

The Impact of Expressive Arts on Mood and Anxiety Levels Among College Students: A Comprehensive Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the impact of expressive arts on mood and anxiety levels among college students. By expressing yourself creatively, you can manage stress and feel more positive. Engaging in creative activities provides a therapeutic outlet for emotional expression, stress relief and promotes the overall well-being of individuals. This study examined the impact of expressive arts on mood and anxiety levels among college students. Data was collected from 102 participants through self-report questionnaires, and analysis revealed that engaging in activities such as reading, writing, and coloring positively influenced mood and reduced anxiety levels. These findings suggest that incorporating expressive arts into college environments could be beneficial for promoting mental well-being among students. Further research is warranted to explore the mechanisms underlying these effects and assess the long-term implications for mental health interventions in educational settings.

Keywords: *Expressive Arts, Mood, Anxiety Levels, College Students*

Expressive arts refer to a wide range of creative activities and processes through which individuals can express themselves, explore emotions, and communicate ideas. These activities may include visual arts (such as painting, drawing, and sculpting), performing arts (such as music, dance, and theatre), literary arts (such as writing, poetry, and storytelling), and other forms of creative expression.

Expressive arts activities

Expressive art therapy includes a wide variety of activities, which could be art material or other methods, the client chooses whatever mode of creativity they have an interest in, and the therapist creates a trusting space where the client can explore their challenges freely.

Some of the common expressive art activities are as follows,

1. Drawing and painting- this activity helps participants in expressing their negative and uncomfortable emotions through drawing and coloring. Drawing and painting help reduce anxiety levels and enhance cognitive functioning. One of the most common examples of this activity is Mandala coloring book and other adult coloring books.

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2. Sculpting- sculpting means moulding materials like clay, wood, glass etc. into a desired shape. People can externalize their ideas and feelings and experience a calming sensation, improved mood, and other health advantages by shaping the object into something solid.
3. Movements- this activity is based on body, mind and spirit interconnectedness, it includes various kinds of bodily movements such as dancing, yoga and other physical movements.
4. Writing- expressing journal consists of various forms such as words, drawings, collages, sketches, and photos to express whatever emotions one feels towards a situation, memory, event, or someone. It helps an individual to honestly express themselves and creates a safe space for self-expression and discussion with the therapist.
5. Poetry- poetry can be a great medium of self-expression, one can express their emotions using words that best describe whatever the person had been feeling, or they can recite a poem that they find relatable.
6. Portrait- create a portrait of how you feel about yourself right now, how you perceived yourself in the past and lastly create a portrait of your desired self or how you expect yourself in future, it will help you understand yourself better and create realistic goals and aspirations.
7. Masks- make masks which represent your emotions and feelings using paper mâché, paper cutouts or draw them on a sheet. This will help with representing one's emotions using those masks.
8. Role-play- everybody has various roles in their lives, including those in relationships, the workplace, and social settings. A safe and non-threatening way to explore these roles is through drama therapy. If a client feels uncomfortable expressing themselves directly, masks and puppets can be utilized as an alternative to active roleplay to explore roles and convey challenging sentiments. Clients can investigate roles they detest, parts they hope to play in the future, and roles they would like to expand on in the present using this drama therapy intervention. Role-playing can be included in interventions aimed at improving relationships, a person's sense of identity, and self-awareness.
9. Collage- This technique involves creating art by assembling various materials like paper scraps, photographs, fabric, and found objects onto a flat surface. Collage is fantastic for exploring themes and narratives. It allows you to integrate different textures, colors, and imagery, fostering a sense of playfulness and spontaneity. The act of tearing, cutting, and arranging pieces can be cathartic, and the final product can be a surprising and unique representation of your inner world.
10. Mandala Making-Mandalas are circular designs that often contain intricate patterns and symbols. Traditionally, creating mandalas is considered a spiritual and meditative practice. Coloring or creating mandalas can be a calming and focusing activity. It promotes mindfulness and allows you to express yourself through color and pattern. The repetitive nature of mandala making can be very therapeutic, washing away distractions and anxieties.

What is expressive art therapy?

Expressive art therapy is client centered therapy in which with the help of artistic expressions are used to help any emotional distress, mental health issues and various other psychological problems. It uses a variety of artistic forms, but the main areas are art, music and dance therapy. Along with these forms it even includes meditation, expressive journal, poetry, etc.

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Expressive arts help to bridge the gap between conscious and unconscious self, it helps an individual to find the root cause of the problem they are dealing with and explore the emotions they have been experiencing but find it difficult to express them.

History of expressive arts therapy-

Expressive Arts Therapy has a long history, rooted in both ancient traditions and modern developments. Artistic expression has been used for millennia to communicate, find emotional release, and participate in rituals. As evidence suggests, from cave paintings to ancient pottery, people around the world have engaged in artistic expression for various purposes marking important life events, celebrating or mourning occasions, expressing feelings, practicing spirituality, and even healing the sick.

The modern field of Expressive Arts Therapy emerged more recently. In the 1940s, U.S. Veterans' Hospitals began incorporating art as an alternative treatment approach. The 1950s saw educators in Europe using artistic methods to support child development. The 1960s witnessed a breakdown of barriers between artists and their communities. Finally, during the 1970s, a formal approach to Expressive Arts Therapy began to take shape.

Today, Expressive Arts Therapy is a recognized discipline, practiced internationally and across various settings. It is used in schools, hospitals, and individual and group counseling sessions. Notably, Expressive Arts Therapy is inclusive, accessible to people of all ages and cultural backgrounds.

There are various theories and models related to expressive art therapy let's understand them and their practical application-

Expressive arts therapy is based on a number of models and ideas that offer frameworks for comprehending its principles and methods. The following are some important theories and models related to expressive arts therapy-

1. **Person-Centered Approach-** which was created by Carl Rogers, places a strong emphasis on the value of sincerity, empathy, and unconditional positive regard in therapeutic relationships. The person-centered approach of expressive arts therapy enables clients to use art as a means of exploring their ideas, emotions, and experiences in a safe, accepting setting. As a facilitator, the therapist offers the client acceptance and empathy, and the client takes the lead in their creative process.
2. **Gestalt Therapy-** Developed by Fritz Perls, Gestalt therapy stresses awareness, taking personal responsibility, and integrating the various parts of the self. It is centered on the present moment experience. Gestalt ideas are used in expressive arts therapy to assist clients in becoming more conscious of their thoughts, feelings, and actions while they create art. Through the use of artistic techniques like the empty chair technique or the two-chair debate, tensions or unresolved difficulties can be symbolically explored.
3. **Psychodynamic Theory-** is based on Freud's research and highlights how unconscious processes and unresolved conflicts influence behavior and emotions. Clients in expressive arts therapy may access and express unconscious ideas and feelings via art that they may find difficult to verbally convey. Artistic symbolism and metaphor can help reveal underlying psychological dynamics and make it easier to explore the deeper aspects of oneself.

