

Editorial Introduction

In this issue of the *International Journal of Educational Review* Vol. 1, Issue 2, the featured articles explore diverse yet interconnected dimensions of education, spanning individual development, social protection, and national talent cultivation. SHAO Jie's article, grounded in life-course theory, examines the trajectories of university students, highlighting the interplay between personal agency, family support, and institutional opportunities. Yi wanxian's contribution turns to higher education faculty development, drawing lessons from international practices to advocate for systematic training of graduate students' teaching ability in China. Li Jiaxin's study investigates the dual vulnerability of urban children in plight during major crises, underscoring the urgency of multi-stakeholder engagement and risk governance. Taken together, these articles illuminate education as both a personal journey and a societal endeavor, integrating individual growth, social responsibility, and national development into a shared vision for the future.

We hope these contributions will inspire readers and promote continued academic dialogue and collaboration. We extend our sincere gratitude to all authors, peer reviewers, and editorial staff for their dedicated efforts. We warmly welcome readers to continue following the journal and submitting their work, contributing to the growth and excellence of this publication.

Table of Contents

Research Article

Factors Influencing the Healthy Development and Success of University Students: A Text Analysis of 113 “College Student of the Year” Awardees

Jie SHAO

1-16

Cornell University Center for Teaching Innovation: A Study on the Program for Improving Graduate Students’ Teaching Ability

Wanxian YI

17-26

Selection of intervention modes for vulnerability risks of urban children in plight

Jiixin LI

27-37

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Factors Influencing the Healthy Development and Success of University Students: A Text Analysis of 113 “College Student of the Year” Awardees

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
College Student of the Year; Influencing Factors; Life-course; Growth Trajectories	Drawing on life-course theory, this study conducts a content analysis of the advanced deeds of 113 recipients of the national “College Student of the Year” award over roughly the past decade. The analysis reveals that: (a) under the life-long development dimension, development motivation steers students toward distinct developmental trajectories; (b) within the agency dimension, individual action and decision-making play a dominant role; (c) under the time–space dimension, the student development capacity of higher education institutions still requires improvement; (d) under the timing dimension, early accumulation and developmental opportunities are non-substitutable; and (e) under the linked lives dimension, family support and mentoring relationships guide life ideals. Additional findings indicate that healthy development and success require integrating personal motivation with the needs of the nation and the people; multidimensional influences jointly shape development, among which individual agency is paramount; access to high-quality education and distinguished mentors is critical; success is not merely a matter of luck but primarily of “cumulative advantage”; and family background is not decisive—family attitudes are. Finally, the study discusses the complexity, temporality, and harmony of the factors influencing university students’ healthy development and success.
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1. Introduction

“The country has a future and the nation has hope when the young generation has ideals, skills, and a sense of responsibility.” This statement by the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core positions the goals for youth talent in the new era (Ai, Jiao, & Song, 2018). According to the 2020 Statistical Bulletin on National Educational Development, the total number of university students in China has

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exceeded 40 million (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China [MOE], 2021). How university students can achieve healthy development and success is therefore a pressing question. The awardees of the College Student of the Year program, jointly guided by the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee, the Ministry of Education, the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League, and the People's Daily, constitute exemplary representatives of this cohort. How did they become top talents? How do their trajectories differ? What factors influence their development? Addressing these questions offers useful implications both for nurturing different types of top talent and for the high-quality development of higher education.

2. Research Method

1) Research Objectives

This study focuses on the College Student of the Year selection jointly guided by the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee, the Ministry of Education, the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League, and the People's Daily, and hosted by People.cn, China University Students Online, and Guangming Daily's Education Channel. We examine 113 awardees selected over approximately the past decade. They are typical representatives among tens of millions of university students in recent years. Male awardees far outnumber females (77%), and 64.6% are CPC members. Nearly half (47.79%) come from "985 Project" institutions, with only nine from higher vocational colleges. Awardees span doctoral, master's, bachelor's, and junior college levels, with the largest share being undergraduates. Majors cover natural sciences, humanities, and social sciences, with social sciences the largest category (Table 1).

Based on their documented deeds, the 113 awardees are grouped into six categories: (a) Academic Research—strong research competence and outstanding achievements in their fields; (b) Innovation and Entrepreneurship—active engagement in mass entrepreneurship and innovation with notable outcomes; (c) Self-Strengthening—overcoming adversity with perseverance and optimism; (d) Courageous and Righteous Acts—self-sacrificing actions in the face of threats to life and property; (e) Patriotism and Professionalism—strong love of country and outstanding performance in their roles; and (f) Arts and Sports—excellence in cultural or athletic endeavors.

Table 1. Basic profile of national College Student of the Year awardees, 2011–2020.

Variable	Category	N	%
Gender	Male	87	77.0
	Female	26	23.0
Ethnicity	Han	95	84.07
	Uyghur	6	5.31
	Tibetan	2	1.77
	Other minorities	10	8.85

Political status	CPC member	73	64.60
	CYL member	26	23.01
	Masses	1	0.89
	Unspecified	13	11.50
Institution type	Project 985	54	47.79
	Project 211	23	20.35
	Regular undergraduate	27	23.89
	Higher vocational	9	7.97
Degree level	Doctoral	30	26.55
	Master's	22	19.47
	Bachelor's	51	45.13
	Junior college	10	8.85
Field of study	Natural sciences	22	19.47
	Social sciences	84	74.34
	Humanities	7	6.19
Awardee category	Academic research	29	25.66
	Innovation/entrepreneurship	26	23.01
	Self-strengthening	18	15.93
	Patriotism/professionalism	25	22.12
	Courageous acts	9	7.97
	Arts/sports	6	5.31

Sources: Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee, the Ministry of Education, the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League, and the People's Daily, and hosted by People.cn, China University Students Online, and Guangming Daily's Education Channel.

2) Data Sources and Coding

The study collected textual materials on awardees' deeds from the annual selection webpages (2011–2020), People.cn, Guangming Daily, and university websites. Using content analysis, the study coded the narratives of 113 awardees by dimensions to identify factors shaping healthy development and success, thereby informing talent cultivation in higher education. To ensure reliability, a lead coder and an assistant coder jointly conducted category coding. Inter-rater agreement (Cohen's K) was 0.90, and content analysis reliability reached 0.95, meeting the ≥ 0.90 threshold (Zhang, Liu, & Wu, 2016).

3) Analytical Framework

The analytical framework is grounded in life-course theory, which emerged in the United States in the 1920s and has developed into a multidisciplinary theoretical system across psychology, anthropology, history, economics, biology, and more (Mortimer & Shanahan, 2003). The theory emphasizes the interplay between individual development

and sociohistorical change, focusing on life trajectories and addressing questions such as “what influences life and how.” Five core principles guide life-course research: life-long development, agency, time and place, timing, and linked lives. Drawing on these principles and on prior studies of factors influencing university students’ growth and success (e.g., Li, 2009; Wang, 2019; Ren & Chen, 2019; Tian, 2017; Huang & Huang, 2012), the study designed the category scheme shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Category scheme for factors influencing healthy development and success of awardees.

Dimension	Subcategory	Description
Life-long development	Development motivation	A psychological tendency and attitude oriented by developmental needs toward certain goals
	Development planning	An overall plan for one’s life course
Agency	Sense of responsibility	Helping others and enabling common prosperity
	Mental maturity	Accurate self-understanding; facing setbacks with positivity
	Action execution	Persistent implementation of effective learning and growth strategies
Time–space	Social practice	Internships, entrepreneurship, student organizations, and other broad activities
	Elite institution advantage	Enrollment in Project 985/211 or “Double First-Class” universities
	Family background	Family atmosphere, social status, and income supporting development
Timing	Early accumulation	Prior professional study, training, or self-study aligned with later development
	Developmental opportunities	Opportunities arising from policy, institutional platforms, or self-directed

		learning
Linked lives	Family support	Support, encouragement, and guidance from parents and relatives
	Peer support	Support from friends or spouses
	Mentoring by distinguished faculty	Guidance from renowned professors or teachers
	Inspiration from role models	Motivation from great figures, athletes, or celebrities

Source: by Author.

