

Study on Early Detection and Prevention Mechanism of Psychological Problems in College Students

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Abstract: Since entering the new period, colleges and universities have increasingly prioritized students' mental health to ensure their healthy growth. In the current era, the rapid dissemination of information and the pervasiveness of various values in both online platforms and students' daily lives pose numerous challenges. In this environment, students are confronted with many obstacles that may trigger anxiety and depression in some individuals. Recognizing this phenomenon, higher education institutions and educators must focus on mental health education for students, implementing corresponding preventive measures and guiding them to effectively manage negative emotions while establishing correct values. This paper examines early detection methods and preventive mechanisms for college student's mental health issues, presenting relevant perspectives on the matter.

Keywords: College students; Psychological problems; Prevention mechanism; Research

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1. The concept of psychological problems

The concept of psychological problems encompasses a wide range of issues that affect everyone throughout their life and developmental processes ^[1]. It can generally be classified into two main categories: adaptive psychological problems and developmental psychological problems. These two types of issues profoundly impact individual mental health across various life stages and environments. Adaptive psychological problems arise from individuals' struggles to achieve harmonious coexistence with their environment through psychological adjustment when faced with challenges. Such challenges may stem from life pressures, interpersonal conflicts, or difficulties adapting to role changes ^[2]. Individuals must enhance their psychological adaptability to navigate changing environments effectively. On the other hand, developmental psychological problems primarily manifest as cognitive distortions regarding one's abilities, qualities, and potential. These distortions can hinder individuals from forming accurate self-evaluations, particularly concerning their abilities and qualities. Among the myriad psychological issues, college students commonly encounter adaptive and

developmental psychological problems as their main challenges. These issues warrant attention and intervention to support students' mental well-being.

2. Types of psychological problems faced by college students at this stage

2.1. Psychological problems caused by self-consciousness

A healthy and positive self-awareness is a key aspect of students' mental well-being. College students are undergoing crucial physical, mental, and cognitive development, leading to a refinement of their self-awareness. Consequently, some students develop dual selves, namely the ideal self and the realistic self^[3]. While the former embodies students' aspirations, many still grapple with the reality. As a result, they may experience fluctuating moods and a bias in self-perception, contributing to the emergence of mental health issues over time.

2.2. Psychological problems arising from interpersonal relationships

The college years mark a significant period of personal growth, characterized by a communal living environment. In this setting, students engage not only academically with teachers but also socially with peers. Such communal living profoundly influences students' individual development and social adaptability^[4]. However, some students struggle to adjust to this collective life, leading to negative emotions such as anxiety and feelings of inferiority in both academic and social settings. Left unaddressed, these emotions can severely impact students' mental well-being, thereby affecting their overall quality of life.

2.3. Psychological problems stemming from employment concerns

The junior and senior years of college represent a pivotal juncture in students' lives, where they must confront crucial decisions about their future paths. Clarifying their career aspirations and enhancing their competitiveness becomes paramount at this stage^[5]. Firstly, it's important to emphasize that academic achievements alone do not define one's worth. Nevertheless, many students experience a loss of confidence due to poor grades, fearing the implications for their future job prospects. They may internalize their academic performance as a measure of their value, leading to stress, self-doubt, and feelings of inferiority. Secondly, students facing challenges in job hunting may undergo further blows to their self-confidence after repeated rejections. They may attribute their failures to personal shortcomings, adopt a negative self-evaluation, and lose hope for the future.

3. Schools and teachers' failure to early detect the limiting factors of students' psychological problems

3.1. The individual complexity of college students

Firstly, the psychological problems among college students in the current era are diverse. These issues are not only limited to the types mentioned above but are also influenced by external factors and intertwined with multiple variables^[6]. Secondly, there are gender differences in the psychological challenges faced by college students. For instance, boys may exhibit emotional outbursts when psychologically unstable, whereas some girls may exhibit reluctance to engage in communication. Thirdly, the nature of psychological problems varies across different stages of college life. Freshmen must adapt to a new environment; sophomores and juniors face heightened academic pressure and interpersonal challenges; seniors confront the pressure of postgraduate entrance exams and career decisions, all of which impact their mental well-being.

3.2. Limitations in the warning mechanism for mental health

Mental health education holds significant importance within the university education system as it aids in fostering students' robust psychological resilience and coping mechanisms to navigate life's challenges ^[7]. However, in most colleges and universities, mental health education is often presented simplistically, with dull content and inadequate student engagement. Classroom-based instruction predominates, lacking practical relevance and tailored approaches to address students' diverse psychological needs. The absence of effective interaction and communication mechanisms makes it challenging for educators to gain profound insights into students' psychological states and deliver targeted interventions. Moreover, insufficient attention from some teachers further undermines the efficacy of mental health education.

3.3. Weaknesses in the professional mental health education team

Primarily, the number of full-time counselors and psychology specialists in colleges and universities remains relatively low ^[8], despite their comprehensive professional training. Given the dynamic nature of students' psychological conditions, these professionals must continually update their knowledge and skills to meet the evolving demands of mental health education in the modern era. Secondly, while counselors form the core of the mental health education team, many lack formal training in psychology, hindering their ability to offer specialized assistance to students facing mental health challenges.

