

The Cause of Buddha-like Mindset in the Chinese Young Generation and the Potential Impact

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Abstract: With the development of the times, there are more and more Buddhist youth, lacking motivation and goals, so conducting a research to investigate the understanding, reasons, and influence of contemporary young people on Buddhism is very important. This research focuses on the reasons that cause buddha-like mindset in the Chinese young generation and its potential impact. This research will be useful for understanding the underlying reasons causing this phenomenon and for society to tackle this problem. This study combines surveys with questionnaires and online interviews and existing literature. The research showed that young people nowadays believe that Buddhism is a state of loss of motivation and lack of ambition. Most young people become Buddhist due to family reasons, as well as peer pressure, psychological state, and cultural differences. The Buddhist's best influence on teenagers is inner tranquility. Future research can focus on exploring the relationship between the economic situation and people's adoption of this mindset.

Keywords: buddha-like, teenager, impact

1. Introduction

The research has found that with the development of society, more and more teenagers are becoming Buddhist, lacking motivation and goals. So, researcher plan to investigate the reasons and impacts of young people becoming Buddhist. Researchers believe that studying the reasons for the Buddhist lifestyle among young people can help understand the mindset of today youth [1]. The research results are limited due to the small number of participants in this study.

2. Reasons

2.1. Social Factors

The rapid development of society has brought great pressure to young people, especially in terms of employment and life. The increasingly fierce competition for work and the rising cost of living makes young people feel pressure. At in such an environment, Buddhist youth choose to let go and pursue material and fame and fortune, the pursuit of inner peace and tranquility, is also a response to the social environment.

Secondly, the development of society has also changed the values of young people. In the past, people attached more importance to success and believed that only by working hard can they succeed. However, young people nowadays pay more attention to self-realization. They pay more attention to their mental health and pursue happiness and happiness. Therefore, they will be more Buddhist. Instead of forcing themselves, they just want to arrange their lives loosely and freely.

Finally, the development of society also gives young people more choices. They can choose the job they like instead of passively accepting social arrangements. Therefore, they will be more Buddhist. They will not force themselves, but just want to arrange their lives freely.

2.2. Family Factors

This research can see that family factor of buddha-like is large proportion. In terms of family education, parents in the past often imposed on their children's excessive expectations and pressure make children must strive to surpass in their studies and life. This kind of family education will put great pressure on children, resulting in a lack of security and self-confidence in the process of growing up. The parents of Buddhist youth emphasize the inner growth and value cultivation of their children, creating a free and peaceful growth environment for them.

2.3. Psychological Factors

Buddhist youth pay more attention to inner peace and tranquility. They know how to let go. Running and hugging will not let too much anxiety and stress interfere with your heart. They maintain a peaceful attitude towards themselves and the outside world and will not be too obsessed with things and let themselves fall into a heavy emotional quagmire [2, 3].

Another possibility for Buddhist youth is the change of self-knowledge. At some stage of life, some people will realize that what they pursue is not so important. They begin to think rationally and pay attention to the inner peace and the meaning of life. The Buddhist lifestyle just meets the needs of this self-awareness, so that people can know themselves better and no longer struggle with some irrelevant things [4].

2.4. Cultural Atmosphere

With the development of the Internet, the cultural atmosphere of the country is also gradually changing, and the Buddhist culture has also emerged. Some well-known bloggers and big Vs have also begun to pay attention to that.

The influence of Buddhist culture cannot be underestimated, and it has a great impact on some young people. These people tell their own stories, pass on the spirit of Buddhism, and guide young people to Buddhist life.

