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Low Desire in the Ivory Tower — The Group Mentality of Young University Students and Paths for Guidance

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Abstract. When young people progress, the country progresses. University students in the ivory tower are one part of the youth group, and their willingness to strive is of vital importance to the country. This study focuses on the young university student group in G Province, and through the innovative construction of a six-dimensional indicator system covering learning performance and public participation, explores the patterns, characteristics and influencing factors of the "low desire" of more than six hundred university students. The study finds that "low desire" of different degrees already exists among contemporary young university students, and the number is large: about three quarters of the surveyed university students show "low desire", and the degree of their "low desire" is affected by the overlapping influence of multiple factors such as individual economy and social support. It is necessary to guide them out of the state of "low desire" and encourage them to strive. At the same time, to a certain extent this study provides a reference for research on the "low desire" of university students and even youth groups.

Keywords: ivory tower, contemporary youth, university students, low desire

1. Introduction

In his words, General Secretary Xi Jinping once said: "A generation of youth with ideals, abilities and a sense of responsibility means the country has a future and the nation has hope." The growth of the youth group is related to the personal future and destiny, and is closely connected with the future of the country and the nation. But in an era of material abundance, the phenomenon of "low desire" among the youth is becoming a global symptom, such as the "NEET group" in the UK, the "nest-returning group" in the US, the "hikikomori" and the yutori generation in Japan, the living-alone society and the "Sampo generation" in Korea, and the "discouraged labor force" in India; the phenomenon of "low desire" among the youth is spreading in many countries. At the same time, the phenomenon of "low desire" is also gradually emerging among youth groups in China, mainly manifested in the decline of fertility willingness, the reduction of willingness to love and marry, the refusal of consumption, social withdrawal and the weakening of kinship ties.

University students, as an important component of the youth group, have their own particularity compared with other youth groups. First, the vast majority of university students have not entered the workplace, have no actual source of income, and cannot do without the strong material and spiritual support of their parents; second, there is heterogeneity within the university student group,

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for example between graduating and non-graduating students, between university student groups of different levels of institutions, and between university students from different regions; third, the university stage is a key period in the growth process of the youth, and plays an irreplaceable and far-reaching role in their growth into talent. Precisely these special attributes, which distinguish them from other groups, make the "low desire" presented by the university student group have its own characteristics.

When understanding the social psychology of university students, an increasingly important perspective is the educational community as the "ivory tower". University communities are teaching organizations, and are also an institutionalized form of community [1]. Inside university campuses there are relatively fixed boundaries of life, students share a similar cultural atmosphere, and they also receive training under similar institutional arrangements, forming a semi-closed space of social life [2]. In such an "ivory tower" community, resource allocation, learning competition, peer networks, teacher support and social capital all invisibly influence the psychological state and desire structure of students. At the same time, universities of different levels have in fact formed a stratified educational community, and the differences in resource allocation between universities, the differences in learning atmosphere, and the differences in opportunities for further education and employment all constitute a clear and perceptible community stratification. Which level of university a student studies at often means what kind of community atmosphere he is in, and this atmosphere obviously shapes his way of behavior and future expectations.

This study selects the university student group of several universities in G Province as the research object. Through an in-depth exploration of the current situation of the "low desire" phenomenon presented in the university student group and its influencing factors, it helps to understand the current needs and confusions of the university student group, and can also provide support for guiding university students to reasonably plan their future development paths, which has important practical significance. At the same time, this study can also enrich the theoretical and practical achievements in related fields such as youth subculture, and provide reference and learning for subsequent similar research focusing on the phenomenon of "low desire" among university students and even youth groups.

2. Theoretical review and research review

2.1. Theoretical review

2.1.1. Tönnies' theory of community

Tönnies understands community as a combination based on emotion and ethics. Community is regarded as a real, organic form of life; it is rooted in ties of blood, geography and spirit, and individuals form natural connections in it through essential will. This connection is not deliberately constructed but arises from common life experience and emotional resonance. Family, clan, village and guild, these forms of community all embody the mutual support and the sharing of weal and woe among members. In contrast, society is an abstract, mechanical construction, based on the individual's will of choice and contractual relations, and the combination of members is more out of the exchange of interests than natural emotion. Tönnies' theory reveals two basic forms of human communal life [3].

The university educational community as the "ivory tower", although it is not a natural community in the traditional sense, often forms an atmosphere similar to a community because students share the rhythm of learning, living space and a similar institutional environment inside the

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campus. Between students it is easy to produce resonance in pressure, expectations and disappointment, and this resonance will slowly transform into a kind of group psychological tendency. The communal character inside universities means that students do not face the future in a completely free individual state, but constantly compare, adjust, and even lower their own goals within this community framework, thus affecting the formation of low desire.

Community theory provides a morphological basis for understanding university educational communities, but universities as institutional organizations are not traditional communities; their members have high mobility and their relations are somewhat instrumental, so it is necessary to introduce the concept of community mentality as a meso-level analytical tool [4].

2.1.2. Meritocracy

The core claim of meritocracy is that personal success should depend on one's own ability and effort. This concept occupies an important position in the modern education system. Sandel points out that meritocracy seems fair, but easily breeds the arrogance of the elite and the despair of the bottom; it attributes success entirely to individual factors, ignoring the influence of external conditions such as the social environment and family background [5]. In educational communities, the penetration of meritocracy is reflected in all aspects, from the ranking of academic achievement to the allocation of various opportunities, all of which take ability and effort as the criteria of judgment. This orientation makes the youth remain in a fierce competitive environment for a long time, and in order to reach the so-called standards of success, they have to invest a large amount of time and energy. However, not all young people can stand out in the competition; those young people who encounter setbacks easily produce emotions of self-denial, and then lower their expectations for the future, forming a state of low desire. At the same time, even those young people who have temporarily achieved success may, because of sustained competitive pressure, produce anxiety and exhaustion, and finally lose their enthusiasm for life. The single standard of success brought by meritocracy narrows the value pursuit of the youth, making them choose to retreat and lower their desires when they cannot reach the expected goals. This phenomenon is especially obvious in educational communities and has become an important factor shaping the low desire of the youth. The spread of meritocracy will also lead to the alienation between young people, weaken the communal character of the community, and further intensify the spread of low desire.

