

# Psychological Issues of Junior High School Students from Single-Parent Families: Case Analysis and Countermeasures

Yutong Li

*Department of Education, Guangxi Normal University, Guilin, China*

**Abstract:** *Junior high school students are in a critical stage of adolescence. This study employs a case study approach to analyze a junior high school student from a single-parent family in a specific region. By examining the psychological challenges faced by the student, this paper explores the causes of such issues from the perspectives of key interpersonal relationships, include parents, peers, and social networks, and discusses emotional dilemmas, unexpressed struggles, and latent crises. The analysis integrates family, school, and societal factors to propose practical countermeasures. These include fostering positive parental emotional influences, enhancing teachers' empathetic engagement, and promoting social-emotional learning in schools. Such strategies aim to improve emotional expression, strengthen psychological resilience, and cultivate healthy mental states and positive social emotions among adolescents.*

**Keywords:** *Single-parent families; Psychological issues of junior high students; Case analysis*

## 1. Introduction

The Civil Code of the People's Republic of China came into effect on 1 January 2021, and in order to implement the provisions of the Civil Code regarding the 'cooling-off period' for divorce, the Ministry of Civil Affairs amended the marriage registration procedures to include a 'cooling-off period' in divorce proceedings. According to the Statistical Bulletin on the Development of Civil Affairs published by the Ministry of Civil Affairs of the People's Republic of China in 2021, the number of legally registered marriages nationwide this year reached 7,643,000, a year-on-year drop of 6.1 per cent; the marriage rate was 5.4 per cent, a decrease of 0.4 per cent compared with the previous year; the number of divorces registered by civil affairs departments was 2,441,000, and the number of divorces decided by the courts and mediated by courts was 698,000, a year-on-year decrease of 34.6 per cent. The divorce rate was 2.0 per cent, a decrease of 1.1 percentage points from last year. From the above data, although the divorce rate has dropped compared to last year, the divorce rate in China has remained high in recent years. This has led to a significant increase in the number of minors from single-parent families. The breakdown of family relationships has led to numerous psychological problems among children. In particular, junior high school students in their adolescence have more acute psychological problems, so the mental health of this group is receiving more and more attention.

## 2. Case Presentation

This paper adopts the case study method to select typical cases in J city. In the process of data collection, interviews, participatory and non-participatory observation and other methods are used.

The subject of this paper is a 14-year-old junior high school student in a junior high school in J City, Xiao A, male, born in 2008, whose parents divorced when he was five years old and lived with his mother, and who is currently staying at home on leave of absence on the grounds of illness. In his first year of junior high school, he had a conflict with his teacher because he was criticised by the teacher in the classroom, and subsequently he feared that the teacher would make things difficult for him, and showed refusal to go to school. In the second year of junior high school, he strongly requested his parents to transfer him to another school, saying that he would study hard as long as he had a new learning environment. At that time, the parents think the child said very reasonable, they used the relationship to the child to do the transfer formalities, but, after only one month, Liu Mou and claimed that do not adapt to the environment, and classmates tensions and schoolwork pressure and other issues, to take extreme

ways to force parents to transfer back to the original school for him. Parents forced by the double pressure of the child and the school, for the child again for the transfer. After returning home, the child again refused to go to school behaviour, that learning is too hard want to go to the sports single, parents compromised for the planning, contact sports coaches, but a month later said that the body is not feeling well to give up the idea. He has remained at home since then, where he and his parents have continued to have heated arguments, appearing to be unable to listen to any advice or criticism from his parents, refusing to participate in any social activities, interpersonal tensions, withdrawn, addicted to games all day long and chaotic life, such as day and night problems.

### **3. Analysis of causes**

#### ***3.1. The Self-Oriented Dilemma: 'Egoism' in the Face of Inferiority Esteem***

Adler believed that low self-esteem is the most basic determinant of human behaviour. Due to physical, mental or social reasons, people may have a feeling of self-depreciation, which is a kind of self-compensating mentality. For example, congenitally blind people who cannot regain their eyesight often use touch or smell to compensate for the difficulties in life due to their eyesight. He believed that this use of compensatory functions affects the normal development of the personality. Adler's neuroscientific theories also emphasise that inappropriate compensation, or 'avoidance' effects, can cause mental problems.

Junior high school students from single-parent families have certain problems in personality development because they are not guided by the correct compensatory mentality in their studies and lives. They have obstacles in interacting with the outside world, and they often show negative emotions in dealing with their own selves. Changes in the family structure and the failure of parents to provide timely guidance in the face of adversity can make junior high school students more prone to internal conflict and sensitivity, which can also lead to the development of such minors' self-denial of the idea that "I am inferior to others, I am inferior to others", and then become timid and have an inferiority complex. During the observation, it was also found that in order to form a stable social group, Xiao A paid for his classmates' meals and paid for their bills to please others, and packaged himself to integrate into the group and gain the so-called "friends", which further led to the pessimism and low sense of self-worth of the minors from single-parent families and their habitual denial of themselves.

