# Factors influencing the educational expectations of Chinese youth

Wang Yifang[1], Pu Weiwei[2]
[1] *Universiti putra Malaysia, Malaysia*
[2] *Infrastructure University Kuala Lumpur*
*Corresponding author: author's@email.com* [pww25@qq.com](pww25@qq.com)

**Abstract**

In China, education is an indispensable part of the growth of teenagers, and the results of education are also the achievements that teenagers should achieve at this stage. Educational expectation as a socio-psychological variable has an important impact on student's educational results. In the "Wisconsin Model", educational expectation as an intermediary variable has been a concern by researchers Unfortunately, limited studies were found about the influencing factors of educational expectation. As a result, this study will examine the influencing factors on the educational expectations of Chinese teens using a sample of teenagers aged 13 to 15 as well as the feedback from their parents, which was gathered in 2018 from China Family Panel Studies(CFPS). Data were analyze using SPSS 26 to get the descriptive statistic and nested model result. Result found, the educational expectations of the teenagers are somewhat influenced by their home background and the school environment.

**Keywords**: Educational, expectations, factors, influence, youth

## Introduction

Educational expectation refers to the expectation of individuals or others to achieve the highest level of education in the future and it is also a psychological implication. The academic success of students is significantly impacted by educational expectations. The higher the educational expectation, the higher the possibility of higher educational achievements (Li and Xie, 2021). Although expectation does not play a decisive role in a person's future achievements, expectation can play an incentive role, encouraging teenagers to seek academic success (Ronnie and Philip 2021). In 2021, Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China published that teenagers are the future of China and the hope of the nation. Therefore, exploring the influencing factors of educational expectations helps to set good educational goals for teenagers and establish good plans for China's future. According to Liu et al.(2020) family background is also closely related to China's higher education enrollment opportunities, and occupation can be regarded as a category of family background. As a result, it was found that the proportion of students whose parents are engaged in non-management skills are higher than those of parents engaged in management skills. Thus, it can be seen that family background is still one of the important reasons that affect social class mobility. However, there is still a lack of relevant support for the basis of this impact and the analysis of data. Besides the parents' professional occupation, students' family background, their personality and school's environment also play roles in this educational expectation, still needs further exploration. Therefore, this paper will use SPSS to select 13-15 years old teenagers and their parents' answers according to CFPS or empirical analysis to explore the factors related to educational expectations.

## Literature review

Since 1950s, The Wisconsin School carried out a great deal of empirical research on the factors of the expectation of the personal education and the expectation of the occupation. Early studies focused on the effects of individual and household factors on the student's personal education (Sewell & Hauser, 1993). According to research, gender, cognitive ability, and economic status of home societies are important factors affecting the expectations of Youth Education (Sewell et al., 1957). Li and Xie (2020)based on baseline data of the 2013 - 2014 "China Education tracking survey", the present state and the influence factor of the difference between the city and the rural area which the expectations for junior high school students' education were examined. The purpose of this study is to

identify variances of junior high school students' educational expectations between urban and rural situation. Overall, there is a significant difference in the educational expectations of junior high school students in urban and rural areas. The expected value for junior high school students to receive higher education in rural areas and among migrant workers is significantly lower than junior high school students in urban areas. Next, the family registration structure of the junior high school students was explained by the difference of the junior high school student expectation of the urban and rural area. This difference is influenced by students' cognitive ability, home background and school environment, and the influence of school registration structure is the most remarkable. The study believes that creating a good school education atmosphere, alleviating the division of school registered residence registration, and enhancing school integration are important measures to promote China's education equity and social equity.

From the above literature, the expectation of this education begins with the "Wisconsin model", and the expectation of the education is influenced by the home background, and it influences the student's learning result and the career result as an intermediate variable (Coleman, 1988; Sewell et al., 1957). In analyzing the relationship between family social status and educational expectations, Sewell et al. (1968) found that with parents' professional reputation as an independent variable and under the control of intellectual factors, in families with higher professional status, children's educational expectations are also higher. In addition,Li and Xie 2020 pointed out that the main factors affecting the expectations of education are home economics capital, home culture capital and home social capital. These home backgrounds will have a positive impact on the student's educational expectations. In addition, research shows that parents play an important role in children's education by providing support and expectations for children's education, especially for children's learning. In an article about the lack of home education, low-income parents are less likely to participate in the education of their children, pointing out that these parents lack more time and resources (Cross et al., 2019). This is due to the believe that they are poor in ability and lack self-efficacy, they may be in a state of atrophy and reluctance in exchange with the school. In contrast, parents with high degrees of education and high socioeconomic status may have the opportunity and resources to understand children, have higher values, and face fewer participation disorders. Moreover, the participation in the child education is high, and the strategy is very positive (Li & Yu, 2020).

