

The Inspiration of Social-cultural Theory to the Psychology Group Counselling Activities of College in China

Liang Hai Yan & Roselan Bin Baki

Abstract—After entering college, poor students not only have to bear economic pressure, but also have to deal with study problems, interpersonal problems and employment pressure etc. Due to the pressure of social competition, students' experience is shallow, poor psychological bearing capacity. Poor students are more likely to suffer from inferiority, anxiety, depression and other psychological disorders than ordinary students. College students are the hope and future of the country. Although most of the poor students are in good mental health, some of them are not optimistic about their mental health. As educators, we pay attention to the mental health of poor students in addition to their academic performance. In addition to the mental health class, psychological group counselling activities can effectively improve the psychological quality of college students and promote the harmonious development of students' physical and mental health. Based on qualitative style research methodology, this study searched and analyzed existing literature related to Vygotsky's social-cultural theory and psychological group counselling activities. This study starts from ideas on psychological group counselling activities, then explore the social-cultural theory in the psychological group counselling activities. The results from the study showed that Vygotsky social-cultural theory not only reveals the law of individual psychological development, but also plays an enlightening and guiding role in the psychological group counselling activities carried out in the college. Inspirations include: through practical activities to give poor students a sense of social value compensation; Strengthening peer relationship to promotes psychological development; *Games and tutors should go hand in hand*; Psychological internalization is achieved through written learning journal. The study identifies its implication and limitations for future research.

Keywords— Social-cultural theory, Vygotsky, Psychological group activity, Game, Internalization, Learning journal

I. INTRODUCTION

According to the results of the 2022 College Students' Mental Health Survey Report jointly released by the Chinese Academy of Sciences, Chinese college students are generally in good mental health and have a high degree of satisfaction with life. But the high rate of depression, anxiety and other problems cannot be ignored. About 21.48% of college students may be at risk for depression and 45.28% may be at risk for anxiety, according to the report. However, poor students are more likely to suffer from psychological and emotional disorders than students from wealthy families. Jensen's (2020) research proved that poverty would affect students' emotions, behaviours and academic performance.

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Deng (2004) Compared with other college students, the psychological quality of poor college students is relatively low, which makes them more likely to suffer from various mental diseases. Yuan (2022) According to the statistics of China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation, at present, the number of poor college students in Chinese universities accounts for more than 20%. At the same time, meta-analysis was used to conduct a more objective and systematic analysis of the mental health level of poor college students in China, and it was found that there was a certain gap in mental health between poor and non-poor college students. In other words, relatively speaking, poor college students face more pressure and psychological conflicts, and are more likely to have fluctuations in their mental health level. In reality, due to the influence of poverty and other internal and external factors, some poor college students do have difficulties in learning, communication and employment, such as excessive inferiority due to family economic difficulties; Due to the lack of learning motivation and the environment does not adapt to lead to academic early warning; Due to difficulties in interpersonal communication, resulting in the inability to establish a harmonious interpersonal relationship.

The economic poverty of students has been widely concerned by the state and society. In recent years, the state has formulated a series of financial assistance policies to ensure that poor students can study at ease. With the gradual solution of the economic poverty of the poor students in colleges, the psychological poverty of some poor students has not been paid enough attention to. Psychological poverty refers to the psychological development obstacles and defects caused by students' poor economic background.

At present, the college has basically formed a comprehensive student mental health management system such as mental health education theory courses, psychological group counselling activities and psychological one-to-one counselling. But in practice, compared with the theory course of mental health education, the science and effectiveness of psychological group guidance teaching still have some shortcomings.

It is very complicated and challenging for group psychological counselling activities to get a good teaching effect. First of all, individual psychology and emotion are inherently complex. Not to mention that many individuals with psychological problems are brought together, exponentially increasing the complexity and variability. Capuzzi & Stauffer (2021) each group member has complex thoughts, feelings and behaviours. This complexity is magnified many times in a group because the goals of most group members interact with each other and with their leaders in complex patterns of psychological exploration, growth, and change. Secondly, the design level of teaching activities of psychology teachers or counsellors is uneven.

Thirdly, in the realization of the goal of psychological correction in education, it is necessary to give consideration to the interest and experience of the course according to the learning characteristics and needs of students.

To carry out psychological group counselling for college students should be based on education and focus on guidance, so as to ensure the effectiveness and pertinence of education. With the gradual development of psychological group counselling activities, it has become an urgent need for educators to explore suitable theories, techniques and practical operations that can serve its development.

