

# Study on the Reasons and Solutions of College Students' Low Willingness to Seek Psychological Help\*

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**Abstract**—With the emphasis on mental health in China, college students' mental health education has become an important task for college students' management. However, the current college students' willingness to seek psychological help is low. In order to improve the effectiveness of college students' mental health education, this paper analyzes the reasons for the low willingness of college students to seek psychological help, and proposes corresponding improvement strategies, hoping to provide reference for the corresponding mental health education reform of colleges.

**Keywords**—willingness to seek psychological help; college students; solution

## I. INTRODUCTION

With the expansion of colleges and universities, the employment of college students, enrollment pressure and the complex interpersonal relationship, the mental health problem of this special group, college student has received attention from all walks of life. Relevant research shows that all kinds of mental illnesses have become an important influencing factor for college students to drop out of school and suspend their studies [1]. If an individual suffers from psychological problems and does not resort to a professional psychological service organization and occupation such as a psychological counseling teacher or a psychologist, but seeks help from a classmate, relatives and friends, the Internet, and even asks for a non-professional support and guidance such as praying to Buddha, it is not conducive to psychological recovery, and may even lead to more serious consequences. However, unfortunately, due to the long-standing phenomenon of "demonizing" mental disorder in China and the lack of publicity of mental health knowledge, college students who need psychological counseling and treatment are often worried that they will be labeled "psychiatric" by the surrounding people, so they are not willing to ask for help of professional psychological service institutions such as college psychological counseling centers. Relevant research has shown that the current college students have

low utilization rate of professional psychological service institutions such as psychological counseling centers, general hospital psychological counseling clinics, and mental hospitals psychology departments [2] [3]. Therefore, it is of great significance and value to improve the psychological health level of college students by raising the psychological help-seeking consciousness of college students and making them actively seek help from professional psychological service institutions when they need them. However, at present, the research and measures taken by colleges and universities for mental health education focus on improving the professional level and teaching ability of psychological counseling teachers, the implementation of mental health education courses for college students, the training of class psychological committee members, and campus mental health knowledge publicity. There are few studies on influencing factors and promotion strategies of willingness to seek psychological help. This paper attempts to analyze the reasons for the low willingness of college students to seek help, and proposes corresponding improvement strategies in order to provide reference for the corresponding reform of mental health education in colleges and universities.

## II. REASONS FOR THE LOW WILLINGNESS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSISTANCE

### A. *The Long-term Prejudice Against People with Mental Disorders in China*

Compared with other diseases, there is a general tendency of "demonization" in mental disorders in China. For example, patients with various mental disorders are considered to have a tendency to hurt others, mental illness may lead to uncontrollable emotions and behaviors and patients with mental disorders may have the tendency of violence. Even medical students have discrimination against mental disorders [4]. At the same time, there is a long-standing phenomenon of mixing "mental disorder" and "psychological problem" in China. In most people's minds, psychological counseling and treatment belong to the treatment of mental illness. Accepting psychological

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counseling and treatment is equivalent to seeing a psychiatrist because one suffers from mental illness [5]. In this context, even if colleges and universities carry out sound mental health education and mental health knowledge, college students are still vulnerable to the concept of universal society. At the same time, the psychological counseling centers of colleges and universities are often located in areas where students are concentrated, such as office of student affairs, dormitory areas, and teaching buildings, while staff responsible for appointments and reception of psychological counseling is mostly undergraduate and postgraduate students in psychology. Students who need the help of professional psychological counseling institutions but are worried that others will know their "psychological problems" are likely to have concerns that their classmates and roommates will know they enter the psychological counseling institution, and believe they have "mental problems" that affect interpersonal relationships, and thus they dare not to enter the psychological counseling center for help. In the practice of psychological counseling in colleges and universities, the author often encounters college students who require to receive psychological counseling through telephone, mail, QQ, WeChat, etc. since they dare not to enter the psychological counseling center for help, those who have experienced repeated ideological struggles before entering the psychological counseling center and even students who were misunderstood to have "mental problems" after receiving psychological counseling. How to improve the social prejudice against psychological and spiritual problems is an important factor influencing the psychological help-seeking consciousness of college students in the future and thus improving their mental health.

