



The "Soul Exploration" in Junior High School Class Teacher's Moral Education: Innovative Pathways for Student Psychological Intervention

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Abstract. In recent years, psychological problems among junior high school students have become increasingly prominent, such as feelings of inferiority, depression, and anxiety. These issues not only affect students' daily lives and academic performance but also pose significant challenges to class teachers. This study, from the perspective of class teachers, deeply analyzes the psychological problems of junior high school students, which cover aspects like academic stress, interpersonal relationships, and emotional fluctuations. The roots of these problems lie in family, school, and sociocultural factors. To effectively intervene, this study explores innovative pathways for class teachers' work, integrating psychological theories such as positive psychology and cognitive-behavioral therapy to provide precise interventions. It also employs multiple intelligence theory, group cooperation, and personalized education plans to tap into students' potential and creates a comprehensive nurturing environment involving the class, family, and community to foster a healthy ecosystem for students' mental health.

Keywords: Class teacher; Junior high school students; Psychological problems; Innovative psychological intervention

1 Introduction

In March 2024, representatives at the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) highlighted that the proportion of students experiencing depression, anxiety, academic burnout, and internet addiction is on the rise. The trend of high-incidence, multi-incidence, and younger age of onset of students' psychological problems has not been fundamentally reversed. Promoting the physical and mental health, personality development, and comprehensive growth of adolescents is a significant issue of national and social concern. Adolescence is a period of immense change and multiple crises, with common psychological issues such as jealousy, inferiority, and loneliness. During this stage, students' psychological states are often fragile and prone to various psychological problems.

A survey conducted by the author among 935 students in a junior high school revealed that 7.27% of students had engaged in self-harming behaviors, with 1.28% showing obvious signs; 30.8% reported impulsive behavior, with 7.27% showing obvious signs; and 22.35% frequently felt worthless or without purpose. The survey results indicate that common psychological problems among junior high school students include feelings of inferiority, significant stress, academic psychological issues, maladjustment to school life, obsessive-compulsive tendencies, depression, anxiety, and phobias. These problems not only affect students' learning and life but also pose significant challenges to class teachers' work.

In October 2023, the Ministry of Education of China and 16 other departments issued the "Special Action Plan for Strengthening and Improving Students' Mental Health in the New Era (2023–2025)," elevating students' mental health work to a national strategy for the first time. How can junior high school class teachers intervene in students' psychological problems? Through long-term educational practice, the author has observed that the traditional moral education model of class teachers, which focuses on instilling moral norms, is inadequate in addressing the complex and diverse psychological problems of students. There is an urgent need to explore innovative pathways to delve into students' inner worlds, accurately analyze the roots of psychological problems, and provide timely and effective help.[1] Currently, there is a scarcity of literature on the pathways for junior high school class teachers to intervene in students' psychological problems, lacking specific guidance for class teachers. Therefore, this study focuses on the "soul exploration" in junior high school class teachers' moral education to explore innovative pathways for psychological intervention. This research is not only beneficial for the growth and development of individual students but also helps to advance the in-depth development of school mental health education, holding significant theoretical and practical importance.

2 Multidimensional Analysis of Junior High School Students' Psychological Problems

Junior high school students undergo dramatic physical and psychological changes, leading to complex and diverse psychological problems. The causes of these problems vary among students and are rooted in multiple dimensions, including family, school, society, and individual personality. A comprehensive understanding of the nature and development of these problems requires a multidimensional analysis to provide a solid basis for effective intervention and resolution.[2]

2.1 Classification of Common Psychological Problems

2.1.1 Academic Pressure and Self-Cognitive Deviation.

Academic pressure is a significant factor contributing to psychological problems among junior high school students. Many students exhibit anxiety, depression, and disinterest in learning due to the intense academic demands. For example, high parental expectations and a competitive school environment can lead to chronic stress,

resulting in symptoms such as insomnia, decreased appetite, and lack of concentration. Moreover, academic pressure can lead to self-cognitive deviations, causing students to misjudge their abilities and enter a vicious cycle [3].

