

The Integration Pathways of Junior High School Music Classroom Teaching and Mental Health Education

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ABSTRACT

With the increasing prominence of mental health issues among junior high school students, the integration of subject teaching and mental health education has become an important direction for educational reform. The music discipline, leveraging its unique attribute of emotional expression, possesses a natural affinity with mental health education. Based on music psychology and humanistic education theory, this paper analyzes the current state of integration between junior high school music classrooms and mental health education. It proposes concrete and actionable integration pathways from four core dimensions: teaching objectives, teaching content, teaching methods, and teaching evaluation. Accompanied by supporting strategies such as enhancing teacher capacity, resource support, and home-school collaboration, it provides practical references for junior high school music teachers to conduct integrated teaching, aiming to achieve the educational goal of "cultivating individuals through aesthetics and soothing the mind through music."

KEYWORDS

Junior high school music classroom; Mental health education; Integration pathways; Interdisciplinary integration

1 Introduction

In recent years, the Ministry of Education's "Notice on Strengthening the Management of Student Mental Health" has explicitly stated the need to integrate mental health education into the teaching of various subjects. Junior high school students are in a critical stage of adolescence, facing multiple psychological challenges such as academic pressure, self-identity confusion, and interpersonal conflicts. According to the "National Mental Health Development Report of China (2023)", approximately 30% of junior high school students experience emotional distress of varying degrees. Simultaneously, the "Compulsory Education Arts Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition)" emphasizes that music teaching must "focus on students' emotional experience and personality development." The natural role of music in emotional regulation and psychological makes it an ideal vehicle for integrating mental health education. However, most current junior high school music classrooms still primarily focus on knowledge and skill acquisition, failing to fully realize their psychological nurturing value. The integration of the two faces problems of "disconnected concepts and unclear pathways."

At the theoretical level, this research integrates music psychology and mental health education theory, enriching the theoretical system of interdisciplinary integrated education and providing a new research perspective for interdisciplinary psychological nurturing. At the practical level, the specific integration pathways proposed can be directly applied to classroom teaching, helping music teachers overcome the dilemma of "only knowing how to teach music, not how to conduct mental health education." This enables mental health education to transition from "specialized lessons" to "daily lessons," truly achieving the subtle, pervasive nurturing effect of "moistening things silently."

2 The theoretical basis for integrating junior high school music classrooms with mental health education

2.1 Definition of core concepts

Junior high school music classroom teaching, with "aesthetic experience" at its core, aims to cultivate students' musical literacy and emotional expression abilities through activities such as listening, singing, playing instruments, and creating. It is characterized by its emotional nature, experiential focus, and interactivity. The core content of mental health education for junior high school students includes four key modules: emotion management (identifying and regulating negative emotions), self-awareness (building a positive self-image), interpersonal communication (learning to cooperate and communicate), and coping with setbacks (enhancing psychological resilience). The "integration pathways" discussed in this paper refer to the natural incorporation of mental health education elements into classroom segments without deviating from the main thread of music teaching, thereby avoiding the addition of extra teaching tasks and an increased burden on students.

2.2 Theoretical support

Research in music psychology indicates that elements of music such as rhythm, melody, and harmony can affect the limbic system through auditory stimulation, regulating the secretion of neurotransmitters like adrenaline and dopamine, thereby altering emotional states—soothing, slow-tempo music can reduce anxiety levels, while uplifting melodies can stimulate positive emotions. Humanistic education theory emphasizes a "student-centered" approach, advocating that teaching must focus on students' emotional needs and psychological experiences. This aligns highly with the characteristic of music classrooms that "value personalized perception." The theory of interdisciplinary integration provides the logical basis for combining the two. Its core premise is that "different disciplines maximize educational value through the complementarity of knowledge and methods." The "emotional expression" of music and the "emotional guidance" of mental health education can form a functional complementarity, working together to promote students' psychological growth.

