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Study on the Formation Mechanism of Hidden Dropout

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ABSTRACT

Educational revitalization is a key focus of China's transition from poverty alleviation to rural revitalization. Under the policy background of actively promoting "dropout prevention and school retention" by the Party and the state, China's "nine-year compulsory education popularization rate" has continued to rise, and explicit dropout has been effectively governed. However, the problem of hidden dropout-where students remain enrolled but are physically and mentally detached from educational and teaching activities-has gradually attracted academic attention and become an important factor affecting rural revitalization. Existing research covers different educational stages including compulsory education, secondary vocational education, higher vocational education, and even universities, and has conducted extensive research around the conceptual connotation, group characteristics, generation mechanisms, and governance paths of hidden dropout. Based on existing literature, this paper sorts out the conceptual definitions of hidden dropout at home and abroad, analyzes its formation mechanism from multiple dimensions including institutions, schools, families, villages/communities (society), and individuals, and summarizes the governance countermeasures proposed by academia from the perspectives of educational administration, schools, families, villages/communities and community collaboration, and individuals. The aim is to improve the existing dilemma of hidden dropout and promote the healthy growth of adolescents.

KEYWORDS

Dropout prevention and school retention; Rural revitalization; Hidden dropout; Formation mechanism; Home-school-community collaboration.

1. PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONCEPT DEFINITION

"Dropout" means to stop or terminate; "dropping out of school" means to stop attending school. A similar term is "withdrawal," which refers to the situation where the student status is no longer registered at school and the person is not at school-this is typically what we call explicit dropout.

With the advancement of China's dropout prevention and school retention actions, whether in the north or the central and western regions, the probability of explicit dropout has significantly decreased. However, what follows is the phenomenon of hidden dropout. Many scholars have different definitions of the concept of hidden dropout.

There is no concept of hidden dropout abroad, but there are terms such as potential dropout and dropout intention. Foreign analyses of the causes of dropout and potential dropout mainly focus on family background, gender, school, and individual aspects.

Miller divides the reasons affecting student dropout into internal factors and external factors. Internal factors refer to students' family background, personal attributes, and prior educational experiences, which affect students' performance in learning and social systems, and further affect their intention to leave school; external factors include alcoholism, drug abuse, pregnancy, etc. [1] Pedditzi et al. analyzed the dropout situation of students in a middle school from the perspectives of teachers,

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parents, and students through questionnaires and interviews. The research showed that parent-child relationships, teacher-student relationships, and parent-teacher relationships all affect students' school life, and students' learning motivation and some external factors such as community relationships also affect students' dropout intention [2].Mokoena and van Breda, through a study of girls who dropped out of school in a rural area of South Africa, found that pregnancy, illness, and migration were the main reasons for their dropout [3]. Zengin used the "Dropout Risk Scale" to collect data and investigated the dropout causes of a public high school, taking silent students who had a sense of failure but did not exhibit dropout behavior as the risk group. The survey found that male students were more likely to drop out than female students and to engage in antisocial behavior [4]. Ekstrom et al. proposed the Path Model of dropout, which holds that the interwoven effects of students' background (family structure, social status, race, gender), family support system (parental expectations, resource provision), and students' school performance are the main reasons for adaptive students' dropout [5]. Jeanne analyzes the causes of student dropout from the perspective of school educational structure and school environment. She believes that students do not form positive interactions with teachers and peers at school, and relationships are not close enough, resulting in loneliness and a sense of loss, which in turn leads to a sense of distance from school and ultimately to the path of dropout [6]. Boyaci analyzes the main causes of dropout from the perspective of social demography. He believes that factors such as being married, employed, living in rural areas or county towns, and divorced families are the main social demographic issues leading to student dropout, while economic factors and low academic performance are the main reasons for their dropout [7]. Bianchi et al., through a survey of more than 200 impoverished adolescents, found that peer relationships affect dropout behavior. Especially for adolescents with immigrant backgrounds, peer acceptance is negatively correlated with their dropout intention [8].

