

# *The Healing Effect of Art Learning on the Psychological Pressure of Primary and Secondary School Students*

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**Abstract:** Art learning is not only a process of skill cultivation, but also plays an important role in alleviating the psychological pressure of primary and secondary school students and promoting emotional regulation. With the increasing academic burden, mental health problems have increasingly become an important challenge in students' growth. This article starts with the psychological healing effect of art learning and explores its potential and practical application in reducing students' stress and guiding negative emotions. By analyzing factors such as creative expression, immersive experience, teacher guidance and educational resource allocation in art learning, this paper reveals multiple mechanisms of art education in improving students' mental health. Through theoretical exploration and case analysis, this article proposes strategies to promote the therapeutic efficacy of art courses, aiming to provide theoretical support and practical guidance for future art education practices.

## 1. Introduction

With the modern education system gradually putting students' mental health issues on the agenda, the traditional way of knowledge imparting has gradually shown its limitations, especially in the academic environment with increasing pressure. How to relieve students' psychological burden through effective means has become a core issue in educational research. As a non-disciplinary core course, art education has gradually been endowed with more psychological support functions. Its unique advantages in helping students release emotions and regulate stress have also attracted widespread attention. This article aims to explore how art learning can achieve emotional guidance through artistic creation, thereby alleviating the psychological pressure of primary and secondary school students, analyze the obstacles and challenges they face in teaching, and propose corresponding solutions based on practical problems. Through systematic theoretical analysis and practical cases, this paper hopes to provide new perspectives and methods for educators and researchers, with the expectation of promoting the positive role of art learning in mental health education.

## **2. The psychological healing effect of art learning**

### **2.1. The relationship between creative expression and emotional release**

When exploring the healing effect of art learning on the psychological pressure of primary and secondary school students, the relationship between creative expression and emotional release is undoubtedly a key issue. Creative expression is not merely a process of artistic creation; it is also a self-relief mechanism for students when they are confronted with inner troubles and external pressures. Psychological research shows that the suppression and accumulation of emotions often lead to the accumulation of psychological stress, which in turn affects an individual's emotions and behaviors. Through art creation, students can express those indescribable inner feelings through various art forms, such as painting, sculpture, or installation art, etc<sup>[1]</sup>. The silent language of art provides students with a safe space, enabling them to release their inner anxiety and suppressed emotions in an unrestrained way. This process of expression is not only an release of emotions, but also the first step of psychological adjustment. During the creative process, students can temporarily get rid of external troubles while concentrating their attention and organizing their thinking, thereby reducing stress.

The emotional release brought about by creative expression does not merely rely on the completion degree of the work, but is more reflected in the sense of participation and control during the creative process. Research shows that when students feel they can control the rhythm and direction of their creation during the process of art creation, they will have a strong sense of self-efficacy<sup>[2]</sup>. This sense of efficacy can effectively counteract the emotional distress caused by multiple factors such as academic pressure, social pressure or family pressure, thereby promoting mental health. Art learning, as an effective means of emotional regulation, not only enables students to release suppressed emotions during creation, but also helps them find themselves and enhance their confidence in the process of artistic expression, gradually forming a positive emotional cognitive pattern. The role of creative expression in emotional release is not limited to short-term emotional relief, but can have a profound impact on students' mental health. Students who have been involved in art creation for a long time tend to develop more diverse emotional regulation strategies. Through continuous artistic creation, they gradually learn how to organize and express their emotions through artistic works, and even can deal with challenges more calmly when facing difficulties in daily life<sup>[3]</sup>. Therefore, as a tool for emotional expression, art learning not only provides stress relief at a certain moment, but also imperceptibly cultivates students' healthier and more positive psychological coping mechanisms, helping them maintain emotional stability and mental health during their growth process.