Yang and Hong (2023)found that social capital from the perspective of interpersonal relations will promote families to comply with society and equate with society, they will require their children to make progress and have higher educational expectations. Let families perceive the real return on education through the highly educated people in society, and make rational compliance on education decisions, so as to gain the effect that families with high social capital can obtain high-quality resources through social capital to improve the academic performance of their children and thus form high educational expectations, while children from families with low social capital may be more diligent to improve their performance due to resource constraints, thus promoting families to have high educational expectation (Yu et al., 2022). It should be noted that Chinese parents have the unique localization and origin of their localization, which is influenced by China's current state of affairs and Chinese parents emphasize their children's academic performance more than their parents(Li & Xie,2020). Regardless of their socioeconomic status, Chinese parents are working to provide children with good learning conditions (Li & Yu, 2020).

Programmer for International Student Assessment (PISA) data set to analyze discipline atmosphere and mathematics achievement, found that there was a positive correlation between discipline atmosphere and mathematics achievement (Aytekin et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2022). In addition, Rizzotto and França (2022) used the 2018 International Student Assessment Plan to have an evaluation plan of 2018, the influence of the school atmosphere on the student's learning performance of Brazil is evaluated, and this theme is verified using the Compensated Score Distribution Method (PSM). The final result showed that the negative school atmosphere was not conducive to the school performance of students. Moreover, the intensity of school atmosphere will affect students' academic performance in different ways, the effect on students' learning performance is remarkable. In addition to influencing students' academic performance, school atmosphere will also affect students' perception ability. The school atmosphere in which middle school students live will also further affect both students and parents' educational expectations for different middle school students (Backes et al., 2022). Zysberg and Schwabsky (2021) based on the concept of social cognition theory and academic self-efficacy, a model of 1642 junior high and high school students in Israel tested the model. In this model, the self-efficacy of the school was adjusted by the relationship between school atmosphere and academic performance. Huang et al. (2018) mentioned that school atmosphere was related to students reported academic achievements through their academic self-efficacy, it is still necessary to consider the age of the sample. When students are old enough, they can perceive the complexity of the school environment and report it. On the other hand, if the sample is young enough, the school environment will affect their future development, especially in terms of academic efficiency and achievement. Ying and Yidan (2021) used a hierarchical linear model to analyze the baseline data of the China Education Tracking Survey 2013-2014. For this purpose, the study found that class environment has a significant impact on students' educational expectations. It can be seen that both subjective and objective class environment have an important positive impact on students' educational expectations.

By reading the literature's analysis of the effect of expectation on education, it was found out that the author did not provide the age of the examinee, did not take into account the environment where the subject was located, and did not consider the related influence element from various perspectives. Most of it was obtained from the perspective of parents. It was found out by the author through reading the relevant literature. In China, research on the influence factors of the expectation to the education is insufficient, and as is the research on the specific youth group is less. This study focuses on the factors influencing the expectation of Youth Education. Therefore, this study mainly focuses on the influencing factors of educational expectations for adolescents, and puts forward the following hypotheses:

**H1:** The individual characteristics of adolescents will have a positive impact on their educational expectations

**H2:** Adolescents' own family background will have a positive impact on their educational expectations

**H3:** The school environment of teenagers will have a positive impact on their educational expectations

**Methodology**

*Data source*

The data used in this study is mainly from China Family Panel Studies (CFPS) in 2018 which was implemented by the China Social Sciences Research Center of Peking University. The project uses computer-aided survey technology to conduct interviews to meet diverse design needs. The CFPS focuses on many research themes, including China's economy and non-economic welfare, economic activity, educational outcomes, family relationships, home dynamics, population transfer and health. This is a national, large-scale, multicultural social tracking research project. At the end of the CFPS 2018 survey, a total of about 15,000 families were interviewed and about 44,000 personal questionnaires were collected. From a set of integrated personal self-answering questionnaires (for individuals aged 10 and above) and Guardian's answering questionnaires (for individuals aged 0-15). The content of the questionnaire includes the integration of individual self-assessment questionnaires and children's parents' proxy questionnaires. Starting from 2018, CFPS has reorganized the previously independent adult and children's questionnaires to form an integrated questionnaire system, including individual self-assessment questionnaires (for individuals aged 10 and above) and children's parents' proxy questionnaires (for individuals aged 0-15). And it also introduces the concept of family answering. Since 2018, CFPS has introduced the concept of family answering for the first time, requiring original family members to answer some basic questions for each individual who leaves the home unit, rather than limited to those who are financially connected to the original family. In addition, a personal answering program has been added, allowing respondents who are financially co located with the surveyed individuals to answer questions on behalf of those who are unable to answer the questionnaire due to physical reasons. The completion of the family class part of CFPS 2018 was 69.3% and the cross-wheel tracking rate was 86.6%. The cross-section response rate of the single sample was 67.4% and the cross-wheel tracking rate was 80.8%. When only baseline gene members were considered, the completion rate in 2018 was 64.5%. The response rate of CFPS 2018 is still at the international level.