In 2001, Zhou Minshu proposed the concept of hidden dropout during field research on rural junior secondary education. This was the earliest description of the hidden dropout phenomenon in China. Zhou Minshu described it as a group of students who, due to loss of confidence in learning, are not at school most of the time but remain registered in the student status system and participate in graduation examinations or make-up examinations [9]. In 2008, Lan Jing and Zhang Nianmeng argued that hidden dropouts are individuals or groups who exhibit early-stage dropout behaviors but have not yet reached the defined threshold of dropout. They distinguished the concept from three criteria: student status, class hours, and curriculum. They believed that "student status definition" can only define formal dropout, i.e., explicit dropout, but cannot define hidden dropout; "class hour definition" focuses on "whether students come to school to study," which can define some hidden dropout phenomena but cannot fully define hidden dropout, because coming to school does not mean learning, and coming to school to learn does not mean being able to complete the required class hours on time; "curriculum definition" emphasizes whether students can complete the required curriculum tasks, using learning content as the criterion for determining whether students have dropped out. They further divided dropouts into four types: "registered but absent," "present but mentally absent," "present but without affection," and "present but without effort" [10]. After more than two decades of development, the academic understanding of the connotation of hidden dropout has continuously expanded, forming both narrow and broad interpretations.

From a narrow perspective, compared with explicit dropout, the core feature of hidden dropout is that the student status has not been canceled-that is, students are nominally at school but actually detached from classroom teaching activities. Some students are "registered but absent," chronically truant, late, leave early, ask for leave to leave school, and are simply waiting for graduation to obtain certificates. Regarding the higher vocational group, Wang Liqin pointed out that hidden dropout students have student status; although they are on campus, their spirit is detached from the classroom and they cannot complete academic tasks as required [11]. Feng Bang and He Xiaofeng argued that hidden dropout refers to students who, although registered at school, have certain dropout tendencies and behavioral manifestations such as truancy and learning weariness. Although these students are not dropouts, they have become potential dropouts [12]. Lou Yufan and Wang Yu, building on Lan Jing's

work, summarized three types of hidden dropouts: the "reading-is-useless type," the "reading-is-hopeless type," and the "reading-is-uninteresting type," and comprehensively summarized four representations of students: "poor experience," "professional confusion," "weak willpower," and "institutional resistance" [13].

The broad understanding of hidden dropout no longer only looks at whether students come to school, but focuses on students' actual learning investment. Huang Chuxiang proposed that some students stay at school, pay fees normally, and take examinations, but are basically detached from classroom learning and are just waiting for graduation-this group of students can be considered hidden dropouts [14]; Jia Limin made a specific explanation from the perspective of class culture: if situations such as asking for leave and transferring schools are excluded, registered students who submit blank examination papers multiple times or are absent from examinations can be regarded as hidden dropouts [15]; Yang Jiajia and Feng Qi explained hidden dropout as an abnormal phenomenon of "physically present but mentally absent"-that is, although students are on campus, they lack learning motivation and willingness to learn, their hearts are already outside school, and they are just quietly waiting for graduation [16]; Zhou Xincheng emphasized that students canceling their student status during compulsory education, or not canceling their student status but failing to complete the prescribed courses and class hours on time, all fall within the scope of hidden dropout [17]; Luo Yan and Liu Pai extended the research scope to universities. What they call hidden dropouts are students who, although not learning, have a clear understanding of social rules, abide by regulations, and are good at maintaining interpersonal relationships, thereby avoiding unnecessary penalties and obtaining a kind of false success; these people are not ideal learners, but they are not academic failures either; they rely on "performative learning" to avoid punishment and obtain results such as grade points and graduation diplomas [18]; Luo Yan and Liu Pai's research reveals a new form of hidden dropout emerging under an evaluation system dominated by grades and performance, pushing the concept of hidden dropout from the behavioral level to the institutional reflection level.

Overall, the academic consensus on dropout is: "student status definition" is used to determine explicit dropout-that is, explicit dropouts are students whose student status has been canceled. Hidden dropout is usually based on "curriculum definition" and "class hour definition": one is "registered but absent"-student status is at school, but the student is actually not at school; the other is "physically present but mentally absent"-although the student is at school, they are detached from the classroom, not listening carefully in class, not completing prescribed courses and class hours on time, being late, leaving early, and playing truant. The research subjects have also expanded from early rural left-behind children and junior secondary students to diverse groups such as urban adolescents, secondary vocational students, higher vocational students, university students, and disadvantaged adolescents in ethnic minority areas.

