Perplexity and Innovation of University Students’ Psychological Health Education

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KEYWORDS

University students, Psychological health education, Psychological counseling, Psychological archives

ABSTRACT

The problems of university students’ psychological health, which are shown in different ways at different grades, are becoming more and more complicated. It mainly focuses on family poverty, interpersonal relationship, study weariness, emotional entanglement, internet addiction, employment panic, etc. which have widely aroused general concern from higher schools and society. It’s high time that psychological health education be innovated. This paper analyzes the factors affecting the psychological health of university students, family, school, students and social aspects. And it explores the effective means of psychological health education that respond to contemporary university students’ characteristics, so as to promote the work toward a scientific, professional and systematic direction, and ensure their overall health and happy growth.

1 Introduction

Life at university is the weaning period in psychological development for students who are faced with life, daily life, emotional upheavals, job seeking, and other sources. University students are especially vulnerable to psychological problems, ranging from low self-esteem, emotional depression, anxiety, self-closeness, and oversensitivity. China’s Communist Party’s sixth session of the sixteenth plenary conferences highlighted, “Focus shall be put on promoting people’s psychological harmony, strengthening humanitarian solicitude and psychological counseling, guiding people to treat themselves, others and society, so that people can address difficulties, setbacks and honors properly. Psychological health education and health care work shall be improved; the network of psychological counseling shall be strengthened, to ensure rational, calm, and positive social mentality.”[1] In recent years, the psychological health status of university students is disappointing. Malignant events keep occurring because of psychological illness or psychological disorders among university students, and the trend shows signs of further escalation. This has aroused widespread concern and profound reflection from university authorities and all walks of life in society. Innovations must be made with university students’ psychological health education work, so as to effectively improve the level of their psychological health, and promote their overall health and harmonious growth.
2 Symptoms and Causes for University Students’ Psychological Health Problems

Along with the change of learning task, content, and style in universities, and coupled with the impact from family, school, society and other factors, especially the conflict and fusion of various cultures and information in the context of globalization, university students at present face confusion and perplexity, and even psychological imbalance.

2.1 Symptoms of university students’ psychological problems

The psychological problems of university students become more and more complicated. The common psychological problems come into being mainly from family poverty, interpersonal communication, physical defects, learning difficulties, emotional entanglement, internet addiction, employment panic. These problems are shown in different degrees for different grades of students. The first-year students, for example, are faced with orientation and adaptation problems; psychological imbalance caused by learning accounts for the major part of university students’ psychological problems for university students. Feeling self-pride and filled with sense of superiority, university student come into the university campus, only to come to the sudden realization that all around the students are very good. They immediately feel the pressure of learning to be distinguished. Then, self-esteem get intertwined with feelings of inferiority, which finds its in reluctance to accept, low self appraisal, environment- spurred irritability, wrong self-awareness, and even campus weariness. Second year students face the challenge of interpersonal problems. Human psychological problems are mainly caused by the imbalance of social relationships. Psychologist Ding Zanceng said, “Human psychological adaptation means, in the first place, the adaptation of interpersonal relationship. So the human psychological problems come out mainly due to the imbalance of interpersonal relationship.” [1] Along with environmental changes for study and daily life at university, people have more complicated interpersonal relationship than that in high school. Many university students are not good at interpersonal skills, which often lead to communication panic, and imbalanced interpersonal relationships. The third-year students have emotional problems. As adolescents, they have the desire to love, but sometimes they can’t address their personal emotions reasonably. Emotional crisis caused by love is an important factor in university students’ psychological problems. It is no surprise to see emotional instability, emotional maladjustment, and even unexpected departure from school campus, Dutch act or other extreme tragedies happen, all due to broken-up romances or emotional disputes. The fourth-year students have problems in getting jobs. China’s higher education has seen a gradual transition from the elite group to the general mass. As a result, university students find employment an increasingly pressing problem. “Graduation means unemployment” panic sweeps all graduate students, making graduating students extremely vulnerable to psychological imbalances.

