eISSN 3139-2377
RESEARCH WORK
A Monthly, Open Access, Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Volume 02, Issue 10, October 2026 DOI- https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.24217300

Role of Visual Arts in Supporting Mental Health and Well Being of Pupil Teachers at Dayalbagh Educational Institute Agra

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Received: 31 July 2026 Accepted & Reviewed: 25 Oct 2026, Published: 31 October 2026

Abstract

Visual Arts aren't just pleasant to look at, they are genuinely good for our brain and soul. Whether you're painting, doing photography, creating something with clay, or just engaged in calligraphy a notebook, creating visual art gives you a hands-on way to process feelings, think outside the box, and get to know yourself a bit better. A massive World Health Organization report looking at thousands of studies found that engaging with art helps people stay healthy, cope with stress, and manage ongoing health conditions at any age. Making art triggers your imagination and helps you solve problems in fresh, unexpected ways. It gives you a way to express heavy or complex feelings when words just aren't cutting it. Recent studies show that simple art activities can noticeably ease anxiety, lift symptoms of depression, and raise self-esteem. Teachers are the framers of society. If mental health of teachers is good, they will be able to fulfill their duties in their professional life properly. By bringing more art into teacher education institutes, schools, workplaces, and local community spaces can prove a low-cost, high-impact way to keep teachers, students and people feeling healthier and more connected.

This article explores how engaging with visual arts boosts creativity and improves mental wellness of pupil teachers at Dayalbagh Educational Institute, Dayalbagh, Agra.It breaks down how art practices foster original thinking, imagination, emotional release, focus, confidence, stress relief, and community bonds. Studies consistently show that art programs can ease symptoms of depression and anxiety while enhancing overall quality of life. While art serves as a helpful tool for emotional balance, it works alongside rather than replaces formal mental health care. Ultimately, the piece advocates for making regular art activities integrated in teaching learning process in teacher education institutes and community centers to nurture everyday well-being of pupil teachers.

Keywords: Visual Arts, Creativity, Mental Health, Emotional Expression, Art Education, Well-being, Art Therapy, Psychological Well-being

Introduction

The saying, "An empty mind is the devil's workshop," suggests that when children remain without meaningful work, their energy and abilities may be directed towards negative or destructive activities. However, when this energy is channeled into creative and productive work, a person can achieve wonderful things. Many studies have also highlighted the positive impact of creative activities on a person's overall development and well-being. Visual arts constitute an important medium for human expression, communication, learning, and emotional development. Activities such as drawing, painting, sketching, collage, clay modeling, printmaking, craft, photography, and visual design provide individuals with opportunities to explore ideas, express emotions, solve problems creatively, and develop self-awareness. In recent years, increasing research has highlighted the relationship between arts engagement, creativity, psychological well-being, and mental health. The World Health Organization's review of more than 3,000 studies reported that arts engagement can contribute to health promotion, prevention of ill health, and management of health conditions across the lifespan.

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Creative activities can include reading, writing, learning new skills, painting, drawing, photography, collage making, mural art, craft work, and many other forms of artistic expression. A person can choose an activity according to their interests and abilities. For example, if someone is interested in drawing and painting, they can explore different forms of visual art. There are numerous possibilities, such as painting, photography, collage making, mural art, sketching, and craft work.

It is important to encourage pupil teachers to participate in creative activities in teacher education programs for the development of Teaching Learning Material.. Even simple activities can make a difference. For example, instead of always buying greeting cards from the market for birthdays or special occasions, they can be encouraged to make their own cards. They can decorate them with drawings, colors, and creative messages. This not only develops their creativity but also makes the person receiving the card feel special and happy. Creativity and mental well-being are essential parts of overall personal growth. In today's fast-paced world, people constantly deal with school pressures, job stress, emotional hurdles, and digital fatigue. Because of this, Educational Institutes must adopt strategies that strengthen emotional grit, imagination, and mental health alongside traditional academic skills.

