

Exploration of Expression using Mixed Media as a Medium for Emotional Therapy: A Literature Review

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Abstract: The use of art in art therapy, particularly mixed media drawing, has been proven to enhance adolescents' ability to express emotions in a positive manner. Expressing themselves through visual representation offers young people a broad creative freedom, allowing for more diverse and profound self-expression. Drawing-based art therapy is also effective in improving adolescents' emotional well-being and helping them cope with stress and other emotional challenges. This study aims to highlight the importance of drawing as a medium for adolescent expression and creativity in addressing both short-term and long-term emotional issues. It provides a deeper exploration of the use of mixed media in drawing as a means of expressing adolescent emotions through a literature review analysis. The findings are expected to offer a more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon and contribute to more effective solutions in recognizing and addressing emotional problems among adolescents.

Keywords: Expression, Emotional, Mixed Media, Adolescents.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The use of art, including drawing with mixed media, in the context of art therapy can enhance adolescents' ability to express their emotions positively (Susanto & Widyaningsih, 2018). Setiawan & Kartika (2019) stated that artistic activities such as drawing can help adolescents better understand and manage their emotions. Wijaya et al. (2020) also added that the use of mixed media in visual arts offers greater creative freedom for adolescents, thus enhancing their ability to express themselves.

Mixed media, as described by Haq & Rachmawaty (2023), is an artistic technique that combines various materials such as paint, paper, wood, and others into a single artwork. This technique is particularly suitable for adolescents, as it allows them to explore their creativity and imagination through the use of various media. It serves as a medium for creating artworks that merge two or more creative materials—such as ink and pastels or paint and collage—into a single piece. In modern art, mixed media plays a significant role in fostering users' creativity and imagination, enabling them to explore diverse media and techniques (Hunaifah, 2020).

Expression through drawing is a compelling phenomenon. Emotions can be conveyed through illustrations.

Drawing plays an essential role as a medium of expression for Indonesian adolescents in facing and overcoming their emotional struggles. Through drawing, adolescents are able to express their feelings more freely and experience improved emotional well-being (Suryadi & Harahap, 2017).

Wijaya (2019) also explored the use of mixed media in drawing as a form of creative expression. The findings revealed that mixed media provides greater flexibility and creative freedom for adolescents, allowing them to express themselves in more varied and profound ways. Rahayu & Nugraheni (2020) further explained the use of drawing-based art therapy as a means of enhancing adolescents' emotional well-being. Drawing as art therapy has proven effective in fostering positive emotional expression and helping adolescents cope with stress and other emotional challenges.

According to Prasetyo (2019), the expressions depicted by adolescents in their drawings can be categorized into five types: (1) Positive Emotional Expression: drawings that reflect happiness, joy, and love often use bright colors and harmonious compositions. Adolescents may draw natural landscapes, happy families, or enjoyable activities. (2) Negative Emotional Expression: drawings that express sadness, anger, or anxiety typically use dark colors and tense or aggressive lines. Examples include images of rain, dark nights, or scenes of conflict. (3) Self-Identity Expression:

adolescents often draw self-portraits or symbols that reflect their interests, hobbies, and personal identities. These images assist in the process of self-exploration and identity formation. (4) Internal Conflict Expression: drawings that reflect inner conflict or psychological tension are often complex and rich in symbolism. These may include images of duality or scenes depicting internal struggles. (5) Hope and Aspiration Expression: drawings that illustrate adolescents' dreams and future aspirations, such as desired careers or ideal lives. The colors and themes used are usually optimistic and inspirational.

Focusing on the use of drawing in art therapy or creative expression, this study aims to delve deeper into the significance of drawing as a medium of expression and creativity for adolescents in addressing short-term emotional issues, while also considering the long-term impact of drawing on enhancing adolescents' emotional well-being. Through a literature review approach, this research seeks to provide deeper insights into the phenomenon and offer more effective solutions for understanding and addressing emotional problems in adolescents.

II. METHOD

This study employs a literature review analysis to examine the use of mixed media in drawing as a means of expressing emotions among adolescents. A literature review is a method used to identify, evaluate, and interpret all relevant research related to a particular topic or phenomenon, and it helps to build a strong theoretical foundation for further research (Snyder, 2019).

