

Art as a Stress Outlet through Creative Workshop for Teacher Trainees

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ABSTRACT

Stress is increasingly recognized as a major factor affecting teacher trainees, with existing literature documenting its negative effects on learning, concentration, and overall well-being. Prior research highlights conventional coping methods such as counseling, mindfulness, and physical activity, but relatively few studies explore creative arts as structured interventions for stress management. This study addresses the gap by investigating how pupils reflect on art activities to relieve stress. The research question guiding this study was: *How do teacher trainees perceive the role of art in reducing stress and supporting emotional well-being?* The central hypothesis proposed that participation in a creative art session would enable pupils to express emotions non-verbally, reduce stress, and foster relaxation. A qualitative design was implemented using targeted sampling. Teacher trainees participated in a guided M-Seal art activity. Data was collected utilizing a questionnaire for collecting Pupils' opinions and an observation checklist to document nonverbal actions such as body language, participation, and gestures.

Thematic analysis of feedback revealed consistent outcomes: pupils stated less stress, more relaxation, higher focus, and the ability to express feelings that are difficult to clarify verbally. Observational investigations reinforced these themes, showing a unique shift in mood from uneasiness at the beginning to calm enthusiasm by the end of the activity. In conclusion of this research has major implications for educational organizations, showing that art can be a low-cost, accessible, and fun therapy that enhances students' mental health. Incorporating creative activities into learning environments can boost well-being and offer healthier coping methods.

Keywords: Art, stress outlet, creative workshop

1.1 Introduction

Stress is growing as one of the most serious issues in colleges and universities, particularly among teacher trainees who must manage academic and professional responsibilities (Fimian et al., 1987). Acquiring an educator demands not just understanding subject knowledge, but also learning instructional skills, managing daily obligations, and building a professional character (Day et al., 2002). According to research, severe stress can impair concentration, weaken motivation, and have a poor impact on both mental well-being and academic performance (Benítez-Agudelo et al., 2025; Fomina et al., 2025). Untreated stress is especially troublesome in the context of teacher education because it may limit prospective educators' ability to create positive educational environments for their pupils (Prova et al., 2025; Goswami et al., 2024).

Psychological therapy, training in mindfulness, time management, and physical exercise are several prominent stress reduction measures recommended in educational settings (Alhasani & Orji, 2025). While such strategies are advantageous, they are not always efficient and frequently fail to give quick, engaging, or joyful opportunities for expressing oneself (Amabile & Kramer, 2011). Additionally, such methods often emphasize verbal or intellectual processing, which might not be appealing to everyone, particularly those who struggle to express their feelings through words (Boyd & Markowitz, 2024). This has motivated experts to investigate alternative, creative, and nonverbal stress alleviation techniques (Mhanna et al., 2024).

The expressive arts are increasingly recognized as a therapy technique that enables people to express their emotions, alleviate psychological tension, and relax (Webb, 2023). Unlike traditional stress-relief methods, art activities facilitate nonverbal communication and provide a secure, imaginative environment in which participants can express their inner thoughts and feelings (Annet, 2024). In response to studies, participating in artistic passions such as painting, drawing, sculpting, or crafting can help to reduce stress, boost focus, and develop a sense of success (Jean-Berluce, 2024). These benefits align with the growing desire to include wellness approaches in educational institutions.

However, a majority of the existing research on art-based treatments in education is either quantitative in nature, focusing on measurable results such as adrenaline levels or anxiety scales, or it is directed towards general student populations rather than teacher trainees, especially (Van Lith et al., 2021). There is a considerable gap in qualitative research that records the real-world experiences and reflections following creative sessions. Teacher trainees are a unique group

whose stress levels differ due to their dual roles as learners and future educators (Zarabi & Amirian, 2025). Understanding how students interpret and react to creative art workshops is critical for developing appropriate contextually supportive techniques.

In this research investigation, art is considered not just as an outlet for pleasure but also as an organized remedy for stress management (McNiff et al., 2004). The selection of creative medium—M-Seal art—provides a tactile, engaging process in which participants mold and shape material into artistic creations. Such hands-on experiences are known to improve mindfulness, sensory involvement, and control of emotions. Importantly, they allow pupils to express complicated emotions in a symbolic, peaceful manner (Scott et al., 2017).

