



The Significance and Methods of Psychological Counseling for College Students

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How to cite this paper: Fangfang Mou, Hui Wang. (2023) The Significance and Methods of Psychological Counseling for College Students. *Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Science*, 7(8), 1620-1624. DOI: 10.26855/jhass.2023.08.026

Received: July 22, 2023

Accepted: August 18, 2023

Published: September 15, 2023

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Abstract

Psychological health issues among college students have been on the rise in recent years, with studies indicating a significant increase in depression, anxiety, and other mental health problems in this population. Psychological health issues among college students have become a significant concern in higher education. Psychological counseling is one effective way to address these issues. This article explores the significance and methods of psychological counseling for college students. It also highlights the characteristics of counseling for this population, including their age and developmental stage, academic environment, and cultural diversity. The effectiveness of psychological counseling is discussed, along with its limitations and challenges. Stigma, limited resources, cultural and linguistic diversity, and lack of follow-up and continuity of care are some of the challenges that need to be addressed to ensure the effectiveness of psychological counseling for college students. This article concludes by emphasizing the importance of reducing stigma and increasing access to psychological counseling services, providing adequate resources for mental health services, and addressing the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Keywords

Psychological counseling, College students, Psychological health

1. Introduction

As society develops and people pursue a better quality of life, psychological health issues among college students have become an important concern in higher education. The resolution of such issues is not only related to the personal growth and development of individuals but also to the stability and progress of society. Psychological counseling is one effective way to address psychological health issues among college students. This article aims to explore the significance and methods of psychological counseling for college students.

1.1 Background of Psychological Health Issues in College Students

With the popularization of education and changes in society, psychological health issues among college students have become an important concern in higher education. According to statistics, psychological health issues among college students mainly manifest as anxiety, depression, and interpersonal relationship problems. These issues seriously affect the academic and life quality of college students. At the same time, psychological health issues among college students have become a focus of attention for school administrators and educators. Resolving psychological health issues among college students has become an important task in current higher education (Loice Natukunda, 2021).

1.2 Definition and Significance of Psychological Counseling

Psychological counseling is a person-centered service that mainly involves one-on-one communication between a professional counselor and a seeker of help. The main goal of psychological counseling is to help seekers resolve psychological issues, improve their psychological qualities, and enhance their adaptive abilities. The significance of psychological counseling for college students in addressing psychological health issues is mainly reflected in the following aspects:

(1) Promoting Psychological Health of College Students

Psychological counseling is an important guarantee for the psychological health of college students. Counselors help seekers of help develop a better understanding of their own mental state and provide appropriate guidance and intervention to promote positive change and development in their mental health (Audenaert Mieke, Decramer Adelen, & George Bert, 2021).

(2) Improving Academic Performance

Psychological counseling can help college students overcome various psychological obstacles that hinder academic performance, such as anxiety and depression. Counseling can provide them with emotional support, teach them coping skills, and enhance their motivation to learn (Jane Frances Maley, 2020).

(3) Enhancing Interpersonal Relationships

Psychological counseling can help college students improve their interpersonal communication skills and establish healthy relationships with others. Counselors can help them resolve conflicts, develop empathy, and improve their ability to interact with others (Hongning Zhang, 2022).

2. Characteristics of Psychological Counseling for College Students

Psychological counseling for college students has several characteristics that distinguish it from counseling for other populations:

2.1 Age and Developmental Stage

College students are at a unique age and developmental stage in their lives, which presents unique challenges and opportunities for personal growth. It is a time when individuals transition from adolescence to young adulthood and begin to form their identity, values, and beliefs. They experience significant changes in various areas of their lives, including academic, social, emotional, and physical development. At this stage, college students are often seeking independence and autonomy, which can result in increased stress and anxiety. They are faced with the pressure to achieve academic success, make important life decisions, and establish their place in society. This can be overwhelming and lead to mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety (Yibin Zhang, 2013).

Counseling for college students must take into account their age and developmental stage to provide appropriate guidance and intervention. Counselors must understand the developmental tasks that college students are facing and provide support to help them navigate these challenges. They must also be able to recognize when a student may need additional support from other professionals, such as psychiatrists or medical doctors (Serra Ginalber L O, 2023).

