

The Impact of Parents' Participation in School Activities on Primary School Students' Life Satisfaction in Suzhou, China

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of parents' participation in school activities on the life satisfaction of primary school students in Suzhou, China. Using qualitative methods, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 students from diverse family and school backgrounds. The findings indicate that parental involvement—such as attending school events, assisting with classroom activities, and engaging in school-home communication—significantly enhances students' emotional well-being, academic motivation, and social connectedness. Students whose parents actively participated expressed a stronger sense of pride, security, and belonging. In contrast, students who experienced limited parental engagement reported feelings of exclusion, disappointment, and lower life satisfaction. The study highlights the mediating role of school culture and event type in shaping students' perceptions of parental involvement. These insights underscore the importance of fostering inclusive parent-school partnerships and designing accessible participation opportunities to support children's holistic development and happiness. The findings also contribute to the growing body of literature on parental involvement in the Chinese educational context, offering implications for policy and practice.

Keyword: Parental Participation, Life Satisfaction, Primary School

Introduction

Life satisfaction is a critical indicator of a child's overall well-being and development (Bruk et al., 2021; Trong Dam et al., 2023). Among primary school students, life satisfaction reflects not only academic success but also emotional health, social adaptability, and the quality of family support. In educational research, life satisfaction is increasingly regarded as an essential complement to traditional cognitive measures of success, as it captures the broader developmental outcomes that shape long-term mental health and social adjustment. In China, where academic achievement is traditionally emphasized, there has been a growing concern regarding the holistic development of children, including their psychological well-being (Ling et al., 2022; Su & Lee, 2023; Sun & Liu, 2023). This concern is amplified in the current social context, where modernization and globalization bring both opportunities and

pressures for children and their families. Shifts in family structures, intensified academic competition, and changing cultural expectations have created a more complex environment for child development, making it necessary to consider non-academic indicators such as life satisfaction. As Chinese society evolves under the dual influences of modernization and globalization, family structures and parenting practices are undergoing significant transformations. Against this background, parental participation in school activities emerges as an important factor that may influence a child's development in ways that go beyond mere academic attainment.

Parental involvement in school activities—such as attending parent-teacher meetings, participating in classroom events, helping organize extracurricular programs, or volunteering for school governance—has been demonstrated in various international contexts to positively affect children's academic performance, social-emotional skills, and even behavioral adjustment (Goshin et al., 2021; Kim, 2022). These interactions create a communicative bridge between home and school, reinforcing children's sense of security and support. Yet, in the Chinese educational context, where high-stakes examinations and academic excellence are often prioritized, the emotional and subjective experiences of children—particularly their sense of life satisfaction—have not received equivalent academic attention.

In cities such as Suzhou in Eastern China, a region characterized by strong economic growth and relatively advanced educational infrastructure, the dynamic between parental engagement and student development becomes particularly nuanced. Parents in urban areas often balance demanding careers with child-rearing responsibilities, leading to selective or limited forms of school engagement (Luo, 2025; Smith Slámová & Simonová, 2024). Some may prioritize academic-related involvement, such as tutoring or exam preparation, over more holistic forms of participation. This context underscores the importance of investigating not only whether parents participate in school life but also how children themselves perceive such engagement, and whether these perceptions translate into higher life satisfaction. This situation raises several pertinent questions: How do children perceive their parents' participation in school activities? Do such forms of engagement contribute to their subjective well-being and life satisfaction? And if so, in what ways?

The primary objective of this study is to explore how parents' participation in school activities affects the life satisfaction of primary school students in Suzhou, China. Specifically, the research aims to identify the various forms of parental participation that are prevalent in local schools; understand how students perceive these efforts; and investigate the potential relationships between such participation and children's self-reported life satisfaction. By focusing on subjective life satisfaction rather than academic performance, this study not only enriches theoretical discussions on child well-being but also responds to practical demands for educational policies that promote balanced and sustainable development for children.

Previous studies on parental involvement have largely focused on its correlation with academic outcomes. For example, research in Western contexts has consistently shown that active parental participation contributes to improved grades, higher attendance, and better classroom behavior (Fan & Chen, 2001; Hill & Tyson, 2009). In China, similar studies have affirmed that parental investment in homework supervision and academic guidance correlates with school performance. However, the literature remains limited in two significant

ways. First, the emotional and psychological dimensions of parental involvement—particularly as they pertain to children’s subjective life satisfaction—are under-explored. Second, most existing studies adopt quantitative methodologies that may overlook the nuanced and contextual experiences of children. Furthermore, few studies have investigated these dynamics in second-tier cities like Suzhou, where economic affluence does not necessarily translate to optimal developmental outcomes. Thus, the present research is positioned at the intersection of sociology, psychology, and education, addressing a clear gap in both theory and practice. This research addresses these gaps by employing a qualitative approach, specifically semi-structured interviews, to gather rich data from students in Suzhou. Through this lens, the study captures the lived experiences and perceptions of children, thereby offering insights that can inform educational policy and parental engagement strategies.

