

# The Study on Group Work Involved in Practical Death Education for Students in Yunnan Agricultural University

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## ABSTRACT

Death education enables individuals to set up a correct and positive attitude towards death on the basis of correctly viewing the natural phenomenon of death and death-related activities, which can solve psychological problems such as death anxiety and death avoidance caused by death. Based on the current situation of death attitude and demand for death education in Yunnan agricultural university and the findings of group work practice is most of the students can look at death naturally, and some of them have the psychology of fear and escape of death. Group work for the purpose of death education can effectively improve students' death fear and escape psychology and deepen their cognition of death. As a new way of death education, group work is highly effective and can be extended.

**Keywords:** *college students, death education, group work, social work, practical study*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In terms of death attitude, the traditional Chinese culture adopts an attitude of avoiding death, which is considered unlucky and cannot be used as a topic of conversation. While the western culture has been actively discussing the death, whether it is hospice care or death education, but the attitude towards death is consistent, that is, death is not a terrible phenomenon but should be treated with a rational attitude. In terms of the development of death education, death education in China started late, adopting a simple theoretical limit-teaching method, and relying on life education instead of separate death education courses. The contents related to death are greatly compressed, and the impact on students is not obvious. In foreign countries, when carrying out death education, classes are generally directly selected in cemeteries, funeral homes, crematoria and other places to pay attention to students' death experience and emotional exchange. The traditional culture's evasive attitude towards death restricts the development of death education in China, which can only be carried out in the form of simple theoretical imparting, resulting in the failure of death education to achieve the expected effect and the lack of death education for college students.

At present, most college students are born in the 1990s or even in the 2000s, mainly the only child. When they get older, they will experience more and more death. During the four years of college, each of them may encounter the experience of fighting against illness and directly fighting against death when themselves or others get sick. There will also be the death of relatives, friends and into the funeral home, crematorium and other death experience. These

experiences of voluntary or forced death will have a great psychological impact on college students and lead to potential psychological crisis. If they have not received death education and formed a correct view of death, then when facing death, college students will appear to be panic-stricken and have serious death anxiety, which will affect their normal life.

The author has participated in the activities of different public welfare organizations involving in other social issues by using group work methods, and found that the forms of the activities were widely welcomed in the process of specific development of group work methods. The group members actively participated in the activities with frequent interactions, and emphasized the participation of each group member.

## 2. Research design of group work

### 2.1. object selection and main index design

The researchers used the time of compulsory public courses in Yunnan agricultural university to conduct questionnaire survey on death attitudes and death education needs and left contact information, so as to facilitate the recruitment of team members later. According to the number of students, grades and majors in Yunnan agricultural university, a random survey was conducted, and 300 questionnaires were issued. The students with obvious death avoidance and death fear were contacted, and a 12-member education group was formed on a voluntary basis.

The team used the Chinese version of the dap-r scale (death attitude description scale) as an indicator to evaluate the

effectiveness of the team's work, which was mainly divided into the following five categories: death fear, death avoidance, approach acceptance, escape acceptance and natural acceptance. On a scale of 1-5, from 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree. Before the start of the first group activity, the group members were given psychological tests to exclude the impact of mental health problems on death cognition, so as to more accurately assess the effectiveness of the group's work.

## **2.2. Develop the basic principles of the group work program**

The following basic principles should be considered in the formulation of the group work plan: firstly, the educational group should be adopted in the group work to impart death-related knowledge. The starting point is to enable the group members to better accept the death knowledge, and the effectiveness of the group work method in imparting death knowledge should be evaluated and tested. Secondly, as one of the professional methods of social work, group work has high requirements for scientific theories. In this practical exploration, the social work teachers of the school have conducted in-depth research on the theories, practice models and effects related to group work, and the team organizers have the experience and skills of group work. Thirdly, the work plan and activity design of the group should conform to the physiological and psychological characteristics of contemporary college students, fully consider the ability of college students to accept knowledge and psychological capacity, not only to pay attention to the common needs of college students for death education, but also to consider the particularity of each individual.

## **2.3. The objectives, number of sessions, and time of group work**

The group work was arranged for a period of one month, which was divided into five activities, each of which lasted about an hour. Each activity was aimed at imparting certain aspects of death education. The goal of the first activity is to understand the purpose and general process of the group activity, get to know each other among the group members, clarify the group contract, and initially establish the relationship between the group members, the group leader and the volunteers. The second activity aims to let the team members understand the definition of death in different disciplines, and preliminarily explore the team members' preliminary feelings on the phenomenon of death. The goal of the third activity is to make the group members understand the symbolic symbol of death -- funeral and mourning. Through learning and group activities, the fear of funeral and death of the group members can be reduced, and the intuitive feelings of the group members about death and

funeral can be understood. The goal of the fourth activity is to understand the group members' attitudes towards some common death problems and help them to establish a correct view on death, outlook on life and values. The goal of the fourth activity is to understand the group members' attitudes towards some common death problems and help them to establish a correct view on death, outlook on life and values.

