The Interaction Effect of Socioeconomic Status and Childhood Psychological Factors on Marital Attitudes

Jinglei Wang

School of Foreign Languages, Shanghai Institute of Technology, Shanghai, 201418, China

Email: wangjinglei228@126.com

Abstract:

This study investigates how psychological and social factors during childhood influence adult mating strategies and marital attitudes. The research indicates that the quality of parent-child relationships, stability of the family environment, and socioeconomic status (SES) during childhood significantly shape individual personality traits, which in turn affect their social skills, interpersonal relationships, and mate selection criteria in adulthood. Notably, individuals who have experienced psychological abuse may exhibit different mating tendencies and marital attitudes in adulthood 1. These findings underscore the importance of early life experiences on the quality of marital life and provide scientific evidence for individual development, marriage counseling, and policy formulation. However, current research still has limitations, and future studies need to delve deeper into longitudinal research in this field.

Keywords: Childhood psychological factors, adult mating strategies, life course theory, psychological abuse, socioeconomic status (SES)

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

Psychological and social experiences during childhood have a profound impact on individual development. Early life experiences not only shape an individual's personality traits but also influence their future social skills, interpersonal relationships, and mate selection criteria 3. Among these factors, socioeconomic status (SES) is a significant social determinant that has been extensively studied and found to be closely linked to an individual's marital attitudes 2. Individuals from high SES backgrounds tend to place greater emphasis on their partner's educational level and social status, whereas those from low SES backgrounds may prioritize economic capability and familial responsibility. However, most existing research focuses on the impact of single variables on marital attitudes and rarely explores the interactive effects of SES and childhood psychological factors on how they jointly influence an individual's marital attitudes.

1.2 Research Significance

The current limitations of research primarily lie in two aspects: first, there is a lack of studies examining marital attitudes in non-Western cultural contexts; second, most studies are cross-sectional and fail to systematically track the long-term effects of childhood experiences on marital attitudes in adulthood 3. Therefore, this study aims to fill these gaps by exploring the interaction effects of SES and childhood psychological factors on marital attitudes. This research seeks to provide new perspectives for the development of related theories and offer empirical support for practical applications.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Current State of Foreign Research

Research indicates that experiences of psychological abuse during childhood can lead individuals to seek partners who provide a sense of security in adulthood and to exhibit higher levels of attachment anxiety and avoidance in intimate relationships. Attachment theory posits that this insecure attachment style stems from early relationship patterns with caregivers, which subsequently influences mate selection decisions 1. Socioeconomic status (SES) has been found to be closely linked to an individual's marital attitudes. Individuals from high SES backgrounds tend to pursue partners with similar or higher educational levels and place importance on their partner's career success and social status; conversely, individuals from low SES backgrounds may place more value on their partner's economic capabilities and familial responsibility 2. Life course theory emphasizes the impact of an individual's growth experiences on later-life mating and marriage, suggesting that significant events in early life leave lasting impressions and influence mate selection criteria and marital quality. Additionally, this theory pays attention to the continuity and dynamic changes in an individual's experiences 3.

2.2 Current State of Domestic Research

Studies show that the family environment and parent-child relationships during childhood have a direct impact on marital satisfaction. A harmonious family atmosphere is associated with higher marital satisfaction, while individuals who experience family conflicts may face more problems in their future marriages 4. Domestic research has found that psychological trauma experienced during childhood can affect marital relationships in adulthood, leading to lower marital satisfaction and communication difficulties. Psychological trauma may indirectly impact marital quality through its effects on cognitive and emotional regulation abilities 5. Cross-cultural studies indicate that individuals from different cultural backgrounds exhibit significant differences in mate selection criteria and marital attitudes, reflecting the unique social and historical traditions of each culture 6.

2.3 Research Questions

Despite a substantial body of research focusing on the impact of childhood experiences on later-life mating and marital attitudes, most studies have concentrated on Western cultural contexts and lack long-term tracking of the mechanisms through which childhood experiences influence outcomes. Particularly limited is research on the interaction effects of SES and childhood psychological factors on marital attitudes. This study aims to fill these gaps by exploring how the interaction between SES and childhood psychological factors specifically affects individuals' marital attitudes in adulthood.

