

Psychological impact of implicit power structure in college students' dormitories

Yusi Li^{1,a}, Meirong Zhou^{1,b}, Xinyi Luo^{1,c,*}

¹Business School, Guangdong Ocean University, Yangjiang, 529500, China

^alys@gdou.edu.cn, ^b1953275607@qq.com, ^c919335109@qq.com

*Corresponding author

Keywords: Dormitory relationship, Implicit power structure, Mental health, Behavioral effect

Abstract: As an important place for daily activities of college students, the implicit power structure of college dormitories has a profound impact on their mental health. Existing research mostly focuses on explicit interpersonal relationships, lacking a systematic exploration of how implicit power shapes the micro social structure of dormitories. This study focuses on the implicit power structure in the relationship between college students' dormitories, using qualitative research methods to deeply analyze its manifestations, formation mechanisms, and its impact on the psychological health and behavior of college students. It reveals the double-edged sword effect it has on members' psychology and behavior through forms such as opinion leadership, social isolation, and information control.

1. Introduction

College student dormitories, as key places for students' daily life and study, play a pivotal role in their growth process. College students spend a lot of time in the dormitory every day except for sleeping, making the dormitory a space where their ideological exchanges are most active and information communication is most free. In this small dormitory group, members get along day and night, and their ideological characteristics, personality hobbies, and moral cultivation are fully displayed, and the influence on each other is constantly deepened imperceptibly. A good dormitory relationship can provide students with emotional support, help relieve study pressure, and promote the development of mental health. At the same time, a harmonious atmosphere can also stimulate students' learning motivation, cultivate good study habits, and thus improve academic performance.

In dormitory relationships, the implicit power structure is a factor that cannot be ignored. This kind of power is not clearly stipulated by rules and regulations, but plays an important role in dormitory decision-making, behavior norms, and interpersonal relationships. This study aims to deeply analyze the implicit power structure in college students' dormitory relationships, reveal its formation mechanism, manifestations, and impact on dormitory relationships and students' individual development, so as to provide targeted theoretical and practical guidance for college student management work.

2. Literature review

The relevant research can be summarized into the following two aspects, as follows.

2.1 Research status of college students' dormitory relationships

With the changes in the social environment, the evolution of the characteristics of college student groups, and the innovation of research methods, new progress has been made in the study of the relationship between college student dormitories, mainly in the following three aspects. One is the research on the influencing factors of dormitory relationships. Fosnacht et al. suggest that students are more inclined to freely choose roommates rather than being randomly assigned to the same dormitory [1]. The second is a study on the impact of dormitory relationships on academic performance. Garlick pointed out that if roommates have poor learning behavior, it will have an

impact on their roommates [2]. The third is the impact of dormitory relationships on mental health. Zhao et al. believe that harmonious interpersonal relationships and harmonious relationships among members in dormitories can provide individuals with high-quality social support and improve the mental health level of college students [3].

2.2 Research on implicit power structure

The implicit power structure, as a key part of the field of power research, has attracted much attention from academia in recent years. Unlike formal power structures, implicit power operates through mechanisms such as informal networks, cultural norms, and symbolic capital, exerting profound impacts on organizational decision-making, resource allocation, and social inequality. In terms of formation mechanisms, the implicit power structure is affected by the interaction of many factors. Lv found that in grass-roots governance, due to the strengthened supervision of grass-roots power by superiors, the formal power of grass-roots political power has been weakened, but fiscal transfer payments and investment promotion activities have strengthened grass-roots implicit power [4]. Shi et al. pointed out that implicit power can be divided into positive and negative categories, and individuals with extensive and close connections have more implicit power [5].

To sum up, current research pays insufficient attention to implicit power in dormitory relationships. Most studies mainly focus on surface interpersonal relationships and conflict resolution, and few deeply explore the implicit power structure gradually formed in the daily interaction of dormitory members and its in-depth impact on dormitory relationships. Research on the sources, formation mechanisms, and roles of implicit power in dormitory decision-making and behavior norms is still lacking.

3. Analysis of implicit power structure in college students' dormitory relationships

3.1 Manifestations of implicit power structure

1) Leading role of opinion leaders

In college student dormitories, opinion leaders exert the role of implicit power in dormitory decision-making and atmosphere building by virtue of their unique personal traits and behaviors. Dormitory A of a certain university serves as an example. The dormitory members are from different majors and regions. In dormitory life, member Chen gradually becomes an opinion leader. Chen has a cheerful personality, is good at communication, and has strong organizational skills and rich social experience. When making decisions on dormitory activities, such as choosing a weekend trip destination, Chen can always put forward attractive suggestions through detailed strategies and vivid descriptions. Other members are often infected by his enthusiasm and professionalism and finally adopt his opinions. In terms of creating a dormitory atmosphere, Chen actively advocates a healthy lifestyle, gets up early every day to exercise, and encourages other members to participate. Under his leadership, the dormitory has gradually formed good work and rest habits and a positive atmosphere. The leading role of such opinion leaders is reflected in many dormitories. Their existence has an important impact on the harmonious development of dormitory relationships and the formation of dormitory culture. If opinion leaders have positive values and behavior patterns, they can guide dormitory members to make progress together and promote the harmony of dormitory relationships; on the contrary, if the behaviors and concepts of opinion leaders are biased, they may have a negative impact on the dormitory and trigger conflicts and disputes.

