

CEPS Perspective: The Impact Mechanism of Parents' Academic Expectations on Junior High School Students' Self-Efficacy

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Abstract: This study utilizes the rich data resources of the China Educational Panel Survey (CEPS) to systematically analyze and explore the relationship between parents' academic educational expectations and junior high school students' self-efficacy. The research focuses on multiple variables such as family background, parent-child relationship, and individual student characteristics, and deeply examines how these factors interact with parents' academic educational expectations and the self-efficacy of junior high school students. By comprehensively considering various factors, this study aims to reveal how parents' academic educational expectations influence the self-efficacy of junior high school students through different mechanisms.

Keywords: CEPS; Parental Educational Expectations; Junior High School Students; Self-Efficacy; Impact Mechanism.

1. Introduction

Self-efficacy is a core concept in individual psychology, which specifically describes the confidence and expectations an individual shows when facing specific tasks or challenges. This confidence and expectation are not static but dynamic, changing with the individual's situation, accumulated experience, and inner state fluctuations. In the academic field, students' self-efficacy is particularly important as it largely shapes students' learning attitudes, emotional engagement, and coping strategies when encountering difficulties in learning. A student with strong self-efficacy is more likely to maintain a positive attitude when facing learning challenges, actively seek solutions, and thus achieve better academic results.

When focusing on a specific group such as junior high school students, their self-efficacy becomes even more critical. Junior high school students are in the critical developmental stage of adolescence, where their bodies and minds are undergoing rapid and significant changes. During this period, their self-awareness gradually awakens and strengthens, and they become extremely sensitive to the evaluations and expectations of the outside world, especially peers and significant others. Therefore, the formation and development of junior high school students' self-efficacy directly relate to their current learning outcomes, such as classroom participation enthusiasm and homework completion quality, and more profoundly affect their life values, future career choices, and ultimate social achievements[1].

The family environment, as the initial and most important place for individual growth, plays an irreplaceable role in the formation and development of self-efficacy. In the unique cultural and social context of China, the influence of family education and parents' expectations on children is far-reaching and significant. Parents' academic expectations for their children are not just an expectation of children's academic performance but more deeply reflect the family's educational concepts, values, and plans and visions for children's future development[2]. These expectations subtly influence children through daily family interactions, parents'

educational methods, attitudes, and behaviors, shaping their self-efficacy.

In recent years, with the continuous deepening and expansion of large-scale social survey projects such as the China Education Panel Survey (CEPS), we have been able to examine the complex relationship between family education and student development from a more macro and comprehensive perspective.

2. Research Methods and Data Sources

2.1. CEPS Data Measurement

Based on the rich data resources of the CEPS[3] project, this study aims to further explore and analyze how these key factors jointly affect individual educational development, thereby contributing wisdom and strength to promoting educational equity and improving educational quality. The project team randomly selected 28 county-level administrative units as the initial research samples, considering factors such as geographical distribution, economic development level, and cultural background to ensure comprehensive coverage and representativeness of the research. Within these county-level units, the team further randomly selected 112 schools, covering urban and rural areas, public and private schools, and other types of schools to enhance the breadth and diversity of the research. Among these schools, the team further randomly selected 438 classes, involving about 20,000 seventh and ninth-grade students, as the main research subjects of this study.

In the data collection process, the CEPS project mainly relies on questionnaire surveys. The project team designed detailed questionnaires for the sampled students, their parents or guardians, head teachers, main subject teachers, and school management, covering various aspects of educational outcomes. These questionnaires are scientifically designed and comprehensive in content, aiming to collect views and experiences on educational outcomes from multiple perspectives, providing solid and reliable data support for the research.

To further explore the relationships between various variables in the research and their specific impact

mechanisms on educational outcomes, this study first used descriptive statistical methods for preliminary processing and analysis of the data. The main purpose of this step is to fully understand the distribution of various variables, laying a solid foundation for subsequent more complex data analysis.