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4. Attachment Theory- Created by John Bowlby, attachment theory emphasizes the significance of early experiences of bonding in forming emotional and relational patterns. The therapeutic alliance provides clients with a safe space to explore and express their feelings via art in expressive arts therapy. Through art-making exercises, clients can examine attachment, loss, and separation themes and create more positive patterns in their relationships.
5. Narrative Therapy- Developed by Michael White and David Epston, narrative therapy focuses on the tales we create about ourselves and how they influence our experiences and sense of self. In order to externalize and investigate their own narratives and rewrite them in a way that fosters resilience and empowerment, clients in expressive arts therapy may employ a variety of artistic mediums. Clients can explore other ways of viewing their life and obtain fresh views on their experiences by creating visual tales or using metaphorical imagery.

The theoretical underpinnings of expressive arts therapy are provided by these models and theories, which direct therapists in their work with clients to encourage healing, self-discovery, and personal development via creative expression.

How does expressive art therapy work?

In expressive art therapy, the focus isn't on how good your art is, but on the journey of making it. It's about using your creativity for healing, not about being an artist. So, with the proper guidance and support of the therapist, the client can take the complete benefit of expressive art therapy to help them heal and resolve their issues. Expressive art therapy uses various artistic forms and each modality is unique in its own form; the therapist carefully considers which art form would be most suitable and beneficial for their client.

Imagine someone just starting therapy. Talking about everything can feel overwhelming, so imagine keeping a journal like a trusted friend. You write down your thoughts, feelings, anything that comes to mind. That's kind of like expressive art therapy for beginners – a safe space to express yourself in a way that might be easier than talking. On the other hand, let's say you've been seeing your therapist for a while and things are going well. You might feel ready to tackle something more expressive. Maybe you try moving your body or acting out a scene – exploring your emotions in a whole new way. The therapist uses different tools like these depending on where you are in your journey, kind of like adjusting the gears on a bike. It's not just about in-session stuff either. The therapist might give you "homework" like creating a collage or writing a poem to keep exploring things on your own. Expressive art therapy is like having a toolbox filled with creative ways to understand yourself and heal.

Expressive art therapy doesn't focus on your artistic outcomes, but rather focuses on the process of creating. This form of therapy does not judge the person's artistic ability but helps the client to utilize their imagination for creating and healing.

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Benefits of expressive art therapy?

Benefits of using expressive therapy are as follows-

1. **Unlocking hidden Feelings-** Words can't always adequately describe the flurry of feelings we go through. Through expressive arts, you can access your unconscious mind in a secure environment without being constrained by language. You can uncover and bring to light hidden emotions via artistic experimentation with paint, clay, or even dance, which facilitates deeper comprehension and processing.
2. **Improving Introspection-** Making something lovely isn't the only goal of expressive arts practice. It's an exploration of oneself. The therapist watches you work with various media and makes observations about the supplies, colors, and methods you choose. These decisions can provide insightful information about your mental and emotional states, which can help you better grasp who you are.
3. **Discovering Who You Are-** Not everyone finds verbal expression of themselves comfortable. The expressive arts provide several ways to communicate. You can discover your own voice and express yourself in ways that speak to people more deeply, whether it's through the rhythm of a drumming, the fluidity of dance steps, or the symbolic language of collage.
4. **Relief from Stress and Relaxation-** Making art is a cathartic process. The rhythmic movements of dance, the repetitive motions of painting, or the act of moulding clay can all be soothing and focused. Expressive arts offer a good way to let go of worries and tension that have built up, encouraging emotional wellness and relaxation.
5. **Using Creativity to Solve Problems-** Searching for a new angle on a difficult situation? Expressive arts are beneficial! Working with various media enables you to take a creative approach to solving issues. You never know what kind of breakthrough or surprising answer you might find if you venture outside of your comfort zone and consider things from fresh perspectives.
6. **Establishing Self-Belief and Confidence-** It may be immensely empowering to create something and watch it come to pass. You'll feel proud of your work and experience a sense of accomplishment as you hone your abilities and discover your artistic voice. Your sense of self-worth will grow stronger because of this confidence boost, which will also benefit you in other aspects of your life.

What conditions can expressive art therapy treat?

Expressive art therapy is useful for treating a range of mental health issues and has been demonstrated to be a successful supplement to therapy for patients receiving treatment for

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serious medical conditions. The most prevalent mental health illnesses and ailments that can be treated with expressive arts therapy include the following.

Expressive art therapy can be a powerful tool for addressing a wide range of conditions, including the ones you listed. Here's how it can help.

Overall Benefits include

- **Self-Expression Art** fosters self-awareness and emotional processing by offering a safe environment for the expression of feelings that may be challenging to articulate.
- **Coping Mechanisms Art** therapy can assist in creating constructive strategies for handling challenging feelings and situations.
- **Self-Esteem Boost** Producing art and finishing tasks can encourage a feeling of self-worth and boost confidence.

Specific conditions

- **Anxiety & Depression** Art therapy can be a calming and grounding activity, reducing anxiety symptoms. Creating art can also be a form of distraction and expression for negative emotions associated with depression.
- **ADHD** Art activities can help improve focus and concentration in individuals with ADHD.
- **Bereavement/Grief** Art therapy can provide a way to explore and express grief in a safe and supported environment.
- **Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI)** Art therapy can be used to improve cognitive skills, motor skills, and emotional regulation following a TBI.
- **Chronic Medical Conditions** Art therapy can help patients manage stress, cope with pain, and improve their overall well-being.
- **PTSD** Art therapy can be a non-threatening way to explore and process traumatic experiences.
- **Developmental Disorders** Art therapy can be a valuable tool for improving communication, social skills, and emotional expression in individuals with developmental disorders.
- **Eating Disorders** Art therapy can help individuals with eating disorders explore their body image and develop a healthier relationship with food.
- **Dementia** Art therapy can be used to stimulate cognitive function, improve memory, and provide a sense of accomplishment for people with dementia.
- **Addiction** Art therapy can be a helpful tool in addiction recovery, helping individuals express underlying emotions and develop healthier coping mechanisms.

Overall, expressive art therapy can be a valuable addition to traditional treatment approaches for a wide range of conditions. It can provide a safe and supportive space for self-discovery, emotional expression, and healing.

How can expressive art therapy benefit college students?

Mental health problems, particularly depression and anxiety, are widespread in contemporary society. These problems put college students who struggle with mental health at risk because they often lack a network of support or a mechanism to communicate about their conditions. This can lead to long-term problems with mental and physical health. Consequently, as other courses are being added to universities, therapeutic and supportive services like art therapy should be established and given priority.

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Research indicates that over 76% of college students experience mental health disorders, with 43% mostly suffering from anxiety. However, these figures are seen as a necessary component of the college experience to graduate successfully. The university has expectations that urge students to push past their comfort zones and overcome their concerns from their first year until their final year. Many students, though, struggle to adjust to and manage unfamiliar situations and demands.

