



# Patriotism Education for the Teenagers from Chinese Villages. A Case Study in Huayuan No.3 Middle School, Xiangxi, Hunan

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**Abstract.** Patriotism education plays an important role in cultivating teenager's national pride and identification. It lays a foundation for teenagers to achieve the establishment of Chinese national rejuvenation and promotion of socialism core values. Since there is a disparity between urban education and rural education, this study focuses on patriotism education for teenagers from rural areas. Under the guidance of the Guidelines for Moral Education in Primary and Secondary School, patriotism education of teenagers through curriculum, campus activities, school culture, off-campus practice, school management, and home-school-community coordination were analyzed. Both year levels and political consciousness have a positive correlation with attitudes and perceptions regarding patriotism education. Also, this research finds an explicit preference in patriotism educational content between female students and male students. Additionally, left-over teenagers, central school resources, and urbanization of rural areas carried out challenges for families, schools, and local communities to unite together for solutions.

**Keywords:** Patriotism Education · Teenagers · Rural Education

## 1 Introduction

Patriotism is essential for both individuals and countries. For an individual, as cited by Sun Yat-sen, "The greatest thing to be a man is to know how to one's country" [1]. For a national and a country, patriotism plays an important role in the political, cultural, and socioeconomic aspects of China. It is a core national spirit to unite every individual Chinese together [2]. Patriotism is not only the ideological foundation of China but also protected by the Constitution of the People's Republic of China. Therefore, patriotism enjoys its sanctity, authority, and coercion [2, 3]. Since the 18th and 19th Communist Party of China (CPC) National Congress, China has achieved a period of historic developments and has entered into the great national rejuvenation stage. Patriotism education is the crux of this important strategic period to accept severe global challenges and to embrace national bright prospects [2, 4].

Under the before-mentioned social background, teenagers are identified as the focused objects of patriotism education is determined by their personal characteristics and political functions [5]. With the development of globalization, teenagers are

exposed to a variety of cultures and perspectives from various platforms [6]. Meanwhile, teenagers are in the “jointing-booting period” which is at the critical point of forming their insights, views, and values [7, 8]. Patriotism education enables teenagers to avoid blindly worshipping foreign and forfeiting national dignity [9]. In several Communist party and national documents and conferences, the political functions of teenagers have been identified based on the requirement of the new era. Teenagers are builders and successors of socialism with Chinese characteristics. More importantly, teenagers are shouldering the mission of Chinese national rejuvenation [8, 10]. Thus, teenagers are placed in an irreplaceable and vital position of patriotism education in China [11]. What is the essential content of patriotism education and how to effectively implement patriotism education for teenagers becomes heated topics to reflect on and ponder.

According to Chao Luo and Xiaowei Wang’s comprehensive study, since 2011, there have been at least 100 pieces of academic papers annually conducted regarding either substance or implementation of patriotism education. Several academic papers agreed that for teenagers it is key to cultivate patriotic emotion with a focus on national identity, ethnic identity, and ideology identity [5, 8, 12].

In 2019, the Outline for the Implementation of Patriotism in the New Era enlighten the way of patriotism education for teenagers. Combining the Outline with other studies [2, 7, 11–16], there are two important aspects of the implementation of teenager’s patriotism education. The first aspect is to reinforce school as the main educational organization for teenager’s patriotism education and to strengthen the coordination of family, school, and community. The second aspect is to maintain the consistency and interconnection of teenager’s patriotism education from compulsory education to tertiary education.

The importance of patriotism education for teenagers has been repeatedly reinforced from the school to the nation. However, some issues exist in patriotism education for teenagers, particularly teenagers from rural areas. There are very few academic studies to consider the implementation of patriotism education and the different characteristics of teenagers from urban areas and rural areas. Plus the complexity of social issues in rural areas such as regional disparity and inadequate education resources is underestimated within the patriotism education context.