The contributions of this research are threefold. First, it broadens the scope of research on parental involvement by incorporating the concept of life satisfaction, an essential yet often neglected dimension of child development. Second, it provides context-specific insights into the patterns and perceptions of parental participation in an urban Chinese setting, adding cultural and regional depth to the existing literature. Third, by adopting a qualitative methodology, the study uncovers subjective experiences and interpretive meanings that are often inaccessible through quantitative surveys, thereby enriching the academic conversation with diverse voices and lived realities of primary school students.

Literature Review

Parents’ Participation in School Activities

Parents’ participation in school activities refers to the active engagement of parents in both academic and non-academic aspects of their children’s schooling (Cleland & Lumsdon, 2021; Yulianti et al., 2022). It encompasses a broad array of behaviors, including attending parent-teacher conferences, volunteering at school events, communicating with teachers, participating in school decision-making processes, and supporting extracurricular activities. Scholars frequently distinguish between home-based involvement—such as helping with homework, discussing school matters, and supervising study time—and school-based involvement, including classroom assistance, event participation, and collaboration with educators. Epstein’s model is widely used to categorize these practices into six types: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community (Gitonga, 2023; Rejeki et al., 2025). Each type of involvement supports student outcomes through different channels. From a theoretical perspective, parental participation is not merely a supportive behavior but also a mechanism that integrates family capital with school resources, thereby shaping children’s developmental trajectories in both cognitive and non-cognitive domains.

In the Chinese context, especially in urban centers like Suzhou, parental involvement is often disproportionately weighted toward academic support due to prevailing cultural norms that equate parental responsibility with scholastic success. Parents tend to prioritize homework supervision, exam preparation, and academic tutoring, reflecting a performance-oriented approach. However, researchers have begun to highlight the importance of broader forms of involvement, such as emotional and social engagement, which contribute to a more holistic developmental environment. In particular, participation in school-organized activities

allows parents to build stronger relationships with teachers and understand school culture, which can foster a more supportive and inclusive environment for students. Studies have shown that such involvement is linked not only to cognitive outcomes but also to emotional resilience and positive behavior. Therefore, a more comprehensive understanding of parental participation—one that balances academic, emotional, and social dimensions—is crucial for supporting children's well-being. This suggests that parental participation can serve as a bridge between the academic and emotional domains of child development, making it an especially relevant factor in contexts where children face competing academic demands and social pressures.

Students' Life Satisfaction

Students' life satisfaction refers to a student's subjective evaluation of their overall quality of life and personal well-being (Antaramian, 2017; Rivera et al., 2021). It is considered a key indicator of positive youth development and is strongly associated with emotional stability, mental health, and social functioning. Life satisfaction is typically understood as a multidimensional construct, encompassing domains such as family relationships, school experience, peer interactions, physical environment, and psychological health. According to Dogan and Celik (2014), life satisfaction is a cognitive-judgmental process where individuals compare their current life conditions with their perceived standards or expectations.

For primary school students, life satisfaction is particularly influenced by interpersonal relationships and emotional security. Positive interactions with parents, teachers, and peers contribute significantly to how children perceive their quality of life. In recent years, there has been increasing awareness in China regarding the psychological well-being of children, especially as academic pressures continue to mount. In urban areas like Suzhou, children often experience limited leisure time and heightened academic stress despite having better access to educational resources. Scholars have emphasized that children's perception of parental warmth, attentiveness, and emotional availability plays a central role in fostering high levels of life satisfaction. For example, Hasan and Power (2002) found that parental responsiveness and involvement were positively associated with children's happiness and optimism. As such, life satisfaction is not only shaped by external conditions but also by the child's perception of relational support, emotional validation, and personal agency within their family and school environments. Thus, life satisfaction should not be viewed as a peripheral issue but as a central developmental outcome, particularly in high-pressure educational contexts where emotional needs may be easily overlooked.