One of the primary developmental tasks of college students is identity formation. They are in the process of figuring out who they are, what they believe, and what values they hold. Counselors can help college students explore their identity and provide guidance as they work through this process. They can help students recognize their strengths and weaknesses, identify their values, and establish their sense of self. Another developmental task of college students is the establishment of autonomy and independence. They are seeking to establish their own identity and make their own decisions, often without the guidance of parents or other authority figures. Counselors can help students develop the skills they need to make decisions and solve problems independently. They can also help students recognize when they need to seek help or support from others.

Counselors must also understand the impact of developmental changes on emotional and social functioning. College students are often faced with a range of emotional challenges, including stress, anxiety, and depression. Counselors can help students develop coping skills to manage stress and anxiety, and provide support to help them work through feelings of depression or other emotional issues.

2.2 Academic Environment

The academic environment of college presents unique challenges and stressors that can impact psychological health. The academic environment is highly competitive and demanding, which can lead to stress, anxiety, and depression among students. The pressure to achieve academic success, meet deadlines, and manage multiple responsibilities can be overwhelming for many students.

Counselors must understand the academic environment and its impact on the mental health of college students to provide appropriate counseling. They must be aware of the academic expectations and pressures that students face and be able to recognize when these pressures are contributing to mental health problems. Counselors can provide support to help students manage academic stress, develop effective study skills, and cope with academic setbacks.

One of the primary academic stressors for college students is academic performance. The pressure to achieve good grades and perform well in classes can lead to stress and anxiety. Counselors can help students develop strategies to manage their academic workload, prioritize tasks, and set realistic goals. They can also help students develop effective study habits and provide support and guidance when academic setbacks occur. Another academic stressor for college students is the transition to college life. The transition from high school to college can be challenging, and many students struggle to adjust to the new academic and social environment. Counselors can help students navigate this transition by providing support and guidance on how to manage their time, build relationships with peers, and cope with homesickness or other emotional challenges.

Counselors must also be aware of the impact of academic stress on physical health. College students may neglect their physical health due to the demands of their academic workload, leading to poor sleep habits, unhealthy eating habits, and lack of exercise. This can contribute to mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety. Counselors can provide guidance on healthy lifestyle habits and stress management techniques to promote both physical and mental health.

2.3 Cultural Diversity

College campuses are diverse environments, with students from different backgrounds and cultures. As a result, counselors must be sensitive to the cultural diversity of the students they serve. They must be knowledgeable about different cultures and be able to provide culturally sensitive counseling. Cultural diversity affects the way that students perceive and experience mental health issues, and counselors must be able to understand and respect these differences to provide effective counseling.

Counselors must first acknowledge their own cultural biases and be willing to learn about the cultural backgrounds of the students they serve. They must be open to different ways of thinking and be willing to adapt their counseling style to meet the needs of their clients. Counselors must be aware of cultural values, norms, and beliefs that may affect the way that clients perceive and seek help for mental health issues. Cultural differences can also impact communication styles and interpersonal relationships. Counselors must be able to recognize these differences and adapt their communication style to meet the needs of their clients. They must be able to establish a trusting relationship with clients and be able to understand and respect the unique experiences and perspectives of each client. In addition, counselors must be aware of the impact of cultural stigma on mental health issues. Mental health issues may be stigmatized in certain cultures, and individuals may be hesitant to seek help for fear of judgment or social stigma. Counselors must be able to address these concerns and provide support to help clients overcome stigma and seek help for mental health issues. Finally, counselors must be able to work with clients from diverse backgrounds to develop culturally sensitive treatment plans. Treatment plans must take into account cultural values, beliefs, and norms, and be tailored to meet the needs of each client. Counselors must be able to recognize when cultural barriers may impact treatment and be able to work with clients to address these barriers.

3. Methods of Psychological Counseling

Psychological counseling for college students can be provided through various methods, depending on the student's needs and preferences. The three most common methods are individual counseling, group counseling, and online counseling.

Individual counseling involves one-on-one sessions between the counselor and the student seeking help. This type of counseling is best suited for students who prefer a personalized approach and require focused attention to their specific concerns. Individual counseling allows the student to work directly with a counselor to develop a

treatment plan tailored to their needs. It also provides a safe and confidential space for students to explore their thoughts and feelings without fear of judgment.

