

The Causes of Contemporary High School Students' Psychological Problems in the Perspective of Ecosystem Theory

Jiachen Jiang*

High school affiliated to Nanjing normal university Jiangning campus, Nanjing, China

* Corresponding Author Email: liaoya@ldy.edu.rs

Abstract. In general, it is a serious problem that contemporary high school students are suffering from a series of psychological problems now days. The most common categories of their psychological problems are excessive anxiety, emotional instability, low self-esteem and autism, and self-abandonment. This paper also discovers the group differences of high school students' mental problems including regional differences and gender differences. Students in rural place tend to be more vulnerable to psychological problems compared with urban students. Female students are actually more likely to have psychological problems than male students. This paper further analysis the causes of high school students' psychological problems from the perspective of both the family and the school. Family structure can affect students' mental status. A complete family structure has a positive influence on students' mental health but a fragmented family can cause serious psychological challenges. The family's parenting style also serve as a significant role in high school students psychological health. When it comes to the school's impact, lots of school carry out psychological education to prevent students' mental problems but such education methods exist some problems. Besides, students at school are facing excessive academic pressure. This pressure if accumulating might do harm to students' mental health.

Keywords: High school students; Psychological problems; Ecosystem theory.

1. Introduction

The optimization of contemporary high school students' psychological health plays a significant role in their all-round development. However, recent years have witnessed a sharp rise of the rate of contemporary high school students' psychological problems. With the intention of solving this problem, it is necessary to fully understand the internal causes of these mental problems.

Before this paper, a previous study demonstrates that mental health issues are prominent in the high school student population and social problems caused by the psychological problems of high school students emerges frequently [1]. However, without a clearer picture of the causes of today's high school students' mental problems, hardly can people appropriately deal with those problems. As is universally acknowledged that today's high school students spend most of their time at school and at home, which means both the school environment and family environment play a significant role in students' mental health. As a result, this paper wants to discover the factors leading to high school students' psychological problems from the perspectives of both the school and family. Equipped with the deeper and comprehensive recognition to the formation of students' mental problems, both the teachers and parents can better guide and help the students to get rid of the burden of mental challenges.

From the perspectives of the family and school education, this study will find out the effecting factors on contemporary Chinese high school students' psychological problem and the specific impacts exerted on student's mental health.

2. The Major Categories and Group Differences of Contemporary High School Students' Psychological Problems.

2.1. The Major Categories of Contemporary High School Students' Psychological Problems in China

The current mental health status of high school students is not optimistic in general. Some students have different degrees of psychological problems, and the proportion of students with psychological disorders is showing an increasing trend year by year [1]. There are four major categories of contemporary high school students' psychological problems: excessive anxiety, emotional instability, low self-esteem and autism, and self-abandonment. These problems if stimulated by some external pressure will further develop into some serious psychological disorders such as clinical depression, neurosis, and so on. This paper will then take a review on each of these problems.

First, excessive anxiety. Anxiety is the most common and most typical psychological problem among high school students in China [1]. Students equipped with serious anxiety problems will feel extremely difficult to concentrate their mind and attention during class. Besides, it is hard for them to deal with their daily issues peacefully and calmly but quite easy for them to get angry and mad, frequently trapped into fighting with others. As a result, their academic performance might be loaded with a series of challenges brought by their psychological problems, which in turn intensify the problems, putting the students into a vicious cycle. Second, emotional instability. It means that students with such problems are in lack of the pressure-resistant capability. A small failure on their exam or a hassle with parents will lead to a huge psychological fluctuation and even make them go to extremes. Third, low self-esteem and autism. Students with this problem tend to be afraid of communicating with their classmates especially classmates of the opposite sex, facing their parents or teachers when getting a low degree, and being laughed at by others because of their family circumstances. Fourth, self-abandonment. Some students suffering from such problems cannot positively embrace themselves, feeling powerless and hopeless to change their bad situation, thereby deciding to completely abandon themselves without any efforts.

The following part of this paper which centered on the factors causing contemporary high school students' psychological problems will generally talk about the above types of problems and their variations.

2.2. The Regional Differences of Contemporary High School Students' Psychological Problems in China

Based on the extremely varied education and living environments between the urban and rural areas, contemporary high school students' psychological problems turn out to have an apparent difference. Given the insufficient data sources directly focusing on the students in urban areas, this paper will mainly focus on the students in rural areas and reveal their specificities compared with urban students.

