

# Sustainable Development Education for Students from Single-Parent Families: A Case Study of Students from Ningxia Polytechnic

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## ABSTRACT

For students from single parent families, it is difficult to achieve better academic performance than those from intact families. In order to investigate the educational issues of single parent students and the impact of implementing sustainable development education on single parent students at Ningxia Polytechnic, this study selected 15 students, 5 teachers, and 5 student managers from Ningxia Polytechnic as research subjects. Qualitative interviews were conducted to explore and analyze the sustainable development of single parent vocational school students and how to promote sustainable development by providing inclusive education opportunities. The counselors and teachers at Ningxia Polytechnic have done a great job in helping students. Therefore, this study not only analyzed the subjective and objective reasons why single parent students at Ningxia Polytechnic are prone to become problem students in receiving sustainable development education, such as abnormal family environments and mistakes in school education work, but also proposed corresponding strategies for educating single parent students. This research has found that sustainable development education is highly effective in improving the academic performance, social and emotional well-being, and future prospects of these students. By considering the unique needs of students from single parent families, this study also gets the conclusion that sustainable development education is very important in addressing educational inequality. Finally, this study provides guidances for educators on how to educate students from single parent families and ensure their healthy growth, such as updating the concept of vocational education, reforming the curriculum model and teaching system, establishing the task of sustainable development education teaching, adopting inclusive education approach, and so forth. In future research, how to combine age characteristics to do a good job in educating students from single parent families is an urgent problem that vocational school educators need to solve.

**Keywords:** single parent families, sustainable development education, educational inequality.

## INTRODUCTION

With the continuous development of market economy, people's marriage concept is changing gradually and the number of abnormal families (such as single-parent families and divorced families) is increasing. Single-parent families are more likely to expose their children to serious physical trauma. They are socially disadvantaged groups and have been directly influenced by incomplete family structure, lack of parents' love, and the emergence of psychology problems. However, these do not attract enough attention from families, schools and society (Gouthro, 2022). The study on the issue of vocational college education is carried out from multiple views, while the research on the problem behaviour of vocational colleges and single-parent students has always been the focus of the education sector. Although researchers's comprehensive and in-depth researches have different

views on the connotation of ongoing education in training, most scholars also have some consensus. This research will comprehensively study the sustainable development of single-parent family education in vocational schools. From the perspective of student management, it solves a gap in Ningxia Polytechnic's management of students' sustainable development.

To explore the sustainability of education for vocational college students in single-parent families, this research focuses on stressing the necessity for educational institutions to adopt inclusive practices which consider the unique needs of students from single-parent families. It explores the intersection of sustainable development education and the unique circumstances of students from single-parent families. The primary focus is on a case study conducted at Ningxia Polytechnic in China, and it aims to examine the implications and strategies for promoting sustainable development education in this specific context. Overall, this research not only contributes valuable insights into the intersection of sustainable development education and single-parent family dynamics, but also highlights its potential to create positive change within the educational system and curriculum enhancements.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Vocational Education and Sustainable Development

Based on the principles of sustainable development, education for sustainable development is a broad concept. From the perspective of Ahmed & Sayed (2021), sustainable development education is a key factors in promoting the understanding of various education problems. In the mid-1980s, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank put forwards the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) which is an integral part of the modern national educational system (Antonietti et al., 2022). As to the implementation path of sustainable development-oriented TVET, Atorkey et al. (2021) claim that there are two main arguments. The first one emphasizes the solution of sustainable development through the content of TVET and the other stresses the sustainability of student employment by improving the quality of TVET (Chinedu et al., 2019). Specifically, the former advocates the implementation of sustainable development component in the teaching of TVET, while the latter thinks that TVET plays an indispensable role in solving various problems of sustainable development, such as reducing poverty, improving employment ability, and improving citizenship literacy. In fact, both views reflect the inevitable relationship between sustainable development and TVET. Vocational education and training institutions need to further expand the supply of high-quality skilled personnel, and this can ensure that the skills can promote lifelong learning and support the transition of society (Collins et al., 2024).

Antonietti et al. (2022) demonstrate that the core task of vocational education is education and teaching, and the concept of sustainable development has already been integrated into vocational education and teaching. Sustainable development education provides a holistic framework for social and environmental education, human rights, and development education. Dumbiri & Permana (2021) believe that higher vocational education, as an important component of vocational education in China, has made rapid progress in its scale and has made great contributions to local economic construction and social progress. However, in the course of development, many of the deep-seated issues that affect the sustainable development of higher vocational education, such as the construction of the connotation cannot keep up with the scale expansion, the function is not perfect, the self-sponsorship is out of order, the administrative constraints are dislocated, the industry-university cooperation cannot be deepened, and the talent structure is out of balance and so on (Atorkey et al., 2021).

