

ARTICLE

The Relationship between Parents' Expectations and Career Adaptability of Primary School Students: The Mediating Effect of Proactive Personality

*Yizhuo Feng, Shixiang Liu **

Teachers College of Beijing Union University, Beijing 100011, China

ABSTRACT

With the development and changes of society and the further iteration and renewal of parents' concepts, the importance and influence of future career planning of primary school students have become increasingly prominent. Parental expectation is a very important part of influencing proactive personality, and it is also an important part of improving career adaptability, personal quality and comprehensive ability. This study explores the relationship between parents' expectation, proactive personality and career adaptability of primary school students. This paper deeply analyzes the influence of proactive personality on career adaptability, so as to provide theoretical support for improving the career adaptability of primary school students. In this study, the Chinese version of "Career Resilience", "Parental Expectation Questionnaire" and "Proactive Personality Measurement" (PPS) were used as research tools to conduct psychological measurement on 287 students in grade 5 and 6 of a primary school in Beijing. SPSS29.0 and Process statistical software were used to explore the status quo and relationship of proactive personality, parents' expectation and career adaptability of primary school students. The conclusions of this study are as follows: (1) The correlation analysis results between parental expectation and proactive personality are significant, and there is a significant positive correlation. (2) The correlation analysis results between parents' expectations and career adaptability are significant, and there is a significant positive correlation. (3) The correlation analysis results between career adaptability and proactive personality were significant, showing a significant positive correlation. (4) Both parents' expectation and proactive personality have significant direct and positive effects

*CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Shixiang Liu, Teachers College of Beijing Union University, Beijing 100011, China; Email: gorenliu@126.com

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 10 November 2024 | Revised: 15 December 2024 | Accepted: 28 December 2024 | Published Online: 10 February 2025
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30564/jpr.v7i1.8235>

CITATION

Feng, Y., Liu, S., 2025. The Relationship between Parents' Expectations and Career Adaptability of Primary School Students: The Mediating Effect of Proactive Personality. *Journal of Psychological Research*. 7(1): 1–8. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30564/jpr.v7i1.8235>

COPYRIGHT

Copyright © 2025 by the author(s). Published by Bilingual Publishing Co. This is an open access article under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>).

on career adaptability, and proactive personality plays a partial mediating role between parents' expectation and career adaptability.

Keywords: Primary School Students; Parental Expectations; Proactive Personality; Career Adaptability; Mediating Effect

1. Introduction

1.1. Career Adaptability

Career adaptability refers to the ability of an individual to cope with various challenges in his career, reflecting the state of readiness shown by an individual in the face of predictable work tasks, career roles, and career mutations or uncertainties. This concept covers four core dimensions: career concern, that is, the degree to which individuals attach importance to career development; Career control reflects the individual's autonomy and control in career planning and management. Career curiosity reflects the individual's desire to explore the future career; And career confidence, that is, the positive self-perception that an individual holds in his career. These four dimensions together constitute a comprehensive framework of career adaptability, and improving the ability of the four dimensions can help individuals better adapt to and cope with various challenges and changes in their career^[1]. Individual's career adaptability is regarded as an indispensable psychological resource, which has a profound impact on his future career development and his ability to cope with the complex and changeable professional environment. From the perspective of career construction theory, the importance of career adaptability is particularly prominent. It can not only help individuals effectively deal with various uncertainties and challenges in their career, but also provide strong support for individuals to achieve more remarkable achievements in their career path. The positive effects of career resilience can be seen in many ways. First of all, it enables individuals to adapt to changes in the career environment more flexibly. Whether it is the rapid development of the industry or the upgrading of technology, career adaptability can help individuals quickly adjust themselves to adapt to the new working environment and work requirements^[2]. Secondly, career resilience also plays a crucial role in the pursuit of professional success and personal growth. It encourages individuals to maintain a positive attitude in the face of difficulties and challenges, and constantly explore

new possibilities, so as to maximize their self-worth. This kind of adaptability can not only help individuals better cope with the challenges in their careers, but also play a decisive role at key moments, providing a solid guarantee for the overall development and growth of individuals. Therefore, cultivating and improving individual's career adaptability is of immeasurable value for their future career development and personal growth.

