

Study on the Causes, Educational Challenges and Optimization Strategies of the Off-Campus Accommodation Phenomenon Among College Students

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Abstract: Driven by both the high-quality development of higher education and the diversification of campus life forms, the phenomenon of off-campus accommodation among college students has evolved from a traditionally niche choice into an educational management issue that cannot be ignored. The choice of off-campus accommodation not only responds to students' personalized demands for learning and living scenarios but also poses new challenges to colleges and universities in academic support, campus integration, and safety management. This paper sorts out the core background of the off-campus accommodation phenomenon, analyzes the multiple logics behind students' choices, and combines the practical difficulties faced by off-campus students to construct targeted and effective refined guidance strategies. It aims to provide academic reference and practical paths for colleges and universities to optimize student management services and promote the all-round development of students.

Keywords: College Students; Off-Campus Accommodation Choice; Multiple Motivations; Refined Guidance; Student Management.

1. Introduction

The triple forces of social development, the reform of university operation, and the upgrading of students' needs have jointly promoted the gradual prominence of the off-campus accommodation phenomenon among college students. From a social perspective, the deepening of urbanization has integrated most universities closely with urban life. The improved residential supporting facilities around universities in central urban areas and suburban areas have provided a geographical foundation for students' off-campus accommodation; the three-dimensional development of the urban public transportation system has significantly reduced commuting costs, broken spatial constraints, and offered practical support for off-campus living. From a university perspective, the expansion of school-running scale and the renewal of talent training concepts have remarkably enhanced universities' tolerance for students' personalized choices. Combined with the actual allocation of accommodation resources, some universities have reasonably approved off-campus accommodation applications, indirectly promoting the formation of the off-campus student group. From a student perspective, the awakening of self-awareness among contemporary college students has raised their requirements for the quality and autonomy of study and life. No longer confined to the unified collective accommodation model, they actively seek a balance between academic studies and daily life through off-campus accommodation, driving the shift of off-campus living from a passive choice to an independent decision.

2. Analysis of Multiple Motivations for College Students' Choice of Off-Campus Accommodation

2.1. Family Level: Dual Drivers of Support Guarantee and Emotional Needs

The family serves as an important supporting subject for

students' choice of off-campus accommodation, and its influence on students runs through the entire scenarios of academic development and daily life. On the one hand, families can provide living conditions far superior to campus collective dormitories. Independent and quiet study spaces, as well as regular and nutritious diet and daily routines, can effectively reduce interference from trivial life matters, help students alleviate academic pressure, and enable them to devote themselves to professional learning and ability improvement with a more focused state. For students with special living needs such as chronic diseases or physical disabilities, or those with strong emotional dependence, the careful care and companionship from families can significantly enhance their psychological sense of security, providing a solid guarantee for the stable adjustment of their physical and mental states [1]. On the other hand, some families attach great importance to their children's growth and hope to directly participate in daily management through off-campus accommodation, timely avoid interferences such as schedule conflicts and interpersonal contradictions in collective life, guide students to develop a self-disciplined learning attitude and good living habits, and lay a solid foundation for their long-term development.

2.2. Individual Level: Active Adaptation to Personalized Needs and Growth Planning

Students' personal needs constitute the core logic behind the choice of off-campus accommodation, which profoundly reflects the core demands of contemporary college students for the awakening of self-awareness and personalized development. The awareness of self-planning among contemporary college students has been continuously strengthened, and their requirements for the autonomy and sense of control over study and life have kept rising. Some students have found in collective dormitory life that the unified lights-out system and public space usage rules are difficult to adapt to their own learning rhythms, and potential interpersonal interferences such as daily communication and

entertainment activities among classmates will also affect learning efficiency. Thus, off-campus accommodation has become an important choice for them to independently control time and focus on academic improvement [2]. In addition, some students choose off-campus accommodation to avoid conflicts in collective life due to special living habits, such as extremely high requirements for living hygiene and quietness; some other students take off-campus accommodation as an opportunity to make full use of spare time to participate in social practice, undertake family affairs or delve into interest activities, realizing the coordinated promotion of campus learning and social growth, and enriching their personal growth experience [3].

2.3. Campus Level: Objective Impact of Resource Allocation and Management Model

The campus environment and resource allocation have formed an important indirect guidance for the choice of off-campus accommodation, and the adaptability between its hardware conditions and software management has a profound impact on students' decisions. Restricted by factors such as school-running space and construction cycles, some universities have periodic shortages in accommodation resources. Some dormitories have problems such as narrow space, aging supporting facilities, and poor lighting and ventilation, which are difficult to meet the expectations of contemporary college students for living comfort. When unable to obtain ideal accommodation conditions, some students take the initiative to choose off-campus accommodation as an alternative [4]. At the same time, the opening hours of some campus learning resources are concentrated during the day, and the spatial layout is unbalanced, which has low adaptability to the evening learning needs of off-campus students. Compared with accommodating the arrangement of campus resources, studying at home after off-campus living is more likely to improve efficiency; in addition, most campus collective activities are concentrated in the evening or weekends, and the management rules are mostly formulated around on-campus students, which are difficult to take into account personalized needs, thus also prompting students who pursue independent space to tend to choose off-campus accommodation [5].

