

Research on the Construction of Mental Health Service System for College Students in the Internet Age from the Perspective of Storytelling Education

Xiang Liu

School of Computer Science and Software Engineering, Southwest Petroleum University, Chengdu, Sichuan 610500, China

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*Corresponding Author: Xiang Liu

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Abstract

Original Research Article

The Internet has profoundly reshaped the survival, social interaction and cognitive patterns of college students. New psychological risks such as information overload, virtual social alienation, internet addiction, and digital privacy anxiety continue to emerge. Traditional university mental health services have shortcomings such as rigid forms, disconnection between supply and demand, insufficient collaboration, and shallow integration of technology. Story-based education, as a flexible educational model with both ideological value guidance and psychological healing functions, can fill the gap in the lack of humanistic warmth in digital psychological services. Supported by Bronfenbrenner's ecosystem theory, narrative therapy and social learning theory, this study interprets the internal logic of applying story-based education to college mental health services against the backdrop of Internet media, extracts the "situational infiltration-emotional resonance-cognitive reconstruction-behavioral tendency" spiral action path, constructs a longitudinal growth axis and a dual spiral-driven service framework of horizontal element collaboration, and systematically disassembles the five core elements of story-based education, namely the subject, content, method, scene, and goal. It integrates digital technologies such as VR/AR, AI, and online narrative platforms to establish a three-dimensional practical carrier. Combined with the school-based practice of Southwest Petroleum University, it sorts out the mental wellness narrative resources, online mental wellness radio stations, narrative group workshops, VR immersive psychological experiences, etc., analyzes the limitations of the current system such as insufficient long-term tracking data, lack of personalized matching capability, and lack of home-school-community collaboration, and proposes optimization paths from four dimensions: intelligent empowerment, evidence-based practice, all-round integration, and inter-school resource sharing. The research aims to promote the deep coupling of psychological education and ideological education, and provide replicable and scalable narrative-based mental health service solutions for the implementation of the "Three Comprehensive Education (all-staff, all-process, all-round education)" pattern in universities in the Internet era.

Keywords: The Internet Era, College Students, Mental Health Services, Story-Based Education, Dual Spiral-Driven Mechanism.

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0 Introduction

Digital media have fully penetrated campus life. Generation Z undergraduates constantly navigate interwoven online and offline living spaces. This has led to psychological dilemmas distinct from

traditional groups: Massive information causes persistent decision-making anxiety; social comparisons on social media lead to self-denial; shallow virtual interactions exacerbate social isolation in reality; addiction to short videos and online games weakens self-regulation ability; digital



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information leakage triggers regular privacy concerns. At the same time, the traditional mental health service model in domestic universities is lagging behind: there is insufficient professional teaching staff, and intervention methods mainly consist of lectures and offline consultations; students' sense of shame about illness leads to low willingness to seek help; online digital tools only remain at the levels of assessment and text-based counseling, lacking emotional immersion and value guidance; ideological education and psychological work have long been disconnected, and didactic moral education is unable to reach students' deep psychological needs, and the integration mechanism between the two is missing.

Story-based education is a classic method of ideological and political education in China. It relies on storytelling to evoke emotions and convince people with reason. Narrative therapy abroad has proven that storytelling has intervention efficacy in emotional counseling, trauma recovery, and cognitive reconstruction. Currently, most domestic research focuses on the cultivation of values through story-based education, with few systems integrating it into a complete mental health service system. Moreover, there is a lack of mechanism construction and school-based empirical research under the empowerment of internet technology. In this context, exploring an innovative mental health service system centered on story-based education, which integrates digital technology and unifies ideological and political work with psychological services, has become a practical issue for fulfilling the fundamental task of fostering virtue and promoting education and resolving digital psychological crises among young students.

1 Current research status at home and abroad

1.1 Current research status in China

Firstly, the research on the relationship between the Internet and the mental health of college students: The academic community generally agrees that the Internet is a double-edged sword. It not only gives rise to psychological problems such as anxiety and social phobia, but also can build digital

psychological services through online platforms, AI, and VR. However, the existing digital tools generally have deficiencies in humanistic aspects, monotonous interaction, and lack of value guidance.

Secondly, the research on story-based education: The existing achievements are mainly concentrated in ideological and political classes and campus culture construction, proposing implementation paths such as "five integrations" and educational community. However, they rarely explore the psychological mechanism of narrative in emotion regulation, stress relief, and the formation of positive behaviors, and have not formed a complete application framework for psychological services.

Thirdly, the research on the integration of psychology and ideological and political education: It mostly remains at the theoretical level, lacks practical and systematic integration carriers, and fails to connect the entire service process of prevention, development, and intervention.

