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POWER OF CREATIVITY: ART CREATION IN THE EMOTIONAL REVELATION OF STUDENTS WITH LOW EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE BASED ON TEIQue-SF

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ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence has often been overshadowed by academic excellence and intelligence quotient (IQ), particularly in the field of education. This study aims to shed light on the importance of emotional intelligence in students' well-being and to facilitate emotional revelation through art creation. To identify students with low emotional intelligence, the TEIQue-SF was administered to 184 senior high school students at a university in Santa Cruz, Laguna. The researcher designed a four-week program titled "Artful Emotions: A Journey of Emotional Revelation," consisting of three art forms: sculpting, painting, and writing. Three (3) senior high school students identified with low emotional intelligence, based on TEIQue-SF criteria, participated in the program. Each student engaged individually in all three art forms, completing four sessions per modality. Each session lasted approximately two hours, including a short interview about the participants' art creation process and emotional experience. Observations were also conducted during the sessions to capture non-verbal expressions and behaviors. Each session was guided by a theme designed to promote emotional expression and self-reflection. Findings revealed that engaging in creative or artistic activities served as a bridge for participants who previously struggled to articulate their emotions. The program gradually guided the participants with low emotional intelligence toward emotional awareness, expression, and enlightenment.

KEYWORDS: *Art Therapy, Emotional intelligence, Senior High School*

INTRODUCTION

The power of art has been proven in the application of it to different therapies and as an intervention to various psychological and emotional challenges. Its ability to evoke, express, and heal has been proven in diverse contexts, enhancing well-being and fostering personal growth (Malchiodi, 2012; McNiff, 2004). From exposure to creation, it has shown its transformative potential that may be applied in the school environment.

School guidance counselors encounter different students with various challenges. They provide support and interventions in dealing with these problems, from academic to emotion-related issues. Moreover, they contribute to fostering a conducive environment for personal growth and well-being (Corey, 2017; Schmidt, 2010).

Emotional intelligence is said to be as important as Cognitive Intelligence. Having self-awareness, and knowing how to manage your emotions is as powerful, or even more, than being good with numbers, language, and other academic subjects in school. (Goleman, 1995; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2016).

As we dive into the creative process, this study seeks to uncover how engaging in art creation can be a significant tool in the emotional development of these students. By connecting art and emotional intelligence in the school setting, the research aims to provide insights that could be of help to support the educational practices in students with low emotional intelligence. (Malchiodi, 2015; Rubin, 2016).

Research Questions

This study aimed to understand the power of art creation in the emotional revelation of students with low emotional intelligence. The researcher intended to answer this question: How does engaging in various forms of art creation impact the emotional revelation of students with low emotional intelligence?

Literature Review

As defined by Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2016), emotional intelligence is the ability to accurately perceive emotions in self and in others, to access and generate emotions, to understand emotions, and to manage emotions effectively to promote emotional, social, and intellectual growth.

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Regular classroom activities can effectively affect the emotional and social competencies of students (Storey-Hurtubise, Forristal, Henning, & Parker, 2022). Programs that exercise or teach this skill can improve emotional awareness, regulation, and interpersonal intelligence (Salovey, 2016).

Emotional intelligence not only contributes to enhance individual well-being but also plays an important role in having positive interactions within communities and educational environments (Brackett & Salovey, 2006; Mayer & Salovey, 2016). Toscano-Hermoso et al. (2020) suggest that students' emotional intelligence can positively impact their ability to manage emotions, leading to better interpersonal relationships, increased self-awareness, and overall well-being.

Art creation and art therapy allow individuals who struggle in putting their emotions into words to express and verbalize them. By creating art instead of articulating their emotions, a safe space for individuals is given to allow them freely express complex feelings and emotions without hesitation and fear (Whitehouse, S., 2024). For students with low emotional intelligence, the participation to various art forms serves as an aid for emotional revelation and understanding how art can empower them.

A recent study by Guo (2024) underscores the significant role of arts education in enhancing emotional intelligence and self-efficacy among university students. The research highlights that engagement in artistic activities not only fosters emotional expression but also contributes to personal growth and psychological well-being. Specifically, the study concluded that students with higher emotional intelligence were better equipped to leverage artistic pursuits for emotional development, emphasizing the transformative potential of art in educational settings. This aligns with the broader objective of cultivating emotional intelligence through creative means in the educational field.

Previous research has highlighted the important role of educational interventions in enhancing the emotional intelligence of students. Art-based interventions have proven promising outcomes in enhancing emotional awareness and regulation (Nelis et al., 2011; Upadhaya, Mishra, & Jha, 2016).

Similarly, a study by Bhatnagar and Imran (2024) found that young adults who engage in artistic activities reported higher levels of happiness and emotional intelligence compared to those who do not. This suggests that regular participation in creative processes can contribute to better emotional understanding and well-being.

Storey-Hurtubise et al. (2022) studied "The Umbrella Project," a six-month classroom intervention for EI competences in elementary school children. It was reported that students' overall EI scores involving adaptability and stress management demonstrated mean increments after engaging in creative and reflective activities. These result suggests that organized creative activities can promote emotional comprehension and social ability of the undergraduate students.

In conclusion, the review of the literature stresses the ambiguous relation between emotional intelligence and art production, especially if art students with low emotional competences are taken into account. Previous research demonstrates that different forms of art including sculpting, writing, and painting can have a beneficial effect on emotional expression and well-being.

Research Methodology

A Qualitative Case Study Approach was utilized in this research to explore the experiences and perceptions of students with low emotional intelligence students engaging in art creation.

The researcher used a university in Santa Cruz, Laguna as the site of the study. A purposive sampling is utilized to categorize the students with low emotional intelligence in the senior high school from the school. 184 senior high school students at the university were asked to take the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-Short Form (TEIQue-SF) of Petrides, Pita, and Kokkinaki (2007) to identify their emotional intelligence. Three (3) students who were identified with low emotional intelligence based on the criteria, willing to participate, and able to engage in art activities were chosen as participants.

