

Exploration of mental health education model in colleges and universities based on aesthetic education

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ABSTRACT

At present, mental health education in colleges and universities faces challenges such as limited methodologies and low student engagement, making it difficult to address young people's needs for emotional expression and self-exploration. Aesthetic education can enhance an individual's emotional awareness and creative thinking through artistic activities, offering a new approach to mental health education. Therefore, this paper discusses how to systematically integrate aesthetic education with mental health education and proposes a new educational model with aesthetic experience as the core, aiming to improve students' emotional management skills and psychological resilience, ultimately helping them develop lifelong psychological adaptability.

KEYWORDS

Mental Health Education in Colleges and Universities; Integrating Aesthetic Education; Interdisciplinary Resources; Immersive Experiences

In recent years, the mental health issues faced by college students have become increasingly complex and are occurring at younger ages. The incidence of emotional disorders, such as anxiety and depression, has continued to rise. Current educational methods primarily consist of lectures and counseling, which often fail to address the deep-seated emotional needs of students. Many students report that traditional mental health courses focus mainly on theoretical explanations, which have limited effectiveness in resolving practical issues. This situation highlights a disconnect between educational content and psychological needs. In this context, the value of aesthetic education is re-examined. The creative processes involved in painting, music, drama, and other artistic activities can activate the brain's limbic system and promote the secretion of dopamine. This physiological mechanism provides a scientific basis for the role of aesthetic education in mental health intervention. Accordingly, this paper will elucidate how aesthetic education influences emotional regulation through embodied cognition and will explore a mental health education model and practical pathways based on aesthetic education. This exploration is of great significance: a systematic analysis of how aesthetic education activities, such as art and music, activate the emotional centers of the brain through physical engagement can assist students in transforming abstract emotions into concrete experiences that can be perceived and regulated. This transformation enables students to shift from being passive recipients of emotional treatment to becoming active managers of their own emotions, ultimately supporting their personal development and positively impacting their growth.

1 The Intrinsic Connection Between Aesthetic Education and Psychological Health Education in Colleges and Universities

1.1 The Psychological Function and Value of Aesthetic Education

Aesthetic education psychology primarily focuses on cultivating student's ability to appreciate beauty and differentiate between beauty and ugliness through music, art, literature, and the beautiful aspects of nature and social life. This approach encourages a passion for the pursuit of beauty and creativity, gradually fostering noble moral sentiments and civilized habits, while promoting the healthy development of both the mind and body. Various art forms, including painting, dance, music, and literature, can transform abstract emotions into visual and auditory experiences. In the process of transformation, individuals can alleviate psychological pressure. The choice of paint colors, changes in rhythm, and the presentation of dance movements can directly reflect inner emotional fluctuations^[1]. Therefore, long-term participation in aesthetic education practices can enhance individuals' emotional awareness, allowing them to more sensitively identify their emotional changes, actively adjust their psychological states, and reduce the risk of emotional runaway. Aesthetic education can also promote the optimization of cognitive structures. Individuals need to mobilize various psychological functions, such as perception, memory, and imagination, when interacting with artistic works, integrating fragmented information into a meaningful whole. This cognitive processing is closely related to the self-cognitive mechanisms that underpin mental health. Through poetry, individuals can clarify their emotional contexts, and

through sculpture, they can visualize inner conflicts, transforming vague self-awareness into observable objects.

1.2 The Core Needs and Pain Points of Mental Health Education

Modern college students often encounter various pressures, including academic demands, social conflicts, and uncertainty about the future, which can make them susceptible to anxiety. However, many individuals lack systematic emotional management methods, which can easily lead to emotional buildup that can result in avoidance behaviors and psychological exhaustion. In light of this situation, mental health education must offer practical tools to help students recognize emotional signals, analyze the underlying causes of their emotions, and select appropriate counseling methods. This guidance can assist them in gradually regulating their emotions and better adapting to societal expectations. However, the current mental health education in colleges and universities primarily relies on standardized curricula and group counseling. The development of students' psychological issues is influenced by various factors, including family background, personality traits, and life experiences. Consequently, a uniform teaching approach cannot adequately address the complexities of individual situations. The existing educational model fails to sufficiently account for individual psychological characteristics, which prevents some students from benefiting from conventional interventions. Additionally, there are disparities in students' acceptance of mental health services; traditional counseling methods may exacerbate the psychological defense mechanisms of certain individuals, thereby diminishing the effectiveness of mental health education.

