

# The Influence of Family Economic Capital on Adolescents' Decisions Regarding Art Education

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**Keywords:** Family Economic Capital; Adolescents; Art Education Choice; Educational Equity; Cultural Capital; Social Capital; Resource Access; Curriculum Selection; Institutional Selection; Indirect Influence

**Abstract:** This paper examines the impact of family economic capital on adolescents' selection of art education and delineates the underlying mechanisms that precipitate these decisions. At the fundamental level, family economic capital exerts a direct influence on adolescents' access to and selection of art education resources. These educational resources encompass a variety of elements, including educators and facilities, as well as a range of course offerings in terms of both types and levels of profundity. Additionally, institutions, whether renowned or more conventional, are influenced by family economic capital. At the indirect level, factors, including the family's cultural atmosphere, parental education levels, social networks, and interpersonal resources, among other intermediary factors, have been shown to exert an influence on the decisions made by adolescents. The purpose of this study is to clarify how family economic capital shapes the differences in art education choices of adolescents, and to provide a theoretical reference for promoting the fairness of art education.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Research Background

In today's society, with the development of the economy and the improvement of living standards, art education has gradually become one of the important aspects of family investment. More and more parents are concerned about the all-round development of their children, and art education, as a way to promote creativity and aesthetic ability, has been widely discussed. The choice of art education is often restricted by family economic capital. Family economic capital not only determines the art education resources parents can provide for their children, but also influences the development trajectory of adolescents in the art field. Examining how family economic capital affects adolescents' choices in art education can provide theoretical support for enhancing the popularity of art education and optimizing resource allocation.

### 1.2 Research Significance

It is of great practical and theoretical significance to understand the influence path of family economic capital on adolescents' art education choice. From a realistic perspective, art education is one of the key factors for the all-round development of adolescents, which is related to the cultivation of aesthetic ability, creativity, and the construction of cultural identity. Understanding the influence of economic capital can enhance our perception of art education choices, which are often viewed as solely driven by interest. By examining the various ways in which economic resources affect the artistic development of adolescents from different families—such as through access to resources and the transmission of ideas—we can gain a deeper appreciation for the complexities involved in choosing art education [1].

This study provides valuable guidance for developing educational policies. Identifying the specific aspects of economic capital differences in art education can provide clear guidance for policy development. For instance, in light of the disparity in access to resources, the promotion of inclusive

art education resources is recommended, including the provision of affordable, high-quality educators and shared art facilities. In addition, considering the barriers to indirect influence, we can mitigate them by guiding parents' ideas and opening up social resources.

This research aims to enhance understanding of educational equity, particularly in the context of social equity. It highlights that the disparity in art education opportunities is not just an issue of resource distribution; it can also worsen cultural differences and developmental gaps between various social classes [2]. Clarifying the pathways of influence will provide a foundation for the rational allocation of resources, help mitigate the disparity in developmental opportunities among adolescents caused by variations in economic capital, and promote social and cultural equity as well as class mobility.

Theoretically, the research will enrich the application of capital theory in the field of education. Analyzing how economic capital influences choices in artistic education—including the connection between direct resource transformation and indirect factors such as culture and social capital—will provide detailed evidence for the theory of capital transformation. This research will also expand the understanding of the relationship between family capital and educational choices within the field of educational sociology.

### **1.3 Research Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to systematically analyze the influence of family economic capital on adolescents' art education choice in a multi-dimensional and deep-seated way, and to reveal the internal logic and concrete performance of these influences. The research will examine how family economic capital directly influences the key aspects of adolescents' art education. In terms of resource acquisition, we will clarify how economic capital affects the entire resource acquisition chain, from basic to advanced levels, in terms of teacher quality, facility resources, and practical opportunities. In our exploration of curriculum selection, we examine the specific limitations and support mechanisms of economic capital on the breadth, depth, and sustainability of the curriculum [3]. In the context of institutional choice, it is essential to clarify how economic capital influences pivotal decisions, including the establishment of institutional hierarchies and the evaluation of functional adaptability.