In 2000, after the Implementing Urbanization Strategy was announced at the 5th Plenary Session of the 15th CPC Central Committee, the policy of merging primary and middle schools in rural areas was carried out thoroughly [17]. Rural school consolidation led to some problems such as overcrowded central schools, “hollow” rural schools, and an unhealthy student-teacher ratio. Even though schools pay a lot of attention to patriotism education, it seems that there is an imbalance between patriotism education and educational resources [18, 19]. Additionally, a majority of central schools are boarding schools which, to a certain degree, minimize the function of parents’ patriotic education [18]. Family is the first school for teenagers and parents’ behaviors have a profound influence on patriotism education for teenagers [13, 18]. Parents from rural areas are not capable to take the responsibilities for family patriotism education because of their low-level education and all-year-round working outside status [19].

Therefore, this study narrows down the research focus to the patriotism education of teenagers from rural areas in China. With a purpose to examine authentic problems

**Table 1.** Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.851	9

**Table 2.** KMO & Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.873
Barlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1148.631
	df	36
	Sig.	0.000

in this particular scenario and expect to propose several effective solutions based on the development of new socialist country sides.

## 2 Methods

Since there is no referable standard scale, this research designed a questionnaire with single-choice and multi-choice questions within six core elements of moral education [20].

This study distributed a formal questionnaire, and eventually, 365 valid questionnaire responses across three-year levels were collected. 181 responses from 7th-grade students, 114 responses from 8th-grade students, and 70 responses from 9th-grade students. Among the 365 responses, 142 responses are from male students, and 223 responses are from female students. In addition to that, 94.52% of the respondents are not the only child in their families.

The following one-to-one phone interviews were conducted with 9 school teachers and administrators. Each interview lasted for an average of 35 min. Interview transcripts were arranged in PDF form and sent to interviewees for confirmation.

Furthermore, the responses to the questionnaire were analyzed by SPSS 26.

## 3 Results

Through the results analysis of questionnaire investigations and one-to-one interviews, this research presents the findings within 6 core dimensions.

In addition, based on the SPSS analysis, the reliability and validity of the whole scale are both above 0.8. The reliability of internal consistency was evaluated with Cronbach's alpha coefficients. The Cronbach's alpha is 0.851 as demonstrated in Table 1. The questionnaire contains 9 scale questions. In terms of validity, a KMO and Bartlett's test is employed and the result as displayed in Table 2 is 0.873.

**Table 3.** Cross-tabulation and Chi-Square tests Between Gender and Class

Do you like Morality and Legality class?						
		Very like	Relatively like	General	Relatively dislike	Very dislike
Male	Count	18	25	80	11	8
	%Within Gender	12.7%	17.6%	56.3%	7.7%	5.6%
Female	Count	26	74	109	13	1
	%Within Gender	11.7%	33.2%	48.9%	5.8%	0.4%
Chi-Square Test						
				Value	df	Asyptotic Significance(2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square				18.714	4	0.001

### 3.1 Patriotism Education Through Curriculum

According to the questionnaire results and interview analysis, patriotism education has been implemented effectively via school subjects and their curriculum. Among the school subjects, more than 70% of students obtain patriotism-related education in Morality and Legality, Chinese and History Patriotism-related topics ranging from Chinese dream, traditional culture to Xi Jinping Thought on socialism for a New Era were widely discussed in the before-mentioned classes. The Chinese dream was the topic of most interest to the students. Further more patriotism-related in-class activities such as patriotism songs singing and patriotism arts appreciation were mainly arranged in Music and Arts class.

However, even though there were some in-class interactive activities such as sitcoms, current affair discussions and debate arranged in Morality and Legality class, 55.9% of students showed quite average interest in this subject, and 80.27% of students thought the interaction frequency is average or below average.

The cross tabulation between gender and attitude towards Morality and Legality class is significant. The Chi-Square tests show a  $P \leq 0.001$  as shown in Table 3. Compared to male students, female students possessed a relatively positive attitude towards the Morality and Legality class.

