

# *The Influence of Literary Works on High School Students*

Xintong Wang<sup>1,a,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The High School Affiliated to Beijing Normal University, Beijing, 100052, China

a. 20150435406@mail.sdufe.edu.cn

\*corresponding author

**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to explore whether literary and artistic works are related to the formation of the concept of beautifying pain in high school students, and analyze the correlation between beautifying pain and depression, so as to predict the future development of high school students. Questionnaire method and SPSS analysis are the main methods involved in this study. This study makes up for the gap in the previous research on the concept of beautifying pain in high school students, and finds that the concept of beautifying pain is an unhealthy psychological state. The results show that high school students in first-tier cities have a relatively high degree of beautification of pain and depression. There is no significant correlation between contacting artistic works and the idea of beautifying pain, but there is a significant positive correlation between the idea of beautifying pain and depression. The degree of pain beautification and depression can predict the future development of high school students effectively, and high school students with high pain beautification are more inclined to engage in spiritual exploration majors. For high school students with high degree of pain beautification, parents and teachers need to guide, educate and give more psychological support in a special way.

**Keywords:** beautification of pain, literary and artistic works, depression

## **1. Introduction**

Youth is an important period for the formation of world outlook and cognitive construction. In the high school stage, teenagers will face a lot of troubles and sometimes psychological problems. As early as 2009, a study completed by Wei Sun, Ling Nie and Chun Chang found that 35.2% of high school students in a school in Beijing were screened as positive for depressive symptoms, and high school students with depressive symptoms were not inclined to seek psychological assistance [1]. Therefore, in order to better solve the problem of depression in high school students, it is important to identify a wider range of attributions account for depressive symptoms among high school students in first-tier cities.

In recent years, the society of first-tier cities, due to fierce competition, fragmented information and large population, has led to the emergence of people's eager for quick success, especially in the middle school and high school students seeking to enter a school of higher education. The heavy workload of students at school leads to a distorted view of pain suffering. However, many people are unaware of these spiritual distortions and explorations. Parents, schools and so on have prejudice to teenagers' exploration of self-spirit, thinking that self-spirit construction will affect learning, and the benefits it brings are far less than learning hard. In addition, from the perspective of literary works,

many literary works contain the beautification of pain. Beautifying pain is an essential part of most tragic works. For example, the sculpture *Laocoon*, the writer Fyodor Dostoevsky, etc., regardless of moral significance, it is the beautification of pain to achieve their tragedy. In the real world, human sorrow and joy are not the same, and the beautification of pain in literary works has found a way for human sorrow and joy to communicate. Another example is the book *Fang Siqu's first love Paradise*, the word "paradise" in the title, and the poetic literary expressions, such as "lost paradise" in the text symbolize the beautification of pain [2, 3]. Kant's aesthetic pain ontology also proposed that pain is the force that stimulates life and the deep condition of aesthetics [4]. High school students will inevitably come into contact with these literary and artistic works, and it impose a certain impact on their psychological state. This study aims to explore whether the age of exposure to literary works is related to the emergence of pain-beautifying ideas in high school students, and explore the impact of pain-beautifying ideas on the psychological state of high school students, and predict the future development of high school students based on pain-beautifying ideas.

In this study, literary and artistic works are defined as various forms of cultural creation, such as novels (including online novels, fanfiction, etc.), article collections, films (especially literary and artistic films, or films with coherent logic and plot, excluding cartoons with few lines), etc., mainly including literary works.

## 2. Research Method

### 2.1. Questionnaire Design

In this study, middle school students, high school students and college students in first-tier cities who have been exposed to literary and artistic works are selected for researching. The questionnaire in this study refers to the International SDS Scale (Self- Rating Depression Scale 20-question version), the Resilience Scale for Chinese Adolescent (RSCA) and 12 items of Neuroticism dimension in the 60-item version of the Big Five Personality Scale. The items are adapted and added to be more suitable for this study. The content of the questionnaire is divided into three dimensions: dimension 1: age of exposure to literary and artistic works and views on literary and artistic works; dimension 2: degree of pain beautification; dimension 3: degree of adolescent depression. The first dimension adopts the demographic questionnaire survey method. The second dimension includes two sub-dimensions: the degree of beautification of pain and the degree of practicing "painful experience" in life. The third dimension includes three sub-dimensions: the degree of depression, the degree of pessimism and the ability to resist frustration. The questionnaire consists of 50 questions and adopts the five-level scale. In the second and third dimensions, the higher the score, the higher the degree of beautification of pain and the more severe the depressive state. In dimension 2, a score of 1-13 represents a low degree of pain beautification, a score of 14-26 represents a moderate degree of pain beautification, and a score of 27-40 represents a high degree of pain beautification. In Dimension 3, a score of 1-38 is normal, a score of 39-77 is normal most of the time with mild depression, a score of 78-116 represents significant depression, and a score of 117-155 represents the depression which has affected normal life. In this study, the Cronbach  $\alpha$  of the whole questionnaire is 0.927, and the KMO sampling suitability is 0.828.

