

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

Jing Peng\*, Yi Zhou, Haiyan Yu, Chang Li, Xiaoyi Yang, Mingjuan Wang

Sichuan Vocational and Technical College, Suining, 629000, China

\*Corresponding author: 18017151425@163.com

**Abstract:** Vocational college students are under a high degree of psychological stress, and the good diffusion of mental health information can offer them some support in self-management. At present, there are cases of information being overlooked, misunderstood or failing to motivate people to take part in the spread activities. The three dimensions of the evaluation indicators in this paper are: 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 behavioural level. According to how closely the content is in line with people's lives, how easy it is to obtain, whether it contradicts existing knowledge, etc., the three main modifications will be to deconstruct the content, adapt its form for daily life, and build a two-way interaction platform. The model in this paper is to assess and improve 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 an important stage in life and need to learn how to manage their emotions and problems in daily life; therefore, spreading mental health knowledge can help them do so. However, in terms of the actual situation of dissemination, a large number of mental health-related materials have not truly reached the students' attention; even when they are received, they are quickly forgotten, and it is even more difficult to inspire specific changes in behaviour. The reasons for the low dissemination efficiency are that the quality of the information is poor, and the dissemination process does not consider the psychological traits of the audience, how they learn, and suitable carriers. Therefore, some specific studies need to be carried out on the communication effects of mental health information for vocational college students to clarify the dimensions of their evaluation, identify the main variables influencing the impact, and explore particular optimisation paths. The aim of this study is to add new knowledge to the existing literature by examining the dissemination of mental health information among vocational college students; that is, to clarify the links in the spread process of mental health information for this group and determine how to improve the effect and impact of dissemination.

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

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

The degree to which vocational college students can learn the information on mental health is limited by how well this content can be understood and integrated with their existing cognitive system. Students will be able to grasp the general ideas of the information better; for instance, they will know the signs of common emotional distress and some simple ways to cope with stress. If the expression of the information is too general or full of technical terms, students will not be able to understand it and will lose interest in learning. Communication is how people spread information; if this information is not understood correctly, it can have adverse effects on emotions and behaviour, so we need to know what the information is about first. Some of the evaluation operations are short open-ended questions or

keyword-recall tasks to determine how well the students have grasped the main ideas. The above way has a small burden on the students and is convenient to use repeatedly<sup>[1]</sup>.

The degree to which one can remember and reproduce the knowledge gained after a certain period of time is called the extent of memory retention. Generally speaking, information on mental health is only needed in special circumstances, such as remembering how to relax under the pressure of an exam; therefore, saving this information is more practical than learning it for a short time. The main reasons for forgetting are that the information is not organised logically, it is not repeated often enough, and there is a weak connection with one's own experiences. Determine whether the students can remember the main stages or ideas of the information in their own words without hints during retelling. The better the memory retention, the higher the probability that this information will be recalled spontaneously in similar circumstances in the future, and the longer the communication effect will last. It should be pointed out that memory retention should cover not only the recall of facts but also the retention of procedures; that is to say, students should be able to remember the sequence of operations rather than individual steps.

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

Psychological resonance is the extent to which the content of the information can affect the emotions and thoughts of vocational college students. When the situation or emotion in the information is close to what students have experienced in their own lives, such as dormitory interpersonal conflicts or confusion about career choices, they are more likely to feel that it is "just like their own life". At this time, their psychological defences are lower, and they are more willing to accept the ideas in the information. To determine the extent of resonance, one can observe how students feel about the information after receiving it; for example, are they satisfied or relieved? The obtained information is often in the first person, uses everyday language that students are familiar with, and has a reduced psychological distance. Psychological resonance can also be shown indirectly; for example, whether students are willing to share what they have learned with others after studying it can be considered an indication that they have reached a certain level of resonance.

The degree of change in emotion experienced by a person as a result of new information is called emotional amplitude. Mild emotions, such as slight anxiety or happiness, are more likely to be remembered; strong negative emotions will make a person avoid that situation, and very weak stimuli will go unnoticed. One should consider the degree of emotional fluctuation in the evaluation, and the ideal condition is that students can bear it and are still willing to pay attention; it should not be too dull or too exciting. In fact, an emotion self-rating scale can be used to obtain the numerical difference before and after being exposed to the information, and this difference serves as an objective index<sup>[2]</sup>.

### ***1.3 Willingness to change one's health behaviour and intention to act after learning at the behavioural level***

The will to change one's health behaviour is the desire to modify one's own mental and physical habits based on new information, and it is a subjective state. A will is formed because one believes that the current situation needs to be improved and that the suggestions in the information will be beneficial to oneself. For example, if some information on how to relax before sleep makes students think, "I can try doing that tonight", then a will to change has been formed. We need to know how willing the students are to accept the suggestions internally and whether they believe they will be able to try them in practice. The stronger the will, the more feasible it will be to spread the news. Keep in mind that willingness is not the same as behaviour; it is a psychological basis for action and can be determined by asking people hypothetical questions, such as, "If you are in a similar situation next week, do you think you will use this way?".

