

An Investigative Study on the Demand for Family Education in Weinan City

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Abstract: To comprehensively understand the current status of local family education needs, gather parental feedback, and better support child development and the advancement of family education initiatives in the region, a systematic investigation has been conducted on family education demands in Weinan City. Through a mixed-methods approach, this study employs documentary analysis to review relevant theories and existing research, questionnaire surveys to collect quantitative data from a broad range of families, and in-depth interviews to obtain qualitative insights. The research systematically examines the characteristics of family education needs in Weinan across multiple dimensions, including educational beliefs, frequency and formats of educational activities, content preferences, and service expectations. Based on the findings, evidence-based recommendations and countermeasures are proposed to enhance the quality of family education and improve the support service system. The results aim to provide valuable reference for policymakers and practitioners seeking to optimize family education practices in Weinan.

Keywords: family education, foster virtue and cultivate talent, educational demand

1. Introduction

Parents are universally acknowledged as a child's first teachers, and the family environment serves as the primary classroom in life, making family education the foundational stage for fostering virtue and cultivating well-rounded individuals. The profound impact of early family experiences is encapsulated in the renowned statement by psychologist Alfred Adler: "A fortunate person is healed by their childhood, while an unfortunate person spends their life healing from their childhood." Highlighting the societal importance of this issue, China formally enacted the Law on the Promotion of Family Education in October 2021, providing a comprehensive legal framework to standardize, guide, and promote family education practices nationwide. This legislative milestone underscores the critical role of family education in shaping individual development, promoting social harmony, and ensuring long-term stability.

In Weinan City, a mid-sized city in Shaanxi Province, rapid socioeconomic development and ongoing educational reforms have led to families increasingly prioritizing their children's education. Parental investments of time, resources, and energy into educational activities have grown substantially. However, within this context, parents and caregivers encounter numerous practical challenges and conceptual confusions. These include balancing academic achievement with holistic development, navigating generational differences in educational values, accessing reliable information, and implementing effective parenting strategies amidst changing societal norms.

Understanding the current status, characteristics, and nuanced demands for family education in Weinan is therefore of paramount importance. It enables the design and implementation of targeted guidance programs, facilitates the optimal allocation of educational resources, and ultimately enhances the effectiveness of family education practices. This study

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seeks to fill a gap in the existing literature by providing a detailed, empirical investigation into the specific needs of families in this region, thereby contributing to the broader goal of improving child outcomes and strengthening family support systems.

2. Research Methods

A multi-faceted research methodology was adopted to ensure comprehensiveness, validity, and depth of understanding, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches.

2.1 Literature Review

An extensive review of both domestic and international academic literature was conducted. This involved analyzing peer-reviewed journals, doctoral and master's theses, key policy documents—and authoritative monographs on family education theory and practice. The purpose was to synthesize existing knowledge on family education models, theoretical frameworks, historical evolution, and innovative practices globally. This foundational work helped to inform the research design, identify core theoretical constructs, and establish benchmarks against which to compare local practices in Weinan, ultimately sharpening the focus of the investigation on the most pertinent issues.

2.2 Questionnaire Survey

A detailed and structured questionnaire, titled Weinan City Family Education Demand Survey Questionnaire, was meticulously designed. The instrument covered several key dimensions: (1) basic family demographics (e.g., parental education level, income, family structure); (2) parental attitudes and beliefs regarding the importance of family education versus school and societal education; (3) specific content areas where parents felt the need for more knowledge or skills (e.g., moral development, mental health, academic tutoring); and (4) expectations and preferences concerning family education services (e.g., format, provider, frequency).

The sampling strategy aimed for diversity and representativeness. Schools were selected from different districts of Weinan City, encompassing a mix of kindergarten, primary, and secondary levels to capture the needs of parents across different developmental stages. In total, 1000 questionnaires were distributed physically and electronically. After data cleaning and validation, 946 complete and usable responses were retained, yielding a high valid response rate of 95%. The quantitative data were processed and analyzed using statistical software (SPSS), with descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means) being primarily employed to identify overall patterns, central tendencies, and variations in the responses.