A study by Skoriko and Vondracek^[3] showed that for American middle school students, good career adaptation can reduce the incidence of adolescent problem behaviors, improve their happiness and reduce negative emotions. There is a lack of research on career adaptability in senior primary school at home and abroad. But in fact, career adaptability also has a very important significance for primary school students^[4]. Better career adaptability can help them make career decisions and goals that are more suitable for them.

1.2. Parental Expectations

Research shows that families play a key role in this, and parents are the most central part of the influence^[5]. Parents have an influence on their children's career aspirations, career goals and career decisions, and this influence is usually reflected through expectations and communication^[6]. Parents as an important guide on the path of children's growth, they provide care and support for children's daily life at the same time, but also in the child has not yet formed an independent world view and outlook on life, the initial planning and imagination of its future. This kind of expectation and planning is not a simple fantasy or fantasy, but a deliberate decision based on a deep understanding of the child's character, interests, abilities and other characteristics. Parents' expectations not only include the expectation of their children's future achievements, but also reveal their trust in their children's abilities. They will actively guide and help children choose the right direction for their growth at all stages of their children's growth, and strive to lay a solid foundation for their future career. Therefore, it can be said that

parents' expectations shape the growth trajectory of children to a large extent and are an important factor in the formation of children's career resilience^[7].

1.3. Proactive Personality

In addition to parents' expectations and planning, children's personality traits also play an important role in the formation of their career resilience^[8]. As one of children's personality characteristics, proactive personality has a significant impact on their career adaptability. Children with proactive personality can often be more active and proactive to explore the unknown world, and more courageous to face difficulties and challenges^[9]. In the face of career choices, they will also be more firm in their beliefs and goals^[10]. Children with different personality traits, even under the same background and resource conditions, may show completely different career resilience and choices. Therefore, there may be a certain correlation between children's proactive personality and career adaptability, and it is of great significance to cultivate and promote individual proactive personality traits for individual development and success. Their interaction will affect the child's career development and career planning^[11].

At the same time, studies have shown that parents' expectations of primary school students are closely related to their children's career adaptability. In recent years, empirical studies on career resilience have found a close relationship between proactive personality and career resilience^[12]. Proactive personality refers to a stable tendency of an individual to take the initiative to influence the surrounding environment^[13]. On this basis, the research question I put forward is the relationship between parents' expectation, active personality and pupils' career adaptability and the mediating role of active personality.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Subjects

The study participants were students in a primary school in the city of Beijing, with a random sample drawn from each class. From fifth to sixth grade, five classes were selected from each grade, with 145 participants, for a total of 290 students. A total of 278 effective questionnaires were collected, with an effective rate of 95.8%. Among

them, 130 were male, accounting for 46.8%; There are 148 girls, accounting for 53.2%. There were 155 only children, accounting for 55.8%; There were 123 non-only children, accounting for 44.2%; The fifth grade accounted for 134, or 48.2%, and the sixth grade accounted for 144, or 51.8%.

2.2. Research Tools

In this study, the sample was assessed by the career resilience scale, the parental expectation Scale and the proactive personality scale.

2.2.1. Parental Expectation Scale

The Parental Expectation Questionnaire was compiled by Cheng Lin^[14] and revised by Jin Lu^[15]. The questionnaire has 24 questions and five dimensions. The five-point scoring method is used to sum the scores, and the higher the score, the higher the expectation. In this study, the overall reliability α value of the parental expectation scale was 0.824, and the reliability α value of all dimensions remained above 0.8. This result shows that the reliability of the questionnaire conforms to the preset standard of this study, indicating that the scale data has good reliability.

2.2.2. Proactive Personality Scale

In 2009, Shang Jiayin and Gan Yiqun jointly launched the Proactive Personality Measurement (PPS) scale, which was adapted from the research results of Bateman and Crant^[16]. The modified PPS scale is excellent in reliability and accuracy. It contains 11 independent items and has been verified by systematic structural analysis. Since this study focuses on primary school students, in order to ensure the validity and applicability of the scale, we conducted a detailed reliability test on the Chinese version of PPS revised in 2009. SPSS 29.0 was used to analyze the Klonbach α coefficient of the proactive personality inventory, and the results showed that the Klonbach α value was 0.922, which met the research requirements.