*B. College Students Are Worried That the Psychological Problems They Asked Are Exposed to Others*

The confidentiality principle is the basic professional ethics of psychological counseling and treatment. The counselor is obliged to keep the psychological problems of the seekers confidential. However, the psychological counseling and mental health education in colleges and universities in China have long overlapped with ideological and political education. Even most college psychological counseling centers belong to the school, which causes the contradiction between "confidentiality" and "reporting to the student management department" of psychological problems. It is reasonable for psychological counselors to report the psychological issues such as suicide, self-injury or injury to the department of student affairs. However, it is not clear whether the general psychological problem should be reported. For example, when a college student expresses the dissatisfaction with roommates or counselors during the consultation process, or is unwilling to learn and wants to drop out of school, should the counselor give feedback to the student manager such as the counselor? Then even if the counselor strictly abides by the principle of confidentiality, the college students who ask for help will be worried that these sensitive issues will be known by the counselors, roommates and other surrounding people, and they will not be willing to go to the psychological counseling center for help.

*C. The Popularity of Mental Health Knowledge in Colleges and Universities Is Different from Expectations, and Students Have Doubts About the Effectiveness of Psychological Counseling*

Because the psychological counseling and treatment start relatively late in China, the popularization of mental health knowledge has lagged behind in health education. At present, some Chinese people cannot fully acknowledge the effect of psychological counseling. For example, patients with mental illness in China are still skeptical about diagnosing and treating only by "talking" or "doing a questionnaire." Most of the psychological problems encountered by college students are developmental problems, such as interpersonal relationships, test pressures, employment counseling and other general psychological problems. These problems often lack clear diagnostic criteria, and the consultation effect is difficult to be obviously reflected in the short term. At the same time, for these psychological help content, college students can adjust their status through communication with friends, network and even physical exercise, drinking, etc., so they can completely improve the mental status without professional psychological counseling. For a few complicated psychological problems such as obsessive-compulsive disorder, college students who need help may not think that they can cure the disease only by "communication". For non-medical institutions such as college psychological counseling centers, college students may think that their level is limited, and they may not trust the treatment effect, resulting in low willingness of psychological help-seeking.

*D. The Publicity of Mental Health Has a Tendency to Attach Importance to Mental Illness While Ignoring Mental Health*

With the emphasis on mental health work in China, colleges and universities have carried out publicity of mental health knowledge through multiple aspects such as series activities of college students' mental health activity month, publicity of campus mental health knowledge, college students' mental health education courses, mental health knowledge lectures, and class mental activities. However, at present, the publicity of mental health knowledge in domestic colleges and universities focuses on psychological diseases such as depression and other serious psychological problems, and mental illness such as the influence of unhealthy psychological state on individuals, while there are fewer publicity of developmental psychological problems, such as emotional adjustment and interpersonal relationships, communication skills, and academic pressure. This in turn causes students who think that they have more psychological diseases have a strong sense of seeking psychological help, while the willingness to seek help for most common developmental psychological problems in universities are not high, which will cause the students with common psychological problems worry they will be considered to have serious illness. This will further aggravate college students think that those who enter psychological counseling center mostly have "psychological problems", affecting psychological help-seeking consciousness.

### III. SUGGESTIONS AND COUNTERMEASURES

Although the reasons for the current low willingness of college students to seek psychological help are complex, involving social prejudice, cultural characteristics, educational experience, living environment, and the popularity of mental health knowledge, colleges and universities can effectively carry out relevant education and publicity for the above-mentioned influencing factors to enhance the psychological help-seeking awareness of college students. In addition to further strengthening the professional skills of psychological counseling teachers, professional quality training, and carrying out mental health education, combined with the above-mentioned influencing factors, the author puts forward the following suggestions.