Specifically, this study will focus on the following questions:

(1) How does the interaction between SES and childhood psychological factors (such as the quality of parent-child relationships and experiences of psychological abuse) influence individuals' marital attitudes in adulthood?

(2) Does this interaction differ across different cultural contexts?

(3) How do major events experienced during childhood (such as parental divorce and family poverty) interact with SES to influence individuals' marital attitudes in adulthood?

3. Argumentation Section

3.1 Research Methodology

This study adopted a comprehensive approach to thoroughly explore the impact of socioeconomic status (SES) and childhood psychological factors on individuals' marital attitudes. The research subjects included diverse groups of adults varying in age, gender, SES, and the quality of parent-child relationships. Questionnaires were distributed both online and offline to ensure the breadth and representativeness of the data. The questionnaire content covered multiple dimensions such as mate selection criteria and marital attitudes, supplemented by in-depth interviews to gain a deeper understanding of participants' personal experiences and their specific impacts on marital attitudes. For data analysis, both quantitative methods (such as descriptive statistics, factor analysis, and regression analysis) and qualitative methods (such as thematic anal-

ysis) were combined to conduct systematic and in-depth analyses of the questionnaire data and interview content. This approach aimed to reveal the interactive effects of SES and childhood psychological factors on individuals' marital attitudes and to verify the research hypotheses. Such a comprehensive research methodology ensured the comprehensiveness and reliability of the results, providing strong support for subsequent research and policy formulation.

3.2 Data Collection

To ensure the comprehensiveness and accuracy of the data, this study employed both online and offline meth-ods for distributing questionnaires. Online channels such as social media and online survey platforms were used alongside offline methods like on-site visits and distribution of paper questionnaires for data collection. This section will detail the process, timeline, and specific procedures for data collection. To guarantee the timeliness and effectiveness of data collection, this study planned to conduct data collection from June to August 2024.

4. Empirical analysis

4.1 Reliability and validity testing

Table 1 Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.812	6

validity

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.828
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	614.614
	df	15
	Sig.	<0.001

In order to ensure the reliability and effectiveness of the scales used, this study conducted reliability and validity tests on all scales. According to the reliability test results, the Cronbach Alpha values of the Child Psychological Abuse Scale, Mate Selection Criteria Scale, and Life History Strategy Mini-k Scale were all higher than 0.7, indicating good internal consistency among them (α=0.812, a total of 6 items). The validity test results showed a KMO value of 0.828, indicating good sample appropriateness; The Bartlett sphericity test results showed a significance of<0.001, supporting the validity of the scale structure. Through exploratory factor analysis, the expected major factors were successfully extracted from each scale, further confirming the validity of the scale.

4.2 Descriptive Analysis

Table 2 Frequency analysis results

Name	option	frequency	percentage(%)
1. What is your age?(n=200)	Aged 18-25	34	17
	Aged 26-35	40	20
	Aged 36-45	45	22.5
	46 years old and above	81	40.5
2. What is your gender?(n=200)	male	126	63
	female	74	37
3. What is your highest educational level?(n=200)	High school and below	46	23
	junior college	81	40.5
	Undergraduate degree	57	28.5
	Master's degree or above	16	8

	Lower	73	36.5
4. What is your current socio-economic status?(*n*=200)	secondary	59	29.5
	higher	68	34
total		200	100

This study conducted a detailed statistical summary of each variable based on the collected data, and presented its basic distribution in written form. The following are the descriptive statistical analysis results of the main variables:

Age distribution: Among the respondents, 18-25 years old accounted for 17% (34 people), 26-35 years old accounted for 20% (40 people), 36-45 years old accounted for 22.5% (45 people), and those over 46 years old accounted for 40.5% (81 people), indicating that a higher proportion of respondents are middle-aged and elderly. Gender ratio: Male respondents accounted for 63% (126 people), while females accounted for 37% (74 people), indicating a relatively higher proportion of males in the sample. Highest education level: In terms of education level, high school and below accounted for 23% (46 people), associate degree accounted for 40.5% (81 people), bachelor's degree accounted for 28.5% (57 people), and master's degree or above accounted for only 8% (16 people), indicating that respondents with associate's degree or below are more prominent. Socioeconomic status: Regarding socioeconomic status, 36.5% (73 people) have a low level, 29.5% (59 people) have a medium level, and 34% (68 people) have a high level, indicating that the economic status of the respondents is relatively dispersed, with the proportion of low and high being relatively close. Overall, the age and gender distribution of the respondents showed a clear advantage in middle-aged and elderly individuals, as well as males, while education and socioeconomic status reflected diversity, especially with a higher proportion of college graduates and below. These statistical results not only reveal the characteristics of the sample population, but also provide important data support for subsequent empirical analysis.
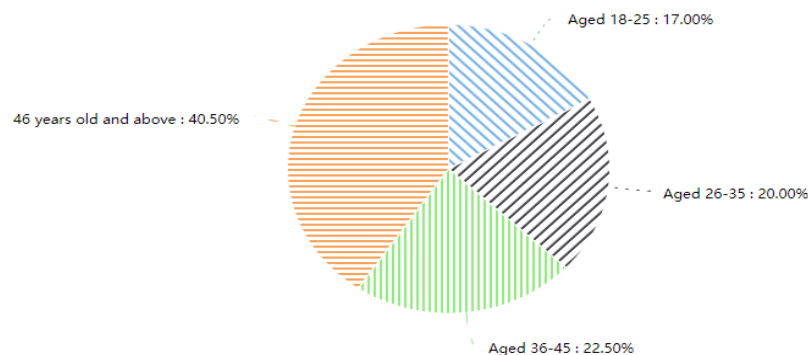

1. What is your age?

Aged 18-25 : 17.00%

46 years old and above : 40.50%

Aged 26-35 : 20.00%

Aged 36-45 : 22.50%

Figure 1 what is your age?

2. What is your gender?
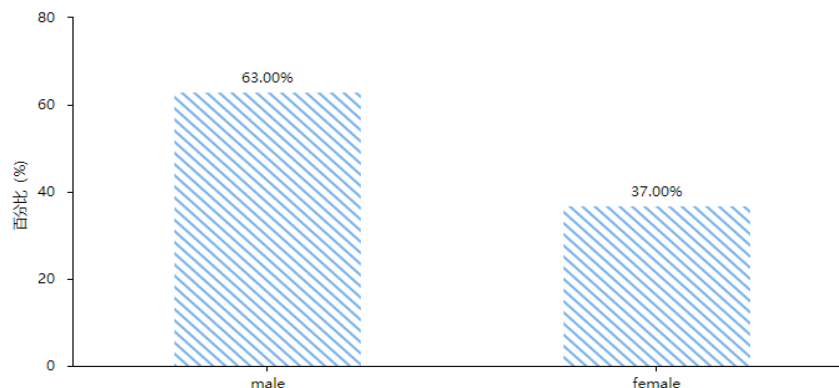
63.00%

37.00%

百分比（%）

male

female
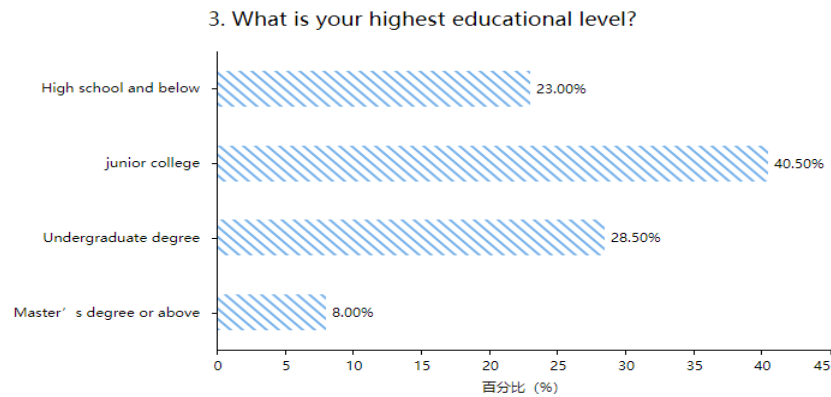
Figure 2 what is your gender?
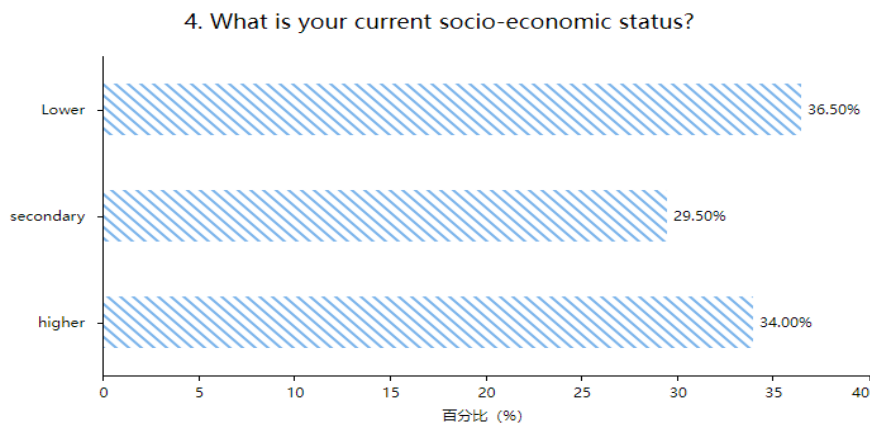
Figure 3 what is your highest educational level?