### 3.2 Patriotism Education Through Campus Activities

On-campus patriotism related activities were mostly held in the form of group gathering for instance, more than 50% of students participated in patriotism themed lectures, ceremonies and military training. Additionally, patriotism themed lectures were the most welcomed form for students.

Data analysis displayed that patriotism related activities were held regularly once to twice each school semester, yet there was no limpid boundary for both students

**Table 4.** Cross-tabulation and Chi-Square test Between Gender and Campus Activities-Forms

What is your favorite form of a patriotism education related activity on campus?									
	Patriotism themed-	Lecture	Contests	Group ceremony	DIY events	Arts appreciation	Military Training	No interest of any	Never participated in any
Male	Count	43	13	13	7	14	33	9	10
	% within Gender	30.3%	9.2%%	9.2%	4.9%	9.9%	23.2%	6.3%	7.0%
Female	Count	55	12	28	37	51	29	5	6
	%within Gender	24.7%	5.4%	12.6%	16.6%	22.9%	13.0%	2.2%	2.7%
Chi-Square Test							Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square							35.223	8	0.000

and teachers to distinguish patriotism related activities and others. In the questionnaire responses, 40.27% of students indicated that they do not clearly know how frequently patriotism related activities are organized on campus. During the interviews, when asked about on campus patriotism related activities, more than 4 subject teachers showed uncertainty about whether the examples provided are patriotism-related activities or not.

Students' attitudes towards patriotism related activities were very positive. 61.09% of students very much or somewhat expect the school to organize more patriotism related on campus activities.

It is worth noting that there are significant correlations ( $P \leq 0.001$ ) between gender and patriotism related on-campus activities regarding organizing form and students' attitudes. As displayed in Tables 4 and 5, male students were more willing to participated in military training, contests and themed lectures while female students had a strong preference for arts appreciation and DIY activities. 69.1% of female students expressed very much expect or somewhat expect more school organized patriotism activities. There was 20.6% less that of male students.

### 3.3 Patriotism Education Through School Culture

According to interview communications, the school campus carries the history of anti-Japanese war and Miao minority culture. There are plenty of historic buildings, such as the Mingde Building, Conference Avenue, and the Youth Building. There were 52.32% of students chose to join in regional culture extracurricular activities namely Dragon and Lion Dance (13.15%), Miao Drum-dancing (20.27%), Suona Horn (8.49%), and Calligraphy (10.41%).

The school paid close attention to developing and consummating school culture. Several actions were undertaken, for instance, the school motto has been updated, the School History Museum is under construction, and a school history research team has been assembled. However, according to the questionnaire results, nearly 20% of students

**Table 5.** Cross-tabulation and Chi-Square tests Between Gender and Attitudes

To what extent do you expect more patriotism related activities on campus?						
		Very expect	Relatively expect	General	Relatively do not expect	Very do not expect
Male	Count	35	34	63	7	3
	%within gender	24.6%	23.9%	44.4%	4.9%	2.1%
Female	Count	61	93	66	2	1
	%within gender	27.4%	41.7%	29.6%	0.9%	0.4%
Chi-Square Test						
				Value	df	Asymptotic significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square				21.367	4	0.000

stated he/she has no favorite place on campus. 38.1% of students demonstrated a general familiarity with school history and school motto. 43.0% of students showed an indifferent attitude towards publicity slogans related to famous sayings, aphorisms, and core socialist values.

Additionally, there is a relatively significant ( $P \leq 0.01$ ) correlation between the political status of students and their campus cultural awareness. In Table 6, it is explicit that league members and young pioneers are very concerned or relatively concerned about the publicity posters on campus. While nearly 50% of the general public displayed a neutral attitude.

