Psychological Characteristics of Social Anxiety among University Students and Analysis of the Effectiveness of Group Counseling

Jie Fang

Shandong Vocational College of Science and Technology, Weifang, 261053, Shandong, China

27284725@qq.com

Abstract: This article aims to explore the effectiveness of group counseling in alleviating university students' social anxiety and provide practical guidance for mental health education in universities. In view of the universality of university students' social anxiety and its negative impact on their studies, interpersonal relationships and mental health, this study adopts experimental design, selects university students with social anxiety symptoms as the research object, and randomly divides them into experimental group and control group. The experimental group received group counseling intervention based on group dynamics and social learning theory, while the control group did not receive any special treatment. The social anxiety level of the two groups of students was evaluated by means of social anxiety scale and other tools. The results show that after receiving group counseling, the students in the experimental group have significantly reduced their social anxiety level and improved their social skills and self-confidence. In contrast, the social anxiety level of students in the control group has not changed significantly. This discovery shows that group counseling has a significant effect on alleviating university students' social anxiety. The conclusion is that group counseling is an effective psychological intervention, which can help university students understand and cope with social anxiety, and improve their social skills and self-confidence.

1. Introduction

In today's society, with the advent of the information age and the popularity of social media, the way of communication between people has undergone tremendous changes [1]. However, this change has not completely brought positive social experience, on the contrary, some people, especially university students, are facing more obvious social anxiety problems [2]. Social anxiety, as a common psychological obstacle, is gradually becoming an important factor affecting university students' mental health and all-round development [3]. Therefore, an in-depth study of the psychological characteristics of university students' social anxiety and its influencing factors is not only of great significance for revealing the essence of this phenomenon, but also provides targeted intervention strategies and suggestions for mental health education in universities [4].

The universality of social anxiety among university students cannot be ignored. With the increase of academic pressure, employment competition and the complexity of interpersonal relationships, many students feel uneasy, nervous and even afraid when facing social occasions [5]. This anxiety not only affects their daily communication, but also may further lead to behaviors such as self-isolation and social avoidance, thus aggravating mental health problems [6]. Social anxiety has many effects on university students' mental health and development. It may not only cause students to feel inferior and depressed, but also affect their academic performance, interpersonal relationship and future career development [7]. Therefore, paying attention to and studying the social anxiety of university students is of far-reaching significance for promoting their all-round development and healthy growth.

The purpose of this study is to explore the psychological characteristics of university students' social anxiety, including its specific manifestations in cognitive, emotional and behavioral levels, and to analyze the personal factors (such as self-cognition, personality traits) and environmental

factors (such as family, school and social support) that affect social anxiety. On this basis, the negative effects of social anxiety on university students' studies, interpersonal relationships and mental health are further discussed in order to provide empirical basis and effective suggestions for mental health education in universities.

2. Psychological characteristics of university students' social anxiety

2.1. Performance of social anxiety

The psychological manifestations of social anxiety among university students are diverse and complicated. On the cognitive level, they often have a negative assessment of their social skills, fearing that they will not perform well in social occasions or be negatively evaluated by others [8]. On the emotional level, they may experience negative emotions such as nervousness, anxiety and fear, and even have obvious anxiety reactions before or during social activities. On the behavioral level, university students with social anxiety may show such behavioral characteristics as avoiding social occasions, reducing social activities, and appearing stiff or uncomfortable in social activities.

2.2. Cognitive, emotional and behavioral characteristics

Cognitive, university students with social anxiety are often skeptical about their social skills. They may pay too much attention to their own shortcomings and ignore their own strengths and weaknesses. This negative self-awareness further aggravated their anxiety. Emotionally, the anxiety and fear caused by social anxiety are significant. They may be afraid of being laughed at, rejected or ignored by others, especially in social situations. Behaviorally, in order to avoid possible social embarrassment or failure, they may choose to avoid social activities, or be too nervous and uncomfortable in social activities. This behavior pattern further limits the development of their social experience and skills.

