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Building Emotional Creativity Through Art Appreciation Learning

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Abstract

This research aims to describe: 1) the effects of art appreciation on emotions and cognitive and; 2) the role of art appreciation learning in building students' emotional creativity. The research uses a qualitative approach with an exploratory type of research that collects data using the library research method. Google Scholar as a database that is also linked to Scopus and PubMed was used to collect literature with a time span of 2016-2025. Data were analyzed using synthesis techniques that present data descriptively and narratively. The results showed two sub-sections. First, the effects of art appreciation on emotions and cognition, including increasing the experience of aesthetic emotions (diversity, intensity, and frequency of emotions), meaning-making, fostering emotional intelligence, a sense of empathy, implicit emotion regulation skills, self and others' understanding, generating inspiration and stimulating creative ideas, and awakening imagination and imagery. Secondly, art appreciation learning acts as a medium for emotional education and character development, creating an interactive reflective space, paving the way for new experiences, and free space for directed expression. Experiences from learning art appreciation can become patterns that are abstracted in everyday life. Indirectly, the research provides a basic description of the relationship between emotional creativity and art appreciation in the context of education.

Keywords: Effects of Art Appreciation; Art Appreciation Learning; Emotional Creativity

Introduction

The importance of learning art appreciation is evidenced by its presence in the art education curriculum. Art appreciation is an activity of observing, assessing, appreciating, and interpreting values in artwork. This learning is not only used to introduce and learn cultural values, but also as a medium for character building for students. Although research generally mentions art education as a medium for developing emotional intelligence (Hadijah, 2024), a mediator of personality change (Grosz et al., 2022), and a positive effect on psychological well-being (Jin & Ye, 2022; Saif, 2024), it is believed that learning art appreciation as one of the activities in art education means that it is also involved in influencing these psychological effects. This is because the process of art appreciation often involves emotional factors.

The psychological impact caused by art appreciation is here formulated as emotional ability, because the involvement of activities that involve emotions is similar to the concept of emotion

regulation. The similarity lies in the process of assessing, managing and expressing emotions that occur in the process of art appreciation. In addition, this activity also stimulates creative ideas (An & Youn, 2018), provides aesthetic experiences and develops new values or meanings through the interpretation stage. The novelty that may appear in the results of each individuals' art appreciation is reminiscent of the concept of creativity. Logically, products that are considered creative result from creative processes and abilities. That means there are creative abilities that are generated in art appreciation and involve emotional factors. The presence of both, namely creativity and emotion, refers to one ability called emotional creativity.

Emotional creativity is an individuals' ability to experience and express emotional responses that meet three criteria, namely novelty, effectiveness, and authenticity (Averill, 2002). Preparedness is an additional requirement in the construction of emotional creativity. Novelty in terms of emotional responses that are different from the general public and reflect oneself, effectiveness in terms of impact or benefit to individuals especially groups, and authenticity relating to the authentic expression of individual values (Averill, 2002).

Emotional creativity is mentioned as an emotional ability that differ from emotional intelligence (Averill, 2004) in terms of the cognitive processes that are evoked and the measurement criteria used (Ivcevic et al., 2007). The reason why art appreciation learning is not said to be limited to evoking emotion regulation abilities or emotional intelligence, is because the emotional abilities that are evoked may be a combination of several other abilities. In addition, the concept of emotional creativity in art appreciation is seen as a stage in aesthetic development that also discusses abilities from a psychological perspective.

Aesthetic development is the pattern of an individual's way of understanding artwork, in this case observed through art appreciation. The abilities displayed in each stage of aesthetic development, as in Parsons (1987) and Housen (1999), indicate specific abilities of individuals that are different from individuals in other stages. The differences in individual abilities in each stage are indicated to be similar to the characteristics of creativity. The explanation from a psychological perspective also strengthens the idea that the type of creativity shown in each stage refers to emotional creativity.

Based on the explanation, learning art appreciation as one of the activities in art education can have an impact on the psychology of students who refer to efforts to generate emotional creativity. Therefore, the role of art appreciation learning in building students' emotional creativity needs to be explored. Although the relationship between art appreciation and emotional creativity has not been explained explicitly and comprehensively in previous research, the role can be connected through the similarity of a series of processes, components, or effects of art appreciation with the concept or components of emotional creativity. Thus, the set of processes, components, or effects of art appreciation on emotions and cognition need to be explored first.

This research examines: 1) the effects of art appreciation on emotions and cognition, and; 2) the role of art appreciation learning in building students' emotional creativity. The research is expected to expand knowledge about the role of art appreciation learning in emotional development in the form of emotional creativity. The findings in this study can be a reference for further studies in understanding the relationship between art, emotion, and creativity in the context of education.