This study will explore the indirect mechanism of family economic capital. The study will analyze how artistic interest in adolescents can be cultivated and how decisions can be made by shaping the family cultural atmosphere (e.g., the creation of an artistic environment and the development of activities), parents' educational concept (e.g., value cognition, long-term planning, and expectation of artistic education), and social network resources (e.g., the expansion of contacts in the art field and the acquisition of professional information). Additionally, this study will also clarify the interaction between these indirect factors.

The research aims to create a systematic and practical influence path model that clearly illustrates the decision-making logic, constraints, and behavioral differences among families with varying levels of economic capital when choosing art education. This model provides an empirical basis for policymakers to design targeted intervention measures, such as inclusive resource allocation and guidance programs for parents, as well as for educators to enhance art education services. In the end, it will help to build a fair and diverse art education environment and assist adolescents with different economic backgrounds to get suitable artistic development opportunities.

## **2. The Theoretical Basis of Family Economic Capital and Adolescents' Art Education**

### **2.1 Capital Theory and Educational Choice**

In capital theory, Bourdieu's classification of capital has significant explanatory power. He divides capital into economic capital, cultural capital, and social capital. Economic capital is the basic form, which is manifested as resources that can be directly exchanged, such as money and assets; Cultural capital is embodied in knowledge, skills, aesthetics, and other cultural qualities; Social capital refers to resources obtained via social networks. These three kinds of capital do not exist in isolation; economic capital can be transformed into cultural capital through the purchase of art books and the

payment of training fees. Moreover, the social circle can be expanded by increasing economic input and transformed into social capital.

Regarding education, the total amount and structure of family capital directly affect the educational opportunities of adolescents: economic capital provides the material basis for educational choice and determines whether families can bear the extra cost of art education; The shift from economic capital to cultural and social capital will further influence adolescents' interests and choices [4]. In non-basic education, such as art education, the influence of economic capital is particularly significant. Through direct investment and capital transformation, it affects adolescents' choices regarding what type of art education to pursue.

## **2.2 Related Theories on the Influence of Family Economic Capital on Education**

The influence of family economic capital on education can be explained from the perspectives of family resource theory and cultural reproduction theory. The theory of family resources points out that the disposable economic resources of families are the core constraint of children's educational investment. Families with sufficient economic resources are able to provide their children with more educational opportunities, such as access to high-quality teachers and learning materials. In contrast, families with limited financial resources face challenges in meeting educational needs beyond basic requirements, as they are constrained by the total amount of resources they can access.

The theory of cultural reproduction further suggests that families' economic capital facilitates the transmission of advantages through the educational process. Wealthy families can more easily cultivate their children's cultural tastes and aesthetic abilities through art education, allowing them to maintain their advantages in social competition. Conversely, families in poverty lack economic support, and their children have fewer opportunities for art education and other activities, creating cultural differences between social classes. In addition, the theory of equal educational opportunities emphasizes that the difference in family economic capital is a vital reason for the uneven educational opportunities. Art education requires increased investment, and family economic capital significantly influences the choice of art education, leading to unequal starting points in adolescents' artistic development [5].

## **3. The Direct Influence of Family Economic Capital on Adolescents' Art Education**

### **3.1 Influence on the Acquisition of Art Education Resources**

Family economic capital directly determines the quality and scope of art education resources that adolescents can access. Families with better economic resources have significant advantages when it comes to hiring teachers [6]. They can afford to pay hundreds, or even thousands, of dollars per hour for private instruction. Additionally, they hire professionals, such as conservatory professors and experienced artists, for personalized one-on-one tutoring. Furthermore, they can strive for scarce opportunities for their children to participate in master classes or internships in artists' studios. In terms of hardware resources, these families purchase high-end musical instruments, such as a Steinway piano or a handmade violin. They also purchase professional painting materials, such as imported paints and linen canvases, along with digital art equipment, which includes professional drawing tablets and recording studio gear. These resources provide a material guarantee for their studies.

