

Negative Parenting Style and Mate Preference in College Students: Mediating Effect of Filial Piety Belief

Jiaying Chen¹, Kaiting Zhang¹, Wentong Lin¹, Xiayan Li^{1,*}

Guangdong University of Finance, School of Public Administration, Guangzhou, 510521, China

Abstract: Family factors have a significant impact on the formation of mate preferences among college students, and it is not yet clear. Therefore, this article constructs an intermediary model and conducts a questionnaire survey on Chinese college students. The result show that negative parenting style affects mate preference, and some of the effects are mediated by filial piety belief. The results of the study are helpful to reveal the mediating mechanism between negative parenting and mate preference, which is of great significance for college students to establish the concept of mate choice.

Keywords: Negative parenting style; Mate preference; Filial piety belief; College students

Fund Project:

Funding Statement: This work was supported by the Provincial Projects of University Students' Innovation and Entrepreneurship Training Program in China Guangdong(No: S202011540001) and the 2022 Project granted by China Guangdong Provincial Office for Philosophy and Social Sciences (No: GD22CJY09).

1. Introduction

Mate preference refers to the conditions or standards used by people in the process of mate selection, that is, the traits and attributes that people hope their mate has, and these qualities are relatively stable. After years of research, researchers often categorize the qualities that people appreciate when choosing a mate into three categories. Firstly, good genes represent the characteristics and clues that a mate possesses good genes, namely biological characteristics. Secondly, good providers represent the mate's ability and resources to provide good parental investment for future generations, which is a socio-economic characteristic. Thirdly, good father/good mother represents a male/female mate with a good personality and willingness to provide parental investment for future generations, which is a spiritual personality trait. The mate preferences of college students exhibit diverse characteristics with the development of society, reflecting changes in social value orientations. Exploring the influencing factors and mechanism of college students' mate preference is of great significance for promoting college students' altruistic behavior, establishing a correct view of love, and improving marital satisfaction.

Parenting style is an important family factor affecting college students' mate preference. In Chinese culture, negative parenting styles refer to authoritarian parenting styles that are rejecting and overprotective. Negative parenting style has a negative impact on college students' mental health development, interpersonal relationship, prosocial behavior, etc. However, there is still a lack of research on the role of family education factors in mate preferences and behaviors.

Filial piety belief refers to the individual's personality tendency to act according to the views and principles of filial piety, which affects people's views, attitudes and behaviors towards filial piety. In mate selection, filial piety belief plays an important role, which may play a mediating role in parenting style and mate preference. On the one hand, children gradually acquire filial piety belief in their daily interactions with their parents, thereby establishing a filial piety belief^[1]. Early research shows that parenting style have a certain predictive effect on children's filial piety belief^[2]. In recent years, the influence of family factors on mate preferences has gradually been taken seriously in China. Scholars found that parents' filial piety beliefs can affect children's filial piety beliefs through parenting style. Further research has shown that negative parenting style have a certain predictive effect on the formation of filial piety

beliefs (individual cognitive factors), which in turn can affect individual behavioral performance^[3]. On the other hand, due to the influence of Chinese Confucianism, Chinese children's obedience to their parents is seen as a manifestation of filial piety belief, so parents have a significant impact on adult children's mate selection^[4]. A recent study found that filial piety belief can predict young people's mate preferences. Chinese college students with high levels of filial piety belief are more inclined to follow their parents' requirements and choose partners with traits that their parents prefer^[5].

In summary, this study constructed a mediation model to examine the mediating role of filial piety belief between parents' negative parenting style and college students' mate preferences. Examining factors from the family level helps to understand the linkage process between the family and college students' own development system. Based on previous research, this study hypothesizes that: Filial piety belief plays a mesomeric effect between negative parenting and mate preferences.

2. Method

Using a random sampling method, a questionnaire (Egna Minnen av Barndomsuppförstran^[6], Filial Piety Belief Scale^[7], Mate Preference Questionnaire^[8,9]) was distributed online. A total of 1238 college students were surveyed, and 512 valid questionnaires were obtained. SPSS 21.0 was used for analysis.

3. Result

Referring to the Mediation test proposed by Wen et al.^[10], and using the SPSS Process and Bootstrap test developed by Hayes^[11] for further operational verification. The results show that filial piety belief plays a significant mediating effect between parents' negative parenting style and good genes, good providers, and good father/good mother.

Table 1 Causal steps approach of mediation effect

		β	SE	t	P	R ² (95%CI)
Model 1						
Direct effect	Negative parenting→Good genes	0.123	0.013	2.867	<0.01	0.120 (0.012, 0.063)
Indirect effect	Negative parenting→Filial piety belief	0.230	0.010	5.332	<0.001	0.053 (0.033, 0.071)
	Filial piety belief→Good genes	0.298	0.058	6.968	<0.001	0.120 (0.290, 0.517)
Total effect	Negative parenting→Good genes	0.191	0.013	4.391	<0.001	0.036 (0.032, 0.084)
Model 2						
Direct effect	Negative parenting→Good providers	0.182	0.013	4.206	<0.001	0.095 (0.030, 0.081)
Indirect effect	Negative parenting→Filial piety belief	0.230	0.010	5.332	<0.001	0.053 (0.033, 0.071)
	Filial piety belief→Good providers	0.201	0.059	4.840	<0.001	0.095 (0.168, 0.398)
Total effect	Negative parenting→Good providers	0.230	0.013	5.348	<0.001	0.053 (0.044, 0.096)
Model 3						
Direct effect	Negative parenting→Good father/Good mother	-0.231	0.009	-5.528	<0.001	0.156 (-0.067, -0.032)
Indirect effect	Negative parenting→Filial piety belief	0.230	0.010	5.332	<0.001	0.053 (0.033, 0.071)
	Filial piety belief→Good father/Good mother	0.378	0.040	9.042	<0.001	0.156 (0.280, 0.436)
Total effect	Negative parenting→Good father/Good mother	-0.144	0.009	-3.294	<0.01	0.021 (-0.049, -0.012)

The bootstrap test is used to further test the mediation effect of filial piety belief (n=5000, 95%CI). The results are as follows.

