

Problems and Optimizing Strategies of Primary School Students' Mental Health Education

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Abstract: This article aims to explore the problems and optimization strategies in primary school students' mental health education. After analyzing the current status of mental health education for primary school students, the article will employ a literature review method to analyze the issues related to the weak teacher workforce, insufficient school emphasis, and family factors. By strengthening professional training to enhance the professional competence of educators, actively transforming teaching philosophies to prioritize mental health education, and promoting home-school cooperation to integrate mental health education into various subjects, these optimization strategies can effectively improve the current status of mental health education for primary school students. The research findings indicate that the current mental health education for primary school students faces problems such as a weak teacher workforce, insufficient school emphasis, and family factors. However, through the implementation of optimization strategies, the professional level of educators can be enhanced, and home-school cooperation can be promoted, thereby effectively improving the mental health education for primary school students. The study suggests that the aforementioned optimization strategies provide some guiding recommendations for mental health education for primary school students and have a certain impact on promoting their mental well-being.

1. Introduction

With the steady progress of quality education, the issue of mental health education for primary school students has become a widely recognized concern in current primary education. For a long time, primary education has lacked emphasis on the mental health of primary school students [1], and primary school students often face mental health problems. This article analyzes the problems in mental health education for primary school students and proposes corresponding optimization policies to address the existing mental health issues.

2. Current problems in primary school mental health education

2.1. Weak Teacher Team and Lack of Professional Talents

Given the hidden and complex nature of student psychological issues, it is evident that teachers require highly specialized skills to address these challenges. This necessitates primary school teachers to possess extensive teaching experience and strong professional abilities in order to better cope with these challenges. The overall teaching competence of the teacher team may directly impact the effectiveness of mental health education in

primary schools. Lin Fengni's research [2] demonstrates that in developed Western countries, primary school mental health counselors are required to obtain relevant professional qualifications and have a certain number of years of teaching experience before assuming their positions. In contrast, in China, the level of professionalization in mental health education is far from sufficient, and the overall quality of various psychological counseling training programs is relatively low, making it difficult to provide students with professional teaching assistance. To ensure the smooth implementation of mental health education for primary school students, the primary task is to establish a strong and professional teacher team. This not only requires mental health teachers to possess profound professional knowledge but also to maintain a high level of mental well-being. A qualified and sufficient teacher team in mental health education is the cornerstone of deepening mental health education. Currently, the main challenges lie in the weak teacher workforce and a lack of professional talents. The professional knowledge, skills, and personal qualities of the teacher team in mental health education for primary school students need to be improved. Many mental health teachers often focus only on completing teaching tasks, while their abilities and experience in psychological counseling remain insufficient. This results in difficulties in timely and

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effectively addressing the psychological issues encountered by primary school students.

2.2. Insufficient Emphasis by Schools and Formalized Teaching Methods

The lack of emphasis on mental health education by schools, in addition to the qualifications of teachers, is also a significant reason for the current unsatisfactory state of mental health education. Some schools only superficially engage in mental health education without truly integrating it into educational practices. When selecting teachers, schools often assign these responsibilities to other teachers. While these teachers may have extensive teaching experience, most of them have not received specialized training in psychological counseling, thus unable to provide effective solutions for individual students. It can be observed that the teaching methods of many elementary school mental health education courses are no different from regular subjects. Teachers often employ a mechanical approach to impart knowledge, delivering mental health information to students in a rigid manner, solely for surface-level understanding rather than deep learning. This method severely violates the professional spirit of mental health education practitioners, as it fails to genuinely impart psychological knowledge to students or help them understand the deeper meanings and practical applications of this knowledge in their lives. Such teaching methods are ineffective in cultivating students' sound psychological qualities and holistic personalities. Wu Mengdie [3] points out that under China's current imperfect education system and the immense pressure of exam-oriented education, many schools excessively pursue enrollment rates and academic performance, leading to the neglect of students' mental health development. High-quality education often remains confined to theories and slogans, lacking genuine implementation. When assessing schools, educational authorities primarily focus on enrollment rates and students' grades, further exacerbating the neglect of mental health education by schools. In such an environment, schools often fail to recognize the importance of mental health education, making it difficult to carry out mental health education activities as intended. This not only affects students' holistic development but also contradicts the original intention of education.

2.3. Problems Arising from Family Factors

In the learning and daily life of primary school students, family factors play a dominant role. The main causes of primary school students' psychological problems must first be sought from the perspective of their families. The primary school stage is a critical period for students' growth, where their psychological development is not yet mature, and the formation of thinking and values requires correct guidance from parents and teachers. However, parents often face enormous life pressures, being busy with work and neglecting their children's learning and

growth. Additionally, some parents, in order to ensure their children do not fall behind, enroll them in numerous extracurricular and academic training classes, subjecting them to immense academic pressure, which in turn affects their mental health. However, these parents often fail to recognize their children's mental health problems and do not take measures to address them, severely impacting their children's psychological development. Furthermore, Goodwin [4] suggests that the increasing unmet mental health needs of children are mostly related to families and households, yet most recommended solutions are school-based. Recommendations include increasing the involvement of school nurses in programs aimed at improving children's mental health.

