

The Current State and Characteristics of Parental Educational Anxiety and Contributing Factors

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Abstract: This article employed descriptive statistics, regression analysis, and mediating effect analysis to study the current state and characteristics of parental educational anxiety as well as contributing factors. It was found that there was a 66.8% rate of educational anxiety among parents surveyed; that education policies were the primary factor in parental educational anxiety, with their relation being mainly mediated by school-related variables; that there was a significantly negative correlation between child academic performance and parents' educational anxiety; and that mothers are more prone to educational anxiety than fathers.

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Introduction

THE study focused on the parents of compulsory education students in Shanghai city. Through a large-scale survey and subsequent data analysis, it aimed to the status quo and characteristics of educational anxiety among parents of compulsory education students; analyze the factors in parental educational anxiety from the standpoints of educational policies, schools, families, and students; and propose recommendations on improving the education policy system from the perspective of policy design.

Analytical Framework and Data

Analytical Framework

The government, schools, parents, and students were chosen as the analytical dimensions of the educational setting to explore the causes of parental educational anxiety using variables such as parental understanding of educational policy, school education service quality, parental educational expectations, and student academic performance. The focus of analysis was on the impact of parental knowledge of educational policies, parental satisfaction with the quality of school education services, and student academic performance on parental educational anxiety.

Data and Variables

The research was based on the data from the *Survey on Compulsory Education Students' Needs to Participate in Off-campus Education* by East China Normal University's National Institute of Educational Policy Research. The survey adopted a convenience sampling method to select primary and middle schools from various administrative districts in Shanghai and include all students from the selected schools and their parents in the sample. A total of 68205 valid questionnaires were retrieved with 35,162 from parents and 33043 from students. Main variables were established from the aspects of the educational policy, school, parent, and student.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were employed to analyze the current state and characteristics of parents' educational anxiety. Subsequently, regression analysis was adopted to identify the influences of educational policy-, school-, family-, and student-related factors on parents' educational anxiety. Furthermore, the mediation model was constructed to clarify the paths to the influences of all variables on parents' educational anxiety and relevant mediating effects.

The Status Quo of Parental Educational Anxiety and its Characteristics

High Prevalence of Parental Educational Anxiety

Among parents surveyed, 66.8% felt extremely anxious about child education, with 14.4% feeling “very anxious” and 52.4% feeling “considerably anxious.” The overall parental educational anxiety was above the moderate level.

The Wide Variety of Causes of Parental Educational Anxiety

The issues that related to parents’ educational anxiety included child academic performance (79.3%), campus safety (54.5%), mobile phone addiction (54.3%), soft skill cultivation (50.7%), educational equity (44.8%), school choice (39.9%), foreign language learning (27.3%), puppy love (25.4%), educational investment (24.4%), off-campus training (24%), sex education (21.6%), school district-focused residence (10.7%), and overseas study (7%), among which, child academic performance remained the greatest source of parental educational anxiety.

Factors Influencing Parental Educational Anxiety

- (i) Parents’ understanding of the policies on the senior secondary education entrance examination and “Double First-class” universities posed a salient impact on their educational anxiety.
- (ii) School service quality had a significant influence on parental educational anxiety, while school ownership was not related to it.
- (iii) Certain aspects of family capital had prominent impacts on parental educational anxiety. Parental education levels, parental occupational status, and home economic status were positively related to parents’ educational anxiety.
- (iv) Child academic results exerted a substantial impact on parents’ educational anxiety. Parents’ low satisfaction with child school performance was a critical reason for their educational anxiety.

Mediating Effects on the Generation of Parental Educational Anxiety

Educational policies are the primary factor influencing parental educational anxiety. In addition to their direct impact, they also indirectly affect parents’ educational anxiety via school-, family-, and student-related factors. As a result, a multi-channel mediation path arose, consisting of chains “educational policies – parental educational anxiety,” “educational policies – schools – parental educational anxiety,” “educational policies –

families – parental educational anxiety”, and “educational policies – schools – students – parental educational anxiety.”

Conclusions

The research concluded that: (i) educational policies posed the strongest impact on parental educational anxiety, and the mediating chain “educational policies – schools – parental educational anxiety” served to be the primary path; (ii) parents’ knowledge of educational policies were closely associated with their educational anxiety; (iii) Family capital significantly affected parents’ educational anxiety; (iv) Child academic performance was negatively related to parental educational anxiety; (v) the quality of school education service had significant influences on parents’ educational anxiety; (vi) Mothers were more prone to educational anxiety than fathers, and parents’ educational anxiety peaked at the junior secondary phase.

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