The present investigation explores teacher trainees' reflections upon their involvement in a creative workshop centered on M-Seal art. It focuses on how these interactions affect their stress levels, emotional expression, and overall well-being. Using a qualitative approach, the study emphasizes human experiences and observational insights above standardized evaluations, filling a gap in the existing literature.

The important nature of this research emerges from its possible effectiveness in teacher education programs. If creative workshops are proven to relieve stress and increase emotional well-being, they can be integrated into institutional health strategies as low-cost, easily accessible, and enjoyable therapies. These approaches not only enhance teacher trainees' mental health but they additionally allow them to employ comparable techniques in their future classrooms, creating environments that promote creativity and emotional expression.

1.2 Research problem

Academic challenges, practical roles, and the obstacles of professional skill development can all cause significant anxiety for teacher trainees. While traditional techniques like counselling, mindfulness, and physical exercise are frequently suggested, they might not entirely tackle emotional expression or provide beneficial expressive alternatives for stress alleviation. As a consequence, the key issue is a lack of qualitative investigations into how teacher trainees view and reflect on art as a stress-relieving technique. Specifically, there is little evidence to support the way they perceive things and nonverbal behaviors during structured creative workshops. This gap limits the comprehension of the potential of artistic activities in teacher education settings, highlighting the necessity for research that captures participants' reflections and behavioral changes during imaginative sessions.

1.3 Objectives

1. To examine the role of M-Seal art in reducing stress among teacher trainees.
2. To explore how creative expression helps trainees release and manage emotions.
3. To observe behavioral and emotional changes during the creative workshop.
4. To identify reflections that highlight art as a tool for stress management.

1.4 Research methodology

The present study adopted a qualitative research design to explore teacher trainees' reflections and experiences after participating in a creative art workshop. The focus was on capturing students' subjective experiences and non-verbal behaviors, rather than measuring outcomes quantitatively.

• Tool used

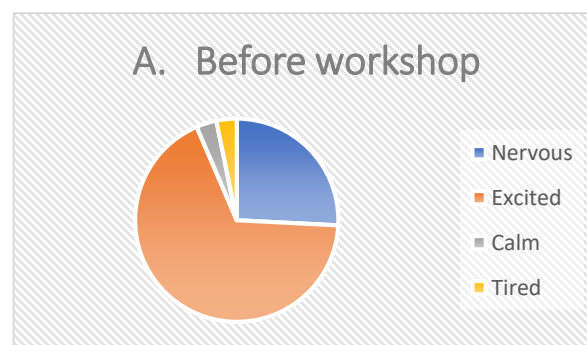
primary tool used for data collection:

1. **Questionnaire**—A questionnaire was provided after the workshop. It included a mixture of open-ended questions and tick-box items prepared to provide feedback on students' reflections on their emotional state before, during, and after the session. The questions also asked whether they felt stress relief, relaxation, or emotional expression through the art session.

The research was conducted as a creative art session using the M-Seal product. The session began with participants receiving basic instructions on how to use M-Seal to create simple forms. The activity encouraged freedom of expression, allowing students to mold the material in whichever way they felt comfortable.

After the completion of the activity, the questionnaire was distributed to gather individual reflections about their experience. Data was collected and analyzed.

