Research on the Impact of Family Care on College Students' Academic Stress and Countermeasures

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ABSTRACT
Objective: To investigate the current status of academic stress among college students and propose specific strategies to alleviate academic stress through good family care. Methods: A questionnaire survey was conducted in May 2025, with 3,206 questionnaires distributed to XX University through random sampling, and 3,104 valid questionnaires were obtained after screening. Taking the total score of academic stress as the dependent variable and academic self-efficacy, positive coping style, and family care degree as independent variables, a statistical model was constructed to quantify the predictive effects of various factors on academic stress, thereby comprehensively revealing the mechanism of academic stress. Results: Family care had a significant direct predictive effect on academic stress among college students, and both the independent mediation and chain mediation effects of academic self-efficacy and positive coping style were significant. Conclusion: Family care can effectively reduce the perception of academic stress among college students. Additionally, it can alleviate academic stress by enhancing academic self-efficacy, positive coping tendency, and the chain mediation of self-efficacy-positive coping style, thereby promoting the psychological development of college students.

Keywords: *Family care, Academic pressure, Academic self-efficacy.*

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the data from the "Chinese College Student Tracking Survey" in 2024, 90.3% of college students believe that "the competitive atmosphere in their environment is very intense"; 84.1% feel "intense competition among classmates"; 85.4% claim "everyone competes with each other in studies"; and 86.2% believe "everyone is afraid of falling behind in studies". Some college students who lack academic competitiveness and have no hope of further education lose their motivation to strive, consider themselves failures, and feel that their future is hopeless. "Lying flat", "going with the flow", and "letting things slide" have become their self-comforting attitudes towards life. Nowadays, academic pressure has become a social focus, and the anxiety caused by employment pressure and uncertainty about their future has led to a rising proportion of depression among college students. Some students have developed psychological issues such as anxiety and weariness towards learning, posing serious challenges to the quality of talent cultivation in universities. The concept of "holistic education" emphasizes the cultivation of students by all members of society, throughout the entire process, and in all aspects. Family education, with its unique role in shaping personality and cultivating values through parent-child emotional connections and personal example, can effectively alleviate students' academic pressure and psychological burden. It is evident that the organic integration of family and school is a key path to implementing the "holistic education" concept. Only by pooling the joint efforts of education, strengthening academic support, and creating a family growth environment conducive to mental health and comprehensive development can college students enhance their self-efficacy, effectively alleviate academic pressure, and help universities improve the quality of talent cultivation.

2. ISSUES AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Currently, college students generally face significant academic pressure due to factors such as complex curriculum systems, high practical requirements, and fierce industry competition. Existing research has shown that academic pressure not only affects students' academic performance but may also lead to mental health issues, hindering their overall development. However, previous studies have mostly discussed the impact of family factors on students' interpersonal relationships individually, with insufficient research on the impact of academic pressure. Based on this, this study intends to explore how family care can systematically alleviate academic pressure, as well as the moderating role of academic self-efficacy and positive stress coping strategies in this process.

2.1 Family Care and Academic Pressure

The social development of college students is deeply influenced by their family environment. As a crucial setting for their growth, the family provides them with learning spaces and resources, subtly cultivating their social norms and values. College students who feel the love and support of their parents gain more motivation in their studies. Parents' words and deeds can help students form good social norms and values. Family care can affect students' learning engagement and, in turn, their learning outcomes. When learners feel the positive effects of family care, their academic pressure decreases, and they perform better academically. When parents lack understanding of professional training programs, they may set unrealistically high expectations that are not aligned with their students' reality, or misunderstand the difficulty of courses and assume that students are not studying hard, exacerbating students' academic pressure. Good family care can encourage families to form reasonable expectations that align with professional training goals, providing students with more understanding and encouragement. This, in turn, fosters a collaborative effort between home and school, reducing academic pressure caused by cognitive dissonance, lack of support, and conflicting goals. Based on the above, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: Family care can alleviate academic stress among college students.