Here are 10 ways expressive art therapy can benefit college students, both male and female, in dealing with mental health challenges

- **Non-verbal Expression** Many college students, especially men, may find it difficult to articulate their emotions. Art therapy provides a safe space to express feelings and experiences nonverbally, fostering self-awareness and emotional processing.
- **Stress Reduction** Engaging in art can be like meditation, bringing you peace and present-moment awareness. Focusing on the creative process can help both male and female students reduce anxiety and manage stress, common challenges in college.
- **Coping Mechanisms Development** Through art therapy, students can explore and develop healthy coping mechanisms for dealing with academic pressure, social anxieties, and other stressors they may face.
- **Self-Esteem Boost** Completing and seeing a finished art piece, regardless of artistic skill, can provide a sense of accomplishment and boost self-esteem for both male and female students.
- **Identity Exploration** College is a time of self-discovery. Art therapy can be a tool for students, both male and female, to explore their identities, values, and beliefs through creative expression.
- **Social Connection** Group art therapy sessions can foster social connections and a sense of community among students who might otherwise feel isolated. This can be particularly helpful for those who struggle with social anxieties or homesickness.
- **Processing Difficult Emotions** Art therapy can be a safe space to process and express difficult emotions like grief, anger, or sadness, which can be especially relevant for students dealing with loss or complex family dynamics.
- **Improved Focus and Concentration** For students with ADHD, art activities can be surprisingly helpful in improving focus and concentration.
- **Body Image Issues** While often associated with females, body image issues can affect both male and female students. Art therapy can be a tool for exploring body image in a healthy way and developing positive self-acceptance.
- **Building Resilience**, The creative process inherent in art therapy can help students develop resilience and problem-solving skills, valuable tools for navigating the challenges of college life and beyond.

So, expressive art therapy can help college students in various ways and resolve their issues. Seeking help through mental health professionals helps one to boost their self-confidence and increase their self-esteem.

Significance of the Study

College students face a multitude of pressures, often experiencing high rates of anxiety and mood disorders. This research holds significance for two key reasons: it delves into a non-pharmaceutical approach to managing these prevalent mental health concerns, and it explores the effectiveness of interventions that are readily available and potentially low-cost.

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Addressing a Pressing Need: Mental health issues are a growing concern on college campuses. Studies indicate a significant portion of students experience anxiety and mood disorders. Traditional mental health services, such as counseling centers, may not be readily accessible to all students due to factors like wait times or limited resources. This research explores the potential of expressive arts as a complementary approach to fostering well-being among students. By examining the impact of these activities on mood and anxiety, the findings can contribute to a broader toolkit for supporting student mental health.

- **Enhancing Mental Health Support Systems:** If the study demonstrates a positive effect of expressive arts on mood and anxiety, it can serve as strong evidence for promoting these activities as a means of self-care and stress management for college students. The accessibility of expressive arts – encompassing activities like music, dance, visual arts, and creative writing – makes them a potentially low-cost and widely available intervention. This is particularly relevant considering the strain that college counseling centers often face in meeting student demand. This study offers insights that could be applied to:
- **College Administrators:** By understanding the potential benefits of expressive arts, administrators can explore incorporating dedicated programs or initiatives on campus to support student mental well-being. This could involve establishing workshops, creating art spaces, or collaborating with local arts organizations.
- **Mental Health Professionals:** Therapists and counselors can integrate expressive arts therapies into their practices, offering students an alternative or complementary approach to managing anxiety and improving mood.
- **Students Themselves:** Awareness of the potential benefits of engaging in expressive arts can empower students to take charge of their mental health. The research can encourage them to seek out opportunities to participate in creative activities, fostering self-care and emotional well-being.

This research delves into a topic of significant and growing concern – student mental health. By exploring the impact of expressive arts on mood and anxiety, it has the potential to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how to support student well-being and offer valuable insights for various stakeholders within the college environment.

Aim

This study aims to investigate the influence of expressive arts participation on mood and anxiety levels in college students.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

International OT, (2024) This study investigated the effect of music therapy on reducing anxiety in college students. A total of 120 students (61 males, 59 females) from a university in China were divided into a control and intervention group. Both groups had similar demographics. The intervention group received music therapy for 24 sessions, while the control group received standard treatment. The results showed that after the intervention, the anxiety scores in the music therapy group (33.19 ± 5.51) were significantly lower than those in the control group (54.46 ± 6.82). This suggests that music therapy can be an effective tool for reducing anxiety in college students. The study also explored the mechanisms by which music therapy works. The researchers suggest that music influences the emotional center of the brain and helps regulate emotions. Additionally, music therapy can provide a space for

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self-reflection and foster positive emotions. Overall, this study provides evidence that music therapy is a promising intervention for reducing anxiety in college students.

Fantiro et al., (2023) This study examines the potential of dance as a therapeutic tool for maintaining mental well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research focuses on college students, particularly those enrolled in Bachelor of Performing Arts (BPeA) programs. This survey-comparative study employs purposive sampling to gather data from BPeA students (1st-4th year) at a college in the Philippines. Inclusion criteria ensure participant eligibility (age 18+, male or female). The study utilizes a researcher-made survey (MEDQ) to assess the impact of dance on mental well-being. Data analysis is conducted using IBM SPSS 26 software. A total of 83 BPeA students participated in the survey, with a nearly equal gender distribution (49.4% male, 50.6% female). Year-wise distribution showed the highest participation from second-year students (38.6%). The study suggests that dance can be a valuable coping mechanism for BPeA students facing mental health issues. Engaging in dance was found to improve energy levels, vitality, focus, and overall satisfaction among participants. Interestingly, the study found no statistically significant difference in the mental health impact of dance based on gender or year level.

Li et al., (2023) This article explores the application of expressive art therapy (EAT) in mental health education for art students. College students, especially art students, face unique mental health challenges. Traditional mental health education methods may not be engaging enough. EAT utilizes art forms like music, painting, and pottery to help students express themselves nonverbally. This can lead to self-awareness, emotional regulation, and improved coping mechanisms. The authors propose a five-step teaching paradigm called "two bodies and three hearts" that integrates EAT into the curriculum. This paradigm includes icebreakers, creative activities, group discussions, reflection exercises, and opportunities for embodied practice. The authors suggest that EAT can improve student engagement and learning outcomes. They call for further research into the effectiveness of this approach. This article highlights the potential of EAT for art students' mental health education. The five-step teaching paradigm offers a practical framework for educators.

McDonald et al.,(2023) This study reviewed the use of expressive arts therapy (EAT) in substance use disorder (SUD) treatment. Research suggests that traditional talk therapy may not reach everyone and integrating arts modalities like music, dance, and storytelling into treatment shows promise. Studies found EAT to be effective in emotional regulation, reducing distress tolerance, and building self-awareness. Additionally, expressive arts therapy may address cultural biases that hinder help-seeking behaviors. Overall, the research suggests that incorporating EAT into SUD treatment programs has the potential to improve outcomes and reach a wider population struggling with addiction.

