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(IJMOE)www.gaexcellence.com/ijmoeFAMILY EDUCATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS AMONG
GRADE 12 STUDENTS IN HAINAN PROVINCE, CHINA:
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Abstract:

This study describes family educational characteristics among Grade 12 students preparing for the Gaokao in Hainan Province, China. A cross-sectional survey included 1,194 students from four senior high schools. Students reported perceived parental expectations, parent-child closeness, and paternal and maternal parenting styles. Analyses used descriptive statistics and exploration paired-samples tests. The overall expectations mean was slightly above the six-point scale midpoint ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 0.73$). Future financial responsibility for the family received the highest item mean ($M = 4.09$). Father-child and mother-child closeness means were 3.06 and 3.10; the difference was statistically significant in an unadjusted test but very small ($d_{av} = -0.05$). Students rated fathers higher on authoritarian and authoritative parenting and mothers higher on permissive parenting. Standardized differences were small for authoritarian ($d_{av} = 0.31$) and permissive parenting ($d_{av} = -0.29$), and very small for authoritative parenting ($d_{av} = 0.08$). The findings provide a contextual descriptive profile, not evidence of causal effects or fixed parenting categories. They offer a reference for future regional comparisons and longitudinal research.

Keyword:

Descriptive Study; Family Education; Grade 12 Students; Parental Expectations; Parent-Child Relationships; Parenting Styles



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Introduction

Family education is part of the daily experience of adolescents, involving learning, relationships and expectations for the future. Research links family involvement and parenting practices with academic engagement, adjustment and mental health (Zhao & Zhao, 2022; Bornstein, 2019; Kim, 2022). For students preparing for the Chinese college entrance examination, these experiences occur at a critical stage of educational selection. Therefore, the third year of high school provides a useful context in which to examine what students believe their parents expect, how close they feel to each parent, and how they perceive their parents' support and regulations.

These experiences need to be understood in their cultural and institutional contexts (Harkness & Super, 2021). In discussions of family education in China, the Confucian learning tradition links educational success with family responsibility and intergenerational support (Chen, 2023). The college entrance examination adds an immediate educational goal, and family involvement may be organized around this goal (Liu, 2013). Parents may convey expectations, supervise learning, and provide support during students' exam preparation. How students experience these practices is an empirical question; cultural traditions alone cannot establish what actually happens in a particular family.

Previous studies have examined several relevant aspects of family life. Parental expectations are associated with educational aspirations, academic engagement and academic achievement (Jeynes, 2024). Associations between parent-child relationships, learning engagement and psychological adjustment have been studied (Shao & Kang, 2022). Parenting research examines academic achievement and behavioral problems across different cultural contexts (Pinquart & Kauser, 2018). Research on Chinese adolescents also addresses overprotective parenting and academic anxiety (Li et al., 2025). It also examines parent-child relationships and depression (Zeng et al., 2025). These findings inform questions about developmental outcomes. This study addresses a complementary descriptive question. What patterns of expectations, closeness and parenting do students report during the third year of high school? This study focuses on Hainan Province. The Hainan Free Trade Port policy provides a regional context. This context is relevant to discussions of education and future opportunities (CPC Central Committee, State Council, 2020). The survey does not measure the impact of the policy on families. Its contribution is to describe family experiences reported by students in this setting. It does not explain these experiences in terms of regional development.

This study uses a cross-sectional survey of 1,194 final-year high school students from four schools. It examines perceived parental expectations, parent-child closeness and parenting dimensions. Students rate both of their parents. This allows corresponding paternal and maternal scores to be compared within the same respondent. The analysis describes score

levels, item distributions and the magnitude of parental differences. It does not test causal pathways. It also does not assign parents to mutually exclusive parenting categories. The study addresses three research questions:

- RQ1. What are the overall level and item-level distribution of perceived parental expectations among the sampled Grade 12 students?
- RQ2. What levels of parent–child closeness do students report, and how do average father–child and mother–child scores compare?
- RQ3. What are the distributions of perceived parenting-style dimensions, and how do corresponding paternal and maternal scores compare?

Literature Review

Parental Expectations In Stratified Educational Systems

Parental expectations express what parents want their children to achieve and what responsibilities they expect their children to assume. These expectations are associated with achievement, educational aspirations, academic engagement and persistence, so they remain a recurring focus of family research (Jeynes, 2024). Another concern for a descriptive study is: What exactly does expectations score capture? Similar overall scores may conceal differences in the importance attached to academic success, future employment or obligations to the family. The interpretation of these expectations depends on the context in which they arise. Accounts that emphasize autonomy and achievement motivation place expectations within particular understandings of development and educational success (Harkness & Super, 2021); cross-cultural research also focuses on cultural values and family arrangements, through which goals acquire meaning (Bornstein, 2019). Therefore, an expectation cannot be understood by its intensity alone. Its content and its place in family life are equally important.

