

How Can Psychology Promote Common Prosperity in the New Era? –The Role of Social Psychological Services

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Abstract

Common prosperity in spiritual life constitutes an indispensable component on the path to steadily advancing common prosperity. Mental health represents a crucial link within common prosperity in spiritual life. Social psychological services can contribute to the process of promoting common prosperity by enhancing mental health levels. A healthy psychological state can assist people in coping with the inevitable sense of relative deprivation during the development process toward common prosperity, facilitate the construction of a socialist harmonious society, help accumulate healthy human capital essential for common prosperity development, and promote a sense of psychological fairness. Moving forward, it is essential to continuously improve school mental health education and the social psychological service system, foster the formation of a positive social mentality, and thereby inject psychological strength into realizing common prosperity in the new era.

Full Text

How Can Psychology Advance Common Prosperity in the New Era? –The Role of Social Psychological Services

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Abstract

Spiritual common prosperity constitutes an indispensable component of solidly advancing common prosperity. Mental health represents a crucial link in achieving spiritual common prosperity, and social psychological services can play a vital role in promoting the common prosperity process by improving mental

health levels. A healthy psychological state can help people cope with the inevitable sense of relative deprivation during common prosperity development, promote the construction of a socialist harmonious society, help accumulate healthy human capital needed for common prosperity development, and foster a sense of psychological equity. Future efforts should continuously improve school mental health education and social psychological service systems, promote the formation of a positive social mentality, and inject psychological strength into realizing common prosperity in the new era.

Keywords: common prosperity; spiritual prosperity; social psychological services; mental health services

1. The Psychological Demands of Common Prosperity

Common prosperity represents an essential requirement of socialism, and achieving it has been a social ideal that our Party has unwaveringly pursued for a century [1]. As Xi Jinping has pointed out, common prosperity means that the people's material and spiritual lives are both prosperous. The spiritual common prosperity of the people is inherent in Marxism [2, 3]. Spiritual prosperity provides individuals with the ideals and beliefs necessary for healthy growth and furnishes spiritual pillars for the harmonious development of society [4]. Spiritual prosperity describes the state that people's spiritual lives should achieve during the process of solidly promoting common prosperity [5].

Spiritual common prosperity cannot be realized without the support of social psychological services. One of the primary manifestations of spiritual prosperity is possessing sound psychological qualities [6]. The report of the 19th Party Congress states that we must “strengthen the construction of the social psychological service system and cultivate a social mentality characterized by self-esteem, confidence, rationality, and positivity.” This provides a fundamental direction for our work—adopting a positive psychology perspective, putting people first, and integrating social governance with social work models [7]. Although scholars hold different views on the qualitative definition of mental health, three aspects are widely recognized: vitality, positive inner experiences, and good social adaptation [8].

This conception of mental health aligns remarkably well with the sound psychological qualities emphasized by spiritual prosperity and the social mentality demanded by the Party. Mental health serves as the internal strength of spiritual prosperity and provides effective support for building spiritual common prosperity. To achieve spiritual common prosperity, we must first improve everyone's mental health levels and realize common prosperity in mental health. In China's schools, improving student mental health is typically accomplished by mental health education teachers through mental health education curricula [9]. However, to achieve spiritual common prosperity, the targets of mental health work must extend beyond student populations, the forms must go beyond classroom activities, and the providers must extend beyond school teachers. It is

against this backdrop that social psychological services have emerged. In 2016, the National Health and Family Planning Commission and other departments jointly issued the “Guiding Opinions on Strengthening Mental Health Services,” formally expanding the targets of mental health work to all social groups for the first time. In 2018, the “National Pilot Work Plan for the Construction of a Social Psychological Service System” jointly released by the National Health Commission and ten other ministries further explicitly incorporated mental health services into social psychological services. Mental health work at the national policy level has undergone a historical evolution from school mental health education to mental health services and then to social psychological services [10]. Social psychological services represent both an inheritance and transcendence of mental health education, responding to psychological needs in social governance and serving as the “magic weapon” for psychology to advance common prosperity in the new era.

