

A Study on the Effect of Family Capital on College Students' Academic Achievement

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Abstract: The relationship between family socioeconomic status and students' academic achievement has long been a topic of intense academic interest; however, few studies have combined family economic capital, cultural capital, and social capital as family capital to investigate its influence on students' academic achievement and how it affects students' academic achievement. This study investigates the relationship between family capital and the mechanisms of influence on students' academic achievement in an effort to generate new strategies for enhancing family capital and students' academic achievement. Using the method of literature review, it was determined that the social, cultural, and economic capital of students' families were all substantially related to their academic achievement in school, and the greater the family capital, the higher the students' academic achievement. In this process, academic goals play a mediating function, meaning that family capital not only directly affects students' academic achievement, but also indirectly affects it by influencing their academic goals.

Keywords: family capital, academic achievement, academic objectives

1. Introduction

Higher education is essential for individual human capital enhancement and social mobility, and family capital has a substantial impact on university students' success in higher education. As higher education becomes more accessible to students from all walks of life, the question of how to ensure that children from different families have good development after entering university affects the final learning outcomes of all university students and whether they can make full use of their hard-won higher education opportunities, achieve comprehensive development, and achieve upward social mobility with others in the same higher education institution. It is about the final outcomes for all students and their ability to make the most of their hard-won opportunities in higher education, to develop fully, and to accomplish upward social mobility in the higher education arena in comparison to those around them.

A review of relevant research indicates that the socioeconomic status (SES) of the family plays a significant role in intergenerational transmission and equity research [1]. However, in previous research, the status-achievement model has served as the framework for the majority of investigations, and few researchers have comprehensively measured the family environment of educated people on a theoretical basis. The majority of studies have only used parental education and income as surrogate

variables for socioeconomic status, which fails to convey its complexity and heterogeneity. Therefore, it is necessary to establish a clear and comprehensive theoretical framework for measuring family background.

Scholars in China have increasingly used the concept of ‘capital’ to define variables associated with family socioeconomic status and educational attainment as research advances. However, most studies have examined the impact of family cultural capital, family economic capital, and family social capital on school access separately, and few have examined the impact of family capital on students’ academic performance and higher educational attainment by combining the three types of capital. Few studies have also addressed the mediating effects between family capital and access to higher education, as well as the relationship and function of motivational sources between family socioeconomic status and student learning outcomes.

Through a literature review methodology, this research investigates the effects of family capital—including family economic capital, cultural capital, and social capital—on the academic success of university students. The goal is to lessen the effect that family wealth disparities have on university students’ academic performance and future prospects while they are pursuing their higher education. The goal is to successfully promote the realisation of equity in higher education by minimising the effects of variations in family wealth on students’ academic performance and future lives.

2. Definition of Family Capital and Its Division

The most typical and representative discussion of the meaning of family capital is Pierre Bourdieu and James Coleman’s interpretation of “family capital.” French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu conducted the earliest systematic examination of the concept of family capital. According to Pierre Bourdieu, the ‘family’ is the ‘cell’ and the fundamental social unit [2]. Capital is a valuable and exchangeable social good within a given field. Thus, Bourdieu defines family capital as “the collection of resources and powers that a family can provide for its children’s educational activities and which have a significant impact on the development of the individual.” Bourdieu’s concept of family capital stems from his extension of the meaning of social capital, which he divides into three dimensions in his book *The Forms of Capital*: economic, social, and cultural. In Bourdieu’s theoretical framework, the three types of family capital are fluid and transformable, with “economic capital serving as an important foundation for the establishment of cultural and social capital, which are frequently created from economic capital” Bourdieu’s earlier work, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, describes the connotation of economic capital: “Economic capital is a measure of material resources, and money and property rights are symbolic and institutional forms of economic capital.” The family income can be used to fund organised after-school activities, access to elite educational opportunities, and the development of valuable social networks. The economic resources that children from disadvantaged circumstances and their families possess restrict their opportunities. Economic capital therefore determines the extent to which parents can support their children’s education financially.

Coleman believes that social capital functions both within and beyond the family. Outside the family, social capital is defined as the interpersonal relationships within the family’s community [3]. Coleman identified the connection between social capital and education in the 1990s and made the first attempt to apply social capital to education in his analysis of high school dropouts. He argued that social capital promotes student academic achievement and influences the educational goals of children and adolescents. Variations in the amount of social capital generated by family social networks are one of the primary causes of disparities in academic performance among students. Coleman argues that human and economic capital can be transferred within a family, with social capital serving as a complement to this process. Thus, positive parental interactions increase the social capital of their offspring. On the other hand, single-parent families and large families will result in a

lack of individual social capital. Coleman investigates the impact of social capital in the context of the family on educational outcomes. He argues that parental involvement is a crucial tool for individuals to create social capital, similar to other forms of capital, such as economic, human, and cultural capital, on which individuals can draw to increase productivity and promote upward mobility.

3. The Effect of Family Capital on Students' Academic Success

3.1. The Effect of Family Economic Capital on Students' Academic Success

The family's economy and the resources it can equate to supply all the material resources required for the child's personal growth while at school are at the core of the family's economic capital. According to Chevalier and Lamont's research, a student's likelihood of succeeding academically in higher education is correlated favourably with their parents' financial condition. By analysing the learning outcomes of 1180 students at the University of Wisconsin, Robert-Havman has shown that variations in family income lead to variations in student accomplishment. James Coleman contends that parental financial circumstances have an impact on both children's access to and performance in higher education, and that the better the parents' financial circumstances are, the better their children's access to and success in higher education will be [4].

