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Creativity in Early Childhood Art in Ibadan, Oyo State of Western, Nigeria: A Developmental and Contextual Approach

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Abstract

This article delves into the magic of children's art creativity, exploring how children's imagination sparks creativity and innovation. Creativity is a vital aspect of human development and early childhood is a critical period for fostering creative potential. Art-making is a universal language that allows children express their thoughts, ideas and emotions. Kellog's (1967) theory of childhood artistic creativity is a unique language of communication conveying thoughts, feelings and experience. Eisner (1972) theory of nursery art emphasises the creative expression in children. The paper explores the developmental stages of children's artistic development and the contextual factors that influence their creative expression. It is argued that a holistic and child-centred approach is essential for assessing creativity in early childhood art. The research highlights the importance of process over product, open-ended questions, observation, and authentic assessment methods. We also emphasise the need to consider contextual factors such as environment, culture, and socio-economic background. The findings of this study have implications for early childhood educators, policymakers, and researchers seeking to foster creative development in young children.

Keywords: Art, Contextual Approach, Creativity, Development Approach, Early Childhood

Introduction

Assessing creativity in early childhood art can be challenging due to the complex and subjective nature of creativity. Adegoke (2024) reiterated creativity in children is spontaneous as they tend to get involved in the process rather than the product. They unleash their art production as if they had preconceived same. That is not the situation, but a release of their thoughts, emotion and inspiration from within called imaginative creativity. A more mature person who may or may not be artistically inclined would rather judge children's art by saying; 'and so what do they bring forth, nonsense and ingredients.

Focusing on the process rather than the product helps children understand that mistakes are an essential part of the creative journey. Creativity is in the process, rather than in the product. The process, and not the final product, is what matters in children's art and how their creativity is expressed. Thus, the essence of creativity lies in the journey taken to make every masterpiece. "Creativity in children's art is not a linear process, in which you have to learn all the necessary skills before you get started. It is true that creative work in any field involves a growing mastery of skills and concepts. It is not true that they have to be mastered before the creative work begins in children" (Robinson, 2015).

This paper is about children's voices—their minds, feelings and souls. It's about how children's voices are liberated through the arts, and how children make and communicate meaning through still and moving images, sounds, textures, gestures and the use of many other signs. It is also about how teachers, parents, peers and the community influence children's early development, and how quality art education in early childhood is an essential component of lifelong learning (Ray, D., 2010). Children explore materials, techniques, and ideas during the creative process, which helps develop their problem-solving skills and



imagination. The process of creating art helps children learn about colours, textures, shapes, and patterns, as well as fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination. Children use art to express their thoughts, emotions, and experiences, which fosters self-awareness, communication skills, and emotional intelligence. In this light, the childhood artist is best encouraged psychologically, socio-economically and with freedom to manifest more of their intrinsic talents.

Please note that this article interchangeably used 'early childhood art' and 'children's art' to connote the same sense. Children in this sense also refers to any growing child that has opportunity to be affiliated with art education globally. It is in no doubt that the environment in which a child develops has a far-reaching effect on their cognition, social and emotional propensity.

Objectives

The objectives of study are to:

- i. investigate how young children's artistic expressions change and evolve across different age ranges (0-8 years);
- ii. examine how cultural and societal factors influence young children's artistic expressions; and
- iii. examine the impact of family dynamics and parenting styles on children's creative development.

Literature Review

Many of the leading creativity scholars and practitioners believe that the essential source of creativity is the irrational, supra-rational, preconscious—something other than the rational, logical mind (Torrance, 2003). This text explicitly describes children's propensities of early creative expressions. The article explored the developmental stages of children's artistic development and the contextual factors that influence their creative predispositions. Early childhood artists are zealous with applications and always want to fill every available space on paper.

A moody child once held her crayon and started scribbling on paper, as scribbling is the children's first stage of artistic development. She was then asked; Dolly what are you doing? Without looking up to take cognisance of who was addressing her, she simply responded, I am drawing.

