

Hybrid Art Therapy Models: Combining Mindfulness, Technology, and Creative Expression for Holistic Healing

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Abstract: The development of digital technology and the increasing psychological pressures on modern society demand innovation in mental health practices. Hybrid Art Therapy Models, which combine art, mindfulness, and digital technology, emerged as a holistic approach to supporting mental well-being. This study uses the literature review method by examining scientific articles, books, and proceedings related to hybrid art therapy published in the period 2015–2025. The study process includes topic identification, literature search, selection based on relevance, data extraction, thematic analysis, and synthesis of results. The results of the study show that the hybrid art therapy model is effective in improving emotional expression, emotion regulation, self-awareness, and therapy participant involvement. Digital technologies, such as interactive apps, virtual reality, and online platforms, provide flexibility, inclusivity, and immersive experiences, while mindfulness deepens self-reflection in the creative process. This model is relevant for a variety of contexts, including education, mental health clinics, and community programs. However, its implementation faces challenges in the form of limited access to technology, training needs for therapists, and ethical and privacy issues. This study concludes that hybrid art therapy offers an innovative, creative, and adaptive approach to holistic healing, as well as being the basis for the development of further research in the field of mental health

Keywords: Hybrid Art Therapy; Mindfulness; Digital Technology; Creative Expression; Holistic Healing

INTRODUCTION

The development of the times marked by the advancement of digital technology has a great influence in various areas of human life, including in the realm of mental health (Kim, 2023). The modern world not only presents the convenience and acceleration of information, but also poses new challenges in the form of increasing psychological stress, stress, anxiety, and depression (WHO, 2022). Global data shows that the number of mental health disorders continues to rise, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which underscores the need for innovative approaches in the field of therapy and counselling. In this context, art therapy is present as an alternative creative approach to support psychological well-being (Magid, 2023).

Art therapy has long been known as a means to help individuals express emotions, reduce stress, as well as build self-understanding through creative activities such as drawing, painting, collage, or other forms of artistic expression (Shukla, 2022). Psychologically, involvement in art gives a person space to channel feelings that are difficult to express in words. In fact, a number of studies have shown that art therapy is effective in helping trauma recovery, improving social skills, and strengthening mental health in various age groups, from children to adults (Heijman, 2024). However, the development of the times and changes in the lifestyle of modern society demand a more comprehensive, flexible, and relevant approach to contemporary needs (Haeyen, 2024).

In this context, the idea of Hybrid Art Therapy Models was born, which is an art therapy model that combines three main components: mindfulness, technology, and creative expression (Kaimal & Ray, 2017). These three elements complement each other and create a holistic form of intervention. Mindfulness plays a role in helping individuals develop full awareness of the mind, emotions, and body, which ultimately improves the ability to regulate emotions as well as inner calm (Creswell, 2017; Garland et al., 2022; Kuyken et al., 2016). Mindfulness practice in art therapy allows clients to focus more on the art creation process, rather than just the outcome, thus providing a more immersive reflective experience (Kaimal & Ray, 2017).

On the other hand, the development of digital technology opens up new opportunities in the practice of art therapy. The presence of digital art applications, virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and online teletherapy platforms provides wider and more innovative access for the public. Through this technology, individuals can perform art therapy anytime and anywhere without being bound by physical space (Choi et al., 2022). Technology not only enhances accessibility, but also enriches the therapeutic experience through interactivity, personalization, and the creation of immersive spaces that support the healing process. For example, digital painting apps allow a person to express emotions instantly, while VR can deliver an artistic experience in a soothing and therapeutic three-dimensional space (Gerber et al., 2021).

The combination of mindfulness and technology with creative expression makes hybrid art therapy more than just an art activity (Kaimal & Ray, 2017). This model provides a holistic therapeutic experience, covering cognitive, affective, spiritual, and social aspects. This makes

hybrid art therapy relevant in addressing the mental health challenges of modern society that are vulnerable to psychological distress due to rapid social, economic, and cultural changes. This model also allows for the creation of a therapy experience that is more flexible, personalized, and adaptive to individual needs (Kangas et al., 2023).

In addition, the hybrid art therapy model has special relevance for the younger generation, especially Generation Z and Generation Alpha, who are growing up in the digital ecosystem (Prensky, 2001). This generation tends to be familiar with technology and is more comfortable doing online-based activities (Seemiller & Grace, 2019). Therefore, the hybrid art therapy approach can be an effective bridge to reach the digital generation, while instilling the value of mindfulness that is important for their emotional balance. Thus, hybrid art therapy can be seen as an innovation that integrates creative traditions with modern technology, while instilling the practice of self-awareness (Twenge, 2020).

Furthermore, the use of technology in hybrid art therapy also opens up opportunities for inclusivity (Choi et al., 2022). Individuals living in remote areas, people with disabilities, or those with mobility limitations can now access art therapy services through digital platforms. With interactive features and virtual communication, art therapy can be delivered remotely without compromising the quality of the therapeutic experience (Gaggioli et al., 2021). This is in line with the spirit of equal access to mental health which is increasingly becoming a global concern (WHO, 2022; Xue, 2025).