Group counseling involves several students meeting with a counselor to discuss common concerns and share experiences. This type of counseling is best suited for students who prefer to work collaboratively with others and benefit from the support of a group setting. Group counseling provides an opportunity for students to connect with others who are experiencing similar issues and to develop social support networks. It also provides an opportunity for students to practice social and communication skills in a safe and supportive environment.

Online counseling, also known as e-counseling, involves counseling sessions conducted over the internet. This type of counseling is best suited for students who prefer the convenience and flexibility of online communication. Online counseling can take place through various platforms, such as email, chat, or video conferencing. It allows students to access counseling services from any location and at any time, which is especially beneficial for those who have limited access to traditional counseling services due to geographic location or scheduling conflicts.

The selection of counseling method depends on the nature of the psychological issue and the student's needs and preferences. Some issues may be better suited for individual counseling, while others may benefit from group counseling or online counseling. It is important for counselors to assess each student's needs and preferences and to work with them to develop a counseling plan that best meets their needs.

4. Effectiveness of Psychological Counseling

Research has shown that psychological counseling is effective in addressing psychological health issues among college students. Studies have demonstrated that counseling can improve students' psychological well-being, increase their coping skills, and enhance their ability to manage stress and anxiety. Additionally, counseling has been shown to improve academic performance, such as increasing GPA and decreasing academic probation rates.

Moreover, counseling can improve interpersonal relationships by enhancing communication skills and promoting healthy relationship patterns. It can also reduce the risk of future mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety. Counseling can provide students with the skills and tools they need to manage future stressors and to prevent the development of more severe mental health issues.

However, the effectiveness of psychological counseling depends on several factors. One important factor is the counselor's qualifications and experience. A qualified and experienced counselor can provide effective counseling services and tailor treatment to meet the specific needs of each student. The quality of the counseling relationship is also important. A positive and trusting relationship between the counselor and student is crucial for successful counseling outcomes.

The motivation and willingness of the student seeking help is another important factor in the effectiveness of counseling. Students who are motivated and willing to actively engage in the counseling process are more likely to experience positive outcomes. Additionally, the duration and intensity of counseling can also impact its effectiveness.

5. Limitations and Challenges of Psychological Counseling

Despite its effectiveness, psychological counseling for college students faces several limitations and challenges. Some of these include:

5.1 Stigma and Resistance

Stigma and resistance to seeking help for mental health issues remain a significant barrier to accessing psychological counseling. Despite the increasing awareness and education about mental health, some college students may still be hesitant to seek help due to fear of judgment or social stigma. They may feel embarrassed or ashamed to admit that they are struggling with mental health issues. Additionally, some students may view seeking help as a sign of weakness or feel that they should be able to handle their problems on their own.

5.2 Limited Resources

Many colleges and universities have limited resources for psychological counseling, which can hinder the availability and accessibility of services. This can include a limited number of counselors, long wait times for appointments, and inadequate funding for mental health services. The demand for counseling services often exceeds the

available resources, leaving many students without access to the support they need.

5.3 Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

Cultural and linguistic diversity among college students can present challenges for psychological counseling. Counselors must be knowledgeable about cultural differences and sensitive to the needs of students from diverse backgrounds. Language barriers and differences in cultural norms and values can impact the effectiveness of counseling. Counselors must be able to provide culturally sensitive counseling and adapt their approach to meet the needs of each student.

5.4 Lack of Follow-up and Continuity of Care

Follow-up and continuity of care after initial counseling sessions are crucial for sustaining the benefits of psychological counseling. However, many college counseling centers face challenges in providing follow-up and continuity of care due to limited resources and high demand for services. Students may not receive the ongoing support they need to maintain progress and prevent relapse. This can lead to a cycle of repeated counseling sessions without achieving lasting change.

6. Conclusion

Psychological counseling is an effective way to address psychological health issues among college students. It can promote their psychological health, improve academic performance, and enhance interpersonal relationships. However, psychological counseling faces several limitations and challenges that need to be addressed to ensure its effectiveness. Colleges and universities should take steps to reduce stigma and increase access to psychological counseling services, provide adequate resources for mental health services, and address the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Funding

This work has been supported in part by the Research on the construction path and evaluation mechanism of labor education in colleges and universities in the new era (Inner Mongolia Philosophy and Social Science Special Project in 2021) (Project number: ZSZX21167).

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