The participants underwent a series of individual art creation sessions over the course of four (4) weeks. The first and second weeks focused on tactile exploration through clay sculpting, using materials such as clay, sculpting tools, and cleaning supplies. During the second and third weeks, participants transitioned to painting as a mode of expression. They were provided with necessary materials including paints, paintbrushes, and blank canvases, and were encouraged to express their emotions visually. From the third week until the final week, the focus shifted to writing. Participants engaged in various literary forms to articulate their thoughts and feelings. Each session across all art forms was guided by specific themes and topics, which served to direct the participants' creative process and facilitate emotional revelation. These diverse art modalities offered unique avenues for participants to express and process their emotions and thoughts.

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The data were collected through interviews with the participants about their experience with each art medium creation and emotional revelation. Observation also took place during the sessions to capture non-verbal expressions and behaviors. The analysis of documents was also vital in the data collection such as analyzing the participants' creations and reflective writings.

The researcher used Thematic Analysis to identify patterns, themes, and meanings within the data and Coding to encode transcripts, observations, and documents to categorize and interpret participants' experiences.

In addressing ethical considerations, strict measures have been implemented throughout the research process of this study. Prior to their involvement, participants are carefully informed about the nature and purpose of the research, ensuring their voluntary and informed participation through the provision of detailed informed consent for themselves and their guardians. To ensure participants' identities and uphold their privacy, pseudonyms are utilized, and data are securely stored. Additionally, after engaging in art creation sessions, participants are offered a chance to debrief with a professional, allowing them to express any emotional reactions. These measures aim to uphold participants' rights and well-being while maintaining confidentiality throughout the research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This presents the findings uncovered by the researcher based on the narratives shared by the participants. To analyze the data, thematic analysis was used to identify patterns, meanings, and themes that emerged from the participants' experiences throughout the art program. The findings are presented using tables that include themes, categories, and key concepts, supported by direct participant statements.

Table 1. Background of the Participants

PSEUDONYMS	EI RESULT	GENERAL TRAITS/BEHAVIOR	PERSONAL BACKGROUND
ANNA	LOW	Calm, approachable, and demonstrates a strong interest in art creation.	• 16-year-old • Grade 11 STEM
BEA	LOW	Reserved, shy, and tends to take time when completing tasks.	• 16-year-old • Grade 11 HUMSS
CARLO	LOW	Playful and often less focused, completing tasks quickly.	• 17-year-old • Grade 11 HUMSS

Table 1 provides a brief overview of the participants, highlighting contextual information relevant to the study. To maintain ethical standards and protect the identity of the participants, pseudonyms are used throughout this chapter when referring to the participants and their insights.

Table 2. Emotional Narratives in the Art Creation Process

THEMES	CATEGORIES	KEY CONCEPTS
1. Emotional Awareness	1.1 Recognition of Emotions	1.1.1 Identifying emotions through art
	1.2 Emotional Reflection	1.2.1 Gaining emotional insights through self-reflection in art
		1.2.2 Reconnecting with past emotional experiences through art
2. Art as Emotional Outlet	2.1 Expressions through Art	2.1.1 Art as a safe channel for emotional expression
	2.2 Venting through Art Creation	2.2.1 Art as a means to release pent-up emotions
3. Self-Discovery	3.1 Self-Exploration	3.1.1 Art as a tool for exploring one's sense of self
	3.2. Uncovering Hidden Feelings	3.2.1 Self-awareness and emotional discovery through art creation
4. Reluctant to Expression	4.1 Initial Resistance	4.1.1 Hesitation and discomfort in sharing emotions through art
	4.2 Overcoming Barriers	4.2.1 Working through emotional blockages via art
5. Safe Space through Art	5.1 Safe Environment	5.1.1 Art as a non-judgmental, secure space for emotional expression
	5.2 Acceptance and Comfort	5.2.1 Therapeutic space for emotional safety and healing

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Table 2 presents the narratives shared by the participants regarding their emotional experience in the art creation process. These narratives are based on the participants' responses to the researcher's questions after each session of art creation and upon completing the entire artistic program. The table revealed five (5) themes that serve as the key findings on the emotional and psychological effects of art creation on the participants. According to Malchiodi (2007), engaging in artistic and creative activities like sculpting, painting, and writing can promote self-awareness and provide a safe space for emotional expression. Similarly, Moon (2010) emphasized that the creative process allows individuals to access and reflect on emotions that may otherwise remain unexpressed. Art therapy and expressive arts, as McNiff (2011) suggests, support emotional growth by making giving light to the hidden experiences through artistic creation.

Theme 1: Emotional Awareness

In the data collected through interviews, participants shared personal experiences that highlighted their journey toward greater emotional awareness. This theme emerged through two significant categories: the recognition of emotions and emotional reflection. These categories helped uncover how art creation facilitated the development of emotional insights and recognition.

Recognition of Emotions

The emotional narratives of the students under this category revealed the key concept of identifying emotions through art. As they engaged in the process of art creation, they began to recognize, spot, and name different emotions, whether their own or not. Activities allowed them to become more aware of them. Through painting, sculpting, or writing, students started to connect more clearly with emotions they may not have understood before. This was discussed by the participants as:

"'No'ng una po ginagawa ko po 'yung sculpture. Masaya po ako pero medyo may lungkot po ako."
(When I was first doing the sculture, I was happy but there's also sadness.)

Anna in Sculpting Session 2

"Katulad po no'ng clay ko no'ng last time, ganun pa rin po hindi naman po ako malungkot, hindi naman din po ako sobrang masaya. Parang normal lang po 'yung feelings po na nararamdaman ko. Kalmado lang gano'n po. Siguro po ano habang tinitingnan ko po 'yung picture no'ng nabubuo siya tapos nagcha-change shade po ako ng colors, then nakita ko po 'yung dark shade no'ng blue, meron pong medyo may lungkot po dun sa color po ng blue."
(Just like my clay from last time, it's still the same — I'm not really sad, but I'm not super happy either. My feelings just feel normal. I feel calm, something like that. Maybe while I was looking at the picture as it was coming together and I was changing shades of color, then I saw the dark shade of blue — there was a bit of sadness in that color blue.)

