

Study on the Psychological Motivation and Systematic Adjustment Path of College Students' Stealth Behavior

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Keywords: "Stealth behavior"; College students; Youth social mentality

Abstract: Under the background of individualization of contemporary society and deep integration of digital technology, "stealth behavior," as a new social mentality and behavior paradigm of young people, is spreading widely in the field of university campuses. The purpose of this study is to transcend the moral judgment of its appearance, to construct a three-dimensional analysis framework of "micro-medium-macro," and to systematically deconstruct the "stealth" behavior of college students. It is found that the self-identity crisis, the internalization of achievement anxiety and the activation of psychological defense mechanism form the core internal drive at the microcosmic individual level. In the mesoscopic environment, the algorithmic logic of digital platforms and the effect of "information cocoon" superpose the constraint of campus competitive evaluation system, and form the concrete pattern of the behavior. At the macro-social level, the social competition pattern, the cultural orientation of the performance-based meritocracy and the structural pressure brought by the accelerated change of society constitute the deep soil of its breeding. It is further dialectically pointed out that, as a strategic adaptation, "stealth" provides psychological protection for individuals in the short term, while it also entails the long-term risks of alienating interpersonal relationships, intensifying internal consumption and solidifying "information cocoons." In view of the above-mentioned causes and risks, this study proposes a set of systematic adjustment pathways to guide college students to construct positive and healthy social mentality from three dimensions of individual psychological empowerment, educational environment optimization and social support system.

1. Introduction

Under the background of modern society individualization and deep integration of digital technology, the social mentality and behavior patterns of youth groups emerge many new characteristics. As a compound phenomenon with both psychological attributes and behavioral representations, stealth has spread rapidly among college students and formed a certain degree of behavioral consensus [1]. Its typical practice pattern covers a wide range of fields such as learning, career planning and social society. In school, it manifests itself as studying secretly late at night, but openly claims leisure and entertainment. In professional preparation, it presents itself as secretly submitting a large number of job applications, but expresses itself as not paying attention to the employment market. In social interaction, it manifests itself as being highly concerned about the

dynamics of others, but deliberately avoiding direct interaction. This behavior model reflects a deep-seated contradictory psychology of "eager to gain group acceptance but afraid of being scrutinized by others," which not only reflects the complex mentality of contemporary college students in their academic, social and future development plans, but also deeply reflects the psychological adaptation dilemma and self-identity problem faced by the young generation in the rapidly changing social structure [2].

From the perspective of social psychology, the formation of "Stealth behavior" is not an accidental individual behavior deviation, but an adaptive strategy with deep social structure and individual psychological logic [3]. It is not a simple "moral hypocrisy" or "a derivative behavior of 'involution' (neijuan)." In essence, it is a strategic action taken by social individuals to achieve the goal of self-protection and limited resource acquisition under multiple structural pressures and environmental constraints. Facing the increasingly fierce homogeneous social competition, contemporary college students need to cope with the quantitative pressure from academic performance and the high uncertainty of future career development [4]. Therefore, it is of great theoretical value and practical significance to carry out deep research on it and systematically clarify its multi-level generating motivation and mechanism.

The purpose of this study is to construct the "micro-medium-macro" integration analysis framework, transcend the description of surface phenomena and moral evaluation, systematically deconstruct the generating logic of "Stealth" behavior, and on this basis, propose the systematic adjustment path involving multiple agents and multi-level coordination, so as to provide theoretical support and practical reference for solving the dilemma of "Stealth" of college students and cultivating the positive social mentality of rational peace.

2. Analysis on the Psychological Motivation of College Students' "Stealth" Behavior

2.1 Microcosmic Level: Internal Driving Mechanism of Individual Psychology

At the microcosmic individual level, the generating logic of "stealth" behavior is deeply embedded in the individual's internal cognitive structure, emotional experience and motivation system.

First of all, the crisis of self-identification constitutes the core psychological basis for the formation of "Stealth" behavior. According to Erikson's self-identity theory, the university stage is the key development period for individuals to complete "role identity positioning and integration of values." However, contemporary college students are in the complex situation of multi-value impact and fragmented social role expectation, this multiple and often contradictory expectation system easily leads to the individual falls into a developmental dilemma of self-doubt and identity confusion [5]. When an individual predicts that the public display of true self-status may lead to the inconsistent evaluation of others, and thus threaten the stability of his self-identity, "concealed expression" will naturally become his security strategy to maintain self-identity. Through "stealth" behavior, individuals can maintain a unified and stable "social persona" in the external social field, and carry out self-exploration and value ranking without interference in the internal psychological field, so as to realize the temporary balance of self-identity in a specific stage.

