

# Under the Social Reproduction Mechanism-Threshold Perception in College Students' Academic Help-Seeking and Differences in Academic Performance

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**Abstract.** Based on the theory of social reproduction, this study focuses on the impact of differences in family capital on college students' academic help-seeking behavior and related outcomes through "threshold perception". A mixed research method was adopted, integrating data from 125 quantitative samples and 11 qualitative interviews for analysis. The results show that the influence of family capital on threshold perception is selective: the higher the mother's education level, the lower the "other-orientation" of her children; and the "social anxiety" of students from rural areas is significantly higher than that of students from urban areas. The group with high threshold perception tends to rely more on online help-seeking and shows a more prominent tendency to avoid help-seeking. There is a negative correlation between academic performance and help-seeking behavior. Academic performance has a significant predictive effect on career expectations: students with better academic performance have higher expected salaries and are more inclined to choose high-prestige occupations. Qualitative analysis reveals that due to family upbringing, students with high threshold perception form a psychological structure of "prioritizing external evaluation over academic needs", which inhibits their willingness to seek help. This study provides theoretical and practical references for lowering the help-seeking threshold for disadvantaged students and promoting the equity of educational outcomes, and suggests implementing measures from three aspects: optimization of school channels, adjustment of family upbringing, and individual psychological intervention.

**Keywords:** Social reproduction; educational equity; family capital; academic help-seeking; college students.

## 1. Research Background

With the development of society, discussions on educational equity and social mobility have become increasingly in-depth. China's Educational Modernization 2035 emphasizes advancing educational modernization. Although a preliminary balance in the "supply of educational opportunities" has been achieved at the macro level, insufficient attention has been paid to the differences in the ability to "utilize opportunities" at the micro level. Academic help-seeking, as a key behavior for students to proactively utilize educational resources, is particularly worthy of exploration, especially regarding the phenomenon behind it—"choosing to remain silent even when help-seeking channels are available". As an effective learning strategy, academic help-seeking behavior directly affects the efficiency with which students access classroom resources and mentor support. Therefore, the ability to proactively seek help and effectively grasp resources is often the key factor influencing academic outcomes.

The differences in this "opportunity utilization" ability are largely related to the "face sensitivity" shaped by family capital over the long term, which is referred to as "threshold perception" in this paper. Students from disadvantaged families are more likely to worry about external evaluations and fear "losing face", thereby raising their psychological threshold for seeking help. This leads to avoidance of help-seeking and hinders their effective utilization of external resources. This not only makes it difficult to fully implement the policy goal of educational equity but may even exacerbate differences in academic quality and subtly intensify the phenomenon of social reproduction.

Existing studies still have limitations in explaining this phenomenon. On the one hand, most studies focus on individual psychological factors, such as shyness and self-efficacy, while rarely

touching on the structural roots behind individuals—for example, whether differences in family capital affect students' attitudes toward help-seeking. On the other hand, sociology lacks a systematic analysis of the micro-psychological mechanisms of disadvantaged students in the process of participating in higher education, such as the "inner thoughts" when seeking help. More critically, variables related to "face" (such as shame and anxiety) in existing studies are mostly scattered, and a unified concept that integrates "face sensitivity" (i.e., "threshold perception") has not yet been formed. This makes it difficult to clearly measure the "psychological threshold" of students from different family backgrounds when seeking help.

Wu Yanan found in her research that undergraduate students whose hometowns are at the county level or above have a stronger awareness of help-seeking than those from towns and rural areas [1]. This phenomenon suggests that differences in family capital may affect students' help-seeking behavior through an invisible mechanism (i.e., the "threshold perception" focused on in this paper). Therefore, in-depth analysis of the formation logic of "threshold perception" and revelation of how family capital shapes students' help-seeking tendencies through this mechanism have become important issues for promoting the deepening of educational equity toward "equity in outcomes".

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Research Progress on Academic Help - Seeking**

#### **2.1.1. Connotation and Types of Academic Help - Seeking**

Academic help - seeking refers to a learning strategy in which learners seek help from others to solve learning problems when facing learning difficulties [2] [3] [4] [5]. This concept originated from Western research and is currently widely regarded as an effective learning strategy and self - regulation means [6].