2.2.3. Career Adaptability Scale

In this study, the career resilience Scale compiled by Savickas and Porfeli^[17] was selected and the Chinese version revised by Hou et al.^[18] was adopted for testing. The scale covers four key dimensions: career concern (corresponding to questions 1–6), career control (corresponding to questions 7–12), career curiosity (corresponding to questions 13–18),

and career confidence (corresponding to questions 19–24), with a total of 24 items. By calculating the average score of all items, the higher the score, the higher the level of career resilience^[19]. Previous studies have shown that the α coefficient of all dimensions of the career resilience scale is stable above 0.7, while the α coefficient of the total scale is over 0.8, indicating good reliability. In this study, the α coefficient of the total career resilience table is as high as 0.927, which further verifies its high stability and reliability in measurement.

2.3. Statistical Methods

SPSS29.0 was used to conduct descriptive statistics, independent sample t test, variance analysis, correlation analysis, multiple regression analysis and so on.

3. Results

3.1. Common Method Deviation Test

In this study, self-reported questionnaire was used to collect research data, and reverse scoring of some questions was used to reduce common method bias in the collection process. Harman single factor test was used to evaluate the common method bias, and the results showed that there were 9 factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, among which the explanatory variance of the first factor was 32.61%, which was lower than the critical standard of 40%. Therefore, it can be assumed that there are no significant common methodological biases in this study.

3.2. Difference Analysis of Parents' Expectation, Proactive Personality and Career Adaptability of Primary School Students

The differences of parental expectation, career adaptability and proactive personality among students of different genders were analyzed. There are significant differences in parental expectation, career adaptability and proactive personality.

The differences of parental expectation, career adaptability and proactive personality among students of different grades were analyzed. There are significant differences in parental expectations, but no significant differences in career adaptability and proactive personality.

3.3. Correlation Analysis of Parents' Expectation, Proactive Personality and Career Adaptability of Primary School Students

According to the Pearson correlation analysis in the **Table 1**, there is a significant correlation between parents' expectation, proactive personality and career adaptability of primary school students. Among them, the correlation analysis results between parental expectation and proactive personality were significant, showing a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.563$, $p < 0.001$). There was a significant positive correlation between parental expectation and career adaptation ($r = 0.702$, $p < 0.001$). There was a significant positive correlation between career adaptability and proactive personality ($r = 0.726$, $p < 0.001$).

Table 1. Correlation between parental expectation, proactive personality and career adaptability of primary school students (N = 278).

Variable;	1	2	3
Parents expect	1		
Career adaptability	0.702**	1	
proactive personality	0.563**	0.726***	1

**. At the 0.01 level (two-tailed), the correlation was significant. *. At the 0.05 level (two-tailed), the correlation was significant.

3.4. The Influence of Parents' Expectations on Career Adaptability of Primary School Students: An Examination of the Mediating Effect of Proactive Personality

This study set parental expectation and career adaptability as control variables to explore the mediating effect of

proactive personality. The results showed that parental expectation could significantly predict career adaptability ($\beta = 0.702$, $t = 16.380$, $p < 0.001$ ***). Proactive personality could positively predict career adaptability ($\beta = 0.484$, $t = 11.269$, $p < 0.001$ ***). Parental expectation significantly positively predicted proactive personality ($\beta = 0.563$, $t = 11.19$, $p < 0.001$ ***). Proactive personality plays a partial mediating

role in the relationship between parental expectation and career adaptability.

In summary, according to the analysis results, it can be concluded that both parents' expectation and proactive personality have significant direct and positive effects on career adaptability, and proactive personality plays a partial mediating role in parents' expectation and career adaptability. The overall model fits well and significantly. The results are shown in **Table 2**.