As a result of his immaturity, Little A's judgement of problems in life may be excessively subjective, and he resents language and behaviour that is contrary to his own, resulting in the problem of egotism. Ellis put forward the ABC theory that a person's emotions and behaviours cannot be directly triggered without being directly stimulated, but have to be misperceived and assessed by the person affected, which ultimately produces emotional and behavioural results in a certain situation. While the self-awareness of secondary school students is gradually increasing, their minds are still self-centred and they are prone to make one-sided understanding of things, which leads to negative self-assessment, resulting in low self-esteem, low self-confidence and other problems. The problem of egotism can also arise under the weight of low self-esteem. What is egotism, in layman's terms, is self-righteousness. The most common, widespread, and influential of all personality defects happens to be self-righteousness. Psychologists have found that egotism and self-righteousness are actually a sign of low self-esteem. When a person has low self-esteem, he or she tends to be overly arrogant and overconfident as a way to hide their low self-esteem and the lack of self-confidence that stems from internalisation. And this self-righteousness trait can be found in almost everyone, only the trait expressed is stronger or weaker.

#### ***3.2. Alienation from the outside world: 'exhaustion and confusion' in the face of rebellion.***

Nowadays, with the rapid development of technology, the network coverage is getting bigger and bigger. During the new crown epidemic, online teaching makes junior high school students contact the network more frequently, this stage of the children have not yet set up a correct view of the world, outlook on life and values, their ability to distinguish right from wrong is weak, they are easily disturbed by external factors, the emergence of erroneous and bad ideas greatly affects the environment in which the children grow up, the thought of the useless theory of reading makes students confused about the value and meaning of learning, lack of motivation, and easy to deny their own learning behaviours. The idea of the uselessness of studying makes students confused about the value and meaning of learning, lack of motivation for learning, and easy to deny their own learning behaviour. In serious cases, students even detach themselves from reality and begin to deeply doubt the learning behaviour of others, the learning

behaviour of the society and the behaviour of the state in running schools. At the same time, in some divorced families, parents themselves will appear anorexic psychology, emotional instability, negative and pessimistic about life, inadvertently giving children a wrong model, the parents' negative emotions will make students become more negative, anxious, and at a loss. Single parents usually in their own emotional regulation and assume family responsibilities will ignore the confusion faced by the child or learning and life problems, failed to solve or communicate in a timely manner, resulting in the deterioration of the situation into psychological problems, affecting their healthy growth.

For students from divorced single-parent families, school is the closest place to them outside of the family, and the care they lack in the family they long to get in the school and teachers. The relationship between teachers and students is an invisible educational force which is the basis of teaching and learning activities. The relationship between teachers and teachers has a direct impact not only on the effectiveness of teachers' teaching, but also on students' academic performance and intellectual development. The disharmony between teachers and students will make the students' antipathy towards the teachers stronger, thus creating a reverse psychology and a gradual loss of interest in the subjects taught by the teachers, thus becoming an obstacle to teaching. Moreover, in actual education and teaching, many teachers do not care enough about single-parent students, lack in-depth research on the causes of problematic behaviours of single-parent students, and adopt education methods that are not compatible with the actual situation of the students, which can hardly play a positive role for the students, and may even play the opposite role, making the students more indulgent, which is detrimental to the transformation of problematic behaviours of the students. In addition, the lack of communication between schools and divorced single-parent families has led to insufficient understanding of the students by their parents, who have neglected the psychological problems of the students, and the lack of effective co-ordination between school education and family education, which has affected the transformation of the students' problematic behaviour.

Such students do not receive due guidance and encouragement at home, and they do not receive attention and care from teachers at school. The double neglect at home and at school leads to self-doubt on the part of the child, which initiates the generation of a self-defence mechanism - rebelliousness.

#### **4. Exploration of countermeasures**

##### ***4.1. Warmth under the family***

The Law of the People's Republic of China on the Promotion of Family Education, which came into force on 1 January 2022, has elevated the responsibility of the national education department for family education guidance to the legal level. As a modern education system that dominates the 'three-in-one' education system of society, family and school, it is an obligation, but also a responsibility, to pay attention to, promote and facilitate the reform and development of family education, so it is undoubtedly the most crucial to improve the status quo of family education and promote the development of family education.

