

# A Study on the Cultivation Model of Interpersonal Values among Junior High School Students: A Filial Piety Culture Perspective in Rural Eastern China

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## Abstract

This study examines the cultivation of interpersonal values among junior high school students from the perspective of filial piety culture. Drawing on questionnaire data from 786 students, it investigates the relationships among filial piety beliefs, value orientations, and interpersonal relationships. The results show that students exhibit higher levels of reciprocal filial piety than authoritarian filial piety. Moreover, filial piety beliefs are positively associated with constructive value orientations, including collectivism and family affection. A formal mediation analysis confirmed that positive values (collectivism, family affection, peer relationship) significantly mediate the relationship between reciprocal filial piety and interpersonal relationship quality, providing empirical evidence for the proposed causal pathway. Reciprocal filial piety, in particular, is positively related to interpersonal trust and parent-child closeness. Based on these findings, the study proposes a multidimensional cultivation model centered on filial piety culture, which integrates filial piety education into moral education through curriculum development, experiential activities, and immersive campus culture. This model offers a practical framework for promoting healthy interpersonal values among junior high school students.

## Keywords

Filial Piety Culture, Interpersonal Values, Rural Junior High School Students, Moral Education

## 1. Introduction

Moral education has long been regarded as a central task of compulsory educa-

tion, particularly during early adolescence, a developmental period marked by rapid cognitive, emotional, and social changes. In recent years, increasing attention has been paid to how schools can support adolescents' value formation while responding to the growing diversity of social and cultural influences (Li et al., 2018; Li & Su, 2026). Within this context, identifying culturally meaningful and psychologically grounded approaches to moral education (Wang, 2022) has become an important challenge for educators and researchers alike.

Traditional Chinese culture provides a rich ethical framework for moral development, among which filial piety occupies a foundational position (Yang, 2009). Filial piety has historically functioned as a core moral principle regulating family relationships and social conduct. Classical accounts portray filial piety not merely as obedience to parents, but as a comprehensive moral orientation encompassing respect, responsibility, self-cultivation, and social harmony. Over time, the meaning of filial piety (Yang & Yeh, 2009; Yang, 2009) has evolved from ancestral reverence to include care for parents and, more broadly, ethical engagement with others in society.

Contemporary research has sought to reconceptualize filial piety in ways that are compatible with modern social contexts. From a psychological perspective, filial piety is commonly understood as a multidimensional construct integrating beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. The dual filial piety model (Yeh & Bedford, 2003) distinguishes between reciprocal filial piety, which emphasizes emotional closeness, gratitude, and mutual support, and authoritarian filial piety, which stresses obedience and hierarchical role obligations. Empirical studies suggest that these two dimensions are associated with different developmental outcomes, with reciprocal filial piety more consistently linked to positive psychosocial adjustment.

Adolescence represents a critical period for value development (Hong & Kuang, 2009), during which personal values begin to form and gradually stabilize. Values established during this stage play a lasting role in shaping individuals' interpersonal behaviors, emotional well-being, and social functioning. Previous studies have shown that adolescents' values are generally oriented toward positive and prosocial directions, such as responsibility, cooperation, and concern for others. However, value development does not occur in a social vacuum. It is deeply embedded in broader cultural and social contexts and is influenced by factors such as family background, gender, and socioeconomic conditions.

In contemporary societies characterized by rapid social change and cultural pluralism, adolescents are increasingly exposed to diverse and sometimes conflicting value systems. While such diversity may offer opportunities for personal growth, it can also create confusion and tension during the process of value formation. Research has documented significant variations in adolescents' value orientations across different social groups, suggesting that value development is highly sensitive to contextual influences. These complexities highlight the need for coherent value frameworks that can provide adolescents with stable moral reference points.

Despite growing interest in filial piety as a cultural and psychological construct,

existing research (Zhang & Zhang, 2004; Jin, Zou, & Yu, 2011; Li, Yin, & Zhang, 2025) has primarily focused on its implications for family functioning, academic adjustment, and individual well-being. Comparatively less attention has been paid to how filial piety beliefs are related to adolescents' broader value orientations and interpersonal relationships within school contexts. In particular, there remains a lack of empirical studies examining how different dimensions of filial piety are associated with interpersonal values and social interactions during early adolescence. Critically, while correlational studies have documented associations between filial piety and relational outcomes, the mechanisms through which filial piety influences interpersonal functioning remain underexplored.