### Sustainable Development and Lifelong Learning

From the perspective of social development goals and development motives, there is an inseparable dialectic relationship between lifelong education and sustainable development (Parry et al., 2023). According to *Figure 1*, it can be seen that the process of lifelong learning is also a process of sustainable development. From the beginning of a learning process to the end of learning and learning, it is the result of new knowledge and skills, as well as socioeconomic and cultural development (Verdin et al., 2020). In the process of lifelong learning, from the formulation of learning plans to the realization of learning goals, the mastery of new knowledge to the discard of old knowledge is a sustainable process (Zwolinska et al., 2022).



## METHODOLOGY

### Research Population and Sampling

The sample selected by the researcher should satisfy the purpose of the study and answer the research questions while meeting the requirements of cost and other constraints. The logic of purposeful sampling is to select informative cases in order to provide insight and understanding of the phenomenon being investigated. This study interviews the results of a joint effort of teachers, students, and student managers. This study selected students (10 or 15 students, including 60% of single-parent families), teachers (5), student managers (5), and corporate personnel managers (5), using purposeful sampling procedures. The participants in this study were purposefully selected, participants' background information is obtained through classroom observations and interviews. Each participant was considered a case for the study. **Table 1** describes the characteristics, distribution and sampling process of the participants.

Table 1. The characteristics, distribution and sampling process of the participants.

Participants	Number	Location	Sampling Procedure
Students (including 60% of single-parent families)	10-15	Student guidance center	Purposeful
teacher	5	Teachers' office	Purposeful/Convenience
Student administrator	5	Teachers' office	Purposeful
Enterprise personnel manager	5	Company reception room	Purposeful
Total	25-30		

### Research Design

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the interviewer's growth experience, some people's relevant weblogs are collected for analysis after obtaining the consent of the interviewees. In qualitative research, in order to reduce the restrictions on the interviewee's ideas, interviews should try to set open or semi-structured problems. The combination of interview methods, observation methods, and document review are conducive to scientific and effective data, providing a solid and real basis for the discussion of this topic. The interview method is mainly aimed at the problems related to the sustainable development of vocational students in Vocational schools, and interviews teachers and single-parent families to obtain qualitative conclusions. **Appendix 1** shows the interview outline of teachers and student managers, and **Appendix 2** is the interview outline of students.

Semi-structured interviews are based on a part of the interview framework, and the semi-open interview method is based on the interviewee's ideas (Othman et al., 2021). This is an important qualitative research method. Through in-depth interviews with literature review and special cases, the subjective ideas in the study of single-parent families are explored. At the same time, this study also conducted semi-structured interviews with instructors and counselors. In both types of interviews with teachers and students, 8-10 questions related to the survey results were developed, and this can ensure that the discussion on the reasons behind the sustainability of education and training for single-parent families is more in-depth and targeted.

### Data Collection:

**Interviews:** Conduct semi-structured interviews with various stakeholders, including students from single-parent families, teachers, and student managers at Ningxia Polytechnic. Interviews will provide insights into personal experiences, challenges, and support systems related to sustainable development education.

In the first phase of the research, researchers relied on semi-structured interviews and document review to generate data on the impact of different stakeholder groups on ESD. Interviews were conducted in the first phase, and each interview lasted approximately one hour. For each stakeholder group, an interview agenda for topics and questions was prepared in advance to guide the interview process, but participants could lead if possible.

In the second phase of the study, interviews were organized in five cases throughout the phase: from the beginning of the exploration to the later stages, a more in-depth review of the identified topics was conducted. Each informant participated in one or two interviews, it firstly identifies the problems and possibilities in sustainable development education, then addresses the educational factors of students' sustainable development in the context of single-parent families, and evaluating the impact on expected changes.

**Observations:** Conduct classroom observations to understand how sustainable development education is delivered at Ningxia Polytechnic. Observe teaching methods, materials, student engagement, and interactions within the learning environment.

## METHODS

This research collects materials related to the learning ability and quality of single-parent students through various channels such as literature interviews and classroom observations. Through the three processes of open decoding, main axis decoding and selective decoding, the sustainable development of vocational college students is formed Theoretical framework.

