

Exploring the Significance and Implementation Strategies of Mental Health Education for College Students

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Abstract: College students are influenced by diverse cultures in the new era, thus their inner world is rich and changing rapidly. The acceleration of social rhythm can easily lead to different kinds of psychological problems. Mental health education is people-oriented, using scientific methods and means to train high-quality talents with all-round development across the world. A healthy psychological state can promote the sound development of students, make them establish correct core social values, and realize self-value. At present, there are some problems in university mental health education, such as single form and imperfect system. At the same time, college education plays an important role in the formation of ideas for college students' ideological values. As a front-line student worker, college counselors should cooperate with the school's psychological departments to improve the college psychological education system, rationally plan the psychological teaching program, and pay attention to the college students' mental health education. The government should also take into account the need to ensure that the education system is not undermined by the lack of a comprehensive and effective education system.

Keywords: Significance; Mental health education; Development; Values; Counselors

Online publication: February 25, 2024

1. Introduction

General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized the need to prioritize people's health in the strategic position of development, to achieve national fitness and overall well-being, to increase basic research on mental health issues, to popularize the knowledge of mental health and mental illnesses, and to standardize the development of psychotherapy, psychological counseling, and other mental health services. At present, contemporary college students, as the successors of socialism and the weavers of China's dream, are the future and hope of the motherland, a new generation of builders to take on the important task and play a mainstay role in the development of society. In the past ten years, the rapid development of the gross national product has provided unprecedented opportunities for society, enterprises, and young college students, but also brought various challenges and difficulties. In the learning process, college students face many pressures in learning, life,

employment, and other aspects, resulting in all kinds of mental health problems, impeding the development of individuals and society. Therefore, we should pay increased attention to the psychological development of college students, acquiring relevant skills to provide certain psychological counseling and education to college students^[1]. Therefore, college counselors are responsible for carrying out ideological and psychological education to guide the students to achieve good mental health. This paper explores the significance and implementation strategies of mental health education for college students from the perspective of counselors.

2. The significance of mental health education for college students

2.1. The meaning and importance of mental health education for college students

Mental health education refers to the application of appropriate psychological education methods to guide the normal psychological development of students, to cultivate students with a certain degree of stress resistance and psychological quality as well as correct values. Mental health education is an important part of cultivating college students with excellent moral, intellectual, physical, and aesthetic characteristics, and it is an essential aspect of the teaching work of colleges and universities. Each college and university is equipped with different levels of psychoeducational training institutes, but there are only a few counseling services for college students on the issue of psychological development. Additionally, college students' treatment of psychological problems has changed from ignorance to perfunctory. Students with poor mental ability cannot rehabilitate themselves during the school years and cannot face the problems positively, leading to the appearance of some extreme behaviors. In the United States, pedagogy has investigated some relatively successful people in society and found that the commonality of their success lies in the possession of healthy psychological quality and positive, optimistic, and upward mental state. Over the past 40 years of China's reform and opening up, the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Party's socialist society and the sudden rise of the new coronavirus epidemic have ushered in unprecedented opportunities for China. The positions provided by the community require college students to have a more positive and healthy mental quality and require colleges and universities to cultivate more new talents for the country.

At the same time, the rapid development of the economy has provided diversified educational methods, and contemporary college students can be exposed to diverse cultures and various educational methods. According to Jianqing Ma, when encountering psychological problems caused by life setbacks and other stresses, the person concerned cannot avoid but also cannot face them normally, and will exaggerate the events beyond their psychological capacity^[2]. When contemporary college students encounter major illnesses or casualties of their own or their family members, they will have psychological crises and cannot face them. At the same time, the campus is full of many illegal temptations, such as campus loans, fraudulent sales, and so on. Students who lack self-protection awareness easily fall into the trap, resulting in psychological problems. Appropriate psychological education for college students can lead them to acquire moral values and optimistic character, promote the development of the students themselves, and play a positive role in building a moderately prosperous society in an all-round way.

2.2. The role of higher education in mental health education for college students

The education in colleges and universities emphasizes more on ideological health education and professional skills training, and lacks sufficient attention and experience in the mental health education of college students. The heavy pressures of studying and choosing a career after graduation bring certain psychological difficulties to the new generation of college students. At this time, new-era colleges and universities should make full use of the school's mental health education department to encourage students to discover their psychological problems

and receive counseling, and cooperate with parents to actively solve the problems. At the same time, counselors are active and permeable to the formation of a healthy psychology of college students. Therefore, counselors should actively cooperate with schools and psychological counseling departments to focus on students with problems, communicate with parents, and establish treatment approaches after new students are psychologically assessed. At the same time, they can also help students establish correct values and positive attitudes towards life through ideological education, which can help solve certain psychological problems ^[3] and help students grow up healthily and optimistically. The history of human social development tells us that for a nation, a society, and a country, the most lasting and deep-rooted power is to establish normal core values, which carry the pursuit of the nation, judge the rights and wrongs of the society, and guide the development of individuals. Through the ideological and psychological education in university, we can efficiently lead university students to form the values recognized by society ^[4].

