



The Role of Parental Stimulation in Family Education in China

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Abstract. Parental involvement is one of the key topics now in family education. Researchers found that the depth and qualities of parental involvement in education have both direct and indirect impacts on all aspects of children's development. In China, however, there are lack of concrete and implantable recommendations on how to get parents to participate deeply in their children's education. Therefore, this article defines the parental stimulation in family education to influence parental attitudes toward education. By analyzing the issue of parental stimulation and checking its importance to children, the article categorizes the stimulation to attitude words and actions and primarily checks the way they affect children's cognitions, emotions, and academic performance. Positive parental stimulate is correlated positively with all aspects of a child's development. Children's healthy development is best supported by stable connections with them through quality words and behaviors. However, the lack of educational knowledge leads to parents always being absent from family education. The dominant reason is parents over-emphasize academic achievement and parent's low cognitive levels. The study suggests helping Chinese parents timely about increasing educational knowledge and offering guidance in practicing.

Keywords: Parental Stimulation, Parental Stimulation, Children's Development

1 Introduction

Over recent years, family education has been proven to be highly relevant to children's development along with the improvement of living standards and the development of spiritual civilization. As Baumrind's parenting styles theory and Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory pointed out, a child's growth is a continuous interaction process with the external environment [1, 2]. Parents as children's first partners and role models, their words and deeds have a direct impact on their children's cognitive level and emotional development. For example, when parents adopt an authoritative parenting style - caring about their children's growth without being harsh or restrictive, children who grow up in this situation generally have a stronger sense of secure attachment, self-confidence, and happiness. Therefore, parents play an important role in their children's growth and development.

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However, the perfection of parental involvement in family education is still have drawbacks in some aspects. Previous research primarily focuses on the influence of family education and parenting styles on kids. The impact of parental stimulation on children's individual development is unclear. A European study showed that parents' higher educational level can predict the tendency for them to use complex vocabularies and quality expressions in education [3]. This enriched language stimulation offered a favorable environment for children's language development. There is a scarcity of research examining the categorization of stimulation in Chinese families and the effects of stimulation on children. The discussion of these issues has great meaning for Chinese parents to scientifically raise children and cultivate quality talents for China. Based on this, this study analyzes the role of parental stimulation and its importance for children. The aim is to help Chinese parents recognize the importance of their role in the family and provide them with positive stimulative advice.

2 The Meaning and Importance of Stimulate

2.1 The Meaning and Categorization of Stimulate

Current research does not provide a specific and consistent definition of parental stimulation in family education. This paper defines stimulation as the dynamic interaction between parents and children in the process of parenting, based on studies of parental involvement in related articles [4-6]. Parental stimulation can be broadly classified into two categories. One category is positive stimulation, in which parents can pay attention to children's demands and emotions and give efficiently warm responses. The other category is negative stimulation in which parents neglect children and employ inappropriate forms of stimulation, such as less companionship and communication and inconsistent supervision and discipline [4].

In addition, the way of stimulation has been divided into attitude words and actions in this paper. Stimulate attitude can be considered as the importance of parental perception for child development. Parental attitudes are thought to be a prerequisite for positive stimulating behaviors and words because attitudes drive the measures taken by parents. Just like authoritative parenting uses sensitive attitudes, encouraging words, and companionable behaviors to achieve the goal of happy and healthy growth of children [2]. This paper mainly focuses on the part of parental stimulating attitudes that affect children. This is because the words and actions taken by parents and their quality are influenced by parental attitudes. Parents with higher self-perception usually resort to an understanding and supportive approach to get along with their children. Their behaviors and words will lean towards encouragement and support. This contributes to the overall development of the child.

Parents' words and actions belong to the explicit parental stimulation. Parents can transmit their beliefs, acceptance, and doubts to kids through their own words and actions. Parents' words and actions not only provide an environment rich in cognitive stimulation for the child but also facilitate the quality of parent-child bonding in joint attention activities, as well as providing encouragement and loving hugs. Parents can

either supply easy physical contact for a healthy psyche or create as meaningful as possible environments for the development of their children.

2.2 The Role of Stimulate on Children

The Effects on Cognitive Development. Early childhood development is crucial for a child's cognitive development. Especially when children are 18-65 months old, the brain is highly influenced by environmental stimuli in the early years of growth [1]. The early childhood home environment is the factor that is most capable of shaping children and having a lifelong impact on them. Parental stimulation begins to influence children's cognitive functions before they enter school. When parents spend more time staying with their children, such as telling stories or playing, children receive more cognitive stimulation in that way than those who lack parental company. The more of these cognitive stimuli, the more conducive to the formation of the child's cognition. In contrast, a survey by Li et al. showed that only 15% of rural Chinese parents tell stories to their children, 7% read to their children, and 21% play with their children [4]. This indicates that parents in rural China had very limited cognitive stimulation. That is one of the reasons why another meta-survey in rural China found that the average cognitive delay rate of children under 5 years old was as high as 48%, which is related to the poorer parenting practices in rural China [2].