Table 2 Bootstrap test of mediation effect

		β (95%CI)		Z	P
Model 1	Negative parenting→Filial piety belief→Good genes	0.068 (0.017, 0.038)	0.013	2.867	<0.01
Model 2	Negative parenting→Filial piety belief→Good providers	0.048 (0.023, 0.080)	0.014	4.206	<0.05
Model 3	Negative parenting→Filial piety belief→Good father/Good mother	0.087 (0.049, 0.132)	0.021	-5.528	<0.001

4. Discussion

This study found that parents' negative parenting style can predict college students' mate preferences, which further supports previous research findings. The mate preferences of children are related to traditional Chinese concepts of mate selection and parental upbringing, and will not change due to factors such as living environment^[12]. Moreover, a supportive family environment and

democratic family relationships will give children more time and opportunities to develop their mate preferences; An authoritative family environment and hierarchical family relationships can promote children's mate preferences to mature and shape in a relatively short period of time. In summary, parents have a significant impact on their offspring's mate preferences.

More importantly, this study found that parents' negative parenting style also indirectly predict college students' mate preferences through filial piety beliefs. Negative parenting style may make children have higher authoritative filial piety beliefs. Moreover, under the influence of Chinese Confucianism, the obedience of Chinese children to their parents is seen as a manifestation of filial piety belief, so parents have a significant influence on the selection of mates for adult children^[4]. With the development of society, Chinese people's mate preference has become more focused on the physiological and economic conditions of their partners. From the results of this study, it can be seen that college students who grew up under the negative parenting style are more likely to passively obey their parents' arrangements. Therefore, Chinese children may be more inclined to choose people with better physical and economic conditions as partners when choosing a mate, which coincides with the preferences of parents and modern Chinese society in mate selection. Moreover, although college students who grew up under the negative parenting style do not value the spiritual personality traits of their partners, filial children are more inclined to choose partners with good father/good mother traits to follow their parents' requirements or avoid future generations from repeating the same mistakes^[13].

The results of this study contribute to understanding the influencing factors of college students' mate preferences from the perspective of parent-child interaction. In reality, filial piety beliefs of college students to some extent reflect the parenting style, and have a profound impact on their perception and acceptance of their parents' influence. These factors collectively affect college students' mate preferences. This enlightens us: on the one hand, college students should be aware of the potential impact of their parents and their opinions when choosing a mate; On the other hand, society should attach importance to family education, actively cultivate correct filial piety beliefs among college students, and lay a solid foundation for them to choose their partners correctly.

References:

- [1] Ye Guanghui, Yang Guoshu. Chinese Filial Piety: A Psychological Analysis [M]. Chongqing: Chongqing University Press, 2009:346 -- 357
- [2]Ho D Y F. Filial piety, authoritarian moralism, and cognitive conservatism in Chinese societies[J]. Gen Soc Gen Psychol Mon, 1994, 120(3): 347–365.
- [3]Li Qiming, Chen Zhixia, Xu Haiyan. The influence of parenting style and gender on intergenerational transmission of filial piety [J]. Psychological Exploration, 2016, 4: 358 -- 364.
- [4]Nichols R. The origins and effects of filial piety (Xiao 孝): How culture solves an evolutionary problem for parents[J]. Journal of Cognition and Culture, 2013, 13(3-4): 201–230.
- [5]Guo Q, Li Y, Yu S. In-law and mate preferences in Chinese society and the role of traditional cultural values. Evolutionary Psychology[J]. 2017, 15(3): 1–11.
- [6]Yue Dongmei. Parenting style: Preliminary revision of EMBU and its application in patients with neurosis [J]. Chinese Journal of Mental Health, 1993, 7(3): 97 -- 101.
- [7]Yu Yibing. Assessment of Social adjustment of Middle School students and its family Risk Factors and Protective Factors [D]. Beijing: Beijing Normal University, 2009.
- [8]Lu H J, Zhu X Q, Chang L. Good genes, good providers, and good fathers: Economic development involved in how women select a mate[J]. Evolutionary Behavioral Sciences, 2015, 9(4): 215–228.
- [9]Chang L, Lu H J, Zhu X Q. (2017). Good genes, good providers, and good fathers and mothers: The withholding of parental investment by married couples[J]. Evolutionary Behavioral Sciences, 2017, 11(2): 199–211.
- [10] Wen Zhonglin, Zhang Lei, Hou Jietai, et al. Mediation effect test program and its application [J]. Acta Psychologica Sinica, 2004, (05): 614 -- 620.
- [11]Hayes Andrew. Introduction to Mediation, and Conditional Process Analysis[J]. Journal of Educational Measurement, 2013, 51(3): 335–337.
- [12]Hynie M, Lalonde R N, Lee N S. Parent-child value transmission among chinese immigrants to north america: the case of traditional mate preferences[J]. Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology, 2006, 12(2): 230–244.
- [13] Zhang L R , Chen W W. The Mediating Role of Parental Influence on the Relationship Between Adult Children's Filial Piety Beliefs and Mate Preferences[J]. Evolutionary Psychology, 2020, 18(4): 1–12.

*Corresponding author