Families with limited economic capital can only afford part-time teachers for community public welfare classes or collective classes in general training institutions. Musical instruments they use are mostly second-hand or entry-level, painting materials are mostly inexpensive, and digital art equipment is even harder to access. In terms of practical resources, wealthy families can pay tens of thousands of yuan for their children to participate in international art summer camps, transnational performances, or national competitions. In contrast, children from ordinary families often only have access to free art exhibitions or community events organized by schools. In summary, there is a significant disparity in the quality and quantity of resources they can acquire.

### **3.2 Influence on the Choice of Art Education Curriculums**

Family economic capital directly limits the breadth, depth, and sustainability of adolescents' art education curriculum. Affluent families can encourage their children to explore multiple arts simultaneously: for instance, they take piano lessons after school on weekdays and practice ballet on weekends, learn printmaking in the afternoon, and take drama performances during holidays. The course includes both classical and modern, western and traditional art forms. Children from these families can progress from basic classes to more advanced ones, which may include piano performance, specialized oil painting courses, and even less common art forms like guqin and installation art.

However, families with average economic conditions often have to settle for just one low-cost course, such as a children's stick figure drawing class or an introduction to the electronic piano. Most of these families remain at a basic level since the tuition for advanced courses is double that amount, making it unaffordable for many. For example, the training fee for the dance exam is thousands of yuan. Moreover, economic pressure may lead to the interruption of courses: Ordinary families may be forced to pause their art studies if they encounter unexpected expenses. In contrast, wealthy families can maintain the continuity of courses through long-term planning, highlighting the difference between continuous investment and sporadic learning.

### **3.3 Influence on the Choice of Art Education Institutions**

Family economic capital directly affects adolescents' choice of levels and functions of art education institutions. Families with sufficient economic capital are more likely to choose high-end private institutions or those with a brand name. These institutions typically offer a well-defined teaching system, often aligned with international art grading standards. They also employ high-quality teachers, including graduates from prestigious universities and experienced professionals in the field. Additionally, they provide supportive services like art, further education planning, and portfolio guidance. The tuition fee for a single semester can reach tens of thousands of yuan. Some families choose customized institutions that design exclusive courses based on their children's talents and interests. For example, they may arrange art museum curatorial practice for children with artistic abilities and collaborate with painters on creative projects.

In contrast, families with limited economic conditions mostly rely on community public welfare institutions, training courses attached to schools, or small individual institutions. These institutions have low tuition fees, typically ranging from a few hundred yuan to a few thousand yuan per month. However, their courses are quite basic and mostly offered in a group setting. Many of the teachers are part-time instructors or current students, which limits their ability to effectively connect resources [7]. For example, they cannot recommend competitions and channels for further studies. What's more, some families can only learn by themselves through free online courses because they can't afford the institution fees, which results in a reduction in the systematization and professionalism of art education.

## **4. The Indirect Effect of Family Economic Capital on Art Education Choice of Adolescents**

### **4.1 The Indirect Influence of Family Cultural Atmosphere**

Family economic capital influences the family's cultural atmosphere and indirectly affects adolescents' choices of art education. Families with affluent economic conditions often have greater resources to create an artistic living environment. They may display paintings, sculptures, and other works of art in their homes, and their shelves are likely filled with rich art and music albums. As a result, it is common for them to play classical music or art documentaries daily. These families also have more channels to engage in art-related family activities, such as visiting art galleries and watching plays on weekends, and traveling on artistic themes during holidays, like going to Dunhuang to see murals and visiting Vienna to attend concerts. Additionally, they might organize small family concerts and parent-child painting competitions at home.

An immersive cultural atmosphere subtly cultivates teenagers' perception and interest in art. This

is because their frequent contact with artistic elements in daily life will make it easier for them to germinate their willingness to learn actively, and then pursue the art field in their educational choices. On the other hand, families with limited economic capital often prioritize basic living needs due to livelihood pressure. Not only do they lack art-related items and activities, but parents also have little time and energy to create an artistic atmosphere. In such a growing environment, adolescents' opportunities to engage with art are scarce, making it naturally difficult to stimulate their interest in art, and it is also challenging to pursue a career in the art field as part of their educational direction.

