



The Application of Psychodrama in Students' Mental Health Education

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Abstract. School psychodrama refers to a set of effective psychological teaching approaches based on the principles and methods of psychodrama, which utilizes technology to solve students' psychological problems. It breaks through the traditional form of school psychology teaching, instead using popular, vivid, relaxed, and unique methods, and cultivates students' independent understanding through students' performance, observation, and feelings, to further promote the treatment of students' psychological problems. The current research analyzes the grounds and characteristics of school psychodrama. Beginning with its theoretical basis, this analysis deeply studies the practical strategy of school psychodrama and proposes to carry out future research and application of school psychodrama based on introducing innovative themes, strengthening the professional training of teachers, and extending application channels.

Keywords: School Psychodrama · Students' mental health · Educational applications

1 The Connotation and Theoretical Basis of School Psychodrama

1.1 The Connotation of School Psychodrama

School psychodrama is an adaptation of psychodrama. Psychodrama, also known as a social drama, was invented and developed by the Viennese psychiatrist Moreno in the thirties of the twentieth century [1]. School psychodrama involves encouraging students to re-experience spiritual events or spiritual problems, and feel emotional contradictions through the form of stage performance with the help and guidance of professional psychology teachers. Afterward, students are supposed to discover their personality characteristics, interpersonal relationship conditions, and their respective spiritual problems, which they find a way to solve independently. Then through action simulation and action compensation, they can gradually change the original erroneous ideas and practices, accept new ideas, and learn new practices [2]. Students may develop a variety of mental health problems during their development, the school psychodrama is a way to combine mental health problems and their solutions through the students' own interpretation and discussion. The main popular psychodramas can be divided into therapeutic small group psychodramas and performative large-scale psychodramas [3].

Currently, the mental health problems of adolescent students still need attention. School psychodrama is an educational method for students to learn to actively face and solve psychological problems by interpreting stories close to students themselves, helping them to solve real-life problems, and guiding them to change their cognition, emotions and behaviors [4]. Psychodrama is not only beneficial to help students with psychological problems to recover their psychological health, but also to help the majority of psychologically healthy students to explore themselves further, understand themselves, establish a good self-concept, and improve their personality, so it has been widely used in school mental health education.

1.2 The Theoretical Basis of School Psychodrama

Positive Psychology

Positive psychology is proposed based on the principles of negative psychology and was first put forward in Maslow's book *Motivation and Personality* in 1954. It advocates that social psychology should be based on people's realistic, potential, and developmental abilities, values, and functions, and it promotes the use of positive methods to explain people's psychological phenomena, through which process various factors can be found to help students achieve psychological harmony under good social conditions [5]. In the selection of themes of psychodrama, theories from positive psychology should be used to guide and cultivate students' positive personalities, motivations, self-discipline, and other positive emotions and characters in psychodrama, and carry out training for positive emotions and counseling for the happy spirit.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Cognitive behavioral therapy is a structured, short-course, cognitively oriented psychotherapy approach developed by A.T. Beck in the 1960s. It believes that a person's emotions come from the person's beliefs, evaluations, and interpretations of what is happening to them, rather than from the things themselves. Therefore its main focus is not only on the external manifestations of behavior and emotions, but also on the individual's irrational cognitive problems, which can be changed by changing the individual's misconceptions about himself, people or things. In psychodrama, students can be guided to self-awareness, to identify and change their own bad perceptions. The change of the individual's cognitive structure means a new understanding of oneself, a gradual improvement of self-evaluation and self-efficacy, a rebuilding of confidence, and an improvement of psychological quality.

Social Role Theory

On the one hand, individuals play various roles in their life, but due to the complexity of reality, not everyone can play their role very well. People often have role confusion in life and conflict with roles, resulting in self-contradiction, self-confusion, and self-conflict, which has caused great trouble and interference with their survival. Psychodrama, on the other hand, allows people to perform, experience, and feel various characters freely, and gain inspiration and lessons from those characters. Psychological role theory believes that there are two main categories of psychological roles: psychological role-players

and characters played in the middle of reality and fantasy. The psychological actor temporarily gets rid of his original survival role and life state, and the originally suppressed mood and pain are liberated and expressed in the illusory character, to help themselves re-evaluate his own spiritual and practical problems from a new perspective, change his views and practices, and thus improve the problem.

2 The Educational Function of School Psychodrama

2.1 Elicit Emotional Experiences in Students

School psychodrama is a teaching method that can fully reflect emotions and gain knowledge. In school psychodramas, specific situations similar to campus life can be presented, and such a specific situation is well known to students. As the plot advances and unfolds, various circumstances in the course of students' well-being development will be shown one by one, and the different feelings of the characters in the play, including laughter, trouble, anxiety, anxiety, worry, etc., will also be displayed, accompanied by various behavioral reflections. Due to the outlets and diverting of emotions, students' psychological pressure will be relieved to a certain extent.

2.2 Change Students' Cognitive Patterns

When students enter the scenes of school psychodrama, they often find that not only do they have corresponding psychological problems to characters in the play, but other peers also have similar psychological problems and phenomena. Through performance, students can self-examine, reflect and change their erroneous perceptions [4]. With the change in cognition, students' psychological quality and self-efficacy will be enhanced, and the ability to improve their psychological quality will be strengthened.