Method

The study used a qualitative approach with an exploratory type of research that collected data using the library research method. Exploratory research intends to explore research questions to study a problem that cannot be clearly defined (Mbaka & Isiramen, 2020). This is in line with the role of appreciation learning in the development of emotional creativity which has not been fully studied comprehensively and explicitly.

Literature comes from secondary sources in the form of journal articles, books, book series, and conference proceedings. The database utilizes Google Scholar which is connected to Scopus and PubMed for literature searches in the 2016-2025 period. The keywords used in the literature search include the effects of art appreciation, aesthetic experience, art appreciation process, art appreciation learning, inspiration, emotion, cognitive ability, and creativity.

The literature search applied inclusion criteria and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria included: 1) studies that focus on the influence of art on emotions, cognition, and creativity; 2) studies that provide a psychological and cognitive description in the process of art activities; 3) studies have been published and are within the last 8-9 years; 4) studies are qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods, and; 5) language is available in Indonesian or English. Studies that were not relevant to the topic or did not fall within the inclusion criteria were used as exclusion criteria.

Initial selection was done by reading the title, abstract and keywords. Literature findings on the emotional and cognitive effects of art appreciation were used to address aspects of art appreciation that build emotional creativity. The themes that have been identified in the discussion of the effects of art appreciation are grouped into components of emotional creativity. The grouping will be elaborated with ECI (Emotional Creativity Inventory) items developed by Averill (1999) and explained descriptively to answer about the role of art appreciation learning in building emotional creativity.

Results and Discussion

1. Emotional and Cognitive Effects of Art Appreciation

Art appreciation has various effects on the viewer. The different effects on each individual are based on many things, such as taste, experience, predictive ability (Edwita et al., 2019; Mortu, 2023), and knowledge. Some findings have been summarized to describe the effects of art appreciation on art lovers, both in emotional and cognitive aspects. Cognitive aspects are included because art appreciation also involves thinking.

Art has the power to bring out certain emotions in people through artwork. Like a magical power that can affect other people's emotions, it is very natural to happen because artwork are emotions represented by aesthetic objects and elements. The appeal of artwork will attract people who have a connection to the feelings and values it has. When a person feels surprise, it is the first time an individual can feel a certain attraction and emotion towards artwork that may not be known why. Even appreciators can give a strong aesthetic emotional response, as happened to viewers of immersive paintings in the experimental results of Pizzolante et al. (2023). In addition, art appreciation has an impact on the high frequency of emotions as experienced by art graduates who have an emotional connection with artworks (Miu et al., 2016).

One can be very sad disappointed, happy, moved, and the like during the art appreciation process. The variety of emotions that individuals feel is due to certain visual stimuli. The emotional diversity felt by appreciators is also explained by Rodriguez et al. (2021). Museum visitors on average experience 7 out of 10 emotions during appreciation and novelty and openness to experience are important factors for emotional diversity to occur (Rodriguez et al., 2021). Another study showed an increase in the experience of a variety of aesthetic emotions said to be a cinematic experience in people who see movies in theaters (Fröber & Thomaschke, 2021). Based on its effect on emotions, art appreciation is able to provide a rich emotional experience through the activity of viewing artworks.

In addition to evoking certain emotions, artworks can awaken the imagination of the appreciator. Historians, for example, often activate their own imagination to understand the artist's imagination in the artwork (Onians, 2018). By imagining, people can think of something beyond their actual experience. The awakening of imagination is shown in the art appreciation results of non-art students who emphasize subjective qualities such as imagination (Riswarie et al., 2019).

Art appreciation also evokes imagery. Meng (2021) describes someone looking at a painting of a horse and imagining the horse's legs moving as an illustration of imagery. The term imagery is very close to the imagination that often arises during the process of art appreciation. In images that feature psychological processing procedures, imagery becomes the end of the imagery scheme (Meng, 2021).

In addition to evoking imagination or imagery, art appreciation can also foster socio-epistemic skills related to self-understanding and other-understanding (Sherman & Morrissey, 2017). Art appreciation mediates the development of self-understanding through self-reflection driven by moving art experiences and understanding others by looking into the experiences people actually have (Sherman & Morrissey, 2017). Self-understanding is one of the factors that can foster empathy in art (Riswarie & Damajanti, 2020).