Art and Creativity are interconnected and the creative development in children is expressed through their artistic abilities. Art is all about process and not product in children. Creativity enhances Art, building on their imaginations. This paper exhibits how art starts with scribbling and scratching among toddlers and transforms into drawing, painting, and colouring in the early childhood period. Creativity is one's own expression and continues throughout one's life. Thus, Art is how children express themselves when they are actively involved in their own learning (Ray, 2010). A child's first experiences with Art is always full of pleasure, imagination, and active participation. This engagement in Art is creativity. It sparks children's interest and helps them in their ability to think and imagine. Art in children is the freedom to explore and experiment with colours and tools. Art creativity in children is not a matter of looking before they leap whereby, they gain mastery to plan their drawing. Their artworks are spontaneously created the moment they handle the medium to draw exhibiting their inner talent and creativity

The creative process encourages children take risks, try new things, and view mistakes as opportunities for growth. The act of creating art brings children joy, satisfaction, and a sense of accomplishment. Children's art reflects their developmental stage, showcasing their cognitive, social, and emotional growth thereby fostering uninhibited imagination. Creativity in children is often uninhibited, allowing them to think outside the box and generate innovative ideas.

The creative process helps children develop confidence in their abilities, which translates to other areas of life. By emphasizing the process, children are more likely to maintain a creative mindset for posterity. In valuing the process over the product, we can help children develop a lifelong love for creativity, learning, and self-expression. Children's art is a journey, not a destination. It is a celebration of imagination, creativity, and self-expression thereby giving the child a voice, uniqueness and an identity. As children explore art, they develop essential skills that benefit many areas of life; from problem-solving and critical thinking to communication and emotional intelligence (Mincemoyer, (2016).

The creative journey matters more than the final product because it enhances growth in children as they



develop and evolve as artist. The experience is fun to them as well as widens their horizon to acquire more skill and overall creativity. In the journey of creativity process children embrace mistakes in which errors become opportunities for growth and learning. In other to foster creativity in these childhood artists, the tip for parents, educators and caregivers is to encourage children's art exploration. Make materials available to them for exploration and exploits (Wright, S. (2015/20), in order to inspire creativity in early childhood art. In synchronising art and emotions, art helps children express, manage, and understand their emotions to express their feelings and thoughts in a non-verbal way, helping them communicate emotions that they might not suffice in words. Creating art can be a therapeutic outlet for children to release pent-up emotions reducing stress and anxiety. Early childhood artists may stimulate creativity beyond art as their art developmental creativity process translates to other areas of life, like science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) (Reyner,2024). In support of Reyner, (2024), some aspects of art is calculative, seemingly mathematical. In drawing for example, it should be noted that the human body is symmetrically structured. The head though single has its features in pairs; the ear lobes, the eyes, nostrils and the first half of the mouth replicates the second half. The whole body from top to bottom could be viewed symmetrically and tagged the left and the right wings. The head size could be found 7/8 times in the body from head to toe, save in exceptional cases like dwarfs. Now categorising the other aspects of STEM (Science, technology and Engineering) as one; the body could be likened to a 'human machine'. Why is this so? Fuel is bought into the vehicle to keep it running while we eat to keep us alive. Biologically, we take water keeping us hydrated else the body collapses. The same happens to a vehicle without water in the carburettor destroying the gasket and stops. Finally, the human exhaust is the anus to fart and defecate, passing out wastes from the body while farting is part of digestion. The veins and arteries in the body are the electrical wirings in the vehicle while the heart stands for the carburettor pumping fuel for use in the car which when blocked somehow affects the perfect working of the vehicle correspondingly causing high or low blood pressure, tantamount to hyper/hypotension in human beings at the instance of cholesterol blocking the veins and arteries through our food intake. That is why the human body is said to be fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:13).

Cognitive Development

For young children, making art is a sensory exploration activity according to (Piajet in Pakpahan, F. H. and Saragih, M. (2022). Children enjoy the sensation of using crayons on paper and watching blobs of coloured paint grow larger. Exploring materials helps children build knowledge about the objects in their environment.

Activities focused on making art also require children to make decisions and conduct self-evaluations. Klein (1991) identified four key decisions that child artists make: first, they decide what they will render in their art—such as a person, a tree, or a dragon fostering critical thinking trait of cognition. Secondly, they choose their media, the organisation of objects in their work, and the perception viewers will take. Children decide next how quickly or how slowly they will finish their project, and finally, how they will evaluate their creation. Children often evaluate their artwork based on their preferences and feedback from others about what is pleasing – a socio-emotional trait. (Feeney & Moravcik, 1987).

As children grow and develop, their art-making activities move beyond exploring with their senses and begin to involve the use of symbols as shown in (Fig. 1b). Children begin to represent real objects, events, and feelings in their artwork. Drawing, in particular, becomes an activity that allows them to symbolize their knowledge and feelings. This is a needed outlet for children whose written or verbal communication, may be limited (de la Roche, 1996). This early use of symbols in artwork is crucial because it provides a foundation for children's later use of words to symbolize objects and actions in formal writing.

