

# **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTAL EDUCATIONAL ANXIETY AND PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP AMONG PARENTS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN CHENGDU, SICHUAN PROVINCE**

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**Abstract:** This study aimed to investigate the current status of parental educational anxiety and parent-child relationship among parents of primary school students in Chengdu City, Sichuan Province, and to understand the differences between parental educational anxiety and parent-child relationship among different demographic backgrounds (parents' gender, parents' educational qualification, student's grade group, and number of children), to explore the relationship between parental educational anxiety and parent-child relationship. This study adopted a convenient sampling method and completed sampling in three primary schools in Chengdu City, Sichuan Province. There were 361 parents of primary school students who were selected as subjects by questionnaire. Using descriptive statistics analysis, independent sample T-Test and one-way ANOVA analysis Pearson correlation analysis. The results showed that the overall level of parental educational anxiety among parents of primary school students was moderate. Intimacy was more than conflict in the parent-child relationship. There were significant differences between parental educational anxiety and parent-child relationship in demographic backgrounds: parents' gender, parents' educational qualification, student's grade group, and number of children. There was a significant positive correlation between parental educational anxiety and the parent-child relationship, and the correlation between parental educational anxiety and conflict was higher than parental educational anxiety and intimacy.

**Keywords:** Primary School Students, Parental Educational Anxiety, Parent-Child Relationship, Emotional ABC Theory, Ecosystem Theory

## **Introduction**

Education was a meaningful way to promote individual development. When there was a significant deviation between educational intention and personal academic achievements, anxiety arose, while particular anxiety about academic achievements was learning anxiety, and individual parents' and

teachers' anxiety about students' academic achievements was parental educational anxiety. With the development of education, extracurricular tutoring activities have been popularized in many countries for a long time, and their positive or negative effects on students' academic development have attracted the attention of scholars and education policymakers (Li, 2013).

Extracurricular tutoring has a long history in Asia, Japan, South Korea, and other countries (Ji, 2015). Before introducing China's "double reduction" policy, the participation rate of off-campus training for primary and secondary school students in China was 37.8% (Li, 2023). It could be seen that parental educational anxiety had become a common anxiety among Chinese elementary school parents.

Nowadays, China vigorously promoted cultivating talents with comprehensive qualities and abilities in all aspects, so parents have increased their investment in their children's education. As parents, they certainly hoped that their children would achieve more. Therefore, parental educational anxiety has become a common phenomenon, a characteristic of the times. Since the two-child policy was fully liberalized in 2016 and the "three-child" policy has been supported since 2022, China's population has not experienced rapid growth as expected, reflecting the problem of "anxiety in educating children" faced by Chinese parents.

Parental educational anxiety was difficult to alleviate, reflecting the complexity of the causes of general family parental educational anxiety, including both objective reasons and subjective reasons. Objective reasons included fierce social competition (Fang, Liu, 2022), class solidification (Su, 2021), unbalanced distribution of educational resources (Chen, 2023), media, and teaching and training institutions amplifying anxiety (Li, 2021), etc. Alleviating parental educational anxiety and making them better assume the role of the family has become a hot spot in primary and secondary education.

The parent-child relationship was the first interpersonal relationship formed by an individual and was the most basic and essential interpersonal relationship in individual socialization and development. The quality of the parent-child relationship would have a significant impact on the growth of individuals. A good parent-child relationship could promote good communication between individuals and parents, increase trust between parents and children, bring security to individuals and encourage individuals to learn knowledge and skills actively. At the same time, it also played an essential role in developing other social relations in the process of social development.

The age of primary school students was transitioning from childhood to adolescence, which was primarily in need of protection and care. A good parent-child relationship could not only meet the needs of pupils in the hierarchy of needs but also give pupils a complete sense of security. It could give pupils emotional respect and understanding to meet their respect needs. Relieving parental educational anxiety through the parent-child relationship met the policy requirements. It enabled primary school students to learn to get along with others and carry out academic activities in a relaxed and happy family atmosphere.

