

A Case Study of Mental Health of Impoverished College Students in Minority Areas of Guangxi Province in China

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How to cite this paper: Li, X. Y., & Wang, M. S. (2018). A Case Study of Mental Health of Impoverished College Students in Minority Areas of Guangxi Province in China. *Creative Education*, 9, 2804-2810. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ce.2018.916210>

Received: November 21, 2018

Accepted: December 15, 2018

Published: December 18, 2018

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Abstract

Impoverished students in colleges and universities in China account for about 20% of the total number of students in the university, while the proportion of impoverished students in minority local colleges and universities is higher. Impoverished students face higher psychological stress. The stressors from economic, family and life are the main stress factors affecting the mental health of impoverished students. This paper selects two cases of family members who are seriously ill, conducts research, seeks common problems, explores the psychological adjustment of impoverished students, social support and new ways of mental health education, and provides certain psychological health intervention reference for impoverished students in ethnic areas.

Keywords

Mental Health, Poverty, College Students, Case Study

1. Introduction

With the expansion of the enrollment of colleges and universities in China and the tuition fees at their own expense, this has brought about a large increase in the number of impoverished students in colleges and universities. Among the students in colleges and universities nationwide, about 20% of students are from impoverished families, while the proportion of impoverished students in minority local colleges and universities is higher. The number of impoverished students in the university is about 41%, which is much higher than the average level of impoverished students in ordinary universities in China, taking Baise University in Guangxi Province as an example. Studies have shown that impoverished

students face higher psychological stress, and the main sources of stress affecting their mental health come from the economy, family and life (Fan, 2018; Ponnet K. & Wouters, 2014; Yikealo, Yemane, & Karvinen, 2018). There are very few case studies on impoverished students. This study selected two Chinese students whose relatives were seriously ill as research subjects, sought common problems, explored new ways of education, and provided some reference for mental health interventions of impoverished college students.

2. Research Methods, Selection of Research Objects and Validity Test of Research Results

2.1. Research Methods

This study used a case study approach. Different from the traditional quantitative research methods, this study embodies some characteristics of qualitative research: First, collect first-hand data in natural situations, use rooted theory, and summarize the solution strategies from the original data with research questions. Secondly, the psychological process and phenomena are considered as a whole to analyze, instead of quantitative research to decompose phenomena and manipulate experimental variables for research.

2.2. Selection of Research Objects

In order to be able to select the most representative and most viable research subjects, the study presupposes four criteria: the family economy is very poor, the academic performance is excellent, the family is sick, and the positive personality traits. According to the purposeful sampling, 20 subjects were pre-selected under the recommendation of the Baise University counselor. After preliminary situation investigation and interviews, through the intensity sampling, two subjects were finally determined for case study.

2.3. Validity Test of Research Results

This study mainly used in-depth interviews and symptom self-rating scale (SCL-90) to collect data. Under the guidance of grounded theory, the interview data was encoded and analyzed, and the research conclusions were drawn. The recorded transcription materials and the first draft of the paper were reviewed by the respondents, confirming their descriptive validity.

The study also used a SCL-90 revised by Wang Zhengyu to conduct a questionnaire survey (Wang, 1984), which included 90 questions and scored according to 1 - 5. The symptom reliability coefficient of the scale is between 0.79 and 0.90, which has high reliability. It is the most widely used scale for Chinese college students' mental health research in the past 20 years. It contains 10 dimensions of somatization, interpersonal sensitivity, depression, coercion, hostility, anxiety, stubbornness, fear, psychosis and other symptom factors. The total scores of the protagonists in the two selected cases all exceeded 160 points, with positive stress symptoms.

3. The Cases

Case 1: Xiaowen encountered difficulties in the second year of college. Her father had uremia and needed to survive through dialysis. The family spent the money on her father and could not afford to pay for her living expenses. She said that she wanted to give up her studies, go out to work to support herself and help her family. The friend sympathized with her and helped her find a part-time job in Baise so that she could Resolutely passed the storm!

Her friend's testimony: "It is true that we are born in rural areas, we have no reason not to be strong. Because if the rural family has a small situation, or an unexpected event, the economy will be very embarrassed, then we can only be strong enough to get through the storm, isn't it?"

