

# The Influence of Parental Education Level on Family Emotional Expression

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**Abstract.** With the development and progress of the times, people pay more and more attention to family education and family rearing style, but few scholars have singled out the study of family emotion expression from family rearing style. In this paper, OLS model is used to establish multiple regression equation, aiming at studying the influence of parents' education level on family emotional performance from both verbal and nonverbal aspects. The results show that parental education level has a significant effect on family emotional performance. Compared with the father, the mother's education level has a greater impact on the family emotional expression, this may be related to mother-child attachment. Therefore, parents should attach importance to the relationship between their educational background and family emotional expression, and fathers should show more emotional expression. This paper enriched the research on parental education level and family emotional performance, and helped parents understand the link between parental education level and family emotional performance from the theoretical level and the degree of influence.

**Keywords:** Family emotion expression; parents' educational level; mother-child attachment.

## 1. Introduction

As time progress and society develops, a large number of Internet information input, international communication and the collision of educational ideas have led to more and more parents to pursue modern educational ideas, and people have gradually realized the importance of family education and the diversification of family upbringing.

Comprehensive studies at home and abroad show that family rearing style is manifested in the process of parents and children getting along, including behavioral tendency, overall atmosphere and emotional expression [1]. Family rearing style is an attitude about how parents treat their children, and this attitude is expressed and passed on to their children through their behavior or speech. Emotional expression is one of the important dimensions of family rearing style [2]. In this study, emotional expression is divided into verbal and nonverbal parts, namely communication and companionship. Communication refers to the behavior in which parents communicate with their children and express their emotions, such as chatting, discussion, heart-to-heart talk. Accompany refers to those more behavioral emotional expression, is more indirect to the children's feelings, such as accompany children to eat, go out to play. The purpose of this paper is to study the influence of parents' education level on family emotional expression from both verbal and nonverbal aspects.

As far as the current research results are concerned, most scholars focus on family parenting style and its impact, and there are relatively few studies that single out emotional expression from family parenting style, and few studies on the factors affecting family emotional expression. As emotional expression is one of the most important components of family upbringing, so it is particularly important to study its factors. Only by studying the influencing factors clearly, can parents improve the situation of insufficient family emotional expression and its adverse effects more pertinently.

Family education affects every aspect of children, and the influence degree is much greater than that of other factors such as school education [3]. As people say, example is better than precept. Children are mirrors of their parents and they are influenced by the behavior of their parents mostly. In the family, if the emotional expression is warmer, then children will be more able to express their feelings to relatives, friends, strangers; If the family emotional performance is insufficient, it will lead to the children's unhealthy and negative emotions, and even problem behaviors, such as improper

handling of interpersonal relations, mental illness, Internet addiction, violent behavior, illegal and criminal behavior [4]. In the development of children's social emotional ability, family interaction and communication are important factors, and cannot be replaced by other education [5], and family interaction and family communication are part of the family emotional expression. Therefore, it is of great social significance to study the factors affecting family emotional expression. The study looked at middle school students across the country, not college students, as in many studies. Due to different objective experience, middle school students normally have a lower degree of perfection of three views than college students, so they are more personal, which adds new content to more and more studies on parental education and family emotional expression. At the same time, this study reflects the connection way between parents' education level and family emotional expression, which is helpful for contemporary parents to further understand the influence of parents' education level on family emotional expression from the theoretical level, so as to improve the family parenting style and the overall atmosphere.

## **2. Method**

### **2.1. Data Source**

The data are derived from the 2014-2015 China Education Panel Survey (CEPS), which is a nationally representative continuous survey sample. After determining the research content, samples with outliers and severely missing samples were eliminated, and finally 8,449 samples were obtained. In this study, stata16.0 software was used to carry out statistics and measurement of parental education, variables representing family emotional expression and other related variables, and OLS model was used to establish multiple regression equations for analysis.

### **2.2. Variable setting**

In this study, the educational level of parents is used to represent the educational level of parents, and the emotional expression is divided into communication and companionship. The variables of communication are whether parents take the initiative to discuss with their children the following things: things happening in school, the relationship between children and friends, the relationship between children and teachers, and the worries or troubles of children. The variables for companionship are the frequency of parents ate dinner with their children in the past year; the frequency of parents visited museums, zoos, science and technology museums with their children in the past year; the frequency of parents going out to see shows, sports games, movies with children in the past year. In order to control for other factors that may affect emotional performance, in regression, control variables include whether the child has a non-agricultural household registration, the father's occupation, the mother's occupation, whether the child's health condition is good or above, and whether the parents have confidence in the child's future. Pseudo variable is set for control variables, which are defined as follows (table 1).

