

Exploring the roles of self-care and self-awareness in the psychological well-being of college students

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Abstract: Currently, college students face a multitude of pressures, including academic demands, social relationships, and future employment prospects, which can potentially impact their psychological well-being. This study aims to explore the roles of self-care and self-awareness in the psychological well-being of college students. Through surveys and interviews, the research findings indicate that self-care and self-awareness can effectively alleviate the psychological stress experienced by college students, enhancing their adaptability and psychological resilience. The results suggest a positive correlation between high levels of self-care and self-awareness and better psychological well-being. This study underscores the importance of strengthening psychological health education in colleges to help students cultivate positive self-images, enhance self-care and self-awareness, and thereby maintaining their psychological well-being.

Key words: self-care; self-awareness; college students; psychological well-being; stress management

1 Introduction

With the intensification of societal competition, college students face unprecedented pressures in academics, social interactions, and future planning. Prolonged psychological stress of this nature can lead to issues like anxiety and depression, significantly affecting their academic performance and quality of life. Consequently, maintaining the psychological well-being of college students has become an urgent concern. Self-care and self-awareness, as crucial mechanisms of psychological adaptation, hold significant importance in promoting individual psychological health, increasing life satisfaction, and happiness. This study aims to delve into the significant roles of self-care and self-awareness in the psychological well-being of college students through theoretical analysis and empirical research.

2 The alleviating role of self-care in college students' psychological stress

Self-care, as an internal mechanism for self-comfort and protection, is increasingly gaining attention for its significance in individual psychological well-being. Among college students, self-care not only contributes to enhancing psychological resilience but also effectively mitigates psychological issues arising from academic demands, interpersonal relationships, and future plans.

2.1 The concept and significance of self-care

Self-care refers to an individual's self-love and self-acceptance, encompassing understanding and acceptance of self-imperfections, compassion for challenging circumstances, and care for personal emotions. This concept holds particular

importance in countering the mounting psychological stress, especially the stress faced by college students in their growth, academics, and social life. High levels of self-care encourage individuals to confront self-challenges in a healthier manner, thus maintaining psychological balance when confronted with failures, criticisms, or other life pressures. In the current educational and societal context, college students often grapple with external expectations and evaluations, which may result in a loss of self-worth and diminished self-esteem. Cultivating self-care plays a pivotal role in preventing the damage caused by negative self-evaluation, excessive self-criticism, and prolonged psychological stress. It encourages students to develop an inner sense of compassion that allows them to maintain benevolence and understanding towards themselves, even in the face of setbacks and challenges [1].

2.2 How self-care impacts psychological well-being

Self-care affects an individual's psychological well-being through several key channels. Firstly, it facilitates the development of a positive self-dialogue by reducing self-criticism and self-deprecation, thus strengthening an individual's self-esteem and self-confidence. Secondly, self-care can promote emotional regulation, aiding individuals in effectively facing and managing negative emotions rather than avoiding or suppressing them. Finally, self-care is related to psychological resilience, supporting individuals in maintaining a positive and adaptive attitude when confronted with challenges and stress. Among college students, self-care has been proven to be an effective strategy in preventing mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and excessive stress. Through self-care, students can alleviate excessive worries about grades, interpersonal relationships, and future, enabling them to focus more on current tasks and maintain their motivation for learning and life. Furthermore, self-care fosters improved problem-solving and decision-making abilities, allowing students to maintain clear thinking when dealing with difficult decisions or solving complex problems [2].