According to the results of the mediation effect test, the confidence interval does not include 0, indicating that

the direct path can significantly predict career adaptability.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the action path of this study is composed of parental expectation-proactive personality-career adaptation, with an indirect effect value of 0.282. In summary, it can be concluded that proactive personality plays a significant mediating role between parents' expectations and students' career adaptability, and there is a partial mediating role, that is, parents' expectations can have an impact on students' career adaptability through proactive personality (a partial mediating role). The results are shown in **Table 3** and **Figure 1**.

Table 2. Mediating effect test of proactive personality (n = 278).

Variable;	Career Adaptability			Proactive Personality			Career Adaptability		
	β	t	p	β	t	p	β	t	p
constant	0.949	5.054	<0.001	0.923	2.299	0.022	0.707	4.498	<0.001
Parents expect	0.702	16.380	<0.001	0.563	11.19	<0.001	0.429	9.992	<0.001
proactive personality							0.484	11.269	<0.001
R	0.70			0.56			0.81		
R2	0.493			0.317			0.653		
F	268.311			128.123			258.893		

Table 3. Breakdown of total effects and direct effects and mediation effects.

Metavariable	Effect;	Effect	SE	95%CI Floor;	95%CI Toplimit	Effect Ratio
proactive personality	indigo effect	0.282	0.044	0.206	0.371	38.8%
	direct effect	0.444	0.044	0.357	0.531	61.2%
	ensemble	0.726	0.044	0.639	0.813	

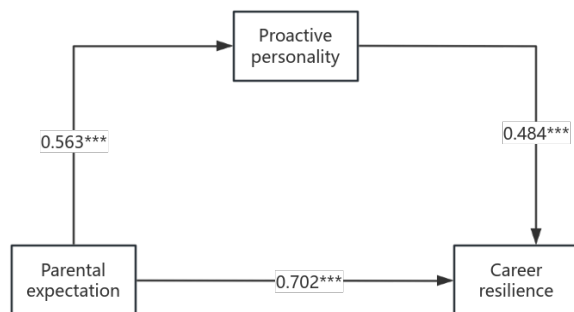


Figure 1. Effect of parents' expectation on career adaptability: test of the mediation effect of active personality.

Note: ** $P < 0.01$, *** $P < 0.001$.

4. Discussion

Through sorting out the questionnaire results of parents' expectation, proactive personality and career adapt-

ability of primary school students, and using the method of independent sample T test, the differences between parents' expectation, proactive personality and career adaptability of primary school students and each grade and gender were analyzed. The results show that there is no significant difference between proactive personality and career adaptability in grade, but there is significant difference between parents' expectation in grade. There are significant differences in gender. There is significant correlation between parents' expectation, active personality and career adaptability. There is a significant positive correlation between parental expectation and career adaptability. There is a significant positive correlation between career adaptability and proactive personality.

4.1. Differences of Demographic Variables in Various Indicators

At grade level, there are significant differences in parents' expectations. Factors such as family environment, parents' educational background and values may have an impact on parents' expectations. There is no significant difference in proactive personality among grades. The social culture and educational environment of the fifth and sixth grade students in the sample are relatively consistent, and there is no significant difference. The performance of all initiatives is relatively similar, resulting in no significant difference. There is no significant difference in the career adaptability of primary school students in grade. The age range of grade 5 and Grade 6 students is relatively small, and their career adaptability may not be significantly different in grade.

In terms of gender, there are significant differences in parents' expectations. Parents' expectations of primary school boys are higher than those of primary school girls. According to research findings, parents have higher average educational expectations for boys than girls^[20]. There are significant differences of proactive personality in gender. Studies have pointed out that male traits have a direct impact on the development of proactive personality, and their explanation rate is as high as 38.7%, so they can predict the formation of proactive personality to a large extent^[21]. At the same time, considering the profound influence of gender role expectation and social culture, men are usually more likely to show the characteristics of proactive personality^[22]. The career adaptability of primary school students has significant difference in gender. In some societies and cultures, there may be differences in expectations, roles and parenting styles for boys and girls, which may result in them exhibiting different characteristics and needs in terms of career resilience, leading to significant gender differences.