3. Analyzing the Influencing Factors of College Students' Healthy Development and Achievement

1) Frequency Distribution of Factors Influencing College Students' Healthy Growth and Success

The factors influencing the healthy growth and success of college students involve five major dimensions: the driving forces that support individual development, the exercise of subjective initiative, the impact of life events within specific temporal and spatial contexts, the individual's ability to seize critical "opportunities," and the influence of significant others in one's life. Table 3 presents the frequency with which these dimensions appeared in the growth trajectories of 113 "College Student of the Year" awardees, reflecting the relative importance and practical role of the corresponding influencing factors.

Table 3. Frequency of influencing factors by awardee category (N = 113 awardees)

Dimension & Factor	Academic (n=29)	Innov./Entrepreneurship (n=26)	Self-strength (n=18)	Patriot./Prof. (n=25)	Courageous (n=9)	Arts/Sports (n=6)	Total
Life-long development:							
Development motivation	27	24	13	23	5	5	97
Development planning	12	15	10	16	1	3	57
Agency:							
Sense of	20	24	14	25	9	4	96

responsibility							
Mental maturity	23	25	17	23	5	6	99
Action execution	29	26	18	25	9	6	113
Time–space:							
Social practice	16	26	12	22	6	4	86
Elite institution advantage	22	20	10	21	0	5	78
Family background	2	0	1	3	0	0	6
Timing:							
Early accumulation	27	25	6	13	2	5	78
Developmental opportunities	2	6	3	5	0	1	17
Linked lives:							
Family support	5	4	8	9	4	3	33
Peer support	4	2	1	1	0	0	8
Mentoring by distinguished faculty	17	4	5	4	0	3	33
Inspiration from role models	1	2	1	6	0	0	10

Sources: By Author.

A . Support from Motivational Factors in Individual Development

Developmental motivation and planning are two primary driving forces that influence whether college students can achieve personal growth. Regarding motivation, 97 “College Student of the Year” awardees explicitly stated their developmental needs and goals. Within their narratives, motives such as patriotism and poverty alleviation, dedication to scientific research, innovation and invention, devotion to education, and service to the people appeared with high frequency. Overall, the development motivation of these students mainly stemmed from two sources: personal interests and attachment to their hometowns. With respect to developmental planning, more than half (57 students) had specific ideas and strategies for their future, including developmental pathways, the application of personal strengths, and learning methods. Expressions such as “planning,” “pursuing a path,” and “progressing step by step” frequently appeared in their accounts.

B. Exercise of Individual Agency

As shown in Table 3, the frequency distribution of factors related to agency was consistently above 95, suggesting that the exercise of individual initiative was fully demonstrated in the growth of the 113 awardees. Specifically, action execution emerged as the most prominent feature, reflected in the ability to master appropriate learning methods and strategies, self-management, self-regulation, self-motivation, and effective time management. A strong sense of responsibility and mental maturity were also key elements enabling the exercise of individual agency. Approximately 90% of the students gave back to the nation, society, and hometown through scientific research, grassroots service, agricultural poverty alleviation, charitable donations, or military service. These benevolent acts and the noble qualities they reflect exemplify the “virtue” and “moral conduct” of outstanding contemporary college students.

C. Impact of Life Events in Specific Contexts

For about 76% of the awardees, participation in social practice represented a significant life event in their developmental trajectories. Their narratives demonstrate that such experiences enhanced their initiative. In addition, more than half of the students studied at prestigious universities. Institutions under the “985 Project” and “211 Project” provided opportunities for professional advancement, skill development, and self-expression. Although family background is undoubtedly important for student growth, it was mentioned only six times in the sample, suggesting that a favorable family environment or financial resources are not necessary conditions for healthy student development. Conversely, nearly half of the awardees came from rural families with limited resources. Such hardship cultivated resilience, perseverance, and a stronger appreciation for educational opportunities, thereby motivating self-development.

D. Seizing Critical “Opportunities”

The issue of timing emphasizes the sequential nature of life events, a crucial yet often overlooked aspect of life-course research (Kang and Wang, 2020). Opportunities

should be understood from two perspectives: (a) the accumulation of personal competencies is the foundation for obtaining opportunities, and (b) opportunities are critical for individual development. In this study, most awardees had engaged in professional study, training, or self-learning before opportunities arose. Unfortunately, the frequency of opportunities was only 17, indicating, to some extent, misalignment between government macro-level adjustments and student development, insufficient societal dynamism, delayed institutional support from universities, and limited opportunities arising from students' self-learning processes. Hence, governments, society, universities, and students themselves need to make practical improvements.

E. Influence of Significant Others

The influence of significant others in the lives of these awardees cannot be underestimated. Closely linked to life events, key stakeholders such as family members, friends, university mentors, and societal role models all played supportive roles in their development. However, it should be noted that not all significant others were supportive. In certain critical decision-making or bottleneck stages, some students encountered discouragement from family or friends. This finding indirectly suggests that, in the developmental process of college students, the dimension of subjective agency exerted a stronger influence than that of significant others.

2) Differences in Types of Influencing Factors for College Students' Healthy Growth and Talent Development

In the growth process of different types of "College Student of the Year" awardees, the distribution and degree of influence of the factors vary to some extent (see Table 4). Specifically, only the innovation and entrepreneurship type shows zero proportion in family background factors; the courage-in-action type shows zero proportion in factors such as elite university support, family background, development opportunities, peer support, mentorship, and idol inspiration; and the cultural and artistic type shows zero proportion in family background, peer support, and idol inspiration factors. Apart from these cases, all other categories of awardees are influenced to varying degrees by the fifteen identified factors.

Table 4. Percentage of awardees within each type exhibiting each factor

Dimension & Factor	Academic	Innov./Entrepreneurship	Self-strengthening	Patriot./Prof.	Courageous	Arts/Sports
Life-long development:						
Development motivation	93.10%	92.31%	72.22%	92.00%	55.56%	83.33%

Development planning	41.38%	57.69%	55.56%	64.00%	11.11%	50.00%
Agency:						
Sense of responsibility	68.97%	92.31%	77.78%	100.00%	100.00%	66.67%
Mental maturity	79.31%	96.15%	94.44%	92.00%	55.56%	100.00%
Action execution	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Time–space:						
Social practice	55.17%	100.00%	66.67%	88.00%	66.67%	66.67%
Elite institution advantage	75.86%	76.92%	55.56%	84.00%	0.00%	83.33%
Family background	6.90%	0.00%	5.56%	12.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Timing:						
Early accumulation	93.10%	96.15%	33.33%	52.00%	22.22%	55.56%
Developmental opportunities	6.90%	23.08%	16.67%	20.00%	0.00%	16.67%
Linked lives:						
Family support	17.24%	15.38%	44.44%	36.00%	44.44%	50.00%
Peer support	13.79%	7.69%	5.56%	4.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Mentoring by distinguished faculty	58.62%	15.38%	27.78%	16.00%	0.00%	50.00%
Inspiration from role models	3.45%	7.69%	5.56%	24.00%	0.00%	0.00%

Sources: By Author.

By comparing the analytical dimensions and influencing factors of different types of “College Student of the Year” awardees, several findings emerge.