This research focused on parental educational anxiety and parent-child relationship among parents of primary school students in Chengdu City, Sichuan Province. Through empirical research, it investigated the current status of parental educational anxiety and parent-child relationship, the differences in demographic backgrounds, and their relationship. Finally, combined with the research conclusions, it put forward some suggestions to improve parents' parent-child relationship from the perspective of alleviating parental educational anxiety, which could provide academic guidance for parents of primary school students in an excellent emotional atmosphere under current policy implementation.

### **Research Objectives**

(1) To understand the current status of parental educational anxiety and parent-child relationship among parents of primary school students in Chengdu City, Sichuan Province.

(2) To determine the differences in parental educational anxiety and parent-child relationship among parents of primary school students in Chengdu City, Sichuan Province, among different demographic backgrounds (parents' gender, parents' educational qualification, student's grade group, and number of children).

(3) To analyze the relationship between parental educational anxiety and parent-child relationship among parents of primary school students in Chengdu City, Sichuan Province.

### **Literature Review**

#### ***Research on Parental Educational Anxiety***

Because the research on early parental educational anxiety suggested that the formation of parental educational anxiety came from the difficult situation of children's academic development, some scholars began to pay more attention to the formation mechanism of anxiety, which provided a basis for the follow-up theoretical research on parental educational anxiety.

Deitcher (2020) believed that the guidance of the emotional ABC theory was beneficial for parents to continually scrutinize their unreasonable beliefs, which had enlightening and reference significance for alleviating parental educational anxiety. In the education process, parents needed to separate their children's educational problems from their early experiences and continuously correct their irrational educational beliefs, even if they thought deeply about the events that caused their parental educational anxiety. They regulated controllable factors within a reasonable range, guided individual subjective emotional responses with positive beliefs, and reduced self-consumption caused by stress.

In the research on the construction of the scale for parental educational anxiety among parents of primary school students, Wang (2022)'s Questionnaire for Parental Educational Anxiety of Primary

School Students in G District of Xi'an included four dimensions: anxiety of academic performance, anxiety of learning attitude and ability, anxiety of interpersonal communication and parent-child interaction, anxiety of school selection and future achievement, which had good reliability and validity after testing.

In the study on the current situation of educational anxiety, Xu (2022) and Wang (2022) found that parents of primary school students had educational anxiety about their children, mainly reflected in their children's academic development, while Lai (2022) found that parents of primary school students had educational anxiety about their children primarily reflected in their children's learning ability.

In the study on the difference in demographic backgrounds of educational anxiety, Yang (2022) showed that mothers had higher educational anxiety. Hu (2021) believed that the reason was that mothers paid more attention to and invested more in their children's education. Zhong et al. (2023) and Zhu & Luo (2023) believed that parents with higher education degrees had higher educational anxiety. Feng, Song (2018), Rao (2018), and Jiang (2023) showed that the overall level of educational anxiety of parents of senior primary school students was high. Gao et al. (2022) believed that over-education, over-control, and over-comparison led to a higher overall level of educational anxiety among parents of senior primary school students. Wang (2021), Zhang (2022), and Lai (2022) respectively investigated children, primary school students, and junior middle school students and found that parents with only children had a higher degree of education anxiety.

### ***Research on Parent-Child Relationship***

Since the 1940s, researchers all over the world warmed up their enthusiasm for exploring parent-child relationship, among which the most landmark was the theory of human development ecology put forward by Bronfenbrenner (1981), which emphasized the interaction between people and various ecological factors in the ecosystem and held that the parent-child relationship was homologous to and restricted by the environment.

As research progressed, some scholars began to view parent-child relationship as an ecosystem within the family, laying a theoretical foundation for subsequent research on parent-child relationship. Bronfenbrenner (1986) further proposed the ecosystem theory, which held that individual development should be discussed under the natural environment and specific social background. Every individual lived in each layer of the system from microsystem to macrosystem, and the connection between each layer of the system had different influences on individual physical and psychological development, with the family being one of the essential microsystems that affected individual development.

