

# *A Review of Research on Mental Health Education for Community Correction Objects*

Xianji Ma<sup>a,\*</sup>

*Department of Education, Yunnan Normal University, Kunming, Yunnan, China*

*<sup>a</sup>1650151283@qq.com*

*\*Corresponding author*

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**Abstract:** Community psychological correction mainly refers to a series of psychological counselling, correction, counselling and treatment activities conducted by professional psychological workers, including criminology experts, psychologists, psychological consultants and other professionals, who use psychological knowledge to help community prisoners. The object of community correction has the characteristics of centrality, resilience, innovation, and human nature. The content mainly includes six aspects: general knowledge education of mental health, self-cognition education, positive and healthy mentality education, willpower and character education education, harmonious interpersonal relationship education, standardized life habit education, and socialized education.

## **1. Community-based corrections**

### **1.1. Definition**

Community correction is a non custodial punishment that places the object of community correction in the community, utilizing the joint efforts of the state and society to provide labor education and ideological transformation to the object of community correction. The fundamental purpose is to help the community correct misconceptions and smoothly return to society.

### **1.2. Object**

It refers to criminals who receive correction in the community, also known as community correction objects or community correction objects. Generally, the following situations are met: juvenile offenders with minor crimes and minimal subjective malignancy, elderly, sick, and disabled offenders, as well as first-time offenders and negligent offenders with minor crimes who are generally sentenced to public surveillance, probation, parole, decision to temporarily serve outside prison, deprived of political rights, and serving sentences in the community. They have a certain degree of personal freedom and are able to work normally, in addition to concentrating their study time and submitting their ideological reports on time.[1]

## **2. Community psychological correction**

Community psychological correction mainly refers to a series of psychological counselling, correctional, advisory and therapeutic activities carried out by professional psychologists, including criminologists, psychologists, counsellors and other professionals, who provide psychological knowledge to help people serving community sentences, with the aim of preventing and guiding the undesirable psychology of community correctional subjects and promoting the formation of their healthy and positive personality. The ultimate goal is to eliminate past bad habits and behaviours, establish a new, healthy lifestyle and behaviour, return to society and become a part of it, a process of re-socialisation and transformation.

## **3. Psychological health education for community correction objects**

Mental health education refers to the educational practice of using the relevant theories and operations of scientific psychology disciplines in a purposeful, planned and organised manner to cultivate healthy psychological qualities and improve the social adaptability of the educated according to the characteristics of their physical and mental development. It can promote the development of psychological potential and the overall improvement of quality.

Mental health education for community correctional clients is the core aspect of community psychological correction. It refers to the process of education and behavioural correction for all community correctional subjects, including the transfer of scientific and cultural knowledge, standardised behavioural training and practical guidance on "re-socialisation", in order to improve their own psychological quality and promote the improvement of the psychological health of community correctional subjects, a kind of social training for community correctional subjects. "This is an educational activity that fosters the social 'bonding' attributes of community correctional clients. [2]

## **4. The Characteristics of Psychological Health Education for Community Correction Objects**

### **4.1. Centrality**

Compared to imprisonment correction, community psychological correction, as an important component of community correction work, bears the responsibility of risk control for the legal and social values of community correction work. It is an effective means to prevent correctional personnel from committing crimes again. At the same time, as the last link of judicial correction, it bears the responsibility of the re socialization of criminals. In this process, Psychological health education gradually improves and improves the negative psychological and behavioral characteristics of correctors through systematic psychological intervention, ultimately achieving good social adaptation. Therefore, psychological health education in community psychological correction work has a central characteristic.

### **4.2. Recoverability**

The core purpose of community psychological correction is to correct the negative psychology and behavior of correctional personnel, cultivate social skills, and achieve re socialization. Therefore, under community psychological correction, psychological health education fully utilizes the familiar social environment of correctional personnel in work, weakens the closure of prisons, relaxes the freedom of criminals, increases the connection between criminals and society, and promotes criminals to master life skills and relevant social knowledge Shaping criminals' beliefs

and personalities that are in line with normal social life ultimately achieves good social shaping of criminals, helps them break free from the influence of criminal "labels", enables them to integrate into social production and life faster and better, and achieves the goal of preventing crime.[3]

### **4.3. Innovation**

Compared to the long history of imprisonment correction, the development of community psychological correction in China has the characteristics of late start and slow development. China started the pilot work of community correction in 2003, and it was fully piloted nationwide in 2009. As community correction is gradually on the right track, mental health education, as a new integration mode of community correction work and psychological consultation work, has shown completely different characteristics in the past judicial correction work.

