

# Exploring of Expressive Art Therapy in Counselling: A Recent Systematic Review

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**ABSTRACT:** *Objectives:* This systematic review aims to identify what themes are found in the study of expressive art therapy and counselling, and to identify and analyse the variety of therapeutic research methods and intervention settings to understand how these factors contribute to effective mental health care and therapeutic practise worldwide. Sometimes meeting the complex emotional needs of clients can require more work than typical counselling strategies. This encourages us to explore how EAT can improve therapeutic outcomes for people struggling with a range of mental health conditions. *Design:* A thorough and systematic review of the literature, including studies, research and applications of expressive arts therapy in counselling, was conducted using the PRISMA framework. *Data source:* Advanced techniques and targeted keywords were used to search SCOPUS and the Web of Science database. Following a mixed methods analysis of the resulting primary dataset (n = 20), three overarching themes were identified. *Methods of review:* The database used by the researcher was from 2020-2023. Based on this search, 20 articles met the specified criteria. *Results:* The initial conclusions of the study indicate that expressive arts therapy can promote the ongoing exploration and integration of creative and therapeutic approaches into mental health care, demonstrating a methodological approach to understanding and treating adult mental health through broader medical and academic methods.

**Keywords:** Expressive art therapy, counselling, systematic review, mental health care, therapeutic outcome.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Expressive art therapy combines creativity and mental health into a distinctive and effective counselling method [1–4]. The main aim of this influential article is to provide a comprehensive overview of expressive arts therapy, including an analysis of its theoretical foundations, pragmatic implementations and empirical evidence of its effectiveness in the therapeutic setting [5–7]. Effective art therapy essentially incorporates various artistic modalities — including visual arts, music, movement, drama and writing — to promote emotional expression and individual exploration. (8–11). In contrast to conventional talk therapy, this method utilizes people's inherent capacity for artistic manifestation and offers clients alternative channels to explore and articulate their feelings and thoughts [8–10, 12]. This article explores the theoretical foundations of expressive arts therapy and how the creative process can facilitate psychological rehabilitation. By exploring key theories such as the person-centered, psychodynamic and Gestalt approaches, the reader can gain an understanding of how artistic expression can promote self-awareness, emotional control and personal development [13–16]. This article highlights the pragmatic implementation of expressive arts therapy in counselling, including its use with diverse populations and the presentation of case studies that demonstrate its flexibility across age cohorts and cultural milieus. This article explores the integration of expressive arts therapy into various types of counselling, including individual, group and family sessions. It highlights the importance of expressive arts therapy in fostering interpersonal relationships and creating a therapeutic

environment that goes beyond traditional verbal exchanges. The evidence-based review of studies evaluating the effectiveness of expressive arts therapy for various mental health conditions will be an essential part of the in-depth investigation. The article will shed light on the therapeutic effects of creative expression by examining outcomes related to anxiety, depression, trauma and other psychological problems, drawing on empirical research. The article will also discuss the potential difficulties and moral aspects of expressive arts therapy [17–19].

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1. EXPLORATION

According [20] expressive art therapy in counselling uses different types of creative expression to help clients explore and understand their feelings, thoughts [20] and experiences. This approach recognizes the potential limitations of conventional verbal communication in facilitating the expression and processing of an individual's deepest emotions [21]. Expressive arts therapy offers an alternative method of communication that allows individuals to unleash their creativity and utilize various art forms such as visual arts, music, movement, poetry, and creative writing to express themselves [21,22]. Art allows the individual to delve into the depths of their subconscious and express emotions that are difficult to explain verbally. This type of therapy is particularly beneficial for those who have difficulty communicating their experiences verbally or expressing their feelings. Expressive art therapy provides a safe and non-judgmental environment in which individuals can delve into their inner selves and understand their feelings and experiences [20]. Self-expression, personal development, and self-knowledge can be the result. By actively participating in the creative process, clients can discover new strategies for managing their emotions and overcoming obstacles, thus developing a greater awareness of their circumstances and themselves. Expressive arts therapy utilizes many art forms such as visual arts, movement, music, poetry, and creative writing to enable clients to delve into their hidden emotions and express them through artistic means [20,23].

### 2. INTEGRATION

Expressive arts therapy has been shown to be effective in catharsis in psychotherapy, especially in groups [24]. Nevertheless, this form of therapy requires a structured and specialized module, especially for mental health problems [22]. In addition to helping clients cope with grief and loss, substance abuse and ethical dilemmas, incorporating expressive techniques such as cinema, art and music into counselling can provide a new perspective [25]. These strategies can be integrated into counselling practice within the framework of different counselling theories and offer a variety of solutions for clients with different concerns [26].

Margaret Naumburg, widely regarded as the "mother of art therapy," was a pioneer in the use of art as a psychoanalytic tool, utilizing artworks to express the unconscious [27]. There is evidence that expressive arts therapy is helpful for disorders such as depression [28]. Over time, expressive arts therapy has evolved to treat various psychological issues and is used with different populations, including children, adults, and the elderly. Expressive and creative arts therapy are synonymous with concepts that involve the use of many art forms in therapeutic settings to improve mental, emotional, and physical well-being. These therapies promote self-awareness and self-acceptance.