And modern universities are generally influenced by the logic of meritocracy. Meritocracy emphasizes the use of achievement as the basis of allocation, but in practice it often evolves into a kind of intense competitive pressure. The differences in resources between universities of different levels will amplify this pressure, making students produce self-doubt and even a sense of powerlessness in constant comparison. Especially in universities with relatively insufficient resources, students are more likely to feel structural constraints in repeated comparisons, and thus tend to lower their goals and reduce their investment. Meritocracy shapes the competitive atmosphere of universities and the way students understand themselves, and is therefore an important factor in explaining low desire. This theory reveals how the institutional competitive environment shapes the self-cognition of students from the macro level. Community, common community mentality and meritocracy have formed a progressive analytical framework from form to mentality and then to institution.

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2.2. Definition of concepts

The understanding of "low desire" in academic circles mainly originates from the views mentioned in the book *Low Desire Society* by the Japanese writer Kenichi Ohmae, that is, "a low birth rate, super-ageing, and more and more young people who are unwilling to bear crises, lose their motivation to improve and lose normal desires" [6]. The Chinese scholars Song Dexiao and Bie Yangyang proposed that "low desire" is a reflection of young people's sense of failure and frustration after "involution" and effort, a manifestation of learned helplessness after hitting walls everywhere in the period of social transformation, and a complete resignation to life after recognizing the social reality, and then an adjustment made to their own life goals and expectations [7].

The definitions of "low desire" in existing research are not applicable to this study. This is because, in terms of the object of definition, existing research focuses more on the "low desire society" and the "low desire group" rather than on "low desire" itself; in terms of the content of definition, existing research starts more from the nature of "low desire" rather than defining its connotation out of the consideration of concrete measurement and operation.

By referring to previous research, and combining the research object and research content of this study, this study holds that the "low desire" of university students refers to the weakening of university students' individual demand for material things and success, a state of retreat toward public activities, interpersonal relations and communicative interaction, as well as negative views about future development and a lack of willingness to change.

In addition, "low desire" is different from related concepts such as "lying flat" and "Buddhist style". Whether it is "lying flat", a concept carrying behavioral intention, or "Buddhist style" and "sang culture", concepts carrying psychological imagery, or the other related concepts, they are all only one manifestation of "low desire". This is because related concepts such as "lying flat", "Buddhist style" and "sang culture", as a kind of general negative state, either lead to retreat because of external pressure, or are a revolt against mainstream culture; whatever the cause of the negative attitude, essentially the realistic manifestation of this attitude is the lowering of desire, that is, it belongs to the manifestation of "low desire". This study further clarifies the concept of "low desire", focusing the "low desire" of the university student group on six aspects: academic study, public affairs, extracurricular activities, communicative interaction, consumption and personal planning.

2.3. Research review

2.3.1. Current state of foreign research

According to the connotation of "low desire" in the Chinese context, the research achievements of foreign academia on the "low desire society phenomenon" are still few. The earliest foreign research on the phenomenon of "low desire" (low desire society phenomenon) originated in Japan and was put forward by the famous Japanese management scientist Kenichi Ohmae in the book *Low Desire Society: The Age of No Ambition*. In the book he describes current Japanese society in this way: because of the great pressure of social survival, out of concern about future life, many young people are unwilling to consume in advance, bear economic risks, or fall in love and marry and have children. Simply put, there is no desire for consumption and no fighting spirit, the whole society is lifeless and has fallen into a state of low desire. The so-called "low desire" society means that no matter how much prices fall, consumption cannot be stimulated and the economy has no obvious growth; bank credit interest rates are repeatedly lowered, but the number of people buying homes

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before the age of 30 still declines year by year; young people have almost no interest in buying cars, and luxury consumption is scoffed at; the "otaku" culture prevails, and three meals a day are simple.

At the same time, the phenomenon of "low desire" can also be traced around the globe. The earliest example is the "NEET group" in the UK, also called boomerang children, which also embodies the symptoms of "low desire". In 1999 the Social Exclusion Unit of the British government published a research report entitled *Bridging the Gap*, pointing out that the "NEET group" in the UK refers to those young people aged 16 to 18 who do not attend school, do not work and do not participate in vocational training [8]. The US also has a "low desire" group similar to the "NEET group", namely the "nest-returning group", also called the boomerang generation, and in recent years many new expressions have appeared, such as "active disconnection" and "the burnout generation". Some foreign scholars believe that these expressions reflect the state of young people facing high pressure, anxiety and exhaustion, which leads to a decrease in their interest in the pursuit of career and success, and a tendency to seek balance, self-care and inner satisfaction [9].

The phenomenon of "low desire" among the youth also exists in East Asian societies. The first to receive the highest attention is Japan. Whether it is the "hikikomori" who deliberately close themselves off from the social field, the "otaku" who are long addicted to the subculture closely related to video games, animation and magazines, or the "LOHAS group" who, after obtaining a certain accumulation of wealth, do not pursue the possession of wealth and material enjoyment but instead pursue spiritual sublimation and the realization of self-value inward, they are all embodiments of the phenomenon of "low desire". The phenomenon of "low desire" in Japan is more concentrated in middle-class and above families. As some scholars have pointed out, the Japanese "hikikomori" are usually children of middle-class families, retreating into their own bedrooms or spaces equipped with networked computers, consuming all the energy and property of the family [10]. At the same time, the "LOHAS group" also points more to the middle class or high-income groups in Japan. In Korea, the "living-alone society" and the "Sampo generation" are also realistic representations of "low desire". As early as the beginning of the 21st century, the trend of the younger-aging of "one-person households" has become increasingly significant [11]. According to the *2020 Population and Housing Census* released by Statistics Korea, in 2020 the number of people living alone in Korea had reached 6.443 million, an increase of 950,000 year on year; households of people living alone accounted for 31.7% of the total number of households in Korea; young women are more likely than men to accept living alone and being unmarried[1]. The phenomenon similar in meaning to "Honjok" (living-alone generation) also includes the "Sampo generation", that is, abandoning love, abandoning marriage and abandoning childbirth. This has made the fertility rate in Korea go all the way down. Turning the perspective to India, a developing country also in Asia, in recent years, although the proportion of Indian youth in the total population has continued to increase and the average years of education have also risen, the labor force participation rate of Indian youth has shown a downward trend, facing the crisis of the "discouraged labor force", that is, young people have neither found jobs nor actively look for jobs [12].