Parents' Participation and Students' Life Satisfaction

An increasing body of research has explored the relationship between parents' participation in school activities and students' overall well-being, including life satisfaction. Findings from Western contexts suggest that children whose parents are actively involved in school tend to report higher levels of emotional support, self-esteem, and social competence (Elshanum, 2024; Yim, 2022). These benefits are largely attributed to the emotional message conveyed through parental involvement: children feel valued, supported, and integrated into their educational environment. When parents attend school events, volunteer in classrooms, or maintain regular communication with teachers, they reinforce their child's sense of security and belonging. In China, however, most research has focused narrowly on academic outcomes, such as grades, attendance, or academic motivation (Li et al., 2023). The potential

emotional and psychological benefits of parental school involvement have received comparatively less attention. Nonetheless, emerging studies have begun to investigate this relationship. For example, Zhang et al. (2021) found that parental attendance at school events was positively correlated with students' sense of happiness and inclusion.

Yet, cultural factors complicate the dynamics of parental involvement. In some cases, over-involvement or performance-focused engagement may lead to stress or feelings of inadequacy among children, especially if interactions are perceived as critical rather than supportive. This indicates that the quality of parental engagement, particularly its emotional tone and intent, is as important as its frequency. From a theoretical standpoint, parental participation can be understood as a form of social support, where the child's subjective interpretation mediates its developmental outcomes. This underscores the need for culturally sensitive research that situates parental participation within broader family and societal expectations in China.

Literature Gap

Although a growing body of research has examined parental involvement in children's education, most studies have concentrated on its influence on academic performance, such as grades, test scores, and school engagement. In the Chinese context, the dominant research narrative has largely centered on cognitive outcomes, often overlooking the broader dimensions of child development, including emotional well-being and subjective life satisfaction. This academic bias may be attributed to the cultural emphasis on educational achievement as a primary family goal, particularly in urban areas where competition is intense. As a result, the role of parental school participation in shaping children's holistic well-being remains insufficiently understood.

Moreover, the concept of life satisfaction has been more frequently explored among adolescents or secondary school students, while primary school-aged children have received relatively less attention. This gap is significant, as early childhood experiences form the foundation of emotional development and long-term mental health. Few studies investigate how younger children perceive and internalize their parents' involvement in school-related activities. This lack of focus limits both the theoretical understanding and practical guidance needed to promote supportive parenting behaviors during a critical developmental period.

In terms of methodology, much of the existing research relies heavily on quantitative instruments such as standardized surveys and academic performance metrics. While useful for identifying general patterns, these tools often fail to capture the nuanced, context-dependent experiences of children. Particularly absent are studies that center children's voices and subjective interpretations of their parents' participation in school life. This is a crucial omission, as the impact of parental engagement may vary based on how children perceive and emotionally respond to such behaviors. Furthermore, regional disparities within China are often neglected in existing literature. Cities like Suzhou, which combine rapid economic development with strong traditional values, provide a unique cultural and socio-economic backdrop. Yet, little empirical research has examined how these local characteristics shape parental engagement and its impact on children's well-being. In such contexts, parents may face conflicting demands between professional obligations and

educational expectations, influencing both the quantity and quality of their school involvement.

This study addresses these research gaps by adopting a qualitative approach to explore how primary school students in Suzhou perceive their parents' participation in school activities and how this influences their life satisfaction. By focusing on students' voices and experiences, the study aims to offer a more holistic, culturally grounded, and developmentally appropriate understanding of the parent-child-school dynamic in contemporary urban China.

Methodology

Research Design

A qualitative research design was adopted to explore the subjective experiences and interpretations of primary school students regarding their parents' involvement in school activities. The study is grounded in a constructivist paradigm, which emphasizes the importance of understanding human experience from the point of view of those who live it. Semi-structured interviews were employed to provide participants with a flexible, yet guided, platform to express their thoughts, feelings, and personal stories. This method was chosen for its capacity to capture the nuances of children's emotional responses and contextual understandings.

The research focused on the emotional and perceptual aspects of parental involvement rather than measuring the frequency or quantity of such behaviors. This decision aligns with the study's goal of investigating life satisfaction, a construct best explored through participants' subjective interpretations. The interview questions were designed to address how students perceive their parents' presence at school events, how they feel about this involvement, and whether it affects their sense of happiness, security, or connection to school.

Sampling Method

The study employed purposive sampling to select participants who could provide rich, relevant data aligned with the research objectives. A total of 20 primary school students from Grades 4 to 6 were recruited from three public schools in Suzhou, an economically developed city in eastern China. The selection criteria included students aged between 9 and 12 years old, enrolled in full-time education, and capable of expressing their thoughts clearly in Mandarin.

