

A Study on the Reflections and Solution Pathways for Adolescent Mental Health Education in the Digital Era

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ABSTRACT

The healthy psychological condition of adolescents is fundamental to the development of their personalities, and is an essential part of building a harmonious society, realizing national rejuvenation, and realizing a strong educational country. Under the environment of digital culture, mobile devices and social media have had a significant impact on adolescents' daily life, causing great changes in their social interaction, information acquisition and cognitive modes, and bringing new threats and pressures, such as cyber-addiction, cyber-bullying, information overload, social alienation, etc., while providing convenience for them. Therefore, this paper discusses the problems encountered in adolescent mental health education in the digital era, to explore effective educational strategies that are more in line with reality, and to promote the healthy development of adolescent psychology.

KEYWORDS

Digital age; Adolescent psychology; Health education

1 Introduction

Adolescence is a turning point in the development of life, a stage in which individuals develop rapidly physiologically and mature psychologically, with a strong sense of self and a desire for independence and identity. However, the rate of psychological development of adolescents often lags behind physiological changes, and they are not mature enough in cognitive judgment, emotion management, and stress tolerance. The popularization of digital technology has provided new tools and broad space for adolescents' learning and socialization, and has also had a far-reaching impact on their growing environment. The multiplicity of network information, the experience of social entertainment, and online social pressure have made it more challenging to cope with self-identification, interpersonal interaction, and negative emotions. Therefore, this paper will study the mental health problems of adolescents to provide a reference for the establishment of a more scientific and practical mental health education system.

2 The Impact of the digital age on adolescent mental health

2.1 The impact of social media and mental health risks

Social media is the primary platform for young people to communicate, expanding their socialization and introducing new mental pressures. "Likes", "comments", and "shares" are the main interaction mechanisms of the platform, which provide open and quantifiable assessment methods for the socialization of adolescents, and these seemingly straightforward exchanges allow children to often use other people's lives as a reference for their own. Frequent online social comparison activities are highly susceptible to negative emotions, such as feelings of inferiority and frustration due to a lower self-esteem than others, or disappointment due to not receiving the desired attention. Social media pushes users to create and present a better side of themselves, and this constant selective expression of themselves creates more pressure. People tend to be overly conscious of their online presence to garner more recognition and attention, and sometimes fall into role-playing. In addition, the "invisibility" and "distance" of the Internet reduce the cost of using inappropriate language and actions in practice, thus leading to the frequent occurrence of cyberbullying. Compared with real-life conflicts, cyberbullying has a greater spread and persistence, and the damage it brings to an individual's spirit is often more insidious and profound ^[1].

2.2 Information overload and psychological pressure

The Internet has broken the limitations of time and space, and vast amounts of information are constantly coming in in a fragmented, high-speed flow. Teenagers have convenient access to knowledge and technology, but also bear the information load far beyond the limits of their cognitive processing and screening ability. In the face of the flood of information from a wide range of sources, which is difficult to distinguish between true and false and often contradictory, their immature cognitive frameworks and critical thinking skills are usually overwhelmed, and they are easily confused

and have difficulty in making choices. The mental energy consumed in screening valid and reliable content amid the overwhelming amount of information is enormous, and cognitive fatigue and inattention are likely to occur over time. One evident phenomenon is the spread of "knowledge anxiety" among adolescents, i.e., the fear of missing out on important information and lagging behind others. This constant anxiety about missing information constitutes an unprecedented and invisible source of long-term stress. Rapidly updated information and a large number of fast-paced, shallow content formats (e.g., short videos, short news) are also compressing the space for adolescents to engage in in-depth reading, independent thinking, and value system construction, and contributing to the tendency to be superficial and emotional when facing complex issues ^[2].

3 The dilemma of current youth mental health education

3.1 Limitations of traditional mental health education models

In contemporary school mental health education, many curricula and teaching methods are still based on a fixed teacher-talking, student-listening approach, and this unified model is challenging to respond to the variety of new disturbances that students encounter on cell phones and the Internet ^[3]. For example, students generally spend a lot of time on swiping videos, playing games or social software, and are prone to encounter problems such as information confusion, pressure of online socialization, and even addiction and self-image anxiety, which are real disturbances that often do not find corresponding solution ideas in the textbook knowledge of traditional classrooms. The course usually focuses on explaining psychological concepts and universal truths. Still, it seldom teaches students how to cope with the constant barrage of information on the screen, the pressure of social comparison, or the difficulty of falling asleep late at night. Teachers stand at the podium and talk while students sit down and listen, lacking the opportunity to get students to open up about what's bothering them, to practice dealing with their emotions, or to build good online habits. This approach doesn't make it easy to identify students who are already quietly struggling with social media anxiety or gaming overdependence promptly, and by the time academic performance has noticeably declined, the problem has already built up and exploded.

3.2 Imbalance of educational resources and lack of information

Resources for providing mental health help to students show noticeable differences in different places and schools. Schools in large cities or with good conditions usually have teachers specializing in psychology, or even psychological counseling rooms, as well as access to the latest courses or tools for online psychological problems. However, many remote or under-resourced schools lack a full-time psychology teacher and the tools required to address the challenges students face due to the Internet. When they do encounter gaming addiction or develop strong low self-esteem due to social software, they are unable to find people who know how to intervene promptly. This gap is rather widening with the spread of digital technology. Schools in economically developed areas can supplement or even catch up with online resources and distance learning courses to help solve new problems arising from the online environment; however, in resource-poor regions, even if they have the equipment or internet connection, they often lack the expertise and appropriate content to utilize them, and as a result, students, when confronted with the same onslaught of information on the Internet and social pressures, are Problems accumulate and go unrecognized and unaddressed.

