

# A study concerning what parenting topics parents appreciate the most

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**Abstract:** The main purpose of this study is to explore the different parenting preferences of parents depending on their educational background, social status, and parenting style. In this research paper, the target population consisted of 949 respondents having preschool children in Taiwan. The researcher collected 709 valid questionnaires with a response rate of 76.2%. The findings of this study showed that (a) most parents emphasize theme of the nurture regarding how they can be involved in developing their child both physically and mentally during early childhood; (b) Mothers aged 30-39 years old, and fathers aged 45 years old and above tend to pay more attention to the child's physical and mental development. And also, Southern Taiwanese parents give more importance to nurturing their children's talents and schoolwork than the Northern Taiwanese parents. (c) These different nurturing emphases vary according to educational attainment. The reason for this is that the educational level of parents in the southern part of Taiwan is lower.

## 1. Introduction

The purpose of parental education is to teach people how to be parents (Kuo, 2006). When children are born into this world, the first people they make contact with are their parents. Children imitate what they see in their parents, so the parent's behaviors and attitudes will deeply affect the child's future personality. Therefore, parents should not only provide a good life and educational environment for their children, they should also constantly absorb new knowledge for themselves. Every parent should aim to adjust their attitudes and methods for disciplining their children, so that they will grow and thrive in their love for education

Nowadays, more and more children are enrolling in kindergarten. So, the standards for kindergarten education are improving. Based on information gathered in Taiwan on 3 to 6 years old children, 70% went to Kindergarten school. The preschool should have the ability and responsibility to help parents be competent in fulfilling their parental roles, and provide them with the proper training to educate their children.

In recent years, the trend in educational development is to foster cooperation between the school and family, since neither can accomplish the task of education alone. Most people learning parental education are working parents who come to parenting class despite the busyness of life. Therefore, before implementing parental education, most first understand each person's situation and needs. It is important to take the interest and time of each parent into consideration (Lin, 2007). Tsao (2010), Zepeda & Morales (2001) believe that parental education should include the teaching of roles and responsibilities of parents, mental development of the child, methods and attitudes regarding child discipline, parent-child communication and interaction, etc.

In order to make appropriate adjustments in teaching materials and methods, and to trigger parental motivation. We must first ask: What topics do parents prefer to study? The main purpose of this article is to explain that parental styles differ depending on the parent's background, thus yielding in different results.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 The Research Framework

Figure 1 shows parental topics emphasizing factors of parental background.

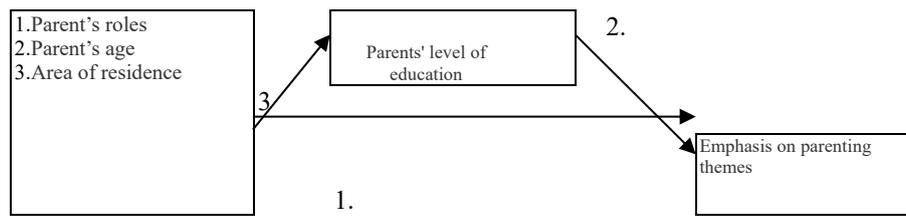


Figure I the research framework

Firstly, this chart explains the allocation of percentages regarding the sources of parental concepts were brought up. Secondly, the percentage of cross-variance analysis is used to understand the distribution and differences for different backgrounds of parents. Finally, regression analysis is used to understand the level of education as an intervening variable as to how different parental backgrounds and education levels affect sources of parenting concepts.

The underlying assumptions of this research's framework and related literature are described below:

Hypothesis 1: Whether or not the roles, ages, and areas of residence affect different parenting themes.

Hypothesis 2: Whether or not the different educational attainments of parents affects different parenting themes.

Hypothesis 3: Whether or not different backgrounds, roles, ages, and areas of residence have an effect on the educational levels on parenting themes.

## 2.2 Research Subjects and Sampling Methods

This study investigated the number of parents that attended both public and private kindergartens in Taiwan. It summed up to 3283 preschool and 189,792 children (Ministry of Education, 2017).

Second, the sampling method used in this study is stratified random sampling with an accordance ratio of 0.5%. This assumes a number of 949 samples taken. The actual number of questionnaires is 931, while the valid number of copies of the questionnaire is 709, with an effective response rate of 76.2%. The respondents in this sample are 33% fathers and 63% mothers. With regard to education, 37% of respondents fell into the 35-39 age range, while 29% were between 30-34 years old. The percentage of parents who attended college was about 52% for all samples. The majority (35%) of the living zones is in the northern part of Taiwan.

