

# The Psychological Impacts and Intervention Measures of College Students Failing Exams

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**Abstract:** In recent years, some students have experienced negative emotions due to failing exams. Some students even give up their university studies. This not only affects the personal development of students, but also has a negative impact on the implementation of the school's teaching plan. Therefore, we need to study the reasons and impacts of college students failing exams. This article analyzes the reasons for college students failing exams. They include three reasons. Students have improper learning attitudes. The learning methods of students are not scientific. Students can not manage their time well. Then, we analyzed the psychological impacts of college students failing exams. Failing exams among college students can lead to a loss of confidence among them. Failing an exam for college students can lead to anxiety. Failing exams for college students can lead to social barriers. We have put forward corresponding suggestions for these impacts. Universities should collaborate with parents to jointly guide students in scientific learning. Universities should provide psychological counseling for students who fail exams.

**Keywords:** College Students; Exams; Fail; Psychological Impacts; University

## 1. Introduction

In China's university education system, exam scores have always been regarded as an important criterion for measuring the learning outcomes of college students. According to the Statistical Bulletin on the Development of China's Education in 2022, there were a total of 3013 higher education institutions in China with 46.55 million students enrolled. According to common standards, a failure rate of 0% to 20% in general university course exams is within the normal range. Even if we calculate based on a 1% failure rate for college students, there are

4.655 million students nationwide who fail exams every year. Most students who fail the exam can successfully achieve the final passing grade of the course through make-up exams and retakes. However, for a small number of college students, failing exams has become a major obstacle in their academic career. Failing exams even affects their confidence and motivation for future university studies. Therefore, we will focus on analyzing the reasons for college students failing exams and their psychological impact. Then we will propose corresponding intervention measures to address these impacts. Through in-depth research on this issue, we hope to help university teachers, students, and parents better understand and respond to this issue. University teachers and parents can jointly promote the physical and mental health of college students. They can also promote comprehensive development of college students. Some scholars have analyzed the anxiety caused by college students failing exams and believe that universities need to improve the relationship between teachers and students. Scientific reading can help college students alleviate psychological anxiety [1-2]. Other scholars have studied the frustration caused by college students failing exams and believe that self-esteem levels are positively correlated with resilience. Universities should provide psychological health education to students [3-8]. Some scholars have analyzed the reasons for college students failing exams and believe that the lack of clear learning objectives is the main reason for failing exams [9-10]. Overall, many scholars have studied the issue of college students failing exams, but there is a lack of analysis from the perspectives of schools, families, and students on college students failing exams. What are the reasons that college students fail exams? What is the psychological impact of failing an exam on college students? How do universities and parents cope with college students failing exams? This is the focus

of this article.

## **2. The Reasons for College Students Failing Exams**

There are various reasons why college students fail exams, and the following are some common reasons.

Firstly, students have an improper attitude towards learning. Some students have finally been admitted to their ideal universities after three years of hard study in high school. The praise from parents and relatives makes students proud and complacent. Students feel that they don't need to work hard and can have a good future. The pressure of further education is gone, and university teachers are not as strict in managing students as in high school. As a result, students relax their studies and ultimately fail the exam. Some college students may lack sufficient understanding and cognition of their chosen major. It will result in the chosen major not being suitable for them. Of course, college students may also be transferred to other majors due to insufficient grades or other reasons. College students may be forcibly assigned majors by parents. It will result in their lack of interest in the major that they are studying. Because the major is not something they like, students lack enthusiasm and motivation for learning. It will result in poor learning outcomes and failing exams.

Secondly, the learning methods of students are not scientific. Some students lack planning in their studies and have countless thoughts on what they need to see, do, and learn every day. These students always consider "what the teacher wants me to do" rather than "what I want to do". For example, after students completed a chapter of the course, students should summarize the knowledge points. Students should be clear about which the key points are and which the difficulties are. Unfortunately, many students do not have such a plan. They only passively listen to the class and rely on the teacher to summarize for them. If students do not actively summarize and summarize, the learning effect will naturally be greatly reduced. Some students do not have the habit of reviewing the courses they learned on the same day every day. They do not review in a timely manner at the most easily forgotten time. German psychologist H. Ebbinghaus found that forgetting begins immediately after learning and

the process of forgetting is not uniform. At first, the forgetting speed was fast, but gradually slowed down afterwards. Someone conducted an experiment where two groups of students studied a section of the text. Group A did not review after learning. It resulted in a memory rate of 36% one day later and only 13% after one week. Group B reviewed according to the Ebbinghaus memory pattern. They maintained a memory rate of 98% one day and 86% one week later. The memory rate of Group B was significantly higher than that of Group A. Some students do not have the habit of reviewing in a timely manner after class on the same day. They will forget the content they have learned quickly. Students often fail to grasp and understand before exams. It ultimately results in failing the exam.

