Internet Mental Health Problems and Education of Ethnic Minority Students in Chinese Universities

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Abstract: The rapid development of new media technology has brought many new impacts on the internet mental health of university students. In Chinese universities, ethnic minority students are a vulnerable group that needs special education attention. Universities should consider how to conduct effective and efficient mental health education for ethnic minority students in the new media era. This study summarizes the major internet mental health problems of ethnic minority students, such as excessive internet use, negative views of life, online consumerism, and online immoral behaviors. Given the above major internet mental health problems, several recommendations for mental health education of ethnic minority students are proposed.

1. Introduction

Along with regular enrollment, many Chinese universities recruit ethnic minority students under the consideration of education fairness and ethnic harmony. When these ethnic minority students enter universities, they usually encounter various challenges and some of them even suffer from language barriers [1]. Chinese universities strive to help these students to achieve personal and professional growth. However, attention is lacking to their internet mental health. The development of new media has a profound impact on the daily life of university students. While bringing convenience, it also brings many potential crises, especially leading to some internet mental health problems. In order to meet the needs of mental health education in the new media era, university educators need to understand the major internet mental health problems of ethnic minority students and generate coping strategies.

2. Major Internet Mental Health Problems

2.1. Excessive Internet Use

The learning environment in universities gives students great freedom, whereas some ethnic minority students are unable to manage their freedom, showing a lack of online self-discipline and

excessive use of the internet. Excessive internet use refers to the uncontrolled waste of time on the internet, resulting in damage to academic, work, and social functions [2]. When ethnic minority students indulge in the online world, they may lose the sense of time. Long-term immersion in the internet is harmful to ethnic minority students by a great separation from the real world, a degradation of social skills, a lack of collective consciousness, and a destruction of national unity.

The reasons for excessive internet use are complex. There are many novel and interesting elements on the internet, such as online games, online chat, and pornographic information, which can meet the psychological needs of ethnic minority students, and attract them to indulge in the online world for a long time. Research has shown that the use of electronic products can cause the brain to secrete a large amount of dopamine, leading to a feeling of excitement within a short period of time [3]. Students enjoy the excitement and hence are unwilling to withdraw. Once they leave the online world, they will experience a serious sense of depression. Furthermore, due to various problems, including language and cultural barriers, some ethnic students escape reality by engaging in the virtual online world where they can gain comfort and self-identification easily. This behavior can lead to mental health problems such as inferiority, depression, and pessimism among ethnic minority students.

2.2. Negative Views of Life

Affected by the online information, some ethnic minority students hold negative views of life. Being in the essential life stage, ethnic minority students are constructing their views of life. Not surprisingly, they are susceptible to the online environment given the new media era. The brain receives massive amounts of information from the internet every day, which may seem like an expansion of knowledge. However, in fact, online information is usually fragmented. Fragmented information browsing can hinder one's systematic mastery of knowledge, which may cause informational depression such as "informational anxiety", "informational worship", and "informational chaos"[3,4]. This trend will undoubtedly have a negative impact on the physical and mental health of ethnic minority students, thus distorting their value choices, destroying their logical thinking, and eroding their sense of responsibility [2]. Eventually, inappropriate online information can induce negative views of life.

Additionally, embraced by the complex online environment, ethnic minority students often lack the ability to process and organize complicated information. Sometimes, they are unable to distinguish the true or right information and are easily induced by negative or one-sided information. On the internet, some negative views of life and related terms have spread rapidly among young people, such as "lying without effort", "putting things down", and "slacking off". Some young people even employ this thought of giving up as their life belief. Especially, some ethnic minority students are enrolled in universities with working commissions that they are designated to go back to their ethnic town after graduation [1]. Therefore, these students are more likely to adopt negative views of life and lose the motivation to study hard.

2.3. Online Consumerism

With the rapid development of the online economy, the influence of new media has gradually expanded. In the online economy, young people have become the most important consumers. However, many young people, including ethnic minority students, are immature with limited social experiences. Exposed to the various online marketing strategies, ethnic minority students are easy to fall into the trap of Consumerism and even have alienated consumption. Alienated consumption refers to the online consumption of many items that individuals do not usually use, but indulge in the pleasure and joy of shopping [5]. When having alienated consumption, ethnic minority students

spend a lot of time selecting products, resulting in the impairment of their physical, mental, and financial health [6]. Influenced by consumerism, some ethnic minority students may suffer from anxiety and inferiority due to financial problems.

To be noted, ethnic minority students do not have the ability to be economically independent, and some are even from low-income families. Once they fall into the trap of consumerism, they may try any ways to obtain money in order to meet their consumption needs. The students, who have little social experience and an urgent need for money, are in dangerous situations. They may be lured to have illegal online transactions, online loans, online naked chatting, and gambling, which ultimately result in property damage, mental harm, and even life cost. In conclusion, online consumerism is a vital internet mental health problem that needs to be solved.

