

Research on the Intervention Effect of Music Group Counseling on School Weariness Among Left-behind Children

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Abstract

Left-behind children constitute a special group that has emerged during China's urbanization process. The detection rate of their school weariness is as high as 21.9%, seriously affecting their academic development and mental health. Existing research indicates that self-compassion can buffer the negative impact of school weariness on problematic behaviors, while music therapy possesses unique advantages in emotional regulation and subconscious exploration. This study aims to explore the intervention effect of music group counseling on school weariness among left-behind children and examine the possible mediating role of self-compassion. Utilizing literature research, theoretical analysis, and program design methods, this study integrates self-compassion theory and music-guided imagery theory to construct a mechanism model of music group counseling and design a six-session music group counseling program. The research reveals that music group counseling can alleviate school weariness by enhancing self-compassion levels, with its mechanism including emotional expression, self-acceptance, group support, and mindfulness cultivation. This study theoretically deepens the understanding of the mechanism of self-compassion and provides a new approach for intervening in school weariness among left-behind children in practice.

Keywords

Left-behind children; weariness towards learning; music group counseling; self-compassion; intervention study.

1. Introduction

Left-behind children refer to minors who stay in their registered residence while their parents, both or one, work away from home and are taken care of by others. This group has emerged in large numbers during China's urbanization process, and their mental health issues have garnered significant attention. Research shows that left-behind children are more prone to developing a disinterest in learning than their non-left-behind peers, with a detection rate of up to 21.9% [1]. Disinterest in learning not only hinders academic development but is often accompanied by internalizing problems such as anxiety and depression, and may even increase the risk of delinquency and criminal activity [2]. Therefore, exploring effective intervention measures to help left-behind children alleviate their disinterest in learning is of great practical significance.

In the field of mental health education, "self-compassion," as a positive self-attitude, has emerged as a research hotspot in recent years. Self-compassion refers to an individual's ability to treat oneself with kindness when facing failure or pain [3]. Luo Xiaoman et al. found that self-compassion can buffer the negative impact of school weariness on problematic behaviors, meaning that left-behind children with high levels of self-compassion exhibit fewer negative behaviors when facing academic setbacks [1].

However, there is currently a lack of mature intervention research on how to systematically cultivate the self-compassion ability of left-behind children.

Music therapy exhibits unique advantages in emotional regulation and subconscious exploration. According to the music-guided imagery theory proposed by Bonney, music can serve as a "collaborative therapist" to tap into individuals' deep emotions [4]. Zhang Hanwen applied Orff group music therapy to the mental health education of college students and achieved good results [5]. Group psychological counseling is widely used in school mental health education due to its wide influence, high efficiency, and easy consolidation of effects [6]. Currently, although there are studies exploring the buffering effect of self-compassion, methods of music therapy, effects of group counseling, and learning disinterest characteristics of left-behind children, no research has yet integrated these elements to specifically investigate how music group counseling can intervene in learning disinterest among left-behind children by cultivating self-compassion. This study attempts to fill this gap by integrating self-compassion theory and music-guided imagery theory, designing a group counseling program suitable for left-behind children, and elucidating its mechanism of action.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Study on school weariness among left-behind children

Domestic scholars have conducted systematic research on the issue of school weariness among left-behind children. Ren Shengtao analyzed the manifestations, causes, and psychological counseling mechanisms of school weariness among adolescents, pointing out that the psychology of school weariness goes through four stages: anxiety, doubt, fear, and inferiority [2]. Left-behind children, whose parents work away from home, constitute a high-risk group for school weariness. Luo Xiaoman et al. conducted a survey of 1,285 middle school students in Sichuan Province and found that the scores of left-behind adolescents on school weariness were significantly higher than those of non-left-behind adolescents, and there was a positive correlation between school weariness and problematic behaviors [1]. Ni Fengkun studied the school weariness sentiment of left-behind children from the perspective of school alienation and found that left-behind children scored significantly higher than non-left-behind children in terms of feelings of lack of norms, powerlessness, and isolation [6]. The aforementioned studies provide the background and theoretical basis for this research, but existing studies have mostly focused on describing the current situation of school weariness and analyzing related factors, lacking systematic intervention research.

2.2. Self-compassion research

The concept of self-compassion was systematically elaborated by Neff, encompassing six dimensions: self-kindness, common humanity, mindfulness, self-judgment, sense of isolation, and excessive indulgence [3]. Chen Jian et al. revised the Chinese version of the self-compassion scale, providing a reliable tool for domestic research [7]. Luo Xiaoman et al. found that self-compassion is negatively correlated with problematic behaviors, and self-compassion can buffer the negative impact of school weariness on problematic behaviors [1]. This finding provides important insights for intervention research: cultivating self-compassion may be an effective path to alleviate school weariness. However, there is currently a lack of empirical research on how to enhance the self-compassion level of left-behind children through specific psychological counseling methods.