Studies have shown that excessive academic pressure affects junior high school students' mental health in multiple ways. It not only increases anxiety and depression but also reduces academic achievement and overall well-being [4]. Therefore, society, schools, and families should pay attention to the mental health of junior high school students and provide psychological support and reasonable educational strategies to help them cope with academic stress and promote healthy growth.

2.1.2 Interpersonal Relationships and Generational Conflict.

Junior high school students often face multiple psychological challenges in interpersonal relationships. Firstly, they are in a period of heightened self-awareness, overly concerned with others' evaluations. Their rich and sensitive inner lives can magnify minor details in social interactions, leading to increased insecurity and internal conflicts, and making it difficult for them to engage in effective empathy. Secondly, students often experience generational conflicts, particularly with their parents. These conflicts manifest as communication barriers, differences in values, and tense parent-child relationships. As students' self-awareness grows and they seek more independence, conflicts with parental discipline are common [5]. For example, research indicates that parent-child relationships become significantly more conflictual in the second and third years of junior high school, with decreased intimacy and equality [6]. Additionally, parenting styles and family functions significantly impact students' social skills. For instance, marital quality, parenting styles, and family communication patterns can influence students' social sensitivity through intergenerational transmission. Meanwhile, grandparents' involvement in child-rearing can also affect the school relationships of left-behind junior high school students, with psychological resilience acting as a mediating factor [7].

These psychological challenges not only affect students' social functioning but can also lead to increased loneliness and compromised mental health. Therefore, schools and families need to pay attention to the interpersonal psychological issues of junior high school students and provide educational guidance and psychological counseling to help them develop healthy social concepts and interaction skills.

2.1.3 Emotional Fluctuations and Anxiety/Depression.

Emotional issues are common among junior high school students, characterized by significant mood swings, irritability, and susceptibility to frustration and depression. During adolescence, rapid physical and psychological development, along with hormonal changes and discomfort with bodily changes, can lead to emotional instability. For example, students may experience intense anxiety or depression over minor issues. Additionally, family environment and peer relationships significantly impact emotional problems. A stable family environment and strong emotional support can effectively alleviate emotional issues in junior high school students [8].

2.2 Origins of Psychological Problems

2.2.1 Family Environment Factors.

The family, as the first environment for students' growth, plays a foundational role in shaping their psychology. Some parents overly indulge their children, treating them as the center of the family and handling everything for them. This approach deprives children of opportunities to independently solve problems, leading to poor self-reliance and fragile psychological resilience [9]. For example, parents who daily organize their children's school bags, check their homework, or even do their cleaning duties for them, create a dependency that leaves children anxious and helpless when facing minor setbacks at school, such as forgetting stationery or being criticized for poor cleaning.

Conversely, some parents set unrealistically high expectations for their children, projecting their unfulfilled dreams onto them and setting unattainable goals. This often manifests in enrolling children in numerous extracurricular tutoring classes, filling their free time with academic tasks and keeping them in a state of constant stress. When children fail to meet these expectations, parental blame and disappointment can lead to self-doubt, feelings of inferiority, and disinterest in learning, and may even trigger rebellious behavior as children resist parental pressure and avoid academic tasks.

Family disharmony is another critical factor. Frequent arguments, cold wars, or divorce between parents create a tense and oppressive family atmosphere. Children growing up in such environments often lack a sense of security and may develop introverted, sensitive, and suspicious personalities. Witnessing parental conflicts can also lead to a fearful and pessimistic view of intimate relationships, affecting their social interactions at school. They may struggle to build trust with peers, preferring solitude and becoming more emotionally volatile when facing misunderstandings or conflicts, increasing the risk of psychological problems.