In Chinese family education, the Confucian tradition links learning and self-cultivation with family responsibilities and intergenerational obligations (Lu et al., 2024). This perspective helps to explain why educational expectations may extend beyond a child's individual academic progress. Research distinguishes achievement aspirations from expectations about future support for the family (Dai et al., 2025; Yang et al., 2024). These orientations can be examined through students' responses to specific items without assuming that every family gives them the same weight.

During the students' preparation for the college entrance examination, an item-level description can show which expectations the students perceive most strongly, thus providing details beyond the overall score. But it cannot determine why parents hold these expectations or whether students will meet these expectations. This distinction is the core of this study: perceived expectations are regarded as students' accounts of their parents' goals for them. To understand these accounts, we also need to consider the relationships through which expectations are communicated.

Parent–Child Relationships in the Confucian Cultural Context

Parent–child relationships are the setting in which educational expectations are expressed, negotiated, and experienced. Studies have associated relationship quality with learning engagement, psychological adjustment, and mental health (Shao & Kang, 2022; Zeng et al.,

2025). These broad associations do not mean that a single measure captures every aspect of the relationship. The present study focuses on perceived closeness, using corresponding questions about mothers and fathers.

Attachment theory emphasizes the role of secure relationships in exploration, self-regulation, and adaptation (Bowlby, 1988). Cross-cultural scholarship places these emotional bonds within family ethics, cultural values, and social expectations (Lansford & Bornstein, 2020). Closeness should consequently be interpreted with attention to how families express care. Emotional expressiveness and autonomy support are relevant features, but they do not exhaust the ways in which students may experience a relationship with a parent.

Accounts of family relationships in China link parental care with guidance and children's responsibilities toward the family (Lu et al., 2024). Around the college entrance examination, communication about educational aspirations, study supervision and parental accompaniment may bring these functions together (Chen et al., 2023). However, the same examination setting may be experienced differently across families. Therefore, rather than inferring relationship quality solely from cultural expectations, it is useful to examine what students themselves report about their relationships.

Maternal and paternal roles also need to be examined empirically. Research examines parenting in relation to family living arrangements (Liu & Yu, 2024), and links father involvement with parental role beliefs, fathering self-efficacy and maternal gatekeeping (Liu et al., 2022). This research suggests that mothers and fathers should not be regarded as fixed opposites. Parallel closeness scores provide a way to describe similarities and differences between the two parents within the same student sample. The direction and magnitude of a difference both matter: a detectable difference in average scores does not necessarily indicate substantial differences in students' experiences of their parental relationships.

Parenting Styles and Their Cultural Applicability

Parenting-style research examines patterns of responsiveness, demands, and behavioral regulation. Studies have linked parenting dimensions to externalizing problems (Pinquart, 2017) and compared their associations with achievement and behavior problems across cultures (Pinquart & Kauser, 2018). A descriptive analysis asks a narrower question: how strongly do students endorse the measured dimensions for each parent?

Baumrind's (1971) distinction among authoritative, authoritarian and permissive parenting, together with the framework of Maccoby and Martin (1983), has informed much of this work. These frameworks draw attention to parental responsiveness and demand, including autonomy support and behavioral expectations. Their application across different settings requires caution, because the meaning and developmental associations of a practice may vary with cultural values and institutions (Pinquart & Kauser, 2018).

In discussions of family education in China, educational investment, family responsibility and respect for authority help to frame parental expectations for behavior. Emotional involvement and demanding supervision may occur at the same time, which complicates interpretations based on a simple opposition between support and control (Yim, 2022). This possibility is a reason to examine measured practices separately, rather than a basis for assuming that demanding parenting is beneficial in every family.

Research on father involvement highlights the relevance of family processes and role beliefs (Liu et al., 2022), while research on overprotective parenting raises questions about students' academic anxiety (Li et al., 2025). For this study, a dimensional approach allows authoritative, authoritarian and permissive scores to be described for each parent, avoiding the classification of parents into a single category based on sample averages. By comparing the corresponding paternal and maternal dimensions, we can identify the magnitude of differences in students' ratings without treating these differences as evidence of fixed parental roles or developmental effects.

Methodology

Participants And Procedure

This study involved a cross-sectional questionnaire survey of final-year high school students at four general senior high schools in Hainan Province, China, including two public schools and two private schools. The study used stratified cluster sampling, with final-year high school classes as sampling clusters. Students were both respondents and units of analysis. Each student rated both parents, thus providing paired paternal and maternal observations.

Sample-size planning used Cochran's (1977) formula and incorporated a finite-population correction for the estimated population. The calculation assumed a population of 68,311 final-year high school students, a confidence level of 95%, a margin of error of 3%, and a population proportion of 0.50, yielding a minimum sample size of 1,051 students. To allow for nonresponse and invalid questionnaires, the target sample size increased to 1,200. This calculation provided a simple random sampling benchmark, which did not incorporate a cluster-design effect.

