

Family Education as the Foundation of Children's and Adolescents' Development: A Review of Family Systems Psychology: Mastering the Art of Family Education and Parent-Child Communication

Mengnan Dou

University of Jinan, Jinan, Shandong, China

Abstract: *Family education occupies a foundational position in individual development, shaping psychological health, character formation, everyday competence, and lifelong growth. Drawing on Qiao Fuqiang's book, Family Systems Psychology: Mastering the Art of Family Education and Parent-Child Communication, this review essay reconstructs the book's account of family education as a multidimensional developmental system. The discussion organizes the book's implications into twelve interrelated dimensions: emotional well-being, everyday life and labor, rule consciousness, interest development, goal formation, frustration tolerance, reading and writing, interpersonal communication, love and attachment, ritual practice, meaning in life, and preparation for school education. These dimensions show that family education is not merely supplementary to schooling, but is the primary relational environment in which children and adolescents acquire emotional security, self-regulation, social competence, and value orientation. The review also situates the book's argument within contemporary Chinese policy efforts to strengthen collaboration among families, schools, and society. It argues that a family-systems perspective provides a useful framework for building more scientific, relationally sensitive, and developmentally appropriate approaches to parent-child communication and family education.*

Keywords: Family education, Family systems psychology, Children and adolescents, Parent-child communication, Child development.

1. Introduction

Family, school, and society are three major fields in which human development unfolds. The family is the first field into which a person is born and within which early growth takes place. It provides the earliest relational environment and therefore has a decisive influence on psychological security, personality formation, habits, and the basic orientation through which children understand themselves and others [1,2]. The school then becomes the main field for systematic knowledge acquisition and peer interaction, while society provides the wider field in which individuals establish occupational identities, social relationships, and public value.

Among these fields, the family is the earliest and most intimate. For children and adolescents, family atmosphere, parental interaction, and parent-child communication are not only background conditions. They shape emotional regulation, self-understanding, rule consciousness, learning habits, and social adaptation. A harmonious family does not guarantee successful development by itself, but it provides the basic psychological soil from which later learning, resilience, and interpersonal competence can grow.

Qiao Fuqiang's book, *Family Systems Psychology: Mastering the Art of Family Education and Parent-Child Communication*, published by Beijing Normal University Press in 2024, offers a systematic account of family education from the perspective of family systems psychology [3]. The book does not reduce family education to academic supervision or parental control. Instead, it treats the family as a relational and developmental system in which emotional

support, daily life, boundaries, interests, goals, setbacks, reading, communication, love, rituals, meaning, and school preparation are interconnected. Based on the logic of the book, this article reviews twelve major functions of family education and explains how they contribute to the development of children and adolescents.

2. Emotional Education: Learning to Experience and Release Feelings

The family is the first psychological base for the child. Because family relations are usually the most intimate and important relations in early life, the family should offer a setting in which children can experience relaxation, joy, security, and emotional expression. In this sense, family education is first a form of emotional education. It helps children learn how to experience affection, express grievance, release distress, and recover from negative emotions.

A supportive family atmosphere is built through understanding, tolerance, and responsiveness. When family members can express concern and support in ordinary life, children acquire a basic sense that emotions can be spoken about and regulated rather than suppressed or acted out [4]. By contrast, persistent blame, humiliation, rejection, and emotional injury can prevent children from experiencing the family as a safe base. Such experiences do not repair distress. They intensify psychological pain and may increase the risk of later emotional and behavioral problems [5]. From a family-systems perspective, emotional education is therefore not a decorative part of family life; it is a core developmental function.

3. Life Education: Learning to Live and to Work

The family is, before anything else, a place of everyday living [6]. Children learn the meaning of care, cooperation, responsibility, and shared labor through concrete family practices. Life education is therefore not an abstract moral lesson. It is embedded in meals, cleaning, daily routines, helping family members, and participating in household tasks.

Domestic labor is a particularly important form of family participation. Household chores and other shared activities can strengthen family cohesion, develop practical ability, and help children experience themselves as contributing members of the family [7]. For children and adolescents, participation in family labor can also cultivate empathy, responsibility, physical coordination, teamwork, and respect for ordinary work. Such practices turn the home into a practical classroom where children learn to live with others and to value labor as part of human development.