According to the purpose of help - seeking and behavioral characteristics, academic help - seeking is mainly divided into three types [7] [8]. Executive help - seeking means relying on others to solve problems that should be independently completed, reflecting dependence; instrumental help - seeking is to achieve independent problem - solving through the indirect help of others, reflecting independence; avoidant help - seeking is the behavior in which learners have the intention to seek help but do not take the initiative to do so. Research has confirmed that students who are good at using instrumental help - seeking can improve their academic performance more efficiently [9] [10] [11]. However, the phenomenon of avoidant help - seeking is still widespread. This raises a core research question: Since instrumental help - seeking is beneficial to learning, why do a large number of learners choose to remain silent and withdraw? Exploring the deep - seated reasons for avoidant help - seeking, especially its underlying structural roots, has become an important starting point for this study.

#### **2.1.2. Influencing Factors of Academic Help - Seeking**

Previous studies have found that there are many factors influencing academic help - seeking, which can be mainly divided into two categories: personal psychology and external environment.

At the personal psychology level, "sensitivity to external evaluation" is a key factor that inhibits help - seeking. Research has found that concerns about negative evaluations such as being laughed at, being considered incompetent, or disturbing others due to help-seeking will greatly reduce students' willingness to seek help [10] [12]. Individuals often anticipate negative reactions or worry about damaging their self - image, resulting in anxiety or negative cognition, and finally choose not to seek help to avoid "social risks" [11] [13]. However, most current studies attribute this sensitivity to individual psychological differences, failing to fully explain its sociocultural roots (essentially a manifestation of "face - sensitivity" in a specific cultural context), and lacking a systematic analysis of the structural roots behind "face - sensitivity" - that is, how it is shaped by the family environment and social class. This perspective of "emphasizing the individual over the structure" limits the in - depth understanding of differences in help - seeking behavior.

At the external environment level, the impact of differences in family background on academic help-seeking behavior has become increasingly prominent [1] [14] which is largely intertwined with the "concept of face". Face is regarded as an important "social cost" in interpersonal communication [13]. The fear of the risk of "losing face" (such as being rejected, exposing deficiencies, disturbing others) brought about by help - seeking behavior will significantly raise the psychological threshold for individuals to initiate help - seeking. As the primary place for individual socialization, the family plays a decisive role in the formation of the "concept of face" and individual "face - sensitivity". However, existing studies have failed to deeply reveal how different family capitals specifically affect individuals' perception of the "face - cost", and there is still an overall limitation of "emphasizing individual psychology and neglecting structural roots".

## **2.2. Structural Perspective on Academic Help - Seeking**

### **2.2.1. Definition of Family Capital**

The "family capital" theory from a sociological perspective provides an important framework for analyzing how differences in family background structurally influence an individual's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral patterns.

Coleman proposed that family capital includes three forms: physical capital (referring to the material and financial resources owned by the family), human capital (referring to the knowledge, skills, and educational levels of family members), and social capital (existing in the interpersonal relationship network, which can be divided into internal and external family social capital) [15].

Bourdieu divided capital into economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital, with a particular emphasis on cultural capital [16]. Bourdieu classified cultural capital into three types: the embodied state, the objectified state, and the institutionalized state. In addition, Bourdieu introduced the concepts of "habitus" and "field". He believed that habitus is a sustainable and transmissible system of dispositional tendencies, and family capital, especially cultural capital, profoundly influences an individual's "habitus", enabling the individual to act in line with their class background in a specific "field", such as a university environment.

In the context of Chinese sociology, Bian Yanjie, Wu Xiaogang, and Li Lulu further proposed the concept of "political capital", enriching the connotation of family capital [17].

Based on the above theories, the family capital studied in this paper mainly includes family economic capital, that is, the material wealth owned by the family; family cultural capital, that is, the cultural level of parents; and family social capital, that is, the social relationship network both inside and outside the family.

### **2.2.2. Potential Impact of Family Capital on Academic Help - Seeking**

Numerous studies have confirmed the impact of family capital on students' academic performance and development opportunities [18][19][20][21][22]. This study focuses on differences in micro - strategies during the academic process, especially the negative behavior of "avoidant help - seeking". The author argues that the long - term socialization process of family capital shapes students' "sensitivity to external evaluation" and amplifies their psychological perception of help - seeking barriers. The mechanisms of action of the three types of capital are elaborated in detail below.