Research Objectives

- To examine the role of visual arts activities in supporting mental health/well-being of pupil teachers at Dayalbagh Educational Institute, Agra.
- To identify the visual arts activities—such as drawing, painting, sketching, collage-making, clay modeling, craft, photography and calligraphy—that pupil teachers find most beneficial for emotional well-being of Pupil Teachers.
- To assess the perceptions of pupil teachers regarding the integration of visual arts into teacher education programs.
- To suggest ways of integrating regular visual arts activities into teacher education programs for promoting psychological well-being of pupil teachers.

Methodology

The present article adopts a **qualitative, descriptive, and experiential approach**. It is based on observations and experiences of pupil teachers participating in visual arts activities at Dayalbagh Educational Institute, Agra. Observations focused on their engagement, creativity, emotional expression, concentration, confidence, peer interaction, and perceived stress relief during activities such as drawing, painting, sketching, collage-making, craft, calligraphy, photography, and creative TLM preparation. Informal interactions and reflective experiences were also considered to understand the perceived benefits of visual arts. Relevant literature on visual arts, creativity, mental health, psychological well-being, and art education was reviewed to support and contextualize these observations. The observations were interpreted thematically, with emphasis on creativity, emotional expression, self-awareness, relaxation, confidence, social connection, and overall well-being.

Role of Pupil Teachers in Nurturing Student Creativity and Engagement

Pupil teachers (student teachers) play a pivotal role in bridging the gap between passive consumption and active creation. As future educators entering modern classrooms where digital distractions and instant gratification are prevalent, pupil teachers must intentionally design learning experiences that foster innovation, hands-on experimentation, and critical thinking.

Pedagogical Responsibilities

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- **Designing Hands-On Learning Experiences:** Pupil teachers should shift the instructional focus from rote learning to project-based and inquiry-based activities that require students to build, design, and experiment.
- **Integrating Art and Craft into the Curriculum:** Incorporating creative tasks into core subjects—such as constructing models for science or creating visual journals for literature—helps maintain student engagement, particularly during adolescence.
- **Counteracting Screen-Time Passivity:** By introducing tactile, real-world tasks in the classroom, student teachers can redirect adolescent energy toward productive problem-solving and meaningful self-expression.
- **Encouraging Process over Product:** Pupil teachers must guide learners to value effort, patience, and iteration rather than relying on ready-made commercial solutions.

A Glimpse of Visual Arts Resource Centre at Dayalbagh Educational Institute, Agra



Role of Visual Arts in Supporting Mental Health and Wellbeing of Pupil Teachers

Visual arts—such as drawing, painting, sculpting, crafting, and photography—offer an intuitive and open way to meet these needs. They give individuals an outlet to communicate complex thoughts and feelings that are hard to put into words. The World Health Organization even highlights art as a key driver for emotional balance, brain stimulation, social connection, and health. Kaimal, Ray, and Muniz (2016) found that Thirty-nine healthy adults participated in 45 minutes of art-making. Researchers collected saliva samples before and after the activity and found a statistically significant reduction in cortisol. Participants also reported that the

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activity was relaxing, enjoyable, and sometimes associated with a sense of "flow." A 2025 systematic review and meta-analysis by Huang et al. examined 35 randomized controlled trials involving 3,167 adults. The analysis found a significant reduction in anxiety symptoms among people receiving visual art therapy compared with control groups. Visual art does not necessarily have to be *created* to have psychological effects. It is interesting to know that even viewing visual arts helps in reducing stress. A scoping review by Law et al. (2021) examined research on viewing visual artworks and stress outcomes. The review found indications that viewing art can affect stress-related outcomes, but also highlighted substantial gaps and differences among existing studies. The World Health Organization (WHO) conducted a large scoping review covering more than 3,000 studies concerning arts and health. It concluded that the arts have an important potential role in prevention of ill health, promotion of health and well-being, and management and treatment of illness. Ryder & Filgueiras (2026)conducted systematic review/ meta-analysis comparing art production and art appreciation, their finding stated that Art production was associated with reductions in anxiety; art appreciation also appeared promising, although the evidence was limited by small samples and possible publication bias.