2.3 Interview Method

Conducted semi-structured interviews using a tailored protocol to explore family education needs in Weinan. Purposively sampled 40 participants comprising 20 parents (representing diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, educational levels, and family structures), 10 Women's Federation officials, and 10 family education experts. Interviews combined predefined questions with dynamic probing to elicit in-depth perspectives on challenges, needs, and experiences. All sessions were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key themes. The qualitative results complement and deepen the survey findings, providing nuanced insights into local family education demands.

3. Analysis of Family Education Demand in Weinan City

3.1 Parental Educational Attitudes

A slight majority of parents (54.3%) demonstrated a clear understanding of the critical role played by family education. They recognized that factors such as the home environment, parental role modeling, and daily interactions are fundamental to a child's holistic development, influencing their moral character, academic performance, and psychological well-being in profound ways. However, a significant proportion (38.1%) held the belief that formal schooling constitutes the most influential educational environment for children, attributing primary responsibility for educational outcomes to schools. A smaller segment (7.6%) emphasized the roles of broader societal education or the child's own self-directed learning efforts, indicating a diverse, and sometimes outsourced, perception of educational responsibility.

The survey explored the sources from which parents acquire their parenting knowledge and skills. The top three sources were: (1) self-directed learning through reading parenting books, magazines, or online articles and attending

occasional lectures or courses (38.5%); (2) practical, informal experience gained from caring for younger siblings or relatives' children (31.2%); and (3) observational learning and advice received from their own parents (traditional methods) (19.8%). A notable number of parents (14.5%) reported acquiring knowledge through modern media channels like television programs, short videos, and audio productions. Most strikingly, 275 respondents (29.1% of the sample) indicated they had "never had any experience or learning related to childcare," highlighting a substantial deficit in preparatory knowledge and a significant potential demand for basic parenting education.

3.2 Participation in Family Education Activities

The data revealed limited parental engagement in organized family education activities. Less than half of the respondents (47%) reported having ever participated in any form of family education event, workshop, or lecture. Among those who had participated, the overwhelming majority had attended activities organized by their child's school (57.3%), followed by those arranged by their local community or neighborhood committee (17.4%). Activities initiated by other potential providers, such as universities, the District Education Bureau, the Women's Federation, corporate unions, or specialized non-profit organizations, were notably scarce, together accounting for less than 25% of all attended activities. This indicates a heavy reliance on schools as the primary channel for parental guidance and a lack of diversified, community-based support networks.

3.3 Content Needs in Family Education

An overwhelming majority of parents (96.2%) expressed a strong willingness to engage in learning to improve their parenting knowledge and skills. This high level of motivation signifies a robust demand for family education support. When asked about their specific content interests, parents' needs were broad and covered multiple domains. The most desired areas, in order of priority, were:

Child Development: A comprehensive category including the cultivation of moral qualities (honesty, responsibility, empathy), physical health and nutrition, development of life skills and independence, enhancement of cultural literacy, and the establishment of positive behavioral habits.

Family Development: Focusing on improving intra-family dynamics, such as effective parent-child communication strategies, building and maintaining emotional bonds, fostering a positive family culture, managing family economic resources related to education, creating a supportive home learning environment, and maintaining family health and wellness.

Handicrafts and Practical Skills: Activities like knitting, embroidery, pottery, hand-painting, and paper-cutting, which are often seen as valuable for nurturing children's creativity, patience, and fine motor skills, and for providing quality parent-child interaction time.

Delving deeper into the child development category, three particularly acute needs emerged:

Moral Education: Over 90% of parents expressed a strong desire for practical guidance on how to effectively foster core moral virtues in their children, such as honesty, kindness, perseverance, and a sense of social responsibility. Many felt uncertain about moving beyond simple admonition to implementing effective daily practices.

Mental Health Education: Reflecting growing societal awareness, approximately 97% of parents reported being concerned about their child's psychological well-being. They expressed a strong need for knowledge and skills to help them identify early signs of common psychological issues (e.g., anxiety, stress, low self-esteem), strategies for providing initial emotional support and psychological guidance, and methods for cultivating resilience and a positive mindset in their children. A common theme in interviews was parents feeling "ill-equipped" and "anxious" about handling these issues due to a lack of professional knowledge.