First, in terms of action execution, all six categories of awardees reached 100%. This indicates that, throughout their growth, they consistently demonstrated self-management, self-regulation, self-motivation, and effective time management through the use of appropriate methods and strategies.

Second, from the perspective of the life-span development dimension, the proportion of development motivation is significantly higher than that of development planning across all six categories. Nevertheless, more than half of the innovation and entrepreneurship type, the self-improvement type, and the patriotism and dedication type awardees demonstrated specific development plans.

Third, from the agency dimension, most influencing factors exceeded 90% across the six categories. The only exceptions are that the factor of mental maturity for the academic research type and the courage-in-action type, as well as the factor of responsibility consciousness for the self-improvement type and the cultural and artistic type, fell below 90%—though still above 50%.

Fourth, from the time-space dimension, social practice was the most influential factor for innovation and entrepreneurship, self-improvement, patriotism and dedication, and courage-in-action awardees. Among these, innovation and entrepreneurship stood out the most, reaching 100%. In contrast, for the academic research and cultural and artistic types, elite university support was the most prominent factor, which mainly manifested through the provision of professional education and institutional platforms.

Fifth, from the timing dimension, prior accumulation emerged as the most influential factor across all six categories, suggesting that prior accumulation serves as an essential foundation for seizing developmental opportunities.

Finally, from the life-related dimension, family support and mentorship were most influential for the innovation and entrepreneurship type and the cultural and artistic type; mentorship was particularly crucial for the academic research type; while family support was the most influential for the self-improvement, patriotism and dedication, and courage-in-action types. These findings highlight the significant role of mentors in fostering professional skills and competencies, as well as the pivotal influence of family in shaping students’ moral character.

3) “Five-Dimensional” Analysis

A. Life-span Development Dimension: Development Motivation Guides the Type of Student Growth

According to the above analysis of the life-span development dimension, all six categories of “College Student of the Year” awardees exhibited a relatively high proportion of development motivation factors. In the textual accounts of their deeds,

the sources of development motivation can generally be divided into two categories: personal interest and affection for hometown. In addition, there are some individual cases where development motivation was triggered by family circumstances, personal health conditions, and other specific factors. For example, Wang Kaiyong (14th awardee) expressed his determination: “Strengthening the nation through science and technology, writing a patriotic aspiration with my work”; while Wang Qingcan (10th awardee) said: “Mathematics is my true passion, as well as the lifelong career and dream I will pursue.” Different types of motivation point to different developmental directions, thereby shaping students into different types of talents. This indicates that development motivation plays a guiding role in determining student development. Accordingly, universities should encourage the development of students’ individual interests, provide differentiated education tailored to their specific conditions, and strengthen ideological and civic education to guide students in serving the nation and their communities.

B. Agency Dimension: Individual Action and Decision-Making Dominate Student Development

From the perspective of the agency dimension, its influencing factors had the highest proportion among the awardees, particularly the factor of action execution. External conditions only exert influence through internal responses, and student development is no exception. Thus, it is crucial to fully leverage the agency of individuals. In their growth process, awardees were able to design action plans according to their own situations, or make corresponding choices in response to evolving circumstances, thereby achieving their goals. This suggests that individual action and decision-making occupy a dominant position in student development. Accordingly, students should select and employ learning methods suited to their individual conditions, and continuously refine them for greater effectiveness. They should also develop skills of self-management, self-motivation, and self-regulation, and persistently act in line with self-set goals and plans. Time management is especially critical. In this study, 86 awardees were described as “active figures” during their college years, adept at classifying tasks by urgency and importance and allocating time efficiently.

C. Time–Space Dimension: The Need to Improve Universities’ Educational Capacity

Student growth and development unfold within specific historical contexts of time and space, which both shape and constrain them. The analysis above indicates that students achieved development through social practice, yet the supporting role of elite university resources was relatively weak. Meanwhile, in textual narratives, awardees such as Ma Renyi, Wang Qingcan, and Zhao Zheng explicitly expressed deep gratitude to their universities for professional education and broad platforms. This shows that participation in social practice was mostly facilitated through university channels. Since family background often contains unchangeable objective factors, universities have become a crucial component within the time–space dimension of student growth.

Accordingly, higher education institutions urgently need to enhance their educational capacity by cultivating a positive academic ethos, fostering a strong scholarly atmosphere, building high-quality and wide-ranging platforms, and providing both vertically specialized and horizontally interdisciplinary education.

D. Timing Dimension: The Irreversibility of Prior Accumulation and Development Opportunities

From the perspective of timing, prior accumulation (such as professional education and training) was much more influential than development opportunities. The sequence of knowledge and skill accumulation determines the smoothness of individual growth. Clearly, only by making sufficient preparation can students seize opportunities when they arise. Whether students can grasp opportunities in time depends not only on their comprehensive qualities but also on the extent to which governments, society, and universities provide enabling conditions for the emergence of opportunities. The preceding analysis revealed that awardees fully exercised individual agency and were often able to secure platforms for leapfrog development at opportune moments. This reflects their high level of overall competence. To better seize opportunities, students must first engage in sufficient prior accumulation to strengthen their capabilities; at the same time, governments, society, and universities should pool resources, cultivate distinctive industries, and expand educational platforms in alignment with student needs.

E. Life-Related Dimension: The Guiding Role of Family and Mentorship in Shaping Life Ideals

The analysis of the life-related dimension highlights the outstanding importance of family support and mentorship in student growth. Families exert a foundational and enduring influence, primarily shaping students' values, moral orientations, and other fundamental personality traits. For instance, Xu Meng (9th awardee) noted: "I was born into an ordinary working family. From a young age, my parents and grandparents taught me to help others and to be a good person.(National Center for Nanoscience and Technology, 2017)" By contrast, mentors exert a guiding and long-term influence, mainly affecting the establishment of students' developmental goals and the selection of pathways for their realization. Therefore, in cultivating students, families should model positive values and consciously provide correct guidance; universities should give full play to the role of mentors in guiding students' developmental trajectories, build excellent faculty teams, and enhance teachers' awareness of their mission as role models and guides.

3. Conclusion and Discussion

Life course theory holds that the developing individual is a dynamic whole, neither a passive bearer simply subject to social trajectories, nor merely a collection of elements such as emotions, cognition, and motivation (Xu & Xu, 2009). Based on several core

concepts of the life course paradigm (lifelong development, agency, time and space, timing, linked lives), the above analysis of the texts of “China College Students of the Year” leads to the following conclusions and discussion.

1) Conclusions

A. *The healthy growth and success of college students must integrate personal development motives with the needs of the nation and the people*

“Cultivating oneself, regulating the family, governing the state, bringing peace to the world” reflects the mutually reinforcing and indispensable relationship between self, family, nation, and the world. In the above analysis, regardless of type or developmental background, the development motives of “College Students of the Year” were integrated with the needs of the nation and people. For example, Yang Bing (15th cohort) practiced patriotic ideals by leaving the city to serve as a village cadre; Song Xi (14th cohort) defended the country through military service. Thus, the realization of personal value must serve the nation and people to achieve healthy growth and success.

B. *Healthy growth and success is the result of multidimensional interaction, with individual agency being the most crucial factor*

“Diligence makes up for clumsiness; one reaps what one sows.” The healthy growth and success of college students result from multiple interacting factors, with personal effort playing a decisive role. Time, timing, and linked lives are conditions for development; lifelong development and personal agency are internal bases, while external causes act through internal ones. On the one hand, when external advantages exist, students must still exercise agency, otherwise achievements will be limited. For instance, Liu Lu (7th cohort), though recognized for mathematical talent, was praised for his ability to endure solitude and focus. On the other hand, students with disadvantaged external conditions can still succeed through persistence, as exemplified by Liu Daomin (15th cohort), a disabled Paralympic gold medalist who broke world records (Li, Li, & Wang, 2014).

