

# ***The Influence of Art Therapy on Adolescent Identity Development***

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**Abstract:** Art therapy is an approach aimed at promoting the mental health of individuals through creative expression and self-exploration. The method has been widely used in the field of education and child psychotherapy, and significant progress has been made. In particular, art therapy plays an important role in adolescent identity development. Adolescence is regarded as a critical period in the formation of an individual's identity and they are faced with identity challenges and exploration. By engaging in art therapy activities, adolescents can express emotions and thoughts in creative ways as a means of exploring and shaping their identity. This article aims to analyze the benefits of art therapy on adolescent identity development by reviewing existing research and providing insights. The article will provide an in-depth look at three perspectives: art therapy open studios, school-based art therapy, and digital technology art therapy. The findings clearly show that art therapy helps adolescents to shape their self-identity to a certain extent. Therefore, it is necessary to further promote and apply art therapy to provide more opportunities and support for the healthy growth of adolescents. By expanding the scope and implementation of art therapy, people can further improve its effectiveness in adolescents' identity development, thus making a greater contribution to the development of their mental health and social adaptability.

**Keywords:** Art therapy, identity development, psychosocial problems, adolescents

## **1. Introduction**

Art therapy is often used to help youths and young grown-ups who are confronting numerous mental challenges. Research has shown that positive changes happen through the course of actual contact with art materials [1].

Around the world, it is assessed that one out of seven (14%) 10-19-year-olds experience the ill effects of psychological wellness issues, yet these issues remain to a great extent unnoticed and untreated [2].

As per analyst Erik Erikson's fifth phase of the self in psychosocial advancement hypothesis, is character and job disarray. Adolescents explore personal independence and develop a sense of self during this stage [3]. They are exceptionally delicate in their mental self-portrait, particularly before their friends they are often reluctant to admit that they need the help of a "therapist" [4]. However, when they receive art therapy, there is no shame. Art therapy provides a safe environment for them to express their emotions and inner experiences through the creation of artwork. Without having to

face the therapist directly, they can indirectly communicate with the therapist. This non-verbal form of communication makes teens more comfortable and at ease and able to better express themselves.

This paper aims to investigate the potential influence of art therapy on the identity development of adolescents. Various forms of art therapy, including school-based art therapy, art therapy open studios, and digital art therapy, will be examined in terms of their ability to aid adolescents in overcoming psychological challenges. By comprehending the role of art therapy in shaping identity, researchers and educators can offer enhanced support to adolescents during their self-exploration journey and facilitate the resolution of their psychological concerns.

## 2. Literature Review

Art is a strong specialized device. It is now widely acknowledged that artistic expression is a means of visually expressing feelings and thoughts that cannot be expressed verbally [5].

Art plays had a crucial impact on mankind's set of experiences, improvement, culture, and cognizance since ancient times. This understanding can be followed back to buckle artistic creations when individuals utilize pictures to communicate and get a handle on the world. The proper act of art therapy started in Europe during the twentieth hundred years, with the term authored by English craftsman Adrian Slope in 1942. The English Relationship of Craftsmanship Specialists was established in 1964 [6].

As more headway has been made in the field of art therapy, it has likewise gotten established in the field of schooling and kid psychotherapy draws near. Art therapy has established itself as a trustworthy psychotherapeutic method and practice for practitioners worldwide.

## 3. Previous studies

### 3.1. Art Therapy Open Studios

The open studio way to deal with art therapy arranges art as the focal point of remedial work. Its beginnings can be found in the early stages of the art therapy field when artists began incorporating studio settings into psychiatric institutions because they were inspired by the humanist approach to psychiatry [7]. As the field of art therapy developed into a perceived calling, it expected to lay out validity by embracing speculations from other remedial disciplines. However, studio practices that emphasize art as the primary component of therapeutic work are becoming increasingly common in modern times.

In a previous study, a therapeutic day school implemented an Open Studio Identity Development (OS-ID) intervention. The school, which operated over ten months, caters to students aged 13 to 17 from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, with a majority being female. Out of the total 13 students enrolled in the school, 8 attended weekly OS-ID tables throughout the entire duration of the school year. The school was primarily designed for youth who had experienced academic setbacks due to hospitalization, truancy, or staying at home. Some students had been expelled from their previous schools following psychiatric hospitalization, while others faced mental challenges that hindered their progress in mainstream educational settings. Additionally, some students exhibited prolonged periods of isolation, refusing to leave their bedrooms. The fact that all of the students in this study had experienced significant disruptions to their social and educational development made them an ideal group for OS-ID interventions.

