

# The Guidance Strategy of Group Counseling to the Occupational Values of Contemporary Female Liberal Arts Graduate Students

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## Abstract

Currently, female graduate students in liberal arts seeking employment has received widespread attention from the government and society. Among the many influential factors affecting job search, professional values play an important role. This article uses group counseling to help female liberal arts postgraduates maintain consistent attitudes and behaviours in their job search, and explores the value of group counseling in guiding female liberal arts postgraduates' professional values, using group activities on professional values as the research object.

## Keywords

Group counseling; Female liberal arts graduate; Professional value.

## 1. Introduction

Employment is the greatest livelihood. At present, the employment situation of female graduate students in the liberal arts is severe. On the one hand, with the development of higher education, the enrollment of liberal arts graduate subjects and categories are expanding, and there are fewer types of careers to choose from. On the other hand, due to the impact of the new crown pneumonia epidemic, the economic downward pressure has increased, and the demand for job vacancies is much lower than the number of graduates, so the pressure on graduates to find jobs is rising. What's more, most female graduate students are over 25 years old, and employers are worried about the negative impact of women being in the age of starting a family and childbirth, which puts female postgraduates at a disadvantage compared to male postgraduates in the employment market. The combination of these factors has led to fierce competition for employment among female postgraduates in the arts, and the employment difficulty index has increased significantly. In addition to external economic factors, an important reason why many female liberal arts postgraduates cannot find jobs is their own inappropriate career value. Therefore, studying and grasping the professional values of female arts postgraduates is of great value in helping them to choose their careers and employment, and correct professional values can help female arts postgraduates to establish a new career value system according to the needs of the times. This form of group counselling provides a realistic way to correctly guide the professional values of female arts postgraduates.

## 2. Current Situation and Characteristics of Professional Values of Contemporary Liberal Arts Female Postgraduates

Occupational values are the embodiment of values in occupation, which is the inner scale for people to measure the merits and significance of various occupations in society, and provide reference for job seekers' career choices and efforts to achieve the purpose of work, as well as their beliefs and attitudes towards their occupations and their positioning of their own values. Correct professional values play a guiding role in the employment of female liberal arts postgraduates. It is related to the future career choice, work attitude and work motivation of

female liberal arts postgraduates, and will even have an important impact on the development and progress of the whole society.

Compared to science postgraduates, arts postgraduates are more inclined to develop an independent consciousness, critical thinking, good writing skills and other academic qualities, and their career choices do not always emphasise the "professional counterpart", but often require social, writing and creative skills, which are different from the operational skills of science students. Compared to men, women are more likely to choose careers that are less mobile, because of the traditional "men are the mainstay of the family and women are the mainstay of the family" and their physiological characteristics, which mean that they have to take on more tasks in the family and in raising children. In recent years, the new epidemic has created a lot of uncertainty for other types of careers, and the heat and competition for the national public servant has never been greater. In short, female postgraduate students in the arts are facing difficulties in finding employment due to a variety of factors. It is undeniable that, in addition to social factors, some of the reasons are due to the inappropriate concepts and attitudes of female liberal arts postgraduates in their own careers.

### **2.1. Evident Pragmatic Overtones**

Most female arts postgraduates see their jobs as a means of earning a living, pursuing long-term job comfort, while neglecting their own values, personal interests and the application of their professional knowledge, and failing to develop their careers to meet their own needs, thus focusing all their efforts on achieving a career. The career evaluation criteria of contemporary female liberal arts postgraduates have changed from the abstract idealism of the past to obvious pragmatism, with priority given to salary, benefits, housing, position and development prospects when choosing a job.

### **2.2. High Expectations**

Women graduate students in the arts often have high expectations of finding a job. In the past, postgraduate education was seen as the "elite of the elite". But with the expansion of postgraduate education in recent years, the quality of teaching and training methods has been very different from those in the past. At present, employers tend to view postgraduate students more rationally, usually as a kind of generalist education. At the same time, due to their lack of work experience and the fact that girls are sensitive, it is easy for them to become mentally unbalanced and extremely anxious because they are not sufficiently prepared to face the many upsets in the job search process. At present, all frustration is often due to a lack of objective and comprehensive knowledge of oneself, others and things.

