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Influencing Factors of Adolescent Identity Formation Difficulties: Literature Review Based on the Perspective of Identity Development

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Abstract. Adolescence is a critical period in which individuals develop a coherent sense of self and work toward identity formation. In this process, teenagers integrate their own interests, abilities, values, expectations and ideals of others to form a relatively coordinated and stable self-identity. However, affected by rapid physical changes, social role changes and future social choices, not all teenagers can smoothly integrate their identity, and some fail to complete the task of identity construction well. Teenagers' exploration of self-identity affects their current mental health level and relates to the normal development of future education, employment and social functions. Erikson pointed out that the main task of youth development is to solve the crisis of identity and confusion. If this crisis is not properly handled, it is easy for people to experience the state of self-identity crisis, loss of life goals and failure to form a stable belief commitment. Later, Marcia's identity state model also emphasized that only through exploration and commitment can a complete sense of identity be achieved. Nowadays, the growth environment of middle school students is increasingly diverse and complex, so the difficulties in identity construction result from diversified factors rather than a single one. Based on identity development theoretical framework, this paper adopts literature analysis method to build a comprehensive cause analysis model of adolescent identity crisis and elaborate the influence and interaction of family, personal and social factors on adolescent identity construction.

Keywords: Teenagers, identity development, family environment, self-concept clarity, social environment

1. Introduction

Adolescence is a critical period in the transition from childhood to adulthood and a time of repeated identity construction and adjustment. Adolescent students are facing great physical and psychological changes, as well as the choice of future education, employment and social life. Therefore, establishing a stable and clear identity has become an important task for contemporary youth.

The so-called stable self-identity not only refers to the understanding and mastery of the basic information such as the name and age but also refers to whether the author can have a deep

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understanding of personality characteristics, basic values, hobbies and specialties, and future planning, and integrate these different aspects to form a unified and harmonious whole. After puberty, some children can gradually clarify their life goals through thinking about their own interests and values; However, there are also many individuals who are always in a state of role chaos. While not knowing what they really want, they must constantly change their roles under the different social expectations around them and lose a stable sense of self-worth.

The above factors that affect identity construction will have adverse consequences on Teenagers' identity status, and further have adverse effects on Teenagers' mental health and future development, such as confusion and hesitation in learning objectives, career development, social relations processing, etc. Therefore, it is necessary to identify these factors. This is of great theoretical and practical significance to describe the individual differences in teenagers' psychological growth.

The construction and development of identity in adolescence is one of the important objects of this paper. It mainly uses Erikson's psychosocial development theory as the basic basis to explain the understanding of the development of identity in adolescence. He believes that the main contradiction of teenagers is how to solve "self-identity and role confusion". They need to connect their experience, their own ability with the requirements of the real society and their future aspirations, so as to maintain a unified image of themselves. When there are obstacles in this process, it will lead to identity crisis, which is manifested as unstable self-image, lack of clear goal pursuit, and lack of stable and firm core values [1].

Based on Eriksson, Marcia put forward the state theory of identity: a person's identity has two important characteristics of "exploration" and "commitment" [2]. "Exploration" means that individuals try to contact and evaluate different values, social roles and social life prospects; "Commitment" refers to the relatively stable decisions made by individuals according to their own inquiry results. Since then, contemporary research has further confirmed that identity formation belongs to a dynamic process, which will change with individual experience and social environment [3].

In addition, in today's social context, the growing environment faced by teenagers is becoming more and more complex. The pressure of entering a higher school, the change of intergenerational expectations, the reshaping of peer group relations and the impact of the network platform on real life all affect teenagers' identity construction and life planning to a certain extent. Therefore, teenagers' identity crisis cannot be viewed separately from inter subjectivity. Contemporary identity development research also emphasizes the transition stage from adolescents to early adulthood, and the identity construction process itself has high complexity and situational differences [4].

In view of this, this paper, based on the literature and under the guidance of identity development, explores the causes of adolescent identity crisis from three aspects: family factors, personal factors and social factors, and puts forward a model of "external influence - internal reaction - identity exploration process - identity state".