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study is to study the inspiration of Vygotsky's social-cultural theory to the psychological group counselling activities of poor college students in China. And how to apply social culture theory into practice in psychological group counselling activities.

III. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study was based on qualitative research and used the literature collection method to collect data. Sources include books, journal articles, and relevant and reliable news reports.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ideas on Psychological Group Counselling Activities

In contrast to one-to-one individual counselling. Psychological group counselling activities are mainly a form of psychological counselling conducted by students under the guidance of psychological teachers or counsellors in group situations. Through a series of discussions and training of interpersonal interaction activities, students can identify and solve internal or interpersonal conflicts in the activities to improve interpersonal relations. Group counselling can meet the needs of various special groups. Because the group psychological work to overcome the shortcomings of one-to-one psychological counselling, less time, a wide range of people, more efficient problem solving, especially in decompression, communication and other aspects of the remarkable effect, the group psychological work in the 1990s into China, quickly in all walks of life to play a positive role. Capuzzi & Stauffer (2021) it is well documented that positive group experiences can be therapeutic factors.

The emergence of group psychological counselling can be traced back to the first decade of the 20th century, mainly applied in the medical field. In 1905, Joseph Hersey Pratt in Boston experimented with the "class" approach to the treatment of tuberculosis patients. In 1909, Cody Marsh began giving motivational group lectures to psychiatric inpatients. Marsh soon became known for his motto: "Wounded in crowd heals in crowd" (Capuzzi & Stauffer, 2021). Among them, Alfred Adler's Theory and Kurt Lewin's Field Theory played a significant role in promoting the development of group psychological counselling theory. In the 1940s, Lewin's field theory emphasized the interaction between individuals and the environment. Emphasize the

relationship between parts and whole. In 1947, Lewin and his research team established T-group. T-group focuses on individual growth and interpersonal relationships. With the development of The Times, people's interest in and investment in group psychological counselling continues to strengthen, and the group psychological counselling activities led by professional or non-professional understanding have been rapidly developed in recent years. Group counselling, though, is popular because of its low-cost, high-yield leverage. At present, group psychological counselling activities are constructed by different theoretical systems. Among them, Alfred Adler's theory, Lewin's field dynamics, rational emotive behaviour therapy, and the concepts of Gestalt therapy all provide theoretical perspectives for establishing group counselling.

In fact, in addition to the above theories, Vygotsky's elaboration of psychological defect-compensation, psychological development theory and activity theory cannot be ignored.

Activity theory is an important part of Vygotsky's social-cultural theory. In the 1920s, he found that human practice should become an important category of scientific psychology, and he also tried to apply the concept of activity to psychology. Vygotsky noticed the important role of activity in the formation of higher psychological functions at a very early time, and realized the unity of consciousness and activity, that is, consciousness is not a closed internal system separated from activity, but activity is really the objective manifestation of consciousness (Wang, 2009). Therefore, it is possible to conduct an objective study of consciousness through activities, materialize the facts of consciousness, and transform them into objective language and things that exist objectively. Vygotsky's theory of activity on the principle of the unity of activity and consciousness opens up a realistic path for the study of human consciousness. University psychology group counselling activities focus on practice. From Vygotsky's theoretical point of view, he also attaches great importance to practice and the practical significance of psychology. Vygotsky advocated that psychology should move towards life, taking psychological technology as an important means to get rid of the crisis, and overcoming the occurrence of psychological crisis through practice.

It can be seen that the origin and development of group psychological counselling activities are closely related to Vygotsky's social-cultural theory. Vygotsky's social-cultural theory contains many valuable ideas for modern college psychological group counselling activities.

Social-cultural Theory in the Psychological Group Counselling Activities

Through Practical Activities to Give Poor Students A Sense of Social Value Compensation

Vygotsky was a highly regarded psychologist in the 20th century. His social and cultural theory proposed in the 1920s and 1930s had far-reaching influence on the field of psychology and pedagogy and had epoch-making significance.

The social-cultural theory provides a new perspective for us to understand the relationship between human beings and

the cultural, historical and educational backgrounds where we live (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

Vygotsky's (2016) research on the education of children with defects and difficulties proved that "the core principle of modern educational psychology of deficient children is that every defect creates a compensatory facilitator. Therefore, the study of the dynamics of children with impairments cannot be limited to determining the level and severity of impairments, but should consider compensatory processes in children's development and behaviour - processes of substitution, reconstruction and balance (p.7) . Vygotsky argued that it was not the disease that mattered, but the patient. Not the defect itself, but the person who suffers from the negative effects of the defect.