Of the 1,205 questionnaires distributed, seven were excluded due to mechanical response patterns, logical inconsistencies or substantial missing data, leaving 1,198 initially valid responses. Mahalanobis-distance screening then identified four multivariate outliers, which were subsequently excluded. The final analytical sample included 1,194 students: 617 male students (51.7%) and 577 female students (48.3%). Participants were predominantly 17–19 years old ($M = 17.82$, $SD = 0.46$).

Students completed the questionnaires anonymously in classrooms. Participation was informed and voluntary. The study established ethical standards for academic research and received approval from the participating schools and the relevant ethics committee.

Measures

Perceived Parental Expectations

Perceived parental expectations (PPE) were measured with nine items derived from the Living Up to Parental Expectations Inventory (Wang & Heppner, 2002). The source instrument was developed with Taiwanese college students and addressed expectations in a Chinese cultural context. Its coverage of educational goals and family expectations informed its selection for this study. Students responded on a six-point scale from 1 (not at all) to 6 (entirely); higher scores indicate stronger perceived expectations. Internal consistency in the present Grade 12 sample is reported in Table 1.

Parent–Child Closeness

The study operationalized parent–child relationships as perceived closeness (PCC). The measure drew on Buchanan et al. (1991) and the Chinese adaptation reported by Zhang et al. (2011). Students answered nine items about their father and nine corresponding items about their mother. The parallel forms cover emotional closeness and interaction experiences, allowing the two parental ratings to be compared. Responses ranged from 1 (never) to 5 (very often), with higher scores indicating greater closeness. Table 1 reports internal consistency separately for each form.

Parental Authority Questionnaire

Parenting styles were measured with the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ; Buri, 1991), based on Baumrind's (1971) framework. Students completed 30 items for each parent, with 10 items for each of the permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative dimensions. The administration used frequency anchors from 1 (never) to 5 (very often). Higher scores indicate a stronger perceived presence of the relevant dimension. All scores reflect students' reports rather than parents' self-reports.

The PAQ provides corresponding paternal and maternal forms and distinguishes the three dimensions (Buri, 1991). Each dimension was analyzed as a continuous score. No overall parenting score was calculated, and parents were not assigned to mutually exclusive categories. Sample means consequently describe the relative endorsement of measured practices; they do not reveal the combination of practices within each family.

Data Analysis

Analyses were conducted in IBM SPSS Statistics 26.0. Screening examined completeness and response quality, including mechanical answering patterns and logical anomalies, with reference to Leiner (2019). Cronbach's α was calculated for internal consistency. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) statistic and Bartlett's test of sphericity assessed the suitability of item correlations for factor analysis. These diagnostics address factorability rather than providing a complete assessment of construct validity.

Skewness and kurtosis were inspected for the composite scores. Because all measures were obtained from the same respondents at one time point, Harman's single-factor test was used as a limited diagnostic for common method bias. Its results were not taken to establish that such bias was absent (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Descriptive statistics included item frequencies and percentages, means, and standard deviations. Composite scores remained on the original response scales. The six-point expectations scale has a theoretical midpoint of 3.50; the five-point closeness and parenting scales have a midpoint of 3.00. These values were used as descriptive reference points, not validated thresholds for low, moderate, or high functioning. Raw means from scales with different ranges were not directly compared.

Paired-samples t tests compared corresponding paternal and maternal composite scores. Mean differences were defined as father minus mother. Cohen's d_{av} standardized each difference using the average of the two parental standard deviations (Lakens, 2013). Positive values therefore indicate higher paternal scores, and negative values indicate higher maternal scores.

The tests were conducted at the individual level, without adjustment for clustering or multiple comparisons. They were treated as exploratory, with emphasis on the magnitude of differences as well as the unadjusted p values.

Results

Measurement Diagnostics

KMO values ranged from .758 to .873, and all Bartlett's tests were significant ($p < .001$; Table 1). The item correlations were therefore suitable for factor analysis, although these diagnostics do not establish the proposed factor structure or equivalence between parental forms. Cronbach's α ranged from .689 to .871. Paternal authoritative parenting had the lowest coefficient ($\alpha = .689$), slightly below the .70 benchmark discussed by Hair et al. (2022) and requires particular caution in interpretation.

Table 1: Internal Consistency And Factorability Of The Measures

Construct	Dimension	KMO	Bartlett's p	Cronbach's α
PPE	Overall	.819	< .001	.856
PCC	Father-child relationship	.873	< .001	.871
PCC	Mother-child relationship	.873	< .001	.855
PAQ-F	Authoritarian	.830	< .001	.810
PAQ-F	Permissive	.840	< .001	.761
PAQ-F	Authoritative	.758	< .001	.689
PAQ-M	Authoritarian	.846	< .001	.790
PAQ-M	Permissive	.842	< .001	.772
PAQ-M	Authoritative	.794	< .001	.755

Note. PPE = perceived parental expectations; PCC = parent-child closeness; PAQ-F and PAQ-M = paternal and maternal Parental Authority Questionnaire forms. KMO assesses sampling adequacy; Bartlett's p refers to the test of sphericity. These statistics do not establish construct validity or measurement equivalence.