Figure 4 what is your current socio-economic status?

Table 3 Frequency analysis results

Name	option	frequency	percentage(%)
Relationship with parents? (n=200)	Not intimate	10	5
	commonly	25	12.5
	Not very intimate	111	55.5
	Very intimate	54	27
Have you experienced psychological abuse? (n=200)	Often experienced	3	1.5
	Occasionally experienced	24	12
	I have never experienced it before	173	86.5
How are the relationships between family members? (n=200)	Very nervous	11	5.5
	often disputes	11	5.5
	commonly	96	48
	Very harmonious	82	41
Family economic situation during childhood	Very difficult	6	2.99
	Generally	7	3.48
	Better	101	50.25
	Very good	87	43.28
total		200	100

From the frequency analysis results, among the respondents who have a relationship with their parents, 5% (10 people) said they are "not very close" to their parents, 12.5% (25 people) think they are "average", 55.5% (111 people) say they are "not very close", and 27% (54 people) think they are "very close", indicating that most respondents have a relatively distant relationship with their parents. Regarding the experience of psychological abuse, 1.5% (3 people) stated that they have "experienced it frequently", 12% (24 people) "experienced it occasionally", and 86.5% (173 people) stated that they have "never experienced it", indicating that the majority of respondents have not experienced psychological abuse. In terms of relationships among family members, 5.5% (11 people) consider them "very tense", the same proportion of people

say they "often have disputes", 48% (96 people) choose "average", and 41% (82 people) consider them "very harmonious", indicating that overall family relationships are relatively harmonious. In terms of family economic status during childhood, 2.99% (6 people) thought it was "very difficult", 3.48% (7 people) chose "average", 50.25% (101 people) said it was "good", and 43.28% (87 people) thought it was "very good", indicating that the majority of respondents had a relatively good childhood economic situation. In summary, the relationship between the respondents and their parents is generally not very close, but most of them have not experienced psychological abuse. Their family relationships are generally harmonious, and their childhood economic situation is good.

4.3 Correlation Analysis

Table 4 Pearson related

	Average	Standard deviation	Mate selection criteria	Marriage concept	Relationship with parents	Family economic status	Have you experienced psychological abuse
Mate selection criteria	7.07	1.571	1				
Marriage concept	5.36	1.672	0.268**	1			
Relationship with parents	3.045	0.772	0.656**	0.198**	1		
Family economic status	3.338	0.689	0.739**	0.196**	0.604**	1	
Have you experienced psychological abuse	2.85	0.398	0.218**	0.172*	0.431**	0.257**	1