### 3.4 Patriotism Education Through Off-Campus Practice

Students' safety issues have always been the focus of local educational authorities and schools. On top of that, due to COVID-19, there has been issued a series of epidemic prevention policies, hence off-campus practices were not able to operate. 60.82% of students have never visited any neighborhood patriotic education bases. A well-designed off-campus practice namely "Follow the Red Army Pathway" was cancelled due to pandemic prevention in March this year.

### 3.5 Patriotism Education Through School Management

One-to-one interviews with school teachers who are in the school management roles stated there has been an ongoing systematic construction of the school motto and school spirit. Within the construction, patriotism plays the most important role. It is the first priority among school motto and it is also the most essential standard of students' behaviors. 84.39% of students believed that there are patriotism-related requirements

**Table 6.** Cross-tabulation and Chi-Square tests Between Political Status and Campus Culture-Awareness

To what extent do you pay to the famous sayings, aphorisms, and core socialism values posted in school public areas?		Very concerned	Relatively concerned	General	Relatively not concerned	Very not concerned
Young Pioneer	Count	3	27	19	6	0
	% within political status	5.5	49.1	34.5	10.9	0.0
League Member	Count	14	43	34	4	0
	% within political status	14.7	45.3	35.8	4.2	0.0
General Public	Count	15	66	104	25	5
	% within political status	7.0	30.7	48.4	11.6	2.3
Chi-Square Test				Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square				22.411	8	0.004

within school or class disciplines, yet 50.14% of them indicated they cannot recall the specific requirements. 80% of students confirmed that they have learned rules of etiquette for the national flag, national emblem, and national anthem.

55.5% of the interviewees regarded a teacher-friend relationship would be the most ideal way to communicate and influence students. Moreover, 78.08% of student's attitudes towards patriotic role models are very positive. Patriotic role models deeply inspire 26.85% of students would like to be models.

### 3.6 Patriotism Education Through Home-School-Community Coordination

Home-School coordination encounters challenging not only in terms of patriotism education but also in a general scenario. The fact is 64.66% of students' parents do not work in the local area and 37.26% of students live only with their grandparents. As reinforced several times during the interview, the efficiency of home-school coordination is low. For students, in spite of schooling, parenting was placed the last resource to obtain patriotism education even after community atmosphere and Internet information.

Video-related educational pathway seemed to be the most suitable method for Home-School-Community coordination. On an average of 45.2% of patriotism related activities

conducted in community were in the form of film-watching, slogan-posting, patriotic public service advertisement broadcasting and pledge activities. Patriotism related film and TV appreciation with parents and video-shooting within community were the most willing way for students received patriotism education beyond the school context.

## 4 Discussion

### 4.1 Patriotism Education Status Quo in the Middle School

Based on the questionnaire data and interview transcripts, this research discovered several essential findings regarding patriotism education which were summarized into the following three aspects.

#### 4.1.1 Grades Differences Have an Impact on Students' Cognitive Development of Patriotism Perceptions

“Different from Grade 8 and Grade 9, students in Grade 7 maintain curiosity and simplicity. They are bold and passionate. 9th graders are confronting the pressure of the high-school entry examination. They are more result-oriented and less active in and outside of the classroom.” cited one of the interviewees. As a result, 30% of students in Grade 9 did not participate in any extra-curricular activities.

In spite of the participation beyond the classroom, it is very obvious to observe that students' patriotism perception has developed with grades accordingly.

Patriotism-related concepts increased along with grades. In terms of the school curriculum, 86.7% of students in grade 7 claimed the Morality and Legality class covers patriotism-related content. 93.9% of 8th graders and 94.3% of 9th graders demonstrated the Morality and Legality class contains patriotism-related content. Regarding whether patriotism-related topics such as the Chinese Dream have been discussed in Morality and Legality, Chinese, History, and Geography classes or not, 66.3% of 7th graders stated approval. The percentage of that increased to 76.3% for students in Grade 8 and 90% in Grade 9. The same tendency happens to the familiarity with school history, school motto, and school spirit. 39.8% of students in Grade 7 indicated that they are very familiar or relatively familiar. Compared to that of 9th graders, the percentage enhanced to 70%.

