

Research on the current situation of life values of university students in Beijing

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the current state of life values among university students in Beijing and to explore the major influencing factors on contemporary students' life values. Using questionnaire surveys and random sampling, 820 university students from various universities in Beijing were investigated. An empirical analysis method was employed to analyze the current state of life values and major influencing factors. The study revealed that material and family values accounted for a relatively large share of students' value orientations, and achieving self-ideals was also their primary pursuit. However, their sense of social responsibility was relatively weak. The main factors influencing university students' life values include materialistic tendencies caused by economic development, misunderstandings in family education that prioritize results over the process, the disconnect between professional education and ideological and political education in universities, negative influences of internet culture, and students' lack of subjective initiative.

1. Introduction

Life values refer to people's basic perspectives on the meaning and value of their lives. They reflect a person's attitude and goals towards life and are the inherent core of how each shapes themselves. University is an important stage of growth and development, and university students are in a period of rapid formation of worldviews, outlooks on life, and values. Their values will profoundly influence their behavior and value pursuit ^[1]. However, currently, some university students have obscure life values, prominent utilitarian tendencies, and diversified value orientations. This is not conducive to university students correctly recognizing and grasping themselves, nor is it beneficial to the inheritance and development of socialist core values ^[2].

It is of great significance to guide university students in establishing correct life values by researching their life values. Existing studies have mainly focused on investigations and analysis of university students' life values, mostly qualitative analysis, and there is still a lack of comparative research on university students in different regions ^[3]. This study takes university students in

Beijing as the research object because as the capital and political-cultural center of China, Beijing has concentrated university resources and its student group is representative. Through questionnaire surveys, it aims to understand further the development status of life values of university students in Beijing, analyze the social factors and root causes underlying their formation, and propose corresponding strategies and suggestions, to provide references for promoting the education of contemporary university students' life values.

2. Analysis of the Current Situation

This study analyses the current situation of life values of university students in Beijing based on a comprehensive survey. The study collected data from a random sample of 820 enrolled students across a variety of disciplines, including philosophy, economics, law, education, science, engineering, agriculture, management, and art. This broad representation ensured that the student body was balanced in terms of values. The results of the study revealed important insights into the material, family, professional, personal development, and social values of these students^[4-6]. According to the survey results:

In terms of material values, 41.2% of students chose "think of ways to earn more money", while 30.8% chose "to have food and clothing is enough". This reflects that material enjoyment is still an important value orientation for most university students. Research data show that a significant proportion of university students exhibit a strong tendency towards materialistic values, reflecting the importance they place on economic stability and material needs. However, it should not be overlooked that there is still a significant portion of university students who uphold the concept of minimalism, and who value contentment more than over-achievement. It is noteworthy that a higher proportion of university students are concerned about how to earn more income, which maps out the economic pragmatism tendency of university students^[7]. At the same time, this may also be driven by the economic pressure that comes with living in the fast-growing city of Beijing. On the other hand, although the proportion of university students satisfying their basic needs is relatively low, the proportion is still significant, indicating that the value of simple living still has a place among the younger generation, and may be a reflection of consumerism.

In terms of family values, 55.3% of students chose "to let my parents live a decent life", while 12.4% chose "I am the most important". This shows that most university students attach importance to family. This trend suggests that students recognize the importance of family ties and filial piety. They value the comfort and happiness of their parents and are willing to prioritize their needs and well-being. This is a positive reflection of traditional family values and societal norms that emphasize the importance of respecting and caring for one's elders. However, it is also important to note that 12.4% of students chose "I am the most important." This indicates that a small but significant portion of university students may have a more individualistic or self-centered mindset. It is essential to promote a balanced perspective that values both personal growth and family ties. By encouraging students to appreciate the importance of family while also pursuing their dreams and aspirations, we can foster a society that values both individual and collective well-being^[8].

