



“Lying Flat” Phenomenon: Representing Perspective, Generative Logic and Guiding Strategies

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Abstract. The phenomenon of “lying down” has become the focus of public opinion. It has become a new form of cultural expression for young netizens. “Lying flat” young people create an alternative way of life by maintaining a low desire, a positive and uncooperative psychological state, a sober sense of social status and their own destiny, and the value concept of self-compromise and self-reconciliation. Through the perspective of the phenomenon of “lying flat”, it is helpful to fundamentally solve practical problems and guide young people to change from “lying flat” to “standing up”.

Keywords: Lying flat · Lifestyle · Guiding

1 Introduction

Following the popular trend of online youth subculture phenomena such as “funeral culture” and “Buddhist culture”, the phenomenon of “lying flat” began to enter people’s field of vision, becoming a new synonym for the young generation’s slack attitude, and quickly becoming a hot topic of public opinion. There was a Douban topic “What are the ‘involution’ phenomena in your major or industry?” that triggered a debate among young netizens about “competition” and “hard work”. Later, a professor from Tsinghua University scolded young people for their “lying flat” attitude, and a Henan University professor’s “laying on the first day of the first year, but not the fifteenth” once again triggered a great discussion on the topic of “lying flat” on the Internet. Mainstream media and Internet opinion leaders also voiced their opposition and denounced this cultural phenomenon, but some young people ignored and dissatisfied. How to treat this cultural phenomenon? Why is this phenomenon favored by contemporary youth? Perhaps only by standing in the perspective of “lying flat people”, exploring the causes from a deep level, finding the crux, and solving practical problems from the root, can they open their hearts and realize the transformation from “lying flat” to “standing up”.

2 The Representation and Perspective of the Phenomenon of “Lying Flat”

The word “lying flat” originated from the Internet term “lying flat and ridicule”, which means “lying down and ridicule you”. It mainly refers to a psychological attitude of

young people who don’t respond and don’t resist. Now it is used to express a social situation in which contemporary young people actively choose to pursue a low desire life after being indifferent to competition. In 2021, a netizen published a post, sharing his nearly two years of lying flat experience, which quickly resonated with young netizens. With the gradual deepening of communication, the meaning of “lying flat” continues to expand. One refers to the awakening consciousness of “lying flat”, that is, by putting down desire and staying away from the noise, in order to set aside energy and time for the more meaningful things you like. The other refers to immersing in the virtual world of mobile network and killing time in emptiness and boredom [1]. The emergence of the phenomenon of “lying flat” is not only a mirror reflection of the realistic problems, but also becomes the “spiritual destination” of many young people, reflecting their mental state and psychological demands.

2.1 Sustaining Low Desires: A Silent Resistance to Consumerism

With the rapid development of economy and society, people’s living standards have been greatly improved, which has increased the pressure of social competition and living consumption standards. Consumerism permeates the changes of young people’s consumption behavior and habits, and promotes the acquisition of money and wealth to become an important goal of their struggle. When young people feel that no matter how hard they try, they can’t meet their expectations and the success standard defined by the society, they are easy to maintain the lowest and most comfortable living state by reducing expectations and desires to reduce “energy consumption”. This phenomenon is called “low desire society” in Japan. From this point of view, the essence of “lying flat” is a kind of stress response of young people under heavy pressure, and it is their helpless act of being defeated by reality after their efforts. Their “lying flat” is not to give up production and work with the nature of value creation, but to reduce working hours, desire and living costs as much as possible, abandon false prosperity, and choose to live a life without desire. This lifestyle breaks the values and evaluation system of the mainstream culture, and implicitly expresses their resistance to consumerism and disdain for the standard of success. Regarding their own development, they do not pay attention to the various standards set by society and others, and they are no longer bewitched by external desires, and are no longer shaken by the values instilled in various consumerism and success studies. They hope to produce and consume by choosing their own comfortable lifestyle, and leave room for their spiritual pursuit.