2.2 Causes of psychological health problems for university students

1. Family indulgence. Most of the new generation of university students is the only kid for their parents. As a result, they become very dependent and unable to take care of themselves properly because of their parents’ long-term meticulous care. Also, they grow very self-centered for family spoiling. They are inexperienced and suffer no hardships from real life, which renders them unable to adapt to society or to afford to take any frustrations. They are extremely vulnerable to a variety of psychological disorders and psychological illnesses, and this might cause some malignant events. 2. Negligence of school education. As university students’ psychological problems grow increasingly prominent, it becomes clear that university authorities do not realize the importance of psychological health education. Besides, the psychological counseling method applied is too limited, making psychological consultation equivalent to casual chat. Thus only ideological guidance is given, rather than making good use of psychological knowledge to eliminate doubts and confusions inside troubled students. As a result, it is difficult to eradicate their psychological problems. In addition, attention is given to remedial work after problems show up, instead of focus on prevention education. 3. Impacts from social environment. The making of university students’ psychological health is a complicated dynamic process. Students are faced with various psychological perplexities in the process of growth, and the determining factors could both be accounted for by individual’s internal psychology, and adverse environmental factors. Students are also virtually plagued by the negative social and psychological inertia that exists in the public’s inner world. At the same time, the conflict and integration of different cultures in the context of globalization, as well as intertwined collision of various social trends of thought and values, could easily result in students’ inner loss and struggle, even confusion and chaos in their values. This has a negative bearing on the psychological health of university students.

3 Perplexity of the Current Psychological Health Education for University Students

The psychological health education for university students means that universities and universities must follow psychological health standards, impart organized psychological health knowledge, and help students to carry out scientific psychological adjustments, so as to promote the comprehensive development of students’ intelligence, emotion, perseverance, personality, and behavior. The purpose is to improve the psychological quality of university students, and exert their psychological potential to maintain their psychological welfare. Psychological health education is an indispensable part of school education, including lectures of basic psychology knowledge, psychological coaching, and psychological counseling.
3.1 Lack of attention from university authorities

First of all, school authorities attach long-term importance to the ideological and political education, neglecting the significance of psychological problems. They often regard psychological problems of university students as being political and ideological. Secondly, psychological health education at university started late in our country. Generally speaking, students’ psychological problems and their symptoms are not sufficiently analyzed and researched. People still tend to regard those with psychological obstacles as psychiatric patients, which lead to the patients’ reluctance to turn to psychological help. Furthermore, psychological health courses are not fully emphasized. Psychological health education is generally erected as an elective course at university. It cannot even guarantee the right class time, let alone achieving ideal teaching effects.

3.2 Unqualified teaching staff

Psychologically, any psychological phenomenon has its inherent formation mechanism. Psychological health education at university is a new discipline in our country, so the teaching staff is mostly chosen from teachers majoring in education, management science, sociology, moral education, who either take it as a full-time or part-time job. Therefore their limited professional qualification and working experience, as well as unspecialized internal knowledge structure make it difficult to realize the adapted teaching objective and content, thus substantially refrain them from achieving the desired teaching efficiency in psychological health education.

3.3 Monotonous teaching pedagogy

Classroom teaching is the basic form of psychological health education for university students. It is the main channel to achieve teaching purposes and teaching tasks. The problems with the present psychological health teaching lie in its rigid and boring teaching form, and unappealing teaching effect. Classroom teaching only emphasizes on imparting students the basic knowledge of psychological health, while ruthlessly ignoring training students’ abilities to solve psychological problems using the knowledge acquired herein. Psychological health teaching is in fact alienated from students’ real needs.

3.4 Institutions exist but not in operation

To tell the truth, psychological health education at university in China is still largely marginalized, although almost all universities have established specialized psychological health education and consultation institutions, but the majority of these psychological health education and consultation institutions are anchored under the student affairs office. They have no real independence and are shouldered only by part-time teachers, hereby making psychological health education a mere formality.

4 Innovation of University Students’ Psychological Health Education

American educational psychologist Lan Desen points out: “Psychological health and learning success is closely related to each other. Between them, or opposite them, namely between low emotional adaptation and intellectual inefficiency, there is a complex causal relationship. Psychological health is the basis of effective learning, and learning interest and self-improvement is symbolic of psychological health. In researching the basic conditions of effective learning, people have discovered reasons why some children and young people’s academic achievement will exceed or lag behind other individuals with identical intelligence, as expected. One of the main factors is psychological health.”[3] Due to family, emotional, academic, and interpersonal and employment pressures or other problems, some students fall a victim to psychological poverty, which inevitably leads to their inferior position at university. It is far from enough if we hope a few elective courses and psychological teachers’ counseling can ease university students’ psychological distress and psychological pressure, or help them overcome themselves and smooth out of the shadow of psychological sub-healthliness. It takes a lot more psychological aid resources and even the innovation of entire psychological health education at university. In fact, both the content and form of psychological health education need to strengthened, so as to solve various psychological problems in university students, improve humanistic care, highlight psychological counseling, and truly elevate the scientific nature and effectiveness of university Students’ psychological health education.

