

## Investigating the Impact of Art Therapy on the Mental Health of Generation Alpha Children

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### Abstrak

Studi ini mengidentifikasi dampak Terapi Seni terhadap kesehatan mental anak-anak Generasi Alpha. Generasi Alpha mengacu pada anak-anak yang tumbuh di era digital, menghadapi tantangan unik terkait kesehatan mental. Tekanan sosial dari media sosial dan masalah kesehatan mental merupakan tantangan umum yang dihadapi oleh generasi ini. Dalam konteks ini, seni muncul sebagai alat potensial untuk mendukung perkembangan psikologis mereka. Melalui kegiatan seni, anak-anak dapat mengekspresikan emosi dan mengelola stres, membantu mereka memahami pengalaman internal dan membangun keterampilan sosial. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode meta-analisis melalui tinjauan pustaka, mengumpulkan data dari 10 artikel ilmiah yang dirangkum dan dianalisis menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif.

**Kata kunci :** *Seni, Terapi Seni, kesehatan mental, Generasi Alpha.*

### Abstract

This study identifies the impact of Art Therapy on the mental health of Generation Alpha children. Generation Alpha refers to children growing up in the digital era, facing unique challenges related to mental health. Social pressures from social media and mental health issues are common challenges encountered by this generation. In this context, art emerges as a potential tool to support their psychological development. Through art activities, children can express emotions and manage stress, helping them understand internal experiences and build social skills. This research employs a meta-analysis method through a literature review, collecting data from 10 scientific articles that are summarized and analyzed using a quantitative approach.

**Keywords :** *Art, Art Therapy, mental health, Generation Alpha.*

### INTRODUCTION

Generation Alpha is the group of children born between 2010 and 2024, growing up in a highly connected world filled with new challenges. They are the first generation to be fully raised in the digital technology era, with easy access to smart devices and the internet from an early age. This influences how they interact, learn, and communicate.

Children in this generation tend to be more open to information and diverse cultures. However, amidst technological advancements and rapid access to information, many pressures often faced by Generation Alpha may not have been experienced by previous generations. Social pressures from social media and mental health issues are common challenges for Generation Alpha. Education for this generation increasingly focuses on 21st-century skills, including creativity, collaboration, and problem-solving, to prepare them for a constantly changing world. Mental health for these children is a primary concern, given the rising levels of anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues, making it essential to create an environment that supports positive growth and development.

In this context, art emerges as a promising solution to support their psychological development. Art serves not only as a medium of expression but also as a tool that can help children understand and manage their emotions. Art activities such as painting, drawing, dancing, and participating in theater provide opportunities for children to express feelings that may be

difficult to articulate in words. Dr. Gene Cohen, a psychologist and art expert, argues that “art has the power to touch emotions and facilitate the processing of experiences.” This statement suggests that art can function as a bridge between children's internal experiences and the outside world, helping them forge better connections with themselves and others.

Moreover, various studies show that engagement in artistic activities has a positive impact on children's social and emotional development. According to research conducted by Hargreaves and Marshall (2003), children involved in artistic activities demonstrate improved abilities to collaborate, communicate, and understand others' perspectives. Group activities such as drama or choir not only build self-confidence but also strengthen social bonds among them. This is particularly important as children today often feel isolated due to excessive technology use.

Furthermore, art can also serve as a tool for reducing stress and enhancing overall well being. A study published in the Journal of the American Art Therapy Association shows that children participating in art therapy experience reduced levels of anxiety and improved mood. This indicates that art can function as an effective form of therapy, providing children with tools to cope with the stress they encounter in daily life.

By understanding the crucial role of art in the mental health of Generation Alpha children, we can create a more supportive environment for them. This article will delve deeper into the positive impacts of art on children's mental health, referencing various studies and expert opinions in the fields of psychology, education, and art. With these insights, we hope to provide practical recommendations for parents, educators, and the community to encourage children's involvement in the arts, allowing them to grow into mentally and emotionally healthy individuals.

## **METHOD**

This study employs a quantitative approach through a literature review to investigate the impact of art on the mental health of Generation Alpha children. A literature review is a type of research method that involves collecting and analyzing published scientific articles to gain a comprehensive understanding of the researched topic. The method used in this article is meta analysis, which combines the results of various previous studies to identify common patterns, relationships, or overall effects regarding the topic being examined. Data for this research was gathered from articles published in various journals, accessible through platforms such as Google, including Google Scholar (<https://scholar.google.com>) and similar resources. To facilitate the search, keywords such as "art," "mental," and "Generation Alpha" were used. From this search, several articles that met the criteria for discussion in this article were identified. To facilitate the search, keywords such as “Art”, “Art Therapy”, “mental health”, and “Generation Alpha”. can be used. The search yields several articles that meet various criteria relevant to the discussion in this article.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Result**

Overall, this study indicates that art therapy is a highly effective method for supporting the mental health of Generation Alpha children. Art therapy serves as a multidimensional approach that addresses various aspects of child development. In the context of Generation Alpha, where many children face unique challenges, art therapy not only functions as a tool for stress relief but also as a platform for emotional and social learning. One of the key advantages of art therapy is its ability to overcome verbal barriers, which can often be an issue for children in their development. Additionally, art therapy aids in enhancing emotional regulation, a sense of control, and children's ability to understand their experiences.

