

## **Drawing Intervention and Emotional Release: A School-Based Study on Depression Symptoms Among Urban Migrant Children in China**

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### **Abstract**

This study explores whether a school-based drawing intervention can reduce depressive symptoms among urban migrant children in China. These children, who move from rural to urban areas with their parents, are often excluded from equal access to education and services due to restrictive household registration systems. Consequently, they face emotional suppression, social marginalization, and identity struggles. The study was conducted at a public school in Xi'an, where migrant students comprised approximately 75% of the population. One class per grade (Grades 4–6; 136 students aged 10–12) participated in a six-week free drawing and symbolic drawing program. These activities provided a low-pressure, nonverbal outlet for emotional expression. The Children's Depression Inventory (CES-DC) was administered before and after the program. Results showed a statistically significant reduction in scores post-intervention ( $p < .05$ ), supporting the effectiveness of the drawing-based approach. In the group feedback after the intervention program, some children also mentioned feeling more supported and understood by their classmates and teachers. This additional social recognition may have further contributed to a greater sense of self-worth. The findings support the view that integrating creative activities like drawing into school routines can offer developmentally sensitive and culturally appropriate mental health support, especially for vulnerable children facing social adversity.

**Keywords:** art-based intervention, emotional expression, marginalized children, resilience, school mental health