*Research results*

*Results of descriptive statistics*

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics*

| Variable | Min | Max | Mean | Std. deviation | Variance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | 0 | 1 | 0.540 | 0.498 | 0.248 |
| Census | 0 | 1 | 0.540 | 0.499 | 0.249 |
| Child | 0 | 1 | 0.460 | 0.498 | 0.248 |
| Chinese | 1 | 4 | 3.100 | 1.040 | 1.081 |
| Mathematics | 1 | 4 | 2.950 | 0.963 | 0.927 |
| Income | 1 | 5 | 2.310 | 1.047 | 1.097 |
| Subsidy | 0 | 1 | 0.170 | 0.378 | 0.143 |
| Marriage | 0 | 1 | 1.210 | 0.404 | 0.163 |
| School | 0 | 1 | 0.720 | 0.451 | 0.204 |
| Level | 0 | 1 | 0.260 | 0.438 | 0.192 |
| EE | 1 | 5 | 2.990 | 0.871 | 0.759 |

Table 1 provides the basic information about each variable. From Table 1, we can see that the average level of education expectation (EE) is 2.99, and the corresponding education stage is a bachelor's degree. It can be concluded that most junior high school students hope to receive an education above the bachelor's degree.

## *Nested model*

## Table 2

*Table of the Nested model*

| Variable | Model 1 | | Model 2 | | Model 3 | | Model 4 | | Model 5 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Estimate | SE | Estimate | SE | Estimate | SE | Estimate | SE | Estimate | SE |
| Gender=1 | .132** | .041 | -.149* | .041 | -.169 | .042 | .159 | .042 | .159** | .044 |
| Census=1 | -.116** | .041 | -.096* | .042 | -.009 | .045 | -.046 | .045 | -.003* | .046 |
| Child=1 | -.698** | .041 | -.646* | .042 | -1.006** | .053 | -1.022** | .053 | -.565** | .055 |
| Chinese=1 | | | .333** | .074 | .268** | .075 | .255** | .075 | .198* | .073 |
| Chinese=2 | | | .182* | .081 | .137* | .083 | .170** | .083 | .081** | .077 |
| Chinese=3 | | | .292** | .052 | .400** | .057 | .418* | .057 | .265** | .084 |
| Chinese=4 | | | .309** | .059 | .472** | .062 | .475** | .062 | .196** | .058 |
| Mathematics=1 | | | .879** | .080 | .919** | .083 | .923* | .083 | .222** | .092 |
| Mathematics=2 | | | .827** | .080 | .873** | .082 | .878** | .083 | .018** | .084 |
| Mathematics=3 | | | .823** | .049 | .788** | .050 | .780* | .050 | .137** | .065 |
| Mathematics=4 | | | .812** | .063 | .932** | .059 | .825* | .050 | .102** | .053 |
| Income=1 | | | | | 1.726 | .149 | 1.744 | .149 | 1.322* | .151 |
| Income=2 | | | | | 1.620* | .121 | 1.683* | .121 | 1.334* | .124 |
| Income=3 | | | | | 1.161* | .120 | 1.195 | .121 | 1.123* | .123 |
| Income=4 | | | | | 1.566 | .125 | 1.586 | .125 | 1.286* | .128 |
| Income=5 | | | | | 1.558 | .123 | 1.596** | .127 | 1.121** | .124 |
| Subsidy=1 | | | | | 1.836** | .123 | 1.670* | .124 | 1.562** | .128 |
| Marriage=1 | | | | | | | -.621* | .053 | -.628** | .054 |
| School=1 | | | | | | | | | 1.062** | .065 |
| Level=1 | | | | | | | | | -1.363** | .054 |
| Constant term | -1.758** | .170 | -3.986* | .076 | -4.102* | .076 | -1.758* | .170 | -4.511** | .080 |
| Observed value | 8447 | | 8447 | | 8447 | | 8447 | | 8447 | |
| $R^2$ | .031 | | .056 | | .103 | | .118 | | .204 | |

*Note.* *$p<0.05$, **$p<0.01$, ***$p<0.001$

Table 2 reports the results of the nested model data analysis. We estimate the five influencing factor models of educational expectations. Among them, model 1 estimates the impact of individual characteristics on middle school students' educational expectations. The data results show that, under the control of other variables, the level of educational expectation of boys is 0.312 lower than that of girls, and the educational expectation of students with rural hukou is 0.116 lower than that of students with urban hukou. Since the one-child policy, the gender of children has changed when choosing education. To increase the future professional competitiveness and inheritance of family class, girls pay more attention to education. At the same time, we added the only child variable, and the education expectation of the only child is 0.698 higher than that of the non-only child. In model 2, we want to examine the impact of student's academic achievements on their educational expectations. We have added the excellent and poor grades of Chinese and Mathematics scores. The data results show that the coefficients of these two variables are positive and significant, indicating that the better the student's performance, the higher their educational expectations. This result confirms hypothesis1.