Secondly, the deep internalization of achievement anxiety and the psychological tendency of risk avoidance constitute the continuous emotional motivation of "Stealth" behavior. In the highly competitive social environment, the "success-oriented" cultural values are constantly strengthened, and the college students generally internalize the absolute cognitive belief of "cannot fail," which leads to high-intensity achievement anxiety [6]. In order to effectively alleviate this anxiety and systematically avoid the potential risk of failure, individuals gradually form a set of specific behavioral logic: Through concealing their own efforts process, the possible failure results are subtly transformed from the internal attribution of "personal incompetence" to the contextual attribution of

"unknown degree of effort" or "external environmental constraint." This set of psychological mechanism is precisely defined as "self-handicapping" in psychological research. When an individual expects that his or her behavior may face negative evaluation, the security provided by "undisclosed attempts" at the psychological level is significantly higher than the expectation of "failure after an open attempt." Therefore, "Stealth behavior" becomes a game strategy with the function of psychological risk hedging in essence - if the behavior succeeds, it can achieve the positive effect of "a stunning success"; If the behavior fails, the premise of "insufficient efforts" can be relied on to effectively avoid the fundamental self-value of questioning and other people's negative evaluation.

In addition, the systematic activation and continuous operation of psychological defense mechanism is the key psychological guarantee for the maintenance of "Stealth" behavior. According to the classical psychodynamic theory, when an individual is exposed to potential emotional damage, social rejection or self-esteem threats, the psychological defense system is instinctively activated to maintain internal psychological balance. "Concealment" and "avoidance" are the two core defensive modes in "stealth" behavior mode: By strictly controlling the disclosure scope and behavior mode of self-information, individuals can effectively reduce the interference and evaluation of external environment to their own psychological state, thus maintaining the necessary psychological balance and self-value in the complex social interaction, and avoiding the possible psychological trauma caused by direct competition or public evaluation.

2.2 Median Level: Behavioral Modeling Logic of Environmental Factors

The formation and evolution of "stealth" behavior is not an isolated individual psychological phenomenon, but is constantly shaped, strengthened and legitimized by the meso-environment, especially the digital technology environment and the physical campus environment.

The structure logic and operation mechanism of digital technology platform have had an unprecedented profound influence on the behavior pattern and group mentality of college students. On the one hand, the algorithm recommendation mechanism and the superposition resonance of "information cocoon" effect constitute the powerful catalytic factor of "Stealth" behavior. Relying on fine user portraits and behavioral data tracing, social media platform aggregates individuals with similar behavioral tendencies and anxiety by accurate algorithm push to form a virtual "community of interest" or "affective tribe [7]." In this kind of community field, "Stealth behavior" is no longer regarded as an individual's abnormal or deviant behavior, but is quickly constructed as a "group wisdom" and "rational survival strategy" through experience sharing, strategy discussion and emotional support within the group. In this process, the individual gets a strong recognition of "behavior legitimacy," which reduces the psychological burden and moral doubts of adopting the behavior. On the other hand, the digital social environment is inherently "asynchronous" and "highly controllable," which provides a unique survival soil for "Stealth" behavior. Although digital society reduces the emotional pressure brought by instant feedback, it also weakens the emotional connection necessary for deep empathy and comprehensive understanding, and it is easy to form a social pattern dominated by "weak connection [8]." In this pattern, individuals tend to adopt typical "stealth" behavioral strategies such as "diving," "hidden watching" and "selective information display" -that is, maintaining basic social connection with the lowest emotional cost, while effectively avoiding the emotional exposure and evaluation risk caused by deep social interaction.

At the same time, the campus environment, as the primary physical environment of college students' daily study and life, its system design and cultural atmosphere have more direct and concrete effects on the induction and maintenance of "Stealth behavior" [9]. The competitive evaluation system is the most direct institutional inducement for the behavior of "Stealth." When the key development resources such as scholarship evaluation, postgraduate recommendation and research qualification

acquisition, and high-quality internship opportunity allocation are closely linked with the quantitative indicators such as academic performance ranking, competition award level, and scientific research achievement quantity, the public display of their efforts may cause double pressure: First, peer tension and interpersonal exclusion risk caused by "being marked as potential competitor"; The second is the strong self-worth negation and face loss caused by "not reaching the expected goal after hard work." Therefore, "concealed efforts" has become the rational choice of individuals under the restriction of this system, which can not only guarantee their qualifications to participate in the competition of key resources, but also maintain the relative harmonious peer relationship and the successful external image by strictly controlling the information disclosure.