Tudge (2017) believed that the parent-child relationship was the key to the family microsystem, and family culture was critical to developing the parent-child relationship. The government and social institutions could encourage parents to inherit and carry forward traditional culture and provide

beneficial cultural resources and activities, such as folk culture, art culture, etc., to help families form a positive cultural atmosphere.

The research on the parent-child relationship in China was wealthy, and the research objects included many groups, including children and parents, primary and secondary school students and parents, and college students and parents. Many studies showed that the parent-child relationship was an essential factor affecting individual cognition, emotion, personality, mental health, and social development (Zhai et al., 2019). Since the parent-child relationship was the earliest interpersonal relationship since an individual's birth, the parent-child relationship for children and primary and secondary school students was the most fruitful.

In the study on the status quo of the parent-child relationship, Li (2022) and Zhang (2022) showed that the parent-child relationship was lower than that of the mother-child relationship, and Sun (2023) believed that fathers had higher expectations for their children, so they were more inclined to carry out parenting activities from the perspectives of intervention and control, so it was more reflected as conflict.

In the study on the demographic backgrounds of the parent-child relationship, Cao (2022) believed that the parents' educational background would affect the parent-child relationship. Tang (2023) found that the higher the educational background of parents, the higher the parental compatibility level. Sun (2023) found that the conflict score of higher-education parents was lower. Liu (2018) showed that the higher the grade, the worse the parent-child relationship. Yuan (2023) found that the parent-child affinity score of parents with an only child was significantly higher than that of non-only child parents; Liu (2022) found that the intimacy score of parents with an only child was slightly higher than that of non-only child parents; and Sun (2023) found that the conflict score of parents with an only child was lower.

### ***Research on the Relationship between Parental Educational Anxiety and Parent-Child Relationship***

At present, the direct research results about parental educational anxiety and parent-child relationships are scarce. Still, the research on "anxiety" related to parental educational anxiety and "parent-child attachment" associated with the parent-child relationship provided some theoretical reference for this study.

Ju (2018) investigated the influence of parent-child conflict on junior high school students' anxiety in parent-child relationships and found that through the investigation of 2286 junior high school students, parent-child conflict and negative coping had an intermediary effect between negative family emotional expression and anxiety, while parent-child conflict and negative coping had a chain intermediary effect.

Li (2019) found that intimacy in parent-child relationships had a positive predictive effect on

young children's anxiety. Although anxiety was a shared emotional experience for individuals, it had a significant negative impact if not controlled and guided. Especially for young children, parents needed to pay attention to whether intimacy in the parent-child relationship was beneficial for their current physical and mental development.

Wang et al. (2022) examined the relationship between mothers' psychological flexibility in parenting and infant anxiety, as well as the role of parenting stress and parent-child relationship in it. The results showed that parenting stress and parent-child conflict played a chain intermediary role between a mother's parenting psychological flexibility and children's anxiety, and parenting psychological flexibility could indirectly affect children's anxiety through parenting stress and parent-child conflict.

### ***Summary of Reviewed Literature***

Through literature analysis, domestic and foreign scholars have provided detailed discussions on parental educational anxiety and parent-child relationships, offering a rich reference for this study. Parental educational anxiety and parent-child relationship had the following research characteristics:

Firstly, the research object was concretized. Due to the promulgation of "Opinions on Further Reducing Students' Homework Burden and Off-campus Training Burden in Compulsory Education Stage," the research on parental educational anxiety at that time focused on students in the compulsory education stage, i.e., primary and secondary school students. Research on parent-child relationships widely involved multiple groups, from young children to college students.

Secondly, measurement tools were localized. Whether it was parental educational anxiety or parent-child relationship, because foreign scholars studied it earlier than Chinese scholars, most of the scales for parental educational anxiety and parent-child relationship originated from abroad. Still, Chinese scholars translated and adapted them locally based on foreign scholars' research. A large number of studies showed that both parental educational anxiety and parent-child relationship have yielded rich empirical research results.