On the other hand, adaptive art appreciation can contribute to a deeper understanding of other people's emotions, thus fostering emotional intelligence and empathy (Serrao et al., 2024). Adaptive changes facilitated by neuroplasticity help simplify complex aesthetic reasoning and analysis processes, so that the connotations and meanings of artworks can be fully understood (Wei et al., 2024) including the emotions of others expressed through artwork. In the study of Biglino et al. (2019) on appreciators' responses to the artwork Making the Invisible Visible, the audience felt that they could learn something new about the heart and experience increased understanding and awareness through appreciation of the installation. Not only about understanding, but art appreciation evokes implicit emotional regulation in the form of reappraisal as shown in the study of Van Dongen et al. (2016).

Art appreciation is done not without purpose, one is expected to enrich values through the process of finding meaning, especially the implied meaning in artwork visualized in the form of certain symbols. Continuous art appreciation trains and improves symbol literacy skills for meaning formation, because basically appreciation is an individual's communication of artwork's language. At the end of the paper, Dolese & Kozbelt (2020) mention meaning-making as the end of the aesthetic response, because ultimately the artistic communication process is directed at the creation of meaning by the appreciator. Meaning-making is said to promote inspiration mediated by the feeling of being moved, both in meaning inference and impression evaluation (Sawada et al., 2024).

Several studies have also proven that art appreciation evokes inspiration through empirical studies. Art appreciation evokes inspiration and then stimulates creative ideas that can help get the job done, such as design drafting in business (An & Youn, 2018) or inspire creativity for art creation (Ishiguro & Okada, 2019) such as style creation, expression, and motion improvisation in dance learning (Alistiana, 2020). People who create art usually look a lot to find references as inspiration and transmute them into creation ideas. This is also evident in Chen's study (2023) which shows that learning art appreciation affects the display of children's artwork which appears to be connected to the theme of the observed artist's artwork.

Art appreciation expressed verbally or in writing is said to improve the communication skills of the appreciator. A qualitative case study by Duh (2016) showed that the development of art appreciation had a positive impact on the communication skills of preschool children. Improved communication skills were stimulated through learning designed to recount experiences when viewing artwork in front of friends and teachers.

Based on the research findings, the compilation of the effects of art appreciation on cognitive and emotions includes; a) increased aesthetic emotional experience (diversity, intensity, and frequency of emotions); b) meaning making; c) fostering self and oter-understanding; d) fostering emotional intelligence; e) fostering a sense of empathy; f) generating inspiration and stimulating creative ideas; g) generating imagination and imagery; h) fostering implicit emotional regulation skills, and; i) improving communication skills.

2. The Role of Art Appreciation Learning in Building Students' Emotional Creativity

This section will answer the second research problem about the role of art appreciation learning in building emotional creativity. The effects of art appreciation on emotions and cognition that have been found in several studies in the previous section 1 are grouped based on the similarity of concepts with the components of emotional creativity, namely the ECI items by Averill (1999). ECI items are considered to describe a more diverse and clear form of ability, so that explanations can be more specifically directed at the intended item. The emotional creativity item codes written here use the same criteria codes as the ECI items in Averill's (1999) writing, such as P for preparedness, N for novelty, E for effectiveness, and A for authenticity.

Although one's level of emotional creativity can influence art appreciation ability, art appreciation can also do the opposite mediated by learning. The outcomes or activities developed in art appreciation learning at school help students abstract the patterns of evaluating artworks related to emotional creativity into everyday life. The first criteria of emotional creativity are preparedness.

Like the name of the criteria, certain abilities are not merely formed, but created with all the preparation. In learning art appreciation at school, students are not only introduced to cultural artwork but also aimed at absorbing virtuous values. In other words, this art appreciation learning is present as a medium for emotional education and character development of students.

The existence of art appreciation learning in schools automatically familiarizes students to pay attention to their emotions or feelings involved in evaluating artwork. The habituation aims to foster students' interest and awareness of the importance of emotions in character building. This awareness is formed through self-reflection activities that foster self-understanding (Sherman & Morrissey, 2017). The existence of increased understanding and awareness of a person due to art appreciation has been proven by the study of Biglino et al. (2019) which was conducted by looking at installation artworks. This shows that learning art appreciation builds emotional creativity in terms of awareness of the importance of emotional development (P2), understanding (P3) and attention to own emotions (P4).

Basically, art appreciation builds interaction between the audience and the artist's emotions through artwork. That means an understanding own emotions here is formed from art appreciation activities that also require an understanding of the emotions of others or artists. Both understandings are formed and honed repeatedly through activities and reflection questions in art appreciation learning. This shows that art appreciation learning also supports emotional creativity in terms of understanding own emotions through attention to the emotions of others (P7).