Motor Development

Making art helps young children develop control over both large and small muscle groups (Koster, 1997). Large arm movements required for painting or drawing on an easel or large paper on the floor build coordination and strength. The smaller movements of fingers, hands, and wrists required to cut with scissors, mold clay, or draw or paint on smaller surfaces develop fine motor dexterity and control. With



repeated opportunities for practice, young children gain confidence in their use of tools for making art and later for writing.

Making art also helps children develop hand-eye coordination (Koster, 1997). As children decide how to make parts fit together into a whole, where to place objects, and what details to include, they learn to coordinate what they see with the movements of their hands and fingers. This hand-eye coordination is essential for many activities, including forming letters and spacing words in formal writing – a form of cognitive development.

Research and Methods

Some facts were retrieved through review of literature. A qualitative research design was employed, involving a collection of 40 artworks created by children aged 1-10. The research study location is His Kingdom Kiddies school. Behind Acorn filling station, off Ife Road, Alakia area, Ibadan. Interaction with the art teacher, Mrs. Bakare, and her assistant, Mr. Johnson, – a seasoned teacher of these unique students, facilitated access to the school. The children's works were examined, and photographs were taken for data collection.

Selection of works: The children's artworks were provided by the art teacher and the ones for screening and analysis were selected (40) and shots taken.

Interview: The children were interviewed concerning their works. Each student addressed their works, speaking to them and interpreting their depictions. The phenomenon exhibits a level of cognitive development, being left alone to take thematic decisions and colour applications.

The artworks were visually analysed using a framework that considered the cognitive, social, and contextual dimensions of art-making. The content analysis of the works was executed.

Findings and Discussions

Developmental Stages:

Children's artistic development progresses through distinct stages, including scribbling, symbolic representation, and realistic depiction. Each stage is characterized by unique cognitive, motor, and creative skills. Scribbles in children's art are a natural and essential part of their creative development. It is the initial stage of artistic development of early childhood art typically occurring between 12-18 months. Scribbling is in stages and as well sequential. These are as reiterated.

Random Scribbling

This is the initial stage of artistic development in Children exploring making marks with no specific intention as shown in (Fig.1). At this stage they move their hands, wrist and fingers in exploration. They have no understanding of boundaries as their scribbles may run off the paper. With this process, children are developing their fine motor skills, hand-eye coordination, creativity and self-expression.

Controlled Scribbling

The second stage of scribbling is the controlled scribbling (18-24 months). Here they start to make purposeful marks, like straight lines or circles. At this stage they have improved fine motor control demonstrating better switch over tools and movement. They have better understanding of boundaries with their scribbles staying within paper edges. Children at this stage make repeated marks creating simple patterns and start to experiment with different tools and technique with merging creativity.

Named Scribbling

Children on developing to a stage in art start telling stories and name their scribbles at (2-3 years of age): Children give meaning to their scribbles, like "this is a car. And are able to tell stories about their works. The essence of scribbling helps develop hand-eye coordination and finger control. This is tantamount to fine motor skills. Other importance of scribbling is the demonstration of creativity as it allows children express themselves and explore different techniques. The indistinguishable scribbling essence is problem-solving as it helps children experiment and learn from mistakes. The art of Communication is an early form of self-expression and storytelling in early childhood art as shown in Fig.3. The child in this art expression exhibited socio-cultural intelligence depicting a driver riding on a bumpy road with some mountains behind the driver and his car. The interpretation of the work in figure 3 in relation to the child

artist sensual growth is cognitive. He's able to mentally process imageries in his environment and able to harness these imageries to communicate by a composite arrangement telling a story. He is able to recognize a driver in a vehicle, on a bumpy road predominantly existent in his locality and as well mountains observed locally or in books or absorbed in mobile pictures in videos or television. This phenomenon reflects the plausible parental support socio-economically.

Encouraging Art Creativity in Children

Encouraging children at all levels of childhood art development is critical, particularly at the early stage of scribbling. Providing adequate materials for them offer a variety of art supplies, like crayons, markers, and paint. It is as well encouraging to embrace the process, focusing on the creative journey, not the end result (Ulutaş, I, et al. (2021).

Displaying their works encourage pride and motivation in them.