Additionally, research on the mental health problems of primary school students in poverty-stricken communities is relatively scarce. Rousseau [5] conducted a study on emotional and behavioral health needs among 202 third and fourth-grade students in a charter school predominantly composed of Hispanic communities. The study used the Revised Child Anxiety and Depression Scale-25 for self-report by children and teacher-reported scales to assess the perceived mental health needs of these children and teachers. The prevalence rates of depression reported by teachers and anxiety reported by children were 7.0% and 6.67% respectively. The study found that living in single-parent households was a specific risk factor, with higher rates of emotional and behavioral problems among these children compared to those living with both parents. The higher rates of depression and anxiety in this sample compared to nationally representative data indicate the need for culturally sensitive early prevention and intervention in this underserved community.

3. Strategies to optimize primary school students' mental health education

3.1. Strengthen Professional Training and Improve the Professional Competence of Educators

Teachers are the main implementers of education, and their professional competence determines the effectiveness of students' mental health education. Therefore, as frontline educators, teachers should enrich their knowledge in mental health. In addition to homeroom teachers, teachers from various subjects should participate in self-training and continuously improve their professional competence to provide more solid and professional psychological education guidance for primary school students, offer higher-quality education, and effectively improve students' mental health education.

Firstly, schools should establish a professional mental health teacher team. According to the research by Jiang, Ge, and Liu [7], a professional teacher team is the fundamental guarantee for the professionalism and effectiveness of mental health education. It can provide strong educational support to subject teachers, such as

psychological knowledge, assessment, and counseling. Therefore, schools should make efforts to build high-quality mental health teacher teams and establish corresponding counseling rooms to provide more professional mental health services for students and teachers. In this process, in addition to talent recruitment, schools can also conduct internal teacher training to comprehensively and multidimensionally enhance teachers' professional education in mental health, such as factors influencing primary school students' mental health, common psychological problems among primary school students, psychological activities of primary school students, and measures to guide healthy psychological development. This will provide teachers with systematic training courses in psychological knowledge, enabling them to continuously enrich their professional knowledge in mental health and enhance their counseling abilities.

Secondly, in addition to internal training, schools can organize teachers to participate in professional training offered by relevant institutions or listen to lectures by psychology experts to help teachers accumulate more experience in mental health education. This will enable teachers to possess a higher level of mental health education ability while conducting basic subject teaching, combining mental health education with subject education to provide students with higher-quality education. Melissa Anderson [8] suggests that more rigorous research is urgently needed to determine which programs can change teacher behaviors or improve children's mental health outcomes.

3.2. Actively Transform Teaching Concepts and Emphasize Mental Health Education

In the "Outline of the National Medium- and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan" released in 2010, it was proposed that primary and secondary schools should consider mental health education as a fundamental educational task and attach importance to the mental health development of students. Therefore, mental health teachers need to transform their previous teaching concepts and regard mental health education for primary school students as an important teaching task. Additionally, schools should conduct publicity on mental health education to make students aware of the manifestations and harm of mental problems, enabling them to seek help from teachers in a timely manner when facing psychological issues. At the same time, schools should establish dedicated counseling rooms to protect students' privacy, making introverted students feel comfortable and able to freely express their problems.

The effective implementation of mental health education requires educators to strengthen their understanding of mental health education for primary school students. Schools need to attach greater importance to mental health education, enhance educational publicity, and ensure that educators, parents, and students have a correct understanding of mental health education [9]. A positive and healthy mindset is a prerequisite for adapting to society. Therefore, students

can only live more actively, face problems, and handle events with a healthy mindset. In the context of quality education, mental health education has become an important means to promote the development of primary school students. Unlike knowledge-based subjects, the purpose of mental health education is to fundamentally address students' psychological problems. Therefore, educators need to constantly strengthen their emphasis on mental health education, provide more effective educational guidance for primary school students' mental health through more efficient teaching methods, gradually improve the effectiveness of mental health education.

Positive teacher-student relationships influence the psychological development of primary school students and play an intangible guiding role. Teachers should attach importance to this aspect and actively establish good relationships with students, based on the educational principles of respect, equality, objectivity, and care for students. This can enable students to grow and develop in a good educational environment, avoiding serious psychological problems [10]. Furthermore, for students facing learning difficulties or unfavorable family conditions, teachers should provide more care and attention, using positive educational methods such as appreciation and emotional education. By fully tapping into students' strengths and giving timely recognition and encouragement, teachers can help students build confidence and develop a positive and vibrant mental state. Additionally, teachers should have a clear understanding of students' differences, analyze students' psychological changes in a comprehensive and in-depth manner, and fully understand each student's psychological development at each stage, including their psychological adaptation and resilience. Implementing an "all-round cultivation, individual guidance" educational approach ensures that all students receive good mental health education, thereby promoting students' positive direction of psychological development and gradually igniting their enthusiasm and hope for life and learning.

