), including the teaching, interaction and relationship between parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters and other family members. The characteristics of family education mainly include:

Intimacy: The emotional connection between family members cannot be replaced by other forms of education. Intimate parent-child relationships can provide children with a sense of security and belonging (Harach and Kuczynski 2005).

Continuity: Family education is an important factor that continuously influences a child's entire growth process. Children live in the family environment from birth to adulthood, and the influence of family education runs through their entire lives.

Multi faceted: Family education not only includes the cultivation of academic performance, but also involves aspects such as moral cultivation and social adaptability (Bandura et al. 1996). The content of family education is extensive, covering various aspects of children's lives.

Personalization: Family education can provide personalized education based on individual differences of children, which is more in line with their needs (Von Stumm and Wertz, 2021). The flexibility of family education enables it to better adapt to the developmental characteristics and needs of children.

Family education has a significant impact on children's growth. Through family education, children can acquire basic moral, interpersonal, emotional management, and learning abilities, and develop good personal character and values. Family education can also help children develop good autonomy and social adaptability, laying a solid foundation for their future development and success.

3. The core connotation and functional positioning of family education

The core essence of family education is to provide children with education, cultivation, emotional support, and socialization opportunities through family environment and parent-child relationships, helping them grow and develop comprehensively. Specifically, family education includes the following aspects:

Family education philosophy: the goals, beliefs, culture, and knowledge of family education. These concepts directly affect the direction and methods of family education. For example, some families focus on cultivating their children's independence, while others emphasize traditional respect and obedience.

Family Education Model (Doherty, 1995): The emotional atmosphere or nurturing environment of family education, such as democratic, authoritative, laissez faire, etc. These patterns have a profound impact on the psychological and behavioral development of children. Different parenting styles have varying impacts on children's self-esteem, independence, and social skills.

Family Parenting Practice: A specific practical process carried out in a specific family upbringing environment to achieve educational goals, including daily life examples and planned educational activities. For example, parents influence their children's values and behavioral habits through storytelling, shared household chores, and participation in family activities.

In the English speaking world, "family education" is often translated as "childrearing" or "parenting", which reflects the evolution from "nurturing" to "education" and emphasizes the important role of parents in the socialization process of children (Zhang, 2017).

4. Research achievements in contemporary family education

Contemporary family education research is showing a trend towards diversification and interdisciplinary approaches. Researchers not only focus on the traditional way of parents' education to their children, but also explore the role of grandparents, brothers and sisters in family education. Multiple disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and education have jointly focused on family education, forming an interdisciplinary research model.

4.1 Research shows

The importance of parent-child interaction: parental companionship time is crucial for children's development. Parent child interaction has a positive impact on children's cognitive and emotional development (Paulus et al. 2018). Research has found that intimate parent-child relationships contribute to children's emotional stability and social development. Specific forms of parent-child interaction, such as parent-child reading, shared games, and family activities, have a significant promoting effect on children's language abilities and social skills.

The influence of parental education methods: Parents' education methods directly affect their children's learning motivation and academic performance. Authoritative parenting styles (both demanding and responsive) have been proven to be most beneficial for children's academic and psychological development. On the contrary, authoritarian or laissez faire parenting styles may lead to behavioral, emotional, and academic problems in children. Research has found that authoritative parenting styles not only contribute to children's academic achievement, but also promote their emotional development and self-control abilities (Holmlund, Lindahl and Plug, 2011).

The role of family atmosphere: A good family atmosphere is beneficial to children's psychology. A harmonious family environment can reduce children's behavioral problems; enhance their self-esteem and sense of social responsibility. Research has shown that harmonious relationships between parents and positive family communication can effectively prevent psychological problems in children and adolescents (Utomo and Alawiyah, 2022).

Family education plays an irreplaceable role at the core of shaping children's values and outlook on life. Family is the first classroom for children's socialization, and parents' values and behaviors have a profound impact on children. For example, parents' professional ethics, attitudes towards life, and ways of handling interpersonal relationships can all subtly influence their children. Family education plays a crucial role in cultivating children's sense of responsibility, cooperation spirit, and social responsibility.

Collaborative cooperation between Family and School Education is the key to promoting children's comprehensive development, as shown in Figure 2. Home school cooperation can form an educational synergy and improve the overall effectiveness of education. Research has found that parental participation in school activities and family education guidance can help children achieve comprehensive academic and moral development. Home school cooperation can not only improve educational effectiveness, but also promote children's social adaptation and mental health.