4. Rule Education: Learning Self-discipline and Action

A well-functioning family is not only a place of affection; it is also a place where boundaries and rules are learned. As the classical Chinese saying associated with Mencius states, without rules and standards, nothing can be properly formed. In family education, rule consciousness develops as children gradually internalize expectations, boundaries, and self-discipline.

Qiao discusses this issue through the concept of the ‘paternal function’ in family systems psychology [8]. This concept should be understood as a relational function rather than a rigid biological or gender role. In the family system, caregiving and acceptance provide security, while boundary-setting and guidance help children understand what can be done, what should not be done, and how to persist when facing difficulty. Effective rule education therefore combines warmth with structure. It does not rely on simple authoritarian control. Its aim is to help children transform external rules into internal self-regulation and purposeful action.

5. Interest Education: Learning to Explore and Discover

Interest is a major driving force in learning and personal development. Children and adolescents often show spontaneous curiosity toward nature, technology, art, stories, inventions, and social phenomena. Family education should notice, protect, and guide this curiosity rather than interrupting it with premature utilitarian expectations.

The discovery and preservation of interests are especially important because early curiosity can become the basis of confidence, talent, and long-term commitment [9]. Parents need to provide opportunities for observation, questioning, experimentation, reading, and creative expression. When children are allowed to explore what they genuinely care about, they gradually learn to connect interest with effort.

This connection becomes an important source of future self-confidence and may also help them transform personal interests into meaningful life projects.

6. Goal Education: Learning Aspiration and Task Completion

Family education also involves helping children form goals. Goals give direction to action and help children organize their thinking, time, and effort. Long-term goals are connected with aspiration and life orientation, while short-term goals make action concrete and manageable [10].

Parents can help children distinguish between wishes and workable goals. They can guide children to set achievable steps, review progress, reflect on difficulties, and revise plans. Through this process, children gain real experiences of action, feedback, and adjustment. These experiences support the formation of willpower, self-efficacy, and a more integrated personality. Goal education is therefore not limited to telling children to be ambitious. It teaches them how to transform intention into action and how to connect present effort with future development.

7. Frustration Education: Learning Endurance and Self-regulation

Valuable learning often involves difficulty. Tasks with developmental value usually require effort, uncertainty, and the possibility of failure. For this reason, frustration is not simply an obstacle to development; it is also a necessary condition for the growth of resilience [11]. Children and adolescents need opportunities to encounter manageable setbacks, experience frustration, and learn how to recover from it.

Parents have an important role in helping children understand frustration realistically. They should not manufacture unnecessary suffering, but they should also not remove every difficulty in advance. Effective frustration education supports children when they feel disappointed, helps them name the source of failure, encourages them to draw lessons from the experience, and guides them toward the next reasonable goal [12]. In this process, children learn endurance, emotional regulation, problem-solving, and the confidence that setbacks can be faced rather than avoided.

8. Reading Education: Learning to Read and Write

Books preserve human knowledge, imagination, and reflection. Reading provides high-quality resources for cognitive development, moral reflection, language growth, and inner enrichment. In earlier social conditions, children could often acquire life experience through slower rhythms of work, observation, and community participation. In contemporary digital society, however, children and adolescents face faster information flows and more demanding learning environments. They therefore need more efficient and systematic ways to acquire knowledge and organize thought.

A family that values education should cultivate reading and writing habits as basic developmental capacities [13]. Parents can support this process through companionship, demonstration, regular reading time, discussion, and encouragement of writing. Reading education should not be reduced to examination preparation. Its deeper function is to strengthen language ability, imagination, attention, reflection, and the capacity to understand complex human experience. These abilities are central to the future adaptation of children and adolescents in a knowledge-based society.

9. Relationship Education: Learning Expression and Communication

Human beings develop through relationships. The family provides the earliest prototype of interpersonal relations and becomes the first training ground for expression and communication. Children learn how to speak, listen, negotiate, apologize, refuse, and cooperate largely by observing family interaction and by receiving parental guidance.

When parents encourage children to express themselves and respond with respect, children gradually develop the willingness and skill to communicate. They learn that their thoughts can be heard and that communication can solve problems. By contrast, when the family environment is marked by negative language, ridicule, silence, or suppression, children may lose interest in expression and develop communicative difficulties [14]. Over time, these difficulties become habitual and later change becomes more demanding. Relationship education therefore requires parents to model communication, create opportunities for expression, and correct harmful interaction patterns within the family system.