2.3. Music therapy research

Music therapy became an official discipline at Michigan State University in 1944 and has since developed various methods such as receptive, participatory, improvisational performance, and Orff group music therapy [5]. The music-guided imagination theory founded by Bonney

emphasizes that music can reach deep subconscious memories and emotions [4]. Zhang Hanwen applied Orff group music therapy to the mental health education of college students and achieved good results [5]. These studies provide methodological support for this article, but existing research mostly focuses on college students or general adolescent groups, with fewer specialized studies on left-behind children.

2.4. Research on group psychological counseling

Group counseling achieves psychological counseling objectives through group activities and has the advantages of wide influence, high efficiency, and easy consolidation of effects [6]. Ni Fengkun used group counseling to intervene in left-behind children, and after 15 weeks, the school alienation of the experimental group significantly decreased, proving the effectiveness of group counseling for left-behind children [6]. This study provides important methodological references for this research, but it does not involve musical elements and does not explore the mechanism of self-compassion.

2.5. Research review

In summary, existing research has accumulated rich achievements in areas such as the learning disinterest problem among left-behind children, the buffering effect of self-compassion, methods of music therapy, and the effectiveness of group counseling, providing a solid theoretical foundation and methodological references for this study. However, no research has yet integrated music group counseling with self-compassion theory to specifically conduct intervention research on the learning disinterest of left-behind children. This study attempts to fill this gap.

3. Research Methods

3.1. Research Approach

This study adopts a research approach that combines theoretical construction with scheme design, specifically divided into six steps:

- (1) Systematically search and read literature on left-behind children's weariness towards learning, self-pity, music therapy, group counseling, and related fields, and record the theoretical basis and research methods of each article.
- (2) Organize literature notes, compare findings from different studies, and clarify the contributions and shortcomings of existing research.
- (3) Integrate Bonnie's music-guided imagination theory and Luo Xiaoman's self-compassion theory to construct a theoretical framework for music group counseling intervention against school weariness among left-behind children.
- (4) Based on the Orff music therapy method, the Bonnie Five-Step Method, and Ni Fengkun's group counseling activities, design a music group counseling program consisting of six sessions.
- (5) Based on literature analysis and theoretical integration, practical suggestions for schools and teachers are proposed.
- (6) Integrate the various parts into a complete thesis.

3.2. Research methods

3.2.1. Literature research method

This study systematically retrieved and organized the following five types of literature: research related to school weariness among left-behind children, research related to self-compassion, research related to music therapy, research related to group counseling, and research combining the aforementioned fields. The sources of literature included databases such as CNKI and Wanfang, with a retrieval time range from 2000 to 2026. Through literature

review, the current research status and gaps were identified, providing theoretical support for research design.

3.2.2. Theoretical analysis method

This study uses self-compassion theory as the core explanatory mechanism, combined with music-guided imagery theory, to analyze how music group counseling can alleviate school weariness by enhancing self-compassion ability. The specific analysis is carried out from two levels: first, based on self-compassion theory, analyzing the relationship between the six dimensions of self-compassion and school weariness; second, based on music-guided imagery theory, analyzing how music helps individuals touch deep emotions, enhance self-awareness, and self-acceptance. Through theoretical integration, the intrinsic connection between music, self-compassion, and school weariness is clarified.

3.2.3. Scheme design method

Based on the fundamental methods of Orff music therapy (musical movement, improvisation, song discussion, etc.), combined with the Bonny Five-Step Method (beginning, relaxation, theme, musical activity, ending), and drawing on the game and discussion design in group counseling by Ni Fengkun [6], this study developed a six-session music group counseling program suitable for left-behind children. Each session is set to last 60 minutes, and the content is adaptively adjusted according to the psychological characteristics of left-behind children. The program design clearly outlines the objectives, process, musical materials, and theoretical basis for each session.

3.3. Intervention program design

This plan involves six activities, with each activity strictly adhering to the Bonny Five-Step Method. The specific details are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. Music Group Counseling Program

frequency	Theme	main content	Musical material s	theoretical basis
1	Get to know and relax	Self- introduction, music rhythm, body relaxation training	Gymnopédie No.1 (Satie)	Orff Music Therapy, Bonnie Five-Step Approach
2	Emotion recognition and expression	Music emotion painting, improvisational performance	Sonata No. 14 In C Major, Op. 10, No. 1, "Moonlight" (Beethoven)	Music guides the mindfulness dimensions of imagination and self-compassion
3	self- acceptance	Discuss the song "Invisible Wings" and share growth experiences	"Invisible Wings" (by Zhang Shaohan)	Self- friendliness, universal humanity
4	Underst and loneliness	Chinese folk music stimulates imagination and fosters group sharing	"Spring Moon Over a Flower- Adorned River" (Orchestral Version)	Music guides imagination and alleviates feelings of isolation
5	inner strength	Listen to a segment of "Symphony of Destiny" and improvise	Symphony No.5, First Movement (Beethoven)	The buffering effect of self- compassion, and the stimulation of positive emotions
6	Summary and Outlook	Reviewing our growth, exchanging musical blessings, and concluding the ceremony	Members choose their own music clips	Group cohesion, positive reinforcement

The specific process of each activity is as follows:

First activity: Getting to know each other and relaxing. The goal is to establish group relationships and alleviate tension. The content includes self-introduction, music rhythm, and body relaxation training. The soothing piano piece "Gymnopédie No.1" is selected as the background music.