### **2.2. Immersive experiences and stress relief in art activities**

In the process of art learning, immersive experience refers to the psychological state in which students devote themselves wholeheartedly to the creative process and establish a deep connection with the artworks. This sense of immersion is both a cognitive focus and an emotional resonance, which can effectively relieve students' psychological pressure. Psychological research indicates that immersive experience is a highly therapeutic psychological state, which enables individuals to temporarily escape from external pressure and enter an autonomous and stress-free inner space. In art activities, students start to have in-depth interaction with their creations through the brushes, engraving knives or other artistic tools in their hands. This concentration and dedication enable them to temporarily forget the surrounding environment and pressure, and enter a state of "flow". During this process, students can not only release suppressed emotions through artistic creation, but also achieve the transformation and relief of emotions through creative expression. In fact, when

students fully focus their attention on artistic creation, external troubles and anxieties are effectively blocked out, and their physical and mental state presents a kind of harmony and relaxation<sup>[4]</sup>.

The significance of immersive experience in art activities is far more than just a temporary relief of stress. More importantly, it provides students with a long-term mechanism for emotional regulation. Studies show that in an immersive state, an individual's anxiety level is significantly reduced and emotional fluctuations become more stable. Through the deep connection with emotions, art activities enable students to perceive their inner needs and emotional flows during the creation process. This improvement in self-awareness, in turn, promotes the healthy regulation of emotions. During this process, in every stroke and every color of the creation, students not only vent their emotions but also find self-identity in the expression of emotions, thereby achieving a balance of the soul. Especially when facing external stressors such as academic pressure, family difficulties or social relationships, immersive experiences provide students with an effective coping method, enabling them to regain a sense of control and security in art creation.

From the perspective of neuroscience, immersive experiences can activate the reward mechanism in the brain, release neurotransmitters such as dopamine, and generate a sense of pleasure and satisfaction. This physiological response further enhances the psychological healing effect of artistic creation. Students who have been involved in art activities for a long time often manage their emotional fluctuations better and enhance their psychological resilience. This immersive experience formed through art activities not only helps students relieve their current psychological pressure but also provides them with positive emotional resources to deal with future psychological challenges in the future. Therefore, art learning is not only a process of cultivating skills and aesthetic sense, but also a process that can help students achieve psychological healing in immersive experiences, and it has an undeniable mental health value.

### **2.3. Interdisciplinary Perspective: The Mental Health Role of Art in Education**

From an interdisciplinary perspective, the mental health promotion function that art learning plays in the education system is increasingly becoming the focus of cross-attention in multiple fields such as educational psychology, art therapy, and even neuroscience. Unlike the cognitive goals and knowledge accumulation emphasized by traditional disciplines, art education inherently possesses the dual dimensions of emotional expression and psychological adjustment, which makes it play an irreplaceable role in the construction of students' mental health. From the perspective of educational psychology, the aesthetic pleasure, self-expression and creative realization that students experience in art learning can effectively meet their psychological needs of self-efficacy and a sense of belonging. These are precisely the key factors for the construction of self-identity and the formation of stress resistance ability. From the perspective of the research path of art therapy, art learning, as an expression form where the concrete and the abstract coexist, provides students with a non-verbal channel for emotional transformation, enabling them to externalize complex emotions and psychological conflicts through means such as color, line, and composition even at an age lacking precise language description<sup>[5]</sup>.

Research in cognitive neuroscience also indicates that artistic activities can activate multiple brain regions related to emotion regulation, motivation generation, and sensory integration, such as the prefrontal cortex, cingulate gyrus, and amygdala. The activity of these regions not only helps individuals gain psychological pleasure during the creative process but also enhances their psychological resilience against stress through the mechanism of neural plasticity. Therefore, from the physiological mechanism to the psychological mechanism and then to the Social adaptation mechanism, the mental health role of art Learning in the educational field has long transcended the traditional academic minor or interest guidance, and its position in the Emotional education and

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) system has become increasingly prominent. Especially under the background of the "Double Reduction" policy, school education urgently needs to reduce students' psychological burden and expand their non-academic growth space through multiple channels. And art courses, due to their natural freedom of expression and aesthetic appeal, have become one of the important carriers of mental health education.