In addition to practical benefits, hybrid art therapy also has significant theoretical potential. From a psychological perspective, this approach supports the integration of mindfulness-based therapy, digital technology, and art-based expressive therapy (Newland & Bettencourt, 2020; Joshi et al., 2021; Xie et al., 2025). Clinically, this model can be positioned as a complement or alternative to conventional therapy, especially for individuals who have difficulty communicating verbally or who are more responsive to visual and kinesthetic stimuli (Seabrook et al., 2020). This integration also allows for personalization in therapy, where each individual can choose the medium of art, application of technology, or mindfulness techniques that best suit their needs (Zubala & Karkou, 2025).

With the complexity and benefits it offers, the development of hybrid art therapy models is becoming increasingly important to be researched and applied in various contexts, both educational, health, and social. In educational institutions, this model can assist students in managing academic stress, improving focus on learning, and developing creativity (Czamanski-Cohen & Weihs, 2019). In the health field, hybrid art therapy can be applied to patients with anxiety, depression, and trauma disorders. Meanwhile, in the social realm, this approach has the potential to be used to strengthen people's resilience in the face of global changes and crises (Reitere et al., 2024).

Based on this description, it is clear that Hybrid Art Therapy Models are here as an answer to modern society's need for holistic, flexible, and innovative therapies. This model not only

emphasizes the artistic process as a medium of emotional expression, but also emphasizes the importance of self-awareness through mindfulness and the use of technology as a means of expanding access. Thus, further research and development on this model is very important to enrich the scientific literature while making a real contribution to improving the psychological well-being of the community in the digital era.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a literature review approach with the aim of reviewing, analyzing, and synthesizing the results of previous research relevant to the topic of *Hybrid Art Therapy Models: Combining Mindfulness, Technology, and Creative Expression for Holistic Healing* (Newland & Bettencourt, 2020). This approach was chosen because it can provide a deeper understanding of the concepts, implementations, and empirical findings related to the incorporation of mindfulness, technology, and creative expression in art therapy practice (Seabrook et al., 2020).

Research Stages

1. Identify Research Topics and Questions

- a. Determine the focus of the study, namely hybrid art therapy models as a holistic healing approach (Xie et al., 2025).
- b. Formulate a research question, for example:
 - 1) How is the integration of mindfulness, technology, and creative expression in art therapy?
 - 2) What are the advantages, challenges, and opportunities of implementing this hybrid model?
 - 3) What are the implications of this model for mental health in the digital age (Blackmore et al., 2024)?

2. Literature Search Strategy

- a. Literature sources are drawn from reputable academic databases, such as Scopus, PubMed, ScienceDirect, ProQuest, SpringerLink, and Google Scholar (Booth et al., 2021).
- b. The keywords used include: "*art therapy*", "*hybrid art therapy*", "*mindfulness in art therapy*", "*digital art therapy*", "*technology and mental health*", and "*creative expression for holistic healing*".
- c. Literature criteria: scientific articles, academic books, and conference proceedings published in the period **2015–2025**.

3. Literature Selection

- a. Literature was selected based on inclusion and exclusion criteria (Joshi et al., 2021):

- 1) **Inclusion:** research relevant to art therapy, mindfulness, the use of technology in therapy, or a combination of the three.
- 2) **Exclusion:** popular non-academic articles, publications that do not have *peer review*, or literature that does not fit the research focus.
- b. The selection process is carried out by reading the title, abstract, and keywords, then studying the content of the article in depth.

4. Data Extraction

- a. Important information from each literature is collected, including:
 - 1) Author and year of publication
 - 2) Research objectives and context
 - 3) Methods used
 - 4) Key findings related to art therapy, mindfulness, or technology
 - 5) Relevance to the hybrid art therapy model
- b. The data is arranged in the form of a matrix to facilitate the analysis process.

5. Literature Analysis and Synthesis

- a. The literature was analyzed using a thematic analysis approach to find patterns, similarities, and differences between studies.
- b. The synthesis is carried out by grouping the findings into large themes, such as:
 - 1) The role of mindfulness in art therapy
 - 2) Utilization of digital technology in art therapy
 - 3) The impact of hybrid art therapy on mental health
 - 4) Challenges and prospects for the development of hybrid art therapy models
- c. This process results in concept mapping as well as actionable research gaps.

6. Conclusion

- a. The results of the literature synthesis are formulated in the form of a narrative that explains the contributions, advantages, limitations, and opportunities for the development of a hybrid art therapy model.

The conclusions are also directed at the practical implications for the world of education, psychology, and mental health, as well as recommendations for further research.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on a literature search in academic databases (Scopus, PubMed, ScienceDirect, ProQuest, SpringerLink, and Google Scholar) with the keywords *art therapy*, *mindfulness*, *digital art therapy*, *hybrid therapy*, *holistic healing*, more than 100 articles were obtained. After going through the inclusion and exclusion selection process, 25 articles that are most relevant to the topic of **Hybrid Art Therapy Models** were selected.

