

A Study on the Impact of Psychological Comfort Services on the Mental Health of the Elderly from the Perspective of Social Support

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Abstract:

Elderly mental health refers to the psychological development status of elderly people based on emotional stability, normal cognitive function, good social adaptation, and high subjective well-being. Its maintenance is of great significance for achieving positive aging. Based on the perspective of social support, this article systematically analyzes the mechanism of spiritual comfort services in promoting the mental health of the elderly, and elaborates in detail on individual differences, family support, community service supply, social environment and culture, and other influencing factors; And propose to improve the mental health level of the elderly through collaborative linkage between families and communities, empowering emotional companionship with digital technology, integrating and optimizing policies, systems, and resources.

Keywords:

Social Support, Spiritual Comfort Services, Elderly Mental Health

1. Introduction

The Proposal of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Formulating the 15th Five Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development proposes to improve the service guarantee system for special groups such as empty nest elderly, improve the care system for disabled and dementia elderly, and strengthen psychological and mental health services. [1] Social support refers to the emotional care, information assistance, and practical support that individuals receive through family, friends, communities, social organizations, etc. Its core is to rely on a stable social network to meet psychological and social needs. With the deepening of population aging, the support of the elderly in emotional companionship and social participation is gradually weakening, and the demand for spiritual comfort is becoming increasingly prominent. Therefore, it is necessary to explore its impact mechanism on the mental health of the elderly, in order to strengthen their psychological resilience.

2. The Connotation of Spiritual Comfort Services

Spiritual comfort services refer to providing non-material support and care to elderly people through emotional companionship, psychological counseling, communication and interaction, cultural entertainment, social participation, and other means around their psychological feelings and spiritual needs, in order to make up for their deficiencies in emotional attachment, value recognition, social connections, and other aspects. Unlike daily care and life services, spiritual comfort services place greater emphasis on responding to the feelings of loneliness, loss, and meaninglessness experienced by elderly people during retirement, physical decline, and social role transition from a spiritual perspective, helping them obtain emotional comfort and psychological support. Its essence is to rely on diverse entities such as family members, community workers, social organizations, volunteers, etc., to form a sustained and stable support network, strengthen the sense of belonging, self-worth, and life confidence of the elderly, and thereby promote them to maintain a positive attitude, improve their mental health level and quality of life in their later years.

3. The Mechanism of the Effect of Spiritual Comfort Services on the Mental Health of the Elderly

The mechanism of the effect of spiritual comfort services on the mental health of the elderly is mainly reflected in the comprehensive influence of multiple levels and pathways. In terms of emotional support to alleviate loneliness, spiritual comfort services provide stable emotional input to the elderly through daily companionship, patient listening, emotional response, and other forms, filling the emotional gap caused by insufficient family companionship or reduced social interaction, thereby reducing feelings of loneliness and marginalization, and promoting emotional stability. In terms of enhancing the meaning of cognitive reconstruction, spiritual comfort services use psychological communication, life experience review, positive value guidance, and other methods to help elderly people re-understand their own life process, adjust negative cognitive patterns, strengthen affirmation of their own existence value, gradually produce more positive life explanation structures and psychological identification, and improve their sense of life meaning and resilience. In terms of enhancing social integration and connectivity, community activity organizations, interest group participation, and multi-party interactive communication are utilized to broaden the social participation channels of the elderly, strengthen their interaction and emotional connections with family members, neighborhood communities, and social organizations, and enable them to gain a sense of belonging and participation in continuous social interactions, thereby improving their social adaptability and mental health level.

4. Key Factors Affecting the Effectiveness of Mental Comfort Services

4.1. Individual differences influencing factors

The individual differences of the elderly play a key role in the effectiveness of mental comfort services, covering various aspects such as age stage, physical health status, cognitive ability, personality traits, and life experiences. The physical health status directly affects the frequency and quality of elderly people's participation in mental comfort activities. Those with limited physical function may rely more on on-

site services or remote interactions, while those with better health are more inclined to participate in collective activities and obtain psychological satisfaction from them. The difference in cognitive ability determines the level of understanding of psychological counseling and value guidance among the elderly. Those with higher cognitive levels can better accept self reflection and cognitive reconstruction, thereby achieving more significant psychological improvement [3]. In terms of personality traits, outgoing and proactive elderly people are more likely to receive emotional support in social and interactive settings, while introverted or closed minded elderly people have a lower acceptance of services and require more personalized guidance. In addition, life experience and educational background can also affect the elderly's understanding and perception of the need for spiritual comfort services. Different cultural literacy and growth experiences lead to differences in value recognition, sense of life meaning, and emotional expression among the elderly, which in turn affects the effectiveness of spiritual comfort services.