Anna in Painting Session 1

"Hmm... Siguro po naisip ko lang po na medyo malungkot lang po ako pero hindi naman po sobra. Ayun po."
(Hmm... I guess I just thought that I was feeling a bit sad, but not too much. That's all.)

Bea in Painting Session 1

"Ayun, kasi po sa emotion ko po, ayun nga po.... Kasi tingin ko po masaya naman po ako pero hindi po ganun masyado kasi, ayung, parang may may kulang po, ganun."
(That's it, because of my emotions, yeah... I think I'm happy, but not really that much, because, well, it's like there's something missing, something like that.)

Bea in Painting Session 4

"Mmmm... opo siguro. Yung emotion ko po na iba-iba, parang siguro yung ano, yung masaya po ako minsan. Tapos minsan naman hindi. Siguro ganon. Minsan ano, parang galit din po o naboboring. Ayun po."
(Mmmm... yes, maybe. My emotions are not the same. Maybe, I am happy sometimes. And other times, I am not. Maybe that's it. At times, it seems like there's anger too, and boredom. That's it.)

Carlo in Painting Session 2

"Medyo ano lang po siguro ay... May konti pong lungkot. Parang ano lang po... Nakakapagod lang."
(I'm slightly what.... Maybe... Maybe there's slight sadness there. It's like... It's just exhausting.)

Carlo in Writing Session 4

Emotional Reflection

The emotional narratives of the students under this category revealed the key concepts of gaining emotional insights through self-reflection in art and reconnecting with past emotional experiences through art. Doing the activities deepened their understanding of their emotions and their possible roots. Moreover, it allowed them to recollect past experiences and the emotions associated with

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these events. Through painting, sculpting, or writing, students started to have a profound understanding of their emotions through reflection. This was discussed by the participants as:

"Kasi po since bata po ako naggigitara na po ako. So 'yung gitara po na na ini-sculpt ko, ito po 'yung gitarang 'yun. Ah... gift po sa akin ng tito ko po noong grade ah 9 po ako noon. Tapos hindi ko na po siya ginagamit ngayon kasi naka mayroon na po akong bagong gitara pero ito po 'yung una kong gitara."
(Because I've been playing the guitar since I was a child. So I chose to scuplt a guitar. Ah, the guitar was gifted to me by my uncle when I was in Grade 9. I am no longer using it now because I have a new guitar, but this one I sculpted that first guitar.)

"Kasi ayan nga po, kasi po every time po na naggigitara ako, parang nagagaan 'yung pakiramdam ko. So nakatulong po 'yung paggigitara sa akin kasi ayan nga po natutulungan niya ako kapag may nararamdaman po akong stress, o kaya malungkot po ako naggigitara lang po."
(Because every time I play the guitar, I feel lighter. So playing it helps me whenever I feel stresses, or if I'm sad, I just play my guitar.)
"Noong una po naalala ko po 'yung time na binigay po 'to sa akin tapos na masaya po ako."
(I remeber the time it was given to me, I was happy.)

Anna in Sculpting Session 2

"Kapag po pala kasama ko yung mga pinsan ko masaya po. Kasi may isa rin po na dapat ipe-paint ko: Nung ano po- nung nagpunta naman po kami no'ng mga pinsan ko rin po yun sa MOA. Nanood po kami nang concert no'n. Ayun. Pinsan ko rin po yung kasama ko noon. Tapos naisip ko po na masaya ako pag kasama ko po 'yung mga pinsan ko. Ayun po."
("When I'm with my cousins, I'm happy. Because there was another one I was thinking of painting: when we—my cousins and I—went to MOA. We watched a concert back then. That's it. I was with my cousin that time. And then I thought that I'm happy when I'm with my cousins. That's it.")

"Masaya po tapos gusto ko po na.... Na-miss ko po 'yung mga pinsan ko. Ayun. Tapos parang gusto ko pong bumalik sa Sky Ranch. Ayun po."
("I'm happy, and I realized that I miss my cousins. That's it. And I kind of want to go back to Sky Ranch. That's it.")

Bea in Painting Session 3

*"Ay, ano po 'yan.... Nung Grade 9 po ako. Siguro po ano ay.... Kaya 'yan kasi iba po nu'ng grade 9 kesa ngayon dito sa pidab (PWU).... Siguro mas masaya lang po... Pero masaya din naman dito. Mas masaya lang siguro po dati sa *former school*. Hmmm... siguro ano lang po....syempre bata pa po tapos hindi pa gan'to kadami ginagawa. Tambay lang. Chill."*
("Oh, that… That was when I was in Grade 9. I guess… it's because things were different in Grade 9 compared to now here in PWU. Maybe it was just happier back then… But I'm happy here too. It's just that it was probably more fun at former school. Hmmm… maybe it's just… of course, I was younger back then, and I didn't have this much to do. Just hanging out. Chilling.")

Carlo in Writing Session 1

The participants' narratives highlighted consistent evidence that engaging in artistic activities such as sculpting, painting, and writing gradually enhanced their ability to recognize and articulate their emotions. Students who initially struggled to identify their emotions gradually developed a more refined and profound understanding of their emotional experiences. For example, participants described experiences of both happiness and sadness while sculpting, suggesting the early stages of emotional differentiation. During these sessions, participants showed moments of pause, quiet contemplation, and hesitance before describing their feelings. It indicates how they are processing their emotions, that was not always immediate but appeared to unfold as they interacted with the art materials. This observation supports the idea that creative processes can help students recognize mixed or complex emotions, which is a foundational component of emotional intelligence development. Such findings resonate with the assertion that emotional awareness can emerge more clearly in safe, expressive environments where individuals are not forced but gently guided toward introspection (Saarikallio & Erkkilä, 2007).