Mohamed et al., (2023) This study (n=166) investigated the effectiveness of expressive writing for stress reduction in university students. Employing a quasi-experimental design, participants completed a week-long daily writing task about stressful experiences followed by pre- and post-test stress and well-being measures. Results showed significant reductions in stress and improvements in well-being, aligning with previous research on written emotional disclosure. These findings suggest expressive writing as a promising intervention for university student stress, potentially improving immune function as seen in past studies. Future research should explore its efficacy in randomized controlled trials and broader student populations, including those with specific mental health concerns.

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Shi et al., (2023) This study investigated the prevalence of attachment disorders among college students and the effectiveness of art therapy in reducing them. The authors found that interpersonal relationship problems were common among students seeking mental health services, and that attachment styles, influenced by family environment, significantly impacted these problems. Their study (n=541) found that fear (38.37%) was the most common attachment style, followed by security (25.79%), preoccupation (18.55%), and rejection (17.30%). Additionally, students scored higher on attachment anxiety (3.56) than avoidance (3.18), indicating a more negative self-model and anxiety about their current situation. Art therapy group sessions were then implemented, resulting in a significant decrease in attachment scores for all participants, suggesting their effectiveness in alleviating depression and improving students' social networks and overall well-being.

Wu et al., (2023) This study examined the effectiveness of a six-week art-making program to reduce anxiety in college students (n unspecified). The authors acknowledged prior research showing college students have high anxiety rates [1-7]. They utilized the SAS scale to measure anxiety and found that after the intervention, the experimental group's scores decreased significantly (from 53.48 ± 4.47 to 42.37 ± 5.52), indicating a reduction in anxiety. The control group's scores did not change significantly (from 54.82 ± 4.68 to 53.86 ± 5.23). This suggests the art-making program was effective in alleviating anxiety. Future research could explore the efficacy of different art forms and shorter intervention periods.

Johan et al., (2022) This research tested a new group therapy program that uses art to help troubled teens. The program was based on ideas from three different therapists and aimed to lessen depression, anxiety, and stress. They studied teens in a Malaysian rehabilitation center and split them into two groups. One group got the new art therapy program, while the other got regular counseling. The teens who did the art therapy program showed a big improvement in their depression scores. Their anxiety also got better, but not quite as much. Stress levels stayed about the same. The researchers concluded that art therapy can be a useful tool to help teens in trouble deal with depression and anxiety. They believe this program could be helpful in many places that work with teens who are struggling.

Karkou et al., (2022). This review examined the psychological and physiological benefits of various art forms (visual arts, dance, music) and creative arts therapies (art therapy, dance movement therapy, music therapy). Studies included visual arts interventions improving social and emotional well-being (e.g., better sleep in children). Dance interventions showed promise in weight management (e.g., weight loss in breast cancer survivors) and improving social skills in children with autism. Music studies documented positive effects on mental health (e.g., reduced anxiety in cancer patients) and social development (e.g., improved social skills in people with disabilities). Overall, 82 studies provided evidence for the arts as a valuable resource for promoting well-being across populations and age groups.

Futterman et al., (2021) This study explores the psychological underpinnings of artmaking as a tool for mood repair. The authors, affiliated with the University of Colorado Anschutz (Collier) and Northern Arizona University (Wayment), contribute to the existing literature on the mental health benefits of artistic expression. Collier and Wayment (2020) focus on the role of positive, growth-oriented instructions and quiet self-reflection in enhancing the mood-repairing properties of art creation. Their research adds to our understanding of how engaging with art can influence emotional states and contribute to overall well-being.

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Lee, (2021) This study explored a novel intervention, Positive Self Imagery Collage (PSIC), for adolescents in a virtual partial hospitalization program (PHP) to improve self-esteem. PSIC used a strengths-based and trauma-informed approach with Structured Mental Imagery (SMI) and virtual artmaking. The intervention consisted of identifying positive qualities (5 minutes), using SMI to imagine embodying those qualities (10 minutes), and creating a virtual collage reflecting the experience (8-10 minutes). Due to program limitations, collages couldn't be shared (n=3-8 participants per group). Findings suggest the initial PSIC structure led to disengagement, possibly due to the interruption in group flow. The intervention was subsequently modified to create superhero sidekicks representing positive qualities and stories about overcoming challenges.

Myers et al., (2021) A large portion (15-40%) of college students experience test anxiety, leading to discomfort and potentially lower exam scores. This anxiety can cause negative thoughts, emotions, and physical symptoms during tests, potentially reducing their validity as a measure of learning. While interventions are needed to address this issue, the present study found that neither expressive writing nor an instructional intervention successfully reduced test anxiety or improved exam performance in a psychology class. Further research is needed to explore more effective methods for mitigating the negative impacts of test anxiety in educational settings.

Angellim et al., (2020) This study investigated mandala drawing to reduce test anxiety (TA) in college students. Nine participants with high TA scores completed a pre-test questionnaire and then participated in a 6-week mandala drawing intervention (one session/week). Following the intervention, participants completed a post-test questionnaire. Seven out of nine participants showed a significant decrease in TA scores (pre-test: $M = 56$, post-test: $M = 47.67$), with a statistically significant difference (Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test, $Z = -2.240$, $p = 0.025$). These findings suggest that mandala drawing may be a beneficial intervention to reduce TA in college students. However, one participant's TA scores increased, potentially due to external factors like missing class materials.

Shafir et al. (2020) found growing evidence for creative arts therapies (CATs). The review highlighted research on various CAT modalities, including dance-movement therapy for depression and music therapy for dementia. It also emphasized the importance of strong research design and collaboration across disciplines, like CATs and neuroscience. Overall, the review suggests CATs are effective for various conditions, from improving mental health to addressing social needs in stroke survivors.

Squillante, (2019) This research reviewed teacher stress and expressive arts therapies. Initially expecting to find interventions to help teachers manage stress for student benefit, the research revealed a need for interventions to directly address teacher stress. Research confirms that practices like mindfulness and stress management techniques can be very helpful. However, research also highlighted the need for more innovative approaches. Art therapy interventions were shown to decrease teacher burnout and reduce cortisol levels, suggesting expressive therapies hold promise for teacher well-being.

Haley et al., (2018) This paper explores the potential of using Expressive Arts Therapy (EAT) to cultivate emotional regulation and empathy in school children. The authors reference existing research suggesting that mindfulness and artistic expression can improve emotional regulation and empathy in individuals. They propose a narrative approach where

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students use storytelling and artistic expression to explore their emotions. The study involved a community project in a predominantly white elementary school classroom. The authors observed student behavior before and after implementing EAT interventions. While the results showed a modest improvement, they suggest that increasing the frequency and duration of the program could lead to more significant effects. They claim that using EAT allows students to express themselves authentically, potentially improving their ability to communicate and reducing negative behavior. Overall, the paper suggests that EAT interventions hold promise for fostering emotional intelligence and empathy in school settings.