Absolute skewness was below 3 and absolute kurtosis below 10 for the composite variables, indicating no severe departures under the screening criteria used (Kline, 2023). This does not establish exact normality for every composite score or paired difference. In Harman's test, the first unrotated factor accounted for 42.68% of the variance. Although it did not account for a majority of the variance, this result cannot exclude common method bias in single-informant, cross-sectional data (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Perceived Parental Expectations

The overall PPE mean was 3.61 ($SD = 0.73$), slightly above the six-point scale midpoint of 3.50 (Table 2). Item means ranged from 3.35 to 4.09, and item standard deviations from 0.90 to 1.10.

The highest mean was for PE5, "My parents expect me to assume financial responsibility for the family in the future" ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 0.90$). PE2, "My parents expect my academic achievement to make them proud," had the lowest mean ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 0.98$). The item

rankings thus distinguish the salience of particular expectations within the sample, beyond what is conveyed by the overall score.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics For Perceived Parental Expectations

Construct	Item	Not at all	A little	Mild	Moderate	Almost	Entirely	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
PPE	PE1	16 (1.3)	91 (7.6)	399 (33.4)	498 (41.7)	172 (14.4)	18 (1.5)	3.65	0.917
	PE2	38 (3.2)	177 (14.8)	446 (37.4)	413 (34.6)	108 (9.0)	12 (1.0)	3.35	0.977
	PE3	11 (0.9)	124 (10.4)	394 (33.0)	475 (39.8)	170 (14.2)	20 (1.7)	3.61	0.942
	PE4	27 (2.3)	177 (14.8)	440 (36.9)	421 (35.3)	107 (9.0)	22 (1.8)	3.39	0.981
	PE5	3 (0.3)	38 (3.2)	242 (20.3)	540 (45.2)	312 (26.1)	59 (4.9)	4.09	0.897
	PE6	6 (0.5)	106 (8.9)	432 (36.2)	439 (36.8)	190 (15.9)	21 (1.8)	3.64	0.929
	PE7	20 (1.7)	112 (9.4)	408 (34.2)	454 (38.0)	166 (13.9)	34 (2.8)	3.62	0.987
	PE8	19 (1.6)	161 (13.5)	384 (32.2)	370 (31.0)	206 (17.3)	54 (4.5)	3.62	1.103
	PE9	26 (2.2)	141 (11.8)	406 (34.0)	423 (35.4)	177 (14.8)	21 (1.8)	3.54	1.009
Overall mean								3.61	0.734

Note. $N = 1,194$. Response cells shown (%). Percentages may not total 100 because of rounding. PE1–PE9 identify items in the PPE measure. *M* and *SD* refer to item scores; the overall row reports the composite score.

Parent–Child Closeness

Mean closeness was 3.06 ($SD = 0.863$) for fathers and 3.10 ($SD = 0.820$) for mothers (Table 3). Both were near the five-point scale midpoint of 3.00. Maternal closeness was 0.04 points higher on average.

Father–child item means ranged from 2.91 for PCRF7 to 3.26 for PCRF2. The highest-rated item, PCRF2, asked, “How comfortable do you feel expressing your emotions to your father?” For the maternal form, item means ranged from 2.96 for PCRM6 to 3.22 for PCRM2. The two forms therefore showed broadly similar levels of endorsement, although the lowest-rated item differed.

The paired comparison yielded $t(1193) = -2.120$, $p = .034$, with a father-minus-mother difference of -0.04 and $d_{av} = -0.05$ (Table 5). The difference met the unadjusted .05 significance threshold, but its standardized magnitude was very small.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics For Parent–Child Closeness