Furthermore, participants made meaningful connections between emotional experiences and the symbolic elements in their artwork, such as associating the colors with different emotions. These expressions revealed that art not only served as a mirror for their emotions but also as a language through which emotions could be safely explored and named. In particular, some participants pointed at certain colors in their paintings or symbols in their writing with a quiet sense of discovery, sometimes even appearing surprised at their own emotional revelations. The researcher also noted non-verbal cues such as changes in facial expressions, increased eye contact, or an emotional shift in tone while participants discussed specific colors or shapes they had used. This proved that engaging with art materials on a sensory level can support individuals in recognizing and becoming aware of their emotional states (Malchiodi, 2012).

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Moreover, some students stated that they did not fully understand their emotional experiences until after completing their artwork and reflecting on it. These reflections showed that students gained deeper emotional understanding, suggesting that making art helped them explore and discover their feelings both during and after the creative process. As the art process went on, participants often spoke more openly and with more confidence about their feelings than they did at the beginning of the sessions. This shift was observable in their body language—some students who were initially reserved began leaning forward during interviews, making longer eye contact, and using more emotionally descriptive words. This highlights the idea that emotional awareness can develop over time and be strengthened through engaging in reflective and creative experiences (Lusebrink, 2004).

The current study affirms the view that students with lower emotional intelligence can experience significant growth in emotional awareness when provided with expressive outlets like visual arts and writing. Through engaging in these creative activities, participants progressed in articulating and describing their emotions with clarity. These findings support the proposition that structured yet flexible art-making opportunities can serve as catalysts for emotional insight among adolescents who struggle with emotional expression (Gussak, 2009; Burkitt et al., 2011).

Theme 2: Art as an Emotional Outlet

In the data collected through interviews, participants shared personal experiences that signified their use of art as an emotional outlet. This theme emerged through two significant categories: the expression through art and venting through art creation. These categories highlighted how art-making has evolved into a meaningful tool for emotional expression and release.

Expressions through Art

The emotional narratives of the students under this category revealed the key concept of art as a safe channel for emotional expression. As they engaged in the process of art creation, they began to see art as a non-threatening medium through which they could externalize emotions that were otherwise difficult to articulate. The activities allowed them to explore their emotions in a way that felt safe, personal, and free from judgment. This was discussed by the participants as:

"Naintindihan ko po yung , ano, emotions ko po... Tapos naiintindihan ko po, natutunan ko po na, ah, kaya ko po palang ipakita yung emotion ko sa painting... Like nu'ng nararamdaman ko po ay peaceful, ganito po 'yung drinowing ko."

Anna in Painting Session 2

"Siguro po... Naiisip ko kasi nga na malungkot po ako kaya 'ayan po 'yung pinakita ko sa art. Malungkot."
("Maybe… I think it's because I'm sad, that's why that's what I showed in my art. Sad.")

Bea in Sculpting Session 4

"Ah... Ano po, siguro po... masaya po kaya... kaya po siguro 'yun napili ko. Mmmm... Masaya po yung emotion ko. Siguro ano, kaya ano po, 'yun nagawa ko, kasi nga po masaya po ako."
("Ah... Well, maybe... I was happy, so... that's probably why I chose it. Mmmm... My emotion was happy. Maybe that's why I created it, because I was happy.")

Carlo in Sculpting Session 1

Venting through Art Creation

The emotional narratives of the students under this category revealed the key concept of art as a means to release pent-up emotions. As they engaged in the process of art creation, they discovered that creative expression offered an outlet for feelings they often kept to themselves. Through sculpting, painting, or writing, they were able to release emotions that had been building up inside—emotions that were difficult to express verbally but found form through their artistic choices, movements, and symbols. This was discussed by the participants as:

"Wala lang din po akong mapagsabihan kasi... Ewan ko po. Hindi lang ako palakwento po kaya dito ko na lang po inilabas."
("I just don't really have anyone to talk to… I don't know. I'm just not the type who shares stories, so I just let it out here instead.")

"Opo. Kasi lagi ko pong inaano na okay lang ako. Tinatago ko po na may gano'n nga. Na 'di pa rin talaga ako okay."
("Yes. Because I always pretend that I'm okay. I hide the fact that I'm really not.")

Anna Writing Session 1

"Dahil wala po akong kaibigan... sinasarili ko na lang po 'yung ano... lungkot ganon... Dahil po dito, naipakita ko po 'yung ano... siguro kahit konting lungkot lang po."
("Because I don't have any friends… I just keep the sadness to myself… But through this, I was able to show, maybe just a little bit of that sadness.")

Bea Painting Session 2

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"Siguro ano po.... Tingin ko po naexpress ko naman po emotion ko pati na 'yung mga di ko laging naieexpress. Tulad ng lungkot kasi chill lang po ako as a person."
("Maybe… I think I was able to express my emotions, even the ones I don't usually express. Like sadness, because I'm usually just chill as a person.")

Carlo in the Final Interview

The art creation process provided participants with a powerful outlet for expressing and releasing emotions that were difficult to verbalize. Students shared that during sculpting, painting, or writing, they felt able to let out feelings that had been "bottled up" or suppressed. The testimonies demonstrated that art became a way to safely externalize and release emotions, especially for those who struggled to speak about them openly, like students with low emotional intelligence. This was particularly evident during sculpting sessions, where several participants applied strong, exaggerated pressure while shaping clay or repeatedly adjusted their work in silence—behaviors the researcher observed as indicative of emotional tension being physically worked out through the medium This supports the idea that making art can help people let out their emotions without using words, giving them a safe way to release emotional tension (Malchiodi, 2015).

The participants described the act of creating art as a way to release emotions they found difficult to express verbally. For some, painting or sculpting became a means of "letting out" feelings that they had been keeping inside. One participant, for example, began the painting session with visible frustration and minimal verbal communication, but after immersing themselves in the activity, appeared calmer and later described feeling "lighter." The researcher also observed instances where students sighed audibly, relaxed their posture, or became more verbally open after completing their art—nonverbal cues suggesting emotional release. This signifies that engaging in creative activities can provide a healthy outlet for processing and discharging emotional tension (Malchiodi, 2015; Gussak, 2007). By channeling their emotions into their artwork, students found a nonverbal and safe way to express what they might usually keep hidden.