He believes that children do not directly experience their own shortcomings. All he felt was the plight of the defect. The direct result of the defect is the lower social status of children. The defect is a kind of social dislocation. All the relationships with people, all the factors that determine man's place in social relations, his role and destiny as a participant in life, and all the functions of social existence are changing. Here, defect arousal compensation is not direct, but indirect, mediated by the sense of inferiority it establishes (Vygotsky, 2016).

The defect itself is limited in its damage to people. But the lower social status brought about by defects is more damaging. Similarly, poverty itself does limited harm to people, but the secondary harm caused by these harms indirectly through the medium of poverty is profound. It leads to the formation of students' special psychology and causes the poor students to feel inferior and lack of sense of value.

The psychological defect caused by poverty can be regarded as a special type of psychological defect. That is to say, in the college, when we face the students with mental disorders, we should not put the focus of education on the degree of students' mental disorders, but to pay attention to what kind of trouble and influence these mental disorders bring to the students.

Vygotsky's social-cultural theory, especially his research on the psychology of defects, provides an inspiration for this study. Why don't we try to apply Vygotsky's sociocultural theory to the formation of poor students' character, especially the building of self-confidence? According to Vygotsky's theory, defect is essentially a social dislocation. The compensation for defects is not biological compensation, but social compensation. However, human's inner body has a balance point in the process of development. Therefore, in education, we can use the law of "subtraction caused by defects" to "compensatory addition" to enhance the sense of social value of poor students.

Strengthening Peer Relationship to Promotes Psychological Development

Vygotsky mentions that any physical defect will manifest itself through behavioural aberrations, and that it affects relationships first. Many literatures have found that interpersonal disturbance is an important source of stress for college students (Jensen, 2020). Poor students are not only easy to be ridiculed or criticized by people around them, but

also sympathy and pity will cause great psychological burden to poor students. On the contrary, close, reliable relationships help students stabilize their behaviour.

A large body of literature have proved the positive impact of teacher-student relationships on the academic achievement of poor students (Jensen, 2020; Strahan, 2003; Scales; 2019). As the leader of counsellors in psychological groups, teachers should have a certain understanding of the mental state of poor students. Social-cultural theory holds that people's cognition and character are affected and restricted by the social environment they live in. The cognitive disorders and behavioural abnormalities of students are related to their growing environment and experience. Vygotsky (2016) personality is the social film of the individual. For psychologists, it is necessary to understand each kind of psychological activity or the whole personality of a person, not only with the past, but also with his future.

It is character that is not born, so character can also be cultivated and shaped by man. Therefore, teachers should have a full understanding of the poor students, understand the overall situation of students and the psychological root of their behaviour.

For poor students, inferiority and high sensitivity bring great harm to them and cause psychological loss, such as cognitive retardation or emotional disorders. This bad character will affect students' performance in classroom learning, especially in group tutoring activities. As a result, they may not take the initiative to participate in classroom discussions and interactive links, and lack of communication and communication with classmates around them. At this time, teachers are prone to lack of confidence and want to give up. Or shift the focus of teaching to more high-performing, motivated students.

So, teachers should have a scientific and sober cognition, change the stereotype of poor students, enhance teaching confidence, and make sure that students' mental health depends on the cultivation of students' overall personality. In other words, under the guidance and training of regular psychological group counselling activities, poor students' inferiority can be restored to a normal state and they can also obtain a full sense of social value. On this basis, teachers communicate with students with empathy and strive to gain students' trust. After gaining the trust of students, teachers should not immediately change their students' wrong behaviour to avoid antagonizing and antagonizing students. On the contrary, teachers should learn to make use of their wrong behaviour, in order to better transform some of their bad character into active character. Finally, by strengthening the humanistic care and psychological counselling of poor students, teachers guide students to correctly understand justice and profit, group and oneself, success and failure, gain and loss, and cultivate students' self-esteem, rational peace, positive and healthy attitude.