Her own testimony: "Learning life is getting more and more busy, but I still want to work part-time to support myself, let the family save some money for my father's treatment, I firmly believe that I can do it! Because life makes us strong!"

For the case of Xiaowen girl, the lucky one is that her father has participated in the new rural cooperative medical system in Guangxi Province. In 2016, Guangxi Province determined the hospitalization reimbursement line for the county-level fixed-point medical institution to be 400 - 500 yuan. The proportion of medical expenses that can be obtained from the new rural cooperative fund after the hospitalization of the farmers is 60% of the designated medical institutions at the county level. Her father needs to be treated in a county hospital, with a reimbursement rate of 65% - 75%, which relieves her family's financial burden to some extent. Xiaowen's tuition fees apply for China's national student loans, which are gradually returned after graduation. However, Xiaowen's living expenses are not enough to be paid by part-time work. The author helped her to win a job-study job updated online course information in the university. The monthly subsidy is 150 yuan, plus The Chinese National Normal Student Grant is subsidized by 300 yuan per month and part of the relatives. The living expenses of Xiaowen are barely enough. Xiaowen said that she will go to the factory in Guangdong Province to work in the summer, and she can save about 1500 yuan in living expenses for more than one month.

Case 2: A Ling, female, when she first went to college, her mother had a major operation, and since then the family began to borrow. In the second semester, her mother detected the late stage of uterine cancer. Because her father and grandmother were very bad to her mother, they did not take care of her mother during the serious illness. The father did not agree with her schooling, and at this time he was unable to support A Ling. She has repeatedly found the author to understand the issue of dropping out of university, but she can see her desire to continue her studies and complete her studies. After many efforts, the university finally agreed to take time off to take care of her mother. Two months later, the only family who loved her—the mother had finished her life, she had finished her mother's affairs and returned to university. In the two months of

caring for her mother, she insisted on self-learning the culture of each subject. After returning to school, she basically had no problem adapting to the theoretical course, and stepped up her skills training. She achieved good results in the final exam.

In the case of Aling, on the one hand, the university gave her humanistic care and allowed her to take care of her mother for nearly three months. On the other hand, she herself has the determination and actions to persist in her studies. Tuition loans, living expenses are subsidized by his aunt 60 dollars per month, so the basic living problems have been solved. But she still hopes to find a part-time job and be self-reliant.

4. Discussion

By analyzing the above two cases, it is not difficult to find that they have the following common characteristics: impoverished students are strong and confident; get better social support (such as obtaining national student loans, living expenses supported by relatives and friends, getting work-study and summer job opportunities). The university gives impoverished students humanistic care, through the telephone conversation with impoverished students, mobile phone text messages, WeChat, QQ, understand their psychological trends in a timely manner from multiple aspects, provide work-study positions, guide them to correctly understand the difficulties, so they can continue to complete their studies. So, are there any practical ways to help more impoverished students?

4.1. Guide Impoverished Students to Treat Poverty with Optimism and Actively Seek Social Support

1) Guide impoverished students to look at poverty optimistically, confident and self-reliant.

First, poverty is not his/her fault and can be solved. High tuition pressures can be addressed by applying for student loans, bursaries and scholarships. Although poverty is not a good thing, impoverished students must not feel inferior because of their poverty. They should focus on their studies.

Second, poverty is only temporary. As long as the impoverished students work hard enough, there are still many opportunities. As the saying goes: there is always a way out. Poor students should analyze their own strengths and weaknesses, give play to their strengths and advantages (Fan, 2018), and win the employment of good employers when they graduate, and change the status quo of poverty. Establishing this concept will make them feel calm and gain more recognition in their interactions, which will help them get rid of loneliness and depression (Wang & Li, 2011).

2) Guide impoverished students to actively seek social support.

The mental health problems of impoverished students are generally caused by pressures such as economy, employment, and parental expectations exceeding psychological capacity. Poor students should consciously improve their ability to resist interference. In addition to actively seeking self and external support, they

can also actively decompression through mental health training sessions, psychological counseling, etc., and participate in some useful collective activities to broaden their horizons and get rid of psychological dilemmas.