Overall, this study supports the idea that creative expression can be a valuable emotional outlet for students with low emotional intelligence. Through activities like sculpting, painting, and writing, students found constructive ways to process and express feelings they might otherwise avoid or suppress. This shows that art can be a therapeutic channel for managing emotions, particularly among youth who face challenges in emotional expression. (Pifalo, 2006; Rubin, 2016).

Theme 3: Self-Discovery
In the data collected through interviews, participants shared personal experiences in art creation that highlighted their journey to self-discovery. This theme emerged through two significant categories: self-exploration and uncovering hidden feelings. These categories emphasized how art-making has served as a reflective process that allowed students to better understand themselves, access deeper emotions, and recognize parts of their identity that were previously unacknowledged. This was discussed by the participants as:

Self-Exploration
The emotional narratives of the students under this category revealed the key concept of art as a tool for exploring one's sense of self. The process of creating art enabled them to engage in meaningful introspection, leading to a more profound understanding of themselves. Through associating their emotional experiences with different art forms, they were able to gain more knowledge about who they are.

"Hmmm....Natutunan ko po na strong person po pala ako... Na okay lang kahit umiyak ako, na hindi ibig sabihin no'n mahina na ako. Strong po ako kahit malungkot ako. Natutunan ko po na... Na okay pala 'yung ganito..."
("Hmmm... I learned that I'm actually a strong person... That it's okay to cry, and that crying doesn't mean I'm weak. I'm strong even when I'm sad. I learned that... that this kind of thing is okay after all...")

Anna in Writing Session 3

"Tapos po parang, ayun nga po, naiisip ko po na, ah, mahiya-in po ako, ayun. Tapos nakita ko rin po do'n sa painting ko na ayun po, na dahil naka face mask din po yung dinrowing ko po. Ayun po."
("And then, it's like, I realized that, ah, I'm really shy. And I also saw that in my painting—because the person I drew was also wearing a face mask.")

Bea in Painting Session 2

"'Yun nga po. Nakakamotivate po kasi siguro... syempre parang inaano ko po 'yung sarili ko na kailangan ko pagbutihin sa buhay."
("That's it. It's motivating, I think... of course, it's like I'm telling myself that I need to do better in life.")
"Natutunan ko po na siguro kailangan kong gawin 'yan lagi para motivated po ako."
("I learned that maybe I need to keep doing this so I can stay motivated.")

Carlo in Writing Session 3

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Uncovering Hidden Feelings

The emotional narratives of the students under this category revealed the key concept of self-awareness and emotional discovery through art creation. Art creation allowed the students to discover parts of themselves, including their emotions, that they were not aware of prior to engaging in the artistic process. The act of creating gave them the opportunity to reflect more deeply on their feelings, thoughts, and internal states, leading to a heightened awareness of aspects that previously lay beneath their conscious awareness. This was discussed by the participants as:

"Siguro po, narealize ko dito na siguro may lungkot din po talaga na.... na.... na meron po sa akin kasi nga nung ginawa ko po yung painting, ayun, na... namiss ko po si Mama."
("Maybe I realized here that maybe there really is some sadness in me… because when I was making the painting, I ended up missing my mom.")

Anna in Painting Session 3

"Ay 'yun nga po. Siguro naisip ko po... siguro ah, 'nung ginawa ko po 'yung painting... ay 'yun, nung bago ko po gawin, sabi ko nga po, hindi naman po ako malungkot. Tapos nu'ng nakita ko na po parang nalungkot po ako. So ayun, hindi ko po alam kung malungkot ba talaga ako o nalungkot lang po ako do'n sa painting. Tapos ayun po, hindi ko po alam na meron pala po akong na nararamdaman na lungkot."
("Ah, that's it. I guess I thought... maybe when I made the painting… Before I did it, I told myself I wasn't sad. But then when I saw it, I suddenly felt sad. So yeah, I'm not sure if I was really sad or I just felt sad because of the painting. Then I realized that I didn't know I had that kind of sadness inside me.")

Bea in Painting Session 1

"Sa sarili ko po... Siguro emotion ko. Kwento. Gano'n. Kasi nalalaman ko po 'yung ano ay... yung ibang mga arts tsaka anong emotion ko do'n. Parang napapansin ko 'yung emotion ko po dahil do'n. Naaano siya.... napapansin. Nalalaman ko. Yung lungkot. Gano'n."
("About myself... Maybe my emotion. Story. Something like that. Because I come to know, like... my other artworks and what emotions are in them. It's like I notice my emotions because of that. They become noticeable... I become aware of them. Sadness. Things like that.")

Carlo in the Final Interview

The process of creating art has led to meaningful moments of self-discovery to the participants. As they engaged in sculpting, painting, and writing, they began to explore aspects of their identities, thoughts, and emotions that they had not previously understood and were conscious of. Through reflecting on their artwork, students gained new insights about who they are. They also often expressing realizations about the emotions they did not know they had. For students with low emotional intelligence, who typically struggled to articulate their feelings, the creative process became a powerful pathway to deeper self-understanding.

Participants shared that making art helped them see themselves more clearly. Some spoke of realizing personal traits, such as shyness or inner strength, while others described how creating art allowed them to accept emotions like sadness without feeling ashamed. These reflections suggest that engaging in art provided space for personal growth, as students learned more about themselves in the process of making and interpreting their work. The participants' statements highlighted the value of creative expression as a tool for developing self-awareness and exploring one's identity (Moon, 2002; Malchiodi, 2012).

In addition to understanding their identity, students also uncovered emotions they had not consciously acknowledged. Some only recognized their sadness, loneliness, or emotional pain once it appeared in their artworks. These realizations often came as a surprise and were described as important moments of clarity. The act of creating seemed to access a deeper layer of emotion—one that was often hidden or difficult to put into words. This supports earlier studies showing that art can help bring out hidden emotions and allow people to better understand their feelings (Allen, 1995; McNiff, 2004). For participants with low emotional intelligence, this was especially significant, as it gave them a safe and reflective way to become more emotionally aware.