### **4.4. Human nature**

Unlike traditional incarceration correction, which separates correctional personnel from the social environment and achieves correction in the incarcerated environment, psychological health education under community psychological correction provides education and correction to correctional personnel on the basis of not being separated from the social environment. During the correction process, the personal dignity and social support level of the correctional personnel are fully considered. Compared to imprisonment correction, mental health education under community psychological correction is relatively free in management and system, providing correction personnel with certain space. Based on the psychological characteristics of the corrected personnel, psychological health education activities are adopted according to local conditions to improve negative psychology and behavior, improve social adaptability and skills, and prevent recidivism in a way recognized by the corrected personnel.

## **5. Research background**

### **5.1. Era background**

Since June 2003, the Supreme People's Court, the Supreme People's Procuratorate, the Ministry of Public Security, and the Ministry of Justice jointly issued the "Notice on Carrying out Pilot Work of Community Correction", community correction has developed rapidly in China, and various regions have actively explored community correction. The concept of community correction began with the socialization of execution in the West and became a legal system. It originated in the 1950s and, after more than half a century of development, has now become the dominant method of execution in Western countries. The emergence of community correction system has broken people's traditional understanding of punishment, which is a major progress in the history of human thought. From the perspective of development trend, the penalty system has entered a stage where non custodial punishment is the main punishment, rather than imprisonment. Literature shows that in many countries, the number of people applying community correction significantly exceeds the number of incarcerated individuals.

In recent years, the country has attached great importance to promoting community correction work, and the number of community correction targets has been continuously increasing. The Ministry of Justice once introduced at the National Conference on Community Correction Education Management that the number of community correction targets has approached one-third of the total number of criminals in the country and will continue to increase. The return of so many social correction objects to society is inseparable from the support of society. In 2014, the Ministry

of Justice and others issued the "Opinions on Organizing Social Forces to Participate in Community Correction Work", advocating for the participation and support of all sectors of society in social correction work..

Under the background of the era construction, since the reform and opening up, China has made remarkable achievements in the construction of material civilization, on which the ideological and cultural quality of the people has also been constantly improved. The concept of the legal system has been deeply rooted in the hearts of the people. "Know the law, understand the law, and abide by the law" has become a well-known slogan.[4] At the same time, there are also relevant literature studies that "crime is equal to death penalty" The outdated ideas of "criminals should not have any rights" still exist in people's minds, causing certain obstacles to community correction and community imprisonment work. As a highly targeted and innovative correction method, community correction aims to transform criminals through a combination of free work and regular participation in community activities in a non custodial manner. The research on "psychological correction", as a key means of community correction, is particularly important in breaking away from outdated thinking, providing humanistic care for criminals, and assisting correction victims in returning to society.

## 5.2. Psychological background

In the context of psychology, in September 2009, the government issued the "Opinions on Trial Implementation of Community Correction Work Nationwide", which pointed out that since 2009, community correction work has been implemented nationwide, requiring different means and methods to provide psychological health education and counseling to correction personnel. On December 30, 2016, the National Health and Family Planning Commission, the Ministry of Propaganda, and others jointly issued the "Guiding Opinions on Strengthening Mental Health Services", which stated: "We should attach importance to the mental health services of special personnel (community correction objects), strengthen humanistic care and psychological counseling, eliminate discrimination, help them reintegrate into society, improve their ability to withstand setbacks and adapt to the environment, and avoid recurrence, The planning outline clearly states that the "Guiding Opinions on Strengthening Community Mental Health Services" has been elevated from the basic level to the strategic level, with the aim of improving the social psychological service system and crisis intervention mechanism.

In practical operations, correctional personnel often have the "particularity" of their identity. They are not only "social citizens" living in the community, but also "criminals" undergoing judicial reform. The particularity of their identity and the psychological "particularity" brought about by it have become the focus of attention in both disciplinary construction and practical operations. Research data shows that "confusion, vigilance, resentment, hostility, resistance, exclusion, loneliness, inferiority, shame, depression, anxiety, and fear" constitute the "particularity" of the psychological characteristics of community correction objects, and among them, "self blame" and "regret" have become the main psychological problems, becoming obstacles for the corrected individuals to return to society. Providing psychological health education tailored to the psychological "particularity" of community correction objects has become a necessary link in community correction, as well as an effective means of controlling the risks of community correction objects.

## 5.3. Social background

In the context of social construction, research on community psychological correction has focused on foreign countries, with a significant gap in people's lives compared to China's social

background. Studies have shown significant differences in the key dimensions of independence and dependence between Western and Chinese communities. Therefore, copying foreign practices does not conform to China's national conditions and community status. It is necessary for Chinese professionals to conduct relevant research based on the corresponding social background and community status in China. In addition, the work and research on community psychological correction in China have been carried out relatively late, and the system and theoretical construction need to be strengthened. However, on the contrary, the number of registered community correction objects in China has been continuously increasing since 2009. In Yunnan Province alone, there were 20000 registered community correction objects in the province in 2010, and by April 2015, it had grown to 38000, showing a rapid growth trend. With the pressure of system optimization and the increasing demand for community correction targets, it is urgent to carry out targeted and efficient community psychological correction work. In addition, since the issuance of the "Opinions on Trial Implementation of Community Correction Work nationwide" in April 2009, community psychological correction work in China has received positive responses from various regions. Community psychological correction has been recognized by all sectors of society for its human nature, efficiency, flexibility, and other characteristics.[5]