2.2 Positive and Uncooperative Mental State: Awakening to One’s Destiny

“To get happiness and freedom, we must understand this truth: some things we can control ourselves, others can’t. Only by facing up to this basic principle and learning to distinguish what you can control and what you can’t control, can you have internal tranquility and external efficiency” [2]. As a youth group in the new era, the post-90s and post-00s are the generation with ideals and the most independent ideas. They can deeply see the results that their efforts can achieve, and show a clear understanding of the social status quo and their own destiny. They do not want to be squeezed out of residual value in unreasonable competition, so they begin to explore their inner meaning and adopt

a positive and uncooperative approach to achieve control over their own choices, their own destiny and future. Sociologist Xiang Biao believes that for many people, work is a kind of “refusing to admit defeat”, but now you need to advocate “refusing to admit defeat in appointment”. Life is there. Only by thinking clearly about your own life can you form a new understanding of society from the inside to the outside. In the face of competition, the “lying flat” youth do not fight or obey, and even do not care about the future, but only live in the present. This kind of “lying flat” active non-cooperation means not participating in the involutionary competition with disproportionate returns on investment, not being brainwashed by consumerism, and not forcing oneself to buy a house or a car immediately. They have their own views on the meaning of life, but they are unwilling to get involved in the procedures set for them by the social system, and do not want to pursue the traditional meaning of “promotion and salary increase”, “buying a house and buying a car”. This sober awareness prompts them to opt out of the pursuit of success in the social system, and set the measurement standard as their inner acceptance of their own state. This is essentially a form of self-protection, and at the same time, it is also a kind of contempt for the “laying winner”.

2.3 Self-deprecating Emotional Expression: The Psychological Inertia of Defensive Pessimism

The reason why people work hard is that they have faith that their efforts can be rewarded. When they find that this kind of effort is not proportional to the gain, and they find that they can't keep up with the pace of society after their efforts, their faith will be broken, and they will adopt a negative and pessimistic way to achieve reconciliation between themselves. Nancy Cantor, a famous American psychologist, found that although pessimism is usually regarded as a negative trait, there is a positive pessimism, which can become a cognitive strategy for people to deal with anxiety, fear and worry. In short, people will prepare themselves for potential failure by reducing their evaluation and expectations, and at the same time encourage themselves to work hard to avoid real failure. This strategy is named defensive pessimism [3]. Facing the diversity of sources of anxiety, contemporary youth are facing new situations that their parents have never encountered, and are indeed more likely to have a sense of insignificance, powerlessness and helplessness. The emergence of the phenomenon of “lying flat” can be seen as a kind of emotional catharsis of young people who hate involution, but only in a pessimistic way to reduce the sense of loss and frustration when they fail to complete their goals. “If you can't change the environment, you can change the state of mind”. This kind of self-liberation is the experience summary of youth in the process of socialization participation. Through ridicule and emotional catharsis, they dispel the discipline of the external environment on themselves, and admit the dilemma of their real life, using pessimistic and negative ways to seek psychological comfort. Therefore, it can be said that “lying flat” is a way for young people to entertain and laugh at themselves under social pressure and anxiety about success, and it is a way for them to seek emotional release and relieve the pressure of real life. Although this way can help young people temporarily vent and release their emotions, the problem has not been solved.