In general, the psychological problems are much more serious and difficult to be dealt with in rural areas. There are three major features of rural students' psychological problems which is different with urban students. First, the more serious problems of agitation caused by more academic pressure compared with urban students. From the previous study, 65% of rural students felt that their study pressure increased significantly after they entered high school, and 78% of rural students felt that their study pressure was obvious before the midterm examination [2]. The unavoidable influence from rural parents' strong expectation and strict requests for their child to earn outstanding academic performance results in excessive mental burden on them. Their parents believe that get a high score in Gaokao and then get into the best university is their child's only way out. Just as the saying goes "Poor children study hard" And the lack of appropriate psychological care from both the school and their family makes things even worse. From a previous study made on 1600 high school students, 86% of the rural students' elementary school or junior high schools did not have a psychological catharsis room, and 90% of the rural students had not received professional counseling such as sand tray games

[2]. In such circumstances, rural students turn to be afraid of school, exams and get nervous all the time which may also cause their sleeping deprivation. Second, the difficulty to be adaptive to the school which further leads to the autism. Due to the relatively closed environment of rural areas, rural students are equipped with less access to the outside world. When they get into high school, they will spend an extremely tough period to adapt themselves to the educational style of teachers, the living environment in school or the daily communication with other students. Besides, most of rural students also find it difficult to communicate with their teachers. From a previous study, in the teacher-student relationship survey questionnaires, 13% of the students chose very satisfied with the teacher-student relationship and 78% chose average satisfaction [2]. Third, lower self-esteem. Compared with urban students, rural students are more actively and frequently involved in the agricultural activities during their daily life which deprive them of their opportunities to be exposed to talent learning activities. As a result, when they get into high school, they have less talents, artistic skills, and hobbies than urban students, thereby resulting in more vulnerable self-esteem.

Hence, this paper can tell that urban students and rural students actually share a series of common problems. However, because of the inferior environment from most perspectives in rural areas, such problems are intensified in rural place.

2.3. Gender Differences of Contemporary High School Students' Psychological Problems in China

There is a higher rate of having psychological problems among female students than male students. And female students are more vulnerable to such problems with the common explanation that female students tend to be more sensitive and reliable on their parents. However, such explanation hasn't been rigorously proved by comprehensive and scientific researches. A study based on the data from students' psychological consultants at one school reveals that there are 362 female students and 60 male students participate in the consultants during one year [3]. From the study results, both the male and female students have consultant problems mainly focusing on their academic difficulties. Besides, female students are more likely to be trapped into interpersonal communication issues and emotional damage. And male students are less likely to be mentally challenged by their family problems.

To conclude, this paper discovers that though female students get some psychological problems more easily than the male ones, their problems are also easier to solve because of their stronger willing to consult and ask parents or teachers for help.

3. The Causes of Contemporary High School Students' Psychological Problems from the Perspective of Family

3.1. The Effects of Family Structure on Student's Psychological Health

This paper divides the term family structure into two categories: Single-parents family and two-parents family and makes an in-depth comparison between them in order to analysis what role dose the family structure serve in contemporary high school students' mental health. Single-parents family means families in which only one of the fathers (or mothers) lives with his or her unmarried children who are not capable of independent living and who are under 18 years of age or, although they have reached the age of 18, are in full-time education.

This paper discovers that different types of family structure may not have the direct and decisive impact on students' psychological health. However, it is closely connected with the family relationship which effects students' psychological health directly and significantly. There is an apparent difference in the field of intimacy between single-parent family and two-parents family. From a series of previous studies, this paper finds out that due to the absence of important family members directly leads to the corresponding absence of parent-child relationship and reduction of parent-child interactions, and the family members have less opportunity to help each other. Besides, marital conflict and the dissolution of close family residential relationships can undermine parent-

child relationships. The weakness of the parent-child relationship hinders the family to serve as a stable emotional support when students encounter some mental issue or frustration, which makes them more vulnerable to the psychological problems. According to relative data, there exists a higher detection rate of psychological problems among secondary school students from single-parent families than from two-parent families [4]. The difference in the field of academic anxiety is not apparent which means the family structure might not serve an influential role in students' academic anxiety problems, however, students from single-parent family have much more serious emotional instability than those from two-parents family. They are apt to be excessively sensible to the little frustrations during their daily life and easier to feel nervous or worry, which further results in some physical symptoms such as sleeping deprivation and vomiting. The absence of the main members in the family due to parental divorce or death greatly lower students' threshold of acceptance, and they are prone to worrying about everything, which triggers negative feelings of anxiety and uneasiness at the touch of a button.