#### **(1) Cultural Capital**

Differences in cultural capital profoundly affect students' ways of expression and values. On the one hand, students from backgrounds with low cultural capital may have more concerns about seeking help due to differences in language ability (e.g., worrying about being mocked for inappropriate dialect expression) [1][23]. On the other hand, working - class families often instill in their children values such as "the supremacy of personal effort" and "willingness to endure hardships" [24], and highly moralize and familialize academic achievements, closely linking them to family rewards and family honor [25]. In such a conceptual environment, students tend to regard academic difficulties as a "moral responsibility" that needs to be born alone, rather than ordinary problems for which help can be sought, significantly amplifying the risk of "losing face" in case of help - seeking failure.

## (2) Social Capital

The lack of social capital, especially among rural students, shapes specific behavioral patterns. In rural societies, "face" is an important mechanism for maintaining social order, and individual behaviors are deeply constrained by others' expectations and social norms [23]. This environment fosters a "habitus" of focusing on external evaluations and pursuing group harmony. When students enter the university environment, this habitus is transferred to the context of academic help - seeking, making them excessively worry that seeking help will "disturb others", "cause trouble", or lead to negative evaluations, thereby inhibiting their willingness to seek help <sup>[11]</sup>. High sensitivity to interpersonal "face" becomes a key barrier. In addition, students with low social capital have weak social interactions, which also prevents them from fully recognizing the value of human capital [26].

## (3) Economic Capital

Disadvantages in economic capital easily breed a sense of inferiority in students, making them presuppose that they are in a "disadvantaged position" in interpersonal interactions [26]. When considering seeking help, they tend to overestimate potential costs (such as being mocked or rejected) and underestimate actual benefits (such as effectively solving problems). At the same time, economic pressure may force them to focus more on short - term survival needs and feel burnout towards long - term academic investment [23]. Moreover, conservative values may also restrict them from fully recognizing the value of expanding social networks and seeking help [27]. The combined effect of these factors makes them more worried about exposing their shortcomings or being regarded as "grandstanding" when facing academic difficulties, raising the psychological threshold for seeking help.

In summary, through long - term socialization, differences in family capital profoundly affect students' internal "concept of face" and "face sensitivity". Students with low family capital place more emphasis on their own efforts, value external evaluations, and attach great importance to maintaining "face". This concept is internalized into a stable dispositional tendency (habitus). When they face academic difficulties, their high "face sensitivity" is easily transformed into a strong perception of help - seeking risks, which is the "threshold perception" proposed in this study. Ultimately, strong psychological barriers lead to "avoid help-seeking", hindering their effective utilization of educational resources.

## **2.3. Proposal and Explanation of the Concept of "Threshold Perception"**

### **2.3.1. Necessity of "Threshold Perception"**

The previous text indicates that differences in family capital shape are different "face sensitivities" through the formation of "face concepts", thereby affecting academic help-seeking behavior. However, how to transform this into micro-psychological barriers in specific help-seeking scenarios still requires a more integrated conceptual description and measurement. Existing studies mostly focus on scattered psychological variables such as anxiety and shame, making it difficult to systematically explain the role of internalized "face sensitivity" in help-seeking behavior.

Therefore, this study proposes an integrated concept focusing on "the degree of face sensitivity"—"threshold perception". The "threshold" refers to the psychological barrier an individual faces when deciding whether to seek help; "perception" refers to the intensity of the individual's subjective evaluation of this barrier. This concept aims to capture how objective differences in family capital are internalized into subjective psychological barriers in the context of academic help-seeking.

### **2.3.2. Operational Definition**

"Threshold perception" specifically refers to the intensity of an individual learner's subjective evaluation of the potential negative external evaluations that may result from seeking help when facing academic difficulties. Its core connotation is: the face sensitivity (habitus) formed by the internalization of differences in family capital is externally manifested as a subjective judgment on the difficulty of crossing the risk of "losing face" in the decision-making process of academic help-seeking.

