Running head: Article critique about the “Students’ perception of family influences on their academic motivation: a qualitative analysis

Article critique about the “Students’ perception of family influences on their academic motivation: a qualitative analysis”

Xiaolu Zhang

March 31, 2016

George Mason University

**Abstract**

The article aims to critique the “Students’ perception of family influences on their academic motivation: a qualitative analysis”, which was written by Urdan, T., Solek, M., and Schoenfelder in 2007. In the article, we firstly introduced the purpose, method, findings, Urdan et al (2007)’s conclusions. Second, we analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of parts of Urdan et al (2007), including goal, conceptual framework, method, analysis and discussion. We were trying to use critical thinking skills to find out the weaknesses of the article, and at the same time, we admitted the outcome of Urdan’s research. Finally, we came up with our perspectives about the implications of research in Jang (2008), and we called the part as “reflection”. In reflection part, we related the article to personal experience, and tried to find out the connection between the implications of research in the article and the real life.

**Introduction**

Urdan et al (2007) investigated that parents play a focal role in their children’s education and academic motivation. However, previous studies rarely focus on the relationship between the degrees of parents’ involvement and children’s education and career performance. In purpose to fill the gap, authors conducted their research regarding the perceptions from students toward family influence, parental factors and children’s educational motivation and performance. Urdan et al (2007) were willing to explore two points. First, different types of family influence. Second, the inosculation between current study and previous research/theory relate to family influence. Forty-seven high school students participated in this research. Male students were slightly higher than females. All of students stay with their immigrant parents with cross-national background. Each participant engaged in a 15-30mins interview individually and privately with open ended questions. The questions were coded into five dimensions which respectively were perception of family influence on motivation; valence; nature of influence; source of influence and family socioeconomic factors influencing motivation. As a conclusion, authors revealed types of family influence. The perception of students toward these influences affects their academic performance. Moreover, non-parental members such as sibling, grandparents also play an important role related to educational motivation. Apart from these main findings, author mentioned about the influence of achievement level and critical incidents are various depend of ethnic and individuals. In the last, authors suggested that further researches could stress on enlarge the participants group and upgrade the interview questions with easier analysis approach.

**Analysis of article**

**Goal**

Article aims to find out the relationship between family members and students’ academic achievements. As the article said, “Research examining family influences on student motivation and achievement in school has generally focused on parental influences and has often been limited to one or two variables.” (Urdan & Solek &schoenfelder, 2007). Therefore, authors used qualitative research skills to find out other kinds of family influences, and finally, built relationship between kinds of family influences and students’ achievements.

**Conceptual framework**

Family influence is the key conception in the article, as the author mentioned, there was limited view about family influence that only include parental expectations and parental involvement in schoolwork. The authors defined the scale of the family influence, which consisted of family pleasing, family support, aversive influence, and no influence, the types of family influences also differed by cultural characteristic and achievement level. In sum, the conception of family influence is the center of the whole paper and also directs the following discussion.

**Method**

The authors selected 47 high school seniors, to show the validity, the sample was picked out by random, which represented a diversity of achievement levels, genders and generational status. The research was conducted in interviews with qualitative research skills, and finished by analyzing the information in the audiotape records. The questions in the interviews had different purposes, some of them aimed to enhance the engagement of students, some of them aimed to find out the relationship between family influences and students’ academic achievements.

**Analysis**

First comes to the analysis of the goal part, the authors mentioned their goal several times, it is a good way to remind audience of the purpose of the article. However, the goal of finding out other types of family influence is not appropriate enough, because nobody could say that they find out all kinds of family influences. On the other hand, the article aims to build relationship between family influences and students’ achievements, but there are many factors that may influent students’ achievements and motivation, since the family influences cannot be the only factor, the effect size of family influences should be assessed.

Secondly, almost all the conceptions in the article origin from the family influence, which means that it is easy to build relationships among them. However, it is hard to distinguish that which of them is more important, and which one of them is focused by the authors.

Finally, the method is clearly listed in the article. However, the sample size is too small, there may be a large number of error in data. On the other hand, the research is conducted with qualitative research skills, which is a good way to assess complex topic, but it will be better if the qualitative research skills can be combined with quantitative research skill.

**Discussion**

In general, the article discussed about the varieties of family influence, cultural factors, achievement level differences, the importance of modeling, a systems approach to understanding critical incidents. The authors pointed out two limitation of the research, they are the limitation of the sample and interview format. However, the authors insist that “This research has the potential to inform research on familial influences on student motivation.” (Urdan & Solek &schoenfelder, 2007, p.19). In summary, the final conclusion is that the family context should be valued.

**Reflection**

For my personal perspective, this research is a solid study toward parental influence. I like the method authors conducted since it provided more precious description then standard questionnaire. As a mom, I did gain a lot from reading the article. I agree with the authors that the cultural factors affect perception of parental influence. According to authors’ category of family influence, family pleasing and family obligation pattern are very common in Chinese family. It is not only among immigrants. In Chinese culture, embracing gratitude to parents is a common sense as parents gave the birth and scarified themselves to their children. The baby became to the center of the family once they born. Some even play as the driving force of the family. Under such climate, striving to please parents is taken as normality to every child. Moreover, Chinese think highly in the education. Automatically, Chinese family perceived higher achievement level than others. As a result of this, children put more stress on educational performance. They do burden a lot under this philosophy, but they gain huge motivation from their parents’ satisfaction. Of cause, Chinese children are more performance goal oriented since they fostered by pleasing others.

In addition, modeling is important as well. I keep studying once my son born. Namely, he has been used with seeing me study from his wake up to sleep. As he gets old, study embeds in his head since he always express that he would like to be a master student as mom. Moreover, he always pretends doing “homework” by seating in front of my laptop and reading the book. As mentioned by authors, modeling play an important role in all kinds of family influence categories. Some children desire to be the model and some can be influenced by modeling parents or siblings. In contrast, the negative modeling would be more harmful for children. This makes me think, should the parents’ intervention involved into children’s friendship. Before reading this article, I strongly disagree with such idea. Recalled my childhood, my mom sometimes stopped me from make friend with child who was deemed as “bad kid”. It hurt me a lot as I barely believe my friend was taken as “bad” by my parents. It is probably a better way to filter the school and neighborhood carefully beforehand. Moreover, parents can observe children’s friend by proactively invite them to home. If there do have situations worth to consider, parents could raise questions to children and have them think it over under parents’ guidence.

**Reference**

[1] Urdan, T., Solek, M., & Schoenfelder, E. 2007. Students’ perceptions of family influences on their academic motivation: A qualitative analysis. European Journal of Psychology of Education Eur J Psychol Educ*,* 22(1), 7-21.