2. The theoretical basis of identity development

2.1. The formation process of identity

The so-called subjectivity construction refers to the development process in which individuals integrate their own personality characteristics, values, social identity, life goals and other aspects, to form a relatively stable self-consciousness. In adolescence, people think more consciously and profoundly about their own nature and development prospects. This process requires people to constantly adjust and develop between their own internal needs and social needs.

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When such a connection can work smoothly, teenagers will form a relatively stable identity and make decisions based on value orientation; On the contrary, if a person lacks enough freedom or internal psychological energy to integrate these scattered experiences, he will not be able to integrate them into a unified and coordinated whole, which will lead to the cognitive confusion of his own identity.

Therefore, the problems caused by identity crisis are not without "purpose", but the difficulties that individuals face in recognizing their own advantages and potential, weighing different choices, and making stable decisions.

2.2. Dynamic relationship between exploration and commitment

According to Marcia's theoretical model, exploration and commitment are the two key dimensions of identity development. Exploration is to help people understand various possibilities, and commitment is to let individuals make relatively stable decisions on the basis of these possibilities [2].

But exploration may not bring benign identity. Meaningful identity exploration is a process with goals and reflection, which can help teenagers better understand their needs, while continuous questioning without purpose may lead to confusion and suspension. Therefore, the frequency and times of the exploration process are not the core variables that affect the quality of identity, but whether they contribute to self-awareness and whether they can develop a life commitment worth pursuing [5].

Identity is not fixed and will change in different periods due to different growth conditions. For example, teenagers may sometimes be in a vague identity, but with the growth of age and the changes of social networks, their identity will become relatively clear. This shows that identity is a process of change and development, and is affected by family factors, personal factors and social factors [3].

3. The influence of family environment on adolescents' identity development

Family is the first social field of individual development and plays an important role in identity construction. Of course, the family does not directly determine the result of adolescents' identity but indirectly participates in and affects the process of identity construction through influencing adolescents' autonomous development, exploring the possibility of practice and decision-making experience.

Emotional support is conducive to giving adolescents a sense of psychological security and encouraging them to dare to try different possibilities. If they get the understanding and support from their families, they will enhance their confidence in their decisions; Even in the face of uncertain results, they are willing to try.

Second, the support of autonomy is very beneficial to the construction of individual identity, because moderate autonomy helps teenagers acquire the ability to make decisions independently and begin to form their own value standards. For example, in terms of things that children are interested in, the choice of learning goals and future planning, if parents can let children participate in and make some decisions, children can better understand their abilities and preferences in the process [6].

On the contrary, the use of psychological manipulation parenting style will restrict teenagers' positive identity construction process. In the family environment that emphasizes external rules and standards, teenagers may develop a false identity commitment, that is, passively following the

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requirements of parents or society, which is not the result of making choices in an autonomous way. As a result, they have direction, but it is difficult to establish a stable and subjective important self-concept.

In the parent-child relationship, the key factor determining the effect of identity construction is not the length and frequency of parents' company, but how parents can consider emotional care and individual freedom. A good emotional foundation is the security guarantee of children's exploration activities, and the relatively free growth space is conducive to the formation of stable individual identity of children.

4. The influence of individual psychological factors on the development of adolescents' identity

Although family and society are the big background for teenagers' identity construction, the external environment cannot determine what kind of identity teenagers finally form. Faced with the same environmental conditions, different teenagers will be affected to varying degrees, which is due to the different understanding of their own experience, self-efficacy and the way of identity construction. Thus, for individuals, when the external environment affects their identity development, the internal psychological process of individuals plays a key role in restricting.

4.1. Self-concept clarity and identity integration

Self-concept clarity refers to whether a person's understanding of his own attributes, basic values and purpose of life is clear, stable and unified [7]. Adolescence is an important stage of individual development. The formation of identity currently depends on high self-concept clarity, because identity construction itself is a process of constantly understanding oneself and integrating experience.