Drawing on the research results of Nolan Zane and May Yeh (2002) [28], "threshold perception" includes six core dimensions. First, public self-awareness: the degree to which an individual perceives themselves as the focus of others' attention and cares about others' opinions during the help-seeking process. Second, private self-awareness: the individual's internal scrutiny and sensitivity to the possibility that help-seeking behavior may expose their own shortcomings. Third, other-orientation: the tendency of an individual to pay attention to the feelings and reactions of helpers or onlookers during the help-seeking decision-making process, and then adjust their own behavior accordingly. Fourth, social anxiety: the intensity of anxiety an individual experiences due to the anticipation of awkwardness or discomfort in help-seeking interactions. Fifth, behavioral disguise: the tendency of an individual to adopt concealing behaviors to cover up their intention to seek help. Sixth, evaluation attitude: the individual's subjective trade-off between the costs and benefits of help-seeking behavior.

In this study, a higher score of "threshold perception" indicates that the individual perceives greater psychological barriers to help-seeking, and thus has a lower willingness and possibility to initiate help-seeking. This concept provides a quantifiable core explanatory variable for understanding how differences in family capital inhibit academic help-seeking behavior through "face sensitivity".

## 2.4. Review

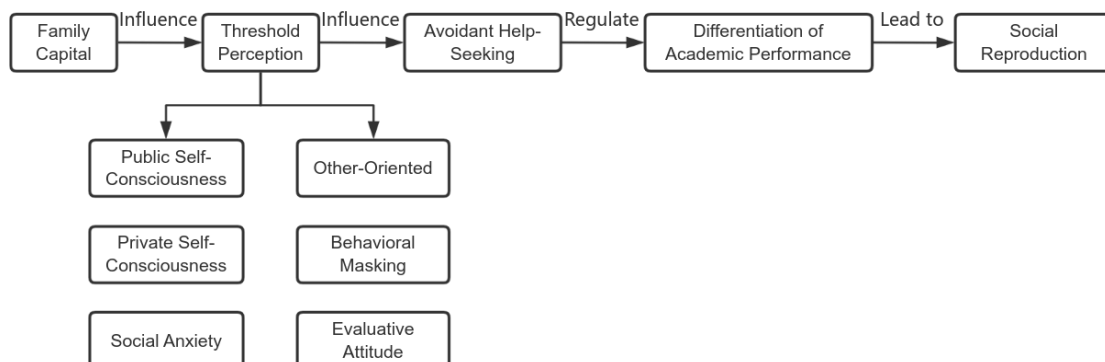
### 2.4.1. Theoretical Supplement and Practical Significance

At the theoretical level, this study integrates sociological and psychological perspectives, reveals the path through which family capital inhibits academic help-seeking by being internalized into "face sensitivity" (operationalized as "threshold perception"), and fills the theoretical gap of "emphasizing individual psychology while neglecting structural roots" in academic help-seeking research.

At the practical level, the study points out that even if the equal supply of educational opportunities is ensured, the differences in the "ability to utilize opportunities" among students with different family capitals are still significant. Students with low family capital avoid help-seeking due to high "threshold perception", leading to a hidden reduction in the efficiency of resource acquisition and exacerbating class reproduction. Therefore, promoting the equity of educational outcomes needs to shift from "opportunity supply" to "opportunity utilization", and specifically reduce the psychological barriers to help-seeking for disadvantaged students.

### 2.4.2. Analytical Framework of This Study

To respond to the above-mentioned need for a shift in educational equity, this study constructs a core analytical framework, as shown in Figure 1. Family capital shapes college students' "threshold perception", which in turn affects their help-seeking behavior. Students with high threshold perception tend to engage in avoidant help-seeking. As a negative learning strategy, avoidant help-seeking exacerbates the differentiation of academic performance. Ultimately, differences in educational outcomes strengthen social reproduction.



**Figure 1.** Analytical Framework.

### **3. Research Design**

#### **3.1. Research Questions**

Based on the theory of social reproduction, this study focuses on the impact of family capital on college students' "threshold perception" of academic help-seeking, as well as its chain effects on help-seeking behavior, academic performance, and career expectations. Specifically, the following questions are explored:

- (1) Do differences in family capital significantly affect college students' "threshold perception" of academic help-seeking?
- (2) Does the "threshold perception" of academic help-seeking have a significant positive impact on students' academic help-seeking behavior?
- (3) Does students' academic help-seeking behavior affect their academic performance?
- (4) Can differences in academic performance predict students' expected occupational status, such as expected salary and occupational prestige?
- (5) What are the subjective explanations of students with high threshold perception for giving up help-seeking, and what psychological structural characteristics of family capital deficiency do these explanations reflect?