The first stage in planning the review involves defining the objective of the review. Before beginning the literature review process, it is important to determine its purpose. After setting the objective, the next step is to define the scope of

the literature review, which includes determining the topic, research questions, and limitations that will guide the search and selection of literature. Selecting the type of review is also essential—various types include systematic review, integrative review, narrative review, and scoping review, each with different methodologies and objectives. Identifying sources involves selecting the databases, journals, and other information sources to be used in the literature search (Snyder, 2019).

The second stage begins with designing a search strategy. It is important to develop a systematic and comprehensive search strategy, which includes determining keywords, search terms, and keyword combinations relevant to the topic and scope defined in the first stage. Selecting search sources entails choosing the most relevant databases and information sources for the research field. These may include academic databases such as PubMed, JSTOR, Google Scholar, and others relevant to the research topic. Conducting the literature search involves using the developed strategy and selected sources. All steps and search results should be documented to ensure transparency and reproducibility. Screening the collected literature is the next step, which includes evaluating the relevance and quality of the sources. This may involve reading abstracts and conclusions and assessing whether the literature meets predetermined inclusion criteria. Managing search results involves organizing the collected literature into a structured system—this may include classifying by theme, date, or research methodology. Good management supports the analysis and synthesis processes in the later stages of the review (Snyder, 2019).

The literature was collected using Google Scholar, focusing on studies published between 2020 and 2023 related to emotional expression and drawing.

Table 1 Meta-Analysis Matrix of References

Author and Article Title	Journal and Link/DOI	Findings/Substance of the Article
Paula Jati (2021), <i>Visual Art as a Medium to Help Clients Express Feelings and Problems</i>	DOI: 10.31234/osf.io/8g54p	Art counseling uses visual art as a medium to help clients express their feelings and the problems they are facing. Visual art—such as drawings, paintings, photographs, and sculptures—can be adapted to suit the client's age group in order to facilitate self-expression. Art counseling allows counselors to understand and interpret the meaning of clients' issues through the various forms of visual art used. The art counseling process can help clients identify, explore, and transform their self-concept, emotions, and behaviors. It can also serve as an effective approach for clients who are reluctant or find it difficult to express their problems verbally.
Ferdy Jonson (2021). <i>Visual Art in Counseling</i>	https://www.researchgate.net/publication/355077903	Art therapy can help children with special needs by providing them with a safe, non-verbal means of self-expression. Through visual arts such as drawing, painting, or creating other forms of artwork, these children can express emotions, experiences, and feelings that may be difficult to communicate verbally. This process supports their trauma recovery, enhances social skills development, and improves their emotional well-being.

		The non-verbal communication characteristics in art therapy include the use of metaphors as therapeutic tools, creative and expressive visual art expression, and the relational orientation between therapist and client. Art therapy utilizes non-verbal expressions—such as drawings, paintings, and other forms of artwork—as tools to understand and address clients' psychological issues. This non-verbal communication allows clients to convey their thoughts, feelings, and experiences more freely and deeply.
Susanti Etnawati dan Joko Pamungkas (2022). The Use of Painting Media in Art Learning to Develop Children's Multiple Intelligences	Early Childhood Education Journal DOI:10.31004/obsesi.v6i6.2766	Painting media such as oil paints, watercolors, wax crayons, batik dyes, and artificial coloring can be used in art learning to foster children's creativity. Art learning at TK ABA Wirobrajan is conducted using a center-based model that aligns with the steps of center-based learning. The BCCT (Brain-Based, Creative, Critical Thinking) approach is applied to enhance children's multiple intelligences through art learning.
Cindy Amalia (2021). <i>Visual Art in Counseling Therapy: The Use of Visual Art Therapy as a Medium for Visualization and Emotional Catharsis</i>	DOI:10.2139/ssrn.3937095	Visual Art Therapy is used as an art counseling technique that focuses on visualization and symbolization to help clients express their emotions and problems through various media such as coloring, drawing, collage-making, and sculpting. The use of Visual Art Therapy enables individuals to symbolically express feelings, experiences, and hopes that are difficult to convey verbally, and also helps illustrate the subconscious mind and reveal hidden conflicts. The types of Visual Art Therapy techniques that can be applied include drawing, painting, collage, photography, and sculpture, with each technique offering its own benefits and objectives in the counseling process. Research-based implementation of Visual Art Therapy has been shown to improve sensory abilities, instruction-following, and adaptability in children who have experienced trauma, as well as assist them in expressing their feelings and experiences.
Sekar Ayu Kuncoroputri, Ariesa Pandanwangi, Wawan Suryana (2023). Visual Expression of Human Emotion in Painting Artworks	Journal of Non-Formal Education DOI prefix 10.37905	The method used in creating the visual expression of human emotion is a qualitative descriptive method. The process of creating the artworks took two months, and the theme "My Emotions" was developed through direct observation of human facial expressions, which included expressions of happiness, joy, surprise, contemplation, and deep sadness.
Ida Puteri Mahsan (2021). Artistic Expression and Visual Communication of Special Needs Students in Primary School Visual Arts Education	National Early Childhood Education Journal https://ejournal.upsi.edu.my/journal/JPAK	Artistic Expression for Special Needs Students: This study emphasizes that artistic expression and visual communication are inherent when students engage in art activities, regardless of their talent level. Artworks created by students with special needs should be appreciated not only for their formalistic aspects but also for their subjective form and meaning. Enhancing Creativity and Communication: The integration of various techniques and media in art activities stimulates students' creativity, supports the development of communication skills, and fosters

