

# Psychological Causes and Solutions to Mass Incidents in Universities

Fei Fang

College of Foreign Studies  
Shandong Technology and Business University  
Yantai, P. R. China

**Abstract**—The frequent occurrence of mass incidents in universities could severely affect the work order and normal life of students and faculties. This paper analyzes the psychological features of participants, which include catharsis, bigotry, self-actualization, fluke mind and spectator's perspective in the hope of revealing the psychological causes for the mass incidents and proposing effective measures in preventing and coping with these incidents. This research will have implication for maintaining harmony and stability in colleges and universities.

**Keywords**—college students; mass incidents; psychological causes

## I. INTRODUCTION

As contemporary society marches forward rapidly and the higher institution reform continues further, universities have turned to be an area susceptible to mass incidents. Most of the participants are the 90s students with distinctive personalities. The risk of mass incidents in universities is on the rise and these incidents are characterized by conflict, transiency, purposefulness, suddenness and unpredictability. Mass incidents in universities not only affect the order and peace, but also impair the fame and image and lower the credibility of the universities. Some incidents may also turn into social and political issues. Therefore, it has become a hot topic to analyze the psychological causes of mass incidents in universities and find out effective measures to prevent them from happening. This study will play a favorable role in maintaining stability on campus and improve the fame and competitiveness of universities.

## II. PARTICIPANTS' PSYCHOLOGY IN COLLEGE MASS INCIDENTS

College Mass Incidents refer to the incidents happening on campus suddenly, and out of the control of administrators. They usually have a clear aim, that is to fight for certain rights and interests, and have severe effects on the order of teaching and study due to mass involvement. There are many causes for mass incidents in universities and we will mainly focus on the ones that feature university students. Generally speaking, students involved in mass incidents have the following five psychological features:

### A. Catharsis

As an important means of self-psychological adjustment, catharsis not only let people's sentiment out, but also helps them to strike psychological balance. Many students in universities consider themselves the disadvantaged group. They feel very resentful and angry about the negative incidents, vices and evils in society. When such negative mood mounts to a certain degree, it bursts out through a certain incident. In this way, catharsis becomes a mental element for university students getting involved in mass incidents.

### B. Bigotry

Conformity means an individual, influenced by a group, voluntarily or involuntarily conform to the group's awareness, judgment, knowledge and behavior. When a leader appears in a group, many students will follow him without realizing or even considering what consequence their behavior will bring. They could barely explain their purpose for participating in the mass incident.

### C. Self-identification and Actualization

According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, self-actualization which means giving full play to one's potential and gaining recognition from society is the highest need of human beings. Some university students who cannot adapt to a new environment or have few friends tend to have a sense of inferiority and doubt their own value. They need a way of self-actualization.

### D. The Fluke Mind That Law Will Not Punish the Majority

In the mass incidents in universities, the fluke mind plays an important role in leading the incident to an uncontrollable situation. Many participants believe if they just participate and do the same thing as most people, they will not be punished, since only the bird which takes the lead got shot. A fluke mind plays a role that cannot be neglected in university mass incidents.

### E. Spectator's Perspective

This means people stand by the incident like watching a show. They are just interested in the incident and have no sympathy and understanding for people involved. Young

college students usually have a weak competence in making judgement and their analysis ability is not sufficient to help them make reasonable choice and evaluation. So in on-looking or participating in the mass incidents, most of them have this mind. In the process, their mindset and insufficient knowledge catalyze the development of the incident.

### III. CAUSES FOR THE PSYCHOLOGICAL FEATURES

#### A. *Causes for Catharsis: Mounting Stress and the Appearance of Stimulus*

Young students have the expectations from society, family and university to live up to and meanwhile they shoulder the pressure from life, study, interpersonal relation, love and employment. They tend to be anxious, depressed, disappointed, scared and jealous. If these pressures cannot be let out in time, students may develop mental disease and once a stimulus appears and they cannot make correct judgment, catharsis may happen like a monster breaking out of confinement. Besides, the expansion of universities undoubtedly leads to the shortage of higher institutions resources and the inconsistency between limited education resources provided by colleges and student's strong desire for growth and development has become a major conflict in universities. This conflict takes various forms in universities, such as doubts about teaching quality, complaint of lab equipment, dissatisfaction for the food in the cafeteria or limited number of seats in library. Once a stimulus gets enough attention from students, they may let out their complaints easily.

#### B. *Causes for Bigotry: Young People's Impulsion and Easily Getting Affected*

At the moment, bigotry explains most participation of college students in mass incidents. This is because young people in the period of growth are characterized by volatility, impulsion, lack of social experience and sensitivity to the outside world. In universities, students' attitude and behavior are easily affected by the environment surrounding them. A resistant attitude can start from one student's extreme words and actions and circulate among a group quickly. Therefore, most students participating in mass incidents usually have no clear purpose or they are unaware of the possible consequence their actions might bring. In addition, similar actions and attitudes from students around them encourage them. The resistant attitude develops and the risk of mass incidents increases.

