

Exploration of the Psychological Mechanism in Students from Financially Disadvantaged Families in Colleges and Universities---Taking the Clinical Medical College of Jiangxi University of Chinese Medicine as an Example

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Abstract: This study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the psychological situation of students from financially disadvantaged families in colleges and universities. A questionnaire survey was carried out among 438 such students from the Clinical Medical College of Jiangxi University of Chinese Medicine. By analyzing the survey data, the study delved into the characteristics and problems of these students in terms of gender, grade, psychological adaptation, learning satisfaction, interpersonal relationships, and sources of stress. Furthermore, corresponding suggestions and countermeasures were put forward based on the findings. This research is of paramount significance as it enables colleges and universities to formulate targeted mental health education and support measures. By identifying the specific needs and challenges faced by students from financially disadvantaged families, educational institutions can provide more effective assistance and resources to promote their psychological well-being and overall development. Additionally, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge in the field, shedding light on the complex psychological mechanisms of this vulnerable student population and providing valuable insights for future research and practice. Ultimately, the goal is to create a more supportive and inclusive educational environment that helps these students overcome their difficulties and achieve their full potential.

Keywords: Colleges and Universities, Students from Financially Disadvantaged Families, Psychological Mechanism, Mental Health

1. Introduction

Students from financially disadvantaged families in colleges and universities refer to those students whose families and themselves can hardly afford the basic expenses for their study and life during their schooling. They are more prone to mental health problems than ordinary college students, being more sensitive, prone to anxiety and depression, and also prone to adaptability problems in study, life, and interpersonal communication after entering the university. Studies have pointed out that the constant consumption of self-control resources to resist temptation or desire at the same time will reduce the self-control ability of college students from families with financial difficulties and increase the possibility of them succumbing to other temptations or desires^[1]. Many of these students have an inferiority complex, which may stem from the gap in economic conditions, such as being inferior to others in terms of clothing, study tools, and the backwardness of personal skills and cultivation due to economic limitations, as well as the lack of outstanding academic performance in the university, resulting in a low sense of self-worth and excessive sensitivity to the evaluation and views of others^[2]. After entering the university, they are easy to have a huge sense of gap, causing psychological barriers and spiritual emptiness. Economic pressure brings anxiety about tuition fees, living expenses, family burdens, academic performance, and employment^[3]. They worry that family changes will affect their studies, are anxious about study expenses, are afraid of disappointing their families or sponsors with poor grades, and when facing employment, they have to consider both their own development and the economic situation of their families, making their career choice mentality confused and full of fear for the future. Seeing the superior living conditions of classmates from wealthy families, although they are not inferior or even better in terms of study, ability,

and intelligence, they cannot enjoy them due to family poverty, resulting in psychological imbalance and jealousy. This emotion may lead to hostility towards others, but if guided properly, it can also be transformed into a driving force for progress.

Some financially disadvantaged college students have a lower core self-evaluation, less friend support, and a stronger sense of loneliness, facing many psychological problems such as inferiority, depression, and anxiety. Some students are dissatisfied with their poor family background, resent their families and parents, and even resent others and society, or develop a mentality of envy for the rich and hatred for officials. Some financially disadvantaged students have a lack of integrity, such as providing false poverty certificates, cheating in exams to obtain scholarships, and maliciously defaulting on student loans, which reflects their lack of the spirit of self-reliance and the sense of responsibility. Some students are too immersed in their own misfortune, their ideals and beliefs are diluted, and their spiritual realm is occupied by utilitarianism, money worship, and pragmatism^[4]. However, existing studies have found that the self is closely related to mental health, and a positive self can maintain the coordination of various parts of the psychological system, maintain the consistency between the individual's internal and external and the stability of behavior, and promote the individual's adaptation to society, which has a positive significance for their mental health^[5].

Students from financially disadvantaged families in colleges and universities are a special group that cannot be ignored. Under the shadow of economic pressure, they often face many psychological challenges^[6]. In-depth research on the psychological mechanism of this group is of great significance for understanding their inner world and providing effective psychological support and help^[7]. The issue of students from financially disadvantaged families in colleges and universities deserves attention from all parties and requires efforts from all sides. This study attempts to take the students from financially disadvantaged families in the Clinical Medical College of Jiangxi University of Chinese Medicine as the research object, further study the psychological characteristics of these students, and explore the factors that cause the psychological characteristics of these students, and put forward targeted educational countermeasures.