(1) Among the many research variables, this study particularly focuses on an important dependent variable,

namely, educational level. Referring to the measurement method of Zhong Yujun and Dong Zhiqiang [4], the survey questionnaire items reflecting the educational level variable and related control variables are selected as measurement indicators, with an internal consistency reliability of 0.811. The educational level statistics are shown in Table 1:

Table 1. Variable Value Statistics Table

Variable	Value	Sample Size	Percentage (%)	Efficacy Mean
Education Level	9=Primary-Junior High School	5175	51.5	6.33
	11=Technical Secondary-Senior High School	2811	27.4	6.59
	16=Junior College-Graduate School	1903	21.1	6.91
Control Variables	Self-assessed Family Economic Conditions	1=Difficult	1421	15.6
	2=Average	6679	73.4	6.44
	3=Wealthy	1002	11.0	6.62
Parent Relationship	0=Bad	923	10.2	5.93
	1=Good	8167	89.8	6.52
Parental Educational Expectations	0=Indifferent	402	4.4	5.25
	1=Primary-Junior High School	164	1.8	4.36
	2=Technical Secondary-Senior High School	1369	15.0	5.67
	3=Junior College-Graduate School	7178	78.8	6.77

(2) The dependent variable is students' self-efficacy. Referring to the measurement method of self-efficacy by Zhong Yujun and Dong Zhiqiang [4], three questions in the survey questionnaire that reflect the variable of self-efficacy

and related variables were selected as measurement indicators, with an internal consistency reliability of 0.809. The statistics for the variable of self-efficacy are shown in Table 2:

Table 2. Variable Value Statistics Table

Variable	Value	Sample Size	Percentage (%)	Willpower Mean
Self-Efficacy	Value 0-3	5175	51.5	6.33
Control Variables	Visiting Places	0=No	4206	46.0
		1=Sometimes	1984	21.7
		2=Usually	1202	13.2
		3=Frequently	1747	19.1
Homework Assistance	0=Not Much Care	5311	57.6	6.03
	1=Average	2821	30.6	6.58
	2=Enthusiastic Assistance	1082	11.8	6.70
Learning Environment Quality	0=Poor	2520	27.6	5.91
	1=Average	733	8.0	6.36
	2=Good	5893	64.4	6.54

3. Research Results and Analysis

3.1. Relationship between Parents' Academic Expectations and Students' Self-Efficacy

There is a significant and profound positive correlation between parents' academic expectations for junior high school students and the students' self-efficacy. This conclusion is drawn from a scientific analysis of a large amount of detailed actual data, revealing a crucial aspect of family education.

When parents hold high expectations for their children's academics and express these expectations clearly and

consistently through daily communication and behavioral modeling, such expectations serve as a guiding light for the children. Children perceive their parents' care, trust, and recognition of their abilities from these positive emotional experiences, which internalizes into a source of self-motivation. As a result, children are confident in their learning capabilities, believing they can overcome various academic challenges and difficulties. This confidence, or self-efficacy, not only makes children more proactive and active in learning but also enables them to maintain a tenacious spirit when facing difficulties.

The impact of parents' educational expectations on

children's self-efficacy is complex and multifaceted. It does not only directly affect children's confidence and motivation but also has a broader impact through a series of mediating variables. Parents' expectations also influence children's learning attitude and behavior, as well as their choice of learning strategies and acquisition of learning resources. By deeply understanding their children's academic performance and needs, parents can provide various learning resources and support more effectively, which may include but are not limited to tutorial books, online education platforms, educational software, participation in interest groups, or training classes.

By providing these learning resources, parents not only help children access a broader knowledge field but also create a diversified learning environment for them. In such an environment, children can try and explore different learning methods, such as visual, auditory, or hands-on practices to absorb and understand knowledge. Parents can also guide children to learn time management and planning, fostering their ability to study independently, which are indispensable skills in the learning process. By encouraging children to try different learning methods, parents can help them discover and apply the most suitable learning methods, thus improving learning efficiency.

This positive feedback and emotional support not only improve children's learning efficiency and academic performance but, more importantly, allow children to feel their value and capabilities during the learning process, thereby enhancing their self-efficacy. When children have stronger confidence in their learning abilities, they will face future learning challenges with more self-assurance and pursue higher goals bravely. Therefore, parents' expectations and support play a crucial role in children's choice of learning strategies, acquisition of learning resources, and enhancement of self-efficacy.