2.3 Strategies for enhancing self-care to cope with college life stress

There are existed several effective strategies for enhancing self-care among college students. Firstly, self-care can be enhanced through specialized training and workshops. Practices such as mindfulness meditation and mindfulness-based stress reduction have been demonstrated to boost an individual's self-care abilities. Through these practices, students can learn how to stay calm and self-accepting when facing stress and challenges. Secondly, establishing a supportive social environment is crucial for cultivating self-care. Universities can encourage students to practice self-care on and off campus by offering psychological counseling, organizing self-care related activities, and establishing support groups. Additionally, teachers and counselors play vital roles in providing positive feedback and support to help students build and maintain a positive self-image. Furthermore, the development of individual habits contributes to the enhancement of self-care. Encouraging students to engage in regular self-reflection, identify and express personal needs, and learn how to cope with stress and challenges in a healthy manner is essential. For instance, activities such as journal writing, art therapy, and physical exercise are effective methods for promoting self-care and self-understanding. In summary, self-care plays a significant role in maintaining the psychological well-being of college students. Through education and practice, we can not only help students develop a more positive self-image but also provide them with effective strategies for coping with life challenges and stress. In this process, universities, teachers, peers, and students themselves all play indispensable roles.

3 The role of self-awareness in the psychological adaptation process

In the field of modern psychology, self-awareness is considered a core component of an individual's self-consciousness, involving how individuals understand and interpret their internal states and behavioral patterns. Among college students, self-awareness is particularly crucial for cultivating psychological adaptability, as this stage of life presents multiple challenges related to identity, future planning, and interpersonal interactions.

3.1 Multidimensional analysis of self-awareness

Self-awareness is a multidimensional and complex construct that encompasses awareness of one's personality, abilities, interests, values, and emotional states. These dimensions are intertwined and collectively shape an individual's self-image and self-esteem. Possessing accurate self-awareness implies that individuals can clearly recognize their strengths and limitations, enabling them to set reasonable expectations and achievable goals when facing challenges [3].

During the college phase, the multidimensionality of self-awareness manifests in students' understanding of themselves in social, academic, and career planning contexts. For instance, a student with an accurate perception of their academic abilities is more likely to set appropriate learning goals and adopt effective study strategies. In social settings, students who are aware of their emotional tendencies and communication styles can establish and maintain interpersonal relationships more effectively. Therefore, the multidimensional nature of self-awareness provides rich resources for the psychological adaptation of college students.

3.2 Positive impacts of self-awareness on college students' psychological adaptation

Self-awareness has profound effects on the psychological adaptation process of college students. Firstly, accurate self-awareness contributes to emotional regulation. Understanding one's emotional patterns and triggers helps students predict and manage emotional reactions, thereby reducing unnecessary emotional distress. Secondly, self-awareness promotes more effective problem-solving. Recognizing one's thinking patterns and problem-solving styles enables students to face academic and life challenges more flexibly [4]. Additionally, self-awareness enhances self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's confidence in completing tasks. This confidence arises from a correct assessment of one's capabilities and motivates students to overcome difficulties and actively pursue their goals.

College students with well-developed self-awareness demonstrate higher psychological resilience and adaptability when faced with life and academic challenges and stress. They can not only assess challenges reasonably but can also employ appropriate coping strategies based on their abilities and resources. This positive coping approach further promotes personal growth and self-fulfilment, creating a cycle of positive self-reinforcement.

3.3 Methods to enhance self-awareness and practical application for college students

Enhancing self-awareness among college students requires the comprehensive application of various methods. Reflective practices are key to improving self-awareness. Through activities such as journal writing, participating in group discussions, or one-on-one counseling, students can delve deeper into their behaviors and feelings, identify potential cognitive biases, and explore their intrinsic motivations. Universities should provide relevant workshops and training, such as role-playing and scenario simulations, to help students enhance self-awareness in real or simulated situations.

Moreover, psychological assessment tools are effective means to enhance self-awareness. Through personality quizzes, aptitude tests, and other assessments, college students can gain valuable feedback regarding their personality, interests, and abilities. However, it is essential to ensure the scientific validity and appropriateness of these assessments and to provide proper interpretation and guidance by professionals.

In daily life, encouraging students to establish long-term self-monitoring habits is also crucial. This includes regular self-reflection, setting and reviewing personal goals, and actively seeking feedback from others. These practices not only help students maintain a deep understanding of themselves but also encourage them to maintain an open and accepting attitude towards their own growth and change.

