

Research on the current status and cultivation of social responsibility among contemporary youth

Sarah Taylor^{1, a, *}, Zhang Wu^{2, b},

¹University of Bath, Claverton Down Bath, BA2 7AY, UK

²Wuhan University, No. 299 Ba Yi Road, Wuchang District, Wuhan, Hubei Province, 430072, China

a.sarah1126lor@sina.com, b.xiaowu_z18@sohu.com

***Corresponding Author**

Abstract: The sense of social responsibility among contemporary adolescents largely determines the quality of the citizenry in building socialism with Chinese characteristics. The cultivation of social responsibility among contemporary adolescents should be integrated with practical aspects of education, teaching, and daily life. Efforts should be strengthened in improving mechanisms, enriching carriers, leveraging the primary role of individuals, integrating into subject education, and forming a collaborative force among schools, families, and society. This will lay the foundation for enhancing the ideological and moral qualities of contemporary adolescents.

Keywords: Adolescents, Sense of Social Responsibility, Cultivation, Pathways

1. Introduction

The report of the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China particularly emphasizes the need to further "promote the construction of civic morality, advocate truth, goodness, and beauty, denounce falsehood, evil, and ugliness, guide people to consciously fulfill their legal obligations, social responsibilities, and family responsibilities, create a social atmosphere that honors labor and creativity, and cultivate a good social ethos that values honor and disgrace, upholds integrity, contributes to society, and promotes harmony."

The vast number of adolescents are the hope for realizing the Chinese Dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. They bear the important mission of national revitalization and the rise of the nation, serving as the reserve force for the cause of building socialism with Chinese characteristics. The prerequisite for all this is that adolescents must have a strong sense of social responsibility, closely linking their personal destiny with the destiny of the nation and the country, and realizing their own value in the process of making positive contributions to society. Otherwise, the modernization drive of building socialism with Chinese characteristics will face a situation of lacking or weakening main forces. In this sense, the social responsibility of adolescents is related to the future of the nation and the destiny of the country. However, in the context of informatization and global cultural integration, the current thoughts of adolescents are influenced by various complex factors, and there are some worrying issues regarding the current state of their social responsibility. This requires great attention and continuous exploration of new ideas and measures for cultivating adolescents' social responsibility under the new circumstances.

2. The current status of social responsibility among contemporary adolescents

2.1. The positive aspects

2.1.1. *They have a certain understanding of social responsibility*

Responsibility refers to the cognition, emotion, and behavior related to responsibility. Social responsibility cognition specifically refers to the understanding of the content and knowledge of responsibility, mainly the connotation, value, regulations, and conditions for realizing social responsibility. The cognition of social responsibility is the foundation for fulfilling social responsibility; a lack of cognition will directly affect the recognition and realization of social responsibility. According to relevant surveys,

most adolescents today can recognize the basic content of social responsibility, such as the obligations individuals should fulfill towards the country, society, and family. They understand that only by fulfilling these responsibilities can they reflect their own value and that helping others contributes to creating a positive social atmosphere. In summary, most adolescents have basically formed a correct sense of responsibility and can recognize the importance of fulfilling social responsibility.

2.1.2. They have a relatively positive attitude towards fulfilling their responsibilities

Adolescents are significantly influenced by education and public opinion. Given the emphasis on cultivating social ethics and a sense of social responsibility in China's educational system, most adolescents still maintain a relatively pure mindset and a positive emotional attitude towards fulfilling social responsibilities. For example, the majority of adolescents possess basic qualities such as compassion, conscience, love, and a spirit of dedication. In terms of behavior, most adolescents recognize the importance of studying hard and developing their abilities. They express gratitude for the hard work of their parents and teachers, abide by traffic regulations and moral standards, and show aversion to behaviors that violate public ethics, damage public property, or disrupt public order.

2.1.3. They have a strong sense of responsibility towards their family

Influenced by China's excellent traditional culture and school education, and with a more direct and profound experience of family life, contemporary adolescents have a distinct sense of love for their parents. They believe that fulfilling their duties within the family primarily involves studying hard and, secondly, helping family members with household chores to the best of their abilities. In some cases, adolescents from a few disadvantaged families are even able to take on the responsibility of caring for their family members.