The interview method is mainly aimed at the problems related to the sustainable development of vocational students in Vocational schools, and interviews teachers and single-parent families to obtain qualitative conclusions. In the process of identifying the research objects, researchers started the process of data collection, mainly using in-depth interviews In which observation and informal conversation were the methods of data collection. During the interview, the Researcher also suggested that what the interviewee feels can be recorded through his own habits such as writing a diary, a weblog, and writing microblogs.

This is an important qualitative research method in this study. Through in-depth interviews with literature review and special cases, the subjective ideas in the study of single-parent families are explored, which is of great reference to the reasons behind the phenomenon of single-parent family students. value. At the same time, this study also conducted semi-structured interviews with instructors and counselors, in order to obtain teacher-level perspectives from outside the student level and to carry out various problems arising from learners in the sustainable teaching mode of vocational education. All aspects, multi-angle analysis, and exploration. In addition, the dialogue with teachers can not only reveal the reasons for student performance from another perspective of the classroom but also give some advantages and disadvantages of teaching methods. In both types of interviews with teachers and students, 8-10 questions related to the survey results were developed to ensure that the discussion on the reasons behind the sustainability of education and training for single-parent families is more in-depth and Targeted.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Problems

#### Family aspect

The educational results of families are coordinated by their living environment and educational methods. It is not consistent with objective facts to assert that single-parent family status has a negative or positive impact on students.

The impact of single-parent families on students' education is integrated with many other factors. In single-parent families, a large number of single-parent families often face greater economic pressure. In interviews, parents of single-parent families have expressed some concern about the funding of their children. Parents hope to improve their financial ability so that They can support their children to continue their studies. They have to work harder

to give their children a better educational environment. due to financial problems, this not only caused the school to lose its students but also caused the loss of talent and The pursuit of the student's own life value. Some parents also have poor comprehensive quality and educational ability, and poor education methods lead to some children's bad behaviour.

### **Social aspect**

The impact of negative social norms on students, such as the concept of prioritizing money and the culture of comparison. Students have many personal problems and their self-control is weaker than other students. The inherent outdated ideological concepts in society that belittle and ridicule single parent families and students have also caused great mental pressure on students. Due to the deep-rooted family values, people feel that although divorce can be understood, it is still a shameful thing, as if it is inferior. Children in single parent families often face discrimination from others in terms of mental health, and this pressure is very cruel for them. Overall, the society lacks sufficient concern for single parent families from all aspects.

### **School aspect**

Some teachers believe that teaching quality is everything, and that students' personal problems have nothing to do with them. The school does not pay enough attention to the development of sustainable development ability of single-parent families. Higher vocational education only pays attention to the development of all students in the school, but ignores the comprehensive and sustainable development of single-parent students. It has caused too much emphasis on skills training in the process of talent cultivation, neglecting humanistic quality, and not paying attention to the cultivation of students' sustainable development ability. Higher vocational colleges do not have courses related to the development of sustainable development ability. They do not pay enough attention to the professional quality and sustainable development ability of higher vocational students, and ignore the long-term development of higher vocational students.

The school lacks sufficient care and education for the mental health of single parent students. Schools place too much emphasis on the education of students' basic and professional knowledge, following the popularization model of educational standards. Most of them do not offer the course of "student mental health education", and their care and education efforts are far from sufficient. In addition, schools lack specialized institutions and teaching staff. Although the Ministry of Education repeatedly requires vocational colleges to establish "psychological counseling centers" or "psychological counseling rooms", the implementation is not strong enough.

### **Countermeasures**

#### **Form collaborative education among schools, families, and society**

Schools should actively maintain contact with parents of students from single parent families, and provide timely feedback to parents on their learning, discipline, and behavioral performance at school (Atorkey et al., 2021). While fully understanding the students, learn more about the parents. Some single parents are born without love for their children, only raising them without teaching them, failing to fulfill their guardianship responsibilities, and turning a blind eye to their children's bad behavior; Some only care about their children's food and clothing, and do not care about their moral education. By contacting parents, reminding them of their responsibilities, caring for their children in the right way, and emphasizing spiritual communication with them. Social education is a big classroom for educating people (Antonietti et al., 2022). In addition to learning, actively organize class students and single parent family students to provide services in nursing homes, welfare homes, and communities, and cultivate their love and sense of responsibility through these social practices. Through the joint education of families, schools, and society, we can guide the healthy development of students from single parent families.