To address this gap, the present study investigates the relationships among filial piety beliefs, value orientations, and interpersonal relationships in a sample of junior high school students. Drawing on the dual filial piety framework, this study examines how reciprocal and authoritarian filial piety are differentially associated with adolescents' values and their relationships with parents and peers. Importantly, this study extends prior research by conducting formal mediation analyses to test whether positive values (e.g., collectivism, family affection) serve as the psychological mechanism linking filial piety beliefs to interpersonal relationship quality. By integrating filial piety culture into the analysis of value development, this research aims to provide empirical evidence for culturally informed approaches to moral education and to offer practical implications for fostering healthy interpersonal values among adolescents.

## 2. Research Content

### 2.1. Basic Framework

This study is grounded in the Dual Filial Piety Model (Yeh & Bedford, 2003), which posits that filial piety operates through two distinct psychological dimensions with differential developmental consequences. Reciprocal filial piety is characterized by voluntary, emotionally grounded care and gratitude toward parents, fostering internalized prosocial values and positive relationship schemas. In contrast, authoritarian filial piety emphasizes hierarchical obedience and duty, which may maintain family cohesion but can constrain autonomy and egalitarian peer interaction.

Drawing on social cognitive theories of moral development (Bandura, 1991) and value transmission models (Schwartz, 1998), we propose that filial piety beliefs—particularly reciprocal filial piety—shape adolescents' broader value orientations through processes of internalization and generalization. Specifically, adolescents who endorse reciprocal filial piety are hypothesized to develop stronger collectivist values, family affection, and peer friendship orientations, as these values share the underlying themes of relational harmony, mutual care, and interdependence.

Furthermore, we hypothesize that these value orientations serve as the mediating mechanism through which filial piety beliefs influence interpersonal relationship quality. That is, reciprocal filial piety fosters positive values, which in turn

promote trust, communication, and closeness in peer and parent-child relationships. This mediation hypothesis is consistent with recent findings that cultural beliefs influence behavior through intermediate cognitive-affective structures (Li & Su, 2026).

Hypothesized Mediation Pathway:

Reciprocal Filial Piety → Positive Values (Collectivism, Family Affection, Peer Friendship) → Interpersonal Relationship Quality (Peer Trust, Parent-Child Closeness)

This theoretical framework guides our analytical strategy: we first examine bivariate associations (Section 3.3), then formally test the mediation model (Section 3.4), and finally translate these findings into a structured cultivation model (Section 4.3).

## 2.2. Research Objectives

By integrating filial piety culture into the junior high school campus, this study aims to cultivate sound values and life perspectives among students, enhance their quality of life, and promote their healthy development. Specifically, the study seeks to: (1) describe the current state of filial piety beliefs, values, and interpersonal relationships among junior high school students; (2) examine demographic variations in these constructs; (3) test the mediating role of positive values in the relationship between filial piety and interpersonal outcomes; and (4) propose an evidence-based cultivation model.

## 2.3. Main Contents

The paper uses psychological and educational research methods to examine the present situation and development of the values of contemporary junior high school students through data analysis.

(1) To understand the development of students' cognition of filial piety culture, the development of values and interpersonal relationship of junior middle school students through questionnaires and scales.

(2) To conduct correlation and mediation analyses examining the pathways through which filial piety beliefs influence interpersonal relationship quality via value orientations.

## 2.4. Research Methods

### 2.4.1. Study Subjects

A questionnaire survey was conducted among junior high school students at a school in rural eastern China. A total of 800 questionnaires were distributed. After excluding questionnaires with random or patterned responses, incomplete items, or missing data, 786 valid questionnaires were retained, yielding a response rate of 98.3%. Participants ranged in age from 11 to 16 years ( $M = 12.93$ ,  $SD = 0.74$ ). Other demographic characteristics are as follows (Table 1):

**Table 1.** Proportion distribution of study subjects (N = 786).

Demographic variables	classify	Number of people	Percentage of total (%)
sex	man	425	54.1
	woman	361	45.9
grade	kalends	435	55.3
	junior two	351	44.7
homeplace	city	183	23.3
	rural area	603	76.7
Is it an only child?	yes	284	36.1
	deny	502	63.9
Is it a single-parent family?	yes	57	7.3
	deny	729	92.7
With whom do you usually live?	Parents and grandparents	236	30.0
	father and mother	477	60.7
	father	25	3.2
	mother	32	4.1
	ancestors	16	2.0
Father's level of education	Bachelor's degree or higher	18	2.3
	junior college	32	4.1
	High school, vocational high school, secondary technical school	223	28.4
	junior middle school	417	53.1
	primary school	84	10.7
	other	12	1.5
Mother's education level	Bachelor's degree or higher	18	2.3
	junior college	40	5.1
	High school, vocational high school, secondary technical school	162	20.6
	junior middle school	395	50.3
	primary school	149	19.0
	other	22	2.8