3. Practical Dilemmas Faced by College Students Choosing Off-Campus Accommodation

3.1. Academic Development: Insufficient Continuity and Restricted Access to Resources

The commuting links and scenario differences under the off-campus accommodation model have brought multiple practical obstacles to students' academic development, with core issues focusing on learning continuity and resource access. The commuting process not only consumes a great deal of time and energy but also easily causes fatigue for students due to long-term back-and-forth travel. Moreover, affected by sudden factors such as traffic jams and extreme weather, students are highly likely to be late for or leave early from classes, disrupting the established learning rhythm and directly affecting classroom concentration and knowledge

absorption effects. Compared with on-campus students, off-campus students need to return home immediately after class, resulting in a loose connection with the campus. They can hardly make use of core academic resources such as libraries and laboratories at any time, and also miss the immediate communication opportunities to consult teachers and discuss difficulties with classmates after class, thus having inherent disadvantages in links such as academic collaboration and scientific research practice [6]. Meanwhile, although the family environment is comfortable, it lacks the strong learning atmosphere of the campus and is easily disturbed by external factors such as housework, family members' activities, and electronic entertainment. Students with insufficient self-discipline are prone to problems such as decreased learning efficiency, loose academic planning, and task procrastination.

3.2. Campus Integration: Narrow Social Circles and Weak Sense of Belonging

The "campus-home" linear life mode of off-campus students has created significant obstacles for their campus integration, making it difficult for them to deeply participate in campus life [7]. Campus collective life is a key scenario for college students to expand interpersonal relationships, cultivate collaborative abilities, and shape collective awareness. However, the life focus of off-campus students is concentrated outside the campus, and their interactions with classmates are only limited to class hours. Informal interaction scenarios such as post-class dining in canteens, chatting in dormitories, and wandering around the campus are basically absent, making it hard to establish profound friendships with classmates and resulting in relatively closed and narrow social circles [8]. Restricted by commuting time and safety concerns, off-campus students can hardly participate in campus cultural activities, community organizations, and volunteer services held in the evening or on weekends. Their perception of the connotation of campus culture and the atmosphere of class collectives is extremely weak, making it difficult to form a strong sense of campus identity and belonging. They have long been in a disconnected state of "coming only for classes and leaving immediately after class", which is likely to breed negative emotions such as loneliness and alienation, restricting the all-round development of comprehensive literacy [9].

3.3. Safety Management: Insufficient Dynamic Control and Lagging Risk Prevention

The characteristics of off-campus students—"short time on campus and more activities off campus"—have brought new challenges to the safety management of college students, with prominent management blind spots and prevention loopholes. Off-campus students spend most of their time outside the scope of campus management, and colleges and universities lack effective means to grasp their real-time whereabouts, living conditions, and activity trajectories, resulting in obvious blind spots in daily management, safety education, and emergency disposal [10]. During special periods such as public health incidents and extreme weather, the difficulty of travel control and health monitoring for off-campus students increases significantly, and various management measures are difficult to fully implement and take effect. Issues such as traffic safety during commuting, fire safety, and personal and property safety in off-campus accommodation are all beyond the scope of regular campus management. Once potential

safety hazards or sudden accidents occur, colleges and universities can hardly detect them in a timely manner and intervene quickly. At the same time, the frequency of face-to-face communication between off-campus students and counselors or class teachers is much lower than that of on-campus students, making it difficult for colleges and universities to timely capture their ideological dynamics, emotional changes, and practical difficulties, leading to insufficient accuracy and timeliness of support work.

4. Refined Guidance Strategies for College Students' Choice of Off-Campus Accommodation

4.1. Optimize the Academic Support System and Safeguard the Rights and Interests of Off-Campus Students

Centered on the core orientations of equality and convenience, a comprehensive academic support system tailored to the needs of off-campus students should be constructed to effectively safeguard their rights and interests in academic development. To this end, the allocation of campus educational resources needs to be refined with precision. In light of the after-class learning patterns of off-campus students, the opening hours of learning spaces such as libraries, laboratories, and study rooms should be scientifically extended during evenings and weekends, while exploring a flexible opening mechanism for selected venues. Meanwhile, the digital transformation of educational resources should be accelerated through the establishment of a unified online learning platform that integrates courseware, academic literature, teaching videos, and online consulting channels, thereby breaking the constraints of time and space and effectively addressing the inadequacy of offline resource access.

Further efforts should be made to deepen the reform of classroom teaching and after-class services. Teaching progress and after-class tasks ought to be reasonably arranged, with unnecessary centralized after-class activities minimized to reserve sufficient commuting time for off-campus students. Teachers are encouraged to set up exclusive online communication groups for their courses, through which learning information is pushed in a timely manner and academic inquiries are addressed promptly to ensure the continuity of students' learning process.

Additionally, targeted academic guidance should be implemented. Exclusive improvement plans should be formulated based on the learning characteristics and weak points of off-campus students, while simultaneous emphasis is placed on training in time management and independent learning capabilities to comprehensively enhance their learning efficiency.