4.2. Expanding Social Support and Support Channels for Impoverished Students

1) Further improve the funding system.

Colleges and universities have formed a series of subsidy policy systems, including national scholarships, national motivational scholarships, national bursaries, national student loans, work-study grants, subsidies, and tuition reductions. The amount has also increased year by year. The selection methods that should further improve for various scholarships and achieve fairness. To fully tap the potential of social funding. The development of college students' talents plays an important role in the prosperity of local culture. Colleges and universities should pay attention to the funding of impoverished students, and the society also has the responsibility to help impoverished students.

In 2017, the university student funded projects set up by the government, universities and the society funded 42.759 million students from the national colleges and universities, with a funding of 105.074 billion yuan, an increase of 9.49 billion yuan or 9.93% over 2016 (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2017). Among them: China's state financial funds of 50.883 billion yuan, Chinese banks issued 28.42 billion yuan of national student loans, and the income of colleges and universities to extract and spend funds of 23.821 billion yuan. Social organizations, enterprises and institutions and individuals donated funds of 1.95 billion yuan. These four items accounted for 48.43%, 27.05%, 22.67%, and 1.85% of the total amount of university funding in 2017, respectively.

In the cases, Xiaowen and Ailing were supported by the national student loans to solve their main economic problems, which made them have more confidence to complete their studies. Initiate social and social groups to set up scholarships or bursaries in colleges and universities to help impoverished students solve major economic problems. Expand the channels for student and university work in the university, so that impoverished students can obtain certain financial rewards through appropriate labor. A series of funding policies will alleviate the economic situation of impoverished students and eliminate their psychological pressure.

2) Impoverished students should establish the glory of labor (Xu & Qiu, 2018).

In many developed countries, most adult students have to work to earn tuition. In the case, Xiaowen obtained a certain amount of labor compensation through the work-study job in the university, which relieved part of the economic pressure and played a greater role in her self-reliance. Therefore, society and schools should provide such opportunities to impoverished students. However, there are relatively few such jobs in medium-sized cities in China, and there are more in large cities.

The university perfects the mental health counseling system to provide more psychological counseling for impoverished students. First, impoverished students can understand their interpersonal relationship objectively and correctly through psychological health education courses, and let them learn some methods and skills of interpersonal communication, such as guiding them to talk to relatives, classmates and friends in time (Liu, 2015). Second, the university should establish a mental health education center with high-quality full-time mental health education teachers (Li, 2012), forming an individualized way to help impoverished students solve mental health, and change their psychological state of anxiety, sensitivity, and inferiority.

Universities and societies broaden the employment channels of impoverished students and solve their worries. In response to the psychological pressure of employment of impoverished students (Bi, 2016), colleges and universities should do the following work: First, guide impoverished students to establish a correct concept of career choice and career development, and guide them to combine their ideals and abilities, parents' expectations and reality. Through the analysis of seeking truth from facts, they can find their position in the job market, maintain a good employment mentality, and continuously enhance their psychological endurance and anti-frustration through the development of employment psychological counseling. Second, universities must create employment conditions for impoverished students and build employment platforms. Universities should pay attention to cultivating the vocational skills of impoverished students, freely open computer rooms and laboratories to impoverished students, actively provide thoughtful and meticulous employment services for impoverished students, and provide personalized guidance to impoverished students to help them find employment.

5. Conclusion

In the cases, Xiaowen and Aling's tuition fees were all settled through state loans, and living expenses were mainly funded by relatives. Under the premise that their economic difficulties have been basically solved, through their loved ones support, peer help, teacher education guidance and ability training, they can explore their potential, correctly understand poverty, courageously face poverty, actively respond to poverty, and eventually surpass poverty. There are few case studies, and this study can help to understand the realities of college students with financial difficulties to a certain extent, and then provide targeted assistance to promote their healthy growth and success.

Conflicts of Interest

No conflicts of interest, financial or otherwise, are declared by the authors.

Funding

Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region Education Science Planning Project of

China (NO. 2010C163); Baise University Teaching Research Project (NO. 2009JG15).

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