### **3. The practical effect of art learning on the psychological pressure of Primary and secondary School students**

#### **3.1. The influence of individual differences on the therapeutic effect of art therapy**

When exploring the practical effect of art learning on the psychological pressure of primary and secondary school students, individual differences are undoubtedly one of the important factors affecting the healing effect. Psychological research indicates that each student has significant differences in their reaction patterns and coping mechanisms when facing stress. Such differences are not only reflected in explicit characteristics such as gender and age, but also involve internal factors such as individual emotional expression, mood regulation ability, and psychological resilience. As a highly personalized form of expression, the significance of the healing effect of art is often closely related to students' self-awareness, ways of emotional expression and participation in artistic creation. Specifically, students who are more introverted in expressing their emotions and tend to think deeply inside may be more inclined to vent their suppressed feelings through delicate brushstrokes, rich colors and other means. Students who are emotionally extroverted and good at communicating with others may relieve stress through group creation and interactive art activities, thereby finding emotional identification and a sense of security in the collective. Therefore, the different needs of individuals in art creation often determine the specific effect of art learning on alleviating their psychological pressure.

The compatibility of students' personality traits with art learning also has a profound impact on the therapeutic effect of mental therapy. Introverted students may be more inclined to release their emotions through independent creation, while extroverted students are more likely to obtain psychological satisfaction from group creation. Research shows that introverted students can gain inner comfort through in-depth self-reflection and emotional expression during the creative process, while extroverted students can feel social connection and a sense of belonging through interaction, cooperation with peers and collective creative experiences, thereby reducing inner anxiety and stress. In addition, the differences in cognitive styles also play an important role in the therapeutic effect of art therapy. For instance, students who are inclined towards visual and figurative thinking can better express their emotions through visual artistic creation, thereby effectively alleviating their psychological burden. Students who tend to think in a logical and abstract way may be more inclined to achieve emotional release and psychological balance through art forms with stronger structures, such as sketching and sculpture. Such individual differences enable art learning to present diverse healing effects among different students.

The influence of individual differences on the therapeutic effect of art therapy not only makes the applicability of art therapy methods more flexible, but also provides profound inspirations for educational practice. Educators should design personalized art learning plans based on students' different psychological characteristics and creative tendencies, so as to maximize the unique advantages of art learning in alleviating students' psychological pressure. Only by understanding and respecting the individual differences of students can the most effective psychological support and emotional care be provided for each student, truly realizing the psychological healing function of art education.

### 3.2. Case Analysis: Practical Application in School Art Courses

When exploring the practical effect of school art courses on the psychological pressure of primary and secondary school students, case analysis undoubtedly provides us with an important perspective for an in-depth understanding of its effect. Through the analysis of actual cases, we can understand more specifically the application effect of art courses in alleviating students' psychological pressure, especially its role in emotional regulation, psychological counseling and self-awareness improvement. For instance, a certain middle school has introduced creative tasks based on emotional expression in its art curriculum, aiming to enable students to release their emotions through forms such as painting and sculpture and establish connections with their inner world. During this process, teachers guide students through openness, encouraging them to create with themselves as the theme and allowing them to present their inner troubles, pressures and unease in an artistic form. Experimental data shows that students who participated in this course generally demonstrated an improvement in their emotional regulation ability. Many students said after class that their anxiety was effectively relieved and their mood became pleasant and relaxed.

This case highlights the unique advantage of art courses in achieving psychological healing through creative expression in practice. Art learning provides students with a safe and free space. Students can express themselves without language barriers, especially when facing indescribable emotions. Art creation has become an important channel for them to vent their emotions. Unlike traditional subject teaching, art courses not only focus on the improvement of students' skills, but also pay more attention to the expression of emotions and the cultivation of mental health. In this course design, the consideration of individual differences is also one of the key factors. The school has designed various types of art creation tasks based on students' interests and specialties, such as static sketching, dynamic sculpture, and color application, to ensure that each student can find an outlet for emotional expression in an art form that suits them. In this way, art courses not only relieve students' psychological pressure, but also enhance their self-awareness and social adaptability imperceptibly.

