

Research on Class Teacher's Moral Education Intervention Strategies for Depressed Students in Upper Primary School Grades from the Perspective of Moral Education Empowerment

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, students' mental health issues have garnered widespread attention from families and society. The continuous implementation of the "Double Reduction" policy and the gradual low-age shift in social competition pressure have led to an increasingly prominent issue of depression among upper primary school students. This study takes a fifth-grade depressed student named Xiaochun as an example to deeply analyze the root causes of the problem and constructs a "cognitive empowerment-emotional empowerment-behavioral empowerment-environmental empowerment" four-dimensional moral education intervention strategy for class teachers based on the empowerment education philosophy. Practical verification shows that this strategy can effectively improve students' psychological states, enhance their emotional regulation and social adaptation abilities, and provide a referable class teacher work paradigm for early intervention in depressed students during the primary school stage.

KEYWORDS

Upper primary school grades; Depressive tendencies; Class teacher moral education; Empowerment intervention

1 Introduction

The "Double Reduction" policy aims to alleviate students' excessive academic burdens and promote their all-round development.

However, the reality of the forward shift in social competition pressure has made adolescent mental health issues increasingly prominent. According to the latest *Survey Report on Adolescent Mental Health and Academic Status 2024* released by the Chinese Academy of Sciences, adolescents with experiences of being left behind, lacking parental care and parent-child communication, distant teacher-student relationships, and poor peer relationships face higher risks of depression and anxiety. The detection rate of depressive tendencies among upper primary school students is as high as 19.6% and shows a continuous upward trend. This data not only reveals the vulnerability during the critical period of children's psychological development but also exposes the shortcomings in the campus mental health education system.

As direct guides for students' growth, class teachers, in the traditional moral education paradigm, often focus on shaping behavioral norms and have limited abilities in identifying and intervening in students' "hidden psychological issues."

National education policies actively respond to this situation. The *Guidelines for Moral Education Work in Primary and Secondary Schools* propose "promoting the deep integration of moral education and mental health education," and the *Notice on Strengthening Student Mental Health Management* reinforces the role of class teachers as the first responders to psychological crises, pointing out the direction for addressing the current dilemma. Therefore, exploring the transformation path of class teachers' moral education functions is of great significance for improving the campus mental health protection system and safeguarding adolescents' healthy growth.

2 Case overview and problem analysis

2.1 Basic information of the case

Xiaochun is a fifth-grade female student from a family with superior material conditions. Her father is a university professor with a rigorous academic attitude and extremely high academic expectations for Xiaochun. His educational methods are relatively harsh, and he even resorts to corporal punishment when her grades are unsatisfactory. Her mother is engaged in commercial work and, due to her busy schedule, had little time to take care of the family before Xiaochun's fourth grade, resulting in a lack of companionship for her.

Under such a family environment, Xiaochun has been under tremendous pressure for a long time. In the fifth grade's second semester, Xiaochun was listed as a high-risk warning object in a school-organized mental health survey and was

later diagnosed with moderate depression by a hospital, requiring medication.

2.2 Main manifestations

Cognitive Level:

Xiaochun exhibits severe self-denial.

As the class monitor, when another class monitor assists her, she feels that her work has been taken over and that others do not trust her. When her grades are not ideal and she is ridiculed by classmates, she has thoughts like "I'm useless" and feels lost and helpless about her future studies and class life. When praised by the class teacher for doing well in something, she feels that she hasn't done well enough. This reflects her inner doubts about her abilities.

Emotional Level:

Xiaochun experiences significant emotional fluctuations and is particularly susceptible to the influence of her classmates.

She often cries out of feelings of being wronged due to a classmate's comment, gets angry when not included in classmate conversations, and assumes classmates are dissatisfied with her when their facial expressions are not friendly. Later, her emotions gradually became low, and she experienced insomnia, fantasies, and even self-harming behaviors. She refused to communicate deeply with others and isolated herself.

Behavioral Level:

Xiaochun's learning state is poor. Due to staying up late to study, she is in a poor mental state during the day and often dozes off in class.

