

Influence of Family Financial Conditions on the Choice of Family Parenting Style: An Empirical Study Based on CEPS Data

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Abstract As an important factor affecting the accumulation of children's human capital, family parenting style is of great significance to the future development of filial generation. Based on China's social reality, the study investigated the influence of family financial conditions on the choice of family parenting style by using the data of CEPS2013-2014. The results showed that the improvement of family financial conditions significantly increased the intensity of the parenting style chosen by the family, and parents would have higher requirements for their children's daily study and life. Moreover, such impact varied among different classes and regions.

Key words Family financial conditions, Family parenting style, CEPS

1 Introduction

1.1 Research background Since ancient times, Chinese parents have a strong concept of "hoping their children have a bright future". Influenced by this concept, Chinese people have always attached importance to the cultivation of next generation human capital. The disadvantaged groups hope that through the cultivation of their offspring, they can get rid of the vicious cycle of intergenerational low human capital accumulation, and further get out of poverty and realize the leap-over of classes. The social dominant group hopes to maintain the economic and educational advantages of the younger generation through the training of their descendants. As an important factor of children's human capital accumulation, family education has been concerned and valued by Chinese parents for a long time. With the accelerated development of education "involution", people's attention to family education is no longer limited to family education expenditure and time investment, but has gone deep into the previously neglected level of family parenting style. For example, "helicopter parenting", "tiger parents" and "tiger parenting education" and other new terms related to family parenting style are emerging endlessly, and even cause widespread controversy in the society.

There are many factors affecting the choice of family parenting style, and family financial condition is one of the most important factors. On the one hand, the difference in family financial conditions will affect the degree of care parents give to their children, and indirectly affect the care time for children and family education expenditure. On the other hand, the difference in family financial conditions will also have a certain impact on the educational concept of parents, thus affecting the choice of family parenting style. Although the family financial conditions will directly affect the choice of family parenting style, few efforts have been

dedicated to the concrete influence process and result based on the social reality of China. In addition, different parenting styles caused by differences in family financial conditions is also closely related to intergenerational mobility, and its analysis can better explain why poverty is transmitted between generations. Therefore, it is of great theoretical and practical significance to discuss the influence of family financial conditions on the choice of family parenting style.

1.2 Literature review The concept of family parenting style was first proposed by Baumrind^[1], who classified family parenting into authoritative, authoritarian and permissive styles following the degree to which parents are demanding of their children in terms of discipline, communication and expectations. On this basis, McCoby *et al.*^[2] refined the division of family parenting styles by taking into account the extent to which parents support their children in self-cultivation and self-management, further expanded the concept of original family parenting style through the interaction of demand dimension and support dimension, and put forward the fourth family parenting style, that is, neglecting parenting style. They held that authoritative parenting style is a combination of high requirements and support. Parents give their children full care and support in the process of their growth, but also provide corresponding discipline. Authoritarian style is a combination of high requirements and low support. Parents tend to regulate their children's behavior, and often intervene in children's choices and force children to obey themselves while actively participating in children's growth. Permissive style is a combination of low requirements and high support, and parents who follow this parenting style will give their children strong support for growth, but will not put forward all kinds of high standards. Neglecting style is a combination of low requirements and support, and parents pay more attention to themselves than to their children. According to the four parenting styles, the existing literature usually refers to authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles as intensive parenting styles, while permissive and neglecting parenting styles are

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referred to as tolerant parenting style.

In terms of the factors influencing the choice of family parenting style, Smith^[3] suggested that in families with poor financial conditions, parents are often too busy with making a living to take into account the attention and concern for their children, that is, they tend to neglecting parenting style. Lareau^[4] observed the parenting styles of families of different social and economic classes in Britain and found that the parenting styles varied with income. Liao Qing *et al.*^[5] analyzed the path of western family parenting styles and found that family financial conditions, socio-cultural context and social network would affect the choice of family parenting styles.

