

The alignment path between adolescent self actualization needs and mental health education under humanistic theory

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Abstract

This article explores the mechanism of the alignment between the self actualization needs of adolescents and mental health education within the framework of humanistic psychology theory. By analyzing the characteristics of adolescent psychological development and the current situation of educational practice, this study reveals the inhibitory effect of traditional education models on self actualization needs, and proposes a systematic path from conceptual transformation, archive establishment to multi-party collaboration, aiming to provide theoretical references and practical strategies for optimizing adolescent mental health education.

Keywords

Humanistic psychology; Adolescent self actualization; Psychological health education; Requirement satisfaction; Educational Path

1. Introduction

Adolescence is a critical stage for personality development and self-identity construction, and its mental health is not only related to individual growth, but also affects the future of society. However, behind the frequent occurrence of psychological problems among adolescents, such as depression, anxiety, and self-identity crisis, it reflects the limitations of traditional mental health education models. Humanistic psychology, with "self actualization" as its core, emphasizes the individual's inherent potential and growth needs, providing a theoretical perspective for solving this dilemma. This article is based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory and Rogers' self theory, analyzing the characteristics of adolescents' self actualization needs and their compatibility with mental health education, and exploring a systematic transformation path.

2. The core proposition of humanistic theory

Humanistic psychology, with "self actualization" as its core, emphasizes that individuals have inherent growth potential, and its theoretical propositions have important implications for adolescent mental health education.

2.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

Maslow divided human needs into a pyramid structure, and the psychological development of adolescents follows a hierarchical progression of "belonging and love → respect → self actualization". [1] The need for belonging and love manifests as a desire for peer acceptance and family support. If it cannot be met, it may lead to feelings of loneliness or social withdrawal; Respecting needs is reflected in recognizing one's self-worth and abilities. If one experiences long-term setbacks, it can easily lead to feelings of inferiority or rebellion; The need for self actualization refers to the expression of creativity and the development of potential, which is the core driving force for adolescent mental health. The lack of fulfillment of needs can lead to psychological problems: a lack of belonging can cause loneliness, a lack of respect for needs can lead to inferiority, and obstacles to self actualization may lead to anxiety or depression. Therefore, education should be based on meeting needs and avoid "offside intervention" or "lagging support".[2]

2.2 Rogers' "Self Theory"

Rogers proposed the concept of "fully functional individuals", believing that individuals have a natural tendency for self-regulation and self actualization, and education should avoid excessive intervention. Its core propositions include unconditional positive attention, empathetic understanding, and self guidance. Unconditional active attention requires teachers to accept all the characteristics of students, avoid evaluations based on grades and behavior, and establish trust relationships; Empathy emphasizes helping students clarify their self-awareness and promote emotional integration through listening and feedback; Self guidance encourages teenagers to independently set growth goals, cultivate a sense of responsibility and decision-making ability, rather than passively accepting external instructions. This theory provides methodological support for mental health education: by creating an accepting environment, stimulating students' intrinsic motivation, and promoting their personality development.

3. Characteristics of adolescent self actualization needs

The self actualization needs of adolescents have three major characteristics: independence, creativity, and sense of value, which are closely related to the optimization direction of mental health education.

3.1 Independence Requirements

During adolescence, with the dual maturity of physiology and psychology, the de-

mand for independence significantly increases. They crave to break free from the excessive control of parents and teachers, and pursue autonomy in decision-making, such as expressing personal wishes in academic choices, social activities, or interest exploration. If the need for independence is hindered, it may trigger a rebellious mentality or a dependent personality. Therefore, education needs to empower young people with the right to choose, such as providing elective courses, autonomous space in activity organization, and cultivating their autonomy through progressive accountability (such as student roles in class management).[3]

3.2 Creativity Needs

Teenagers are full of curiosity about unknown fields, and their creative needs are manifested in deep exploration and breakthrough attempts in areas of interest, such as artistic creation, technological innovation, or social issue research. However, the traditional education model often compresses interest courses under the pretext of "unrelated to further education", leading to the suppression of creativity. Education should respect the creative needs of young people, provide diverse platforms (such as club activities and scientific research projects), encourage interdisciplinary thinking and trial and error space, and avoid limiting divergent thinking with standardized answers.

3.3 Value Sense Needs

Teenagers gain value recognition by contributing to society or achieving personal goals, and their need for a sense of value is reflected in their pursuit of a sense of meaning. If lacking a sense of value, one may fall into existential anxiety. Education needs to design service learning programs that combine personal growth with social responsibility, such as organizing community services, environmental actions, or public welfare activities, to help young people establish their self-worth by helping others, while cultivating a sense of social responsibility.[4]

4. The current situation of the alignment between the self actualization needs of adolescents and mental health education

The contradiction between traditional models and the self actualization needs of adolescents in current mental health education is increasingly prominent, which is reflected not only in the backwardness of educational concepts, but also in the limitations of practical paths.

4.1 The current situation of the alignment between adolescent self actualization needs and mental health education

Traditional mental health education focuses on "problem correction" and neglects the intrinsic value of adolescents' self actualization needs, resulting in a disconnect between meeting needs and educational practice.

