The Necessity and Strategies of Value Interference in School Psychological Consultation

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“Value free” principle was once advocated, accepted, and applied by a number of theoretical and practical professionals during the process of psychological guidance and consultation specialization in China. However, as the practice deepens, the value issue is found unavoidable and a complete “value free” is neither feasible nor achievable. Therefore, the paper advocates that value interference is necessary in the school psychological consultation. Meanwhile, school psychological consultation needs scientific and reasonable value interference. The major types of value interference in school psychological consultation are the respect of value, the verification of value, the attribution of value, the choice of value, the interference of value, and the identification of value.

Keywords: school psychological consultation, value interference, strategies

Handling value issues is always sensitive and tricky in psychological guidance and psychological consultation. As is known to us all, “value free” principle is the core idea of the human-centered approach, especially the client-centered therapy of Rogers. This principle has been advocated, accepted, and applied by many theoretical and practical professionals during the specialization of psychological guidance and consultation in China. However, with the deepening of practice, a lot of guiders (or counselors) realize that value issues are unavoidable and completely “value free” is neither practical nor feasible.

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Value issues are sensitive and tricky to handle in psychological guidance and psychological consultation. According to the popular understanding, value is an explicit or implicit opinion on “What is worthwhile”. It has individual or collective characteristics, influencing people’s choices on behaviors, methods, and purposes.

This paper agrees with some scholars’ opinion (Jiang, 2001) that an effective psychological consultation must have value interference. Here are the reasons.

Value Interference Is Essential From the Function’s Perspective

As “The advice of the ministry of education on colleges and universities to strengthen the work of mental health education” points out, mental health education is “an integral part of ideological and political education in colleges and universities” (Ye, 2001). As an important way for school mental health education, school psychological consultation must serve the moral education goals in colleges. Moral education emphasizes the regulation of individual behaviors according to the social requirements and stresses the evaluation and cultivation of individuals with social relations. It requires the individuals to act with the current and future

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social responsibilities. Moral education is dedicated to solving individuals’ social tendencies in mind. Therefore, the moral education, in a way, is a process to regulate, where the individuals passively adjust to the existing value systems and behavior models.

Although psychological consultation and college education differ a lot in the specific content, methods, and strategies, psychological consultation can never be substituted by the ideological and moral education. But conversely, the goal of college psychological consultation can by no means contradict with the objectives of college education. They must be highly consistent to promote and guarantee the realization of college education objectives. Therefore, college psychological consultation has distinct education orientation and cannot be completely neutral on the value issues.

Also, the subjects of school psychological consultation are the on-campus students. Their world outlook has not fully fixed yet and their personality is still under development. As a result, they are more likely to have psychological confusions and be trapped in the confusions of different values. When a psychological problem emerges, their ability to analyze, observe, adjust, and correct themselves are relatively poor, which calls for the school psychological consultation professionals to guide and interfere the values of those student counselees.

**Counselees Can Be Transformed From the Theory’s Perspective**

From the point of view of theory, one of the philosophical foundations of psychological consultation is to believe that counselees can be transformed. And “The transformation of counselees is first of all the change of values” (Fan & Wang, 2000). As the “helpers” in the counseling relation, counselors’ value interference becomes a must. Otherwise, the transformation of counselees’ values may lack the vector. The meaning of counselors’ value interference relies on helping, stimulating, or quickening the transformation of counselees’ values. To some extent, it affects or supports the direction of counselees’ value tropism. Individuals are neither so completely decided by the real life as believed by behaviorism, nor are they so completely independent as claimed by the “counsellee-centered” school. In addition, “value free” is not the consensus of all the counseling schools in the western world. For example, behaviorism holds that counselors can never be “value free” and sense-emotion therapy has its distinct value interference tendency.

