

## **A Study on the Life Stressors and the Coping Strategies of the Minority College Students of Xinjiang in the Universities of Jilin Province**

Hongshuai Wang

The Publicity Department of Beihua University, No. 3999 Binjiang east road, Fengman District, Jilin province, China Postcode: 132013  
365992895@qq.com

**Keywords:** Xinjiang minority college students; Stressors; Stress reaction; Countermeasures

**Abstract.** The purpose of this paper is to help Xinjiang minority college students who study in the mainland to solve psychological problems, to assist the first-line counselors in managing the education of Xinjiang minority college students, to prevent the occurrence of minority students psychological crisis events, to explore new ways of minority college students mental health education in Jilin province. Based on the psychological stress theory and the education practice of first-line counselors, this study analyzed the mental health status of Xinjiang minority college students in universities of Jilin province by means of questionnaire survey, interview and conversation, and comparative study. The results showed that Xinjiang minority college students who study in the mainland generally faced five major life stressors, including language barrier, interpersonal communication, employment worries, cultural differences and economic difficulties. This paper believes that these stressors can be divided into three main types: negative and positive stress reaction, acute and chronic stress reaction and stress reaction of daily frustration. Therefore, it should be dealt with from three aspects: stressors assessment, positive experience balance, and stressors anticipatory coping.

### **Quotation**

Since 2014, there are more than 20 universities in Jilin area receiving minority students more than 600 people each year, including 60% Xinjiang minority college students. And universities education work pressure increases progressively year by year. So improving the mental health education mechanism of Xinjiang minority college students in our province is necessary to maintain regional security and social stability. "Minority students from Xinjiang need to integrate into the new social environment as soon as possible when they go to study in the mainland universities, which is a necessary prerequisite for improving their psychological security." [1] It is necessary for universities to timely grasp the causes of psychological pressure of Xinjiang minority college students, evaluate their stress reaction and propose coping strategies. It has certain academic reference value for colleges and universities to make relevant educational management rules and regulations. At the same time, further research on the main life stressors of Xinjiang minority college students is a necessary way to help mainland minority college students adapt to the new environment and improve their ability to cope with emergencies.

### **Investigation on the Life Stressors of Minority College Students in the Universities of Jilin Province**

**Definition.** Stressor: Stress is a mode of reaction, which is manifested as stress when the stimulus event breaks the balance and the load capacity of the organism, or exceeds the ability of the individual. These stimulus events include various situations from the outside or inside, collectively referred to as stressor. [2] In terms of the dimensionality, the stimuli produced by stressors to students vary in intensity, interval and frequency, as well as predictability. In terms of types, there are four major stressors: physical, psychological, social and cultural. [3]

**Status Survey.** The Social Readjustment Rating Scale (SRRS) [4] was revised for 160 Xinjiang minority college students from some universities in Jilin city. We assign points from the following

aspects such as the important course failed to pass, the girlfriend or boyfriend, the school work burden of aggravating, outstanding achievements, the changes of living conditions in the first semester of college, the fierce debate with teachers, below anticipant scores, the changes of social activities, the changes of living environment, the change of eating habits, the changes of the number of family gatherings, miss class too much, change schools, one or more of the course to keep up with, language barriers, change the major, social part-time, the cost of living expenses and so on, and then use these to show the life stress events need to adapt to the total amount. The higher score, the greater stress, and the higher risk for mental health. The results showed that life events of language barrier, interpersonal communication, employment worries, cultural differences and economic difficulties were the main life stressors.

### **Psychological Responses to Stress Analysis of the Minority College Students of Xinjiang in the Universities of Jilin Province**

"Minority college students are a special group, and their living environment, education, culture, inherent customs and religious beliefs are diversified." [5] The Xinjiang minority college students who come to the mainland, is bound to be faced with various challenges, such as differences in cultures and customs, differences in regional climate, the language communication barriers, and different religious beliefs. As a result, they are psychologically stimulated by a variety of life stressors, followed by psychological responses to different types of stressors.

**Negative and Positive Stress Reactions.** The change of living environment is the source of pressure. For example, entering college for Xinjiang underdeveloped regions of minority family is a great event, not only make the students to universities, also let the whole family be proud of their children. Even if these events are welcomed by students from Xinjiang, but entering a higher school is a significant change for their routine life. They need to "individuals in psychological and behavioral aspects of their own culture and the harmonious integration of Han culture" [6] to adapt to a new environment. Entering college is still a major source of stress, leading to lower life satisfaction. For most Xinjiang minority college students, studying in the mainland means living far away from their families and relatives and facing new environments and challenges on their own. Xinjiang minority college students are new to a region. With poor language, unique appearance, different customs and different diets, they are unfamiliar with each other, which brings them many difficulties. Poor mandarin, on the one hand, affects the effectiveness and enthusiasm of communication among minority students; on the other hand, it also severely blows to self-confidence of Xinjiang minority students. It may cause anxiety, depression and other negative psychological stress reactions for Xinjiang minority freshmen.