### 3. EDUCATION

A study by [29] in Malaysia found that mental health professionals and counsellors who wish to use Expressive Arts Therapy in their work require extensive and continuous training by qualified professionals. The use of Expressive Art Therapy skills and expertise could prevent undesirable outcomes or bring new challenges that the client cannot overcome. In addition, many modern studies on Expressive Art Therapy are being conducted in Malaysia. The study was conducted by [30-33]. The aim of the study conducted by [30] is to explore the adjustment process of first-year student teachers. The researcher utilised the technique of storytelling by identifying the themes of the adjustment process. The integration of Expressive Arts Therapy allows counsellors to immediately and indirectly remember the students' main concerns, which facilitates the provision of more precise interventions. Study [31] present a study examining the effects of pregnancy and

childbirth on internal conflict in unmarried adolescents. Using the expressive arts therapy approach in counselling facilitates counsellors' deeper understanding of the psychological turbulence associated with pregnancy symptoms. Birth and infant mortality. This shows that art therapy can motivate these adolescents to openly communicate latent emotions, whether unintentionally or intentionally, by reducing inhibitions such as guilt and fear. At the same time, [32] investigated the effectiveness of creative group counselling in alleviating stress, anxiety and depression and improving self-compassion and mental health in single mothers. Thirty-six single mothers from women's shelters in Selangor participated in this study, which was supervised by the Selangor Islamic Religious Council (SIRC). To determine the effectiveness of creative arts in group therapy, the researcher administered the Self-Compassion Scale and the DASS, two psychological assessments, before and after the study. Single mothers experience a positive outcome thanks to the innovative group counselling approach. In addition, a group of divorced single mothers in Terengganu participated in an art therapy study by [33]. The subjects were divorced single mothers who had custody of their children. The duration of the study was six days, with the art therapy group only participating for three days. Interviews were conducted with the single mothers before, during and after the art therapy programme to gain insights into their experiences. Independent research shows that art therapy can provide social and personalised support, alleviate feelings of isolation and promote positive emotions.

The results show that expressive arts therapy provides clients with a safe environment in which they can uncover latent emotions, that it is suitable for groups and that it has the potential to promote the development of more positive emotions. The purpose of this study is :

- 1) To identify the theme in the study on expressive art therapy and counseling?
- 2) To identify and analyze the diversity in therapeutic research methodologies and intervention settings, aiming to understand how these factors contribute to effective mental health care and therapeutic practices globally.

### III. DESIGN

The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) flowchart guidelines identify the articles relevant to the research investigation and serve as a checklist [15]. PRISMA is recognised as a reliable standard for highlighting literature as the thorough and careful process ensures the consistency and quality of the review process [34]. The result of using the PRISMA method in the social sciences is work from reputable data sources that is widely recognised by researchers. The PRISMA flowchart includes the first four processes, identification, screening, eligibility and inclusion, which identify studies that fulfil the criteria set by the researcher [35,36].

The articles on SLR were searched in two scientific databases: Web of Science and SCOPUS. Previous studies [37,38] have identified WoS and Scopus as the most important bibliographic databases. Meanwhile, [39] WoS and Scopus were found to be highly regarded "search engines" for finding high quality and relevant articles on SLR. Consequently, the WoS and Scopus databases were the primary sources of information. A study by [37] found that about 96% of journals from the Web of Science (WoS) database are also included in the Scopus index.

### IV. IDENTIFICATION

For this study, a considerable amount of relevant literature was selected by conducting a systematic review in several steps. First, the most important words were selected and related terms were researched in dictionaries, thesauri, encyclopedias, and previous studies. Each relevant term was selected after formulating the search parameters for Scopus and Web of Science (see Table 1). In the first phase of the systematic review, 46,209 documents were collected from both databases for the study project. For the Scopus database, the first step in the search is to use expressive OR creative\* AND art AND therapy AND counselling. Using this search term, the researcher found a total of 152 articles. However, the exact search terms are also used in the WOS database. A total of 46,057 articles were found. As the field of the study is too large, four concepts were created, as shown in Table 1 below:

**Table 1.** The search strings

First concept	Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY ( ( expressive OR creative* AND art AND therapy AND counselling ) )
	Wos	Results for (expressive OR creative* AND art AND therapy AND counselling) (All Fields) TITLE-ABS-KEY ( ( expressive OR creative* AND art AND therapy AND counselling ) ) AND PUBYEAR > 2019 AND PUBYEAR < 2025 AND ( LIMIT-TO ( PUBSTAGE , "final" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( LANGUAGE , "English" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( DOCTYPE , "ar" ) )
Second concept	Scopus	
	Wos	Refine results for (expressive OR creative* AND art AND therapy AND counselling) (All Fields) and Open Access and 2020 or 2021 or 2022 or 2023 (Final Publication Year) and Article (Document Types) and English (Languages) and Psychology or Arts Humanities Other Topics or Social Issues (Research Areas)
Third concept	Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY ( ( expressive OR creative* AND art AND therapy AND counselling ) ) AND PUBYEAR > 2019 AND PUBYEAR < 2025
	Wos	Refine results for (expressive OR creative* AND art AND therapy AND counselling) (All Fields) and Open Access and 2020 or 2021 or 2022 or 2023 (Final Publication Year) and Article (Document Types) and English (Languages) and Psychology or Arts Humanities Other Topics or Social Issues (Research Areas) and Psychology (Research Areas)
Fourth concept	Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY ( ( expressive OR creative* AND art AND therapy AND counselling ) ) AND PUBYEAR > 2019 AND PUBYEAR < 2025 AND ( LIMIT-TO ( PUBSTAGE , "final" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( LANGUAGE , "English" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( DOCTYPE , "ar" ) )
	Wos	Refine results for (expressive OR creative* AND art AND therapy AND counselling) (All Fields) and Open Access and 2020 or 2021 or 2022 or 2023 (Final Publication Year) and Article (Document Types) and English (Languages) and Psychology or Arts Humanities Other Topics or Social Issues (Research Areas) and Psychology (Research Areas) and Open Access and 2023 (Final Publication Year)

## V. SCREENING

Removing duplicates should be the first phase of the filtering process. A total of 3 articles were removed and only 57 articles from 60 publications were evaluated in the second phase based on the criteria established by the researchers, as shown in Table 2. In the first phase, all articles were considered. Research articles were the main criterion for selection due to the valuable information they contain. Theses, book chapters, conference reports, proceedings were not included in the study. The study also only considered papers written in English. The study spanned three years, from 2020 to 2023. 46,149 publications were excluded based on a specific criterion.