C. *Access to quality education and guidance from distinguished mentors is crucial*

“The way of the university is to manifest virtue, to love the people, and to pursue the highest good.” Excellence is not innate; growth and success depend on quality educational environments. Such environments include first-class universities with resources, peer learning communities, and mentorship from renowned scholars. For innovation, entrepreneurship, and academic research, distinguished mentors provide experience and foresight to guide students through bottlenecks (Li et al., 2014).

D. *Success is not merely a matter of chance but relies on the accumulation of advantages in earlier stages*

“Without accumulating small steps, one cannot reach a thousand miles.” Growth requires accumulation. “Cumulative advantage” is a key life course concept: early advantages tend to perpetuate benefits in later social positions (Zhou, 2015). While some “College Students of the Year” benefited from opportunities, most relied on prior accumulation. For example, Lü Weizeng (15th cohort) studied agricultural sciences diligently, which enabled him to seize development opportunities later.

E. *Family background is not decisive; family attitudes matter most*

“The foundation of the world lies in the family.” Here, family refers not to economic or social status, but to atmosphere and habits. Most honorees came from poor families, some from intellectual families, showing background is not decisive. Instead, family support was most frequent, especially for students from disadvantaged conditions. For example, Yang Mengheng (10th cohort), physically disabled, was encouraged by his father and taught by his mother, enabling him to excel. Family influence lies mainly in positive guidance and educational support.

2) Discussion

A. *Influencing factors are complex*

As Leibniz said, “There are no two identical leaves.” No two students undergo identical interactions of self and environment. Growth paths differ due to complex, nonlinear, multilevel, and multistage interactions between individuals and their biological, natural, and social environments (Ke & Chai, 2021; Halfon et al., 2014). Student development must be embedded in sociohistorical and cultural contexts; only by considering social and historical perspectives can we understand life courses fully (Kang, Wang, & Pang, 2019).

B. *Influencing factors follow temporal sequences*

The grasp of opportunities depends on prior cumulative advantage, emphasizing sequence in life events. Most honorees experienced early accumulative training, though some succeeded only after detours. Reviewing cumulative advantage requires attention to school, family, and individual levels. Schools should design programs suited to context, families should cultivate advantages through atmosphere and educational style, and individuals should act timely to enhance competitiveness (Zhou, 2015).

C. *Influencing factors exhibit harmony*

From physiological to psychological, behavioral, cognitive, and sociocultural levels, growth involves dynamic balance of systems. Interaction between individual and environment is regulated through self-adjustment at biological and psychological levels. Therefore, students must continuously mature physiologically and psychologically, achieving balanced development at critical turning points (Tu, 2025). Enhancing self-regulation promotes socialization and

enables healthy growth and success.

Conflict of interests

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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Cornell University Center for Teaching Innovation: A Study on the Program for Improving Graduate Students' Teaching Ability

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Cornell University; Center for Teaching Innovation; Graduate Students; Teaching Ability	University teachers are the primary resource in higher education, and their quality directly determines the quality of higher education, which in turn affects the talent level of a country. The United States has more than one hundred years of experience in cultivating the teaching ability of future university teachers at the graduate level, and now has a relatively complete training system. By learning from the advanced experience of the Teaching Innovation Center at Cornell University in its program to improve graduate students' teaching ability, China should update its concepts in cultivating graduate students' teaching ability. It is important to value the formulation of plans for cultivating university teachers' teaching ability, ensure funding, and provide incentives and support for related programs. At the same time, diverse projects should be carried out to improve graduate students' teaching ability, and cooperation and exchanges between internal and external universities should be strengthened, forming inter-university partnerships.
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1. Research Background

In his speech at the symposium with teachers and students of Peking University in 2018, Xi Jinping pointed out that the key to talent cultivation lies in teachers. The quality of the teaching faculty directly determines the ability and level of universities. Building a modern socialist country requires a large number of outstanding talents in various fields. This has put forward new and higher requirements for the ability and quality of the teaching faculty (Xi, 2018).

At present, the teaching staff of Chinese universities mainly come from doctoral graduates of domestic and international universities. According to statistics, in a sample survey of doctoral graduates in 2016, 90.5% of them intended to work in universities after graduation. More than 50% of doctoral graduates chose to work in universities,



and among them, 41% were engaged in teaching. This shows that doctoral graduates cultivated by universities have become the main source of future university teachers (Chen, 2017).

Teaching ability is the core link in teacher training, and its strength directly affects the quality of teaching. Research on the development of teachers' teaching ability in China started relatively late. Professor Pan (2007) pointed out: "In a broad sense, the development of university teachers refers to all in-service teachers, who continuously improve themselves through theoretical learning and practice in various ways. In a narrow sense, the development of university teachers emphasizes their development and improvement as educators, that is, the improvement of teaching ability." Zheng, Li, and Pan (2010) believed that "the connotation of the teaching development of university teachers in China refers to the improvement of academic level, professional knowledge and skills, and the enhancement of emotions and professional ethics." Currently, while the academic qualifications of Chinese university faculty are continuously improving, problems such as uneven distribution of teaching staff remain, and a gap exists between high academic and research levels and relatively weak teaching ability (Lou, 2018).

In recent years, the teaching ability of university teachers has received increasing attention, which has had a profound impact on graduate education as a reserve force for future university teachers. Graduate education, both in China and abroad, has begun to pay attention to the cultivation of graduate students' teaching ability. The United States has long attached great importance to training future university teachers, offering rich training activities for graduate students who intend to pursue academic careers. These activities provide opportunities to receive basic skills training required for university teaching during their graduate studies, preparing them for future teaching positions. Such programs shorten the growth period of new teachers to a certain extent and contribute to improving the teaching ability of new faculty members in the U.S. By examining the graduate and doctoral training programs of the Cornell University Center for Teaching Innovation, valuable insights can be drawn for the development of future teacher training in Chinese universities (Lai, n.d.).

1.1 A Study on Cornell University's Program for Improving Graduate Students' Teaching Ability

Cornell University, founded in 1865, is one of the eight members of the Ivy League. Its founding principle emphasized equal access to education for everyone. It was the first Ivy League institution to implement gender equality by admitting both men and women. Moreover, it was also one of the earliest to adopt admissions policies that did not consider social class, religion, or race, with the goal of establishing a comprehensive university that embraced a wide range of disciplines.

The Cornell University Center for Teaching Innovation (CTI), established in 2017, provides support to members of the Cornell teaching community—from teaching

assistants and postdoctoral fellows to lecturers and professors—through a full range of personalized services, programs, initiatives, and campus projects. In addition to working directly with faculty, the CTI collaborates with departments, colleges, and other related units to build and sustain a diverse, rigorous, and dynamic learning environment (Cornell University Center for Teaching Innovation, n.d.-a). The center promotes best practices in teaching to support undergraduate learning at Cornell and beyond. Its graduate and postdoctoral programs aim to accelerate students' preparation as instructors and equip them for future teaching-related efforts (Cornell University Center for Teaching Innovation, n.d.-b).

(1) The GET SET Program

The main components of the GET SET program include teaching courses, workshops, institutes, and a university-wide teaching conference. These opportunities allow students to explore specific topics in greater depth and to apply these concepts and practices to their teaching. In addition, the program hosts an annual teaching celebration for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows, offering a full day of sessions to explore a wide range of themes.