2.2.2 School Education Factors.

The educational philosophy and practices in schools have a profound impact on junior high school students' psychology. Under the shadow of exam-oriented education, some schools overly focus on grades and college admission rates, with curricula centered around exam subjects and teaching methods relying heavily on rote memorization and extensive practice. Students immersed in endless exercises and frequent exams experience a monotonous and stressful learning life, leading to issues such as neurasthenia, anxiety, and disinterest in learning [10]. Additionally, the intense competitive atmosphere in schools, with transparent and public grade rankings, places students under constant pressure to compare themselves with peers. High-achieving students may feel the burden of maintaining their status, while those with lower grades may face discrimination and neglect, leading to damaged self-esteem and feelings of inferiority. This can further alienate them from school and learning.

Moreover, the effectiveness of moral education and the strength of psychological counseling in schools are often insufficient. Moral education courses tend to be theoretical and detached from students' real-life experiences, failing to touch their hearts

or guide their behavior. Psychological counseling rooms often lack adequate staffing, with few full-time counselors and part-time staff whose professional competence varies widely. This makes it difficult for schools to provide timely, precise, and in-depth psychological support to students, often missing the optimal intervention window when dealing with complex psychological issues.

2.2.3 Sociocultural Factors.

The complex and rapidly changing sociocultural environment of today, coupled with the widespread use of the internet, presents both opportunities and challenges for junior high school students. While the internet provides easy access to information, it also exposes students to numerous potential hazards. The internet is filled with content of varying quality, including violence, pornography, and vulgar material. Given their strong curiosity and weak discernment, junior high school students are easily influenced by such negative content, which can distort their values and morals and lead to anxiety, fear, and restlessness [11]. For example, some students become immersed in violent video games, venting their emotions in the virtual world and gradually blurring the boundaries between reality and the virtual world. This can result in impulsive and aggressive behavior when resolving conflicts with peers at school.

The prevalence of social media has also changed students' social patterns. While online interactions expand their social circles, they also bring new challenges. On one hand, excessive online engagement can lead to addiction, with some students spending significant time scrolling through feeds and engaging in and commenting, neglecting face-to-face interactions. This can lead to a decline in their real-life social skills, making them shy and awkward in genuine social settings and preventing them from forming deep friendships. On the other hand, online social comparison and flaunting, such as showing off luxury goods, travel experiences, or high grades, can easily trigger feelings of jealousy and inferiority. This can lead to appearance anxiety, grade anxiety, and a constant pursuit of external validation, leaving students with a sense of emptiness and lack of happiness.[12]

The pervasive culture of social restlessness and utilitarianism also erodes the mental well-being of junior high school students. Concepts such as "grades above all" and "materialism" permeate daily life, causing students to focus prematurely on material and fame. This deviates from the essence of growth, as students become overly concerned with material and fame, neglecting the joy of knowledge exploration and personal moral development. When their grades are not satisfactory or their material desires are unmet, they may fall into confusion and loss, leading to psychological imbalance and hindering the development of a healthy personality and long-term growth.

3 Innovative Pathways for Psychological Intervention

After a multidimensional analysis of junior high school students' psychological problems, how can class teachers effectively intervene? The following sections discuss three main approaches: integrating psychological theories for precise intervention,

leveraging multiple intelligence theory to tap into students' potential, and creating a comprehensive nurturing environment.

3.1 Integrating Psychological Theories for Precise Intervention

3.1.1 Applying Positive Psychology to Stimulate Intrinsic Motivation.

Positive psychology emphasizes focusing on individuals' positive qualities, strengths, and potentials. By cultivating positive psychological traits such as optimism, resilience, and a sense of well-being, it promotes students' comprehensive development [13]. In junior high school students' mental health education, class teachers can use positive psychology to effectively stimulate students' intrinsic motivation and help them develop positive psychological qualities and healthy learning attitudes.

Firstly, positive psychology posits that learning motivation is the internal drive for students' learning. Class teachers can guide students to clarify their true learning purposes, cultivate a positive interest in learning, and create diverse learning activities that allow students to experience the joy of learning, thereby enhancing their intrinsic motivation.

