

# Practical Research on the Intervention of Group Work in the Emotional Management of Middle School Boarding Students

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This study focuses on the special group of middle school boarding students, aiming to explore the intervention effect of the group work method on their emotional management. Through the analysis of the current situation of the emotional problems of boarding students, a targeted group work plan was designed and implemented, and a variety of professional techniques were used to guide group members to recognize, express, and regulate emotions. The practical results show that group work has achieved remarkable results in improving the emotional cognitive level of boarding students, enhancing their emotional regulation ability and improving interpersonal relationships, providing a useful reference for mental health education in middle schools.

*Keywords:* group work, middle school boarding students, emotional management

## Introduction

With the development of education, the boarding system in middle schools has become increasingly common. Boarding students leave their families and study and live in a relatively independent and closed campus environment. They face challenges in many aspects such as academic pressure, interpersonal communication, and self-identification, and are prone to emotional problems such as anxiety, depression, and anger. If they cannot manage their emotions effectively, it will not only affect their academic performance, but also may lead to adverse consequences such as behavioral deviations and psychological disorders. As one of the professional methods of social work, group work emphasizes the interaction, support, and common growth among group members, providing a new perspective and approach to solving the emotional problems of boarding students.

## Literature Review

Scholars at home and abroad have carried out a lot of research on the emotional management of adolescents. In terms of the definition of the connotation of emotional management, Salovey and Mayer (1990) proposed the emotional intelligence model, which covers the abilities of emotional perception, application, understanding, and management, laying a theoretical foundation for understanding the emotional management of adolescents. Boarding life makes adolescents break away from the daily support system of their families and face more interpersonal conflicts and difficulties in adapting to life. Chen Haizhen's (2018) research shows that middle school boarding students often experience anxiety and depression under academic pressure, and due to the close dormitory space, interpersonal frictions easily lead to negative emotions such as anger and grievance. In terms

of influencing factors, family parenting styles have been widely proven to have a profound impact on the emotional management of adolescents. Parents' emotional warmth and understanding can promote children's positive emotional expression and regulation, while excessive strictness or neglect has the opposite effect (Gottman, 1997; Lin Danhua et al., 2008). There has been some practical exploration on the intervention of group work in the emotional management of adolescents. Li Jing (2015) used group work to help urban adolescents cope with exam anxiety and improved their ability to use emotional regulation strategies through systematic activities. However, in-depth research on the intervention of group work in the emotional management of middle school boarding students, a specific group, combined with their boarding life situations, is still insufficient. Most of the existing studies focus on presenting problems and need to be strengthened in designing detailed intervention plans based on the actual lives of boarding students and long-term follow-up and evaluation of the effectiveness, which provides exploration space for this study.

### **Analysis of the Current Situation of Emotional Problems of Middle School Boarding Students**

#### **Emotional Problem Manifestations**

Through questionnaires and interviews, it was found that boarding students generally have a sense of loneliness, especially when they first enter boarding life and have difficulties adapting to the new environment and miss their families. The nervousness and anxiety brought about by academic competition have long troubled some students, especially before and after exams. Interpersonal frictions in dormitory life, such as conflicts in schedules and disputes over the use of items, trigger emotions such as anger and grievance.

#### **Cause Analysis**

Most of the mental health education courses in schools are taught in large classes, mainly focusing on theoretical teaching and lacking personalized counseling. Class teachers are busy with their work and it is difficult for them to detect and deeply intervene in the emotional fluctuations of each boarding student in a timely manner. Although parents care about their children, it is difficult to capture the subtle emotional changes of their children through long-distance communication and they cannot provide timely and effective on-site guidance.

### **Scheme Design of Group Work Intervening in the Emotional Management of Middle School Boarding Students**

#### **Theoretical Basis**

Humanistic theory emphasizes people's self-actualization tendency and internal value and believes that group members have the ability to solve their own problems. In the group, a sincere, respectful, and accepting atmosphere should be created to make boarding students feel understood and stimulate their motivation for self-exploration and changing the current emotional situation.

Social learning theory holds that individuals acquire new skills by observing and imitating the behaviors of others. Group activities provide a platform for group members to observe and learn from each other. For example, sharing successful experiences in emotional regulation and learning from each other's effective coping methods can improve their emotional management abilities.

The ABC theory of emotions points out that emotional and behavioral outcomes (C) are not directly determined by the activating event (A), but are affected by individuals' cognitive evaluations (B) of the event.

Guide boarding students to reflect on their views of daily events and correct unreasonable beliefs to adjust their emotions from the root.

### **Group Goal Setting**

The short-term goal is to help group members identify common emotions and master two-three simple emotional regulation techniques. The medium-term goal is to improve the emotional expression ability of group members so that they can freely share emotional stories in the group and get effective responses. The long-term goal is for group members to transfer the learned emotional management methods to daily life, establish a stable and positive emotional state, and promote academic progress.

### **Recruitment and Screening of Group Members**

Based on the data of the school's psychological census, boarding students with relatively high scores in anxiety, depression, and other emotional scales and who self-reported emotional distress were selected as potential group members. Recruitment posters were posted to introduce the group's goals, activity contents, and time arrangements to attract volunteers. One-on-one interviews were conducted with the registered students to understand the severity of their emotional problems, their willingness to participate, and their teamwork abilities. Eight-twelve (8-12) group members were comprehensively screened to ensure that the group was homogeneous and had sufficient motivation.