Finally, the research results were empirical. From the related research results of parental educational anxiety and parent-child relationship, the research results directly focused on parental educational anxiety and parent-child relationship were very scarce. However, some scholars have revealed the relationship between anxiety and the parent-child relationship through "anxiety" related to parental educational anxiety and "parent-child attachment" associated with the parent-child relationship, which also provided some theoretical reference for this study.

### **Methodology**

This study employed a convenient sampling method and conducted sampling in three primary schools in Chengdu City, Sichuan Province: Shuanglin Primary School, Chenghua Experimental

Primary School, and Longquanyi District No.1 Primary School. During the formal investigation stage, questionnaires were disseminated to the parents of primary school students in the three primary schools mentioned above by the liaison staff of each school. With approximately 6,021 students in the three primary schools, an equivalent number of samples for parents were targeted. Following the research sample size standards of Krejcie and Morgan (1970), the number of samples taken should be 361. This study aimed to collect 361 valid questionnaires, encompassing around 120 parents from each of the three specified grade categories (grades 1-2, 3-4, and 5-6). Given the necessity to collect 361 questionnaires, 390 questionnaires were distributed. After examination, 361 valid questionnaires were recovered, and the effective return rate reached 92.56%. The questionnaire on parental educational anxiety for primary school students in Chengdu City, Sichuan Province, selected for this study, originated from the parental educational anxiety questionnaire for primary school students in G District of Xi'an, compiled by Wang (2022). In this study, 361 questionnaires were utilized to test the validity of the questionnaire. The KMO value of the questionnaire was 0.952, exceeding 0.9, and significant at the level of .001, indicating that the questionnaire was suitable for factor analysis. Through exploratory factor analysis, four common factors were extracted from the Parental Educational Anxiety Questionnaire, and the cumulative contribution rate was 50.194% after being rotated by the maximum variance method. At the same time, the factor loads of each item in Factor 1 were 0.642-0.714, that of each item in Factor 2 were 0.522-0.678, that of each item in Factor 3 were 0.573-0.682, and that of each item in Factor 4 were 0.558-0.655, all of which were more significant than 0.4. It could be seen that the Test of the Parental Educational Anxiety Questionnaire had good structural validity.

The questionnaire on parent-child relationship for primary school students in Chengdu City, Sichuan Province, selected for this study, originated from the reduced version of the Parent-Child Relationship, compiled by Deng (2013). In this study, 361 questionnaires were used to test the reliability of the Parent-Child Relationship Questionnaire. The results showed that the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of each dimension was between 0.703 and 0.790, higher than 0.7, and the overall Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was 0.604 because the questionnaire was a fixed variable scale. Therefore, the overall Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was 0.844, which was higher than 0.8 after all the eight items in the conflict dimension were scored in reverse, which showed that the reliability of the questionnaire conforms to the statistical standard of this study and had a strong reliability level, which could be used for further statistical analysis.

The exploratory factor analysis test found that five common factors were extracted from the parent-child relationship questionnaire among parents of primary school students, and the cumulative contribution rate was 52.699% after being rotated by the maximum variance method. At the same time, the factor loads of each item in factor 1 on the corresponding factors were 0.573-0.683, and those in factor 2 were 0.536-0.648, all greater than 0.4. It could be seen that the parent-child relationship questionnaire among parents of primary school students had good structural validity.

## Results

### *Demographic Analysis of the Respondents*

In the valid questionnaire, there were 162 parents, accounting for 44.9%, and mother's side were 199, accounting for 55.1%. It can be seen that most of the parents surveyed were mothers. In terms of parents' educational qualification, there were 90 parents with high school education, accounting for 24.9%, 126 parents with junior college, accounting for 34.9%, 108 parents with a bachelor's degree, accounting for 29.9%, and 37 parents with a master's degree or above, accounting for 10.2%. It could be seen that the parents surveyed mainly had a bachelor's degree and junior college. Regarding the student's grade group, there were 123 parents of lower-grade students, accounting for 34.1%, 130 parents of middle-grade students, 36.0%, and 108 parents of upper-grade students, accounting for 29.9%. It could be seen that the parent's and children's schooling in the survey were relatively balanced. Regarding the number of children, there were 142 parents with only children, accounting for 39.3%, 184 parents with two children, accounting for 51.0%, and 35 parents with three or more children, accounting for 9.7%. It could be seen that with the implementation of China's "three-child," some families had three or more children.