Secondly, class teachers can use the "strengths perspective" from positive psychology to help students discover their own advantages and potentials. For example, by conducting mental health activities that evoke emotional resonance, students can be encouraged to express their thoughts and feelings, thereby boosting their self-confidence and intrinsic motivation. This positive educational approach not only focuses on students' strengths but also helps them develop a positive self-perception and enhance their sense of self-efficacy through appreciation and encouragement.

Additionally, class teachers can use situational creation and group counseling to cultivate students' psychological resilience, helping them maintain a positive attitude when facing academic pressure and life challenges. This group counseling not only improves students' psychological quality but also enhances class cohesion and students' social interaction skills.

3.1.2 Guiding Emotional Management Based on Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy.

In junior high school students' mental health education, using cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) to guide students' emotional management is an effective method. CBT emphasizes that the root of emotional problems lies in individuals' irrational cognitions. By adjusting cognitive patterns, emotional and behavioral issues can be effectively improved [14]. For example, many junior high school students easily fall into negative emotional cycles due to academic pressure, interpersonal relationships, or family environment, such as anxiety, depression, or impulsive behavior. Class teachers can help students manage their emotions through the following approaches.

3.1.2.1 Identifying and Challenging Irrational Beliefs. When facing setbacks, junior high school students often generate irrational thoughts such as "I can't do it" or "Others look down on me," which trigger negative emotions. Class teachers can guide students to keep emotion diaries to identify these automatic negative thoughts and

challenge and correct these irrational beliefs through logical analysis and reality testing. For example, when a student blames themselves for poor exam results, the teacher can help them recognize that grades do not fully represent their abilities, guiding them to learn from failures and develop more positive cognitive patterns.

3.1.2.2 Emotional Regulation Skills Training. In addition to adjusting cognitions, class teachers can provide specific emotional regulation skills to help students better manage their emotions. Techniques such as deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, and mindfulness meditation can effectively alleviate anxiety and tension. Additionally, through role-playing and situational simulation, students can practice coping with stress and conflict in a safe environment, enhancing their emotional regulation skills.

3.1.2.3 Home-School Collaborative Support. Emotional management requires not only school support but also a key role from the family environment. Class teachers can communicate with parents to help them understand the importance of emotional management and guide them in creating a positive and supportive atmosphere at home. For example, parents can listen to and understand their children's feelings, avoiding excessive criticism and helping them develop healthier self-perceptions.

3.1.2.4 Continuous Monitoring and Feedback. Emotional management is a long-term process. Class teachers need to continuously monitor students' emotional changes and provide timely feedback and support. By regularly conducting mental health education activities such as themed class meetings and group counseling, teachers can help students consolidate their emotional management skills and encourage them to actively apply these skills in daily life.

3.2 Leveraging Multiple Intelligence Theory to Tap into Junior High School Students' Potential

In junior high school education, class teachers can more effectively tap into students' potential by leveraging multiple intelligence theory. The following sections discuss personalized education plans and group cooperation to promote complementary strengths.

3.2.1 Personalized Education Plans.

Multiple intelligence theory posits that human intelligence can be divided into at least eight categories: linguistic intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, spatial intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, musical intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, and naturalistic intelligence [15]. Each student's performance in these intelligence areas varies, and class teachers should understand students' intelligence strengths through observation and testing.

For example, students with strong linguistic intelligence can be encouraged to participate in speech and writing competitions, serve as class language representatives,

and organize language-related learning activities. Students with high logical-mathematical intelligence can be encouraged to engage in mathematical modeling, physics competitions, and other activities, and be guided to form math study groups to help other students with difficult problems. When developing personalized education plans, it is also essential to consider students' interests. Interest is an internal driving force for learning, and combining intelligence strengths with interests can better stimulate students' potential. For example, students with high spatial intelligence and an interest in painting can be provided with resources such as art clubs and drawing training to develop their skills in their areas of interest.