3.3 Lack of support systems in families and schools

In the journey of adolescents to cope with the complex psychological challenges intertwined with digital life, there exists a serious communication and collaboration gap between families and schools, which are the two main forces working closely together. On the one hand, some families are not fully aware of the profound impact of the online environment on adolescents. Parents do not understand the mechanism of online socialization, are not clear about the potential load of information overload on the brain, and find it difficult to detect their children's stoicism and helplessness in the face of cyberbullying. In the face of their children's mood swings, drastic extension of online time, or social withdrawal, some parents blame their children for being "playful and unmotivated". This misunderstanding not only makes it difficult for families to provide timely emotional support, but also sometimes exacerbates their children's internal stress through unintentional words or behaviors. On the other hand, schools are often fragmented and lagging in their perception of the vast amount of online information students are exposed to in school, the online social dynamics of their peers, and even the online troubles they encounter. Although educators popularize online information security and etiquette in the classroom, it is difficult for them to accurately understand the actual trajectory of each child's online behavior and the psychological friction points they face when they return home, which results in the risk signals that would otherwise require timely joint interventions being ignored or delayed ^[4].

4 Current solution paths for youth mental health education

4.1 Improvement of digital mental health education platform

To solve youth mental health problems, we can start with the establishment of a comprehensive online support system to address the imbalance and difficulty in accessing information on the Internet. The platform must provide students with stable and credible teaching content and convenient learning materials, integrating a variety of carefully selected teaching materials, including clear animated illustrations, short scenarios, and step-by-step self-study guides, covering practical issues such as emotional cognition, stress coping, and interpersonal interaction. The presentation of the content must be visual and easily accessible to adolescents. It is also necessary to establish convenient channels for seeking help, such as setting up a bright question-and-answer area to solve complex problems and, where conditions permit, opening up online appointments so that students in areas with poor educational resources can have a chance to get close to experts. The establishment of simple self-assessment units with counseling-style training allows students to safely gain a basic understanding of their condition and learn basic relaxation or emotional stabilization. The whole system should be designed according to the principle of ease of use, by simplifying the operation process, to ensure that students in various situations can use the core services fluently. The mission of this platform is to integrate the resources of experts in multiple fields so that more young people in need can start seeking help safely and autonomously^[5].

4.2 Developing personalized and interactive education models

To give full play to the potential of digital technology and promote changes in the way mental health education is delivered, the key is to design teaching tools based on students' characteristics actively. Ideal platforms should have preliminary analytical functions that can surmise the current interests and dilemmas faced by students through the behavioral trajectories of users' clicking preferences, evaluation results, and learning records, to provide them with appropriate learning resources. For example, a set of practical emotion regulation strategies can be introduced for adolescents who have been in a state of depression for a long time. The model breaks through the traditional mode of passively watching videos or reading texts, and integrates immersive interactive design into real-life environments, practicing students' communication and emotion management skills through real-life situations such as "resolving disputes" and "dealing with emergencies". With clear rules and professional guidance (e.g., system tips, mentors, etc.), students with similar encounters are encouraged to carry out mutual help exchanges and share their experiences to gain understanding and support from the group. The method aims to provide students with a dynamic learning experience that responds to individual situations, combining cognitive input with real-life scenario exercises to enhance the immediacy and practicality of education.

4.3 Strengthening cooperation between schools and families

Effectively linking schools and families through technological means and constructing a collaborative mechanism centered on students' mental health can establish an effective digital channel for information sharing, communicating cognitive divides, and coordinating supportive actions. Schools can provide parents with concise and practical mental health knowledge, standard psychological analysis of adolescents, and practical parent-child interaction counseling through an exclusive digital terminal interface for parents, gradually updating the cognitive foundation of family members. The platform should be set up with limited information interaction functions: teachers can make objective notes based on their daily observations (e.g., "There has been a recent decline in the level of activity in the class, so please pay attention to the timing of emotional communication") and need to ensure the privacy of the students. Parents who receive the notification may refer to relevant intellectual background information or raise other issues of concern with the school on an anonymous basis. It is also essential to include modules that facilitate independent learning for parents to improve their mastery of mental health issues, as well as accompanying and guiding children in their daily emotional reactions, with practical guidance. To compensate for the previous lack of support for adolescent psychology due to a lack of information and mobility.

5 Conclusion

The article suggests that adolescent mental health education in the digital era faces problems such as uneven resource allocation, insufficient service coverage, traditional education models that are difficult to match individual differences, and information barriers between home and school that weaken synergistic effectiveness. Therefore, in terms of the implementation path, we should focus on three aspects: establishing a standardized digital platform; integrating authoritative resources and opening them to all regions; guaranteeing the accessibility of basic psychological counseling

services; developing an adaptive learning system that dynamically pushes teaching content according to students' behaviors and embedding virtual practice scenarios into the teaching situation to improve the effect of skill transformation; and constructing a family-school digital synergistic mechanism to enhance the common understanding and responsiveness of both sides to students' psychological needs through directed information interaction and scientific knowledge transfer. By deepening the matching between platform functions and users' needs, it improves the precision and synergy of education and builds material support for the development of adolescents' mental health.

About the Author

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