It is worth noting that the practical application in art courses is not static, and its healing effect may vary among different student groups. Research shows that in this process, students' individual emotions and the degree of creative engagement directly affect the manifestation of the healing effect. Some students may be more inclined to express emotions through the combination of colors and shapes, while others may achieve psychological venting through the depiction of delicate lines. Therefore, in classroom design, art teachers must fully consider the individual differences of students and flexibly adjust teaching methods to maximize the role of art courses in regulating psychological pressure.

The practical application of school art courses has demonstrated the powerful potential of art as a tool for psychological healing. Through case analysis, we not only witnessed the successful application of art learning in helping students release their emotions and regulate psychological stress, but also reflected that as an important component of mental health education, it can provide strong support for students' emotional health and growth.

### 3.3. The crucial role of teachers' guidance in art therapy

In the practical process of exerting the psychological healing function in art learning, the guidance of teachers undoubtedly plays a crucial mediating and catalytic role. Art education is not merely the imparting of techniques or the indoctrination of aesthetics. Its deeper significance lies in guiding students to achieve the cognition, expression and transformation of their inner emotions through artistic means. However, as the designer of classroom activities, the observer of students' psychological states and the co-builder of creative experiences, the role of teachers is far beyond



what can be covered by the traditional knowledge transmitter. It is crucial for teachers to guide students' creative intentions at the initial stage of the course. By presenting open-ended themes and encouraging students to create based on their personal emotional experiences, teachers not only stimulate students' inner desire to express themselves but also imperceptibly build a psychologically safe creative atmosphere, enabling students to dare to confront their emotional fluctuations and inner conflicts directly. This kind of guidance is not a controlling instruction but a situational stimulation, enabling students to independently construct the context for emotional expression while feeling respected and understood.

The immediate feedback and emotional companionship provided by teachers during the classroom process are crucial links in facilitating the implementation of art therapy effects. Research has found that the accepting evaluations and emotional resonations given by teachers to students' works can effectively strengthen students' positive cognition of their own emotions and enhance their confidence in expression. In this interactive process, the empathetic attitude and psychological sensitivity demonstrated by teachers directly affect students' psychological comfort and course engagement. For instance, when students express suppressed emotions or family conflicts through painting, if teachers can respond with non-judgmental language and guide students to further explore their own feelings through questioning or empathetic explanations, it can not only facilitate the smooth release of their emotions but also, in a subtle way, promote the reconstruction of their psychological cognition. In addition, teachers' control over rhythm and content in course design also has therapeutic effects: Appropriately setting up progressive emotional creation tasks and arranging for group and individual creations to alternate can help meet the differences in rhythm and depth among different students during the psychological adjustment process, thereby enhancing the inclusiveness and therapeutic effect of the overall course.

It can be said that teachers are not passive observers of art therapy, but active constructors and guides. In the current situation where the psychological pressure on primary and secondary school students is becoming increasingly severe, art teachers who attach equal importance to psychological quality and art education ability have become the key bridge connecting art and mental health. The quality of its guidance not only determines the depth of emotional reach in art learning, but also affects whether students can truly achieve psychological release and reshaping in the process of creation. It can be seen from this that the effectiveness of teachers' guidance is the core variable for whether the process of art therapy can truly be implemented, deepened and sustained, and it deserves more attention and investment in educational practice and research.

## **4. Obstacles and Challenges in Art Learning**

### **4.1. The influence of resource limitations and teaching environment on the healing effect**

Although art learning shows remarkable healing potential in alleviating the psychological pressure of primary and secondary school students, in the actual educational context, its effectiveness is often restricted by multiple factors such as resource allocation and teaching environment, thereby weakening its due psychological support function. The insufficiency of hardware resources has become the primary obstacle restricting the therapeutic effect of art therapy. In some schools where educational resources are relatively scarce, art teaching is often marginalized. The lack of necessary materials and equipment, professional classrooms, and even stable teaching schedules makes artistic creation a formal or ritualized existence, making it difficult to form a continuous and in-depth emotional expression channel. Under the condition of limited resources, students often find it difficult to achieve psychological counseling and reconstruction through high-quality artistic activities, and their participation motivation and creative enthusiasm also decline accordingly. The lack of such material conditions not only affects the freedom and depth of

creation, but also weakens students' emotional identification and psychological dependence on art learning at the subconscious level, thereby reducing its therapeutic effect.