But there is one obvious problem that can't be ignored: the student-teacher ratio. At present, the teaching staff of psychological counsellors is still low. The current relevant regulations are that full-time teachers of mental health education should be engaged in college students' mental health education with relevant academic qualifications and professional qualifications, in accordance with the teacher-

student ratio is not less than 1:400 equipped, each school is equipped with at least 2. As a result, a psychology teacher or counsellor cannot carry out small class teaching like other professional courses when carrying out psychological group counselling activities. For example, in a group of about 120 people, there is usually only one psychology teacher or counsellor. Even if psychological counsellors teaching ability is strong, more dedicated, willing to devote all of their time to maintain a good relationship with students, but in the face of so many students, there will be a feeling of weakness. Especially in the case of students with poor concept of discipline, teachers have to spend a lot of time and energy to maintain order in class. Under the influence of various subjective and objective factors, the most important interpersonal interaction in a group is not the interaction between teachers and students, but the competition, cooperation and sharing among students.

Therefore, it has become a key teaching strategy to strengthen the peer relationship and promote the psychological development of students in psychological group counselling activities.

Through group psychological counselling activities, students can understand and experience the positive interpersonal relationship between themselves and other peers, help students develop social awareness and skills, get more emotional support from peers, and achieve balanced inner development.

However, this teaching strategy is not a simple task to be completed in groups, but needs to be carefully designed by teachers to make it develop towards established positive goals. Otherwise, it will only be an act of rubbing salt into the wound for poor students. Generally speaking, in the psychological group counselling activities carried out by colleges in China, the teaching strategy commonly used by teachers is group activities. But careful observation, it is not difficult to find that poor students do not perform well in such group cooperation activities. Too introverted, self-abasement and sensitive character, so that they are not willing to take the initiative to express their own ideas, lack of appropriate emotional expression ability, and do not want to have too much contact with others. This will easily lead to misunderstanding and rejection of peers, and there will be less communication between peers, which in turn will aggravate poor students' feelings of inferiority. In teaching, teachers can enhance the driving force of students' inner development by combining the teaching strategy of interpersonal communication theory with the strategy of group psychological practice. On the one hand, teachers should impart necessary interpersonal knowledge and skills to students. On the other hand, in the design of psychological group counselling activities, peer relationship should be purposefully taken as the fulcrum, and peer relationship should be purposefully integrated into games or other curriculum activities, so that students can return to normal interpersonal relationship. Encouraging techniques can be used to correct their false perceptions (Vygotsky, 2016). Students perform better academically when they feel they are in a social group and accepted by the group.

Games and Tutors Should Go Hand in Hand

While mind games have long been popular in Western countries, they have only become popular in Chinese colleges in recent years. It is an innovative form of mental health education for college students. College psychology group counsellor activities will generally set up a variety of games. Psychological group counselling activities take games as the medium, so that the inner world of members can be projected, and then the psychological counselling can be carried out on them. Games are thought to create a happy experience for students and increase participation in the classroom. More importantly, it is necessary to improve the knowledge, skills and attitudes of college students through games. But there is a misconception about games in group activities: A teacher leading a group of students to play games is considered group tutoring?

However, Vygotsky (2016) disagrees with the definition of games as activities that provide pleasure for children". Pleasure, he argues, should not be a defining feature of games, because there are many activities that provide a greater sense of pleasure than games. "Play Brings an internal shift in child development.

Acceptance of games as a learning tool, rather than as a time filler, is essential if their full potential is to be realized (Wright et al., 1984).

Kumar & Lightner (2007) A substantial body of literature indicates that the use of non-traditional interventions, such as games, simulations, multimedia instruction and interactive activities are valuable teaching methods.

Play is an area that Vygotsky attaches great importance to as a form of interaction between not only children but also adult students. Vygotsky emphasizes the relationship between play, cognition and emotion, and believes that play is the basis of the development process, because play is an activity in the recent development zone (Wang, 2009, p.59). While play can stimulate children's development, simply playing with peers of similar skill does not promote learning. Therefore, the psychological development of children can be promoted through activities with adults at a higher level of development. Because older adults already have the tools of the immediate development zone that the child is currently in, it is easier for them to provide the kind of stimulation that will help the child move beyond his current level of development.

Vygotsky's theoretical elaboration of games and adult guidance makes us see the rationality and feasibility of taking games as an oriented activity to form and improve behaviours in psychological group activities, and further proves the important role of teachers in psychological group games. It also reminds some teachers to change the stereotypical concept of games and change the traditional idea of letting students play and observe by themselves. Teachers should take the initiative to participate in students' games and give timely guidance at appropriate times.