4.1 To establish new concept of education

In October, 2004, “the CPC Central Committee and State Council’s Proposition on Improving University Students’ Ideological Education” clearly put forward “carrying out in-depth and meticulous ideological and political work and psychological health education”. In January 2005, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health, the CYL Central Committee issued “On Further Strengthening and Improving University Students’ Psychological Health Education”. It clearly pointed out that psychological health education shall be integrated into ideological and political education; in-depth and meticulous ideological education activities shall be organized to achieve “one key to one lock” effect, resolving contradictions and edifying people unawares. Psychological health education is a systematic project for all students; psychological health as an important aspect of healthiness draws increasing attention. Psychological health status directly affects and restricts the all-round development of individuals. Excellent psychological quality plays a decisive role in elevating the overall quality of university students. As the main channel of psychological health education for university students, psychological health curriculum should be listed into teaching plan as compulsory, just to guarantee
this course has reasonable hours promulgating psychological health knowledge and improving university students’ awareness with it. At the same time, independent center of psychological health education shall be set up in higher schools, offering course of psychological health education, lecture, and psychological counseling, to ensure the effectiveness of psychological health education and service, and guarantee the scientific development of psychological health education.

4.2 To strengthen the teaching staff construction

University is the very place where most psychological health education is conducted, and teachers are main force who carries it out. Psychological health education is a highly specialized work, the effectiveness of which depends largely on the quality of teaching staff. To improve the psychological health of university students, teaching staff construction must be emphasized. Therefore higher schools must establish for this cause a devoted team that consists of a few competent full-time staff, complemented by some part-time teachers. With psychological health education experts playing the main role, psychology researchers, medical workers, student assistants, Youth Corps Committee and the management staff work together to form a diversified psychological education team, hereby improving its professional level. At the same time, intensified efforts shall be made to provide the teaching staff with professional training, improve their comprehensive quality and professional competence, and tighten up certification and assessment of psychological health workers, in order that they should have a good command of relevant knowledge and be able to give psychological counseling. The professional level of psychological health education could be improved accordingly.

4.3 To consolidate ambition and faith of education

World Health Organization suggested that “health is not only free of disease physically, but also means sound psychological health, good social adaptation and moral codes”. “Ideological and political education means to perfect one’s personality.” [4] Ideological and political education is the centre of quality education, so it holds the core position in cultivating essential qualities. Comrade Jiang Zemin stressed: “The ideological and political education should be placed in an important position in all types of, and different levels of schools, and it shouldn’t be relaxed and weakened. Ideological and political quality is the most important.” [5] Ideological and psychological problems have the same structure; psychological health must be based on the premise of sound ideological quality. Ideological and political education is also aimed at improving people’s psychological quality. The principle that ideological education and psychological health education facilitate each other shall be closely adhered to, so the two kinds of education shall be organically fused. “Morality is a bow, and psychological health an arrow; then psychological health will be shooting archery.” [6] Psychological health education rescues the soul of people, and ideological and political education saves human spirit. For university students, ideological and political education is a necessary prerequisite for psychological health education, while psychological health education is an important part of ideological political education. Psychological health education must be sufficiently attended to, and be incorporated into the work scope of ideological and political education. While psychological aid is provided to students, it has to be rendered with right values and life outlook. Therefore, their interactive bearing upon each other could help overcome the setbacks of conventional education that tends to solve ideological problems only by infusion preaching while ruthlessly neglecting human cognition activities. In one word, ideological education and psychological health education for university students must be organically intertwined throughout the entire process of their higher education.

