

The Application of Power Communication Theory in Promoting Interpersonal Relationships among College Dormitories

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Abstract: The relationship in dormitories has a significant influence on the formation of college students' worldviews, life perspectives, values, the cultivation of good behavior habits, and their mental health levels. Establishing good interpersonal relationships in dormitories has always been an important issue for college students. Motivational communication theory emphasizes the conscious recognition of differences and contradictions between individuals on the basis of accepting individual differences, transforming these differences and contradictions, promoting all parties in communication to gradually gain a sense of security, belonging, value, and self-realization, and then establishing harmonious interpersonal relationships. The theory proposes theories and techniques related to interpersonal communication, including the diamond theory, five communication techniques, and six handles for specific use of "awareness and presentation". Practice has shown that motivational communication theory can promote the establishment of good interpersonal relationships in college dormitories.

The dormitory is an important place for college students' life and study. Dormitory relationships have a significant impact on shaping college students' worldview, values, cultivating good behavior habits, and psychological well-being. How to communicate effectively with dormitory members and establish good dormitory interpersonal relationships has always been an important issue for college students. In recent years, the number of college students seeking psychological counseling due to dormitory conflicts has gradually increased, and crisis incidents caused by dormitory conflicts have also occurred on college campuses from time to time. Helping college students establish good dormitory interpersonal relationships has become an important content of university student work, especially psychological health education work.

1. Introduction to Power Communication Theory

Power communication refers to a process of consciously recognizing, utilizing, and transforming the inevitable similarities, differences, contradictions, and conflicts between two or more parties (or participants in communication) while respecting rationality and morality and combining all the wisdom achievements of humanity. This process aims to facilitate the gradual acquisition of a sense of security, belonging, value (respect), and self-realization by the involved parties [Wang Wenzhong.

Theory and Practice of Power Communication. Beijing: Petroleum Industry Press, 2014]. The theory of power communication acknowledges that there are differences between individuals, each having different thoughts and using different concepts in communication. Consequently, the parties involved in communication may not necessarily understand each other. Therefore, power communication aims to recognize and transform the differences and contradictions between individuals, promote spiritual communication between them, and establish a genuinely safe and trusted communication platform for exchanging information, collaborating in labor, and achieving self-realization, ultimately leading to global harmony.[1]

Combining rational emotive therapy, mindfulness therapy, existentialism, and other psychological theories and techniques, power communication theory proposes theories and techniques related to interpersonal communication in both theory and practice. Its main components include the diamond theory, five major communication techniques, and six handles for specific application of power communication during "awareness and presentation." The diamond theory describes the three diamond structures that affect communication: the self-diamond structure, communication-diamond structure, and language-diamond structure. The five major communication techniques refer to the Beauty technique, Kant technique, Marx technique, Confucius technique, and breathing technique. The six handles related to "awareness and presentation" in communication involve maintaining immediate awareness and presentation, systematic awareness and clear presentation, and dynamic awareness and appropriate presentation of various communication elements.

The core and foundation of the three diamond structures of power communication lie in the self-diamond structure. It asserts that a person's self is a tetrahedral structure with the same pole, composed of individual self-feeling, individual body, rationality, sensibility, and self-reflection. The most crucial part is the individual's self-feeling, which connects the individual's body, rationality, sensibility, and self-reflection, simultaneously linking to self-reflection. The self-diamond theory emphasizes that individuals must first have a stable self-structure in communication. Individuals should take care of their bodies, respect life, consider their rational thinking, and frequently reflect on what their bodies need, what their feelings are, and what their lives are. This reflection, like a psychotherapist, accompanies and supports individuals, helping them maintain sobriety about themselves, knowing that their self-comprises essential components like the body, rationality, sensibility, self-reflection, and awareness. Once individuals possess a self-diamond structure in communication, they can actively engage in communication while becoming a sober reflector. The self-diamond structure explains self-communication issues, while the communication-diamond structure mainly elucidates problems in interpersonal communication.[2] It points out that the elements of interpersonal communication include communicators, communication objects, and communication contexts, collectively determining the communication effect. In communication, participants should at least possess a perspective of self-reflection and be able to view issues from an external perspective, constituting the communication-diamond structure. Besides behavior and non-verbal information, language serves as an important carrier and tool in communication. From the diamond's perspective, language also exhibits a diamond structure. The elements of the language diamond structure include the sender of language information (the subject of language), the receiver of language information (the object of language), the intention of the dialogue, and the interest of the dialogue, with the interest of the dialogue forming the apex of the language diamond structure, representing a common psychological space created by the language subject and object.