Construct	Item	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
PCRF	PCRF1	42 (3.5)	306 (25.6)	476 (39.9)	263 (22.0)	107 (9.0)	3.07	0.986
	PCRF2	21 (1.8)	215 (18.0)	493 (41.3)	361 (30.2)	104 (8.7)	3.26	0.913
	PCRF3	50 (4.2)	313 (26.2)	464 (38.9)	259 (21.7)	108 (9.0)	3.05	1.003
	PCRF4	36 (3.0)	323 (27.1)	509 (42.6)	217 (18.2)	109 (9.1)	3.03	0.968
	PCRF5	56 (4.7)	354 (29.6)	441 (36.9)	224 (18.8)	119 (10.0)	3.00	1.035
	PCRF6	52 (4.4)	343 (28.7)	460 (38.5)	225 (18.8)	114 (9.5)	3.01	1.016
	PCRF7	66 (5.5)	393 (32.9)	441 (36.9)	168 (14.1)	126 (10.6)	2.91	1.052
	PCRF8	35 (2.9)	245 (20.5)	488 (40.9)	328 (27.5)	98 (8.2)	3.18	0.946
	PCRF9	51 (4.3)	298 (25.0)	488 (40.9)	257 (21.5)	100 (8.4)	3.05	0.984
Overall mean							3.06	0.863
PCRM	PCRM1	34 (2.8)	304 (25.5)	530 (44.4)	219 (18.3)	107 (9.0)	3.05	0.953
	PCRM2	30 (2.5)	200 (16.8)	538 (45.1)	335 (28.1)	91 (7.6)	3.22	0.899
	PCRM3	28 (2.3)	239 (20.0)	485 (40.6)	335 (28.1)	107 (9.0)	3.21	0.943
	PCRM4	16 (1.3)	252 (21.1)	532 (44.6)	314 (26.3)	80 (6.7)	3.16	0.878
	PCRM5	24 (2.0)	292 (24.5)	538 (45.1)	230 (19.3)	110 (9.2)	3.09	0.937
	PCRM6	71 (5.9)	338 (28.3)	465 (38.9)	203 (17.0)	117 (9.8)	2.96	1.040
	PCRM7	43 (3.6)	293 (24.5)	497 (41.6)	250 (20.9)	111 (9.3)	3.08	0.983
	PCRM8	28 (2.3)	310 (26.0)	513 (43.0)	257 (21.5)	86 (7.2)	3.05	0.925
	PCRM9	26 (2.2)	287 (24.0)	526 (44.1)	262 (21.9)	93 (7.8)	3.09	0.922
Overall mean							3.10	0.820

Note. $N = 1,194$. Response cells shown (%). PCRF and PCRM identify father–child and mother–child closeness items. Percentages may not total 100 because of rounding. Overall rows report composite scores.

Parenting Styles

The six parenting-dimension means were near the five-point scale midpoint of 3.00, with different descriptive rankings for the two parental forms (Table 4). For fathers, authoritarian parenting had the highest mean ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 0.837$), followed by authoritative ($M = 3.19$, $SD = 0.841$) and permissive parenting ($M = 3.03$, $SD = 0.912$). For mothers, permissive parenting had the highest mean ($M = 3.28$, $SD = 0.786$), followed by authoritative ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.842$) and authoritarian parenting ($M = 2.95$, $SD = 0.936$). Differences among dimensions within each parental form were not tested. These rankings describe scale scores, not the prevalence of parenting types.

For fathers, permissive item means ranged from 2.81 (PSFA19) to 3.21 (PSFA13), authoritarian means from 3.12 (PSFB12) to 3.38 (PSFB29), and authoritative means from 3.03 (PSFC5) to 3.37 (PSFC11). The corresponding maternal ranges were 3.03 (PSMA17) to 3.57 (PSMA10), 2.88 (PSMB7) to 3.16 (PSMB15), and 2.96 (PSMC22) to 3.21 (PSMC5), respectively.

All three paired paternal–maternal comparisons were statistically significant at the unadjusted .05 level (Table 5). Students rated fathers higher on authoritarian parenting, $t(1193) = 12.810$, $p < .001$, $d_{av} = 0.31$, and authoritative parenting, $t(1193) = 3.132$, $p = .002$, $d_{av} = 0.08$. Mothers received higher permissive scores, $t(1193) = -11.777$, $p < .001$, $d_{av} = -0.29$. Using Cohen’s (1988) benchmarks as a descriptive guide, the authoritarian and permissive differences were small; the authoritative difference was very small.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics For Parenting Styles