In conclusion, self-awareness, as a significant component of college students' psychological adaptation, deserves high attention and active cultivation. Through various methods and practices, college students can establish and strengthen their self-awareness, enabling them to better cope with the challenges of learning and life and achieve personal growth and development. Throughout this process, universities, teachers, and mental health professionals should assume their

respective responsibilities in providing the necessary support and resources to students.

4 The role of universities in promoting self-care and self-awareness among students

In contemporary society, college students face numerous challenges to their mental well-being, making higher education institutions pivotal in fostering students' self-care and self-awareness. This chapter delves into the primary challenges in current psychological health of college students, analyzes the role of universities in mental health education, and puts forth a series of recommended programs and strategies to enhance students' self-care and self-awareness.

4.1 Challenges in the current psychological health of college students

21st-century college students find themselves in an era of information explosion and rapid social change, accompanied by increased psychological stress and challenges. Firstly, academic pressures are a significant source of psychological burden. College students have to cope with intensive coursework, demanding academic requirements, while also considering future career planning, all of which can lead to severe anxiety and stress overload [5]. Secondly, the fast-paced nature of modern society and the highly competitive environment make college students more prone to feelings of frustration and powerlessness when encountering failure and setbacks. Moreover, the prevalence of social media exacerbates these pressures. On various platforms, people tend to showcase their idealized selves, leading many students into the trap of comparison with others, resulting in feelings of inferiority and anxiety. Simultaneously, the rise of virtual social interactions makes students feel less comfortable in real-life social situations, as they lack the necessary interpersonal skills, further increasing their psychological burdens. Collectively, these factors expose college students to various psychological health issues, including tendencies towards depression, anxiety, sleep disturbances, and self-harm. If these issues are not addressed and intervened upon, they can not only affect students' academic performance but also have far-reaching consequences on their long-term happiness and career development.

4.2 The role of higher education institutions in mental health education

Higher education institutions serve not only as temples of knowledge but also as cradles for students' intellectual growth and social adaptability. During this crucial stage, college students face pressures from academics, personal relationships, and future planning, making mental health education particularly vital. Higher education institutions play multifaceted roles, which are deeply connected to students' psychological well-being and overall success.

4.2.1 Establishment of a comprehensive mental health service system

Universities bear the responsibility of establishing a comprehensive and accessible mental health service system. This entails investment in qualified mental health professionals to expand the service scope while enhancing the quality and consistency of these services [6]. Clinical psychological counseling, psychological assessment, emergency interventions, and referral services should all be integrated into the system. Additionally, culturally sensitive and personalized services should be provided to cater for diverse student groups based on cultural, gender, and socioeconomic backgrounds. In terms of psychological crisis management, universities should formulate clear protocols and procedures to address student suicides, self-harm, campus bullying, and other psychological crisis events. This requires establishing partnerships with local healthcare institutions, community resources, and emergency services to ensure students receive necessary support during critical moments [7].

4.2.2 Integration of mental health education into academic curricula and campus life

Incorporating mental health education into formal curricula is crucial to raising students' awareness and self-care abilities. Universities can infuse important mental health information and resources into students' daily learning through the introduction of mental health courses, workshops, seminars, and lectures. For instance, coping strategies for stress, interpersonal skills, conflict resolution methods, handling negative emotions, and more are indispensable skills for students

in their campus life. Furthermore, mental health education should extend to extracurricular activities. Through student organizations, social events, volunteer services, and campus activities, students can learn and apply these skills in practice. This not only helps build a supportive community but also encourages students to seek help when facing challenges.

