

From Hope to Anxiety: The Interaction Mechanism of Educational Expectations and Social Pressures in College Students' Families

Heying Wang

(School of Management, Hunan City University, Yiyang, Hunan 413000, China)

Abstract: This study theoretically explores the interaction mechanism between educational expectations and social pressure in college students' families. By analyzing the relevant theories of sociology, psychology and education, this paper reveals how the high educational expectations of families for college students are affected by the social environment, and how this expectation interacts with social pressure, which in turn affects students' academic performance and mental health. Studies have pointed out that families' educational expectations may be transformed into students' anxiety under the transmission of social pressure, which may further affect students' academic development and mental health. This paper puts forward theoretical suggestions for optimizing family education strategies, in order to provide useful guidance for college students' families and promote students' all-round development.

Keywords: College Students; Family; Educational Expectations; Social Pressure; Interaction Mechanism

1.Introduction

In today's society, education is widely seen as a key pathway to personal development and social mobility. Families' expectations for their children's education are generally high, especially among families of college students. Parents generally hope that their children will be able to obtain a high degree through higher education, so that they can occupy an advantageous position in social competition, and achieve the social status and economic improvement of the family (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988). This expectation is not only derived from parents' visions of their children's future lives, but is also influenced by socio-cultural contexts (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988). The general recognition of high education and the high treatment of highly educated talents make parents think that education is an important means to change their destiny and achieve social mobility. However, the formation of educational expectations does not exist in isolation, it is affected by a combination of factors such as family economic conditions, social class, cultural environment, etc. Society's high expectations for educational success make families feel great pressure in the process of educating their children, not only from the economic

burden, but also from the intensification of social competition and fierce competition for educational resources.

With the intensification of social competition and the rising cost of education, families are facing increasing pressure in the process of educating their children. Society's emphasis on high education and professional status has put families under tremendous pressure to educate their children. Parents are worried that their children will fall behind in the fierce competition, so they continue to raise their expectations for their children's education. This expectation reflects not only parents' expectations for their children's future success, but also parents' anxiety about their own social status. The intensification of social competition has intertwined the family's educational expectations for their children with social pressures, forming a complex interactive relationship. Social pressure acts on students through the transmission of family expectations, which may lead students to feel greater academic pressure and psychological burden. This stress not only affects a student's academic performance, but can also have a negative impact on a student's mental health. Studies have shown that high educational expectations of

families can motivate students to work hard to a certain extent, but if the expectations are too high, it may lead students to feel greater pressure, which in turn affects their learning effectiveness and mental health.

The purpose of this study was to explore the interaction mechanism between educational expectations and social pressure in the families of college students. By analyzing the relevant theories of sociology, psychology and education, this paper reveals how the high educational expectations of families for college students are affected by the social environment, and how this expectation interacts with social pressure, which in turn affects students' academic performance and mental health. Understanding this interaction mechanism is of great significance for optimizing family education strategies and alleviating students' academic stress and anxiety. This study not only helps to enrich and improve the theoretical framework of educational expectations and social pressures, provides a new perspective for understanding the educational phenomenon in college students' families, but also provides scientific suggestions and guidance for families, schools and society, and promotes the all-round development of students. Through the in-depth study of the interaction mechanism between educational expectations and social pressure, we can better understand the educational phenomenon in the families of college students, and provide theoretical support and practical guidance for cultivating well-rounded high-quality talents.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Sociological Theoretical Perspective

(1) Social Class Theory

Social class theory holds that the unequal distribution of social resources leads to differences between different classes. In the field of education, the economic, cultural and social capital of the family has a significant impact on children's educational opportunities and achievement (Bourdieu, 1986). Higher-class families are often able to raise their educational expectations by providing their children with more educational resources and opportunities (Bourdieu, 1986; Lareau, 2011). However, the intensification of social competition has made even high-class families feel greater pressure, and this pressure is passed on to their children through the family, which can lead to anxiety among students.

(2) Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory emphasizes the costs and benefits of individuals in social interactions. Families' high educational expectations for their children can be seen as a social investment, and parents hope to gain social status and financial rewards through their children's high education (Coleman, 1988). However, the cost of such an investment (e.g., financial burden, time commitment, etc.) can also be stressful for families and students. If a student fails to meet their parents' expectations, it can lead to a "failed investment" for the family, which can trigger feelings of anxiety.

2.2 Psychological Theory Perspective

(1) Expected Value Theory

Expectation theory states that an individual's motivation depends on his or her expectation of success and his subjective value to success (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). In educational contexts, parents' high educational expectations may motivate students to work hard, but if students feel excessive pressure, it may reduce their subjective value to success and thus affect their motivation to learn (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). In addition, excessively high expectations can lead to an increased fear of failure in students, which in turn can lead to anxiety.