2.3 Help Students Identify Their Own Psychological Problems

Mental health education in schools seeks to help students identify their own psychological problems and to enhance their understanding of the meaning of mindfulness and health, as well as to improve their psychological quality and health in general. By using their own school psychological dramas, students can easily identify their own internal problems and deepen their understanding and awareness of these problems, thus making their mental health education more relevant [6].

2.4 Improve Students' Social Skills

School psychodrama creates a multi-level interpersonal environment and psychologically simulated society. Students can transfer various thoughts, wills, and activities from school psychodrama to real life. It helps students acquire more specific knowledge of interpersonal relationships and prevents frustration directly from a lack of exercise in school social life.

3 The Application of School Psychodrama in Students' Psychological Education

3.1 Cautiously Choose and Create School Psychodrama Themes

In the creation and rehearsal of school psychodrama, it is necessary to select themes that can have alerting and exemplary significance for students' physical and mental health growth according to the characteristics of their mental health problems and focusing on enriching the rational consciousness connotation of school psychodrama, so that students can have rational judgments on specific characters in the play. In the creative selection of the theme of school psychodrama, it is also important to take the psychology of positive mental states to guide students to attend to and cultivate their positive emotions, personalities, motivation, and other positive qualities, and carry out training of positive emotions and counseling of happy mental states. At the same time, we should not neglect the exploration of mental health and character connotation in the selection of psychological drama themes, and should appropriately expand the proportion of such themes so that the classic image of healthy mind and character can be learned and imitated by more students through the performance of psychological drama.

3.2 Strengthen the Professional Training of Teachers for School Psychodrama

Teachers play an important role in the organization and practice of school psychodrama, serving as the backbone of the construction of the school psychodrama team. Thus building a professional, stable, and qualified teacher team for psychodrama is a key factor in the development of school psychodrama [7]. Schools should improve the specialization and regularization of psychodrama teachers. First, we need to improve the specialized training of teachers in schools. Schools need to send teachers for professional training to have comprehensive theoretical knowledge and practical experience in school psychodrama, so that these teachers can conduct in-depth observation and discussion on school psychodrama teaching, skillfully apply the knowledge of school psychodrama, and flexibly apply the teaching guidance skills of school psychodrama. Second, to strengthen teachers' practical skills in teaching psychodrama in schools [8]. Schools can arrange teachers to write psychological scripts and then create school psychological dramas for students to perform, so that the psychological performance of students and the content of the drama can be constantly refined and summarized, so that theoretical knowledge and practical situations are closely linked. Through continuous practice and practical work, students gradually become professional instructors of school psychological drama teaching.

3.3 Extend the Application Channels of School Psychodrama

Firstly, school psychodrama can enter the theoretical curriculum, and act as a useful supplement and expansion of teaching activities. When school psychodrama enters the teaching, the theoretical course can be presented with a vivid, active, relaxed, democratic, and equal image of school psychodrama, thereby reducing the boring indoctrination of

traditional schooling. The second is to integrate school psychodrama into school psychological education and teaching activities, turn it into regular extracurricular activities, and organize school psychodrama competitions. Thirdly, schools can also form school psychodrama clubs, which will not only show their artistic charm but also fulfill their important functions in school psychological education.

4 Potential Issues in the Application of School Psychodrama in Psychological Education

4.1 More Emphasis on the Psychological Effect Rather Than the Stage Effect

While paying attention to the stage effect of psychological drama, we should also focus on the role of school psychodrama on students' inner development. School psychodrama must achieve two effects; one is to have participants produce inner perceptions and experiences, and the other is that the audience must also produce perceptions and experiences, especially when they sense the problems, they can think about how to face and solve problems. This requires a profound reproduction of students' problems and clear guidance and solution to psychological problems.

4.2 Attention to Guidance and Discussion After the Play

School psychodrama that focuses only on ways to express students' problems or desires will neither encourage students nor allow them to learn how to face and solve their problems accordingly. It only allows them to vent their emotions to the maximum extent possible and seek empathy and understanding. In this case, school psychodrama plays a minimal role. School psychodrama not only presents students' psychological problems but also focuses on encouraging interaction and communication among group members to stimulate positive and healthy behaviors. Therefore, psychology teachers must have good guidance ability, can flexibly use various psychodrama techniques, and provide timely and reasonable guidance to students, but they cannot be overly dominant in the guidance process [9]. At the same time, psychology teachers should guide students not to equate psychological drama with sketching, to appreciate the plot, and not to ignore spiritual feelings. Psychology teachers should design questions, organize actors and audiences to discuss together, and share the feelings of acting and watching. While paying attention to students' emotional catharsis, it is also necessary to give support and encouragement and actively stimulate students to re-examine themselves. It bears great significance to make appropriate comments on the parts that students do not understand, help students clarify their ideas, and recognize and evaluate themselves more objectively and accurately.

5 Conclusion

In recent years, psychodrama has become an effective approach to mental health education in colleges and universities. Studies have shown that the use of psychodrama exerts a positive influence on students' personality, cognition, and behavior [10] and can effectively improve anxiety [11, 12] and depression [13] and improve students' mental health..

This paper discusses the basic meaning and characteristics of school psychodrama and analyzes the practical strategies of school psychodrama and the problems that should be paid attention to in educational application from its theoretical basis. The issues related to school psychodrama and students' mental health education in the current social environment need to be further studied and discussed. How to achieve the effective usage of school psychodrama should be the direction of our future work.

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