		<p>cognitive processes. Art education—particularly in visual arts subjects—can serve as a platform to nurture creativity, emotional expression, and the development of multiple skills for all individuals, including those with disabilities.</p> <p>Visual Communication Theory: The article discusses visual communication theory, highlighting the importance of both verbal and non-verbal symbols in expressing thoughts, emotions, and actions. Verbal symbols involve language-based expression, while non-verbal symbols play a vital role in visual communication.</p> <p>Scaffolding Theory: The study aligns with Vygotsky’s Scaffolding Theory, which emphasizes the importance of providing support and guidance to special needs students in their artistic endeavors. This theory promotes the idea of assisting students in their learning process to enhance their skills and understanding.</p>
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Table 2 Papers Based On Theme/Findings/Or Variables

Theme/Variable	Author and Article Title	Journal Name	Link/DOI
Visual Art, Emotional Expression	Paula Jati (2021). Visual Art as a Medium to Help Clients Express Feelings and Problems		DOI: 10.31234/osf.io/8g54p
	Ferdy Jonson (2021). Visual Art in Counseling		https://www.researchgate.net/publication/355077903
	Cindy Amalia (2021). Visual Art in Counseling Therapy: The Use of Visual Art Therapy as a Medium for Visualization and Emotional Catharsis		DOI: 10.2139/ssrn.3937095
	Sekar Ayu Kuncoroputri, Ariesa Pandanwangi, Wawan Suryana (2023). Visual Expression of Human Emotion in Painting Artworks	Journal of Non-Formal Education	DOI: prefix 10.37905
	Ida Puteri Mahsan (2021). Artistic Expression and Visual Communication of Special Needs Students in Primary School Visual Arts Education	National Early Childhood Education Journal	https://ejournal.upsi.edu.my/journal/JPAK
Intelligence, Painting Media	Susanti Etnawati dan Joko Pamungkas (2022). The Use of Painting Media in Art Learning to Develop Children's Multiple Intelligences	Early Childhood Education Journal	DOI: 10.31004/obsesi.v6i6.2766

III. DISCUSSION

➤ Expression

According to previous research, there are various approaches humans use for expressive purposes, including speech, feelings and emotions, writing, as well as creative language and physical movement (Nafishah et al., 2019). Furthermore, Anderson (2018) stated that cognitive abilities include the mental processes required to acquire knowledge and understand the world through thought, experience, and the senses. These processes include attention, memory, reasoning, problem-solving, and decision-making.

Expression, creativity, and innovation are essential elements in art education. Creativity is the ability to generate new and useful ideas that differ from those previously existing. It involves innovative thinking and the ability to integrate or combine various concepts or elements to create something new (Kafilah, 2020).

Expression is defined as a form of manifesting feelings, thoughts, or ideas through various media such as language, art, and body movement. According to Fauzi (2021), expression is the manifestation of a person's feelings or thoughts conveyed through various forms of communication,

both verbal and non-verbal. Fauzi (2021) also emphasized that expression is a primary way for individuals to interact with their environment. Similarly, Rina Asmara (2022) defines expression as a reflection of a person's emotions and mental state, which can be observed through facial expressions, body gestures, and voice intonation. She stated that expression is an important tool in interpersonal communication, enabling deeper understanding between individuals. Budi Santoso (2020) also interprets expression as a visualization of an individual's internal state that can be observed through behavior and physical responses. In his research, expression plays a crucial role in conveying an individual's identity and true feelings.