2.3.2. Current state of domestic research

Based on Chinese society, emerging expressions such as "low desire", "involution", "Buddhist style" and "lying flat" continue to emerge among youth groups and have become popular hotspots of society. Chinese academia has different views on the definition of "low desire", but it can be found

[1] Statistics Korea, 2020 Population and Housing Census, released in August 2021.

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that the unified definitional elements include: as the new generation of social subjects losing enterprising spirit, lacking material desire and the desire for successful striving, staying away from fashion, staying away from famous brands, staying away from cars, staying away from home purchase, and even staying away from love, as well as kinship severance [13]. It needs to be mentioned that, although different scholars have their own views on what "low desire" is, not all scholars hold a neutral attitude. From the positive perspective, some say that "low desire" is not equivalent to decadence and giving up, and that "low desire" can to a certain extent bring a sense of existence and happiness [14]. From the negative perspective there are more: some say that this is essentially an anxiety of the times triggered by modernization [15]; letting the phenomenon of "low desire" continue to develop among youth groups is bound to have a negative influence on the current social development of China [16]; "low desire" behavior will hinder the realization of a better life; and the phenomenon of "low desire" will hinder the career development of individuals, challenge ethical and moral order, impact excellent traditional Chinese culture, and weaken the development potential of the country [17], and the cultivation of their striving spirit should be strengthened [18].

Research in academic circles on the phenomenon of "low desire" among the youth involves youth groups and juvenile groups [19], and more studies focus on exploring the realistic representations of "low desire" from specific angles. For example, some scholars have explored the influence of overtime work on marriage and childbirth in a "996" and "low desire" society [20]. And some scholars have specifically focused on the group of young cadres, pointing out that the "low desire" mentality of young cadres is an external manifestation of inner confusion and anxiety [21]. Rather interestingly, some say that "low desire" is only the manifestation while "high desire" is the fact; through economic theory they put forward the "desire curve", holding that the contemporary background of China is different from that of Japan, that China is still at the stage of desire release, and that some young people choose to take everything lightly only under the impossibility of moving forward in reality, while deep down they actually pursue a high-quality life [22]. Starting from historical materialism, the scholar Feng Lianjun, based on the dialectical contradiction between productive forces and production relations and between economic base and superstructure, proposed that the emergence of the phenomenon of "low desire" among the youth is influenced by the improvement of material conditions, the restriction of stratum mobility and the collective loss of values [23]. But this study takes the university student group as the main research object, so the review of previous research also mainly unfolds around the research on the "low desire" of this group. At present, the research of Chinese academia on the "low desire" of the university student group mainly concentrates on the following aspects:

First, on the realistic representations of the "low desire" of university students. The scholar Xian Mengyi points out that the "low desire" of the university student group presents forms such as idealism, entertainmentism, utilitarianism and nihilism, and is the result of the joint action of factors such as internal contradictions in real life, the network social environment, subculture and consumerism, accompanied by manifestations such as spiritual slackness, a lack of interpersonal ability and group consciousness, and low material desire, desire for success and desire for love and marriage, and will finally produce an identity crisis leading to social depression [24].

Second, on the analysis of the causes of the "low desire" of university students. In the research on the "low desire" of the university student group in higher vocational colleges, some scholars point out that the "low desire" of the university student group arises from three aspects: the fuzziness of ideals and beliefs and the unclearness of value positioning, the gap between psychological expectations and the imbalance of development needs, and the group anxiety with society under the shock of multiculturalism. Zhang Zhijian, according to the four social mentalities of the university

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student group, points out that the "low desire" of the Buddhist-style university student group originates from two aspects: the richness of the family material base and the doting of the parental generation, while the "low desire" of the compromising-type university student group is the intergenerational replication of the social stratum structure and the difficulty of social mobility caused by stratum solidification, which forces university-student youth to face social reality and their own situation and make compromises. In addition, Song Dexiao and Bie Yangyang proposed in their research that the phenomenon of "low desire" is essentially the self-depreciation of young people after the so-called social "involution". At the same time, some scholars focus on the field of consumption, holding that the "low desire" of the youth group is anxiety and helplessness in the consumer society, and that the high raising of the banner of "low desire" is only to cover up the anxiety of losing identity in the consumer society [25]. Some scholars also focus on the factor of network use, pointing out the influence of the network on the information acquisition mode of university students in social information transmission and on the perimeter of the university system [26].

Based on these studies, it can be seen that the causes of the "low desire" of university students mainly lie in two aspects: on the one hand, lying-flatism is caused by their idealist worldview, entertainmentist outlook on life, utilitarian values and nihilist political view; on the other hand, it also stems from the internal contradictions of real life breeding negative emotions, the operating mechanism of network society inducing mental exhaustion, subculture disturbing the value judgment of the university student group, and the emotional reproduction under consumerism. But overall, low desire is both the product of structural pressure and the adaptive adjustment of individuals under limited conditions, but existing research lacks an empirical test of the overlapping action of multiple mechanisms in the specific field of the educational community.

Third, on the response to the phenomenon of "low desire" of university students. The existing response suggestions mainly include: first, in view of the adjustment of and response to the mentality of the university student group's "low desire", strengthen education in ideals and beliefs and self-cognition education, build a positive youth culture rich in the connotation of striving, guide university students to view "low desire" dialectically, pay attention to the diverse needs of the university student group, cultivate the correct needs of the university student group, take needs as the guide, and encourage university students to strive hard. Second, create a positive social atmosphere, optimize the media education environment and create a fair education environment, build a healthy ecosystem for the development of university students and firmly fasten the protective net. Create a relaxed space for survival for the university student group and stimulate their consciousness of striving; the choice of "low desire" for survival and development by university students is mostly a passive and helpless move, a "soft resistance" in the state of not being able to obtain what they seek and a presentation of the "sense of powerlessness" of working without gain. Therefore, it is especially important to solve the pressing needs of the university student group, create fair development space and a relaxed space for survival for the youth, and open up a new situation for the development of the university student group. Third, attach importance to the establishment and protection of the resilience of young university students, and guide their meaning-oriented life goals so as to promote the youth in finding meaning in positive situations and creating meaning in negative situations [27]. Fourth, improve through the approach of "aspiration support", advocating measures such as appropriate positioning and moderate planning [28].