Overall, the told experiences show that art-making encouraged students to connect with themselves on a deeper level. Through creative expression, they gained a stronger understanding of their emotions and personal experiences. This supports the idea that art can be a transformative tool for self-discovery, particularly among adolescents who may have emotions they are not aware of. By helping students uncover and reflect on their inner world, creative activities provide valuable support for emotional and personal growth (Lusebrink, 2004; Rubin, 2016).

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Theme 4: Reluctance to Expression

In the data collected through interviews, participants shared personal experiences in art creation that highlighted their reluctance to expression. This theme emerged through two significant categories: initial resistance and overcoming barriers. These categories emphasized how art-making provided a gradual and supportive space that allowed students to move past their emotional hesitations.

Initial Resistance

The emotional narratives of the students under this category revealed the key concept of hesitation and discomfort in sharing emotions through art. The process of exploring their emotions through art creation proved to be challenging, as many students expressed uncertainty in confronting their feelings and gradually learning to become comfortable with them. This was discussed by the participants as:

"Okay lang naman po. Medyo nahirapan lang po kasi hindi naman ako sanay na maggawa ng clay pero nagawa naman po."
("It was okay. I just had a bit of a hard time because I'm not really used to working with clay, but I was still able to do it.")
Anna in Sculpting Session 1

"Ah... 'Yung ano po, wala naman po basta ginawa ko lang po yung sa tingin kong emoji na ano po, ayun, madali lang, kasi 'di po ako maalam."
("Ah... Well, nothing really, I just made the emoji that I thought of, that's it. It was easy, because I'm not really skilled.")
Bea in Sculpting Session 1

"Wala naman po. Ay- Ah, isa lang po ang nagawa ko.Nahirapan lang po... sa ano, ay sa clay po.... Mmm... Ay kasi po... Ano, siguro po, ah, okay lang po."
("Nothing really. Ah—just one piece I made. I just had a hard time... with the clay.... Mmm... I guess... it was just okay.")

"Mmmm... siguro wala naman po. Panget lang po nagwa ko (sculpture)... Mmmm... siguro po, wala... wala naman po."
("Mmmm... I guess, nothing really. I just made something ugly (sculpture)... Mmmm... I guess, nothing... nothing really.")
Carlo in Sculpting Session 1

Overcoming Barriers

The emotional narratives of the students under this category revealed the key concept of working through emotional blockages via art. Through continued engagement in creative activities, students were able to gradually overcome their initial emotional resistance, finding comfort and confidence in expressing feelings that were previously difficult to articulate. This was discussed by the participants as:

"No'ng na-sculpt ko po siya, medyo na-proud naman ako kasi maganda naman po siya. So ayan naging masaya naman po ako kasi maganda po 'yung kinalabasan."
("When I sculpted it, I felt a bit proud because it turned out well. So I was happy because the result looked nice.")
Anna in Sculpting Session 1

"Nakakaa ano lang po nung una, hindi ko po alam kung anong gagawin pero masaya naman po kasi na nagawa ko po ng parehas yung gusto kong gawin.
("At first, it was kind of... I didn't know what to do, but I was happy because I was able to do both of what I wanted to do.")
Bea in Sculpting Session 1

"Ayun nga po okay naman po ako na... na ano lang po ako ng konti nung nagulo po yung painting kasi hindi po yun yung gusto kong gawin sana... Na kalaba kalalabasan."
("Yes, I was okay... I just got a bit affected when the painting got messed up because that wasn't really how I wanted it to turn out.")
Bea in Painting Session 1

"Siguro ano po... Mahirap lang nu'ng una kasi di pa komportable pero goods naman na nu'ng bandang pahuli.... Yung sa ano po... ipakita nararamdaman.")
("Maybe... It was just hard at first because I wasn't comfortable yet, but it was okay later on.... With regard to... showing emotions.")
Carlo in the Final Interview

At the beginning of the creative process, the participants showed reluctance when asked to express emotions through art. Expressing one's emotions is one of the struggles people with low emotional intelligence face. Hence, this reaction is expected (Mayer, J. D., Salovey, P., & Caruso, D. R., 2016). Students often shared that they were uncertain of what art to do or how to begin with their artwork. Some expressed obvious hesitation in expressing that was evident in their answers and non-verbal cues. This initial

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resistance was particularly shown in the sculpting sessions, where the unfamiliar materials and emotional expectations created a sense discomfort.

For students with low emotional intelligence, who were not used to expressing their inner experiences, the idea of turning feelings into visual or written form felt new and challenging. (Mayer, J. D., Salovey, P., & Caruso, D. R., 2016).

Participants' responses reflected this discomfort. In answering the interview questions, they would simply give a brief answer, say that they did not feel anything, or that they just chose to make something random. Others described finding it challenging and feeling unsure if what they made had meaning. During early sessions, the researcher observed that several participants sat silently for long periods, hesitating to begin their artwork or repeatedly erasing their initial marks. These reactions greatly showed emotional distance and difficulty connecting with the artistic task on a deeper level. The hesitation was not only about not having artistic skill or knowledge, but also about facing and expressing emotions they were not used to dealing with. This aligns with the idea that individuals with limited emotional awareness may resist expressing their emotions, especially when it feels unfamiliar or vulnerable (Malchiodi, 2015; Moon, 2007).

Despite being reluctant, the participants began to be open and be more comfortable as the sessions continued. They became to be familiarized with the art materials and more willing to explore their emotions through art. Some participants even shared how they felt proud of the outcome of their art, while others admitted they were unsure at first but felt good having to complete the tasks. This marked the beginning of emotional openness, as students slowly learned that they could safely express themselves through creative activities.