### **2.3. Conflicting Orientations of Professional Values**

On the one hand, female liberal arts postgraduates are driven by interests and the needs of real life, and are willing to choose economically lucrative and well-paid regions or jobs that are comfortable and stable and suitable for taking care of their families. On the other hand, due to their long-term education by the state, they also have a passion to resist reality and an ambition to focus on nation-building, knowing that their self-worth is realized in creating material and spiritual services to society; the satisfaction of their personal experience is obtained in the affirmative evaluation of society. The complexity and contradiction of the choice often manifests itself in the fact that old traditional concepts and the pressure of social reality influence female arts postgraduates, while the awareness of the new era pervades their hearts. How to weigh these two aspects in the contemporary employment value orientation of female arts postgraduates is an urgent issue to be addressed.

## 2.4. Short-term Targeting of Professional Values

With the gradual establishment of the socialist market economy system, the career value goals of contemporary female liberal arts postgraduates are the pursuit of mental states and behavior-oriented short-term needs, such as the pursuit of broad career prospects or great reward. In order to pursue career goals, female liberal arts postgraduates have changed from the pursuit of professional social status, the degree of contribution to society, and fame to the pursuit of actual profit. The choice of a career usually lacks holistic and long-term strategic thinking and a proper orientation towards life, focusing instead on the pursuit of short-term benefits.

## 3. Research Methodology

Group counselling is a group-based counselling model that uses group members to work together to solve common problems among group members. In this study, a structured group is used, i.e. with a clear thematic focus, clear and explicit goals, and an experiential and inquiry-based learning approach that allows group members to engage in situations and generate new conscientious structures through self-participation, self-experience and self-reflection.

### 3.1. Survey Respondents

The group is composed of 17 female postgraduate students from the School of Marxism at a university in Nanjing. Activities are planned for weekly group coaching for a total of eight weeks. All counselling sessions are themed around four areas: cognition, concepts, emotions and action, while specific group activities are determined in accordance with the needs of the group members. In order to promote the growth of female liberal arts postgraduates and help them establish correct professional values. Before the activity, each participant's basic information, purpose of participation, and future direct plans were explained in detail by means of self-introduction. The basic profile of the members of this group activity (as shown in Table 1).

**Table 1.** Basic information on group activity members

Basic information on group activity members			
No.	Age	Future planning	Valued factors
1	24	Prefer to be a national public servant or a teacher	Stability
2	25	Prefer to be a school counselor	Stability and ease
3	24	Further study	Stability and self-development
4	25	Prefer to be a teachers	Stability and social status
5	25	Prefer to be a national public servant	Professional match
6	24	Further study	Self-development
7	24	Working, but not sure what she wants to do	Ease
8	24	Prefer to be a national public servant or a teacher	Stability
9	25	Prefer to be a teacher	Stability
10	24	Further study	Self-development, hobbies and interests
11	24	Working, but not sure what she wants to do	Stability and personal interests
12	24	Working, but not sure what she wants to do	Stability and ease
13	24	Working, but not sure what she wants to do	Remuneration
14	34	Further study	Comfort and self-development
15	23	Prefer to be a national public servant or a teacher	Close to home
16	23	Further study	Stability and self-development
17	24	Working, but not sure what she wants to do	Comfort

### 3.2. Activity Process

The duration of a single group activity is approximately 2 hours. Details of the group activities (as shown in Table 2).

**Table 2.** Details of group activities

Details of group activities	
Event Schedule	Main content
1	Giving your impressions of other students from various aspects
2	Discussion on the meaning of work
3	How can we keep holistic health
4	Discussion on safety and security
5	The manifestations of integrity in life
6	Discussion on self-confidence
7	Discussion on the value of service
8	Collective reflection and sending each other good wishes

### 3.3. Data Collection and Collation

The following categories of information are collected for this activity.

