

What Changes Parents' Value in Their Children's Quality?

An Association between Parents' Demographic Background and Their Valued Qualities in Children

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ABSTRACT

What is valued by parents for their children's qualities worth investigating. Additionally, possible demographic characteristics of parents may change their perception of valued qualities. This investigation interested in how age, income level and highest educational level attained influence parents' valuemnt in their children's qualities. The research uses data from World Value Survey (WVS), from wave1 to wave7. Parent's valuemnt qualities and their basic information was used in multivariate regression analysis. As a result, the highest education level and age are essential predictors for the qualities valued. Age of parents is significantly correlated with all qualities except obedience. Among those ten qualities discussed, younger parents value more about independence, imagination and determination and perseverance of their children. Older parents value more about hard work, feelings of responsibility, tolerance and respect, thrift and saving money, religious faith and unselfishness. Parents with Higher education level is significantly associated with more qualities valued (Imagination, Tolerance and respect, Determination and perseverance, religious faith and Obedience) compared to lower educational level. Independence is the only qualities valued by the parents from lower educational background. Feelings of responsibility and tolerance and respect to others are the two most mentioned answers in responses. Future study may focus on the cross-national investigation and find out possible moderators between these relationships.

Keywords: Education, Children's Qualities, Demographic Variables, Parents' Value, World Value Survey.

1. INTRODUCTION

Currently, education has become a global topic. One of the indispensable parts of education success is parental involvement. Even though the school system provides the greatest proportion for children's education, parents would play a more important role in the early stage of education. Learning at home is one of the basic learning stages for children and their formation of personalities may be greatly influenced in this stage. What parents do at home is the most essential period for parental involvement. Parents have to make sure their children have even opportunity for success by monitoring, supporting and advocating them¹⁰. This guidance from parents is crucial and may influence their children for life. The qualities, values and behaviors children learned from their parents by either imitation or observation are vital foundations for their future development. What is valued

by parents for their children's qualities worth investigating. The qualities and values they learned from their parents are crucial for their future personality development and the formation of value.

Which qualities should be encouraged to learn at home is a controversial and pendent topic. Distinct cultural types are related to the qualities valued by parents. Individualism and collectivism are two globally main cultural types. Growing individualism makes the parents value more on autonomy and other individualistic traits in the children. For example, in western countries, which are mostly dominant by individualism, "independence" would be an outstanding quality for western parents. However, in some Asian countries, due to the close binding between family members, the "obedience" may be more appraised. However, the trend is always varying and the values of modern people have changed

dramatically. Autonomy is not the quality that valued by parents in their children during the period from 1986 to 2006, and that the trend away from valuing obedience had also slowed dramatically¹. As a consequence of economic growth, this difference on qualities valument caused by the difference of cultural background gradually faded away. In both American and Japan, in support of the modernization, the trend running towards individualism is rising over the previous decades⁹. Therefore, in this study, American data is used as a representative to investigate the overall pattern of parents' valument in their children's qualities, no cross-national comparison conducted.

Many studies only focus on which qualities parents value the most. For example, during much of the 20th century, there had been trends away from valuing obedience in children and toward valuing autonomy. There are some other variables associating with the qualities value in children: social class, religion, age and sex¹. However, how possible influencing factors and moderators associated with this choice is not clear and rare study is conducted. How possible demographic background influences their valument in children's qualities is the main topic for this paper. Parents' age, highest educational level and their income level shapes their formation of values and attitudes. The traits, qualities, or virtue they possess would affect the children either directly or indirectly. Therefore, the quality of children may be also reflected on parents themselves. By examining parents' demographic background and their valued quality, the individual difference on the valument of children's quality may be explained. However, there is no prior study founded for investigating this relationship.

Before performance of multivariate regression analysis, we predict that Independence would be the most mentioned qualities in participants' responses and education level would be associated with the most qualities.

2. METHOD

The research accessed data from World Value Survey (WVS), the international research programs. The data was collected from wave 1 to wave 7, 1994-2021. The social survey for every wave was conducted every 5 years. The main objective of study is to find the parents' consideration of important qualities that their children learned at home. Therefore, the ranking of the qualities' importance, parents' demographics factors are focused. We are interested in measuring parents: sex, age, income, highest education level. The researcher would ask respondents what is the highest educational level that you have attained and give the 9 level ladders: 1 as no formal education and 9 as university level, with degrees. However, if the respondent indicates to be a student, they would code the highest level he expects to complete.