Otherwise, these games can only make students' feelings stay in the moment, and cannot promote the further advanced development of students' psychology.

Psychological Internalization is Achieved through Written Learning Journal

As one of the earliest proposers of internalization theory, the theoretical basis of Vygotsky's internalization theory is instrumental theory. He regarded symbol as the tool of human mental activity, and language as the leading intermediary of human development. Vygotsky (2016) mentioned that the invention and use of symbols as auxiliary means to solve mental problems (memory, comparison, report, selection, etc.) is just like the invention and use of some mental tools. Symbols as tools of mental activity are similar to the role played by tools in labour.

The concepts of symbols and tools are similar in the mediating functions that each has. There is, however, a fundamental difference. Vygotsky (2016) the most essential difference between symbol and tool is that they guide human behaviour in different directions. Tool is the conductor of human's influence on the active object. It is externally oriented and must lead to the change of the object. It is the means for human to lead to external activities to control and conquer nature. On the contrary, the symbol does not change the object of mental operation, it is an internal activity of self-control, is internally oriented. (p.69-70). Simply put, the difference between a symbol and an instrument is that the instrument is the means of the man's external activities, while the symbol is the means of the man's internal activities.

In Vygotsky's view, language is a tool of internalization and is important for the cognitive development of individuals. As for the role of language in development, Vygotsky believes that there are mainly the following points:

Language serves as the medium of development and the tool of thinking.

Language serves as a tool for social interaction and activities.

Language as a tool for self-regulation and development.

Conventional wisdom held that there was a static, external, mechanized relationship between thought and speech. In contrast to the traditional view, Vygotsky viewed the development of thought and speech dynamically. Vygotsky's (1994) revelation of the relationship between thought and word indicates that this is a dynamic process, a process from thought to word, and the completion and embodiment of thought in word (p.373).

At the end of psychological group counselling activities, teachers usually require students to write learning journals. Through the way of learning journal, students are guided to record what they experience in the process of activities. learning journal is an indispensable link, and its formation is actually the internalization process of students' psychology. For students, the process of writing a written report is to train students to reflect on their personal cognition and thoughts and adjust their emotions. This process is conducive to their cognitive development, to the construction of their knowledge and skills, and to the formation of their ability to self-regulate and reflect. In this way, teachers can clearly understand students' learning progress, psychological development process and learning effect. At the same time, students' written reports can help teachers form teaching evaluation and adjust teaching strategies to better meet the needs of students.

However, a mistake made by many inexperienced teachers is that they seldom give feedback to students' learning journal after they finish the learning journal.

Vygotsky (1986) asserted that learning in an isolated environment will not lead to cognitive development, whereas teacher-student interaction improves student cognitive development. In addition, many literatures have also proved the positive influence of teachers' feedback evaluation on students. Feedback helps students to improve their skills, attitude, motivation, and cognition (Clark, 2012; Panadero et al., 2018). Alabidi's study supported claims that reflective diaries helped students recognize the cognitive strategies and metacognitive skills they needed to complete tasks and achieve their goals (Alabidi, et al., 2022). All these studies show that the use of learning journal, especially feedback, is valuable and has an educational significance that cannot be ignored in teaching activities. Therefore, in order to promote the mental health development of poor students, teachers should attach importance to and actively use feedback evaluation.

V CONCLUSION

Group psychological counselling activities play an important role in improving the psychological poverty of poor students and promoting their psychological development. Although it started relatively late in China, its development speed is very fast and relevant research results are constantly appearing.

Vygotsky's social-cultural theory, especially his research on the psychological development of children with defects, uses dialectical theory to scientifically analyze specific psychological problems. It has important guiding significance to the psychological group counselling activities of college in China. The psychological poverty of poor students and the solution of these problems are undoubtedly complicated. In this way, Vygotsky's theory helps enlighten us that we should face up to the authenticity and complexity of students' psychological problems bravely in teaching. Enlightening us to adhere to the combination of theory and practice, using scientific and appropriate ways to open the inner world of students, so that the personality structure of students with defects tends to reach a normal state as a whole, to help them grow up faster.

At present, there are still some deficiencies in this study.

1. The number of documents included in the analysis was limited;
2. Due to the limited capacity of literature analysis, the understanding of some theories is inevitably narrow and limited, so the analysis may not be comprehensive and in-depth.
3. The paper mainly stays at the level of conceptual analysis, and future research can be expanded to measurable and predictable empirical research.

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