2.5. The Conflict Between Social Reality and Individual Expectations

Buddhist youth emerged in the context of socio-economic transformation and structural adjustment, during which the entire social mentality was in a period of adjustment. The youth group, due to their confusion about the times, has formed a negative mindset of responding to society in a situation where they are unable to change reality. The reason why the "Buddhist tradition" has been widely spread among the "post-90s" youth group is mainly because they are not deeply involved in the world and can easily obtain negative information from society through the internet. The high standard of living requirements and cruel social reality have formed a strong ideological impact on them. The dual pressures of life and work have shattered my once beautiful dreams, and hope has gradually been replaced by despair. To alleviate this disappointment, individuals can exhibit a cynical or even

extreme anti-social attitude and behavior towards society, or they can dispel their despair by changing their inner expectations, resulting in a “Buddhist” mentality. The emergence of Buddhist youth is precisely due to the influence of specific social environments and media tools. If in traditional society, Buddhist youth may not necessarily develop into a group cultural phenomenon. The new era of network technology has provided technological conditions for the rapid evolution of Buddhist culture into a popular cultural phenomenon. With the powerful information dissemination ability instantly ignited by online media, the “Buddhist lineage” enables scattered Buddhist youth in various corners of society to illuminate the entire online space through the “fireworks” mode, while other youth quickly transform an individualized behavior into a network cultural phenomenon through functions such as likes and reposts on the internet, which is magnificent and provides cultural and value choices for young people who are in conflict between individuals and society. The combined effects of popular culture derived from the internet, diverse choices, and individual socialization patterns in modern society have further accelerated the formation of Buddhist youth.

2.6. The Diffusion of Multiculturalism and Values in the Context of Economic Globalization

The social reality does not necessarily lead to the emergence of a “Buddhist system”, which also requires the support of corresponding culture and values, with deep cultural motivations. Driven by economic globalization, China has achieved rapid growth in material wealth, but it also poses a serious challenge to mainstream values, particularly in the game of different social values, the trade-off between traditional and modern values, and the collision of Eastern and Western values. Youth is in a critical period of establishing their values, and the influx of various Western social trends has provided cultural references for young people to address social issues. The phenomenon of young people claiming to be Buddhist youth is the result of multicultural exchange and collision in the context of economic globalization. Cultural resources cannot be spontaneously transformed into the values of young people, and their transformation still requires certain historical conditions. The term ‘Buddhist lineage’ emerged in Japan in 2014 and became a popular online term in China in 2017, due to the increasing pressure on young people’s lives and work, as well as a cultural phenomenon influenced by despair. At the same time, the influence of postmodernism cannot be ignored, as its anti traditional and innovative characteristics naturally align with the values of young people. As a new form of postmodern ideology, the “Buddhist system” is easily recognized by young people’s emotions [5].

3. Impact

This research employs two kinds of methods: interview and survey. The interview includes a diverse range of participants of different ages, mainly high school students, as well as adults and college students. Participants are asked questions about their attitudes toward buddha-like mindset, the potential cause of buddha-like mindset, and the effect of buddha-like mindset. To enlarge the database, a survey is uploaded on WeChat, and the questions on the survey are the same as the interview. Based on the Figure 1, the majority of the participants perceive buddha-like mindset as having both positive and negative impacts, which is 79.17 percent. Additionally, the percentage of participants who perceive positive influence is 12.5 percent, which is higher than the percentage of participants who perceive a negative influence, which is 8.33 percent.