The emotional atmosphere and structural arrangement of the teaching environment also have a profound impact on the therapeutic effect of art therapy. On the one hand, many schools still position art classes as "minor subjects" at present. In the curriculum design, they are frequently compressed, replaced or used as "make-up classes" for other subjects. This not only weakens the systematicness and coherence of art teaching, but also makes it difficult for students to establish the continuity of emotional expression in the fragmented learning rhythm. On the other hand, teachers' professional ability and psychological sensitivity often become important variables that determine the classroom atmosphere. If art teachers lack the ability to identify students' psychological states or teaching strategies that combine artistic creation with emotional guidance, it will be difficult for them to build a sufficiently inclusive and safe psychological space in the classroom, thus turning art learning into a field for technical training rather than emotional healing. Furthermore, the singularity of the academic evaluation system has led to art classes being incorporated into the "exam-oriented logic". Some schools even take technical proficiency as the sole evaluation criterion, neglecting the emotional flow and psychological state of students during their creative process. This utilitarian orientation seriously deviates from the psychological support function that art courses should have.

The dual constraints of resources and the environment constitute a structural problem that cannot be ignored in the implementation of the psychological healing function in current art learning. Only on the basis of the two-way improvement of material guarantee and teaching concept, and by establishing a stable, respectful and open art education ecosystem, can the potential of art learning to relieve the psychological pressure of primary and secondary school students be truly released, and it can be promoted to move from a marginal course to the core position of emotional education and mental health development.

#### **4.2. Students' psychological resistance and acceptance of art learning**

In the process of healing the psychological pressure of primary and secondary school students through art learning, students' psychological resistance and the acceptance of art learning constitute challenges that cannot be ignored. This phenomenon has profoundly influenced the role of art education in emotional regulation and psychological counseling, especially among student groups facing academic pressure and psychological distress. Psychological resistance may become an important factor hindering the realization of its healing effect. The psychological resistance of many students to art learning does not stem from an inherent rejection of art, but is profoundly influenced by traditional academic culture and the exam-oriented education system. For a long time, fine arts, as a non-mainstream discipline, has often been regarded as a "minor subject" or a "secondary course". Its teaching content and evaluation criteria often overly focus on techniques and forms, neglecting its unique role in emotional expression and psychological counseling. This cognitive bias has led some students to have a negative evaluation of art learning as a "waste of time", especially those who perform well in academic subjects and have greater academic pressure. They tend to focus their energy on subjects with stronger "practicality", thereby intensifying their resistance to art learning.

Students' emotional identification and creative freedom are also important factors influencing their acceptance. Artistic creation is essentially a highly individualized expression process. However, many students do not find sufficient psychological security in art classes and often suppress the expression of their own emotions due to excessive technical requirements and external standards for evaluating works. In this situation, students' participation in art courses is often more

to meet the expectations of teachers or society rather than based on the true expression of personal emotions. Especially in some classrooms where the teaching atmosphere is rather reserved and there is a lack of sufficient space for self-expression, students' inner world is difficult to be displayed through artistic creation. This not only hinders the release of their emotions but also greatly weakens the positive effect of art learning on their mental health. The differences in psychological resistance and acceptance are particularly evident among different types of students. For some students with a high need for self-expression, the creative process may be filled with emotional fluctuations and inner release. However, for those who are emotionally introverted and relatively closed, art learning may become a compulsive task, making it even more difficult for them to integrate into it. Therefore, educators need to pay more attention to the individualized identification and targeted guidance of students' psychological states in teaching. By creating an inclusive, free and evaluation-free creative environment, students can truly feel the spiritual comfort and emotional guidance brought by art learning in a situation without external pressure.