Teaching Courses

To become a qualified teacher, one needs not only subject knowledge but also a foundation in educational theory. Before cultivating teaching ability, it is essential to strengthen knowledge of educational theory, which directly shapes teachers' classroom decisions and interactions. A solid grasp of educational theory is therefore the prerequisite for improving teaching ability (Li, 2016).

The program offers several courses for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows, aiming to accelerate their preparation for effective teaching in higher education. Students devote significant time to studying a variety of teaching theories, practices, and applications. These courses include *Higher Education Teaching*, *Teaching in a Diverse Classroom*, *Improvisation for Teaching*, and the *International Teaching Assistant Program*.

- **ALS 5780: International Teaching Assistant Program Course**
ALS 5780 supports international students who serve as teaching assistants by helping them improve their spoken English to meet university expectations. Support strategies include group discussions, bi-monthly meetings with instructors, audio resources, and teaching practice. The course emphasizes oral communication while engaging students in cross-cultural classroom exchanges and teaching skill discussions.
- **Graduate Courses in Higher Education**
Current offerings include *Theatre Techniques* and *Higher Education Pedagogy*.

The *Theatre Techniques* course lasts seven weeks and is designed to strengthen teaching and presentation skills by applying theatre-based strategies, thereby enhancing both classroom instruction and public speaking. The *Higher Education Pedagogy* course prepares graduate students for faculty positions, addressing topics such as faculty roles and responsibilities, educational philosophy, learning theories, teaching methods, course design, and assessment.

- **Online Course: Teaching and Learning in a Diverse Classroom**
This non-credit, four-week online self-study course is open to anyone at Cornell with teaching responsibilities, regardless of discipline or experience level. The modules address inclusive course design, social identity and self-reflection, as well as teaching strategies that foster student engagement and a sense of belonging across diverse backgrounds.

(2) The GET SET Workshop Series

Workshops are generally organized in the form of seminars, which are the main type of faculty development activity in American universities. These are organized by centers for faculty development or professional developers and are typically designed around predetermined themes or specific issues encountered by young faculty members. Senior professors and young faculty are invited to participate in these discussions (Wu, 2014). The GET SET workshop series consists of 75-minute weekly sessions, offering graduate students, teaching assistants, and postdoctoral fellows opportunities to engage in teaching-focused seminars in higher education.

Institutes

The institutes include the Inclusive Teaching Institute, the Teaching Portfolio Institute, the Active Learning Institute, and the Course Design Institute. These are conducted as one- to two-day workshops. The Inclusive Teaching Institute, held each spring, is a two-day workshop designed for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows to explore strategies for promoting diversity and inclusion in teaching and learning. The Teaching Portfolio Institute is a one-day workshop that guides participants in creating and completing electronic teaching portfolios. The Active Learning Institute, also one day, explores active learning strategies and how they can improve student learning based on current educational and cognitive research. The Course Design Institute is a one-day workshop that walks students step by step through the course design process.

University-wide GET SET Teaching Conference

Held each fall, the university-wide GET SET Teaching Conference provides graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and teaching assistants with opportunities to network with faculty and peers from across colleges and to engage in interdisciplinary teaching discussions.

International Teaching Assistant Program

The International Teaching Assistant Program is a professional development initiative designed to support international teaching assistants (TAs) in achieving the level of spoken English proficiency required for their teaching duties. The program consists of three major components: a language assessment, the ALS 5780 course, and the International Teaching Assistant Summer Program.

Language Assessment

All TAs from countries where English is not the first language must take a 30-minute language assessment. This assessment is an oral proficiency interview divided into two parts. In the first part, students are asked to speak about topics they listed on their registration form, usually related to their experiences, background, and interests. In the second part, students are required to briefly introduce concepts from their field of study to a group of incoming students. Graduate TAs whose native language is not English must successfully pass the assessment before they can be officially appointed as teaching assistants.

ALS 5780 International Teaching Assistant Course

This course consists mainly of two 75-minute interactive class sessions each week, in addition to meetings held every two months. It aims to help students improve their spoken English by practicing communication skills in real or simulated teaching contexts. Activities include role-playing, discussions, peer feedback, teaching practice, and individual consultation.

Summer Program

The International Teaching Assistant Summer Program is a required training program for international students who speak English as an additional language and are expected to take on teaching assistant duties in the fall semester. The program provides high-level individual coaching, group sessions, and activities that help students adapt to the Cornell campus and culture.

(3) Teaching Portfolio Program

The establishment of a teaching portfolio is an important activity in the development of university faculty in the United States. By the 1990s, more than 500 American universities had adopted teaching portfolios as a form of faculty development. Today, the creation of teaching portfolios has become an indispensable practice in many universities to improve teaching quality. However, different universities and departments have varying understandings and approaches to teaching portfolios, which results in differences in their content (Wu, 2014).

In general, a teaching portfolio consists of three parts: a statement of teaching philosophy, a syllabus that the individual has developed or adapted, and a record of teaching evaluations. The primary function of a teaching portfolio is to assess the teaching of graduate teaching assistants. It serves as an important basis for formative evaluation, with the purpose of monitoring and improving teaching practice.

(4) Scholarships

The Center for Teaching Innovation provides a series of grants and awards for graduate students to support the implementation of innovative and evidence-based teaching practices. The main opportunities include the Cornelia Ye Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award and the CTI Graduate Teaching Fellowship.

Cornelia Ye Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award

The Cornelia Ye Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award is given to two teaching assistants who demonstrate dedication and excellence in their teaching. Applicants must have received outstanding teaching evaluations and have at least two semesters of teaching assistant experience at Cornell University. Each awardee receives a \$500 prize in recognition of their teaching achievements.

CTI Graduate Teaching Fellowship

This fellowship is open to graduate students who are currently enrolled at Cornell University, making satisfactory progress toward their degree, and have at least two semesters of teaching experience at the university. Applicants are required to complete the following tasks: participate in CTI fellow training in August and January; assist in or co-facilitate two GET SET workshops; and collaborate with the CTI fellows team to develop and coordinate one event. Participants who successfully complete all requirements will receive a certificate and a \$1,000 award.

2. Implications of U.S. Graduate Teaching Ability Programs for Chinese Graduate Education

(1) Current Situation of Graduate Teaching Ability Training in Chinese Universities

At present, teaching and learning centers in Chinese universities have not fully implemented programs specifically aimed at enhancing graduate students' teaching ability. Some universities have begun training graduate teaching assistants (TAs), but these efforts often focus on explaining policies and regulations rather than providing practical training in teaching methods. With the implementation of the graduate TA system in China and the increasing proportion of young faculty members, it is especially important to enhance the teaching ability of graduate students who intend to pursue academic careers (Chen, 2017).

Compared with the relatively mature systems and diverse projects in the United States for cultivating the teaching ability of future university faculty, China started later in this field. Currently, graduate students in China mainly engage in teaching or administrative work through the “Three Assistances” system (*assistantships in teaching, research, and administration*). Although this system has achieved some results during its development, China has not yet established a systematic training program for graduate TAs, nor has it developed other projects to prepare future university teachers. Therefore, certain gaps still exist in cultivating graduate students’ teaching ability (Qu, 2019).

(2) Insights from U.S. Graduate Teaching Ability Programs

Updating Concepts and Emphasizing the Design of Graduate Teaching Ability Training Programs

Traditionally, graduate education in China has emphasized research training while neglecting teaching preparation. As a result, most graduate students devote much of their energy to publishing papers and completing dissertations, often overlooking the essential qualities required for future teaching roles. This orientation tends to highlight utilitarian outcomes while underestimating the developmental function of graduate education. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen awareness of pre-service teaching preparation for graduate students, giving greater weight to teaching ability in the overall objectives of graduate education (Li, 2016).