Therefore, the real situation may be different from the data collected. The income level is measured by asking respondents to specify their income level in their country by giving a scale of incomes on which 1 indicates the "lowest income decile" and 10 indicates the "highest income decile" in their country. The qualities parents value is asked by presenting a list of qualities which children can be encouraged to learn at home. These ten qualities are: independence, hard work, feelings of responsibility, imagination, tolerance and respect for other people, thrift and saving money, determination and perseverance, religious faith, unselfishness, and obedience. Among those ten qualities, respondents can freely choose up to five. Their answer code would be either 1 or 2, as "mentioned" and "not mentioned"¹². The five choices of all participants are collected. after clearing unused data and filtering data, a total of 5679 participants' responses are collected. Effect sizes were estimated based on the previous literature, and by using a large effect size estimate and a statistical power. Because a large number of samples are collected, the statistical power is effective for this multivariate regression analysis.

3. RESULTS

The Multivariate regression for studying the correlation between independent variables and dependent variables are performed. Total 5679 samples of responses for qualities valued in children were recorded. The proportion analysis and regression analysis were performed for each quality. As a result, from all responses, 51% of participants mentioned "independence" in their response, while the other 49% of participants did not choose "independence" as their desired quality. After putting income level, highest education level as independent variables into the model, the results show that there is a significant association between age and mentioning independence ($p < 0.0012$). Younger parents tend to choose "independence" in their responses. Another significant association is between higher education level and independence ($p < 0.0029$). The pattern is the same for the highest educational level. Parents with lower educational level tend to choose "independence" in their responses compared to higher educational level parents.

There were 58% of participants who mentioned "hard work" in their responses, and 42 % did not mention "hard work" in their responses. Age is the only variable significantly associated with hard work ($p < 2e^{-16}$). When the parents' age increases, they are more likely to choose "hard work" as their valued quality.

Compared to other variables, feelings of responsibility is the qualities mentioned a lot by participants. About 63% of participants mentioned responsibility in their response. However, age is the only independent variable significantly associated with their

response of responsibility ($p < 2e^{-16}$). Older parents are more likely to mention “responsibility” in their response compared to younger parents.

Totally 28 % of participants mentioned imagination in their responses, and 725 of them did not mentioned imagination as their valued quality for children. Age and highest education level of parents are significantly associated with their valuemment of imagination. ($p < 2e^{-16}$, $p < 0.0003$) Younger and higher educational level parents care more about the imagination of their children.

Tolerance and respect are the most mentioned qualities in responses collected. 72 % of participants mentioned tolerance and respect in their responses. Age and Highest education level parents achieved are significantly associated with participants’ response of tolerance and respect. Older and higher educational level parents are more inclined to choose “tolerance and respect” in their responses.

Thrift is another quality rarely mentioned by participants. Only 25 % of participants choose thrift as their valued quality in children. Age is the only significant associated variable with thrift ($p < 2e^{-16}$) The pattern is that older parents would prefer their children possess quality of thrift.

38% of participants mentioned determination as five of the qualities they valued in children. Both age and highest educational level are statistically significant associated with the determination. The pattern of age and educational level is opposite. When the parent's age increases, they are less likely to choose determination. Parents with higher educational level background tend to choose “determination” more.

Religious faith is mentioned by 43% of participants when they answer their valuemment for children’s quality. Same as determination, both age and highest educational level are statistically significant associated with the religious faith. Older parents are more likely to choose “religious faith” in their response, and parents with higher income level would prefer “religious faith” more compared to lower income level parents.

Unselfishness is mentioned by 35% of participants in their responses. After performing regression analysis, it is shown that both income level and age of parents are associated with their mentioning of unselfishness. This pattern is the same as the pattern of unselfishness. Older parents are more likely to choose “unselfishness” in their response, and parents with higher income level would prefer “unselfishness” more compared to lower income level parents.

Not many participants mentioned Obedience. Only 27 % of participants mentioned they would like their children to learn obedience at home. Additionally, highest education level attained is the only variable correlating with the obedience ($p < 0.0232$). Parents with

higher educational levels are more inclined to mention “obedience” in their answer.

In conclusion, tolerance and respect, feelings of responsibility are two qualities mentioned most in parents’ response. As contrary, imagination, thrift, obedience are the least mentioned responses. Table 1 shows the whole proportion distribution of ten qualities. Income level only statistically associated with the quality of unselfishness. Parents with higher income level are more likely to mention “unselfishness” in their responses. Table2 shows the regression results for income level and qualities valued. Younger parents value more about independence, imagination and determination and perseverance of their children. Older parents value more about hard work, feelings of responsibility, tolerance and respect, thrift and saving money, religious faith and unselfishness. Table3 shows the regression results for parents’ age and qualities valued. Parents with Higher education level is significantly associated with more qualities valued (Imagination, Tolerance and respect, Determination and perseverance, religious faith and Obedience) compared to lower educational level. Independence is the only qualities valued by the parents from lower educational background. Table 4 shows the regression results for parents’ educational level and qualities valued.

