

The development process and feasibility analysis of indigenous spiritual social work in China

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Abstracts: With the rapid development of China's economy, social citizens' demand for the development of social work has become more and more vigorous, and spiritual social work, as an important field of social work, can play an important role in guiding the psychological state and normal life of social residents. This paper summarizes the development stages of spiritual social work in China by studying the development process of local spiritual social work in China. On this basis, it summarizes the feasibility of the development of spiritual social work in Chinese local society, in order to promote the recognition of spiritual social work.

keywords: spiritual; social work

1. Introduction

Spiritual social work, as an emerging paradigm of social work, arises from the reflection on and supplementation of traditional social work. Throughout history, people's exploration and concern for inner spirituality have evolved alongside societal development.^[1] Against this backdrop, spiritual social work has emerged to fulfill people's yearning for spiritual alignment. Within this field, spirituality assumes a central role as a guiding concept informing relevant practical interventions. From the perspective that individuals are integral parts of their respective nations, each person possesses their own unique spiritual capacity while every nation also possesses its distinct spiritual ability. Therefore, it becomes imperative to cultivate and develop not only everyone's spiritual aptitude but also our own nation's distinctive spiritual prowess.

Spirituality is a much talked about direction in the contemporary field of social work, where spirituality as an expression of culture, beliefs and values from an indigenous perspective has a significant impact on development at the individual, community, organizational and national levels.^[2]

2. Sources of spiritual social work theory in China

Important theories of spiritual social work in China include Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoist philosophy and Christianity imported from ancient times. To varying degrees, these theories have had a positive impact on the development of spiritual social work, providing social workers with rich ideological resources and practical guidance, and helping to better meet the needs of individuals and society at the spiritual level. In the process of localization of spiritual social work, domestic scholars have continued to draw on local spiritual theoretical knowledge from traditional Chinese culture, the practical political context of the compatibility of religion and socialism, and Western social work attitudes towards religion, spirituality and spirituality.^[3]

Confucianism plays an important role in Chinese spiritual social work. Confucianism emphasizes the core values of benevolence, righteousness, courtesy, wisdom and trust, which are closely related to the goals of spiritual social work - to promote people's inner growth, spiritual balance and social harmony. Confucianism emphasizes care and compassion for others, advocates showing empathy and respect in social work, encourages social workers to treat their clients with benevolence and love, and advocates the use of good deeds to touch others. At the same time, Confucianism also focuses on personal cultivation and self-reflection, which in spiritual social work helps to enhance social workers' professionalism, self-awareness and spirit of service.

The influence of Buddhism on spiritual social work in China is equally profound. Buddhism emphasizes the values of compassion, self-sacrifice and liberation, which are closely linked to spiritual social work's goals of caring, helping others and alleviating suffering. Buddhism teaches people to transcend material desires and pursue inner peace and wisdom, which echoes the goals of spiritual social work in pursuing spiritual growth and individual happiness. In practice, by drawing on Buddhist ideas, social workers can pay attention to the spiritual needs of individuals, guide them to alleviate their suffering and resolve their difficulties, and spread the spirit of compassion and

kindness in social work to promote social harmony and community.

Taoist philosophy also has its unique value in Chinese spiritual social work. Taoism follows the way of nature and focuses on following nature and doing nothing, which is consistent with the concept of spiritual social work, which focuses on the inner growth of individuals and respects their uniqueness and autonomy. Taoism focuses on “Tao” and “virtue” and advocates maintaining inner peace and indifference in social work, avoiding excessive intervention and coercion, and allowing individuals to spontaneously achieve inner self-cultivation and growth through inspiration and guidance. By learning and applying Taoist thought, social workers can better understand the laws of individual growth and guide them towards inner harmony and balance.

The place of Christianity in Chinese spiritual social work cannot be ignored either. Christianity stresses the values of love, faith and forgiveness, which are compatible with spiritual social work’s goals of caring for others, promoting hope and helping individuals develop positive beliefs. Christianity encourages individuals to make a connection with God and to seek spiritual comfort and strength, which is highly relevant to psychological counselling and spiritual care in social work. In practice, social workers can respect the religious beliefs of individuals, understand the impact of their beliefs on their psychology and their behavior, and integrate their beliefs into their services to help individuals better face the challenges of life with the support of their beliefs.