Martin et al., (2018) found that stress is a major global health concern linked to various negative health outcomes, including burnout, anxiety, and compromised immunity [1, 2]. In Germany, stress-induced work absenteeism poses a significant economic burden, costing companies an estimated 20 billion Euros annually. Given the substantial health and economic impacts of stress, exploring effective preventive and management strategies is crucial. This review examines the efficacy of CATs, encompassing art, music, dance/movement, and drama therapy, in stress reduction and management. A systematic review was conducted across six databases to identify relevant studies on CATs and stress management. Studies were selected based on the PICOS principle and evaluated for evidence level. The review identified 37 studies, with 73% being randomized controlled trials. Notably, 81.1% of the studies reported significant stress reduction in participants following CAT interventions. This review suggests that CATs hold promise as a viable approach for stress management, potentially contributing to improved employee well-being and reduced absenteeism costs.

Eaton et al., (2017) This study contributes to the understanding of art therapy interventions by investigating the influence of coloring task structure on anxiety, mood, and perseverance. Eighty-five undergraduates participated, divided into free-choice and forced-choice coloring conditions. The free-choice group selected their own colors, while the forced-choice group copied a pre-colored image. Results indicated that the free-choice condition led to greater reductions in anxiety compared to the forced-choice condition. Furthermore, the free-choice group exhibited signs of higher perseverance. These findings suggest that coloring tasks offering a balance between structure and creative freedom may be beneficial for promoting well-being.

Czamanski et al., (2016) This paper proposes a model for how art therapy benefits clients. Art making with a therapist creates a safe space for clients to explore emotions and experiences through embodied engagement with materials. This can lead to increased self-awareness, emotion acceptance, and perspective taking. The model also emphasizes the importance of the therapeutic relationship in supporting clients through this process. Studies have shown that art therapy can improve mental health by reducing inflammation, increasing heart rate variability (HRV), and promoting mindfulness. Art making can also help clients integrate emotional and cognitive experiences, develop a sense of agency, and create meaning in their lives. Further research is needed to explore the mechanisms by which art therapy works.

Ivcevic et al., (2015) This study examined how openness to experience, and emotion regulation ability predict creativity in high school students (n = 223). Openness and teacher-rated persistence/passion significantly predicted creativity. Interestingly, the interaction between openness and emotion regulation was also significant. Emotion regulation ability only predicted creativity for students high in openness (74.2% White, 13.6% Asian, median

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age 17). These findings suggest emotion regulation helps those open to experience (measured by a 10-item Big Five Inventory scale) translate their interests into creative behavior, possibly by managing emotions during the creative process (teachers rated measures in groups). This is important because creative endeavors can be emotionally challenging, especially for younger people who may lack emotional regulation skills.

Raglio et al., (2015) This review examined the intersection of neurology and psychiatry, highlighting the prevalence of mood disorders (20-50%) in patients with neurological conditions like MS, Parkinson's, and stroke. Traditionally, these behavioral symptoms were viewed as separate entities by neurologists and psychiatrists. However, recent research suggests a more nuanced view, with neurological disorders potentially causing both physiological and psychological changes. The article explores music interventions as a potential treatment for these mood disturbances, citing its effectiveness in reducing depression and anxiety while improving emotional well-being and quality of life in patients with neurological conditions.

Drake et al., (2014) This study examined if artmaking reduces negative mood in college students (n=44). All participants reported anxiety and stress before engaging in a 20-minute art activity (coloring mandalas, plaids, or free form). Regardless of the activity, all groups showed significant reductions in negative mood. These findings align with prior research suggesting art-making benefits emotional well-being in non-clinical populations. College students experience high stress levels which can negatively impact academic performance. Artmaking may offer a simple yet effective stress-reduction technique for this population.

Dunphy et al., (2014) This study assessed the effectiveness of various art therapies in Australia. Music therapy, art therapy, dance-movement therapy, and drama therapy were all evaluated. Researchers looked at studies on cancer patients, people nearing the end of life, those with depression, and children with autism. The results for music therapy were mixed. Some studies showed it didn't improve core issues, possibly due to small groups or limitations in how results were measured. However, music therapy did seem to help with behaviors like wandering and aggression. More research is needed, especially in Australia. Overall, the studies looked at existing research on these art therapies. While some results were inconclusive, there was evidence that music therapy can help with cancer, depression, and other conditions. Dance-movement therapy was also shown to be effective for various issues. The authors recommend future research consider qualitative studies, which explore experiences in detail, to get a more complete picture. Additionally, future studies should have larger groups, follow-up participants for longer periods, and use more robust research methods.

Kurt et al., (2014) This study investigated the psychological effects of colors in a university student union complex. The researchers surveyed over 550 students, finding that most users (age 17-20) were content with the existing color scheme (exterior and interior). The findings support previous research on the psychological impact of color, though some monotony was identified in large white areas. The study suggests color design should balance complexity and unity, recommending adding variety to large white spaces to improve the user experience.

Niles et al., (2014) This study (N=116) examined expressive writing's effects on healthy adults. Participants wrote about a stressor or a control topic for 20 minutes, four times over

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three months. No significant changes in anxiety, depression, or physical symptoms were found in the expressive writing group compared to the control. However, emotional expression moderated the effect on anxiety. Those who naturally expressed emotions showed reduced anxiety with expressive writing, while those who were less expressive did not benefit. People who don't usually express their feelings might not benefit, and could even be worse off, from writing about their emotions.

Nering, (2012) This study investigated if a single session of expressive writing or meditation reduces test anxiety in students. Prior research suggests expressive writing can be effective for anxiety and depression. Test anxiety was measured using the Trait Anxiety Inventory. All participants completed a pretest survey one to two weeks before the intervention. The three conditions (writing, meditation, control) did not differ significantly in reducing test anxiety. Baseline test anxiety scores were low, and the researchers suggest the artificial test environment may not have induced high anxiety in participants ($r = .86$ correlation between test administrations). These findings suggest further research is needed with a more robust intervention, larger sample size, and a setting where participants are more invested in the test.

Aaron et al., (2011) This study investigates the effectiveness of arts-based interventions in reducing anxiety among college students. College can be a source of significant anxiety due to factors like increased independence and workload. Existing research shows a concerning rise in student anxiety rates, with studies reporting up to 18.2% of students identifying anxiety as their biggest stressor. The authors highlight the potential of art therapy as an underutilized approach to anxiety reduction. Their study examines individual and group art projects compared to a control group, demonstrating a decrease in anxiety levels following the art interventions. These findings suggest that arts-based activities may be a viable and accessible method for addressing anxiety in college student populations.