3.2. The Effect of Family Cultural Capital on Students' Academic Success

In 1986, Bourdieu first articulated the idea of "cultural capital." According to his definition, cultural capital is an element of a system that encompasses the knowledge, linguistic abilities, and mannerisms that children learn from their parents. He proposed that these characteristics influence an individual's growth stage. Three types of cultural capital are recognised by Bourdieu: Physical cultural capital, like books, is where objectified culture is most visible. Material resources cannot directly change bodilized cultural capital; instead, it is shaped through personal learning and assimilation. Bourdieu contends that children from higher social strata also have an edge when it comes to earning educational credentials in the case of institutionalised cultural capital. It is believed that institutionalised cultural capital has a significant role in schools' success. It makes sense to infer that differing achievements are tied to an individual's social class if cultural resources are differentiated based on family background. For instance, a student's social skills, language preferences, and attitudes towards the academic material and professors may differ based on social status. Bourdieu further postulated that working-class parents preferred a natural-growth parenting style in which children were given more freely scheduled time to come up with their own activities. Middle-class parents, on the other hand, preferred a parenting style he called collaborative nurturing, in which children's talents were nurtured through organised activities. Due to the fact that middle-class families' educational methods are more compatible with the educational system, they are consequently better prepared for their children's schooling. It is easier to understand the cultural symbols that teachers use to communicate with students when parents have more cultural capital, and this makes it more likely that their children will be liked and noticed by teachers, which improves learning outcomes.

3.3. The Effect of Family Social Capital on Students' Academic Success

The term "social capital" refers to the degree of social cohesion or "resources for action" within a community and includes traits of social organisation like civic engagement, reciprocity norms, trust, and social processes that foster cooperative relationships. Social relationships are frequently strong points of social capital. Although other scholars have conceptualised social capital in various ways,

relevant researchers typically employ Coleman's theory as the most prevalent form used in educational research.

Family social capital is initially divided into social capital within the family and social capital beyond the family by Coleman. As parents' attitudes and encouragement support their kids' efforts and engagement in school, "intra-family social capital" mostly consists of parents' expectations and concerns for their kids' education [5]. Extra-familial social capital, which includes parents' social connections, occupations, and rank as well as the family's class of social contacts, is a symbol of the family's capacity to access social resources. Coleman underlines how the availability of social capital affects whether an actor is able to complete a certain instrumental action goal because of its productive nature. According to Coleman's conceptualization of social capital, social structures such as families, schools, and communities can produce social capital [6]. Based on the projected achievement of a student's socioeconomic condition, higher education achievement can be explained by the interaction between family and community.

4. Suggestions and Actions

4.1. Government Level--The Distinctions Between Urban and Rural Cultures

First, the government needs to increase public awareness of adult education and provide guidance on how to utilise this time effectively, foster a love of lifelong learning, and modernise the educational philosophies and practises for their kids. Second, the government has to improve adult education in a context-specific way and modernise the subject matter and delivery methods of continuing education. In order to give adults access to spaces and tools for cultural learning so they can advance their cultural literacy after work, the government should pay special attention to the creation of public cultural resources, such as public libraries, universities for the elderly, community schools, regular public lectures, and the organisation of cultural experiences. These programmes support the development of children's families' cultural capital, the creation of a learning society, and the advancement of the nation's general standard of living.

4.2. Academic Level--Create a Complete Profile of Students

Regarding the familial wealth of students as a starting point, targeted educational initiatives should be implemented. Teachers responsible for student management should collect and investigate students' family information as soon as possible after their enrollment in school in order to have a thorough comprehension of their basic family situation and to create individualised files for them. The school should devise compensatory measures and educational plans based on the family's actual financial situation. In order to assure the academic success of students during their school years, it is necessary for there to be timely communication in education.

In addition to the mastery and application of knowledge, the academic achievement of students in higher education also includes the development and improvement of their comprehensive abilities. This encompasses not only the achievement of professional learning and the level of comprehensive cognitive ability based on the acquisition of theoretical knowledge, but also a series of comprehensive qualities required to adapt to and partake in future social life. The goals of training and academic assessment should be aligned with the requirements of students and their social development, allowing them to adapt to society more quickly and flourish after completing higher education.

4.3. Family Level--Wise Utilisation of Family Resources

Regarding the family's economic capital, parents can support their children's interests, hobbies, special skills, and knowledge and skill enhancement training [7]. They can help their children develop

in a more qualitative, efficient, and holistic manner so that they will be more prepared for future education, employment, and social adaptation.

Concerning the cultural capital of the family, it is essential that parents continue to better themselves through education, particularly in the areas of their children's education, pedagogy, and psychology. Higher education is essential to the maturation of an individual's thought processes and perspectives on life's issues. To ensure their children's healthy development in higher education, parents should pay special attention to their children's psychological state at this stage and provide scientific and rational guidance.

In terms of family social capital, parents should actively encourage their children to engage in social practises, encourage their integration into society, and encourage them to express themselves. Parents should therefore encourage their children to cultivate a sense of citizenship and social participation.

5. Conclusion

This paper analyses the relationship between family wealth and academic achievement among university students. The findings indicate that family wealth influences the academic achievement of university students not only directly and positively, but also indirectly by influencing their academic objectives.

The direct or indirect effects of familial variables on students' academic achievement throughout their school years are still not fully understood. Future studies could follow changes in aspects of family capital in students' lives using a longitudinal cohort study approach. Qualitative research may also be utilised to examine the long-term effects of such modifications on students' academic performance and future development. Other outcome variables including academic achievement quality, stress levels, and more generally the choice of variables. To further understand how large-scale cultural and societal factors influence the academic achievement of university students, the study may additionally include other outcome variables, such as the standard of academic achievement, stress indicators, and, more broadly, multiple universities in the region.

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