2 The Development of a Mental Health Education Model Grounded in Aesthetic Education

2.1 Aesthetic Education-Oriented Curriculum Goal Setting

Aesthetic education-oriented mental health curriculum objectives should concentrate on two key aspects: perceptual activation and the establishment of meaningful connections. Perceptual activation, in particular, highlights the use of various art forms to awaken individuals' awareness of their internal emotions. By utilizing mediums such as painting, music, and drama, aesthetic education courses can help students transcend language barriers and directly engage with their deeper psychological states. The change in color during the painting process corresponds to the fluctuations in students' moods, while the varying tempos of music reflect their psychological tension. This interplay gradually fosters a multidimensional understanding of their emotions in practice. "Meaning connection" refers to the enhancement of the dynamic relationships between the individual and the self, others, and the environment through aesthetic activities. College students often experience mental health issues that are accompanied by a lack of meaning, and aesthetic education can help extract order from chaos. Based on this, the course should guide students in extracting universal themes from artistic creation and appreciation, such as life, growth, contradiction, and reconciliation, and applying them to real psychological contexts^[2]. When students analyze the narrative structure of artworks, they must engage both logical reasoning and emotional resonance to transform external observations into internal reflections. This process encourages them to transcend isolated perspectives and redefine their roles within groups and society. Furthermore, the curriculum design for aesthetic education should enable students to independently establish cognitive associations during aesthetic practice, gradually forming a stable system of value judgments to alleviate psychological imbalances caused by ambiguous meanings.

2.2 Integrated Design of Artistic Activities and Psychological Interventions

The integration of art activities and psychological intervention aims to use art to awaken individuals' true feelings and guide the natural flow of these emotions. People often find it challenging to express their emotions clearly in words. The priority of brush strokes in painting, the fluctuations of melody in music, and the movements of the body in dance can all reflect an individual's psychological state, often without conscious awareness. The role of psychological intervention in this context is to provide a safe outlet for these emotions. Therefore, teachers must strike a balance between freedom and guidance when designing such courses. Artistic creation requires sufficient space for individuals to relax, while also offering simple frameworks that help them articulate their inner conflicts and uneasy emotions, gradually uncovering the root causes of emotions. Such courses soften the intervention and mitigate the resistance associated with direct contact with an individual's sensitive areas. Art serves not only as a tool but also as a bridge for students to communicate with themselves. When students express their emotions through creative endeavors, their works become a window into their inner selves. The role of psychological intervention is to help students interpret this form of body language^[3]. For instance, in group painting activities, students can observe the strokes added by one another, gradually gaining insight into how emotions influence interpersonal dynamics. The patterns of interaction among participants can reflect their genuine relationships. The integration of art and psychology allows students to unconsciously repair and rebuild themselves

during the process of creating beauty.

2.3 Synergy Between Aesthetic Experience and Emotion Regulation

When students engage in artistic activities such as painting, music, and crafts, the sensory stimulation of vision, hearing, and touch can directly elicit emotional responses. The key to psychological intervention is to assist individuals in recognizing and understanding the concrete expression of emotions conveyed through artistic mediums. Therefore, teachers must consider both free expression and structured guidance when designing activities. This approach not only allows students to create and play freely, preserving the authenticity of their emotions but also using cold colors to signify negative emotions. Additionally, stretching movements can correspond to a state of relaxation, thereby providing a reference for emotion classification and a visual pathway for subsequent emotional management. In addition, the physical properties of art materials—such as the fluidity of pigments and the ductility of clay—interact with student behavior, leading to intuitive behavioral outcomes ^[4]. When students discover that applying excessive force causes a sculpture to crack, this feedback encourages them to adjust their approach, which can indirectly influence their emotional state. Furthermore, the blending of colors in collaborative paintings can reflect the interplay of different students' emotional states. In this process, the role of psychological intervention is to guide students in observing the details of changes that occur during artistic creation and to establish a logical connection between behavior, emotion, and outcomes. When individuals discover that adjusting their drawing speed can alleviate anxiety, they can proactively translate this experience into emotion regulation strategies. Additionally, analyzing the correlation between creative behavior and emotional fluctuations at various stages can assist students in improving their ability to regulate their behavior and apply similar logic in non-artistic contexts. Compared to traditional educational methods, this approach helps reduce students' cognitive load and enhances their emotional self-efficacy.