**Table 2.** The selection criterion is searching

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Language	English	Non-English
Timeline	2020 – 2023	< 2019
Literature type	Journal (Article)	Theses, conference, books, and proceedings
Publication Stage	Final	In Press
Subject area	Psychology, medicine, social science, arts and humanities, health profession, nursing.	Others

## VI. ELIGIBILITY

26 articles were collected in the third phase, the so-called adequacy review. In this step, a comprehensive review of the titles and text of each article was conducted to ensure that they met the inclusion criteria and were relevant to the research objectives of the current study. As a result, a total of 6 datasets, papers and articles were excluded for a variety of reasons. These included that they did not fall within the scope of the study, that a greater link between the abstract and the objective was required, and that they did not provide full-text access to empirical evidence. The titles and abstracts of the excluded articles also did not sufficiently support the objectives of the study. There are currently 20 papers remaining for assessment.

## VII. DATA ABSTRACTION AND ANALYSIS

As a primary evaluation strategy, the study utilized integrative analysis to examine and combine different research designs that relied mainly on quantitative methods. The primary aim was to identify sub-themes and themes relevant to the field of expressive arts therapy. In the initial phase, data was collected thoroughly. Figure 1 shows a comprehensive examination of 20 articles to extract relevant statements. In doing so, the authors scrutinized both the methods and the results of previous research on expressive art therapy. The co-operation of the authors was essential for the creation of concepts that are anchored in the context of the study. The entire process of data analysis was documented using a detailed protocol that included analyses, perspectives and other relevant factors. An essential procedure was the comparison of findings to reveal any inconsistencies in the thematic framework, which were subsequently resolved through consultations between the authors. In particular, the themes were improved to ensure their consistency. To ascertain the validity of the issue, two experts were involved in the analysis selection: Prof Salleh Amat, an expert in counseling, and Ku Suhaila Ku Johari, an expert in play therapy. By designating the domain, the expert review phase guarantees each subtheme's clarity, significance, and appropriateness.

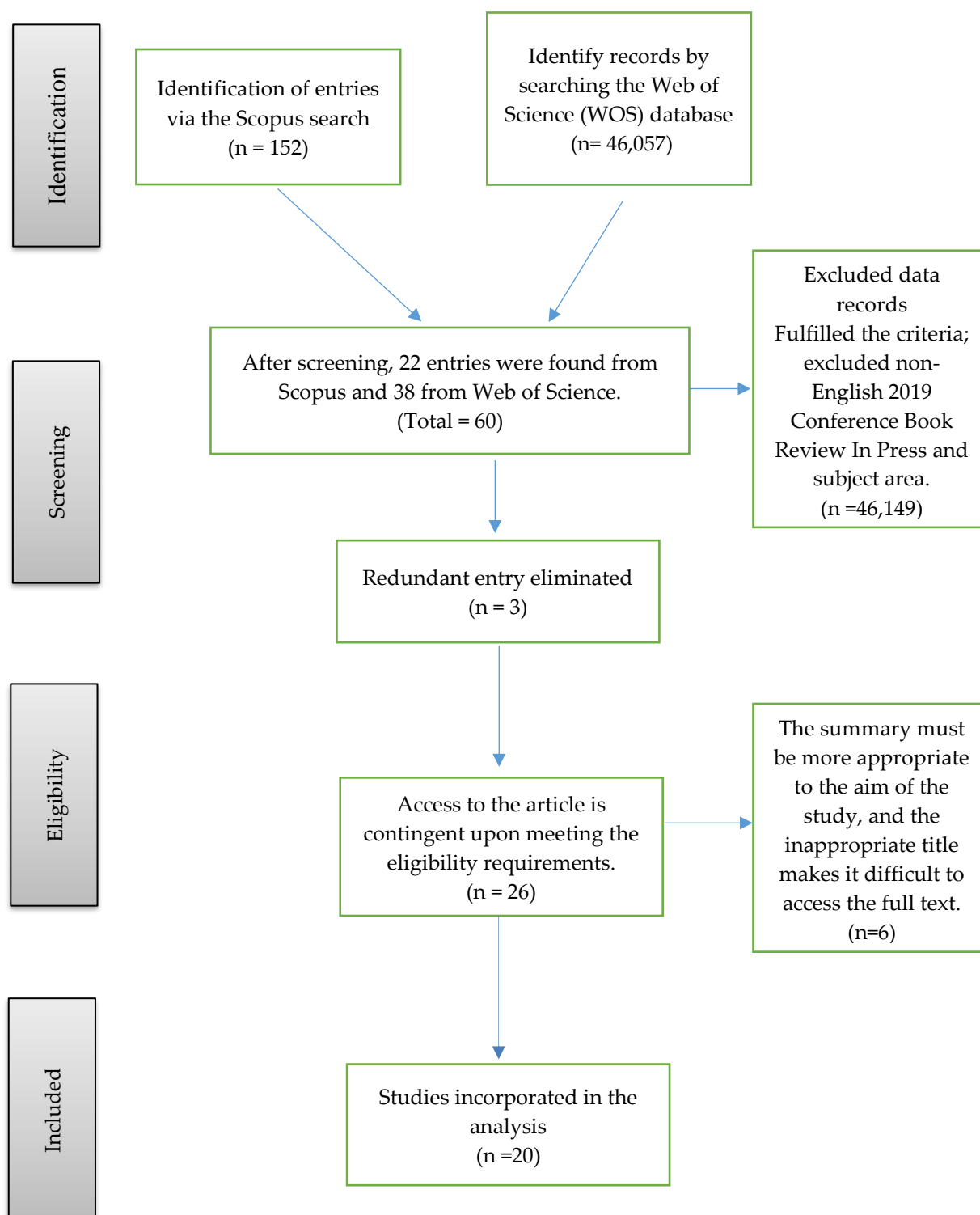


FIGURE 1. Analysis flowchart (34)