Middle school students with a clear self are often more able to understand their own interests, abilities and values and establish their life goals on this basis; For example, if people know what they are doing for themselves, they can make a quick and clear decision in the face of a variety of possible choices. On the contrary, if a person does not have a clear understanding of himself, it will be difficult to effectively combine experience with current experience, and he will be unable to make decisions when facing different options and will be hesitant.

The low level of self-identity makes teenagers rely more on external evaluation to obtain self-awareness, such as the degree of acceptance by others, the requirements of parents or the expectations of the public as the standard to measure their own value rather than making judgments according to their own preferences and values. In this case, even if they make a certain role commitment, its reliability is usually not very high, because it is not based on full self-knowledge.

In short, self-concept clarity concerns not only how adolescents understand themselves but also whether they can translate exploration into a stable identity. Clear self-concept can help teenagers to choose between various possible choices and then find a suitable development path.

4.2. Self efficacy and identity exploration ability

In addition to self-identity, self-efficacy is also one of the key factors affecting the construction of individual identity. Bandura believes that self-efficacy refers to an individual's judgment of the ability necessary to complete a specific activity [8].

Self-efficacy supports adolescents' willingness to explore new possibilities despite uncertainty and complexity. For example, in the future employment orientation, it is necessary to try to

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participate in a variety of activities, and it is normal for failures and changes to occur in the process. If teenagers think they can solve difficulties and actively respond to external changes, they are also more likely to regard setbacks as part of learning and continue to find their own way.

On the contrary, the low level of self-efficacy will reduce the exploration tendency of teenagers. If an individual thinks he cannot handle a new challenge task, he will refuse to try different roles or options to avoid possible failure. In addition, when there are difficulties in the process of exploration, low self-efficacy people will also tend to give up rather than reflect and revise their original goals.

Therefore, teenagers' identity exploration is not only to see whether there is exploration behaviour, but also to see whether they can persist and effectively adjust. Sometimes the reason for the failure of teenagers' identity exploration is not that they have no opportunity to explore, but that they are unable to support their psychological capital to continue to explore.

4.3. Active exploration and the formation of identity commitment

Of course, identity exploration does not necessarily lead to identity construction. Only the exploration with strong purpose, reflective nature and beneficial to individual growth will be conducive to the occurrence of identity construction.

Active exploration refers to the process in which people consciously understand different values, interests and social roles and link them with their own experience for reflection. For example, youth can identify their advantages and preferences in the process of participating in activities, obtaining work information and communicating with others, to plan more clearly.

However, if the exploration only stays in constant comparison and repeated self-questioning, without action and deep thinking, it may aggravate the sense of identity confusion. After facing many possibilities, some teenagers cannot determine which one is the thing they want most, so they have been wandering in the state of scattered identity.

It can be inferred that the important factor affecting the results of identity development is not whether the exploration itself is extensive or in-depth, but whether the results of exploration can help them obtain a more stable sense of self-identity and form their own commitment [5].

5. The influence of social environment on the development of adolescents' identity

In addition to family background and individual psychological factors, the external environment is also one of the important factors affecting the process of adolescent identity construction. When teenagers are in a growing social relationship, the role of peer groups, social competition pressure and social media environment will affect the identity construction and development trend of teenagers.

5.1. Peer relationship and identity development

Interpersonal communication is an important part of puberty's social development. In the process of peer communication, individuals can continuously obtain information about their own abilities, interests and social status. Therefore, healthy interpersonal communication is conducive to the development of identity exploration.

For example, teenagers who are in a positive peer relationship can obtain different views from them and accept the reasonable judgment of others on their own characteristics, to find the

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development direction they had never thought of before or deepen their understanding of themselves in these social activities [9].

On the other hand, in the negative peer relationship, teenagers may be hindered. In the environment of exclusion, rejection or competition, teenagers will have some negative identity concepts and pay too much attention to the feedback of others. At this time, they tend not to try what they can do, but to meet the expectations of others to determine their status. Therefore, the role of peer relationship in identity construction mainly depends on whether the relationship is supportive or critical. It can expand the possibility of self-identity in a positive relationship; Negative peer relationships can increase individual identity confusion and uncertainty.