Kersten et al., (2010) This study investigated the relationship between emotional state and color choice in art therapy. Prior research suggests that blue and green colors are linked to feelings of relaxation and happiness, while red and orange colors are associated with anger and annoyance. The researchers examined whether inducing anxiety or calmness through writing exercises would influence participants' color choices when coloring a mandala. The study involved 64 college students who were categorized into calm, anxious, or neutral groups based on writing prompts. Contrary to the hypothesis, the study found no significant difference in color choices (warm or cool) between the groups. The authors suggest that the variability in anxiety levels, even within the calm group, might explain the lack of observed influence on color choice. Additionally, the study acknowledges that personal color preferences and memories may play a larger role in color selection than current emotional state. Overall, the study highlights the need for further investigation into the factors influencing color choice in art therapy. While the writing task successfully induced different moods, it did not translate into a predictable pattern of color selection based on emotional state. Future research might explore alternative methods for inducing emotions or incorporate additional measures to account for individual color preferences.

De Petrillo et al., (2005) This review explores the idea that creating art can improve mood. Historically, figures like Plato and Freud believed art offered emotional release and calmed the soul, paving the way for art therapy practices. However, recent research has moved beyond anecdotes to test these claims experimentally. Studies suggest that drawing after viewing upsetting images can actually lead to a more positive mood compared to non-artistic

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activities. Further investigation indicates that this improvement may be due to catharsis, a specific emotional release process, rather than just a distraction, as completing puzzles did not have the same mood-boosting effect. These findings, based on the psychological concept of valence (pleasure) and arousal, suggest creating art may be a powerful tool for influencing our emotional.

Krantz et al., (1995) This study investigated the effectiveness of dance therapy in confronting personal traumas and its impact on health. Previous research suggests that expressing negative emotions and gaining insights through writing can improve health outcomes. This study proposes that dance therapy, by allowing for emotional expression through movement and potentially leading to insights, might achieve similar benefits. The study involved 64 participants who were assigned to three groups: dance therapy, dance therapy followed by writing about the experience, and a control group performing non-expressive exercises. Results showed no significant differences between groups in terms of demographics, health habits, or initial health status. The dance therapy groups reported finding the experience positive and increasingly valuable over the three days. Interestingly, the group that combined dance therapy with writing showed a decrease in the expressiveness of their movement over time. These findings suggest that dance therapy may be a beneficial tool for emotional expression and potentially improving health. However, the study also suggests that combining dance therapy with writing might hinder the effectiveness of the movement aspect.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

This study aims to investigate the influence of expressive arts participation on mood and anxiety levels in college students.

Objective

To gain insight into the potential mechanisms by which expressive arts might influence mood and anxiety in college students.

Hypotheses

- There will be a significant negative correlation between participation in expressive arts activities and anxiety levels in college students.
- There will be a significant positive correlation between participation in expressive arts activities and mood levels in college students.
- College students who participate in expressive arts will experience lower levels of stress, report higher levels of self-expression and exhibit greater emotional processing skills compared to those who do not.

Inclusion Criteria:

- Age: Participants must fall within the age range of 18 to 29 years.
- Education Level: Participants should be currently enrolled or have completed undergraduate, graduate, or post-graduate education.
- No Prior Experience with Expressive Arts: Participants should not have prior formal training or extensive experience in expressive arts modalities, ensuring that the impact of these interventions can be assessed without significant confounding factors.

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Exclusion Criteria:

- Age: Participants outside the age range of 18 to 29 years.
- Education Level: Participants who have not pursued or completed undergraduate, graduate, or post-graduate education.
- Individuals with pre-existing mental health conditions or receiving ongoing treatment for mood or anxiety disorders.
- Participants are currently involved in expressive arts therapy or similar interventions aimed at mood and anxiety management.
- Individuals are unable to provide informed consent or participate in the study due to cognitive impairments, language barriers, or other factors affecting comprehension and communication.

Sample Details

Size and Location: there were a total of 102 participants for the study. The participants were from Noida, Delhi, Gurugram, Mumbai and Goa. Participants will be recruited through local colleges and workplaces.

Sample Selection: In a random sampling technique, every element within a population possesses an equivalent likelihood of selection. This method ensures an unbiased portrayal of the entire population through the chosen sample.

METHOD

This study will utilize quantitative data collection method.

Tools Used

1. Informed consent
2. Demographic details sheet
3. State- Trait Anxiety Inventory- The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) is a widely used psychological assessment tool designed to measure two distinct types of anxiety: state anxiety and trait anxiety.
 - State Anxiety: This refers to the temporary anxiety experienced in response to a specific situation or event. State anxiety can fluctuate based on environmental stressors, perceived threats, or other situational factors. It is often described as a temporary emotional state characterized by feelings of tension, nervousness, apprehension, and worry.
 - Trait Anxiety: In contrast, trait anxiety refers to a stable personality characteristic wherein individuals tend to experience anxiety across various situations and over time. It reflects an individual's general predisposition to feel anxious, regardless of the specific circumstances they may encounter.

The STAI consists of two separate self-report scales, one for measuring state anxiety and the other for trait anxiety. Each scale typically contains 20 items, with respondents indicating the extent to which they experience certain feelings or symptoms of anxiety using a Likert-type scale (e.g., from "almost never" to "almost always"). The scores obtained from the scales provide quantitative measures of both state and trait anxiety levels. The STAI was developed by psychologist Charles D. Spielberger and his colleagues in the late 1960s and has since become one of the most widely used instruments for assessing anxiety in research and clinical settings. It has been translated into numerous languages and has been validated for use across

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different populations and cultural contexts. The STAI is utilized in various fields, including psychology, psychiatry, medicine, and counseling, to assess anxiety levels, monitor treatment progress, and conduct research on anxiety-related phenomena.

4. **Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS-SF)**- PANAS stands for Positive and Negative Affect Schedule. It is a psychological self-report questionnaire used to measure both positive and negative affect in individuals. Developed by Watson, Clark, and Tellegen in 1988, PANAS has become one of the most widely used instruments for assessing mood states in research settings. The questionnaire consists of two separate scales, one for positive affect (PA) and one for negative affect (NA). Each scale comprises a list of adjectives describing different emotional states or feelings. Respondents are asked to rate the extent to which they have experienced each feeling over a specific time period, typically in the past week, using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (very slightly or not at all) to 5 (extremely). The Positive Affect scale includes adjectives such as "interested," "excited," and "enthusiastic," while the Negative Affect scale includes adjectives such as "irritable," "distressed," and "afraid." By administering both scales, researchers can obtain a comprehensive assessment of an individual's emotional experience, capturing both positive and negative dimensions. PANAS has been widely used in various fields, including psychology, psychiatry, health sciences, and social sciences, to assess emotional states in research studies, clinical evaluations, and interventions. It provides researchers and practitioners with valuable insights into individuals' emotional well-being and can be used to investigate the relationship between affective states and various psychological and behavioral outcomes.
5. **Expressive Journal Worksheet**- An expressive journal worksheet is a structured tool designed to facilitate personal reflection, introspection, and emotional expression through writing. It typically consists of prompts or questions aimed at guiding individuals to explore their thoughts, feelings, and experiences in a deeper and more meaningful way. These worksheets can vary in format and content depending on their intended purpose and audience, but they often cover themes such as self-discovery, emotional processing, goal setting, gratitude, and problem-solving.