2. Research Methods

2.1. Research Object

A total of 438 students from financially disadvantaged families in the Clinical Medical College of Jiangxi University of Chinese Medicine were carefully selected as the research object. These students were chosen based on specific criteria related to their financial status to ensure the representativeness and relevance of the sample for the study. The selection process took into account factors such as the level of financial hardship, family income, and other relevant indicators to accurately identify and include students who truly faced financial difficulties in the research. By selecting these 438 students as the research object, the study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the unique challenges and experiences faced by this particular group within the context of the Clinical Medical College.

2.2. Research Tool

A self-compiled "Questionnaire on the Psychological Situation of Students from Financially Disadvantaged Families in Colleges and Universities" was used, which included the basic information of the students, the economic situation of their families, their psychological adaptation, learning satisfaction, interpersonal relationships, psychological stress, and other aspects.

2.3. Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected through an online questionnaire, and a total of 438 valid questionnaires were collected. Statistical software was used to perform descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and difference tests on the data.

3. Results and Analysis

3.1. Differences by Gender and Grade

There were 178 male students, accounting for 40.64%; and 260 female students, accounting for

59.36%. The results showed that there were significant differences in psychology by gender. Specifically, male students from financially disadvantaged families may be more inclined to cope with psychological pressure through external behavioral manifestations, such as working harder to improve their academic performance in the hope of changing their situation, or by participating in fiercely competitive activities to prove their abilities. However, this coping style may lead them to be more prone to anxiety and frustration when facing setbacks, and they may be less willing to actively seek help from others to get rid of inner troubles. In contrast, female students from financially disadvantaged families may be more delicate and sensitive psychologically. They often pay more attention to interpersonal relationships and emotional support, and when facing the psychological pressure brought by economic difficulties, they may turn to friends, family, or teachers to obtain emotional comfort and practical help. But this way may also make them more susceptible to the influence of others' evaluations and views, resulting in an inferiority complex. In addition, female students may show more worry and fear when facing the uncertainty of the future, and have higher anxiety levels regarding career development and marriage and family.

The research results clearly show that there are significant psychological differences by grade among students from financially disadvantaged families in colleges and universities. For freshmen students from financially disadvantaged families, they have just stepped into the university campus and are facing a huge transformation in the new environment and lifestyle. At this time, they often have high expectations for university life, but at the same time, they feel inferior and uneasy due to economic difficulties. In the process of adapting to the new environment, they may show strong anxiety, worrying that they cannot integrate into the collective and are afraid of being discriminated against due to economic reasons. In addition, due to the lack of a clear understanding of the major and the future development direction, they may feel confused and puzzled. As the grade increasing, sophomore students from financially disadvantaged families gradually adapt to university life and begin to pay more attention to their studies and personal development. However, economic pressure is still one of the main problems they face. In order to reduce the burden on their families, they may study harder to strive for scholarships or grants. At the same time, they may also actively look for part-time jobs, but this may lead to conflicts between study and work, thereby causing anxiety and stress. In terms of interpersonal relationships, they may pay more attention to establishing deep friendships with like-minded classmates to obtain emotional support and help.

By the junior year, students from financially disadvantaged families have a deeper grasp of professional knowledge and a clearer direction for their future career planning. However, they may be limited in choosing internship opportunities, participating in training courses, or preparing for postgraduate entrance exams due to economic reasons, which will make them feel anxious and helpless. In addition, as graduation approaches, they begin to realize that they are about to face the challenges of society and feel worried about the uncertainty of the future and employment pressure. At this stage, their psychological state may be more complex and contradictory. Senior (fifth-year) students from financially disadvantaged families are facing the dual pressures of graduation and employment. They need to complete their graduation thesis or design, and at the same time, actively look for job opportunities. In the job search process, they may face more difficulties and challenges due to the lack of economic background and social resources, which may lead to negative emotions such as inferiority, anxiety, and depression. In addition, for those students who choose to continue their studies, the pressure of postgraduate entrance exams and the economic burden will also bring them a greater psychological burden.

