

Communication Effects of Mental Health Information for Vocational College Students and Its Optimization Pathways

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Abstract: Vocational college students face multiple psychological pressures, and the effective dissemination of mental health information provides foundational support for their self-regulation. In current dissemination practices, there are phenomena such as information being ignored, misunderstood, or difficult to translate into behavior. This paper constructs evaluation indicators from three dimensions: understanding and memory retention at the cognitive level, psychological resonance and emotional fluctuation at the affective level, and willingness to adjust and tendency to attempt at the behavioral level. It analyzes key variables including information matching degree, differences in carrier accessibility efficiency, and interference from recipients' cognitive schemas, and then proposes three optimization pathways: content deconstruction and life-oriented translation, adjustment of dissemination rhythm and repetition strategies according to information contact habits, and introduction of two-way interactive mechanisms. This paper provides an operable framework for evaluating and improving the communication effects of mental health information for vocational college students.

Keywords: vocational college students, mental health information, communication effects, cognitive schemas, interactive mechanisms

Introduction

Vocational college students are at a critical stage transitioning from adolescence to adulthood, and the dissemination of mental health information plays an irreplaceable role in alleviating emotional distress and enhancing coping abilities. However, from the perspective of actual dissemination practices, a large amount of mental health-related content has not truly entered students' attention scope, or even if received, it is quickly forgotten, and it is even more difficult to translate it into specific behavioral adjustments. This phenomenon of low dissemination efficiency is not simply due to the insufficient quality of the information itself, but rather because the dissemination process lacks systematic consideration of the audience's psychological characteristics, information processing habits, and carrier adaptability. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct specialized research on the communication effects of mental health information for vocational college students, clarify its evaluation dimensions, identify key variables affecting the effects, and explore targeted optimization pathways. The significance of this study lies in filling the gap in existing communication research that pays insufficient attention to vocational college students as a specific group, providing theoretical references for improving the actual reach rate and conversion rate of mental health information, while avoiding vague macro-level strategies and focusing on operable and observable dissemination links.

1. Core Evaluation Indicators for the Communication Effects of Mental Health Information for Vocational College Students

1.1 Degree of Understanding and Memory Retention of Information Content at the Cognitive Level

The degree of understanding of mental health information depends on whether the information content can be successfully decoded by vocational college students and incorporated into their existing cognitive frameworks. Specifically, the effect of understanding is reflected in whether students can accurately grasp the core concepts in the information, such as identification clues for common

emotional distress or simple steps for stress coping. If the information expression is overly abstract or dense with terminology, students are prone to misunderstandings or even give up further processing of the information content. From the perspective of communication effects, inadequate understanding will directly weaken subsequent responses at the affective and behavioral levels; therefore, information comprehensibility needs to be taken as a foundational evaluation indicator. In specific evaluation operations, brief open-ended questions or keyword recall tasks can be used to measure the accuracy of students' extraction of key information points. This measurement method imposes a relatively small burden on students and is convenient for repeated use^[1].

The degree of memory retention measures the ability to extract and reproduce information within a certain period after it has been received. Mental health information typically needs to be retrieved in specific situations, such as recalling relaxation techniques during exam anxiety; therefore, the long-term retention of information is of greater practical significance than short-term memorization. Key factors affecting memory retention include the logical clarity of the information structure, the frequency of repetition of core points, and the degree of association with personal experience. In evaluation, one can observe whether students can retell the key steps or principles of the information without external prompts. The higher the memory retention, the greater the likelihood that the information will be automatically awakened in similar future contexts, and the more durable the communication effects will be. It should be noted that memory retention should not only measure factual knowledge but also the retention of procedural knowledge—for example, whether students remember the sequence of operations rather than isolated steps.

1.2 Magnitude of Psychological Resonance and Emotional Fluctuation Triggered by Information at the Affective Level

Psychological resonance refers to the degree to which the information content resonates with the internal emotional states of vocational college students. When the scenarios or emotional experiences described in the information are close to students' real lives, such as dormitory interpersonal conflicts or confusion about career directions, students are more likely to develop a sense of identification that "this is exactly about me." This resonant state can lower psychological defenses and make the concepts carried by the information more readily accepted. To evaluate the degree of resonance, one can focus on students' self-reported responses after receiving the information, such as whether they feel understood or experience a sense of relief. Information that produces stronger resonance often adopts a first-person perspective or uses everyday language familiar to students, thereby shortening psychological distance. In addition, psychological resonance can also be observed through indirect behavioral indicators, such as whether students actively forward the content to others after exposure; such forwarding behavior often implies that the resonance has reached a sufficient intensity.