Construct	Item	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
PSFA	PSFA1	41 (3.4)	364 (30.5)	479 (40.1)	179 (15.0)	131 (11.0)	3.00	1.016
	PSFA6	54 (4.5)	313 (26.2)	466 (39.0)	246 (20.6)	115 (9.6)	3.05	1.016
	PSFA10	21 (1.8)	244 (20.4)	511 (42.8)	314 (26.3)	104 (8.7)	3.20	0.921
	PSFA13	28 (2.3)	233 (19.5)	501 (42.0)	324 (27.1)	108 (9.0)	3.21	0.937
	PSFA14	51 (4.3)	388 (32.5)	436 (36.5)	185 (15.5)	134 (11.2)	2.97	1.049
	PSFA17	74 (6.2)	379 (31.7)	429 (35.9)	177 (14.8)	135 (11.3)	2.93	1.078
	PSFA19	85 (7.1)	465 (38.9)	375 (31.4)	133 (11.1)	136 (11.4)	2.81	1.098
	PSFA21	73 (6.1)	360 (30.2)	455 (38.1)	178 (14.9)	128 (10.7)	2.94	1.059
	PSFA24	24 (2.0)	281 (23.5)	500 (41.9)	283 (23.7)	106 (8.9)	3.14	0.943
	PSFA28	41 (3.4)	314 (26.3)	507 (42.5)	208 (17.4)	124 (10.4)	3.05	0.994
Overall mean							3.03	0.912
PSFB	PSFB2	33 (2.8)	252 (21.1)	476 (39.9)	303 (25.4)	130 (10.9)	3.21	0.985
	PSFB3	26 (2.2)	272 (22.8)	542 (45.4)	229 (19.2)	125 (10.5)	3.13	0.954
	PSFB7	45 (3.8)	264 (22.1)	479 (40.1)	290 (24.3)	116 (9.7)	3.14	0.992
	PSFB9	25 (2.1)	235 (19.7)	529 (44.3)	285 (23.9)	120 (10.1)	3.20	0.939
	PSFB12	42 (3.5)	303 (25.4)	440 (36.9)	289 (24.2)	120 (10.1)	3.12	1.013
	PSFB15	34 (2.8)	259 (21.7)	508 (42.5)	282 (23.6)	111 (9.3)	3.15	0.958
	PSFB18	15 (1.3)	205 (17.2)	506 (42.4)	347 (29.1)	121 (10.1)	3.30	0.911
	PSFB25	13 (1.1)	184 (15.4)	517 (43.3)	345 (28.9)	135 (11.3)	3.34	0.908
	PSFB26	27 (2.3)	206 (17.3)	484 (40.5)	344 (28.8)	133 (11.1)	3.29	0.955
	PSFB29	6 (0.5)	155 (13.0)	529 (44.3)	388 (32.5)	116 (9.7)	3.38	0.849
Overall mean							3.23	0.837
PSFC	PSFC4	41 (3.4)	307 (25.7)	473 (39.6)	262 (21.9)	111 (9.3)	3.08	0.990
	PSFC5	32 (2.7)	345 (28.9)	498 (41.7)	194 (16.2)	125 (10.5)	3.03	0.989
	PSFC8	30 (2.5)	236 (19.8)	471 (39.4)	343 (28.7)	114 (9.5)	3.23	0.957
	PSFC11	12 (1.0)	172 (14.4)	501 (42.0)	383 (32.1)	126 (10.6)	3.37	0.890
	PSFC16	20 (1.7)	229 (19.2)	495 (41.5)	331 (27.7)	119 (10.0)	3.25	0.934
	PSFC20	29 (2.4)	275 (23.0)	520 (43.6)	258 (21.6)	112 (9.4)	3.12	0.951
	PSFC22	11 (0.9)	245 (20.5)	471 (39.4)	367 (30.7)	100 (8.4)	3.25	0.907
	PSFC23	51 (4.3)	279 (23.4)	438 (36.7)	311 (26.0)	115 (9.6)	3.13	1.016
	PSFC27	40 (3.4)	283 (23.7)	483 (40.5)	278 (23.3)	110 (9.2)	3.11	0.980
	PSFC30	19 (1.6)	211 (17.7)	481 (40.3)	357 (29.9)	126 (10.6)	3.30	0.933