The operating system ID program achieved two kinds of changes in the understudies. At a singular level, they encountered fluctuating levels of injury recuperation. For example, an understudy who at first had second thoughts about interfacing with guys acquired certainty and effectively coordinated into a male companion bunch. Another understudy, who had recently seen herself as being bound, encountered a newly discovered feeling of opportunity. Besides, their social nervousness lessened,

empowering them to draw in life partners while investigating the innovative strategy. These individual and social changes were obvious in their fine art and conduct.

Teachers and specialists ought to consider utilizing mediations that help these youths in overseeing social tension, supporting their characters, and progressing once more into a companion climate. The OS-ID model seems like a good way to deal with these kinds of crises.

### 3.2. School-based art therapy

The investigation of school-based art therapy has been generally talked about as of late. This is because craftsmanship treatment has been demonstrated to be a successful psychotherapeutic apparatus. Nonetheless, art therapy isn't just useful for youngsters with unique requirements. One method for making craftsmanship treatment available to each youngster is to carry it to school.

According to Marygrace, director of the Art Therapy in Schools program at New York University, schools frequently become the sole providers of mental health support for overwhelmed, at-risk families when students are having cognitive, emotional, or behavioral difficulties [8].

The versatility and uniqueness of art therapy allow it to be adapted to the needs of any student. When we notice that a student is experiencing behavioral, cognitive, or emotional difficulties, art therapy can provide a new model of positive intervention: supporting and encouraging the student's natural creative instincts while addressing their areas of difficulty. Furthermore, art therapists can go about as an extension among guardians and instructors, encouraging a more all-encompassing and comprehensive point of view on progress and existing hindrances [9]. Students, teachers, and families benefit from the seamless integration of art therapy services with other school services in overcoming obstacles and restoring function.

Peer-audited distributed school-based research was directed by the standards of Agreement Subjective Exploration (CQR). This review analyzed young people's view of art therapy in the school setting. The example comprised 12 juvenile clients aged 14-18 years ( $M = 16$ ) who partook in bottom semi-organized interviews [10].

The aftereffects of the meetings can be classified into five spaces: the spaces of reference and starting treatment, the areas of the school setting, the spaces of the idea of treatment in the school, the spaces of the relationship with treatment, and the areas of the craftsmanship specialist's effect on the client. Investigation of the meetings showed that a few members at first consented to art therapy since it permitted them to leave the study hall and have some good times. In any case, all members revealed that after time some time in art therapy, they understood that they were encountering an individual and close-to-home cycle that was narcissistic and permitted them to communicate their sentiments unafraid of judgment.

As far as the restorative climate inside the school, members announced that the hardware and materials were good. The discoveries recommend that members, especially those in formal instructive organizations, felt that the secrecy of the two educators and different understudies was safeguarded.

The discoveries recommend that school-based craftsmanship treatment has explicit qualities. For instance, the craftsmanship treatment room was viewed as a shelter. The term "mother" was occasionally used by students to describe their relationship with the art therapist. Participants said that having an art therapist at school made them feel safer and helped them deal with problems they faced every day.

Likewise, craftsmanship treatment has been displayed to assist with self-assurance issues and social connections. Interviews uncovered that social issues and character development were the essential worries of these youths and were reflected in their view of art therapy, its objectives, and commitments. These discoveries are consistent with Erikson's psychosocial hypothesis, which characterizes pre-adulthood as a phase of personality and job disarray.

Be that as it may, as most of the members had never partaken in psychotherapy beyond school, this might clear up the members' powerlessness for portraying the negative or restricting parts of art therapy at school. The students' ages could also be a factor in this.

### 3.3. Digital technology and Art therapy

Digital art therapy has emerged as a novel inclusion in the array of art therapy methodologies and materials. This methodology incorporates a variety of innovation-based mediums, including computerized arrangement, outline, film, and photography, which are utilized by specialists to work with the making of craftsmanship by clients inside helpful meetings [11]. The dynamic evolution of technology and the perpetual fluctuations in societal norms have significantly augmented the potential for innovative expression, effective communication, and extensive networking. Subsequently, workmanship specialists are dynamically charmed by and effectively captivating in conversations about the effect and coordination of advanced innovation inside their training. As these advancements continue to emerge rapidly, art therapists are becoming more interested in and discussing the impact and application of digital technology to their practice.