2. The Promoting Role of Social Psychological Services in Common Prosperity

Mental health is related to people’s happiness and well-being and affects the harmony and stability of social development. Mental health services play an irreplaceable foundational role, as a sound social psychological service system can not only improve public mental health levels but also promote harmonious interpersonal relationships and enhance public life satisfaction. Furthermore, social psychological services can facilitate the realization of common prosperity through the following two aspects.

2.1 Social Psychological Services as an Important Means to Address Relative Deprivation

Building upon the idea of common prosperity, Deng Xiaoping further proposed the strategic concept of “allowing some to become wealthy first—those who become wealthy first help others—common prosperity.” In this gradual process, the phenomenon of “the wealthy first” arousing a sense of relative deprivation among “the later wealthy” inevitably emerges. This is a subjective experience of economic or material deprivation that reduces the sense of gain, happiness, and identity that common prosperity aims to bring to people.

In psychology, relative deprivation is defined as “a subjective experience in which individuals perceive themselves to be in a disadvantaged position through comparison with reference groups, thereby experiencing negative emotions such as anger.” Related research also indicates that relative deprivation affects individual mental health, increases depression risk, and triggers aggressive behavior, which not only affects the stability of overall social mental health levels but also impacts social order and undermines the construction of a socialist harmonious society [11]. The “lying flat culture” that has emerged in recent years is related to perceived relative deprivation [12]. As Mencius said, “People do not worry

about scarcity but about inequality.” The emergence of the lying flat mentality is largely due to anxiety spread through social comparison and the currently narrowed career development space. When individuals feel that the wealth gap between themselves and others is too large, they experience relative deprivation, which brings greater academic and career anxiety. When individuals believe this anxiety cannot be resolved through their own efforts due to a lack of upward mobility, they feel that hard work lacks meaning, lose their motivation to move forward, and choose to “lie flat.”

In the process of the wealthy helping the later wealthy, wealth gaps and social competition are inevitable [13]. However, the lying flat mentality focuses only on social competition, failing to notice the increasingly prosperous material conditions and improving living standards beneath it. Social competition intertwines jealousy and anxiety in everyone’s hearts, and without sound mental health qualities and the support and guidance of mental health services, people can easily fall into the lying flat mentality and withdraw from society. The prevalence of the lying flat ethos is clearly detrimental to China’s economic construction and its goal of achieving common prosperity. Therefore, strengthening the construction of social mental health services, conducting social psychological counseling, and providing adequate social support for individuals experiencing relative deprivation can improve cognitive structures, enhance emotional regulation capabilities, reduce the negative impact of relative deprivation, foster an overall healthy and upward social atmosphere, and effectively advance the common prosperity process.

2.2 Social Psychological Services as an Important Foundation for Accumulating Human Capital

In recent years, both internationally and domestically, health has been recognized as an important factor in sustainable development [14, 15]. General Secretary Xi Jinping has explicitly included “facing people’s life health” as one of the “four orientations” of scientific and technological innovation and proposed the strategic goal of “Healthy China 2030.” This signifies that China’s development places greater emphasis on people-oriented principles, elevating the level of social health development to a more important position as an integral component of national soft power and comprehensive national strength, and as a primary means to improve human capital quality and increase human capital accumulation [16]. Only by relying on high-quality human capital can we create richer material and spiritual wealth and build a higher-quality material foundation for common prosperity. Health is not only a basic condition for individual all-round development and the source of vitality but also the foundational factor of human capital and the source of its incubation and growth. The World Health Organization states that health is not merely the absence of disease but a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being. Therefore, health development under the requirements of common prosperity should not only provide more guarantees for public physical health but also prioritize attention to

mental health, achieving a “dual improvement” in people’s physical and mental health qualities.