In addition, the means of access to patriotism education information became diversified with grades. For instance, Internet as a platform for students to obtain patriotism education information gradually elevated from 48.6% of 7th graders to 65.8% of 8th graders and ended with 67.1% of 9th graders.

Furthermore, according to Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development, the students in the Formal Operational Stage can process abstract thought and have the potential for mature moral reasoning [21]. In the research data analysis, the student's cognitive development shifted from concrete and emotional to abstract and spiritual with year levels. Take visiting patriotic education bases as an example, 7th graders focused on deepening patriotic emotion (67.4%) and regulating behaviors (60.8%). 82.5% of 8th graders put broadening patriotic knowledge in the first place and followed by deepening patriotic emotion (76.3%). While 75.7% of 9th graders regarded both broadening patriotic knowledge and strengthening patriotic commitment are the most important.



This shift, to a certain extent, resonates with the “three-dimensional targets” in teaching [22]. As two interviewees pointed out that based on the Compulsory Education Curriculum Scheme and Standard (2022 Edition), teaching goals and lesson design reinforced knowledge and skills, process and steps, emotional attitude, and values as the essential guiding [23].

#### **4.1.2 Different Genders Reveal Preferences in Approaches to Patriotism Education**

From an educational sociology perspective, there are gender differences appear in attitude, interests and behaviors. It is challenging for schools and teachers to educate students in accordance with gender differences [24].

In this research, female students showed a higher level of sensitivity to theoretical patriotism related content. For example, in whether the topic of Xi Jinping Thought on socialism for a New Era is discussed in Morality and Legality, Chinese, History, and Geography classes or not, there is a 21.1% gap between female students (65.5%) and male students (44.4%).

There is a gender preference in terms of patriotism related topics. Besides the previous-mentioned correlation between gender and patriotism related on-campus activities regarding organizing form, male students prefer physical-involved and military-related patriotic activities. For example, 45.8% of male students indicated that the patriotism related activities with family members are visiting patriotic education bases which outweigh that of their counterparts.

Additionally, two interviewees stated that in their classes, male students showed a great interest in military-related or technological topics. On the contrary, female students offered great sympathy to revolutionary martyrs. Meanwhile, one interviewee claimed that in her class, there is no gender difference in classroom interaction or students’ feedback. She observed a personality difference instead. It alerted that education should combine student’s learning features, avoid traditional gender stereotypes, and respect laws of physical and mental development [25].

#### **4.1.3 A Positive Correlation in Patriotism Education**

The result shows the status of being a league member and the awareness of patriotism education is in direct ratio. There are two main phenomenons that demonstrate this direct proportion.

On one hand, based on the data analysis, league members demonstrated a more positive attitude and better awareness of patriotism education than the general public. To be more specific, when it comes to the question: what is the significance of participating in extra-curricular activities? 42.1% of league members chose to be familiarized with national and social conditions which is one and half times more than that of the general public. 17.7% of the general public expressed that they have never participated in any patriotism-related events with family members which is more than twice that of league members. Only 6.5% of the general public thought there is no significance to pay a visit to patriotic education bases.

On the other hand, an analysis of interview transcripts showed that the school organized regular off-campus patriotism events such as paying respects to martyrs on Tomb Sweeping Day and visiting the nursing house. However, the number of participants was limited and selective due to safety concerns. Normally the vital few which include young pioneers, league members, and student leaders were invited as participants.