**Table 1.** Variable explanation table

Variable class	Variable name	Variable definition
Dependent variable	Communication	Using a point system, count the options never as one point, occasionally as two points, and often as three points. A total of four items is calculated, with higher scores indicating more frequent family communication.
	Companionship	Using the scoring method, the options of never as one point, once a year as two points, once a half year as three points, once a month as four points, once a week as five points, more than once a week as six points. A total score is calculated for each of the three items. The higher the score, the more time the parent spends with the child.
Argument	Father's level of education	The education level of the father is divided into seven levels: 1.Uneducated 2.Primary school and above 3.Junior high school and above 4.Vocational school and above 5.High school and above 6.Undergraduate and above 7.Postgraduate and above. To avoid the dummy variable trap, delete variables without any education.
	Mother's level of education	The education level of the mother is divided into seven levels: 1.Uneducated 2.Primary school and above 3.Junior high school and above 4.Vocational school and above 5.High school and above 6.Undergraduate and above 7.Postgraduate and above. To avoid the dummy variable trap, delete variables without any education.
Control variable	Whether the child is a non-agricultural household registration	Set dummy variables, assigning 0 to farm accounts and 1 to non-farm accounts, resident accounts and others.
	The occupation of father	Set dummy variables, the father occupation is a leading cadre or professional and technical personnel assigned a value of 1, the other is 0.
	The occupation of mother	Set dummy variables, the mother occupation is a leading cadre or professional and technical personnel assigned a value of 1, the other is 0.
	Whether the child's health condition is good and above	Set dummy variables that are in very poor health, not very good health, generally assigned to 0, good health, very good assigned to 1
	Whether parents have confidence in their children's future	Four dummy variables were set as not confident at all, not very confident, somewhat confident and very confident. To avoid the dummy variable trap, there is no confidence in deleting variables at all.

### 2.3. Hypothesis

Professor Li Fengliang proposed that the higher the education level, the more obvious the shaping of emotional characteristics of individuals [6]. These emotional traits may not only show up in mate selection behavior, but also among friends, work and family. In life, people with strong emotional traits are more likely to express themselves clearly and lead others to express themselves more easily. Bi Xinwen showed in her research that the higher the education level of parents, the richer the parenting knowledge and the more modern the educational concept [7], and they know better how to create a good family atmosphere. Based on the above analysis, this paper proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: Parental education level has a significant impact on family emotional performance.

In China, there is a saying that “The man goes out to work while the woman looks after the house”. Women tend to take care of children and families more than men do. Mothers are generally the primary caregivers of a child, and children are more likely to become attached to their mothers than to their fathers. Ma Lili showed in her research that mother's education level has a positive impact on children's use of mental state-related professional vocabulary [8]. Therefore, hypothesis H2 can be obtained: compared with the father, the education level of the mother has a greater impact on the emotional expression of the family.