3.2. Psychological Adaptation Situation

The data presented provides insights into the students' perspectives on various aspects of their university life. Regarding adaptation to university life, the majority of students (52.05%) think it is very good, indicating that a significant portion of the sample has a positive experience in adjusting to the university environment. However, a substantial 45.21% consider it average, suggesting that there is room for improvement in certain areas to enhance the overall adaptation experience. The small percentages of students who think it is poor (2.51%) or very poor (0.23%) highlight the need to address the specific challenges faced by these individuals. In terms of satisfaction with learning, only 16.21% of the students are very satisfied, while the majority (74.66%) are average. This suggests that while most students are moderately satisfied, there is a need to explore ways to increase their engagement and enthusiasm towards learning. The 8.22% of dissatisfied students and the 0.68% who are very dissatisfied indicate that some students are facing difficulties or issues that need to be identified and resolved to improve their learning satisfaction. The evaluation of one's ability to get along with others is also revealing. A relatively high

percentage (48.17%) of students often feel disappointed with their ability in this area, which could potentially impact their social interactions and overall well-being. Additionally, 43.84% of the students sometimes feel lonely and helpless, indicating that many students may be struggling with building and maintaining healthy relationships. However, the 7.99% of students who do not have such issues and get along well with classmates and teachers provide a positive example and suggest that interventions or support can help more students develop better interpersonal skills.

Overall, these findings highlight the importance of addressing the specific needs and concerns of students from financially disadvantaged families to improve their overall university experience, including their adaptation, learning satisfaction, and interpersonal relationships.

3.3. Sources of Psychological Stress

The data shows that academic studies and fierce social competition are perceived as the main sources of life and psychological stress by a significant majority of students (92.92%). This suggests that the academic and career-related pressures are highly prevalent among the students, possibly due to the intense competition in the educational and job markets. Parents' expectations also play a considerable role in causing stress, as indicated by 56.85% of the students. This implies that students feel a sense of burden to meet their parents' expectations, which can add to their overall stress levels.

The direction of love is another factor that a substantial number of students (67.35%) believe brings pressure. This could be related to the emotional and relational challenges associated with romantic relationships, as well as the potential impact on future plans and decisions. Insufficient understanding of the outside world is seen as a source of pressure by 52.05% of the students, suggesting that a lack of knowledge or preparation for the broader world can cause anxiety and uncertainty. Interestingly, only 1.83% of the students consider the family economic situation as the sole source of pressure. This might indicate that while economic difficulties are a factor, they are often intertwined with other stressors and may not be the primary perceived cause of stress for most students. The fact that some students believe other factors may also cause pressure highlights the complexity of the stress landscape for these students. It suggests that there may be individual-specific factors or a combination of multiple factors that contribute to their stress, which requires further exploration and understanding.

3.4. Attitude towards Family Economic Conditions

The data reveals some interesting insights into the students' attitudes towards family conditions and their perception of its impact on learning. Only 20.55% of the students envy their classmates with good family conditions, while the majority (79.45%) do not envy but are determined to strive hard. This shows a positive and proactive mindset among the majority of the students, who are motivated to work hard despite their financial circumstances. Regarding the impact of family conditions on learning, a small percentage (0.91%) of the students believe it has a very large negative impact, and 15.98% believe there is a large negative impact. On the other hand, 47.03% of the students believe there is no impact and they can fully devote themselves to learning, indicating their resilience and ability to focus on their studies regardless of their family background. However, 36.07% of the students are not sure about the impact, which suggests that they may be unsure or have not yet formed a clear opinion on this matter.

This uncertainty could potentially be due to various factors, such as a lack of awareness of the specific ways in which family conditions might affect learning, or a belief that other factors may also play a significant role. It could also indicate that these students may be experiencing some mixed or ambiguous effects that make it difficult to determine the exact impact.

3.5. Self-cognition and Expectations

The data indicates that a significant proportion of students (42.92%) prioritize changing their knowledge, recognizing the power of knowledge in their lives. This suggests that these students understand the importance of education and see it as a means to improve their situation. The 21.69% of students who hope to change their personality may be aware of the need to develop certain traits or characteristics to better cope with life's challenges. The desire for wealth among 19.63% of the students is understandable, given the financial difficulties they may face. However, it is also important to note that a considerable number of students (13.47%) focus on improving their abilities, which can be a more sustainable approach to achieving long-term success. In terms of feelings of inferiority due to economic difficulties, while 35.39% of the students do experience such feelings, the majority (64.61%) do not,

which is a positive sign. This shows that many students are able to maintain a positive self-image despite their financial circumstances.