3 Analysis of the current state of integration between junior high school music classrooms and mental health education

Some teachers have begun preliminary attempts at integration. Firstly, during the "song singing" segment, they select works like "My Future Is Not a Dream," which convey a positive mindset, to guide students in sharing feelings related to their personal experiences. Secondly, in "instrumental ensemble" activities, they foster students' communication skills and team awareness through group collaboration. Thirdly, in "music creation" activities, they encourage students to use simple melodies or lyrics to record their moods, achieving indirect emotional expression. Furthermore, teaching-research activities in some regions have started focusing on the theme of "music-mental health education," organizing thematic seminars for teachers, which has accumulated initial experience for integrated teaching.

However, three major challenges persist in actual teaching practice. Firstly, there is a lack of teacher capacity; music teachers often lack professional knowledge in mental health education and can only provide simple guidance based on experience, making it difficult to address students' complex psychological issues. Secondly, teaching forms are singular; most classrooms only incorporate psychological elements through "work analysis," lacking interactive and experiential activities, which leads to low student engagement. Thirdly, there is a missing evaluation system; current music classroom evaluations still primarily focus on "singing or performance technique," and do not incorporate indicators such as "level of emotional engagement" or "changes in psychological state." Consequently, the effectiveness of mental health education cannot be quantified, making it difficult to sustain and advance these efforts.

4 Specific pathways for integrating junior high school music classroom teaching and mental health education

4.1 Restructuring teaching objectives: integrating the mental health dimension

Adopt a "dual-objective" design model. While accomplishing music knowledge and skill objectives, clearly define mental health education objectives. For example, in an appreciation lesson for Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, the music objective could be "to understand the structural characteristics of a symphony and identify the main theme," while the mental health objective could be "to develop frustration coping skills by analyzing the symbolic meaning of the 'fate knocking' motif." In a "small group chorus" lesson, the music objective could be "to master two-part singing technique," with the mental health objective being "to enhance interpersonal skills and build a sense of team belonging through collaboration." Objective setting must be specific and measurable, avoiding vagueness, to ensure classroom activities revolve around these dual goals.

4.2 Selecting teaching content: uncovering psychological nurturing elements in musical works

The junior high school stage is a critical period for students' adolescent psychological development, facing challenges such as self-identity confusion, intense emotional fluctuations, interpersonal adaptation pressures, and academic anxiety. The rich repertoire in the People's Music Press junior high school music textbook provides a natural vehicle for uncovering psychological nurturing elements. Content selection must closely focus on the core of "adolescent psychological adjustment," integrating the meaning of the works with students' psychological needs to achieve "soothing the mind with music and cultivating individuals through aesthetics."

Building Self-Identity: Select works that convey belief perseverance and value identification to help students establish a clear self-concept, addressing their struggle with a vague sense of self-worth. For instance, the stirring melody and lyrics

like "crossing over high mountains, crossing over plains" in Singing for the Motherland create a solemn and lofty musical image. Through singing and contextual interpretation, guide students to connect personal growth with national development, solidifying their sense of self-worth within national pride.

Emotional Regulation: Based on the "synchronization principle" in music therapy, select works with different emotional tones to help students identify, express, and regulate emotions. Soothing works like Swan Goose, with its melodious melody creating a vast imagery, can be played during times of student anxiety. Guiding students to practice deep breathing while listening can help calm their minds and alleviate tension from academic pressure. Empowering works like the Chinese People's Volunteer Army Song, with its firm, powerful rhythm and lyrics like "so valiant and bold," can resonate with students' suppressed emotions. Singing such songs can help release negative energy and foster psychological resilience against setbacks.

Fostering Interpersonal Skills: Address adolescent interpersonal sensitivity by selecting works that convey friendship and inclusiveness, providing a medium for developing social skills. The lyrics "thousands of young people gathering together" and the smooth waltz rhythm of Youth Friendship Waltz make it naturally suitable for group dance and chorus activities. Through partnered dance step practice, allow students to experience cooperation and trust in musical interaction, enhancing their sense of security in interpersonal communication.

4.3 Innovating teaching methods: promoting psychological growth through interactive experience

(1) **Listening and Reflection Method:** Before listening to a piece, set "emotional priming questions" "What life event does this melody remind you of?". After listening, organize "emotional sharing sessions," guiding students to express their feelings verbally or through drawing, helping them identify their own emotions. For example, after listening to Summer Night Waltz, ask students to share "a moment when they felt most peaceful" to alleviate anxiety from academic pressure.