Construct	Item	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often	M	SD
Overall mean							3.19	0.841
PSMA	PSMA1	13 (1.1)	190 (15.9)	469 (39.3)	398 (33.3)	124 (10.4)	3.36	0.907
	PSMA6	5 (0.4)	134 (11.2)	446 (37.4)	475 (39.8)	134 (11.2)	3.50	0.851
	PSMA10	2 (0.2)	88 (7.4)	455 (38.1)	523 (43.8)	126 (10.6)	3.57	0.783
	PSMA13	53 (4.4)	301 (25.2)	464 (38.9)	263 (22.0)	113 (9.5)	3.07	1.012
	PSMA14	11 (0.9)	154 (12.9)	476 (39.9)	442 (37.0)	111 (9.3)	3.41	0.861
	PSMA17	56 (4.7)	319 (26.7)	472 (39.5)	232 (19.4)	115 (9.6)	3.03	1.017
	PSMA19	6 (0.5)	175 (14.7)	521 (43.6)	411 (34.4)	81 (6.8)	3.32	0.824
	PSMA21	11 (0.9)	240 (20.1)	579 (48.5)	248 (20.8)	116 (9.7)	3.18	0.895
	PSMA24	28 (2.3)	247 (20.7)	525 (44.0)	296 (24.8)	98 (8.2)	3.16	0.923
	PSMA28	29 (2.4)	285 (23.9)	479 (40.1)	285 (23.9)	116 (9.7)	3.15	0.971
Overall mean							3.28	0.786
PSMB	PSMB2	68 (5.7)	428 (35.8)	406 (34.0)	157 (13.1)	135 (11.3)	2.89	1.076
	PSMB3	37 (3.1)	313 (26.2)	500 (41.9)	238 (19.9)	106 (8.9)	3.05	0.969
	PSMB7	71 (5.9)	430 (36.0)	411 (34.4)	140 (11.7)	142 (11.9)	2.88	1.085
	PSMB9	52 (4.4)	347 (29.1)	496 (41.5)	171 (14.3)	128 (10.7)	2.98	1.018
	PSMB12	60 (5.0)	422 (35.3)	442 (37.0)	135 (11.3)	135 (11.3)	2.89	1.052
	PSMB15	20 (1.7)	268 (22.4)	519 (43.5)	275 (23.0)	112 (9.4)	3.16	0.934
	PSMB18	68 (5.7)	410 (34.3)	421 (35.3)	180 (15.1)	115 (9.6)	2.89	1.046
	PSMB25	61 (5.1)	397 (33.2)	444 (37.2)	168 (14.1)	124 (10.4)	2.91	1.042
	PSMB26	51 (4.3)	429 (35.9)	433 (36.3)	161 (13.5)	120 (10.1)	2.89	1.028
	PSMB29	56 (4.7)	401 (33.6)	436 (36.5)	179 (15.0)	122 (10.2)	2.92	1.038
Overall mean							2.95	0.936
PSMC	PSMC4	36 (3.0)	298 (25.0)	504 (42.2)	233 (19.5)	123 (10.3)	3.09	0.985
	PSMC5	4 (0.3)	212 (17.8)	598 (50.1)	291 (24.4)	89 (7.5)	3.21	0.831
	PSMC8	17 (1.4)	248 (20.8)	542 (45.4)	289 (24.2)	98 (8.2)	3.17	0.898
	PSMC11	36 (3.0)	284 (23.8)	481 (40.3)	281 (23.5)	112 (9.4)	3.12	0.977
	PSMC16	36 (3.0)	289 (24.2)	512 (42.9)	257 (21.5)	100 (8.4)	3.08	0.952
	PSMC20	23 (1.9)	291 (24.4)	527 (44.1)	236 (19.8)	117 (9.8)	3.11	0.948
	PSMC22	51 (4.3)	393 (32.9)	442 (37.0)	173 (14.5)	135 (11.3)	2.96	1.047
	PSMC23	17 (1.4)	263 (22.0)	557 (46.6)	245 (20.5)	112 (9.4)	3.14	0.915
	PSMC27	15 (1.3)	256 (21.4)	531 (44.5)	273 (22.9)	119 (10.0)	3.19	0.926
	PSMC30	15 (1.3)	270 (22.6)	559 (46.8)	237 (19.8)	113 (9.5)	3.14	0.914
Overall mean							3.12	0.842

Note. $N = 1,194$. Response cells show n (%). PSF and PSM identify paternal and maternal items; A = permissive, B = authoritarian, and C = authoritative parenting. Percentages may not total 100 because of rounding. Overall rows report dimension scores.

Table 5: Paired Comparisons Of Paternal And Maternal Scores

Dimension	Father (SD)	M Mother (SD)	M Difference	t	p	d_{av}
Parent–Child Relationship	3.06 (0.86)	3.10 (0.82)	–0.04	–2.120	.034	–0.05
Permissive Parenting	3.03 (0.91)	3.28 (0.79)	–0.25	–11.777	< .001	–0.29
Authoritarian Parenting	3.23 (0.84)	2.95 (0.94)	0.28	12.810	< .001	0.31
Authoritative Parenting	3.19 (0.84)	3.12 (0.84)	0.07	3.132	.002	0.08

Note. $N = 1,194$; $df = 1,193$. Difference and d_{av} are expressed as father minus mother. Cohen's d_{av} uses the average parental SD as the standardizer. Reported p values are unadjusted for multiple comparisons and clustering. These comparisons are exploratory.

Discussion

The findings provide a descriptive account of family educational experiences reported by 1,194 Grade 12 students from four schools in Hainan. Perceived parental expectations were slightly above the scale midpoint, while average closeness and parenting-dimension scores were near their respective midpoints. Within the expectations measure, future financial responsibility for the family received the highest rating. Comparisons between parents showed a very small difference in average closeness and small or very small differences in the parenting dimensions.

Expectations And Family Responsibility

The contrast between PE5, concerning future financial support ($M = 4.09$), and PE2, concerning academic achievement that makes parents proud ($M = 3.35$), makes the content of expectations visible. It suggests that family responsibility deserves attention alongside achievement in interpreting students' accounts. Shi et al. (2023) examine expectations of future family obligations in Chinese mothers' educational involvement, and Chen (2023) discusses learning beliefs in relation to family responsibilities. The present findings can be read alongside this work, but the item rankings were not tested as within-person differences. They do not show that every family gives financial obligations priority over academic achievement.