In the future development, spiritual social work can further deepen the research and application of these theories, combine with China’s social and cultural background, explore a spiritual social work model that is more in line with national conditions, and make a greater contribution to personal happiness and social harmony.

3. Stages of Development of Spiritual Social Work in China

The combination of spirituality and social work complements and expands the overall scope of social work. Although social work in China has flourished as an imported product, local nourishment is one of the key elements for its continued growth. Looking back at the development of spiritual social work in China, the development of indigenous spiritual social work in China can be traced back to the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century.^[4] The growth of the field has been influenced by China’s social changes, economic development and cultural shifts, as well as the continuing need for mental health and social services^[5]. The following is a summary of the major developments in spiritual social work in China:

3.1 Traditional stage: traditional Chinese society period

Traditional Chinese culture is heavily influenced by religious beliefs and spiritual practices. Ancient religious organizations and traditional belief systems such as Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism played an important role in society, and religious institutions such as temples and Taoist temples became places where people sought spiritual fulfilment and relief. Such as the Wei and Jin dynasties of civil relief, its relief in various forms mainly to clan relief and religious relief, with a strong mystical and religious and both material relief and spiritual relief, in the spirit of the spirit of indoctrination and appeasement of the poor and weak. Through services such as prayer, shelter, charity and relief, people’s spiritual needs are met, and religious beliefs play a role in community cohesion and social support.

3.2 Social mobilization period: early 20th century to 1980s

China went through the period before the socialist revolution and reform and opening up. During this period, religious activities were restricted and there was relatively little spiritual social work. However, social mobilization and mass organizations provided some spiritual support while meeting people’s basic needs. For example, organizations such as cooperatives in rural areas and workers’ clubs in factories met people’s spiritual needs through group activities and cultural performances. This form of spiritual social work emphasizes the values of collectivism and social solidarity.

3.3 Start-up stage: early 1990s

With the progress of reform and opening, there has been a certain revival of religious beliefs and spiritual practices in China. At this stage, some NGOs and social work institutions began to pay attention to spiritual needs and provide related services. Psychological counsel-

ling agencies, community service centers and other agencies began to provide psychological counselling, spiritual support and rehabilitation services. Using professional methods and skills, these organizations help people deal with psychological distress, find inner peace and seek spiritual growth.

3.4 Specialization phase: early 2000s to today

From the beginning of the 21st century to the present, spiritual social work in China has entered a stage of professionalization. The development of professionalism of spiritual social work is mainly reflected in two aspects: first, the training and development of practitioners, and second, the theoretical construction and research of spiritual social work. Spiritual social work at this stage emphasizes professionalism and science, and focuses on research and study of spiritual issues.

4. Spiritual Social Work Feasibility Analysis in China

4.1 Cultural context and value fit

Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism and other philosophical and religious ideas have a long and deep cultural heritage in China. The spiritual elements in these traditional cultures have much in common with the concepts of spiritual social work, such as the emphasis on inner cultivation and harmonious coexistence between human beings and nature. Therefore, spiritual social work has a high degree of compatibility in the Chinese social and cultural context and is more easily accepted and understood by the public.

4.2 Growing needs of society

The pace of life is accelerating, pressures are increasing and mental health problems are becoming more prevalent with the rapid development of modern society. Spiritual social work focuses on the inner growth and self-healing of individuals, which can help people reduce stress, adjust their mindset and improve their quality of life.

4.3 Specialised Education and Talent Pool

In recent years, the field of social work in China has seen rapid growth, with more and more colleges and universities offering social work majors, providing strong support for the professional talent pool of spiritual social work. At the same time, some professional institutions and groups are also actively promoting the concepts and methods of spiritual social work, and enhancing related education and training, providing a strong guarantee of talents for the application of spiritual social work in China.

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