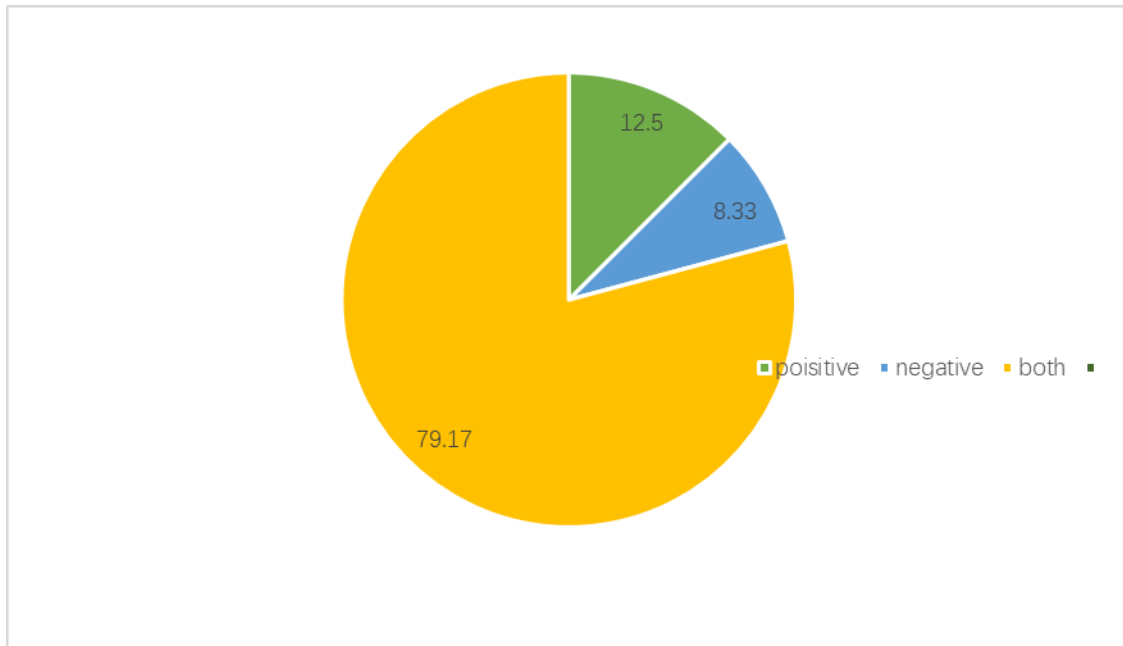


Figure 1: The attitude toward Buddha-like mindset.

The impact of a buddha-like mindset can be categorized into three distinct dimensions: its effects on individuals, its influence on society, and its contribution to the social culture.

3.1. Positive Influence 1: Better Mental Health

Adopting Figure 2, a Buddha-like mindset is seen by many as a way to reduce stress and attain inner peace. The participants include a majority of high school students and young individuals from China who face immense peer pressure in areas such as job applications, academic comparisons, and marriage. Countless young people are determined to succeed in this harsh competition and become accomplished individuals. However, this competition among peers has been found to cause mental health problems in numerous students and young people. One of the interviewees shared: *When I was in my senior year of college, I really wanted to go to a good graduate school, so I worked really hard day after day. I truly did it, and I actually went to a nice school, but I was also really stressed.*

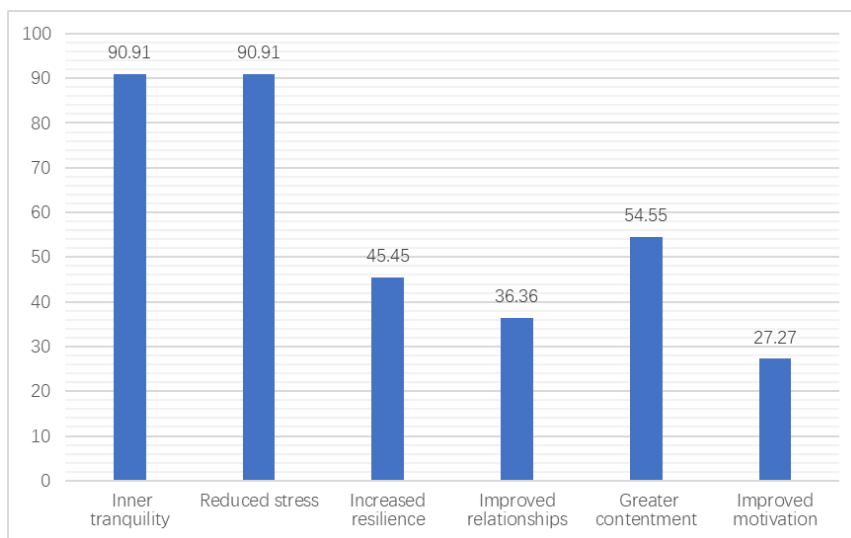


Figure 2: The positive impact of Buddha-like mindset.

There are two different reactions toward this kind of competition: involution and buddha-like. [6] Students who choose involution will work hard to try to beat their peers. However, students who cannot afford such high-pressure studying, choose a buddha-like mindset means giving up attending the competition between their peers. It is not a bad thing at all, and most participants said buddha-like mindset improved their moods and reduced their stress. Thus, buddha-like mindset is self-protection from the high-pressure environment. Moreover, a loss in this competition can more likely make people choose buddha-like mindset. The participant shared his opinion about the effect of becoming buddha-like:

I think the current environment is becoming more and more stressful, and it is very possible for people to choose the buddha-like mindset after trying hard but unable to change the situation. The buddha-like mindset allows people to live in the present moment and forget their troubles in life.