2.1.4. They have a good understanding of social public responsibilities

The majority of adolescents hold correct attitudes and emotions towards fulfilling social public responsibilities. For example, they maintain good public order, protect public property, preserve the ecological environment, ensure food safety, and exercise their legitimate rights without infringing on the interests of others. Most adolescents also express strong opposition to negative hot-button issues, such as uncivilized behavior by tourists, public health incidents, and environmental pollution.[3]

2.1.5. They have a strong sense of national and ethnic identity

Although contemporary adolescents are deeply influenced by Western culture, their sense of national and ethnic identity has gradually strengthened due to China's remarkable achievements in reform and opening up, the enhanced international status of the country, and the increasing emphasis on traditional cultural education. They have a high level of national pride and a basic understanding of the profound and extensive achievements of Chinese civilization. Additionally, they are well-informed about China's accomplishments and development goals in the contemporary era.

2.2. Problems in the sense of social responsibility among contemporary adolescents

2.2.1. Affected by the social environment, adolescents' understanding of responsibility is distorted

Since the reform and opening up, China has achieved rapid economic and social development. However, with the increasing integration of global economic and cultural influences and the rapid development of modern information technology, traditional Chinese cultural values have faced significant challenges. These challenges include the rise of unhealthy value systems such as materialism, moral decline, pursuit of fame, impatience, and an overemphasis on individuality, freedom, and pleasure. These trends have deeply influenced some adolescents, leading to a loss of self-identity and the emergence of individualistic ideologies that prioritize personal gain over collective interests.[4]

Some adolescents, unable to resist temptations, engage in unhealthy competition and pursue thrills at all costs, disregarding the harm their actions may cause to society and others. Others, in their quest to assert their individuality, exhibit rude behavior and uncivilized conduct. When personal interests conflict with those of others or the public, they prioritize their own needs, mistakenly believing that the pursuit of personal goals is the ultimate expression of value.

2.2.2. Family indulgence leads to a lack of responsibility among adolescents

Most contemporary adolescents are only children, living in affluent families and receiving excessive pampering from both their parents and grandparents. Many have developed the habit of being waited on hand and foot. Due to this indulgence, children often become the center of the family, with their wishes being fulfilled by any means necessary. This directly leads to a self-centered mentality among adolescents, who take for granted that all care and attention are their due, and that whatever they want should naturally be provided. As a result, they continuously demand without gratitude, are unwilling to share, cooperate, or consider others' feelings. When their demands are not met, they feel unfairly treated, which can trigger extreme emotions. Towards others and society, they often exhibit indifference and selfishness.

In rural areas, the situation manifests in another extreme. Many adolescents live in "left-behind" families, growing up under the care of their grandparents or being sent to boarding schools from a young age. Parents, feeling guilty, often try to compensate by providing material goods, but material possessions cannot replace love. These adolescents lack familial affection and care, and their psychological issues are not effectively addressed. Consequently, some adolescents become withdrawn, rebellious, and extreme, with an unclear, incomplete, and incorrect understanding of social responsibility.

2.2.3. The pressure of exam-oriented education affects the education of social responsibility

Currently, the pressure of exam-oriented education has extended from high school to elementary school, and even to kindergarten. The educational environment, where exam scores determine everything, leads schools and teachers to focus solely on theoretical knowledge, neglecting the comprehensive quality education of students. This results in the ineffective cultivation of students' collective spirit, cooperation awareness, and other abilities related to social responsibility.[5]

Additionally, the one-sided nature of education and teaching also hampers students' independent thinking and creativity, leading to a lack of observation and reflection on social life. Influenced by the educational climate, many parents also limit their children's education to academic learning, resulting in a singular development goal for the children. This, in turn, restricts the formation and development of adolescents' sense of social responsibility.[6]

2.2.4. Adolescents' own factors limit the development of their sense of responsibility

During adolescence, the mind is not yet fully mature and is highly susceptible to the influence of others and social phenomena, such as the pursuit of pleasure, worship of foreign cultures, and competition with peers. These influences can lead some adolescents to drift with the tide, lose themselves, and lack ambition. Some adolescents blindly pursue individuality and prefer to stand out, positioning themselves at the center of the world. They lack a sense of the bigger picture and a spirit of dedication. Sometimes, they even sacrifice others' interests for their own gains without realizing their mistakes.