2.2 Family Care, Academic Self-efficacy, and Stress Coping Strategies

In the study of the impact of family care on the development of college students, emotional support, value recognition, and resource provision from the family have a significant positive effect on enhancing students' academic self-efficacy and fostering positive coping strategies for stress. As the most stable support force in students' growth process, family care not only creates a warm and safe psychological environment for students but also provides precise support for them to cope with academic challenges and relieve pressure from scientific research. On the one hand, continuous family care can inject stable emotional motivation into students. When facing complex professional courses, family understanding, encouragement, and affirmation can effectively enhance students' confidence in overcoming learning difficulties, making them more resilient in the face of academic setbacks, thereby steadily improving their academic self-efficacy. On the other hand, high-quality family care can help students develop positive coping strategies for stress. By paying timely attention to students' academic progress and psychological state, parents can not only provide targeted emotional guidance to alleviate anxiety when students encounter practical bottlenecks or setbacks in scientific research projects but also offer problem-solving ideas based on their own experiences. This dual care model of "emotional comfort + method guidance" can help students break away from the negative coping habit of avoidance and develop positive strategies of facing and rationally solving problems proactively. Based on this, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H2: Family care has a significant positive effect on college students' academic self-efficacy and can help them develop positive coping strategies for stress.

2.3 Academic Self-efficacy, Stress Coping Strategies, and Academic Stress

Academic self-efficacy serves as both a common source of stress for college students and a crucial factor in regulating academic pressure. Given the complexity of university course knowledge systems and the high practical demands, when students' academic self-efficacy is insufficient, they are prone to develop cognitive biases of "ability deficiency" when facing intense

course assessments, academic competitions, and internship competitions in the industry. This leads to subjective magnification of learning difficulties, especially exacerbating psychological burden when there is an imbalance between goals and ability assessments. Conversely, high academic self-efficacy can act as a buffer mechanism, enabling students to view academic challenges as growth opportunities that can be addressed through strategies. When encountering setbacks, they tend to attribute positively and proactively resolve stress. A long-term lack of successful experiences can easily lead to a vicious cycle of "increasing stress-declining self-efficacy". Meanwhile, stress coping strategies, as individual cognitive and behavioural strategies for dealing with stress, can assist students in viewing stress as an opportunity for growth. Through rational analysis and adjustment of strategies, they can alleviate stress and promote academic progress. Conversely, negative coping can exacerbate negative emotions, accumulate stress, and weaken learning motivation and stress resistance. Both factors jointly influence college students' academic stress state. Therefore, targeted measures are needed to enhance self-efficacy and guide positive coping to alleviate academic stress. Consequently, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H3: Enhancing academic self-efficacy and adopting positive coping strategies can alleviate academic stress among college students.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Subjects

This study is a cross-sectional study, employing questionnaire survey as the specific research method. Prior to distributing the questionnaires, a survey notification was issued in each school, including contents such as informed consent, voluntary participation, and data confidentiality. In March 2025, the questionnaires were distributed to all students at Wuhan University of Science and Technology through the "Wjx.cn" questionnaire survey platform, A total of 3,206 valid data points were collected. After rigorous screening of the data, any data points that were found to be randomly generated were eliminated. The survey, which included responses and questionnaires with extreme values, ultimately yielded a total of 3,104 high-quality valid questionnaires for subsequent in-depth analysis and research. As shown in Table 1, freshmen account for 41.3%,sophomores for 27.5%,juniors for 23.0%,and seniors and above for 8.2%.In terms of majors, students majoring in humanities, social sciences, engineering, agriculture, and medicine account for 50.9%.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of demographic variables

project	(1) category	(2) frequency	(3) Percentage(%)
gender	male	2026	65.3
	female	1078	34.7
grade	freshman year	2556	82.3
	sophomore year	454	14.6
	juniors	28	0.90
	senior year	30	1.0
	graduate student or above	36	1.2
professional type	science and engineering	1802	58.1
	Medicine	987	31.8
	literature and history	315	10.1
Is he/she an only child	yes	1163	37.5
	no	1941	62.5
Family economic status	good	1987	64.0
	average	1040	33.5
	difficulty	77	2.50

project	(1) category	(2) frequency	(3) Percentage(%)
Have you ever experienced being left behind	yes	1291	41.6
	no	1813	58.4

3.2 Research Variables and Instruments

3.2.1 Dependent Variable: Academic Pressure

Tian Lan and colleagues discovered seven dimensions of academic stress among college students through exploratory factor analysis and developed an academic stress questionnaire based on these findings. The Cronbach's α of the questionnaire is 0.93, and the Cronbach's α coefficients for each dimension of the questionnaire meet the measurement criteria. Additionally, this questionnaire exhibits excellent content validity and predictive validity.