1.2 Current research status abroad

Narrative therapy and potential curriculum theories have matured abroad, proving that narratives can reconstruct individual self-perception, alleviate trauma, and enhance psychological resilience. Digital mental health intervention studies focus on apps, online counseling, and VR exposure therapy, confirming that digital tools can lower the threshold for seeking help and break through time and space limitations. However, these studies generally lack a value-narrative dimension and are difficult to align with the ideological education goals of Chinese universities. Recent research has confirmed that digital narratives and story-sharing can effectively reduce the stigma of mental illness and improve the emotional state of college students, but there is a lack of systematic practical models specifically for engineering colleges and integrated with local campus culture.

1.3 Research Approach and Innovation Points

This research follows the logical framework of "problem diagnosis-theoretical explanation-

mechanism construction-practical implementation-optimization outlook". The innovation points are reflected in three aspects: First, there is an innovation in perspective integration, connecting the "character education" of ideological and political education with the "heart education" of psychology, and achieving deep coupling at the operational level through story-based education; Second, there is an innovation in model construction, relying on the ecosystem theory to pioneer a dual spiral-driven service mechanism; Third, there is an innovation in carrier integration, combining school-based story resources with digital media such as VR, AI, short videos, and audio radio stations to construct an integrated narrative education matrix online and offline.

2 The mental health predicaments of college students in the Internet era and the shortcomings of the existing service system

2.1 The Internet has given rise to four new types of psychological challenges for college students.

(1) Information overload leads to generalized anxiety: Fragmented information continuously consumes attention, and the "perfect persona" on social media triggers negative social comparisons, causing students to easily fall into self-doubt and persistent anxiety when facing studies, employment, and choices.

(2) Virtual social alienation causes real-life loneliness: Students overly focus on likes and maintaining online images, resulting in high online activity but lack of communication offline; Cyberbullying spreads rapidly across online platforms, which easily induces social phobia and low self-esteem, and the face-to-face communication ability continuously deteriorates.

(3) Digital addiction weakens self-control ability: The addictive design of short videos and online games causes disrupted schedules and neglect of studies, leading students into a vicious cycle of "indulgence-self-blame", and the self-regulation mechanism fails.

(4) Digital privacy anxiety forms persistent

psychological pressure: The cross-platform circulation and leakage risks of personal information have become normalized, leaving students trapped in persistent digital insecurity and eroding their trust in online environments.

2.2 The seven shortcomings of the traditional university mental health service system

(1) The number of professional psychological counselors is inadequate, and most counselors have not systematically mastered the skills for intervening in online psychological issues.

(2) The educational form is monotonous, relying on lectures and poster publicity, lacking immersive and interactive experiences, and students show low willingness to participate.

(3) The awareness and usage rate of counseling institutions are low. Students have a sense of stigma regarding mental health issues and have weak willingness to seek help voluntarily.

(4) Crisis intervention is passive and delayed. There is a lack of pre-screening and regular proactive intervention networks.

(5) Insufficient investment in software and hardware. The popularity of digital psychological devices such as VR and AI is low.

(6) The supply of services is disconnected from the needs of students. It neglects the demands of young people for anonymous, convenient, and personalized services.

(7) The ideological and political departments and the psychological departments operate independently, lacking a collaborative education system and shared carriers.

3 Theoretical Foundation and Internal Mechanism of Story-Based Education Intervention in Mental Health Services

Based on the above analysis of the digital psychological predicaments faced by college students and the deficiencies of the traditional service model, this chapter elaborates on the

theoretical basis and internal intervention logic of story-based education.

3.1 Core theoretical support

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory: It places the psychology of college students within a multi-layered interaction framework of individual, micro-system (peers, family), meso-system (various departments on campus), and exo-system (social network). The service system needs to integrate resources across the entire university and cover all aspects of students' lives.

Narrative Therapy: It externalizes negative emotions through stories, explores positive exceptional experiences, reconstructs individual life narratives, and achieves emotional counseling and trauma repair, providing a technical path for psychological intervention in story-based education.

Social Learning Theory: The role models in the stories provide positive behavioral models that can be imitated, enhancing students' self-efficacy and promoting the transformation of positive behaviors.

Theoretical Integration of Ideological and Political Education: Story-based education integrates theory into practice, achieving simultaneous advancement of value guidance and psychological counseling, and aligning with the requirements of "big ideological and political education" and "all-round education for students".

