

Study on the Current Challenges and Solutions in Adolescent Family Education

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the key challenges in adolescent family education, drawing from both domestic and international research. Through comparative and literature analysis, it explores the differences in family education approaches across various cultural and socioeconomic contexts, highlighting their profound impact on adolescent development. The findings reveal significant disparities in educational concepts, practices, and content, especially between urban and rural areas, as well as among families with varying parental education levels. To address these challenges, the paper proposes strategies to strengthen school-family collaboration, enhance parents' educational competencies, and improve the family education environment. These strategies aim to foster the holistic development of adolescents' physical and mental well-being. The study offers valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers in the field of adolescent education.

KEYWORDS

Adolescents; Family Education; Educational Practices; School-Family Collaboration; Urban-Rural Disparities.

1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescent family education plays a crucial role in shaping the physical, mental, and social development of young individuals. As societies undergo rapid changes in family structures, education systems, and economic conditions, the effectiveness of family education becomes a topic of growing concern for researchers and policymakers alike. Understanding the differences in family education practices across various regions and cultural settings is essential for addressing these challenges and proposing actionable solutions. This paper aims to analyze both domestic and international research on adolescent family education, highlighting key trends, challenges, and opportunities for improvement.

Through an extensive literature review of Chinese databases (such as CNKI and Chaoxing) and international databases (including EBSCO and Springer Link), it is evident that domestic and international scholars approach adolescent family education from distinct perspectives, focusing on different themes and issues. To facilitate a clearer analysis, this paper categorizes the current state of research into two sections: domestic and international studies.

2. DOMESTIC RESEARCH STATUS

2.1. Definition of Family Education Concepts

Academic perspectives on the definition of family education vary widely. A review of relevant literature highlights several influential and widely accepted definitions. Gu Mingyuan defines family

education as "the mutual education among family members, typically referring to the education of children by their parents." Yang Baozhong characterizes family education as a concept "rich in connotation and broad in scope," referring to the continuous educational influence among family members in social life. Zhao Zhongxin distinguishes between narrow and broad definitions: in the narrow sense, it refers specifically to the education provided by parents (mainly the mother and father) to their children; in the broader sense, it encompasses the mutual influence and education among all family members. Taiwanese scholar Huang Naiyu emphasizes that family education is an interactive process, wherein parents and children influence and learn from each other in daily life.

2.2. Research on Family Education Methods

Renowned educator Tao Xingzhi proposed several scientific principles regarding family education and developed a distinctive "harmonious family education view" through his practical experience. Influenced by the educational philosophies of Pestalozzi and Dewey, Tao argued that "education is life," stressing that the goal of education is to nurture individuals who develop in a balanced and harmonious manner—embodying truth, goodness, and beauty—and achieve comprehensive development in moral, intellectual, and physical dimensions. Tao's key principles of family education include: providing a harmonious home environment, fostering democratic and reasonable relationships among family members, understanding children's psychology, and adapting educational methods to their needs. Additionally, he emphasized parental modeling, the creation of a positive cultural atmosphere, and collaboration between families and schools to promote the harmonious development of children.

Lin Lei categorizes parenting styles into seven dimensions, including indulgent, authoritarian, permissive, expectation-based, inconsistent, rejecting, and democratic styles. These dimensions are further classified into extreme, strict, indulgent, achievement-oriented, and positive types. Zhang Qing advocates for the re-education of parents through the establishment of "parenting schools" to enhance parents' educational awareness, transform their concepts of education, and help them adopt more scientific educational methods, ultimately improving the overall level of family education in society.

2.3. Research on the Content of Family Education

Hu Jiyuan emphasizes that the content of family education should involve both nurturing and teaching, aiming not only to impart knowledge and develop intelligence but also to foster children's moral values and spiritual growth. Jiang Chao's survey at Nanchang University identifies 13 key areas of family education: daily life, professional knowledge, mental health, health and safety, interpersonal relationships, sex education, personality development, career choices, resilience, risk awareness, financial literacy, life values, and social responsibility. The survey revealed deficiencies in areas such as sex education, resilience, and social responsibility, with significant disparities between urban and rural contexts.

Wang Zhiyong argues that the core objective of family education is to support children's growth and development, with moral, health, and quality education being central components. Pang Junpeng notes a common trend of parents prioritizing intellectual development at the expense of moral education. Li Wenjing's research in higher education institutions in Tonghua reveals significant gaps in family education in terms of ideals, values, life education, and adolescent development. Li Hongzeng emphasizes the need for family education to be aligned with children's developmental stages, advocating for educational practices tailored to individual needs.