3. Common problems in the implementation of mental health education for college students

3.1. Common mental health problems in college students

The first common problem is inferiority problem. With the transition from the stressful college entrance examination into the relatively relaxed college life, college students encounter more novel experiences. The unlimited reverie and exploration of unknown things have made college students more self-aware. Students who are intolerant of their classmates often pursue independence and freedom. Gradually, these students will become “independent” and slowly lose their interpersonal skills and develop a sense of inferiority.

There are also psychological problems caused by not being able to study specialized subjects. Freshmen entering the university are able to deal with subjects such as English, politics, and higher mathematics. However, when facing the study of professional courses, they still adopt the method used in high school. The teaching method in university is different from that in high school, which pays more attention to students’ independent learning. Some college students do not revise for or even answer the final exam. Anxiety and low spirits develop before the exam. After failing the exam, they lose their motivation for learning and university life, and their frustration increases, leading to other psychological problems.

Another common problem is poor stress resistance. Most of the modern college students grew up with parents’ doting and pampering, which prevents them from solving life and social problems independently. Their psychological quality is extremely weak and they cannot withstand the pressure and difficulties brought by the outside world. Being far away from their families, they are unable to take care of themselves in the strict student dormitory life, which will form a psychological gap, resulting in mental health problems ^[5]. In addition, after four years of study and approaching graduation, most students will experience anxiety. They lack clarity about future direction and understanding of social conditions, and tend to avoid employment and putting in the effort. This leads to excessive anxiety, insufficient sleep, depressed mental state, and even fantasies and other mental health problems.

3.2. Common problems in conducting mental health education

Firstly, there is a lack of psychological counseling awareness and skills. Mental health education work is usually perceived as the work scope of a school’s professional psychological counseling center, and is therefore ignored by the counselors, teachers, and other departments and positions. For instance, teachers only focus on the teaching of professional courses and students’ performance, and neglect student communication in the process of teaching. Thus, students’ needs cannot be recognized and communicated in the process of learning,

causing them to be prone to psychological problems. Many colleges and universities are unable to meet the 1:200 ratio of counselors issued by the Ministry of Education's Decree No. 24, "Regulations on the Construction of Counselor Teams in Ordinary Colleges and Universities" [6]. The workload of counselors is huge and complex, and their work energy has certain limitations. The psychological education of the students is also superficial and lacks reasonable and scientific methods of education [7]. If students cannot apply the correct educational methods when encountering psychological problems, it will often be counterproductive, worsening the students' psychological problems.

Secondly, there is a lack of focus in professional education. It is a common problem that new students will not learn professional courses systematically. Professional knowledge is vast and varied, new students cannot capture the knowledge points independently and they often excessively rely on teachers. Dependent learning often cannot achieve good results, some new students will develop fear of embarrassment, frustration, and loss of confidence in learning and even life due to unsatisfactory final grades, leading to mental health problems. Many colleges and universities have formed a system of professional teachers as classroom teachers to address this problem, but the classroom teachers are virtually non-existent. For example, professional teachers in scientific research institutes spend more time on scientific research and are too busy to deal with students' learning problems. In addition, despite having strong professional learning, many professional teachers adopt unscientific teaching methods and lack unified training.

Thirdly, families and schools do not cooperate effectively. Many children's psychological problems are caused by family factors and the background of the family of origin has a great influence on the child's development. The parents' marriage, character, and family conditions play a crucial role in the development of the student's character and psychological condition. However, the main family members often ignore the role of their children's psychological development and "entrust" the children to the school, lacking adequate attention to the child's psychological. When a student develops a psychological condition, he or she often refuses to believe it and cannot face the facts rationally and scientifically. The family often believes that the child's short-term inhibition is only caused by a certain period of unsuccessful life or study. The family members are unable to actively cooperate with the school in treating the problem, shirking their responsibilities and refusing to bring the child to undergo examination and receive treatment, thus delaying the treatment of the child and aggravating the child's psychological problems.

Lastly, the school teaching system is inadequate. Every college and university has a compulsory course on psychological education, but the emphasis on psychological classes is inadequate. There is a lack of training and teaching programs for teachers, and the professionalism of psychological counseling teachers needs to be improved. At the same time, many colleges and universities schedule psychological courses as elective courses, and uniformly arrange them in a semester. The teacher cannot pay sufficient attention to each student, and often students with psychological difficulties refuse to take the initiative to reach out to psychological counseling teachers. At the same time, the training method is too single, and the teaching effect cannot reach the expectation.

