Why Young People Are Obsessed with Personality Tests and Various Pseudosciences: A Psychological Analysis of Underlying Real-World Psychological Distresses

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Abstract: Ages 14 to 24 constitute a critical stage for psychological and personality development. During physical and mental transformations, the youth groups, namely adolescents and young adults shape their self-perception and values. Growing social attention has been paid to youth groups' mental health, yet research indicates widespread anxiety, depression and other psychological troubles that hinder sound personality formation. In this paper, pseudoscience refers to content lacking testable empirical evidence but presented as an explanatory or predictive tool. Given insufficient mental health support within educational systems, numerous youth groups turn to personality tests, astrology and other pseudosciences in search of answers-a phenomenon that exposes deficiencies in mental health education and unmet psychological demands [1,2,3]. Therefore, understanding the mental health and personality composition of young people now is helpful to formulate correct ways of helping them to grow up in all aspects, give educators a scientific basis, and urge society to give priority to the cultivation of personality. From four aspects: cognitive psychological mechanisms, personal psychological troubles, social environment influence and interpersonal needs, paper summarizes the previous research results about young people's enthusiasm for this trend, and hides them in the deep heart to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of the current research. Combining with the current social trends, it summarizes the value of the research, providing theoretical reference for guiding young people to think rationally and scientifically and avoiding sticking to pseudoscience.

Keywords: Youth Groups; Personality Tests; Pseudoscience; Psychological Motivations; Real-World Psychological Distresses

1. Introduction

In the era of internet social media, MBTI personality assessments, zodiac personality analyses, tarot divination, traditional fortune-telling and similar content have pervaded youth groups' daily lives. Rather than merely treating them as casual entertainment, youth rely on these tools to judge their own traits, predict life fortunes, define interpersonal bonds, and even base academic, career and romantic decisions on test outcomes [3,4]. Such personality evaluation methods lacking empirical scientific proof, alongside feudal pseudoscientific content, have gradually become core lenses through which youth groups understand themselves and interpret the world.

Domestic scholars have investigated this social phenomenon from social representation, psychological mechanisms, communication logic, adverse effects and governance guidance. Some researchers have revealed the root causes of the real world by investigating the traditional pseudoscientific behaviors of young people such as divination [1]. Other researchers made a professional analysis of the popular MBTI personality test craze [3, 4]. Based on psychological principles, scholars such as Peng Zilin and Ruo Li explained the influence of cognitive biases such as Barnum effect and self-achievement prediction on young people [5, 6]. The overall study further investigated the harm to body and mind conveyed by pseudoscience [2,7]. Literature so far has explained the addictive behavior of young people and revealed the hidden psychological pain such as confusion of identity, lack of understanding of oneself and lack of feeling of belonging to society [1, 3, 4]. This paper summarizes the common opinions of past research, sorts out the evolution of related knowledge and conveys objective opinions.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Research on Cognitive Psychological Mechanisms Behind Youth's Obsession with Personality Tests and Pseudoscience

Psychology is the central framework for thinking about this phenomenon. So far, many studies have used the famous Psychology theory to explain the psychological reasons why young people are addicted to personality tests and pseudoscience. At the same time, we also found the common weakness of synergy in this group [5, 6, 8].

Barnum effect is the basic theory to explain why astrology, tarot card and simple gender diagnosis are attractive. Peng Zilin's survey in "An Analysis of the Correlation Between College Students' Belief in Zodiac Signs and the Barnum Effect" shows that college students who are absent-minded will unconsciously think that they are only suitable for themselves, thus trusting the judgments of all constellations [5]. Mr. Ruo Li has widely introduced the working principle of Barnum effect in the field of science communication research. Pseudoscience and personality test make use of everyone's cognitive habits to fabricate stories that seem to be "only their own" but actually apply to anyone, deceiving young people who are immature and lack critical thinking ability [6]. In the analysis of tarot card divination and network divination fraud, Xiang Hui and Hou Wenya both believe that fortune tellers are good at using this psychological model to fabricate reassuring stories that everyone expects, which can easily undermine the psychological defense of young people [9,10].

