

Research on Emotion Regulation Strategies of Retired Elderly -- The Important Role of Hobbies

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Abstract: The mental health of the elderly has increasingly become the focus of academic attention. By summarizing the literature, this paper discusses the mechanism of interest and hobby on the emotional regulation of the elderly from the perspective of physiological psychology and cognitive psychology. The results showed that positive hobbies can help the elderly produce more dopamine, adjust breathing and heart rate, relax body joints, and at the same time, it can also help the elderly improve their social participation and obtain a sense of belonging; Bad hobbies would affect the health of the elderly, and excessive immersion in them was not conducive to the regulation of negative emotions. Therefore, moderate use of positive hobbies can help regulate negative emotions. It is an ideal way to choose positive hobbies when the elderly need to regulate emotions.

Keywords: Hobbies, retired elderly, emotional regulation

1. Introduction

According to international standards, if over 10% of the population of a country or region is over 60 years old, or over 7% of the population is over 65 years old, then the country or region has entered an aging society [1]. China has already entered an aging society in 2001, with the figures still rising over the years. Aging has become a new hot topic of discussion, in which concerns about the physical and mental health of the elderly have gradually increased. Therefore, the mental health of the retired elderly has been paid more and more attention by the state. According to the survey, the incidence of somatization, obsessive-compulsive symptoms, interpersonal sensitivity, depression, anxiety and paranoid ideation of the elderly in China are above that of the national norm [2], and the incidence of depression is about 22.6% [3]. They are usually depressed, irritable, self-centered, and eager for attention and companionship from others to listen to their troubles. The reason for this problem is that the retired elderly tend to change their psychological state due to physiological decline, social status change and cognitive change, which is easy to develop negative emotions that are not properly dealt with, thereby triggering mental health problems over time [4].

These problems are urgent to be solved, so investigating the mechanism of emotion regulation in the elderly is a worthy task. A growing number of interviews and articles reveal that the elderly with hobbies can improve their fun and interpersonal skills, thus reducing negative emotions [5]. Therefore, hobbies may be a means to enhance the mental health of the elderly. Hobbies are what people's attitude and emotional reaction to something, such as playing table tennis, painting,

drinking tea, etc. Currently there is still a lack of thorough research on "the emotional regulation mechanism of hobbies on retired elderly " in China. Therefore, this paper aims to use literature review to discuss the influence of hobbies on the emotional regulation of retired elderly.

2. Theoretical Review

Emotion regulation is an important method to maintain mental health, which aims to influence the type, time, internal experience and external expression of the individual in a specific situation. The classification of emotion regulation can be divided into the good regulation that makes emotion, behavior, and cognition reach coordination and the bad regulation that makes the individual loses the active control of emotion.

As early as the 1980, the developmental psychology appeared the theory of emotion regulation. In Gross and Thompson's process model of emotion regulation, there are five components: situation selection, situation modification, attentional deployment, cognitive change and response modulation. Studies have shown that the ways of emotional regulation in the elderly are mainly attentional deployment, cognitive change and response modulation [6]. When an elderly person is anxious due to illness, playing music can transfer the elderly from painful emotions and immerse him in music for emotional regulation. At this time, he may rethink and evaluate his illness and get new conclusions. In addition, he may use certain foods or tea to regulate his body in later life. This habit can also regulate the impact of emotions on himself.

Hobbies can be divided into two types: positive hobbies and bad hobbies. They correspond to good emotion regulation strategies and bad emotion regulation strategies at the same time. The most effective way to maintain mental health is a good emotion regulation strategy. The elderly can use positive hobbies to alleviate negative emotions; However, though negative emotion regulation through bad habits is temporarily effective, the effect is not long-term and is not conducive to the improvement of their emotional intelligence level [7]. In the long run, this strategy is not good.

3. Emotional Regulation Mechanism of Interests

Positive hobbies can be divided into sports, literature and art, and leisure. Sport-related hobbies can enhance the level of dopamine and release stress to relieve negative emotions. A large number of studies have shown that sport-related hobbies can reduce the anxiety and depression of the elderly [8]. As one of the popular sports for retired elderly people, table tennis can help the elderly to enhance their individual self-confidence and self-esteem by diverting attention [5]. Because table tennis is a cooperative and competitive sports, in the process of confrontation, the elderly can get a sense of accomplishment, thus reducing their inner loss. The elderly can also make friends with like-minded partners in the process of sports. They can compare notes with partners, improve social interaction ability and enhance trust in each other, thus quieting their loneliness. Taijiquan, as a traditional sports health preservation activity, is also popular among the elderly. During exercise, not only each joint of the body is relaxed and exercised, but also the breath is effectively adjusted. Playing Taijiquan makes the elderly transfer from anxiety and irritability, so that they are always immersed in a peaceful and stable mood. Therefore, physical education interests can increase dopamine in the elderly, relax the body and relieve stress; Psychologically, attention distribution in Gross's emotion regulation model is applied. When the elderly focus on sports, they would have a flow experience and improve their positive emotional experience [7].