The amplitude of emotional fluctuation refers to the intensity of emotional changes induced during the information reception process. Moderate emotional fluctuation, such as mild concern or slight relief, can enhance the depth of memory encoding; excessively strong negative emotions tend to trigger avoidance behaviors, while overly weak stimuli are difficult to attract attention. In evaluation, attention should be paid to the range of emotional changes, and the ideal state should be controlled within a range that students can tolerate and are willing to continue paying attention to, being neither too flat nor too intense. In practical operation, an emotion self-rating scale can be used to collect the numerical differences before and after information exposure as a quantitative reference^[2].

1.3 Willingness for Health Adjustment and Tendency to Attempt After Information Reception at the Behavioral Level

Willingness for health adjustment refers to the intensity of motivation that students subjectively generate to change their own psychological and behavioral patterns after receiving information. This willingness is manifested in whether students acknowledge that there is room for improvement in their current state and whether they believe that the suggestions provided by the information are effective for them. For example, if a piece of information about pre-sleep relaxation methods makes students think "I can give it a try tonight," it indicates that the adjustment willingness has been formed. When evaluating willingness, one should not merely look at whether immediate action is taken, but rather focus on students' internal acceptance of the suggestions and their anticipated possibility of trying. The stronger the willingness, the higher the practical value of information dissemination. It should be noted that willingness is not equivalent to behavioral commitment; it is a psychological preparatory state

before action, which can be measured through hypothetical scenario questions, such as asking "If you encounter a similar situation next week, do you think you could use this method?"

Tendency to attempt further points to the specific state of behavioral readiness, namely whether students have made the minimal preparation to execute the recommended behaviors in the information at an appropriate time. Unlike full behavioral implementation, tendency to attempt is closer to the starting point of the behavioral chain, such as students actively jotting down the key points of a stress-relief action or saving relevant audio links on their phones. Evaluation of tendency to attempt can be conducted by observing whether students show minor behavioral clues, such as asking for more details or discussing operational steps with peers. Once this tendency translates into actual small-scale attempts, even if the initial results are not ideal, it opens up channels for subsequent repeated exposure and habit formation. Therefore, tendency to attempt serves as a key transitional indicator connecting the cognitive and affective levels to long-term behavioral change. In practical evaluation scenarios, one can record the frequency of students' active searches for related information or simulated operations within one week after information reception, as external evidence of the tendency to attempt.

2. Key Variables Affecting the Communication Effects of Mental Health Information for Vocational College Students

2.1 The Matching Degree between the Presentation Mode of the Information Itself and the Psychological Needs of Vocational College Students

The presentation mode refers to the organizational characteristics of the information in terms of language style, sentence structure, narrative perspective, and other aspects. For the vocational college student population, if the information employs plain everyday language rather than a piling up of technical jargon, and intersperses concrete scenarios close to campus life, the probability of its being smoothly received will be significantly increased. Conversely, overly formal or academic expressions tend to make students feel a sense of distance and perceive that such content has nothing to do with them. The core of the matching degree lies in whether the information responds to students' genuine concerns in areas such as stress relief, emotion recognition, and interpersonal handling. When the presentation mode is consistent with students' habitual communication patterns, the information is more likely to be regarded as a "useful reference" rather than "preachy platitudes"^[3].

The matching degree of psychological needs further determines whether the information can enter students' scope of selective attention. Vocational college students have specific needs in areas such as academic pressure, employment anxiety, and self-identity; these needs are sometimes not explicitly expressed but are revealed in daily behaviors. If the information can capture these implicit needs in advance and adopt corresponding presentation strategies—for example, using short sentences and paragraph breaks to reduce reading burden, or presenting problem-solving processes in a narrative style—it can achieve a relatively high matching degree. Low matching degree, on the other hand, manifests as the information content being correct, but the presentation mode does not align with students' customary language system, resulting in the information being quickly filtered out. When evaluating this variable, one can observe whether students show active follow-up questioning or sharing behaviors after exposure to the information; such behaviors are indirect signals that the matching degree is satisfactory.