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2.3.3. Research commentary

It can be found from foreign research on the phenomenon of "low desire" among the youth that the phenomenon of "low desire" first appeared in European and American Western countries, and then appeared in East Asian countries such as Japan and Korea and developing countries such as India. It can be seen that the phenomenon of "low desire" among the youth is becoming a relatively common social issue among countries around the globe. The research on the "low desire" of university students takes Japan and China as examples to illustrate the connotation of the "low desire" of the young university student group, that is, that they have chosen a passive and unproductive way of life in reality [29]. In short, it can be seen that foreign attention to the phenomenon of "low desire" among the youth has a certain quantity, but the research on the phenomenon of "low desire" of the university student group is not much. There is also research pointing out that the reasons for the prevalence of "low desire" among university-student youth include: the influence of postmodern trend culture, the acceleration of the spread of subculture by the Internet, the need for university students to relieve employment pressure and protect themselves, the selfishness bred by rich material conditions, and the bias of self-evaluation under high social competitive pressure.

Overall, at present the research topic of Chinese academia on the "low desire" of university students is relatively small. Although the existing research achievements have reference significance for the study of "low desire", there are still gaps and deficiencies: first, in terms of research methods, mostly speculative methods are adopted, and there is a lack of survey research based on empirical analysis; second, in terms of related concepts, no strict distinction is made between "low desire" and similar concepts such as "lying flat" and "Buddhist style", and whether "low desire" is equivalent to "lying flat" and "Buddhist style", and what the connection with concepts such as "lying flat" and "Buddhist style" is, remains to be verified by further empirical research; third, in terms of research objects, domestic related research is mostly oriented to youth groups rather than university students in school, and university students are generally included in youth groups; whether the "low desire" presented in youth groups is the "low desire" of the university student group remains to be further verified through empirical research; fourth, in terms of research attitudes, scholars generally present an attitude of worry and pessimism toward the phenomenon of "low desire" of university students, and have not gone deep into understanding and studying whether the university student group really has "low desire" and the mechanism behind it.

3. Research hypotheses and research design

3.1. Research hypotheses

In the structural environment of university educational communities, students do not face learning tasks and life choices in isolation, but constantly adapt and compare in a space with resource stratification and a distinct cultural atmosphere. As already mentioned in the previous theoretical review, factors such as community atmosphere, meritocratic pressure and community mentality all influence the emotional structure and behavioral direction of students. Therefore, this study attempts to put forward several research hypotheses, and hopes to further test whether these hypotheses hold through empirical analysis. At the same time, it needs to be mentioned that this study is exploratory and does not presuppose the direction of influence in advance; it only tests whether there is a statistical association between each factor and low desire, and attempts to reveal the specific association.

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H1: In educational communities, the phenomenon of "low desire" in the university student group is relatively common;

H2: At the macro level, factors such as institution level, whether scholarships have been obtained, and place of origin are associated with the low desire of university students;

H3: At the meso level, factors such as the number of close friends, whether one is an only child, and relationship status are associated with the low desire of university students;

H4: At the micro level, factors such as personal monthly income and political status are associated with the low desire of university students.

3.2. Research design

3.2.1. Data sources

The data of this study come from a questionnaire survey of more than 600 university students in different universities in G Province. In view of the fact that the phenomenon of "low desire" is not universally distributed in life scenes, non-random sampling was selected as the sampling method. The core research purpose is an exploratory attempt, and follow-up qualitative research is planned to carry out in-depth interpretation.

3.2.2. Operationalization of core concepts

"Low desire" is the core concept measured by the questionnaire of this study. In order to accurately measure the current situation of the "low desire" of university students in G Province, and on the basis of referring to existing research and carrying out in-depth reflection, "low desire" is operationally divided into six dimensions: learning performance, public participation, extracurricular activities, communicative interaction, consumption and personal planning; and multiple specific indicators are set under each dimension, with an average of 5-10 subdivided indicators under each dimension. The specific indicators are shown in detail in the appendix.

For the design of the measurement scale for the current situation of the "low desire" of university students, the scoring method of the Likert scale is adopted: 1 = completely inconsistent, 2 = relatively inconsistent, 3 = neutral, 4 = relatively consistent, 5 = completely consistent. In addition, because some items are reverse items, reverse scoring was carried out in the process of data processing ("6 minus the original variable"), specifically involving four items in the dimension of communicative interaction such as "I prefer to be alone rather than take part in group activities" and "I often feel mentally exhausted in social interaction".

3.2.3. Questionnaire design

In terms of the specific questionnaire design, this survey questionnaire contains 82 items in total, including scale questions, and is divided into three major parts:

The first part is basic demographic information. It covers basic variables such as gender, ethnicity, grade, school category, discipline category, place of origin, parents' educational level, only-child status and political status. In the study, such variables are used as control variables, aiming to analyze whether there are differences in the performance of "low desire" among individuals of different social attributes, the manifestations of the differences and the reasons, and to provide a basis for subsequent cross-analysis. At the same time, a "skip question" setting was added to the questionnaire (for example, skipping to the question items of different discipline

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classifications according to school level), ensuring that respondents only answer questions related to their own background and improving the accuracy of data.

The second part is the six-dimensional measurement scale. It aims to measure the behavior and attitudes of university students in the six dimensions of learning performance, public participation, extracurricular activities, communicative interaction, consumption and personal planning. Through the combination of single-choice questions, multiple-choice questions and matrix scale questions, it strives to improve the depth and breadth of the data, in which single-choice and multiple-choice questions mainly play the role of auxiliary analysis, while what is especially important is the six-dimensional scale, each dimensional scale containing 5-10 measurement items. The composite score of each respondent is crucial for subsequent further data analysis, and lays the data foundation for revealing the patterns and classification of the "low desire" of university students and for exploring the reasons for the differences in the performance of different types of "low desire".