Thirdly, students do not manage their time well. Some college students lack awareness of time management and do not fully recognize the importance and limitations of time. University teachers are usually not like middle school teachers. The middle school teachers often assign homework every time after they have a class. After college students finish classes, college students will have more free time than high school students. There are many university club activities and various interest associations. Students will participate in various activities to exercise their interpersonal skills, such as dance, COSPLAY, photography, and performance. Although these activities can enrich the lives of college students, they can also occupy a large amount of their time. Therefore, these activities leave them with insufficient study time and ultimately affect their exam results. Some college students have weak execution ability in their plans. Even if some students make reasonable plans, they may not be able to persist due to insufficient execution. It ultimately leads to the plan falling through. The plan is good, but their classmates made plans to go shopping and visit scenic spots on the weekend. Students that return from playing are too tired and no longer have the enthusiasm to learn. Even if they don't go out to play, some students may habitually play with their mobile phones. They often use Tiktok to see short videos and open WeChat chat. These students may initially only want to play for ten minutes, but they cannot control themselves and time quickly passes. As a result, they will ultimately fail to complete their study

plan and fail exams.

### **3. The Psychological Impact of College Students Failing Exams**

Failing an exam for college students may have multiple psychological impacts. They include the following.

Firstly, failing an exam for college students can lead to a loss of their confidence. Failing the exam may make college students doubt their abilities, thereby damaging their confidence. They may start questioning their learning ability, intelligence level, etc. It will lead to a decrease in self-worth. For example, the School of Economics and Management at the university where the author is located has established a financial pilot program. The college will screen students with good academic performance for financial pilot classes. The course difficulty of the financial pilot class will be higher. Teachers will also have higher requirements for their students. Most students are able to adapt to higher learning requirements, but there are also a small number of students who have not adapted to the new changes. In the end, a few students failed each exam. I found a strange classmate while I taught my students their graduation thesis. This student first took sick leave, and then did not write his graduation thesis. The author asked this classmate about the reason. This student explained that he failed multiple exams before. Then he also failed make-up exams and retakes. He lost confidence in graduation, so he was unwilling to write his graduation thesis and went to work to earn money.

Secondly, failing an exam can lead to anxiety among college students. Some students cannot handle exams correctly and are worried that they may fail the new course exams again. These students mainly have poor foundations and struggle with learning. They are not adapted to the learning methods used by college students. Because there are already failed courses, the new exam is taken too seriously. They will worry about what to do if they fail the exam for the new course again. Thoughts generate pressure. Excessive tension is caused by stress exceeding psychological load. Some college students feel anxious because they fail exams and cannot receive scholarships. These students usually perform well in high school and have high expectations from their parents. College

students strive to compete among numerous outstanding students from all over the country in order to inherit and continue the advantages of their high school years. As a result of failing the exam, college students will experience psychological stress such as self-blame, inferiority complex, and difficulty convincing them. So they carry a heavy and tense mental burden on their backs. Whenever they take an exam, they naturally generate various thoughts such as anxiety about failing again.

Thirdly, failing college exams can lead to social barriers among college students. With the rapid development of Internet technology and the popularity of online social software, social software such as WeChat, QQ and Tiktok have become popular among college students. College students can access various class information through WeChat and QQ groups. College students can also chat with their classmates through WeChat and QQ. College students can also show their living conditions by releasing Tiktok short videos. Although social networking apps are convenient, they also reduce the ability of college students to engage in real-life social interactions. The phenomenon of college students studying together and helping each other in the past has greatly decreased. Some college students do not also have the habit of seeking advice from teachers. It will result in unresolving learning difficulties and ultimately failing exams. College students may feel insecure and unwilling to participate in social activities or communicate with others due to poor academic performance. This may lead to a distance between them and their peers. It further lead to exacerbating feelings of loneliness and frustration. A media survey showed that 59.4% of college students felt that there was more "ineffective socializing" in their social circle. 64.2% of surveyed college students felt that they had a psychological or physical "social lag". Among them, 26.7% of surveyed college students felt that they had obstacles in offline socializing. 17.0% of surveyed college students felt that there were obstacles when they were socializing online. 20.5% of surveyed college students felt that they had problems both online and offline.

