

Investigation Report on Stress Status of Mainland China Master Students Studying in Sinkiang Uygur Autonomous Region

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Abstract: Master students from mainland China who studying in Sinkiang are a special group of university students. Stress exerted on them by new natural environment, social environment and cultural difference should not be underestimated. To guide them to deal with stress properly, their stress structure and characteristic must be fully understood. This study investigated the stress status of master students from mainland China who studying in Sinkiang and thereby provided a basis for searching of way to stimulate intrinsic motivation of these mainland China master students.

Keywords: Sinkiang universities; Mainland China master students; stress

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1 Survey content and method

1.1 Survey content

The objective of this study was to investigate the stress status of master students from mainland China who were enrolled in Sinkiang university during period of study; to analyze stress composition and degree of various stresses of mainland China master students studying in Sinkiang; to analyze stress characteristic of mainland China master students via intersection of different data; and finally to analyze the causes of stress based on data obtained thereby to provide basis for searching of way and method to alleviate stress problem of mainland China master students studying in

Sinkiang.

1.2 Survey method

This study employed a combination of questionnaire, in-depth interview, daily observation and literature review methods for conduction of survey. In order to ensure a comprehensive, unbiased and real reflection of stress situation of mainland China students studying in Sinkiang, the researcher used self-composed questionnaire to carry out investigation on mainland China master students of a comprehensive university (A University) in Aksu, Sinkiang. In addition, the investigator lived together with the students for a period of time, observed their daily study life from perspective of “insider”, and collected real and reliable first-hand information through in-depth interview.

2 Structural characteristic of mainland China master student subjects

1. Gender composition: 47% and 53% of males and females respectively.
2. Grade composition: 33% first year, 36% second year and 31% third year.
3. Household registration composition: urban household registration accounted for 27%, rural household registration accounted for 73%.
4. Degree composition: 31% professional master students and 69% academic master students.

3 Stress status of mainland China master students studying in Sinkiang

3.1 Social stress and psychological stress

3.1.1 Social pressure is dominant, followed by

psychological pressure

In studies, psychologists divide source of stress into four categories: physical stressor, psychological stressor, social stressor and cultural stressor. Physical stressor mainly refers to stimuli that cause physical and mental stress through direct stimulation of human body. Psychological stressor is mainly derived from stressful information in human brain, such as psychological conflict and frustration, and tension and stress associated with job responsibility. Social stressor mainly refers to situation and event that cause changes in personal lifestyle and require one to make adjustment and adaptation. Cultural stressor mainly refers to cultural migration which leads to

stress exerted by new living environment, customs habit and others^[1].

The main stress source of mainland China master students studying in Sinkiang was social stressor; this survey found that 93% of master students from mainland China had employment stress, 42% had financial stress, 41% had marriage stress, and 34% had study-related stress. It was followed by psychological stressor: 58% of master students from mainland China had psychological conflict because they did not enter the ideal university, and 28% of students had psychological stress due to interpersonal disharmony. Relatively, cultural stress and physical stress were not particularly prominent.

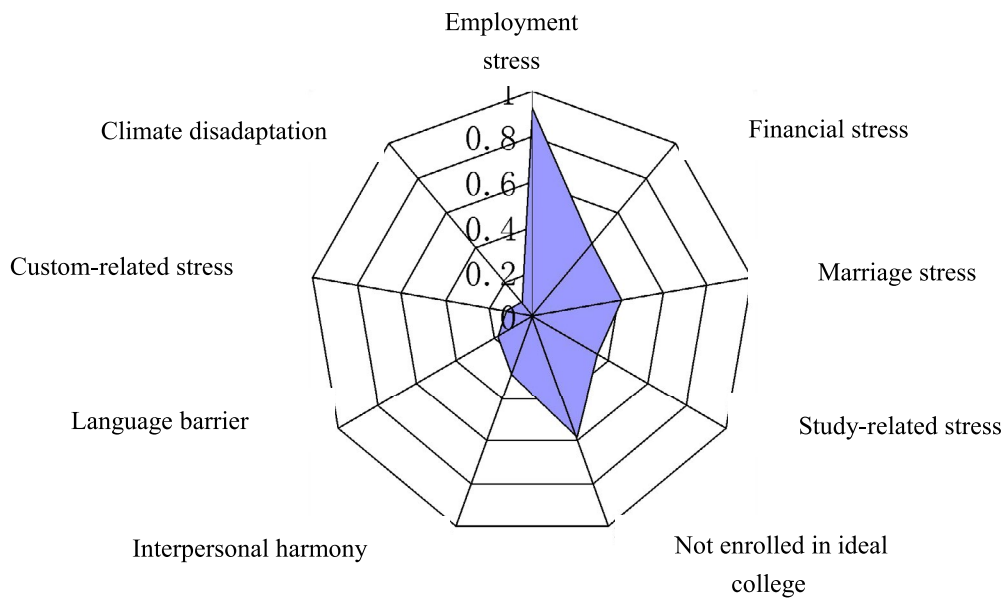


Figure 1 Analysis of stress source of mainland China master students studying in Sinkiang

3.2 Analysis on social stress status of mainland China master students studying in Sinkiang

Social stress of mainland China master students studying in Sinkiang mainly derives from employment stress, financial stress, marriage stress, and study-related stress.