VIII. RESULT AND FINDING

1. THE THEME CAN BE FOUND IN THE STUDY ON EXPRESSIVE ART THERAPY AND COUNSELLING

The use of expressive art therapy in counselling has become increasingly important. It provides a non-verbal method of creatively communicating complicated feelings and experiences. This comprehensive approach encourages the involvement of the various senses and an in-depth exploration of emotions, cognition and sensations. Through the symbolic representation of aspects of one's psyche, art therapy stimulates imagination and creativity and provides a therapeutic forum for self-expression. The individual can release unpleasant feelings as a cathartic release. Through its cultural sensitivity and adaptability, expressive art therapy provides a more individualised and comprehensive treatment plan than traditional talking therapies. Further research demonstrates its effectiveness and establishes it as a versatile and successful tool for therapists committed to comprehensive wellness. The articles have been grouped into three overarching themes: empowerment [5], innovation [8] resilience [7].

Table 3. Empowerment

Author, year (Country)	Study population	Objective	Study Design	Intervention setting	Quantitative measures	Findings
Assing Hvidt E.; Hvidt N.C.; Graven V.; la Cour K.; Rottmann N.; Thomsen K.F.; Linqvist O.; Rasmussen A.; Skaarup H.; Roessler K.K. 2020, (Denmark) [40]	N= 40 Completed the study = 36 Women- 31 Men= 5 Range age= 31-76	This article evaluates effective and obstructive change processes while detailing the developmental journey of an existential support program.	Development and qualitative evaluation	Five-day existential support program "Life Energy"	Not mentioned	"Existential exchange" was a feature of the positive results produced by the programme. Greater awareness, acceptance of their own existential plight and readiness for the future were encouraged by the existential group therapy. Art therapy provides a respite from the illness and a means to articulate complex thoughts and feelings related to the illness. Engagement with the natural world triggered emotions such as calmness, inner serenity, a strengthened sense of self-worth and a deep spiritual connection. On the other hand, negative attributes were associated with the structure of the existential counselling groups, discomfort with creative involvement and stress from the hospital environment.
Hash P. 2021, (United State) [41]	Voluntary participation and availability were	to examine the effects of a curriculum that emphasises	Arts-based educational research (ABER)	Public university	Over the course of a semester, four interviews	The instructor assessed the progress of each student through a narrative analysis and identified therapeutic effects resulting from the curriculum, ranging from emotional introspection to relaxation.

	considered when selecting participants.	expressive arts techniques.			are conducted with each student participant, once after each art project and once again after the semester.	
Park J.E.J. 2022, (Korea) [42]	A six-year-old child diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD)	The significance of participating in therapy with parents and the concept of creative arts therapy. This therapeutic approach playfully utilizes expressive arts,	Individual Therapeutic Education Plan (ITEP)	Child's development	Not mentioned	The results suggest that implementing a parent-centred creative approach has a positive impact on parenting change and child growth. To promote child development and improve the home environment for parents and children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), parent-centred interventions are a viable option.
Boyer W. 2024, (Canada) [43]	adults	emphasizing counselors' skill in recognizing individuals' potential and abilities while respecting	Not mentioned	career growth	Not mentioned	This article explores how training in expressive play therapy enhances the therapeutic alliance among an adult with neurodiversity, their family, and their counselor. It underscores the broader implications for career advancement, suggesting that such training can reduce counselor burnout by enhancing their ability to establish deeper therapeutic connections with clients.



		differences in neurocognitive functioning across domains.				
Raque, TL; Lamphere, B; Motzny, C; Kauffmann, J; Ziemer, K; Haywood, S (2023), Switzerland [44]	First year at university for 51 women over the age of 18	to determine the extent to which an increase in self-compassion improves body image.	changed in Essays — Consensual qualitative research	University	modified consensual qualitative research (CQR-M)	The results showed that university women consistently demonstrated psychological flexibility and body acceptance. In addition, participants reported significant improvements in mindfulness and decreases in social influence, feelings of separation, negative health behaviors and attention to media messages. A decrease in the expression of the inner control center, affection and kindness towards one's own body and body functionality was observed. These findings indicate that mindfulness and reducing negative body-related behaviors can enhance women's body image by promoting self-compassion, particularly about media, apparel, make-up, and unfavorable social encounters.