In handling classmate relationships, she lacks mature communication skills and is easily swayed by others' opinions. Once, when Classmate A told her that Classmate B was gossiping about her behind her back, she confronted Classmate B without verification, leading to a fierce argument and escalating conflicts. When facing conflicts, she becomes emotionally excited, and her fingers and toes suddenly become stiff and unable to move. This somatic symptom made her feel even more fear and helplessness.

2.3 Causal diagnosis

Family Factors:

The family, which should be a warm haven for adolescents, has actually become a significant hidden danger to their mental health due to the lack of family support.

Parent-child emotional communication and care play a crucial role in adolescents' psychological well-being. According to research, adolescents who suffer from a high degree of maternal emotional neglect face a 40.1% risk of depression and a 23.1% risk of anxiety. In this case, Xiaochun's father's excessively high expectations and simple and crude educational methods have placed her under high pressure for a long time. Before each exam, her father sets strict score targets for her, and if she fails to meet them, he severely reprimands or even physically punishes her. Her mother's lack of companionship during her crucial growth period has resulted in a lack of sufficient emotional support for Xiaochun. When Xiaochun was sick as a child, her mother couldn't accompany her due to work commitments, leaving her with a lack of security in her heart.

School Environment:

The school, as the second growth space for adolescents, also has a profound impact on their mental health through interpersonal relationships on campus.

According to research, 30% of adolescents who lack friends' care suffer from depression, and among groups with poor classmate relationships, 60% face a risk of depression and 40% face a risk of anxiety. At school, Xiaochun's self-esteem was severely undermined due to being ridiculed by classmates for her grades. When her grades declined, some classmates' attitudes changed, and they often showed off their grades in front of her. She had work competition and verbal conflicts with Class Monitor Xiaoyi, and some classmates stirred up trouble, further exacerbating the conflicts and leading to a poor social environment in the class. During a class activity planning session, she and Xiaoyi had differing opinions, and some classmates fanned the flames behind their backs, making their relationship even tenser.

Individual Traits:

Xiaochun has a strong and competitive personality.

As the class monitor, she longs for recognition from teachers and classmates and has a strong self-esteem. She is extremely sensitive to others' evaluations. Classmates' comments, facial expressions, and eye movements can all trigger her psychological fluctuations. At the same time, when dealing with conflicts and pressure, she either engages in fierce verbal confrontations or adopts a cold and giving-up attitude, lacking effective emotional management abilities and mature communication skills.

Support System:

The lack of social support (including support from parents, peers, and teachers) increases the risk of depression.

Research using the Darlington Family Assessment Questionnaire on pre-depression family factors in adolescents with

depression shows that poor interpersonal relationships with parents, classmates, or teachers before the onset of depression can lead to a lack of support systems, resulting in a continuous sense of incompetence and adaptation difficulties, leading to depression. Conversely, good social support has a positive effect on preventing adolescent depression.

2.4 Entry points for moral education intervention

Core Conflict:

The mismatch between students' "emotional needs" and "moral education supply." Currently, moral education in schools focuses on behavioral norms, often paying attention to whether students litter or rush around carelessly, completely failing to address Xiaochun's deep psychological needs.

When facing family pressure, classmate ridicule, and friend conflicts, she particularly hopes that someone can understand her and offer advice, but school moral education does not provide this practical care and guidance, leaving her needs unmet.

Intervention Positioning:

Through conducting moral education activities, help Xiaochun rebuild a sense of "value-belonging-hope" and achieve "psychological problem moralization intervention." Specifically, it means helping Xiaochun re-recognize her self-worth, find a sense of belonging in the class, and have hope for her future studies and life.

3 Practical exploration of the "four-dimensional empowerment" intervention strategy

3.1 Cognitive empowerment: reconstructing positive self-cognition based on life education narratives

The core goal of cognitive empowerment is to help students re-recognize themselves and construct a positive self-cognition system.

According to positive psychology theory, the reason for depression is the underutilization of positive forces. The lack of positive cognitive biases has an important impact on individuals' emotions and behaviors. When students fall into negative self-cognition, they are prone to depressive emotions. By using life education narratives to guide students to focus on their strengths and successful experiences, their positive self-images can be reshaped, and their self-worth can be enhanced.