### 2.2. Questionnaire Distribution

Participants are invited to participate in the questionnaire survey by sending questionnaire posters online. Ultimately, a total of 130 questionnaires are collected, including 129 valid samples.

### 2.3. Statistical Approach

In this study, SPSS22.0 was used for statistical analysis, including difference analysis, correlation analysis, etc.

## 3. Result

### 3.1. Exposure of High School Students to Literary Works

#### 3.1.1. Time of First Exposure to Literary Works

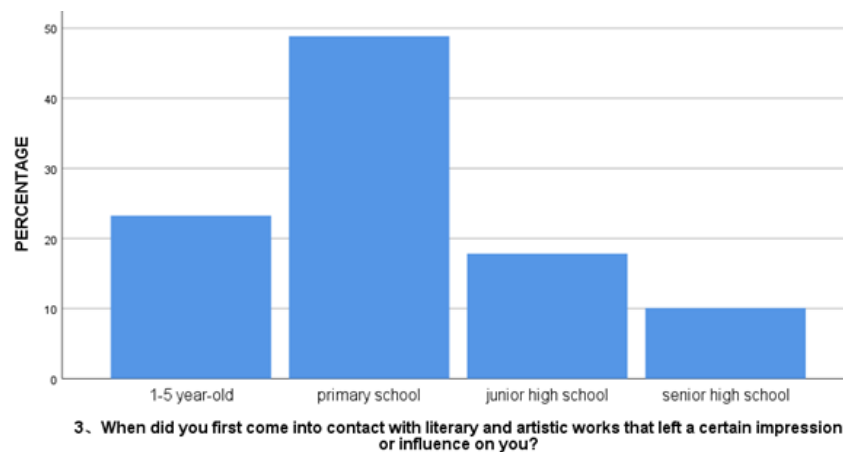


Figure 1: The age at which high school students first contact literary works. (Picture credit: Original)

As it showed in Figure 1, nearly 50% of high school students start to contact literary works from primary school; the second largest proportion, nearly 25% of high school students, start to contact literary works from 1-5 years old. High school students in most first-tier cities are exposed to literary works at an early age.

#### 3.1.2. Affection for Literary and Artistic Works

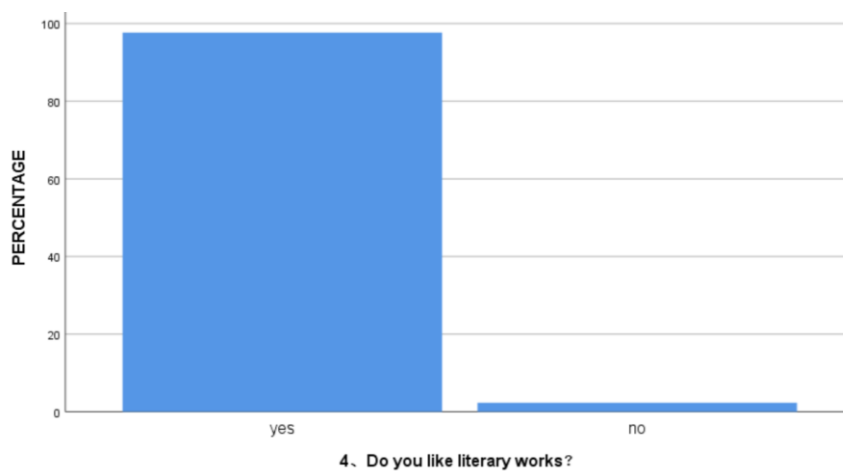


Figure 2: High school students' preference for literary and artistic works. (Picture credit: Original)

As Figure 2 shows, among the high school students in first-tier cities who have been exposed to literary and artistic works, nearly all of them say they like literary and artistic works. High school

students in first-tier cities have a high degree of acceptance and affection for literary and artistic works.