10. Education in Love: Learning to Love and to be Loved

Love is both an experience and a capacity. The family is the place where children first learn whether they are worthy of care and whether others can be trusted. When children grow up with consistent affection, respect, and positive attention, they acquire an inner sense of being loved. This sense supports emotional openness, social trust, and the ability to care for others.

Education in love does not mean indulgence or the absence of boundaries. It means that children can experience stable affection while also learning responsibility and respect. Children who receive adequate love and recognition in the family are better prepared to adapt to school, work, and social environments because they can reproduce constructive relational patterns outside the family. Conversely, a long-term lack of love and respect can weaken psychological energy and affect learning, friendship, work, and intimate relationships in adulthood. Family education must therefore help children learn both how to receive love and how to give it responsibly.

11. Ritual Education: Learning Reverence and Gratitude

Rituals help stabilize psychological structure and social meaning [15]. Traditional rituals often carry reverence toward

nature, ancestors, kinship, and shared values. These experiences exceed immediate individual desire and provide symbolic support for gratitude, responsibility, and self-restraint.

In contemporary life, rapid consumption, entertainment - centered routines, and fragmented attention can weaken the sense of ritual. When rituals disappear from family life, children may lose important opportunities to experience gratitude, continuity, and shared meaning. Research has also linked family rituals with children's behavioral and emotional development through social connection [16]. Qiao emphasizes the developmental value of ritual in family education [17]. From this perspective, birthdays, festivals, family meals, commemorations, greetings, and acts of gratitude are not empty formalities. When practiced sincerely, they help children learn reverence, appreciation, belonging, and emotional connection.

12. Meaning Education: Learning to Feel and Appreciate Life

A sense of meaning in life refers to an individual's understanding and pursuit of purpose, value, and direction. It is a basic psychological motive. Family education can cultivate meaning by helping children cherish their bodies, care for family members, value relatives and friends, and gradually extend concern to the wider circle of people with whom they live [18].

Contemporary discussions of the so-called 'hollow heart' problem point to the risks created when young people lack meaning, connection, and inner purpose [19]. Excessive educational competition may reduce children's time and space for experiencing ordinary life, leisure, social connection, and self-reflection [20]. Meaning education therefore requires families to resist a narrow achievement-only orientation. Children and adolescents need sufficient opportunities to feel life, appreciate others, experience nature and society, and build emotional bonds with people and the world. Such experiences can strengthen psychological vitality and reduce the risk of emptiness, isolation, and developmental imbalance.

13. Family Education as Preparation for School Education

Family education is also the preparatory stage for school education. Before children enter formal schooling, they acquire basic living habits, emotional patterns, rules, and attitudes toward learning at home. These foundations influence whether they can adapt to classroom routines, peer interaction, learning tasks, and teacher expectations.

Parents should therefore pay attention to children's daily routines, persistence, concentration, responsibility, and willingness to learn. Good living habits and positive volitional qualities make it easier for children to form appropriate learning beliefs and learning habits after entering school [21]. In this sense, the family functions as a buffer and bridge between early life and formal education. School success is not produced only by school instruction. It is also shaped by the developmental foundation established in family life.

14. Conclusion

The implementation of the Family Education Promotion Law of the People's Republic of China on January 1, 2022, together with policy efforts such as the Opinions on Improving the Collaborative Education Mechanism among Schools, Families, and Society, indicates that family education has been raised to a more prominent position in China's educational governance. These policy developments reflect the growing recognition that children's development depends not only on schools but also on the quality of family life and the coordination among family, school, and society.

Qiao Fuqiang's Family Systems Psychology: Mastering the Art of Family Education and Parent-Child Communication provides a systematic framework for understanding this issue [22]. By organizing family education into twelve dimensions, the book shows that the family is not only a place of residence or academic supervision. It is a comprehensive developmental system that supports emotional security, life competence, rule consciousness, interest exploration, goal formation, resilience, literacy, communication, love, ritual, meaning, and school readiness. A family-systems perspective can therefore help parents, educators, and researchers move beyond fragmented advice and toward a more integrated, relational, and developmentally grounded model of family education.

Note

The English titles of Chinese-language sources are translated for submission purposes. Journal issue numbers are retained from the source manuscript because volume and page information were not provided in the original file.

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