The rationale for selecting students in Grades 4 to 6 was based on their cognitive and emotional development stage. At this age, children typically possess the verbal ability and reflective awareness necessary for articulating their thoughts and feelings about social relationships and school experiences. Additionally, efforts were made to ensure diversity in the sample in terms of gender, academic performance, and parental background (e.g., parental occupation and education level), to capture a broad range of perspectives. Parental consent and school administrative approval were obtained prior to student recruitment. Ethical guidelines were followed throughout the sampling process to ensure voluntary participation and the protection of children's rights and confidentiality.

Data Collection Methods

Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary method for data collection. Each interview lasted between 20 to 30 minutes and was conducted in a quiet, child-friendly space within the school environment. The interviews were audio-recorded with the permission of participants and their guardians, and later transcribed verbatim for analysis.

The interview guide included open-ended questions such as: “Can you tell me about a time when your parents came to your school?”, “How did you feel when they were there?”, “What do you think parents do at school activities?”, and “Do you think your parents’ involvement makes a difference in your life at school?” These questions were designed to encourage reflection and emotional expression while remaining developmentally appropriate. Follow-up questions and prompts were used to clarify responses and deepen understanding, allowing students to elaborate on their experiences in their own words. The flexibility of the semi-structured format allowed the researcher to explore emerging themes while maintaining consistency across interviews.

Procedures

Data collection was conducted over a six-week period during the spring semester of 2025. After obtaining school permission and parental consent, the researcher coordinated with teachers to schedule interview sessions during non-instructional periods. Students were interviewed individually in familiar school spaces, such as the library or counseling room, to ensure comfort and reduce anxiety. Prior to each interview, participants were briefed on the purpose of the study and assured of their right to withdraw at any time. A brief rapport-building activity was conducted to establish trust and reduce power imbalances between the adult interviewer and child participant. Ethical protocols, including informed consent, confidentiality, and child safeguarding measures, were strictly followed throughout the process. Transcription and anonymization of interview data were completed within one week of each interview to ensure accuracy and immediacy. Interview notes and field observations were also recorded to supplement audio data and provide contextual insights.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the interview data, following the six-step framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarization, coding, theme development, theme review, definition and naming, and final reporting. Transcripts were read multiple times to ensure deep familiarity with the data. Initial codes were generated manually and clustered into preliminary themes based on semantic and latent meanings. Emerging themes included emotional warmth, perceived support, sense of belonging, and contrasting experiences of absent versus active parental involvement. NVivo software was used to organize and refine the coding process, facilitating the identification of recurring patterns and deviations across participants.

To enhance credibility, the researcher employed peer debriefing and member checking. Selected participants were invited to verify the accuracy of interpreted themes and clarify ambiguous responses. Triangulation was achieved through the inclusion of researcher field notes and reflexive journaling. These strategies ensured that findings were trustworthy, grounded in participants’ experiences, and relevant to the research questions. Overall, the methodological framework was designed to prioritize children’s voices and provide a

nuanced, culturally contextualized understanding of how parental participation in school activities shapes primary students' life satisfaction.

Finding

Emotional Responses to Parental Involvement

The majority of participants reported positive emotions when discussing their parents' participation in school activities. Feelings such as pride, happiness, and security were frequently mentioned. Students expressed a strong sense of validation and emotional connection when their parents attended school events like open classes, award ceremonies, and sports meets. One participant noted, "When my mom came to the sports day, I ran faster because I saw her clapping. I felt very proud." Another shared, "I was so happy when my dad came to the classroom. I felt like he cared about my studies." These emotional responses appear to contribute directly to students' broader sense of life satisfaction, as they associate their well-being with parental presence and affirmation. However, a few students also reported feelings of embarrassment or pressure, particularly when academic performance was involved. The key emotional themes are summarized in the table below.

Table 1

Summary of key themes from interviews

Theme	Description	Sample Quote
Emotional connection	Positive feelings linked to parental presence	"I was happy when they came to see me win a prize."
Academic encouragement	Motivation derived from involvement	"I studied harder because they came to the classroom."
Social enhancement	Improved peer interactions and recognition	"Friends talked to me more when my mom helped at school."
Disappointment from absence	Negative feelings due to lack of involvement	"I felt alone when no one came."