3. The importance of strengthening the cultivation of social responsibility among adolescents

3.1. A necessity for realizing the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation

"The strength of China depends on the strength of its youth; the weakness of China is reflected in the weakness of its youth." Achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation is a formidable task that requires contemporary adolescents to play a leading role in the future. Therefore, their sense of responsibility not only determines their own growth and development but also impacts the great cause of the Chinese nation. In this regard, President Xi Jinping has expressed high expectations: he hopes that young people will realize their dreams through the vibrant practices of achieving the Chinese Dream. Thus, it is essential for contemporary adolescents to keep in mind the great mission bestowed by the times, take the Chinese Dream as their goal, further strengthen their ideals and beliefs, and truly enhance their sense of social responsibility and historical mission. They should link their personal ideals with the great ideal of the Chinese nation and closely connect their personal destiny with the fate of the Chinese nation.

3.2. The need for the comprehensive development of adolescents

For adolescents to develop in a comprehensive and healthy manner, knowledge and technical skills are only one aspect. More importantly, they must possess correct and firm ideals and beliefs, a broad and open mind, and a spirit of dedication to society. It should be said that only when one's spiritual dimension grows healthily does their development gain a soul, which can guide them to progress in the right direction. A person who loses themselves can easily deviate in direction. In such cases, no matter how much knowledge and technical skills they acquire, they will have no place to apply them and may even move in the opposite direction of society.

From another perspective, the growth of adolescents cannot be separated from the support of the entire society. Only by fulfilling their social responsibilities can they earn this support and thus create a favorable environment for their own development and success.

3.3. The need to inherit and promote the virtues of the Chinese nation

With a history of five thousand years, the Chinese nation has accumulated a rich and excellent traditional culture. Among these cultural treasures, the spirit of social responsibility—such as shouldering justice with iron will, choosing righteousness over life, caring for the world, and the pursuit of self-cultivation, family management, state governance, and world peace—is one of the core elements. In contemporary times, the personal development goals of patriotism, dedication, integrity, and friendliness in the core socialist values also vividly reflect this essence. This spirit serves as a powerful force in the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Only by inheriting and promoting these fine cultural traditions and by implementing and practicing the core socialist values can the broad youth realize their own value in the struggle to achieve the Chinese Dream.

3.4. The need to cultivate qualified citizens

In civic consciousness, a sense of responsibility is a crucial component and one of the essential qualities of a qualified citizen in a socialist country with Chinese characteristics. This consciousness primarily includes awareness of self-development and responsibility towards family, others, and society. Civic social consciousness is the subjective reflection of objective society, representing an individual's understanding of social relationships and social life. Personal consciousness is relative to social consciousness, and an individual's value can only be realized through social experiences.

For adolescents, their sense of social responsibility is reflected in their roles and contributions to others, the collective, and society. The stronger the social responsibility of adolescents, the deeper their interaction with society and the greater their contribution to it. This, in turn, promotes their own healthy development.

4. The pathways to cultivating social responsibility among adolescents

4.1. Improve the cultivation mechanism

In accordance with relevant regulations and documents, the cultivation of social responsibility should be integrated into the educational development plan. This involves formulating a cultivation plan, setting clear objectives, and determining specific measures based on the characteristics and cognitive development of adolescents. Relevant organizational structures should be established and improved, leadership should be strengthened, and responsibilities should be clearly defined. Additionally, an assessment and evaluation system should be established, placing the evaluation of students' social responsibility on par with knowledge teaching. This will prevent the overemphasis on exam-oriented education at the expense of comprehensive quality education, ensuring that the goals and plans are effectively implemented.