1.5 Observation



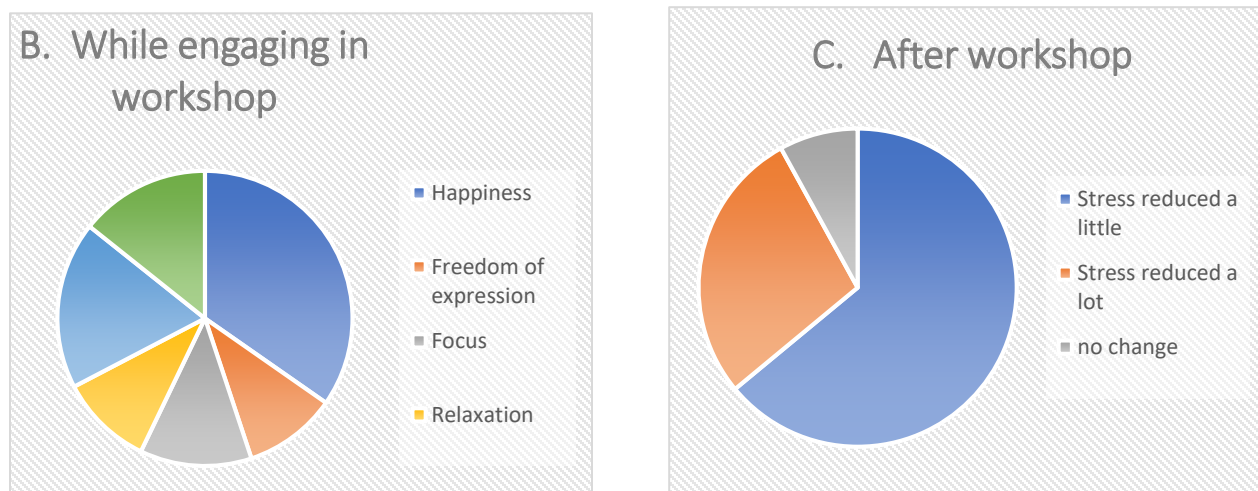


Image 1 - Different pie charts showing the number of students and how they were feeling during various phases of the workshop. A) Before workshop B) While engaging in workshop C) After workshop

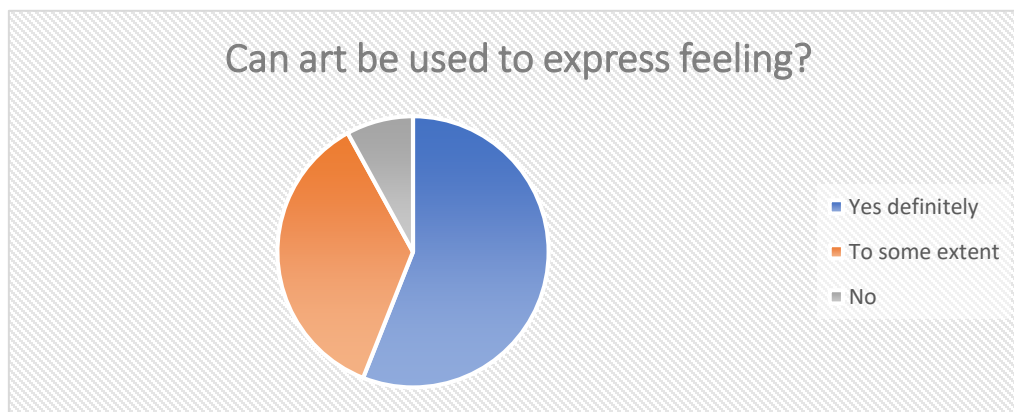


Image 2- Pie chart showing the number of students and their responses regarding art for expressing feelings.

During the creative art workshop, most teacher trainees reported entering the session with nervousness, excitement, or mild stress. As they engaged in activities such as sculpting with M-seal, focusing quietly on their work, or observing and sharing with peers, their emotions gradually shifted toward positivity. The participants expressed happiness, relaxation, calmness, and pride in their creations. Many also highlighted benefits such as improved concentration, freedom of expression, distraction from negative thoughts, and an overall sense of peace. A few participants relied on other coping strategies like listening to music, journaling, or sitting in silence. However, most recognize art as a helpful and enjoyable means of emotional release.

1.6 Result

The results indicate that participation in the creative art workshop contributed to stress reduction for most teacher trainees. A large proportion reported that their stress was reduced either “a little” or “a lot,” while only a very small number noted no change. The workshop not only reduced negative emotions but also enhanced positive states such as joy, energy, and self-expression. Art was repeatedly described as a stress buster and, for many, even a therapeutic outlet. The findings show that both male and female trainees benefited, though the majority of responses came from female participants. Overall, the workshop created an environment that supported emotional well-being, concentration, and relaxation.

1.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, art serves as an effective non-verbal outlet for stress among teacher trainees. Engaging in creative expression allowed participants to release tension, improve focus, and experience positive emotions, even when starting from a state of nervousness or fatigue. The evidence strongly suggests that structured creative workshops can play a valuable role in stress management by promoting relaxation, enhancing self-expression, and fostering emotional balance. Therefore, art can be recommended as a simple, low-cost, and enjoyable tool to support the mental well-being of teacher trainees, complementing other conventional stress management strategies.

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