With these small breakthroughs, it was demonstrated how art had became a gentle and supportive space for emotional expression. Even when students could not clearly explain what emotions they were feeling, the act of creating allowed them to work through emotional barriers. This suggests that, over time, art helped them move from reluctance to self-expression.
The experiences that were shared by the participants support the idea that art-making can help individuals overcome internal resistance and gradually be open in emotional expression. (Allen, 1995; McNiff, 2004). In this study, art served as a stepping stone—starting with discomfort but eventually guiding students toward greater comfort with emotional expression.

Overall, this theme highlights how the creative process can support emotional growth even for those who experienced initial reluctance in emotional expression. With art providing a safe space for gradual expression, art-making can help students overcome emotional barriers and begin connecting with their inner experiences. These findings show that hesitations and reluctance are the starting point of emotional development.

Theme 5: Safe Space through Art
In the data collected through interviews, participants shared personal experiences in art creation that highlighted students having a safe space through art. This theme emerged through two significant categories: safe environment and acceptance and comfort. These categories emphasized how art-making provided a non-judgmental and secure space for students to express their emotions freely. Through the creative process, they found emotional safety, allowing them to process their feelings without fear of criticism or rejection. This was discussed by the participants as:

Safe Environment
The emotional narratives of the students under this category revealed the key concept of art as a non-judgmental, secure space for emotional expression. The art-making process created a sense of emotional safety that allowed students to explore and release their feelings without the pressure of being judged or misunderstood. Through this space, they were able to express their emotions freely.

"Hindi ko po usually sinasabi 'yung nararamdaman ko, pero sa drawing, parang pwede ko pong sabihin kahit 'di ko sinasabi."
("I don't usually talk about my feelings, but with drawing, I feel like I can say it without actually saying it.")
Anna in Painting Session 3

"Parang okay lang... Parang safe po akong magkwento dito... like sa sulat."
(I feel it's just okay.... I'm safe telling my story here through writing.)
Anna Writing Session 1

"Ayun nga po, parang mas okay po maglabas ng nararamdaman sa art kasi wala namang magja-judge."
("I feel like it's better to express my feelings through art because no one judges me.")
Bea in Writing Session 1

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"Dito po sa paint, ay siguro po, hinayaan ko na 'yung ano ko. Naisip ko po ngayon ko lang naman ieexpress."
("Here in the painting, I guess I just allowed myself to [feel]. I thought, I'm only going to express this now anyway.")
Carlo in Painting Session 3

"Nakakahiya nga po ay. Pero naisip ko na lang po, ano naman? Sulat lang naman"
("It was kind of embarrassing. But then I thought, so what? It's just writing anyway.")
Carlo in Writing Session 2

Acceptance and Healing

The emotional narratives of the students under this category revealed the key concept of art as a therapeutic space where they felt a sense of emotional relief and comfort. Through the process of creating art, students experienced emotional release and found ways to ease internal tension. The act of expressing their emotions through art helped lighten their emotional burden, offering them a comforting and soothing experience that supported their emotional well-being.

"Natutuwa naman po ako habang nagpi-paint po ako tapos mas nakakapag, uh.... nakakapag-relax po ako, mas nakakapag-isip po ako ng maayos. Tapos po... Hmm... Ayun nga lang po, peaceful po kasi talaga."
("I feel happy while painting, and I can relax more, I can think more clearly. And... well, it just feels really peaceful.")
Anna Painting Session 2

"Tapos, ummm... natutunan ko po na pag gusto ko po pala na maging... magrelax tapos parang gumaan yung nararamdaman ko... pwede ko pong gawin itong pag pi-paint para po matulungan po akong maano yung nararamdaman ko po."
("Then, ummm... I learned that when I want to relax or feel lighter, I can actually do painting to help me manage what I'm feeling.")
Anna Painting Session 3

"Masakit po siya, pero nung naisulat ko na, parang nabawasan po 'yung bigat."
("It was painful, but once I wrote it down, it felt like a weight was lifted.")
Anna in Writing Session 2
"Ahmm... Ayun po. Nalungkot po, pero parang gumaan 'yung loob ko kasi parang nailabas ko siya."
("Umm... I felt sad, but it felt like a weight was lifted because I was able to let it out.")
Bea Writing Session 2

"Mmm... Ay, siguro po, ay 'ayon. Narelax po ako... Siguro po, mas um-okay lang yung pakiramdam ko po siguro... Ay, mmmm... siguro po, kanina... ano po kasi, kanina 'di lang po okay, tapos medyo ano po... medyo okay na siguro."
("Mmm... Ah, maybe, yeah. I felt relaxed... Maybe my feelings just became a bit better... Umm, earlier... I wasn't really okay, but now, I guess I feel a little bit better.")

"Ayun nga po. Na siguro pwede pong maging okay pag gan'to. 'Yung painting po. Nakatulong naman po siguro."
(That maybe I can really be okay when like this... With painting. I think it helped.")
Carlo in Painting Session 1

Throughout the whole creative process, the participants were consistent in describing their experiences of art-making as a safe and non-judgmental space for emotional expression. These participants with low emotional intelligence, who often find it challenging to identify, articulate, and share their feelings, found the creative process to be an essential tool in facilitating emotional development.

The paradigm through which students felt safe using art transpired in two ways. Firstly, students remarked that they felt free to articulate feelings through the use of art creation. For some, drawing or writing about things was a means of expressing something they could not say.

This supports Malchiodi (2015), who claims that art bypasses defenses and presents barriers and provide a more accessible channel for emotional expression.

Furthermore, this emotional safety was reinforced by the absence of judgment people with emotional intelligence are usually concerned about. The students said that because no one would see their artworks associated with their emotions, they were not in any way being confronted. For students with emotional intelligence, the privacy and control over the process of making art was particularly important in enabling the release of feelings that were usually bottled up. The act of creating became a self-conversation instead of a performance, which is an important shift for those who do not openly express their feelings (Moon, 2007). Even when dealing with painful or sad feelings, the act of creation seemed liberating rather than constricting. This supports the idea that art enables people to manage difficult emotions in relative safety. (Allen, 1995).