3.2.1 Employment stress

Employment stress, as the name implies refers to psychological stress attributed to job seeking. During the investigation, it was found that 65.3% of respondents were transferred to Sinkiang university following failure of admission to the first choice university. Further, 84% of the transferred students were studying on courses which were not of their

choices. During study, they would encounter some subjects that they never encounter before, but reality required them to understand and be able to apply all courses within a year and a half, which was greatly challenging. Among them, some students were not well-versed in professional knowledge, and they were not optimistic about the employment prospects of the majors they studying, which directly led to relatively high employment stress.

Through the survey on mainland China master students in A university, the author revealed that 62.7% of students expressed dissatisfaction with the faculty, 85.3% of students felt stress about the employment prospects of the majors they studied, 70.7% of students were confused about their future, and 89.3% of students

expressed that they felt stress to deal with fierce employment competition based on their current ability. Based on investigation of status of employment stress, the author conducted a related interview with a second year student, record as follows.

Case 1:

Interviewee: A, 26 years old, Shanxi, second-year graduate

“I am a transferred student. After I come here to study, I face some professional knowledge which I never encounter before. In fact, stress of studying the professional course is not great, but it is mainly because I am not sure whether the current course will be helpful for future work. There are indeed many job opportunities in Sinkiang. If I stay in Sinkiang after graduation, it should be not stressful. But, the reality is not allowing! Sinkiang is too far away from my hometown. It consumes about a week of time to be on the road for a round-trip back. My parents are in my hometown. It is not convenient to take care of them when I stay here. I still want to go back to the mainland to find a job. Nowadays, prospects of postgraduate are not as good as before. Few of my graduated seniors currently working in the mainland are not really doing well, and the salary is lower than expected. I am a little bit stressed.”

It could be observed that employment stress of student A was mainly due to confusion about employment prospects of the course studied, which is more in accordance with the questionnaire survey.

3.2.2 Financial stress

Household registration had a greater impact on financial stress of master students from mainland China, and impact by gender factor was not obvious.

Gender factor had little effect on financial stress. The average score of males 3.4 was slightly higher than average score of females 3.1. That is, financial stress of males was slightly higher than that of females, but it was not significant. Reason was investigated, it was found that although males traditionally have psychological characteristics of strong self-esteem and unwilling to show weakness, and they give themselves extra life stress than females, the survey showed that 47.5% of male master students from mainland China indicated that monthly subsidy given by the university was sufficient to cope with daily expense. Meanwhile, 51.4% of female master students from mainland indicated that they couldn't cope with daily expense, but they would request for subsidy from their parents or borrow from friends. In addition,

male master students were more likely to find part-time jobs in Sinkiang than female master students, which on the one hand eased the financial stress of male master students from mainland China.

Case 2:

Interviewee: B, 25 years old, male, Hubei, first-year graduate

“I feel that there are a lot of part-time opportunities here, as Sinkiang is wide and lowly populated! For example, during harvest of red jujube, you can go and wait at the school gate, there will be cars that directly bring you to the place. By picking red jujube I can earn almost one hundred Yuan a day. We guys are certainly not afraid to go to Kazakhstan. When we have nothing to do, we will go for a few days and we will then have living expense. Females are definitely not willing to go, or not many are willing to go. Guys are definitely more stressed than females, so it doesn't matter if we are tired.”

Financial stress of mainland master students of rural household registration was greater than that of urban master students. It is not difficult to understand that family condition of urban students is generally slightly better, and they have higher ability to pay for expenses such as tuition fee and living expense.

3.2.3 Marriage stress

Master students from mainland China studying in Sinkiang faced great marriage stress, and males were more stressed than females.

University A was previously an agricultural university. Male-female ratio was not balanced. It was difficult for males in university to find suitable marriage partner. Of the surveyed master students from mainland China, 41.3% did not have fixed partner; of which, 71% were males and 29% were females. Further, 71% of the respondents expressed that they did not want to stay in Sinkiang after graduation and hoped to return to the mainland for employment. Therefore, they were more willing to choose partner from mainland China. They also put certain stress on themselves because of geographical restriction.

At the same time, respondents who did not have a fixed partner felt anxious because of imbalance between males and females in the university, age pressure or expectation from their parents and others around them; which in turn further increased their marriage stress. For those mainland master students who had fixed partner or married, employment difference between men and women, long-distance relationship, material condition and other factors would also increase their

marriage stress.

Marriage stress of male master students from mainland China who studying in Sinkiang was generally higher than that of females. The average value of marriage stress in male was 3.1 while the average value of marriage stress in females was 2.2. Among the mainland master student group, 34% of marriage stress in single males was due to age pressure and 26% was due to material pressure; for marriage stress in males with fixed partner, 44% was due to stress exerted to both partners because of employment difference, 33% was due to material pressure, and 11% was due to stress arose from long distance relationship.