2.2 Differential Performance of Different Dissemination Carriers in Information Reach Efficiency

Dissemination carriers determine the types of channels through which mental health information travels from the sending end to the receiving end. Common carriers include class group messages, campus official accounts, short-video platforms, and printed materials such as posters or brochures. Different carriers exhibit significant differences in information reach efficiency, mainly reflected in the timeliness of information arrival, the completeness of presentation, and the concentration of attention during reception. For example, information pushed through instant messaging tools arrives quickly, but it is easily drowned out by a large volume of daily messages; short-video carriers require low attention but impose limitations on information depth. When evaluating reach efficiency, one should not merely look at whether the information has been sent, but rather focus on the proportion of the target student population that actually opens or scans the information content.

Carrier differences also affect the way in which information is processed. Vocational college students tend to browse mobile information during fragmented time; therefore, mobile carriers have an advantage in coverage, but information on such carriers stays for a short duration, making it difficult for complex content to be processed in depth. In contrast, although print carriers or fixed campus display boards are slower in reaching the audience, the information persists in physical space, providing students with opportunities for repeated exposure. The reach efficiency of different carriers is also highly correlated with students' usage habits; for example, lower- grade students rely more heavily on group notifications, while upper- grade students pay more attention to information channels related to internships and employment. Understanding these differential performances helps determine which type of carrier is more suitable for carrying specific types of mental health information, thereby improving the overall communication effects.

2.3 The Interference Effect of Recipients' Existing Cognitive Schemas on Information Screening and Interpretation

Cognitive schemas are the knowledge structures formed through individuals' long - term experiences, used to organize and categorize new information. Before entering school, vocational college students have already formed specific views on mental health topics, such as believing that seeking psychological help is a sign of weakness, or that emotional problems can only be resolved by oneself. These existing schemas come into play in the early stages of information reception, automatically screening which information deserves attention and which should be ignored. If new information conflicts with existing schemas, students may subconsciously look for counterarguments or skip it directly; if the information aligns with the schemas, it is more likely to be accepted, but it may also reinforce fixed cognitions and cause them to miss new useful perspectives^[4].

The interference effect is manifested not only in the screening stage, but also in the deviation of information interpretation. When faced with the same piece of information about anxiety coping, students holding the schema that "anxiety can be transformed" tend to accept the suggestions and think about how to implement them, while those holding the schema that "anxiety equals failure" are likely to interpret the information as a denial of themselves, thus generating defensive reactions. This interpretive deviation often occurs without the students' own awareness, yet it directly affects the final outcomes of information dissemination. To reduce the interference of cognitive schemas, it is necessary to understand the typical schema characteristics of the target group and embed content design in the information that can loosen the schemas—for example, by contrasting common misconceptions with facts, helping students recognize the limitations that their existing schemas may impose.

3. Pathway Design for Improving the Communication Effects of Mental Health Information for Vocational College Students

3.1 Targeted Deconstruction and Life- Oriented Translation of Information Content

Targeted deconstruction refers to breaking down mental health knowledge that is originally lengthy in length or complex in structure into several independent and easy - to - understand units. If a complete set of emotion regulation methods is presented all at once, it is likely to cause cognitive overload among vocational college students and reduce the information absorption rate. The deconstruction operation can be carried out according to behavioral steps, types of common problems, or chronological order, with each unit containing only one core point. For example, stress management content can be broken down into three independent modules: identifying stress signals, selecting regulation methods, and evaluating the regulation effects. This deconstruction approach lowers the threshold for single - session information processing, enabling students to complete learning in fragmented contexts, while also facilitating subsequent repeated exposure and reinforcement^[5].

Life- oriented translation emphasizes replacing abstract terminology and theoretical expressions with everyday language and scenarios familiar to vocational college students. Professional terms such as "cognitive restructuring" can be transformed into "looking at things from a different perspective," while "emotional triggers" can be replaced with "what situations easily make you feel agitated." In the process of translation, the core logic of the information needs to be preserved, but its expressive form should be altered to make it closer to students' daily communication habits. The effectiveness of translation depends on the grasp of the target group's commonly used vocabulary and typical life

scenarios, such as using common situations like dormitory interactions, club activities, and part-time jobs to carry mental health information. After translation, the comprehensibility of the information is significantly improved; students can grasp the key points without needing to consult additional materials, and the threshold for information dissemination is consequently lowered.