As for the influence of family parenting style choice, scholars at home and abroad generally concern its influence on the accumulation of human capital of adolescents. At the level of children's academic development, most studies have found that family parenting style will more or less affect children's achievement directly or indirectly. For example, Radziszewska *et al.*^[6] studied the relationship between white, Hispanic, African American and Asian parenting styles and adolescents' academic achievement according to the parent-adolescent decision-making model, and found that intensive family parenting styles have a significant positive impact on adolescents' academic achievement, while the effects are inter-racial and cross-social. Deborah *et al.*^[7] took family parenting style as an investment for empirical analysis, and found that children raised in intensive family parenting style tended to have higher college enrollment rates and academic performance. In addition, since children's social behavior and mental health are important indicators to measure human capital, some scholars have also paid attention to the impact of family parenting styles on these indicators. In terms of children's social behaviors, Barnes *et al.*^[8] suggested that the choice of family parenting style is closely related to the frequency of juvenile drinking, crime and related problems, and parental support and control can effectively reduce the probability of such social behaviors. At the level of children's mental health, Dwairy *et al.*^[9] measured the relationship between family parenting style and adolescent mental health through questionnaire survey data of Egyptian adolescents and found that female adolescents who were more influenced by authoritative parenting style reported more frequent mental disorders. In the context of East Asian cultures, scholars have come to similar conclusions about academic development, mental health, *etc.* Zhang Haochen *et al.*^[10] empirically analyzed the influence of parents' parenting style on adolescents' human capital formation by using CFPS2010-2014 data, and found that authoritarian family parenting style could bring the best academic performance, while adolescents raised in authoritative and permissive parenting style were far better psychologically than those raised in the other two parenting styles. Xiang Rong *et al.*^[11] investigated the impact of family parenting style on children's problematic behavior based on the data from 18 counties and 8 cities in Hubei Province, and found that authoritative parenting style was generally conducive to suppressing children's prob-

lematic behavior, while children raised in neglecting parenting style were more likely to have problematic behaviors.

Based on the theoretical basis and research ideas provided by the existing literature, there are still following shortcomings. First, the existing research is more obsessed with seeking the influence of family parenting style on the accumulation of human capital of adolescents, but often ignores the influencing factors of family parenting style. Second, as family financial condition is one of the most important factors affecting family parenting style, the existing research generally adopts qualitative analysis, but lacks quantitative analysis. Moreover, since most of the existing researches are conducted under the western cultural background, whether its conclusion is applicable to China is not clear. Based on this, this paper quantitatively described the influence of family financial conditions on the choice of family parenting style in China by using the data of CEPS2013-2014.

2 Research design

2.1 Data source and variable description

2.1.1 Data sources. The research data were derived from the China Education Panel Survey (CEPS) designed and implemented by the National Survey Research Center at Renmin University of China, which covered 112 schools and 438 classes across China, being a nationally representative panel project. CEPS questionnaire mainly involves students, parents, classes, schools and other databases. Student questionnaire includes the basic information of students, physical and mental health, parent-child interaction and educational expectations. Parent questionnaire includes the basic information of parents, family financial conditions, family education support and other information. So far, CEPS has published the trial survey data of the 2012 academic year, the baseline survey data of the 2013 – 2014 academic year, and the follow-up data of the 2014 – 2015 academic year, and we mainly used the data of CEPS2013-2014 for the consideration of sample size.

2.1.2 Variable description. As for the family parenting style of explained variables, A8, A14 and A17 in part A of CEPS parent questionnaire involve some questions about the degree of parents' requirements and participation in children's daily study and life. The questions in part A8 mainly focus on the level of parental control over children's daily life, such as whether the internet time, TV time, *etc.*, are strictly controlled, and there are 8 questions in this part. The original questionnaire has 3 options for each answer: 1 = don't care, 2 = do care about it, but are not strict, 3 = very strict about it. The questions in part A14 mainly focus on parents' communication with their children's daily life, such as whether they take the initiative to discuss their mood, worries and troubles with their children, and there are 5 questions in this part. The original questionnaire also has 3 options for each answer: 1 = never, 2 = sometimes, 3 = often. Part A17 emphasizes parents' involvement in children's daily lives, such as how often they eat together, read books and watch TV, and there are 6 questions in this part. The original questionnaire has 6 options for each an-

swer. According to the treatment of classified variables by Hamermesh *et al.*, the study redivided these 6 classified variables into three categories: 1 = low frequency, 2 = medium frequency, and 3 = high frequency. Finally, referring to the practice of Li Yanan *et al.*^[12], the family parenting style indexes were obtained by adding up the answers of 19 questions and averaging them. The lowest score obtained for parenting style was 1 and the highest score was 3. The higher the score, the higher the intensity of parenting style chosen by the family, the more the family inclined to intensive parenting style, and the higher the level of parents' care, requirements and participation in their children's daily study and life.