Parents are the best teachers of students, and their words and deeds in daily life influence students all the time. Therefore, parents should set a good example and be good role models in students' lives. In the face of family changes, parents should deal with the situation rationally. They should not feel sorry for themselves or blame others, but rather, they should be more and more courageous, adjust their mentality in time, and walk out from the painful life situation to find a new life. As parents of students from single-parent families, they should bravely take up their own responsibilities and create for students from single-parent families the most secure and reliable place conducive to their lifelong learning and living. At the same time, this responsible attitude towards their children can also influence them in a subtle way and provide a guarantee for the emotional stability of single parent students.<sup>[1]</sup> Parents should face life with a positive and optimistic mindset, eliminate their own bad emotions, infect their children with their own sunny mindset, help their children get out of the haze in their hearts, and make their children full of hope and confidence in their future lives. In this way, single parents to create a healthy single parent family atmosphere, can provide a good guarantee for the psychological development of single parent family students, through the stability of the family atmosphere to convey education.

In the process of children's growth, parents should not only provide sufficient material conditions for their children, but also teach their children how to behave and how to be based on society. Therefore, parents should transform their educational philosophy and adjust teaching methods. They must avoid judging children solely by academic performance or viewing them as bargaining chips for their own

future aspirations. Instead, parents should strive to understand, care for, and encourage their children. While paying attention to academic achievements, greater emphasis should be placed on recognizing children's efforts throughout the learning process and identifying their unique strengths.

Psychological counseling should be prioritized in daily life. Parents need to proactively initiate conversations with their children, seeking common ground and shared interests to establish meaningful dialogue. Through heart-to-heart communication, they should address psychological issues, alleviate mental burdens, and listen attentively to their children's inner thoughts while witnessing their growth journey. When children encounter difficulties, parents should provide timely care and assistance to foster a sense of security. This approach will ultimately enhance children's self-confidence and support their holistic development.

#### ***4.2. Support under the school***

Schools as well as junior secondary school teachers, who are the leaders of the education process, have the responsibility to help students from single-parent families to solve their psychological problems, so as to achieve home-school co-education and to face the psychological difficulties of single-parent junior secondary school students together.

Li Huanhuan et al.'s findings show that teacher support has a significant impact on students' psychological crisis intervention, while perception of discrimination affects teachers' intervention in students' psychological crisis, and teacher support has no gender-specific impact on students'.<sup>[2]</sup> In their also study, Zhang Ling and Li Xinying found that teacher autonomy support and children's psychological flexibility are mutually reinforcing, while preventing mental health problems.<sup>[3]</sup> Therefore, in order to address the issue of psychological crisis intervention for secondary school students, it is important to focus on adjusting their understanding and strengthening the support of teachers.

Teacher support is divided into three main areas: learning support, emotional support and ability support.<sup>[4]</sup> First, learning support. In classroom management and education and teaching, teachers should have a comprehensive understanding of the students' family situation, upbringing and learning foundation, and set different learning and behavioural standards for different students. Specifically, teachers should implement personalised management for students from divorced single-parent families and adopt targeted programmes to promote the common progress of all students; they should make clear the purpose of evaluating students from divorced single-parent families, and have a comprehensive understanding of the students' growth and learning history while protecting their privacy. Emotional support, in the actual education and teaching, teachers can not wear 'tinted glasses' to see these students, but to be treated equally, teachers should be good at discovering the strengths and advantages of the students, and make positive comments in a timely manner, through the language and behaviour of the positive reinforcement to help students set up self-confidence, sunshine, optimistic mentality. And pay more attention to the growth of students in the learning process of emotional and attitudinal changes, more use of encouraging evaluation, motivate students to strive for excellence, accelerate the transformation of student problem behaviour. Three ability to support, teachers should strengthen their own problem-solving skills, single-parent family students in the school life of the dilemma faced, to do specific problems specific solutions. The problematic behaviour of divorced single-parent students can be measured and intervened in the collective, through the team, collective activities, so that they realize that they are an important part of the class, with the help of harmony, unity, upward class atmosphere to infect them, so that they realize their role and value in classroom management and construction, and to enhance the sense of self-efficacy. Teachers can also carry out face-to-face psychological counselling, chatting into the students' hearts, listening to the difficulties and problems encountered by the students in their studies and lives, and putting forward constructive suggestions for the students, opening the students' hearts and minds with sincerity and trust, and nipping the students' psychological problems in the bud.