4.2. Correlation between Parents' Expectation, Proactive Personality and Career Adaptability of Primary School Students

The results of this study support the hypothesis that there is a significant correlation between parents' expectations, proactive personality and career adaptability. This means that the higher the parents' expectations of their children, the stronger the child's own proactive personality per-

formance. Secondly, the correlation analysis results between parents' expectation and career adaptability also show a significant positive correlation. This suggests that parental expectations can stimulate children's positive attitude towards future career development and promote their ability to adapt to future careers. In addition, the correlation analysis results between career adaptability and proactive personality also showed a significant positive correlation. This suggests that individuals with higher proactive personality traits may help them better adapt to future career development.

4.3. The Mediating Role of Proactive Personality between Parents' Expectation and Career Adaptability of Primary School Students

The results of this study support the mediation model of parental expectation, proactive personality and career adaptability, and provide empirical support for related theories. This mediation model shows that parents' expectations have not only a direct effect on children's career adaptability, but also an indirect effect through stimulating children's proactive personality traits. It is of great significance to understand the multiple influencing factors and mechanisms of personal development, and provides a theoretical basis for related research. In addition, the results of this study also provide certain guidance for educational practice and intervention, and encourage educators to pay more attention to cultivating students' initiative and career adaptability. However, there are also some limitations in this study, such as the limitations of sample selection and cross-cultural differences. Therefore, future studies can examine a larger sample and consider the influencing factors in different cultural backgrounds to comprehensively and deeply explore the relationship between parental expectations, personality traits and career resilience.

In summary, this study is of great significance for revealing the relationship between parental expectation, proactive personality and career adaptability, and provides some theoretical and practical guidance for family education, school education and career planning. However, future research needs to further explore more influencing factors and mechanisms to improve the breadth and depth of research. Only by deepening our understanding and application of these relationships can we better support and facilitate students' personal development and career planning.

5. Conclusions

Using questionnaire method, this study explores the relationship between parents' expectation, proactive personality and career adaptability of primary school students. The main conclusions are as follows:

First, the correlation analysis results between parental expectation and proactive personality are significant, showing a significant positive correlation.

Second, the correlation analysis results between parents' expectation and career adaptability are significant, showing a significant positive correlation.

Third, the correlation analysis results between career adaptability and proactive personality are significant, showing a significant positive correlation.

Fourth, both parents' expectation and proactive personality have significant direct and positive effects on career adaptability, and proactive personality plays a partial mediating role between parents' expectation and career adaptability.

Author Contributions

Y.F.: Responsible for literature review, data collection, data analysis and thesis writing. S.L.: Responsible for overall design and thesis writing.

Funding

Beijing Shidayidu Cultural Development Co., Ltd: Research on the influencing factors and curriculum intervention of middle school students' career adaptability (No. BUU2023026).

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement

In the data availability statement, authors should provide information about the availability of data and materials used in the study. It should include details about how and where to access the data, including any restrictions on access or use. The statement should be clear and concise, and should provide

sufficient information for others to access and use the data. If the data is not publicly available, authors should explain why and describe any conditions or limitations on access.

Acknowledgments

At the completion of this thesis, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to those who have offered support and encouragement throughout my academic journey. I would like to sincerely thank my advisor, Professor Shixiang Liu. With this thesis, I wish to convey my most sincere thanks to all of you.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