Sharing in the fun makes the child understand it is a worth-while venture while at home. Scribble alongside your child to make it an enjoyable, shared experience. Scribbling is a vital part of children's artistic development. By embracing and encouraging them, this assists the child build a strong foundation for future creativity and self-expression.

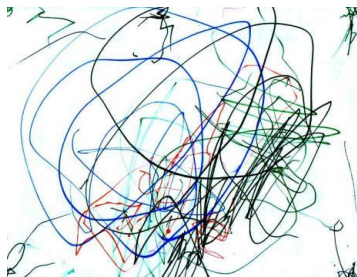


Fig. 1 Random Scribbling



Fig. 2 Controlled Scribbling



Fig. 3. Driving on a Bumpy Road in Complementary Colours

Symbolic representation in childhood art refers to the use of symbols, icons, and images to convey meaning and tell stories. Children often use symbols to represent people, places, and things in their artwork. Stick figures are utilized as simple representations of people, often with basic features like heads, bodies, and limbs. In simplified forms, basic shapes and forms used to represent objects, like circles for heads or rectangles for buildings and many more.

Icons depicting simple images or symbols are used to represent complex ideas or objects, like a heart for love or a smiley face for happiness. Metaphors are used as object or image to represent another, like a snake for a scary situation. Abstract symbols or non-representational marks or shapes are used to convey emotions or ideas.

Symbolic representation in childhood art serves several purposes such as communication. Communication helps children convey thoughts and feelings in art. Each child's artwork tells a story. It is ideal to allow children tell stories and share their experiences. The phenomenon of symbolic representation allows children to explore and resolve conflicts through symbolism as well as fosters imagination and innovation in creativity. It also indicates a level of developmental milestone exhibiting their cognitive and artistic growth.

In a bid to interpret symbolic representation in childhood art, the following parameters should be put into consideration. The context in which the child is coming from; understanding the child's experiences and inspirations. One may ask the child to explain their artwork. It is very critical to comprehend the child's chronological development considering the child's age and artistic abilities to assess their creativity. Furthermore, the cultural background from which the child emanates has a great influence on their socio-cultural experiential depictions in their works as reflected in Fig.3.

The child artist that executed the work in Fig.3 socio-culturally understood a vehicle as well as the existence of rough bumpy roads and mountains as shown; recognizing cultural symbols and icons. By embracing symbolic representation in childhood art, you'll gain insight into their thoughts, feelings, and creative processes.

Realism in Children's Art

Realistic depiction in childhood art refers to the ability of children to accurately represent the world around them through their artwork. This skill develops over time as children's cognitive, fine motor, and artistic abilities improve (Ulutaş, I. et al. (2021). Here are some age-related milestones as laid out.

The toddlers within ages 2-3 years do have limited realism, with focus on basic shapes and colours. Preschoolers within 4-5 years show simple, recognizable forms, like basic facial features or body parts. Early school age of 6-7 years exhibits more detailed and accurate representations, like facial expressions or clothing. Older school age (8-10 years) _increased attention to detail, proportion, and perspective. Preteens, aged 11-12 years reveal more refined techniques, like shading, texture, and realism. (Larsen, et al (2022).

Characteristics of Realistic Depiction

Characteristics of realistic depiction in childhood art reflect proportion in accurate size and scale relationships between objects. The creative skill at this stage stimulates an inclusion of more detailed features like the eyes, nose, or mouth. The appreciation of perspective at understanding depth and distance is demonstrated. Texturized impression representing surface qualities, like smooth or rough surfaces are made manifest as shown in Figs. 4, 5 & 6. The chiaroscurotic play of light and dark via shading is reflective on the textures depicting it is indeed texturized. Chiaroscuro as well create dimensions in proximity and remoteness in composite drawings and paintings. In Fig. 4, the creative arrangement of pencil shaves creates an effect of realism where the hen is agitated in the sight of an external aggressor while incubating on her eggs. The teacher too was highly impressed and ascribed the child artist the premium mark.

The rendering of woolly effect on a lamb in 2D drawing as shown in Fig.5 illustrates creativity while Fig.6 shows the posture of a composed and peaceful bird with the smooth feathers unruffled and scenically arranged on each other.



Fig.4. Texturised Application Treatment on Hibernating Hen.



Fig.5. Texturised Treatment on Lamb depicting its wooliness.



Fig.6. Smooth Texturisation on a Local Hen.