Regarding the willingness to disclose their status as poor students in public, the majority of students are either very reluctant or unwilling to do so. This could be due to a fear of being judged or stigmatized. However, the 14.16% of students who are not very willing but can accept it, and the 14.16% who depend on the specific situation, show a more flexible attitude. The 1.83% of students who are willing to say and do not consider it a big deal demonstrate a high level of self-acceptance and confidence. Overall, these findings highlight the diverse aspirations and attitudes of students from financially disadvantaged families. It is important for educators and policymakers to take these factors into account when designing support programs and interventions to help these students achieve their goals and build a positive sense of self.

3.6. Interpersonal Relationship Situation

These findings shed light on the social and interpersonal challenges that some students from financially disadvantaged families may face. The perception that classmates look at them differently due to their family economic conditions can lead to feelings of isolation and low self-esteem. This may further impact their social interactions and sense of belonging in the school community. The fact that some students have big fights with their parents over small things suggests that the financial stress may also be taking a toll on their family relationships. It could indicate a lack of effective communication and understanding within the family, which can add to the students' emotional burden. The high percentage (79.45%) of students who choose to give up participating in group activities due to family economic problems is concerning. This may limit their opportunities for socialization, skill development, and building a sense of community. It can also have a negative impact on their overall college experience and personal growth.

On the other hand, the 20.55% of students who do not give up participating in group activities demonstrate resilience and a determination to not let their financial situation limit their experiences. These students can serve as positive examples and may benefit from additional support to continue their active participation. Overall, these issues highlight the need for schools and educators to be aware of the potential challenges faced by these students and to provide appropriate support and resources to help them overcome these barriers. This could include offering financial assistance for activities, facilitating communication and conflict resolution skills within families, and creating a more inclusive and supportive campus environment.

3.7. Coping Methods

The data shows that the majority of students (73.52%) are willing to actively accept the help of classmates and social relief when needed, which indicates a certain degree of openness and willingness to seek support. This is a positive sign as it suggests that these students recognize the importance of external help in dealing with the anxiety caused by their family's economic situation. However, 5.94% of the students choose not to accept such help, which may be due to various reasons. Some students may have a strong sense of independence and prefer to solve problems on their own. Others may feel embarrassed or uncomfortable accepting help, possibly due to a fear of being judged or indebted to others. Understanding the reasons behind this choice can help in providing more appropriate support and addressing any potential barriers to seeking help. The 20.55% of students who do not know how to choose indicate a state of confusion or uncertainty. This may suggest that these students need more information and guidance on the available options for dealing with their family's economic situation and the associated anxiety.

In short, as mentioned, students indeed have various ways to cope with the anxiety of the family economic situation. However, it is important for schools, families, and society to provide appropriate support and resources to help students make informed decisions and access the help they need. This could include offering counseling services, providing information about available assistance programs, and fostering a supportive and non-judgmental environment where students feel comfortable seeking help. Additionally, educating students about the benefits of accepting help and building strong social support networks can also be beneficial in helping them manage and overcome the challenges associated with their family's economic situation.

4. Discussion

4.1. Psychological Characteristics of Students from Financially Disadvantaged Families

The psychological adaptability tends to be relatively weak for some students^[8]. They encounter difficulties in adjusting to university life, and this might be associated with the economic pressure they bear and the changes in the living environment they experience during their growth. Moreover, the low level of learning satisfaction could also have a negative impact on their self-confidence and enthusiasm. For instance, the financial constraints may limit their access to resources and opportunities, making it harder for them to integrate into the university community. Additionally, the sudden change from a familiar environment to a new and unfamiliar one can cause stress and anxiety, further hindering their adaptation. The dissatisfaction with learning might lead them to doubt their abilities and lose motivation, which could have long-term consequences on their academic performance and personal development^[9]. Therefore, it is crucial to address these issues and provide appropriate support to help these students enhance their psychological adaptability and improve their learning satisfaction.

The perception of pressure is relatively obvious. Factors such as academic competition, parents' expectations, and love all bring great pressure to students, and the family economic situation also aggravates their psychological burden to a certain extent. There are differences in self-cognition and expectations. Students have different expectations for themselves and the aspects they hope to change, but most students hope to change the status quo by improving knowledge and abilities. The attitude towards family economic conditions also reflects their psychological state, and some students will feel inferior or envy others. Problems in interpersonal relationships. Some students have problems in getting along with classmates and parents, which may affect their emotional support and mental health. Giving up participating in group activities due to economic problems may lead to a narrow social circle and further aggravate their sense of loneliness.