Intervening in the problematic behaviours of students from divorced single-parent families is not only the responsibility of families, but also the responsibility of schools. Schools should put home-school co-education into practice, not only to make parents aware of the problems that may arise when their children are living in the environment of divorced single-parent families, but also to teach parents to help their children solve problems in a scientific way. Home-school co-operation can achieve the purpose of co-education and promote the healthy growth of children. Schools can sign a joint home-school convention with parents to enhance their sense of responsibility, so as to ensure the sustainability of education for divorced single-parent families, and to enable parents and schools to work together to form an effective intervention mechanism with concerted efforts. Schools can hold regular classes for parents to popularise scientific concepts of education and teaching methods, and invite parents to participate in school

activities, so as to thoroughly help children eliminate the soil for unhealthy mentalities. Schools can pair up outstanding teachers with students from divorced single-parent families, adopt different counselling methods for students with different degrees of problematic behaviours, and set up tracking files for these students to observe and analyse the dynamics of the students, and provide targeted education programmes; they can also make use of the Internet to set up a platform for home-school co-education, which facilitates communication and exchanges between the school and the parents, and at the same time enables resources to be shared, and improves the ability of cooperation between the parents and the school. It also enables the sharing of resources and improves the co-operation between parents and schools.

#### ***4.3. Joint assistance under the society***

First of all, the emergence and development of the Internet has also brought some unfavourable effects to the healthy growth of students from divorced single-parent families. The Internet has a huge amount of information resources, and these information resources are of mixed quality. For students who are not yet physically and mentally mature, it is easy for them to have cognitive misunderstandings about such information. Coupled with the fact that some students from divorced single-parent families lack parental supervision and discipline, it is easy for them to develop radical thoughts and behaviours under the influence of undesirable Internet resources. It is very necessary to correct the undesirable induction of social resources and create a healthy Internet environment to protect the psychology of minors.

Secondly the healthy growth of students cannot be separated from the support of society. In addition to the initiatives and responses implemented by schools themselves, they need to strengthen close contact and cooperation with the community, establish a school-society linkage system, seek help from the community, legal aid organisations, mental health counselling organisations, etc., carry out social practice activities that are suitable for students, and encourage the active participation of students from divorced single-parent families in order to cultivate the qualities of self-improvement, autonomy, and self-reliance in students. Schools can co-operate with the community and make use of weekends and holidays to organise students to carry out community volunteer activities, so that students from divorced single-parent families can go to the streets to give warmth to sanitation workers, give condolence performances in homes for the elderly, and popularise knowledge of fraud prevention for the public, etc., so as to gain social acceptance and feel their self-worth from the social practice activities.

Finally, the school can also contact the local police station and invite the police into the school to publicise and popularise the knowledge of law to the students, touching the students' hearts with the examples of juvenile delinquency around them, raising the students' awareness of the law, and avoiding the students from single-parent families from going astray. In the case of divorced single-parent families with difficulties in their lives, schools must also communicate with the community, civil affairs and other departments to mobilise social forces to implement social assistance and provide the necessary support, so as to ensure the students' basic livelihood and enable them to study with ease.

### **5. Conclusion**

Children of single-parent families are not uncommon in today's society, and divorce caused by parents' emotions and other reasons is not an uncommon thing, because every parent has the right to pursue their own happiness and joy. The secondary school period is in an important period both physically and psychologically, and hormonal imbalance in physiology will lead to sensitive and fragile thoughts and greater emotional changes in students during this period, especially the performance of students from single-parent families is more serious.<sup>[5]</sup> Many students from single-parent families, due to family breakups, it is very easy to alienate their families and parents, resulting in the students' inability to adapt to and integrate into the surrounding environment, and it is easier for the students to produce mental and spiritual double pressure, resulting in physical and mental health problems. Cultivating positive social emotions among junior high school students from single-parent families requires the concerted efforts of families, schools and society to solve the psychological problems of these minors and to promote the healthy development of the individual's body and mind.

### **Acknowledgement**

This thesis is the research result of the project of 'Innovation Project of Guangxi Graduate Education' in 2024, 'Research on TPACK Competence Model Construction and Enhancement Strategies of Junior High School Language Teachers', project number: XYCSR2024036.

## References

- [1] ZHANG Yaxuan, WANG Limei. *A study of strategies for cultivating positive social emotions in minors from single-parent families*[J]. *Educational Practice and Research*(C), 2022(Z1):54-57.
- [2] Sun Fang, Li Huanhuan, Bao Jiamin, Zhen Zi'ang, Song Wei, Jiang Songyuan. *Relationship between teacher support and peer support and psychological crisis in middle school students: the mediating role of discrimination perception* [J]. *Psychology and Behavioral Research*, 2021,19 (02): 209-215.
- [3] Zhang Ling, Li Xinying. *The effects of parental support and teacher support on adolescent mental health: the mediating role of psychological flexibility* [J]. *Educational Theory and Practice*, 2022,42 (17): 12-16.
- [4] JI Chunmei, ZHAO Hui. *The relationship between teacher support, academic self-efficacy and academic achievement of primary and secondary school students: a meta-analytic structural equation model*[J]. *Research on Teacher Education*, 2021, 33(06):106-113.
- [5] Huang Xia. *Emotional expression and mental health: an empirical analysis on single-parent adolescents*[J]. *China Youth Research*, 2021(08):76-84.