**Acute and Chronic Stress Reactions.** When analyse psychological stressors, it is not easy to give a clear conclusion, whether it is acute or chronic stressors. Taking Urumqi Xinjiang "7.5" incident as an example, at the beginning, it was an acute stress event, but some societal rumours and some extreme internet comments made the Xinjiang minority college students constantly worry about being affected by the incident. Therefore, the incident became a chronic stress event. Xinjiang minority college students unconsciously appear strong defensive psychology, showing the maintenance of their own nation and resistance to foreign nationalities. At the same time, Han students in mainland colleges and universities will be affected by rumors and extreme internet comments, which is easy to form prejudices against Xinjiang minority students. "Ethnic relations are the relations of mutual exchange and influence in the process of the existence and development of ethnic groups." [7] The chronic stress reaction caused by ethnic prejudice of Xinjiang minority students has a profound impact on their overall physical and mental health and treatment of other ethnic relations.

**Stress Reaction to Daily Setbacks.** Xinjiang minority students are more affected by setbacks in daily interpersonal communication, such as obstacles in daily language communication, misunderstandings of others, unusual vision caused by their unique appearance, lack of recognition and respect for national habits, economic difficulties, and cold treatment of employment and other daily stress events. These recurring daily stressors are common to most Xinjiang minority college

students. Taking language communication obstacle as an example, the Xinjiang minority college students speak minority languages in their hometown. After entering the mainland colleges, they should not only master the language of daily communication, but also improve the Chinese language ability needed in class as soon as possible. Those Xinjiang minority college students who are often misunderstood have worse and worse ability of language communication and listening to classes, and even have deep frustration and inferiority complex.

### **Coping Strategies for Life Stressors of Xinjiang Minority College Students in the Universities of Jilin Province**

Because of the obvious differences in culture, religion, custom and language, Xinjiang minority students will inevitably feel various pressures in their daily life when they come to Jilin to attend university. "If they cannot get timely counseling and help, they will fear the study and the school life." [8] Over time, it will become a chronic stressors, which will disturb students' daily life for a long time, and may even threaten their physical and mental health. Therefore, Xinjiang minority students who study in different places must learn some ways to deal with these stressors. At the same time, as teachers stationed from Xinjiang, Xinjiang minority counselors, and full-time counselors also need to master a set of coping strategies to deal with students' psychological problems and sudden psychological crisis events, in order to avoid the occurrence of extreme events.

**Stressor Assessment.** When students encounter many stress situations, in fact, the first step should be to determine how these stress situations cause pressure on themselves, what the requirements are, how big the threat is, and the resources available to them to relieve pressure. These resources include economic, psychological health, personal expertise, coping ability, the help of professional teachers, and the support of interpersonal network. Some stressors, such as dormitory disputes, personality differences, different interests and hobbies, are encountered by every student, but there are many other stressors defined in many ways, mainly depending on students' own abilities and their self-evaluation of abilities. "At present, universities in the arrangement of dormitories, basically don't use the form of single ethnic accommodation, but take the form of mixed living of different ethnic groups." [9] Taking the ethnic habits of Xinjiang minority college students as an example, they never eat anywhere except in the halal dining hall of the school and the halal restaurant near the school. They require that the teacher of the halal cooker in the school must be a believer in Islam, and even some Xinjiang minority college students should not allow Han students to eat in the dormitory when they live together. Otherwise, they are considered to be disrespectful for them. In the face of such a typical stress event, we should first make a primary assessment of the severity, "What happened?" "Is this a good or bad thing for me, or is it irrelevant?". If the assessment results are stressful, it is necessary to estimate the potential impact of stressors, to determine whether the injury has occurred or will happen, or to take some actions. Once the action is taken, it is necessary to conduct a secondary assessment, to assess whether personal and social resources can effectively cope with stressful situations, such as seeking friends, family, counselors, psychological consultation teacher's help, and then we should consider the selected action plan. If the first plan doesn't work, the pressure didn't disappear, we should seek professional psychological teacher's help, and take a new method.