3.1.1 "Life tree" growth portfolio plan

First, draw a "Life Tree." Guide Xiaochun to think about the support her family provides, such as the economic support that allows her to participate in various interest classes and cultivate her painting and dance talents.

Sort out her strengths, such as her strong organizational skills (she can always arrange class activities in an orderly manner) and her sincerity in treating others (she always helps classmates in need). Review successful events, such as achieving full marks in every dictation and successfully organizing a school meeting that ranked first in the whole school during her tenure as class monitor. Second, write "mood notes" and encourage Xiaochun to record one "small achievement" every day, such as "Today, I actively helped the teacher organize the podium" or "Today, I bravely corrected a small mistake made by the teacher in class." Third, use the first 5 minutes of Chinese class to hold a "Life Story Sharing Session." During the session, Xiaochun shared her experience of helping classmates solve learning difficulties and receiving their thanks and applause, which enhanced her sense of self-worth. This activity not only allowed Xiaochun to see her own shining points but also guided the whole class to discover the "beauty in the ordinary," creating a positive and upward class atmosphere. Inspired by this, classmates actively sought Xiaochun out after class to exchange stories, and class cohesion was enhanced.

3.1.2 "Error transformation" dialogue technique

Based on the "growth mindset" theory in positive psychology, which 赋予s (endows) people with positive rationality and encourages them to view their future development positively after comparing, analyzing, and summarizing situations or contexts, the "error correction" process in moral education can be cleverly transformed into "ability discovery."

For example, when Xiaochun became emotionally excited due to a conflict with Xiaoyi, the class teacher guided her in this way: "This conflict with Xiaoyi shows that you care a lot about your relationships with classmates and have a strong awareness of maintaining class harmony, which are your strengths. If you encounter a similar situation next time, let's calm down first and try a different communication method, such as listening to the other person's ideas first and then expressing your own views. Maybe you can solve the problem better." Through such dialogues, Xiaochun can recognize her abilities from setbacks and gradually develop a positive attitude towards facing difficulties, enabling her to face the challenges in life and study with a more optimistic and confident state. Later, when Xiaochun encountered conflicts with classmates again, she was able to calm down first and initiate communication actively, and the conflicts were better

resolved.

3.2 Emotional empowerment: constructing a hierarchical emotional support network

Students' emotional needs must be truly concerned about and met, and the core of emotional empowerment is to provide students with diverse emotional support to prevent them from falling into a state of isolation.

According to social support theory, a sound social support system can help individuals effectively alleviate psychological pressure and promote mental health. Based on this theory, we can help Xiaochun by constructing a hierarchical emotional support network, so that she can receive care and help from family, school, or social levels when encountering difficulties, effectively improving her emotional state and promoting her mental health development.

3.2.1 "Three-level emotional confession box" mechanism setup

The school, as the second home for adolescents, has a profound impact on students' mental health through campus interpersonal relationships.

A three-level psychological care system can be constructed on campus to create a warm haven for students' hearts.

Level 1 Confession Box: Teacher-Student "Secret Garden" Handbook: The class teacher acts as a confidant and guide and engages in in-depth dialogues with Xiaochun through daily annotations in the handbook.

· For example, when Xiaochun poured out her dissatisfaction with her parents' educational methods and her inner 委屈 (feelings of being wronged) in the handbook, the class teacher not only replied patiently but also shared her own growth stories to guide Xiaochun to think from others' perspectives and taught her how to communicate her feelings to her parents, helping her resolve her inner knots.

Level 2 Confession Box: "Sunshine Little Messengers" Peer Mutual Aid Plan: Three outgoing and friendly classmates are selected as Xiaochun's "Sunshine Little Messengers." They actively invite her to play games, chat, go hiking, and have picnics together during breaks and on weekends, making her feel the warmth of friendship and dispelling the gloom in her heart.

Level 3 Confession Box: Class "Mood Weather Chart": This is a shared emotional platform for the whole class where everyone can share their moods through anonymous stickers. After Xiaochun posted a sticker saying "I'm very disappointed because I only scored 74 in this Chinese exam," she was surprised to find that many classmates had similar troubles.

· This emotional resonance made her realize that she was not alone and relieved her sense of helplessness. The three-level care systems complement each other and safeguard students' mental health.