2) Phenomenon of social isolation and exclusion

Social isolation and exclusion, as a means of implicit power, occur from time to time in college student dormitories, exerting a profound impact on the psychology and behavior of dormitory members. In dormitory B, member Wang has an introverted personality and is not good at taking the initiative to communicate with others, so he has a low participation in dormitory activities. Over time, other members gradually feel alienated from Wang and intentionally or unintentionally exclude him in daily communication and activities. For example, dormitory members often have dinners and play

games together, but rarely take the initiative to invite Wang to participate; when discussing issues in the dormitory, they also rarely pay attention to Wang's opinions and ideas. This kind of social isolation makes Wang feel lonely and inferior, and gradually develops fear and disgust towards dormitory life. His academic performance is also affected, showing a significant decline. From the perspective of power theory, social isolation is a means of implicit power that exerts influence by depriving individuals of social resources and participation opportunities. Social isolation not only harms the mental health of the isolated, but also may damage the harmonious atmosphere of the entire dormitory, trigger conflicts and disputes among other members, and affect the stable development of dormitory relationships.

3) Information Control and Communication Advantage

In college student dormitories, information controllers gain implicit power by mastering the channels and rhythm of information dissemination, which has an important impact on dormitory relationships. In dormitory C, member Gao is well-informed. He is keen on paying attention to various school and off-campus information and keeps in touch with different students, so he has a lot of information resources. In the dormitory, Gao is always able to obtain school notices, activity information, and other news related to everyone's interests first. He will choose which information to convey to dormitory members and when to convey it according to his own will. For example, when the school organizes an important academic lecture, Gao thinks that this lecture may not be of much help to some members, so he does not inform everyone in time, resulting in some members missing the opportunity to attend the lecture. This kind of information control behavior enables Gao to have certain implicit power in the dormitory. Other members need to rely on him to obtain information in many things, thus obeying his opinions and arrangements to a certain extent. He can use this advantage to control the flow and volume of information, influence the cognition and decision-making of other members, and then occupy an important position in the dormitory power structure. Information control and communication advantage may lead to information asymmetry in the dormitory, trigger misunderstandings and conflicts among members, and damage the harmony and stability of dormitory relationships.

3.2 Forming factors of implicit power structure

1) Differences in personal traits and abilities.

These are important factors affecting the formation of implicit power in college student dormitories. Students with cheerful and outgoing personalities are often more likely to connect with others and have high social activity in the dormitory. They are good at expressing their views and ideas, can actively participate in dormitory discussions and activity organization, and thus are more likely to play a leading role in dormitory decision-making. In terms of ability, students with strong organizational skills, communication skills, or professional knowledge are also more likely to obtain implicit power. Students with excellent organizational skills can efficiently arrange dormitory activities, coordinate relationships among members, and resolve conflicts, thus winning the trust and respect of other members. Students with excellent academic performance and solid professional knowledge often have authority in dormitory study discussions, and their opinions and suggestions are more likely to be adopted.

2) Dormitory culture and atmosphere.

Dormitory culture and atmosphere play a key role in shaping the implicit power structure. Under different cultural atmospheres, the power structure of the dormitory is significantly different. In a positive, united, and mutually helpful dormitory culture, members respect and trust each other, and focus on common growth and progress. In such an atmosphere, implicit power is often in the hands of members who can lead positive values and contribute to the development of the dormitory. In a negative and indifferent dormitory culture, members lack communication and cooperation, and small group phenomena may appear. Implicit power is more reflected in the core members of small groups. In dormitory affairs decision-making, the opinions of small groups often dominate, and the rights and interests of other members are easily ignored, leading to an imbalance in the dormitory power structure. Dormitory culture and atmosphere are the results of long-term interaction among dormitory

members. They affect the relationship patterns and behavioral norms among members, and then shape different implicit power structures, which have a profound impact on the development of dormitory relationships.

3) External environmental factors.

Such as school management and family background, have an undeniable impact on the implicit power structure of college student dormitories. The school's management system and culture have a macro-guiding effect on dormitory relationships. If the school pays attention to dormitory culture construction, carries out various dormitory evaluation activities, and encourages cooperation and communication among dormitory members, it will promote the formation of a positive atmosphere in the dormitory, which is conducive to the formation of a healthy implicit power structure. In order to win honors, dormitory members actively cooperate to jointly create a good dormitory environment. In this process, members who actively participate in dormitory construction and work hard for dormitory honors gradually gain implicit power in the dormitory. Family background will also affect students' behavior and power status in the dormitory. Students with superior family economic conditions and rich educational resources may have certain advantages in knowledge and social skills, and are more likely to stand out in the dormitory and form implicit power. At the same time, family education methods will also affect students' personalities and behavior patterns, and then affect their position in the dormitory power structure. Students who grow up in a democratic family education style often have strong communication skills and independent thinking ability, and are more likely to play a positive role in the dormitory and gain implicit power; while students who grow up in an authoritarian family education style may behave more self-centered in the dormitory, and it is difficult to establish good relationships with others, which is not conducive to the formation of implicit power. External environmental factors indirectly shape the implicit power structure in dormitory relationships by affecting the individual characteristics of dormitory members and the overall atmosphere of the dormitory.