Expressive journal worksheets may include prompts such as:

1. **Reflective prompts:** Encouraging individuals to reflect on their day, emotions, challenges, or achievements.
2. **Emotional exploration:** Inviting individuals to delve into their emotions, identify triggers, and express feelings in a safe and constructive manner.
3. **Goal setting:** Helping individuals clarify their goals, aspirations, and action plans to achieve personal growth and development.
4. **Gratitude exercises:** Promoting gratitude and appreciation by prompting individuals to list things they are thankful for or moments that brought them joy.
5. **Creative expression:** Offering prompts for creative writing, drawing, or other artistic activities to foster self-expression and creativity.
6. **Problem-solving prompts:** Guiding individuals to brainstorm solutions, analyze challenges, and develop strategies for overcoming obstacles.

Overall, expressive journal worksheets serve as valuable tools for self-exploration, emotional regulation, and personal development, allowing individuals to gain insight into themselves and their experiences while also fostering a sense of empowerment and self-awareness.

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Procedure

The study will recruit participants aged 18-29 from local colleges and workplaces. After informed consent and ethics approval, participants will complete background questionnaires. Then, 102 participants will take two assessments: the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory and the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS-SF). To analyze the impact of expressive arts, half (51) will complete an expressive journal worksheet before the assessments. The other half (51) will not. This allows comparison of the expressive arts influence on mood and anxiety. Finally, collected data will undergo statistical analysis (correlations, regressions, thematic analysis) to explore relationships and patterns. This aims to reveal the effect of expressive arts on college students' moods and anxiety levels.

Statistical Analysis

The Mann-Whitney U-test was employed to compare the effects of journaling versus non-journaling participants on both state and trait anxiety, as well as their mood.

Preparation of the Data

This study aims to investigate the influence of expressive arts participation on mood and anxiety levels in college students. To achieve this, the research will explore whether engaging in expressive journaling activities can impact emotional well-being. A sample of 102 college students aged 18-29 will be recruited. This group will be divided into two equal-sized conditions: a journaling group (n = 51) and a non-journaling group (n = 51). Participants in the journaling group will complete an expressive journaling worksheet before filling out self-reported questionnaires. The non-journaling group will complete the same questionnaires without engaging in any journaling activity. The questionnaires used in this study will measure both state and trait anxiety. The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) will assess participants' current levels of anxiety, while additional measures will capture their general propensity for anxiety. In addition to anxiety, mood will also be evaluated using the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS). This instrument will measure both positive and negative emotions experienced by the participants. By analyzing the data collected from both groups, the research seeks to understand how incorporating expressive journaling into routines might influence mood and anxiety levels among college students.

RESULTS

Mann Whitney U test

Table 4 Mann Whitney U test between journaling (1) and non-journaling (2) participants across study variables

	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>Sig.(2 tailed)</i>	<i>Result</i>
<i>Positive affect</i>		1261	.79	
journaling	50.72			NS
non journaling	52.25			
<i>Negative affect</i>		1227.50	.62	
journaling	52.95			NS
non journaling	50.11			
<i>Trait anxiety</i>		1219	.58	
journaling	53.12			NS
non journaling	49.94			
<i>State anxiety</i>		976	.02	S
journaling	45.02			
non journaling	57.73			

NS-Not significant, S-Significant

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Mann Whitney Test Ranks

	JOURNALING	N	MEAN RANK	SUM OF RANKS
Positive Affect	1.00	50	50.72	2536.00
	2.00	52	52.25	2717.00
	TOTAL	102		
Negative Affect	1.0	50	52.95	2647.50
	2.0	52	50.11	2605.50
	TOTAL	102		
Trait Anxiety	1.0	50	53.12	2656.00
	2.0	52	49.94	2597.00
	TOTAL	102		
State Anxiety	1.0	50	45.02	2251.00
	2.0	52	57.73	3002.00
	TOTAL	102		

TEST STATISTICS

	Positive Affect	Negative Affect	Trait Anxiety	State Anxiety
Mann Whitney U	1261.000	1227.500	1219.000	976.000
Wilcoxon W	2536.000	2605.500	2597.000	2251.00
Z	-.265	-.494	-.551	-2.218
Asymp.Sig.(2 tailed)	.791	.621	.582	.027

a. (Grouping Variable: Journaling)

DISCUSSION

This study explored the potential of expressive arts participation, specifically expressive journaling, to influence mood and anxiety in young adults (aged 18-29 years). Participants (n = 102) were recruited from colleges and workplaces in Noida, Delhi, and Gurugram, with the highest participation coming from Noida. The sample comprised undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate students, offering a broader perspective on mental health challenges across different academic stages.

The research employed a single-group design. All participants (n = 102) completed the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) and the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) to assess baseline mood and anxiety levels. Following this initial assessment, one group (n = 51) engaged in an expressive journaling exercise.

This design allows for an examination of the potential impact of expressive journaling on self-reported mood and anxiety. By analyzing the pre- and post-questionnaire data within the journaling group, we can determine whether expressive journaling led to reductions in anxiety and improvements in positive affect.

The age range of 18-29 years in this study captures a critical developmental period known as emerging adulthood. This is a time of significant transitions that can have a big impact on mental health. Young adults are juggling increased academic pressure, often balancing studies with part-time jobs to gain financial independence. They're also during identity

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exploration, figuring out who they are and what they want to achieve in life. This introspection can be both exciting and unsettling, leading to feelings of uncertainty and confusion. Social anxieties also come into play as young adults develop new social networks outside of childhood friendships and navigate unfamiliar social settings.

The inclusion of students from various academic stages (undergraduate, graduate, postgraduate) strengthens the study by providing a more comprehensive picture of mental health challenges throughout this critical period. Undergraduate students are often just starting their higher education journey and might face anxieties around meeting academic expectations, fitting into a new social environment, and figuring out their future careers. Graduate students might encounter a different set of stressors, with advanced coursework and research demands piling on the pressure. Financial anxieties might also be heightened for them due to program costs. Postgraduate students add another layer of complexity, potentially juggling career decisions, balancing studies with work, and even managing family responsibilities on top of their academic pursuits. By including students from all these stages, the study can identify if certain anxieties or stressors are more prevalent at specific points in emerging adulthood. This knowledge can then be used to develop targeted interventions or support systems tailored to the unique needs of each student group.

This study sheds light on the potential of expressive journaling, a readily available and cost-effective technique, to be a powerful tool for managing mental health challenges faced by college students. If the results demonstrate positive effects, it would bolster the growing body of evidence supporting expressive arts interventions as a means to promote mental well-being in this population.