* p<0.05 ** p<0.01

In Pearson correlation analysis, significant correlations were observed between the variables. Firstly, there is a significant positive correlation between mate selection criteria and marital beliefs (r=0.268, p<0.01), indicating that individuals with higher mate selection criteria typically hold more positive attitudes towards marriage. In addition, there is a strong positive correlation between mate selection criteria and relationship with parents (r=0.656, p<0.01), which means that people with good relationships with parents tend to have higher requirements for mate selection criteria. Similarly, there is a strong positive correlation between mate selection criteria and family economic status (r=0.739, p<0.01), indicating an association between good family economic status and higher mate selection criteria. There is a weak positive correlation between marital attitudes and relationships with parents (r=0.198, p<0.05), indicating that parental relationships have a certain impact on marital attitudes,

but their correlation is not as significant as other factors. The relationship between family economic status and parents showed a moderate positive correlation (r=0.604, p<0.01), indicating that good family relationships may be associated with family economic status. In addition, the correlation between experiences of psychological abuse and other variables is also noteworthy. There is a significant correlation (r=0.218, 0.172, 0.431, 0.257, all p<0.05) between experiences of psychological abuse and mate selection criteria, marital beliefs, relationships with parents, and family economic status, especially with a higher correlation (r=0.431, p<0.01) with parents. This suggests that individuals who have experienced psychological abuse may have negative impacts on their standards and beliefs in various aspects. Overall, these results indicate that family relationships and economic status play important roles in influencing mate selection criteria and marital attitudes, while experiences of psychological abuse have a profound

impact on various aspects of psychology and behavior.

4.4 Regression analysis

In order to further verify the influence of childhood psy-chological and social factors on adult mate selection strategies and marriage concepts, this study used multiple regression analysis method.

H1: The quality of parent-child relationships has a signifi-cant positive impact on mate selection criteria

Table 5 Regression analysis results (n=200)

	Non standardized coefficient		Standardization coefficient	t	p
	B	Standard Error	Beta		
constant	3.004	0.343	-	8.765	0.000**
Relationship with parents	1.335	0.109	0.656	12.239	0.000**
R 2	0.431				
Adjust R 2	0.428				
F	$F(1,198)=149.799, p=0.000$				
D-W value	1.849				
Note: Dependent variable=mate selection criteria					
* $p<0.05$ ** $p<0.01$					

In the above regression analysis, the influence of "rela-tionship with parents" was analyzed with "mate selection criteria" as the dependent variable. The results showed that the constant term was 3.004, which was significant (t=8.765, p<0.01). The non standardized coefficient of the independent variable "relationship with parents" was 1.335, and the standardized coefficient (Beta) was 0.656, indicating that a good relationship with parents had a sig-nificant positive impact on mate selection criteria, with a t-value of 12.239 and a p-value also less than 0.01, further confirming the significance of this effect. The determina-tion coefficient R ² of the regression model is 0.431, and the adjusted R ² is 0.428, indicating that the model can explain about 43.1% of the variation in mate selection criteria and has good predictive ability. The F-test result is F (1198)=149.799, p=0.000, indicating that the overall model is significant. The D-W value is 1.849, close to 2, indicating a small residual autocorrelation.

Overall, the analysis results indicate that the relationship with parents has a significant positive impact on mate selection criteria, emphasizing the importance of good family relationships in personal mate selection criteria and supporting the positive and significant impact of par-ent-child relationship quality on mate selection criteria in H1.

H2: Family economic status has a significant positive im-pact on marriage concepts

Table 6 Regression analysis results (n=200)

	Non standardized coefficient		Standardization coefficient	t	p
	B	Standard Error	Beta		
constant	3.777	0.576	-	6.563	0.000**
Family economic status	0.475	0.169	0.196	2.808	0.005**
R 2	0.038				
Adjust R 2	0.033				
F	$F(1,198)=7.887, p=0.005$				
D-W value	1.868				
Note: Dependent variable=marital concept					
* $p<0.05$ ** $p<0.01$					

In the regression analysis results, the aim is to verify hypothesis H2: family economic status has a positive and significant impact on mate selection criteria. Using "marriage concept" as the dependent variable, the analysis

results showed that the constant term was 3.777, which was significant (t=6.563, p<0.01). The non standardized coefficient of the independent variable "family economic status during childhood" was 0.475, and the standardized coefficient (Beta) was 0.196, indicating that family economic status during childhood has a significant positive impact on marriage concept, with a t-value of 2.808 and a p-value of 0.005, further confirming the significance of this impact. Although the coefficient of determination (R²) of the regression model is 0.038 and the adjusted R² is 0.033, indicating that the model can explain about 3.8% of the variation in marriage attitudes, this explanatory power is relatively low. However, it still shows that family eco-nomic status has a certain degree of influence on marriage attitudes. The F-test result is F (1198)=7.887, p=0.005, indicating that the overall model is significant. The D-W value is 1.868, close to 2, indicating a small residual au-tocorrelation. In summary, the analysis results support hypothesis H2, indicating that the family economic status during childhood has a significant positive impact on marriage concepts, emphasizing the importance of family economic background in shaping individual marriage concepts.