As a system serving practice and guiding psychological services, power communication theory must have corresponding technical guidance for integrating theory and practice. This set of techniques is the "Beauty Technique Series," including the Beauty technique, Kant technique, Marx technique, Confucius technique, and breathing technique. The Beauty technique, expressed in English as "BEAUTY," consists of six words: "Being," "Experience," "Act," "Understand," "Target," and "Yes."

"Being" denotes existence, indicating that individuals cannot rely on anyone or anything in this turbulent and uncertain world and must seek and create the meaning of their own lives, which is an existential attitude. "Experience" entails experiencing without judgment or rejection, fully opening the sensory organs of the body to perceive, observe, and experience. "Act" emphasizes individuals making contributions to society and connecting with the world to live better. "Understand" implies that everyone has their own ideas, and in the process of cooperation and coexistence, everyone should strive to consider issues from the perspective of others. "Target" refers to the brevity of life, and each person should clarify their daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly goals. "Yes" underscores affirming oneself. Life presents numerous challenges, and it's not easy; thus, individuals should frequently affirm, praise, and be grateful to themselves and everything around them.[3]

Awareness and presentation in power communication encompass immediate awareness and presentation, systematic awareness and clear presentation, and dynamic awareness and appropriate presentation, comprehensively applying the self-diamond structure, communication-diamond structure, and language-diamond structure. Immediate awareness and presentation require maintaining curiosity and acuity in communication, being able to distinguish and connect the "self" with other people, things, and events, integrating the mind and brain to process dynamic stimuli, and continuously hypothesizing, judging, and verifying in consciousness. Systematic awareness and clear presentation involve placing the "self" in the communication system, maximally perceiving all elements of communication, and presenting oneself clearly. Dynamic awareness and appropriate presentation imply that the real world is constantly changing and flowing; thus, while protecting the dignity and safety of communication partners, individuals should appropriately present their awareness, promote the awareness of others, establish a sense of trust and security, generate consensus, and deepen communication continuously.

In summary, power communication theory acknowledges and accepts individual differences and the communication conflicts and contradictions resulting from them as objective realities. Therefore, power communication theory emphasizes the need to be aware of everything in communication, striving to represent all relevant individuals and matters in communication from multiple levels and perspectives, identifying the root causes of conflicts, expressing one's viewpoints and needs rationally, respecting others' perspectives and feelings, and seeking common solutions.[4]

2. Application of Power Communication Theory in Promoting Interpersonal Relationships in College Dormitories

In college dormitories, roommates range from 6-8 individuals to as few as 2-4 individuals. Compared to other interpersonal relationships, the proximity in spatial distance determines that direct interpersonal interaction among dormitory members is the most frequent. Each dormitory member comes from different regions, family backgrounds, routines, and personalities, inevitably leading to conflicts and contradictions among them. Moreover, due to improved living conditions, many students have independent bedrooms at home and are accustomed to having their own space for freedom and quietness. Consequently, college students have higher expectations for the quality of dormitory life. Additionally, with the prevalence of smartphones and internet entertainment, many students rely heavily on their phones, resulting in a lack of real-world interpersonal communication skills and experience. They are not adept at resolving conflicts in dormitory relationships. When friction occurs, they either choose to "cold war," move out of the dormitory, engage in intense verbal or physical conflicts, or even encounter some malicious incidents. This greatly affects students' satisfaction with their academic and living experiences during their time in college. Research has shown that tense and hostile dormitory relationships often lead to feelings of depression, affecting mental health and even limiting the potential for learning and work during college. Healthy dormitory

relationships can help students establish interpersonal trust, thereby improving self-control and self-efficacy, effectively reducing the likelihood of mental illnesses such as depression. Therefore, studying the interpersonal relationships of college dormitories, exploring appropriate ways to improve college students' interpersonal communication skills, helping college students effectively and cleverly resolve dormitory interpersonal conflicts, and establishing high-quality dormitory interpersonal relationships are important tasks and goals of college psychological health education.