### *Descriptive statistical analysis*

1) According to the descriptive statistical results in Table 1, the mean of parental educational anxiety among parents of primary school students was 3.479, which was moderate. Among these, the mean of learning attitude and ability anxiety was the highest, followed by academic performance anxiety, school selection and future achievement anxiety, while interpersonal communication and parent-child interaction anxiety was the lowest.

**Table 1:** The Current Status of Parental Educational Anxiety among Parents of Primary School Students

Dimensions	N	M	SD	Interpretation
Academic achievement anxiety (IV1)	361	3.639	0.679	High
Learning attitude and ability anxiety (IV2)	361	3.718	0.799	High
Interpersonal communication and parent-child interaction anxiety (IV3)	361	3.127	0.636	Moderate
School selection and future achievements anxiety (IV4)	361	3.432	0.689	Moderate
Overall parental educational anxiety (IV)	361	3.479	0.569	Moderate

2) According to the descriptive statistical results in Table 2, the mean of the parent-child relationship among parents of primary school students was 3.473, which was moderate. The means of intimacy and conflict were 3.885 and 3.061, respectively, among which intimacy was the highest and conflict was the lowest.



**Table 2:** The Current Status of Parent-Child Relationship among Parents of Primary School Students

Dimensions	N	M	SD	Interpretation
Intimacy (DV1)	361	3.885	0.502	High
Conflict (DV2)	361	3.061	0.605	Moderate
Overall parent-child relationship (DV)	361	3.473	0.345	Moderate

### *Statistical Analysis of Differences*

Among the parental educational anxiety among parents of primary school students in Chengdu City, Sichuan Province, the mean of parents with a bachelor's degree, master's degree, or above, parents of senior students and only child students were higher. Regarding the intimacy of the parent-child relationship, the mean score of mothers, parents with a master's degree or above, parents of middle-grade students, and parents of only child was higher. In the conflict of the parent-child relationship, the mean score of parents and parents of senior students was more elevated.

### *Correlation Statistical Analysis*

Pearson correlation analysis was used to investigate parental educational anxiety and parent-child relationships. The data showed that there was a significant positive correlation between parental educational anxiety and the parent-child relationship. In contrast, the correlation coefficient  $r$  between parental educational anxiety and intimacy was less than the correlation coefficient  $r$  between parental educational anxiety and conflict, which showed that the correlation degree between parental educational anxiety and conflict was higher than that between parental educational anxiety and intimacy. The relevant situation was shown in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Correlation Analysis between Parental Educational Anxiety and Parent-Child Relationship among Parents of Primary School Students

	IV1	IV2	IV3	IV4	IV	DV1	DV2	DV
IV1	1	.613***	.535***	.612***	.849***	.146**	.404***	.461***
IV2	.613**	1	.480***	.525***	.827***	.285***	.379***	.540***
IV3	.535***	.480***	1	.495***	.757***	.167**	.363***	.439***
IV4	.612***	.525***	.495***	1	.808***	.156**	.384***	.451***
IV	.849***	.827***	.757***	.808***	1	.237***	.471***	.586***
DV1	.146**	.285***	.167**	.156**	.237***	1	-.235***	.522***
DV2	.404***	.379***	.363***	.384***	.471***	-.235***	1	.706***
DV	.461***	.540***	.439***	.451***	.586***	.522***	.706***	1

## **Discussion**

### *Current Status of Parental Educational Anxiety and Parent-Child Relationship among Parents of Primary School Students*

In terms of parental educational anxiety among parents of primary school students, the research results showed that the parental educational anxiety among parents of primary school students was

moderate, and the dimensions with higher scores were learning attitude and ability anxiety, academic performance anxiety, and the scores of school selection and future achievement anxiety were close to 3.5. It indicated that the parental educational anxiety among parents of primary school students surveyed was mainly reflected in their children's academic development. The research conclusion was close to the research results among parents of primary school students targeted by Xu (2022) and Wang (2022), but different from the research results of students' parents who were about to enter primary school by Lai (2022).