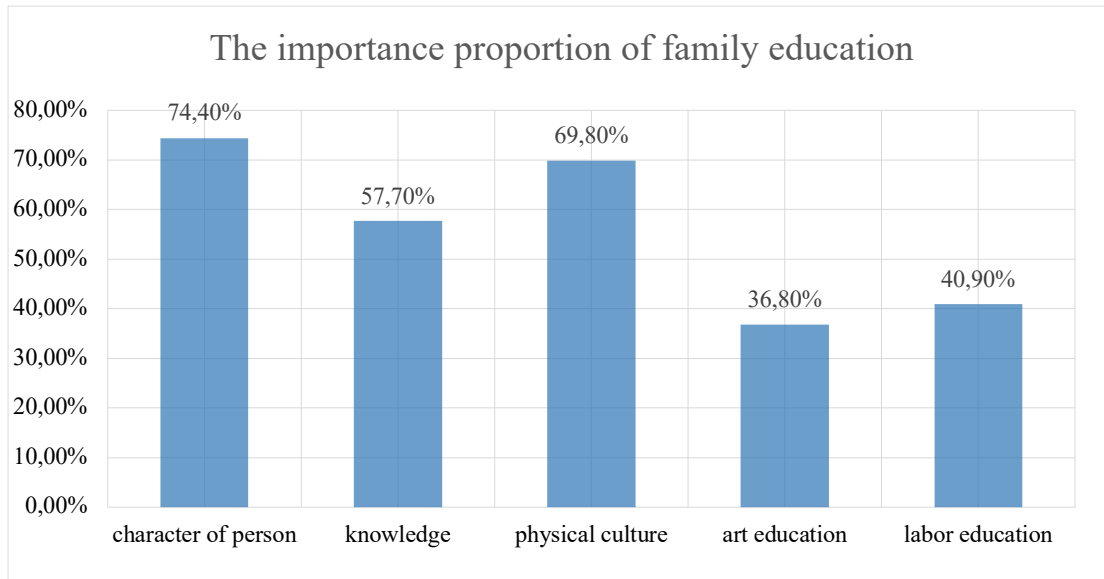


Figure 2. Proportion of time spent on family education in various aspects

5. Practical Issues in Family Education

There are various practical problems in family education practice, mainly including the following four aspects: Family education issues in different age groups:

Parenting attitudes exist during the infancy and early childhood stages. Problems such as unscientific thinking, traditional parenting styles, and insufficient emphasis on personality development. For example, research has found that many parents overly focus on academic knowledge in infant and toddler education, while neglect-

ing the cultivation of emotional and social abilities. During adolescence, parents often face the challenge of balancing their children's autonomy and guidance.

The problem of different parenting styles in families: There is a deviation in the content overly traditional parenting styles, education. For example, some parents use physical abuse and punishment in their education, which is not only detrimental to their children's mental health but may also lead to behavioral problems. The lack of good communication between parents and the failure to form a unified educational philosophy and method have affected the effectiveness of education. Research has shown that consistency between parents plays an important role in shaping children's behavioral norms and values.

General issues with family education concepts. In terms of educational content, emphasis is placed on intelligence over morality, with too much emphasis on heteronomy and neglect of self-discipline cultivation, as well as neglecting psychological attention to children. For example, some parents overly focus on their children's academic performance while neglecting moral education and mental health.

Family education issues for special groups: single parent families, intergenerational parenting families, special issues faced in family education such as restructuring families. For example, children from single parent families may lack paternal or maternal love, children from intergenerational parenting families may lack guidance from modern educational concepts, and children from restructured families may face complex family relationships. Research has found that children from single parent and intergenerational parenting families are more likely to experience problems in emotional and behavioral development.

Unequal distribution of educational resources: Urban and rural families have unequal access to educational resources and concepts. The differences have had varying impacts on family education. For example, rural families have significant differences in educational resources, parental education levels, and educational concepts compared to urban families, which has a profound impact on children's growth. Research has shown that there are significant differences in education investment and methods between urban and rural families, which directly affect the quality of children's education and their growth environment.

These issues reflect the difficulties that exist in the practice of family education, which are caused by both internal factors within the family and the influence of the social environment. Research has shown that factors such as family structure, family economic status, and social support system can all affect the quality and effectiveness of family education.

6. The Shortcomings of Contemporary Family Education Research

Despite certain advancements in contemporary family education research, there remain significant gaps and limitations in the field. These shortcomings can be categorized into several key areas:

6.1 Insufficient Research on Family Education Capacity Building

There is a notable lack of research directly focused on the concept of family education capacity building. This area has been underexplored, particularly in the context of Chinese Mainland. While there is some research on family education capacity building, it primarily revolves around the training of family education professionals in Western countries. In China, existing studies on this topic are predominantly found in master's theses and

journal articles, with the overall quantity remaining low. Notably, there are no doctoral dissertations or monographs dedicated to this subject, highlighting the need for more comprehensive and specialized research on how to build and enhance family education capacities both at the individual and institutional levels.