Table 4. Innovation

Author, year (Country)	Study population	Objective	Study Design	Intervention setting	Quantitative measures	Findings
Clacherty G. 2021, (South Africa) [45]	15–20 children in the SCPS retreat house	Using crayons and paint to depict the details of their lives, these books allow individuals to immerse themselves in the harsh realities of xenophobic violence from their neighbors and the rigid bureaucratic hurdles	psychosocial support programs	refugee children	Not mentioned	The article describes a multi-yearbook project aimed at refugee families that was carried out at a counselling centre in Johannesburg, South Africa. The inclusion of trusted children's books from this project in the African Storybook Project's digital library demonstrates the transformative power of these books as an advocacy tool. The report explores the pragmatic elements of the project by detailing the process and addressing the

Thomas V. 2020, (United Kingdom) [46]	Not mentioned	they face in obtaining necessary documents. This paper argues for a more profound inclusion of creative methods in counselling and suggests that one possible solution is to create a more inclusive framework for this practice. This article aims to broaden the understanding of humanistic art therapy to include the recognition of a shared creative experience between therapist and client as a component that contributes to the therapeutic relationship.	Develop the frameworks	Counselling practice	Not mentioned	theoretical points of view that emerge from the representation of everyday events. This review looks at efforts within talking therapies to construct functional and descriptive models for the use of mental imagery, with the aim of integrating different theoretical perspectives. The discussion examines different models and academic viewpoints to assess their potential for integrating creative techniques into counselling practise. In the context of humanistic art therapy, the author explores the function of artmaking in the session as a co-operative and therapeutic activity and emphasises its positive effects on the relationship between client and therapist. The article is a plea for further research in the following areas: the psychological well-being of art therapists the impact of collaborative creative processes on clients and therapists the influence of multicultural perspectives on clients' evaluations of the art practises used by their therapists during sessions Given the criticism levelled at current inpatient therapy in psychiatric institutions, the article provides a rationale for the inclusion of interventions in the present, particularly music listening. The reason for this is the transition from long inpatient stays to shorter periods of stabilisation in psychiatric care. The authors believe that contemporary interventions such as listening to music can meet the changing needs of patients in the context of shorter hospital stays and can be a
Tompkins Rosa C.L. 2023, (Canada) [47]	Client and therapist		Not mentioned	Post-session response art	Not mentioned	
Sackett C.R.; Edwards R.N. 2020, (United State) [48]	6 people in group Range age= 19-63	We promote listening to music as an intervention of the expressive arts in inpatient psychiatric group counselling.	Case study	inpatient psychiatric group	hypothetical case example	

Rattigan M.D.; Morningstar D.; Horowitz S. 2023 (United State) [49]	Age=mid- 20s	The authors use the button method to illustrate a five-stage paradigm of cooperation	Case study	Hospital	Not mentioned	more adaptable and effective therapeutic method. Art therapists and clinicians from different mental health disciplines are encouraged to collaborate by using the Button Method, a five- step model of collaboration described in this article. The authors provide practical illustrations and notable factors that support clinicians in their collaborative efforts. By emphasising the integration of art therapy into broader therapeutic practises, the model provides a systematic framework for promoting effective interdisciplinary collaboration in mental health. The article examines the pedagogical approaches incorporated into a UK university's postgraduate diploma programme in counselling children and young people. The curriculum emphasises the integration of creative and arts-based therapeutic tools. The authors present initial observations on the integration of these tools into the curriculum. Furthermore, the paper highlights the deliberate and strategic implementation of these methods during psychotherapeutic and counselling training programmes. It addresses intentionality in the implementation of creative interventions in therapeutic practise.
Hubena B.; Mulcahy J. 2020 (United Kingdom) [50]	Children and young people (C&YP)	The application of intentionality is also at the centre of this article, which describes the function of creative interventions in therapeutic practise.	Not mentioned	therapeutic practice	Not mentioned	
Ibrahim M.; Abdullah A. 2023 (Malaysia) [51]	Participants (n = 4) mental health therapists from public	Evaluation of the therapeutic effectiveness of the use of Creative Expressive – Bodily Maps of Emotions (CE-BME) with adolescent clients	qualitative	Hospital	Semi- structured interviews emphasize the processual and	This article identifies six themes for facilitative processes related to a creative expression tool (CE-BME) in the psychiatric treatment of children. The themes encompass the following: bolstering client self-awareness, facilitating emotional exploration and processing, fostering committed relationships with young

		during the healing process.			experiential components of the interviewee's experience.	clients, alleviating therapist tension, providing emotional relief, and guiding interventions. The results of this study reinforce researchers' confidence in the use of the CE-BME instrument and demonstrate that it effectively supports therapists involved in child mental health interventions.
Parsons, A; Dubrow-Marshall, L; Turner, R; Thurston, S; Starkey, J; Omylinska-Thurston, J; Karkou, V (2023) UK [52]	The expression (n-18) represents the number of individuals in the group, excluding the 18 participants mentioned earlier. Most of these individuals are female (83%), of white British ethnicity (56%), and work in psychotherapeutic professions (72%). The	This study examined how a 90-minute session known as "Arts for the Blues" (A4B) influenced the mood and achievement of personal goals in 18 participants. The participants evaluated the importance of psychological flow concerning the psychotherapeutic goals of A4B, and the level of psychological flow experienced was measured quantitatively.	A repeated measures design within the same group was used to assess changes before and after the study.	University	Jackson et al. (2008) developed two assessment tools: the Positive and Negative Affect Scales (PANAS), comprising 20 items, and the Short Flow States Scale (SFSS), comprising nine items. Additionally, they constructed the Importance of Flow Survey (IoF).	The study's results are analyzed regarding limitations in methodology, implications for researchers and practitioners aiming to promote flow in their work, and possibly advantageous creative therapeutic elements that could enhance flow.

rest are  
either  
students or  
academics.

