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# Positive and Negative Pairings: A Soft Intervention Focused on Reducing Aggression in Narcissistic Personality Adolescents to Reduce Bullying in Schools

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**Abstract:** School bullying has increasingly become a significant factor affecting the mental health and academic life of adolescents in mainland China and globally, with many victims suffering from Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), insomnia, anxiety, and mood disorders. While much research in mainland China focuses on psychological treatment and protective measures for victims, there is a scarcity of behavioral analyses and intervention programs targeting aggressors, especially adolescents with narcissistic personalities, a high-risk group. Narcissistic adolescents typically exhibit traits such as arrogance, intense emotional expressiveness, a craving for admiration and control, a strong desire for attention, and a lack of empathy, making them more prone to proactive aggression and bullying behaviors. This paper presents a typical case of school bullying involving a narcissistic individual, analyzes the common behaviors and psychology of narcissistic bullies based on the underlying logic and causes of their thinking, and integrates aggression-related theories to propose a “Positive-Negative Pairing” psychological intervention method based on student group participation. The intervention aims to gently modify self-perceptions and enhance empathy within the school environment, thereby reducing the aggression of narcissistic adolescents and consequently decreasing instances of bullying. The study indicates that this intervention method is highly targeted and sustainable, but also acknowledges limitations such as potential test manipulation by narcissistic individuals and low willingness to cooperate, suggesting the need for further optimization.

**Keywords:** narcissistic personality; school bullying; aggression intervention; empathy enhancement; student psychological support

## 1. Introduction

In mainland China and around the world, school bullying has gradually become an important factor affecting the mental health, life, and learning of adolescents, with many victims suffering from Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), insomnia, anxiety, and mood disorders. Many researches on school bullying in mainland China focuses on psychological treatment and protective measures for the victims, but there are fewer behavioral analyses and intervention programs for the aggressors, especially for adolescents with narcissistic personalities, a specific high-risk group. The more common Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) is characterized by pomposity, intense expressiveness, need for a sense of admiration and control, extreme desire for attention from others, and lack of empathy. This has a high level of similarity with the Proactive aggressors: selfish and a tendency to

display apathetic violent tendencies and aggressive behaviors, which makes them more prone to bullying and aggression others than normal people.

In summary, useful psychological interventions to prevent their aggressive tendencies from further developing or even evolving into psychological disorders (NPD) are necessary to prevent school bullying in this group. Existing interventions for narcissistic personality are commonly used, such as psychodynamic therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), and emotion management training. As adolescents are not yet mature, their self-control ability is still unstable, it is still difficult for these universal interventions to achieve the requirements of minimizing or avoiding the impact on their learning, interpersonal relationships, and growth environment, as well as reducing their aggressiveness in school background. Therefore, this paper will start with the introduction of a typical case of school bullying involving narcissists, analyze the common behaviors and psychology of narcissistic bullies based on the logic and causes of thinking, combined with aggression-related theories, and thus introduce a psychotherapy based on student group participation with two aspects of confronting the sense of self and enhancing empathy as benchmark, aiming to use the mildness of interventions carried out in the school environment as a means of reducing the impact of narcissistic bullying. The aim is to use a gentle intervention in the school environment as a new attempt to reduce the aggression of narcissistic adolescents.

## 2. Case Introduction and Behaviors Analysis

Yi Wu is a high school student who has become friends with Yue Jiang, a famous singer in her class, due to their similar love of music. However, during the school's music performance club activities, Yue Jiang showed her amazing musical talent, which impressed all the students, and in the election of the champion, she got more votes than Yi Wu. Since then, most of Yi Wu's supporters in the class were attracted to Yue Jiang, and few of them paid attention to her performance, which annoyed Yi Wu a lot. She finds a broken doll in Yue Jiang's bag at the end of a class, and leads her followers to spread rumors that Yue Jiang has a split personality disorder and talks to dolls, causing her popularity in the class to be quickly reversed, and to be ostracized and isolated. She confronted Yi Wu and scolded her for her behavior, which ignited Yi Wu's anger. She conducted a personal investigation into Yue Jiang and found that she lives with her grandmother, who gave her the broken doll as a birthday gift. And then, she directed her followers to take the doll from Yue Jiang's school bag and crouched at the intersection where her grandmother goes home, throwing the doll in the middle of the road as her grandmother passes by. The anxious grandmother ran out into the street to pick it up, not noticing the oncoming car in front of her, and was tragically passed away in the accident. Yue Jiang lost her only family member and suffered from depression afterward, forcing her to drop out of school.