In the parent-child relationship among parents of primary school students, the research results showed that the mean of the intimacy dimension was higher than the mean of the conflict dimension, which was similar to the research results of Tang (2023) for primary school students' parents, Wang (2022) for junior high school student's parents, and Sun (2023) for student's parents. At the same time, Zang (2022) showed that adolescent parents' support was higher than parent-child conflict, indicating that the parent-child relationship had intimacy.

#### ***Differences in Parental Educational Anxiety and Parent-Child Relationship among Parents of Primary School Students with Different Demographic Backgrounds***

Among the parental educational anxiety among parents of primary school students in Chengdu City, Sichuan Province, the mean of parents with a bachelor's degree, master's degree, or above, parents of senior students and only child students were higher. Regarding the intimacy of the parent-child relationship, the mean scores of mothers, parents with a master's degree or above, parents of middle-grade students, and parents of only child was higher. In the conflict of the parent-child relationship, the mean scores of parents and parents of senior students was more elevated. These findings were consistent with the research results of Yang (2022), Zhong et al. (2023), Zhu and Luo (2023), Gao et al. (2022), Wang (2022), Zhang (2022), Lai (2022), Li (2022), Zhang (2022), Sun (2023), Cao (2022), Tang (2023), Liu (2018).

#### ***Relationship between Parental Educational Anxiety and Parent-Child Relationship among Parents of Primary School Students***

Correlation tests showed that parental educational anxiety was positively correlated with the intimacy and conflict of the parent-child relationship. That was, the closer the parent-child relationship, the higher the parental educational anxiety, and the more tense the parent-child relationship, the higher the parental educational anxiety.

Although there was no direct research on parental educational anxiety and parent-child relationship at present, there were abundant studies on the relationship between parent-child relationship and parents' cognition, psychology, and behavior. For example, Sun (2023) found that intimacy and conflict (before reverse scoring) were positively correlated with parents' expectations. Sun's research provided enlightenment for this study. Whether it was an intimate or conflicting parent-

child relationship, most parents' expectations for their children were positive and optimistic. No matter whether parents' parent-child relationship was close or conflicting, most parents had requirements for their children's individual development and academic development. Therefore, although intimacy and conflict were negatively correlated with parental educational anxiety ( $r=-0.235$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), they were positively correlated with parental educational anxiety.

Finally, the correlation coefficient  $r$  between parental educational anxiety and intimacy was less than that between parental educational anxiety and conflict, which showed that the correlation between intimacy and parental educational anxiety was lower than that between conflict, suggesting that parents of primary school students should have paid attention to intimacy and reduced conflict when carrying out parenting activities, which was beneficial to alleviating their parental educational anxiety.

### **Conclusions**

1) The overall level of parental educational anxiety among parents of primary school students in Chengdu City, Sichuan Province, was moderate. In the parent-child relationship, intimacy exceeded conflict.

2) Among the parental educational anxiety among parents of primary school students in Chengdu City, Sichuan Province, the mean of parents with a bachelor's degree, master's degree, or above, parents of senior students and only child students were higher. Regarding the intimacy of the parent-child relationship, the mean scores of mothers, parents with a master's degree or above, parents of middle-grade students, and parents of only child was higher. In the conflict of the parent-child relationship, the mean scores of parents and parents of senior students were more elevated.

3) There was a significant positive correlation between parental educational anxiety and parent-child relationship among parents of primary school students, and the correlation between parental educational anxiety and conflict was higher than that between parental educational anxiety and intimacy.

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