Chinese graduate programs should update their perspectives by paying attention to graduate students’ needs and career goals, and by building diverse systems that support the improvement of future faculty teaching ability. Drawing on the experience of the Cornell University Center for Teaching Innovation, projects can provide clear application procedures, structured courses, and portfolio development. Such detailed and diversified training allows graduate students who aspire to become faculty members to gain direct teaching experience and a broader vision of academic work.

Ensuring Funding and Providing Incentives for Graduate Teaching Ability Programs

Graduate students and doctoral candidates who intend to pursue teaching careers in universities represent a major force in the teaching workforce and bear significant responsibility for higher education. Their professional quality and overall competence directly influence the future development of universities and the advancement of education as a whole (Han, Sun, & Dong, 2020). Therefore, from the government perspective, greater support and oversight should be provided for graduate teaching ability programs to ensure effective implementation. From the institutional perspective, universities should allocate sufficient funding in line with government policies to sustain and expand these programs, and where possible, seek external sponsorship to supplement resources.

Developing Diverse Graduate Teaching Ability Training Programs

At present, graduate teaching ability training in China relies mainly on TA responsibilities within the “Three Assistances” system. However, a comprehensive training system for graduate TAs has not yet been established, and few other related projects exist. Moreover, TA assignments are often limited to routine tasks rather than meaningful teaching practice. As future faculty members, graduate students need strong teaching ability as a core competency. Thus, universities should strengthen the connection between the TA system and the broader development of future faculty (Yan, 2014).

One approach is to incorporate one or two credit-bearing courses related to teaching preparation into graduate programs, such as higher education pedagogy or educational psychology. These courses would provide both theoretical and practical training, equipping students with fundamental teaching competencies. For doctoral students, teaching and learning centers could open up their resources, encourage participation in activities, and record engagement through mechanisms such as a “doctoral student teaching development record.” Centers could also conduct assessments of doctoral students’ participation (Wei, 2019).

Another approach is to design multiple forms of TA training programs. During training, graduate TAs could watch videos of both exemplary and flawed lectures to compare teaching strategies, and they should also practice delivering lessons themselves to build confidence and professionalism. A mentoring system could also be introduced, where senior faculty members meet weekly with TAs to discuss teaching challenges and provide practical solutions. Such mentorship would enhance TAs’ teaching literacy, problem-solving skills, and overall competence (Dong & Yu, 2016).

Strengthening Inter-university Collaboration and Building Shared Teaching Resources

Beyond TA training and internal institutional programs, universities authorized to train graduate students should leverage their service functions by establishing cooperative relationships with other departments, institutes, and universities. Such collaboration could involve joint teaching workshops, seminars, academic conferences, or research projects. Exposure to different institutional cultures and exchanges with diverse teaching professionals would not only strengthen graduate students’ teaching ability but also help universities integrate resources needed for program development. Ultimately, these collaborative efforts can promote the professional growth of future faculty and improve the overall quality of higher education (Liu, 2014).

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Selection of intervention modes for vulnerability risks of urban children in plight

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
urban children in plight; intervention modes for vulnerability risks	The dual vulnerability of urban children in plight and their families is dramatically amplified during major crises, plunging them into both material and social survival risks. Starting with a conceptual understanding of children in plight and their vulnerability, combined with Simmel's theory of freedom, this study summarizes the social characteristics of survival risks for children in plight and further analyzes the current risks facing urban children in plight. By integrating developmental support, social organizations' supervision, and multi-stakeholder participation into risk interventions for children in plight, this study aims to transform crises into opportunities, driven by the goal of risk governance.
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Introduction

Compared to other children, children in plight lack the growth foundation and the close family relationships. This is because the parents of urban children in plight face greater external risks of unemployment, intensified internal conflicts and other troubles, leading to an atmosphere of anxiety and depression in their family. When family members simultaneously suffer from illness, economic collapse and others, children's physical and mental health, skills and development, and even their values may be further challenged. This can significantly amplify the vulnerability of children and their families in a short period, even leading to a vicious cycle that exposes them to even more severe survival risks. Without knowledge of their environment it is impossible to understand that many of their seemingly irrational choices and hardships are consequences of a reality over which they have no control (Li et al., 2012). Therefore, it is crucial to prevent and mitigate the continued accumulation of survival risks for urban children in plight and to implement timely and effective early intervention and prevention measures.



1. Interpreting the concept of vulnerability among urban children in plight

In the “Opinions on Strengthening the Protection of Children in plight” issued by the State Council of China, children in plight are classified into three major categories: children with difficulties in living, seeking medical care, and attending school due to family poverty; children with difficulties in rehabilitation, care, nursing, and social integration due to their own disabilities; and children whose safety is threatened and violated due to abuse, abandonment, accidental injury, or unlawful infringement due to lack of family guardianship or improper guardianship (the State Council of the People’s Republic of China, 2016).

Existing studies have mainly completed the identification of children in plight by describing the “unfavorable” situation of children, but have not analyzed the deep-seated causes of their plight, resulting in the current definition of the “plight” of children in plight still being limited to superficial symptoms such as “family financial difficulties, personal disabilities, and unfavorable guardianship.”

In fact, “plight” implies the loss of “freedom” that is necessary for survival. Starting with Kantian philosophy’s theory of free will, Simmel posits that “freedom” is “will unimpeded by external forces.” He argues that “will” itself is not a subject pursuing freedom, but rather a process of intending. He interpreting “free will” as “the ability of the self to intend without external interference”(Zheng, 2015). Both “freedom” and “free will” must be realized within a network of social relations. Survival, development, and participation are concrete manifestations of individual “freedom”, all of which are grounded in certain social relationships. As social individuals, urban children in plight have an essential desire for “freedom” and “social relationships”. However, due to the reality of their material survival difficulties and the lack of social relationships, their “freedom” is restricted, leading to an even more severe social survival dilemma.

Vulnerability refers to the “lack or deficiency of coping awareness and ability that a person exhibit when encounter sudden crisis events due to lack of coping resources and external support”(Peng & Zhong, 2003). In sudden major public crises, the dual vulnerability of urban children in plight, who have limited “freedom” and lack of “social relationships”, and their families will be sharply amplified, pushing the children into an even more severe crisis.

In general, plight and vulnerability are mutually causal. Due to the difficult circumstances which urban children in plight faced, the possibility of social action for them is weakened, which in turn makes their vulnerability issues such as insufficient resources and lack of coping capabilities more prominent when facing major crisis events, thereby aggravating the crisis and putting them further at risk.

2. Analysis of the social characteristics of survival risks for urban children in plight

Simmel's theory of freedom analyzes "philosophical freedom" and "experiential freedom" as two sides of "freedom" by elaborating on two concepts: "freedom" — "the possibility of social action" and "free will" — "the ability of the self to intend without external interference". "Philosophical freedom" is the basis of empirical freedom, involving the improvement and transcendence of the self-mind behind the action, and "experiential freedom" is the realization of "philosophical freedom", which is related to how to practice and complete the self-will (Zheng, 2015).

Combining Simmel's theory of freedom, we can find that the survival risks of children in plight can be attributed to some extent to "freedom loss risks", that is, the risk of weakening the possibility of social action. Children's pursuit of survival, be protection, development and participation is the pursuit of freedom. Survival first contains the meaning of material freedom, while be protection, development and participation mean more freedom of social interaction and social relations. When these "freedoms" cannot be actively realized and developed, the individual will fall into survival risks.

2.1 Multiple restrictions

Multiple restrictions refer to the fact that plight children's "freedom" is influenced by external forces such as their environment and interpersonal relationships, which in various ways restrict their ability to act independently. Beyond the "possibility of social action", "freedom" also implies "individuals are not subject to external influences". It is not only a special causal relationship, but also a self-initiated action process that starts with "inner desires" and ends with "acting on the external world".