2.4 The Self-compromise of Passive Abandonment: Perplexity and Loss of the Meaning of Life

German philosopher Han Bingzhe believes that in this era, people’s labor has been transformed from the traditional impression of “exploitation” into a kind of “self-exploitation”. “Self-exploitation” is a way to grab surplus value. It is based on the purpose of self-realization, and people voluntarily work hard without being forced by the “other” to contribute more surplus value, which makes freedom itself the object of being squeezed. In the Neo liberal regime, exploitation is no longer carried out in the way of alienation, but has become freedom and self-realization. There is no other as an exploiter here, but the self is willing to squeeze itself, based on a belief in self-improvement [4]. The youth group has a deep desire for self-realization and hopes to enter a certain competitive circle. When making a choice, they enter a certain system and become the promoter of the inner circle. And when most people’s hard work can’t make themselves better, and can only make themselves become cheap tool people and objects for others to squeeze, they will feel that their efforts are meaningless, resulting in the lack of a sense of meaning. Facing these developmental dilemmas such as alienation, loss and anxiety, and not knowing how to make themselves jump out, these young people will give up their hard work and busy life, or choose to take action to achieve physical “lying flat”, or lose their fighting spirit in work and life, which is manifested as the spiritual “lying flat” of negative response to work. This solution that automatically slides to marginalization is actually a manifestation of youth’s self-alienation, which reflects their own mental state, that is, the confusion about the meaning of life, and the sense of loss about the meaninglessness and worthlessness of life.

3 The Generating Logic of the “Lying Flat” Phenomenon

Only by thoroughly investigating the generative logic behind the phenomenon of “lying flat” of youth and exploring the social and cultural structure and the characteristics of youth groups, the cause of the phenomenon of “lying flat” can be understood.

3.1 The Phenomenon of “Lying Flat” is an Inevitable Product of the “Involution” Situation of Economic and Social Transformation

The emergence of specific cultural phenomena stems from the transformation of economic society. At present, China is experiencing a critical period of economic and social transformation and development, and its economy has changed from rapid growth to medium and low growth. The development of the industry is limited, the rising space of youth is suppressed, and the competition is more intense, which makes the youth groups who think they can improve their lives and personal status through efforts encounter a bottleneck period that cannot continue to rise, trapped in the “involution” of “everything can be rolled”. Involution, simply speaking, is internal competition or internal vicious competition, which mainly refers to the stagnation phenomenon caused by excessive competition in the process of social and cultural development mode. For the same resource, due to internal vicious competition, people need to pay a higher price and make

more efforts to obtain resources. In this case, the individual's "income effort ratio" will decline, showing the "inflation" of effort. The individual's labor and struggle did not change his own situation, but aggravated the disorder of competition and meaningless repetitive labor, and weakened the individual's upward spiritual power. Young people cannot jump out of the inner circle with their own efforts, and when they are not satisfied with being exploited by capital and have no hope for their future, they will choose a "soft" resistance and express their silent resistance to social injustice by "lying on the ground".

3.2 The Realistic Basis of Material Abundance Provides the Conditions for the Phenomenon of "Lying Flat"

When young people find that their rate of return on labor is far lower than the rate of return on capital, and the marginal benefit of labor input to individuals is lower than the marginal cost, no matter how hard they work, they will not be able to significantly improve the situation. In the basic living conditions, they will choose to "lie down" and explore their own spiritual space by reducing their desires. Therefore, the realization of "lying flat" requires a basic premise, that is, private life can not only be maintained, but also not disturbed. To be "flat", the support of capital is needed, especially the satisfaction of material conditions. At the same time, in the case of abundant material conditions, those young people who are active in thinking and do not stick to traditions may not be so eager to improve their material conditions, and they naturally want to change a relaxed lifestyle, that is, to "lie flat" to reduce their own burden and avoid involution.

3.3 The Awakening of Self-awareness in Youth is the Catalyst for the Phenomenon of "Lying Flat"

In the process of individual development, modern people have become "self-centered and huge individuals". Everyone is self-centered and everything else revolves around the satisfaction of their own needs and interests. However, in the workplace, individuals are often small and part of the system. This gap is more likely to aggravate the resistance of young people. From childhood, contemporary young people are accustomed to choosing what they want to do, and everything points to "self". Self is an important derivative in their growth process, and it is also an important driving force for them to say "no" to traditional rules. In the face of development difficulties, in order to highlight themselves and highlight their values, youth groups will try to take new confrontation ways to express their aspirations and demands. As a generation with an awakening consciousness of rights, they are dissatisfied with being trapped in involution all the time, so they achieve autonomy by reducing their desires, adopting active but uncooperative means, and using the "soft" method of "lying flat". On the other hand, the younger generation pays more attention to self-experience. When they find that they have nothing to gain from their hard work, they are easy to use hedonic ways to achieve a "lying flat" life.