Growing up in a media-saturated environment, Generation Alpha is exposed to excessive information, which can lead to anxiety and depression. Art therapy becomes an effective way to help these children clear their minds and alleviate the pressures they face in this digital landscape. Each child has unique needs regarding development and mental health, and art therapy can be tailored to meet those needs, taking into account factors such as cultural background and personal experiences. This customization enhances the therapy's effectiveness and the child's engagement.

## Discussion

Based on the literature review conducted on Generation Alpha children, it was found that these children live in an environment surrounded by digital technology, which necessitates the development of technological skills from an early age. This generation is the first to grow up entirely in the digital era, making them more familiar with digital devices and social media compared to previous generations. The extensive exposure to technology and digital interactions significantly impacts their mental and emotional health. While advanced technology offers many benefits, it also poses risks that can lead to anxiety and other social issues.

The literature review revealed several mechanisms through which art therapy operates:

1. **Emotional Expression:** Through art activities, children can express their feelings without verbal limitations, helping them understand and cope with complex emotions.
2. **Social Engagement:** Art therapy is often conducted in groups, allowing children to interact with one another, develop social skills, and build empathy (McDonald et al., 2021).
3. **Cognitive and Motor Skills Development :** Art activities also contribute to cognitive and motor skill development, which are crucial for learning in school (Haryati et al., 2015).

Additionally, the benefits and roles of art therapy were identified :

1. **Benefits of Art Therapy in Addressing Mental Health Issues in Children**

Studies show that art therapy plays a significant role in helping children manage emotional disturbances, anxiety, and trauma. It enables children to express their emotions and experiences through non-verbal media like drawing, painting, and sculpting, which is particularly beneficial for those with limited verbal expression. For instance, research by Novianty and Shahroh (2020) found that coloring activities significantly reduced anxiety in preschool children, demonstrating that art therapy provides opportunities for children to alleviate negative emotions and foster positive feelings.

2. **The Role of Art Therapy in Influencing Emotional Well-Being**

The literature review also found that art activities such as coloring, painting, and crafting provide a safe and positive way for children to manage their emotions. Research indicates that children who consistently participate in art therapy sessions experience a reduction in anxiety symptoms and an overall improvement in emotional well-being. Art therapy also has the ability to provide an outlet for emotional expression. As noted in a study by Hidayah (2020), "When children engage in art activities, they can express emotions that are difficult to articulate with words.

3. **The Role of Art Therapy in Reducing Trauma in Children**

Further literature review findings reveal that art therapy is highly effective in assisting children who experience ongoing mental health issues, potentially leading to trauma. "The etiology of psychosocial problems is complex and varies with regard to the problem(s) and/or the specific individual," indicating that trauma and negative experiences in childhood play a role in the emergence of psychosocial problems (Bosgraaf et al., 2020). A study by Bosgraaf et al. (2020) shows that children who experience trauma often struggle to express their feelings verbally. In such situations, art therapy allows children to visualize and process their trauma in a safer manner. Additionally, a study by Fauziyyah et al. (2020) suggests that "Drawing activities in children are believed to be an effective means of emotional expression and can help children release repressed emotions that reside in their subconscious." This is further supported by research conducted by McDonald et al. (2021), which found that art therapy can reduce aggressive behaviors in children.

4. **Art Therapy and Attention to Learning Accuracy in Students**

The literature review also found a significant influence of art therapy on students' attention to detail. For instance, a study conducted by Haryati et al. (2015) utilized Treatment by Level Design (T-L), aiming to measure the level of attention to detail resulting from the art therapy implemented in this research. In the study, subjects engaged in creating a piece of art in the form of embroidery. Embroidery, as a type of art, involves various stages that require precision in execution.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the explanation provided, it can be concluded that in the context of mental health and emotional development of Generation Alpha children, art therapy demonstrates significant effectiveness. Several identified benefits, such as children's ability to express emotions, reduce anxiety, and develop social skills, clearly highlight the urgency of integrating art therapy into educational and mental health programs.

However, despite various studies showing positive results, there are still several challenges that need to be addressed. First, accessibility to art therapy is not uniform, particularly in remote and underdeveloped areas. Additionally, not all educators or therapists have adequate qualifications and training in art therapy, which can impact the overall effectiveness of the programs. On the other hand, there is a risk that art therapy may be perceived as a temporary solution if it is not supported by other approaches that address deeper mental health issues.

To address these challenges, a synergistic collaboration among the government, educational institutions, and non-governmental organizations is needed to expand access to art therapy. Increasing training for educators and therapists will also be crucial so they can optimally utilize this method. In other words, there is a need to develop programs that combine art therapy with a holistic approach to children's mental health. Children should not only receive temporary assistance but also long-term support to develop their emotional systems.

With these planned and coordinated steps, it is hoped that art therapy can be optimized as an invaluable tool in supporting the mental health and development of children amidst the complexities of an increasingly digital era surrounding their lives.

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