3.2.4 Study-related stress

Study-related stress is mainly due to course learning. Study system of master degree is relatively shorter. Most of the courses concentrate in the first year following admission. Compared with undergraduate, courses of postgraduate are not only difficult, but also require students to be creative and innovative. Of course, for master students with better foundation, it will not cause too much study-related stress. However, as discussed above, mainland master students in the A University were basically transferred students, and there were many cross-disciplinary students. They had to study and at the same time complete courses prescribed by the master degree, and they are also required to revise undergraduate courses, thus resulted in relatively high study-related stress. In addition, A university had a requirement for master student, that is, master candidates must publish at least one paper in core journal of their own discipline during the course of master study. This regulation encouraged academic enthusiasm of the master students but at the same time increased their academic stress.

Case 3:

Interviewee: C, 26 years old, Henan, second-year graduate

“There is stress with study. First of all, I have to complete my subjects, otherwise I cannot write my thesis. And, my journal paper must be published. Although the university requires only one article for graduation, but if you participate in scholarship assessment, you must publish at least one core issue. Now some students have already published at least one EI, this exerts even more stress on all other students.”

3.3 Status of psychological stress of mainland China master students studying in Sinkiang

3.3.1 Psychological conflict brought by difference between expectation and reality

In real life, 54.7% of mainland master students believed that their study life in A university was slightly different from what they initially expected, and 36% believed that there was big difference. In particular, of the students who applied to universities in mainland China but have been transferred to Sinkiang, 85.9% believed that the current graduate life was different from what they expected.

Case 4:

Interviewee: D, 26 years old, Henan, first-year graduate
“There is large difference. At the beginning, I applied for a 211 university in the Mainland, and I finally get transferred because I did not pass a single subject. I initially thought that my future will be more promising if I am admitted to graduate school, but who knows that employment prospects for the discipline that I am studying are really not very good. Secondly, natural environment here is too challenging, it is in close proximity to desert, wind sand is strong, and it is far away from home. In addition, course mode is different from what I initially thought. It applies to "mentor responsibility system" here, research direction is also based on the supervisor's project. My current research direction is different from my original discipline.”

3.3.2 General interpersonal stress

Of the surveyed master students from mainland China, 28% faced psychological stress brought about by interpersonal disharmony.

Case 5:

Interviewee: E, 25 years old, Shandong, second-year graduate

“It is hard to comment on interpersonal relationship. Basically, relationship with ordinary students is alright, but relationship with course mate or supervisor is subtler, there must be competition besides cooperation. We have lesser contact with ethnic minority students. Han and Uighur students in A university are separated in real life. We have independent dormitory and separate canteen. There will be not too much conflict on living habit, eating habit and religious belief.”

In general, interpersonal-related stress of master students from mainland China decreased from first year to third year. First-year students had greatest stress in getting along with ethnic minority students; third-year students had greatest stress in getting along with supervisor. Interpersonal-related stress was in general

slightly higher in males than that of females.

3.4 Status of cultural stress and physical stress of mainland China master students studying in Sinkiang

Cultural stress faced by mainland China master students studying in Sinkiang was mainly reflected in language environment and custom habit. Sinkiang is a place where many ethnic groups gather and language is very rich. In Sinkiang, various ethnic groups co-exist in long-term harmony and there is mutual cultural influence, master students from mainland China who were mainly Chinese-speaking would certainly feel stressful toward the language environment when the students came to this place.

Case 6:

Interviewee: F, 25 years old, Henan, second-year graduate

“I have been here for two years. At the beginning, I couldn't understand language by Uyghur compatriots, but now I can mention some simple words. For example, I know that "Balan" means a young man, it is quite interesting.”

Sinkiang meals are largely made of beef and mutton, and they taste sour, spicy and salty. Most people of the Hui and Han populations in Sinkiang are migrants from northern China who prefer heavier taste; this has a great impact on Sinkiang's dietary habit. In recent years, with migration of a large number of Sichuan's people to Sinkiang, spicy taste has gradually been favored and adopted by Sinkiang people. Therefore, master students from Southwest China and North China were not particularly stressed about dietary habit in Sinkiang. In

addition, there were halal canteen and general canteen in the A University campus in which the dietary needs of students from different region were met as much as possible. Therefore, cultural stress of master students from mainland was generally not obvious.

In addition, it was found that although 70.7% of the mainland China master students in this survey indicated that climate in Sinkiang is relatively dry, but 92% of the students indicated that they could adapt to the natural environment here, thus the resulted physical stress was not great.

4 Summary

Based on this survey, social stress related to employment, finance, marriage and study faced by master students from mainland China who studying in Sinkiang was relatively high. In addition, psychological conflict attributed to difference between reality and expectation, and psychological stress due to interpersonal disharmony were also not to be underestimated. Although cultural stress and physical stress brought about by difference in language environment, lifestyle and natural environment had little impact on mainland master students, these should not be neglected. When educators are engaged in student management of college and university in Sinkiang, they need to accurately grasp the stress characteristics of master student from mainland China in order to carry out targeted education and management.

References

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