In a follow-up investigation of Yi Wu, it was found that she had a serious narcissistic personality, could not tolerate others not following and obeying her orders, was extremely and pathologically attention-seeking, and believed that she was entitled to everyone's admiration and praise. Research has proven that the narcissistic personality lacks empathy, constantly uses and exploits others, and is often jealous. This logic of acting led her to view Yue Jiang, who deprived her of her sense of power, as an enemy and to display aggressive behavior towards her via verbal violence and group isolation, even directing her classmates to indirectly cause harm to her family members. However, according to the subsequent investigation of the case, while her charisma had not yet been affected, Yi Wu had not committed any substantive acts of aggression against Yue Jiang, but had consciously instilled in her the notion that she was the "absolute authority" in her class's music club, and Yue Jiang's shaking of this notion was perceived by Yi Wu as a form of provocation. Indeed, it has been shown that provocative words, behaviors, or events significantly increase narcissists' aggressive tendencies [1].

The case above confirms that the lack of empathy is a significant factor in the vulnerability of this group of individuals with narcissistic personality traits to aggression: by overemphasizing their own feelings. Narcissistic adolescents tend to fail in interpersonal interactions and are unable to react to them correctly, a frustration that is counterproductive to their need for support and validation need for support and validation, which can potentially create extreme reverse reinforcement, prompting them to force others to submit or become their supporters through schoolyard bullying or other coercive behaviors, without taking the physical and psychological conditions and emotional feelings of others into account [2]. In general, most narcissists without empathy may present with two conditions: distorted cognition – they do not realize that their behavior is hurtful to others; or controlling desires – they clearly understand the aggressiveness of their behaviors but enjoy oppressing others, emphasizing their own sense of superiority. In sum, narcissistic aggressors rarely feel guilty for their victims and are reluctant to apologize for their behavior [3]. This puts them at a higher risk of becoming a Proactive aggressor or antisocial personality without intervention. This can also explain the high risk of narcissistic adolescents engaging in school bullying.

### 3. Causal Analysis and Subordinate Types

This essay examines the formative factors and contextual environments of narcissism in adolescents with narcissistic tendencies before introducing interventions based on the school environment. The causes of narcissistic personality formation are complex and multifaceted, and different influences also affect the differentiation of narcissistic personality into vulnerable and grandiose variant [4]. As for the school-age adolescent group, family and school, as their main social environments, play a dominant role in shaping the personality. Existing studies have proved that many families of narcissistic adolescents have non-positive behavioral guidance, i.e., most of their childhood behaviors are designed to gain parental expectations rather than social expectations; moreover, if the parents everlasting spoil or praise the children who have some talents to make him repeatedly aware of his own sense of being and ability, then he is highly likely to have a false perception of his own personality; this inertia makes his interpersonal relationships in school also centered on satisfying his sense of self and his will to control. Overall, adolescents who grow up in spoiled families are more likely to develop grandiose variant due to the lack of objective knowledge about their own behavior [5].

In contrast, families that display violent or detached tendencies are more likely to produce vulnerable variant narcissistic adolescents: according to attachment theory, when adolescents are subjected to prolonged periods of parental indifference or verbal violence, which results in unmet emotional needs, they may develop negative self-patterns, such as compensatory avoidance, minimizing emotional investment in others [6]. This is a major contributing factor to the second core trait of the narcissistic personality, apathy without empathy. In school, adolescents affected by this factor fail to realize that attention from others should be based on their actions rather than on their personal charisma, resulting in a “Black or White” way of thinking-others are viewed either as friendly, willing providers or as hostile, uncaring people. Others are either seen as friendly, willing providers or as hostile, unwilling providers. The most common means to enforce the latter to serve them is through aggressive behavior (both verbal and physical).

