

Dynamic Effects of Family Factors on Children's Social and Emotional Competence: A Systematic Literature Review

Huiying Zhang^{1, a}, Tingting Liu^{1, b}, Lifei Lu^{1, c}, Shijiao Liu^{1, d *}

¹ Guangdong University of Science and Technology, Guangdong, China.

^a zhanghuiying_gdust@126.com, ^b Liutingting_2003@163.com, ^c LuLifei_2022@163.com,

^d Liushijiao_2022@163.com

Abstract. This paper presents a systematic literature review examining the dynamic effects of family factors on children's social and emotional competence. Social and emotional competence, encompassing skills such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, interpersonal skills, and responsible decision-making, is crucial for shaping an individual's career success and overall well-being. The review highlights that family factors, including socio-economic status, family capital, parenting styles, and parent-child interactions, significantly influence children's socio-emotional development. Studies show that higher family economic capital and parental literacy positively impact children's social-emotional competence, while warm and authoritative parenting styles, as well as collaborative parenting approaches, foster a harmonious family environment and enhance children's socio-emotional competence. Additionally, the review underscores the importance of parent-child communication in mitigating negative impacts such as those caused by parent-child separation. The findings suggest that to improve children's social-emotional competence, parents should adopt positive parenting strategies, respect their children's individual needs, and provide ample support and encouragement. Future research should explore the interactions between different family factors and their specific influences across diverse cultural and socio-economic contexts to develop more effective family intervention strategies.

Keywords: Social and emotional competence; family factors; positive parenting strategies.

1. Introduction

Childhood is a crucial period for developing social and emotional skills. These skills, often called social and emotional competence, non-cognitive skills, or soft skills, are essential in shaping a person's career. Their development level influences whether a person's career succeeds or fails. The report "Skills for Social Progress: The Power of Social and Emotional Skills" by OECD (2017) highlights that social-emotional skills are linked to the "achievement of long-term goals (endurance, self-control, passion, self-efficacy)," as well as self-esteem, optimism, and self-confidence. These skills have significant effects on both individual lives and socioeconomic outcomes.

Artificial Intelligence is advancing rapidly, and we are currently in a period marked by high instability, complexity, uncertainty, ambiguity, and unpredictability (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity, VUCA). Surviving in such an environment requires socio-emotional skills to adapt flexibly to these challenging and unpredictable situations (Hamano 2020). This underscores the importance of developing social-emotional competence, and this paper will present a systematic review of the literature on family factors influencing children's social-emotional competence and explore effective ways to support their development.

2. Definition of Social and Emotional Competence

According to Huang (2024), the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defines social-emotional competence as "an individual's ability to manage his or her own emotions during interactions with society and to build positive relationships with others, make responsible decisions, and solve problems in social life." It includes self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, interpersonal skills, and responsible decision-making. Meanwhile, OECD defines social-emotional competence as "the ability of a person to achieve goals,

manage emotions, cooperate with others, and communicate and interact with others,” based on the Big Five personality model. The OECD has created a framework for assessing social-emotional competence based on the five facets of the Big Five Model: task competence, emotional coordination, collaboration, open-mindedness, and interaction. A Study on Social and Emotional Skills (SSES) for adolescents was conducted using the scale in 2019. For developing social and emotional competence, OECD proposed three factors: “direct investment,” “environmental factors,” and “policy instruments.” Parent-child interactions, as a typical form of direct investment, are an important factor influencing children's social-emotional competence.

3. Factors Influencing Children's Social and Emotional Competence

3.1 Family Social Factors Affecting Children's Social and Emotional Competence

Family social factors affecting children's social and emotional competence include family capital and socio-economic status. For example, Zhang et al. (2022) surveyed 2,228 parents of students in grades three to five using a questionnaire and found that family capital positively impacts students' social-emotional skills. Additionally, creating a learning environment mediates the relationship between family economic capital and social-emotional competence. The study highlighted that a family's investment in the child is the child's main human capital, while the family's economic capital determines the level of investment in education. Parents from more advantaged families are not only financially better off but also tend to have higher expectations for their children's education, which encourages greater parental involvement in educational activities. This involvement positively influences the child, including their words, behaviors, and values, and promotes the development of their social and emotional competence.

Based on the 2023 Jinan OECD Social and Emotional Competence Measure, Liu et al. (2024) analyzed the link between family socioeconomic status and the social-emotional competence of 3,454 10-year-old primary school students from 77 schools. The results showed that family socioeconomic status positively affects social-emotional competence. The study emphasized the need for resource support for students with low economic status, for schools to strengthen growth mindset development, and for home-school collaboration to reduce academic anxiety. Xu (2023) conducted a survey with 390 elementary school students aged 10 from a child care facility in Hubei and Henan provinces to examine the relationship between the family parenting environment and young children's social and emotional competence. It was found that factors such as caregiver household registration, parents' literacy level, and the family's per capita monthly income significantly influenced young children's social-emotional competence. The above study indicates that factors like family economic level and parental literacy can impact children's social-emotional skills.