Students' psychological resistance and acceptance of art learning are one of the key factors affecting the therapeutic effect of art education. To realize the psychological healing function of art education, educators must break the traditional disciplinary prejudice, create a more open creative atmosphere, and pay attention to the individual psychological differences of students, so as to stimulate their inner artistic potential, and further achieve self-regulation of emotions and improvement of mental health.

#### **4.3. Solution: Strategies to enhance the therapeutic effect of art learning**

Facing the practical obstacles encountered in the process of mental healing through art learning, exploring systematic and operational solution strategies has become a common concern in educational practice and academic research. From the institutional level, it is necessary to reshape educational values, liberate art education from "marginalized interest courses", and re-incorporate it into the core agenda of students' all-round development. This means that educational administrators should provide stable and sufficient class hour resources for art teaching in the curriculum design, and carry out systematic optimization in aspects such as teacher allocation, teaching AIDS and equipment, and classroom environment, in order to build a spatial ecosystem that not only meets the creative needs but also nourishes emotional expression. Teachers, as the direct executors of the therapeutic effect of art therapy, urgently need institutional support and systematic training for the improvement of their professional qualities. On the one hand, art teachers should possess an interdisciplinary knowledge structure, be able to organically integrate artistic expression with psychological adjustment theories, and formulate teaching designs with the function of emotional guidance. On the other hand, by introducing basic psychology courses and case-based teaching methods, teachers' ability to identify students' emotional states and coping strategies should be enhanced, enabling them to truly become the guides and companions of emotional education.

In terms of teaching strategies, the traditional teaching mode mainly focused on skill training should be broken, and instead attention should be paid to students' subjective emotional experiences and self-expression needs during the creative process. Specifically, through methods such as context introduction, emotional theme setting, and creative narrative sharing, students can be guided to project their own life experiences, emotional fluctuations, and even psychological predicaments onto artworks, achieving a deep transformation from "technical expression" to "emotional mapping". In addition, to enhance the emotional healing function of art courses, elements and methods from art therapy can be appropriately introduced, such as mandala painting, self-portrait creation, and the construction of emotional colors, so that classroom activities are both artistic and have the soft effect of psychological intervention. Meanwhile, a non-judgmental, open and collaborative teaching



atmosphere should be established, allowing students to explore themselves and understand others in creations without standard answers, thereby achieving the dual goals of emotional release and interpersonal connection.

From the perspective of the social support system, the collaborative interaction among families, schools and communities should be strengthened to jointly build a support network for students' mental health. Parents should abandon the utilitarian tendency of viewing art courses from a pragmatic perspective and instead support children in seeking inner order and emotional support in art learning. Schools should regularly carry out integrated courses or special lectures with the theme of "Art and Psychology" to enhance the sensitivity and responsiveness of the overall education system to emotional education. The community can provide students with a broader stage for expression by setting up public art Spaces, youth art exhibition platforms and other forms, further expanding the social value and psychological efficacy of art learning. In conclusion, only by promoting multi-dimensional strategies in parallel can the psychological healing effect of art learning be fundamentally enhanced, making it truly a gentle yet powerful spiritual path for primary and secondary school students when facing pressure.

## 5. Conclusions

This article deeply explores the unique role and multi-dimensional mechanisms of art learning in alleviating the psychological stress of primary and secondary school students. Creative expression and immersive experience provide students with effective channels for emotional release, helping them reflect on and express their inner emotional conflicts through artworks. The guidance and emotional support provided by teachers in the classroom, especially the attention paid to individual differences, determine the healing effect of art learning. Despite facing practical challenges such as resource limitations and teaching environments, this article proposes strategies such as optimizing the curriculum setting, enhancing teachers' qualities, and creating an inclusive teaching environment to further strengthen the psychological healing function of art education. Art education from an interdisciplinary perspective is not merely the cultivation of artistic skills, but also an important component of students' mental health education, which holds profound educational significance. Future research and practice should continuously focus on the profound value of art courses in mental health and further promote their development and application in the education system.

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