**Counselors Will Unavoidably State Their Own Standpoints, Viewpoints, and Attitudes in Counseling Practice From the Reality’s Perspective**

It is impossible for the counselors to completely stick to the “value free” principle when they use a series of techniques like “explanation, feedback, and effect summary”. In a diversified world, everyone’s value is unique and psychological consultation must be closely related to the values. The counselors themselves are a vector of social values. Therefore, the facts and values cannot be fully apart in the consultation. The counselors will always express their value tropism intentionally or unintentionally during the consultation. “Usually the implicit way includes: the selection of a topic, what are they pleased with or interested in, what are they uninterested in, the actions such as their look in the eye, intonation, gestures while listening and so on” (Jiang, 2001). Just as what Corey once said, “Even if you realize that it is not suitable or moral to impose your own value on the counselees, you will still affect them to agree with your viewpoint in some subtle ways” (Jiang, 2001). Therefore, in fact, any kind of information contains double information, that is, “a description of the fact without bias” and “the implicit expression of what is expected” (as cited in Gao & Peng, 2004). A wise counselor can understand this kind of complexity, realizing his/her own value tropism and recognizing the existence of diversified values.
Value Interference in Psychological Consultation Is Based on the Cultural Difference From the Culture’s Perspective

The value free principle is rooted in the western culture. Since the mentality of Chinese people is different from that of westerners because of different cultural backgrounds, the expectations, and demands of counselees to the counselors are also different. In the West, the common expression used by the counselors to the counselees is like this, “You are the party. No one knows better than you about your own problem and no one can better deal with it than you”. But this kind of expression is not suitable for the Chinese. It is believed that all the counselors have sensed the counselees’ anxiety for specific guidance and heard about their urgent inquiry: “Please tell me what I should do”. If the counselors insist on the “value free” principle of “giving no comments”, “no blame”, or “no interference”, then the counselees will be extremely disappointed and even doubt “then what I come here for?”. This disappointment will affect the establishment of the relationship between counselors and counselees weaken counselees’ trust on counselors and even stop the consultation from continuing. There are scholars who have experienced from their own consultation practice that counselees in our country are more likely to accept the authority of the counselors and sometimes even expect their authoritative attitude.

Of course, this fact cannot naturally lead to the conclusion that counselors must have an authoritative attitude or give an authoritative guidance to the counselees. However, the cultural relativism at least indicates that a complete “value free” principle cannot meet the demand of Chinese counselees in practice.

The Strategies of Value Interference in School Psychological Consultation

Seen from the current psychological consultation practice and research results, there are mainly following types of value interference in school psychological consultation.

The Respect of Value

The respect of value requires the counselors to respect and accept counselees’ old values. They cannot reject, criticize, or judge their values in order to provide them with a safe and protected atmosphere for free expression. When the counselee expresses himself/herself, the counselor should sincerely understand the particular reason why he/she chooses a certain kind of value and really understand the specific process where his/her individual value is developed (as cited in Jiang, 2001). This is conducive to the transforming counselees by the afterward aid of the counselors. In addition, this kind of respect and acceptance cannot only improve the relationship between counselors and counselees, but also provoke counselees’ self-recognition and self-exploration of their own values, abandon those which are imposed by the outside world and cannot meet their own inner needs, reevaluate their own needs, rely on their own ability to verify their original value systems and reconsider their multifarious values.

The Verification of Value

Counselors need to help counselees verify the relation between their value tropism and value demands, promote them to choose correct and reasonable values. Therefore, during the consolation, counselors not only need to keep highly self-conscious, but also be good at observing the counselees’ value tropism. The specific procedure is as follows. First, counselors should always be highly self-conscious of their value system. They need to know their own tendency to some basic values and realize that they will also have prejudice. They need to be sensitive to the value issues involved in the consultation and recognize the value conflict behind
counselors’ certain attitude and choice. Only when they know their own value tropism can they avoid imposing their own values on the counselees when confronting with a value issue. Second, when a value issue is involved, counselors are encouraged to discuss it with the counselees in an open and clear way. They need to state the values of their own, help counselees recognize the value that they have and tell them that counselees have no obligation to comply with counselors’ values. When the value of counselors is inconsistent with that of counselees, especially when contradictory, counselors should be able to observe the disparity instantly and have an open discussion with the counselee to avoid the negative influence on the counselees. Next, counselors need to use the psychology approach and skills to help counselees verify their own pursuit of value. For example, they can guide the individual to verify their value by the method of “one inquiries and the other answers”. They can let counselees have their own value tropism and further verify it in the discussion by the method of role playing or imaging the occasional event. Also, they can use the journals after reading stories and essays or the method of applying different value measurement scales to the same issue as a way to help counselees realize their own values, their real demands and see whether there are any contradictions between them, judging its nature and consequences and making a corresponding transformation. In a word, counselors have to create a safe psychological environment for counselees to voice freely and design some suitable activities for them to obtain a deep impression so that they can transfer the process of verification to other value verification issues.