In addition, the demonstration effect and implicit normative pressure within peer groups further accelerate the diffusion and solidification of "stealth" behavior at the group level. When some students in the group successfully achieve the goal of resource acquisition or psychological protection through the behavior of "stealth," their behavior mode will be quickly spread and imitated through the network of primary groups such as dormitory, class and student association, and gradually form the group cognition that "most people are working hard in the dark." Once this kind of cognition is formed, it will be transformed into a kind of strong implicit group normative pressure. Even those individuals who are originally inclined to open efforts and sincere cooperation, in order to avoid being isolated by the group or regarded as "different," they have to adjust their own behavior strategies, passively or actively adopt the "Stealth" mode, and finally form a self-reinforcing behavior consensus at the group level.

2.3 Macro Level: Deep Impact Mechanism of Structural Stress

The widespread spread of the phenomenon of "stealth" must be interpreted in the context of the broader changes in the macro-social structure.

At present, the pattern of social "involution" is the most macroscopic background condition of "Stealth" behavior. Under the premise that the core social resources such as high-quality higher education resources and ideal employment posts are relatively limited, the social competition mode is changing from "incremental competition" to "stock competition [4]." When the open and high-intensity competition mode not only consumes a large amount of psychological and time cost, but also easily causes peer tension and social trust loss, the behavior of "stealth" becomes the "suboptimal strategy" for individuals to participate in this highly homogeneous competition with its characteristics of "low conflict" and "high concealment" -it can not only maintain the necessary degree of competition participation with relatively low psychological cost, but also effectively avoid the interpersonal relationship risk caused by direct competition.

The sociocultural orientation of performance-based meritocracy provides the latent legal support for the behavior of "Stealth" from the view of value [2]. In contemporary society, the evaluation of personal value is closely bound with the external and quantifiable achievement indicators, forming a powerful "result-oriented" value evaluation system. College students' groups bear multiple "success expectations" from families, schools and even the whole society. In order to cater to the idealized imagination of "easy success" and the value standard of "high efficiency" in the social culture, some students have chosen the strategy of "stealth": To create the intellectual superiority image of "success without effort" in the public field, so as to meet the social expectation of "excellent individuals of genius"; While in the private field, we should strictly follow the performance principle to carry out high-intensity efforts to guarantee our own key resource acquisition ability. In essence, this behavior division is the passive catering and active performance of young individuals to a distorted view of success.

Finally, the acceleration of social change and the continuous deepening of individualization

constitute the deepest social structural inducement of "Stealth" behavior. According to the theory of social acceleration, the contemporary society presents the triple acceleration characteristics of "technology acceleration, social change acceleration and life rhythm acceleration," which leads to the functional weakening of traditional social support systems such as traditional family support, neighbourhood community and community mutual assistance. Individuals are thrown into a situation of self-responsibility for their own survival and have to deal with the changes brought about by various uncertainty risks [10].

The trend of individualization not only strengthens the self-consciousness and self-dependence of individuals, but also inevitably causes the widespread insecurity and existential anxiety. "Stealth behavior" is a typical behavior representation of this highly individualized state-by concealing their real behavior and psychological state, minimizing the uncontrollable interference and evaluation of the external social environment, seeking a limited sense of self-stability and psychological security for themselves in a fast-changing society.

3. The Systematic Adjustment Path of College Students' Stealth Behavior

As a systematic phenomenon with individual psychological attribute, environmental adaptation and social structure root, it is difficult for any single dimension intervention measure to achieve effective governance.

3.1 Individual Level: Psychological Empowerment, Cognitive Reconstruction and Capacity Building

The individual is the ultimate practice subject of the behavior of "Stealth," so it is the basic link to solve the psychological dilemma of "Stealth" to improve its internal psychological capital, reconstruct its cognitive framework and strengthen its key ability.