#### **3.2. Research Methods**

This study adopts the mixed research method combining qualitative and quantitative approaches proposed by Lazarsfeld. The quantitative research focuses on the analysis of correlations and differences between variables to reveal the path through which family capital affects "threshold perception". The qualitative research, through in-depth interviews, explores the psychological mechanism behind the avoidance of help-seeking by students with high "threshold perception". Together, the two approaches provide accurate responses and explanations to the above research questions.

##### **3.2.1. Quantitative Research Method**

This study adopted the stratified sampling method, with college students from universities across the country as the research objects, and 125 valid samples were collected. Among them, there were 62 males and 63 females; the samples covered double-first-class universities (12%, 15 people), ordinary undergraduate institutions (84.8%, 106 people), and higher vocational colleges (3.2%, 4 people); and included students from the first year (15.2%, 19 people), second year (16%, 20 people), third year (32%, 40 people), and fourth year (36.8%, 46 people) of college. Family capital was divided into three groups—low (34.4%, 43 people), medium (48.8%, 61 people), and high (16.8%, 21 people)—based on the average value of four indicators: the highest educational level of parents, the type of family residence location, the number of books collected at home, and the self-assessment of economic status.

The "threshold perception" scale was adapted from the "Loss of Face" theory proposed by Nolan Zane and May Yeh. The questionnaire included sections on basic information, family capital, help-seeking behavior, "threshold perception", and career expectations. Questionnaires were distributed online, and 125 valid questionnaires were recovered. The statistical software SPSS 21.0 was used to conduct statistical analysis on the processed survey results.

##### **3.2.2. Qualitative Research Method**

Eleven undergraduate students with high "threshold perception" were selected as interviewees (see Table 1). These interviewees covered three types of educational institutions and all grade levels. The interview outline focused on the details of the interviewees' family capital, their inner thoughts regarding academic help-seeking, and their concerns about giving up help-seeking, aiming to explore the impact of external evaluations on help-seeking decisions.

**Table 1.** Survey Sample Information Sheet.

Serial Number	Gender	School	Grade
LS01	Male	Ordinary Undergraduate Institution	Senior
LS02	Female	Ordinary Undergraduate Institution	Junior
LS03	Female	Ordinary Undergraduate Institution	Senior
LS04	Male	Double-First-Class University	Freshman
LS05	Female	Ordinary Undergraduate Institution	Sophomore
LS06	Female	Ordinary Undergraduate Institution	Junior
LS07	Male	Double-First-Class University	Senior
LS08	Female	Ordinary Undergraduate Institution	Junior
LS09	Male	Ordinary Undergraduate Institution	Senior
LS010	Male	Ordinary Undergraduate Institution	Sophomore
LS011	Female	Higher Vocational College	Freshman

## 4. Quantitative Results Analysis

### 4.1. Impact of Family Capital on College Students' "Threshold Perception" of Academic Help-Seeking

To address Research Question 1, one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Pearson correlation analysis were employed to explore the association between family capital and "threshold perception".

The study found that different levels of family capital showed no statistical significance ( $p > 0.05$ ) in the six dimensions of "threshold perception" including "public self-awareness", and there was no significant overall correlation between the two. However, "mother's highest educational attainment" exhibited a significant negative correlation with "other-orientation" ( $r = -0.182$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) (see Table2). This indicates that the higher the mother's educational level, the lower the "other-orientation" of her children, and the weaker the sense of burden about "owing favors". "Type of family residence location" showed a significant negative correlation with "social anxiety" ( $r = -0.182$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) (see Table3). This suggests that students whose family residences are in urban areas have lower "social anxiety" and are less likely to have the thought of "feeling nervous at the mere thought of asking questions".

**Table 2.** Correlation Analysis Results Between Mother's Highest Educational Attainment and "Other-Orientation".

		Mother's Highest Educational Attainment
(Other-Orientation) I feel that owing favors is a burden, and I would rather spend more time solving problems on my own.	Correlation Coefficient	-0.182*
	<i>p</i> -Value	0.042
	Sample Size	125

\*  $p < 0.05$  \*\*  $p < 0.01$

**Table 3.** Correlation Analysis Results Between Type of Family Residence Location and "Social Anxiety".

		Type of Family Residence Location
(Social Anxiety) I feel nervous at the thought of asking questions in person	Correlation Coefficient	-0.182*
	<i>p</i> -Value	0.042
	Sample Size	125

\*  $p < 0.05$  \*\*  $p < 0.01$

#### 4.2. Impact of Threshold Perception of Academic Help-Seeking on Students' Help-Seeking Behavior

To address Research Question 2, one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Pearson correlation analysis were employed to explore the relationship between "threshold perception" and help-seeking behavior.