4. Impact of implicit power structure on mental health and behavior

4.1 Impact on mental health

A good implicit power structure can provide strong psychological support for college students, enhance their sense of belonging, and have a positive promoting effect on their mental health. In dormitory relationships, when there is a positive and cohesive implicit power structure, opinion leaders can usually play a positive guiding role. With their optimistic attitude, positive life attitude, and strong organizational and coordination skills, they drive dormitory members to jointly create a warm and harmonious dormitory atmosphere. A bad implicit power structure may bring heavy psychological pressure to college students, trigger psychological problems such as anxiety and depression, and pose a serious threat to their mental health. Social isolation and exclusion, as a manifestation of a bad implicit power structure, will put the isolated students in an extremely painful psychological state.

4.2 Impact on behavioral performance

The implicit power structure plays an important role in college students' academic performance, exerting various impacts on students' learning motivation, learning habits, and academic achievements. In a positive implicit power structure, if the opinion leaders in the dormitory have good learning habits and high learning enthusiasm, they can stimulate other members' learning motivation through their own behavioral demonstration and guidance. Also, the implicit power structure has a significant impact on college students' social behavior, shaping the social scope and social methods of dormitory members. In dormitory relationships, members at the center of implicit power usually have strong social influence, and their social behaviors and preferences will have a demonstration effect on other members.

5. Conclusion and outlook

This study deeply analyzes the implicit power structure in college students' dormitory relationships, reveals its complex internal mechanism and extensive impact, and clarifies that the implicit power structure occupies an important position in dormitory relationships. The implicit power structure has various manifestations. Opinion leaders dominate dormitory decision-making and atmosphere building through their own influence. Their views and behaviors can guide the actions of other members and play a key role in the formation of dormitory culture. The phenomenon of social isolation and exclusion is a negative means of implicit power. Isolated members are in a marginal position in the dormitory, and their psychology and behavior are seriously affected. This not only damages the harmonious atmosphere of the dormitory, but may also lead to psychological problems of the isolated. Information control and communication advantage enable members who master information to have a certain right to speak in the dormitory. They can influence the cognition and decision-making of other members through information screening and dissemination.

Differences in personal traits and abilities, dormitory culture and atmosphere, and external environmental factors jointly shape the implicit power structure. Members with cheerful personalities and outstanding abilities are more likely to obtain implicit power in the dormitory; a positive dormitory culture is conducive to the formation of a healthy power structure, while a negative dormitory culture may lead to power imbalance; external factors such as school management and family background also affect the distribution of implicit power to a certain extent.

The implicit power structure has a significant impact on college students' mental health and behavioral performance. A good implicit power structure can provide psychological support, enhance the sense of belonging, and promote mental health; while a bad implicit power structure will bring psychological pressure and trigger problems such as anxiety and depression. In terms of behavioral performance, a positive implicit power structure can stimulate learning motivation, promote the formation of good learning habits, and improve academic performance; at the same time, it is also conducive to expanding the social scope and improving social methods. On the contrary, a negative implicit power structure will distract learning attention, reduce learning motivation, and lead to the narrowing of social scope and unhealthy social methods.

Looking forward to the future, this study can further expand the research perspective, deeply explore the differences and impacts of dormitory implicit power structures in different types of colleges and universities and different professional backgrounds, and provide more targeted theoretical support and practical guidance for college student management work.

References

- [1] K. Fosnacht, R. M. Gonyea, and P. A. Graham, The relationship of first-year residence hall roommate assignment policy with interactional diversity and perceptions of the campus environment, *The Journal of Higher Education*, vol. 91, pp. 781-804, 2020.
- [2] R. Garlick, Academic Peer Effects with Different Group Assignment Policies: Residential Tracking versus Random Assignment, *American Economic Journal-Applied Economics*, vol. 10, pp. 345-369, 2018.
- [3] D. Zhao, T. Wang, K. Wu, Z. Li, and X. Zhou, The Relation between College Students' Dormitory Interpersonal Relationship and Depression: the Mediating Effect of Dormitory Interpersonal Conflict Coping Style and the Moderating Effect of Gender, *Psychological Development and Education*, vol. 35, pp. 597-604, 2019.
- [4] D. Lv, A glimpse into the logic of grassroots power losing control, *Negotiation Forum*, pp. 39-41, 2017.
- [5] R. Shi, C. Guo, and X. Gu, A Non-Binary Implicit Power Measurement Method Based on Social Network and Viewpoint Interaction, *Journal of Systems & Management*, vol. 29, pp. 541-548, 2020.