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Aside from safety, the students commented on how sculpting, painting, and writing made them feel better afterward. They reported feeling "lighter," "more relaxed," or "peaceful," suggesting that the art-making process brought them emotional relief. These emotional shifts were also observable—some participants who entered sessions appearing withdrawn or tense were noted smiling or calmly engaging in discussion post-activity. Such narratives are consistent with art therapy literature which indicates that expressing self-defined emotions through art facilitates effective emotional regulation, leading to an improved state of well-being (McNiff, 2004; Malchiodi, 2015).

As the sessions continued, students appeared to develop greater ease and confidence with using art as a means of depicting their feelings and thoughts. Initial hesitant behaviors—such as blank stares, passive handling of materials, or expressions of confusion—gradually gave way to purposeful engagement, longer periods of focused activity, and more spontaneous reflection. With the materials and the process, participants eventually became less guarded and more receptive to articulating their feelings through art.

CONCLUSIONS

The participant's journey in art creation has proven the transformative power of creativity. People with low emotional intelligence often struggle in identifying, expressing, and understanding emotions (Goleman, 1995). Students who took part in this study were identified as such using the TEIQ-SF. In the initial part of the art program, the participants expressed unwillingness, reluctance, and difficulty in conveying their emotions both in the creative process and in the interview. Eventually, as the program continued through every session and every art form, the transformative power of art creation became evident in their gradual openness and willingness to do the creative tasks and resonate with their emotions. The resistance and hesitation in emotional revelation are common to people with low emotional intelligence, often stemming from fear of vulnerability (Goleman, 1995), but the reluctance was diminished slowly over time.

As the students became more comfortable in the artistic process, they began reconnecting with past experiences and the emotions connected to them. New emotions emerged from the memories, which helped them understand their emotions and themselves deeply. Moreover, the students uncovered hidden feelings and released bottled-up emotions that brought them at ease, evident from their statements that they felt good after expressing. Art has become a safe space for students with low emotional intelligence, who often feel discomfort in expressing their emotions and with fear of external judgment.

The findings showed that sculpting, painting, and writing played a significant role in the emotional revelation and exploration of the participants. Sculpting, with its physicality – pressing, molding, shaping – enabled a raw and immediate form of emotional processing. Although this is the part where the students expressed great reluctance and unfamiliarity, it was a helpful exercise on the students' ability to recognize different emotions.

Painting added another layer of expressive depth. The participants associated their emotions with their choice of color. The visual and colored representation of how they feel facilitated a more profound understanding and identification of emotions without the use of language, which can be at times constricting. (Doriot-Krienitz, S. (2018)

The most reflective and verbal form of art was writing. Through putting their emotions into words creatively and freely, participants started to articulate their feelings they had experienced during the sculpting and painting sessions, including those they were not certain of, and those they were not aware of. It has encouraged deeper introspection and resulted in emotional clarity, self-awareness, and relief.

Through the whole process of art creation, the participants went through a change in their emotional landscapes. Initially, they were uncomfortable and resistant, but eventually, they felt an increasing sense of emotional awareness and self-understanding. This was facilitated by the secure, non-judgmental environment in which the sessions were conducted. Free from fear of criticism or misinterpretation, participants were more inclined to explore the emotions they had previously suppressed or were unconscious of. The artistic process served to be a therapeutic space – a place that allows someone to be vulnerable and authentic, with every emotion and story welcomed to be expressed.

In summary, the study illustrated how doing a series of art-making activities profoundly affected the emotional growth of low emotional intelligence students. It fostered emotional awareness, provided an emotional release, created a secure space for openness, and facilitated deeper self-understanding. Each of the art experiences played a distinctive role in the emotional process and collectively constituted an integrated system of emotional discovery.

In conclusion, this study found that engaging in creative or artistic activities has become a bridge for the participants who previously struggled to articulate their feelings to express and reveal their emotions. The students with low emotional intelligence showed gradual emotional development by enabling themselves to create art concerning their emotions.

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Sculpting, in particular, was effective the initiating of emotional breakthroughs. The reluctance of the students in these sessions became an important part of the whole process of revealing emotions because it underlined their emotional barriers, which, later on, highlighted the breakthroughs in emotional expressions.

Painting provided a clearer visual representation of the participants' emotions. Its elements, such as the shapes, colors, lines, and tone, became a significant facilitator of their emotional revelation and expressions.

In the writing sessions, after the students have undergone the two previous art forms, and finally established the courage to express themselves, their emotions and understanding of it were organized. The writing sessions were emotional, authentic, and free-flowing. This only proved that aside from the safe space writing has provided, the consistency of emerging into art had been transformative.

The interplay of these forms of art, sculpting, painting, and writing, proved to be especially effective. The program gradually guided the participants with low emotional intelligence to emotional enlightenment. Furthermore, this study highlights how creating a judgment-free environment and a comfortable, safe space are important in facilitation emotional intelligence. Vulnerability may be difficult, especially for individuals who struggle with verbal communication and recognizing how they feel, but with the transformative power of creativity, the initial hesitations will lead to openness, unfamiliarity will turn to comfort, and emotional suppression will transform to expression.

Based on the conclusions drawn from this study, several recommendations can be made to improve the emotional development of students with low emotional intelligence through art-based activities.

With this study, to help students express and understand their emotions, the researcher suggests that schools should integrate structured art programs like sculpting, painting, and writing into their curricula. These creative activities support emotional awareness and self-expression, especially for those who struggle to identify and process feelings. Educators and counselors must foster a safe, non-judgmental space where students can express themselves without fear of criticism. A progressive structure—starting with sculpting, then painting, and finally writing—has been effective in gradually enhancing emotional understanding. This approach allows students to explore various forms of emotional communication. For these programs to be effective, facilitators should be trained in both emotional intelligence and the use of art as a tool for emotional growth. Future research should also investigate the long-term impact of these art-based programs through longitudinal studies to assess whether the emotional improvements are sustained over time.

In summary, incorporating art-based activities into educational settings can significantly support students with low emotional intelligence. By fostering an environment that encourages creative self-expression, schools can help students develop the emotional awareness and skills needed for personal growth and well-being.

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