Table 5. Resilience

Author, year (Country)	Study population	Objective	Study Design	Intervention setting	Quantitative measures	Findings
Shipley M.J.; Coggins K.; Shipley K.C.; Ellison D. 2021, (United State) [53]	age range of (N = 37): seven to fifty-five years	This study centered on the involvement of thirty-seven current and former military personnel and their families in community- based cultural activities.	Phenomen ological study with a survey research design	mental health	The questionnaire contained four demographic questions, six quantitative Likert- type questions and four open questions with narrative content.	The results suggest that through art, people were able to reflect on how 11 September affected their country, their families and their fellow citizens. A deeper understanding of how expressive arts activities that address the grief and hardships associated with the conflict can positively contribute to community engagement and integration can be achieved by exploring participants' perspectives.
Li Y.; Peng J. 2022, (China) [54]	263 students in university	The current study employed network analysis to assess how expressive art therapy enhances resilience among university students amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.	A pre-post design method based on network analysis was used.	University students psychological ly exposed to COVID-19 and their resilience	Resiliency Scale for University Students (RSUS)	Self-efficacy before the intervention and peer support after the intervention proved to be crucial variables in the network analysis. The problem-solving components and support from friends and family were closely linked, with support from friends playing an important role in the network. A more precise intervention in resilience mechanisms is possible through network analysis in expressive art therapy. As an alternative to practical problem solving, the intervention should emphasise the importance of building social support networks, especially those consisting of peers.

Sonnone A.; Rochford J.S. 2020 (United State) [55]	undergraduate students	This essay argues for the benefits of introducing art therapy groups at UCCs to counteract the increase in use and expand the range of appropriate treatment alternatives available to students.	Not mentioned	University	Not mentioned	University Counselling Centres (UCCs) can use art therapy process groups to treat students' mental health problems. A UCC art therapy group was founded by authors who are also art therapists. The main goal of this group is to motivate students to express themselves creatively, which not only improves their emotional stability, but also fosters stronger social bonds. These organisations are of great benefit to the members and would enrich UCC's programme offerings.
Price E.W.; Swan A.M. 2020 (United State) [56]	College students who are in their first year	This article aims to (a) investigate the mental health challenges faced by undergraduate students, (b) showcase the advantages of an expressive arts group tailored for this demographic, and (c) outline an eight-week curriculum model for such groups.	Group therapy	College campus	The 8-week group focused on the exploration and expression of art	In addition to discussing the rationale for incorporating expressive arts into group therapy with first-year students, the eight-week explicit arts group curriculum is presented to help students develop new coping mechanisms, self-expression, and interpersonal relationships.
Gray B. 2023 (United Kingdom) [57]	People with mental health	The aim of this article is to explain the lived experience of mental illness, the problematic cases and the bias of mental health courts, and the coercive treatment by psychiatry and psychiatric nursing.	Not mentioned	Mental health service	Not mentioned	This essay attempts to shed light on the practical experience of mental illness, the problematic legal principles and prejudices that characterise the courts for the mentally ill, and the coercive measures used by psychiatric nurses and psychiatrists. The report then analyses more positive accounts of alternative approaches and makes recommendations to improve mental health services and individuals' perceptions of these services.
Raque, TL; Lamphere, B;	First year at university	The aim was to determine the extent to	changed in Essays	University	modified consensual	The results showed that university women consistently demonstrated psychological flexibility

Motzny, C; Kauffmann, J; Ziemer, K; Haywood, S (2023), Switzerland [44]	for 51 women over the age of 18	which an increase in self-compassion improves body image.	— Consensual qualitative research		qualitative research (CQR-M)	and body acceptance. In addition, participants reported significant improvements in mindfulness and decreases in social influence, feelings of separation, negative health behaviours and attention to media messages. A decrease in the expression of the inner control centre, affection and kindness towards one's own body and body functionality was observed. These findings suggest that practicing mindfulness and reducing negative behaviors related to body image can improve women's self-perception by fostering self-compassion, especially in contexts involving media, clothing, makeup, and negative social interactions.
Zheng, XC; Qu, JR; Xie, J; Yue, W; Liang, XJ; Shi, Z; Bai, J; Sun, ZY; Cheng, FN; Li, XX; Liu, CX Forster, M; Bertolucci, J; James, S (2023), China [58]	A total of 244 patients were divided equally between the EW group, consisting of 122 patients, and the control group, comprising 122 patients.	The study aimed to evaluate how effective and suitable an online expressive writing (EW) format is for reducing psychological distress in asymptomatic COVID-19 patients at Fangcang Hospital.	Quasi-experiment study	Hospital	Following the intervention, the Inpatient Mental Health Preliminary Screening Scale (IMHPS) and the Brief Profile of Mood States (BPOMS) were administered before and after the intervention. Additionally, a self-designed questionnaire was used to assess the writing quality of the EW group and their satisfaction with the intervention.	In the hospitals of Fangcang, the psychological stress of asymptomatic COVID-19 patients can be alleviated using EW. The improvement in mood increases as the quality of writing increases. EW can be popularised and used as a new type of psychological intervention in Fangcang hospitals with high patient satisfaction.



## IX. TO IDENTIFY AND ANALYZE THE DIVERSITY IN THERAPEUTIC RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES AND INTERVENTION SETTINGS, AIMING TO UNDERSTAND HOW THESE FACTORS CONTRIBUTE TO EFFECTIVE MENTAL HEALTH CARE AND THERAPEUTIC PRACTICES GLOBALLY.