4.4 To create a harmonious campus environment

Creating a good atmosphere for university students will facilitate their psychological healthiness, enhance a cohesive campus culture, cultivate students’ sentiment, shape beautiful psychology, and foster good moral character. Second classroom could be opened to build up good school spirit, positive atmosphere in teaching and study. Campus broadcast, television, network, newspapers, windows and other channels could be made full use of organizing cultural activities, campus psychodrama contests, and other forms, to extensively popularize psychological health knowledge, eliminate misunderstanding about psychological counseling. Promotional activities featuring psychological health could be regularly held to create a harmonious interpersonal relationship, providing the platform for university students to cultivate psychological health. Interpersonal communication ability and sound adaptation capacity could help perfect people’s personality. Harmonious campus culture could strengthen students’ psychological immunity.

4.5 To build students’ psychology archives

Psychological problem investigation archives are to be strictly managed, for students’ psychological archives can ensure that school psychological health education should be more targeted and efficient. Upon freshmen’s admittance into university, psychological evaluation is to be conducted, so that each student shall have a psychology record tracking the status of their psychological development in different periods at university. This way, students’ psychological changes could be recorded to help the implementation of psychological health education. And, in accordance with students’ psychological archives, an early warning database for students with serious psychological disorders could be established so as to give priority targets special attention, and in proportion to the seriousness of their psychological state, relevant guidance and intervention will be provided effectively and timely. This helps to form a long-term and stable mechanism for psychological health education.
4.6 To improve psychological health services

Current psychological health education is basically supported by “one class”, psychological health education class, and “one room”, psychological health counseling room. Therefore, full ranges of psychological health services must be provided for university students, so as to reduce incidents of psychological problems. First of all, three levels of psychological health education network have to be constructed. Longitudinal warning system is to be set up to realize the free flow of information and interaction, hereby enhancing psychological crisis prevention and intervention. All levels of student management departments shall be mobilized to form a “university, school, class, three-grade psychological health control network.” The efficiency of psychological health education depends on the perfect structure of university-level psychological health institution, school-level psychological health association, and class-level psychological health team. Full-time and part-time teachers for psychological health education in universities are limited in number. Therefore, to best integrate all resources, it is necessary to choose a class-level psychological commissioner, namely selecting a psychology watchdog as a member of the class commission, generally one for boys and one for girls respectively. By means of general survey and case investigation, these members can take the commitment of monitoring the psychological health conditions in the whole class, thus playing their role in psychological crisis prevention and intervention. Secondly, psychological counseling rooms shall be established at student apartments. In order to further expand the space for psychological health education, and ease the work pressure of school psychological consultation room, psychological counseling rooms can be set up in agreement with student dormitory distribution. In each student apartment area, psychological counseling room shall be fixed, and timed to receive visiting students, in full ranges to provide psychological counseling and psychotherapy. Thirdly, home-school interactive management system shall be established. Family is their major growth environment, good family education and family environment is the key to ensuring students’ sound psychology. Rousseau said: “Good family atmosphere is the best agent to resist contaminating trends.”[1] School authorities should attach great importance to psychological health education for university students, and have it extended to their families. Extensive links are to be established between universities and their students’ parents, so as to help parents put more focus on their children’s psychological health education. This will ensure parents’ complementary role in the education of psychological health, and help break the boundary of teacher guidance and campus. Lastly, internet-based platform for psychological education counseling shall be launched. Network psychological consultation room not only respects the client’s privacy, and shares the functions taken up by real life psychological consultation rooms. Using the Internet as a teaching resource, a network of psychological health counseling and psychological health education website is established into campus net, breaking fixed time limit and expanding new spheres of psychological health education. In addition, the invisibility of network of psychological consultation helps resolve client’s wariness. Therefore, those who have psychological problems and need psychological help but who did not want to go into the consulting room, can now face get help through online counseling and consulting activities. This meets the needs of different students to the maximum extent.

5 Conclusion

In short, psychological health education of university students is a long-term and arduous foundational project. To cultivate harmonious psychology for university students is the inevitable requirement for modern quality education. We shall actively promote the psychological health education, explore effective ways and means to cater to the characteristics of contemporary university students’ psychological health, comprehensively utilize the various modern approaches, media, and strengthen the management, guidance and assessment of psychological health education, so that we shall promote psychological health education at university toward a scientific, professional and systematic direction.

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Foundation:

This paper is the periodical achievement funded by the following projects:
2012, Humanities and Social Sciences (Marxism Theory) research project, funded by Education Department of Henan Province, “Innovating Party Construction to Expand Ideological and Political Education”, Project No.: 2012-MGH-045.

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