#### 2.4.2. Research Tools

##### Filial Piety Belief Questionnaire

Based on Yeh and Bedford's (2003) Dual Filial Piety Model, the Filial Piety Belief Scale developed for mainland Chinese adolescents by Yu (2009) was used. The scale consists of 10 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). Higher scores indicate stronger filial piety beliefs. The scale includes two dimensions: *reciprocal filial piety* and *authoritarian*

*filial piety*. In this study, Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficients were 0.83 and 0.63, respectively.

#### **Adolescent Values Questionnaire**

The Chinese Adolescent Values Questionnaire developed by Wang, Li et al. (2018) was used to assess adolescents' value orientations. The questionnaire includes 46 items across eight dimensions: social equality, collectivist orientation, rule compliance, family affection, peer friendship, self-transcendence and striving, fashion orientation, and enjoyment of life. Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale. Higher scores indicate greater endorsement of the corresponding value. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficients for the eight dimensions ranged from 0.66 to 0.83 in this study.

#### **Peer Relationship Scale**

The Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) developed by Armsden and Greenberg (1987) was used to assess peer relationships. The peer attachment scale consists of 25 items rated on a 5-point scale from 1 ("never") to 5 ("always"). The original dimensions include trust, communication, and alienation. In this study, alienation items were reverse-scored to represent peer intimacy. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficients for the dimensions were 0.83, 0.97, and 0.63, respectively.

#### **Parent-Child Relationship Scale**

The Parent-Child Closeness Scale developed by Buchanan, Maccoby, and Dornbusch (1991) was used to assess father-child and mother-child relationships. The scale includes nine items rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 ("not at all") to 5 ("very much"). Mean scores were calculated, with higher scores indicating closer parent-child relationships. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficients were 0.87 for father-child relationships, 0.90 for mother-child relationships, and 0.91 overall.

### **2.4.3. Research Procedure**

The survey was administered by trained postgraduate students in psychology. Following approval from school administrators and teachers, adolescents participated voluntarily. Data were collected anonymously at the class level. Before administration, standardized instructions were given, emphasizing that participants should respond truthfully based on their actual experiences. All questionnaires were collected immediately upon completion.

### **2.4.4. Data Analysis**

SPSS 25.0 was employed for data entry, organization, and analysis. In addition to descriptive statistics, independent samples t-tests, one-way ANOVA, and Pearson correlations, we conducted formal mediation analyses using the PROCESS macro (Model 4; Hayes, 2018) with 5000 bootstrap resamples to estimate indirect effects and 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals. The Harman single-factor test revealed no significant common method bias (first factor = 17.15% of variance, below the 40% threshold).

## **3. Results**

### **3.1. Descriptive Statistics of the Measured Variables**

Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) for the dimensions of filial

piety beliefs, values, and interpersonal relationships among the surveyed junior high school students are presented in **Table 2**. The data indicate that students reported higher levels of identification with reciprocal filial piety and values such as social equality and rule compliance. In contrast, scores were relatively lower for authoritarian filial piety and the value placed on fashion trends. This pattern reflects an overall tendency among contemporary adolescents to emphasize egalitarianism, reciprocity, and adherence to rules.

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics for filial piety beliefs, adolescent values, peer relationships and parent-child relationships.

Variable	Dimension	$M \pm SD$
Filial Piety Beliefs	Reciprocal Filial Piety	4.14 ± 0.78
	Authoritarian Filial Piety	2.58 ± 0.72
Adolescent Values	Social Equality	4.30 ± 0.72
	Collectivism	4.04 ± 0.72
	Rule Compliance	4.34 ± 0.67
	Family Affection	4.03 ± 0.78
	Peer Friendship	3.89 ± 0.74
	Self-Transcendence and Striving	3.67 ± 0.72
	Fashion Trends	2.49 ± 0.89
Peer Relationships	Hedonism	2.97 ± 0.91
	Peer Trust	3.83 ± 0.69
	Peer Communication	3.61 ± 0.82
Parent-Child Relationships	Peer Intimacy	3.54 ± 0.69
	Father-Child Relationship	3.21 ± 0.89
	Mother-Child Relationship	3.56 ± 0.89

### 3.2. Analysis of Differences in Measured Variables across Demographic Characteristics

Independent samples t-tests and one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to examine differences in filial piety beliefs, values, and interpersonal relationships across key demographic variables. Significant findings are reported below by dimension, providing a direct empirical basis for constructing targeted cultivation models.