The study found that among groups with different levels of "threshold perception", there were no statistically significant differences ( $p > 0.05$ ) in the 7 items related to help-seeking targets (including "course instructors") and frequency of help-seeking. However, significant differences were observed in 2 items: "online platforms" and "I usually do not seek help from anyone" ( $p < 0.05$ ) (see Table 4). This indicates that the group with high "threshold perception" is more inclined to seek help through online platforms, and their avoidant behavior of "not seeking help from anyone" is more prominent. In addition, "threshold perception" showed a significant positive correlation with the item "I usually do not seek help from anyone" ( $r = 0.237$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) (see Table 5), which means the higher the threshold perception, the more likely students are to avoid seeking help from anyone.

**Table 4.** Results of ANOVA on the Impact of "Threshold Perception" of Academic Help-Seeking on Students' Help-Seeking Behavior.

	Threshold Perception: Three-Group Classification (Mean $\pm$ Standard Deviation)			F	p
	Low (n=33)	Medium (n=56)	High (n=36)		
	(Help-Seeking Targets) Online Platforms (search engines, knowledge payment services, etc.)	5.06 $\pm$ 2.26	4.63 $\pm$ 1.59		
(Help-Seeking Targets) I usually do not seek help from anyone	2.03 $\pm$ 1.26	2.86 $\pm$ 1.43	3.03 $\pm$ 1.80	4.41	0.014*

\*  $p < 0.05$  \*\*  $p < 0.01$

**Table 5.** Correlation Analysis Results Between "Threshold Perception" and Help-Seeking Targets.

	Threshold Perception (Three-Group Classification)	
	Correlation Coefficient	p-Value
(Help-Seeking Targets) I usually do not seek help from anyone	0.237**	0.008
	Sample Size	125

\*  $p < 0.05$  \*\*  $p < 0.01$

#### 4.3. Impact of Academic Help-Seeking Behavior on Students' Academic Performance

To address Research Question 3, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Pearson correlation analysis were employed to examine the relationship between academic help-seeking behavior and academic performance. The coding rule for students' academic performance was set such that a higher numerical value indicates poorer academic performance.

The study found that there was neither a significant group difference ( $p > 0.05$ ) nor a correlation between "academic help-seeking behavior" and "academic performance". However, in the reverse test, it was found that students with different academic performance levels showed significant differences in the item "I usually do not seek help from anyone" ( $p < 0.05$ ) (see Table 6). This implies that the group with better academic performance is more likely to seek help from others. The result suggests that academic performance may have a reverse impact on students' academic help-seeking behavior.

**Table 6.** ANOVA Results of the Impact of Academic Performance on Help-Seeking Targets.

	Current Overall Academic Performance: (Mean ± Standard Deviation)					F	P
	1.0(n=18)	2.0(n=46)	3.0(n=51)	4.0(n=5)	5.0(n=5)		
(Help-Seeking Targets) I usually do not seek help from anyone	1.67±0.77	2.98±1.65	2.92±1.52	2.20±1.64	1.80±1.30	3.44	0.011*

\*  $p < 0.05$  \*\*  $p < 0.01$ 

#### 4.4. Impact of Differences in Academic Performance on Students' Expected Occupational Status

To address Research Question 4, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), Pearson correlation analysis, and linear regression analysis were employed to explore the relationship between academic performance and expected occupational status.

ANOVA confirmed that there was a statistically significant difference in the expected salary for the first job among students with different academic performance levels ( $p < 0.05$ ,  $F = 2.950$ ) (see Table 7). Pearson correlation analysis further revealed a significant negative correlation between academic performance and expected salary ( $r = -0.266$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) (see Table 8), indicating that better academic performance was associated with a higher expected salary. The results of linear regression analysis further strengthened this relationship. As shown in Table 9, the model formula is: "Expected monthly salary for the first job =  $3.122 - 0.244 \times$  Academic Performance". Academic performance had a significant negative predictive effect on expected salary ( $\beta = -0.244$ ), accounting for 5.1% of the variation in the expected salary for the first job ( $R^2 = 0.051$ ).