3.2 The spiral path of how stories influence the formation of one's psychology and promote mental health

A complete four-level progressive mechanism of "contextual infiltration-emotional resonance-cognitive reconstruction-behavioral tendency" is formed:

Contextual infiltration, breaking psychological defense: The story creates a virtual safe context, allowing students to have alternative emotional experiences, avoiding the resistance to offline counseling, and establishing emotional connections;

Emotional resonance, releasing negative emotions: Similar growth and hardship stories awaken empathy, alleviating loneliness, and providing an outlet for emotional expression;

Cognitive reconstruction, correcting irrational thinking: The story provides multiple perspectives, challenging cognitive biases such as "perfectionism" and "failure is destruction", enhancing psychological resilience;

Behavioral tendency, shaping positive actions: Model narratives strengthen self-efficacy, guiding students to actively engage in positive behaviors such as stress management, interpersonal communication, and career planning; These four stages circulate cyclically to deliver sustained psychological nourishment for undergraduates.

3.3 The five core components of story-based education

Subject elements: A multi-layered narrative team is constructed with psychological counselors and ideological instructors as core participants, supplemented by professional teachers, alumni, outstanding students and peer psychological committee members, who receive regular training on narrative competency;

Content elements: Divided into five categories of stories: school history spirit, teacher ethics and conduct, peer growth, professional enlightenment, and psychological healing. Build a standardized online resource library;

Method elements: Multidimensional digital presentation forms such as short videos, mental wellness radio, VR immersive narrative, interactive narrative games, and anonymous peer narrative sharing modules;

Scene elements: Covering the ideological education in the first classroom, theme activities in the second classroom, online communities in the third classroom, and individual/group psychological counseling offline;

Target elements: Set psychological growth goals at different stages such as first-year adaptation, second-year identification, third-year stress resistance, and fourth-year career selection.

4 The Construction of a "Dual Spiral-Driven Mechanism" Service System for Storytelling to Promote Mental Health in the Internet Age

Based on the ecosystem theory, a double helix framework is established. The growth cycle of students is longitudinally matched. The educational resources of the entire school are horizontally integrated. Online digital technology is empowered and offline physical activities are implemented. A closed-loop psychological service system is formed.

4.1 Vertical drive: Progressive storytelling along the growth axis for students of different grades

According to the four-year undergraduate psychological development tasks, match differentiated narrative theme packages to achieve comprehensive education throughout the process:

First year (adaptation and belonging): VR immersive stories of school history, stories of senior students sharing their adaptation experiences, to alleviate the unfamiliarity of freshmen and ease freshmen's enrollment anxiety;

Second year (exploration and self-identity): Professional role model stories, narrative of career figures interviews, to stimulate professional identity and reduce academic confusion;

Third year (pressure and resilience cultivation): Workshop on narrative of setbacks, stories of entrepreneurship and adversity in difficult situations, to enhance the ability to resist pressure and mitigate stress arising from academic involution;

Fourth year (transition and hope shaping): Alumni career growth stories, narrative of social responsibility, to alleviate employment anxiety and establish a belief in long-term development.

4.2 Horizontal drive: Cross-departmental collaborative education element collaborative network

A school-level joint working committee covering psychology, ideological education and campus narrative culture is set up. This committee coordinates cross-departmental collaboration among Student Affairs, Mental Health Center, Academic Affairs Office, School of Marxism, Youth League Committee and all undergraduate colleges:

Resource coordination: jointly build and share a narrative resource library and digital narrative tools;

Activity coordination: jointly plan brand activities such as story radio, narrative workshops, VR psychological experiences;

Assessment coordination: incorporate story-based education psychological services into the assessment indicators for counselors and professional teachers in education;

Evaluation coordination: uniformly use the evaluation tools for story-based education effects and regularly review the service outcomes.

4.3 Digital technology empowers the digital upgrade of the system

Relying on Internet technology to enrich the carriers for educating through stories, and addressing the pain points such as the limitations of traditional services in terms of time and space, as well as privacy concerns:

(1) VR/AR immersive narratives: VR school history museums, VR social desensitization podiums, VR mental stress relief gardens, used for desensitization training of fear and anxiety; AR overlay of campus real scenes with school history and role model stories;

(2) AI intelligent auxiliary narratives: AI automatically matches students' psychological needs and pushes suitable stories; intelligent chatbots provide 7x24-hour emotional counseling;

(3) All-media online narrative platforms: campus narrative mental health repository, mental radio, WeChat tree hole stories, short video micro-

narrative columns;

(4) Digital assessment tools: online real-time feedback scales, psychological scale tracking systems, online narrative text analysis tools, achieving full-process data monitoring.