Parental stimulation is a manifestation of parents' cognitive level, which acts as a mediator on children. This also suggests that parents who generally take a positive stimulation approach commonly have a higher level of cognition. These parents will be able to give more and higher quality cognitive stimulation resources. For example, the quality of a parent's storytelling determines a child's understanding of the world, but some rural caregivers believe that storytelling is only to soothe a child to sleep [6]. In this case, caregivers with low cognitive levels would not choose appropriate storybooks for the children and would not be conducive to forming the children's worldview.

The Effects on Mental Health and Emotions. This paper argues that the interaction between parents and children will directly affect the construction of children's psychological environment and the cultivation of positive emotions. According to Bowlby's description of parent-child relationships, the quality of the attachment that children form with their caregivers in early years continues to play a role in shaping the child's mental health throughout childhood and into the future [1]. Therefore, a high-quality parent-child relationship is equivalent to children having a secure attachment to their parents. This is inseparable from parents being attentive to their children from childhood and maintaining good communication with them. And research indicates that effective parent-adolescent communication improves adolescents' social-emotional adjustment [1]. This is because a cozy and intimate bond with parents allows adolescents to feel supported by their parents and to seek support from them in learning how to cope with difficulties [7]. In this process, parents initially make effective communication with their children and participate in educational activities that

could increase the adolescents' confidence in their parents. Therefore, when parents can make an appropriate link with their children, the growth of the children will be a healthy cycle process full of companionship and communication.

This can also be explained by authoritative parenting styles [3]. A study that investigated the situation of 1171 students' emotional eating found that children's emotional eating was negatively correlated with authoritative parenting [8]. Children's emotional eating problems were reduced when their primary caregiver, the mother, gave more support to children, had more reasoning or induction (giving reasons and explanations) when faced with a problem, or prioritized the child's emotions. Therefore, it is vital that parents are able to give children a warm and independent space to grow, to be responsive to their children's emotions, and to respond to them in a rational manner to foster children's emotional stability and psychological health.

The Effects on Academic Performance. A child's academic performance is a commonly discussed topic among Chinese parents. Because of social reasons, most parents have expectations for children's academic achievement. Gan and Bilige classified effective parental stimulation into stimulating language using friendly communication, stimulating behaviors with reasoned rule-setting and tutoring, and stimulating attitudes with supportive affections and expectations [5]. Thus, children with supportive families generally have higher academic achievement. Parents in supportive families focus on stimulating attitudes, and parents expect of entering good colleges, thus children receive emotional encouragement. Supportive families have more positive stimulating language, with parents taking the time to communicate school tasks with children. As well as parents having supportive stimulating behaviors, with parents planning play and rest time for a child, and also accompanying child in completing assignments. Hence, parents who are more emotionally invested can increase the support to children, and then children are more likely to be spontaneously motivated to strive for success. Parents' positive stimulating attitudes lead them to positive accompaniment and communication that result in the visualization of the child's achievements.

However, Li et al. found an alternative explanation for the effect of parental input on academic performance. They found that harsh parental tutoring of children in homework sometimes has a downward effect on grades [9]. This is because parental tutoring affects the child's cognitive ability, which results in a drop in grades. This attributed to the mediating effect of parents' cognitive level. However, it is also able to prove that the parents' own influence on their children's academic performance cannot be ignored. It has also been suggested that Asian parents could spend more time reading with their children, thus influencing children's study habits to improve their academic performance [3]. This is not exactly the same as the Western studies that recommend more parental involvement in children's school activities. Therefore, it is more important for Chinese parents to focus on their role in family education and try to practice it according to their needs.

3 Problems and Factors in Chinese Family Education

3.1 Problems of Family Education

According to current research, Chinese parents tend to neglect the use of stimulation in home education. Most Chinese parents would regard education as teachers' duty [10]. They believe that teachers should solve all the flaws and problems of their children.

Family Education Equal to Academic Education. Due to the excessive focus on academic grades, it is common for Chinese parents to categorize children with good grades as "good" children, and to give them more rewards and encouragement. For example, "Your test scores are higher than last time" or "We can go skiing if you get the highest grades next time". Oppositely, the "bad" kids are ignored for their internal emotional and cognitive problems because of poor academic performance. Parents thus overlook the cultivation of their children's qualities, morals, and mental health [11]. As a result, family education turns out to be monotonous. Academic education takes up most of the time in Chinese home education [10]. Moreover, parents tend to adopt extreme education methods because of the influence on academic performance, such as lack of communication and disregard of progress academic performance.