Urban children in plight are part of the whole social, living in numerous social relationships, including family, community, peer, and teacher-student relationships. As they grow, children emulate the behavior of adults. In maintaining these relationships, they gradually attempt to actively restrain their overly free-spirited thinking and action. In other words, ordinary children are gradually unable to achieve a state of "intend without external interference". However, because the plight children's "freedom" is already limited, coupled with the constraints of these social relationships, they are even less able to achieve the state of "intend without external interference". This limits their actions and constrains their pursuit of "freedom".

Specifically, children in plight already have fewer resources than ordinary children, and they are left with only basic life instincts. The external world they're living is a collective world comprised of numerous selves—the world of "society". Any independence and self-reflection they possess are acquired through instruction or learning from others. The realization of freedom obviously requires a "society" beyond the self, encompassing other people, other things, and a diverse environment. Therefore, the pursuit of freedom by children in plight is also influenced by external factors, such as other selves within society and the networks of relationships they inhabit. When these influences significantly exceed their capacity to withstand, their survival and development face multiple constraints, which in turn represent the existential risks they

face.

2.2 Intergenerational transmission

Intergenerational transmission means that the difficult state of children in plight may be caused by family difficulties and will continue if their own situation cannot be resolved. The formation of society stems from some continuous interaction and rules. There must be a network of interpersonal relationships between individuals that influence and interact with each other before there can be a society. Moreover, people call it as “society” because these interactions are not random interactions, but dynamic relationships that occur repeatedly based on some identical rules, so that people can regard it as a unitary whole (Zheng, 2015).

Children in plight are affected by their innate living conditions, which results in their freedom not being a naturally given good state, but being transmitted to their living conditions and acquired actions by the social units and relationship networks they belong to. Individual freedom comes from the freedom of the group network they belong to. The larger and more powerful the group network, the greater the individual freedom will be. Conversely, the smaller the group network, the higher the risk will be.

In short, children in plight may have a negative “connecting the past and the future”. Urban children in plight come from a broader population of urban children. We suggest that this is partly due to their family circumstances and partly due to their own unresolved health issues.

Therefore, the survival risks faced by children in plight, both materially and socially, stem from the various relationship constraints they face in their pursuit of “freedom”. These constraints stem from inherited family difficulties, the added plight posed by their own health and others. When children are unable to escape these multidimensional relationship constraints, their plight not only continues with them but is instead passed down through generations due to family, social conditions, and their own personal problems, creating a vicious cycle of risk.

2.3 Cross-iteration

Cross-iteration is also a negative trait, referring to the survival risks faced by children in plight, which not only stem from the material but also from the social crises (including those caused by material hardship). The two constantly overlap, generating a chain reaction and deepening the degree of risk.

The various circumstances that children in plight are in jointly affect their vulnerability, thereby determining the severity of their survival risks. Individuals do not exist in isolation in social life. They are both restricted by social relationship networks and subject to the characteristic transmission of the group networks. In this process, the survival risks of children in plight partly stem from the lack of a good educational environment within the family and partly from the children’s own difficulty in self-discipline. There are also risks of supervision deficiency and other risks caused by

insufficient support from social organizations, and these problems often do not exist alone.

On the basis of material survival risks, such as economic poverty and imbalance between supply and demand, social survival risks such as falling behind in learning and psychological anxiety are more likely to occur. And social survival risks, in turn, will affect the material foundation to fall into an even worse state. The two interact and stimulate each other in a cycle, resulting in fragile iteration. Therefore, when we consider resolving the survival risks of children in plight, we should not simply consider them in isolation but should analysis potential measures based on the social realistic manifestations of the risks.

3. The realistic manifestations of survival risks for urban children in plight

Due to the continuous troubles of urban children in plight and their families caused by unemployment risks, economic poverty, family anxiety, academic difficulties and other problems, the dual vulnerability has been intensifying during this period. For their families, the basic condition for survival — the economy cannot be guaranteed. Coupled with their relatively low social status, they cannot meet the need for “freedom”, which makes it impossible for them to take timely and effective actions immediately when facing sudden problems. For children in plight, due to the limitations of their family environment and social relationships, their basic survival needs are also hard to meet because of the fragility of their families. As a result, various learning requirements also encounter problems, leading to greater anxiety and psychological crises as well as difficulties in social integration. Numerous problems have exacerbated the vulnerability of children in plight and their families, curbed the “pursuit of freedom”, and thus trapped them in multi-dimensional risks. Overall, they can be classified into two major categories: one is material survival risks, and the other is social survival risks.

3.1 Material survival risks

The material survival risks faced by urban children in plight mainly stem from the scarcity of external material resources. The unemployment crisis among parents has disrupted what might have been a relatively stable family economic situation. Shortage of income and scarcity of daily necessities have plunged families of children in difficult circumstances into extreme hardship, directly affecting their survival. When facing major public crisis events, the emergence of diverse emergency education forms such as "online teaching" and "cloud courses" has turned the home into a classroom, and the Internet has become the main learning channel. However, due to the inherent poverty of the family, the high requirements for network stability and network expenses, the support of family information technology equipment conditions, the good learning atmosphere and learning space within the family, etc. cannot be well met. The connection of academic tutoring is lacking, which dampened students' enthusiasm for their studies and led to a poor learning state. The stable situation where academic achievements were made through hard work in the classroom in the past has been

disrupted. The learning process has been passively embedded with family gaps, which have turned into a kind of gap predicament for children in difficult circumstances. The emergence of "disparity" has led to an academic crisis for children. The dual vulnerabilities of families in difficult circumstances and children in difficult situations, as well as the family crises and academic crises are intertwined.

3.2 Social survival risk

Social survival risks and material survival risks have a mutually restrictive effect and more often show a cyclical and intersecting nature. Social survival risks are more often manifested as unmet "social relationship needs", such as insufficient family care, lack of family guardianship, communication needs, psychological crises and difficulties in integration, which further aggravates the vulnerability of children in difficult circumstances and restricts their physical and mental health development.

3.2.1 Lack of close family relationships

Family relationships are the fundamental ones that children come into contact with. Close family relationships are the key factors to ensure children's future survival, development and participation. The problems faced by children in difficult circumstances occur more frequently within families, between parents and children. In the context where parents are facing unemployment crises and students are confronted with academic crises, on one hand, anxiety and distress stemming from life pressure, economic pressure and social survival pressure, and on the other hand, anxiety caused by academic gaps, lack of care, poor communication and setbacks in belief, continuously spread to every corner of the family. Family conflicts are gradually intensified by anxiety. It leads to tense family relations.

In fact, peers in the family, the power of role models, and friendly communication between parents and children are of vital importance. However, compared with ordinary families, families of children in difficult circumstances already lack certain growth conditions. In a family atmosphere filled with anxiety, they are more likely to feel lonely and helpless. Due to their own anxiety, parents are unable to maintain a good family relationship. It also neglects the crucial companionship and communication for children. The exemplary power in family education cannot be exerted. Coupled with the fact that children are occupied by anxiety and develop a sense of weariness and rejection towards the things around them, the formation of close family relationships is even more out of the question. Children in difficult circumstances are thus also forced into endless distress, lacking action protection and increasing their survival risks.

3.2.2 Incidents of guardianship infringement occur frequently

The General Provisions of the Civil Law stipulates two major types of guardianship infringement, namely, "active infringement" with greater subjective malice and "passive inaction" manifested as "negligence in guardianship". Both of them cause

children to fall into varying degrees of distress and cause serious physical and mental damage to children. The frequent exposure of the problem of children in difficult circumstances on the Internet has not only turned the majority of netizens into "spectators", but also warned people to deeply reflect on family education and incidents of child abuse. The perpetrators take advantage of children's self-esteem and their fear of "moral condemnation" and "family upbringing", acting wantonly frequently and causing indelible harm to children in difficult situations.