6.2 Fragmentation of Research on Parental Education and Family Education Guidance

Research in parental education and family education guidance is relatively scattered and lacks cohesion. Works such as Zhao Zhongxin's *Family Education: Science and Art of Educating Children*, Yang Baozhong's *Family Education in the Perspective of Big Education*, and Miao Jiandong's *Family Education* have touched on these topics but tend to lack empirical depth and systematic exploration. Notably, the cultivation of professional roles, such as family education counselors, has not been sufficiently examined, and empirical studies that provide concrete insights into the development of such professionals are rare. The absence of a comprehensive and integrated approach to these topics calls for further in-depth, data-driven analysis.

6.3 Narrow Research Perspective

The research perspective in family education remains relatively narrow, which, in turn, limits the discipline's growth and the development of family education practices. Research paradigms in the field predominantly focus on summarizing historical experiences and engaging in theoretical speculation, while empirical analysis remains underdeveloped. Furthermore, the research tends to emphasize family dynamics, interpersonal relationships, and the problems associated with family education, but it often overlooks crucial aspects, such as enhancing parents' self-awareness and developing their capabilities in the context of family education. Expanding the research perspective to include the role of parents in building their own educational competencies is essential for advancing the field.

6.4 Weaknesses in Theoretical Construction

Family education research has traditionally been grounded in empirical observations, with limited theoretical development. Theoretical frameworks are often underdeveloped, and there is a lack of cohesive and robust theoretical constructs that underpin the practice and policy of family education. As a result, much of the research remains at the level of experiential knowledge, without the benefit of a solid theoretical foundation. This gap has hindered the long-term development of family education as a distinct academic discipline. To promote the discipline's maturity and relevance, there is a pressing need to develop a systematic theoretical framework that integrates empirical research with practical guidance.

In conclusion, the future of family education research requires a more comprehensive approach that includes expanding empirical studies, developing theoretical frameworks, addressing gaps in professional training, and broadening research perspectives. Only by addressing these deficiencies can the discipline evolve into a more robust, evidence-based field that effectively supports families in their educational roles.

7. Future Directions

The future of family education research should be guided by several key developmental directions, aimed at deepening our understanding of the long-term impacts of family education practices, enhancing practical applications, and fostering effective collaborations between families, schools, and communities.

Firstly, it is essential to conduct in-depth investigations into the long-term effects of various educational methods on children's development. Longitudinal studies are necessary to comprehensively track the enduring impact of family education on children's personal, academic, and professional trajectories. Such research could, for instance, explore how family education influences children's career success, social adaptation, and mental health in adulthood. Additionally, the development of a robust theoretical framework for family education, grounded in empirical research, will provide a scientific foundation for its practice, ensuring evidence-based guidance for educators and families.

Secondly, research should address practical issues related to the formulation and implementation of family education policies. Governments and educational institutions can enhance support systems by establishing family education guidance services. For example, creating a national family education curriculum or guidelines could equip parents with evidence-based strategies for fostering their children's development. Furthermore, organizing regular family education seminars, workshops, and training programs would enable parents to improve their educational skills and better support their children's growth.

Another important direction is the promotion of stronger communication and interaction among family members. Establishing a harmonious family environment is vital for nurturing children's positive characteristics and constructive behavior patterns. Training programs aimed at improving communication skills between parents and children, as well as fostering closer parent-child relationships, should be emphasized. By strengthening family members' interactions, we can ensure a more supportive and effective family education experience.

Moreover, it is crucial to encourage collaboration between family and school to foster the holistic development of children. Schools can play a pivotal role by regularly organizing parent-teacher meetings and family education sessions, which would promote cooperation between families and educational institutions. This partnership is not only instrumental in improving children's academic performance but also enhances their social skills, emotional intelligence, and overall well-being.

Lastly, cross-cultural comparative research is another promising avenue for family education studies. By examining family education practices across different cultures, researchers can identify effective strategies and successful models that may be adaptable to different societal contexts. Comparing family education approaches in various countries and regions would enrich the theoretical foundations of family education, offering valuable insights for localized adaptations and implementations. This cross-cultural perspective would not only broaden the scope of family education research but also provide valuable lessons for improving domestic practices.

In sum, these directions underscore the need for a more holistic, practical, and evidence-based approach to family education research, aiming to strengthen the interplay between theory, policy, and practice.

8. Summarize

Contemporary family education research is currently at a crucial stage of development, requiring increased collaboration among educators to address emerging challenges and explore future directions. It is essential for parents to acknowledge the pivotal role of family education, actively enhancing their educational knowledge

and parenting skills. By doing so, they can create an optimal growth environment for their children, thereby fostering their healthy and well-rounded development.

Simultaneously, society must offer greater support and resources for family education, working together to establish an educational ecosystem that nurtures the holistic development of children. Achieving the healthy growth of children and the flourishing of society can only be realized through the collective efforts of families, schools, and the broader community.

In conclusion, while notable progress has been made in the theoretical, practical, and policy domains of family education research, there remains a need for deeper investigation and further practical exploration to address the dynamic nature of the social environment and the evolving educational demands.

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