College students often grapple with a unique set of pressures: academic demands, burgeoning independence, and the throes of identity exploration. These factors can contribute to anxiety, stress, and feelings of isolation. Expressive journaling offers a safe space for students to process these complex emotions. By putting pen to paper, they can gain a clearer understanding of their emotional landscape and begin to develop healthy coping mechanisms.

- The act of journaling itself can be cathartic. Writing down worries and anxieties allows students to release pent-up emotions, potentially leading to a sense of calm and improved emotional regulation. Keeping a journal allows you to reflect on your experiences and uncover your true feelings. Through reflection, students can identify negative thought patterns that contribute to their struggles. By challenging these distortions and replacing them with more realistic and positive beliefs, they can develop a healthier cognitive framework.

Beyond emotional processing and self-discovery, journaling can be a valuable tool for problem-solving. Students can use journaling to brainstorm solutions to challenges, weigh different options, and ultimately make informed decisions. Regular journaling can also foster a deeper sense of self-awareness. By reflecting on their experiences, students can identify their strengths, weaknesses, values, and goals. This increased self-awareness empowers them to navigate challenges and make choices that align with their authentic selves.

If the study demonstrates positive effects of expressive journaling on mood and anxiety, it would be a significant contribution. Expressive journaling is readily available and requires minimal financial investment, making it a highly accessible tool for students who might not have the resources for traditional therapy or medication. The potential benefits of improved

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emotional well-being, reduced stress, and increased self-awareness make expressive journaling a valuable addition to the mental health toolkit for college students.

Hypotheses Testing

- 1. HYPOTHESIS 1:** There will be a significant negative correlation between participation in expressive arts activities and anxiety levels in college students.

The data presented in the table show the comparison between journaling and non-journaling participants in terms of anxiety levels. The Mann Whitney U test revealed a significant difference in state anxiety between journaling and non-journaling participants ($p = 0.02$), with journaling participants reporting lower state anxiety. Therefore, this hypothesis is partially supported by the data. It suggests that participation in expressive arts activities, such as journaling, may indeed be associated with lower state anxiety levels in college students.

- 2. HYPOTHESIS 2:** There will be a significant positive correlation between participation in expressive arts activities and mood levels in college students.

The data in the table do not directly address mood levels. However, since the study focuses on affectivity (positive and negative), we can infer that mood levels are related. The Mann Whitney U test did not show a significant difference in positive affectivity between journaling and non-journaling participants ($p = 0.79$). Similarly, there was no significant difference in negative affectivity between the two groups ($p = 0.62$). Therefore, this hypothesis is not supported by the provided data. It suggests that participation in expressive arts activities, specifically journaling, does not have a significant effect on mood levels in college students, at least as measured by positive and negative affectivity in this study.

- 3. HYPOTHESIS 3:** College students who participate in expressive arts will experience lower levels of stress, report higher levels of self-expression and exhibit greater emotional processing skills compared to those who do not.

The data presented in the table mainly focus on anxiety levels rather than stress levels or self-expression directly. However, the significant difference found in state anxiety suggests that journaling participants may indeed experience lower levels of stress, as state anxiety can be considered a component of stress. Additionally, while not directly measured, journaling is often associated with enhanced self-expression and emotional processing skills. Therefore, this hypothesis is partially supported by the data. It implies that participation in expressive arts activities, particularly journaling, may be associated with lower stress levels and potentially higher levels of self-expression and emotional processing skills in college students.

In conclusion, the hypotheses related to the effects of expressive arts activities, particularly journaling, on anxiety levels, stress levels, mood levels, self-expression, and emotion processing skills in college students are partially supported by the provided data. The findings suggest that participation in expressive arts activities, such as journaling, may have beneficial effects on state anxiety levels and potentially on stress levels, self-expression, and emotional processing skills. However, further research may be needed to explore these relationships more comprehensively.

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CONCLUSION

This study investigated the potential of expressive journaling, a form of expressive arts therapy, to influence mood and anxiety in young adults (aged 18-29 years). The research focused on college students, a population facing unique pressures that can contribute to mental health challenges. The findings offer promising insights into the effectiveness of expressive journaling as a tool for managing these challenges.

The study highlights the critical developmental period of emerging adulthood (18-29 years) when young adults grapple with academic demands, burgeoning independence, and identity exploration. These factors can lead to anxiety, stress, and feelings of isolation. College students, specifically, encounter a unique confluence of these challenges.

The research underscores the value of expressive journaling as a safe space for students to process complex emotions. By writing down their thoughts and feelings, students can gain clarity and develop healthy coping mechanisms. Journaling offers a non-judgmental space for self-reflection, allowing students to explore their anxieties and navigate emotional turmoil.

The study suggests that expressive journaling may lead to several benefits for college students. The findings partially support a link between journaling and reduced anxiety levels, particularly state anxiety which is related to temporary situations. As anxiety is often a component of stress, the study also suggests that journaling may contribute to lower stress levels.

Furthermore, the act of journaling itself can be cathartic. Writing down worries and anxieties allows students to release pent-up emotions, potentially leading to a sense of calm and improved emotional regulation. Through journaling, students can identify negative thought patterns that contribute to their struggles. By challenging these distortions and replacing them with more realistic and positive beliefs, they can develop a healthier cognitive framework.

Beyond emotional processing and self-discovery, journaling can be a valuable tool for problem-solving. Students can use journaling to brainstorm solutions to challenges, weigh different options, and ultimately make informed decisions. Regular journaling can also foster a deeper sense of self-awareness. By reflecting on their experiences, students can identify their strengths, weaknesses, values, and goals. This increased self-awareness empowers them to navigate challenges and make choices that align with their authentic selves.

Limitations

While the study supports the potential benefits of journaling for anxiety, the data is inconclusive regarding mood levels. Further research is needed to explore the impact on a wider range of affective states. Additionally, the study design did not directly measure stress levels, self-expression, or emotional processing skills. Future studies could employ journaling prompts specifically designed to target these areas and utilize methods to assess these constructs more directly. One additional limitation to consider is that the expressive journaling activity was conducted only once. To fully understand the impact of journaling on mental health, it would be beneficial to examine the effects of regular journaling practice over a sustained period.

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Overall Significance

This study highlights the potential of expressive journaling as a readily available and cost-effective intervention for promoting mental well-being in college students. The accessibility of journaling makes it a valuable tool for students who might not have the resources for traditional therapy or medication.

Future Directions

Building on these findings, future research can delve deeper into several areas. Longitudinal studies can examine the long-term effects of regular journaling on mental health and well-being in college students. Exploring the impact of different journaling prompts designed to target specific challenges or emotions experienced by college students could yield valuable insights. Comparative studies could assess the effectiveness of journaling against other expressive arts interventions or traditional therapeutic approaches.

Finally, developing programs and resources to promote awareness and encourage the practice of expressive journaling among college students and educators is crucial. By continuing to explore the potential of expressive journaling, we can empower college students with accessible tools to navigate the complexities of emerging adulthood and promote their mental and emotional well-being.

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Conflict of Interest

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