The bad psychological consequences of this obsession will be aggravated by the self-fulfilling prophecy. Hou Ruihua's research shows that once people accept the results of personality test or divination, they will unconsciously adjust their behavior to meet the preset label, and gradually, their lives will meet the results of divination [8]. Young people define the label of test as "such a person as themselves", fall into the trap of rigid thinking, and have no mood to let themselves grow up. This is a typical situation in which young people don't know who they are and critical thinking becomes weak. Similarly, Han Xiaoshi's analysis of zodiac folklore shows that young people who have always believed in the fixed label and fortune prediction of "this is their own personality" are more likely to fall into passivity. Even if they hit the wall, they will hesitate to act on their own and pin their hopes on unfounded fatalism [11].

Summarizing all kinds of psychological research, the reason why young people are addicted to pseudoscience is that their thinking ability is not well developed. People in this group tend not to know themselves very well, and their ability to distinguish between good and bad is very weak, and they are easily influenced by what others say. If you are exposed to the interesting and resonant personality test and the content of pseudoscience, you will not be able to make a reasonable judgment and will fall into the trap of thought.

2.2 Research on Underlying Individual Spiritual Distresses Fueling Obsessive Behaviors

In addition to the superficial psychological influence, there are many studies to investigate the hearts of young people. This study reveals the reasons for the popularity of personality tests and pseudoscience-psychological burden and troubles, and shows what young people want and psychological troubles [1,3].

First, pervasive anxiety over self-identity and a pervasive crisis of self-discovery. In research on the MBTI test frenzy, Sun Jinyu argues that contemporary youth navigate a pluralistic, conflicting value landscape, making it difficult to articulate clear understandings of their personalities, life trajectories and self-worth. Having once resisted external categorization, they grow desperate for fixed labels to define themselves [3]. MBTI, zodiac signs and other personality tests deliver instant identity markers, acting as vessels to contain their spiritual disorientation. Analyzing youth fortune-telling practices, Liang Gang and Bi Xiaoya add that intensifying social competition fuels fear of an unforeseeable future; unable to control life's trajectory, young people turn to pseudoscience to predict fate and ease uncertainty-induced anxiety [1].

Second, limited channels for emotional catharsis, leading them to seek spiritual solace from pseudoscience. Liang Gang and Bi Xiaoya classify fortune-telling as a form of psychological defense and emotional release for young adults. Burdened by academic rat races, workplace competition, heartbreak and life setbacks, young people endure persistent negative emotions with few viable outlets for venting and stress relief. Resonance words of personality test and

reassuring words of divination can temporarily calm down negative emotions, give people an illusory spiritual support and relieve inner depression [1, 3].

The third is to escape the pain of the real world and have a passive idea of resignation. In his master's thesis investigating the influence of pseudoscience on young people, Ma Ruiqing concluded that long-term contact with pseudoscience arranged by fate would lead young people to be afraid to face adversity. In the face of failure, they blame the frustration on fate, not on their own ability and judgment. Then he evaded his own responsibility and accepted passive ideas such as "playing it safe" and "resigned to fate", which greatly hindered his personal growth [2, 11].

Previous studies have revealed the core weaknesses of young people today. That is daily anxiety, decreased self-confidence and weak resilience. Neither personality test nor pseudoscience is a real cure for inner pain. These are only temporary buffer materials to escape the pain of life and hide the inner chaos [1, 2, 3].

2.3 Research on Behavioral Drivers Shaped by Social Environments and Social Interaction Needs

Scholars generally agree that apart from personal psychological troubles, the external opportunities for the spread of personality tests and pseudoscience are the ever-changing social conditions, digital communication forms and young people's demands for society. At the same time, it also shows the social problems among young people.

Internet communication and commercial capital are spreading this popularity. In the study of symbolic socialization of MBTI, Wang Duxian said that Internet algorithms always introduce similar test content, which increases the opportunities for young people to contact the test. Entertainment companies package personality tags and metaphysical mysticism into popular culture, which is widely spread on short videos and social platforms to create an atmosphere of participation [4]. Li Yihe's analysis of the explosive spread of pseudoscience in the past shows that the novelty and fun of pseudoscience are conducive to the rapid spread of human beings in groups, making the Internet spread faster and weakening the scientific thinking ability of young people [7]. Combined with the newspaper survey, Cao Yaxin and Zhang Han pointed out that replacing objective feelings with fixed concepts in label-based personality communication will distort young people's ideas about interpersonal relationships [12].