4.2. Factors Affecting the Psychology of Students from Financially Disadvantaged Families

4.2.1. Economic Factors

Family financial difficulties are one of the important reasons for students' psychological problems. Economic pressure may make students face many limitations in study and life, affecting their self-esteem and self-confidence^[10].

4.2.2. Family Environment

The educational style of the family, the relationship between family members, and other factors will all have an impact on the students' psychology. A lack of care and support in the family environment may make students more prone to psychological problems.

4.2.3. Social Environment

Social factors such as the perception and attitude towards poor students and the relationship between classmates will also affect the students' psychology. Discrimination and strange looks may hurt the students' self-esteem.

4.2.4. Personal Factors

Students' personality traits, coping styles, and other individual factors also play a significant role in determining their ability to withstand difficulties and make psychological adjustments to a certain extent. For instance, individuals with a resilient and optimistic personality are more likely to cope effectively with challenges, as they tend to view setbacks as temporary and see opportunities for growth. Similarly, adaptive coping styles, such as problem-solving and seeking social support, can help students manage stress and maintain a positive mental state. Other personal factors, such as self-esteem, emotional intelligence, and resilience, also contribute to their ability to navigate through difficult situations and make appropriate psychological adjustments. Therefore, it is important to consider these individual differences when providing support and interventions to help students develop healthy coping strategies and enhance their psychological well-being.

4.3. Countermeasures and Suggestions

4.3.1. Strengthen Mental Health Education

Colleges and universities should offer specialized mental health courses to help students understand their psychological state and master the methods to cope with stress and setbacks. Teachers and counselors are supposed to provide psychological counseling services to provide students with timely psychological support and help.

4.3.2. Improve the Funding System

In addition to financial assistance, more developmental funding should be provided, such as scholarships and internship opportunities, to help students improve their abilities. The funding management committee needs to ensure the transparency and fairness of funding information so that students who really need help can get support.

4.3.3. Create a Good Campus Atmosphere

The school should advocate a campus culture of equality, care, and mutual assistance, and reduce discrimination and prejudice against poor students^[11]. Various activities should be actively organized by the school authorities to promote the communication and integration of students. Through sports competitions, cultural festivals, and academic seminars, students from different backgrounds can be brought together to share their experiences and ideas and build deep friendships.

4.3.4. Strengthen Family Education Guidance

Parents should attach great importance to their children's mental health and provide them with ample care and support. It is crucial for parents to be attentive to their children's emotional well-being, listen to their concerns, and offer encouragement and reassurance. By doing so, parents can create a safe and nurturing environment for their children to grow and develop. School can play a significant role in this aspect by offering family education guidance. They can organize workshops, seminars, or online courses to help parents acquire the correct educational methods. These resources can equip parents with the knowledge and skills to better understand their children's needs, communicate effectively, and set appropriate expectations. Additionally, schools can provide counseling services or refer parents to professional psychologists when needed, ensuring that children receive comprehensive support for their mental health.

4.3.5. Improve Students' Own Quality

Students ought to make every effort to enhance their knowledge and capabilities, as well as boost their self-confidence. They should learn to actively confront difficulties and setbacks, and cultivate an optimistic and progressive mindset. For example, they can engage in continuous learning, seek out new challenges, and reflect on their experiences to grow and develop. By actively coping with difficulties, they can build resilience and learn valuable life skills. Additionally, maintaining an optimistic outlook can help them see opportunities in adversity and stay motivated in the face of challenge^[12]. Cultivating such a positive mentality will not only benefit them during their academic years but also in their future endeavors.

5. Conclusion

Through the investigation of the psychological situation of students from financially disadvantaged families in the Clinical Medical College of Jiangxi University of Chinese Medicine, this study found that they have some problems in psychological adaptation, pressure perception, self-cognition, interpersonal relationships, and other aspects. The emergence of these problems is related to various factors such as economy, family, society, and individuals. In order to help students from financially disadvantaged families grow up healthily, colleges and universities should take comprehensive measures, strengthen mental health education, improve the funding system, create a good campus atmosphere, strengthen family education guidance, and improve students' own quality. At the same time, all sectors of society should also pay attention to this group and provide them with more support and help to jointly promote their all-round development.

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