(2) Social Comparative Theory

Social comparison theory states that individuals evaluate their abilities and achievements by comparing them to others (Merton, 1957). In the collegiate setting, students are compared to their peers, especially in terms of academic performance and career development (Bandura, 1977; Vygotsky, 1978). Parents' high educational expectations can exacerbate this comparison, making students feel greater competitive pressure. If students are at a disadvantage in comparisons, it can lead to a decrease in self-efficacy, which in turn can lead to feelings of anxiety.

2.3 Pedagogical Theoretical Perspectives

(1) Theory of Educational Expectations

According to the theory of educational expectations, the family's educational expectations for their children are an important factor affecting their children's academic achievement (Lareau, 2011). Parents with high educational expectations often provide their children with more learning support and resources, pay attention to their children's learning process, and give positive encouragement and support. However, high educational expectations can also lead

to students feeling more stressed, affecting their learning outcomes and mental health.

(2) Sociocultural Theories

Sociocultural theories emphasize the influence of the social environment on individual development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Vygotsky, 1978). The family is an important part of the social culture, and the educational expectations of the family are profoundly influenced by the socio-cultural context. In the current environment of fierce social competition, the society's admiration for high education and high professional status has made families continue to raise their expectations for children's education. Educational expectations in this sociocultural context interact with social pressures and affect students' academic performance and mental health.

3. The interaction Mechanism Between Educational Expectations and Social Pressure

3.1 The Impact of Social Pressure on Educational Expectations

(1) Social Competitive Pressure

The intensification of social competition has led to a rising expectation of families for the education of their children. In modern society, a high degree of education is seen as an important guarantee for better career development opportunities and social status. Therefore, parents generally expect their children to obtain a high degree and enter a top university. This expectation is influenced not only by the social environment, but also by the educational competition atmosphere of the surrounding population. For example, parents may raise expectations of their own children because of the excellent grades of their neighbors or friends' children.

(2) Economic Pressure

The rising cost of education has brought a large financial burden to families. Especially for families with children who plan to continue their education, the financial pressure is even more obvious. Parents may raise their expectations for their children's education because they are worried about their children's future financial situation, hoping that they will get a better financial return through higher education. However, this financial stress can also lead to tensions within the family, further affecting the mental health of students.

(3) Career Development Pressure

The pressure parents feel during their career development can also affect their children's educational expectations. Parents may want to make up

for their own shortcomings in career development through their children's high education and improve the social status of their families. This career pressure not only affects the mental health of parents themselves, but can also be passed on to their children through the family, causing students to feel more stressed.

3.2 The Transmission and Reinforcement of Educational Expectations on Social Pressure

(1) Transmission of Expectations Within the Family

Parents translate social pressure into educational expectations for their children, and pass them on to their children through daily communication, learning supervision, etc. For example, parents will often remind their children: "If you look at other people's children, they are all studying hard, and you can't fall behind." "This kind of expectation transmission can cause students to feel a lot of pressure, especially when parents have high expectations for their children, and students may feel unable to meet their parents' requirements, which can lead to anxiety.

(2) External Influences of the Social Environment

The society's admiration for high academic qualifications and high professional status, as well as the educational competition atmosphere of the surrounding people, will also directly affect the mentality of students. For example, in some college campuses, there is a strong competitive atmosphere for postgraduate entrance examinations and public entrance examinations, and students will unconsciously feel pressure in this environment, which will affect their academic planning and psychological state. The external influences of this social environment interact with the transmission of expectations within the family, further reinforcing the social pressures felt by students.

3.3 Mechanism of students' anxiety

(1) Academic Stress and Anxiety

Students' anxiety is the result of the interaction between educational expectations and social pressures. On the one hand, social pressure acts on students through the transmission of family expectations, making them feel greater academic pressure and psychological burden. On the other hand, students' own uncertainties about academic performance, career development, and worries about the future can further exacerbate their anxiety. For example, one student mentioned in an interview: "I know that my parents have high expectations for me, and I want to go to

graduate school, but I am afraid that I will not be able to pass the exam, and I will not only live up to my parents' expectations, but I will also be very disappointed." "

(2) Mental Health and Anxiety

Students' mental health also affects how they perceive and cope with educational expectations and social pressures (Lazarus, 1991). Students with poor mental health may be more likely to feel stress and turn it into anxiety. For example, studies have shown that students with anxiety and depression are more likely to experience learning difficulties and psychological problems when faced with academic stress. This interaction between mental health and anxiety further exacerbates the psychological burden of students.