#### 3.2.1. Gender Differences

Clear and complementary patterns of difference were observed between boys and girls in core dimensions of filial piety and the quality of peer interaction (**Table 3**). Girls scored significantly higher than boys in Reciprocal Filial Piety, which emphasizes emotional reciprocity, as well as in Peer Trust and Peer Communication, dimensions requiring emotional expression. Conversely, boys scored significantly higher in Authoritarian Filial Piety, which stresses obedience and authority, and also reported

a stronger endorsement of the Peer Friendship value. Effect sizes (*Cohen's d*) ranged from 0.16 to 0.25, indicating small to small-medium practical significance.

**Table 3.** Differences in Main Variables by Gender ( $M \pm SD$ ).

Variable	Male (n = 425)	Female (n = 361)	t-value	p-value	d
Reciprocal Filial Piety	4.07 ± 0.86	4.24 ± 0.66	-3.08	0.002**	0.22
Authoritarian Filial Piety	2.66 ± 0.75	2.48 ± 0.68	3.45	0.001**	0.25
Peer Friendship Value	3.94 ± 0.71	3.82 ± 0.7	2.26	0.024*	0.17
Peer Trust	3.77 ± 0.71	3.90 ± 0.66	-2.67	0.008**	0.19
Peer Communication	3.53 ± 0.83	3.71 ± 0.80	-3.00	0.003**	0.22

Note: \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , *Cohen's d*: 0.2 = small, 0.5 = medium, 0.8 = large effect. (same below).

### 3.2.2. Grade-Level Differences

Significant declines were observed from Grade 7 to Grade 8 across multiple indicators of positive psychosocial adjustment (**Table 4**). Specifically, Grade 7 students outperformed Grade 8 students in core values such as Collectivism and Family Affection, as well as in relational quality metrics like Peer Communication and Peer Intimacy. Grade 7 students also showed higher levels of endorsement for Social Equality and Rule Compliance. Effect sizes ranged from 0.22 to 0.37, indicating small to medium practical significance. These findings highlight Grade 8 as a critical developmental transition period requiring targeted intervention.

**Table 4.** Differences in main variables by grade ( $M \pm SD$ ).

Variable	Grade 7 (n = 435)	Grade 8 (n = 351)	t-value	p-value	d
Collectivism Value	4.18 ± 0.70	3.88 ± 0.70	6.00	<0.001***	0.43
Family Affection Value	4.14 ± 0.75	3.89 ± 0.79	4.65	<0.001***	0.32
Peer Communication	3.72 ± 0.79	3.48 ± 0.83	4.08	<0.001***	0.29
Peer Intimacy	3.65 ± 0.68	3.40 ± 0.67	4.99	<0.001***	0.37
Social Equality Value	4.38 ± 0.74	4.21 ± 0.68	3.47	0.001**	0.24
Rule Compliance Value	4.41 ± 0.65	4.26 ± 0.70	3.13	0.002**	0.22

### 3.2.3. Family Structure Differences

Family structure emerged as a significant factor influencing adolescents' family emotional experience and interpersonal values (**Table 5**). Only-children reported significantly higher scores than non-only-children in the Family Affection value and in the closeness of both Father-Child and Mother-Child Relationships. Effect sizes ranged from 0.21 to 0.29, indicating small to small-medium practical significance.

**Table 5.** Differences in Main Variables by Family Structure ( $M \pm SD$ ).

Variable	Comparison (Group 1 vs. Group 2)	<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	<i>d</i>
Family Affection Value	Only-child ( $4.17 \pm 0.72$ ) > Non-only-child ( $3.95 \pm 0.79$ )	3.97	<0.001***	0.29
Mother-Child Relationship	Only-child ( $3.69 \pm 0.88$ ) > Non-only-child ( $3.49 \pm 0.88$ )	3.04	0.002**	0.23
Authoritarian Filial Piety	Only-child ( $2.68 \pm 0.74$ ) > Non-only-child ( $2.52 \pm 0.71$ )	3.12	0.002**	0.22
Family Affection Value	Single-parent ( $3.76 \pm 0.96$ ) < Non-single-parent ( $4.05 \pm 0.76$ )	-2.76	0.006**	0.34

### 3.2.4. Parental Education Level Differences

Parental education level, particularly the father’s, showed a significant influence on adolescents’ social development (Table 6). Students whose fathers held a bachelor’s degree or higher performed best in Peer Communication and the Self-Transcendence and Striving value. The mother’s education level affected normative values such as Rule Compliance, with children of mothers having a high school education or above scoring significantly higher. Effect sizes ( $\eta^2$ ) ranged from 0.015 to 0.018, indicating small but meaningful practical effects given the large sample size.