2.4. Online Immoral Behaviors

In the new media era when the spread of information is extremely fast but the management of the online information is poor, it is easy for ethnic minority students to receive negative information and hence have online immoral behaviors. Since some ethnic minority students have weak online morality and legal awareness, they tend to conduct human flesh searches, online violence, online humiliation, and even online crimes. Online immoral behaviors can be roughly divided into three categories, that is, online immoral speech, online infringement, and cybercrime [7]. Online verbal abuse, spreading rumors, and infringing on others' privacy are all behaviors of online immoral speech. Online infringement includes illegal plagiarism and handling, infringement of others' intellectual property rights, and illegal viewing of obscene and pornographic content. Cybercrime includes digital invasion, online extortion, e-property stolen, and internet fraud.

Cybercrime is the most serious form of online immoral behavior [7]. The main reasons for university students to commit cybercrime are as follows. Firstly, there is a blind worship of Internet technology. As the "indigenous people" of the internet society, university students have a far greater worship and addiction to network technology than other groups of netizens. They usually master more mature network technology as well, which makes the implementation of criminal acts possible. Secondly, there is a bias in the recognition of online crime. Considering the fact that cybercrime is intangible, some students may believe that online behavior without violence or physical contact is not a crime. Thirdly, students are not mature enough to control their negative feelings. When defeated in reality, they tend to express their negative feelings on the internet. Once the expression is beyond control, it is easy to transfer into cybercrime.

3. Coping Strategies of Mental Health Education

3.1. Setting up an Internet Health Section in Mental Health Education

Universities should pay more attention to internet mental health education and incorporate it into the routine management and mental health education curriculum of ethnic minority students. When setting up the online health section in mental health education courses, we should focus on major internet mental health problems and promptly detect the actual needs of ethnic minority students. In the online section, some specific content should be included. Firstly, ethnic minority students should be guided to develop healthy internet habits and prevent them from becoming addicted to the online world. Secondly, they should be taught to identify complex online information and consciously resist the negative impact of negative content. Thirdly, they should be introduced to healthy online consumption, online marketing strategies, and various economic traps. Fourthly, they should be educated that the moral principles of the real world are also applicable to the virtual world of the internet. In order to regulate online behavior, help ethnic minority students to clarify

the serious consequences of online immoral behaviors via legal education, and enable them to form self-restraint.

Additionally, suitable teachers should be selected to form a professional team for internet mental health education. These teachers need to have a professional background in psychology, be familiar with ethnic minority students, and master necessary network technologies. To meet the challenges of mental health education in the new media era, only equipped with the knowledge of the internet, mental health, and ethnic minority students, can the teachers understand and solve the internet mental health problems of the students. Specifically, teachers need to combine professional knowledge of psychology with new media knowledge to form a practical internet mental health education program for ethnic minority students. In addition to the education program, the education team should dynamically track and record the state of internet mental health for each ethnic minority student.

3.2. Establishing a Warning Network for Internet Mental Health Problems

Universities should play the leading role in establishing a united system of "family-school-society" to support internet mental health education. The united system contributes to the warning and prevention of internet mental health problems. Family, school, and society form the living environment of university students. If the importance of internet mental health is emphasized in the surrounding environment, ethnic minority students may pay more attention to online health and be aware of the possible support they can gain.

"School" is the key point in this united system, and universities can go further in warning and preventing internet mental health problems of ethnic minority students [8]. For example, an integrated feedback mechanism of "class-dormitory" can be established, in which students are organized to actively pay attention to the online words and actions of ethnic minority students around them. In this way, their psychological fluctuations and changes can be timely detected and reported so that accidents may be effectively prevented. Universities can also encourage students to establish a peer network aimed at interpersonal help, and alternatively, organize one-to-one helping partners between Han students and ethnic minority students. Both peer networks and helping partners can motivate ethnic minority students to participate in offline small group activities through rewards, entertainment, and social networking, which expand the positive influence of peer friends.

3.3. Enriching the Modes of Mental Health Education

In order to meet the actual psychological needs of ethnic minority students in the new media era, it is necessary to improve educational beliefs and enrich the modes of mental health education [4,9]. Several new modes are recommended. The first mode is to utilize new media platforms to innovate the promotion of mental health knowledge. For example, use short videos such as TikTok and WeChat media to share mental health tips with multi-ethnic language subtitles. The second mode is to establish an official online account to integrate internet mental health education into the daily life of ethnic students. For example, the account can attract students to make online interactions by providing internet mental health case reports, interesting psychological tests, and self-evaluation of mental health knowledge. The third mode is to innovative forms of mental health services by providing online counseling with the help of new media platforms. For example, the counseling could be conducted through online chat rooms, WeChat official account, email, and other online ways. Under the virtual and convenient environment of the network, it may be easier for ethnic minority students to open their hearts and tell their concerns. The fourth mode is to use online resources to establish an electronic file of mental health for ethnic students, dynamically tracking

the mental status of each student. Specifically, by using new media tools to carry out psychological assessments, and follow up on the mental health files of ethnic students in real-time, educators can analyze the causes of mental health problems based on Big Data technology. This new model is helpful in the long term since it can provide a data-based reference for future intervention and treatment of mental health problems.

4. Conclusions

In conclusion, in the new media era, universities should be concerned about the internet mental health problems of ethnic minority students, especially their excessive internet use, negative views of life, online consumerism, and online immoral behaviors. Correspondingly, mental health education needs to be improved by setting up an online health section in mental health education, establishing a warning network for internet mental health problems, and enriching modes of mental health education.

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