4.2. Build Diversified Interaction Platforms and Strengthen the Perception of Campus Integration

With the objective of enhancing off-campus students' sense of belonging, a comprehensive and multi-dimensional campus interaction mechanism should be established to break temporal and spatial barriers and facilitate their in-depth integration into campus life. To achieve this, innovations should be made in the forms of campus cultural activities. In response to the actual commuting conditions of off-campus

students, activity designs should focus on "short duration, high flexibility, and low threshold", such as online thematic salons, cloud art performances, fragmented-time interest exchange sessions, and short-term weekend volunteer services. These initiatives can lower participation barriers, enable flexible engagement, and effectively expand students' social networks.

Meanwhile, full play should be given to the connecting role of classes and student associations. The liaison responsibilities of class committee members and association leaders need to be clarified, and a dedicated liaison mechanism for off-campus students should be established. This mechanism aims to proactively synchronize activity information, invite off-campus students to participate in the planning of collective affairs, and regularly organize pre-class team-building activities and inter-class learning sharing sessions that are tailored to their commuting schedules, thereby enhancing their sense of collective participation. Furthermore, a special exchange organization for off-campus students should be set up. Leveraging counselor studios, regular activities including learning experience sharing sessions and psychological adjustment seminars should be carried out to build a peer mutual assistance platform. This platform is intended to alleviate feelings of loneliness and alienation among off-campus students and gradually strengthen their sense of campus identity.

4.3. Improve the Special Management Mechanism and Consolidate the Safety Guarantee Line

Rooted in the pain points of safety management for off-campus students, a full-process and closed-loop special management system should be constructed to weave a solid safety guarantee network. To lay a solid foundation for this system, the procedures for off-campus accommodation application and filing management need to be standardized. A comprehensive assessment should be conducted on students applying for off-campus accommodation, with a focus on verifying the safety and feasibility of their family addresses and commuting methods. For approved students, detailed registration of basic information, commuting routes, emergency contacts and other relevant details should be completed, dynamic management accounts should be established, and designated personnel should be arranged to update and maintain these accounts regularly, ensuring a thorough grasp of students' real-time situations. Meanwhile, hierarchical and classified safety publicity and education should be strengthened: various forms such as thematic lectures, online safety courses, safety knowledge manuals and WeChat notifications should be adopted to popularize safety knowledge covering commuting, personal and property security, and cybersecurity. Typical cases should be utilized for warning education, and emergency drills should be organized regularly to enhance students' self-protection capabilities; in special periods, control requirements should be accurately conveyed, and dynamic monitoring of students' travel and health status should be intensified.

Furthermore, the diversified communication and linkage mechanism should be improved to consolidate the safety management chain. Counselors should keep abreast of students' status through weekly heart-to-heart talks and online greetings, addressing their difficulties in a timely manner. A home-school collaborative management platform should be

built to regularly communicate students' situations, integrating the joint management forces of colleges and universities and families to form a synergistic effect for off-campus students' safety management.

4.4. Strengthen Humanistic Care Services and Accurately Meet Diversified Needs

Adhering to a student-centered educational philosophy and focusing on the diverse needs of off-campus students, personalized and refined humanistic care services should be provided to address their specific requirements comprehensively. Priority should be given to mental health services: leveraging the university's mental health education center, dedicated online and offline green channels for psychological counseling should be opened exclusively for off-campus students. Targeted counseling should be offered to address psychological issues such as loneliness and anxiety that they may encounter, and regular mental health-themed activities should be organized to facilitate their positive mental adjustment.

Simultaneously, efforts should be made to optimize campus supporting service facilities. Temporary rest areas and storage spaces should be rationally arranged near campus teaching buildings and libraries to provide convenience for off-campus students to rest between classes and store personal belongings. Proactive collaboration with urban transportation departments should be pursued to offer students optimized commuting route recommendations. Additionally, off-campus students from impoverished families should be included in the special assistance program, with appropriate subsidies provided for their commuting expenses. Moreover, a dynamic demand investigation mechanism should be established: regular collection of off-campus students' needs through questionnaires, interviews and other means should be conducted to grasp real-time changes in their demands, enabling timely adjustment and optimization of service measures to continuously enhance their learning and living experiences.

5. Conclusion

The phenomenon of off-campus accommodation among college students is an inevitable result of the coordinated role of the popularization of higher education, the diversification of campus life forms and students' personalized needs. It not only fully demonstrates the richness and diversity of contemporary college campus life but also puts forward higher requirements for the refinement and humanization of college educational management work. Colleges and universities need to view students' choice of off-campus accommodation from an objective and rational perspective, abandon the traditional single management thinking, always focus on the core of students' growth and development, and make precise efforts from the four key dimensions of academic support, campus integration, safety management

and humanistic care to construct a scientific, efficient and feasible refined guidance system. By continuously optimizing management and service measures, colleges and universities can not only fully respect students' independent decision-making rights but also accurately solve various practical dilemmas faced by off-campus students, promote off-campus students and on-campus students to achieve synchronous academic progress and comprehensive quality improvement, effectively promote the all-round development of all students, and continuously empower and improve the high-quality advancement of college educational management work.

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