5 The implementation results of the system practice

This two-year school-based practice at Southwest Petroleum University has yielded replicable outcomes covering theoretical frameworks, digital resource platforms and branded educational activities.

(1) At the theoretical level: A complete theoretical framework for story-based mental health service education in the Internet environment has been established. An innovative "dual spiral-driven mechanism" model has been proposed and explained. Combined with the ecosystem theory, the operation logic of multiple layers of educational environment has been clarified. The five core elements of story-based education, including the subject, content, method, environment, and goal, have been systematically decomposed and the internal correlations among the elements have been sorted out. At the same time, through the pilot survey data, the actual effectiveness of the "context penetration-emotional resonance-cognitive reconstruction-behavioral tendency" spiral psychological intervention path has been empirically verified.

(2) In terms of resource platform construction, an online "Southwest Petroleum University Mind Story Resource Library" has been established, collecting over 300 pieces of text, audio, short videos, VR scene scripts and other diverse story materials. A "Voice into the Heart" mental radio online column has been specially created, with a total of over 80 episodes updated, and the program has accumulated over 500,000 online plays. Simultaneously, a 1.0 version of the story-based education effect assessment toolkit has been developed, integrating multi-dimensional evaluation tools such as process feedback scales, long-term psychological tracking assessment modules, qualitative interview outlines, and case analysis forms, to achieve measurable,

assessable, and traceable educational effects.

(3) At the practical activity level, a complete narrative education brand matrix has been established. Standardized narrative group workshops such as the freshmen adaptation circle, stress narrative, and career story board have been created, serving over 1,000 students on campus. A story toolbox empowerment project has been launched for counselors, compiling a narrative communication practical manual, regularly holding story power special training camps, and enhancing the narrative counseling ability of front-line ideological and political teachers. In collaboration with the Academic Affairs Office and professional teachers, over 100 course ideological and political micro-stories have been collected and a special case library has been established. A VR immersive psychological experience project has been developed, covering immersive scenarios of school history culture and virtual scenarios of social anxiety desensitization, and being used in the daily freshmen admission education and campus mental health open day events.

6 The limitations of the current system and the future optimization paths

6.1 The limitations of current practices

Insufficient long-term tracking data: The existing interventions only conduct short-term pre-test and post-test assessments, lacking longitudinal tracking over a period of 3-4 years, making it difficult to verify the long-term psychological improvement effects of narrative interventions;

Insufficient personalization adaptation: The stories have not been tailored to the preferences of students with different personalities, academic backgrounds, or psychological issues, and the accuracy of intelligent matching needs to be improved;

Weak external ecological linkage: Story education is limited to the campus environment only, lacking a linkage mechanism for narrative resources from families and society;

The application of AIGC in narrative creation remains superficial, and has not been widely used for

story customization and personalized adaptation.

6.2 Four major development directions for system iteration and upgrading

Deepen the empowerment of intelligent technologies: Introduce AIGC technology to achieve batch creation of stories, personalized adaptation, and precise push; build an intelligent narrative interaction system;

Advance evidence-based verification research: Conduct randomized controlled experiments, accumulate long-term tracking data, and optimize the intervention process of each link in the double helix mechanism;

Expand the boundaries of all-round education: Extend story-based education to management, services, and environmental education, and collaborate with parents, alumni, and industry enterprises to build a narrative resource network both inside and outside the school;

Build an inter-school co-construction and sharing ecosystem: Establish a university story-based education alliance, share narrative resource libraries and digital products, jointly conduct cross-university empirical research, and transform the "Shidai University Experience" into a common industry sample.

7 Conclusion

In the era of the Internet, the psychological crises of college students exhibit digital and complex characteristics. Traditional mental health services are unable to balance professional intervention, humanistic care, and value guidance. Story-based education, as a narrative intervention model with both ideological education attributes and psychological healing functions, can effectively bridge the gap of humanistic deficiency in digital psychological services. This study has constructed a "double helix-driven" mental health service system, based on five elements and with a spiral narrative path as its core. It integrates VR, AI, and all-media online platforms, and connects the "all-staff, all-

process, and all-round" psychological education chain, achieving the organic integration of mental health education and ideological and political education. School-based practice has proved that this system can effectively alleviate students' anxiety, social phobia, and academic burnout, and enhance psychological resilience and campus belongingness.

In the future, universities should continuously rely on digital technology to iterate narrative education carriers, improve long-term assessment and home-school-community collaboration mechanisms, and constantly enrich local narrative resources. With narrative-based psychological services, they can respond to the mental health needs of young students in the new era and provide long-term support for implementing the principle of fostering virtue and cultivating all-round talents.

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