3.2.2 "Non-verbal emotional connection" strategy

In terms of body language, methods such as patting on the shoulder for encouragement and high-fiving for agreements are used instead of preachy communication.

When Xiaochun made a little progress, such as actively participating in class discussions, the teacher patted her shoulder, gave her an encouraging look, and high-fived her, agreeing that she would be more active next time. This non-verbal way made Xiaochun feel the teacher's recognition and support more deeply. In terms of item transmission, students make their own "courage bracelets" and share the "Guess How Much I Love You" mood picture book. Classmates jointly make "courage bracelets" and give them to Xiaochun, symbolizing giving her courage to face difficulties. They also read the "Guess How Much I Love You" picture book together, feeling the warm emotions in the book and conveying love and care. Xiaochun always wears the "courage bracelet," and when she encounters difficulties, seeing the bracelet gives her the courage to face them. After reading the "mood picture book," she also learned to treat others in a warmer way.

3.3 Behavioral empowerment: implementing "micro-goal" positive behavior intervention

To help Xiaochun overcome her lack of motivation, the class teacher formulated a series of practical intervention activities based on behavioral empowerment and social learning theory. Among them, the "Rainbow Action" ladder Plan is quite distinctive.

3.3.1 "Rainbow action" ladder plan

The plan cleverly breaks down the intervention goals into an 8-week "Rainbow Task," with each week focusing on a color theme.

For example, in the first week's red task, Xiaochun is encouraged to raise her hand at least once in class every day to break through her inner silence. In the blue task stage, she takes the initiative to communicate with a classmate and rebuilds her social bridge. During the green task, Xiaochun serves as the group "plant manager" and gradually cultivates a sense of responsibility while taking care of green plants.

To stimulate Xiaochun's enthusiasm, the school innovatively uses a "Moral Education Integral Passbook" for evaluation.

Whenever Xiaochun completes a task, she earns corresponding points, which can be exchanged for special rewards

such as "having lunch with the class teacher" or "extending the library book borrowing time." At the beginning of the red task, Xiaochun was full of tension, but driven by the point rewards, she still bravely raised her hand. As the "Rainbow Tasks" progress, Xiaochun accumulates confidence in one challenge after another, and her abilities in active communication and taking responsibility also steadily improve.

3.3.2 "Failure rehearsal" role-playing

In terms of scenario design, a "Setback Situation Theater" was set up during class meetings. Scenario 1: Simulating how to seek help after failing an exam, with Student A playing herself and the head teacher acting as a supporter to help Xiaochun learn to face failure correctly and seek help and support from others. Scenario 2: Simulating how to respond when being rejected by classmates, with collective discussions on "friendly response scripts" to enhance her ability to cope with setbacks. In the scenario of simulating exam failure, Xiaochun learned to ask teachers and classmates for learning methods; in the scenario of being rejected by classmates, she mastered more appropriate ways to respond, no longer getting emotionally agitated as before but being able to remain calm.

3.4 Environmental empowerment: creating a class "psychological safety zone"

Environmental empowerment aims to create a safe and inclusive class environment for students, reducing the negative impact of the environment on students' psychology. According to social-ecological systems theory, the external environment plays a crucial role in human growth, emphasizing the interaction between individuals and various environmental systems. Multiple factors in different environmental models may jointly influence people's healthy behaviors. A good environment can promote the healthy development of individuals. By creating a class "psychological safety zone," Xiaochun can feel the acceptance and support of the class.

"De-evaluative" class culture construction.

Set up a "No-reason Compliment Corner": Encourage classmates to discover more of Xiaochun's strengths and post compliments about her, such as "Xiaochun took the initiative to help classmates clean the classroom today. She's so enthusiastic" and "Xiaochun's paintings are really beautiful, adding luster to the class cultural wall." This makes Xiaochun feel her value in the class. After seeing these compliments, Xiaochun's heart is filled with warmth, and she gradually regains her confidence and becomes more willing to actively participate in class activities.