4.1.1 Limitations of Traditional Mental Health Education Concepts

Traditional mental health education is dominated by a "problem centered approach" and has three major limitations: firstly, problem oriented narrows educational goals, simplifies mental health as a "diagnosis intervention" process for psychological problems, and neglects the development of adolescent potential.[5] For example, simplifying the anxiety caused by academic pressure in adolescents as "adaptive disorders" without delving into the underlying lack of value or hindered creativity. Secondly, the standardized evaluation system uses scores and behavioral norms as a single standard to suppress individual differences. For example, denying the value of artistic talents based on their grades leads to a crisis of self-identity; Evaluate students based on their obedience and inhibit their independent thinking ability. Thirdly, the authoritative management model emphasizes teacher led decision-making and student passive acceptance. For example, prohibiting students from organizing activities independently and depriving them of opportunities for leadership development; Interfering with interest selection under the pretext of "for your own good" weakens its autonomy. This concept leads to education deviating from the essence of "promoting growth" and becoming an obstacle to meeting needs.

4.1.2 Symptoms of adolescent self actualization needs being hindered

The obstruction of teenagers' self actualization needs triggers multiple psychological crises. Firstly, the lack of a sense of belonging leads to an exacerbation of loneliness. For example, being isolated by peers due to differences in appearance, family background, or interests can lead to social withdrawal or internet dependence; In campus bullying incidents, victims fall into depression due to a lack of support systems. Secondly, the frustration of respecting needs can lead to feelings of inferiority. For example, teachers publicly criticize or parents use "other people's children" as a benchmark, leading to self doubt among teenagers; Under the pressure of further education, students are labeled as "failures" and lose their motivation to learn due to a failed exam. Thirdly, obstacles to self actualization inhibit the development of creativity. For example, being banned from participating in scientific research competitions or artistic creations due to "unrelated to further education" has led to a decline in innovation enthusiasm; The standardized education model restricts interdisciplinary thinking and stifles the exploratory desire of young people. These manifestations collectively point to a core issue: education has failed to provide a soil for young people to realize their potential.

4.2 Exploration of the Matching Path between Adolescents' Self actualization Needs and Mental Health Education

To solve the dilemma of obstructed demand, it is necessary to reconstruct the mental health education system from three levels: philosophy, methods, and ecology.

4.2.1 Transformation of Psychological Education Concepts

Psychological health education needs to shift from a "problem oriented" approach to

a "potential oriented" approach. Firstly, goal reconstruction should focus on the advantageous traits and growth potential of adolescents. For example, using the VIA personality test to help students identify their strengths (such as creativity, leadership) and design personalized development paths; Adjust "eliminating depression" to "enhancing psychological resilience" and cultivate positive emotions through mindfulness training, gratitude diaries, and other tools. Secondly, methodological innovation requires the introduction of humanistic tools. For example, conducting "self exploration workshops" to help students clarify their self-awareness through role-playing and narrative therapy; Organize a 'failure sharing session' to transform trial and error experiences into growth resources. Thirdly, the evaluation reform needs to include non cognitive indicators. For example, establishing a "growth portfolio" to record students' progress in dimensions such as creativity and social responsibility; Introduce peer evaluation and self-evaluation to reduce reliance on standardized testing.

4.2.2 Establishment of mental health records

Psychological health records are demand driven personalized support tools. Firstly, dynamic monitoring requires capturing demand changes through multidimensional data. For example, conducting needs assessments (sense of belonging, respect, creativity intensity) every semester, combined with psychological assessments, behavioral observations, and interview records, to form a three-dimensional needs profile. Secondly, personalized plans need to develop intervention strategies based on demand characteristics. For example, designing peer support groups for those who lack a sense of belonging and enhancing social skills through team projects; Match research mentors with creativity seekers, provide laboratory resources and academic guidance. Thirdly, privacy protection should be integrated throughout the entire process of using archives. For example, using anonymization technology to store data and allowing only authorized personnel to access it; Regularly destroy expired information to avoid labeling and discrimination.

4.2.3 Construction of Multi party Support System

The mental health of adolescents requires the integration of school, family, and social resources. Firstly, school support needs to provide institutionalized platforms. For example, offering a "self actualization course" that covers career planning, critical thinking, and emotional management; Establish a 'Student Autonomy Committee' to empower young people to participate in curriculum design and activity organization. Secondly, family support requires a shift in educational mindset. For example, conducting parent training, promoting humanistic educational concepts, and reducing utilitarian expectations; Encourage democratic decision-making in families and allow young people to choose their own extracurricular activities and interests. Thirdly, social support needs to improve the service network. For example, integrating community resources to provide volunteer services and social practice

opportunities; Establishing a "Youth Innovation Fund" in collaboration with enterprises to support scientific research projects and entrepreneurial plans; Improve mental health service hotlines and consultation platforms to provide immediate assistance to high demand adolescents.

5. Conclusion

The alignment between the self actualization needs of adolescents and mental health education is the key to solving the current psychological crisis dilemma. The traditional education model, due to outdated concepts and practical limitations, hinders the sense of belonging, respect, and self actualization needs of adolescents, leading to problems such as loneliness, inferiority, and creativity inhibition. The alignment path proposed in this article emphasizes systematic transformation: at the conceptual level, it shifts from problem centeredness to potential development, at the methodological level, personalized support is achieved through psychological health records, and at the ecological level, a support system for home school community collaboration is constructed. Future research needs to further explore the quantitative correlation between demand satisfaction and mental health indicators, and conduct cross-cultural comparisons to improve the theoretical framework. Education practitioners should be guided by humanism, reshape the value orientation of adolescent mental health education, and help them grow into "fully functional individuals" with autonomy, creativity, and social responsibility.

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