The third section is the in-depth follow-up questioning section. This part focuses on the respondent's personal cognition and attribution of "low desire", including the respondent's self-identification with "low desire", the analysis of subjective causes (social involution, changes in values, etc.), the evaluation of the phenomenon (attitudes toward "Buddhist style" and "lying flat") and the expression of open views, especially the respondent's subjective attitude toward whether they themselves belong to the "low desire group". This has an indispensable influence on the analysis and exploration of the mechanism of the reasons influencing whether university students have "low desire", and on the analysis of the difference between the subjective attribution of respondents and their behavior.

3.2.4. Survey subjects and sample selection

This study takes university students receiving higher education in G Province as its subjects. The study adopts a sampling method combining snowball sampling and purposive sampling, and selected students of all grades from freshman to senior year and graduate level and above in key undergraduate institutions in G Province (double first-class universities, universities jointly built by the province and the ministry, and provincial first-tier undergraduate institutions), ordinary undergraduate institutions in G Province (including second-tier, third-tier and private undergraduate institutions) and higher vocational colleges in G Province. Questionnaires were distributed through network platforms such as WeChat, and 633 questionnaires were collected in total. Through the completeness of filling (whether all required questions were answered) and the answering time (whether it was greater than or equal to three minutes), a total of 628 valid samples were screened out, with a valid rate of 99.21%, which can complete data analysis well.

3.2.5. Data analysis methods

This study uses the SPSS statistical analysis software for data analysis. First, descriptive statistics are used to present the basic situation of the sample and the overall distribution of low desire. Second, independent-samples t-tests and one-way analysis of variance are used to compare the differences of different groups in the scores of the low desire scale. Third, multiple linear regression analysis is used to analyze the influence of each factor on the six-dimensional low desire scores and the total score; when the dependent variable is a continuous variable, OLS regression is adopted. Finally, binary logistic regression is used to analyze the influence of each factor on whether they belong to the low desire group, the dependent variable being a dichotomous variable.

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3.2.6. Reliability and validity analysis

After the basic preparatory work was done, the reliability and validity of the sample began to be tested. Using SPSS statistical software, and on the basis of the recovered and collated relevant data, this study explores whether it can accurately measure the "low desire" patterns of university students needed for the next step of research. First, in terms of validity, the result of the KMO sampling suitability test was 0.961 > 0.9, which shows that the questionnaire has a good structure and can well accomplish the measurement purpose.

Table 1. KMO and Bartlett's test

KMO measure of sampling adequacy		.961
Bartlett's test of sphericity	Approximate chi-square	15822.831
	Degrees of freedom	741
	Significance	<.001

Second, in terms of reliability, through reliability analysis, the overall reliability statistic alpha value of the six-dimensional measurement scale was 0.953 > 0.9, which shows that the data obtained have high consistency and good reliability.

Table 2. Reliability statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items
.953	39

4. Research results

4.1. Overall situation of the "low desire" of university students

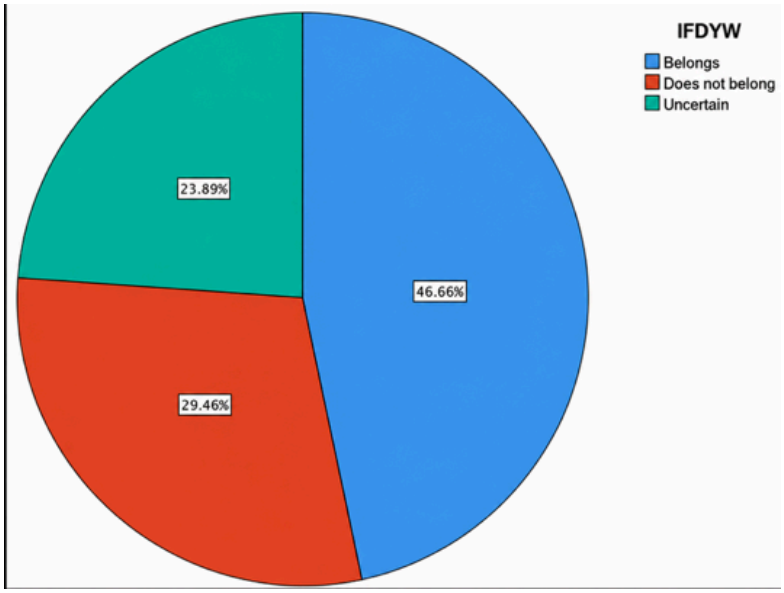


Figure 1. Analysis of the subjective identification of respondents with "low desire"

First, in terms of subjective identification. The majority of respondents tend to identify themselves as belonging to the "low desire" group. The specific results are shown in Figure 1: 293

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respondents considered themselves as belonging to the "low desire" group, accounting for 46.66% of the total; 185 respondents considered themselves as not belonging to the "low desire" group, accounting for 29.46% of the total; and another 150 respondents said they were not sure whether they belonged to the "low desire" group, this part of respondents accounting for 23.89%. It can thus be seen that in the present university student group, the number of people who subjectively consider themselves as belonging to the "low desire" group is already far greater than the number of those who consider themselves as not belonging to the "low desire" group.

Second, in terms of scale scores. The critical value of the scale "low desire" was delimited according to quartiles, and the results are shown in Figure 2. 475 respondents showed "low desire" in terms of scale scores, accounting for 75.64% of the total.

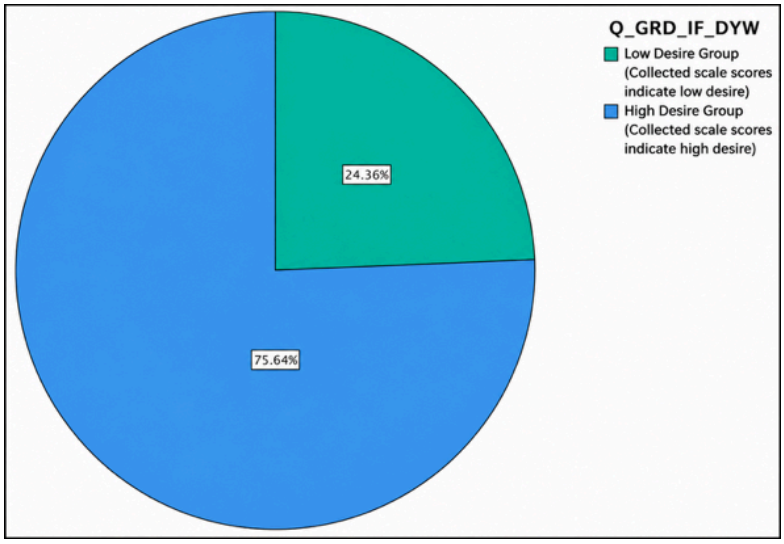


Figure 2. Scale "low desire" situation

4.2. Analysis of the six dimensions of the "low desire" of university students

Before carrying out the dimensional analysis of the phenomenon of "low desire" of university students, and in combination with the setting of scale questions, the score situations of the six-dimensional scales were generated separately, the "low desire" boundary scores of each dimension were delimited according to quartiles, and the actual scale "low desire" values were delimited according to quartiles. On the basis of considerations of statistical stability and practical operability, this study delimits university students with "low desire" according to the quartile division method. After generating the quartile division values of the six dimensional scales separately, the classification variable "Q_GRD_IF_DYW" of university students with "low desire" in one or more dimensions was operationally generated, which also facilitates the research.