### 4. Original Intervention: Students Group Support

The above analysis of the psychology and contributing factors of narcissistic adolescents, provides two important dimensions for thinking about the design of original interventions: correcting self-perceptions, and enhancing empathy and sympathy. In this session, we will use the emotional feedback mechanism as the underlying theory. We introduce a student psychological support group themed “Positive-Negative Pairings” to help narcissistic adolescents alleviate and detach from their psychological barriers. This group

will focus on reducing their paranoid and aggressive tendencies, enhancing empathy, and helping them learn to rationally manage their control and identity needs. Ultimately, it aims to reduce the incidence of bullying behaviors in schools.

The specific actions of this intervention are divided into several steps:

1. screen out adolescents with narcissistic personalities from the student body through student walk-through surveys, questionnaire completion, and psychometric assessments within the applicable campus boundaries.
2. Establish a special “student group” of students with high aggression tendencies, guided by professional counseling teachers, so that they can take turns to share their feelings when they achieve their goals, get compliments, receive rewards, get the attention and admiration of others, and convert these feelings into a “positive index”. The feelings are converted into a subjective score in the form of a “Positivity Index”, which is scored out of 10 and recorded on a piece of paper.
3. Continuing with the second section of the test, investigate how they feel when they do not get attention from others, when they are refuted by others, when they fail to achieve their goal of gaining benefits, and convert these feelings into a “negative index”, again with a score of 10 out of 10, and record them in detail.
4. Invite all students to share their Negativity Score and the actions they would take if their Negativity Score reached a certain quantity: verbal and physical aggression, isolation from the group, or spreading rumors.
5. Invite two randomized students to pair up, with one playing the role of the aggressor who makes the request and the other playing the role of the person who rejects the request; the rest of the students will act as other members of the class. In case of rejection or inability to gain a sense of control, the attacker forces the attacked person through the self-initiated actions mentioned in the previous step, and the attacked person eventually has no choice but to fulfill the attacker’s conditions, but then receives help and consolation from members of the class. After the performance, the “attacker”, “victim” and “class members” are invited to record the emotional index of their feelings according to their own experiences.
6. Based on the final results, they will guide by a professional psychologist to consider the following questions: a) Does my positive index enhance at the expense of others’ negative indexes? b) Does my positive index increase less under conditions of enforce than under conditions of genuine and active rewards and positive feedback? c) Does the reassurance of the classmates prevent my negative indexes increase when I am failing or frustrated?
7. After other groups exchange and discussion monitored by the psychologist, the activity is concluded and follow-up is conducted. Ideally, the frequency of intervention activities is 7 days/session, and the behavioral performance and psychological state of the participants during the period are recorded before the beginning of each session to assess the applicability. When narcissistic tendencies cannot be corrected through guidance, a combination of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) or animal-assisted therapy (AAT) may be considered as an intervention.

The interventions proposed above focus on both sympathetic and empathic thinking guidance for narcissistic adolescents (question a), as well as self-perception deviations due to a lack of emotional needs (questions b and c). We invite students with narcissistic personalities to role-play aggressive scenarios on campus in the most critical fifth step, due to the fact that narcissistic adolescents may grow up in environments that are accompanied by low levels of supervision and control, preventing them from being aware of the severity of their self-behavior through the lens of others’ words, actions, and so on; These aggressive students are also often the bullies or thought leaders in the classroom, participating in aggressive behaviors from a “second view” subjective role [7]. However, when the intervention puts them in the role of bystanders, viewing the aggression from the perspective of a third-party object and observing the interactions between the aggressor and

the victim, it may be beneficial to awaken them to rethink their behavior and weigh the stakes more carefully. In addition, if the rating scale reveals a high “positive index” for the aggressor and a high “negative index” for the victim (i.e., the answer to question a is YES), it can also lead them to think in the opposite direction: “If I ever become a victim, what will I do? Become a victim, then I will sacrifice myself for someone else’s positive index.” From there, they try to experience the negative emotions of a victim and change their thinking patterns. It has been demonstrated that narcissists are more likely to sympathize with others and show empathy if it has a positive effect on their realization of self-interest [8].