If there is no place in society, there will be bad social relations based on labels. Both Sun Jinyu and Wang Duxian said that the social circle of young people tends to be subdivided. MBTI's personality types and constellations become simple words to start talking, or separate social groups [3, 4]. In order to find like-minded friends, a group of young people used standard test labels. In this way, the speaking time is reduced, and the loneliness brought by the lonely and scattered life is alleviated. However, there are obvious disadvantages in this way of participation. Judging and screening others' words only by the label of personality will produce social prejudice and biased judgment. This is a distorted form of social psychology.

On the other hand, in the competitive society of strength, the idea that young people only consider useful things becomes strong. The fierce competition between further studies and work will make people only care about success and failure. A group of young people gradually become only thinking about useful things. In order to predict the future and get good luck, they really want divination and personality diagnosis. I want to be advantageous in the competition in an unscientific way, which will further aggravate my tendency to fall into pseudoscience.

2.4 Commentary and Prospects of Existing Research

2.4.1 Strengths of current scholarship

From the overall survey of literature, the domestic research on young people's personality test and obsession with pseudoscience has gradually become a whole system. First of all, the research perspective extends to various fields. They are physics, sociology, communication studies, ideological and political education. Scholars analyze the reasons from the psychology of the individual, the behavior of the middleman and the environment of the big society, and summarize the whole phenomenon [1- 5, 7].

Secondly, the research object is subdivided. It includes not only the old online pseudoscience such as divination and tarot, but also the popular personality diagnosis such as MBTI and zodiac analysis, which is in line with the ever-changing cultural trend of young people. Third, it has high practical value. After discovering the problems,

most paper will introduce some improved methods, such as ideological education, online management, psychological counseling and social support, to provide practical help [1, 3, 3].

The famous theories such as Barnum effect and self-fulfilling prophecies are used to explain the cognitive distortion of young people, which provides a solid theoretical support for the discussion [5, 6, 8].

2.4.2 Limitations of existing research

First, uneven depth of empirical investigation. Many papers rely on theoretical deduction and phenomenological description, while only a small number include field surveys. Most studies lack large-scale sample data from young populations, with insufficient analysis of differences in obsessive behaviors across age and educational subgroups.

Second, inadequate research on correlations between psychological distresses. Existing literature separately addresses cognitive, spiritual and social issues yet rarely explores intrinsic causal links between identity anxiety, warped socialization and passive fatalism, failing to systematically map interactive mechanisms between various psychological pathologies.

Third, homogenized countermeasure research. Mitigation and regulatory strategies proposed across numerous papers overlap heavily, lacking innovative solutions tailored to youth groups' digital lifestyles and pop culture preferences.

Fourth, scarcity of long-term longitudinal studies. Few papers thoroughly investigate the lasting adverse impacts of prolonged engagement with personality tests and pseudoscience on youth's worldview formation, personality development and life trajectories.

2.4.3 Research summary

Consolidating findings from all reviewed literature, youth groups' obsession with personality tests and pseudoscience is far more than a trivial recreational activity-it represents a collective symptom stemming from overlapping real-world psychological distresses. At the individual level, vulnerabilities include fragmented self-perception, chronic anxiety, poor stress tolerance and heightened suggestibility. Socially, youth grapple with isolation, label-based prejudice and dysfunctional interaction patterns. Macro social drivers include cutthroat competition, digital media dissemination and commercial capital exploitation. Cognitive biases like Barnum effect is a direct opportunity. Inner confusion and anxiety are the core internal reasons, and the popularity of niche social culture and network has brought external effects [1-6].

We know that young people's groups demand to express themselves and rest their minds, but relying too much on personality labels and blindly believing in unfounded pseudoscience will lead to rigid thinking, no desire to improve themselves and distorted views on interpersonal relationships [3, 4,11]. Now academic research clearly reveals various problems behind this popularity. Future research will strengthen long-term follow-up investigation, investigate connected psychological disorders more deeply, and create coping styles suitable for young people's psychological characteristics. These efforts can help young people get rid of rigid labels and false scientific ideas, cultivate their own rational and scientific understanding, and cultivate forward-looking thinking for growth and coping with life difficulties.