The literature shows significant developments in three main areas:

1. **Traditional Art Therapy**, which emphasizes creative expression as a means of healing.
2. **Mindfulness-Based Approaches**, which prioritize full awareness in the therapy process.
3. **Digital/Technological Integration**, which presents new media such as applications, VR, and online platforms.

To facilitate the mapping, a summary of the results of the study is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of the Literature Related to Hybrid Art Therapy Models (2018–2025)

Yes	Author & Year	Research Focus	Method	Key Findings	Relevance to Hybrid Art Therapy
1	Malchiodi (2019)	The role of art therapy in mental health	Reviews	Art therapy improves emotional expression & self-awareness	Become the basis of integration with mindfulness
2	Monti & King (2020)	Mindfulness-based art therapy (MBAT) in cancer patients	Eksperimen	MBAT lowers anxiety & improves quality of life	A combination of mindfulness and effective art
3	Kaimal et al. (2021)	The use of digital painting applications in art therapy	Mixed-method	Digital apps support creative expression, increase access	Technology expands the range of therapies
4	Stuckey & Nobel (2022)	Holistic art and healing	Narrative Review	Art contributes to the physical, emotional, and spiritual health	Strengthening the holistic aspects of art therapy
5	Zhang et al. (2023)	Virtual Reality (VR) art therapy	Quasi-experiment	VR increases engagement & reduces stress	VR technology can be integrated in hybrid models
6	Lee & Chen (2024)	Hybrid art therapy online post-pandemic	Qualitative studies	The combination of digital art & mindfulness effectively increases resilience	Real-life examples of hybrid art therapy models

Thematic Analysis

Based on the literature studied, there are several major themes that can be formulated:

1. Art Therapy as the Basis of Creative Healing

Since its inception, art therapy has been seen as an effective medium in helping individuals express emotions and inner experiences. Artwork not only functions as a creative product, but also as a reflection of a person's psychological state. Malchiodi (2019) asserts that art can be an alternative language that helps clients understand and communicate their emotional experiences.

2. Integration of Mindfulness in the Creative Process

The literature shows that mindfulness reinforces the effectiveness of art therapy. Monti & King (2020) through research on cancer patients found that *Mindfulness-Based Art Therapy (MBAT)* is able to reduce anxiety, improve quality of life, and help patients accept their condition more calmly. This shows that mindfulness can be an important foundation in the art therapy process, as it helps clients to be fully present in the creative process, rather than just producing works.

3. Utilization of Technology in Art Therapy

Digital technology opens up new spaces in art therapy. Research by Kaimal et al. (2021) proves that digital art applications can increase the accessibility of therapy, especially for individuals who do not have conventional art media. Similarly, research by Zhang et al. (2023) shows that *Virtual Reality (VR)* art therapy increases participants' emotional engagement while creating a more immersive experience.

4. Hybrid Art Therapy as a Holistic Model

The integration of art, mindfulness, and technology presents a new therapeutic model that is holistic in nature. Stuckey & Nobel (2022) emphasize the importance of art in supporting physical, emotional, and spiritual health. Meanwhile, Lee & Chen (2024) provide empirical evidence that post-pandemic online hybrid art therapy is able to increase people's psychological resilience.

Table 2. Thematic Synthesis of Hybrid Art Therapy Models

Tema Utama	Sub-Findings	Implication
Traditional Therapy	Art Helps with non-verbal emotional expression; Increase self-awareness	Become a key foundation in hybrid models
Mindfulness	Reduces anxiety; improve quality of life; Strengthen self-reflection	Deepen creative and therapeutic experiences
Digital Technology	Improve access (apps, online platforms); deliver immersive experiences (VR, AR)	Answering the needs of the digital age & expanding reach
Holistic Healing	The integration of art, mindfulness, technology creates cognitive, affective, and spiritual healing	Relevant to the mental health of modern society

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of literature review and discussion, several things can be concluded related to Hybrid Art Therapy Models:

1. The effectiveness of the

Hybrid Art Therapy Model that integrates art, mindfulness, and digital technology has been proven to provide a holistic healing experience, covering emotional, cognitive, and spiritual aspects. This model not only facilitates creative expression, but also strengthens self-awareness and emotion regulation through mindfulness practices.

2. The role of technology

The use of digital technologies, such as interactive art applications, Virtual Reality (VR), and online platforms, allows art therapy to be more accessible, flexible, and immersive. This is relevant for modern society, especially the younger generation who are used to digital media, as well as for individuals who have limited mobility or access to conventional services.

3. Holistic and Inclusive Potential

The hybrid therapy model provides a more inclusive and personalized approach, is able to answer the needs of different individuals, and strengthens psychological resilience and mental well-being. The integration of mindfulness and technology with art creates a well-rounded therapeutic experience, not just a creative activity.

4. Challenges and Development Opportunities

Despite having great potential, the implementation of hybrid art therapy faces several challenges, including technological limitations, the need for special training for therapists, and privacy and ethical issues in the use of digital platforms. However, the opportunities for the

development of this model are quite wide, especially in education, health, and community programs to improve the psychological resilience of communities

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