3.2 The Role of Parents in Developing Children's Social and Emotional Competence

Although many studies show that family socioeconomic factors relate to children's social and emotional competence, the significance of other influences beyond socioeconomic status is strongly emphasized in promoting children's socioemotional development. For example, the form and quality of parental involvement are crucial. Specifically, Li (2018) conducted an in-depth study on the impact of parental involvement on children's development with a sample of 3,911 students. The study revealed that activities like parent-child reading, interaction, and communication can significantly boost children's academic performance; parental involvement improves students' social-emotional competence, which then enhances their academic success; and parental involvement has a greater impact on students from lower-income families, those with weaker academic foundations, and lower grades. The study highlights the need to focus on the influence of parental involvement, increase awareness of the impact parents have on their children, and encourage a variety of parent-child activities to build stronger connections, improve family education approaches, and develop children's social and emotional competence.

Unlike the positive effects mentioned earlier, the inhibitory impact of parent-child separation on social and emotional competence involves a complex transmission path. Wu (2024), based on analyzing 1,903 questionnaires from four provinces, found that separation causes tension in family relationships through a dual mechanism: “disruption of family emotional connection - failure of parental supervision.” This process is mediated by “poor family relationship - interpersonal distress in school,” which leads to withdrawal or conflict behaviors among children's peers, ultimately hindering the development of emotional regulation and social skills. Importantly, the study highlights that high-frequency, high-quality parent-child communication can serve as a buffer to effectively reduce the negative effects of separation by rebuilding the family's emotional support system and encouraging positive interactions between the home and school environments. Emphasizing the importance of parent-child communication, the study suggests that strengthening this communication can help mitigate the negative impacts of parent-child separation on children's socio-emotional competence. The article notes that such communication can buffer against separation's adverse effects and foster positive interactions at home and school, thereby enhancing social-emotional development.

3.3 Family Education Strategies to Enhance Children's Social and Emotional Competence

Parenting styles exert some influence on children's social-emotional competence. Liu (2025) studied 986 upper elementary students through questionnaires and interviews, discovering that parenting styles significantly impact their social and emotional competence. A warm parenting style can boost students' social-emotional abilities, while authoritarian and authoritative styles that involve little encouragement and frequent scolding can cause declines in children's emotional regulation and social skills.

Ji (2023) surveyed and analyzed 1,262 third- to fifth-grade elementary students via questionnaires and concluded that parenting styles greatly influence children's socio-emotional competence. Positive styles, such as authoritative, promote the development of children's social and emotional competence, whereas negative styles like authoritarian and permissive hinder their growth. Research indicates that parents' collaborative parenting approaches are crucial for fostering children's socio-emotional competence. During parenting, it is important to support and cooperate, share responsibilities, maintain consistency in strategies, and cultivate a harmonious and stable family environment. Additionally, collaborative parenting can reduce sibling conflicts, encourage cooperation and mutual support among siblings, and lay the groundwork for children's psychological health and social adaptation. Parents who treat their children with respect and understanding, provide positive and warm experiences, and respond promptly to their needs help nurture optimistic and stable emotional well-being. Moreover, parents can teach social norms such as sharing and respecting others through words and actions, aiding children in developing social skills like emotion regulation and conflict resolution.

4. Summary

Through a systematic review of existing literature, this paper provides insights into how family factors dynamically influence children's social and emotional competence. It finds that family factors significantly shape the development of children's socio-emotional abilities from multiple angles.

The study results indicate that, first, socio-economic factors within the family, such as income level and parental literacy, have a substantial positive effect on children's social and emotional competence. The more resources a family has, the better the child's performance in social-emotional competence. Families with stronger economic conditions tend to invest more in education and hold higher expectations for their children, resulting in more active engagement in educational activities and fostering socio-emotional development. Additionally, the role of parents and their approaches to education also effectively influence children's social-emotional abilities. Positive involvement,

such as parent-child reading, activities, and communication, can greatly enhance children's social and emotional competence, which in turn improve their academic performance. Parenting styles that are warm and authoritative also support the growth of children's socio-emotional competence. Collaborative parenting promotes a harmonious and stable family environment, and encourages children's psychological health and social adaptation.

The impact of family factors on children's social and emotional competence is complex and always evolving. To improve these skills, parents should adopt positive parenting approaches like showing warmth and setting boundaries, respect their children's personalities and needs, give children plenty of attention and support, and help boost their self-confidence and optimism. To support overall growth, families should foster a caring environment by focusing on important areas such as parent-child interactions and parenting techniques. Additionally, society and schools should acknowledge how family factors affect children's social-emotional development and work together to promote healthy growth through home-school partnerships and other initiatives.

Future research can explore how different family factors interact and examine the specific ways these influences operate across various cultural backgrounds and socio-economic settings. This can help develop more effective family intervention strategies.

Acknowledgements

Thanks for the support of Guangdong University of Science and Technology 's Doctoral Research Initiation Funding Project: The Influence Mechanisms and Improvement Paths of University Life Satisfaction from a Positive Psychology Perspective (GKY-2024BSQDW-68).

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