In response to the above situation, based on the theoretical concepts and related technical methods proposed by power communication theory, the author conducted six structured group counseling sessions on dormitory interpersonal relationships at the university through open recruitment. The activities of each group counseling session were as follows: warm-up activities, awareness of oneself, others, and the environment during warm-up activities, watching short videos and sharing feelings and thoughts while watching, experiencing power communication techniques, and summarizing and sharing activities in writing.

In the first group activity, as students came from different departments and classes, they felt unfamiliar with each other. Through "ice-breaking activities," students began to get to know each other. In the second group activity, everyone gradually became acquainted through the "A Thousand Knots in the Heart" activity, shortening the distance between each other. Subsequent warm-up activities were led by a student autonomously, making everyone more relaxed, showing more creativity, more active participation, and group awareness.

Warm-up activities are just the beginning to stimulate students' vitality and remove internal defenses. The most crucial part is the awareness and presentation phase after each warm-up. The main task of this phase is to observe and present oneself, others, and the environment during warm-up activities, including describing one's emotions, thoughts, actions, and bodily sensations during warm-up activities, as well as observing classmates around, describing the physical characteristics, internal body language, posture, and gaze of observed classmates, as well as their personality traits, and also observing and experiencing oneself, others, and the environment in the activity from the perspective of an outsider, especially the external and internal characteristics and behavioral performances of classmates who are being observed. In this phase, students can share their observations and thoughts about themselves, as well as express and present the expressions, postures, and speech of observed classmates, and then receive feedback from the observed, thus experiencing different feelings and experiences from before and being able to more authentically express their inner thoughts.

The third phase of each group counseling activity is to watch a short video and share feelings and thoughts after watching. Students watch short videos such as "The Tale of Rabbit-Eared Raccoon," "Unlucky Cupid," and "Package Baby." After each viewing, everyone shares their inner experiences and thoughts while watching the video. Each sharing session is a brainstorming session, where students share their emotions and thoughts while watching the video from different perspectives. Everyone deeply experiences that everyone's perspectives and experiences of observing and experiencing things are so different, and these differences do not bring about conflicts and contradictions between individuals, but rather the pleasure, excitement, and satisfaction of experiencing the collision of ideas in the dialogue, gradually learning to accept and communicate with others different from themselves.

The fourth phase of each group counseling is to lead students to experience the five techniques of power communication together. The Beauty technique guides students to experience their sense of existence through breathing, experiencing the feeling of not moving the body while keeping the body still, while also accepting all current experiences, work, feelings, thoughts, and reactions observed at this moment with an open, free attitude, and giving gentle affirmation to oneself at this moment. The Kant technique also guides students from their own existence, through the breathing channel along the three-dimensional spatial line and time line to three-dimensionally observe their own position,

experience, and feelings, this kind of awareness helps students focus on the background of both communicators, rather than being influenced only by their own subjective time and space. The Kant technique helps students expand their temporal and spatial boundaries, making their minds more free; the Marx technique guides students to experience the abundance, happiness, and satisfaction brought by labor, helping students to view the people, things, and objects around them more practically. In the experience of the Confucius technique, students are guided to perceive, observe, and experience the support and help given by close relatives or friends, and to be grateful for their help. The breathing technique, once again through breathing, guides students to be aware of themselves, making students more confident and clear-headed. For students participating in group counseling, experiencing power communication techniques is a process of relaxation, enjoyment, and reflection. It helps students expand the scope of self-awareness, increase awareness, and break through their habitual thinking.