## 2.3 Research tools

The aim of the result of this survey is to understand the educational background of parents. This research survey questionnaire is just a part of the study topic. The survey questionnaire is intended to answer questions such as parent's roles, ages, and educational levels, places where they lived and whether or not parents are concerned about their child's learning. There are twelve topics on the questionnaire and analyses of the survey are based on these factors: physical and mental development, parenting roles, financial management and gender, and academic and talent.

In accordance with factor analysis, the validity metric of these 12 topics could clearly measure all three factors. It showed that the variance value reached 62.68, which indicates construct validity.

The inner insistence of Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was adopted in terms of reliability. The reliability of these 12 career topics resulted to 0.856 in each of the three factors of Cronbach's  $\alpha$ . A "Physical and mental development and the role of parenting" is 0.878, B "Financial Services and Gender" is 0.751 and C the "schoolwork Talent" is 0.571. The results above show that the reliability of the current research questionnaire is good.

### 3. Results

The result of the average number of parenting topics shows that kindergarten parents value the child's character development (4.69). Most are biased in favor of the development of children physically and mentally, and parenthood education. With the 12 options, the least preferred topic is the children's talent tutorial (3.25). This reason may be related to age, since the children are still young. Determining the preferred parenting themes is parenting regardless of their different backgrounds. Parents aged 30-39 years old pay more attention to the child's physical and mental development compared to parents aged 45 years old and above.

Second, the results show that the educational level of parents is significantly greater than other caregivers (such as grandparents). They also show that the level of education of parents aged 35-44 years old is generally higher than those aged 45 years old or more, or 29 years old and younger. Lastly, they show that the northern Taiwanese parents have higher educational levels compared to southern Taiwanese parents.

Furthermore, it can be found from the regression analysis on the level of education that caregivers, such as grandparents and mothers, have the lowest level of education. Northern Taiwanese parents have significantly higher educational levels than southern Taiwanese parents

About the regression analysis of the parenting concepts sources, table 1 shows that parents find physical and mental development and parenting roles important. It also shows that mothers pay more attention to nurture compared to fathers. Lastly, it shows that the level of parental education correlates with their interest on this specific parental aspect ( $\beta = .20$ ). However, the educational level has no influence on the subject of parental role.

Table1 The regression analysis background of the interest of parents

	Physical mental development and the role of parenting				Financial management and roles				Academic and talent			
	Step 1		Step 2		Step 1		Step 2		Step 1		Step 2	
	b	$\beta$	b	$\beta$	b	$\beta$	b	$\beta$	b	$\beta$	b	$\beta$
Age	-.04	-.04	-.05	-.05	.06	.07	.06	.07	.04	.04	.04	.04
Mother(control group)												
Father	-.19	<b>-.09*</b>	-.21	<b>-.10*</b>	.14	.07	.14	.07	-.06	-.03	-.05	-.02
Others (Grandparents, etc.)	-.37	-.06	-.27	-.05	.02	.00	.02	.00	-.04	-.01	-.12	-.02
Southern Taiwan (control group)												
Northern Taiwan	-.05	-.02	-.11	-.05	.15	.07	.15	.07	-.44	<b>-.21*</b>	-.39	
Central Taiwan	-.04	-.02	-.09	-.04	.15	.07	.15	.07	-.31	<b>-.14*</b>	-.28	<b>-.12*</b>
Outlying Islands	.04	.01	.06	.01	.05	.01	.05	.01	-.11	-.03	-.13	-.03
Level of education			<b>.31</b>	<b>.20*</b>			-.01	-.01			<b>-.26</b>	<b>-.17*</b>
Constant	.225		-.269		-.311		-.308		.160		.576	
The number of samples	680		680		680		680		680		680	
R Square	.012		.057		.017		.017		.035		.064	

Southern Taiwanese parents ( $\beta = -.21$ ) pay more attention to the aspect of "school work and talent" compared to northern and central Taiwanese parents ( $\beta = -.14$ ). But the added level of education has a significant influence ( $\beta = -.17$ ); the central and northern region has decreased. From this perspective, the southern Taiwanese parents pay more attention to their learning and talent more than the central and northern Taiwanese parents. The reason for this is because of the low level of education of southern Taiwanese parents. This low level causes them to put their hopes on the next generation. This will be further explained in the discussion.