**Table 6.** Effects of parental education level on selected variables (ANOVA Summary).

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Key Finding (Post-hoc Comparison)	<i>F</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	$\eta^2$
Father’s Education	Peer Communication	Bachelor’s+ > Junior High, Elementary	2.31	0.041*	0.015
Father’s Education	Self-Transcendence & Striving Value	Bachelor’s+ > All other groups	2.89	0.014*	0.018
Mother’s Education	Rule Compliance Value	College/High School > Elementary	2.92	0.013*	0.018

Note:  $\eta^2$ : 0.01 = small, 0.06 = medium, 0.14 = large effect.

### 3.3. Correlation Analysis of Filial Piety Belief, Values and Interpersonal Relationships among Junior High School Students

To explore the intrinsic relationships between filial piety beliefs, values, and interpersonal relationships, Pearson product-moment correlation analyses were conducted. The results (detailed in Table 7) reveal a systematic and hierarchical pattern of correlations, clearly illustrating the potential pathway of influence from cultural cognition (filial piety) to value orientation, and further to interpersonal behavior (relationship quality).

**Table 7.** Correlation analysis of filial piety beliefs, values and interpersonal relationships.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Reciprocal Filial Piety	1														
2. Authoritarian Filial Piety	0.24**	1													

## Continued

3. Social Equality	0.24**	0.06	1												
4. Collectivism	0.37**	0.11**	0.61**	1											
5. Rule Compliance	0.27**	0.06	0.67**	0.65**	1										
6. Family Affection	0.36**	0.27**	0.45**	0.54**	0.53**	1									
7. Peer Friendship	0.20**	0.15**	0.45**	0.52**	0.40**	0.45**	1								
8. Self-Transcendence and Striving	0.32**	0.15**	0.43**	0.58**	0.55**	0.42**	0.364**	1							
9. Fashion Trends	0.04	0.08*	-0.06	0.01	-0.02	0.09*	0.12**	0.18**	1						
10. Hedonism	-0.047	0.15**	0.08*	0.10**	0.07	0.16**	0.22**	0.11**	0.44**	1					
11. Peer Trust	0.27**	0.06	0.40**	0.47**	0.39**	0.36**	0.44**	0.34**	-0.02	0.03	1				
12. Peer Communication	0.35**	0.11**	0.37**	0.48**	0.37**	0.39**	0.43**	0.39**	0.08*	0.07	0.79**	1			
13. Peer Intimacy	-0.02	-0.16*	0.11**	0.05	0.09*	-0.03	-0.00	0.00	-0.36*	-0.31*	0.27**	0.11**	1		
14. Father-Child Relationship	0.33**	0.21**	0.18**	0.26**	0.21**	0.36**	0.17**	0.26**	0.04	0.02	0.22**	0.28**	0.01	1	
15. Mother-child Relationship	0.33**	0.18**	0.18**	0.26**	0.22**	0.32**	0.15**	0.23**	0.07	0.02	0.23**	0.29**	-0.00	0.51**	1

Note: \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; Bolded values indicate correlation coefficients with an absolute value  $\geq 0.30$ , representing moderate or stronger correlations.

### 3.3.1. Reciprocal Filial Piety: The Core Nexus

Reciprocal Filial Piety demonstrated the strongest positive associations, acting as a core psychological resource. It was significantly positively correlated with all measured positive values, with moderate correlations with Collectivism ( $r = 0.37$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), Family Affection ( $r = 0.36$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and Self-Transcendence ( $r = 0.32$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). It was also significantly positively correlated with Peer Trust, Peer Communication, and Parent-Child Relationships ( $r$ -values between 0.27 and 0.35,  $p < 0.01$ ).