4.2.3 Fostering a positive campus culture

Universities must strive to create a campus atmosphere that promotes mental well-being. This includes dispelling stigmas associated with mental health, encouraging open and honest dialogues, and increasing the awareness of mental health issues within the campus community [8]. Faculty and staff should also undergo relevant training to better support and guide students. To build such an environment, universities can establish mental health ambassador programs involving students, faculty, and administrators who advocate for mental health and well-being. Additionally, hosting mental health awareness weeks or months can raise campus-wide awareness and understanding of the importance of mental health. Moreover, the creation of student support networks is crucial. This may include student-led support groups, social activities, and collaborations with alumni aimed at providing peer understanding and emotional support. These networks are vital for students' mental well-being. Higher education institutions play a central role in promoting students' mental health, and their responsibilities extend far beyond imparting academic knowledge. By implementing the above measures, universities can not only address students' current mental health needs but also teach them essential self-care skills, helping them establish healthy lifestyles to prepare for future challenges and opportunities [9].

4.3 Recommended programs and strategies to enhance self-care and self-awareness

When confronted with the various pressures and challenges of higher education, college students need to be equipped with coping mechanisms to promote their mental health and personal development. Higher education institutions have a responsibility to provide comprehensive and tailored support for students through a range of strategies. The following section elaborates on several effective programs and strategies aimed at promoting students' self-care and self-awareness.

Firstly, developing personalized mental health intervention programs is paramount. Mental health is not a one-size-fits-all issue, and every student has unique needs and experiences. Mental health programs should, therefore, be designed to be adaptable to individual circumstances. On the one hand, investment should be made in resources and strategies addressing common issues such as stress management and anxiety relief. On the other hand, the specific needs of marginalized student groups (e.g. students from diverse cultural backgrounds, those with specific physical or mental health needs) should be considered, providing tailored services through individual counseling, support groups, and workshops focused on specific issues.

Additionally, strengthening resilience training is of utmost importance. Resilience refers to the ability of individuals to adapt and recover in the face of stress or adversity. Universities can enhance students' resilience by offering training in practices like mindfulness, emotional regulation, problem-solving, and decision-making skills. For instance, mindfulness and meditation training can help students learn to focus on the present moment, reducing anxiety related to past or future concerns. By providing training in these skills, students can cope better with stress and challenges, lowering the risk of adverse mental health outcomes.

Promoting activities that integrate physical and mental health are equally essential. The connection between physical and mental well-being is widely acknowledged, and higher education institutions should champion this integrated approach. For example, offering various mind-body activities like yoga, Tai Chi, dance, outdoor sports, etc., can help students alleviate psychological stress and enhance the mind-body connection. These activities aid students in relaxation through physical activity, and increase self-awareness. Moreover, education on nutrition, sleep, and personal care should also be integrated into programs as these factors have a direct impact on mental health.

Furthermore, cultivating positive interpersonal relationships is crucial for students' long-term psychological well-being. Higher education institutions can foster healthy social interactions by organizing team-building activities, providing social skills training, and hosting communication workshops. Strong interpersonal relationships not only offer emotional support but also help students establish social networks that lay the foundation for their future careers. Additionally, schools can encourage positive interactions among students by promoting mentorship programs, establishing study groups, and supporting social clubs.

Implementing these strategies requires a holistic, culturally sensitive approach that takes into consideration the unique needs of diverse students. Universities should also maintain open communication with students to understand their needs and challenges, ensuring that the support provided is relevant and targeted. Furthermore, students involvement in the design and implementation of these programs and strategies should be encouraged, making them feel valued and engaged.

5 Conclusion

Self-care and self-awareness play a crucial role in the management of college students' mental health. Through this research, we have gained an in-depth understanding of how these two factors individually and collectively impact on mental health. Furthermore, specific strategies for promoting self-care and self-awareness in the university environment have been proposed. The results indicate that by enhancing college students' levels of self-care and self-awareness, it is possible to effectively reduce their psychological issues, increase life satisfaction, and overall well-being. Therefore, higher education institutions need to take more proactive measures to strengthen mental health education for college students through various means such as courses, lectures, workshops, and more, assisting them in building a positive self-image, improving resilience, and thereby promoting their personal development and the overall progress of society.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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