

Original Paper

Exploring the Work of College Counselors Based on Crisis Management Theory

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Abstract

As the front-line organizers and implementers of student affairs, college counselors bear significant responsibilities in the prevention and disposal of student crises. Based on the theory of crisis management, this paper deeply analyzes the student work of college counselors. It first sorts out the types of common student crises in colleges and universities, including psychological and academic ones, and points out their characteristics. Then, it points out many existing problems in the current crisis management work of college counselors. Subsequently, it proposes corresponding strategies and suggestions from the dimensions of crisis prevention, response, and recovery, aiming to improve the crisis management level of college counselors and provide a solid guarantee for the healthy development of students and the safety and stability of the campus.

Keywords

Crisis Management Theory, College Counselors, Student Work

1. Introduction

In recent years, the continuous expansion of college enrollment has led to an increasingly diverse and complex student population. Issues in students' academic, psychological, and social domains have become increasingly prominent. At the same time, the rapid development of the internet has led to the explosive spread of information, with some negative information easily having adverse effects on students. Moreover, unexpected events such as natural disasters and public health emergencies pose potential threats to the stability of colleges and the safety of students. College counselors, as front-line practitioners of student work, play a crucial role in the prevention and disposal of student crises. However, there are many defects in the current student work in terms of crisis management. Therefore, integrating crisis management theory into the student work of college counselors is beneficial to improve the counselors' crisis response level, protect the healthy development of students, and maintain

the harmony and stability of colleges.

2. Types and Characteristics of Student Crises in Colleges and Universities

2.1 Psychological Crisis

Common psychological crises among college students include severe psychological problems such as anxiety, depression, and even suicidal tendencies. Academic pressure, interpersonal relationships, and career planning can all trigger anxiety. Depression is manifested as persistent emotional depression, loss of interest, and self-denial. Suicidal tendencies, as the most severe condition, are often caused by the accumulation of long-term negative emotions and stress. (Ma et al., 2017) Students often try to conceal their psychological problems, appearing normal on the outside while suffering internally, making it difficult to detect crises in a timely manner. Due to individual differences in psychological endurance and coping abilities, the manifestations and degrees of crises vary.

2.2 Unexpected Events

Unexpected events include campus violence and accidental deaths and injuries. Campus violence includes physical conflicts and verbal bullying among classmates. Accidental deaths and injuries include situations such as sports accidents and deaths caused by sudden illnesses. Such events are sudden, without significant warning signs, and require immediate action to minimize damage. They can have a significant impact on the students involved, their classmates, and the overall order and atmosphere of the campus. (Wang et al., 2017)

2.3 Academic Crisis

Academic crises are often seen in exam cheating and excessive failures. Exam cheating violates exam rules, with students trying to obtain grades through improper means. Excessive failures mean failing multiple courses. Such problems often arise from poor study attitudes and methods over a long period of time and accumulate gradually. Although there are academic warning mechanisms for failures, some students do not pay attention to them. (Chen et al., 2021) Academic crises not only affect graduation and employment but may also have adverse effects on students' psychology.

2.4 Network Public Opinion Crisis

Network public opinion crises refer to adverse public opinion caused by network dissemination, such as negative evaluations of school management and malicious hype of specific events. They can spread widely and rapidly on network platforms in a short period of time, Not subject to geographical and temporal limitations, and can attract attention worldwide. Once the public opinion is fermented, controlling its spread and impact is extremely difficult.

3. Problems Existing in Student Crisis Management Work of College Counselors

3.1 Weak Crisis Awareness

In student management work, some counselors have a weak sense of crisis. Their awareness of potential risks is limited, and they do not fully anticipate the various crises that students may encounter,

such as psychological, academic, and safety crises, leading to a lack of proactive and forward-looking work, and making it difficult to detect potential crisis risks. At the same time, their sensitivity to students' abnormal behavior and emotional changes is low, and they do not consider them as crisis signals for in-depth exploration and intervention. For example, students who are long-term emotionally low, whose grades suddenly drop, or who frequently skip classes are not handled in a timely manner. (Rosemary Thompson, 2004) Moreover, due to the lack of a comprehensive understanding of crises, when formulating work plans and carrying out activities, they do not consider the factors that may trigger crises, and there are a lack of preventive mechanisms and plans.

3.2 Inadequate Crisis Response Ability

Inadequate crisis response ability is also a major problem. When crisis events occur, some counselors lack effective strategies and methods, often appearing at a loss, and are unable to make precise judgments and decisions quickly. On the one hand, they lack professional knowledge and skills, such as psychological crisis intervention and emergency event handling, and are unable to respond scientifically, affecting the effectiveness of handling. On the other hand, they lack practical experience, lack confidence and calmness in response, and are unable to control the situation, which may even lead to the deterioration of the crisis. For example, when students suddenly develop a psychological crisis, counselors do not know how to effectively communicate and guide them, which may worsen the students' psychological problems.