As a result, this paper points out that an intact family structure can help students deal with their psychological problem more positively and healthily. However, a broken family will actually intensify the seriousness of their psychological problems, especially in the fields of emotional instability and the low self-esteem.

3.2. The Effects of Parenting Styles on Student's Psychological Health.

This paper chooses to define the term parenting styles as the behavioral patterns and educational methods that parents use when interacting with their children on a regular basis. The parenting styles of parents have an apparent and significant impact on students' psychological health. Parenting styles can deeply influence students' sense of self-identity and even their characteristics [5]. This paper will point out different impacts on students' psychological health from different parenting styles.

The democratic way of parenting is beneficial for students to form a positive mind. In this way of parenting, students' can receive sufficient respect from their parents, which means in daily life parents will take their ideas and emotion into account when making decisions and respect their free will. Parents who adopt this parenting style are basically able to control their own emotions, handle problems in a mature and rational way, and respect their children's ideas, creating a harmonious family atmosphere in which their children have a clear code of behavior and a sense of security. Most children who grow up in this type of nurturing family enjoy participating in group activities, care about class work, know how to build good friendships with their classmates. They tend to deal with stress and difficulties in a positive and rational way, and are good at seeking external help when they are frustrated or cannot solve problems on their own.

However, the autocratic way of parenting serves as the exact opposite role. That is to say that parents impose their own ideas and concepts on their children, and there are strict rules both in learning and in life, which means children basically have no room to make their own choice or to negotiate [6]. It eventually leads to students' excessive anxiety and low self-esteem. Parents who adopt this type of parenting might give their children an extremely strict and high standard both on academic performance and on their daily life, forcing them to reach it with punishment if failing. This circumstance will intensify their anxiety to their own academic performance and other behaviors during daily life. Besides, the long-term autocratic decision-making mechanism within the family will deprive students' capacity to deal with their own issues independently and make them feel less confident when making their own decisions or stating their own opinion, thereby resulting lower self-esteem. They will be afraid of being themselves or having their own ideas and be vulnerable to others critics. Moreover, this parenting style might make an irreversible damage to the trust between parents and children, which means students will not turn to their parents for help when facing psychological problems.

4. The Causes of Contemporary High School Students' Psychological Problems from the Perspective of School

4.1. The Current Situation of School's Mental Education.

To deal with the increasingly serious mental problems of contemporary high school students, schools take action to optimize their mental education which is mainly consist of three parts in most high schools.

First, the mental health courses. It will teach students the basic knowledge about some common psychological problems, the possible mental challenges they might encounter when going through puberty and the methods to deal with them such as getting involved in outdoor sports or having conversation with their parents more frequently. Second, the outdoor activities. Schools will take advantage of the spring and autumn excursions, study trips or other activities to optimize students' mental health. Third, psychological intervention. Some schools have teachers specifically in charge of students' mental health. They receive students' mental consultants and occasionally hold some lectures about mental health to help students solve their problems.

However, there are a series of disadvantages of current state of high school mental education. The problems mainly focus on the gap between theoretical institution and practical implementation. For example, even though there is a clear request for teachers to keep an eye on students' mental health and try to promote their psychological well-being. They are in lack of time due to the extremely hectic daily work. And few students are willing to consult with their psychological teachers in school, which makes it difficult to realize individual mental intervention. Besides, there is no effective cooperation between the school and family [7]. Without parents attaching importance on students' mental health, the help provided by school will not actually work effectively.

4.2. The Impact of Academic Pressure on Students' Mental Health

Academic pressure is the most important source of pressure for middle school students. As the increasingly crazy educational competition among high school students who are facing Gaokao in China and the increasingly serious educational intra-volume problems in China, contemporary high school students have to face the excessive academic pressure from endless lessons, shorten vacation and mountain piles of homework or examinations. Academic pressure refers to the psychological pressure and tension caused by academic tasks, mainly including the results of exams, competition with classmates, and expectations from parents and teachers [8]. The current excessive academic pressure on high school students have caused a series of serious psychological problems.

First, excessive academic pressure can cause the psychological problem of self-abandonment which means they tend to face their life with an extremely negative attitude. Relative study proves that there is a significant positive correlation between students' academic pressure and their hates towards school and learning [9]. At first, students feel little learning interest and motivation because of excessive academic tasks. Gradually, they are afraid of going to school or having exams. In some extreme cases, students are apt to skip classes and examinations. Due to the academic pressure, they grow up the fear of school and learning. In the long run, such fear even accompanies with them for the rest of their life. As a result, the resistant attitude towards their school life makes them indulge themselves and fail to grow up a well-rounded person.