As for the key explanatory variable of this study, family financial condition was constructed by question E19 in part E of the parent questionnaire and question B9 in part B of the student questionnaire (CEPS), "Which one of the following best describes the financial conditions of your family at present?" In the original questionnaire, there are 5 options for each answer: 1 = very poor, 2 = somewhat poor, 3 = moderate, 4 = somewhat rich,

5 = very rich. Considering the small number of groups with very poor family financial conditions (582 groups, accounting for 2.04% of the total) and very rich (196 groups, accounting for 0.69% of the total), the study adopted the treatment method of classified variables in part A17, combining the 5 categories into 3 categories: poor, moderate and rich. Thus, the lowest score of family financial conditions was 1, and the highest score was 3. The higher the score, the better the family financial conditions.

When analyzing the influence of family financial conditions on the choice of family parenting style, the variables affecting the choice of family parenting style should be controlled as much as possible, including individual characteristics level (sex, ethnic nationality, living in school or not), parental characteristics level (father's education level, mother's education level, relationship with parents) and family characteristics level (family size, number of children, region). After combining the student database with the parent database and excluding the samples with missing parenting styles, 16 597 observed values were obtained. The descriptive statistics of the main variables are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Statistical description of the main variables

Variable name	Observed value	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Explained variable					
Family parenting style	16 597	1.861	0.382	1	3
Explanatory variable					
Family financial conditions	16 580	1.853	0.493	1	3
Individual characteristic variables					
Sex	16 597	0.504	0.500	0	1
Ethnic nationality	16 564	0.915	0.279	0	1
Living in school or not	16 597	0.319	0.466	0	1
Whether live with parents in the same household	16 597	0.231	0.422	0	1
Parental characteristic variables					
Mother's education level	16 574	3.837	1.984	1	9
Father's education level	16 574	4.197	1.993	1	9
Relationship with parents	16 233	1.837	0.369	1	2
Family characteristic variables					
Number of children in a family	16 351	1.735	0.817	1	6
Region	16 597	1.715	0.840	1	3

2.2 Model construction Referring to the existing literature, the following model was constructed to analyze the influence of family financial conditions on the choice of family parenting style:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 family_{eco} + \beta_2 X + \varepsilon$$

(1)

where Y is the explained variable of the model, representing the parenting style chosen by the family; $family_{eco}$ is the explanatory variable of the model, representing the family financial conditions; X is the control variable, including the characteristic variables of individual, parents and family; ε is a random perturbation term.

3 Results and analysis

3.1 Basic regression result The basic regression results of the influence of family financial conditions on the choice of family parenting style are shown in Table 2. Model (1) did not add control variables; model (2) added individual characteristic variables;

model (3) further added parent control variables on the basis of model (2); and model (4) added family characteristic variables on the basis of model (3). By observing models (1) to (4), it was found that with the gradual increase of control variables, there were significant differences in influence of family financial conditions on the choice of family parenting style ($P < 0.01$), and the results had good robustness. Taking model (4) as an example, the influence of family financial conditions on the choice of family parenting style was 0.036 9, and there was significant difference ($P < 0.01$). It means that the improvement of family financial conditions will increase the intensity of influencing the parenting style chosen by the family. For every level of improvement of family financial conditions, the intensity of the parenting style chosen by the family would increase by 0.036 9, and the requirements for children's growth will be higher.

As for control variables, the individual characteristics of children, characteristics of parents and characteristics of families all had an impact on the choice of family parenting style. In terms of individual characteristics of children, models (2) to (4) showed that if the child was male, the family chose the more intensive parenting style, which may be related to the "son preference" ideology that has long been inherited in China. In addition, a child's ethnic nationality and whether he or she lives in school had an impact on the parenting style chosen by his or her family. The intensity of parenting style chosen by Han families was much greater than that chosen by minority families, which may be related to the long-standing traditional culture of Han. However, the parenting style chosen by the families with children living in school was smaller than those who do not live in school, because the time spent between parents and children is greatly reduced in case of living in school, and it is difficult for parents to intervene in their daily study and life. In terms of parental characteristics, parents' education level had an impact on the family's choice of parenting style, but the education level of mother had a far greater impact on the choice of parenting style than that of fa-

ther. At the same time, the relationship between parents also had an impact on the choice of family parenting style, and families with harmonious parents would choose more intensive parenting style. In terms of family characteristics, the number of children in a family had a significant negative impact on parenting styles, because the more children in a family, the less energy parents devote to each child. In addition, families in economically less developed areas chose less intensive parenting styles than those in economically developed areas.