3.2.2 Core Explanatory Variable: Academic Self-efficacy

Liang Yusong and Zhou Zongkui (2000) referenced the questionnaire developed by Pintrich and DeGroot (1990). This questionnaire consists of 22 items, divided into two dimensions: learning ability self-efficacy and learning behaviour self-efficacy, with each dimension containing 11 items. Its overall Cronbach'sαcoefficient is 0.89,and the Cronbach'sαcoefficients for each dimension meet the measurement requirements, demonstrating good content validity and construct validity, and allowing for accurate measurement of students' academic self-efficacy.

3.2.3 Core Explanatory Variable: Stress Coping Style

Compiled by Xiao Jihua and others, it contains 20 items and is divided into two dimensions: positive coping and negative coping. The overall Cronbach'sαcoefficient is 0.87, and the Cronbach's α coefficients for each dimension meet the measurement standards. It has good content validity and criterion validity, and can effectively assess an individual's coping style in the face of stress.

3.3 Research Methods

Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS 25.0 and the Process plugin. Pearson correlation analysis was used to examine the correlation between academic self-efficacy, stress coping strategies, and academic stress. A P-value of⩽0.05 was considered statistically significant.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1 Common Method Bias Test

Given that this study adopts the questionnaire survey method to collect data, in order to control the potential biases arising from this method, the study introduces the Harman's single-factor analysis method for examination. The results show that a total of four common factors were extracted from the analysis, with the first common factor explaining 24.50%of the total variance. This value is below the critical standard of 40%.Based on this,it can be concluded that there is no significant common method bias in this study. The descriptive statistical normal distribution test has been passed, and outliers have been eliminated using box plots.

4.2 Differences in Academic Stress among College Students Based on Demographic Variables

College students' academic stress exhibits diverse differences based on demographic variables. In terms of gender, female students scored slightly higher than male students in the dimensions of academic prospects and academic competitive pressure, but the difference did not reach statistical significance (P>0.05). However, male students scored significantly higher in the dimension of learning condition pressure. Overall, gender has a relatively small impact on academic stress. In terms of left-behind experience, students who had such experience scored significantly higher than those who did not in all stress dimensions and the total score, including academic prospects, academic competition, and learning effectiveness. This indicates that the left-behind experience has an impact on students' academic stress.

It has a comprehensive and profound impact. As shown in Table 2， it may be that left-behind students do not have sufficient parental companionship or emotional support during their growth process, so when faced with academic challenges, they are more prone to experiencing

anxiety, unease, and other stressful emotions. In terms of the dimension of only children versus non-only children, non-only children scored significantly higher in multiple dimensions and overall scores, such as academic prospects and academic competition, possibly due to the sharing and competition of family resources. In the dimension of parental attitudes, students with strict parental attitudes had significantly higher overall academic stress scores and scores in each dimension compared to those with warm parental attitudes; students with rude parental attitudes had significantly higher scores in each dimension compared to those with strict parental attitudes, indicating that overly strict or rude parental attitudes can exacerbate students' academic stress. This may be because such negative family education methods tend to cause students to develop negative emotions such as fear and anxiety, affecting their learning motivation and self-confidence. Conversely, warm parental attitudes help create a good family learning atmosphere, reduce students' academic stress, and promote their proactive learning. In terms of family status, students with prominent family conflicts had significantly higher overall academic stress scores and scores in each dimension compared to those with harmonious families and occasional frictions. Moreover, most dimensions of students with occasional frictions had higher scores than those with harmonious families, indicating that the lower the level of family harmony, the greater the academic stress faced by students. This may be because family conflicts and disputes can distract students' attention, affect their emotional stability and learning motivation, and subsequently have a negative impact on their academic performance.