### 3. Results

From table 2, the father's education in junior high school and above (Coef.=0.334,  $P < 0.01$ ), technical secondary school and above (Coef.=0.224,  $P < 0.01$ ), high school and above (Coef.=0.188,  $P < 0.01$ ), college degree and above (Coef.=0.308,  $P < 0.01$ ) all have a very significant positive impact on the variables related to communication in emotional performance ( $P < 0.01$ ), the father's education in master's degree and above (Coef.=0.373,  $P < 0.1$ ) has a significant positive impact ( $P < 0.1$ ). Father's education in primary school and above (Coef.=0.13) has a positive effect on communication. The mother's education in primary school and above (Coef.=0.955,  $P < 0.01$ ), junior high school and above (Coef.=0.652,  $P < 0.01$ ), technical secondary school and above (Coef.=0.571,  $P < 0.01$ ), senior high school and above (Coef.=0.52,  $P < 0.01$ ), college degree and above (Coef.=0.58,  $P < 0.01$ ) all have extremely significant positive influence on the variables related to communication ( $P < 0.01$ ), while the mother's education in master's degree and above (Coef.=-0.141) has a negative influence on communication. At the same time, the horizontal comparison of regression coefficients shows that when the mother's education is significantly correlated with the variables related to communication in the family emotion expression, the influence degree is greater than that caused by the father's education level. The longitudinal comparison of regression coefficients shows that the influence of parental education level on the explained variable communication is complex. When the father's education is in junior high school and above (Coef.=0.334,  $P < 0.01$ ), technical secondary school and above (Coef.=0.224,  $P < 0.01$ ) and high school and above (Coef.=0.188,  $P < 0.01$ ), the regression coefficient of explained variable communication shows a decreasing trend. When the father's education is in college and above (Coef.=0.308,  $P < 0.01$ ) and postgraduate and above (Coef.=0.373,  $P < 0.1$ ), the regression coefficient of explained variable communication is relatively large, and the family emotion is relatively warm. When the mother's education is in primary school and above (Coef.=0.955,  $P < 0.01$ ), the regression coefficient reaches the peak. From primary school and above (Coef.=0.955,  $P < 0.01$ ) to high school and above (Coef.=0.52,  $P < 0.01$ ), the regression coefficient of explained variable communication shows a decreasing trend. When the mother's education level is in college and above (Coef.=0.58,  $P < 0.01$ ), the regression coefficient is relatively large.

**Table 2.** Regression analysis- communication

Explanatory variable	Explained variable Communication					
Father's education is primary school and above	0.13 (0.287)					
Father's education is junior high school and above		0.334*** (0.069)				
Father's education in technical secondary school and above			0.224*** (0.058)			
Father has a high school education and above				0.188*** (0.056)		
Father has a college degree and above					0.308*** (0.078)	
Father has a master's degree and above						0.373* (0.203)
Mother's education is primary school and above	0.955*** (0.125)					
Mother's education is junior high school and above		0.652*** (0.059)				
Mather's education in technical secondary school and above			0.571*** (0.059)			
Mother has a high school education and above				0.52*** (0.058)		
Mother has a college degree and above					0.58*** (0.078)	
Mother has a master's degree and above						-0.141 (0.286)
Non-rural household registration	0.448*** (0.046)	0.32*** (0.047)	0.183*** (0.05)	0.272*** (0.049)	0.279*** (0.049)	0.47*** (0.046)
The occupation of father	0.305*** (0.068)	0.24*** (0.068)	0.121* (0.069)	0.152** (0.07)	0.078 (0.073)	0.303*** (0.069)
The occupation of mother	0.415*** (0.091)	0.369*** (0.09)	0.265*** (0.091)	0.258*** (0.091)	0.173* (0.093)	0.412*** (0.091)
Good health and above	0.435*** (0.054)	0.393*** (0.053)	0.426*** (0.053)	0.435*** (0.053)	0.432*** (0.054)	0.454*** (0.054)
Parents are not very	1.1***	1.155***	1.144***	1.166***	1.151***	1.194***

confident in the future of their children	(0.233)	(0.23)	(0.231)	(0.231)	(0.231)	(0.233)
Parents are more confident in the future of their children	2.121***	2.1***	2.128***	2.154***	2.163***	2.236***
	(0.228)	(0.225)	(0.226)	(0.226)	(0.226)	(0.228)
Parents have great confidence in the future of their children	2.907***	2.864***	2.878***	2.91***	2.925***	3.031***
	(0.229)	(0.227)	(0.227)	(0.228)	(0.228)	(0.229)
cons	4.986***	5.358***	5.891***	5.896***	5.982***	5.896***
	(0.357)	(0.23)	(0.226)	(0.226)	(0.226)	(0.228)
Adjusted R2	0.148	0.163	0.161	0.156	0.155	0.143
Obs	8449	8449	8449	8449	8449	8449