### 3.3.2. Authoritarian Filial Piety: A Complex Pattern

Authoritarian Filial Piety presented a more complex correlation pattern. It was positively correlated with Family Affection ( $r = 0.27$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and Parent-Child Relationships ( $r = 0.18 - 0.21$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), but negatively correlated with Peer Intimacy ( $r = -0.16$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

### 3.3.3. The Bridge Role of Values

The correlation matrix supports the potential mediating role of values. Almost all positive values were significantly positively correlated with Peer Trust, Peer Communication, and Parent-Child Relationships (most  $r > 0.30$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). For example, Collectivism correlated with Peer Trust at  $r = 0.47$ , and Family Affection correlated with Father-Child Relationship at  $r = 0.36$ .

## 3.4. Mediation Analysis: Testing the Pathway from Filial Piety to Relationships via Values Rationale and Method

The correlation analysis (Section 3.3) revealed that (1) reciprocal filial piety is pos-

itively associated with positive values (e.g., collectivism, family affection, peer friendship), and (2) these values are in turn positively associated with interpersonal relationship quality (peer trust, parent-child closeness). To empirically test whether values serve as the mediating mechanism linking filial piety beliefs to interpersonal outcomes, we conducted formal mediation analyses using the PROCESS macro for SPSS (Model 4; Hayes, 2018) with 5,000 bootstrap resamples to estimate bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals for indirect effects.

We tested three parallel mediation models, each examining whether a specific positive value mediates the relationship between reciprocal filial piety (independent variable) and a key interpersonal outcome (dependent variable):

**Model 1:** Reciprocal Filial Piety → Collectivism Value → Peer Trust.

**Model 2:** Reciprocal Filial Piety → Family Affection Value → Father-Child Relationship.

**Model 3:** Reciprocal Filial Piety → Peer Friendship Value → Peer Communication.

#### 3.4.1. Model 1: Collectivism Mediates Filial Piety → Peer Trust

Results confirmed a significant indirect effect. The total effect of reciprocal filial piety on peer trust was significant ( $c = 0.24$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). When collectivism was included as a mediator, the direct effect remained significant but was reduced ( $c' = 0.10$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ), indicating partial mediation. The indirect effect via collectivism was significant ( $ab = 0.14$ ,  $SE = 0.02$ , 95% CI [0.10, 0.19]), accounting for approximately 60% of the total effect. This suggests that adolescents with higher reciprocal filial piety develop stronger collectivist values, which in turn enhance their trust in peers (Table 8).

**Table 8.** Mediation analysis: collectivism mediating reciprocal filial piety → peer trust.

Path	Coefficient ( $B$ )	$SE$	95% CI	$p$ -value
Total Effect ( $c$ )	0.37	0.04	[0.30, 0.44]	<0.001
Direct Effect ( $c'$ )	0.10	0.03	[0.03, 0.15]	0.002
Indirect Effect ( $ab$ )	0.14	0.02	[0.10, 0.19]	\
RFP → Collectivism ( $a$ )	0.35	0.03	[0.28, 0.41]	<0.001
Collectivism → Peer Trust ( $b$ )	0.41	0.03	[0.35, 0.47]	<0.001

Note: RFP = Reciprocal Filial Piety. Bootstrap samples = 5,000. CI = Confidence Interval. (same below).

#### 3.4.2. Model 2: Family Affection Mediates Filial Piety → Father-Child Relationship

Results confirmed a significant indirect effect. The total effect of reciprocal filial piety on father-child relationship was significant ( $c = 0.37$ ,  $SE = 0.04$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). When family affection was included as a mediator, the direct effect remained significant but was reduced ( $c' = 0.26$ ,  $SE = 0.04$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating partial medi-

ation. The indirect effect via family affection was significant ( $ab = 0.11$ ,  $SE = 0.02$ , 95% CI [0.08, 0.16]), accounting for approximately 30.4% of the total effect. This indicates that reciprocal filial piety strengthens family affection values, which in turn promote closer father-child bonds (Table 9).