2. REALISTIC TYPES AND GROUP CHARACTERISTICS OF HIDDEN DROPOUT

(1) Type Classification

Existing research mainly classifies hidden dropouts from multiple dimensions such as realistic manifestations, generative causes, spatial circumstances, and psychological states. From the perspective of generative causes, Chu Yan and Wang Ying [19] divided hidden dropouts in western rural areas into "aspiration dropout" (lacking learning goals and learning motivation), "capacity dropout" (physically present but mentally absent), and "human dropout" (frequent truancy, asking for leave, leaving early, etc.) that ignores the "mainstream." From the perspective of behavioral manifestations, Zhou Xincheng divided hidden dropouts in rural junior secondary schools into four categories: classroom drifters, disruptors of school order, street idlers wandering in county and township society, and internet-addicted youth hiding in the virtual world. Wang Yu and Tang Tong [20], based on spatial sociology, proposed three circumstance classifications for secondary vocational

students: the mixed-learning group at the marginal seats of physical space, the struggling-to-learn experience of classroom detachment in knowledge space, and the learning-weariness emotion of internet addiction in living space. Wang Yu and Liu Qiang [21], combined with students' psychological experiences, further divided secondary vocational hidden dropouts into the reading-hopeless type, reading-useless type, and reading-uninteresting type; at the same time, according to different attributions, they divided them into educational, utilitarian, cultural, and emotional hidden dropout; according to subjective choice, they divided them into active and forced hidden dropout. Jia Limin from the perspective of class culture, divided urban junior secondary hidden dropouts into four types: egoistic, altruistic, anomic, and fatalistic, and revealed the shaping effect of the class environment on hidden dropout.

(2) Basic Group Characteristics

Based on the analysis of multiple documents, hidden dropout groups generally possess the following characteristics: ①Lack of learning goals, insufficient learning motivation, low self-efficacy, and the emergence of psychology such as "learning is useless" and "learning is hopeless," thereby producing learning-weariness emotions ; ②Influenced by learning performatism and meritocracy, teachers often pay more attention to high-achieving excellent students, and "backward students" feel differentially treated and have resistant emotions toward teachers and learning activities; ③Disruption of classroom order, killing time in class, and trying every means to escape teaching scenarios caused by the absence of educational subjects; ④Weak academic foundation; as the educational stage rises and knowledge difficulty increases, learning efficacy continues to decline; ⑤In rural samples, left-behind children and children from divorced families account for a relatively high proportion, with absent family guardianship and improper mobile phone management; contemporary hidden dropout is mainly active non-poverty dropout; economic poverty is no longer the primary inducement, and endogenous psychological, cultural, and institutional factors occupy a dominant position.[22]

3. FORMATION MECHANISM OF HIDDEN DROPOUT

At present, academia mostly analyzes the formation mechanism of hidden dropout from multiple perspectives: individual psychology perspective, cultural capital reproduction perspective, institutional structure perspective, spatial sociology perspective, ecological systems perspective, class management perspective, etc. It is generally believed that hidden dropout is not caused by a single factor but is the result of the interaction of multiple forces including individual-family-school-village/community-government-society.

(1) Social Mechanism at the Institutional Level

1) Alienation of Learning Performatism

"Learning performatism" in universities has been criticized by Luo Yan and Liu Pai. In their view, the internal system of China's learning system is influenced by the doctrines of Confucius and others, places relatively great emphasis on ethical relationships between people, and advocates constructing knowledge from within; however, after Western performance management methods were introduced to China, they were alienated into a very radical "performatism." Schools' reliance on quantitative indicators has gone too far, the intrinsic value of knowledge itself has been ignored, and the subjective relationship between teachers and students has therefore been dissolved. Students easily pursue digital results such as credits one-sidedly and do not truly care about the content of learning. Therefore, although university students superficially comply with school rules and regulations, they actually often adopt performative learning methods and use institutional loopholes to obtain diplomas. This has formed a hidden dropout phenomenon unique to universities.