Fourthly, failing exams among college students leads to a decrease in their learning motivation. The learning motivation of college students refers to the internal motivation of their desire

to learn during the learning process. The learning motivation is a comprehensive reflection of individual internal driving forces and external incentives. The main sources of motivation for college students to learn include internal motivation and external incentives. Internal motivation mainly includes self-efficacy, achievement motivation and self-learning motivation. Self-efficacy refers to the confidence and expectation of students in their own abilities. Self-efficacy is one of the important factors that affect their learning motivation and outcomes. Achievement motivation refers to the internal driving force for students to pursue success and a sense of achievement. Students usually achieve their own achievement motivation by achieving good grades, receiving rewards and winning the appreciation of others. Autonomous learning motivation refers to the motivation and willingness of students to choose their own learning. Autonomous learning motivation is the foundation for cultivating their interest and enthusiasm in learning. Autonomous learning motivation is also one of the driving forces for students to continuously engage in learning. Failing an exam for college students can lower their confidence in themselves. Failing an exam for college students can cause them to lose their sense of achievement and interest in learning. Failing an exam for college students can ultimately lead to a comprehensive decline in self-efficacy, achievement motivation, and self-directed learning motivation. External motivation mainly includes the influence of factors such as family, society and teachers. The support and expectations of families for students' learning are one of the important factors that affect their learning motivation. When families encourage and support students in their studies, families will give them positive evaluations and recognition. Students will be more motivated to learn and progress. Social motivation mainly refers to the need to compare and compete with others. Social motivation motivates them to strive for learning and progress. The teaching methods of teachers and their expectations for students can also affect their learning motivation. If parents find out that college students fail exams, they may criticize their children. Teachers also tend to focus on students with good grades. Failing an exam for college students will comprehensively reduce

their external motivation to learn.

#### **4. Intervention Measures for the Psychological Impact of College Students Failing Exams**

We propose the following intervention measures to address the psychological impact of college students failing exams.

Firstly, universities should collaborate with parents to jointly guide students in scientific learning. Universities should fully utilize internet technology to involve parents in talent cultivation. Universities can use online conferences to encourage parents to participate in school activities. Parents can learn about the school's college student training plan and objectives. Schools can promote scientific family education methods to parents. Parents actively propose corresponding talent cultivation suggestions based on their children's personality traits. This helps to create a positive interaction between family and university. It will promote scientific learning among college students. Then, in response to the psychological and physiological characteristics of college students, parents and teachers should actively respond to the changes in the ideological dynamics of college students in the information society. Both schools and families should provide various learning assistance based on the growth needs of college students. Universities should teach students time management methods. Students should handle important and urgent matters immediately on your own. Students should handle important and non-urgent matters in an orderly manner. Minor but urgent matters should be entrusted to others by themselves. Students should try not to do secondary and lenient things by themselves. Parents can better understand their children's learning and mental state. Universities can also better understand the personality traits of students and prevent them from failing exams to the greatest extent possible. After that, universities and parents should provide special care and assistance to students who failed exams. Parents cannot treat their children simply and rudely. Parents should communicate more with their children and encourage them more. Teachers should not only meet students during class. Universities should guide teachers to pay attention to the learning and life dynamics of students. It will reduce their failure rate.

Secondly, universities should provide psychological counseling for students who fail exams. Universities can use role-playing to treat social barriers among college students who fail exams. Role playing is a psychotherapy method proposed by American psychiatrist Moreno. Role playing aim at helping visitors change existing behaviors or learn new behaviors by having them play different roles, thereby it can promote cognitive change. This method is also known as psychodrama and belongs to a type of behavioral therapy. This method aims at using theatrical performance to help people discover problems. It can help people understand the crux of problems. It can help people better adjust their psychological state and solve psychological problems based on this, too. Moreover, universities can use music therapy to regulate the anxiety of college students who fail exams. Music therapy refers to the use of music to alleviate physical and psychological illnesses and discomforts. It can change our emotional state through auditory perception and participation in music. Music therapy can lower people's heart rate, blood pressure, and respiratory rate. At the same time, music therapy can increase our level of excitement and relaxation. And these changes are very effective in relieving anxiety.

### **5. Conclusion**

Through our research, we have found that failing exams can have multiple psychological impacts on students. Failing exams among college students can lead to a loss of confidence among them. Failing an exam for college students can lead to anxiety. Failing exams for college students can lead to social barriers. Schools need to adopt corresponding intervention measures to cope with the psychological impact of failing exams on college students.

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