Table 1. proportion analysis for ten qualities

	Proportion of “Mentioned”	Proportion of “not mentioned”
independence	51%	49%
Hard work	58%	42%
responsibility	63%	37%
imagination	28%	72%
Tolerance and respect	72%	28%
thrift	25%	75%
determination	38%	62%
Religious faith	43%	57%
unselfishness	35%	65%
obedience	27%	73%

Table 2. regression results for income level

	estimate	p-value
independence	-0.0025	0.2716
Hard work	-0.0037	0.0846
responsibility	-0.0037	0.0846
imagination	0.0031	0.0846
Tolerance and respect	-0.0031	0.1384
thrift	0.0011	0.581
determination	-0.0043	0.0532
Religious faith	-0.0035	0.11862
unselfishness	-0.01068	0.0062*
obedience	-0.0010	0.6164

Table 3. regression results for age

	estimate	p-value
independence	0.0009	0.0012*
Hard work	-0.0039	<2e ⁻¹⁷ *
responsibility	-0.0039	<2e ⁻¹⁶ *
imagination	0.0023	<2e ⁻¹⁶ *
Tolerance and respect	-0.0019	1.05e ⁻¹² *
thrift	-0.0036	<2e ⁻¹⁶ *
determination	0.0012	2.53e ⁻⁰⁵ *
Religious faith	-0.0042	< 2e ⁻¹⁶ *
unselfishness	-0.0018	0.0005*
obedience	-0.0004	0.1197

Table 4. regression results for educational level

	estimate	p-value
independence	0.0077	0.0029*
Hard work	-0.0042	0.0909
responsibility	-0.0042	0.0903
imagination	-0.0083	0.0003*
Tolerance and respect	-0.0052	0.0254*
thrift	0.0034	0.129
determination	-0.0094	0.0002*
Religious faith	-0.0071	0.00474*
unselfishness	-0.0080	0.0791
obedience	-0.0052	0.0232 *

4. DISCUSSION

Among those three variables (age, income level, highest education level of parents), age and highest education level of parents are associated more with parents’ perception of valuemment of children. Among ten qualities, except obedience, other nine variables are significantly correlated with the age of parents. This is not coordinated with our previous prediction that highest education level would be the most influencing variables.

As results indicated, young people are more likely to mention independence and imagination compared to older parents. “independence” and “imagination” are gradually taking over the mainstream qualities for children in their 20s. Therefore, more and more younger parents tend to value independence and imagination more about independence. Majority of the findings proves that people value more about autonomy of their children over valuing obedience¹. However, obedience is still mentioned by a lot of parents. It has to be mentioned that the discussion of the increasing value of obedience presumably influenced by different cultural backgrounds. In Asian countries, obedience is still considered my major precious quality for children. However, our study only includes data from America. Therefore, the conclusion should only apply to the American pattern.

Thrift, saving money and things is more likely to be mentioned by younger parents. There is not much previous finding about thrift as the quality and investigate possible relationship about thrift. However, the possible explanation is that young people are more materialistic than older people. older people may care more about spiritual things. However, most young people still need to pay attention to their real life and fight for their family, to satisfy their needs. Therefore, it is possible that young people value that quality in their children.

Religious faith is the complex qualities to interpret. It is rationally reasoned that religious people tend to perceive their children to be religious. Therefore, if they choose religious faith as valued quality, they are more likely to be religious. However, religious faith is a country-varied quality and our research data is only focusing on American data. The pattern we found is that when parents’ age increases, they are more likely to mention religious faith in their responses. In the age distribution of American religion, most of the religious attendance are from young people. However, some findings do prove that younger people are less religious than older ones in many countries, especially in the U.S. and Europe⁷. The conclusion reached from another cross-national study design is that in 46 countries around the world, adults under age 40 are less likely to say religion is “very important” in their lives than are older adults; the opposite is true in only two countries. In 58 countries, there are no significant age gaps on this question,

according to surveys conducted in more than 100 nations⁷. Therefore, older parents may be more religious than younger parents. Thus, they prefer their children to be religious compared to younger parents.

Considering the relationship between younger parents and selection of responsibility, it is possible that younger parents are more inclined to go through the stage of responsibility. They are more likely to mention “responsibility” in their answer. The pattern is opposite for unselfishness. When parents’ age increases, they are more likely to mention “unselfishness” as the quality encourages their children to learn at home. This result is coordinated with many previous findings. Aging is linked to what psychologists call “ego transcending” motivations, or motivations that serve a greater good and offer no clear reward to the person doing the good deed¹⁹. Greater generosity was observed among senior citizens possibly because as people become older, their values shift away from purely personal interests to more enduring sources of meaning found in their communities.”⁵. These previous findings could account for the correlation between age and their mentioning of unselfishness.