In summary, parents' educational expectations have a comprehensive and profound impact on children's self-efficacy. It concerns not only children's academic performance but also their mental health and future development. Therefore, as parents, we should thoughtfully consider whether our expectations are reasonable and positive and strive to create a family environment full of care, trust, and encouragement for our children. Only in this way can we truly help children build a strong sense of self-efficacy and lay a solid foundation for their future.

3.2. The Role of Family Background in the Impact Mechanism

Family background plays a significant role in shaping the relationship between parents' educational expectations and junior high school students' self-efficacy. First, we must recognize that family economic status is a core and critical factor that profoundly affects children's self-efficacy.

When family economic conditions are relatively good, parents usually have more resources and capabilities to provide a high-quality educational environment for their children. This means that children have the opportunity to enter schools or institutions with good reputations and high educational levels, thereby receiving more comprehensive and in-depth education. These quality educational institutions not only provide first-class teaching facilities and faculty but also bring children broader knowledge horizons and richer learning experiences.

In addition to school education, families with better

economic conditions can also provide children with a variety of extracurricular activities. These activities include arts, sports, technology, and other fields, aiming to cultivate children's interests and hobbies and improve their comprehensive qualities. Through participation in these extracurricular activities, children can not only exercise their abilities but also learn important social skills such as communication and collaboration in teamwork. These experiences can enrich children's life experiences and continuously enhance their confidence and self-efficacy in practice.

The quality of family economic status is directly related to the quality of education and the richness of extracurricular activities children receive, which in turn affects their academic performance and self-efficacy[5]. A favorable economic condition can provide children with a broader and more solid growth platform, allowing them to grow strong with the nourishment of educational resources, continuously improving their self-awareness and self-worth.

3.3. The Impact of Parents' Education Level

Parents' education level is one of the important factors affecting children's self-efficacy. Specifically, parents with higher education levels usually have a stronger educational consciousness and richer educational resources. They can provide more scientific and reasonable educational methods for their children through their own knowledge and experience, such as guiding children to explore interests, set reasonable goals, and encourage independent learning. These educational methods not only promote children's academic progress but, more importantly, help children build confidence in their abilities, thereby enhancing their self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to successfully complete specific tasks. When children believe they can overcome difficulties and achieve goals, they are more likely to actively participate in learning and life, showing higher initiative and resilience. Therefore, parents' education level and the educational methods they adopt have a direct and profound impact on children's self-efficacy.

Parents' education level, family atmosphere, and family structure collectively affect children's self-efficacy. By providing effective educational methods, creating a positive and healthy family environment, and maintaining a stable and harmonious family structure, parents can effectively promote the development of children's self-efficacy, helping them grow into confident, independent, and capable individuals.

3.4. The Role of Parent-Child Relationship in the Impact Mechanism

The quality of the parent-child relationship plays a significant mediating role between parents' educational expectations and junior high school students' self-efficacy[6]. This study found that the frequency of parent-child communication and the quality of interaction have a marked positive impact on children's self-efficacy. In families where communication is frequent and interaction is of high quality, children are more likely to feel the care and support from their parents, which helps them establish a positive self-image and a higher sense of self-efficacy. Specifically, effective communication between parents and children is key to understanding the inner world of children. Through daily exchanges, parents can gain a deep understanding of their children's needs in learning, life, and emotions, as well as the

confusion and challenges they may face. This understanding enables parents to provide more precise care and support, helping children solve problems and overcome difficulties, thereby enhancing their self-efficacy.

Parents' positive expectations and beliefs about their children are also crucial in stimulating children's learning motivation and self-confidence. When parents express trust and encouragement to their children, children feel a positive and uplifting force, which can motivate them to study harder and strive for greater achievements. Parents' expectations are not only a recognition of children's abilities but also an expression of confidence in their future success. This confidence can be transformed into children's inner drive, encouraging them to be more confident and resolute when facing challenges.