Professor Zhang Yiwu stresses the importance of family traditions, especially etiquette education, which should help children develop proper values and worldviews. Wu Hang further elaborates that the family is a child's "first school" and plays a crucial role in moral, intellectual, aesthetic, and labor education. He traces the historical evolution of family education, from ancient rites and music

education to modern concepts such as national education and frugality during the Republic of China period, and to more contemporary educational goals proposed by educators like Chen Heqin.

2.4. Research on the Subjects of Family Education

There is some divergence in the current domestic research regarding the subjects of family education. Some scholars argue that parents or other family elders are the main educators. For example, Zheng Qilong (1984) asserts that family education involves the cultivation and guidance of children by parents, an essential part of the broader education system. Similarly, Sun Junsan (1991) emphasizes the role of parents in shaping children's physical and mental development through family life practices and moral education.

Other scholars propose a more collective approach, suggesting that family education is the mutual education among all family members. The "Educational Dictionary" defines family education as the interaction and influence among family members. The recently enacted "Family Education Promotion Law" similarly recognizes both broad and narrow definitions: in the broad sense, it refers to the mutual education among family members, while in the narrow sense, it pertains specifically to the guidance provided by parents or guardians to minors in areas of morality, culture, and behavior. The "Guidance Opinions on Strengthening Family Education Work" (2015) emphasizes the leading role of parents while also encouraging schools to play a supportive role in guiding family education. The draft "Family Education Law of the People's Republic of China" further outlines family education as the responsibility of parents or guardians to promote the healthy growth of minors.

3. CURRENT STATUS OF FOREIGN RESEARCH

Globally, the cultivation of talent is universally acknowledged as a fundamental pillar of national development. However, the characteristics and focal points of family education differ markedly across countries, influenced by variations in cultural traditions, social structures, and economic conditions. By systematically reviewing research findings and relevant literature from diverse nations, this section aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted approaches to family education on an international scale. This exploration will illuminate the various methods employed and the content emphasized in family education, thereby enriching our understanding of its role in shaping adolescent development across different cultural contexts.

In the United Kingdom during the mid-17th century, philosopher John Locke published *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, which extensively articulated his views on family education with the objective of cultivating well-rounded gentlemen for the nation. This notion of "gentleman's education" resonated with the interests of the emerging bourgeoisie in modern Europe, focusing on the development of skilled practitioners and responsible citizens. Locke asserted that a gentleman should possess not only intellectual capabilities but also physical vitality, emphasizing that a robust body is integral to a fulfilling life.

Within his educational framework, moral education was regarded as the cornerstone of a gentleman's upbringing. He famously stated, "Virtue is harder to obtain than any knowledge in the world," underscoring the primacy of moral character over mere intellectual attainment. Regarding intellectual education, Locke advocated against coercive learning methods; instead, he championed heuristic teaching, which aims to stimulate children's natural curiosity and foster a genuine interest in learning. He proposed that educational content should be structured to progress from simple to complex concepts, facilitating a more intuitive understanding.

Locke also promoted experiential learning through hands-on activities such as crafts and gardening, embodying the principle of "learning by doing." This approach not only engaged children in practical skills but also encouraged a deeper understanding of their environment. While some of Locke's ideas are constrained by the historical context of his time and may not be directly applicable to

contemporary youth education or the cultivation of socialist ideals, his emphasis on the holistic development of physical, moral, and intellectual education remains relevant. In particular, his focus on virtue and character development offers a critical perspective on current educational trends that often prioritize academic performance and standardized test scores over comprehensive personal growth.

In Japan, the education system is renowned for its robust school structure, yet family education is equally esteemed. Morishige Satoshi, in his work *Children and Family Environment*, highlights that the quality of family education and the environmental atmosphere are critical to children's development. A nurturing family environment not only supports children's physical and mental well-being but also fosters their overall happiness and growth. In this context, parents are encouraged to collaboratively create a warm and supportive atmosphere that promotes positive development, as high-quality family education significantly influences a child's future trajectory.