### 3.2. High School Students' Idea of Beautifying Pain and Self-Sacrificial Attitude Towards Life

Table 1: Descriptive statistics on dimensions of pain beautification.

|                                               | Minimum | Maximum | Mean    | Standard Deviation |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|--------------------|
| The degree to which pain is beautified        | 3.00    | 15.00   | 10.1628 | 2.60045            |
| The degree of practicing "painful experience" | 5.00    | 25.00   | 15.1783 | 4.41314            |
| Total score of pain beautification            | 8.00    | 40.00   | 25.3411 | 6.33381            |

As can be seen from Table 1, the degree of beautification of pain and the degree of practicing “painful experience” in life of high school students in first-tier cities who have been exposed to literary and artistic works is generally at degree which is a little higher than medium.

### 3.3. Depression State of High School Students

Table 2: Descriptive statistics on dimensions of depression.

|                                  | Minimum | Maximum | Mean    | Standard Deviation |
|----------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|--------------------|
| Pessimistic dimension            | 7.00    | 25.00   | 14.7907 | 4.14328            |
| Depressive state dimension       | 12.00   | 58.00   | 31.2946 | 8.32673            |
| Frustration resistance dimension | 18.00   | 64.00   | 40.7752 | 10.36539           |
| Total score of depressive state  | 41.00   | 139.00  | 86.8605 | 20.55471           |

High school students in first-tier cities who have been exposed to literary and artistic works are generally in a state of depression. As can be seen from Table 2, the average score of depressive state, high school students in first-tier cities who have been exposed to literary and artistic works have relatively obvious depressive mood, but the depression mood has not yet affected their normal life.

### 3.4. The Impact of Exposure to Literary and Artistic Works on the Beautification of Pain

As it can be seen from Table 3, there is no significant correlation between the exposure to literary works and the beautification of pain and the self-sacrificial attitude towards life ( $p>0.005$ ).

Table 3: Correlation between literary works and the pain beautification.

|                                               | Quadratic Sum | Variance | Mean Square | F     | Significance |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------------|----------|-------------|-------|--------------|
| The degree to which pain is beautified        | 38.466        | 3        | 12.822      | 1.938 | .127         |
| The degree of practicing "painful experience" | 72.234        | 3        | 24.078      | 1.243 | .297         |
| Total score of pain beautification            | 193.376       | 3        | 64.459      | 1.631 | .186         |

### 3.5. The Relationship Between the Beautification of Pain and the Depressive State among High School Students

Table 4: Divergence between the beautification of pain and the depressive state.

|                                  | Quadratic Sum | Variance | Mean Square | F     | Significance |
|----------------------------------|---------------|----------|-------------|-------|--------------|
| Depressive state dimension       | 892.128       | 2        | 446.064     | 7.041 | .001         |
| Frustration resistance dimension | 1497.474      | 2        | 748.737     | 7.698 | .001         |
| Pessimistic dimension            | 219.226       | 2        | 109.613     | 6.982 | .001         |
| Total score of depressive state  | 6564.206      | 2        | 3282.103    | 8.703 | .000         |

As can be seen from Table 4, there are significant differences among groups in all dimensions of depressive state ( $p < 0.001$ ).

Table 5: Correlation between the beautification of pain and the depressive state.

|  | Total score of pain beautification | Pessimistic dimension | Depressive state dimension | Frustration resistance dimension | Total score of depressive state |
|--|------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
|--|------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|

Table 5: (continued).

|                                    |                     |   |        |        |        |        |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Total score of pain beautification | Pearson correlation | 1 | .330** | .323** | .438** | .418** |
|                                    | Sig. (Double tail)  |   | .000   | .000   | .000   | .000   |
| Pessimistic dimension              | Pearson correlation |   | 1      | .674** | .587** | .770** |
|                                    | Sig. (Double tail)  |   |        | .000   | .000   | .000   |
| Depressive state dimension         | Pearson correlation |   |        | 1      | .763** | .926** |
|                                    | Sig. (Double tail)  |   |        |        | .000   | .000   |
| Frustration resistance dimension   | Pearson correlation |   |        |        | 1      | .932** |
|                                    | Sig. (Double tail)  |   |        |        |        | .000   |
| Total score of depressive state    | Pearson correlation |   |        |        |        | 1      |
|                                    | Sig. (Double tail)  |   |        |        |        |        |

\*\*. At level 0.01 (double tail), the correlation is significant.