2.4.4 Research purpose and significance

The purpose of this study is to investigate the inner troubles of young people in cultivating mental health and character. Pay special attention to the reasons why they are addicted to personality tests and pseudoscience. Social pressure and personal inner wants are superimposed, and the inner burden of young people is increasing. Now is an era full of information, and wrong information and falsehood further aggravate their inner instability [1, 2]. This phenomenon not only shows that young people want to know more about themselves, but also is closely related to the road of their character growth. This paper will investigate the research on mental health, personality labels and pseudoscience beliefs so far, and find out the internal and external factors that change the mental health of young people. In this way, the teachers and psychological counselors can have the right way to help. The research so far has proved that there is a great relationship between the state of mental health and personality traits. People with high scores in neuroticism generally feel more inner pain. This will be the theoretical basis for this paper research direction. Investigating these problems can deepen our understanding of the psychological development of contemporary youth and become the premise of cultivating healthy personality, which is of great practical significance to the field of education. This research will provide important theoretical support and practical application help to make adolescent's mental health better, thus

promoting their overall harmonious development.

2.4.5 Research objectives

From the perspective of psychology, this paper focuses on the social phenomenon that young people are addicted to personality tests, zodiac divination and other pseudosciences. Summarize the previous academic research, explore this popular psychological opportunity and actual situation, reveal the hidden cognitive deficits, chronic anxiety and social troubles that young people are caught in, and objectively evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of the existing research, and provides theoretical references.

3. Research Content

3.1 Mapping Real-World Manifestations of Youth Groups' Pseudoscience Obsession

3.1.1 Obsessive behaviors toward modern personality assessments

This section lists the popular trends among young people now. Including MBTI diagnosis and zodiac personality analysis, summed up the mode of action. That is to use the label of the test to determine your own value, divide the circle according to the diagnosis result, and decide the three modes of further study, work and love according to the personality result.

3.1.2 Dissemination patterns of traditional online pseudoscience

We classify the spread of traditional pseudoscience among young people, such as tarot divination, online fortune-telling and life forecasting. Then summarize the behavioral characteristics: rely on pseudoscience to reduce stress and anticipate the future.

3.2 Psychological Mechanisms Behind Youth Groups' Obsessive Behaviors

3.2.1 Cognitive bias mechanisms

In this part, using the psychological theories such as Barnum effect and self-fulfilling prophecies, it is analyzed that young people's ability to judge things is still very weak and easily influenced by people's language, and their vague character divination and fortune interpretation are analyzed.

3.2.2 Emotional and psychological demand mechanisms

Combined with the characteristics of young people's growth, this content tells the inner troubles such as academic pressure, not knowing who they are, and anxiety about the future. Then, investigate how personality tests and pseudoscience give inner peace of mind and know their own mood and their inner activities.

3.3 Analysis of Real-World Distresses Underlying Obsessive Behaviors

3.3.1 Individual psychological pathologies

This will investigate the psychological deficiencies of a group of young people. These include scattered self-awareness, weak registry, striking utilitarian mindsets and insufficient independent critical thinking.

3.3.2 Social and environmental pathologies

This part investigates the cultural chaos born in commercialized online content and algorithmic propagation, and the social troubles of young people. Worry refers to relying too much on scattered social life, label-based interaction and narrow, compartmentalized social circles.

3.4 Commentary on Existing Research and Summary of Positive Youth Guidance Strategies

3.4.1 Evaluation of advantages and shortcomings in current scholarship

This is the common view of scholars on the psychological mechanism and the analysis of the causes of this phenomenon, and finds out the existing problems: lack of practical research, lack of analysis of related psychological pain, and similar countermeasures.

3.4.2 Systematic strategies for scientific guidance

This part combines the physical and psychological development law of young people, and explains the targeted improvement methods in four points. One is to cultivate scientific rationality, the other is to provide psychological health counseling, the third is to create a network environment, and the fourth is to cultivate correct values.

4. Research Methods

4.1 Literature Research Method

Systematically collect and organize journal articles, dissertations and news literature concerning personality tests, youth pseudoscience and social psychology. Integrate established academic viewpoints, theoretical frameworks and survey findings, build the paper's analytical framework anchored in the Barnum effect, self-fulfilling prophecies and other psychological theories, and consolidate the study's theoretical foundations.

4.2 Inductive Analysis Method

Classify and generalize youth groups' behaviors including fixation on personality assessments and fortune-telling. Extract hidden psychological and real-world distresses behind these behaviors across four layers: individual cognition, emotional states, interpersonal relationships and social environments, sorting out internal logic and external driving forces of obsessive behaviors.