Interestingly, students who are involution also believe that buddha-like mindset is useful in reducing their mental pressure. Here is one of the records of the interview:

When I have a clear goal, I want to work hard. At the same time, after seeing other people's lives, I want to have the same life, so I work harder. I think the buddha-like mindset is to adopt a normal attitude towards things in life, which is different from being in a bad state. Because it can put me in a better frame of mind.

In this case, both kinds of students agree with the positive influence of buddha-like mindset on mental health, and buddha-like mindset is a way for everyone to escape from the great competition.

3.2. Positive Influence 2: Explore the Possibility Space

During the research, it seems to become common sense that buddha-like mindset is used to help those people who lose from the competition. However, buddha-like mindset gives people more choices and lets them against the mainstream culture in society which can benefit everyone in the society. The way to achieve that is by exploring the possibility space of people. Possibility space means all actions one can do in a specific moment. Modern society's culture values everyone with their wealth, the society appreciates people who can bring more economic progress to society. The public's possibilities are limited, and everyone wants to be those people who are financially success. The interview showed that when people choose buddha-like mindset, they will have a wider possibility space. Here is a record from one of the interviewees:

I think the main reason why people study Buddhism now is that they are under a lot of pressure. After I finished my graduate studies at Columbia University, I just didn't want to face competition from big companies, so I became an economics teacher in my hometown. One of my classmates just felt very tired in big companies. Even if this job doesn't pay much, life can be a little easier.

By adopting a Buddha-like mindset, individuals can expand their choices beyond traditional societal expectations such as working hard, getting married, and striving for perfection. This approach represents a fresh philosophy of life that embodies the rebellious spirit of China's younger generation, as they seek to express their discontent with a society that emphasizes cutthroat competition.

3.3. Negative Influence: Lack of Motivation

However, according to Figure 3, adopting a buddha-like mindset can have negative effects, such as a lack of motivation in daily life and a sense of irresponsibility towards social events. These reactions are common side effects of a buddha-like mindset, and many participants reported losing interest in working hard. According to the results, these behaviors are a result of comparison with other people. Here is a record from one of the interviewees: *When I see other people's lives on TikTok, I feel very envious, and I want to have the same kind of life, but after I work hard, I feel that I cannot rely on efforts to get such a life in my life. So, I just choose to live in a buddha-like way.*

Therefore, the buddha-like mindset also can be attributed to some people's lives in a disappointing way.