4.2. Enrich the carriers for cultivation

By conducting a variety of educational and teaching activities, social activities, and group activities, the carriers for cultivating social responsibility can be enriched. For example, activities such as themed class meetings, speech contests, advanced model report meetings, and the selection of exemplary figures can be organized. These activities serve to establish role models and emotionally engage students, creating a strong atmosphere of serving and contributing to society.

Practical social activities can be organized, such as experiencing life in impoverished families or villages, and living, eating, and studying with underprivileged adolescents. These activities can stimulate a sense of responsibility to care for and support the less fortunate, based on the inherent compassion of most adolescents. Additionally, organizing adolescents to conduct social surveys and participate in public service work can broaden their horizons, allow them to observe society, and experience social life. Through these activities, they can find joy in service and contribution, further enhancing their sense of responsibility.

In the process of serving and contributing, adolescents' sense of agency is activated, reflecting their value to society and helping to cultivate their awareness as responsible members of society.

4.3. Leverage the primary role of adolescents

In education and teaching, both teachers and students are considered "dual subjects." In traditional education models, the teacher is typically the primary focus, and students passively receive information in a one-way transmission of knowledge. Against the backdrop of educational reform, it is necessary to change educational theories and methods, vigorously stimulating adolescents' sense of agency. Only by fully mobilizing their sense of agency can their motivation for self-education and self-development be enhanced.

In practical terms, activities such as rotating discipline duties, rotating labor duties, and autonomous inspections and evaluations can be conducted. Under the guidance of teachers, students can independently formulate rules, set standards, and carry out self-supervision and evaluation. Respecting students' primary role in management and giving them full trust can stimulate their wisdom. For example, discussions, online forums, themed speeches, or debates can be organized around hot topics related to social responsibility, school management, and class management, treating students as the masters of the school and leveraging their intelligence.[8]

In such an environment where adolescents are respected and trusted, they will be motivated to utilize their wisdom and emotions, enhancing their sense of ownership. This closely ties their personal responsibilities to the development of the school.

4.4. Integrate into subject education

In school textbooks, moral education and comprehensive quality education content are more or less integrated, especially in subjects like civics, ideological and political education, Chinese language, and history in middle schools, which prominently reflect humanistic spirit. In teaching, teachers should deeply explore these elements and effectively integrate them into knowledge instruction.

Instead of preaching from a high position, teaching should be closely connected to life, using vivid examples that are relevant to adolescents' lives to provide subtle and impactful education. For instance, when studying economic knowledge, teachers can incorporate examples of counterfeit and substandard products, unsafe food, and telecom fraud, which adolescents frequently encounter. This helps students fully understand the harm of these behaviors, enhances their awareness of integrity, and recognizes that social progress and the establishment of good order require the fulfillment of integrity obligations.

Similarly, in Chinese language teaching, teachers can make full use of revolutionary martyrs and other heroic figures to guide students to learn from their spirit of sacrificing personal interests for the greater good. These figures exemplify selfless dedication to the revolutionary and developmental cause of the Chinese nation, shedding blood and tears for national righteousness and social justice.

4.5. Form a synergistic effort for cultivation

In addition to leveraging the important role of schools in cultivating social responsibility among adolescents, it is also essential to fully mobilize resources from families, society, and the government to form a synergistic effort for cultivation.

4.5.1. Home-school interaction

The family is the starting point for the formation of adolescents' sense of social responsibility. Centered around the family, adolescents continuously expand their social interactions and establish various relationships with others in society. Therefore, the family is the first teacher of adolescents and an important role model for them. The demonstration by parents and their education of their children are extremely

important. Hence, both schools and parents must value interaction with each other. Parents should promptly understand their children's performance at school and provide timely education and guidance when problems arise. Schools, on the other hand, should convey their educational philosophy, direction, methods, and policies to parents through multiple channels, making parents' educational approaches more scientific and their educational content more targeted.