Table 2. Analysis of differences in academic stress among high school students based on demographic variables(M±SD)

project	category	Academic prospect pressure	Academic competition pressure	Learning effectiveness pressure	Learning atmosphere pressure	Academic burden and pressure	Learning condition pressure	Family expectation pressure	Total learning pressure
gender	Male(n=2026)	21.79±7.84	26.08±8.53	12.79±4.48	10.60±3.41	15.98±5.64	9.08±3.67	13.25±4.49	109.67±35.01
	Female(n=1078)	22.25±7.54	26.45±8.09	12.91±4.15	11.09±3.23	16.45±5.44	8.58±3.46	13.24±4.34	110.95±32.71
	t	-1.60	-1.18	-0.71	-3.86	-2.22	3.69	0.06	-0.99
	P	0.081	0.033	0.000	0.007	0.224	0.013	0.131	0.003
the experience of being left behind	Having left-behind experience（n=1291）	23.19±7.39	27.44±8.01	13.44±4.19	11.20±3.21	16.91±5.40	9.33±3.53	13.91±4.32	115.49±32.49
	No left-behind experience（n=1813）	21.07±7.86	25.33±8.54	12.40±4.44	10.47±3.42	15.59±5.64	8.61±3.63	12.78±4.46	106.30±34.92
	t	7.61	7.00	6.61	6.00	6.55	5.58	7.08	7.44
	P	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
only child	only child（n=1163）	21.08±7.95	25.30±8.60	12.38±4.53	10.44±3.52	15.66±5.83	8.77±3.67	12.82±4.54	106.45±35.62
	Non-only child（n=1941）	22.47±7.56	26.76±8.20	13.10±4.25	10.97±3.24	16.43±5.40	8.99±3.56	13.51±4.35	112.31±33.179
	t	-4.89	-4.71	-4.46	-4.03	-3.71	-1.65	-4.18	-4.63
	P	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.100	0.000	0.000
major	engineering	22.06±7.77	26.2±8.42	12.76±4.39	10.64±3.39	16.02±5.59	9.12±3.6	13.3±4.45	110.15±34.47
	Medicine	21.53±7.76	26.03±8.45	12.84±4.34	11.02±3.35	16.21±5.56	8.4±3.61	13.04±4.5	109.1±34.13
	science	22.65±7.41	26.85±7.	13.19±4.36	10.75±3.1	16.63±5	9.29±3.4	13.65±4.13	113.12±33.

project	category	Academic prospect pressure	Academic competition pressure	Learning effectiveness pressure	Learning atmosphere pressure	Academic burden and pressure	Learning condition pressure	Family expectation pressure	Total learning pressure
			95		7	.54	4		04
	F	2.95	1.15	1.31	4.12	1.74	14.91	2.53	1.65
	P	0.05	0.315	0.27	0.02	0.18	0.00	0.08	0.19
	post hoc test	3 > 2	-	-	2 > 1	-	1 > 2 , 3 > 2	3 > 2	-
The attitude of your parents towards you	strict (n=408)	23.55±7.95	28.10±8.78	13.93±4.58	11.37±3.52	17.22±5.60	9.80±3.73	14.47±4.63	118.49±35.75
	warm (n=2682)	21.69±7.68	25.91±8.29	12.66±4.31	10.68±3.32	15.97±5.51	8.76±3.56	13.06±4.38	108.78±33.82
	rude (n=13)	24.31±6.89	28.23±8.05	14.31±4.19	11.77±3.06	17.46±5.70	10.85±3.74	14.15±4.79	121.15±33.73
	F	10.90	12.53	15.94	8.19	9.35	16.67	18.29	15.04
	P	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	post hoc test	1 > 2	1 > 2	1 > 2	1 > 2	1 > 2	1 > 2	1 > 2	1 > 2
family status	Live in harmony1 (n=1987)	20.57±7.2	24.78±8.48	11.99±4.37	10.27±3.46	15.21±5.60	8.41±3.58	12.48±4.47	103.74±34.70
	Occasional Friction 2 (n=1040)	24.19±6.86	28.58±7.47	14.22±3.90	11.63±2.92	17.66±5.05	9.70±3.44	14.52±3.97	120.59±29.73
	Obvious contradiction3 (n=77)	27.25±7.32	31.09±8.62	15.71±4.50	12.18±3.46	19.81±5.84	10.97±3.83	15.99±4.54	133.32±34.15
	F	10.90	12.53	15.94	8.15	9.35	16.67	18.29	15.04
	P	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	post hoc test	3 > 1、2 , 2 > 1	3 > 1 , 2 > 1	3 > 1 , 2 > 1	3 > 1 , 2 > 1	3 > 1、2 , 2 > 1	3 > 1 、2 , 2 > 1	3 > 1、2 , 2 > 1	3 > 1、2 , 2 > 1