5.2. Social comparison and identity uncertainty

Individuals often obtain information about their abilities and importance through comparison with others [10]. As the youth group is in the process of forming self-consciousness, they pay special attention to social comparison. Proper comparison is helpful for teenagers to understand different possibilities, such as understanding their own life goals by comparing with others' interests and hobbies and life goals. However, the dependence of external reference system also leads to the weakening of personal value standards. When teenagers pay too much attention to the "success" of others in society, they will have a sense of self-confidence: is my choice too bad? Is it too late? This standard from the outside will affect teenagers to choose the appropriate identity role according to their own intrinsic value, thus hindering the establishment of identity commitment.

5.3. Digital media environment and identity exploration

The development of new media has changed the social field of teenagers' identity construction. New media is not only a platform for self-expression, but also a space for understanding the outside world and different lifestyles, which widens the boundary of teenagers' identity construction to a certain extent; On the other hand, new media has brought confusion to teenagers' identity construction. On the one hand, the processed and selected individual images in cyberspace tend to make teenagers fall into the contrast with their perfection, resulting in social anxiety; Second, many information and diversified value orientations have increased the difficulty of choice, resulting in some teenagers unable to obtain a clear goal orientation. Therefore, the impact of digital media on individual identity development is determined by the way teenagers use it. When it is used for learning and development exploration, it is conducive to identity development; If it is mainly used for comparison and external recognition, it will deepen the instability of identity [11].

6. Comprehensive discussion: the influence mechanism of adolescent identity formation difficulties

Based on the above discussion, the confusion of middle school students' identity construction is not the result of a single factor, but the product of the joint influence of family, individual and society. First, family is the basic condition for identity construction. Children growing up in a warm family environment can often obtain a sense of security and affirmation, encourage teenagers' sense of security and autonomy, and support them to pursue more possibilities; Authoritative parents will limit children's self-exploration, making them more dependent on external evaluation for self-identity choices.

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Second, in the analysis and response to different external experiences, individual psychological traits also play an important role. For example, better self-knowledge ability enables children to integrate different experiences better, and higher self-efficacy can accept the uncertainty in the process of exploration. Therefore, the role of external family and social factors is played through internal psychological factors, which can really promote the establishment of self-identity.

Finally, at a larger level, the social environment also affects the direction of the exploration process. Peer relationships, social evaluation, and the impact of new media may all change young individuals' judgments about their abilities and future.

To sum up, the dilemma of teenagers' identity construction can be seen as a continuous chain: home environment→ Regulating autonomy, self-efficacy and self-concept → Reshape the mode of identity exploration → Restricting the establishment of identity commitment → Determine the final effectiveness of identity development

For example, if the family cannot give enough independent support, it may reduce the self-efficacy of teenagers, resulting in their lack of willingness to explore new social roles or plan, which will aggravate their dilemma in identity construction. This shows that the various factors of identity development do not exist independently but jointly shape their growth process through continuous interaction.

7. Conclusion

The establishment of identity is one of the primary tasks of adolescent individuals. It is a process of integration of individual experience, interpersonal communication and future aspirations. According to Erikson and Marcia, the construction of personal identity is not a sudden event or a state of completion, but a development process of continuous exploration and commitment [1, 2].

To sum up, the author believes that youth's identity loss occurs under the influence of family environment, internal psychology and social situation. The former provides a sense of security and support and a certain degree of freedom to support the possibility of trying; The latter affects how young people understand events in life and stick to their own attempts; The latter has an impact on youth's identity construction mainly from peer groups, reference groups, social media and other aspects.

These factors can provide more evidence for the theory of identity development and have a certain reference value on how to help teenagers make decisions. Parents can give their children some emotional support and let them think about and decide things by themselves; Schools can help children find their own hobbies and directions, carry out appropriate counseling and guidance, help children understand themselves and clarify their goals.

Future research should focus on the specific mechanism of identity construction in the cross-cultural context and digital living state, to have a more comprehensive insight into the complex process of adolescent identity formation.

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