### **Planning of Group Activity Contents**

First acquaintance (Section 1): Design ice-breaking games such as "Name Relay" and "Fateful Gathering" to break the sense of strangeness and create a relaxed atmosphere. Formulate group agreements covering rules such as confidentiality, respect for others, and punctual participation in activities to ensure the orderly operation of the group.

Emotional exploration journey (Sections 2-3): Carry out the activity of "Emotional Detective", using pictures and video clips to let group members identify different emotional expressions and body movements, and share the corresponding emotional scenes they have experienced. Distribute emotional vocabulary cards, and group members discuss and classify them in groups to deeply understand the connotation and diversity of emotions.

Emotional expression workshop (Sections 4-5): Organize "Emotional Story Collection", where group members take turns to tell recent emotional distress events, and others listen and give feedback, practicing to clearly express their inner feelings using "I-statements" (such as "I felt... because..."). Introduce art therapy means such as painting and music, such as "Emotional Graffiti" and "Rewriting Sad Melodies", to let group members release emotions in a non-verbal way.

Emotional regulation skill training (Sections 6-8): Teach the deep breathing relaxation method, guide group members to close their eyes, meditate and breathe slowly on the spot, and feel the process of body relaxation. Introduce emotional transfer techniques, such as sports catharsis and reading immersion, encourage group members to practice after class and share their experiences. Carry out "Emotional Script Killing", simulate life difficulties, and group members use the learned methods to solve problems and strengthen their coping skills.

Group consolidation and ending (Sections 9-10): Review and summarize the emotional knowledge and skills learned in the previous period, and group members make personal emotional management manuals. Hold a "Thanksgiving for You" farewell party, exchange hand-made thank-you cards with each other, share the gains and growth in the group, handle the emotions of parting, and continue the group support in daily life.

## **Implementation Process of Group Work Intervention**

### **Group Initial Stage: Establishing Relationships and Creating an Atmosphere**

In the first activity, volunteers guided the games with enthusiasm and an open attitude. At first, group members were shy and reserved, but gradually became active as the interaction increased. When formulating the agreement, everyone actively discussed it, and paid special attention to the “confidentiality” clause, realizing the importance of a safe environment and initially establishing a trust relationship, laying the foundation for subsequent activities.

### **Group Mid-stage: In-Depth Interaction and Learning and Growth**

In the emotional exploration session, group members were very interested in identifying emotions and shared their stories with sincere emotions, often resonating with each other. For example, when talking about the depression after failing an exam, many people nodded in agreement. In the stage of expression and regulation skill training, there was a process for group members from being curious to try new methods to being proficient in using them. At first, some students had difficulty mastering the rhythm of deep breathing, but gradually got better after repeated practice. When practicing the technique of shifting attention, sports enthusiasts found that they felt relaxed after running, which inspired others to try sports to relieve stress.

### **Group Later Stage: Consolidating Results and Handling Parting**

When reviewing and summarizing, group members looked through activity records and emotional graffiti paintings and were amazed at their own growth. The personal manuals were detailed, covering strategies for dealing with different emotions. At the farewell party, the atmosphere of gratitude was strong. Some group members were reluctant to part and shed tears. They promised to keep in touch and help each other and return to dormitory life with the warmth of the group.

## **Evaluation of the Effect of Group Work Intervention**

### **Evaluation Methods**

Pre- and post-test questionnaires were used to compare the scores of the boarding students on the emotional management scale before and after the intervention. The growth diaries and experience insights of group members in group activities were collected to understand the changes in their subjective experiences. Class teachers and roommates were interviewed to observe the improvement of group members’ daily emotional performance and interpersonal interaction from a third-party perspective.

### **Evaluation Results**

The data show that the abilities of boarding students to identify, express, and regulate emotions have been significantly improved. For example, the average score in the “Emotional Awareness” dimension on the emotional management scale has increased by five points, and the “Application of Regulation Strategies” dimension has increased by eight points. The growth diaries reflect that group members have changed from being initially confused and helpless to being confident and cheerful and being able to take the initiative to deal with emotions. Class teachers’ feedback shows that group members’ classroom concentration has been enhanced and dormitory interpersonal conflicts have been reduced, proving that group work has a positive and comprehensive positive impact on the emotional management, academics, and lives of boarding students.

### Conclusions and Prospects

This practical research has confirmed that group work has a significant intervention effect on the emotional management of middle school boarding students. Through systematic design of activities and relying on professional theories, it can help boarding students improve their emotional cognition, enrich their regulation strategies, optimize their interpersonal relationships, relieve emotional distress, and enhance their psychological resilience, opening up a practical path for mental health education in boarding schools. As an innovative means, group work effectively improves the emotional management situation of middle school boarding students and fills the gap in personalized emotional counseling in traditional school education.

However, this study also has certain limitations. For example, the time and frequency of group activities are insufficient, resulting in insufficient in-depth practice of some complex techniques. In the future, the cycle can be extended and intensive training can be added. The individual differences among group members are relatively large, and a few introverted students and those with deeper problems need additional counseling. Future research will expand the sample range, extend the follow-up period, explore a comprehensive intervention model in conjunction with families and communities, and jointly conduct parent-child emotional management workshops with families to build a comprehensive emotional support environment for boarding students through home-school cooperation to ensure their healthy growth. In short, continuously paying attention to the emotional needs of boarding students and optimizing the group work model will surely continue to empower their spiritual growth and safeguard the mental health development of boarding students.

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