2) Self-Abandonment Brought by the General-Vocational Streaming

The general-vocational streaming has been socially alienated into a stratified screening mechanism, and society generally holds a stigmatized perception of vocational education. Wang Yu and Tang Tong conducted in-depth research on the circumstances and motivations of secondary vocational students. After students enter secondary vocational schools, because their original learning foundation is poor, it is difficult for them to adapt to the refined knowledge symbol space in cities. Coupled with the marginalizing influence of physical space, they gradually develop ideas such as "reading is useless" and "reading cannot change destiny," and are forced to abandon themselves. Unlike the "lads" in Willis's work who resist and give up after insight into reality, the classroom detachment of secondary vocational school students is often a helpless response to the real situation and their own status. The educational streaming mechanism and the structural contradiction between talent supply and demand have intensified students' professional confusion, spawned negative ideas such as "reading is useless," and constituted important institutional inducements of hidden dropout.

3) Dilemma of the Governance Logic of Dropout Prevention and School Retention

After the state's "two exemptions and one subsidy" and poverty alleviation policies achieved certain results, the problem of explicit dropout caused by economic factors has basically been solved, and dropout prevention and school retention has also shifted from solving exogenous poverty-induced dropout to addressing endogenous hidden dropout. When discussing the causes of hidden dropout in rural junior secondary schools, Zhou Xincheng pointed out that some government administrations uphold the educational governance logic of "no trouble," always over-satisfying parents' demands in home-school conflicts, causing teachers to dare not reasonably manage and discipline students, gradually giving up discipline over backward students, which indirectly indulges the occurrence of hidden dropout behavior.

4) Impact of Social Concepts on Students

Ideas such as the "new reading-is-useless theory," money worship, and hedonism are widely spread through short videos and online media, exerting a negative impact on adolescents' worldviews, values, and outlook on life. Wang Yu and Tang Tong pointed out that the realistic path of working outside school to make a living exerts a pull on students, prompting them to give up learning; on the other hand, reinforced by peer subculture, group imitation, comparison in truancy, and learning weariness appear among peers, amplifying students' negative mentality. Unlike the uninteresting experience of reading life, the online virtual world can provide a sense of achievement difficult to obtain in reality, and students can gain a sense of identity in online games and livestreaming. This leads students to begin escaping real school life and indulging in the internet, intensifying hidden dropout tendencies.

(2) Internal Generation Mechanism of the School Field

1) Spatial Segregation and Unequal Resource Distribution

Wang Yu and Tang Tong used spatial sociology theory to observe the circumstances and motivations of hidden dropout students. From the perspective of spatial sociology, the arrangement of classroom seats presents a center-margin pattern: high-achieving students occupy the center and front-row positions, while students with poorer grades are placed in marginal positions in the back rows of the classroom. Teachers' attention tilts toward high-performing students, bearing all hopes on them; toward marginal students, they adopt a laissez-faire attitude, forming a spatial redistribution of educational resources. Marginal students feel neglected and abandoned, respond with negative hidden dropout behavior as resistance, and breed mixed-learning behavior.

2) Overly Refined Curriculum Cultural Symbols

Wang Yu and Tang Tong, when analyzing the circumstances of secondary vocational students, pointed out that school curriculum knowledge is usually constructed with refined mainstream codes, while students from rural areas and disadvantaged families often carry restricted language codes, namely dialects or broken Mandarin. This leads to a gap between the original cultural habitus and the school curriculum system. Students find it difficult to adapt to the refined code space in schools,

experience cultural maladaptation, develop a sense of exclusion at the knowledge level, continuously encounter academic frustration, and gradually abandon themselves.

3) Evaluation System of Score-Only Theory

Schools use grades as the core evaluation criterion, stratify and stream classes, and academic pressure is excessive. Teachers lack the concept of educating people, the teacher-student relationship is "depersonalized," and emotional care is lacking. Zhou Xincheng , in his research on the governance of hidden dropout in rural junior secondary schools, criticized the school's stratification system, believing that it leads teachers to treat students unfairly and that the relationship between backward students and teachers is poor. When students are consistently unable to receive positive feedback and continuously accumulate learned helplessness, learning-weariness emotions will ultimately transform into hidden dropout behavior. Wang Liqin proposed that teachers' scope of attention presents a "fan-shaped effect," and middle-level and backward students outside the fan are easily neglected, fall into loneliness, and further deteriorate their learning state. Therefore, teachers should pay more attention to the emotional changes of middle-level and backward students and should not rely solely on grades to make judgments.