\*\*\* p<.01, \*\* p<.05, \* p<.1

From table 3, the degree of father in primary school and above(Coef.=0.262) and the degree of father in graduate school and above(Coef.=0.136) had a positive influence on the variable of emotion expression companionship, while the degree of father in junior high school and above(Coef.=0.571, P< 0.01), technical secondary school and above(Coef.=0.555, P< 0.01), high school and above(Coef.=0.517, P< 0.01), college and above(Coef.=0.264, P< 0.01) had a very significant positive influence on companionship (P < 0.01). Mother's education had a significant positive effect on companionship at all levels (P < 0.05). The horizontal comparison of regression coefficients shows that the degree of influence of mother's education on the variables related to companionship in family emotion expression is greater than that of father's education level. The longitudinal comparison of regression coefficients showed that when parents' education level was significantly correlated with family emotion performance, the regression coefficient of the explained variable companionship showed a decreasing trend with the increase of the father's educational level. The regression coefficient of the explained variable companionship showed a decreasing trend when the mother's education was from primary school and above (Coef.=1.829, P< 0.01) to high school and above(Coef.=0.701, P< 0.01). The mothers with a bachelor's degree and above(Coef.=0.731, P< 0.01) and a master's degree and above(Coef.=0.731, P< 0.01) are warmer than the mothers with a high school degree and above(Coef.=0.701, P< 0.01), and less than the mothers with a primary school degree and above(Coef.=1.829, P< 0.01), junior high school degree and above(Coef.=1.108, P< 0.01), and technical secondary school degree and above(Coef.=0.808, P< 0.01).

**Table 3.** Regression analysis-companionship

Explanatory variable	Explained variable					
	Companionship					
Father's education is primary school and above	0.262 (0.318)					
Father's education is junior high school and above		0.571*** (0.076)				
Father's education in technical secondary school and above			0.555*** (0.064)			
Father has a high school education and above				0.517*** (0.061)		
Father has a college degree and above					0.264*** (0.087)	
Father has a master's degree and above						0.136 (0.226)
Mother's education is primary school and above	1.829*** (0.139)					
Mother's education is junior high school and above		1.108*** (0.065)				
Mather's education in technical secondary school and above			0.808*** (0.065)			
Mother has a high school education and above				0.701*** (0.064)		
Mother has a college degree and above					0.731*** (0.087)	
Mother has a master's degree and above						0.731** (0.319)
Non-rural household registration	1.052*** (0.051)	0.838*** (0.051)	0.604*** (0.055)	0.755*** (0.054)	0.882*** (0.054)	1.095*** (0.051)
The occupation of father	0.818*** (0.075)	0.71*** (0.074)	0.493*** (0.076)	0.533*** (0.077)	0.59*** (0.081)	0.825*** (0.077)

The occupation of mother	0.484*** (0.1)	0.406*** (0.099)	0.243** (0.1)	0.245** (0.101)	0.196* (0.104)	0.466*** (0.102)
Good health and above	0.607*** (0.06)	0.54*** (0.059)	0.597*** (0.059)	0.613*** (0.059)	0.619*** (0.06)	0.644*** (0.06)
Parents are not very confident in the future of their children	0.435* (0.258)	0.549** (0.253)	0.531** (0.254)	0.568** (0.255)	0.561** (0.258)	0.608** (0.26)
Parents are more confident in the future of their children	1.149*** (0.252)	1.14*** (0.247)	1.184*** (0.248)	1.229*** (0.25)	1.285*** (0.252)	1.363*** (0.254)
Parents have great confidence in the future of their children	1.542*** (0.254)	1.495*** (0.249)	1.515*** (0.25)	1.571*** (0.251)	1.66*** (0.254)	1.772*** (0.256)
cons	5.438*** (0.395)	6.278*** (0.252)	7.179*** (0.248)	7.187*** (0.25)	7.295*** (0.252)	7.2*** (0.254)
Adjusted R2	0.1777	0.206	0.201	0.19	0.173	0.160
Obs	8449	8449	8449	8449	8449	8449

\*\*\* p<.01, \*\* p<.05, \* p<.1

The father's occupation had no significant effect on the explained variable communication when the father's education was in college and above (Coef.=0.078). At other times, the control variables non-rural household registration, father's occupation, mother's occupation, good health status and above, parents are not very confident about their children's future, parents are relatively confident about their children's future, parents are very confident about their children's future have significant positive effects on the two explained variables. It should be pointed out in particular that the more confidence parents have in their children's future, the greater the impact on the explained variables, and the warmer the family emotional performance (table 2 and 3).

#### 4. Discussion

Through the above research results, hypothesis H1 and H2 are verified.