- [1] Super, D.E., Knasel, E.G., 1981. Career development in adulthood: Some theoretical problems and a possible solution. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*. 9(2), 194–201. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03069888108258214>
- [2] SAVICKAS, M.L., 1997. Career adaptability: an integrative construct for life-span, life-space theory. *The Career Development Quarterly*. 45(3), 247–259.
- [3] Skorikov, V., Vondracek, F.W., 2007. Positive career orientation as an inhibitor of adolescent problem behaviour. *Journal of Adolescence*. 30(1), 131–146. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2006.02.004>
- [4] Chen, X., Chen, G., Zhao, J., 2015. Relationship between family socioeconomic status and adolescent future planning: the regulation of extraversion and its gender differences. *Psychological Development and Education*. 31(4), 8. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16187/j.cnki.issn1001-4918.2015.04.05>
- [5] Hou, Z., 2004. Review of studies on the influence of family on adolescent career development. *Psychological Development and Education*. 20(03), 90–95. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1001-4918.2004.03.018>
- [6] Qi, H., 2024. The relationship between school adaptation and personality traits and parental expectations. Shandong Normal University: Jinan, Shandong.
- [7] Goldenberg, C., Gallimore, R., Reese, L., et al., 2001. Cause or Effect? A Longitudinal Study of Immigrant Latino Parents' Aspirations and Expectations, and Their Children's School Performance. *American Educational Research Journal*. 38(3), 547–582. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1007/JHEP12\(2013\)066](https://doi.org/10.1007/JHEP12(2013)066)
- [8] Mao, J., Wen, F., 2012. Active personality: concept,

- measurement, and related research. *Journal of Educational Science*, Hunan Normal University. 11(2), 4. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1671-6124.2012.02.024>
- [9] Li, H., Zhang, W., 2015. The relationship between college students' initiative and entrepreneurial intention: the intermediary role of entrepreneurial knowledge. *Psychological Development and Education*. 31(3), 7. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16187/j.cnki.issn1001-4918.2015.03.02>
- [10] Li, C.J., Li, F., Chen, T., et al., 2022. Proactive personality and promotability: Mediating roles of promotive and prohibitive voice and moderating roles of organizational politics and leader-member exchange. *Journal of Business Research*. 145.
- [11] Li, X., Hou, Z., Feng, M., 2013. The relationship between parents' career development expectation, proactive personality, career adaptability and career decision difficulties. *The Chinese Journal of Clinical Psychology*. 21(2), 6. DOI: <https://doi.org/CNKI:SUN:ZLCY.0.2013-02-026>
- [12] Wang, Y., Chen, H., Wang, J., 2022. The influence mechanism of future time insight on academic stress in high school students: the internal mechanism of career adaptability and proactive personality. *Chinese Journal of Health Psychology*. 30(2), 6.
- [13] Cai, R., Li, H., Zhang, J., et al., 2019. Test of mediation and regulation effects: the relationship between active personality and career adaptability of college students. *Adult Education in China*. (11), 46–50. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1004-6577.2019.11.012>
- [14] Cheng, L., 2010. Parents' Expectation, the relationship between junior high school students' self-expectation and academic achievement. Henan University: Kaifeng, China. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7666/d.y.1692790>
- [15] Jin, L., 2014. Parents want to junior high school students self concept research. The Influence of Inner Mongolia Normal University: Hohhot, China.
- [16] Bateman, T.S., Crant, J.M., et al., 1993. The proactive component of organizational behavior: A measure and correlates. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*. 14(2), 103–118. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.4030140202>
- [17] Savickas, M.L., Porfeli, E.J., 2012. Career Adapt-Abilities Scale: Construction, reliability, and measurement equivalence across 13 countries. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*. 80(3), 661–673. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2012.01.011>
- [18] Hou, Z.J., Leung, S.A., Li, X., et al., 2012. Career Adapt-Abilities Scale—China Form: Construction and initial validation. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*. 80(3), 686–691. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2012.01.006>
- [19] Yang, Y., 2024. Impact of parental career support on adolescent career resilience: a mediation model with regulation. Guangzhou University: Guangzhou, China.
- [20] Cui, S., Song, F.F., 2019. Gender differences in parental educational expectations and educational input: an empirical study based on educational tracking survey in China. *Education Journal of Renmin University of China*. (2), 15.
- [21] Huang, Q., Liu, D., 2011. College proactive personality and its relationship with gender roles. *School Health in China*. 32(12), 1436–1437. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16835/j.cnki.1000-9817.2011.12.012>
- [22] Wu, J., Dong, Y., Xiong, J., et al., 2016. The relationship between proactive personality and career resilience: the mediating role of achievement motivation and its gender differences. *Psychological Development and Education*. 32(05), 547–556. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16187/j.cnki.issn>