In terms of career values, 67.1% of students chose "realizing my ambitions and ideals", while 22.6% chose "with economic returns and social status as career goals". Realizing ideals and ambitions remains the main goal. The survey results reflect the diversity of university students' professional values. Although economic returns and social status are important considerations for some, realizing one's ambitions and ideals remains the primary goal for a significant majority. This suggests that many university students are driven by a desire to pursue their passions and fulfill their aspirations, rather than solely focusing on material gains or societal recognition. It's important to note that career values are personal and subjective, and different individuals may have different

priorities. Some may value financial security and stability more highly, while others may prioritize personal fulfillment and growth. Understanding and respecting these differences can help create a more inclusive and supportive environment for all students to pursue their career aspirations. Moreover, realizing ambitions and ideals does not necessarily exclude economic success^[9]. Many individuals can find fulfilling careers that also provide economic returns and social status. The key is to find a balance between pursuing one's passions and ensuring financial stability, as well as developing the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in one's chosen field. In summary, while economic returns and social status are important considerations for some students, realizing ambitions and ideals remains the primary career goal for many. It's essential to respect and support individuals' diverse career values and help them pursue their aspirations in a supportive and inclusive environment.

In terms of personal development, 32.1% of students chose "to be independent and free from constraints", while 59.4% chose "to fulfill my potential through hard work". Growth and self-realization are still the main pursuits. This data indicates that for many university students, personal development is focused on both independence and self-fulfillment. On one hand, 32.1% of students value being independent and free from constraints, which reflects a desire for autonomy and the ability to make their own choices and decisions. This is an important aspect of personal growth, as it allows individuals to explore their interests, develop their unique identities, and take responsibility for their own lives. On the other hand, 59.4% of students chose "to fulfill my potential through hard work" as their priority for personal development. This shows a strong emphasis on growth and self-realization through effort and dedication. These students likely believe that their full potential can only be achieved by working hard, challenging themselves, and continuously learning and improving^[10]. Overall, the data suggests that university students value both independence and self-fulfillment as important aspects of personal development. While some prioritize autonomy and freedom, others emphasize the importance of hard work and personal growth. Both perspectives reflect a desire for personal improvement and advancement, demonstrating that growth and self-realization remain the main pursuits for many students.

In terms of social values, only 11.3% of students chose "to uphold justice and care about society", while 29.7% chose "just do not break the law". The sense of social responsibility needs to be strengthened. Firstly, the low percentage of university students who chose "to uphold justice and care about society" (11.3%) indicates a potential lack of emphasis on active social engagement and advocacy among this group. This choice represents a proactive and positive attitude towards societal issues, suggesting a willingness to take action and stand up for justice. Secondly, the higher percentage of university students who selected "just do not break the law" (29.7%) reflects a more passive and compliant attitude. While abiding by the law is fundamental, this choice suggests a focus on personal compliance rather than broader social engagement. The sense of social responsibility among students, as indicated by these data, appears to need strengthening. Social responsibility encourages individuals to consider the impact of their actions on society and the environment, promoting active participation in improving the community. The low percentage choosing to uphold justice suggests a need for greater emphasis on fostering a sense of responsibility and awareness among students^[11]. In conclusion, the data reveals a need to enhance students' sense of social responsibility. Educational institutions and society at large should focus on encouraging students to take an active role in addressing social issues, beyond mere compliance with the law. Promoting awareness, providing opportunities for social engagement, and fostering a culture of responsibility can help develop a more proactive and engaged student population.

3. Analysis of Influencing Factors

3.1 Stimulation of Material Needs Due to Economic Development

Entering the new era, China's economy has developed rapidly, and people's material living standards have improved significantly. However, the improvement in material conditions has also bred some university students' impetuous emotions and tendencies of hedonism. Some students blindly pursue material enjoyment and extravagant lifestyles, lacking rational control over material needs. In terms of consumption concepts and behaviors, they show tendencies of brand comparison and extravagance. They need to be guided to correctly recognise that economic development improves material life, to develop simple living habits, actively build correct consumption concepts, and not take material satisfaction as the goal of life ^[12].

3.2 Barriers in Family-oriented Education

As the primary environment for shaping university students' life values, family education holds a pivotal role. The survey findings underscore that the majority of university students place significant importance on family, indicating the profound influence families exert on their children. However, it is evident that certain families harbor misconceptions, particularly in prioritizing outcomes over processes in education ^[13]. These families tend to excessively emphasize academic achievements, viewing admission to prestigious universities and attainment of high academic credentials as the primary educational objectives, while neglecting the active cultivation of their children's life values throughout their developmental stages. Such an approach is detrimental to the establishment of correct life values among university students. It is imperative to prioritize the cultivation of university students' proper life value orientations from an early age, fostering their sense of social responsibility and instilling feelings of dedication to both their country and family. This entails a shift in focus towards holistic education that encompasses moral and ethical development, rather than solely fixating on academic outcomes.