4.3 Comparative Commentary Method

Contrast research perspectives, analytical conclusions and intervention strategies across different papers, objectively assess merits and limitations of prior scholarship, dialectically analyze youth psychological predicaments in light of youth groups' developmental traits, and ensure rigorous, impartial analysis.

5. Conclusion

Based on the above literature review, three intervention pathways are proposed for educational practitioners to address contemporary youth groups' obsession with personality tests and pseudoscience.

1) School-level interventions: Integrate scientific thinking cultivation into ideological and political curricula and mental health courses. Deliver science literacy lessons covering cognitive biases such as the Barnum effect, organize group psychological counseling to resolve youth groups growth confusion, foster stable, clear self-perception, and launch critical thinking training modules to boost young groups' ability to distinguish credible information from online misinformation. This initiative corresponds to the cognitive biases of the Barnum effect and self-fulfilling prophecy revealed in References [5][6][8], as well as individual psychological disorders such as youth groups' anxiety over self-identity and lack of independent critical thinking proposed in Reference [3]. It is an intervention scheme specifically designed to target the inherent cognitive defects of youth groups, including their tendency to readily believe vague personality descriptions and rely on labels to define themselves. The scheme can be implemented through mental health courses in primary and secondary schools, general ideological and political courses in universities, and popular science lectures organized by student associations. School psychology teachers and ideological and political instructors can jointly develop special courseware distinguishing MBTI and pseudoscience related to constellations, and hold regular group psychological salons, featuring low implementation thresholds. Nevertheless, there are shortcomings in teacher resources: most psychology teachers lack sociological knowledge regarding the spread of pseudoscience, and limited class hours prevent long-term in-depth training on critical thinking. A single round of popular science activities cannot reverse the labeling mindset formed by youth groups over a long period of time.

2) Social-level interventions: Hold internet platforms accountable for content oversight. Mandate restrictions on algorithmic promotion of commercially packaged pseudoscientific content, remove accounts disseminating illegal fortune-telling and divination services, and encourage mainstream cultural institutions to develop positive cultural products matching youth social demands. These measures help adolescents break reliance on label-based interaction and embrace open, inclusive social mindsets. This measure addresses social and communicative maladies proposed in References [4][7][12], including the proliferation of pseudoscience fueled by commercial capital and internet algorithms as well as distorted label-based social circles. It carries out regulation and guidance targeting external communication incentives such as the artificially created nationwide trend of personality tests online and the practice of youth groups dividing social circles by personality labels. Cyberspace administration and culture & tourism authorities may formulate content regulations for short video and social platforms; platform backends can intercept promotional content of tarot reading and paid fortune-telling via keyword and AI recognition. Cultural centers can build offline interest communities for youth groups and produce short popular science videos about personality development to fit the online social habits of youth groups. However, the push logic of platform algorithms is sophisticated, making it difficult to fully identify and filter implicit and soft advertisements for personality tests. In addition, positive cultural products feature long creation cycles and weak traffic appeal, which cannot offset the social popularity brought by entertaining personality tests in the short term, resulting in lagging supervision effects.

3) Family-level interventions: Parents should actively monitor youth groups' emotional wellbeing, build open channels for emotional communication, and coordinate with schools to

ease academic and career-related stress. This prevents young people from seeking spiritual refuge in pseudoscience as an escape from real-life hardships. This intervention path closely targets the mental dilemmas summarized in References [1][2], such as the lack of emotional release channels, poor stress resistance, and fatalistic negative psychology easily triggered by setbacks among youth groups. It directly addresses the core internal motivation of youth groups under the involution competition to relieve anxiety about uncertainty through divination and personality tests. Parents can synchronize school psychological counseling themes via parent-teacher meetings and home-school communication groups, reduce utilitarian preaching that solely emphasizes academic performance and employment in daily life, and hold regular family conversations to provide long-term emotional companionship at low cost. However, some parents lack psychological knowledge, so it is difficult to find the hidden psychological anxiety of their children. Obstacles in parent-child communication are very common, and many youth groups are unwilling to confide their troubles and pressure to their parents. Therefore, the effect of family-based counseling is different.

If people from all positions work together, we can guide youth to have scientific and reasonable ideas about growth and self-growth.

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