Social psychological services can effectively improve individual health levels, both psychologically and physiologically. A recent survey study indicates that depression increases the risk of cardiovascular disease [17], while social psychological services can significantly reduce the severity of depression and prevent future depression risk [18, 19]. Additionally, research shows that social psychological services can improve employee productivity by enhancing their mental health levels [20]. Social psychological services can foster sound personality and normal development in adolescents, relieve and prevent various psychological disorders, reduce the risk of psychosomatic diseases, contribute to the construction of “Healthy China 2030,” improve the quality of China’s human capital, promote the development of China’s productive forces, and ultimately advance the realization of common prosperity.

3. Future Directions for Building Social Psychological Services

According to relevant departmental statistics, the number of people with psychological and behavioral abnormalities and common mental disorders is increasing year by year. At present, there remains a considerable distance to achieving the social mentality demanded by the Party. China’s current social psychological service system is not yet sound and cannot meet public needs for professional services such as psychological counseling and screening, either in terms of quantity or quality. To achieve spiritual common prosperity, future social psychological services can proceed from the following aspects:

3.1 Strengthening School Mental Health Education

We should fully leverage the shaping role of education on mental health, particularly emphasizing and strengthening school mental health education. Based on students’ physical and mental development characteristics and educational laws, we should give full play to their psychological functions, improve psychological qualities, develop psychological potential, promote the all-round development of the educated, and enable students to possess sound and sustainable psychological qualities, laying a foundation for health literacy. School mental health education is the root of social psychological service construction, making it even more necessary to strengthen school mental health education. We should conduct mental health education reasonably, working within the zone of proximal development for psychology. Through educational approaches, we should provide “preventive inoculation” for students’ psychological qualities, reducing their future risk of mental health problems.

3.2 Strengthening Community-Based Mental Health Services

We should give play to the foundational role of communities in mental health services by establishing psychological counseling rooms or related studios in communities and grassroots social governance centers, equipped with professional psychological counseling personnel. Interpersonal relationships constitute an ecosystem, as people are constantly interacting with each other, meaning individuals' mental health is greatly influenced by fluctuations from others. This requires leveraging the advantages of social organizations and social workers in marriage and family, peer relationships, and interpersonal collaboration, striving to build a "three-community linkage" mechanism of community, social organization, and social worker to ensure sustained and effective grassroots psychological services.

3.3 Standardizing Mental Health Services

We should fully leverage the guiding and supporting role of mental health professionals, standardizing unscientific and unprofessional psychological counseling practices in society. We should strengthen the construction of professional talent teams, cultivate practical workers and theoretical research talents in the field, and train university counselors, community committees, and other staff to expand the talent pool for psychological services. Simultaneously, we should advocate for the public's scientific understanding of psychological issues and mental illnesses, correct misconceptions, eliminate stigma, raise mental health awareness, guide citizens to actively seek professional psychological counseling help, and ensure a positive and healthy mentality.

3.4 Optimizing Mental Health Measurement Techniques

To accomplish the above mental health service work, an indispensable aspect is to utilize questionnaire methods, behavioral experiments, brain imaging techniques, and other methods to operationalize the definition of mental health. Without scientific measurement of mental health, the pursuit of mental health becomes a castle in the air. The construction of social psychological services is not merely the responsibility of applied workers; basic research workers also need to participate. Combining traditional psychological questionnaire measurement techniques with modern brain imaging measurement technology can converge concepts of mental health, identify behavioral and physiological markers of mental health, and provide accurate measurement indicators for defining mental health.

Mental health is the primary aspect of spiritual common prosperity. A healthy psychological state can help people face the inevitable sense of relative deprivation during common prosperity development, promote the construction of a socialist harmonious society, help accumulate healthy human capital needed for common prosperity development, and improve productivity. Future efforts should continuously improve school mental health education and social psycho-

logical service systems, continuously expand professional psychological service teams, and continuously complete psychological assistance contingency plans. We should strive to meet the people's mental health service demands, enhance overall social mental health levels, strengthen social harmony and stability, and ultimately advance the realization of common prosperity by promoting spiritual common prosperity.

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Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

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