Highest education level attained by parents is another great predictor for their valuemment in children’s quality. Independence, Responsibility, imagination, tolerance and respect, determination, religious faith and obedience are all significantly associated with the change of the highest education level.

As the previous findings suggested, child independence would be valued more by parents from higher educational background³. However, our study shows the different pattern for independence. The results show that people with lower educational background would be more likely to choose independence as their valued quality. However, the possible explanation for this variation is not clear.

Obedience is the quality of showing compliance with an order, request to others’ authority. The importance of Obedience is varied in different cultural backgrounds. Our results indicate that obedience is only statistically significant with the highest income level of the parents. The pattern shows that the higher the income level, these parents are less likely to mention obedience as their desired qualities for their children. This finding is coordinated with the previous finding: Socioeconomic status of parents predicted their preference of child obedience: parents from lower social class would be more incline to endorse obedience³.

Tolerance and respect are the most mentioned qualities in parents’ response. Tolerance and respect emerge in children who feel safe. This quality not only helps children to accept and value their only behaviors, but also help them to accept others’ behaviors. Harvard professor Michael Sandel said that In the United States

and Europe, disdain for the less educated is more pronounced, or at least more readily acknowledged, than prejudice against other disfavored groups¹¹. This is one possible reason why lower educational groups encourage their children to learn tolerance and respect at home. They realized that tolerance and respect is indispensable and important in everyone’s prosocial life.

Unlike the other two independent variables, income level only has a statistically significant relationship with the selection of unselfishness. That is to say, people with higher income levels are more likely to mention the unselfishness in their responses. The previous finding proved the same relationship: selfish people tend to have fewer offspring and lower incomes than their less selfish counterparts. “The question that still needs to be addressed is why selfishness is bad for fertility and income. Unselfishness helps you to build stronger social relations, and it seems plausible that this accounts for better outcomes in other respects. However, this hypothesis cannot be tested in our data.”⁴ Even though the possible moderators between these two variables are not analyzed, the pattern of relationship is reasonable.

The main weakness of correlation study also applies to this study design. The correlation study cannot assume cause and effect. The modeling correlation cannot infer the causality between these two variables. Therefore, the possible moderator effects may cause great misunderstanding between independent and dependent variables. The lack of correlation between other variables could not infer there is no relationship between these two variables, the possible non-linear relationship may exist. In order to address the uncertainty in correlation study, furthering experimental design between two variables may be needed to model the causality. Even though the totally controlled condition is hard to achieve in real life, the strength of that relationship would be greater than correlation study. One of the limitations of the study is that the choice of qualities valued is limited. Participants could only choose their answer from those 10 choices. However, there are still some other qualities valued by parents: courage, commitment, passion... Therefore, if participants are able to freely select their valued quality in the future study, the precision of results may be greatly increases and scope would become widen. The other limitation for data collected is the limitation of the possible demo-graphic information and possible moderator is not collected. In order to precisely account for the relationship between demographics factors and their preferred choice of selection, it is necessary to find out possible moderator and mediator. But inclusion of those variables needs to wait for the future study. In addition, future research could focus more on the cross-national pattern change such as religion, obedience and independence. Does cultural background change make parents’ valuemment in qualities more convergent or divergent.

5. CONCLUSION

It is necessary to grasp the trending and adapt to the idea of modern education. Parents' view and action are important for this step. How parents comprehend their children, shape their children and what they expect from their children worth discussing. The quality of education children received from their parents is essential for their future development. Therefore, research to investigate which factors affecting parents' perception of their ideal children figure is crucial. This may directly influence the figure of children they shaped. In order to comprehend and fully improve the prevailed education, fully understanding parents and how demographic factors influencing their perception is mandatory. As the result shown, from 1994 to 2021, the most mentioned qualities in parents' responses are respect to others. Age and highest educational level are the most influencing predictors for children's qualities valued. That is to say, the value formation and educational expectation of parents is significantly associated with age and their highest educational level attained. For future study, under the influence of globalization, the pattern between different countries and cultures may become convergent. Therefore, investigating global pattern and cross-nation difference would be encouraged. Additionally, the variance of pattern also worth investigating. What is the parents' view of ideal children figure in 20th century, and what parents expected to see in their children for in modern society? Those are possible future study topic and the educational background of parents would also take part in discussing and play an important role.

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