Combined with the analysis of preferences for expected occupational choices, students with better academic performance not only had higher expected salaries but also were more inclined to choose high-prestige occupations such as doctors, civil servants, and engineers. In contrast, students with poorer academic performance had lower expected salaries and were more likely to choose conventional-prestige occupations such as accountants and technicians.

**Table 7.** Results of ANOVA on the Impact of Academic Performance on the Expected Monthly Salary for the First Job.

	Current Overall Academic Performance: (Mean ± Standard Deviation)					F	P
	1.0(n=18)	2.0(n=46)	3.0(n=51)	4.0(n=5)	5.0(n=5)		
Expected Monthly Salary for the First Job (RMB):	3.22±1.06	2.50±0.98	2.31±0.91	2.40±0.55	2.40±1.52	2.95	0.023*

\*  $p < 0.05$  \*\*  $p < 0.01$ **Table 8.** Correlation Analysis Results between Academic Performance and Expected Monthly Salary for the First Job

	Current Overall Academic Performance:
Expected Monthly Salary for the First Future Job (RMB):	Correlation Coefficient
	$-0.226^*$
	p-Value
	0.011
	Sample Size
	125

\*  $p < 0.05$  \*\*  $p < 0.01$

**Table 9.** Results of Linear Regression Analysis on the Predictive Effect of Academic Performance on Expected Monthly Salary for the First Job (n=125).

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Collinearity Diagnostics	
	<i>B</i>	Standard Error	<i>Beta</i>			VIF	Tolerance
Constant	3.122	0.250	-	12.489	0.000**	-	-
Current Overall Academic Performance:	-0.244	0.095	-0.226	-2.572	0.011*	1.000	1.000
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>			0.051				
<i>Adjusted R</i> <sup>2</sup>			0.043				
<i>F</i>			<i>F</i> (1,123)=6.616, <i>p</i> =0.011				
D-W value			1.770				

Note: Dependent Variable = Expected Monthly Salary for the First Job (RMB):

\* *p*<0.05 \*\* *p*<0.01

## 5. Analysis of Qualitative Results

Regarding Research Question 5, the author found that the core logic behind students with high threshold perception giving up academic help-seeking can be summarized as the long-term shaping effect of insufficient family capital, which leads to the formation of a psychological structure of "prioritizing external evaluation over their own academic needs". Their concerns about abandoning help-seeking are highly consistent with the dimensions of "threshold perception". Most interviewees mentioned "worrying about disturbing others" and "being afraid of troubling others"—these statements highlight a strong "other-orientation", equating help-seeking with "breaking interpersonal balance" and over-predicting others' negative reactions. Some interviewees also mentioned "feeling embarrassed to ask questions publicly in class" and "fearing that supervisors would think their ability is insufficient", reflecting the interweaving of "public self-awareness" and "private self-awareness". They not only care about how others perceive themselves but also worry about exposing their own shortcomings, resulting in a dual fear of "losing face". In addition, feelings such as "it is awkward to ask others for help" confirm the existence of "social anxiety", where help-seeking is avoided due to the expectation of discomfort in interactions.

The root causes of these psychological barriers can be traced back to the long-term shaping of the family environment. First, the strict upbringing of parents makes students feel in awe of authoritative figures such as teachers, strengthening the perception that "seeking help means exposing inadequacies". Second, as one interviewee stated, "My parents said not to cause trouble (LS09)"—the values of "avoiding trouble" conveyed by such remarks lead to unclear cognition of the boundary of help-seeking, making it easy for them to equate normal help-seeking with causing trouble. Growing up in such an environment for a long time, with a lack of successful experiences of "seeking help - receiving responses", weakens interpersonal trust. Third, the potential sense of inferiority caused by economic conditions further reinforces the fear of "worrying about being looked down upon by classmates (LS03)", eventually leading them to prioritize self-isolation when facing academic difficulties.

In conclusion, to avoid external risks, students prioritize maintaining their "face", thereby suppressing help-seeking behavior and sacrificing the resolution of academic problems. Essentially, this is a manifestation of insufficient family capital being internalized into individual "habitus" and externally manifested as high "threshold perception" hindering the utilization of resources.