4. Methods and approaches to implement mental health education for college students

4.1. Setting a moral example and leading by example

The first approach is establishing virtue and combining moral and psychological education. From the book *Zuozhuan*, "There is the establishment of virtue at the top of the hierarchy, followed by the establishment of merit, followed by the establishment of speech." Xi Jinping, general secretary of the university teachers, put forward that

the education concept of moral education is to implement the concept of people-oriented parenting^[8], to cultivate morally, intellectually, physically, and aesthetically outstanding college students. The education concept of “establish morality and nurture people” requires colleges and universities to pay more attention to students’ psychological condition, moral character, and political quality, and to take moral education as the starting point and foundation of cultivating talents.

Counselling teachers should follow the people-oriented principle, constantly improve the planning of lesson plans, focus on their own virtues, and lead by example. Endowed with positive energy, teachers should integrate the core values commonly recognized by the community into students’ daily work and cultivate their values and sense of honor^[9]. The “red spirit” is used to stimulate students’ patriotic thoughts. We organize the May 4th Movement, October 1st National Day, and 129th Long-Distance Race in a scientific and reasonable manner in a diversified form, and promote the formation of an upward and healthy mentality through positive activities^[10].

4.2. Guiding new students to self-regulation

When new students are entering the university and facing a new life, influenced by character, appearance, family factors, and other disadvantages, they easily develop an inferiority complex, resulting in psychological problems. Counselling teachers should timely cooperate with the school counseling department to help students increase their self-esteem, explore students’ strengths, and guide students to be positive. For example, students with low self-esteem are encouraged to be elected class cadres or participate in activities organized by the school, fully affirming the role of students and enhancing the students’ ability to combat stress, so that they can view “success or failure” rationally, treat learning and life with a positive and optimistic attitude^[11]. The students will be able to maintain their mental health and correct their psychological problems in a timely manner, thus promoting the formation of a healthy psychological state.

Counselling teachers work with professional classroom teachers to help students apply university life and professional knowledge. After the second year of college, students gradually master the professional knowledge. At the same time, students should be encouraged to participate in the recruitment of enterprises or lectures to help students understand the employment prospects of their majors and set goals in advance, such as entering the enterprises, graduate school, or national civil service, etc. After students set their goals, they will have the initiative and direction of learning, developing a healthy psychology.

College students are often in a state of anxiety and confusion when they are approaching graduation, and their mental capacity is weak. Factors such as difficulty in finding a suitable position, unsuccessful enterprise interview, and failure in graduate school examination will cause a great impact on the students, and even lead to the formation of psychological problems^[12]. At this time, counselling teachers should pay more attention to students’ psychological situation and daily trends, effectively cultivate graduates’ socialist core values, help students establish a correct view of job hunting, and not give up easily. Teachers should advise students to believe in themselves and help students develop tailored employment plans. Students can be encouraged to go hiking, jogging in the morning, deep breathing, other exercises, etc., to relax themselves and reduce pressure. Teacher should encourage students to treat setbacks correctly and look at the problem from a different perspective, as all setbacks are the nutrients for their growth.

4.3. Improving mental health education systems

The forms of psychoeducational programs need to be enriched. At present, the form of psychological education in colleges and universities is too single, thus we need to develop and innovate a variety of psychological

education programs. Not only the Department of Psychological Education is responsible but all parties must play a role in improving psychological education. The programs should not be limited to the indoor computer quiz or lecture conversation. We should integrate outdoor skills development with psychological education, increase the number of activities of school psychological clubs, and ensure the quality of activities. At the same time, the integration of physical education and psychoeducation should be carried out, enhancing physical quality, teamwork, and students' self-confidence, to achieve both mental and physical health.

With the power of the network and self-media, we should make full use of Douyin short video, Weibo, WeChat interaction, daily dissemination of healthy and uplifting link sharing, celebrity quotes, etc., and organize activities with prizes such as psychological tests and quizzes^[13]. We should also establish and save students' electronic psychological files^[14], and carry out the three-level inspection system for school-specific classes on a weekly basis to keep a close eye on the psychological status of college students.

Other than that, there is a need for the establishment of a collaboration system between society, family, and school. The family is an important force in a student's growth. Creating a harmonious family atmosphere, a relaxed school atmosphere, and an uplifting social atmosphere can promote individual success. At the beginning of enrollment, schools should establish contact with parents, such as using QQ group or WeChat group, regular phone calls or on-site home visits, communicate with parents of students with problems in psychological testing, and build a cooperative mechanism with families^[15] to promote the formation of a positive mental health in students.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, Xi emphasized the need to unswervingly implement the policy of prevention as the mainstay, adhere to the combination of prevention and treatment, joint prevention and control, group prevention and control, strive to provide people with health and wellness services throughout the life cycle, and pay more attention to the mental health education of the entire population. Society, families, and schools should cooperate to strengthen the psychological aspects of college students' attention and education, so that they can set up a good mindset to meet the challenges of youth, fully understand themselves, and advocate the cultivation of moral, intellectual, physical, and aesthetic development of socialist successors to realize the value of the community under the educational philosophy of fostering virtue.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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