In terms of communication, when the father has a bachelor's degree and above or a master's degree and above, the family emotion is warmer, which may be because the father with a bachelor's degree and above or a master's degree and above has a higher level of education, more advanced educational concepts, and pays more attention to parent-child communication and interaction. When the father's education is in junior high school and above, technical secondary school and above, and senior high school and above, the family emotional performance shows a decreasing trend. They are likely to spend more time busy making ends meet and face greater financial pressure. At the same time, the less educated the father is, the more likely he is to work in a lower position and have more leisure time to communicate with his children. In the aspect of companionship, the father's educational level is inversely proportional to the family emotional performance, that is to say, the higher the father's educational level, the less the family emotional performance; The more educated the father, the more likely he is to be involved in higher-paying jobs, which in most cases correspond to busier work schedules that leave him no time to play outside or have dinner with his children[9].

When the mother's education is from primary school and above to high school and above, the family emotional performance shows a decreasing trend, which may be because the low education and gender discrimination in the labor market make the mother often undertake the work of taking care of the children and running the house. This is further explained by the peak of explained variables when the mother's education is in primary school and above, and they spend more time with their children. They also communicate more with their children. In addition, in terms of communication, mothers with an education level of college and above are more modern in their concept of education. They take the initiative to communicate and discuss with their children, and their family emotions are warmer. Mothers with a graduate degree and above are paid more in the labor market, hold higher positions and are more likely to work outside the home. They have less time and energy to communicate with their children, so this has a negative impact. In terms of companionship, the mothers with a college degree and above or a graduate degree and above are the same as the fathers with a high degree. The busy work makes them not have enough time to go out to play or have dinner with their children, so the family emotional expression is relatively insufficient. In addition, the degree of parents' confidence in their children is directly proportional to the emotional performance of the family. The more confident parents are in their children, the greater the expectation of return on investment, and the more willing they are to invest their time and energy in the communication and company with their children.

As mentioned above, the correlation coefficient of mothers is greater than that of fathers in both "communication" and "interaction", that is to say, the influence of mothers' education level on family emotional performance is greater than that of fathers' education level on family emotional performance. Studies have found that mothers are the most important attachment objects of individuals, and their attachment is related to how individuals deal with their inner world [10]. When junior high school students are in adolescence, when facing psychological development and emotional fluctuations, mothers assume the role of active communicator. Compared with mothers, fathers are less involved in their children's lives and have relatively shallow emotional connection with their children. However, father-child attachment involves the exploration and socialization of the external world [11], plays a role in promoting the adaptive development of individuals [10], and is directly related to individual externalization behavior [12]. This is a crucial part of a child's development. Therefore, fathers should increase the frequency of active communication and discussion with their children, and have more positive and warm interactions with their children.

In a family, sharing is the first step to building a close relationship. When parents express their emotions in communication and interaction with their children, they will create an environment of love and security for their children, which plays a guiding role in their self-acceptance and self-disclosure [13]. Therefore, parents should always pay attention to whether the emotional expression of their children is warm enough, especially highly educated parents, when they find that the family emotional expression is insufficient, they should spare more time to accompany their children to go out to play or interact or communicate with their children and other emotional behaviors. Parents should also enhance their confidence in their children, which has a positive effect on the emotional expression of the family, stimulates the intrinsic motivation of their children's self-development and enhances their sense of self-worth [14].

## 5. Conclusion

In this study, junior high school students from all over the country were taken as samples, and the educational level of their parents and the frequency of family communication and companionship were taken as variables to establish a multiple regression equation. It was found that the educational level of parents had a significant positive impact on family emotional performance, and the educational level of mothers had a greater impact on family emotional performance than that of fathers. This paper subdivides the family rearing style, enriching the research on the family emotional performance of junior high school students, reflecting the link between parents' education level and

family emotional performance, and helping to improve the problems caused by inadequate family emotional performance.

In particular, parents with low education level may be more affected by economic conditions and life pressure, so they are less interested in family emotional performance than parents with high education level. Follow-up studies can take average family income as a control variable. In addition, the variables of family emotion expression are not only communication and companionship. More dependent variables can be added to represent the index of "family emotion expression", such as the way to solve family conflicts. With the popularization of the Internet and the iteration of information, the concept of parenting is becoming more and more advanced. The updated data can be compared with that of previous years in the follow-up.

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