3.2.2 Group Cooperation to Promote Complementary Strengths.

In the classroom, class teachers can form groups based on multiple intelligence theory, combining students with different intelligence strengths to achieve complementary advantages [16]. In a group project, students with high interpersonal intelligence can coordinate group relationships and organize discussions; those with strong logical-mathematical intelligence can handle data analysis and problem-solving; and those with linguistic intelligence can write reports and present results. Through such cooperation, each student can leverage their strengths while learning different ways of thinking and skills from their peers. Group cooperation also cultivates students' teamwork and communication skills. During the collaboration process, students need to interact and share ideas, which helps enhance their interpersonal intelligence. By working together to complete tasks, students can identify their weaknesses and target areas for improvement, thereby tapping into their potential collectively.

3.3 Creating a Comprehensive Nurturing Environment

3.3.1 Psychological Nurturing through Class Culture.

Class culture is an implicit educational force that subtly influences students' psychology [17]. Class teachers can carefully create a warm and inclusive class environment, paying attention to details such as wall decoration and furniture arrangement to create a visually comfortable atmosphere. For example, painting the classroom walls in warm colors, posting students' works and inspirational slogans, and placing green plants and flowers can make students feel pleasant upon entering the classroom. Setting up a class culture corner with books, handicrafts, and green plants, and regularly updating it, provides students with a space to relax and interact during breaks. Establishing a "whisper box" where students can anonymously share their worries, with regular responses from the teacher, can provide a safe space for students to express themselves. Protecting students' privacy and making the classroom a sanctuary for their hearts can help them relieve stress and openly share their thoughts, nurturing their mental well-being.

3.3.2 In-depth Home-School Collaboration.

Close cooperation between families and schools is crucial for promoting the mental health of students. Class teachers should regularly organize parent classes, inviting

psychological experts and educational scholars to give lectures on junior high school students' psychological characteristics, parent-child communication skills, and emotional management methods.[18] For example, hosting a lecture on "The Art of Parent-Child Communication in Adolescence" can guide parents to understand the needs behind their children's rebellious behavior and communicate with them in an equal and respectful manner. Conducting training on "Emotional Management for Family Harmony" can help parents regulate their own emotions and create a stable family atmosphere for their children. Additionally, planning parent-child activities such as outdoor team-building exercises, handicraft making, and parent-child reading can enhance parent-child rapport and mend any rifts in their relationship. By engaging in these interactions, parents can gain insight into their children's inner worlds and provide the warmth and support needed for their psychological development. When families and schools work in harmony, they can jointly promote students' growth.

3.3.3 Integration of Community Resources.

Communities offer a wealth of educational resources that can extend and complement school education. Class teachers can actively connect with community organizations to involve students in volunteer services, such as community environmental protection, caring for the elderly, and library organization. Through these activities, students can experience their own value, enhance their sense of social responsibility, and expand their social interactions. Additionally, organizing career experience activities that allow students to visit factories, science museums, museums, fire departments, and other places can help them gain firsthand knowledge of different occupations and understand how society functions. This can clarify their learning goals and connect their personal growth with societal needs, enhancing their ability to adapt to society. By participating in diverse community practices, students can temper their minds and shape their character, laying a solid foundation for their future integration into society.[19]

4 Conclusion

This study has conducted an in-depth analysis of the psychological problems among junior high school students, identifying common issues that span academic stress and interpersonal relationships, with roots in family, school, and sociocultural factors. Factors such as overindulgence, high expectations, and disharmony in the family environment, exam-oriented education, competitive pressure, shortcomings in moral education and psychological counseling in schools, and negative influences from society and utilitarianism all intertwine to foster the emergence of students' psychological problems.[20]

Class teachers' work needs to delve into students' inner worlds, integrating psychological theories such as positive psychology and cognitive-behavioral therapy to guide emotional management. By leveraging multiple intelligence theory to tap into students' potential, developing personalized education plans, and promoting group cooperation to complement strengths, a comprehensive nurturing environment can be

created. This includes using class culture to nurture students' mental well-being, deepening home-school collaboration, and integrating community resources to expand practical experiences. These innovative pathways for psychological intervention among junior high school students can create a healthy ecosystem for their mental health.

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