Concept of Visual Arts

Visual arts refer to forms of artistic expression that are primarily experienced through sight. They include: Drawing and sketching, Painting, Coloring, Sculpture and clay modeling, Collage and mixed media in Printmaking, Photography, Craft and design, Digital visual art, Installation and other contemporary art forms. Visual arts can be practiced for aesthetic enjoyment, education, communication, cultural expression, personal development, or therapeutic purposes.

Thus, art education can become an experiential environment for developing creative thinking rather than merely teaching drawing skills.

Visual Arts and Enhancement of Creativity

Development of Imagination

Art allows individuals to transform imagination into a visible form. Pupil Teachers can create imaginary characters, environments, symbols, patterns, and narratives. This movement from mental images to physical representation strengthens imaginative abilities.

Development of Divergent Thinking

Many visual-art activities have multiple possible solutions. For example, a learner may be asked to represent "a better future" through a painting. Each learner can produce a different interpretation. Such activities encourage divergent thinking and originality.

Encouragement of Experimentation

Artistic creation involves experimentation with materials, colors, textures, shapes, lines, and techniques. Learners gradually understand that mistakes can become opportunities for new ideas. This can reduce fear of failure and encourage risk-taking in creative tasks.

Improvement in Observation

Visual art requires careful observation of objects, people, nature, space, color, proportion, and relationships. Regular observation activities can develop attention to detail and perceptual sensitivity.

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Creative Problem-Solving

Creating an artwork involves continuous decision-making. If a composition does not work, the artist must modify it. Thus, art provides practical experience in identifying problems, generating alternatives, testing solutions, and evaluating outcomes.

Development of Originality

Visual arts provide opportunities for individuals to develop personal styles. When learners are encouraged to interpret rather than merely copy, they become more confident in producing original ideas.

Visual Arts and Mental Health

Mental health involves emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Visual arts can contribute to mental well-being through several interconnected mechanisms.

Emotional Expression

Some emotions are difficult to communicate verbally. Drawing and painting can provide a non-verbal channel through which individuals represent feelings, experiences, hopes, fears, and memories.

The WHO notes that artistic activities can provide opportunities for emotional expression and emotion regulation.

Stress Reduction and Relaxation

Activities such as coloring, sketching, painting, and clay work can encourage focused attention on the present activity. This may provide a temporary break from stressful thoughts and everyday pressures.

Development of Self-Esteem

Completing an artwork can provide a sense of achievement. Appreciation of one's own creative effort can strengthen confidence and self-belief. This is particularly important for learners who may not always experience success in conventional academic activities.

Improvement of Emotional Regulation

Art provides an opportunity to identify, externalize, and reflect upon emotions. Individuals can represent difficult experiences through color, symbols, shapes, or images, potentially making emotions easier to understand and manage.

Social Connection

Group art activities encourage interaction, cooperation, sharing, discussion, and appreciation of others' perspectives. Such experiences can reduce social isolation and strengthen a sense of belonging.

Enhancement of Psychological Well-being

A large WHO evidence synthesis found that arts engagement has potential benefits for both mental and physical health and can contribute to prevention, health promotion, and management of illness.

How Visual Arts May Support Mental Health

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A conceptual pathway can be represented as:



Source: chatgpt AI creation

This process does not necessarily mean that every art activity will produce the same psychological effect. Outcomes may depend upon the type of activity, duration, individual characteristics, social environment, level of participation, and whether the activity is educational, recreational, or professionally facilitated.