Art appreciation learning efforts to foster self-understanding are carried out by inviting students to explore the causes of aesthetic responses. The cause-and-effect of the aesthetic response is explored with the teacher's direction and guidance through reflective questions. The exploration of causation shows that learning art appreciation builds emotional creativity in terms of reviewing the reasons behind feelings (P1).

The causation of aesthetic emotions is often based on personal experience, formal principles, or societal values. Trnka (2023) states that "during cognitive processing of new emotional events, the subject

tries to understand these emotional events by categorizing them. Conceptual knowledge about the subject involves prototypical categories of emotional events that are built based on events experienced by the subject in the past." This concept is the basis for the integration of personal experience (past) in art appreciation to help interpret or interpret other artwork.

Art appreciation learning provides an understanding that past experiences are valuable lessons that bring a person in the present. Therefore, reflection on the integration of personal experience in art appreciation learning supports emotional creativity in terms of overcoming current problems through reviewing past emotional events (P5).

In addition to personal experience, formal principles are never separated from exploring the cause-and-effect of emotional responses in art appreciation. In learning art appreciation, students are equipped with knowledge about the elements, principles, and also the evaluation of artworks. This symbolic investigation or formalistic evaluation refers to the stage of criticism which is considered as part of an objective assessment. This is because art appreciation is the initial stage of criticism. So, the exploration of the cause-and-effect of emotional responses is not only based on subjective experience but also based on objective matters such as formal principles. This shows that art knowledge in learning art appreciation is a provision for building emotional creativity in terms of providing objective responses after intense emotional experiences (P6).

The second criteria of emotional creativity is novelty. This criteria is synonymous with creative judgment that refers to new or different things. In the novelty criteria, art appreciation learning provides opportunities for the entry and development of broad aesthetic experiences to foster the potential for certain abilities. Broad aesthetic experience is certainly not an instant achievement. Students are continuously trained to evaluate artwork using feelings and thoughts in order to have a sharp intuition.

The sharpness of intuition will help students easily empathize and capture subtle emotions conveyed through artwork. Students are exposed to various types of artworks to trigger their emotional responses or feelings, such as sadness, happiness, feeling funny, fear, worry, moved, and so on. The emotions experienced are different for each person, and can even be different for one person. Differences in the types of emotions are evidenced in studies that show the diversity of emotions in the audience (Fröber & Thomaschke, 2021; Rodriguez et al., 2021).

The diversity of emotions in previous research proves that art appreciation learning builds students' emotional creativity in terms of providing space to experience a variety of different emotions (N21) and can even occur at the same time (N18). At the point of optimal development of art appreciation abilities, art appreciation learning will help students experience a unique diversity of emotions, so that these conditions can achieve emotional creativity in terms of experiencing a unique blend of emotions (N11). The experience gained includes an aesthetic experience that may only be encountered through the activity. Unique experiences, which are not only different from others but can also develop into unusual emotional experiences (N13) and may not be easily described with ordinary language (N10) because the complexity of emotions experienced exceeds the ability to describe feelings (N20).

As explained earlier, art appreciation learning is like a container that facilitates the development of the unique side of emotional experience as a component of emotional creativity. Thus, the wealth of knowledge or perspectives fostered in art appreciation learning has the potential to develop one's ability to give different emotional responses, even to emotional situations in several different artworks. Students are trained in empathy by being exposed to diverse artworks, which requires them to provide varied and flexible emotional responses to certain situations. This ability has the potential to develop towards emotional creativity in terms of the tendency to give different and unique emotional responses (N8 & N14) as well as inventive and innovative (N16).

Art appreciation not only evokes emotions, but also the imagination that causes those emotions to occur. Own imagination is activated to understand the artist's imagination in artwork (Onians, 2018), for example the texture of cracks imagined as barren land, bark, or perhaps the texture of a face. In art appreciation learning, reflective questions are given to guide and direct students to find the flow or expand their imagination, but guidance and direction here do not refer to dictation. Reflection spaces lead students to imagine multiple situations, potentially developing emotionally creative ways of imagining multiple emotional situations at the same time (N9).

One thing that cannot be ascertained in the development of emotional creativity through learning art appreciation in schools is the preference for artworks that can evoke certain emotional responses. Increased interest and liking are caused by meaning resulting from stimulus complexity triggered by reflective processing (Husselman & Filho, 2024). A study proved that learning art appreciation can have a positive effect on art and art-viewing, but the extent of its influence on interest has yet to be explained (Chen, 2023).

Recent research has explored how a person's preference for a particular type, style or theme of artwork is linked to personality (Shen et al., 2024). This means that art appreciation is not the determining factor of these preferences. Nevertheless, art appreciation learning in schools can be utilized to track students' preferences for artworks that can evoke certain emotional responses.