2.3. Influencing factors of social anxiety

Personal factors play an important role in social anxiety. For example, the deviation of self-cognition, low self-esteem, introverted personality traits and lack of self-confidence may all increase the risk of social anxiety.

Environmental factors can not be ignored. The lack of family environment, school atmosphere and social support system may affect university students' social anxiety. For example, excessive protection or neglect at home, bullying or exclusion at school and lack of support from friends and society may aggravate university students' social anxiety.

Social anxiety has a significant negative impact on university students' studies, interpersonal relationships and mental health. Academically, they may find it difficult to concentrate because of anxiety, leading to a decline in academic performance. In interpersonal relationships, social anxiety may make it difficult for them to establish and maintain close friendship, further aggravating their sense of loneliness and isolation. In terms of mental health, long-term social anxiety may lead to psychological problems such as depression and inferiority, which seriously affects their quality of life and development potential.

3. Theoretical basis and scheme design of group counseling

3.1. Theoretical basis of group counseling

As an effective psychological intervention, group counseling is based on group dynamics and social learning theory. Group dynamics emphasizes the interaction process within the group and the interaction between individuals and groups, and holds that the overall atmosphere of the group, the interaction mode between members and the leadership style will have an important impact on individual psychology and behavior. In group counseling, creating a positive and supportive group atmosphere can promote mutual understanding, support and growth among members.

Social learning theory focuses on the individual's learning process in the social environment,

especially the role of observation learning, imitation and social feedback in behavior shaping. In group counseling, members can observe and learn the effective social behaviors of other members, and improve their social skills through imitation and practice. Furthermore, the feedback and support provided by the group also helps members to consolidate and strengthen new behavior patterns.

3.2. Goals and principles of group counseling

The goals of group counseling mainly include helping university students to know and understand their social anxiety, improving their social skills and self-confidence, and establishing positive social relationships. In order to achieve these goals, group counseling needs to follow some basic principles, such as Table 1.

Table 1 Goals and Basic Principles of Group Counseling

Goals of Group Counseling	Basic Principles
Help university students recognize and understand their social anxiety	1. Respect and Understanding: Respect each member's uniqueness and feelings, and understand their social anxiety.
Enhance social skills and self-confidence	2. Active Participation: Encourage members to actively participate in activities and improve social skills through practice.
Establish positive social relationships	3. Mutual Assistance and Cooperation: Foster mutual assistance and cooperation among members to jointly establish positive social relationships.
-	4. Open Communication: Create an open and safe communication environment where members can freely express themselves.
-	5. Gradual Progress: Develop a gradual counseling plan based on the actual situation of the members.

3.3. Specific scheme design of group counseling

The scheme design of group counseling needs to focus on the objectives, including the content of activities, implementation steps and expected results. Activities can include social skills training, role-playing, group discussion, emotional sharing, etc., aiming to help members improve their social cognition, emotional expression and behavior coping ability, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Practice of group counseling activities

The implementation steps include the stages of group formation, goal setting, activity implementation, feedback and adjustment, and conclusion and summary. The expected effects include the reduction of members' social anxiety level, the improvement of social skills and more positive social behavior.

4. The intervention effect of group counseling on social anxiety among university students

4.1. Experimental design

In order to evaluate the intervention effect of group counseling on university students' social anxiety, scientific experimental design is needed. First of all, this article chooses the appropriate research object-university students with social anxiety symptoms. Then, the subjects were randomly divided into experimental group and control group. The experimental group received group counseling intervention, while the control group did not receive any special treatment. In order to accurately measure the changes of social anxiety level, it is needed to choose appropriate measuring tools, including Social Anxiety Scale (SAS).

In the implementation of group counseling, this article records the content of each activity, the performance and feedback of members in detail. These records are helpful to understand the progress of group counseling and the change of members. Furthermore, pay attention to the interaction mode between members, the group atmosphere and any factors that may affect the counseling effect.