In model 3, we want to examine the impact of students' family background on their children's educational expectations, adding the variables of family economic status. The result of the data shows that the influence of family economic status is not significant when other variables are controlled, but the educational expectation of students from families with higher living standards is lower than students from families with higher living standards. The reason why the variable of family economic status is not significant may be due to the subjective judgment variable, and whether the family enjoys the minimum living allowance is the objective standard of whether the family is poor. Therefore, this paper believes that students from low-income homes have lower educational expectations than students from higher income homes. Then in model 4, the variable parents' marital status was added. The results show that married status has an impact on the educational expectation industry, and the educational expectation of married status is higher than that of divorce status. The possible reason is that parents' married status has a positive impact on educational expectations. This result confirms Hypothesis2.

Model 1 to 4 of Table 2 consider the influence of personal characteristics and home background of students on their educational expectations. However, students' education is expected to be restricted not only to their home or home environment but also to students' classes and school backgrounds. The results of this study show that the better the school and class the students are in, the higher their educational expectations. Hypothesis

3 has been verified. This means that students in non-key schools and non-key classes tend to lose their confidence and motivation in learning. In Model 5, the gender variable of students again becomes significant ($p < 0.01$), and it is boys who have higher educational expectations than girls. From Model 1 to Model 5, we can find that the gender differences in students' educational expectations are reversed. This shows that the educational expectations of girls are higher than those of boys in general. However, this gender difference is mainly determined by students' academic performance and school environment. As long as boys have better academic performance and are in better schools and classes, their educational expectations are equal to or even higher than girls.

In Table 2, the data results of Model 1 to Model 5 were summarized as well as the descriptive statistical results of family background and school environment on students' educational expectations were described. There are significant differences in the educational expectations of junior high school students and their parents with different family economic levels: the better the family economic level, the higher the parents' educational expectations, and the higher the children's self-education expectations. If the students are in different school environments, there are significant differences in the educational expectations of junior high school students and their parents. The better the learning environment of middle school students is, the better the people around them learn, the higher their parents' educational expectations, and the higher their children's self-education expectations. There are significant differences in the educational expectations of parents and individuals due to the different grades of junior high school students in their main subjects. The higher the grades of major subjects in junior high school students, the higher parents' educational expectations, and the higher education provided for the children. If parents have different marital statuses, there are significant differences in their educational expectations for middle school students: the educational expectations of divorced families for students are lower than those of parents and their kids together. The data results of this study also show that the student's educational expectations are significantly impacted by the students' family and school environment, as well as the student's academic performance. Therefore, junior high school students' expectations of adolescence are not determined by a single factor, but they are formed by cooperation between home, school and students themselves.

**Conclusion and discussion**

This paper uses nested models to explore the influencing factors of Chinese teenagers' educational expectations. According to the previous hypothesis, the following main findings are obtained and relevant suggestions are given. First, the individual characteristics of Chinese teenagers affect their educational expectations, and the degree of educational expectations increases with the growth of their major grades. However, as children grow older, their demands for the self-independence increase, and the degree of expectation for education is also affected. Second, the economic income of parents' home backgrounds affects the educational expectations of adolescents, and as parents' income increases, so do their children's educational expectations. In some cases, however, the home cultural capital has a constant intergenerational transmission. Household status based on the parents' education and the per capita income is accelerating the expression of children. It can be seen from this that education has gradually become a means for the superior social classes to use their social capital to seek more educational opportunities for their children, thus realizing the upward flow of children's educational achievements.

Third, the student school environment will affect the educational expectations of Chinese teenagers, such as the student's school situation and class situation. This invisible educational participation will have a long-term and continuous impact by improving the self-education expectations of teenagers and parents' educational expectations of their children.

At present, with the arrival of the era of the knowledge economy in China, education plays a more and more important role in the process of personal development. Parents and teenagers themselves can feel the value of knowledge in modern society, and they all show higher and higher demand for education. With the development of China's compulsory education, the dropout rate of Chinese teenagers is declining, which shows that the national education fairness work has been effective, but social stratification and the scarcity of high-quality education resources make the education imbalance still exist. In addition to the factors of teenagers' characteristics, the theory that reading is useless will continue to exist, the teenagers themselves give up, and the parents do not believe that reading will change their fate. In the current process of China's development, improving family educational expectations are not only related to social equity and class mobility, but also important support for China's innovation-driven development strategy to provide high-quality talents.

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