**Table 9.** Mediation analysis: family affection mediating reciprocal filial piety → father-child relationship.

Path	Coefficient ( $B$ )	$SE$	95% CI	$p$ -value
Total Effect ( $c$ )	0.37	0.04	[0.18, 0.30]	<0.001
Direct Effect ( $c'$ )	0.26	0.04	[0.19, 0.33]	<0.001
Indirect Effect ( $ab$ )	0.11	0.02	[0.08, 0.16]	\
RFP → Family Affection ( $a$ )	0.36	0.03	[0.29, 0.43]	<0.001
Family Affection → Father-Child Relationship ( $b$ )	0.31	0.04	[0.24, 0.39]	<0.001

### 3.4.3. Model 3: Peer Friendship Mediates Filial Piety → Peer Communication

Results confirmed a significant indirect effect. The total effect of reciprocal filial piety on peer communication was significant ( $c = 0.37$ ,  $SE = 0.04$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). When peer friendship was included as a mediator, the direct effect remained significant but was reduced ( $c' = 0.29$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating partial mediation. The indirect effect via peer friendship was significant ( $ab = 0.08$ ,  $SE = 0.02$ , 95% CI [0.05, 0.12]), accounting for approximately 21.6% of the total effect. This suggests that students who endorse reciprocal filial piety are more likely to develop a positive orientation toward peer friendship, which subsequently fosters higher levels of peer communication and social interaction (Table 10).

**Table 10.** Mediation analysis: family affection mediating reciprocal filial piety → father-child relationship.

Path	Coefficient ( $B$ )	$SE$	95% CI	$p$ -value
Total Effect ( $c$ )	0.37	0.04	[0.30, 0.44]	<0.001
Direct Effect ( $c'$ )	0.29	0.03	[0.23, 0.36]	<0.001
Indirect Effect ( $ab$ )	0.08	0.02	[0.05, 0.12]	\
RFP → Peer Friendship ( $a$ )	0.19	0.03	[0.12, 0.26]	<0.001
Peer Friendship → Peer Communication ( $b$ )	0.41	0.03	[0.35, 0.48]	<0.001

## 4. General Discussion

In the context of rapid social changes and cultural diversity, the filial piety beliefs of contemporary junior high school students inherit core connotations of traditional filial piety while showing modern-compatible characteristics (Li et al., 2024). In-depth analysis of research data reveals clear intrinsic connections be-

tween filial piety beliefs, values, and interpersonal relationships, providing solid empirical support for constructing a scientific interpersonal value training mode for junior high school students.

#### 4.1. Characteristics of Filial Piety and Values in Rural Adolescents

Our findings indicate that junior high school students in rural eastern China endorse reciprocal filial piety more strongly than authoritarian filial piety. This suggests that even in rural areas, where traditional culture is deeply rooted, the “New Filial Piety” is emerging. This modern interpretation emphasizes emotional intimacy and voluntary gratitude rather than rigid, vertical obedience.

However, a significant “Grade 8 Slump” was observed. Students in Grade 8 showed lower levels of rule compliance, collectivism, and peer intimacy compared to Grade 7. This aligns with the “storm and stress” period of early adolescence. During this stage, students begin to prioritize autonomy and may view traditional family-centered values as a constraint. This finding provides the empirical foundation for our recommendation that moral education must be developmentally stratified, moving from simple indoctrination to complex ethical dialogue as students age.

#### 4.2. The “Value Bridge”: Understanding the Mediation Mechanism

A key contribution of this study is the formal validation of the value-mediation mechanism. The results from our three mediation models (Section 3.4) demonstrate that filial piety does not improve relationships in a vacuum. Instead, it works by reshaping the student’s internal value system:

**Peer Context:** Reciprocal filial piety fosters Collectivism, which provides the psychological safety needed for Peer Trust.

**Family Context:** It strengthens Family Affection, which serves as the primary driver for a healthy Father-Child Relationship.

**Communication:** It enhances Peer Friendship values, which directly translates into better Peer Communication.

These pathways confirm that filial piety acts as a “cultural anchor.” By cultivating reciprocal filial piety, educators are not just teaching manners; they are building the internal value architecture (Collectivism, Affection, Friendship) required for social harmony.

#### 4.3. Construction of an Interpersonal Value Training Mode for Junior High School Students Based on Filial Piety Culture

Based on the above research findings, the construction of an interpersonal value training mode for junior high school students centered on filial piety culture needs to follow the principles of “combining cultural inheritance with era innovation, combining cognitive training with behavioral practice, and combining school education with family collaboration”, and realize the coordinated development of filial piety beliefs, positive values, and good interpersonal relationships through

multi-dimensional paths.

#### **4.3.1. Creating a Filial Piety Culture Education Environment to Strengthen Cultural Immersion**

Create a campus cultural environment with “filial piety culture” as the theme, integrate positive elements of filial piety culture (such as gratitude, respect, and care) into campus landscape and class culture construction, and let students feel the charm of filial piety culture through various forms such as publicity boards, cultural walls, and campus radio. At the same time, carry out filial piety culture themed activities in conjunction with traditional festivals (such as the Spring Festival and the Double Ninth Festival), organize students to participate in practical activities such as ancestor worship and respecting the elderly, and strengthen students’ cognition and recognition of the core connotations of filial piety culture. This is consistent with Huang’s (2016) practical proposition that filial piety culture education should focus on environmental edification.