3.2 Adjustment of Dissemination Rhythm and Repetition Strategies Based on Students' Daily Information Contact Habits

The adjustment of dissemination rhythm is based on an understanding of the temporal distribution of vocational college students' daily information contact and the characteristics of their attention fluctuations. Students' willingness to process information varies across different time periods; during morning class hours, attention to information unrelated to coursework is relatively low, while at lunch breaks and evening leisure time, they are more receptive to mental health content. Rhythm adjustment means concentrating information delivery within time windows when students are actively browsing their phones or relaxing, avoiding periods when their attention is occupied by other matters. Rhythm is also reflected in the frequency control of information release: overly dense push notifications tend to induce fatigue, while intervals that are too long make it difficult to form sustained impact. An appropriate rhythm enables students to complete information reception without being aware of it, without feeling disturbed^[6].

Repetition strategies focus on the way in which the same information is presented again at different time points in appropriate forms. Simple mechanical repetition is likely to cause boredom; therefore, varied repetition should be adopted—for example, presenting the full information for the first time, reviewing the key points in a question- and- answer format for the second time, and supporting the same conclusion with different cases for the third time. The intervals of repetition should also follow the pattern of the forgetting curve, with the first review arranged within a relatively short period after the initial presentation, and then gradually lengthening the intervals. For vocational college students, repetition strategies also need to be combined with their information- staying habits, avoiding methods that require active searching, and instead allowing the information to appear naturally in their daily browsing paths. Reasonably arranged repetition can significantly extend the memory retention time of information without increasing students' burden, thereby enhancing the probability of the information being retrieved in subsequent contexts.

3.3 Introduction of Two-Way Interactive Mechanisms to Enhance the Sense of Engagement in the Information Reception Process

The two- way interactive mechanism refers to the situation in which information recipients are no longer passive acquirers of information, but rather participants who can respond to the information content, raise questions, or share personal views. In the dissemination of mental health information, one - way output tends to cause students to feel a sense of alienation that "this has nothing to do with me," whereas the presence of interactive segments forces students to actively process the information. Interactive mechanisms can adopt low - threshold approaches, such as placing a simple self - comparison question at the end of the information, asking students to complete the matching in their own minds; or providing a brief anonymous feedback channel that allows students to express their status by checking boxes or making selections. Such interaction does not require complex platform support; the key lies in creating a step in which students need to make a response.

The enhancement of the sense of engagement stems from the active comparison that students make between the information content and their own situations during the interactive process. When students are asked to answer "Have you ever encountered this situation?" or "Which approach would you choose?" they are, in effect, placing themselves in the scenario described by the information. This shift in psychological positioning, compared with mere reading, is more capable of stimulating emotional resonance and subsequent behavioral willingness. The design of interactive mechanisms requires attention to difficulty control; overly complex interactive tasks reduce participation rates, while overly simple questions fail to genuinely mobilize cognitive investment. Interactive approaches suitable for vocational college students typically feature ease of operation, immediate feedback, and an absence of social pressure, such as multiple- choice questions, rating- based feedback, or keyword association. The data generated from interactions can, in turn, be used to adjust the content and expression of subsequent information, forming a closed- loop optimization. Through this two- way interaction, information dissemination shifts from a broadcast mode to a dialogue mode, and both students' sense of

engagement and depth of information absorption are enhanced.

Conclusion

This paper has constructed core evaluation indicators for the communication effects of mental health information for vocational college students from three dimensions—cognitive, affective, and behavioral—and has revealed the specific mechanisms through which information presentation modes, dissemination carrier characteristics, and recipients' cognitive schemas influence communication effects. The three optimization pathways proposed on this basis are mutually supportive: content deconstruction and life-oriented translation lower the threshold of understanding; rhythm adjustment and repetition strategies extend memory retention time; and two-way interactive mechanisms reinforce active participation in information processing. All these pathways are grounded in students' authentic information contact contexts. Future research can be oriented toward three directions: developing refined quantitative measurement tools that transform indicators such as degree of understanding, resonance intensity, and tendency to attempt into reusable situational assessment tasks; examining the differential effects of various types of mental health information under the same optimization pathways to clarify the applicable boundaries of each pathway; and exploring the patterns of decay and maintenance of communication effects over longer time spans, so as to provide more precise evidence for the spacing arrangements of repetition strategies. At the same time, changes in the digital communication environment and their impact on how new carriers affect students' information processing also deserve sustained attention.

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