In art therapy, the emergence of digital art therapy has provided a novel approach for clients to express themselves using digital media creatively. To better understand the experiential outcomes of using digital media as a therapeutic and expressive medium in a group art therapy setting for young people with intellectual disabilities, a qualitative case study was conducted. Also, the review planned to investigate the helpful meaning of such encounters.

The members in this review comprised of second-year secondary school understudies with scholarly handicaps who were signed up for a specific class. Using a purposive testing strategy, five young people with scholarly handicaps were chosen to take part in a sum of 11 gathering craftsmanship treatment meetings. Information assortment was achieved through a blend of meetings, perceptions, and the assortment of computerized craftsmanship. An analytical approach that adhered to the principles of induction was employed in the analysis of the collected data, serving as the foundation for the case study.

Given the participants' status as members of the digital generation, characterized by their familiarity with smartphones and other similar technologies, the repeated exposure and acquisition of new technological skills fostered a sense of confidence among the individuals. The interactive nature of digital media, facilitated by touchscreens and various applications, empowered these young individuals with disabilities by providing them with a means to actively express themselves. This interaction not only piqued their interest but also afforded them a pleasurable sense of autonomy.

## 4. Discussion

In the first experiment, the researchers explored the perceptions of adolescents between the ages of 14 and 18 about art therapy in the school setting through semi-structured interviews. This study provided insight into how adolescents perceive art therapy. This sample consisted of 12 adolescents whose average age was 16 years old. This study provides fundamental insights into how art therapy is understood and received by the general population of adolescents.

The second experiment explored the perceptions of special classes of high school sophomores with intellectual disabilities about art therapy in the school setting. This study was also based on in-depth semi-structured interviews and included 12 participants. This study contributes to an understanding of how art therapy can be better adapted to special education settings and how approaches can be adapted to meet the specific needs of these students.

The third experiment focused on 11 group art therapy sessions attended by five high school sophomores with intellectual disabilities. Research methods included interviews, observations, and a

collection of digital artworks. This study provides valuable insights into understanding how adolescents with intellectual disabilities express themselves through digital art therapy. This hands-on research provides insight into understanding how adolescents with intellectual disabilities express themselves in art making, their emotional needs, and the specific impact of art therapy on them.

However, these three studies also faced several limitations. First, their sample sizes were very small, limiting the generalizability of the findings. All three had fewer than 20 participants. Second, data collection relied heavily on self-reports, which may be biased. The study was qualitative, lacked quantitative data, and did not consider long-term effects. In addition, the study lacked an assessment of long-term effects and did not use a control group to assess the effectiveness of treatment fully. Therefore, it is challenging to assess art therapy's relative effectiveness.

In general, each of these studies provides valuable insights into the perceptions and responses of different groups to art therapy but also reveals limitations in sample selection, data collection, and analysis methods [12-13].

## 5. Conclusion

In exploring the theme of how art therapy can help adolescents' identity-building, by analyzing three key experiments, we can draw some conclusions. Firstly, art therapy provides a non-judgmental environment in which adolescents can express themselves freely, which is crucial for their personal and emotional development. Through art-making, adolescents were able to explore and express their feelings, which helped them to build their self-identity during adolescence, a critical time for identity formation.

Secondly, research has shown that art therapy not only benefits adolescents' personal development but also promotes their adjustment in social and academic settings. Through art therapy, adolescents learn to better understand and express their emotions, which is important for building positive social relationships and increasing engagement in school.

There are limitations to studies. The small sample size limits the generalizability of the findings. Due to the use of self-reported data, subjectivity bias may also exist. The absence of long-haul follow-up investigations likewise implies that the review can't completely comprehend the degree to which workmanship treatment affects juvenile character building.

In conclusion, art therapy shows great potential as a tool to help adolescents explore and affirm their identities, but there is still a need for broader and more in-depth research to support these findings, for example by following up on long-term effects. It provides a safe, supportive space for adolescents to process complex emotional and identity issues through creative expression, which is essential for their healthy development during this life stage of adolescence.

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