As can be seen from Table 5, the beautification of pain and the self-sacrificial life attitude of high school students in first-tier cities are significantly correlated with depression ( $p < 0.001$ ).

### 3.6. Personal Development

#### 3.6.1. Influence of Exposure to Literary Works on Personal Development

Table 6: Correlation between literary works and personal development.

|                                                                                          | Quadratic Sum | Variance | Mean Square | F      |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|----------|-------------|--------|
| 46. I am interested in psychology, philosophy and other majors that explore self-spirit. | 9.678         | 3        | 3.226       | 2.430  |
| 47. I'm fascinated by art and poetry.                                                    | 10.929        | 3        | 3.643       | 2.794* |
| 48. I think the way of education in school will suppress my will and interest.           | .381          | 3        | .127        | .080   |

Table 6: (continued).

|                                                                                                                                                   |       |   |      |      |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|---|------|------|
| 49. I think my parents, teachers treat me in some ways that are unreasonable, which cause me trouble, and even lead to my feeling of inferiority. | 2.709 | 3 | .903 | .491 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|---|------|------|

\*. At level 0.05, the correlation exists.

As can be seen from Table 6, there is no significant correlation between exposure to literary works and personal growth of high school students. There is no significant correlation between the exposure to literary and artistic works and the presentation and reflection on the problems existing in personal development, but from the question “I am fascinated by poetry and art” from the dimension of personal development, the earlier the high school students contact literary works, the higher the degree of love for poetry and art; there is a correlation ( $p < 0.005$ ).

### 3.6.2. Influence of Depression on Personal Development

Table 7: Correlation between the depressive state and personal development.

|                                                                                                                                                   | Quadratic Sum | Variance | Mean Square | F            |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|----------|-------------|--------------|
| 46. I am interested in psychology, philosophy and other majors that explore self-spirit.                                                          | 2.500         | 2        | 1.250       | .910         |
| 47. I'm fascinated by art and poetry.                                                                                                             | 7.796         | 2        | 3.898       | 2.957        |
| 48. I think the way of education in school will suppress my will and interest.                                                                    | 38.905        | 2        | 19.452      | 15.288*<br>* |
| 49. I think my parents, teachers treat me in some ways that are unreasonable, which cause me trouble, and even lead to my feeling of inferiority. | 75.953        | 2        | 37.976      | 30.506*<br>* |

\*\*. At level 0.01 (double tail), the correlation is significant.

As represented in Table 7, depression is significantly correlated with the presentation and reflection of the problems existing in personal development status ( $p < 0.001$ ), but not significantly correlated with the predicted choice of high school students' career and personal development prediction.

### 3.6.3. Influence of Pain Beautification on Personal Development

As represented in Table 8, there is significant correlation between high school students' beautification of pain and the presentation and reflection of problems existing in the current situation of personal development, as well as the prediction choice of career and personal development prediction ( $p < 0.001$ ).

Table 8: Correlation between the pain beautification and personal development.

|                                                                                                                                                   | Quadratic Sum | Variance | Mean Square | F        |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|----------|-------------|----------|
| 46. I am interested in psychology, philosophy and other majors that explore self-spirit.                                                          | 20.629        | 2        | 10.314      | 8.386**  |
| 47. I'm fascinated by art and poetry.                                                                                                             | 24.018        | 2        | 12.009      | 10.097** |
| 48. I think the way of education in school will suppress my will and interest.                                                                    | 21.486        | 2        | 10.743      | 7.616*   |
| 49. I think my parents, teachers treat me in some ways that are unreasonable, which cause me trouble, and even lead to my feeling of inferiority. | 22.884        | 2        | 11.442      | 6.868*   |

\*. At level 0.05, the correlation exists.

\*\*. At level 0.01 (double tail), the correlation is significant.

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1. High School Students' Attitudes Towards Beautifying Pain, Self-Sacrifice Attitudes and Depressive State

High school students in first-tier cities have a relatively high degree of pain beautification, and they represent obvious depressive moods. Life events, as stress, can significantly predict automatic thinking and depressive mood [4]. Therefore, high school students in first-tier cities are probably under great appreciable pressure. According to the research of Ling Yu, Liu Caili and Pan Li, there is a significant positive correlation between depression and life events and anxiety among high school students, while there is a significant negative correlation between general self-efficacy, depression and anxiety [5]. Therefore, it can be speculated that high school students in first-tier cities have high life pressure, high anxiety, and low self-efficacy in general.