## **2.4. Group work intervention effect evaluation**

The assessment of the team work is divided into two types: effectiveness assessment and process assessment. The effect assessment of group work is mainly to understand the effect of death education and the actual effect of students' acceptance of knowledge, and to test the effectiveness of group work as a method and the changes of group members. Process evaluation refers to the evaluation of the performance of the group members at the end of each group activity. The purpose is to evaluate the shortcomings of each death education content, the status of the group members' acceptance of knowledge, and the advantages and disadvantages of the activity design, so as to master the advantages of the group working method compared with the traditional education method

The measurement tools for assessment are as follows: firstly, the recording of group activities. After each group activity, the volunteers immediately write a brief report of the activity, make detailed records of the feelings of the group members, and master the progress of the group. Secondly, through the method of participant observation, volunteers can actually perceive the subjective feelings of group members, such as their behavior, communication style and satisfaction, and record them systematically. Thirdly, based on the dap-r scale, the group work was evaluated from five dimensions in the pre-test and post-test, so as to show the change in the death attitude of the group members and further reveal the effectiveness of the group work education method

## **3. EFFECT EVALUATION AND REFLECTION**

### **3.1. Group work intervention effect**

#### *3.1.1. Activity effect evaluation.*

According to the program design of the activity, the evaluation of the effect of the activity is mainly the post-test of the group members with the death attitude scale to observe the change of the group members' death attitude. The test results of the death attitude scale of 12 group members are shown in table 2:

**Table 1** The results of all dimensions of death attitude description scale were analyzed before and after the activity

The dimension	Before the test	After the test	The changing value
Death fear	2.65	2.43	-0.24
Escape from death	2.68	2.47	-0.21
Approach to accept	2.43	2.39	-0.04
Fled to accept	2.47	2.39	-0.08
Natural to accept	3.95	4.26	+0.31

Analysis found that the test data before and after change after group activities, naturally accept dimension has the highest average score of 4.26, with a pretest score has improved greatly, which suggests that team members will be more normal look at death, death as a natural phenomenon of life, without too much fear of death and the pursuit of death. The lower scores were still toward acceptance, which was the beautification of death, and escape acceptance, which was the view of death as a relief. The average scores were 2.39 and 2.41, which were not significantly different from the pre-test scores, indicating that the group members were still the least likely to adopt these two attitudes in the face of death. The two dimensions of death fear and death avoidance were in the middle of the score, and the average score was 2.52 and 2.57, which had a certain decrease with the pre-test score, indicating that among the group members, some students still had the psychology of fear of death and would take the behavior of avoiding death. The change of data indicates that group activities have a more positive change in group members' attitude towards death, and their fear and avoidance of death have been reduced to a certain extent. They can also view death as a natural phenomenon with a normal attitude. The overall goal of death education for college students has been achieved.

### 3.1.2. Assessment of activities by team members.

A simple activity evaluation questionnaire was designed to survey team members. In terms of group activity satisfaction, all 12 members chose satisfaction. In terms of the goal and the extent to which the goal was achieved, the team members agreed that the goal was basically achieved. Due to the limitation of activity design and the lack of explanation content, the effect achieved in shaping the concept of death was very limited. The content of the activity is interesting and appropriate, which is greatly supported by the team members. They all believe that it is a new way to receive knowledge, and they are very active in participating in it, which is a very beneficial way for them to learn knowledge. After participating in the whole activity,

the team members had a certain understanding of social work as a major and group working methods, and had a great interest in it. As for the evaluation of the integrity of the activity, the group members all thought that the integrity of the activity was still lacking, the number of activities was few, and there were only three thematic activities related to death education.

### 3.1.3. Group members' assessment of the group leader

Advantages: team members think group leaders in the activities, listening to team members to speak, actively guide team members to participate in the activities, for the special group without prejudice, actively encourage every team members, actively participate in activities, is a qualified team leader, team members formed between a benign atmosphere of trust and established a profound friendship.

Disadvantages: the group leader is too single in the choice of activities, the form is relatively simple, the lack of atmosphere required by the activities, which affects the effect of the activities. At the end of the activity, the team leader should establish a way of communication among the team members, so that the relationship between the team members can still be connected and maintain communication after the activity.

## 3.2. Summary of the advantages of the group working method

### 3.2.1. The advantage of professional concept of "helping others to help themselves"

In the traditional education method, more attention is paid to the imparting of knowledge. The examination method is rigid, ignoring the students' changes after learning knowledge and the application of knowledge. Especially

for college students, after the college entrance examination, they have a serious aversion to the previous "exam-oriented education". If they still adopt the previous traditional education methods in death education, they will be bored, which is very unfavorable to the acceptance of knowledge and the change of students themselves. Group work method in college students' death education is an important purpose is to change the original incorrect view of death, of the college students to shape the correct view of death, a positive outlook on life, values, let college students in the future life more happiness of life, team work is only as a kind of method involved in the death education for college students, the relevant problems in later life, still need to college students to face myself.

### *3.2.2. The media advantage of group activities*

The method of group work is involved in the death education of college students. On the one hand, knowledge is imparting in the form of games, so that college students can learn happily in the games. On the other hand, the emphasis on the active participation of college students in activities fully arouses the enthusiasm and interest of college students and makes them more active in the study of death education. Through a variety of different scenarios simulation, role experience and group activities after the communication, team members can establish themselves to death this phenomenon of rational thinking, change the traditional view, more importantly, to solve many practical problems related to provide advance processing mode of death, when facing these problems in the future, won't produce death anxiety and escape the psychological problems. In the evaluation stage, a special questionnaire is designed to survey the team members, and the team members and workers are evaluated comprehensively. At the same time, not only the evaluation of the activity effect, but also the evaluation of the work of the workers, so as to achieve the common development between the workers and the team members.

### *3.2.3. Advantages of professional methods*

As one of the professional methods of social work, the group working method has its own professional working method and process. In the preparation stage, it conducts pre-test to understand the status quo of a certain problem, evaluates the actual needs of the service object, and designs the activity plan according to the status quo and needs. In the implementation stage, the group leader uses professional skills such as listening and guiding to carry out activities.

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