First, we should focus on the cultivation of psychological resilience and the long-term construction of healthy self-identity [11]. By systematically carrying out growth mindset training, the university students can effectively deconstruct the cognitive schema of "perfectionism" and the psychology of "fear of failure," guide them to establish the scientific belief that "personal ability can develop continuously through continuous efforts and strategic learning," and deeply realize that "learning from failure" is an indispensable core path of personal growth. At the same time, we should rely on the perfect curriculum system of career planning and in-depth self-exploration workshop to help students to gradually clarify their core values, internal interest preference and unique ability advantages, and construct a pluralistic and stable self-concept based on their own characteristics, so as to reduce the excessive dependence on external social evaluation and fundamentally enhance the stability and continuity of self-identity.

Secondly, the cultivation of digital literacy must be strengthened and its critical media literacy must be promoted. The basic logic of algorithm recommendation, the operation principle of attention economy and the construction mechanism of "simulated environment" of social media should be systematically incorporated into the university general education system to guide students to rationally realize the essential difference between the information environment presented by digital platform and the real world, and avoid its cognition being solidified and narrowed by "information cocoon" effect [7]. At the same time, students should be taught practical self-management strategies of digital behavior, such as regularly carrying out "digital detoxes", actively setting information consumption boundary, actively establishing offline interest community, etc., to help them rebuild their dominant right of attention and time, reduce psychological dependence and behavior indulgence on virtual social field, and finally realize the harmony and unity of online virtual behavior and offline real life.

Finally, students should be actively promoted to participate in the real social practice and creative activities, in order to break the psychological cycle of "stealth" behavior. Colleges and universities should vigorously expand and optimize various offline practice platforms, such as internship practice, voluntary service, scientific research innovation and in-person club activities, to provide students with challenging real task scenarios and multiple value realization approaches. The students' sense of accomplishment, belonging and social identity in this practice can effectively correct the negative self-cognition shaped by the virtual environment and distortion comparison, help them to reconstruct self-confidence and self-efficacy in the real social interaction and interpersonal feedback, and gradually reduce the psychological dependence on "stealth behavior."

3.2 Educational Environment: System Optimization, Cultural Reconstruction and Support System Upgrading

The educational environment is the core field of the growth and development of college students. Through profound institutional reflection and reform and positive cultural reconstruction, the educational ecology is optimized, which has the key leverage to resolve the "stealth behavior" culture.

First, we should unswervingly push forward the reform of educational evaluation system and set up a set of comprehensive evaluation mechanism with pluralism, process and development [9]. The concrete measures may include: Adjusting the proportion of the total course evaluation results, increasing the weight of the process evaluation indexes such as course papers, group projects, class participation and practice report; Establish non-competitive honor systems such as "Academic Exploration Award," "Social Contribution Award," "Interdisciplinary Innovation Award" and "Annual Progress Star," and fully recognize the growth and contribution of students in different fields and dimensions; In the key resource allocation links such as postgraduate exemption and scholarship evaluation, the multiple evaluation dimensions such as "comprehensive quality file," "investigation of practical ability" and "peer review" are introduced to effectively break the single evaluation logic of "score-only theory" and alleviate the psychological pressure caused by competitive evaluation on students from the source of system.

Secondly, we should improve the developmental mental health service system and strengthen its psychological support function. The psychological counseling center in colleges and universities should realize the strategic transformation from the traditional "crisis intervention-oriented" to the modern "developmental and preventive-oriented": On the one hand, the group tutoring and skill workshops with the themes of "stress management," "emotional intelligence," "effective communication" and "frustration coping" should be set up in a normalized way, so as to generally improve the students' psychological adjustment ability and social adaptation ability; On the other hand, we should build a three-level linkage psychological support network of "school psychological counseling center-department-class/dormitory," systematically train counselors and professional teachers as "psychological growth tutors," integrate psychological care and support into daily teaching, scientific research and management activities, and realize the normalization, routinization and full coverage of psychological health services.

Third, actively create an open and inclusive campus culture atmosphere to encourage cooperation, effectively weaken diffuse competition anxiety [12]. Colleges and universities should consciously create more non-competitive academic and social communication spaces, such as holding interdisciplinary salons, book sharing meetings, academic afternoon tea, etc. Teachers are encouraged to consciously share their own failure experiences, turns and deep reflections in academic exploration in the process of teaching, and to lead by example to pass on the educational idea of "growing from continuous trial and error and brave challenge" to students. We should vigorously strengthen the normalization and non-utility communication between teachers and students and their peers, devote

ourselves to the establishment of teacher-student relationship and peer relationship based on trust, respect and understanding, and effectively dispel the interpersonal alienation and loneliness caused by excessive competition culture.