3.3 Lack of Collaborative Cooperation

In student crisis management work, there are many deficiencies in the collaborative cooperation between counselors and other departments of the school. The joint participation and collaboration of multiple departments of the school are crucial for student crisis management, but the actual situation is not satisfactory. The contact between counselors and other departments such as the teaching department, security department, and psychological counseling center is not close enough. The lag in information sharing is particularly prominent. When crisis events occur, counselors are unable to obtain key information held by other departments in a timely manner, which seriously hinders the comprehensive control and accurate judgment of crisis events. Moreover, there is ambiguity in the responsibilities of each department in handling crisis events, mutual shirking of responsibilities, which greatly reduces work efficiency and makes it difficult to resolve problems quickly and effectively. More importantly, the lack of a regular communication and collaboration mechanism leads to a lack of communication and cooperation in daily work, making it impossible to form a collaborative effect and Tacit understanding cooperation in crisis management. (Chen et al., 2021)

3.4 Omissions in Post-Crisis Recovery Work

Insufficient attention is paid to post-crisis psychological counseling and academic assistance and other recovery work. Although crisis events are temporarily resolved, their long-term impact on students' psychology and academic performance should not be ignored. However, some counselors fail to timely track the recovery status of students after the crisis is handled and lack sufficient attention to students'

psychological trauma. In terms of academic assistance, they also fail to develop personalized counseling plans for students who have fallen behind in courses due to crisis events, making it difficult to help them keep up with the learning pace. This may lead to the recurrence of students' psychological problems or the exacerbation of academic difficulties, hindering the comprehensive development and healthy growth of students. For example, psychological problems such as inferiority and anxiety that students develop after experiencing major setbacks may lead to long-term psychological difficulties if not timely guided and intervened, affecting their normal learning and life.

4. III. Strategies for Student Work of College Counselors Based on Crisis Management Theory

4.1 Strengthening Crisis Prevention

4.1.1 Enhancing Daily Observation and Understanding of Students

It is crucial for college counselors in student work to enhance daily observation and understanding of students. Counselors need to establish close connections with students, use regular heart-to-heart talks and class activities to fully understand students' ideological dynamics, academic performance, family background, and interpersonal relationships. Especially, they should pay attention to students' emotional fluctuations and behavioral patterns, such as a sudden drop in academic performance, long-term emotional depression, and frequent conflicts with classmates. Once these situations occur, they should be highly alert and take prompt intervention measures.

4.1.2 Establishing a Crisis Early Warning Mechanism

Establishing a crisis early warning mechanism is the core of crisis prevention. Counselors should formulate a scientific student crisis assessment indicator system and periodically assess students' psychological state, academic performance, social behavior, etc. They should also make full use of information technology tools, such as student management systems and social media, to collect and analyze student information and timely capture potential crisis factors. In addition, they should establish student information teams to encourage students to report abnormal situations of their classmates in a timely manner to ensure that counselors can obtain crisis information in the first time.

4.2 Improving Response Ability

4.2.1 Improving Counselors' Crisis Handling Ability through Training and Practice

Colleges should regularly conduct crisis management training, invite experts and scholars and experienced counselors to give lectures and analyze cases, helping counselors become familiar with crisis handling processes and methods, and master effective communication and psychological counseling strategies. At the same time, they should provide practical opportunities, such as organizing simulated crisis exercises, allowing counselors to exercise in simulated situations to improve their response level in real crises.

4.2.2 Improving Counselors' Decision-Making Level

During crises, counselors need to make rapid and correct decisions, which depend on their good problem analysis and situation judgment abilities. They should learn to quickly collect and integrate

information in complex situations, accurately determine the nature, impact, and development trend of crises, and formulate scientific and reasonable response plans. Moreover, they should have the ability to adapt flexibly, adjusting decisions in a timely manner as the crisis changes to ensure effective control of the crisis.

4.3 Strengthening Collaborative Cooperation

4.3.1 Close Cooperation with School Departments

In student work, the response to crises requires collaboration among multiple departments of the school. Various departments of the school, such as the psychological health education center, security department, and teaching affairs department, are closely connected to student work. As a key link, counselors should establish excellent communication and coordination mechanisms with these departments to unite work efforts. In the face of student psychological crises, they need to work together with professional teachers from the psychological health education center for assessment and intervention; when dealing with crisis events involving safety, they need to work together with the security department to protect students' lives and property. (Li et al., 2021)

4.3.2 Establishing a Home-school Cooperation Mechanism

Establishing a home-school cooperation mechanism is crucial. The family plays a significant role in the growth of students, and counselors should maintain close contact with parents, reporting students' conditions in school in real time. When crises occur, they should work with parents to discuss response strategies and obtain their support and cooperation. In this way, home and school work together to form an educational synergy to help students grow healthily and resolve crises.

4.4 Improving Recovery Work

4.4.1 Paying Attention to Students' Physical and Mental Recovery

After crisis events, students' physical and mental recovery is crucial. Such events usually have adverse effects on students' physical and mental health, and counselors need to pay close attention to them. Through individual counseling and group guidance, they should provide necessary psychological counseling for students to help them alleviate stress and dissipate psychological gloom. At the same time, they should remain vigilant about students' physical health status, and actively assist in treatment and recovery for students who are injured or fall ill during crises. (Wang et al., 2021)

4.4.2 Providing Necessary Support and Assistance

Counselors also need to provide strong support and assistance for students in their studies and lives. For students who have fallen behind in their studies due to crises, they should assist in developing scientific and reasonable learning plans and arrange tutoring teachers to provide them with make-up lessons. For students who are facing difficulties in their lives, they should provide necessary financial support and life guidance. More importantly, they should guide students to draw lessons from crises, help them establish correct worldviews and values, strengthen their ability to cope with setbacks and difficulties, and enable them to better face future challenges.

5. Conclusion

Integrating crisis management theory into the student work of college counselors is of great significance, as it can prevent crises in advance, respond to crises efficiently, and recover properly, creating a good environment for students' growth and the stability of the campus. Therefore, colleges should pay attention to the cultivation of counselors' crisis management capabilities, continuously optimize crisis management mechanisms, and jointly build a harmonious and safe campus. In actual student work, counselors should continuously summarize experiences and flexibly apply the theory according to specific situations, fully protecting students' physical and mental health and comprehensive development. At the same time, colleges should provide more support and resources for counselors to promote the advancement of student work towards scientific, standardized, and professional directions.

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