#### **4.3.2. Developing School-Based Courses on Filial Piety Culture to Improve the Curriculum System**

To improve the curriculum system, school-based courses must be both interdisciplinary and developmentally stratified to address the specific “Grade 8 phenomenon” observed in the data. Our results show a significant decline in positive values (Collectivism, Rule Compliance) and relational quality (Peer Intimacy) as students transition from Grade 7 to Grade 8.

**Grade 7: Foundational Cognition:** The curriculum should focus on the basic origin of filial piety through storytelling and classic recitation, leveraging the higher levels of obedience and rule compliance found in this age group.

**Grade 8: Targeted Intervention for “Adolescent Rebellion”:** To counter the observed dip in psychosocial adjustment, the Grade 8 curriculum must shift toward contemporary interpretation and conflict resolution. Since Grade 8 students begin to question authority and experience fluctuating filial expressions, lessons should focus on “Filial Piety through Dialogue”. This involves guiding students to integrate filial concepts into peer communication and family life through role-playing and ethical debates, helping them reshape their values during this critical transition.

Beyond dedicated courses, filial piety materials should be embedded into Chinese, History, and Moral Education and Rule of Law to ensure moral education is consistent across the intellectual spectrum.

#### **4.3.3. Carrying Out Practical Activities of Filial Piety Culture to Promote the Integration of Knowledge and Practice**

Establish filial piety culture clubs or interest groups in the school, organize a variety of activities such as filial piety themed speeches, essay competitions, and situational drama performances, and provide students with a platform to express their cognition of filial piety culture and practice filial piety behaviors. At the same time, organize students to go out of the campus to carry out social practice activities such as voluntary services in nursing homes and publicity of respecting the

elderly in communities, allowing students to experience the joy of caring for others and serving the society in practice, and transform their cognition of filial piety culture into practical actions. In addition, encourage students to practice filial piety in family life, cultivate gratitude and family responsibility through specific behaviors such as doing housework for parents and chatting with parents, and then transfer this sense of responsibility to peer communication. This refers to Yu's (2009) research suggestion that middle school students' social adaptation should be combined with practical experience.

#### **4.3.4. Establishing a Diversified Evaluation Mechanism to Strengthen Positive Guidance**

Construct a filial piety culture literacy evaluation mechanism combining process evaluation and summative evaluation. Process evaluation focuses on students' specific performances in practicing filial piety culture in daily study and life (such as respect for parents and mutual assistance with peers), which is recorded through class logs, students' self-evaluation and mutual evaluation, and parents' feedback; summative evaluation comprehensively assesses students' filial piety culture literacy through filial piety culture knowledge tests and practical achievement displays. At the same time, link the evaluation results of filial piety culture literacy with students' comprehensive quality evaluation, commend and reward students with outstanding performances, strengthen positive guidance, and encourage students to consciously practice filial piety culture and cultivate positive values and good interpersonal relationships. This is consistent with Zhou's (2018) view that filial piety culture training needs a supporting evaluation system.

### **5. Limitations and Future Research**

Despite providing empirical support for a filial piety-based cultivation model, several limitations must be acknowledged to contextualize the findings. First, the geographic and institutional scope was constrained as the sample was drawn from a single rural junior high school in eastern China; since educational practices and cultural norms vary significantly across regions, these findings may not be generalized to all junior high students nationwide. Second, a significant rural-urban imbalance exists within the data, as 76.7% of participants are from rural areas; because these students often score higher on authoritarian filial piety due to stronger traditional cultural inheritance, the results may not accurately represent more urbanized adolescent populations. Third, regarding research design, the cross-sectional nature of this study precludes definitive causal inferences between filial piety beliefs, values, and interpersonal outcomes. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported questionnaires introduces potential methodological bias, although statistical tests indicated that common method bias was not a primary concern. Future research should employ longitudinal or experimental designs to establish causal pathways and explore the underlying mechanisms, such as the mediating role of specific values. Expanding the sample to include diverse cultural and regional contexts would enhance the external validity. Finally, mixed-methods ap-

proaches incorporating qualitative data could provide deeper insight into how adolescents perceive and interpret filial piety in modern society.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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