In order to directly understand the influence of family financial conditions on the choice of parenting style, the regression coefficient of family financial conditions was simply compared with that of other control variables. Taking model (4) as an example again, the intensity of the parenting style chosen by the family increased by 0.036 9 for each level of improvement in family financial conditions; the intensity of the family's choice of parenting style increased by 0.019 3 for each level of improvement in the mother's education level. The influence of the improvement of family financial conditions on the choice of parenting style was nearly twice that of the influence of the mother's education level.

Table 2 Basic regression results

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Family financial conditions	0.104 *** (0.005 97)	0.066 8 *** (0.005 98)	0.042 9 *** (0.006 13)	0.036 9 *** (0.006 22)
Sex		0.013 0 ** (0.005 74)	0.014 2 ** (0.005 74)	0.010 7 * (0.005 79)
Ethnic nationality		0.137 *** (0.010 3)	0.120 *** (0.010 4)	0.102 *** (0.010 8)
Living in school or not		-0.092 7 *** (0.006 34)	-0.068 0 *** (0.006 56)	-0.063 0 *** (0.006 69)
Whether live with parents in the same household		-0.122 *** (0.006 93)	-0.107 *** (0.007 06)	-0.099 1 *** (0.007 17)
Mother's education level			0.021 4 *** (0.001 99)	0.019 3 *** (0.002 04)
Father's education level			0.006 99 *** (0.001 98)	0.006 26 *** (0.002 00)
Parental relationship			0.059 4 *** (0.007 88)	0.061 3 *** (0.007 93)
Number of children in a family				-0.022 9 *** (0.003 94)
Region				-0.015 7 *** (0.003 59)
Observed value	16 580	16 547	16 166	15 932
R^2	0.018	0.064	0.083	0.087

Note: *, **, and *** represent significance differences at 0.1, 0.05 and 0.01 levels, respectively, with heteroskedasticity-robust standard error in parentheses; the same below.

3.2 Heterogeneity analysis Columns (1) and (2) in Table 3 reported the influence of family financial conditions on the choice of parenting styles of families with mothers completed different education levels. With reference to the practice of Li Yanan *et al.* [12], it can be used to observe the influence of family financial conditions on the choice of parenting styles in different classes of families. The education level of mother was chosen over the education level of father because most literature studies have found that the education level of mother has a greater impact on children than that of father. As shown in Table 3, regardless of the mother's

education level, family financial conditions had a significant positive impact on the choice of family parenting style, but had a greater impact on the family whose mother completed a lower education level. This means that when the family financial conditions are improved, the disadvantaged group will be more inclined to choose a more intensive family parenting style.

Columns (3), (4) and (5) in Table 3 reported the influence of family financial conditions on the choice of parenting styles of families in different regions. The results showed that family financial conditions had a significant positive impact on the choice of

family parenting style in eastern and western regions, but had no significant impact on that in the central region. This shows that there are some regional differences in the influence of family finan-

cial conditions on the choice of family parenting style, which may be related to the development imbalance between regions.

Table 3 Influence of family financial conditions on the choice of different types of family parenting styles

	Mother's education level		Region		
	Below high school (1)	High school and above (2)	Eastern region (3)	Central region (4)	Western region (5)
Family financial conditions	0.045 0 * * *	0.033 8 * * *	0.048 4 * * *	0.017 2	0.043 4 * * *
	(0.007 03)	(0.012 9)	(0.008 85)	(0.012 4)	(0.012 9)
Observed value	11 796	4 370	8 582	3 367	3 983

4 Conclusions and discussion

Based on the data of the 2013 – 2014 academic year of CEPS, the study empirically analyzed the influence of family financial conditions on the choice of family parenting style. The research found that the improvement of family financial conditions would significantly increase the intensity of the parenting style chosen by the family, that is, they would choose more intensive parenting style, and have higher requirements and participation in learning and life, which is conducive to the accumulation of children’s human capital. The regression results of different samples also showed that the influence of family financial conditions on the choice of family parenting style differed among strata and regions.

From the perspective of family parenting style, this study clarifies the logical chain of why poverty is transmitted between generations, that is, families with poor financial conditions choose a less intensive family parenting style and invest less in the next generation, which will affect the human capital investment of the next generation, and further affect the income of the next generation. This cycle eventually leads to the transmission of poverty between generations.

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