### 4.2. The Impact of Exposure to Literary and Artistic Works on the Beautification of Pain and the Self-Sacrificing Attitudes Towards Life

There is a significant positive correlation between high school students' degree of beautification of pain and their degree of pessimism. Individuals with a high degree of beautification of pain often pursue the exploration of self-spirit and the consistency of self-cognition, and have a more delicate perception of the outside world. When individuals encounter obstacles and self-cognition disharmony

in the process of exploration, they tend to be pessimistic due to the lack of life experience and the nature of teenagers' radicalism.

There is a significant positive correlation between the degree of pain beautification and depression state of high school students. The higher the degree of beautification of pain, the higher the degree of depression among high school students. The idea of beautifying pain is an irrational cognition. If high school students already encounter emotional problems like depression, physical discomfort and so on, beautifying pain will deepen the distortion of their understanding of pain, and thus imposing negative influence on mental health. If depression does not influence the high school students, individuals with a high degree of pain beautification will immerse themselves in the self-sacrificial lifestyle, and even commit self-injury to obtain the satisfaction of psychological beautification of pain. A study finds that the incidence of self-injury behaviour is higher in adolescents with severe depression, and the proportion of self-injury behaviour among adolescents with depressive disorder is as high as 44% [6].

There is a significant positive correlation between high school students' beautification of pain and their ability to resist frustration. In the scale of anti-frustration ability dimension, the higher the individual score, the weaker the anti-frustration ability. The higher the degree of beautification of pain, the lower the ability of emotional tolerance, discomfort tolerance and delayed gratification of desire tolerance. Personal reasons will hinder adolescents' normal self-organization of anti-frustration ability, which is the internal cause of adolescents' vulnerability to anti-frustration ability. Society, school (teachers) and family (parents) are the external factors that affect the self-organization of teenagers' anti-frustration ability. In terms of adolescents themselves, having a good physical and mental health is the basis for improving their anti-frustration ability. The internal reasons for their weak anti-frustration ability include susceptibility and fragile personality [7]. The beautification of pain will make high school students' perception of pain in reality deviate from their own beautified perception of pain. For the painful experience in life, they will fall into a heroic self-sacrifice. When they may return to reality for a short time, they will feel that the sense gap is too excessive to accept, thus forming a fragile and sensitive personality, which is not conducive to the acquisition of anti-frustration ability.

### **4.3. High School Students' Personal Development**

#### **4.3.1. Influence of Exposure to Literary Works on Personal Development**

High school students who contact literary and artistic works earlier in their lives can invest in the process of reading and text understanding earlier, so that they have an interest in literary and artistic creation, and to some extent guide their personal development and influence their choice of interest in the future.

#### **4.3.2. Influence of Depression on Personal Development**

The more obvious the depression and the greater the impact of depression on high school students' lives, the more they will agree to "I think the school's education mode will suppress and bury my interest". and "I think some of the ways my parents and teachers treat me are unreasonable, which has caused me trouble and even led to my inferiority." As the degree of depression increases, the self-efficacy of high school students decreases, which further leads to the sense of inferiority, self-abasement and even the performance of learned helplessness [8]. High school students in a state of helplessness take the initiative to assess the status quo of their personal development and try to attribute, which can promote the reflection on individual, parents or teachers.

### 4.3.3. Influence of Pain Beautification on Personal Development

In terms of career direction prediction and personal development prediction in high school, the higher the degree of pain beautification, the more interested high school students are in psychology, philosophy and other majors exploring self-spirit, and the more fascinated they are by art and poetry. Individuals with a high degree of pain beautification are more likely to perceive the pain of themselves and of others, which make them continuously improve their ability to empathize. To some extent, the concept of beautifying pain promotes these individuals to conduct deeper and more frequent self-spiritual exploration. Although there will be deviations from the pain and real situation in the real world during the exploration process, these high school students who pay attention to spiritual exploration can still conduct self-analysis, self-cognitive adjustment and have a more comprehensive understanding of the world. To some extent, the concept of beautifying pain is a way for high school students to carry out philosophical thinking, but it will inevitably lead to the deviation of their concept.