**Table 6.** Diversity in therapeutic research methodologies and intervention settings

Country	No (Ar)	Type of group				Type of study design				Intervention setting			
		Chi	Tee	Adu	PP	MM	QL	QT	DDT &F	Hos	Unv	C&P	Com
US	6	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	
UK	4	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓				
Canada	2			✓	✓				✓			✓	
China	2			✓				✓		✓	✓		
Denmark	1			✓					✓	✓			
Portugal	1			✓				✓			✓		
Switzerland	1			✓			✓				✓		
South Africa	1	✓					✓						✓
Korea	1	✓					✓						✓
Malaysia	1				✓		✓			✓			

### Legend

Ar	: Article	QT	: Quantitative
Chi	: Child	DDT&F	: Design Development Theory & Framework
Tee	: Teenagers	Hos	: Hospital
Adu	: Adults	Unv	: University
PP	: Psychotherapy Profession	C&P	: Counselling & Psychotherapy
MM	: Mixed method	Com	: Community
QL	: Qualitative		

Therapeutic research conducted in different countries shows a wide range of target areas and methodological procedures, indicating a diverse landscape. Studies in the United States tend to focus on adolescents, children, and adults and use a combination of research methods such as mixed methods, case studies, and group therapy. These studies are mainly conducted in hospitals and universities. In the UK, the focus is also on child and adolescent mental health, working with mental health professionals and people with mental health problems. They use quantitative approaches and create frameworks in mental health centres and universities. Canadian research focuses on adult populations engaged in counselling and practise and incorporates humanistic art therapy frameworks and training therapies in counselling contexts. China's study focuses primarily on adult patients and uses quantitative approaches in university and hospital settings [43,58–61].

The strengths and prospective limitations of therapeutic research in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and China are revealed through a critical analysis. The United States provides a wealth of information about therapeutic techniques due to its broad focus on various age groups and numerous methodologies,

including mixed methods and case studies [62–64]. However, the focus on hospital and academic settings might restrict generalizability to community-based settings, where many people seek treatment. The UK may underestimate the demands of adult mental health, but its concentration on child and adolescent mental health and rigorous quantitative methodologies improve understanding within specific situations. While combining counseling training and humanistic art therapy in Canadian research enhances therapeutic practices, it might not adequately address the country's unique cultural and demographic context. Although China's use of quantitative methodologies to focus on adult populations offers systematic insights, it may ignore the holistic parts of therapeutic care. Even if every nation offers insightful viewpoints to therapeutic research, greater applicability across various demographics and contexts remains a crucial challenge. Global therapy practices could be further enhanced by incorporating, and community engagement [65] .

## X. LIMITATION OF THE REVIEW

Several limitations merit attention in this systematic review. Firstly, the study confines its scope to a four-year timeframe, potentially limiting the inclusion of older studies that may provide valuable insights. Secondly, inclusion criteria are tailored closely to counselling, psychology, social sciences, and health disciplines, which may introduce a bias towards these specific fields. Lastly, language restrictions restrict the study's inclusivity, potentially excluding non-English literature. These limitations underscore the need for cautious interpretation of findings and suggest directions for future research to broaden the scope of inquiry.

## XI. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

### 1. THE THEME CAN BE IDENTIFIED IN RESEARCH ON EXPRESSIVE ART THERAPY AND COUNSELING.

#### 1.1 Empowerment

This article deals with the positive effects of various therapeutic approaches. Existential group therapy, art therapy and engagement with nature have a positive effect on the individual and promote self-confidence, acceptance and emotional well-being. Parent-centered creative interventions were found to be beneficial for families with autistic children and promoted positive development. In addition, training in expressive play therapy improved the therapeutic relationship between counsellors and neurodiverse individuals, highlighting the importance of professional development in preventing burnout in counsellors. The study on university women found that self-compassion, especially in relation to media and social pressure, can improve body image by increasing mindfulness and reducing negative behaviors.

#### 1.2 Innovation

The article deals with a long-term book initiative in Johannesburg, South Africa, to provide refugee families with books. It also looks at the integration of the project into the African Storybook Project's digital library. The text examines the attempts of talking therapies to integrate mental image models and explores the importance of artmaking in humanistic art therapy. The essay argues for additional research into the psychological well-being of art therapists, collaborative creative processes and multicultural considerations. It also advocates the inclusion of music listening in mental health care because of the shift from longer inpatient stays to shorter periods of stabilisation. The Button Method paradigm encourages collaboration between art therapists and clinicians from different mental health fields. The article also analyses the teaching methods used in a postgraduate diploma course for counselling children and young people in a UK institution, with a focus on the deliberate use of creative interventions. The study outlines six facilitative processes associated with a creative expression tool (CE-BME) in child mental health interventions.

#### 1.3 Resilience

The study examines the impact of the arts on community participation and assimilation following the attacks of 11 September 2001. The text highlights the importance of self-efficacy and peer support in coping with loss and adversity. The study also shows that university counselling centers (UCCs) can use art therapy

process groups to treat students' mental health problems. The eight-week explicit art group curriculum aims to promote the development of students' coping mechanisms, self-expression and interpersonal interactions. The study also examines the practical management of mental illness, the legalities and biases faced by psychiatric nurses and psychiatrists, and the potential benefits of alternative treatments. The study also highlights the potential of expressive writing (EW) to reduce mental stress in COVID-19 patients at Fangcang Hospitals.

Various creative interventions and therapeutic modalities are essential for improving emotional wellbeing, developing community resilience and addressing mental health issues, as the themes explored in the article sections— - empowerment, innovation and resilience - demonstrate. These approaches, which include existential group therapy, art therapy and expressive play, emphasise the importance of tailoring interventions to address different needs and situations [66–68]. In addition, the implementation of projects such as the ongoing book project in Johannesburg and the inclusion of the arts in community rehabilitation efforts following a disaster are prime examples of imaginative approaches that promote healing and cultural assimilation. These efforts not only improve the quality of life for individuals, but also contribute to the overall strength and adaptability of society. In summary, the research reviewed in this article promotes the ongoing investigation and integration of creative and therapeutic approaches into mental health care. These approaches emphasise the ability to effect significant change by empowering individuals, promoting innovative treatments and strengthening the resilience of communities facing challenges. Adopting these approaches can lead to more comprehensive and globally successful mental health therapies, thereby [69,70].