## 6. Conclusion

### 6.1. Research Results

This study explored the relationships among family capital, "threshold perception", help-seeking behavior, academic performance, and career expectations, with the main findings as follows:

There was no significant overall difference between family capital and "threshold perception". However, the higher the mother's educational level, the lower the "other-orientation" of her children; and urban students had significantly lower "social anxiety" than rural students.

The group with high "threshold perception" showed no significant differences in the choice of most help-seeking targets or the frequency of help-seeking, but they were more inclined to seek help through online platforms, and the behavior of "not seeking help from anyone" was more prominent. This indicates that the higher the "threshold perception", the stronger the tendency to avoid help-seeking.

There was no significant correlation between academic help-seeking behavior and academic performance, but academic performance may have a reverse impact on help-seeking behavior.

The relationship between academic performance and expected occupational status was relatively clear: the better the academic performance, the higher the expected salary for the first job, and students were more inclined to choose high-prestige occupations such as doctors and engineers; the poorer the academic performance, the lower the expected salary, and students were more likely to choose conventional occupations such as accountants and ordinary clerks. Linear regression further verified that academic performance had a significant negative effect on expected salary.

Interview results supplemented the formation logic of high "threshold perception" from a qualitative perspective. Due to the lack of family capital (e.g., strict parenting by parents, social restrictions, and inferiority caused by economic conditions), such students formed a psychological structure of "prioritizing external evaluation over their own academic needs". This is mainly manifested in excessive worry about "troubling others" and "being mocked", which ultimately inhibits help-seeking behavior. Essentially, it is the result of the family environment being internalized into the habitus of high "threshold perception".

### 6.2. Research Limitations

First, the adaptability of measurement tools needs to be improved. Although the "threshold perception" scale has been adjusted for localization, it is not sensitive enough to capture differences in family capital. Only the mother's educational level and family location showed a negative correlation with individual dimensions ( $r=-0.182$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), while most core dimensions showed no differences.

Second, the representativeness of the sample is limited. The size of valid samples is small, and the proportion of double-first-class universities, higher vocational colleges, and high-family-capital groups is relatively low, which limits the in-depth analysis of group differences. The method of classifying family capital based on the mean value of four indicators may also mask internal heterogeneity.

Finally, the understanding of the mechanism between "threshold perception" and "face" is oversimplified. Data show that students with high threshold perception are more likely to choose online help-seeking, indicating that the impact of family capital may lie not in "the degree of caring about face", but in "strategies for dealing with face-related issues". Students from better-off families may also value face, but they have more abundant coping strategies and resources. This study failed to distinguish between "risk perception" and "ability to cope with risks", mistakenly regarding "lack of strategies" as "excessive sensitivity", and underestimated the role of family capital in providing coping resources.

### 6.3. Research Recommendations

Based on the above findings, to lower the help-seeking threshold for disadvantaged students and promote the equity of educational outcomes, measures can be implemented from three perspectives:

For schools, it is necessary to accurately respond to diverse needs. In view of the relatively high social anxiety among rural students, schools should organize social activities to alleviate the tension of in-person help-seeking. Regarding the preference of the group with high "threshold perception" for seeking help through online platforms, schools should not only optimize online academic support channels but also guide this group to recognize the efficiency value of offline help-seeking. At the same time, schools can use campus media to publicize and break the prejudice that "seeking help equals incompetence"; they can also invite successful people from different backgrounds to the school to share experiences, dispel the myth of "supremacy of personal effort" and broaden students' career expectations.

For families, it is necessary to adjust parenting concepts. Parents should encourage their children to take the initiative to seek help when needed and convey the idea that "reasonable help-seeking is a normal social interaction". For mothers with lower educational attainment, schools or relevant institutions can guide them through parent classes and other channels to understand the significance of reducing "other-orientation" for their children's academic adaptation.

For individuals, it is necessary to adjust their cognition and behavior. Students need to take the initiative to break the inherent cognition that "avoiding help-seeking means avoiding trouble". Schools can provide psychological counseling to help students view external evaluations objectively. Meanwhile, students can strengthen "low-risk help-seeking practice" to gradually accumulate positive interaction experiences and reduce the fear of "losing face".

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