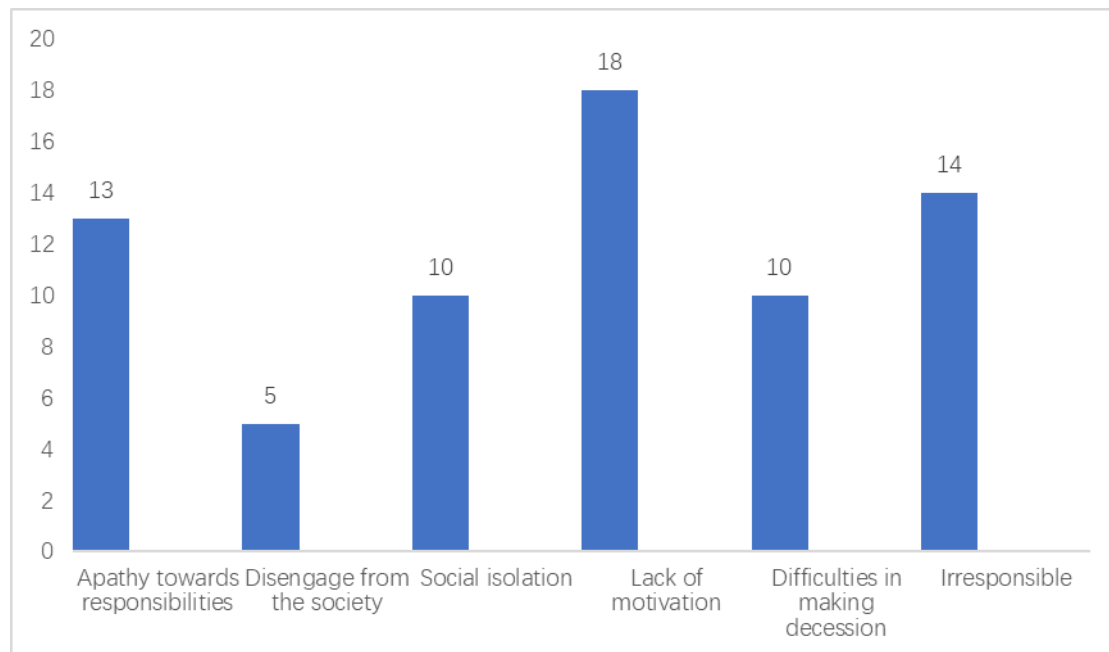


Figure 3: The negative impact of Buddha-like mindset.

4. Discussion

The research suggests that people tend to react differently when faced with stress, and there are various factors that influence their behavior. One such factor is “involution,” which refers to people doing extra work even when there is no clear benefit to doing so. The benefits of this extra work decrease as the amount of time spent on it increases [7]. This tendency towards involution can lead to a more competitive society, as individuals may feel compelled to follow the lead of those who do more than necessary. The impact of involution can be categorized into three types: those who pursue it for personal achievement, those who feel forced to do it due to competition, and those who are motivated by rewards [8]. Each type experiences different levels of anxiety. To better understand the influence of a “Buddha-like” mindset on young Chinese people, it is important to study involution. Future research could compare and contrast these two approaches to life and explore the relationship between them.

Next, the reason why the buddha-like mindset is refused by society is that the buddha-like mindset is against the values of traditional Chinese culture [9]. The traditional culture of China encourages people to devote themselves to society, and everyone should work hard, so they can have a better life. However, buddha-like mindset encourages people to act in different ways, and it emphasizes one's own values. The state media like Xinhua showed strong accusations of buddha-like mindset (also known as Tang Ping in Chinese), and it said it is a shame to become buddha-like and there is no sense of justice to becoming buddha-like [10]. In this case, the mainstream media of the country defines buddha-like mindset as a negative way of living, so it is necessary to study society's attitude toward buddha-like mindset and the moral right or wrong based on Chinese culture.

The research mainly focuses on the attitude of college and high school students in China, but due to limited samples, the results may not be generalizable to the entire population. In the future, it would be helpful to conduct more detailed research on the sources of stress, such as the cost of living, education, and marriage, and how they affect people's pressure levels. Additionally, it would be

interesting to explore the relationship between the buddha-like mindset in China and those with similar mindsets in other countries like Japan and Korea. Furthermore, future research can also focus on the attitude of adults towards the buddha-like mindset and how it affects their daily lives.

5. Conclusions

Through surveys and interviews with high school and college students, this research has identified three main potential influences of a Buddha-like mindset on young generations.

Firstly, a Buddha-like mindset can significantly improve people's mental health, which is a common trait among those who embody it. The heavy social pressures facing young people today often lead them to adopt a more contemplative and inward-looking approach to life.

Secondly, this mindset can help individuals break free from the competitive nature of their peers and pave their own path in life. By choosing to embrace a Buddha-like way of thinking, young people affirm their right to choose their own future and avoid the trap of repeating meaningless work just to keep up with others. The limited resources and intense social pressure in countries like China can lead many to work long hours without any real payback, which can cause them to lose touch with their own personality and values. A Buddha-like mindset can provide a way to push back against this mainstream culture.

Thirdly, a Buddha-like mindset can sometimes lead to a low participation rate in social activities, and individuals who embody it may lack the motivation to complete certain tasks.

Given the impact of COVID-19, an increasing number of people are adopting a Buddha-like mindset. Future research can focus on exploring the relationship between the economic situation and people's adoption of this mindset, as well as investigating any changes in the attitude of young generations towards such a mindset over the past few years.

Authors Contribution

All the authors contributed equally, and their names were listed in alphabetical order.

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