Encouraging Realistic Depiction

Encouraging realistic depiction in childhood art, children are trained to observe the world around them through observational exercises making a copy of visuals in the environment. One learns to draw by drawing. Provide regular opportunities for drawing and art-making by practice. The caregiver should offer gentle guidance on artistic techniques as well as positive reinforcement via praising their efforts and progress. The child artist should be exposed to realistic images and models for perfection to realistic dispositions (Larson, et al. 2022).

It should be noted that realistic depiction is just one aspect of childhood art, though a level of artistic development in the child. emphasise the process, creativity, and self-expression alongside technical skill development (Ray, 2010).

Contextual Factors

Contextual factors such as environment, culture, and socio-economic background significantly impact children's creative expression. These factors influence the availability of art materials, adult support, and opportunities for creative exploration.



The Environment, Culture and Socio-economic Background

The environment significantly impacts early childhood art creativity in various ways depending on the child artist's location. Access to diverse art materials and resources can stimulate creativity and experimentation. A physical space well-designed and safe area designated for art can encourage exploration and freedom of expression. Such environment alone can instigate creativity in the child. In addition, adult influence where they are supportive can foster creativity by providing guidance, encouragement, and opportunities for artistic expression (Engel, U. (2021).

Socio-Cultural Context

Cultural and social context influence creative expression shaped by their cultural background, social environment, and community values. Exposure to nature and outdoor environments can inspire creativity and influence art-making (Ulutaş, I, et al. (2021). Access to digital art tools and software can expand creative possibilities and skill development. Collaborative art-making with peers do promote sharing ideas, learning from others, and developing social skills. The display and celebration of children's art works showcasing and celebrating them psychologically boost self-esteem, motivation, and creative confidence. Allowing children to make choices and take risks in their art-making processes can foster independence and creative growth.

The teacher's roles, their beliefs, values, and instructional strategies can either support or constrain children's creative expression. Hence, teachers and caregivers are advised to thread softly with wisdom in boosting and encouraging the child artist rather than creating fear and discouragement in them.

By recognizing and addressing these environmental factors, early childhood educators and caregivers can create a nurturing and stimulating environment that fosters art creativity and sets the stage for lifelong creative development.

Socio-economic background can significantly impact childhood art in the following ways as reiterated:

Having access to resources making art is key to creativity. Children from lower socio-economic backgrounds may have limited access to art materials, technology, and classes. Those from more affluent backgrounds may be more likely to visit museums, galleries, and concerts. Parents with higher socio-economic status may be more involved in their children's art education as well. Children from higher socio-economic backgrounds may be more familiar with dominant cultural norms and artistic styles. Those from lower socio-economic backgrounds may experience more stress and anxiety, which may adversely impact their creative expression (Ulutaş, I, et al. (2021).

Children may be influenced by societal expectations and role models, which can shape their artistic aspirations. Kids from higher socio-economic backgrounds may have more opportunities for art classes, workshops, and private lessons.

Youngsters from lower socio-economic backgrounds may have limited access to digital art tools and technology. Considering cultural and social networks, Children's socio-economic background can influence their social networks and access to cultural resources. However, teachers may inadvertently hold biases and expectations influenced by socio-economic background which may adversely impacting their support and guidance. It's essential to recognize and address these factors to provide equitable opportunities for all children to develop their artistic potential, regardless of their socio-economic status.

Assessment Strategies

Authentic assessment methods that reflect real-world creative practices are essential to assessing creativity in early childhood art. These methods include *critical thinking checklist (CTC)*, *artistic behaviour scales (ABS)*, and *portfolio assessment*.

- Critical Thinking Assessment

Assessing children's critical thinking ability in art involves evaluating their capacity to render analysis by breaking down artworks into elements and principles (Engel, U. (2021).

Children should be able to 'interpret and speak to their artworks, identifying themes and meanings and asking them to make artist statements by elucidating their creative decisions. The kids should do



evaluation by producing judgments about artworks, considering criteria like composition, contrast, and play of colours. Critical thinking helps children synthesize elements to create new artwork or solutions (Ibid).

The strategies for assessing critical thinking in art is creating open-ended questions to encourage thoughtful responses. Through this, the children think before giving responses. The art caregiver facilitates discussions about artwork. The facilitator should encourage children to record thoughts and processes. Peer discussions also foster critical thinking through group conversations as they brain-storm together. Self-assessment rubrics helps children evaluate their own artwork by discerning their work thematically.