#### C. *Causes for Self-actualization: Hero Complex and Lack of Confidence*

Surviving the rigorous and competitive selection of College Entrance Exam, young students finally enter into universities. Some of them are the excellent children in parents' eyes and have a strong sense of superiority. But they find everyone around in colleges like themselves also used to be excellent students and their sense of superiority disappears. What's more, they have a brand-new environment to adapt to, new problems to solve, and confidence disappears, too. In the meantime, desire for

success, self-respect and the hero complex get stronger and stronger. They could get sense of actualization and confidence through mass incidents.

#### D. *Causes for Fluke Mind: Loss of Confinement*

Each university has certain rules, organizations and traditional ethics to regulate students' behaviors. Students show voluntarily or involuntarily behaviors conforming to these rules. Besides, students are concerned with their image among students, and they usually control their desire or behavior according to the rules. But once a resistant group is formulated, they will feel a formidable force which gives them the illusion that they don't need to shoulder responsibility. When sense of confinement disappears, actions will be controlled by instinct which enables them to let out their instinctive desire.

#### E. *Causes for Spectator's Perspective: Curiosity and the Indirect Interests*

Every one of us has curiosity and college students in the stage of exploring knowledge have an even stronger curiosity for new things and new events. The mentality of "finding truth" is popular in college mass incidents. These groups of students have a comparatively stronger cognitive competence and self-control, besides they are not the direct beneficiary. So they will try to avoid getting directly involved in mass incidents. They adopt an on-looker attitude out of curiosity.

### IV. SOLUTIONS FOR PREVENTING COLLEGE MASS INCIDENTS

College students are independent and yet dependent upon each other, so psychological counseling and education are essential. There are still many theoretical and institutional gaps in dealing with crisis in universities. Most of the higher institutions pay more attention to dealing with the problem that has happened instead of preventing it from happening, or pay more attention to losses instead of causes, lacking scientific, effective and standard accident estimation system and handling measures.

#### A. *Preventative Measures for Mass Incidents in Universities*

- Set up public opinion collection and analysis mechanism. Relevant departments in universities shall organize a crisis alert group which pays close attention to what's happening in the university and among students. This will help spot the problem in time and effective preventative measures will be taken quickly.
- Set up a smooth channel for communication and lead students to express their wish reasonably. Administrators in college need to have various means of communication with students so that the problems students meet in life or study might be known. Such means will include organizing discussions and talks with students periodically, open online mailbox, start the tutor system, etc.

Reasonable advice from students should be taken and problems should be solved as soon as possible. Unreasonable advice or problems hard to solve shall be explained so that the stimulus for students to organize into groups be removed as early as possible.

- Try to make the students' ideological and political education class more interesting and diversified and encourage teacher-student interaction in class.
- Build rich campus culture. Universities are supposed to build rich campus culture, enrich the life of students and lead them into various social practices.

#### B. *Effective Psychological Counseling Measures for Mass Incident in Universities*

1) *Psychological courses should be opened; counseling office and psychological file should be set up to cope with catharsis*: Psychological courses should be oriented towards providing counseling and education to every student on outlook on life, values and cognition and helping students gain a reasonable understanding of himself and society. Analytic therapy, cognitive therapy and behavior therapy should be adopted to help students establish an accurate knowledge of their ability, will, sentiment and personality. These courses will also help students adjust their behavior according to their psychological situations so that their pressure and sense of crisis be relieved. Meanwhile, psychological files will give special attention to students who are easily irritated, affected and have a weak control of their behavior. Various effective measures will be adopted to help them know themselves and prevent them from expressing extreme opinions or having actions encouraged by others.

2) *As for bigotry, it is proposed to improve students cognitive competence*: When college students have problems, they usually turn to others for opinions and advice. A better cognitive competence helps a student to have a clear knowledge of himself instead of following others blindly. So we believe different kinds of activities like group counseling and class talent show shall be organized to help students know themselves, improve their confidence and reduce bigotry. What's more, we should try to convert negative bigotry to positive one by helping students build a correct outlook on the world and life.

3) *As for self-actualization, it is necessary to cultivate a correct value system in students and improve their confidence*: College students in the critical period of study and growth have unique psychological features: both independent and dependent, desiring for both emotional privacy and communication, conflicting between ideal and reality. These conflicts make them vulnerable to self-discipline and setbacks and may have a wrong value system. We should help students shape their value system, cope with self-inferiority and improve their sense of responsibility so that they could have healthy personality and positive quality

that is coherent with their environment and get resistant to potential psychological crisis.

4) *As for the psychology of on-looker and fluke mind, we should improve legal education of students and cultivate their defense awareness*: Legal knowledge about mass incidents and responsibilities of participants in typical cases should be taught, guiding and regulating students' behavior. Meanwhile, students' should be taught to have a calm and clear mind in the face of mass incidents in universities, avoiding blind participation and violence.

#### V. CONCLUSION

Universities have turned to be an area susceptible to mass incidents. The frequent occurrence of mass incidents in universities could severely affect the work order and normal life of students and faculties. Through an analysis of psychological features of university students in mass incidents and mental causes for them, this research proposes prevention and counseling measures in the hope of getting enough attention from university management, faculty and students, and contributing to the construction of a stable and harmonious campus.

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