4.2. Factors related to family support

Family support is an important condition that affects the effectiveness of mental comfort services, including family structure, quality of kinship relationships, duration of family members' companionship, and level of psychological care. Elderly people with a complete family network can receive more emotional responses and life assistance in their daily lives, and their sense of psychological security and belonging is higher, which makes them more likely to gain additional psychological benefits from mental comfort services. The psychological needs of empty nest, single or widowed elderly are more urgent, and they rely more on external spiritual comfort. However, at the same time, the lack of family support may lead to insufficient motivation or trust in participating in services, which affects the effectiveness of service. The quality of companionship and interaction among family members are also very important. Positive, understanding, and supportive communication can improve the acceptance and satisfaction of elderly people with services, while indifferent and conflicting family relationships can weaken the psychological improvement effect of mental comfort services. In addition, while providing psychological support, families can also assist elderly people in choosing and participating in community or professional spiritual comfort activities, thereby forming a synergistic effect between family and external services.

4.3. Factors influencing the supply of community services

The supply of community services directly affects the coverage, accessibility, and professional level of mental comfort services, which in turn affects the effectiveness of improving the mental health of the elderly. Areas with abundant community resources and complete service systems can provide various spiritual comfort activities, such as interest groups, psychological counseling, cultural entertainment, volunteer companionship, etc., to meet the various needs of different elderly people. The professionalism of service provision is also an important factor. Service personnel with knowledge in psychology, social work, and gerontology can more accurately identify psychological problems in the elderly, develop appropriate intervention measures, and improve the effectiveness of psychological support during long-term tracking. The continuity and accessibility of services also affect the effectiveness. If activity arrangements are scattered, information is difficult to obtain, or participation conditions are harsh, elderly people may not be able to achieve

sustained psychological improvement due to a lack of stable experiences. In addition, the level of promotion, convenience of facilities, and volunteer participation in community services can all affect the willingness and satisfaction of elderly people to participate. Overall, the breadth, depth, and quality of community service supply are the main external conditions for whether spiritual comfort services can truly improve the mental health of the elderly.

4.4. Social, environmental, and cultural factors

The social environment and cultural background are key external factors that shape the spiritual comfort needs and service effectiveness of the elderly. Social environmental factors include community safety, social security, public cultural atmosphere, and opportunities for elderly social participation, which directly affect their sense of social integration and psychological security. Cultural factors are manifested in social values, family ethics, and the level of awareness of the mental health of the elderly. In a social and cultural environment that respects the elderly, encourages social participation, and values mental health, the elderly are more likely to actively receive spiritual comfort services and gain positive experiences during the service process. On the contrary, if society does not attach enough importance to the elderly population, there may be intergenerational barriers or biases towards psychological issues, which may lead to psychological defense or rejection of psychological comfort services among the elderly, thereby reducing the effectiveness of the services [4]. In addition, the completeness of social policies, public service support systems, and cultural activity supply will all affect the sustainability of spiritual comfort services and the participation of the elderly. Social environment and cultural factors are both external guarantees for service effectiveness and background support for improving the mental health of the elderly.

5. The Implementation Path of Promoting Elderly Mental Health through Spiritual Comfort Services from the Perspective of Social Support

5.1. Strengthening family support and promoting community collaboration and linkage

Strengthening family support can provide the most basic and direct support for the mental health of the elderly. In the lives of the elderly, the family is not only a place for daily care, but also the main source of emotional attachment and psychological comfort. Social support theory suggests that stable and positive family relationships can effectively alleviate the loneliness and psychological pressure of elderly people, enhance their sense of self-worth and social belonging, and provide a deep emotional foundation for the development of spiritual comfort services. Community is an important component of the social support network, relying on resource integration, service organization, and social interaction to provide multidimensional support such as emotional, cognitive, and social participation to the elderly, thereby extending and amplifying the effectiveness of spiritual comfort services. On the one hand, family members should actively participate in spiritual comfort activities for the elderly, enhance their emotional security through daily companionship, emotional communication, and psychological counseling, and make them feel sustained psychological support in the family environment. At the same time, family members can assist the elderly in participating in cultural and entertainment activities, social

activities, and volunteer services organized by the community based on their interests and needs, achieving an organic combination of internal and external resources and building a multi-level support system [5]. On the other hand, the community should establish a comprehensive service network, provide professional psychological counseling, interest groups, and social participation platforms, and form an information exchange and resource sharing mechanism with families to achieve seamless connection between service supply and family support. Community workers and volunteers can build bridges between families and communities, design flexible participation methods based on the personalized needs of the elderly, and provide continuous attention and feedback during the service process, thereby improving the pertinence of spiritual comfort services.