Academic Tutoring Support: A vast majority (92.5%) of parents reported needing assistance with their children's academic work. This need is driven by perceptions of increasing curriculum difficulty, intense academic competition, and often, a mismatch between modern teaching methods and parents' own educational backgrounds. Parents sought resources and strategies for effective homework guidance, improving children's learning efficiency, and managing academic-related stress, indicating that tutoring is a significant source of parental pressure.

3.4 Service Needs

When asked about their preferred providers of family education guidance, parents showed a clear preference for professionally qualified individuals. The most desired guides were: (1) Certified Family Education Experts (41.2%); (2) Their Child's Own Teacher(s) (35.7%); and (3) Professional Family Education Instructors (18.4%). In contrast, guidance from experienced fellow parents or from postgraduate students in education-related fields was considerably less favored (together less than 5%). This preference pattern underscores a strong parental demand for guidance that is perceived as authoritative, scientific, and expert-led, rather than based solely on anecdotal experience.

The survey investigated awareness and use of a key local resource, the Weinan Women and Children's Activity Center, a public welfare institution. The findings revealed a significant awareness-utilization gap: while a considerable portion of parents (42.4%) had heard of the center, they had never participated in its activities. Half of the surveyed parents (50%) were completely unaware of its existence. Only a very small fraction (6.2%) had both heard of the center and attended its events. This indicates that while such institutions exist, their visibility, outreach, and the attractiveness or accessibility of their programs need substantial improvement to meet latent demand.

4. Identified Issues

4.1 Prevalent Misconceptions and Significant Knowledge Gaps

Despite general acknowledgment of its importance, a deep-rooted, utilitarian educational perspective persists among a substantial subset of parents. As revealed in interviews, many parents equate educational success almost exclusively with high academic scores and admission to elite schools, consequently prioritizing tutoring and exam preparation over the development of moral character, psychological resilience, physical health, and individual interests. This narrow focus can lead to excessive psychological pressure on children, stifle holistic development, and potentially contribute to interpersonal difficulties. Furthermore, the research confirms that many parents lack a structured, scientific understanding of child development and parenting principles. They often rely on fragmented information, outdated traditions, or informal advice, leading to inconsistent and sometimes ineffective parenting practices. The fact that 29.1% reported no prior knowledge or experience underscores the scale of this foundational gap.

4.2 Low Participation Rates and Monolithic Activity Formats

The low participation rate (47%) in family education activities suggests a significant disconnect between the supply of such activities and parents' ability or willingness to engage. The available activities are predominantly organized through schools and, to a much lesser extent, communities. This results in a service model that is largely institution-driven rather than needs-driven or community-embedded. The lack of involvement from other potential organizers—such as higher education institutions (offering expertise), government departments (providing policy support and funding), women's federations (mobilizing communities), and private enterprises (through CSR initiatives)—limits the diversity, frequency, and reach of available programs. This over-reliance on a single channel makes the system vulnerable and fails to cater to the varied schedules and preferences of modern families.

4.3 Multifaceted and Personalized Content Needs Lacking Tailored Solutions

Parents' content needs are undeniably complex, spanning a wide spectrum from moral philosophy to practical handicrafts. However, the current supply of information and training often appears generic, standardized, and fragmented. Interviewed parents frequently expressed frustration that available advice was too vague, not applicable to their specific child's age or temperament, or irrelevant to their particular family context (e.g., single-parent households, families with left-behind children, or low-income families). There is a pronounced demand for more personalized, age-specific, and situation-specific guidance that moves beyond one-size-fits-all lectures to offer actionable strategies and customized support plans.

4.4 Fragmented and Under-Developed Service Ecosystem

The family education service system in Weinan is characterized by its incipient and disjointed nature. Several critical weaknesses were identified:

Training Market Irregularities: There is a lack of standardized curricula, quality control mechanisms, and outcome evaluations

for family education training programs, leading to inconsistent quality and sometimes misleading commercial offerings.

Scarcity of Professional Consultants: A severe shortage of qualified, certified family education instructors and child psychology consultants exists. This limits the availability of reliable, professional consultation services for parents seeking help.

Underutilized Institutional Capacity: Existing public institutions like the Women and Children's Activity Center, libraries, museums, and community centers have not been fully integrated into the family education support network. Their potential to host activities and provide resources remains largely untapped.