4.5.2. *Government support*

Schools should actively seek government support, promptly reflect students' conditions and existing issues to the government, and provide decision-making basis for policy formulation. The government should closely align with educational goals, adjust areas where educational policies are not effectively implemented, and avoid the overemphasis on exam-oriented education that leads to deviations in comprehensive quality education. It is necessary to establish leadership, implementation, enforcement, and evaluation mechanisms for social responsibility education, forming a diversified evaluation guidance system to enhance schools' motivation in cultivating social responsibility. Additionally, the government should improve educational bases such as red education sites, patriotism education sites, practice bases, science museums, and libraries, allowing students to enhance their conscious awareness of fulfilling social responsibilities through experiential learning and practice.[9]

4.5.3. *Make full use of the broader social classroom*

Compared to schools, society is a much larger, more content-rich, and more practical "classroom." It is essential to integrate social responsibility education with social practice and public service organically. Through interaction with various social relationships, adolescents can develop the awareness and capability to fulfill their social responsibilities. Therefore, schools should actively organize and meticulously plan social activities to provide students with richer and broader platforms.[10]

Currently, adolescents are immersed in a highly free, open, complex, and rapidly changing information and cultural environment. Their values, lifestyle, learning methods, and ways of thinking are constantly being influenced and tested by various factors. On one hand, this environment provides adolescents with the convenience to broaden their horizons and enrich their learning content. On the other hand, due to their relatively weak ability to discern, the development of their values is highly uncertain.

Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the regulation of the online information environment and enhance adolescents' information literacy education. At the same time, leveraging information technology, educational platforms can be established through websites, WeChat, Weibo, and other means. By using official accounts, mobile applications (apps), forums, and other tools, schools can establish connections with adolescents, enhance communication, take the initiative in public opinion, and bridge the gap with students, thereby increasing the effectiveness of education.

5. Conclusion

Due to the influence of family, society, and the characteristics of the information culture, contemporary adolescents face some issues regarding their sense of social responsibility, which should be given significant attention. Cultivating social responsibility among adolescents is a systematic project. Firstly, schools should play a leading role by enhancing planning, improving teaching methods, and stimulating students' sense of agency to strengthen the cultivation of social responsibility. Additionally, the roles of families, the government, and society should be fully utilized to form a synergistic effort, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of this cultivation.

6. References

- [1] Jiang Beilei. Exploration of the Cultivation of Social Responsibility among Adolescents[J]. *Jiang xi Education*,2015(33):21-22.
- [2] Li Fei. The Current Development Status and Educational Reflections on Social Responsibility among Adolescents—A Survey Based in Northwest China[J]. *Modern Primary and Secondary Education*,2016(2):11-15.
- [3] Chen Zilong. Research on the Cultivation Mechanism of Social Responsibility among Adolescent Students[J]. *Teaching and Management (Theory Edition)*,2014(10):76-78.

- [4] Chen Ning, Ding Qiang, Huang Hong ji, et al. On the Sense of Responsibility among Adolescents and Its Cultivation[J]. Chinese Youth Studies,2014(5):108-110+119.
- [5] Chen Ning, Hu Chaoyi. Developmental Characteristics of Responsibility among Contemporary Chinese Adolescents—A Survey across Six Provinces and Cities[J]. Chinese Youth Studies,2015(12):56-59+88.
- [6] Liu Ji Xing. How to Cultivate the Responsibility Awareness among Adolescents under New Circumstances[J]. New Education Era Electronic Magazine (Teacher Edition),2015(34):242.
- [7] Dong Haixia. Cultural Reflections on Strengthening the Education of Socialist Core Values among Adolescents[J]. Contemporary Educational Science,2016(11):26-29.
- [8] Shi Ying, Li Ya, Sun Yi Dan, et al. On the Cultivation of Social Responsibility among Adolescents[J]. Today's Hubei (Monthly Edition),2014(5):139-139+140.
- [9] Qin Yong Fang, Liu Yuan Yi, Luo Wen, et al. The Cultivation of Socialist Core Values among Adolescents within the Quality Education System[J]. Social Scientist,2016(6):137-140.
- [10] Liu Yanan. Research on the Education of Socialist Core Values among Adolescents in a Multicultural Context[D]. Shenyang: Shenyang Normal University,2011.