## 2. THERAPEUTIC RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES AND INTERVENTION SETTINGS

The landscape in different countries is characterized by diverse target areas and methodological approaches, each tailored to the specific needs and contexts of the respective populations [63, 71, 72] . Studies in the United States focus primarily on adolescents, children, and adults and use a variety of study methods such as mixed methods, case studies, and group therapy. These studies are typically conducted in hospitals and universities, indicating an intense academic and clinical atmosphere. In contrast, in the UK, the mental health of children and young people are prioritized, often involving close partnerships with mental health professionals and people with mental health problems. Research here often uses quantitative approaches and constructs frameworks within mental health clinics and colleges, emphasizing a systematic approach to tackling mental health issues. Canadian research focuses primarily on adult populations engaged in counselling practices and places great emphasis on the integration of humanistic art therapy frameworks and training treatments in counselling contexts. This approach emphasizes comprehensive treatment techniques that integrate creative and expressive strategies.

In China, research in this area generally focuses on adult patients and uses quantitative research methods in university and hospital settings. This line of study demonstrates a to understanding and treating adult mental health through more comprehensive medical and academic methods [52, 61, 73] .

In summary, the diverse approaches and specific groups studied in therapeutic research in different countries indicate a global commitment to improving mental health care through rigorous scientific enquiry and culturally sensitive interventions. The multiple perspectives in the field enrich it by promoting new methods and ensuring that therapeutic interventions are appropriately tailored to the needs of different people around the world.

### 2.1 Theoretical Integration

The empirical data from many nations supports the emergence of a theoretical framework highlighting the transforming power of creative and therapeutic interventions in mental health care. The collective contribution of multiple modalities, including expressive play, art therapy, and existential group therapy, in promoting community is underscored by their integration [74–78] . These methods are adaptable and effective in addressing various mental health requirements across populations, underscoring the significance of customizing interventions to individual circumstances and specific contexts. For example, the current book project in Johannesburg and the integration of arts in community rehabilitation efforts following disasters demonstrate innovative approaches that foster healing and cultural integration. These strategies enhance individual quality of life and contribute to societal cohesion and adaptability.

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Furthermore, comparing countries' data shows apparent differences in the methods used and the specific groups of people studied. Research in the United States covers various age groups, including adolescents, children, and adults. It primarily employs research methods and group therapy, focusing on academic and clinical settings. The focus is on thorough scholarly investigation and practical implementation in a therapeutic setting. Conversely, the United Kingdom places a high importance on the mental well-being of children and young individuals, frequently engaging in close partnerships with mental health experts and relevant parties. Quantitative methods often create structured frameworks in clinical and educational environments to tackle mental health issues methodically [79,80]. Canada prioritizes the involvement of adults in counseling procedures, with a particular emphasis on incorporating humanistic art therapy frameworks into counseling settings. This approach emphasizes integrating innovative and artistic techniques into therapeutic methods for comprehensive treatment results.

In summary, the theoretical framework developed from this empirical data highlights the worldwide importance of combining creative and therapeutic methods in mental healthcare. This emphasizes the importance of implementing interventions tailored to specific contexts, utilizing creative approaches to strengthen resilience, promote community welfare, and tackle mental health issues in various groups and environments.

## 2.3 Practical Implication

The impact of expressive art therapy on the practice of treating the mentally ill and on future research is considerable. Expressive art therapy facilitates the safe and effective expression of emotions, exploration of inner conflict and coping with traumatic experiences through various art forms, including drama, music, visual arts, and dance [81–84]. Self-awareness, self-expression, and creativity are encouraged throughout the therapeutic process. These outcomes can lead to improved social skills, emotional resilience, and self-confidence [20, 28, 85].

Subsequent research will focus on systematically investigating the mechanisms underlying expressive art therapy and improving treatment protocols [86]. Further empirical and clinical research is needed to understand the mechanisms underlying expressive art therapy and to adapt its application to the individual needs of people at different stages of life [81–83]. In addition, it is essential to investigate the lasting effects of expressive art therapy on mental health and its capacity for community-based interventions and social change [53–55]. As we deepen our understanding of expressive arts therapy and its application, we can provide more productive and accessible treatment alternatives for people of all ages and backgrounds [45, 87, 88].

## XII. FUTURE RECOMMENDATION

Expressive art therapy is an effective tool for addressing psychological problems while improving overall well-being and can be successfully integrated into various therapeutic settings [89]. Therapists can offer their clients a relaxed environment in which they can express themselves using digital media [90]. Drawing, painting, sculpting, and collage are examples of art therapy practices that can help clients explore their feelings, expand their self-awareness, manage stress, boost their self-esteem, and practice social skills. Therapists should adapt art therapy to the different situations and demographics of their clients to create a safe atmosphere for artistic expression and the process of recovery [91–93].

To successfully integrate art therapy, therapists must nurture creativity through training programs that specifically address the fundamentals of digital technologies and media, ethical considerations, and the application of various art therapy techniques to enhance clients' therapeutic understanding and personal development [75,94]. By incorporating these recommendations into therapeutic practice, psychotherapists can utilize the potential of expressive arts therapy to enhance their clients' emotional expression, self-awareness, and overall well-being in a variety of settings.

### Funding statement

This research did not receive funding from any source

### Author contribution

All authors made an equal contribution to the development and planning of the study

### Conflict of Interest

The authors have no potential conflicts of interest, or such divergences linked with this research study.

### Acknowledgements

The presentation and publication of this proceeding paper is funded by Tabung Agihan Penyelidikan (TAP), Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). I would like to thank all the experts for their excellent feedback, which has greatly improved this manuscript.

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