A tendency to try further indicates that there is a certain level of behavioural readiness; that is to say, have students made the minimum preparations to carry out the recommended behaviour based on the information available at that time? It is not the full expression of the behaviour, but it is closer to the beginning of the behaviour chain; for example, students can actively write down the main ideas of a stress-relieving activity or save related audio links on their phones. The extent to which a child is willing to try can be judged by observing some small behaviours, such as asking for more information or talking about how to do something with peers. If this trend can be applied on a small scale, even if the first result is not good, there will still be a chance for repeated practice and habit formation.

Therefore, the will to learn needs to link knowledge with emotion, and this will lead to sustained changes in behaviour. In actual operation, we can observe how often students take the initiative to obtain related information or carry out simulated operations in the week after being informed about this externally, to show their interest in participating.

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

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

Presentation mode refers to how to organise the information in terms of language style, sentence structure, narrative perspective, etc. For the population of vocational college students, if the information uses simple, everyday language and does not contain a large number of technical terms, but rather includes specific situations close to their school life, it will be easier for them to understand. At the same time, if the language is too formal or academic, the students will feel distant from it and think that this content does not relate to their lives. The main reason for the high match degree is that the information can address the students' actual problems of stress relief, emotional awareness and interpersonal skills. If the presentation mode is in line with how students usually speak, then the information will be regarded as a "useful reference" rather than "preachy platitudes"<sup>[3]</sup>.

To find out if the information will interest the students, we need to know what psychological needs it can meet. Vocational college students have some demands for academic pressure, employment anxiety and self-identity, and these needs are not always expressed directly but are shown in their daily behaviour. If the information meets the basic needs of the people and is presented in an accessible way, for example, shorten the sentences and divide them into paragraphs to reduce reading fatigue, or present the process of problem-solving in a story, then it will be relatively popular. On the other hand, a low matching degree indicates that the information is correct, but it does not conform to the students' usual language system in terms of presentation form and is thus quickly disregarded. To know how well the students have learned the content, ask some related questions and have them share what they have learned; their active participation in such activities can show that they have grasped the material.

### ***2.2 Differential Performance of Different Dissemination Carriers in Information Reach Efficiency***

Dissemination carriers determine the type of channel that will be used to spread the mental health information from the sending end to the receiving end. Common carriers refer to group messages, campus official accounts, short-video platforms, printed materials such as posters and brochures, etc. Different carriers have various strengths in spreading information; some are good at distributing the news quickly, some can present it in detail, and others can attract the attention of more people upon release. For example, the information spread by instant messaging tools is fast, but it can easily be lost among the large number of daily messages; short-video carriers require little attention and have limited information depth. To know how effective a spread is, we need to know not only that it has been distributed but also how many of the target students have actually read or watched the spread materials.

Carriers will have different ways of handling the information too. Vocational college students are generally busy and use their mobile phones to get information; although mobile carriers have good coverage, the time students have to read this information is limited, and it is difficult for them to study long, complex contents in detail. Print carriers and fixed campus display boards are slow to reach the public, but this information is still available in a fixed place and can be seen by students multiple times. The range efficiency of the various carriers is also related to how students use them; for instance, younger students are more dependent on group notifications, and older students pay more attention to the information channel for internships and jobs. Based on the different levels of performance, we have learned that some carriers are more suitable for transporting certain types of mental health information and can thus improve the communication effect.

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

Cognitive schemas are knowledge systems that have been accumulated over a long period of time, and they help us organise and classify new information. Before attending school, vocational college

students have formed some ideas about mental health problems; for example, they believe that seeking psychological help is a sign of weakness or that emotional problems can only be solved on one's own. The schemas above are used at the beginning of information reception to automatically filter out irrelevant information and determine what needs to be done. If the new information conflicts with the current schema, students will not be able to learn it properly and may overlook it; if it is in line with the schema, they are more likely to accept it but may also strengthen fixed ideas and fail to learn new knowledge<sup>[4]</sup>.

The effect of interference can be seen in the screening stage and also in the deviation of information interpretation. When given the same piece of information on how to deal with anxiety, students with the schema of "anxiety can be managed" are more likely to accept the advice and think about how to use it; on the other hand, those with the schema of "anxiety is failure" are likely to believe that the information is a rejection of themselves and react defensively. Even if the students are not aware of the difference consciously, it will still affect the final results of the information dissemination. To reduce the interference of cognitive schemas, one should be aware of the typical features of the schemas in the target group and design content that can loosen these schemas; for example, one can present common misconceptions along with facts to help students recognise the deficiencies in their existing schemas.