5.2. Empowering digital services and enhancing emotional companionship

Digital service empowerment refers to the use of modern information technology to integrate online platforms, intelligent terminals, big data analysis and other tools into spiritual comfort services, thereby enhancing the emotional companionship, social interaction, and psychological support effects of the elderly. From the perspective of social support, elderly people rely on stable social networks to obtain emotional, informational, and practical support. Digital means can break through the constraints of time and space, broaden the range of psychological resources provided by families, communities, and social organizations, and enable elderly people to obtain sustained and personalized spiritual comfort in their daily lives, thereby improving their mental health and life satisfaction. The empowerment of digital services and the enhancement of emotional companionship can be achieved from multiple levels. Firstly, with the help of remote interaction and online communication, digital services can achieve real-time emotional communication between family members and elderly people, thereby alleviating the loneliness caused by children being far away or the lack of care in the family, enabling elderly people to obtain psychological comfort and emotional response in virtual interaction, and strengthening emotional attachment and life security. Secondly, by utilizing intelligent platforms and big data analysis, community service agencies can provide personalized activity recommendations based on the interests, psychological states, and social needs of the elderly, such as online interest groups, psychological counseling courses, virtual cultural and entertainment activities, to meet their diverse needs in cognitive stimulation, social participation, psychological support, and enhance their sense of meaning in life and social integration. Thirdly, by integrating family, community, and professional service resources through digital technology, a multi-level support network is constructed to provide comprehensive support for the elderly through continuous companionship and timely psychological intervention, improve the coverage and sustainability of spiritual comfort services, and achieve the goals of alleviating loneliness, enhancing psychological adjustment ability, and improving social adaptation level for the elderly.

5.3. Policy and institutional guarantees, resource integration and optimization

Policy and institutional guarantees can provide stable institutional support and resource guarantees for mental comfort services, thereby ensuring the sustainability and standardization of elderly mental health intervention measures. The mental health of the elderly relies not only on direct support from families and communities, but also requires coordination with macro policy environments and institutional arrangements to form a multi-level and comprehensive support network, improving

the accessibility of emotional care, social participation, and psychological counseling for the elderly. The standardization of policies and the optimization of resource allocation can improve the coverage and implementation effectiveness of mental comfort services, providing strong guarantees for the mental health of the elderly. One is legislative protection. Develop and improve laws and regulations related to the mental health and spiritual comfort of the elderly, provide clear institutional basis for services, standardize service content, service standards, and service processes, and clarify the responsibilities and rights of the government, community, and family, so that spiritual comfort services have legal basis and operability in the social support system. The second is financial support. The government should raise funds through multiple channels such as special financial investment, social fund guidance, and enterprise participation to provide stable resource guarantees for the construction of spiritual comfort projects, training of service personnel, and community activities, reduce service costs, increase the willingness of elderly people to participate, and ensure the sustainability of services. The third is resource integration. Establish a cross departmental coordination mechanism to organically integrate resources from families, communities, social organizations, medical institutions, and digital platforms, forming a multi-party collaborative network to achieve information sharing, service linkage, and precise demand matching, thereby improving service efficiency and effectiveness. At the same time, relying on data platforms and evaluation systems, dynamic monitoring and optimization adjustments are carried out on service quality, the mental health status of the elderly, etc., so as to continuously improve the effective allocation of policies and resources in practice, and thus maximize the promotion effect of spiritual comfort services on the mental health of the elderly.

6. Conclusions

From the perspective of social support, spiritual comfort services are a key carrier connecting families, communities, and social resources, playing a positive role in meeting the emotional needs of the elderly, promoting social participation, and alleviating psychological pressure. Through the synergistic effect of multidimensional support systems, the loneliness and psychological imbalance of the elderly can be improved, and their psychological regulation and social adaptation abilities can be enhanced. In the future, we need to continue to improve the multi subject collaboration mechanism, strengthen the integration of digitalization and humanistic care, improve the institutional guarantee system, and thereby enhance the accuracy and sustainability of spiritual comfort services.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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