Embedding mental health services into the school system can create an integrated continuum of care to improve children's mental health and educational outcomes. To strengthen this continuum and achieve optimal child development, it may be necessary to reconfigure the education and mental health systems to aid the implementation of evidence-based practices. Fazel [11] suggests that comprehensive strategies combining interventions at the classroom level and student level have great potential. This will require a robust research agenda focusing on the implementation and maintenance of interventions at the system level. Integrating mental health with education has both ethical and scientific justifications: integration democratizes services and, if combined with evidence-based practices, can promote children's healthy development.

3.3. Promote Collaboration between Home and School, Guide and Influence Primary School Students to Develop Healthy Psychology

Although education is primarily the responsibility of schools and teachers, mental health not only involves academic knowledge but also students' daily lives. Most mental problems are often caused by family rather than school factors. According to Liu Xiaoyan's research [12], in mental health education, families should pay close attention to and actively participate, forming an organic collaboration with teachers to support the mental health education of primary school students. Additionally, the family situation of each student is unique. When conducting mental health education, teachers should provide targeted guidance based on the actual family environment and the psychological development of primary school students, in addition to general content guidance and cultivation. Teacher guidance cannot replace the role of family education for each student; therefore, parents should actively cooperate, not only focusing on students' academic development but also on their overall growth, including their mental and physical health. In this process, teachers should also provide appropriate guidance on mental health education to parents, helping them fully realize the role of family education and providing more effective psychological guidance for students. Miller-Lewis [13] suggests that early intervention and prevention strategies through establishing stable and high-quality teacher-student relationships during early childhood education and when children enter formal school may help reduce the occurrence of mental health problems in preschool children.

To make parents aware of the importance of mental health education, schools can organize parent workshops on mental health and provide online mental health education courses to help parents better understand the growth process and psychological needs of primary school students, thereby truly helping students address psychological problems. Additionally, schools can encourage parents to raise daily concerns within parent groups and arrange for professional mental health educators to answer and address parents' questions. For example, to enhance home-school communication, schools can organize monthly workshops to discuss mental health issues and summarize the psychological problems of students at different age stages. In addition to hosting workshops, schools can invite professional mental health educators to record online courses, guiding parents to communicate more with their children and cultivate a good parent-child relationship. In this way, parents can understand their children's true thoughts through communication, thereby fostering their independence and helping them solve psychological problems.

Implementing mental health education in primary schools is crucial for promoting students' healthy growth. To leverage the role of mental health education, teachers should diversify teaching methods, actively communicate with parents, and collaborate with parents to explore students' mental health issues. This collaborative effort

can lead to the design of targeted teaching activities, address students' psychological problems, help students develop a healthy personality, and promote their healthy and happy growth.

3.4. Integration of Mental Health Education into Various Subjects

Wan Zengkui concluded through surveys that schools should fully leverage the value and effectiveness of various subject education, encouraging and advocating for subject teachers to actively integrate mental health education into subject teaching. By consciously promoting mental health education, teachers can help students absorb mental health knowledge more comprehensively and develop a positive mental state. Through this subtle integration, mental health education is incorporated into the learning and growth of primary school students. In fact, subject integration is an efficient way and means in the process of mental health education, allowing students to better understand knowledge in activities based on subject knowledge, continuously improving their mental qualities, and forming a positive mental state. Teachers of Chinese language, ethics and rule of law, English, science, and social studies should attach importance to mental health education, fully leverage the value of subjects, and more effectively integrate mental health education into classroom teaching. In the context of subject integration, mental health education is not only practical but also an important educational task in current educational development.

When integrating mental health education into teaching, subject teachers should strengthen the practical teaching effect by incorporating it into every class. For example, teachers can use multimedia resources to present case studies, guiding students to analyze and think based on subject knowledge, further deepening their understanding of mental health knowledge. Through this approach, teachers can not only encourage students to actively learn subject knowledge but also improve the quality of subject teaching, effectively implement mental health education, achieve a "subtle cultivation" effect, and promote the comprehensive development of primary school students' qualities and personalities.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, current primary school mental health education is an important issue that needs to be addressed in the field of education. By enhancing the professional competence of educators, emphasizing the importance of mental health education, promoting collaboration between schools and families, and integrating mental health education into various subjects, significant improvements can be made. This will serve as a beneficial supplement to school-based mental health education and effectively address the current challenges in the mental well-being of primary school students, providing a strong guarantee for their healthy development.

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