- (1) Physical information. The physical materials mainly include members' essays, group summaries, research tips, personal feelings, and discussions about the group's activities.
- (2) Questionnaire. The questionnaire is mainly based on questions related to professional values and is distributed to 17 members of the group activities, at the stage before and at the end of the activities.

## 4. Research Effectiveness and Discussion

The group members were interviewed at the end of the group counselling. When discussing the group activities and themes, they all said that their evaluation of themselves had changed radically and that their professional values had also changed, giving them more confidence to face their future careers.

Student 1: I have a new perception of my own value. I used to have a bit of low self-esteem, but my classmates found a lot of my strengths and I turned out to be such a good person in everyone's eyes.

Student 2: I have learnt that integrity and confidence are very important in life and in my future work. Through the group activities I learned how to listen to others and also how to give advice appropriately.

Student 3: I used to disagree with the style of other people's work. I thought that some people took time and effort but did not achieve the desired result, so I always thought that my own style was the most efficient. In fact, this is not the case. Your own style of work is the most suitable for your own characteristics, and students should know how to communicate with each other and understand each other, so that they can also enhance their self-confidence.

Student 4: I have started to take part in internship activities. The people and things I meet at work are not easy. The group activities have taught me how to deal with people appropriately and how to overcome some difficulties. The group counselling have enabled me to try to adapt to my current internship, to apply what I have learnt in the group activities to real life and to strengthen my interpersonal relationships.

Student 5: Now I have a clear idea of what I should be doing at this stage and how to lead a meaningful postgraduate life, and I also have a new perception of my career and can think about, analyse and solve problems from my own perspective in group activities.

Student 6: From these two months of group counselling, I have a deeper understanding of everyone and myself. I am cheerful and have a good attitude, but I lack carefulness and patience. In the future, I will carry forward these advantages and try to overcome my shortcomings.

Student 7: I used to be confused about my future, I didn't think much about what kind of career I would be suitable for in the future, in fact this is a manifestation of my anxiety. I want to do everything well but I feel that my various abilities are not enough, now I will set myself a goal and act step by step according to the goal, only when I have to act will I be further from achieving my goal, and it also reduces my anxiety about the future.

Student 8: I used to want to be a teacher because of my parents' advice, but now I understand better that I can realise my life's value in every position. And I have become more determined in my career plan during the group counselling that I will become an excellent teacher because of my own pursuit, not my parents' advice.

Student 9: I am rather impatient, but now I am able to listen to people more carefully and patiently and put myself in their shoes. This will help me to handle interpersonal relationships in my future work.

Student 10: Every position has its own meaning, and everyone can realize their own value. Do what they want to do, and do not care too much about others. To do an insignificant thing to the extreme is success.

The above interviews provide an objective view of the impact of group counselling on group members. This is assessed by observing group members' performance in discussing work, self-confidence and self-evaluation and interviewing group members about their experiences of group activities, as well as their subjective feelings. It is clear from the results that group counselling are effective in balancing the lifestyles of female arts postgraduates, giving them a new perception of work, life and self. It make them know how to protect themselves, maintain integrity, believe in themselves and be of service to others. Such professional values are the ultimate goal of group counselling. Based on the evaluation results, it is clear that after participating in the group counselling, all members have some confidence in their future work and believe that they have unique strengths and are able to handle interpersonal relationships and daily affairs well. Over 60% of the members feel that the activities fully meet the predicted goals, while over 20% feel that 80% of the predicted goals are met. Over 71% agree that this type of activity is positive and helpful for personal growth and thinking, and over 21% feel that the group counselling are relatively helpful. Overall, all members think that the group activities are very cohesive and more than 67% think that they would participate in such activities again.