4. Theoretical Model Construction

4.1 Research the Model

Based on the above theoretical analysis, this study constructs a theoretical model to explain the interaction mechanism between educational expectations and social pressure in college students' families. The model includes the following key variables:

Social pressures: These include social competitive pressures, economic pressures, and career development pressures.

Educational expectations: including parents' educational expectations for their children and students' own educational expectations.

Academic pressure: The academic load and study pressure felt by the student.

Mental health: Mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression in students.

Academic Performance: Students' academic performance and learning outcomes.

4.2 Model Assumptions

(1) The Relationship between Social pressure and Educational Expectations:

Social pressures push families to raise their educational expectations for college students by influencing parents' values and educational attitudes.

(2) The Relationship between Educational Expectations and Academic Pressure

The high educational expectations of families amplify the impact of social pressure on students to a certain extent, resulting in students feeling greater academic pressure.

(3) The Relationship between Academic Stress

and Mental Health:

Academic stress further exacerbates students' anxiety by affecting their mental health.

(4) The Relationship between Mental Health and Academic Performance

A student's mental health has a direct impact on their academic performance, and students with anxiety and depression may perform poorly academically.

5. Theoretical Suggestions for Optimizing Family Education Strategies

5.1 Adjust Educational Expectations

(1) Respect Students' individuality

Parents should respect students' interests and abilities and avoid putting unnecessary pressure on students due to excessive expectations. Parents can communicate with students to understand their interests and career plans, and help them set reasonable learning goals.

(2) Set Reasonable Expectations

Parents should set reasonable educational expectations according to the actual situation of students. Avoid expectations that are too high or too low so as not to affect students' self-confidence and motivation to learn. Parents can understand the learning ability and potential of students through communication with teachers, and formulate a scientific learning plan.

5.2 Enhance Communication and Understanding

(1) Establish Good Communication

Parents should establish a good communication mechanism with students to understand their thoughts and feelings. Through regular family meetings or one-on-one communication, parents can identify students' problems and needs in a timely manner, and give support and encouragement.

(2) Understand Student Pressure

Parents should understand the academic and psychological pressures that students may face and avoid excessive criticism and accusations. Parents can help their students relieve stress and boost their self-confidence by sharing their own experiences and feelings.

5.3 Provide Support and Resources

(1) Learning Support

Parents should provide necessary learning support for students, such as tutoring sessions, learning materials, etc. Alleviate academic pressure by helping students improve their academic efficiency and performance.

(2) Psychological Support

Parents should pay attention to the mental health of their students and discover their emotional problems such as anxiety and depression in a timely manner. When necessary, parents can seek professional psychological counseling to help students relieve psychological stress.

5.4 Create a positive family environment

(1) Harmonious Family Atmosphere

Parents should create a harmonious and positive family atmosphere to avoid additional psychological burdens on students due to family conflicts and conflicts. Strengthen family cohesion through family activities and shared interests.

(2) Role Model

Parents should set a good example for their students through their words and actions. Parents can motivate their students to work hard and pursue their dreams through a positive work attitude and learning spirit.

6. Conclusions and Prospects

(1) Conclusion

This study theoretically explores the interaction mechanism between educational expectations and social pressure in college students' families. By analyzing the relevant theories of sociology, psychology and education, this paper reveals how the high educational expectations of families for college students are affected by the social environment, and how this expectation interacts with social pressure, which in turn affects students' academic performance and mental health. The study points out that social pressure pushes families to raise their educational expectations for college students by influencing parents' values and educational concepts. The high educational expectations of families further amplify the impact of social pressure on students, resulting in students feeling greater academic pressure and psychological burden, and then generating anxiety. The internal logic of this interaction mechanism is that the intensification of social competition and the admiration of high education prompt families to raise their educational expectations for college students, and the high educational expectations of families further strengthen the social pressure felt by students through

the transmission of expectations within the family and the external influence of the social environment, and ultimately affect students' academic performance and mental health.

(2) Prospects

Although this study reveals the interaction mechanism between educational expectations and social pressure from a theoretical perspective, it still needs to be further verified in practical application. Future research can further verify the scientificity and validity of the theoretical model through empirical research methods, such as questionnaires and interviews. In addition, future research can also pay attention to the interaction mechanism between educational expectations and social pressure in different family backgrounds and sociocultural environments, and provide more targeted suggestions for optimizing family education strategies.

References

- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241–258). New York, NY: Greenwood Press.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94(Supplement), S95–S120.
- Eccles, J. S., & Wigfield, A. (2002). Motivational beliefs, values, and goals. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 53, 109–132.
<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.53.100901.135153>
- Lareau, A. (2011). *Unequal childhoods: Class, race, and family life* (2nd ed.). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Lazarus, R. S. (1991). *Emotion and adaptation*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Merton, R. K. (1957). *Social theory and social structure*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.