Secondly, another apparent result of excessive academic pressure is the anxiety problems. Relative study proves that Academic pressure can affect students' self-esteem and self-worth, causing them to develop tension, anxiety and, in severe cases, self-injury or suicide [10]. The excessive and unreasonable amount of homework deprive students of their leisure for resting and relaxing, thereby preventing their negative emotion from being relieved. Besides, students are apt to stay up late to accomplish their academic tasks and the lack of sleep also intensify their emotional instability which makes them easily to feel overly anxious. Moreover, the academic competition and the peer pressure

both exert a negative impact on their mental health. The high academic expectation from their parents makes their mental state even worse. In some extreme cases, students commit suicides.

Thirdly, the academic pressure can lead to low self-esteem. Forced to get themselves involved into academic comparison with peers, high school students are suffering the pressure from their academic performance. Students who gain lower scores in examinations tend to feel less confident about themselves and fail to recognize themselves positively. In most cases, teachers are inclined to attach more attention to some outstanding students who have excellent academic performance and less attention to students less competent in learning. This difference leads to insufficient positive feedback to inferior students, thereby resulting in the lack of their sense of achievement. Besides, parents who have a strict academic request to students might criticize them or even commit verbal and physical violence on them when they fail to reach parents' ideal academic performance. In the long run, the feeling of being ignored and being insufficiently respected can actually cause the problem of low self-esteem.

5. Conclusion

Conclusion of your key findings: This paper concludes four main categories of contemporary high school students' psychological problems which are excessive anxiety, emotional instability, low self-esteem with autism, and self-abandonment. These four categories of mental problems are common among high school students. Besides, there is a series of differences between urban students and rural students. First of all, compared with urban students, rural students tend to have more serious problems of academic pressure because of their parents extremely strict request and the inferior education conditions in rural places. Rural students are more prone to have lower self-esteem and difficulty to adapt themselves to school life. When it comes to gender differences, female students are more vulnerable to have psychological problems than male students. This paper reveals that family structure indeed does not have a direct and decisive impact on students' psychological problems. However, the structure can affect the family bonds which are closely connected with students' mental health. In two-parents family, students are less likely to have psychological problems but in single-parent family, students are more likely to have such problems. Moreover, parenting style also plays a significant role in students mental health. The democratic way of parenting is beneficial for students to form a positive mind but the autocratic way of parenting serves as the exact opposite role. From the perspective of school, the psychological education carried by school including the psychological courses and psychological consultants can benefit students' mental health but there are some challenges during the implementation of the psychological education such as the difficulty for teachers to keep an eye on every student's mental status. The excessive academic pressure drives students to have serious psychological problems such as the anxiety problems and the self-abandonment.

Research significance: This paper analysis the causes of contemporary students' psychological problems, thereby helping people to figure out the solutions of students' mental problems.

Reference

- [1] L.Q. Fang. Exploration of common psychological problems and intervention strategies of high school students in the new era. *New curriculum introduction* 08 (2023), 41-43.
- [2] L.J. Jing. Analysis of mental health problems of rural high school students and countermeasures and suggestions. *Mental Health Education in Primary and Secondary Schools* 11 (2019), 51-53.
- [3] C.Y. Tan, Z.H. Liu, A study on the current situation of common psychological problems among high school students: based on the analysis of psychological counseling records in a high school. *Psychology Monthly* 05 (2023), 59-62.
- [4] X.H. Zhao, A comparative study of the current mental health status of students in single and two-parent families, 2019.
- [5] J.B. Wang, A study on the relationship between high school students' family parenting styles, parent-child attachment, psychological resilience and the tendency of cell phone dependence, 2022.

- [6] Z.Y. Wang, L.P. Wang and K.W. Wang, The influence of parent-child relationship on high school students' mental health and educational suggestions. *Elementary and Middle School Mental Health Education* S1 (2022), 74-75.
- [7] L.Z. Zhao, the analysis of the current situation of high school mental health education and solutions. *Academic Weekly* 03 (2023), 151-153.
- [8] L. Zhu, The correlation between academic stress and negative emotions in high school students-the mediation and intervention of individual resilience, 2023.
- [9] J.Y. Zhu, The effect of study pressure on the psychology of anorexia in high school students, 2023.
- [10] Y.Y. Wang, Effects of academic stress on suicidal ideation among high school students, 2023.