Perceived Academic and Social Support

Parental involvement was perceived by many students as a form of academic encouragement. Students believed that their parents' presence at school events motivated them to perform better. This was especially evident during parent-teacher meetings and class exhibitions, where students linked their efforts to parental approval. Additionally, students identified social benefits, such as improved peer relationships and teacher attention, when their parents participated in school activities. One child said, "When other kids saw my mom helping at the book fair, they talked to me more." Such comments suggest that parental visibility at school may elevate a child's social status among peers and reinforce positive self-image. Some students also indicated that they received more support with homework and projects at home when their parents were actively engaged in school matters. This suggests a feedback loop between school-based involvement and at-home academic support. The frequency of these perceptions is summarized below.

Table 2

Frequency of reported parental involvement themes

Theme category	Number of students reporting	Percentage (%)
Positive emotional response	17	85%
Academic encouragement	15	75%
Enhanced social experience	12	60%
Negative impact of absence	6	30%

The Role of School Culture and Event Type

Student perceptions of parental involvement were also influenced by the nature of the school activity and the institutional culture. Events that emphasized collaboration and creativity, such as talent shows and art exhibitions, were described more positively than routine academic meetings. Participants from schools with a more inclusive and family-oriented culture reported greater enjoyment and support. One student explained, "Our school invites parents for everything. It makes me feel like school is part of our family." In contrast, students from more rigid academic environments viewed parental involvement as evaluative or performance-based, which occasionally triggered stress. The frequency and openness of communication between parents and teachers also shaped students' perspectives. When schools actively encouraged parental engagement, students perceived it as a normal and supportive practice.

Comparative Reflections on Parental Absence

A smaller subset of participants reported limited or no parental participation in school activities. Their reflections highlighted feelings of disappointment, loneliness, or envy. One participant shared, "Everyone's parents came to the play except mine. I felt left out." Another noted, "My parents are too busy to come. Sometimes I wish they could see what I do." Students in this category were more likely to express doubts about their own value or importance in the family. These emotional gaps often translated into lower perceived satisfaction with school life and a diminished sense of belonging. However, a few students rationalized their parents' absence by emphasizing family obligations or work-related demands. Despite this, they still hoped for increased involvement in the future. Overall, the results suggest that parental participation in school activities plays a critical role in shaping students' emotional well-being, academic motivation, and social integration. These factors are closely tied to students' overall life satisfaction. In the next chapter, these findings will be discussed in the context of existing literature and theoretical implications.

Discussion

This study interprets the findings of the study in light of previous literature and theoretical frameworks. The primary objective is to contextualize how parents' participation in school activities affects primary school students' life satisfaction in the Chinese context, especially in Suzhou. The discussion is organized around four major findings from the results chapter: emotional responses to parental involvement, perceived academic and social support, the role of school culture and event type, and comparative reflections on parental absence.

One of the most striking findings of this study is the significant emotional impact of parental participation. Students consistently described feelings of pride, happiness, and

connection when their parents attended school activities. These results echo existing research, such as that of Emerson et al. (2012), which emphasizes the positive psychological outcomes associated with parental engagement. In the Chinese cultural context, where familial bonds are often seen as extensions of personal identity, such emotional validation carries deep significance. When students perceive their parents' presence as a sign of care, it reinforces a sense of belonging and worth. This aligns with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, particularly the third level—love and belonging—which is crucial for children's emotional development. Moreover, the emotional salience of these moments supports Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, indicating that mesosystemic interactions between family and school profoundly influence child development.

In terms of academic and social support, the findings illustrate that parental involvement does not merely motivate better performance but also improves social integration and self-perception among peers. When parents are seen volunteering or attending school functions, students perceive a heightened status among classmates and feel more recognized by teachers. This mirrors findings from Dotterer and Wehrspann (2016), who observed that parental involvement correlates positively with students' academic self-concept and social competence. In the Chinese educational system, which is often highly competitive and performance-driven, these sources of external affirmation can act as buffers against academic stress. This is particularly relevant given that Chinese students are known to face early academic pressure, and positive parental reinforcement at school may help mitigate feelings of anxiety or inadequacy.

The data also reveal the importance of school culture and event type in mediating the effects of parental participation. Students from schools that encourage collaborative and creative family-oriented events report higher levels of enjoyment and emotional benefit. This is consistent with studies suggesting that the quality and inclusiveness of school events significantly shape the outcomes of parental engagement (Cripps & Zyromski, 2009). In contrast, rigid or evaluative events may inadvertently heighten student stress, especially if the parental presence is tied to performance judgment rather than encouragement. This distinction is critical in the Chinese context, where "face" (*mianzi*) culture can lead parents and students alike to experience public academic evaluation as a source of pressure. Therefore, schools must carefully design activities that foster genuine parent-child bonding rather than mere academic surveillance.