➤ *Drawing*

Drawing is a complex activity that involves both the physical and mental engagement of adolescents. As stated by Mariani (2021), drawing is a form of creative expression that allows children to develop fine motor skills, visual understanding, and imagination. Drawing activities help children express their ideas, feelings, and experiences in ways that are not always easily conveyed through words. Drawing is the process of creating images that involves the use of lines, shapes, colors, and textures to communicate messages or emotions (Heri Praetyo, 2021).

Ratna Sari (2022) describes drawing as a creative process that enables individuals to express themselves and visualize concepts that exist in their minds. Drawing is an artistic activity that combines hand skills and cognitive abilities to create visual representations of ideas or real objects. Similarly, according to Dewi Ayu (2023), drawing is a form of visual communication that can be used to convey stories, information, and emotions. Thus, drawing is not merely a technical skill but also a medium for expressing artistic expression and creative ideas.

Creating a drawing involves all aspects of past, present, and even future experiences. Drawing simultaneously engages memory, experience, imagination, and observation. Producing an image requires the integration of these elements. When adolescents draw, they become fully immersed in the subject they are depicting. Nearly all drawings and paintings created by adolescents carry meaning and represent their personal experiences throughout the creative process.

➤ *Mixed Media Techniques*

Mixed media in art involves the use of diverse techniques and materials to create complex visual harmony. This approach allows artists to explore various aesthetic aspects and convey deeper messages through their artwork (Wulandari, 2020). In modern art, mixed media plays an important role in fostering users' creativity and imagination, while enabling them to experiment with different kinds of media and techniques (Hunaifah, 2020). Mixed media is a method that utilizes multiple materials and techniques within a single artwork to create dynamic and experimental visual effects. Artists use these combinations to explore concepts, enrich textures, and build complex narratives in visual art (Irma, 2020).

Mixed media refers to an artistic approach that combines various techniques and materials within a single work to achieve more complex visual aesthetics and richer nuances. Artists often blend elements of both traditional and modern art to produce unique and innovative results (Agus, 2022). The term mixed media is used to describe artworks composed of different materials, often transforming existing works into new forms. This technique allows artists to reinterpret the most ordinary objects and detach them from their everyday contexts and functions.

➤ *The Effectiveness of Drawing with Mixed Media Techniques in Expressing Adolescent Emotions*

Drawing serves as an enjoyable way for adolescents to express their imagination through a visual language composed of lines and colors, aligned with their psychological development. Paintings are expressions of adolescent imagination. As stated by Ani (2021), drawing using mixed media techniques not only helps adolescents express their emotions more clearly, but also facilitates self-reflection and a deeper understanding of the emotions they experience. This, in turn, can enhance their emotional well-being. Personal expression emerges through certain symbolic and visual forms—the more they communicate, the more visual forms are produced. Therefore, it is essential to provide support in creating an environment conducive to sensory and creative activities, enabling adolescents to grow and develop naturally and optimally. Artistic expression in adolescents represents the expression of experience, meaningful expression, and aesthetic expression that utilizes the qualities of the expressive tools being used.

According to Sudjana (2021), drawing is a visual process that involves the use of lines, shapes, and colors to represent objects, ideas, or emotions. Ahmad Sulaiman (2020) defines drawing as an artistic activity that combines imagination and technical skill to produce images that depict either reality or abstract concepts. There are many techniques in drawing, one of which is the mixed media technique. Mixed media in visual arts refers to artworks that incorporate various media in the creative process. Thanks to this freedom, mixed media art can result in works that are creative, uninhibited, and unique.

Drawing can also be considered a tool for visual communication. Drawing and expression are closely linked, especially in the context of art and visual communication. Drawing is the process of creating images that serve as a medium for self-expression and a tool for conveying messages or stories (Rina Widiastuti, 2022). Mixed media drawing techniques used by adolescents often result in more dynamic artworks that convey more complex messages. Mixed media helps students explore new ideas and experiment with a variety of available media, supporting them in developing their own painting styles and techniques.

IV. CONCLUSION

The use of art, particularly mixed media drawing, in art therapy can provide significant benefits for adolescents facing emotional challenges. Artistic activities such as painting can help adolescents manage and express their emotions more effectively. Expressing themselves through drawing allows

adolescents the freedom to convey their feelings, enhance their emotional well-being, and cope with stress. Drawing is not merely a technical activity, but also a form of creative expression that enables individuals to communicate their thoughts, emotions, and imagination.

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