In order to understand the situation of university students who really have "low desire" more accurately, a dimensional analysis was carried out on the 475 sample data showing "low desire" in scale scores. University students with "low desire" present different characteristics in different dimensions.

4.2.1. Analysis of the learning performance dimension

Goals are vague, and accompanied by anxiety. For "academic study determines life development", the proportion of 1-3 points reached 42.3%, and the mean score of 3.50 was one of the lower ones in

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the academic dimension, which shows that the low desire group has a lower degree of identification with the value of academic study. However, for "anxiety because of grades", 34.0% of students still chose 4-5 points, with a mean score of 3.49, which shows that their academic pressure has not been completely dispelled; instead, they cope with competition with an attitude of "passive acceptance" and lack the willingness to make active breakthroughs.

Meeting the standard is enough, with a coping mentality. For "elective extension courses", the proportion of 1-3 points reached 37.1%, significantly higher than that of other items, and the mean score of 3.49 was the lowest in the academic dimension. In contrast with the high degree of recognition of "pursuing high scores in examinations", that is, 61.7% chose 4-5 points, it can be seen that students with low desire are more inclined to complete compulsory tasks but refuse to make additional investment, and their learning goals are more inclined to be "coping with examinations".

Internal driving force is weak. Although the proportion of 4-5 points for "having learning enthusiasm for one's own major" was 59.2%, combined with the proportion of 1-3 points for "active performance in class" being 43.8%, it can be inferred that their learning enthusiasm may come more from external constraints than from spontaneous interest, and the deep investment motive is insufficient.

4.2.2. Analysis of the public affairs dimension

Utilitarian motive is lacking, and participation is indifferent. For "running for student cadres", the proportion of 1-3 points reached 46.3%, and the mean score of 3.26 was the lowest in public affairs; for "club activities can improve oneself", the proportion of 4-5 points was only 55.5%. This shows that students with "low desire" neither pursue practical gains nor have the motive for social expansion, and public participation is more a kind of passive choice.

Avoidance of responsibility is significant. The degree of recognition of "cooperating with compulsory activities" reached 53.9%, with a mean score of 3.35, while the degree of recognition of "voluntarily participating in class affairs" was only 50.1%, with a mean score of 3.36. This shows that students with "low desire" are more inclined to complete prescribed matters rather than participate in public affairs spontaneously, and are only willing to fulfill obligations of the minimum limit, which by reflection shows that their sense of public responsibility lacks deep initiative.

Academic activities are neglected. For "participating in academic lectures", the proportion of 1-3 points was 42.8%, and the mean score of 3.39, lower than that of recreational and sports activities such as club activities. It can be seen that they regard academic activities as a kind of additional burden.

4.2.3. Analysis of the extracurricular activity dimension

Time management is fragmented, and they are immersed in shallow entertainment. For "more than 3 hours of entertainment APPs daily", the proportion of 4-5 points was 58.3%, with a mean score of 3.47, the highest score in the amateur dimension, and the proportion of 1-3 points was only 41.7%. In contrast with the proportion of 1-3 points for "spare time used for self-improvement" being 48.7%, it can be seen that they are more inclined to pass the time through instant-satisfaction activities such as short videos and games, avoiding self-improvement behavior that requires long-term investment.

Continuity of interest is broken. For "hobbies lasting more than one year", the proportion of 1-3 points was 41.2%, with a mean score of 3.49; this characteristic forms a contradiction with the high-score proportion of 4-5 points of "being willing to take part in extracurricular activities" being

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53.1%, which by reflection shows that their participation in extracurricular activities may be following-the-trend attempts rather than deep investment.

Habits of physical exercise are lacking. For "weekly exercise", the proportion of 4-5 points was 56.6%, with a mean score of 3.51, but the proportion of 1-3 points still accounted for 43.4%, significantly higher than that of other items. It can be seen that, although health awareness has somewhat improved, regular physical exercise has not yet become the living habit of the majority of students.

4.2.4. Analysis of the communicative interaction dimension

Sensitivity to the energy cost of social interaction. For "often feeling exhausted in social interaction", the proportion of high-score 4-5 points was 58.6%, with a mean score of 3.61, the highest score in the social dimension; for "preferring to be alone", the proportion of high-score 4-5 points was 59.1%. This to a certain extent shows that students with "low desire" regard social interaction as a source of energy consumption, and take the initiative to reduce interpersonal contact in order to maintain psychological comfort, and their social mode is more inclined to defense and avoidance.

Dependence on online social interaction is significant. For "online social interaction is more comfortable", the proportion of high-score 4-5 points reached 57.0%, with a mean score of 3.50, while the degree of recognition of "having stable friends to confide in" was only 58.5%, with a mean score of 3.40. It can be seen that students with "low desire" are more adapted to the low-pressure online social mode, but their ability to maintain deep emotional connection is weak; they rely on social media to maintain weak ties, but avoid social emotional interaction in reality.

4.2.5. Analysis of the consumption dimension

Planning of consumption is weak. For "making consumption plans", the proportion of 4-5 points was 46.7%, with a mean score of 3.34, and the proportion of 1-3 points reached 53.3%, the lowest score in the consumption dimension. In contrast with the high degree of recognition of "entertainment consumption" and "conformist consumption", 56.6% and 55.6% chose 4-5 points. It can be seen that the consumption behavior of students is more easily influenced by instant needs or the group, and their ability of rational planning is insufficient.