Art appreciation learning in schools is also unlikely to be a direct motivator in supporting students' careers. However, the presence of art education in schools aims to help them develop in a variety of other knowledge that has an impact on potential development. Space for expression through dialog, interactive discussion or assignments in the form of texts in art appreciation learning at school can be an exercise for students to enrich vocabulary. In addition, art appreciation learning can be a medium for developing writing skills for students who have potential in terms of poets and novelists (N16).

The third criteria of emotional creativity is effectiveness. This criteria is synonymous with the usefulness or impact of emotions on individual lives. In this criteria, art appreciation learning acts as a medium for emotional and character education for students. They will learn various kinds of experiences that are present through artwork.

Students are equipped with the knowledge and skills to evaluate artworks. He is trained by being exposed to many artworks that have various values, so that the possible responses that arise will vary. His ability to assess and manage emotions experienced when interacting with artwork is developed through learning art appreciation. This is supported by evidence that there is implicit emotion regulation caused by the art context, where psychological distance and attention to aesthetic properties may play a role (Van Dongen et al., 2016).

So, in this case, learning art appreciation not only builds students' emotional creativity in terms of practicing the ability to express emotions well (E23) and provide new or unusual emotional responses in certain situations (E22), but also contributes to shaping their social skills. The ability to express emotions well enables students to better understand and communicate their feelings, thus supporting more harmonious and empathetic interpersonal relationships with others (E24).

Not only forming social skills, learning art appreciation can also provide valuable experiences through the process of meaning making. Meaning making is said to be the end of aesthetic response (Dolese & Kozbelt, 2020). The reflection space created in art appreciation learning provides room for exploration and interpretation based on emotional experiences to understand and find values or meanings that are relevant to real life.

The values found in meaning making can be a motivation for students to live or achieve something in their lives. For example, paintings with the characters of national heroes that depict resilience and strength inspire or motivate youth to become figures who never give up in any condition. In this case, art appreciation learning seeks to raise awareness and understanding of the importance of emotional experiences to students (E26). Motivation inspired by the value or experience of emotion is the contribution of art appreciation learning in developing students' character to undergo or achieve something in their lives (E25).

The fourth criteria of emotional creativity is authenticity. No one can guarantee a person's honesty in expressing their emotional experience, but honesty can be built from the environment. The teacher in learning art appreciation plays a role in giving students a free but still directed (conducive) space for expression. A safe environment will provide a sense of comfort for students to express their feelings or opinions. Students are taught to respect and not easily judge others through interactive reflective discussions.

Based on the explanation above, learning art appreciation, especially in schools, has a contribution in building students' emotional creativity. The contribution is generally included as the first step, raw material, or preparation to foster such creativity. In the end, the final result of one's ability depends on the individual himself. Art appreciation learning becomes a trigger that opens the way for students to explore wider experiences. This is because openness to experience is positively correlated with emotional creativity (Trnka, 2023). The explanation in this study is more in terms of the objectives of learning art appreciation in schools that are linked to the components of emotional creativity. Psychological or cognitive chronologies that explain the mechanisms that bridge the two are suggested for future research.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the research and discussion above, the conclusions are as follows. First, the effects of art appreciation on emotional and cognitive aspects. The effects of art appreciation on emotions and cognition include a) increasing the experience of aesthetic emotions (diversity, intensity, and frequency of emotions); b) making meaning; c) fostering understanding of oneself and others; d) fostering emotional intelligence; e) fostering a sense of empathy; f) evoking inspiration and stimulating creative ideas; g) evoking imagination and imagery; h) fostering implicit emotional regulation skills, and; i) improving communication skills.

Second, the role of art appreciation learning in building students' emotional creativity. Art appreciation learning plays a role: 1) as a medium for emotional education and character development of students; 2) creating interactive reflection activities; 3) equipping students with knowledge of evaluating artwork; 4) creating an active art appreciation space to provide opportunities for the entry and development of new experiences; 5) facilitating discussions with reflective questions; 6) training to evaluate works of art from various perspectives; 7) facilitating expression space through dialogue, interactive discussions or assignments aimed at enriching vocabulary, and; 8) providing free but still directed expression space. In the end, the experience of learning art appreciation can become patterns that are abstracted in everyday life.

This research can be a literature reference that explains the development of emotional creativity through art appreciation moderated by the role of learning. Indirectly, the research provides a basic description of the relationship between emotional creativity and art appreciation in an educational context. The real effect of art appreciation learning on students' emotional creativity needs to be explored through empirical studies. In addition, the psychological processing chronology of emotional creativity formation also needs to be addressed in future research.

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