Role of Visual Arts in Teacher Education at Dayalbagh Educational Institute,Agra

In Dayalbagh Educational Institute, Faculty of Education has been given status of School of Education under the National Aegies Ministry of Education-National Mission on Teachers' Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya National Mission on Teachers and Teaching program. Establishment of Visual Arts Resource Centre is the part of this project where students can learn visual arts not only as an elective subject but also as a pedagogical strategy.There are some compulsory courses related to visual arts where all pupil teachers experience visual arts. In 21st Century where students are exposed of Artificial intelligence and ICT, hands on experience in creative visual arts is like a happy moment for them. They feel refreshed and their own creative art works make them feel happy, creative, relaxed and proud. Different kind of art Integrated Teaching learning material is created and used in real classroom teaching by pupil teachers. Given below are two pictures which give a glimpse of creation of students works.

Pictures showing Teaching Learning Material Developed by Pupil Teachers

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Suggested Classroom Practices

Emotion Drawing: Students represent their feelings through colours, shapes, and symbols.

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Nature Sketching: Observation of nature followed by sketching can develop attention and calmness.

Creative Story Illustration: Students convert stories into visual narratives.

Mandala and Pattern Design: Pattern-making can encourage concentration and creative exploration.

Art Journaling: Students maintain visual diaries reflecting experiences and emotions.

Collaborative Murals: Group artwork can promote cooperation and social connection.

Recycled-Art Activities: Students transform waste materials into useful or decorative objects.

Clay Modelling: Three-dimensional activities encourage sensory engagement and experimentation.

Indian Traditional Art: Madhubani, Warli, Gond, Kalamkari, Mandala, miniature painting, and other traditions can connect creativity with cultural identity.

Art Reflection: Students discuss the meaning and experience of their artwork rather than focusing only on the final product.



Proposed Framework for Using Visual Arts for supporting Mental Health and Well-being

A practical CREATE Framework may be used:

C – Create: Provide opportunities for artistic production.

R – Reflect: Encourage students to think about their artistic experience.

E – Express: Allow emotional and personal expression without fear of judgment.

A – Appreciate: Develop appreciation of one's own and others' creative work.

T – Think Creatively: Encourage experimentation, originality, and multiple solutions.

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E – Empower: Build confidence, resilience, and a sense of achievement.

This framework can be implemented through weekly art sessions, art-integrated teaching, creative workshops, art journals, exhibitions, and collaborative projects. In Dayalbagh Educational Institue Agra different kind of art based projects are done by students to celebrate foundation day and Annual Art Exhibition SRIJAN is organized in the Faculty of Education to showcase art works of pupil teachers.

Implications for Teachers

Teachers can contribute significantly to the psychological benefits of art by creating a supportive environment. They should:
Focus on the creative process rather than only the final product.
Avoid excessive comparison between students.
Encourage individual expression.
Accept different artistic styles.
Use positive and constructive feedback.
Provide opportunities for independent choice.
Integrate local and traditional art forms.
Allow students to discuss the emotions and ideas represented in their work.
Create inclusive art activities accessible to learners with different abilities.
The objective should be creative participation rather than artistic perfection.

Conclusion

Visual arts have considerable potential to contribute to both creative development and mental well-being. They provide individuals with opportunities to imagine, experiment, express emotions, solve problems, communicate ideas, and experience achievement. Research from the WHO and recent systematic reviews indicates that arts engagement can support aspects of psychological and social well-being, although the strength of evidence varies across different outcomes and populations.

In education, visual arts should therefore not be regarded merely as recreational activities or decorative subjects. They can function as powerful tools for creative pedagogy and holistic development. Regular opportunities for drawing, painting, craft, sculpture, visual storytelling, traditional arts, and art reflection can create supportive environments in which learners develop creativity while also nurturing emotional awareness and well-being.

However, art activities should complement rather than replace professional mental-health care when an individual is experiencing significant psychological difficulties. The most promising approach is to integrate visual arts into education, community life, and well-being programmes as an accessible, culturally responsive, and creative means of supporting human development.

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