The symbolic value of consumption is strong. For "brands influence consumption", the proportion of high-score 4-5 points was 57.0%, and the mean score of 3.40 was higher than the 3.37 points of the quality-oriented item 05. This shows that the consumption of students with "low desire" is more easily influenced by brands, and they tend to choose brand products, which to a certain extent shows that they tend to pay for consumption symbols, and their consumption motive tends to be symbolic satisfaction. This phenomenon also needs to be reflected on in combination with the characteristics of the mentality of the times of contemporary university student groups: in a today of increasing material abundance, more and more young people "value brands and neglect practical use" in consumption, and this trend is especially significant among student groups.

The concept of frugality is contradictory. For "frugality is a virtue", the proportion of high-score 4-5 points was 55.2%, with a mean score of 3.38, but the proportion of low-score 1-3 points reached 44.8%. Combined with the relatively high degree of recognition of spiritual consumption in item 02, with 54.3% choosing 4-5 points, it can to a certain extent be inferred that university students with "low desire" pay more attention to cost performance and spiritual satisfaction in consumption rather than absolute frugality; they are willing to pay for self-improvement but reject meaningless saving.

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4.2.6. Analysis of the personal planning dimension

Career goals are vague. For "having a 3-5 year career plan", the proportion of high-score 4-5 points was 54.7%, with a mean score of 3.35, but the proportion of low-score 1-3 points reached 45.3%. In contrast with the high degree of recognition of "a stable life is more important", with 54.7% choosing 4-5 points and a mean score of 3.36, it can be seen that students are more inclined to pursue stability rather than a clear career development path, and the motive for long-term planning is insufficient.

The willingness for urbanization and the demand for high salary are weakening. For "willingness to develop in big cities" and "longing for high salaries", the proportions of 4-5 points were 52.6% and 50.3% respectively, with mean scores of 3.25 and 3.27 respectively, significantly lower than those of other items. Combined with the low degree of recognition of "getting married and starting a family after graduation", with 51.6% choosing 4-5 points and a mean score of 3.24, it shows that the traditional standards of success such as big cities, high income and starting a family as early as possible have a declining appeal for students with "low desire", and the difference in intergenerational values becomes more prominent.

4.3. Analysis of the types of "low desire" of university students

This part will carry out a type analysis of the "low desire" of university students, involving the "complete low desire" type and the "partial low desire" type.

First, the "complete low desire" type refers to the case where, according to the quartile delimitation method, the scores of the six-dimensional scale are all below the quartiles, that is, all dimensions show "low desire";

Second, the "partial low desire" type refers to the case where, also according to the quartile delimitation method, 1-5 dimensions show "low desire" in the scores of the six-dimensional scale, not including 0 or 6 dimensions;

The distinction between the "complete low desire" type and the "partial low desire" type mainly relies on the quartile division method. This division method will focus on scale scores, regardless of the subjective identification of respondents. Taking the quartiles of the total score of each dimension as the threshold, calculate whether "low desire" exists in each dimension.

First, the quartile scores of the six dimensions are learning performance (3.0000 points), public affairs (2.4286 points), extracurricular activities (2.6000 points), communicative interaction (2.6000 points), consumption (2.7143 points) and personal planning (2.6667 points).

According to the scores of respondents on each scale, as shown in Table 3 below, among the six scales, respondents whose scores are all less than or equal to the boundary value, that is, respondents of the "complete low desire" type, numbered 6, accounting for 1% of the total sample; respondents of the "partial low desire" type numbered 469, accounting for 74.7% of the total; the rest were non-"low desire" respondents, whose scores on each scale were all greater than the quartiles of each scale. (In the table, the "not complete low desire" type includes the "partial low desire" type and non-"low desire"; the "not partial low desire" type includes the "complete low desire" type and non-"low desire".)

Table 3. Distribution of the complete low desire type and the partial low desire type

		Frequency	Percentage
Q_GRD_CMPLT_DYW	Not complete low desire type	622	99.0%

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Table 3. (continued)

Q_GRD_CMPLT_DYW	Complete low desire type	6	1.0%
Q_GRD_PART_DYW	Not partial low desire type	159	25.3%
	Partial low desire type	469	74.7%

Specifically, as shown in Table 4: in terms of academic study, 159 people had "low desire"; in terms of public affairs, 160 people had "low desire"; in terms of extracurricular activities, 165 people had "low desire"; in terms of communicative interaction, 221 people had "low desire"; in terms of consumption, 163 people had "low desire"; and in terms of personal planning, 181 people had "low desire". Overall, the "low desire" of respondents existed more in communicative interaction, reaching 221 people, followed by personal planning, reaching 181 people, and the other four aspects of academic study, public affairs, extracurricular activities and consumption were similar, at about 160 people.

Table 4. "Low desire" situation in the six dimensions

		Frequency	Percentage
XYDJLOW_Q	Not academic low desire	469	74.7%
	Academic low desire	159	25.3%
GGSWLOW_Q	Not public affairs low desire	468	74.5%
	Public affairs low desire	160	25.5%
KWHDLOW_Q	Not extracurricular activity low desire	463	73.7%
	Extracurricular activity low desire	165	26.3%
SHJWLOW_Q	Not communicative interaction low desire	407	64.8%
	Communicative interaction low desire	221	35.2%
XFLOW_Q	Not consumption low desire	465	74.0%
	Consumption low desire	163	26.0%
GHLOW_Q	Not personal planning low desire	447	71.2%
	Personal planning low desire	181	28.8%