Neglecting Home Education and Stimulation. On the other hand, most parents do not give positive feedback to their children, especially in front of people who are not in their family. Although parental recognition has been proven to be remarkably beneficial to children's well-being, Chinese parents, influenced by traditional culture, are rarely able to give the proper compliments to their children when they have achieved something [1]. Furthermore, the collectivist culture in China makes parents tend to protect children's growth. They will give the best they can to their children and strive for better material conditions [10]. But they neglect the importance of companionship. For example, when parents accompany their children to complete homework, many of them fail to be effective partners. Some parents play with their cell phones, others tantrums in the process, and very few parents motivate their children properly to make learning fun and work for it.

3.2 Reasons for Chinese Parents Neglect Family Education

The problem of neglect in family education cannot be analyzed separately from cultural, social, and educational standards.

First, Chinese parents' self-perception and self-efficacy in parenting are inadequate [1]. When parents are enabled to self-perceive their responsibilities in family education and take action, children can be influenced most in the process. When parents' self-perceptions are low, they rarely stimulate their children or use invalid interactions that exacerbate parent-child conflict. Examples include ignoring children's progress and blaming children for their mistakes.

Secondly, because the selection of talents in Chinese society heavily relies on academic rankings, the societal quest for a higher degree and a better school became very common [12]. This has led Chinese parents to place a high value on their children's test scores and believe that the results represent the overall educational effectiveness of their children. Good academic performance can lead children to highly ranked colleges, which are more likely to get better-conditioned jobs and greater social acclaim. Therefore, this achievement-oriented assessment system generally causes Chinese parents to neglect the development of their children's other competencies. And because the parents themselves are pursuing academics and job positions from their childhood to work, parents do not have time to learn about parenting. They have an unclear perception of their roles and are not aware of the value of companionship to motivate the child's growth. They have an unclear perception of their roles and are not aware of the value of companionship to motivate the child's growth. As a result, violent, coddling, & ignoring parenting styles occur frequently. Therefore, the lack of parenting experience breaks parents' original intention of offering the best for their children.

Finally, because of China's introverted and modest cultural environment, most parents do not give positive encouragement to their children, especially outside the family. Yet children only realize their self-worth and are willing to disclose themselves to their caregivers through positive encouragement.

4 Suggestions

Through the description of how parental motivation provides children with a more developmentally appropriate education, it can be seen that the effectiveness and correctness of parental motivation is largely influenced by the parents themselves. Hence it is important to increase Chinese parents' awareness of the importance of their roles.

4.1 Suggestions for Stimulating Attitudes

Stimulating attitudes in family education are mainly embodied in the scientificization of child-rearing methods and the improvement of parental accompaniment. The first is to help Chinese parents popularize parenting knowledge. Parents need to know that they have the same influence as school teachers in guiding their children. The government can provide free parenting education, including but not limited to secure attachment building and authoritative parenting. It is important for Chinese children to be guided in their cognitive level as well as their mental health.

However, because Chinese parents are burdened with supporting the elderly and children, they have to spend more time at work and cut back on other things, such as their children's education [12]. This results in they were unable to sufficiently engage with their children and positively adjust their stimulating approach. It is crucial to improve Chinese children's cognitive level as well as their mental health guidance. Therefore, adjusting the working hours to increase childcare communication between parents is also a way of adjustment. However, such adjustments also require coopera-

tion between several government departments. So the effective way at this stage is to provide parents with some authoritative information on childcare.

4.2 Suggestions for Stimulating Words and Actions

Due to cultural influences, Chinese parents tend to be introspective in education. Parents may neglect the role of verbal and behavioral stimulation in youngsters' development, and seldom affirm and praise children's learning performance, which reflects the lack of educational concepts. Almost all parents in China have the aspiration to offer a better education for their kids. However, sometimes they fail to help children with efficient words or actions because of a lack of educational knowledge. Therefore, education college students can be organized as volunteers to help parents with how-to-do scenarios. They could emphasize the use of positive language and behaviors in their daily interactions with their children.

Simultaneously, such financial investments in supervising homework and extracurricular tutoring are very prevalent in Chinese families. However, it has been shown that parents' economic investment to support their children's extracurricular programs has no significant impact on academic performance [9]. The root of the problem is the development of good character and the ability of children to drive themselves to learn spontaneously. Therefore, it needs to be emphasized to parents that the lack of accompaniment will lead to bigger negative impacts on children than the lack of the number of interest courses. Accordingly, parents should be able to give verbal affirmation and behavioral encouragement at a suitable time according to children's traits during the learning process and to help students establish a congenial psychological and developmental environment.

5 Conclusion

This study analyzes the lack of scientific stimulation in Chinese family education. This paper provides a referable way to improve parents' authoritative parenting, which is conducive to enhancing the whole society's perception of education. Through the study, this paper finds that Chinese parents lack appropriate stimulating attitudes, words, and behaviors in family education. And stimulation contributes a lot to inspiring children to learn as well as to maintaining family well-being. First, parents could support children's high level of cognitive development by increasing cognitive stimuli in early childhood. Second, the discretionary use of positive words and actions in parenting can help to foster mental health and emotional stability in children.

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