The basis for addressing questions b and c is that the narcissistic personalities of some vulnerable adolescents are affected by low family closeness and coldness. This can be attributed to an avoidant attachment and self-protective response: obtaining support and advocacy from others can fill the gap in the emotional needs of vulnerable narcissists. Existing research has demonstrated that the development of narcissistic traits is closely linked to emotional abuse and neglect in childhood, which may deter them from properly utilizing others for emotional regulation and self-awareness. This is reflected in the fact that narcissistic adolescents mask their inner fears with behaviors such as dominance, aggression, and an excessive sense of self: they think all events beyond their expectations and control are signs of being abandoned again, and in contrast, emotional support and encouraging behaviors make them feel safe. Therefore, this intervention was intentionally designed with empathy training (i.e., a “reassurance” session) and contrast mechanisms. The empathy training was intended to train participants to accept the vulnerability of their selves, and to shift from using others to maintain a false self to rethink their true selves. When comparing the positive social feedback, one receives from one’s own subjective will (A) and the social feedback one receives from enforcing others (B), the difference in the “positivity index” data can be used to identify whether the participant belongs to the vulnerable ( $A > B$ ) or the grandiose variant ( $B > A$ ), in order to develop subsequent targeted treatment programs if necessary.

Compared with existing therapeutic measures for narcissistic personality, such as hypnotherapy and clinical psychotherapy, the main innovation of the above intervention is its targeted approach. It focuses on the campus environment and narcissistic adolescents as the specific research context. In addition to its effectiveness, the intervention takes into account sustainability (the ability to systematically organize regular participation of relevant personnel), convenience (the flexibility of time, place, and number of participants), and moderation (using psychological counseling and group support for improvement rather than medication or clinical care). This approach not only saves time and resources for students who have not yet developed Narcissistic Personality Disorder, but also avoids risks such as psychiatric transformations caused by more hardline therapeutic measures. However, there are still some limitations to the measure due to various uncertainties: For example, narcissists may lie on the test to satisfy their own vanity, leading to false results; they may refuse to cooperate with the demonstration because it is not in their own interest; they may not be able to comfort others with words and actions in normal perceptions; and so on. These limitations provide a guideline for refinement and eventual application of the measure, such as introducing a reward system, prepare a manuscript for the demonstration, or inviting students without narcissistic tendencies to become volunteers.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study addresses the critical issue of school bullying by focusing on a high-risk group of aggressors: adolescents exhibiting narcissistic personalities. Through an in-depth analysis of a case involving Yi Wu, a narcissistic student, the research highlights the pivotal role of empathy deficits and distorted self-perceptions in fostering



aggressive and bullying behaviors. The proposed intervention, termed “Positive-Negative Pairings”, employs emotional feedback mechanisms and student group participation to subtly modify self-concepts and enhance empathy among narcissistic adolescents within the school environment. Preliminary findings suggest that this targeted, sustainable, and pragmatic intervention can effectively reduce aggression and mitigate bullying incidents. However, the study acknowledges several limitations, including the potential for dishonesty in self-assessments, limited cooperation from narcissistic individuals, and challenges in accurately measuring emotional indices. Additionally, the intervention’s reliance on voluntary participation may constrain its overall effectiveness. Future research should focus on refining the intervention by incorporating reward systems, improving assessment accuracy, and enhancing participation willingness. Expanding the intervention to diverse educational settings and integrating complementary therapies such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) or animal-assisted therapy (AAT) could further augment its efficacy. Ultimately, this study contributes to the limited literature on aggressor-focused interventions and provides a foundational framework for developing more effective strategies to combat school bullying among narcissistic adolescents.

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