3.3 Social Dimension: Support System Synergy and Value-Oriented Reshaping

The deep root of "stealth" behavior lies in the macro-social structure and cultural environment.

First of all, we should adjust the leading value orientation of society and actively shape a healthy and pluralistic view of success. Mainstream media, public figures, social organizations and enterprises should form a joint force: Through the production of high-quality documentary films, character interviews, public service advertisements and other cultural products, widely publicize the professional achievements and life value of laborers from all walks of life (such as senior technicians, community workers, scientific researchers, cultural and creative practitioners), break the successful template of singularity and hierarchy of "famous schools-high salaries-famous enterprises"; In the social public discourse, we advocate the rational life attitude of "doing our best, accepting the limitations and enjoying the process," through the continuous guidance of authority voice, we carry out psychological "decompression and loosening" for the young people, and reduce the unrealistic social expectation's excessive squeeze and restraint on the individual development space [2].

Second, promote the modernization of the concept of family education to build a strong family emotional support barrier. Through the channels of community parent school and online family education guidance platform, we can help parents to deeply reflect on the misunderstanding of "achievement-only theory" and "ranking-only theory," and establish the modern educational concept of "paying attention to the children's all-round development and lifelong happiness."

Finally, the paper constructs a social support network with global coverage and complementary functions to provide a smooth transitional development platform for college students. The government, community, enterprises and social organizations need to establish an effective cooperative mechanism: The government can expand the supply of high-quality internship posts through policy inclination and financial subsidies, and strictly regulate the order of the internship market to protect the rights and interests of students; Community level, relying on local resources to organize a "social mentor" program, invite senior people from all walks of life to pair up with college students to provide personalized career planning guidance and social adaptation support; At the enterprise level, we should increase undergraduates' understanding of the real ecology of the industry and reduce anxiety and blind competition caused by information asymmetry through activities such as open day, occupational experience camp and project system cooperation. On the social organization level, we can provide valuable social participation channels for college students by setting up various volunteer service, public welfare practice and social innovation platform to help them realize their self-recognition and value in the real social interaction and service, and fundamentally break the hidden behavior tendency caused by information asymmetry, anxiety and uncertainty.

4. Conclusion

Using the "micro-medium-macro" three-dimensional integration analysis framework, this study systematically deconstructs the complex social psychological phenomenon of college students' "Stealth." The research shows that "stealth" is not an isolated individual behavior deviation, but a strategic psychological and behavioral adaptation of contemporary college students under the multiple constraints of social individualization, digital survival and highly competitive social pattern [1]. Its generating mechanism is the result of the complex interaction between individual psychological activity and macro-structural pressure. In the middle view, the architectural guidance

of digital technology, the restriction of campus competitive system and the normative pressure of peer groups shape the concrete patterns of behavior. At the macroscopic level, the "inner" pattern of social competition, the cultural orientation of performance-oriented and the structural pressure brought by the accelerated change of society are the deep social soil of phenomenon breeding and spreading [2].

One of the important theoretical advances of this study is that it not only reveals the short-term "rationality" of "stealth" as an adaptive strategy, but also points out its long-term potential harm to individual mental health and interpersonal trust more dialectically. This dialectical understanding provides key insights for addressing the issue of "stealth behavior": Effective intervention must jump out of the simple surface moral criticism and individual behavior correction mode, and turn from the fundamental starting point of "environmental transformation and structural optimization" to actively respond to the deep generating logic behind the phenomenon. According to this research, the "individual-education-society" trinity coordinated adjustment path is put forward, which emphasizes to strengthen its inner adaptability through individual psychological empowerment, to optimize its middle environment through deep reform of educational system and reconstruction of cultural ecology, and to improve its macroscopic social soil through the overall construction of social support system and the active guidance of value orientation, and finally to form a multi-dimensional and multi-subject participation governance force.

It must be clearly pointed out that it is a long-term social project involving far-reaching cultural changes and institutional innovation to guide college students out of the dilemma of "Stealth." It requires continuous deep dialogue and concerted action among individuals, families, universities and social actors. The ultimate goal of this project is not only to change a kind of superficial behavior mode, but also to cultivate a generation of young people with strong psychological resilience, good at sincere cooperation, and capable of coping with the high uncertainty of the future society, so as to inject constant positive and healthy vitality into the harmony and sustainable development of the whole society.

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