4) Curriculum Design Detached from Reality

Wang Yu and Liu Qiang, when studying the influence mechanism of hidden dropout among secondary vocational students in the southwestern region, mentioned the existence of a supply-demand contradiction structure-that is, courses offered by some secondary vocational schools, such as hotel management and e-commerce majors, are not only seriously homogenized but also unable to meet the talent needs of agriculture, manufacturing, and other industries, resulting in a prominent structural contradiction between industry demand and talent cultivation. Therefore, secondary vocational students are prone to professional confusion. Influenced by concepts in modern society, reading is often linked to employment. Once the major one studies is not conducive to employment, it is easy to develop the idea that "reading is useless."

(3) Hidden Influence Mechanism of the Family Environment

1) Lack of Parental Companionship and Weakening of Educational Functions

In the context of rural revitalization, a large number of rural laborers migrate to cities for work, leading to a prominent phenomenon of left-behind children. The absence of parents' companionship and the weakening of family educational functions are important inducements for hidden dropout. Yang Runyong and Wang Ying [23] conducted a survey on the dropout situation of rural junior secondary students and found that the proportion of left-behind children among dropouts was as high as 80%, and the incidence of hidden dropout among left-behind children was significantly higher than that of non-left-behind children. Chu Yan and Wang Ying further pointed out that in rural families in western regions, parents' long-term absence leads to the absence of family education subjects, and the educational function is transferred to grandparents or other relatives, resulting in ineffective supervision and emotional neglect, which provides soil for the breeding of hidden dropout.

2) Parental Educational Expectations and Parent-Child Interaction Patterns

Parents' educational expectations and parent-child interaction quality directly affect students' learning motivation and sense of school belonging. Gil et al. [24] confirmed through empirical research that family support is significantly negatively correlated with students' dropout intention; high-quality parent-child relationships and parental emotional support can effectively reduce students' learning-weariness emotions. Conversely, when parents hold low educational expectations, adopt authoritarian or laissez-faire parenting styles, or lack effective communication with their children, students are prone to develop negative attitudes toward learning, which in turn evolve into hidden dropout behavior.

3) Socioeconomic Status and Cultural Capital

Although economic poverty is no longer the primary cause of hidden dropout, family socioeconomic status and cultural capital still exert a subtle influence. Boyaci pointed out that factors such as divorce, low parental education level, and low family income are still important social demographic variables affecting student dropout. From the perspective of cultural capital theory, students from families with insufficient cultural capital often lack the learning resources and cultural atmosphere necessary for school adaptation, making them more susceptible to academic frustration and hidden dropout.

(4) Negative Shaping Mechanism of the Village/Community Environment

1) Erosion of Rural Culture and the Spread of Negative Values

In the process of rural revitalization, some rural areas are facing the dilemma of cultural hollowing-out, and negative values such as money worship and hedonism are spreading through new media. Chu Yan and Wang Ying analyzed the impact of the rural social environment on hidden dropout, pointing out that in some rural areas, the "new reading-is-useless theory" is prevalent-that is, some villagers believe that even with a college degree, one cannot find a good job, so they might as well go out to work earlier. This concept exerts a subtle influence on adolescents through the village public opinion field, weakening their learning motivation.

2) Peer Subculture and Community Environment

The peer group in villages and communities has a significant influence on adolescents' behavior. Wang Yu and Tang Tong mentioned that in the county and township social space, some adolescents form peer groups that are detached from school, engaging in behaviors such as truancy, hanging out in internet cafes, and gathering in the streets. This peer subculture provides a "safe haven" for hidden dropout students, making it difficult for them to return to normal learning tracks. At the same time, the lack of public cultural facilities in rural communities and the absence of community education functions further weaken the external support system for adolescents' learning.