### **3. Pathway Design to Improve the Communication Effect of Mental Health Information for Vocational College Students**

#### ***3.1 Targeted Deconstruction and Life-oriented Translation of Information Content***

Targeted deconstruction is employed to divide the mental health knowledge that is initially very long or very complex into several independent and easily understandable parts. If all the ways to regulate emotions are presented at the same time, it will be too much for the students to learn, and they will not be able to master them properly. Deconstruction can be carried out in the form of behavioural steps, various kinds of common problems, or a chronological order, and each unit should have only one main idea. The three independent modules of the stress management content are to recognise the signs of stress, choose coping strategies and evaluate the results of coping. Deconstruction is a way to reduce the initial difficulty of learning, so students can learn in small steps and repeat the learning several times for better memorisation<sup>[5]</sup>.

Oriented translation replaces abstract words and theoretical expressions with words and situations in daily life that vocational college students are familiar with; "cognitive restructuring" is a technical term that can be changed to "seeing things from a different perspective", and "emotional triggers" can be modified as "situations that easily make one feel angry". The basic logic of the information in the translation should be preserved, but the way it is expressed needs to be changed to better suit the students' daily language. The translation should be simple enough for the target audience to understand, so common words and daily life situations, such as dormitory life, club activities and part-time jobs, are used to present information on mental health. Translation has been carried out to improve the comprehensibility of the information, so students can learn the main ideas without other materials and reduce the barrier to the spread of information.

#### ***3.2 Modify the Rhythm and Repetition Strategies of Dissemination According to Students' Daily Information Contact Habits***

The release time will be set for when vocational college students are free to get the information and when they are more likely to be interested. Students' interest in learning varies with the time; their attention to information not related to class is relatively low in the morning during lessons, but at lunchtime and in the evening, they are more eager to learn about mental health. Rhythm adjustment is to choose a time when students are not free to use their mobile phones and are in a good mood; it should not be a teaching time. Rhythm can also be employed to regulate the frequency of information release; if it is too high, people will be exhausted; if it is too low, people will lose their interest. A good rhythm can help the students learn by doing and will not be boring<sup>[6]</sup>.

Repetition is to present the same information several times in different ways and at different times. Simple mechanical repetition is likely to cause boredom; therefore, many forms of repetition should be employed, such as presenting all the information for the first time, reviewing the main 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 be in line with the forgetting curve; that

is to say, the first review should be carried out relatively soon after the initial presentation, and then the intervals gradually increase. Repetition strategies for vocational college students should be in line with how they learn information; methods that require active recall should be avoided, and instead, the information can be encountered naturally in their daily lives. A reasonable distance can increase how long students remember some information without increasing their study time, and it is more likely that they will remember this information later.

### ***3.3 Introduction of Two-way Interactive Mechanisms to Strengthen the Sense of Participation in the Information Reception Process***

The second type of interaction mode is an active participation model; the recipients of the information are no longer passive recipients but active participants who can react to the content of the information, ask questions and present their own ideas. If only one-way dissemination of mental health information is carried out, students may feel alienated and believe that the information is not for them; therefore, interactive forms should be introduced to motivate them to learn through participation. One can add a relatively simple self-comparison question at the end of the information section and have students mentally complete a matching task, or alternatively, a short, anonymous feedback channel can be set up for students to report their current circumstances by selecting boxes or making choices. No platform needs to be built; only the step for students to enter the answer needs to be added.

The development of the sense of participation is the result of students' active comparison of the content of the information with their own circumstances in interaction. When asked whether they have ever been in such a situation or which option they would choose, the students are actually placing themselves in the scenario provided by the information. Psychologically, it is not merely about reading; rather, it can also make people feel something and inspire them to act. The Design of the interactive devices should be moderately difficult; otherwise, people will lose interest in playing, and if it is too easy, it will not be fun. Most of the ways vocational college students communicate are easy to learn, have fast feedback and are free from social pressure; typical examples include multiple-choice questions, rating-based comments, keyword association, etc. Based on the interaction data, we can change the content and expression of the next piece of information in a closed-loop manner for optimisation. Therefore, the spread of information will be two-way; it will be both a talk directed at the students and a responsive conversation with them.

## **Conclusion**

The first three assessment indicators for the impact of mental health information dissemination on the cognition, emotion and behaviour of vocational college students have been set in this paper, and specific mechanisms of influence under different forms of presentation for the information, various channels of spread, and students' cognitive systems have been identified. Based on the three optimisation paths mentioned above, they are in agreement: Content deconstruction and life-oriented translation reduce the learning burden; Rhythm adjustment and repetition strategies increase the time for memory; and the two-way interactive mode promotes active participation in information processing. All of the above are based on the students' actual circumstances and contact. The three directions for the future research will be as follows: First, build a good quantitative measurement tool that can convert the indices of the level of understanding, resonance strength and tendency to try into reusable situational assessment tasks. Second, study the different effects of all kinds of mental health information along the same optimisation path and clarify the scope of application for each path. Thirdly, learn about the decay and preservation of the communication effect over a long period of time to obtain more specific evidence of the arrangement of repetition strategies. At the same time, we should be aware of changes in the digital communication environment and how these changes will affect students' information processing due to new carriers.

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