The quality of parent-child interaction plays an essential role in children's growth, especially in guiding them to handle various life situations. High-quality parent-child interaction not only helps children learn strategies and methods for problem-solving but also promotes the development of their emotional, social, and cognitive abilities, thereby enhancing their self-efficacy. In joint activities, parents can consciously design tasks that are challenging yet achievable, allowing children to experience the joy of success in the process of completing tasks. For example, participating together in family crafts, outdoor adventure activities, or community service, these activities not only enable children to learn new skills in practice but also help them build confidence by overcoming difficulties. In this process, parents act as guides and supporters, providing timely encouragement and guidance to help children understand and overcome challenges, thus enhancing their self-efficacy.

In the process of discussing problems and sharing experiences, parents can explore daily life issues with their children, guiding them to think about all aspects of the problem and find solutions together. This open communication allows children to feel that their opinions and ideas are respected and valued, stimulating their thinking and creativity. At the same time, parents can share their own experiences and stories, teaching children how to face difficulties and challenges, providing them with valuable life wisdom and problem-solving strategies. The increase in self-efficacy further motivates children to actively participate in various activities and bravely try new things, forming a positive cycle.

3.5. The Role of Students' Personal Characteristics in the Impact Mechanism

Students' self-efficacy is not only influenced by family background and educational environment but is also closely related to their personal characteristics and learning abilities. Students with cheerful and optimistic personalities can often maintain a positive attitude and firm belief when facing challenges and difficulties, which helps them maintain a high level of self-efficacy in adversity. They tend to view failure as a temporary setback on the road to success rather than a lack of ability, allowing them to recover more quickly from setbacks and continue to strive.

On the other hand, learning ability is another important factor affecting students' self-efficacy. Students with strong learning abilities can usually master new knowledge and skills more quickly, and their academic successes and progress can continuously verify and reinforce their abilities, thereby enhancing their self-efficacy. These students are often

able to organize learning resources more effectively and apply effective learning strategies, which not only improves their learning efficiency but also strengthens their confidence in their learning abilities.

This study shows that the educational environment and atmosphere of schools also have a significant impact on students' self-efficacy. A positive, exploratory, and innovative learning environment can stimulate students' enthusiasm for learning and enhance their confidence and self-efficacy. Teachers' teaching methods, interactions among peers, and extracurricular activities provided by schools are all important factors affecting students' self-efficacy.

Students' self-efficacy is the result of multiple factors, including personal characteristics, learning abilities, family education, and social environment. By optimizing family education methods, creating a positive school education environment, and encouraging students to develop positive personalities and improve learning abilities, we can effectively enhance students' self-efficacy and help them achieve better results in learning and life.

4. Summary

This study, based on data from the China Education Panel Survey (CEPS), has conducted a detailed analysis and discussion of the impact mechanism of parents' academic educational expectations on junior high school students' self-efficacy. The results reveal that parents' educational expectations play a crucial role in the formation and development of junior high school students' self-efficacy. Self-efficacy, the level of confidence an individual has in their ability to successfully perform a certain task, is an important predictor of students' learning motivation, behavioral patterns, and academic achievements. Parents' expectations can influence junior high school students' self-efficacy through various pathways, such as shaping students' learning attitudes, motivating their behavior, and providing emotional support and encouragement.

The study further points out that the impact of parents' educational expectations is not isolated but the result of the interaction between family background, parent-child relationship, and students' personal characteristics. In building the parent-child relationship, parents should adopt democratic and supportive educational methods, actively listen to their children's opinions and needs, and provide them with necessary care and support. By participating together in family and social activities, parents can strengthen the emotional bond with their children and help them establish positive social relationships and self-identity, thereby enhancing their children's self-efficacy.

Schools and society should also value the role of family education, providing necessary educational guidance and support for parents. By conducting family education lectures and establishing parent communication platforms, we can help parents better understand their children's growth needs and improve the effectiveness of family education. In addition, schools and society should work together to create a positive and healthy educational atmosphere and cultural environment, providing strong support for the comprehensive development of junior high school students. Through these comprehensive measures, we can effectively enhance junior high school students' self-efficacy, promote their academic achievements and personal growth, and help them perform better in future learning, work, and life.

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