4.3 Correlation Analysis of Academic Pressure, Academic Self-efficacy, and Stress Coping Strategies

Based on a correlation analysis of a sample of 3,104 students, academic pressure exhibits a strong positive correlation with family expectation pressure, indicating that family expectations are the core source of academic pressure. Academic self-efficacy shows a significant negative correlation with academic pressure and family expectation pressure, suggesting that self-efficacy can buffer the impact of external pressure. Positive coping strategies for stress exhibit a significant positive correlation with self-efficacy and family care, and a negative correlation with stress variables, forming a virtuous cycle of “high self-efficacy-high family support-positive coping with stress”. The research results provide a theoretical basis for alleviating students’ academic pressure by adjusting family expectations, enhancing self-efficacy, and optimizing coping strategies.

Table 3. Correlation matrix between variables

variable	M±SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Academic pressure	110.120±34.226	1					
2 Family expectation pressure	13.25±4.436	0.926***	1				

3 Academic self-efficacy	71.78±15.827	-0.309***	-0.260***	1			
4 Positive coping strategies for stress	34.04±6.862	-0.230***	-0.207***	0.505***	1		
5 Family care	12.06±2.821	-0.241***	-0.218***	0.323***	0.362***	-0.035	1

a Note: ***indicates P<0.001,the same below.

4.4 Chain Mediation Effect Test

This study conducted a chain mediation effect test based on the improved procedure by Wen Zhonglin and Ye Baojuan(2014),standardizing the scores of academic stress, academic self-efficacy, and positive stress coping strategies. To examine the chain mediation effect of academic self-efficacy and positive stress coping strategies between family care and academic stress, this study utilized Model 6(i.e., the chain mediation model) from the SPSS macro program developed by Hayes. Relevant tests and analyses were conducted within a 95%confidence interval through 5000 repeated samplings.

Controlling for variables such as gender and ethnicity, the mediating effect of academic self-efficacy and stress coping strategies between family care and academic stress was tested using the Bootstrap method. The results (as shown in Table 4 and Table 5)indicate that family care not only directly negatively predicts academic stress(β =-2.927,p<0.001),but also indirectly influences academic stress through two mediating pathways: firstly, family care significantly enhances academic self-efficacy(β =0.323,p<0.001),and higher self-efficacy in turn significantly reduces academic stress(β =-1.755,p<0.001);secondly, family care promotes positive stress coping strategies(β =0.541,p<0.001),thereby alleviating academic stress(β =-0.299,p<0.001).The mediating effect analysis reveals that the mediating roles of academic self-efficacy(95%CI excluding 0)and positive coping strategies(95%CI excluding 0)are both significant. This result suggests that family care not only directly reduces students' academic stress but also indirectly mitigates it by enhancing students' self-efficacy and fostering positive stress coping strategies. The chained mediation model diagram is presented in Fig.1:

Table 4. Regression analysis of the chain mediation effect model of academic self-efficacy and stress coping strategies

	academic pressure		academic self-efficacy		positive stress coping strategies		academic pressure	
	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t
family care	-2.927	-13.841***	0.323	42.284***	0.541	46.421***	-1.755	-7.879***
academic self-efficacy							-0.501	-11.694***
positive stress coping strategies							-0.299	-2.982***
R2	0.058		0.104		0.131		0.120	
F	191.574***		360.643***		468.977***		141.236***	

a $^{*}p<0.05$, $^{**}p<0.01$, $^{***}p<0.001$

Table 5. Chain mediation effect test

Mediating path	mediating effect value	BootSE	BootLL	BootUL
1 Family care-Academic self-efficacy-Academic stress	-0.075	0.010	-0.096	-0.055
2 Family care-positive coping strategies-academic pressure	-0.013	0.006	-0.025	-0.003
3 Family care-academic self-efficacy-positive coping style-academic stress	-0.008	0.003	-0.015	-0.002
4 Total indirect effect	-0.097	0.011	-0.118	-0.076

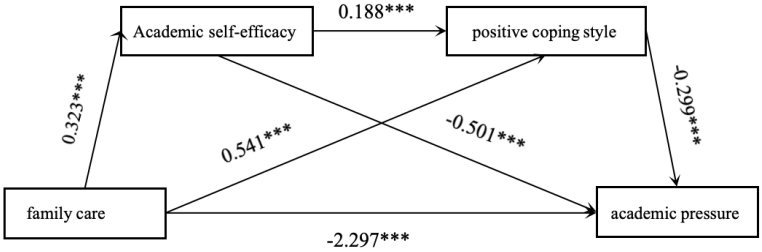


Figure 1 Chain mediation model of academic self-efficacy and stress coping strategies.