In terms of showing and reflecting on the problems existing in the current situation of high school students' personal development, the higher the degree of beautification of pain, the more they will agree on "I think the school's way of education will suppress and bury my interest." and "I think some of the ways my parents and teachers treat me are unreasonable, which has caused me trouble and even led to sense of inferiority." Individuals with a high degree of beautification of pain are more sensitive and radical to "painful experience", and are more likely to immerse themselves in their own world and find it difficult to extricate themselves. The pursuit and acquisition of the sense of meaning of life is conducive to awakening the hope of life of depressed individuals. There was a significant negative correlation between the pursuit of life meaning and depression, and a significant positive correlation between the degree of pain beautification and depression. Individuals with a high degree of beautification of pain are not conducive to pursuing and obtaining the sense of meaning of life, which is not conducive to the establishment of a healthy mentality [9, 10]. However, as mentioned above, such high school students are also more likely to find problems existing in themselves and the surroundings in life and try to attribute, which can promote the joint reflection of individuals, parents and teachers.

## 5. Conclusion

To sum up, high school students in first-tier cities have a relatively high degree of beautification of pain, and the concept of beautification of pain is not conducive to maintaining a healthy psychological state. There is no significant correlation between the idea of beautifying pain and exposure to literary works. That beautification of pain may come from the values preached by the society, the school, and the surrounding environment, which has a far-reaching impact, and may even cause a wide range of emotional and psychological problems of high school students. However, from another perspective, high school students who have a deeper concept of beautifying pain are more interested in self-spiritual exploration, and they can use their beautification of pain to carry out cognitive adjustment, attributions and so on. These high-sensitivity traits make these high school students emotionally troubled, but they have a strong capacity for empathy. This kind of high school students often have talents in philosophy, psychology and other aspects related human cognition science. If schools and parents can dig deeply and educate them in a correct way, these students can make contributions to the society. At the same time, individuals with a high degree of pain beautification also tend to fall into a blind side of interest selection. That is, such groups tend to be only interested in spiritual exploration and do not care about other things in life. Considering the mental torture caused by the beautification of pain, including the physical torture caused by self-injury, the education system and social environment of first-tier cities should also be reflected on why a considerable number of high

school students have a high degree of pain beautification, and the idea should be changed as much as possible.

## References

- [1] Sun, W., Nie, L., and Chang, C. (2009). *Survey on Depression Symptoms and Seeking-help of High School Students in Beijing*. China Academic Electronic Publishing House, 1000-9817.
- [2] Zhao, Y., X. (2018). The Literature of Metaphor, The Writing of Life -- a Multi-Perspective Textual Interpretation of Fang Siqu's First Love Paradise. *Journal of Mudanjiang University*, 1008-8717.
- [3] Wen, X., Y. (2020). "Fake poetry"-- On The Anti-Lyric Writing in Fang Siqu's First Love Paradise by Lin Yihan. *Bei Fang Wen Xue*, 8.
- [4] Lu, N. (2022). Stress and Depressive Mood in College Students: the Mediating Role of Automatic Thinking and Rumination. *G44, A*, 1671-2684.
- [5] Ling, Y., Liu, C., L, Pan, L. (2019). A Study on The Prediction of Life Events and Self-Efficacy on Depression of High School Students[J]. *Educational Measurement and Evaluation*, (5): 53-58.
- [6] Tang, J., T, Wang, G., H. and Wang, X., P. et al. (2005). Analysis of Factors Related to Self-Injury-Related Behaviors and Suicidal Thoughts in Adolescents with Depressive Disorders [J]. *Chinese Journal of Mental Health*, 19 (8):536-538.
- [7] Duan, M., H. Duan, S., Q. and Zhang, X., Y. (2023). Vulnerability of Young People to Frustration and its Prevention Strategies Based on Self-Organization Theory. *Western Quality Education*, (9):1.
- [8] Wu, S., Z. (2021). The Inhibitory Effect of College Graduates' Self-Efficacy on Depression: a Mediating Model of Coping Styles. *G444, A*, 1009-6051.
- [9] Guo, J., Y. (2020). The Relationship between Parental and Peer Attachment, Depression and Sense of Life Meaning in High School Students.
- [10] Liu, M., J, Ran Li, Xiao, H., Y. (2021). The Relationship between Medical Students' Sense of Meaning of Life and Depression. *G44, A*, 1674-0874.