4. Strategies for early detection of college students' mental problems

4.1. Enhancing the relevance and sensitivity of mental health education

Schools need to clearly define the overarching goals of education and enhance the relevance and sensitivity of their efforts. College counselors and psychological center staff should maintain keen observation skills to promptly identify students' issues. Since the emergence of college students' psychological problems is typically a gradual process, it is crucial to seize every pivotal moment, observe any deviations in students' behavior, make timely assessments, and implement interventions to prevent further escalation. Additionally, teachers should excel in discerning details and detecting students' psychological abnormalities ^[9]. They should also observe emotional changes, such as persistent depression or anxiety, which could indicate underlying psychological issues. Moreover, they should monitor behavior, such as sudden withdrawal or reluctance to communicate, which may signal psychological distress. Furthermore, they should be attuned to changes in students' learning attitudes, such as a sudden decline in grades or loss of interest, which could be linked to psychological problems. In addition, they should assess students' interpersonal relationships, noticing any tension among classmates, teachers, or family members, or an excessive pursuit of perfection in relationships, which could contribute to psychological issues. Last but not least, they should pay attention to students' daily routines and rest habits, such as irregularities in work-rest schedules or diet, which may manifest as physiological reactions to psychological problems.

4.2. Strengthening teachers' competence and establishing a modern mental health education team

To ensure the smooth attainment of educational goals, schools must focus on enhancing the mental health education capabilities of psychological teachers and counselors and establish a new educational team ^[10]. Firstly, improving the mental health education abilities of teachers is paramount. Teachers are the backbone of educational activities, and their mental well-being directly impacts student growth. Schools should regularly conduct professional training sessions to equip teachers with essential concepts, principles, and methods of

mental health education. Secondly, the role of counselors in mental health education needs reinforcement. As vital figures in student management, counselors are in close contact with students and can readily identify signs of psychological issues. Schools should enhance counselors' training in psychological education to ensure they possess the necessary skills for mental health counseling and can offer timely support to students. Lastly, schools should assemble a new education team comprising professional and compassionate teachers and counselors ^[11]. This collaborative effort involving schools, teachers, parents, and various sectors of society is essential for nurturing a new generation with robust mental well-being.

4.3. Pioneering innovative forms of mental health education

With the advancement of science and technology and the widespread use of the Internet, it has become imperative to explore new avenues for conducting mental health education activities. Teachers can enhance communication and interaction with students through online platforms. The advantage of these platforms lies in their ability to overcome the constraints of time and space, thereby facilitating more convenient communication between teachers and students. Through online communication, teachers can promptly assess students' mental states and offer targeted psychological counseling ^[12]. Simultaneously, students can share their psychological experiences and receive peer support on these platforms. Moreover, schools can regularly organize psychological practice activities, including lectures, workshops, psychodramas, and group counseling sessions, to assist students in learning how to cope with psychological challenges and enhance their self-adjustment abilities. Additionally, psychological counselors can utilize art therapy, such as psychological painting, to gain insights into students' issues. By analyzing these artworks, counselors can better understand students' psychological conditions and provide more tailored counseling. Furthermore, counselors can alleviate students' anxiety through music therapy. Moreover, it is essential to consider the impact of the social environment on students' mental health and actively foster an environment conducive to their psychological development.

4.4. Improving the prevention mechanism for students' psychological problems

As a crucial measure to ensure the healthy growth of students' physical and mental well-being, the importance of implementing mechanisms for preventing psychological problems cannot be overstated. In China's higher education institutions, psychological centers play a central role, being responsible for formulating and implementing prevention and intervention strategies for students' psychological well-being ^[13].

To effectively prevent and address psychological issues, schools must further clarify the division of work content and responsibilities among personnel at all levels. Firstly, schools should take a multifaceted approach, establishing and enhancing policies for preventing psychological problems. This includes devising scientifically-based psychological intervention measures and providing necessary resources and support to departments at all levels. Schools should conduct regular psychological education training to enhance staff members' ability to identify and address students' psychological issues. Additionally, schools should actively promote mental health knowledge and guide students in establishing correct values and life outlooks.

Secondly, at the college level, schools should implement the psychological prevention policies they have formulated, tailoring specific implementation plans according to the actual situation. Colleges should monitor students' mental health status, regularly conduct psychological assessments, promptly report any issues identified, and take appropriate intervention measures. Furthermore, colleges should strengthen communication with responsible teachers, counselors, and other frontline educators to ensure the effective implementation of psychological prevention efforts.

Thirdly, at the class level, efforts should focus on cultivating students' self-regulation abilities and promoting mutual assistance. Class teachers and counselors should closely monitor students' living and learning

conditions, intervening promptly when abnormal situations arise, and reporting them to their superiors. Classes can also organize mental health education activities to enhance students' psychological well-being ^[14].

Lastly, at the dormitory level, which represents the smallest unit of students' daily lives, fostering a supportive and cooperative atmosphere among roommates is essential. Dormitory heads should be attentive to the dormitory's atmosphere, promptly addressing any conflicts or issues, organizing various cultural activities, and encouraging communication and interaction among roommates.

5. Conclusion

In China, research on college students' mental health has achieved some progress. However, there has been relatively little research on the early detection and intervention of college students' mental problems. This is mainly because the majority of college students belong to the "post-00" generation, and some of them possess strong self-awareness. Consequently, when they encounter psychological issues, they are often difficult to detect promptly. This situation undoubtedly heightens the challenge of later psychological crisis intervention ^[15]. Some studies have indicated that the overall mental health status of college students in China is generally satisfactory. However, there are still prevalent issues such as excessive pressure, interpersonal conflicts, and feelings of inferiority. To ensure the healthy development of college students' physical and mental well-being, schools and educators should conduct in-depth research into the primary issues faced by college students at this stage. They should also recognize the importance of implementing mechanisms for preventing psychological problems and explore various avenues for early detection from multiple perspectives. This approach will help to safeguard the holistic growth of students.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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