3.3 Disconnect Between Professional and Ideological Education

Currently, while vigorously developing professional education, some universities have relatively neglected ideological and political education, resulting in a certain disconnection between the two. Professional courses in universities prosper, while the teaching of Marxist theory and ideological and political education courses is relatively weak. Marxist theoretical education is a compulsory course for university students across the country. For students of non-Marxist majors, it is a compulsory general education course. So there is an unconscious attitude divide ^[14]. Some university students attach more importance to professional courses and have an aversion to Marxist theory courses, thinking they have no practical use in real life. Some students only treat ideological and political theory courses as tools to cope with exams, rather than taking Marxism as internal beliefs. Due to insufficient opportunities for systematic study of Marxist theories, some university students lack social responsibility and moral quality. This kind of disconnection between professional education and ideological and political education is not conducive to the all-round development of students.

3.4 Impact of Internet Culture

The development of information networks has provided convenience for contemporary university students to acquire information. But the rapid development of the internet has also

brought certain negative influences on university students' value choices and behavior. Some university students lack independent information identification skills and critical thinking and are easily misled by erroneous thought trends on the internet. Individual students indulge in online gaming and entertainment, spending long hours online, which is not conducive to developing positive and healthy value systems. Some students are also used to expressing extreme views or disseminating false information online, reflecting the negative impact of internet culture on their values. On one hand, the internet provides university students with greater space for acquiring information^[15]. On the other hand, it also tests their ability to discern information and moral cultivation. University students in the new era need to learn to leverage the positive effects of the internet, guard against the influences of negative content, learn independent thinking, and distinguish between virtuality and reality online, to become masters rather than passive recipients of internet culture.

3.5 Subjective Initiative Needs to be Enhanced

An individual's subjective initiative is an important factor influencing university students' life values. Some students still lack an in-depth understanding of the meaning and value of life and have poor subjective initiative. It is difficult for them to maintain initiative and independence in value choices amidst complex social environments. This is specifically manifested in Firstly, insufficient self-management abilities, easily influenced by external environments and peers. Secondly, lacking judgment when facing complex internet culture and choosing information. Thirdly, lacking rational analytical abilities for new things^[16]. Fourthly, not form a strong sense of social responsibility and dedication. Fundamentally, these issues stem from university students' lack of strong subjective initiative, which makes it difficult for them to maintain independence of mind amid external pressures. Therefore, university students' subjective initiative and sense of social responsibility need to be enhanced through multiple means to improve their excellent qualities of adhering to reason and making independent choices in complex environments.

4. Countermeasures and Thinking

4.1 Giving Full Play to the Main Channel Role of Theoretical Courses

Ideological and political education is an important guarantee for the development of moral education in China and is also an important means to solve social problems. Ideological and political theory courses play a major role in university students' life values education. Facing the confused values of some university students, theoretical course teaching must grasp the right direction and take effective measures to leverage its main channel role. Firstly, teaching content should be updated, and Marxist theories should be sinicized in combination with current social developments to make course content more adapted to the cognitive characteristics and thinking patterns of contemporary university students. Secondly, teaching methods should be improved by increasing interactive teaching segments, using discussions, case analysis, and other means to stimulate students' learning enthusiasm and increase class appeal. Thirdly, the utility of theoretical courses should be strengthened by organizing students to carry out social surveys, volunteer services, and other practical activities, so that they can truly feel the guiding role of theories in practice and promote the integration of knowing and doing. Through the implementation of these measures, Marxist theories should be transformed into the spiritual wealth of university students, to nurture outstanding talents with social responsibility.

4.2 Discerning Online Information to Build Strong Mental Defences

In the face of the impact of internet culture, strengthening network discernment education for university students and improving their ability to discern information to build strong mental defenses is the proper course for life values education. Firstly, education on internet media literacy should be enhanced to enable university students to understand the laws of information dissemination online and prevent being misled by techniques like clickbait and selective exposure. Secondly, university students' critical thinking should be inspired. When obtaining online information, they should maintain a cautious attitude, examine issues from multiple perspectives, and analyze the reliability of sources. Thirdly, university students should be provided with more diversified channels for obtaining information, guiding them to be exposed to broader healthy content, broadening their horizons, and avoiding the influence of individual erroneous information. Through network discernment education, university students can enhance independent thinking and information processing abilities to build strong mental defenses in the vast online world, and avoid the influence of extremist individualism, historical nihilism, neoliberalism, and other ideological trends, constructing a positive and healthy spiritual home.