The reflections of students whose parents were absent from school activities also provide meaningful insight. These participants expressed feelings of exclusion and diminished self-worth, suggesting that the absence of parental involvement may contribute negatively to students' emotional well-being. While some students rationalized their parents' lack of participation due to work or other obligations, the emotional gap was still palpable. This supports the findings of Baker et al. (2018), who noted that perceived parental disinterest, even when unintentional, can be internalized by children as a lack of support. In Suzhou, where economic activity is high and many parents operate small businesses, time constraints are a real barrier. However, this reinforces the need for flexible and diverse forms of involvement that accommodate varying parental schedules, such as weekend family workshops or asynchronous video engagement.

Interestingly, the duality of emotional outcomes—joy from involvement versus disappointment from absence—suggests that even minimal parental presence can yield significant emotional returns. This finding holds particular significance for educational policymakers and school administrators in China. Encouraging and facilitating even small gestures of involvement (e.g., handwritten notes, short visits, or virtual attendance) can have substantial emotional resonance for students. Moreover, the positive reinforcement cycle observed—wherein parental involvement leads to improved student behavior, which in turn elicits greater parental pride and engagement—suggests that interventions aimed at increasing parental presence can have compounding benefits. When viewed through the lens of developmental psychology and educational sociology, the results of this study reinforce the multi-layered nature of child well-being. Parental involvement is not a unidimensional factor but intersects with emotional, academic, and social domains. In China, where educational achievement is deeply tied to familial honor and future opportunity, parental visibility in school life serves not only as a motivator but also as a source of emotional assurance. Therefore, fostering a healthy and constructive form of participation—free from excessive academic pressure—is key to enhancing students' holistic development.

Finally, this study contributes to existing literature by providing qualitative, child-centered perspectives in a research landscape often dominated by parent or teacher reports. By foregrounding students' voices, this research highlights nuanced emotional reactions and interpersonal dynamics that may not be captured in standard surveys. In doing so, it addresses the methodological gap in Chinese parental involvement research, which has historically focused more on quantifiable outcomes (e.g., grades, test scores) than subjective well-being.

Conclusion

This study explored the impact of parents' participation in school activities on primary school students' life satisfaction in the context of Suzhou, China. Drawing upon semi-structured interviews with 20 students, the research identified several meaningful patterns in the emotional, academic, and social responses associated with parental engagement in school life. The findings offer nuanced insights into the relational dynamics between school, family, and student well-being. The primary finding is that parental involvement in school activities positively contributes to students' emotional well-being. Students frequently reported feelings of happiness, pride, and motivation when their parents attended events such as open classes, school plays, or sports days. These emotional responses were directly linked to their broader sense of life satisfaction, suggesting that parental presence provides a vital source of affirmation and security. Conversely, the absence of parental involvement often led to feelings of disappointment and social exclusion.

The study also found that parental participation serves as both academic and social reinforcement. Many students felt more motivated to perform well academically when they knew their parents were involved in school affairs. Furthermore, their social standing among peers appeared to improve with visible parental support, enhancing their sense of belonging and self-esteem. These findings affirm that parental engagement is a multidimensional influence that extends beyond academics to affect students' interpersonal relationships and emotional development.

The results highlight the importance of school culture and institutional practices in shaping the nature and outcomes of parental involvement. Schools that actively encouraged and facilitated parent-school partnerships reported higher levels of student satisfaction. In contrast, environments where parental involvement was framed as performance evaluation sometimes evoked stress rather than support. This underscores the need for schools to cultivate inclusive and child-centered engagement strategies. Based on these findings, three practical recommendations can be offered. First, schools should diversify the types of activities that invite parental involvement, ensuring opportunities for both academic and non-academic participation. Second, educators and policymakers should provide flexible engagement formats (e.g., virtual participation) to accommodate working parents. Third, awareness campaigns can be designed to educate parents about the emotional and developmental significance of their presence in school life.

Despite its valuable insights, the study is not without limitations. The sample size was small and limited to a single city, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the study relied solely on student perceptions, without triangulating data from parents or teachers, which may limit the depth of interpretation. Future research could expand the geographic and demographic scope of the study to include diverse regions and school settings across China. It would also be beneficial to include parental and teacher perspectives to form a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms linking parental involvement to student life satisfaction. Moreover, longitudinal studies may help to assess the sustained impact of parental participation over time.

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