### 4. Discussion

We have found in this study that the most important parenting topics for parents are their child's physical and mental development and parental education. Parental education topics include the child's character education, health growth, parent-child communication, emotional management, and habits. Most parents give the least attention to honing their child's talents during their younger years. First time parents often fear they cannot perform the essential parental responsibilities, which may delay their child's development (Liu & Chen, 2010). Thus, parents are more concerned about the physical and mental development of their children, or learning the roles of a parent. The author speculates that

the concerns of the parents vary as soon as the child enters elementary school or secondary school.

The parenting style of parents differs from their views and background in life. Mothers are usually more passionate in teaching and paying attention to their child's physical and mental development than fathers. The related literature shows that our experiences affect children's knowledge and attitudes (Washington & Dunbam, 2011). Mothers are usually the ones who take care of the children in the family (Aldous, Mulligan & Bjarnson, 1998). Thus, fathers have a different parenting preference.

This study also found that Northern Taiwanese parents pay more attention to honing their children's talents than Southern Taiwanese parents. This then demonstrates the regional differences in parenting. This study also shows that Northern Taiwanese parents have higher educational levels than Southern Taiwanese parents. Because of this, Southern Taiwanese parents lay their hopes on their next generation, which causes them to focus more on their child's future in academic learning. The study of Hao and Bonstead-Bruns (1998) supports the transmission of parental expectations to their children. The family's values are then transmitted to subsequent generations through the process of socialization. In addition, there is an association between the educational level of parents, and correct concepts of parenting. Harkness, Super and Keefer (1997) found that parents with better socio-economic status construct their own parenting ideas and behavior through reading books and magazines. Hence, there is a relationship between knowledge and attitude with the advancement of proper parenting concepts.

## 5. Conclusion

**(A)** Parents focus more on the physical and mental development of children, and parental education. Furthermore, parents specifically focus more on the following topics of parenting: character education, healthy growth, emotional management, habits, and other issues that involve parent-child communication.

**(B)** Mothers aged 30-39 years old pay more attention to physical and mental development and parental education compared to fathers aged 45 and above. Southern Taiwanese parents pay more attention to schoolwork than Northern Taiwanese parents. On the other hand, Northern Taiwanese parents pay more attention to honing talent than Southern Taiwanese Parents.

The level of importance paid to the different parenting concepts varies with roles, age, and area of residence of the parents.

**(C)** The level of importance attributed to the different parenting concepts varies with parental educational attainment. The educational level of Southern Taiwanese parents causes them to pay more attention to the child's schoolwork than Northern Taiwanese parents. This study found out that parents with higher levels of education pay more importance to parental education, and the physical and mental development of children. However, they attribute less importance to nurturing their child's talents.

## 6. Suggestions and Implications

The study found that the preferences of parents to different educational topics vary depending on their different backgrounds. Thus, the characteristics of the participating parents are important. (For instance, having a mother with a higher level of education as a participant.) The appropriate levels of parenting topics motivate the parents to be involved.

The feedback of the parents who have participated in the parenting activities are as follows: (1) what are the reasons why parents choose to participate in parenting education activities? (2) What aspects of the parental education activities will make you gladly participate again? (4) To encourage the parents to express their recent experience in participating parenting activities. Feedback sheets were collected from parents who participated in parenting activities in order to understand their

demands. Preschools were willing to handle parenting activities to enhance the effectiveness of the parents in participating on parenting activities.

If the business community combines their resources, then the funding, human resources and activity concerns of the preschool can be resolved. This could be a feasible proposition for having a flexible selection of content, time and place. If it is possible to remove from learning parenting educational activities from the school, then the community can be the prevailing social unit to handle parenting education activities in order to enrich parental nurture concepts. Can you imagine how low income or broken families care or manage their families? The kindergartens could promote literacy to parents through parental education activities. (Parents who belong to the lower socio-economic status need to increase their parenting knowledge). On the other hand, unprivileged families could be assisted if the initiatives of the kindergarten were combined with the resources of the school, business, and the community. Then, parental education activities could be further implemented. The child could effectively grow and learn in a good environment when his education from family, school, and community is integrated.

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