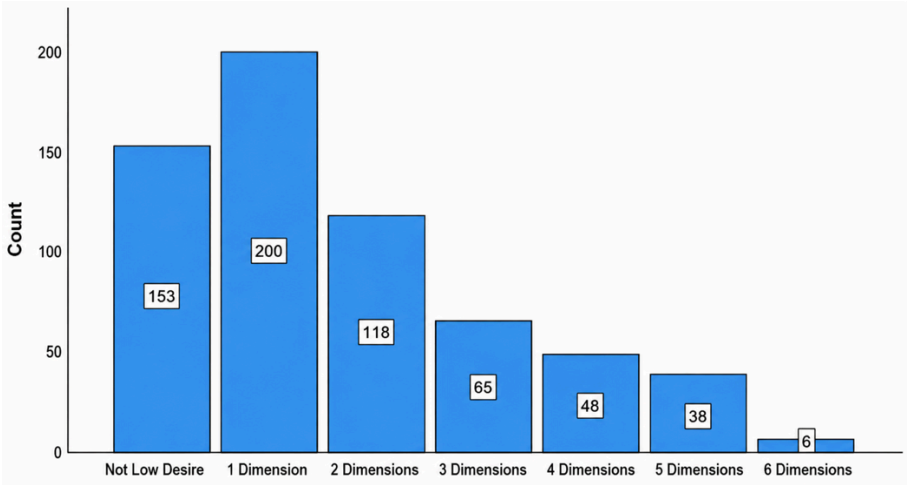


Figure 3. Distribution of the number of "low desire" dimensions

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Going further, as regards the number of dimensions in which respondents had "low desire", according to the result of the counting variable "Q_GRD_LEV_DYW" ("low desire" dimension), as shown in Figure 3, the number of people with "low desire" presented a decreasing trend from one dimension to six dimensions: there were 200 respondents with "low desire" in one dimension, but only 6 respondents with "low desire" in six dimensions.

5. Research conclusions

5.1. Factors influencing the six-dimensional "low desire" of university students

Taking variables such as the gender, ethnicity, grade, school category, discipline category, place of origin, parents' educational level, only-child status, political status, whether scholarships have been obtained, number of close friends and relationship status of respondents as independent variables, and the "low desire" situation of the six-dimensional scale and the "low desire" situation of the total score of respondents as dependent variables, regression analysis was carried out. Taking the basic variables of respondents as independent variables and the "low desire" situation of the six-dimensional scale as dependent variables, the results of regression analysis are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Regression models of the "low desire" situation of the six-dimensional scale of university students (N=628)

Variable	Model 1 (Academic study)	Model 2 (Public affairs)	Model 3 (Extracurricular activities)	Model 4 (Communicative interaction)	Model 5 (Consumption)	Model 6 (Future)
Only child or not	-0.087*	0.028	0.038	-0.084*	0.061	0.058
Institution level	0.033	0.035	0.083***	-0.036	0.031	0.077***
Scholarship obtained or not	-0.041	-0.024	-0.127**	0.040	-0.126**	-0.117**
Number of close friends	-0.027*	-0.016	-0.006	-0.010	-0.001	-0.024
Relationship status	-0.009	0.065†	-0.011	-0.068†	0.028	0.052
Monthly income	0.021	0.031*	0.006	0.018	0.019	-0.014
Adjusted R^2	0.042	0.042	0.048	0.041	0.042	0.048
F value	5.278	5.278	6.055	5.162	5.278	6.055

(Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001)

The results of the OLS regression analysis of the "low desire" situation of the six-dimensional scale of university students show that: students from non-key undergraduate institutions are more likely to produce "low desire" in the dimensions of extracurricular activities and personal planning, that is, the lower the institution level, the higher the degree of "low desire", which may reflect that university students of higher institution levels have clearer life choices; obtaining scholarships has a significant promoting effect on "low desire" in extracurricular activities and personal planning, and at the same time individuals with higher income have lower willingness for public participation, which to a certain extent confirms that a high economic situation will deepen the tendency of "low desire"; non-only children and those with a larger number of close friends avoid academic study and social interaction less, which shows the inhibitory effect of social support networks on "low desire".

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5.2. Factors influencing the overall situation of the "low desire" of university students

The results of regression analysis taking the "low desire" of scale scores and the situations of various categories of "low desire" as dependent variables are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Regression models of the "low desire" of the scale of university students and various categories of "low desire" (N=628)

Variable	Model 7 (Scale score low desire)	Model 8 (Complete low desire)	Model 9 (Partial low desire)
Gender	0.006	0.059	-0.008
Ethnicity	-0.017	0.005	-0.018
Institution level	0.004	-0.032	0.011
Only child or not	0.020	0.025	0.014
Place of origin	0.019	0.093*	-0.002
Scholarship obtained or not	-0.090*	0.015	-0.092*
Number of close friends	-0.082†	-0.059	-0.068
Relationship status	0.048	0.051	0.036
Personal monthly income	0.037	0.030	0.030
Political status	0.080*	-0.021	0.084*
Adjusted R^2	0.036	0.018	0.041
F value	3.421	2.103	4.312

(Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001)

The results of the OLS regression analysis based on the "low desire" of the scale scores of university students and the situations of various categories of "low desire" show that: whether university students have "low desire" and its type are influenced by multiple factors; economic resources such as scholarships and monthly income significantly suppress partial low desire; the social capital represented by the number of close friends can alleviate complete low desire; and the political status of Party membership presents a contradictory effect, suppressing the "low desire" of scale scores but reinforcing partial low desire.

Overall, as regards whether "low desire" is presented and different types of "low desire" arise, they are influenced by eight factors: whether scholarships have been obtained, institution level, place of origin, number of close friends, whether one is an only child, relationship status, political status and monthly income. Among them, whether scholarships have been obtained, institution level and place of origin are macro-level influencing factors; number of close friends, whether one is an only child and relationship status are meso-level influencing factors; and political status and personal monthly income are micro-level influencing factors.

6. Summary and discussion

In short, especially in educational communities, the phenomenon of "low desire" is already spreading among young university student groups, and in fact a majority of university students with "low desire" already exist. But "low desire" does not fit the active background of the striving of the youth to a certain extent. This study holds that the phenomenon of "low desire" of the university

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student group can be responded to from the aspects of formulating relaxed cultivation systems and carrying out social support activities. While guiding the public to view the "low desire" of the university student group rationally, the phenomenon of "low desire" of university students can be guided and responded to institutionally so that it is not further intensified. While not excessively criticizing and controlling individual initiative, the image of university students who have ideals, a sense of responsibility, a sense of duty and strive hard should be advocated. Although this study has certain shortcomings, to a certain extent it breaks through the tendency to simply generalize the youth phenomenon of "low desire", presents the realistic patterns of the "low desire" of the contemporary university student group through quantitative research, and provides a reference for the study of the "low desire" of the young university student group. Future research can further track the long-term trajectories of some young people with "partial low desire", or carry out cross-regional comparative research.

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