Teachers should observe and note children's engagement and thought processes during art activities. By integrating critical thinking assessments into art education, one develops children's analytical skills. It enhances creativity and problem-solving. Critical thinking assessment fosters effective communication and self-expression as well as encourages thoughtful decision-making and reflections. It should be noted that assessing critical thinking in art is an ongoing process that informs instruction and supports children's cognitive and creative growth.

- Artistic Behaviour Scales

Artistic Behaviour Scales (ABS) as an assessment strategy in children's art evaluates their artistic development, focusing on behavioural aspects rather than technical skills (Sadiku, M.N.O. et al (2024). ABS assesses Children's imagination through their originality, creativity, and innovative tendencies. Originality showcases unique and novel ideas. A passionate child's artwork fosters evolution of new ideas and production. Elaboration elicits detailed workings, complexities, and refinement.

Expression in early childhood art displays emotional intensity and authenticity. A child's involvement in art is with utmost emotional intensity as it is a novel participation and experience in art for them and so does it with great diligence. As a result, the production is original and realistic. Creativity in children then becomes an ability to generate new ideas and solutions.

Experimentation in children is the willingness to try new materials and techniques generating new ideas, making mistakes and proffering solutions for better outcome.

Persistence in kiddie's art is an engagement and dedication to artistic activities emerging in relative perfection. Self-expression in children's art is the ability to convey thoughts and feelings through art images. As Omatseye & Emeriewen (2013) reiterated, every picture in a child's art tells a story which is indicative of the kid's self-expression. This assertion is true as children has a lot to say about their works and proud to let you know. This phenomenon exhibits critical thinking ability, self-expressionism, self-esteem, emotional intelligence and confidentiality in children.

Artistic Behaviour Scale (ABS) Benefits:

The benefits of ABS identify artistic strengths and weaknesses which in turn informs instruction and curriculum development. It assesses artistic growth and progress as well as encourages artistic exploration and creativity. ABS in all supports diverse learning styles and abilities. By using ABS as an assessment strategy, educators can gain a deeper understanding of children's artistic development and provide supportive environments for creative growth (Ibid, 2013).

- Portfolio Assessments (PA)

Portfolio assessment in children's art involves collecting and evaluating a selection of artworks created over time to assess artistic development, progress, and growth. The benefits of portfolio assessment strategy entail a comprehensive view, showcasing a range of artistic experiences and skills over time. It monitors progress in tracks development and improvement. PA appears to be an authentic assessment reflecting children's genuine artistic abilities. A holistic evaluation considers artistic process, creativity, and technical skills but this is more of 'the processes in childhood art as technical skill is considerable at a later stage of the child's chronological development (Larsen, S.E., et al (2022).

Children's ownership of works encourages them to take pride in their artwork as a self-satisfaction of their achievement. Contextual understanding on the part of the artist provides insight into children's thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Regular review and feedback on children's works provide ongoing support and



encouragement both to children and parents. Parental and peer involvement in children's art activities do encourage feedback and support from others. The consideration of digital use of portfolio assessment is very convenient, ever accessible and commands durability. Artworks are conveniently selected choosing pieces that demonstrate growth, skill, and creativity. By implementing portfolio assessment, educators can gain a deeper understanding of children's artistic journeys and provide personalized support for their creative development.

Conclusion

Creativity in early childhood art requires a comprehensive understanding of developmental stages, contextual factors, and authentic assessment methods. Creativity in children's art reveals the boundless imagination and innovative potential of young children globally. Through their artworks, children demonstrate unique perspectives, experimentation, and self-expression. By embracing a child-centred approach and utilizing assessment strategies like Artistic Behaviour Scales and portfolio evaluations, educators can nurture and support creative development. Adopting a holistic and child-centred approach, educators and researchers can again foster creative development in young children and provide a foundation for lifelong creative expression. Children's creativity flourishes when encouraged and supported in all ramifications. Artistic expression development enhances cognitive, social, and emotional growth which consequently heightens the child's critical thinking ability. Diverse materials and asking open-ended questions prompt and foster innovative thinking.

By recognizing and valuing creativity in early childhood art, we empower children to become confident, imaginative, and innovative thinkers, paving way for a lifetime of artistic expression and creative problem-solving. The study contributes to the understanding of early childhood art, highlighting its multifaceted dimensions and creative processes. The findings have implications for art-based pedagogies and early childhood educators, emphasizing the need to recognize and value the cognitive, social, and emotional significance of art in young children's lives. Art pedagogy enhances children's cognitive abilities, boosting critical thinking and decision-making skills, which benefits them in the future.

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