5. DISCUSSION AND STRATEGY

Based on the theory of cognitive appraisal of stress, this study delves into the internal mechanism by which family care influences academic stress among college students. It primarily analyses the role of family care in alleviating students' academic stress and examines the chain mediation effect of academic self-efficacy and stress coping strategies in this process. The findings indicate that college students' academic stress is influenced not only by family-related factors but also by their own level of academic self-efficacy and the stress coping strategies they adopt.

5.1 Analysis of the Direct Predictive Effect of Family Care on College Students' Academic Stress

Research findings indicate a significant negative correlation between family care and academic stress among college students, suggesting that higher levels of family care are associated with lower levels of academic stress. This research result validates the relationship between family care and academic stress explored in this study. Furthermore it aligns with previous research findings. Good family care can build a support system for students, and the emotional support and understanding provided by the family can effectively alleviate students' anxiety when facing heavy academic burdens. Previous studies have also confirmed this principle. Yu Shengtao et al.(2006)found that students with a higher degree of home-school cooperation often exhibit lower levels of academic stress and a stronger sense of academic self-efficacy. Therefore, the level of family care can predict the level of academic stress among college students.

5.2 Chain Mediation Analysis of Academic Self-efficacy and Stress Coping Strategies in the Context of Family Care and Academic Pressure

This study reveals the chain mediation mechanism of academic self-efficacy and positive stress coping strategies in the formation of academic stress among college students through empirical analysis. The research data shows that both academic self-efficacy (β=-0.501,$p<0.01$) and positive coping strategies (β=-0.299,$p<0.01$) exhibit significant mediating effects. Specifically, students with high academic self-efficacy demonstrate stronger professional confidence. This inherent belief not only directly alleviates stress experience but also indirectly reduces stress levels by promoting the use of positive coping strategies such as problem-solving and time management.

The research results not only validate the core viewpoint of the stress-cognition interaction theory, but also provide a clear path for academic stress intervention among college students. On the one hand, the emotional support provided by families builds a strong sense of psychological security among students, significantly enhancing their academic self-efficacy ("I can do it" belief) and prompting them to actively seek resources from both school and family to cope with stress. On the other hand, families integrate emotional support with professional resources (such as combining life experience with learning methods, and complementing psychological counselling with family care), enabling students to receive emotional comfort while mastering scientific stress management strategies. This fosters a firm belief in their ability to "cope with challenges" and a preference for problem-solving over avoidance coping strategies. At the practical operational level, the study suggests the establishment of a systematic home-school collaboration mechanism: school

education provides systematic training through a professional curriculum system and engineering practice platforms, while family education relies on emotional support and personalized guidance to cultivate professional confidence. The two form a synergistic educational force.

The specific implementation pathways include establishing a regular communication mechanism, conducting parent workshops, building an information sharing platform, and organizing joint activities. These measures not only help parents gain a deeper understanding of professional characteristics but also guide students to master positive coping strategies such as problem-solving and time management. This study clarifies the significant negative impact of family care on college students' academic stress through empirical analysis, and confirms the chain mediation effect of academic self-efficacy and stress coping strategies in the relationship between the two. It provides a new theoretical perspective and practical guidance for alleviating college students' academic stress and promoting their healthy growth.

6. CONCLUSION

This study clarifies through empirical analysis the significant alleviating effect of family care on college students' academic stress, as well as the chain mediation mechanism between academic self-efficacy and positive stress coping strategies. It provides a new theoretical perspective for universities and families to collaboratively address college students' academic stress issues. In practice, efforts should be made in multiple dimensions, such as optimizing the quality of family care, strengthening home-school collaboration, and focusing on cultivating students' resilience to stress, to fundamentally reduce college students' academic stress and promote their academic development and overall mental health. This also has important practical significance for universities to optimize their educational models and enhance the quality of talent cultivation.

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