(5) Internal Psychological Mechanism at the Individual Level

1) Learning Motivation Deficiency and Self-Efficacy Decline

Individual psychological factors are the internal root of hidden dropout. Feng Bang and He Xiaofeng found in their research on rural junior secondary students that learning motivation deficiency is the core psychological characteristic of hidden dropouts. When students experience repeated academic failures, their self-efficacy continuously declines, and they develop learned helplessness, believing that no matter how hard they try, they cannot change the status quo, thus choosing to "give up on themselves."

2) Identity Crisis and Sense of School Belonging Loss

Adolescents are in a critical period of identity formation. When students cannot obtain positive identity recognition at school, they are prone to a loss of school belonging. Pedditzi et al. found through multi-perspective analysis that negative teacher-student relationships, peer exclusion, and lack of parent-child support all lead to a decline in students' sense of school belonging, which in turn triggers dropout intention. For hidden dropouts, this sense of loss is more latent-they do not explicitly leave school but express resistance through "mental absence."

3) Coping Styles and Psychological Defense Mechanisms

Some students adopt avoidance and denial as coping styles when facing academic pressure and interpersonal difficulties. Yang Hui et al. [25] pointed out in their study on disadvantaged adolescents in ethnic minority areas that when faced with learning difficulties and environmental maladaptation, some students choose to escape into the virtual world or adopt a "passive resistance" attitude, which on the surface appears as "being in class but not listening," but is actually a psychological defense mechanism. This mechanism, while protecting the individual's self-esteem in the short term, exacerbates the depth of hidden dropout in the long run.

4. GOVERNANCE COUNTERMEASURES FOR HIDDEN DROPOUT

Based on the multi-dimensional formation mechanism of hidden dropout, academia has proposed governance countermeasures from the perspectives of educational administration, schools, families, villages/communities, and individuals. These countermeasures are not isolated but require multi-agent collaboration to form a synergistic governance system.

(1) Educational Administration Level: Institutional Optimization and Policy Support

1) Improve the Dropout Prevention and School Retention Governance System

Zhou Xincheng proposed that government administrations should shift from the traditional "no trouble" governance logic to an "active governance" model, rationally define the boundaries of home-school responsibilities, and provide institutional guarantees for teachers' legitimate management and discipline. At the same time, a diversified evaluation system for educational quality should be established to avoid the one-sided pursuit of enrollment rates and grades as the sole criterion for assessing schools and teachers.

2) Optimize the General-Vocational Streaming Mechanism

Wang Yu and Liu Qiang suggested that the government should promote the reform of the general-vocational streaming mechanism, eliminate the social stigma of vocational education, and enhance the social recognition and employment competitiveness of secondary vocational education. By improving the vertical articulation channel between vocational and general education, students are provided with diversified development paths, thereby reducing the sense of powerlessness and self-abandonment caused by streaming.

3) Strengthen Rural Education Investment and Resource Allocation

The government should increase investment in rural education, improve the infrastructure and faculty quality of rural schools, and narrow the urban-rural educational gap. At the same time, special funds should be established to support the mental health education and learning support services for left-behind children and hidden dropout students, providing institutional safeguards for the healthy growth of rural adolescents.

(2) School Level: Educational Innovation and Humanistic Care

1) Reform the Evaluation System and Attentional Equity

Wang Liqin emphasized that schools should break the "score-only theory" and establish a diversified student evaluation system that values students' comprehensive qualities and individual differences. Teachers should expand their scope of attention, care for middle-level and backward students, and avoid the "fan-shaped effect" of attention bias. Zhou Xincheng further proposed that schools should implement small-class teaching and tiered teaching to meet the individualized learning needs of different students.

2) Optimize Curriculum Design and Teaching Methods

Wang Yu and Liu Qiang pointed out that secondary vocational schools should optimize curriculum design based on regional industrial needs and students' actual foundations, reduce the difficulty of refined knowledge symbols, and enhance the practicality and relevance of courses. At the same time, project-based learning and experiential teaching methods should be adopted to stimulate students' learning interest and sense of participation.

3) Strengthen Mental Health Education and Teacher-Student Relationships

Schools should establish and improve mental health education systems, equipped with full-time psychological counselors, and regularly conduct psychological screenings and interventions for hidden dropout students. Teachers should strengthen emotional care, build equal and respectful

teacher-student relationships, and help students rebuild their sense of school belonging and learning confidence.