Limited Access Channels: Parents primarily rely on schools for information, with few other efficient, well-publicized channels to access resources, ask questions, or find support, resulting in an overall scarcity of accessible and reliable family education services.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Launch Sustained Public Awareness Campaigns to Reshape Educational Mindsets

Leverage Digital Media Platforms: Utilize popular social media channels (e.g., WeChat official accounts, Douyin/TikTok, Xiaohongshu) to disseminate content on scientific parenting concepts, child development milestones, and the importance of holistic education. Launch interactive online programs, webinars, and invite experts and respected community figures to share insights and success stories, gradually shifting the focus from purely academic achievement to whole-person development.

Empower Schools as Change Agents: Schools should systematically integrate family education guidance into their regular parent engagement activities. This can be achieved by establishing "Parent Schools" or utilizing regular parent-teacher meetings to organize workshops and seminars. These sessions should elucidate national policies like the Law on the Promotion of Family Education, explain modern educational theories, and disseminate knowledge about children's physical and psychological development patterns, thereby helping parents update their beliefs and adopt more scientific approaches.

5.2 Develop a Multi-Stakeholder, Diversified Activity Framework

Create Collaborative Training Programs: Encourage partnerships between district education bureaus, universities (leveraging their research expertise), women's federations, and qualified non-profit organizations to co-develop a structured curriculum for parent education. This curriculum should cover critical areas identified in the study, such as child psychology, communication skills, and activity-based learning (e.g., handicrafts), combining theoretical knowledge with practical, hands-on workshops and peer-to-peer exchange sessions.

Establish a Professional Instructor Corps: Invest in the training and certification of a professional cadre of family education instructors. These professionals should be deployed to provide on-the-ground, personalized support within schools and communities. They can conduct needs assessments for families, offer one-on-one or small-group counseling, develop customized family education plans, and provide follow-up support, thereby building long-term parental capacity.

5.3 Systematize and Personalize Educational Content

Integrate Core Values into Activities: Schools and communities should jointly design and implement experiential learning activities that subtly embed moral education and mental health awareness. Examples include organizing parent-child volunteer service projects to foster social responsibility, hosting workshops on stress management and emotional intelligence, and promoting traditional cultural activities to teach values and strengthen family bonds.

Develop Localized Guidance Materials: The Municipal Education Bureau should commission the development of a Weinan Family Education Guidebook. This resource should provide comprehensive, yet accessible, information on all key aspects of parenting—moral, psychological, academic, safety—tailored to the local cultural and socioeconomic context, serving as a reliable reference for parents.

Offer Differentiated Learning Options: Move beyond generic courses by developing a tiered and modular curriculum offering. Parents should be able to access beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels of courses, as well as modules specifically designed for different age groups (preschool, primary, adolescent) or specific family situations. Delivery methods should be flexible, blending online modules for convenience with essential in-person workshops for interaction

and practice.

5.4 Build an Integrated, Professionalized, and Accessible Service System

Standardize and Enrich Training Offerings: The relevant government departments should establish clear quality standards and accreditation processes for all family education training providers. Encourage universities and professional bodies to develop high-quality course content. Simultaneously, create a robust online platform hosting a resource library of expert lectures, articles, and interactive tools, complemented by offline community-based parent clubs and salons for mutual support and experience sharing.

Expand Access to Professional Consultation: Establish a municipal-level family education consultation hotline and online service platform, staffed by trained professionals. Promote these services widely so parents know where to turn for immediate advice. Invest in advanced training for counselors to ensure service quality. For complex cases, develop a mechanism for providing intensive, individualized family coaching and intervention.

Activate Community and Institutional Networks: Mandate and resource community centers, public libraries, museums, and cultural centers to play a more active role in family education. They should be encouraged to regularly host themed workshops, exhibitions, reading clubs, and lectures during weekends and holidays. Forge strong partnerships between these community institutions, schools, and NGOs to create a cohesive, resource-rich ecosystem of support that is physically accessible and visible to all families within their neighborhoods.

Improving family education is a complex, long-term societal endeavor that necessitates coordinated commitment and action from government agencies, educational institutions, community organizations, and families themselves. By working in concert, these stakeholders can forge a supportive environment conducive to the healthy and comprehensive development of every child in Weinan, thereby strengthening the human foundation for the city's future sustainable development. Continuous monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation of these strategies will be essential for long-term success.

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