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## STAGE-SPECIFIC TRAJECTORIES OF PARENTAL EDUCATIONAL ANXIETY: INSIGHTS FROM A QUALITATIVE STUDY [ABSTRACT]

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### ABSTRACT

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Aim/Purpose	This study investigates the key factors contributing to parental anxiety across different child educational stages, from kindergarten to university, within the Chinese cultural context. It aims to understand how these factors evolve and shift over time and their relative importance at each stage.
Background	Previous studies have demonstrated that anxiety is contagious, with a particularly notable impact between parents and children. In China, parental anxiety has significantly troubled the mental health of both parents and children, which is triggered by diverse social and cultural pressures. However, existing research predominantly focuses on the parental anxiety of parents of children at specific educational stages, indicating that there is a lack of study that explores the trajectory of parental educational anxiety, examining how it evolves across different stages of a child's academic journey. By highlighting stage-specific fluctuations in parental anxiety and the socio-cultural pressures shaping these patterns, this research provides a fresh lens to understand parental educational anxiety.
Methodology	The study employed purposive sampling to recruit 25 parents representing diverse occupational and educational backgrounds, with 5 parents selected

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## Stage-Specific Trajectories of Parental Educational Anxiety

from each educational stage: kindergarten, primary school, middle school, high school, and university. Snowball sampling was utilized to identify and approach potential participants. A standardized interview protocol was developed to ensure systematic and consistent data collection across different parenting stages. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with parents to explore their sources of anxiety related to their children's educational stages. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using thematic coding, allowing the researchers to identify key anxiety-inducing factors and uncover trends, patterns, and differences across the stages.

Contribution	This research contributes to understanding how cultural and societal variables mediate family characteristics and psychological well-being, highlighting the indirect effects of parental assumptions and anxiousness on youngsters' growth.
Findings	Preliminary results indicate significant variation in the factors contributing to parental anxiety at different educational stages. In the early stages, concerns center on socialization, developmental milestones, and readiness. In later stages, anxiety shifts towards academic performance, peer comparison, and career prospects, reflecting evolving priorities as children progress through their educational journey.
Recommendations for Practitioners	Educational and psychological professionals should design tailored intervention programs for parents, addressing stage-specific concerns. Workshops and counseling sessions about systematic knowledge popularization can help parents manage their anxieties effectively.
Recommendations for Researchers	Future research should extend the sample size to include a wider range of demographics, such as rural versus urban parents, and explore longitudinal trends to better understand how parental anxiety evolves.
Impact on Society	By understanding the progression of parental anxiety, this study can inform policies and programs aimed at reducing societal pressures on parents, ultimately improving their psychological well-being and supporting their children's education.
Future Research	Longitudinal studies are recommended to explore intra-family changes in parental anxiety across multiple educational transitions.
Keywords	parental anxiety, educational stages, Chinese context

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