The 2021 National Conference on the Construction of Community Psychology was held at the Chenggong Campus of Yunnan Normal University, and the issue of psychological correction for community correction objects received attention from scholars from all walks of life. At the conference, the relationship between community correction work and community legal system was discussed, comprehensively revealing the role of community psychological correction in the transformation process of community correction objects. The conference showed that there is a strong negative correlation between the increase in community correction numbers and urban community cohesion. The economic status of urban communities plays a mediating variable role in this relationship. If community psychological correction is carried out effectively, the strong negative correlation between the number of community corrections and urban community cohesion will change to a weak negative correlation. Therefore, in real-time, appropriate, and effective community psychological correction work, in addition to facilitating the willingness of the corrected to return to society and adapt to life, it will also be conducive to the construction of community harmony and stability. Not only is such effective community psychological correction work, but it can also serve as a stabilizer and feedback path for community psychological correction work, achieving better control of community correction work and building a grassroots system for community correction.

The current psychological health education for community correction targets is a requirement jointly proposed by the construction of the times, disciplines, and society.

## **6. Overview of the Development of Community Correction Mental Health Education**

### **6.1. The current situation of mental health education in the application of community correction**

At present, the mental health education services for community correction in China mainly adopt the following four methods: government led, and society purchasing professional services; The government establishes studios and organizes volunteers to carry out work; Community mental health educators with qualifications for psychotherapy and counseling will carry out their own work; A team of psychological counselors organized by social institutions participate in mental health education work in their spare time.

The mental health education of community correction objects includes six aspects: general knowledge education of mental health, self cognition education, positive and healthy mentality

education, willpower and character education, harmonious interpersonal relationship education, standardized lifestyle education, and socialized education.

After further research and pilot experiments on community correction, some scholars advocate localizing and institutionalizing psychological correction and mental health education based on the characteristics of China's own, while studying foreign psychological correction. In terms of domestic research on psychological correction of community correction objects, some scholars advocate the use of relevant theories of western psychology to carry out psychological correction on correction objects, such as the use of Freud's psychoanalytic theory, behaviorism's "aversion therapy", "systematic desensitization" and cognitivism's "rational emotional therapy" to study and explore the correction of criminal psychology of community correction objects. Some scholars also advocate the use of postmodern psychology combined with the psychological characteristics of Chinese people for research and analysis, which to some extent provides a reference for the psychological correction of community correction objects in China. The Crime Prevention Research Institute of the Ministry of Justice has launched the project "Operating Norms and Technical Standards for Internal Observation Methods of Chinese Criminals", organizing prison bureaus and 7 affiliated prisons in 6 provinces (districts and cities) nationwide to explore the use of internal observation therapy to reform criminals. Nearly 900 criminals participated, and over 90% of them achieved very obvious or even shocking results. Therefore, the practical application effect of the internal theme psychological correction method in the psychological correction work of community correction objects is of great significance for constructing a community psychological correction model with Chinese characteristics, regional characteristics, and personnel characteristics. However, the design and practical effectiveness of specific methods still require long-term community mental health education and practical data for psychological correction to support.

## **6.2. The Shortcomings of Psychological Health Education in the Application of Community Correction**

At present, the professional workers participating in community psychological correction in China are mainly social and university forces. These psychological professionals mainly work for normal individuals in daily life, lacking professional backgrounds in law, psychology, sociology, and other related fields. Secondly, there is currently a lack of professional talent training for community psychological correction in China, resulting in a lack of targeted mental health education and corresponding professional psychological correction work, and the effectiveness of correction cannot be improved.

Community correction workers do not have sufficient understanding and attention to psychological correction and mental health education, and cannot provide sufficient support in terms of personnel, institutions, and facilities. The implementation of local mental health education work is too simple and generalized, lacking systematic psychological correction, the establishment of psychological archives, and the quality evaluation of psychological correction. Community correction objects have insufficient understanding of psychological correction and mental health education, and do not cooperate with corresponding work.

Although the relevant laws and regulations on community correction in China are gradually improving, the regulations are scattered in several departmental laws, regulations, and normative documents, lacking systematicity and completeness. There is a lack of specialized legal provisions for community correction of illegal and criminal activities. In practical work, there are often few operational provisions, making it difficult to effectively implement relevant work. In addition, community correction mental health education is a complex task that requires material support such as funding, equipment, and venues. Currently, both pilot and promotion funds in China are

insufficient, making it impossible to carry out various, complete, and in-depth mental health education activities.

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