In Italy, Edmondo De Amicis's novel *The Heart (Cuore)* conveys his insights on family education through a narrative lens. The story, centered around the protagonist Enrico, underscores the importance of family education in cultivating essential qualities such as a love of learning, open communication, and admiration for exemplary figures. De Amicis posits that children can develop into socially responsible individuals through careful nurturing and attentive guidance. Additionally, Maria Montessori emphasizes the pivotal role of children within the context of family education, advocating for the establishment of a positive family environment that allows children to explore and fully realize their potential.

In the United States, psychologist Thomas Gordon developed the "Gordon Model," which emphasizes the use of psychological strategies to strengthen parent-child relationships. Sociologist Rector has noted that with the emergence of a new generation characterized by information and technological revolutions, the relationship between family and education has become increasingly intricate. This evolution has prompted scholars to not only recognize the close interconnection between education and family but also to seek theoretical frameworks for analyzing their various relationships. Psychiatrist Karen Horney, while focusing on individual personality development, underscored the reciprocal influence of family education and social culture, arguing that the interaction between the family environment and societal norms can lead to psychological conflicts, potentially resulting in mental health issues.

In Austria, psychologist Alfred Adler, in his work *The Education of Children*, examined how to foster healthy personality development in children. He asserted that parents bear the dual responsibility of providing academic education and creating a positive psychological and living environment to facilitate healthy development. Adler highlighted adolescence as a critical phase of personal growth, cautioning that parental neglect or excessive interference may impede children's successful navigation of this developmental stage. His insights offer valuable guidance for parents seeking to adopt a more scientific approach to education.

In France, philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau emphasized the crucial role of family education throughout various stages of children's growth, arguing that its importance should not be underestimated. In his numerous works, Rousseau explored different facets of family education in detail. Additionally, economist Pierre Bourdieu proposed that the influence of the family extends beyond financial support to encompass the provision of cultural capital, positioning the family as a significant yet often hidden factor in the process of social reproduction.

4. REVIEW AND CRITIQUE

A total of 71,688 documents have been retrieved from the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) using "family education" as the search keyword. This extensive body of literature reflects the depth and richness of research in this field. The studies have engaged in comprehensive discussions

concerning the definition of family education, its objectives, content, subjects, and the implementation strategies for evaluation systems. Such work has established a robust theoretical foundation for future inquiries and provided valuable insights for the reform of adolescent family education, thereby enhancing its scientific, rational, and standardized nature.

However, despite this wealth of research outcomes, several deficiencies persist, which can be categorized into the following aspects:

4.1. Narrow Research Perspectives

A significant portion of the literature on family education concentrates on comparative studies between China and other countries, such as the United States, France, and Japan. These studies often highlight the deficiencies in Chinese family education while emphasizing the strengths of foreign educational systems, advocating for the adoption of international practices. However, such comparisons frequently overlook critical differences in historical, cultural, and social contexts, resulting in analyses that lack depth and comprehensive insight.

Researchers have often failed to adopt multidimensional perspectives to explore the applicability and adaptability of various educational models. Consequently, the conclusions drawn tend to be superficial and unconvincing. For instance, these comparative studies often neglect to consider China's unique socio-cultural environment and its current stage of economic development, both of which are essential factors when evaluating the potential integration of foreign educational concepts. Therefore, future research should adopt a more nuanced analytical framework to better understand the complexities of family education and to develop contextually relevant strategies.

4.2. Lack of Targeted Research Outcomes

Domestic research on family education predominantly focuses on large and medium-sized cities, while relatively little attention is given to remote and economically underdeveloped county-level cities. This tendency overlooks the unique characteristics and specific challenges associated with family education in China's 374 county-level cities. These areas often experience significant shortages in economic, cultural, and educational resources, leading to heightened difficulties for parents in educating their children.

Existing studies primarily address family education issues arising from urbanization, lacking in-depth analyses of practices in county-level cities and rural areas. This research bias limits a comprehensive understanding of the overall landscape of family education and fails to capture the diversity and complexity of educational practices across different regions. To address this gap, future research should prioritize empirical studies focused on family education in county-level cities and rural areas. Through detailed surveys and case analyses, researchers can identify the unique characteristics and needs of family education in varying socioeconomic contexts, thereby providing more targeted recommendations for policymaking and practice.

In summary, while the current body of research offers a solid foundation for the development of the field of family education, advancing the overall understanding and effectiveness of family education necessitates more in-depth research and analysis from diverse perspectives and specific contexts.

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