#### **Strengthen mental health education**

In the case study, the students without exception showed their love and desire for school life. The school's rich teaching content, diverse activities, and relaxed environment are especially important for students from divorced

single-parent families. Psychological problems among students from single parent families are a common phenomenon, but different students have their own unique psychological problems due to different family environments and experiences (Dumbiri & Permana, 2021). Therefore, counselors should carry out their work in a targeted and targeted manner in the daily management of students. Teach students according to their aptitude, prescribe the right medicine, and care, respect, and trust them in daily class management work. Fully discover their shining points in daily learning and life, praise, encourage, and guide them in a timely manner, educate them to learn to discover, observe, and think, and adopt flexible, diverse, and effective educational methods according to their respective psychological characteristics. One size fits all, all student questions should be handled in one way. This not only fails to promote the sound development of students' psychology, but also lead to new psychological problems.

### **Grasp the direction of vocational education and changes educational concept**

Higher education should change their ideas, not only focus on training students' professional ability, but also the ability to focus on training students for sustainable development. Gouthro (2022) mentioned that part of the school is equipped with special education workers to manage the single-parent families, students have a sound security system, to help single-parent family's student's life and psychological pressure, with the help of a mature mechanism to help students learn to deal with physical and mental discomfort, divorced family produced through the difficult adjustment period. Higher vocational education must firstly be people-oriented, adhere to both technical education and humanities education, do things education and human education simultaneously, achieve the all-round development of talent quality, and shape high-level professional and technical personnel that meet the needs of social and economic development and sustainable development (Atorkey et al., 2021). Most importantly, a new concept of running a school which is in line with the development of modern vocational education and should be established.

## **CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY/RESEARCH FINDINGS**

In conclusion, this study investigated the ability of single-parent families to improve sustainability through vocational education and training at Ningxia Polytechnic. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to increase understanding of the family backgrounds, learning abilities and behaviors of students from single-parent families. It finds that the problems in the development of students' sustainability in vocational school can be attributed as follows, such as the loss of centrality, the loss of the goal of moving forward, slackening of learning attitude, interpersonal distress, prominence of psychological problems, and so on. The study used the theory of sustainable development in vocational education as the basis for this theory. The study aimed to explore the sustainable development of single-parent students can be drawn that contribute to the sustainable development of vocational school students.

Based on the research results, education for development should run through all aspects of school education and teaching and all aspects of students' social life. Education for development is based on the development of after sustainable development values. It is focused on the development of people. The analysis shows that the popularity of culture sustainable culture is relatively optimistic but there are still some omissions. This paper discusses the problem of single-parent students in vocational colleges and makes theoretical analysis. However, students' awareness of sustainable development is still relatively weak and they lack the concept of lifelong learning and have poor sustainable learning skills. Therefore, the education of students from single-parent families has its own special difficulties and it is really necessary and imperative for teachers to improve the students' sustainable development learning ability.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the above discussion, several strategies to address the sustainability of vocational school students will be proposed as follows.

First and foremost, update the concept of vocational education. For example, establish the concept of modernization of vocational education, socialization of vocational education, and lifelong vocational education. The concept of modern vocational education is mainly reflected in the aspects of vocational education values,

talents, curriculum, teaching, teachers and students. Among them, talent cultivation is an important aspect. The modernization of vocational education system is fully reflected in the modernization of vocational education school-running system and operation mechanism. What's more, through the socialization of vocational education, people can acquire the most basic knowledge and skills that are necessary to eradicate poverty and reduce social unemployment. As to lifelong vocational education, it can enable individuals to update and increase skills and ultimately promote the realization of individual's self-development.

Besides, reform the curriculum model and teaching system. Knowledge-based educational curriculum emphasizes the systematicness and integrity of knowledge. As to how to establish a curriculum model, vocational education needs to develop the curriculum from the perspective of development. The curriculum not only focuses on the current needs of students, but also takes the needs of students' future into account. Schools should not only enable students to take a steady first step on the career ladder, but also continue to develop them for greater success. Chinese vocational schools ought to form a curriculum mode that is conducive to the sustainable development of students and combine with China's specific national conditions.

In addition, establish the task of sustainable development education teaching. The fundamental task of teaching in Chinese vocational schools has long been limited to preparing students for future employment. However, in the era of highly competitive knowledge economy, the speed of occupational change is accelerated. If the vocational students do not have the foundation for development and the ability to move among various occupations, then they will face the danger of changing occupations, positions, and even unemployment even they are employed. Therefore, the teaching focus of vocational schools should combine immediate employment and inclusive education so as to achieve long-term development.

**Conflicts of Interest** – The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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