4.3 Enlivening Spirit and Thought Interactive Teaching

In teaching ideological and political theory courses, actively promoting interactive teaching can effectively stimulate students' learning interests and enliven their mindsets. Firstly, teachers can encourage students to engage in discussions, speeches, debates, and other activities, choosing highly relevant topics, reflecting on the times, and provoking thinking, encouraging students to actively express personal views to inspire independent thinking and critical spirit. Secondly, case teaching methods can be adopted by selecting cases that are close to students' lives and have typical significance, allowing students to learn theoretical knowledge while analyzing and discussing the cases, enabling abstract theoretical concepts to be specific and deeply understood. Thirdly, relevant in-class simulations, experiential teaching, and other activities can be organized for students to receive theoretical enlightenment in a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere, developing the ability to use knowledge to analyze problems. Interactive teaching can transform passive acceptance of knowledge into active application, stimulating university students' learning interest, thinking abilities, and social practice abilities, truly making ideological and political theory courses vivid classrooms to temper positive values.

4.4 Family-school Co-education to Nurture Moral Character

Families and schools together constitute the growth environment for university students. The state of working independently must be broken to strengthen communication and form a combined force to jointly grasp moral education work for university students. Firstly, a shift must be made conceptually, calling on parents to transform exam-oriented education concepts that overemphasize results and pay attention to leading by example during the process. Common attention should be paid to cultivating university students' moral character. Secondly, schools need to strengthen observation of students' daily performance, discover issues with their thinking and behavioral deviations through various channels like Youth League committees and counselors, and provide timely feedback to parents to communicate treatment plans. Thirdly, parents should be encouraged to participate in campus cultural activities and carry out volunteer services, cultural heritage, and other activities together with schools, enabling students to nurture moral character in a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere. Fourthly, various family-school education lectures should be held for experts and scholars to guide parents in mastering scientific education methods, updating educational

concepts, and improving educational abilities. Fifthly, normalized communication mechanisms between families and schools should be established for parents to fully understand school education activities and students' performance at school. Strengthening family-school cooperation is beneficial to nurturing students' moral qualities and enabling university students to obtain consistent positive value enlightenment on and off campus, jointly laying the foundation for their moral cultivation.

4.5 Social Practice to Temper Dedication

Organizing university students to participate in social practice activities is an important way to cultivate their spirit of dedication. By going deep into social realities, university students can enhance their sense of social responsibility and foster dedication. Firstly, schools can regularly organize activities like "three rural", and "university student western voluntary service programs" for students to go deep into impoverished areas and engage in teaching assistance, medical care, cultural communication, and other social practice activities. Through their labor, they can create more value for society and others, and further understand and experience the meaning of dedication. Secondly, schools should actively leverage the role of student associations, encouraging them to carry out sustained voluntary service projects, forming voluntary service teams to serve groups like childless elders and the disabled, and enabling students to grow through voluntary service. Thirdly, university students should be guided to engage in internships at grassroots organizations and social institutions during summer/winter vacations to understand national conditions through "going out". Through carrying out diversified, systematic social practice activities, university students can be tempered through serving society and truly applying knowledge to actions, growing into new-era talents with a spirit of dedication.

5. Conclusion

The present study underscores the pivotal role of values education in steering university students toward establishing scientific and morally upright life values. Given the diversity of value orientations among students today, a multifaceted approach is imperative to address this challenge, requiring the concerted efforts of both educational institutions and families. Central to this approach is the reinforcement of ideological and political theory courses, which serve as the foundation for cultivating sound moral judgment. Furthermore, promoting critical thinking and internet literacy equips students with the tools to discern right and wrong in today's digital age. Innovative teaching methods should be employed to breathe new life into the learning experience, making it more engaging and relevant for students. Additionally, fostering close cooperation between families and schools is crucial, as it enables parents to reinforce the values taught in the classroom and provide additional guidance and support. Encouraging students to participate in social practice activities is also a vital aspect of this approach, as it allows them to apply their values in real-world settings and develop a deeper sense of social responsibility. Ultimately, the harmonious collaboration of universities, families, and society is indispensable in guiding the next generation of students toward values that align with the principles of a harmonious and prosperous society. By combining these efforts, we can effectively cultivate morally upright individuals who are capable of contributing positively to their communities and society at large.

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