**Positive Experience Balance.** Xinjiang minority college students often encounter various frustrations in their daily life. These frustrations don't cause enough attention of the students themselves in the initial stage, nor reflect to the counselors or teachers. Therefore, these students are always under a certain level of stress, followed by a series of seemingly inexplicable negative consequences, which puzzles the students. Taking the daily campus cultural activities as an example, "to carry out the activities of ethnic students' unity groups, create a friendly environment, create a sincere atmosphere, promote the interaction and exchange among ethnic students, and improve the interpersonal communication ability of minority college students." [10] In a questionnaire survey of 40 Xinjiang minority students in a university in Jilin City, they were asked to report their positive and negative events every day, and to be paid attention to their daily response intensity. The results

show that popular cultural activities will bring more positive experience, which has a strong immune response to the negative events. At the same time, the negative experience intensity of unpopular cultural events will be weakened. Xinjiang minority college students often feel frustrated because of the obstacles of language communication in academic activities, but they have gained positive experience in basketball, football, literary and dance activities. The previous negative experience has been balanced by these popular cultural activities. Therefore, for students who often feel depressed, it's necessary to understand which events in their daily life will bring them happy experience, so as to balance the negative experience of frustration with these happy experience.

**Stressors Anticipatory Coping.** Whether for Han students or Xinjiang minority college students, we can foresee the stress events in our daily life, so we can make psychological preparations to deal with them before potential stress events. Taking the exam for Xinjiang minority college students as an example, "due to the regional differences between Xinjiang and the mainland, their Chinese foundation is almost zero, and their education level is low. When they enter the university, their foundation of cultural courses is weak." [11] Therefore, the university examination is a challenge for Xinjiang minority college students. That is to say, it is necessary to think carefully about the stressor of the examination and evaluate the stress situation. We have to make it clear that this is a stressful situation before the examination, and make coping behaviors in advanced to cope with stressors anticipatory coping, such as reviewing course at the beginning of the semester, strengthening the training of Chinese listening ability, and so on. There are two ways to cope with stressors anticipatory coping: problem-oriented coping and emotion-oriented coping. Problem-oriented coping is to change the stressor or any other relationship through direct action or problem-solving behavior. The emotion-oriented coping is to change ourselves through taking action but not to change the stressor.

## Conclusion

"Stress tolerance is an important indicator to measure individual mental health." [12] Through grasping the current situation of mental health of Xinjiang minority college students in the universities of Jilin Province, taking full consideration of differences in Jilin local culture, customs, environment, language and other aspects, which brings lots of life pressures to Xinjiang minority college students, and formulating positive guidance and countermeasures, it is not only conducive to improving the level of education and management of minority college students in Jilin province, but also to cultivating minority college students' self-confidence when studying in the mainland. Besides, it can enhance their coping stress abilities so that when they face stress situations, they can take a more positive and optimistic attitude.

## Acknowledgements

The ideological and political research project of "the 13th Five-Year Plan" social science research program of Jilin provincial department of education in 2019, "A Study on the Life Stressors and the Coping Strategies of the Minority College Students of Xinjiang in the Universities of Jilin Province" (JJKH20190687SZ), is one of the phased research results. The student work research branch of the Chinese association of higher education is one of the stage research results of the 2018 college student work project "A Study on the Life Stressors and the Coping Strategies of the Minority College Students of Xinjiang in the Universities of Jilin Province" (LX2018Y003).

## References

- [1] M. Li: Journal of Research on Education for Ethnic Minorities In Chinese, (2018) No.29, p.79.
- [2] Richard J. Gerrig, Philip G. Zimbardo: Psychology and Life In Chinese (Posts & Telecom Press, China 2013),P.362.
- [3] W.B. Che: Encyclopedia of Psychological Counseling In Chinese (Zhejiang Science and Technology Press, China 2001), P.90.

- [4] Richard J. Gerrig, Philip G. Zimbardo: Psychology and life In Chinese, (Posts & Telecom Press, China 2013),P.365.
- [5] G.X. Sun and Y. Ma: Journal of Chinese Youth Social Science In Chinese, (2015) No.4, p.124.
- [6] Y. Wang, N. Lu and Q.R. Chen: Chinese Journal of Clinical Psychology In Chinese, Vol. 27(2019) No.1, p.129.
- [7] Z.Q. Ma and S.J. Ren: Guizhou Ethnic Studies In Chinese, Vol. 2(2016) No.37, p.231.
- [8] B.L. Wang and S.S. Xu: Journal of Jilin Teachers Institute of Engineering and Technology In Chinese,(2015) No.31, p.37.
- [9] Y.Y. Zhou: Specialized Eeducate In Chinese, (2015) No.10, p.64.
- [10]L.Y. Chen: Science & Technology Vision In Chinese, (2016) No.6, p.78.
- [11]B.H. Yang: Ability and Wisdom In Chinese, (2017) No.5, p.185.
- [12]Y. Gao: Journal of Weinan Normal University In Chinese, Vol. 30 (2017) No.2, p.67.