3.4 “Lying Flat” is an Alternative Way for Young People to Escape the Dilemma of “Learned Helplessness”

Under the increasingly solidified class exploitation and capital squeeze, young people are in a helpless state of high pressure and unable to solve the dilemma. Over time, it is easy to produce the dilemma of “learned helplessness”. When facing the pressure and development difficulties in real life, young people still have little change in their living conditions after work, and they will experience all kinds of failures and setbacks. If they are in such a situation for a long time, their efforts will have nothing to do with the results, and form the cognition that “they can’t control the behavior results and external events”, making them feel that their efforts and reactions are ineffective and hopeless, and then forming the expectation that “the future results are also uncontrollable”, from “marching forward” to “lying flat on the spot”. If you can’t change the environment, you can change your lifestyle and mental state. The “lying flat” youth can reduce and offset the psychological anxiety caused by their own setbacks and failures by reducing their desire and staying away from the noise, which is also the expression of people’s instinct to pursue advantages and avoid disadvantages.

4 Guiding Strategies for the “Lying Flat” Phenomenon

According to the root causes of the phenomenon of “lying flat”, on the basis of understanding the psychological state of “lying flat” youth, it is helpful to resolve the practical development dilemma of “lying flat” youth by providing a good external environment, shaping youth values and cultivating their good psychological state.

4.1 Providing a Good Working Environment for Youth

For most young people, they do not want to “lie flat”, but are eager to improve their living conditions and show their life value through their own efforts. To avoid “lying down”, first of all, it is necessary to provide a good working environment for the development of young people. One should encourage young people to actively participate in innovation and entrepreneurship, and provide strength for cultivating new economic growth points. Colleges and universities can further optimize the innovation and entrepreneurship atmosphere of college students, set up training courses, or rely on their educational resources, research resources and alumni resources to establish a diversified and integrated entrepreneurship support platform and build a service system conducive to youth employment. For example, young people can be encouraged to take the Internet platform as a channel to guide them to work with strong personalized characteristics and self-determination, and explore flexible, diverse and dynamic new forms of employment, that is, what people now call “micro lying economy” or “micro lying employment”, so as to expand greater development space with flexible employment. At the same time, the state can also provide supporting policies and measures in terms of preferential tax policies, economic support, rent subsidies, etc., to provide rights protection for young people’s innovation and entrepreneurship, and to mobilize their enthusiasm for participating in innovation and entrepreneurship practice activities. Second, to break through the virtuous cycle of high-quality economic development and personal struggle and realize

the rationalization of wealth distribution, you need to pay more attention to creating a fair competition market environment in the system, standardize the overtime system of enterprises, reasonably arrange the salary and promotion mechanism, realize the transparency of systems and rules, and urge enterprises to operate legally and standardly. For example, it puts forward specific measures and normative systems on how to bring young people's housing dream closer, how to provide more employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for young people, and how to realize the fairness of social selection and employment, so as to provide spiritual impetus for young people's efforts.