3 The Practical Approach to Psychological Health Education in Aesthetic Education at Colleges and Universities

3.1 Strengthen the integration and application of interdisciplinary resources

The development of psychological health education within aesthetic education at colleges and universities should emphasize the integration of interdisciplinary resources. This can be achieved through two key approaches: the reconstruction of the curriculum system and the establishment of collaborative mechanisms among faculty. In the process of curriculum reconstruction, educators should incorporate the fundamental principles of psychology, art, and neuroscience into a cohesive framework. In art courses, students can be guided to establish a direct connection between artistic elements and psychological states by analyzing concepts such as color psychology and the relationship between musical rhythm and physiological responses. Add a unit on art intervention techniques to the psychology course, detailing the mechanisms of painting analysis and music therapy, and transforming abstract theories into actionable tools. During the practice phase in synchronous settings, students are required to record their emotional changes in real-time throughout the creative process, using artistic language to establish a psychological profile. This approach facilitates a dynamic interaction between artistic expression and psychological awareness, enabling students to learn how to express and manage their emotions effectively. In constructing the teachers' collaboration mechanism, we should establish a joint teaching and research group composed of psychology teachers, art educators, and educational technology experts. Psychological educators provide a theoretical framework for emotion regulation, art instructors design corresponding creative tasks, and technical experts develop digital assessment tools. These three parties collaborate to establish teaching evaluation standards, quantifying the emotional expression dimension of creative work concerning mental health indicators. Teachers can flexibly mobilize resources based on course requirements, enabling real-time comparison and analysis of emotional data and artistic behavior. This allows them to monitor students' emotional fluctuations in real time and formulate effective intervention strategies ^[5].

3.2 Creating an immersive aesthetic education environment collaboratively developed by teachers and students

In the practice of mental health education at colleges and universities, the development of aesthetic education environments urgently requires a transformation of existing physical spaces, as well as an innovation in the modes of interaction with students. Regarding physical spaces, classrooms, corridors, courtyards, and other areas should be reimagined as containers for psychological adjustment. For instance, walls can utilize interactive projection technology to generate dynamic art images in real-time, responding to the presence of teachers and students. The design of tables and

chairs should incorporate ergonomic principles, with adaptable seating that accommodates various creative postures. This approach can create a continuous emotional regulation environment by precisely aligning environmental parameters with human physiological indicators, enabling students to continuously adjust and release negative emotions, thereby maintaining psychological stability. In the innovation of interactive modes, a two-way feedback teaching system should be developed. On the teacher's side, data such as stroke pressure and color concentration during students' creative processes are monitored in real time. Simultaneously, students receive a visualization chart of their emotional fluctuation curve, allowing both parties to collaboratively adjust the direction of the creative process based on the data flow. Additionally, a dynamic evaluation model is established to analyze behavioral data from students' creative processes, the emotional density of the final work, and psychological evaluation results. Subsequently, an algorithmic model is used to generate a multi-dimensional assessment report on emotional regulation abilities. Teachers can optimize scene design based on dynamic feedback, guiding students to independently identify the patterns of emotional fluctuations and the effects of adjustments through the comparison of repetitive artistic behaviors and periodic results. This approach gradually enhances their emotional management skills and aesthetic expression levels.

4 Conclusion

In summary, this paper presents a new educational model for emotional regulation driven by aesthetic experience. This model leverages the embodiment and intuition inherent in artistic activities to transform abstract psychological states into actionable creative behaviors. Notably, the integration of interdisciplinary resources transcends the theoretical boundaries of art, psychology, and educational technology, enabling students to simultaneously achieve emotional recognition and transformation during artistic practices, such as color application and rhythm perception. The immersive environments created by both teachers and students can convert physical spaces into dynamic fields for psychological adjustment, effectively enhancing individual self-awareness. The follow-up can further explore the deep application of artificial intelligence technology in the field of aesthetic education and mental health, and establish a multi-dimensional evaluation system for the effects of art intervention to better support the mental health needs of college students.

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