Transform the "Book Corner" into a "Soul Harbor": Arrange throw pillows, doodle notebooks, and emotional regulation guides in the book corner to transform it into a soul harbor. Xiaochun can relax her mood in the soul harbor, release her emotions through doodling, and learn emotional regulation methods. When she is in a bad mood, she comes to the soul harbor, doodles freely in the notebook, or reads the emotional regulation guide, and her emotions gradually ease.

3.5 Home-school collaboration "two-way empowerment" project

Family therapy, as one of the treatment methods for adolescent depression, has proven to be effective and has unique advantages through practice. Appropriate family therapy can promote the dissipation of family conflicts, facilitate the resolution of unpleasantness among family members, and be conducive to the psychological rehabilitation of adolescents with depression. Based on this research result, we regard Xiaochun's parents as an important part of helping her, hoping to resolve the conflicts between Xiaochun and her parents and open her heart through home-school cooperation to assist her in mental health development.

3.5.1 Parent empowerment

Open a "Family Emotional Management Micro-classroom" and send one audio message per week titled "How to Speak So That Children Will Listen" to help Xiaochun's parents learn correct communication methods and emotional management skills and improve the parent-child relationship. Design a "30-Minute Exclusive Parent-Child Time" task sheet, encouraging parents to spend fixed time with her every week to enhance parent-child affection. After learning communication skills, Xiaochun's parents are more patient when communicating with her, and the parent-child relationship gradually becomes harmonious. During the "30-Minute Exclusive Parent-Child Time," they play games and chat together, and Xiaochun feels the warmth of the family.

3.5.2 School empowerment

Feedback students' "warm moments" at school to parents, such as "Today, Xiaochun took the initiative to help the teacher organize teaching aids" and "Xiaochun actively answered questions in class and performed very well," promptly informing Xiaochun's parents of her positive performance at school, reversing parents' "score-only" cognition, and letting them see Xiaochun's growth and progress. After seeing Xiaochun's positive performance at school, her parents no longer evaluate her solely based on her grades but pay more attention to her all-round development.

4 Intervention effects and reflections

4.1 Effect evaluation

Quantitative data: After 12 weeks of intervention, Xiaochun's score on the depression scale in the psychological assessment decreased, gradually shifting from a previous moderate level of depression to a mild level. Her classroom participation significantly increased, with the number of times she raised her hand voluntarily increasing from 2-3 times per week to 8-10 times per week; the frequency of her active communication and interaction with classmates increased, her social skills improved, and the number of conflicts with classmates significantly decreased. Qualitative feedback: Xiaochun expressed her love for class life in her weekly journal, saying, "I really like going to school now. My classmates are very friendly, and my teachers care about me a lot. I feel more and more confident." Xiaochun's parents realized the importance of companionship and correct educational methods, and the parent-child relationship improved. They said that Xiaochun has become much more cheerful at home and is willing to actively share school things with them.

4.2 Research reflections

Head Teacher Role Transformation: Head teachers should transform from traditional "rule enforcers" to "psychologically sensitive individuals" and "emotional companions." In Xiaochun's case, the head teacher cannot only focus on class discipline and academic performance but also be keenly aware of students' emotional changes and psychological needs and provide emotional support and companionship. In daily class management, head teachers should observe students' subtle changes more often, identify problems in a timely manner, and offer help. **Boundaries of Moral Education Work:** Clarify the division of labor between head teachers and psychological teachers to avoid "professional overstepping." When paying attention to students' mental health, head teachers should be clear about their scope of responsibilities and promptly refer problems beyond their capabilities to professional psychological teachers. For example, when discovering that a student has serious psychological disorders, the head teacher should promptly contact the psychological teacher for professional assessment and intervention.

Long-term Mechanism Construction: It is necessary to transform case experience into class routine systems, such as continuously carrying out "Life Story Sharing Sessions." Promote the effective methods and activities used in helping Xiaochun as routine class systems to benefit more students. Regularly hold "Mood Weather Chart" activities, encouraging students to share their moods and create a positive and healthy class atmosphere.

Research has confirmed that head teachers play a crucial role in the intervention of students with depressive tendencies in the upper grades of primary school. The "Four-dimensional Empowerment" strategy provides an effective path for students' mental health development. In future educational practice, this strategy system should be continuously optimized and expanded to build a solid defense line for students' mental health.

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