The Attribution of Value

After the counselees make the value judgment of the motivation conflict, counselors can guide them to attribute their inner conflict by using rational reasoning and let them recognize the relation between their own value and behaviors as well as emotions. Also, they can help counselees recognize that the reason for their current mental problems and manifestation is rooted in their problematic value system, thus let them have the willingness and wish to solve their mental problems independently.

During consultation practice, it is found that the visitors are always emphasizing their psychosomatic symptoms which makes them unable (or unwilling) to have a cognitive analysis. In this circumstance, the counselors can start with the symptoms to analyze, and then move to the cognitive level naturally. They can guide the visitors to analyze their own mentality (psychological strategy), namely, to raise the analysis to the metacognitive, which can effectively spot the efficiency in the mentality. Also, metacognitive analysis can lead visitors to analyze the “origination” and “development” process of their mentality by themselves. This analysis process will surely lead visitors to the value issues voluntarily. That makes a way for value interference.

The Choice of Value

On the basis of value attribution, counselors will help counselees make a sound and sensible value choice. The main psychological confusion of counselors is the difficulty in choosing a value. Therefore, the choice of value is the most substantial in the process of “value interference”.

When counselors guide the counselees to make a value choice, they can help them find the advantages of their values, that is to say, respect the most valuable defined by the counselees during the value verification, help them meet their major value demands. Counselors can mention their own value or introduce an external value when necessary. The purpose of this practice is to widen the counselees’ horizon and help them gain a larger scope for value choice instead of imposing an introduced value on them. On this foundation, counselors help them compare the advantages and disadvantages of various choices based on the counselors’ subjective and objective condition and willingness and lead them to choose the value that is suitable and physically and
It should be noted that a great flexibility must be guaranteed when counselors help visitors make the value choice. As long as the choice does no harm to the benefits of society as well as to others, it can be considered reasonable.

The Interference of Value

The common value problems in consolation are the distinct disparity and conflict between individuals’ value and the mainstream social value. A pro-longed mental conflict will lead to psychological obstacles and corresponding symptoms. For those value choices which are apparently conflicted with the social morality, the author holds that counselors have the responsibility to interfere and guide.

The Identification of Value

After the value verification or the corresponding value choice, counselors can further direct the counselees to identify their value tendency so that the choice that they have made can constantly be reflected in their future behaviors or life.

Although some counselees seem to have a clear knowledge of their own problem and their analysis sounds reasonable, they just cannot solve the problem. The attribution analysis shows that the characteristics of these visitors are “think without action” or “talk without action” (Han, 2004). As to this situation, counselors can use behavior therapy as a basis. They can simply lead counselees to firmly undertake the behavior demanded by the external circumstances without considering the cognition issue. The change of behavior will lead to the external affirmative judgments, which have he or she make a positive emotional response. This kind of emotional response has strong “arousal” or “stimulation” functions. And this kind of intensification will lead to the change of cognition and the unconscious change of attitude, which finally lead to the identification of value.

It should be emphasized that the value interference of counselors should focus on the interference of function instead of content. The functional interference of value is to guide counselees to focus their self-exploration on the relation between self-choice and self-needs. It is not about a counselee’s judging whether a choice is valuable or not based on his/her own value and then impose the value on the counselees. Therefore, counselors should try their best to avoid value preaching (do not preach to the counselees what kind of value they should pursue) in consultation practice. When the value issues are involved, counselors should state their own value and discuss it with the counselees in an open and clear way. Meanwhile, they should make it clear that counselees have no obligation to observe their values. It is counselors’ responsibility to provide counselees with other alternative choices. But they cannot attempt to force them to accept a certain value either explicitly or implicitly. The final decision should be made by the counselees. That the interference should be focused on functions rather than content is decided by the psychological consultation goal of “help from others and help from oneself”.

At the same time, the basic principles of psychological consultation that counselors should always stand by when using the above six interference ways is to help and guide counselees instead of making decisions for them.

In conclusion, value interference is necessary in college psychological consultation. The prerequisites of a successful interference are to respect and accept it. The counselors should not only consider the meaning and function of value, but also experience and identify the universality and variability of the value of life together with the student counselees with an attitude of tolerating and respecting them. Only when the counselees feel psychologically beneficial.
the sincere concern from the counselors can they be guided to constantly analyze themselves, explore themselves, stick to the goals, and develop themselves.

References