(3) Family Level: Parental Companionship and Educational Capacity Enhancement

1) Strengthen Parental Companionship and Emotional Support

Yang Runyong and Wang Ying emphasized that parents should fulfill their guardianship responsibilities as much as possible, increase companionship time, and enhance emotional communication with their children. For left-behind children, parents should maintain regular contact through telephone and video, and entrust reliable guardians to ensure the continuity and effectiveness of family education.

2) Improve Parental Educational Capacity

The government and schools should jointly carry out family education guidance services to help parents master scientific parenting concepts and methods. Gil et al. confirmed that high-quality parent-child relationships can effectively reduce students' dropout intention; therefore, parents should learn to respect their children's individual differences, set reasonable educational expectations, and avoid excessive pressure or laissez-faire attitudes.

(4) Village/Community Level: Cultural Reconstruction and Collaborative Governance

1) Reconstruct the Rural Education Culture

Chu Yan and Wang Ying proposed that rural communities should vigorously promote the correct concept of education, resist the spread of the "new reading-is-useless theory," and create a social atmosphere that values education and supports learning. Through village-level cultural activities, outstanding student role models, and other means, the attraction and cohesion of education in rural society should be enhanced.

2) Build a Home-School-Community Collaborative Mechanism

Villages and communities should establish collaborative governance platforms with schools and families to jointly pay attention to adolescents' growth. Community education committees can be set up to organize public welfare tutoring, interest groups, and other activities, providing extracurricular learning support and positive peer environments for rural adolescents, thereby squeezing out the space for negative peer subcultures.

(5) Individual Level: Motivation Activation and Self-Development

1) Stimulate Intrinsic Learning Motivation

Feng Bang and He Xiaofeng suggested that through career planning education, success experience sharing, and other means, students' intrinsic learning motivation should be stimulated and their self-efficacy enhanced. Schools can carry out goal-setting training to help students establish short-term and long-term learning goals, thereby gradually getting out of the state of learned helplessness.

2) Cultivate Positive Coping Styles

Mental health education should guide students to adopt positive coping styles, such as seeking help, problem-solving, and emotional regulation, rather than avoidance or denial. By building students' psychological resilience, their ability to withstand academic pressure and environmental challenges can be enhanced, fundamentally reducing the psychological roots of hidden dropout.

5. CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

Hidden dropout, as an emerging educational issue in the context of China's transition from poverty alleviation to rural revitalization, has attracted increasing academic attention. Through a systematic review of existing literature, this paper clarifies the conceptual evolution of hidden dropout from

explicit absence to mental detachment, summarizes its realistic types and group characteristics, and analyzes its formation mechanism from five dimensions: institutional structure, school field, family environment, village/community, and individual psychology. Corresponding governance countermeasures are proposed from the perspectives of educational administration, schools, families, communities, and individuals.

However, current research still has certain limitations. First, most studies focus on compulsory education and secondary vocational education stages, with relatively insufficient attention to higher education and early childhood education. Second, research methods are predominantly qualitative descriptions and literature reviews, lacking large-scale empirical investigations and longitudinal tracking studies. Third, the conceptual boundaries of hidden dropout remain ambiguous, and a unified measurement scale has not yet been formed, which to some extent limits the accuracy of cross-study comparisons.

Future research should focus on the following directions: (1) developing standardized measurement tools for hidden dropout to promote quantitative research and cross-regional comparative studies; (2) conducting longitudinal tracking to reveal the dynamic evolution trajectory of hidden dropout; (3) exploring the differential mechanisms of hidden dropout under different cultural contexts, especially in ethnic minority areas and urban-rural fringe zones; (4) strengthening intervention studies to verify the effectiveness of various governance strategies; (5) incorporating the impact of digital technology and artificial intelligence on student engagement into the research framework, examining new forms of hidden dropout in the digital age.

In conclusion, addressing the hidden dropout problem requires not only the joint efforts of multiple agents but also continuous innovation in theoretical research. Only by deeply understanding the formation mechanism of hidden dropout and constructing a scientific and effective governance system can we truly realize the goal of educational revitalization and promote the healthy growth of adolescents.

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