Family obligation is one interpretation of the profile (Wang & Heppner, 2002). Human-capital and educational-signaling perspectives offer another by relating education to occupational opportunities and social mobility (Hung & Ramsden, 2021). These interpretations need not be exclusive: a student may understand future employment in terms of both personal prospects and family support. The survey did not measure the processes that would distinguish these explanations. Hainan's regional development is relevant background, but its influence on the reported expectations remains an open question.

Similar Closeness Scores and Differences in Parenting Dimensions

The average difference between mother–child and father–child closeness was only 0.04 points. Although the unadjusted test was statistically significant, $d_{av} = -0.05$ gives little basis for

claiming a substantial relational advantage for either parent. A family-systems perspective treats relationships among family members as interdependent (Cox & Paley, 1997) and raises useful questions about how parents coordinate support during Grade 12. Coordination was not measured here. Similar mean closeness scores therefore cannot establish that the parents performed interchangeable or complementary roles.

The parenting dimensions showed larger contrasts than closeness. Fathers received higher authoritarian ratings, mothers' higher permissive ratings, and fathers slightly higher authoritative ratings. Dou et al. (2020) likewise examine commonalities and differences in Chinese adolescents' perceptions of maternal and paternal parenting. In the present sample, the small effect sizes indicate differences in average endorsement rather than a sharp division between maternal and paternal styles. They provide no basis for describing fathers as uniformly authoritarian or mothers as uniformly permissive.

Interpretation also depends on what the scales measure. Cross-cultural research reports variation in associations between parenting styles and developmental outcomes (Feng et al., 2024; Pinquart & Kauser, 2018), and family obligation is relevant to Chinese parent–adolescent relationships (Yang et al., 2024). Nevertheless, greater endorsement of permissive items is not equivalent to greater emotional support, and greater endorsement of authoritarian items does not demonstrate effective guidance. Those interpretations would require evidence about the specific practices and their consequences. Aggregate dimension means also leave the combinations of practices within individual families unresolved.

Contribution And Implications

This study describes parental expectations, parent–child closeness, and parenting practices reported by the same group of Grade 12 students. Each measure addresses a different aspect of family life. Expectations concern the goals students believe their parents hold for them. Closeness captures their experience of each parental relationship. Parenting scores describe perceived support and regulation. Studying these aspects together provides a broader description of the sample. The analysis does not establish a higher-order structure or causal links among the measures.

These findings provide a reference for research in other regions and studies that follow students over time. The paired parental ratings also show why it is important to examine the magnitude of a difference: the difference in average closeness scores was very small, although the statistical result was significant; differences in some parenting dimensions were larger, but their effect sizes remained small. Future research can examine whether these patterns persist and how they relate to academic adjustment and psychological well-being. The results of this study do not identify a particular family profile that produces better developmental outcomes. Schools could use these findings to guide conversations with parents about expectations, communication and students' experiences of rules and support. Such discussions should consider individual family circumstances. The average differences found in this study do not justify assigning fixed roles to mothers and fathers. Research on parenting interventions provides further guidance (Bosqui et al., 2024). But any program for this Grade 12 population requires evaluation. These discussions are also relevant to Hainan's policy focus on education and talent development (Hainan Provincial People's Congress Standing Committee, 2025). The effects of the policy were not evaluated in this survey.

When schools work with families, cultural context matters, and the pressure that students may experience also needs to be considered. Schilling et al. (2021) argue that cultural adaptation involves not only changes in language and procedures, but also the principles of the program and how it is delivered. Therefore, school staff should consider what educational expectations mean to families and how parents communicate these expectations. Respect for family traditions should not be an excuse for excessive control. Guidance could address communication between parents while respecting adolescent autonomy. Specific interventions require supporting evidence beyond that provided by this descriptive survey.

Limitations

This study used a cross-sectional design. It captured students' experiences at a specific point during Grade 12. Therefore, it cannot show how family practices change over time. It also cannot establish causal relationships. Longitudinal research could offer further insight. It could examine whether the observed patterns remain stable at different stages of examination preparation.

The sample came from four schools in Hainan. It may not represent all Grade 12 students in the province. It may not represent all Grade 12 students in other parts of China. Future research could include schools from a wider range of settings. It could also account for the clustered sampling design. This would allow findings to be compared across different educational contexts.

The findings are based on students' questionnaire responses. Future studies could include interviews with students and parents. These interviews could explore two questions. First, how do they understand educational expectations? Second, how do they experience family interactions? These accounts could provide context for the survey findings. They could also help explain differences in perspectives within families.

Conclusion

This study describes the family experiences reported by Grade 12 students from four schools in Hainan. Perceived parental expectations were slightly above the scale midpoint, with the expectation of future financial responsibility for the family receiving the highest item rating. Students reported similar average closeness to mothers and fathers. Differences between paternal and maternal parenting scores were small or very small. These findings provide a reference for further research in comparable settings. Research that follows families over time could examine how these experiences relate to student development. Such work should also assess measurement comparability and account for the clustering of students within classes and schools.

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