(2) **Performance Practice Method :** In singing instruction, encourage students to "sing with emotion." When singing Sunshine Always Comes After the Rain, guide them to adjust their tone color and expression based on their experiences of overcoming difficulties. In instrumental teaching, boost confidence through "solo performances" —for introverted students, start with small group presentations before gradually transitioning to whole-class presentations to reduce psychological pressure.

(3) **Music Game Method:** Design games like "Rhythm Chain," requiring students to improvise based on the previous person's rhythm, cultivating adaptability and creativity. Conduct "music scenario" activities where students use music and body movements to enact "the process of resolving a conflict with a classmate," enhancing interpersonal skills through role-playing.

4.4 Optimizing teaching evaluation: balancing "music literacy" and "psychological growth"

Construct a "dual-dimension evaluation system": **Music Literacy Dimension:** Focuses on students' listening ability, singing/playing technique, and understanding of the work. **Mental Health Dimension:** Focuses on students' emotional engagement, cooperative initiative, and changes in psychological state. Employ evaluation methods combining "process evaluation + qualitative evaluation": **Process Evaluation:** Records student performance through classroom observation.

Qualitative Evaluation: Gathers information through tools like "Music Mood Journals" where students record the impact of classroom music experiences on their emotions and "Peer Assessment Forms" where students evaluate each other's cooperative performance, to comprehensively reflect the effectiveness of the integrated teaching approach.

5 Practical safeguard strategies for the integration of junior high school music classroom teaching and mental health education

5.1 Enhancing Teacher Capacity

(1) Conduct specialized training on "Music + Mental Health," inviting experts in music psychology and mental health educators to deliver joint lectures. Content should cover "Identifying Common Psychological Issues in Junior High School Students," "Methods for Uncovering Psychological Elements in Musical Works," "Classroom Emotion Guidance Techniques," etc., with no less than 16 class hours of training per semester.

(2) Establish "regional teaching-research exchange platforms," regularly organizing demonstrations of high-quality "Music-Mental Health Education" lessons and case-sharing meetings. Encourage teachers to share successes and challenges to promote mutual learning.

(3) Implement a "mentorship system," pairing experienced teachers in integrated instruction with novice teachers. Through observing classes, providing feedback, and co-designing lesson plans, the practical abilities of novice teachers

can be enhanced.

5.2 Providing instructional resource support

(2) Utilize multimedia technology to diversify resource formats. Create "Micro-lessons on Music-Assisted Emotion Regulation" (guiding students to use specific music to alleviate anxiety, anger, etc.) and develop "Virtual Instrument Collaboration Platforms" (allowing students to practice ensemble skills online, enhancing cooperation abilities).

(3) Establish a "resource update mechanism" to revise the resource kit contents annually based on teacher feedback and new research findings, ensuring the resources remain timely and practical.

5.3 Strengthening home-school collaboration

(1) Utilize channels such as parent-teacher meetings and WeChat groups to educate parents about the concept of "using music to promote mental health." Introduce the integrated teaching activities conducted in the classroom—for example, "prompting parents to listen together with their child at home to calming music encountered in class, helping the child relieve homework-related stress."

(2) Design "Home-Based Music-Mental Health Tasks," such as "Parent-Child Choir" or "Family Music Story Sharing Sessions" (where parents and children share emotional stories connected to music), thereby extending the educational impact of the classroom.

(3) Establish a "home-school communication and feedback mechanism." Encourage parents to record observations of their child's emotional changes after participating in home-based music activities and provide regular feedback to the teacher. This helps teachers adjust classroom teaching strategies, forming a collaborative "classroom-home" educational loop.

6 Conclusion

Through theoretical analysis and practical investigation, this study clarifies the feasibility of integrating junior high school music classroom teaching with mental health education, proposing a comprehensive integration pathway encompassing "objective restructuring, content selection, method innovation, and evaluation optimization." The research indicates that the integration of the two must adhere to the principle of "using music as the carrier, mental health education as the goal, and experience as the core," avoiding the formalistic tendency of "conducting mental health education for its own sake." Furthermore, teacher capacity, resource support, and home-school collaboration are identified as crucial factors for the successful implementation of integrated teaching, with all three being indispensable.

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