While we condemn, it is not difficult to notice the lack of family protection and the fact that negative inaction contributes to positive infringement. Due to insufficient care, poor communication and improper guardianship, parents and children have become "the most familiar strangers". Children in difficult circumstances are left isolated and helpless when they need understanding and help the most, which emboldens the malice of the perpetrators. Moreover, malice from within the family is more likely to plunge children in difficult circumstances into despair. Additionally, some cases of guardianship abuse due to children's rebelliousness, poor academic performance or health issues, as well as the loss of parents' own hope, directly strike at the hearts of children in difficult circumstances. The forms of infringement are diverse, the frequency is increasing, the duration is longer, and the degree of damage is becoming more and more serious. It should be noted that infringement incidents are a long-standing and highly damaging issue. To prevent such incidents, families themselves need to do more.

3.2.3 Insufficient multi-dimensional support

For children, family and school are two important places in their living world. Besides parents, teachers have become another key and significant other in their growth process. In the face of special circumstances, due to the form of remote teaching, face-to-face communication has become an increase in the actual distance. The teaching group is under certain pressure when confronted with the new teaching methods under emergency measures. Moreover, they cannot actually contact the children and discover the hidden problems existing in them. In addition, the participation of parents of children in difficult circumstances in home-school communication is already relatively low. There is a lack of guidance on children's studies, and there is a lack of vigilance against children's abnormal behaviors caused by online traps. Both home and school have lax control measures.

The formatting of social relations, the interruption of communication in common fields, and the homogeneity among neighbors have led to an extreme shortage of applicable materials in the families of children in difficult circumstances. There are also difficulties in community attention, which have caused children in difficult circumstances to fall into significant public health problems. The risk governance in the "last mile" of caring for and protecting children in difficult circumstances has weakened. The lack of support from families, schools, communities and other aspects will push children in difficult circumstances into a vacuum of control, accelerating the accumulation of risks.

4. Support, supervision and participation: Targeted prevention and resolution of survival risks for children in urban difficult circumstances

The most prominent key feature of children in urban difficult circumstances is the "lack of effective guardianship" and "dual vulnerability of family and children". Coupled with the material poverty of the family itself and the health deficiency of some children, the dual survival risks of material and social aspects keep piling up in different forms. The predicament of children has transformed from the previously emphasized "static crisis" to a multi-dimensional and mixed "dynamic crisis". Therefore, the rapid and effective identification of survival risks and the timely integration of good support, supervision and participation are particularly important for the governance of survival risks of children in difficult circumstances in cities.

4.1 Empower the parent group and improve developmental assistance and support

The unemployment risk among parents can lead to economic hardship and panic in their lives. While tracing the source of responsibility for families of children in difficult circumstances, it is necessary to pay attention to the inherent vulnerabilities of these families, such as economic downturn, weak human resources, and insufficient skills of the labor force. Therefore, while holding families accountable, it is even more important to empower them and provide multi-dimensional support to family members. In terms of assistance to families of children in difficult circumstances in our country, in the past, more emphasis was placed on welfare assistance and economic support, while "developmental support" for such families, such as skills training, opportunity creation, and incentive mechanisms, was relatively lacking (Bu, 2019).

To prevent the occurrence and transmission of risks from the root, enable families of children in difficult circumstances and the children themselves to live with more dignity, break the "freedom restrictions", improve their vulnerability, and jointly enjoy the rights to survival and development, so that they can fundamentally get out of their predicament, the assistance and support we provide should be an important developmental measure of "teaching them how to fish". Rather than merely providing economic support by "giving them fish".

Therefore, while providing welfare assistance, the focus of rescue should be placed on opportunity support, improving development-oriented assistance policies, and emphasizing assistance measures that balance survival and development. For instance, strengthen the specialized employment skills training for the parents of children in difficult circumstances and enhance their ability to participate in work. On this basis, it is necessary to ensure the employment opportunities for the parent group, promote the implementation of the incentive mechanism for nearby employment and entrepreneurship, and guarantee that individuals can smoothly maintain their livelihoods, etc. So as to achieve the source governance of risk issues and better improve the various survival conditions of children in difficult circumstances.

4.2 Strengthen the supervision of social organizations and integrate supervisory actions into daily intimate relationships

When people enter society, it is like stepping into some strange place. In an unfamiliar environment, individuals will develop emotional needs such as intimate relationships and mutual trust and reliance (Jia, 2008). If individuals want to pursue a true shared life and an organic intimate relationship, they need to consciously transform "strangeness" into "familiarity", "trust" and "reliance", and form such an organic connection within the social organization.

As individuals in society, children in difficult circumstances, apart from their families, are closely related to social organizations such as communities and schools, which bear the responsibility of supervising their families. At present, the protection of children has permeated all aspects. In the process of protecting children in difficult circumstances, the system of intervening public power in the guardianship of minors and granting social organizations the right to file lawsuits for the revocation of improper guardianship subjects has received increasing attention.

Strengthen the guardianship and supervision of children in difficult circumstances, and provide them with more opportunities to seek help in terms of access channels and the convenience of seeking assistance. However, incidents such as child guardianship violations are highly concealed when they occur, which hinders the demands of the person under guardianship. Social organizations cannot reach out to their supervision and can only exercise part of their guardianship functions, and their role in providing assistance cannot be fully and effectively exerted. Therefore, it is indispensable to form an organic and close connection between families of children in difficult circumstances and social organizations, enhance mutual trust between families and social organizations, provide better emotional support, and supplement it with face-to-face meetings and in-depth integration. Efforts should be made to weaken organizational boundaries and break communication barriers with families, especially those of children in difficult circumstances, and incorporate supervision into daily intimate interviews and exchanges. Thus, potential problems can be effectively identified and curbed, ensuring that children in difficult circumstances are kept away from harm.

4.3 Form a joint force of care and participation from multiple parties to ensure the physical and mental health of urban children in plight

While the actual distance between home and school remains, the cloud connects them. While parents are receiving information about their children's online course assignments, they have, in an intangible way, formed a form of participation in distance education at a distance, generating a willingness to supervise students' learning and cooperating with teachers to conduct remote offline academic supervision of students. It is more convenient than the traditional communication between home and school.

However, for parents of children in difficult circumstances, the passivity of their online participation remains quite significant. Due to their lack of thorough understanding of their children's learning, they can only follow the professional

guidance of teachers, becoming the "communicators lacking in education" for their children and the "remote marginal assistants" for teachers (Xie, 2020). This does not play a good guiding role in alleviating the academic pressure on children in difficult circumstances.

Therefore, in terms of schools fulfilling their responsibilities, the first step should be to encourage the teaching staff to pay timely attention to children in difficult circumstances. At the same time, educational rights should be appropriately allocated to parents to promote an equal cooperative relationship between parents and the teaching staff, promptly address families' educational concerns, and form an educational synergy. Parents should also attach importance to reflecting on their own behavior during the process of family education, and offer more care to children in difficult circumstances instead of speaking ill of them. At the same time, due to difficulties in social integration and communication barriers, along with possible accompanying psychological crises and health problems, they will be exposed to more survival risks. They need the joint care of families, schools, communities and other entities, providing them with psychological support, supplemented by timely mental health construction, strengthened psychological counseling and individual care. In conjunction with the study of corresponding health and hygiene protection knowledge, we should jointly ensure the physical and mental health development of urban children in plight.

Conflict of interests

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Short bio

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