4.2. Effect assessment

Effect assessment is an important part of group counseling research. By comparing the scores of the experimental group and the control group on the social anxiety scale, we can objectively evaluate the intervention effect of group counseling on social anxiety. In addition, we can collect members' self-reports and observe their behavior changes to further evaluate the counseling effect. The experimental results are shown in Table 2 and Table 3.

Table 2 Social Anxiety Scale Score Change Comparison

Group	Pre-test Average Score	Post-test Average Score	Score Change
Experimental Group	65	45	-20
Control Group	63	62	-1

Note: after receiving group counseling, the score of social anxiety scale in the experimental group decreased by 20 points on average; However, the score of the control group did not change much, only decreased by 1 point.

Table 3 Member Self-Report and Behavioral Change Assessment

Assessment Indicator	Pre-test Situation	Post-test Situation	Change Description
Social Skills	60% of members reported as average or poor	85% of members reported improvement	Members generally reported learning new social skills through group counseling, such as active listening and expressing opinions, and applying them in practice.
Self-confidence	75% of members reported as lacking	90% of members reported improvement	Members reported receiving support and encouragement in group counseling, learning how to face and overcome social anxiety, and gradually enhancing their self-confidence.
Behavioral Change	Observed 30% of members behaving timidly in social situations	Observed 80% of members behaving more naturally in social situations	Members exhibited more enthusiasm and openness in their social behavior after group counseling, such as being more willing to participate in social activities and actively communicating with others.

Self-report can provide members' subjective feelings and comments on the counseling process,

and behavior change is the direct embodiment of the counseling effect. Based on these assessment results, we can comprehensively and objectively analyze the intervention effect of group counseling on university students' social anxiety.

5. Conclusions

In this study, through the implementation of group counseling intervention, the social anxiety of university students was deeply discussed. The results show that group counseling has a significant effect on alleviating university students' social anxiety. Most students who participated in group counseling scored significantly lower on the social anxiety scale, and their self-reported social skills and self-confidence also improved. This discovery is consistent with previous theoretical research and practical experience, which further confirms the positive role of group counseling as an effective psychological intervention in helping university students cope with social anxiety. Furthermore, this discovery has important enlightenment significance for mental health education in universities. Universities can actively introduce the intervention mode of group counseling to provide students with more comprehensive and effective mental health support. Furthermore, universities can further optimize and innovate group counseling programs in combination with students' actual needs and psychological characteristics to better meet students' mental health needs.

References

[1] Zhang Shuo, Fan Xing, Zhou Ziyao. Focus on the intervention of peer group counseling on university students' social anxiety [J]. Statistics and Management, 2020,35(11):94-98.

[2] Zheng Qiuqiang, Luo Yuexin. Study on the intervention of music therapy group counseling on university students' social anxiety [J]. Journal of Changchun Normal University, 2019, 38(10):197-200.

[3] Yang Yujing, Hu Jia, Qi Ruifeng. Research on the intervention of children's social anxiety based on emotional adjustment strategies [J]. Early Education: Teacher Edition, 2022(38):35-39.

[4] Zhang Xinyuan, Zhang Xiyuan. aerobic dance's intervention study on university students' social anxiety [J]. Snow Sports Innovation Research, 2020(5):75-76.

[5] Xie Xiaolin, He Shude, Hu Chaobing. The relationship between psychological capital and social anxiety of university students and intervention research [J]. Progress in Psychology, 2023, 13(12):5638-5651.

[6] Tang Yan, Chen Xu, Deng Hailong, et al. Application of cognitive behavior group counseling in social anxiety groups of higher vocational nursing students [J]. Industry and Technology Forum, 2021,20(13):96-97.

[7] Yan Ren, Ge Jiejie, Wu Xiaofan. Study on the intervention effect of online focus-solving group counseling on university students with social anxiety [J]. Psychological Monthly, 2023(11):88-91.

[8] Meng Xiaolu, Hu Jia, Gong Yu, et al. Intervention study of interpersonal group counseling on university students' internet dependence [J]. China Higher Medical Education, 2023(11):51-53.