The last phase of each group counseling is to let everyone write down their feelings and experiences of this activity and share them in the group to further consolidate the effect of the activity. Through sharing, it can be seen that students gradually have a new understanding of themselves, others, and the environment, and have better tolerance and more flexible ways to deal with dormitory interpersonal conflicts and frictions.

3. Role of Power Communication Theory in Promoting Interpersonal Relationships in College Dormitories

Power Communication Theory plays the following roles in promoting interpersonal relationships among college students in dormitories:

(1) Facilitating the creation of a conducive communication environment and providing the prerequisite for establishing positive, healthy dormitory interpersonal relationships. During the process of establishing interpersonal relationships in dormitories, college students often tend to only express their own demands and highlight their own needs, often separating themselves from the overall dormitory environment. This often artificially creates tense situations and communication barriers, making effective communication difficult. Power Communication Theory believes that in communication, each party has their own needs, desires, and demands, which constitute a complex "field." Communication subjects need to learn to observe the different behaviors of everyone, including themselves, analyze the reasons and motives behind them, understand others' joys and sorrows, learn empathy, not centering solely on themselves, calmly accepting everything that happens in the "field," and then engaging in timely communication based on their identity, role, capabilities, and the current situation and conditions. With this premise of power communication, the communication environment becomes safe, open, and inclusive.

(2) Assisting in promoting students' continuous self-awareness and awareness of others, enhancing students' subjectivity in dormitory interpersonal relationships. In power communication, awareness and presentation, disturbance, and implantation always play important roles. Awareness and presentation refer to self-awareness and presentation on one hand, and awareness and presentation of others on the other hand. Self-awareness is the presentation of oneself, and appropriate presentation to others promotes their awareness, with the goal of facilitating better understanding of oneself and each other. Due to the different growth backgrounds, observation perspectives, and conclusions of communication parties, the communication process naturally causes disturbance to each other. When all parties feel each other's goodwill and the degree of disturbance is appropriate and sufficient, they will implant assumptions about the relationship into each other's psychological world, reach consensus, and form new goals acceptable to all parties. From this perspective, power communication is communication among subjects, where each party must acknowledge the subjectivity of the other, respect, cooperate, and empower each other.

(3) Assisting in enhancing students' emotional management and communication skills, making communication more effective. Power Communication Theory emphasizes empathy in communication. On one hand, one must learn to identify, understand, and regulate their own emotions. On the other hand, one must also be able to recognize and understand others' feelings and needs, respect others' viewpoints and feelings, refrain from judging, criticizing, or blaming others. Additionally, Power Communication Theory also emphasizes the importance of listening and expression in communication. This means actively listening to others' thoughts and feelings, understanding their needs and viewpoints, and then expressing oneself clearly, directly, and honestly, while avoiding the use of aggressive or negative language. After applying the concepts and techniques of power communication in interpersonal communication, students are noticeably more aware of their emotions, especially negative ones. They are also better able to reflect on the sources of negative emotions and make timely adjustments and communicate outwardly.

4. Conclusion

The interpersonal communication concepts and techniques proposed by the motivational communication theory can effectively enhance individuals' abilities to handle interpersonal conflicts and conflicts, helping students master the interpersonal communication concepts and techniques proposed by motivational communication theory can significantly improve students' interpersonal communication skills. In the mental health education work of colleges and universities, relevant teaching staff can be trained, and combined with curriculum settings, the motivational communication theory can be organically integrated into relevant courses of mental health education. Through classroom teaching, case analysis, and other methods, students can comprehensively understand the basic principles and methods of motivational communication theory. At the same time, a variety of colorful mental health education and practical activities can be organized and carried out, such as psychological situation dramas, psychological expansion training, group psychological counseling activities, etc., allowing students to personally experience the practical effects of motivational communication theory in the process of participation, learn to handle interpersonal conflicts and conflicts correctly, and thus establish harmonious interpersonal relationships.

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