#### A. *Strengthening the Publicity of Mental Health Knowledge, Paying Special Attention to the Development of Psychological Problems*

At present, the publicity of mental health knowledge in colleges and universities pays more attention to the harm caused by psychological unhealthy, but there are still some shortcomings in promotion of developmental psychological problems such as academic stress adjustment, emotional management, and even basic knowledge of mental health. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the promotion of general psychological knowledge in colleges and universities in the future. In addition to the publicity carrier such as traditional campus publicity bulletin board, website, campus radio, WeChat public account, official Weibo and other methods that are easily accepted by college students, the publicity methods that students can actively participate in should also be considered, such as competitions and performances that can attract students to participate in, including further strengthening the participation in campus psychological situation drama contest, mental health related essays, speeches, mental health knowledge contests and other campus competition activities, mental health image singer selection, Eysenck personality questionnaire, mental health questionnaire and other commonly used psychological scale public test, excellent class psychological committee evaluation, etc. to enhance students' understanding of mental health and general psychological problems, and help them gradually know that psychological problems are not equal to mental illness, reduce the "stigma" of psychological counseling, and enhance their psychological help-seeking consciousness.

#### B. *Standardizing the Confidentiality System of College Psychological Counseling*

In view of the fact that psychological counseling in colleges and universities may disclose consulting information, the corresponding norms should also be strictly improved. For example, it is necessary to strictly regulate what kind of psychological problems must be reported to the academic department, or what psychological problems can be reported to the counselor, the class teacher, the corresponding college student management personnel, etc.; for the new psychological test, the test results should also be strictly confidential, and for the investigation of subsequent

existing suspected psychological problems should also be carried out in a strict investigation to avoid leaking the results. For the reception staff of the psychological counseling center of the university, in addition to arranging the students of psychology major, it is recommended to increase the counselor to do part-time reception work of psychological counseling center. This not only strictly defines the boundary between the student management staff and the psychological counseling, but also reduces the fear of college students seeking psychological counseling for the disclosure of personal information in the consultation process and raises their awareness of seeking psychological help.

#### C. *Considering Setting up the Psychological Counseling Place in a Relatively Remote Environment*

At present, most colleges and universities in China set up psychological counseling centers in student dormitory, office of student affairs or teaching areas. This kind of setting can really help students to seek help. However, in the above-mentioned environment with large number of people, it is easy for college students who are seeking psychological counseling to worry about personal privacy. In an environment where the prejudice against "psychological problems" in society is difficult to change, colleges and universities can consider setting up psychological counseling places in a more remote environment on campus to reduce the fear of "psychological stigma" among college students who need psychological counseling.

#### D. *Considering Increasing Non Face-to-face Counseling*

In view of the fact that college students are worried that their psychological counseling will be known by others and others think they have "psychiatric diseases", it is also possible to consider non face-to-face consultation methods such as QQ, WeChat, email, etc. Although these consultation methods may unable to solve psychological problems, but can explain, support and make preliminary judgments on their questions, enhance their recognition of psychological counseling, and then enable them to further consider face-to-face psychological counseling in the psychological counseling center to solve their own problems and improve their consciousness of seeking help.

#### E. *Conducting Mental Health Education, Consulting and Counseling Through Methods Acceptable to College Students*

Compared with individual psychological counseling, group psychological counseling, quality development training and other collective projects are more likely to be accepted by college students. In the future, we can consider implementing group counseling for some college students who have common problems, which can help them solve psychological problems effectively. At the same time, they can reduce their prejudice and negative evaluation of psychological problems through mutual communication. They can also further strengthen their communication and teamwork capabilities through quality development training, effectively solve the common psychological problems of

college students such as interpersonal sensitivity, and effectively solve the inadequacy of individual psychological counseling. Besides, for the new students after entering the school, it is necessary to carry out the quality development training of the whole class, to help them adapt the new life, correctly understand the psychological counseling and mental health education, and enhance their awareness of psychological help-seeking.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In summary, the reasons for the low willingness of college students to seek psychological help in China are mainly long-term social and cultural problems. Under the premise that the prejudice of society against mental problems cannot be changed, colleges and universities can consider reducing the prejudice of college students on psychological problems through various ways or reduce the worry of college students to strengthen their willingness to seek psychological help, so as to maintain their mental health.

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