4.2 Shaping the Positive Social Value Orientation of Young People

Stimulating young people's spiritual motivation to work hard with positive value orientation will help guide young people to change from "lying flat" to "standing up". On the one hand, strengthening the education of socialist core values is fundamental. The idea is put forward to better guide practice. If the core values cannot face and respond to various practical problems, answer the many questions of young netizens, and resolve their anxiety, they will not be able to convince the youth, and they will not be able to shape the purpose of youth values. This requires government departments and party and government agencies to promptly explore the diverse demands of young people in the online field, listen to their voices, build institutionalized channels for expressing interests, and guide young people to correctly express their interests and concerns about society. For example, they can give play to the leading role of the mass organizations of the Communist Youth League, widely carry out investigations and studies on youth issues, and formulate targeted countermeasures to solve youth problems on the basis of understanding and mastering the ideological trends and urgent needs of youth. The government should increase its support for youth groups, establish an assistance mechanism, create a relatively fair social competition environment, and help youth solve problems such as employment and academic pressure. On the other hand, they should strengthen labor education for young people and shape the correct labor value orientation of young people. Active and creative labor of body and mind is the realistic carrier that liberates people from the enslavement of "heavy body" and "cross-flowing desire" [5]. Schools are important places for labor education for young people. The labor education curriculum in colleges and universities can fully tap the labor education factors contained in the ideological and political curriculum and guide young people to establish correct labor values by teaching labor scientific knowledge related to youth employment and career planning. By strengthening the construction of mass entrepreneurship and innovation practice bases and the construction of labor education network resources and platforms, it will help to innovate the forms of labor education. At the same time, in the process of labor education, the school should also pay attention to the integration of consumption view and leisure view, and guide young people to pay attention to both productive labor and consumption labor and leisure labor.

4.3 Focusing on the Cultivation of Youth Self-efficacy

In order to help young people overcome the dilemma of learned helplessness, guide them to correctly understand the social operation mechanism, and explore their own values,

it is necessary to improve young people’s sense of self-efficacy. People often speculate about the results of their own behavior. If they predict that a specific behavior will produce the results they expect, then this behavior may be activated or selected. In order to highlight their self-worth, form their own unique judgments and value standards, and meet their own interests, contemporary youth need to consciously mobilize their subjective initiative and consciousness, and regulate their psychological state and behavioral activities with goals. First, you need to plan your life goals reasonably according to your actual needs. Young people should plan their life reasonably, set their own value ranking and strategic goals, and actively participate in course training and industry exchanges by taking advantage of leisure time and opportunities to enhance their core competitiveness for the purpose of growing up for themselves and being responsible for the future. Only in this way, can they dare to face more unknowns and accept uncertain challenges. The second is to focus on the improvement of youth self-education methods, and guide young people to understand themselves objectively. For example, through self-frustration education, young people can be guided to recognize the objectivity of frustration, analyze the causes of frustration, calmly and rationally deal with their own success or failure, and can appropriately adjust the level of self-expectation to seek ways to achieve higher goals on the basis of the realization of lower goals. Or through self-psychological regulation training, participation in quality development training activities, group training, etc., young people can be guided to master ABC emotion regulation and positive and optimistic attribution methods, cultivate optimistic and confident personality traits, and enhance their ability to resist pressure. It is also possible to correctly understand their own economic situation through self-reflection ability education, reduce the occurrence of blind comparisons and excessive consumption, weaken their economic anxiety, and cultivate a sense of prudence and self-discipline. Third, young people should be guided to explore their own interests and hobbies, and pay attention to the cultivation of minority culture. What really resists involution is a person’s genuine interests, hobbies and desire to explore. Young people should be able to separate what they want to do from the purpose of obtaining benefits, find what they want in their hearts or where the fun of life lies, actively explore their own fields of interest, cultivate their own preferences and concentration, and highlight their own value by finding interesting groups and friends with similar interests.

5 Conclusion

The phenomenon of “lying flat” is a new cultural form of contemporary youth’s new limp posture. It is not only the choice of individual behavioral intention, it is also the result of social structural dilemma constraints [6]. If they only focus on criticizing and resisting it by public opinion, and ignore the psychological mechanism and value appeal of young people’s “lying flat”, it will not only be difficult to solve the development dilemma of “lying flat” youth, but also easy to be dissatisfied and opposed by young people, making them continue to indulge in it. Only by digging deeply into the psychological mechanism and value demands behind lying flat young people, starting from the value orientation and giving them attention and help, can you help them view social phenomena and guide them to write brilliant youth chapters.

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