Second activity: Emotion recognition and expression. The goal is to help members recognize and express emotions. The content includes emotional painting after listening to music and improvisational performance. Two pieces of music with distinct emotional contrasts are selected (the first and third movements of "Moonlight Sonata").

The third activity: self-acceptance. The goal is to cultivate a sense of self-kindness. The content includes a discussion of the song "Invisible Wings" and sharing difficult moments in personal growth experiences.

The fourth activity: Understanding loneliness. The goal is to alleviate feelings of isolation and enhance a sense of belonging. The content includes listening to the Chinese folk music "Spring Moon" to guide imagination, and group sharing of feelings.

The fifth activity: Inner Strength. The goal is to stimulate positive emotions and enhance coping abilities. The content includes listening to a segment of Beethoven's "Symphony No. 5, Op. 67, 'Für Elise'", and engaging in improvisation and sharing.

The sixth event: Summary and Outlook. The goal is to consolidate growth and strengthen group support. The content includes reviewing the growth journey, exchanging musical blessings, and the closing ceremony.

4. Feasibility Analysis

This study is feasible in terms of theory, materials, and personal conditions.

Theoretical Feasibility: This study selected five core literature articles as theoretical support: Luo Xiaoman et al. demonstrated that self-compassion can buffer the negative impact of school weariness [1]; Bonney proved that music can touch deep emotions [4]; Ni Fengkun demonstrated the effectiveness of group counseling for left-behind children [6]; Zhang Hanwen provided specific methods for music therapy [5]; Ren Shengtao clarified the severity of school weariness and the uniqueness of left-behind children [2].

Material Feasibility: The required scales can be found in the literature: Zhao Yufen's weariness scale [8] and Chen Jian et al.'s self-pity scale [7]. All necessary musical materials can be obtained through the internet, including "Spring Moon", "Symphony of Destiny", and so on.

Personal condition feasibility: The researcher is a music major student with a deep understanding of classical and ethnic music. They are capable of selecting appropriate music based on the activity's objectives and possess the basic abilities required to complete the research.

5. Suggestions for Schools and Teachers

Based on literature analysis and scheme design, this study proposes the following suggestions for schools and teachers:

- (1) Incorporate music group counseling into the school's mental health education system as a routine intervention for left-behind children.
- (2) Emphasize the cultivation of self-compassion, and guide students to accept and be kind to themselves in education and teaching.
- (3) Leverage music resources to conduct regular emotional education, such as daily music relaxation and emotional expression activities.

(4) Enhance teachers' understanding of basic methods of music therapy and improve their psychological counseling abilities.

(5) Establish an emotional support network for left- behind children, and alleviate their feelings of isolation and powerlessness through group activities.

6. Conclusion

Based on a systematic review of literature related to school weariness, self-compassion, music therapy, and group counseling among left-behind children, this study integrates self-compassion theory and music-guided imagery theory to construct a theoretical framework for music group counseling intervention against school weariness among left-behind children. The study designs a six-session music group counseling program, clarifies the theoretical basis, implementation steps, and specific content of the activities, and provides targeted suggestions for school education practice.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in introducing self-compassion as a mediating mechanism into the research on music group counseling intervention. It breaks through the limitations of previous studies with a single perspective and provides a new theoretical perspective for understanding the mechanism of action of music therapy in the mental health education of left-behind children. The research results indicate that music group counseling may function through the following pathways: music helps individuals relax their body and mind and express emotions, the group atmosphere provides emotional support, and under the guidance of music, individuals gradually cultivate self-kindness and mindfulness, thereby enhancing self-compassion levels and ultimately buffering the negative impact of school weariness on problematic behaviors.

At the practical level, the program designed in this study possesses strong operability and replicability, serving as a valuable reference for school mental health educators. Based on the research findings, this study suggests that schools should incorporate music group counseling into their mental health education system, emphasize the cultivation of self-compassion skills, utilize music resources to conduct regular emotional education, and enhance teachers' understanding of music therapy methods.

This study has certain limitations. Currently, the research is still in the stage of theoretical construction and scheme design, and empirical intervention has not yet been carried out. Subsequent research should further conduct experimental studies, comparing experimental groups with control groups to examine the actual intervention effect of music group counseling on the learning aversion of left- behind children, and verify the mediating role of self-compassion. In addition, future research can also explore the differential effects of different types of music (such as ethnic music and classical music) in intervention, as well as the sustainability and transferability of intervention effects.

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