The interests of literature and art are also essential activities for the retired elderly. As one of the most popular activities for the elderly, square dancing has a wide range of movements and easy to learn. Square dancing can improve the flexibility of the human body and enhance the cardiopulmonary function. In addition, square dancing can also enhance the confidence of the

elderly and their enthusiasm for communication with people, and reduce the possibility of bad mood [9]. In addition, practicing calligraphy is also a method to regulate mood, focusing on calmness. In the practice of calligraphy, people need to pay attention to adjust their own breathing frequency to be in a calm mood. Ancient Chinese calligraphers Yang Ningshi and Mi Fu had treatment for their heart diseases through practicing calligraphy [10]. When practicing calligraphy, the elderly can promote the positive change of mood, thus easing their anxiety and worry. These two hobbies are consistent with Gross's emotion regulation model. The older people's love of music has penetrated into their daily life. Hum songs when they are happy and perform square dance in their leisure time, etc. All this can not be separated from the company of music. As a medium of communication, music can help the elderly in pain get psychological regulation. Its own energy can resonate with human cells and reduce the blood pressure, thus slowing down heart rate for smooth breathing [11]. Through the older people's love of music, it can stimulate the resonance between the elderly and music. Through music, people can release the suppressed pain or express their pleasant emotional state at that time. When people are in psychological balance, they are no longer troubled by negative emotions. Hobbies in literature and art can help the elderly relieve physical fatigue and relax the body. At the same time, the hobbies of literature and art use the reaction adjustment in Gross's emotion regulation model. When the elderly have negative emotions, they can choose the hobbies of literature and art for emotion regulation, which will have obvious changes.

Leisure interests enrich the daily life of the elderly. Most elderly people like drinking tea. Tea is rich in a large number of tea polyphenols and theanine. Tea polyphenols has been proven to prevent the occurrence of cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases and neurological diseases [12], and theanine can help the body to resist anxiety and enhance attention. In addition to its own characteristics, tea also derives a unique way of thinking, which stresses that one should try to meditate to keep calm when problems crop up, very suitable for the elderly to adjust the mood to dissipate melancholy and clear loneliness. Chess and mahjong are also the most common way of leisure for the elderly, which are full of competitive confrontation and can enhance the sense of achievement of the elderly in the process of confrontation. These activities also enhance the social interaction ability of the elderly. They can communicate together to improve skills of playing cards and meet the needs of being respected and loved, giving them a sense of belonging and happiness [13]. In addition, there are also some elderly people who like fishing. The characteristic of fishing is to wait quietly and not be impatient [14]. The elderly can relieve their inner pressure and bad emotions through fishing. Fishing with friends can enhance feelings and promote communication, improve their social communication ability, and help the elderly gain satisfaction when they catch fish. These are good strategies to regulate mood. Leisure interests can help the elderly to quickly integrate into the society and get along well with their partners. Individuals can also relax and release pressure, so that they can achieve a state of inner harmony and balance.

Bad habits can be divided into two categories: one is that the thing itself is not too beneficial to individuals, and the other is the excessive addiction to positive interests. Retired elderly people often smoke or drink because of the sudden change of social status or encountering various unpleasant things, which leads to their failure to give full vent to their depression and anxiety. For them, the nicotine in tobacco and alcohol are "good medicine" to paralyze their nerves, and they use this way to improve their emotional experience, but they do not know that doing so is no good for their health. Studies have shown that people with mental disorders tend to start smoking very early, and those with depression or depressive symptoms are more likely to become smokers and alcoholics [15]. Smoking and alcohol abuse can't solve the problem itself, but cause some physical and psychological harm. When the elderly take smoking or drinking as a habit to regulate emotions, it will also affect the improvement of their emotional intelligence level [7]. Positive interests are effective, but if the elderly are too addicted to them, they will become bad habits. For example, in

mahjong addiction, the elderly will experience physical joint discomfort and have an increased risk of cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases. In addition, if you take winning or losing very seriously, you will feel inner anxiety, so you will lose the fun of this activity, and then you will lose the meaning of emotional regulation.

4. Conclusion

This paper aims to discuss the influence of interests on emotional regulation in retired elderly through the form of literature review, and list some specific activities of positive interests and bad habits, and explain why elderly people can regulate their interests and their principles from the perspective of physiological psychology and cognitive psychology. The paper specifically expounds on the influence of positive hobbies and bad habits on the emotional regulation of the elderly. After discussion, we found that positive hobbies are able to help the elderly produce more dopamine, adjust breathing and heart rate, and relax body joints. Meanwhile, positive hobbies are also able to help the elderly to improve their social participation and gain a sense of belonging. Immersion in activities can relieve the negative emotions of the elderly to a relatively great extent and improve their emotional experience. While bad hobbies will affect the physical health of the elderly, excessive immersion in them and care of gains and losses are not conducive to the regulation of negative emotions. China has entered an aging society. In this paper, Gross's emotion regulation model is applied to the actual life to provide the elderly with important reference for emotion regulation strategies. But this research still has some limitations, First, the research object of this paper is limited, which is only aimed at the retired elderly in China and lacks understanding of the elderly in foreign countries, so it can't represent all groups. Second, this paper is a summary article and lacks an in-depth demonstration of experimental research. According to the above deficiencies, future research can expand the sample of the group, in the field of emotional regulation of the elderly, to a specific interest in-depth follow-up research, can get more accurate conclusions.

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