The data shows that group counselling for female arts postgraduates has contributed positively to their occupational and healthy values education. Through group counselling, female arts postgraduates have a greater sense of control over their own needs and a greater awareness of life precautions. At the same time, group counselling for female arts postgraduates also has a positive impact on value of professional qualities. According to the analysis of the assessment results before and after the experiment, including the self-evaluation of the members, it can be seen that after participating in group counselling, female arts postgraduates can understand themselves more objectively, instead of blindly pursuing job stability as a criterion for career selection. Group counselling can provide an objective career planning for female arts postgraduates, who can plan reasonable career goals and establish correct values according to their own strengths. By participating in group counselling, female arts postgraduates can recognise the diversity of careers and objectively choose a career that is more suitable for their

level of ability based on their own conditions. In addition to enhancing self-confidence, group counselling can encourage more liberal arts postgraduates to engage in self-employment.

In summary, the questionnaire and interviews are used to measure the subjective experiences of the group members. The members are able to share their experiences and feelings with others more naturally, and to understand themselves and others better. Through activities, they can more effectively improve their career planning and develop good career values.

## **5. The Impact of Group Counseling on Career Planning of Female Postgraduate Students in Arts**

### **5.1. Facilitating the Understanding of the Current Employment Situation of Women Postgraduate Students in the Arts**

College is the best period of life for people. Many female arts postgraduates have their own ideals and goals, and are working hard to achieve them. However, the reality of society is not as rosy as one might think. After graduation, female arts postgraduates can easily develop negative and pessimistic feelings in the face of the many obstacles that arise in the process of finding a job. Group counselling can help female arts postgraduates to deepen their understanding of the current society, to position their ideals and goals reasonably according to their actual situation, and to minimise the gap between ideals and reality, so that they can better integrate into society.

### **5.2. Helping Female Arts Postgraduates to Choose Suitable Careers**

For the time being, domestic career patterns are more closely aligned to a multifaceted development and there are many types of careers available. With the rapid development of society, the emergence of various types of careers has increased the range of careers available to female arts postgraduates. However, when choosing a career, female arts postgraduates still tend to focus on positions such as teachers and civil servants. Group counseling allows female postgraduates to better understand and grasp the direction of social development, combine their own actual learning situation and have an overall understanding and knowledge of their own major, broaden their horizons and choose more careers that are more suitable for their own development and social development. This will enable female postgraduates in the arts to bring their value into play in more positions and achieve their ultimate goal, which is more in line with the current development needs of society.

### **5.3. Conducive to the Formation of Correct Professional Values for Female Arts Postgraduates**

Influenced by the general social environment, many female arts postgraduates put their treatment in the first place in the process of looking for a job and use it as a criterion to judge how good or bad a job is. In the workplace, the honour it can bring becomes the basis for achieving their own life goals. This concept has a huge impact on the values of current female arts postgraduates, resulting in more and more female arts postgraduates placing more and more emphasis on money, power, fame and material things. In order to satisfy their own vanity, these arts postgraduates will be more interested in finding a job that can bring them a rich material life in the job search process. At the same time, they also neglect the realisation of their personal values. In China's social development, most enterprises need excellent talents who are capable and not arrogant, which makes it difficult for enterprises to find talents and for female arts postgraduates to find jobs in a two-way situation. However, group counselling can help female liberal arts postgraduates establish a correct career value, give reasonable career goals, so that female liberal arts postgraduates can form a correct concept of job seeking and go further and further on the road of realizing their personal value and goals.



## 6. Conclusion

Group counselling is of specific importance in establishing the right occupational values for female arts postgraduates. In this prime period of life, the correct guidance of the professional values of female arts postgraduates plays a key role in their future career. It not only directly determines the career behaviour of female arts postgraduates, but also influences their work attitude and enthusiasm for their future work, which in turn affects the direction of society. Therefore, the university must provide targeted team guidance for female liberal arts graduate students, and guide them to form a relatively complete and correct occupational value, and transport high-quality talents with positive energy for the society.

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