In 2016, the Implementation Plan for the Reform of the League Members in Middle School stated categorically that in order to manifest the value of leadership and the enterprising spirit of league members, there should be a set of selection criteria for approving new league members such as commitment, hard work, and bravery [26]. This selective process is the recognition of talents and abilities for the vital few and might cultivate individual satisfaction and enhance self-esteem [27]. It is a personal pride to receive an opportunity to join the league within the middle school scenario. This personal honor is the consecration of esprit de corps which is positive psychology and spiritual power to establish core values and moral emotion [28]. To reflect on patriotism education in middle schools, it is not only important to take advantage of league members as role models, but also essential to include the general public to extend the influence of the collective spirit.

#### **4.2 Difficulties in Patriotism Education Facing by Rural Middle Schools**

On the basis of interview observation and questionnaire analysis, there are two key difficulties in patriotism education presented in front of the middle school.

The first difficulty is the application of patriotism teaching by using multimedia in classrooms. The school thoroughly implemented Seewo which is an interactive teaching platform that provides courseware templates, courseware database, interactive games, and online assignments across every subject. 87% of interviewees asserted that Seewo is a very time-saving and helpful teaching device. However, it is rare to locate appropriate resources to combine patriotism education and its own teaching subject. There are some aged Seewo devices that cannot keep up to date and sometimes interfered teaching process. In addition, one of the interviewees was in dilemma between developing multimedia technology skills and a heavy daily workload. According to research in 2020 conducted by Jinchuan Yang, Menglin Xiang, and Shenzhang Yang, the majority of schools in rural areas have basic information hardware devices and teachers possess primary information technology ability [29]. Compare to urban schools, multimedia was introduced to rural schools for a relatively short period and most teachers cannot proficiently use it within a lesson [30]. It is time-and energy-consuming for subject teachers to adapt and innovate to ensure the efficiency of patriotism education instead of downloading readily available resources.

The second difficulty is home-school cooperation in patriotic education. Parenting has a direct impact on students' comprehensive development particularly morals and values [31]. As pointed out by three interviewees, most of the students are stay-at-home children and also 64.66% of questionnaire respondents stated that their parents are not working locally. In this research, even though the school tried to maintain positive home-school coordination via the parents' committee, Dietary Advisory Committee, and WeChat groups, the impact on students' management is very limited. Stay-at-home

teenagers are the main players in the construction of new socialist countryside but grand-parenting leads to a lack of monitoring of academic performance, behavior regulation, and value formation [32]. Making the issue more pressing is the divorce rate is spiraling upwards. In one interview, the fact was that there are 39 out of 55 students' parents were divorced in one class. Due to the burden of guilt caused by lack of company, some parents could do nothing with their children. Therefore, it is arduously to implement patriotism education under positive coordination between schooling and parenting.

## 5 Conclusion

School, or to be more specific, the Morality and Legality class assumes the majority responsibility of patriotism education for students. It is a positive situation in terms of how schools and its curriculum infiltrate patriotism education. However, there is a lot of margin for improvement in the cooperation of patriotism education across different subjects especially natural science-related subjects such as mathematics, chemistry, and physics. A cross-disciplinary teaching approach might be a worthy experiment in the future.

Apart from that, professional development and supporting resources of patriotism are required for teachers in rural schools. A team of teachers with high political and ideological awareness is able to infiltrate patriotism education in and outside of the classroom.

Last but not the least, a direct reason that leads to the lack of home-school cooperation in patriotism education is few employment opportunities in rural areas. With the promotion of rural vitalization, basic public services would be improved and the agriculture industry would be accelerated. As a result, villages are competitive and attractive for individuals to stay which might entirely improve the lack of home-school cooperation in patriotism education.

This study drew attention to the patriotism education of teenagers from rural areas. It provides academic references for local schools to deepen patriotism education outcomes and individualize patriotism education content. It calls for local educational authorities to integrate cultural, historic, and economic resources to raise the ideological atmosphere.

This current study focuses on students and teachers as objects of research and analyzes their insights and perspectives. Some further research actions could be undertaken regarding parents and the local community. For instance, a further interview would be conducted with parents and field research could be might to carry out to explore local Red Culture.

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