#### **4.2 The Indirect Influence of Parents' Educational Concept**

Family economic capital influences parents' educational concepts, which, in turn, indirectly affect adolescents' choices of art education. Parents with sufficient economic capital are often less constrained by short-term financial pressures and are more likely to adopt an educational concept of "all-round development." They may believe that art education enhances children's aesthetic abilities and cultivates their overall qualities, such as creativity and concentration, viewing it as an important aspect of children's future social competitiveness. Parents are increasingly willing to include art education in their children's long-term growth plans. Even if they do not see immediate practical returns, they are committed to continuing their investment.

Parents with limited economic capital may prefer an educational concept based on pragmatism. They may think that art education is an "unnecessary" extra expenditure, so it is better to invest resources in areas where short-term benefits are more likely to be seen, such as subject tutoring and vocational skills training. Some parents believe that "learning art is expensive and there are limited career paths," which leads them to question their children's interest in art. As a result, they tend to downplay or overlook the importance of art education in their decision-making regarding their children's education. These ideas are directly transmitted to adolescents, which affects their value judgments and choice tendencies in art education.

#### **4.3 The Indirect Influence of Social Networks and Interpersonal Resources**

Family economic capital is conducive to expanding social networks and interpersonal resources, and indirectly provides opportunities for adolescents' art education. For families with superior economic conditions, their social network often involves more practitioners or enthusiasts in the art field, such as friends who are art teachers at famous schools or relatives who are professional artists. Additionally, they associate with the curator of art galleries and the head of theatrical troupes through business contacts. Personal network resources provide accurate art education information for families. For example, they recommend high-quality private tutors for children, inform minority and professional training institutions, share information about art competitions with significant awards, and even actively seek practical opportunities for children to perform and exhibit.

Furthermore, the social activities of these families frequently center on artistic pursuits. For instance, when attending artists' salons and art exhibitions, adolescents sought the counsel of "insiders" in the art field, thereby acquiring more professional suggestions. Therefore, the understanding of art education is more profound, and the selection is more purposeful. Conversely, within families with constrained economic resources, social networks are predominantly concentrated within peer groups or livelihood-related circles, exhibiting minimal involvement in the art field. This limitation hinders access to professional art education information and opportunities. Therefore, due to information occlusion, adolescents may encounter difficulties in identifying suitable art education methods or may abandon the notion of art learning due to a lack of awareness regarding available options and the processes involved in making a selection.

### **5. Conclusion**

By analyzing the influence of family economic capital on adolescents' choice of art education, this study draws the following conclusions: Family economic capital deeply influences adolescents' choice of art education through direct and indirect paths, which is the key factor that causes the difference in adolescents' access to art education opportunities with different economic backgrounds.

Regarding the direct impacts, the family's economic capital plays a significant role in the disparities in adolescents' access to art education resources. This includes the quality of teachers, availability of facilities, and opportunities for practical experience. Additionally, it influences the selection of curricula, including their breadth, depth, and sustainability, as well as the choice of institutions based on their level and function. The more abundant the economic capital, the easier it is for adolescents to access high-quality and diversified artistic education opportunities.

Regarding the indirect impacts, family economic capital influences adolescents' artistic interests and choices. It does this by shaping the family's cultural atmosphere, which includes the availability of artistic environments and activities. Additionally, it affects parents' educational philosophies—such as their emphasis on and expectations for art—and the social network resources available to the family, like valuable contacts and information. These factors collectively contribute to differences in artistic education choices among adolescents.

The research conclusion reveals the hidden connection between economic conditions and art education choice, and highlights the importance of educational equity in the art field. To promote equal opportunities for adolescents in art education, we need to enhance the supply of inclusive resources, guide parents in their educational approaches, break down social network barriers, and mitigate the negative effects of disparities in family economic status. They will help ensure that adolescents from various economic backgrounds have equal opportunities for artistic development. To sum up, it not only conforms to educational equity but also provides support for the diversified development of social culture.

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