H3: Psychological abuse experiences have a significant positive impact on marital attitudes

Table 7 Regression analysis results (n=200)

	Non standardized coefficient		Standardization coefficient	t	p
	B	Standard Error	Beta		
constant	3.297	0.846	-	3.896	0.000**
Have you experienced psychological abuse	0.724	0.294	0.172	2.461	0.015*
R 2	0.03				
Adjust R 2	0.025				
F	$F (1,198)=6.056, p=0.015$				
D-W value	1.837				
Note: Dependent variable=marital concept					
* $p<0.05$ ** $p<0.01$					

This study found through regression analysis that child-hood experiences of psychological abuse have a signifi-cant positive impact on an individual's criteria for finding a good partner (B=0.724, p=0.015). Specifically, individu-als who have experienced psychological abuse are more likely to be influenced by this experience when forming their criteria for finding a good partner compared to those who have not, thereby increasing their expectations or standards for their partner to some extent. The experience of psychological abuse is indeed an important factor af-fecting the criteria for finding a good partner. Therefore, it is assumed that H2 has been validated.

4.5 Interpretation of Results

Through descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis of the data, the following conclusions can be drawn:

This study found that psychological and social factors during childhood significantly influence adult mating strategies and marital attitudes. Specifically, individu-als from families with better economic conditions place greater importance on their partner's character and family background, whereas those from poorer economic condi-tions tend to prioritize their partner's economic capabili-ties. Experiences of psychological abuse during childhood lead individuals to seek partners who provide a sense of security and stability, and may exhibit attachment anxiety and avoidance tendencies. The quality of parent-child rela-tionships also significantly impacts mate selection criteria and marital attitudes; individuals who have less intimate relationships with their parents are more likely to seek security in mate selection and exhibit higher insecurity in marriage. These findings not only reveal the profound im-pact of childhood experiences on marital attitudes but also provide empirical evidence for individual counseling and policy formulation.

5. Conclusion

This study delved into the interactive effects of socioeco-nomic status and psychological factors during childhood on individual marital attitudes. The results show that ex-periences of psychological abuse during childhood, the quality of parent-child relationships, and family economic conditions all have a significant impact on individuals' mate selection criteria and marital attitudes. Specifically, experiences of psychological abuse increase the need for

security and stability in mate selection and may lead to attachment anxiety and avoidance tendencies in marriage; the quality of parent-child relationships directly affects the extent to which individuals value their partner's character and family background; and family economic conditions shape perceptions of a partner's economic capability to some degree. These findings not only enrich our theoretical understanding of the mechanisms behind the formation of marital attitudes but also provide important references for marital counseling, psychotherapy, and policy formulation. In summary, this study underscores the significant influence of early life experiences on individual marital attitudes, offering new perspectives and directions for future research and practice.

References

[1] Gibb, B. E., et al. (2009). Childhood emotional abuse, adulthood relationships, and psychotherapy process and outcome. Journal of Emotional Abuse, 9(1-2), 41-61.

[2] Kalmijn, M. (2001). Assortative mating patterns in European countries. European Sociological Review, 17(3), 267-287.

[3] Elder, G. H. Jr. (1998). The life course as developmental theory. Child Development, 69(1), 1-12.

[4] Lin, Chongde, et al. (2012). Influence Factors and Mechanisms of Marital Satisfaction. Advances in Psychological Science, 20(5), 700-708. (Original work published in Chinese:

[5] Wang, Ting (2017). Impact of Childhood Psychological Trauma on Adult Marital Relationships. Advances in Psychological Science, 27(9), 1533-1541. (Original work published in Chinese:

[6] Li, Yinhui (2009). Study on Mate Selection and Marital Attitudes from a Cross-Cultural Perspective. Advances in Psychological Science, 19(3), 456-463. (Original work published in Chinese: