



# InJAERe: Indonesian Journal of Arts Education Research



Journal homepage: <https://ejournal.upi.edu/index.php/ijaer>

## Therapeutic Art Model in Finger-Painting Learning for Autistic Students at the Special Needs Junior High School (SMPLB) Purwakarta

Dian Kencana<sup>1\*</sup>, Tri Karyono<sup>2</sup>, Endang Rochayadi<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sekolah Tinggi Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan, Purwakarta, West Java, Indonesia.

<sup>2</sup> Arts Education Study Program, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Indonesia.

<sup>3</sup> Special Need Education Study Program, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Indonesia.

Correspondence: diankencana1970@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the implementation of the therapeutic art learning design model in finger painting to develop the social-emotional skills of autistic students. An experimental method of the Single Subject Research (SSR) type was applied to obtain individual information (students) as well as to evaluate an intervention conducted on a subject or individual (experimental object). The substance assessed was the social-emotional skills of autistic students. Data were analyzed qualitatively through data display from assessments by teachers and parents, data reduction, and inductive analysis to find meanings or conclusions. This research was conducted on two autistic students at SMPLB Purwakarta. The results showed differences in social and emotional skills between the two subjects; however, both demonstrated improvements in scores before, during, and after the intervention. This is evident from the overall graph, which shows increases across all dimensions, both social skills and emotional skills.

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article History:

Submitted 09/12/2024

First Revised 13/01/2025

Accepted 11/02/2025

First Available Online 30/05/2025

Publication Date 30/05/2025

#### Keyword:

Finger Painting, Social Emotional Skills, Autism Student, Therapeutic Arts

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The number of autistic students in various educational institutions, including Special Schools (*Sekolah Luar Biasa* or *SLB*), has been increasing year by year. Referring to data from the Central Bureau of Statistics, considering the continuous rise in the number of autistic children, it is estimated that there are approximately 2.4 million individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Indonesia, with an estimated increase of around 500 new cases each year (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2012). Given this prevalence, it can be assumed that the population of autistic children will continue to grow in the future, thereby demanding that schools become increasingly open and capable of educating autistic students, a task that must be carried out by professional teachers in Special Schools.

Educational services for autistic students are provided both in inclusive schools and Special Schools across various educational levels, ranging from elementary to senior high school. Special Schools are established by the government as part of efforts to address the needs of children with disabilities at the district/city, provincial, sub-district, and village levels. These types of schools employ different learning strategies and facilities tailored to their specific student populations. The classifications of Special Schools include: (1) SLB A, designated for visually impaired students; (2) SLB B, for hearing-impaired students; (3) SLB C, for students with intellectual disabilities; (4) SLB D, for students with physical disabilities; (5) SLB E, for students with emotional and behavioural disorders; (6) SLB G, for students with multiple disabilities; and (7) schools specifically for autistic students (Directorate of Community and Special Education, 2020).

According to Yuwono (2009), autism is a complex or severe neurobiological developmental disorder that persists throughout life, involving impairments in social interaction, communication, language, behaviour, as well as emotional and sensory perception disorders, including motor aspects. These impairments cause autistic students to have difficulties in understanding learning materials compared to regular children. Therefore, the learning materials provided to these students must be tailored to their specific needs. Providing appropriate learning materials will enhance the effectiveness of the learning process. Based on research by Damayanti, Damajanti, and Muljosumarto (2016), in addition to the provision of learning materials, activities such as arts and crafts and play-based learning methods can also reduce stress and have a positive emotional impact on both children and their parents. Art offers a means to help autistic students develop imagination and understanding of the world around them. Expression through art serves as an alternative way to build or enhance their communication skills, including improving visual skills, developing emotional competence, encouraging social skills, and fostering sensory integration. Milyartini and Haerani (2013) conducted a study aimed at improving the social interaction skills of autistic students through dance activities using the Synectic model. The results of this study demonstrated that, through the Synectic model, autistic students experienced positive changes in their social interactions. The findings also confirmed that the type of learning most accessible and comprehensible to autistic students is art education. Art education plays a crucial role in developing autistic students' abilities to become more independent, communicate both verbally and non-verbally, and enhance their emotional competence.

Social and emotional skills are considered crucial to develop, as they address three primary challenges faced by students with autism: (1) social interaction; (2) social communication related to emotions; and (3) behaviour associated with emotions. Social

skills refer to the ability to cooperate and engage effectively with others. Fahreza (2018, p. 104) defines social skills as the capacity of individuals to communicate effectively with others, both verbally and non-verbally, in accordance with the situational context. Emotional skills encompass the ability to self-regulate and demonstrate resilience when encountering obstacles, control impulses and delay gratification, regulate mood and manage anxiety to prevent interference with cognitive processes, as well as exhibit empathy and maintain hope (Mahmudah, 2010). Denham et al. (2011) identify three dimensions of emotional skills: emotional expression, emotional knowledge, and emotional regulation.

Students with autism possess potential that can be developed through art. One form of art education suitable for autistic students across various school levels, from elementary to high school, is visual arts instruction. Among several artistic activities beneficial for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), finger painting stands out as a particularly effective method. Finger painting is a type of artistic activity where paints are created by directly applying coloured paste (paint) freely using the fingers on a surface. The term "finger" here includes all fingers, the palm, and even the wrist (Sumanto, cited in Astria, Sulastri, and Magta, 2015). Children with ASD express the connection between their inner world and the external environment through finger painting activities (Yucesoy, Baglama, and Tuzel, 2020). The paint can emotionally soothe the child and is also connected to their thoughts, thereby providing us with valuable insights. The materials used in the art creation process can also evoke feelings of satisfaction and calmness in the child within the domain of sensory integration (Yucesoy, Baglama, and Tuzel, 2020). Andini, Pramiasih, and Hermawan (2019) conducted a study on enhancing students' creativity in painting through the finger-painting technique in Cultural Arts lessons. Their research demonstrated an increase in students' creativity in painting using the finger-painting technique in the first-grade Cultural Arts class. This improvement was evidenced by the difference in scores, showing increased creativity in the post test results compared to the pretest before the treatment was applied.

Therapeutic art is an artistic activity that emphasizes the use of the creative and appreciative processes of art in a healthy and therapeutic manner, though it is non-clinical in nature. As such, it can be practiced by professionals from various fields or individually, provided certain conditions are met. Therapeutic art serves several functions at different stages: Regulate: Art plays a role in emotional regulation, particularly through the use of diverse mediums. For example, it can help manage feelings of panic or anxiety. Engaging in artistic creation can assist individuals in regulating their emotions. Then, at the second stage, or the stage of Relate, at this stage artwork can be used as a form of therapy or catharsis and as a means of self-expression. It allows individuals to communicate their stories and emotions to others, thereby facilitating an expressive connection. The third stage is known as the reason this stage involves making sense of the artwork created—meaning-making. Here, reasoning processes are engaged as individuals interpret and find meaning in their artistic creations.

Previous studies have contributed to this research by focusing on the target subjects of autistic students and the implementation of therapeutic art in finger painting instruction. While earlier research examined changes in autistic students' behaviour from the perspective of creativity, this study concentrates on social and emotional skills. By developing social and emotional skills through the implementation of therapeutic art in finger painting lessons, this research serves a rehabilitative function in fostering the behavioural development of students with autism. The autistic students who are the

subjects of this study are junior high school students at the State Special School Purwakarta. These two students exhibit low social and emotional skills, as evidenced by their uncommunicative behaviour towards others and limited ability to express their emotions. At the State Special School Purwakarta, visual arts lessons are offered. The researcher implemented therapeutic art through finger painting instruction to develop the social and emotional skills of the autistic students, aiming to improve these skills by one developmental stage.

Finger painting serves two functions in the education of students with autism. First, through therapeutic art activities involving finger painting, autistic students can visually express their thoughts, ideas, concepts, and experiences. This aligns with the principle of "good communication for autism: see and do" (Lee and June, 2002). According to this perspective, effective communication for students with autism involves "seeing and doing." This principle is exemplified in finger painting activities, where students observe their feelings, thoughts, ideas, and experiences reflected in their artwork and are provided with the opportunity to express themselves through drawing with their fingers. Second, through the implementation of therapeutic art in finger painting instruction, teachers can analyse the thoughts, ideas, concepts, or experiences expressed by autistic students. This enables teachers to design subsequent learning activities tailored to the individual thoughts, ideas, concepts, and experiences of each student with autism. This understanding is crucial for teachers as a foundation in developing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). In this context, the implementation of therapeutic art in finger painting holds a dual significance: it serves as enrichment for developing social and emotional skills in autistic students and as an assessment tool for teachers to develop learning based on students' needs. Therefore, this study focuses on how the therapeutic art model is implemented in finger painting instruction for autistic students at SMPLB Purwakarta.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The conceptual framework of the therapeutic art model in finger painting instruction to develop social and emotional skills in autistic students is grounded in behaviourist theory according to Skinner (1996). Referring to the learning models proposed by Joyce and Weil (2016), therapeutic art falls under the behavioural systems model of learning (Joyce et al., 2016). This classification is because, through finger painting, the therapeutic art model intervenes in the social and emotional behaviours of autistic students with moderate characteristics.

The therapeutic art model consists of three stages. The first stage Regulate involves emotional regulation through art, particularly by using various mediums to manage states such as panic or anxiety. Engaging in artistic creation helps regulate emotions by enabling focus on the materials used—for example, flour and food colouring paint employed in finger painting. The second stage Relate uses artwork as a form of therapy or catharsis, allowing individuals to express themselves and convey their stories to others. This stage facilitates communication of emotions and experiences through artistic expression. The third stage Reason involves making sense of the created artwork, or meaning-making. At this stage, reasoning processes are engaged to interpret and understand the significance of the art. It is important to note that the structure of therapeutic art does not fully meet the formal definition of art therapy. The facilitators are not trained art therapists, and the goals are not necessarily aligned with specific mental health outcomes.

Within these stages, art activities will 1) Promote personal growth; 2) Encourage self-understanding; 3) Achieve emotional balance; 4) Build confidence and skills; 5) Enhance communication skills, both verbal and nonverbal; 6) Improve sensory regulation. Art is beneficial in meeting strong sensory needs through visual and tactile stimulation, which can enhance social behaviour, flexibility, and attention capacity; 7) Address stressful situations; 8) Foster creativity. Through art, creativity can be enhanced, along with the ability to create something new. The therapeutic art model can serve as a medium for catharsis as well as an effective communication tool to release suppressed emotions, anxiety, and tension through artistic expression. Both verbal and nonverbal interactions can emerge through artwork, which also fosters feelings of comfort and self-confidence. To observe changes resulting from the intervention using the therapeutic art model on the social and emotional skills of students, initial and final assessments will be conducted. The initial hypothesis is that the therapeutic art model implemented through finger painting instruction is capable of improving the social and emotional competencies of autistic students.

### 3. METHODS

The method used in this study is an experimental approach of the Single Subject Research (SSR) type with an A-B-A design. The SSR design focuses on individual information as the research sample (Rosnow and Rosenthal, cited in Sunanto, Takeuchi, and Nakata, 2005, p. 65). Single Subject Research is an experimental research methodology used to evaluate an intervention applied to a single subject or individual (Sunanto, Takeuchi, and Nakata, 2005, p. 13). This experimental method of SSR was employed in this study to obtain a direct depiction of the effects of implementing therapeutic art through finger painting instruction on the development of social and emotional skills in autistic students. Through the applied method, the researcher can observe daily changes and make adjustments on subsequent days if necessary. The Single Subject Research (SSR) method allows for a clear analysis of the relationship between the intervention and the observed changes in outcomes. Additionally, this method enables testing the validity of behavioral theories that predict the conditions under which a behavior should or should not change (Horner et al., 2005, p. 170). In this study, a review of the therapeutic art approach was conducted, along with an empirical examination of the social and emotional skills of autistic students.

In this design, two autistic students received interventions (services), and at each session, qualitative descriptive assessments were conducted using observation sheets to measure the development of the students' social and emotional skills. The evaluation of social and emotional skills was carried out at every session to describe the social and emotional competencies of the autistic students receiving the intervention.

In Single Subject Research (SSR), the first step is to formulate the target behavior, which refers to the behavior expected to improve during the study. The target behaviors in this research are social skills within the following dimensions: 1) Peer relations (skills in interacting with others), 2) Self-management skills, 3) Academic skills, 4) Compliance skills (ability to follow rules), and 5) Assertion skills (ability to express opinions). Meanwhile, emotional skills include: 1) Emotional expression, 2) Emotional regulation, and 3) Emotional knowledge.

The participants in this study were two autistic students at the State Special School (SLBN) Purwakarta, at the junior high school level (SMPLB). To complement the data obtained from the two autistic students, MR and AL, additional data were also collected

through exploration with the teachers and parents of these students who were the subjects of the study.

Data collection was conducted while the researcher implemented the intervention with autistic students using the finger painting method. The researcher observed the students' emotional skills from the perspectives of emotional expression, regulation, and emotional knowledge. Structured interviews were conducted using questionnaires with the teachers and parents of the autistic students to understand emotional expression, regulation, and knowledge outside of visual arts lessons. Documentation studies were carried out to observe the finger painting artworks produced by the autistic students. Data analysis was performed using triangulation. Subsequently, the researcher displayed the data, reduced the data, and conducted inductive analysis to derive meanings or conclusions.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Assessment and Intervention in the Learning Process

In therapeutic art learning, an initial assessment, intervention, and final assessment are conducted. The initial assessment takes place over three sessions (sessions 1–3) with the main material being Free Expression painting, which includes two paintings and a painting introducing points, straight lines, and curves, carried out individually. The purpose of this initial assessment is to observe the students' basic abilities or their entry behaviors. The target is to determine the extent of the students' expression and fundamental skills in painting using the finger painting technique.

The intervention process was conducted over five sessions (sessions 4–8) focusing on the core materials of painting points, straight lines, zigzag lines, curves, and waves. These activities were carried out both individually and collaboratively.

- Fourth Session: Painting Dots

The objective of this session is to serve as a gradual exercise to develop hand dexterity and fluidity, using various colours, and to enable students to create their own artwork as well as collaborate with peers. The social skills goal is to foster social interaction with peers and teachers, while the emotional skills goal is to cultivate a sense of empathy towards the learning environment.

Targets for This Session are to be able to paint dots individually and in pairs, to improve sensory regulation and build concentration, to greet the teacher and peers through both verbal and nonverbal communication also to cooperate with peers in creating artwork, demonstrating emotional control and to develop a sense of enjoyment within the learning environment.

- Fifth Session: Painting Straight Lines

The objective of this session is to serve as a gradual exercise to develop hand dexterity and fluidity, using various colours, and to enable students to create their own artwork as well as collaborate with peers. In terms of social skills, the goal is to encourage interaction with peers and teachers, fostering empathy towards friends and teachers. The emotional skills goal is to manage emotions effectively to prevent the tantrums.

Targets for This Session are to be able to paint straight lines both individually and collaboratively in pairs. Participants are expected to demonstrate emotional control and sustain concentration throughout the process of creating artwork as well as during other class activities. Additionally, the session aims to foster the

production of artwork that contributes to enhancing self-confidence and self-esteem. Furthermore, students will practice greeting the teacher and their peers, which serves to improve both verbal and nonverbal communication skills within the classroom environment.

- **Sixth Session: Painting Zigzag Lines**

The objective of this session is to serve as a gradual exercise to develop hand dexterity and fluidity, using various colours, and to enable students to create their own artwork as well as collaborate with peers. Regarding social skills, the goal is to reduce excessive behaviours and to follow rules set by the teacher. The emotional skills goal is for students to be able to express themselves verbally and nonverbally in an appropriate manner.

- **Seventh Session: Painting Curves**

The objective of this session is to serve as a gradual exercise to develop hand dexterity and fluidity, using various colours, and to enable students to create their own artwork as well as collaborate with peers. During this session, storytelling is also conducted by the teacher/researcher with the aim of training focus through listening and attention, stimulating the autistic students' brain development and cognitive growth, aiding in the development of communication skills, enhancing positive behaviour in accordance with social context, and helping students understand others' behaviour or respond appropriately to certain situations. The social skills goals are for students to be able to follow classroom rules and complete tasks both individually and collaboratively. The emotional skills goal is to demonstrate appropriate self-management behaviours, such as expressing joy in learning and other positive emotions.

The targets for this session are to be able to paint curves both individually and collaboratively in pairs. Participants are expected to demonstrate improved behaviour and attitudes compared to previous sessions, thereby supporting their personal growth. Additionally, the session aims to reduce tension and anxiety during learning activities, promoting a state of relaxation. Students are encouraged to produce artwork that enhances their self-confidence and self-esteem. Furthermore, maintaining concentration, listening attentively, and comprehending the storytelling or social story presented by the teacher are key targets. Finally, participants should be able to interact with and respond appropriately to the storytelling or social story shared during the session.

- **Eighth Session: Painting Waves**

The objective of this session is to serve as a gradual exercise to develop hand dexterity and fluidity, using various colours, and to enable students to create their own artwork as well as collaborate with peers. The storytelling activity aims to train focus through auditory stimulation, listening, and attention, stimulate the autistic students' brain development and cognitive growth, assist in developing communication skills, enhance positive behaviour in accordance with social contexts, and help students understand others' behaviour or respond appropriately to specific situations. The social skills goal is to demonstrate understanding and compliance with classroom rules. The emotional skills goal is to show positive responses and reduce negative reactions to instructions given by the teacher.

Target to this session are students able to paint waves both individually and in pairs. A key objective is to reduce tension and anxiety during the learning process, thereby promoting relaxation. The session also aims to enhance participants' skills and creativity through various learning activities. Additionally, students are encouraged to produce artwork that boosts their self-confidence and self-esteem. Experiencing enjoyment while creating finger painting artworks is another important target. Finally, participants should be able to interact with and respond appropriately to the storytelling presented by the teacher.

At the final assessment is conducted over three sessions with the main activity being the creation of paintings on three themes: My School, My Family, and My Favourite Animal. These artworks are created individually by each student. The purpose of this assessment is to observe the students' abilities or final behaviours individually in producing an artwork. The social skills goal is for students to demonstrate attitudes and express opinions regarding their preferred colours or images. The emotional skills goal is for students to have a reasonable understanding of several basic emotions such as sadness, anger, happiness, agreement, friendliness, rejection of friendship, and so forth.

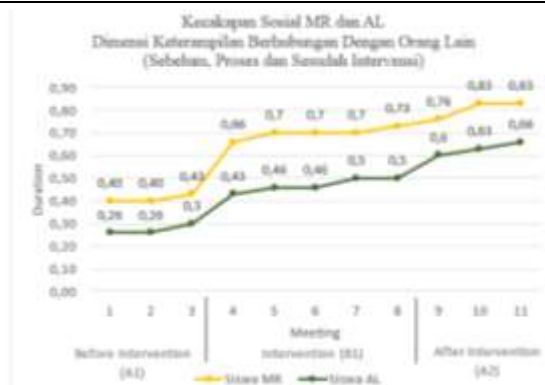
The target for this session are to be able to paint individually in accordance with the given themes. A primary goal is to reduce tension and anxiety during the learning process, thereby fostering relaxation. The session also aims to enhance participants' skills and creativity through various learning activities. Additionally, students are encouraged to produce artwork that contributes to increasing their self-confidence and self-esteem.

#### **4.2. Therapeutic Art Model**

In addition to analyzing the finger painting artworks of the students, the researcher presents data from the Single Subject Research (SSR) analysis using an A-B-A design. The data are illustrated in the form of graphs. The vertical axis represents duration, with social skills measured as a percentage ranging from 0% to 90%, indicating the extent of student interaction with others. For emotional skills, the vertical axis uses frequency, ranging from 0 to 25 occurrences. The horizontal axis ranges from 1 to 11, representing the number of sessions during which the students explored finger painting. Participants MR and AL demonstrated social and emotional skills during three sessions before the intervention (baseline A1 for sessions 1, 2, and 3), five sessions during the intervention (baseline B1 for sessions 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8), and three sessions after the intervention (baseline A2 for sessions 9, 10, and 11).

Graphs 1, 3, and 7 illustrate social skills encompassing several dimensions such as relationships with others, academic skills, and emotional regulation. Graphs 2, 4, 5, 6, and 8 depict the emotional skills of the two autistic students, including self-management, compliance skills, expression of opinions, emotional expression, and emotional knowledge. The researcher observed how the students followed rules, engaged with the material, interacted with peers, responded to instructor instructions, and developed reasoning to acquire appropriate knowledge. The graphs demonstrate changes in the social and emotional skills of MR and AL before, during, and after the intervention as follows:





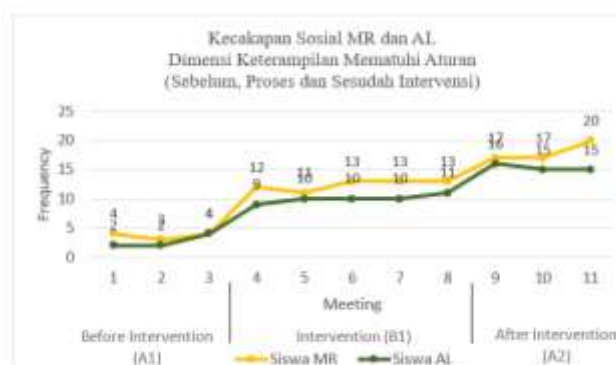
**Graphic 1.** Social Skills Dimension: Relating to Others



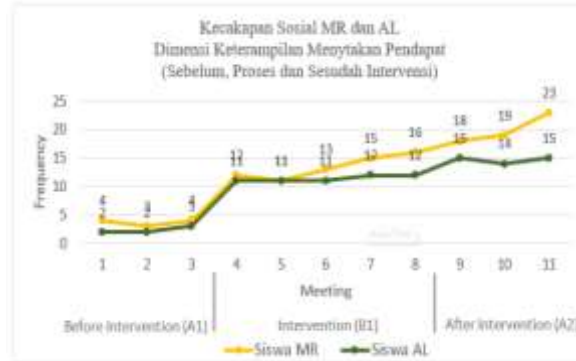
**Graphic 2.** MR Social Skills: Skills Dimension



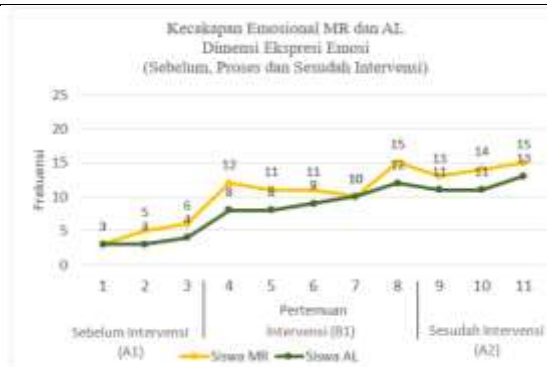
**Graphic 3.** Social Skills of MR and AL: Academic Skills Dimension



**Graphic 4.** Development of Social Skills of MR and AL: Dimension of Rule Compliance Skills



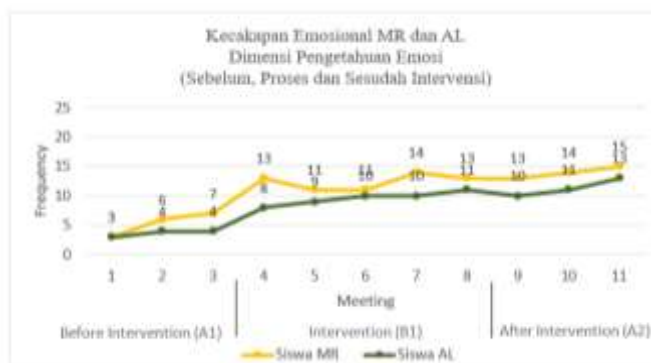
**Graphic 5.** Development of Social Skills of MR and AL: Dimension of Assertion Skills



**Graphic 6.** Development of Emotional Skills of MR and AL: Dimension of Emotional Expression



**Graphic 7.** Development of Emotional Skills of MR and AL: Dimension of Emotion Regulation



**Graphic 8.** Development of Emotional Skills of MR and AL: Dimension of Emotional Knowledge

Based on the graphs above, the therapeutic art model through finger painting learning is effective in improving the social-emotional skills of the two research subjects. This is evident from the overall graphs presented, which show increases across all dimensions in both social skills and emotional skills. These changes are reflected in the observed score differences before, during, and after the intervention. The increase in scores from the pre-intervention to the intervention phase indicates that the use of the therapeutic art model through finger painting empirically enhances the social-emotional skills of autistic students. Furthermore, the increased scores observed before and after the intervention demonstrate that the social and emotional skills achieved by the autistic students have become consistent behaviours as a result of implementing the therapeutic art model through finger painting learning. This means that the social and emotional skills of autistic students, as a positive impact of implementing the therapeutic art model through finger painting learning, have shown considerable improvement. However, ongoing (sustainable) intervention is still necessary to ensure that the enhancement of social and emotional skills in autistic students reaches a level of permanence (product permanence).

Since observations were made before, during, and after the intervention, differences in social-emotional skills were noted in both research subjects. Although variations in social-emotional skills existed, both subjects demonstrated an increase in scores across the pre-intervention, intervention, and post-intervention phases. This indicates that the therapeutic art model through finger painting learning is effective in enhancing social-emotional skills. The differences in social-emotional skill scores for both subjects consistently appeared in observations conducted before, during, and after the intervention.

From the single-subject research analysis on both research subjects, we observe an increase in MR's social skills across several dimensions. In the dimension of interpersonal skills, the score increased from 41% before the intervention to 80.66% after the intervention. For self-management skills, the average frequency rose from 3.33 pre-intervention to 19.33 post-intervention. In the academic skills dimension, the score improved from 43% before intervention to 80.66% after intervention. Regarding rule compliance skills, the average frequency increased from 3.66 before intervention to 18 after intervention. Lastly, in the dimension of expressing opinions, the average frequency increased from 3.66 pre-intervention to 20 post-intervention.

For student AL, the social skills dimensions showed notable improvements after the intervention. In the dimension of interpersonal skills, the score increased from 27.33% before the intervention to 63% after the intervention. For self-management skills, the average frequency rose from 2.33 pre-intervention to 14 post-intervention. Academic skills improved from 27.33% before intervention to 70% after intervention. Regarding rule compliance skills, the average frequency increased from 2.66 before intervention to 15.33 after intervention. Lastly, in the dimension of expressing opinions, the average frequency increased from 2.33 pre-intervention to 14.66 post-intervention. Regarding the emotional skills of student MR, the dimension of emotional expression showed an increase in average frequency from 4.66 before intervention to 14 after intervention. Emotional regulation improved from 33% pre-intervention to 80.66% post-intervention. For emotional knowledge, the average frequency rose from 5.33 before intervention to 14 after intervention.

For student AL, the emotional skills dimensions also showed significant improvements after the intervention. The average frequency for emotional expression increased from 3.33 before the intervention to 11.66 after the intervention. Emotional regulation improved from 21% pre-intervention to 67.33% post-intervention. For emotional knowledge, the average frequency rose from 3.66 before intervention to 11.33 after intervention. These increases in scores before and after the intervention indicate that the therapeutic art model through finger painting learning is effective in developing the social and emotional skills of autistic students. This represents the research output: a conceptual therapeutic art model designed to intervene and enhance the social and emotional competencies of autistic students.

In addition to its strengths, this model has certain limitations, including restrictions in the research subjects, the target behaviors observed, and the research setting, which was conducted in a single special junior high school (SMPLB). The conclusions of this study cannot be generalized due to the limited research subjects, who were exclusively students with mild autism, each possessing unique individual characteristics. Therefore, the effectiveness analysis of this model was conducted using a single-subject design, and its conclusions apply only to the specific subjects studied.

According to the developmental age period by Lowenfeld and Brittain (1975), both MR and AL demonstrated progress within their respective age periods. Prior to the intervention, MR's paintings were categorized within the early realism stage, typical for ages 9-12. After the intervention, MR's artworks advanced to the pseudo-naturalism stage, characteristic of ages 12-14 (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1975). This stage reflects growth in abstract thinking and social awareness, where MR showed enhanced ability to observe objects in greater detail, increased attention, and a developing critical perspective toward his own work.

Regarding AL, his paintings before the intervention were categorized within the pre-schematic stage, typical for ages 4-7, according to Lowenfeld and Brittain (1975). After the intervention, AL's artworks progressed to the schematic stage, characteristic of ages 7-9, where the concept of form becomes clearer, children tend to repeat shapes, and spatial awareness begins to emerge.

The implementation of the therapeutic art model through finger painting learning can enhance social and emotional skills in both research subjects. This is evident from the Single Subject Research (SSR) analysis and the students' finger painting artworks. Children with autism spectrum disorder can alleviate their stress and boost self-confidence through engaging in art activities or simply exploring art materials (Lacour, 2018). However, there is a consistent difference in abilities between the two research subjects across all dimensions of social and emotional skills, with subject MR demonstrating higher social and emotional competencies than AL. This difference is attributed to the unique characteristics and individual differences of each autistic student. Ongoing intervention is still necessary, particularly by using a broader range of thematic stimuli, to ensure that improvements in the social and emotional skills of autistic students become permanent (Pamelia, 2015).

The therapeutic art model through finger painting learning is effective in enhancing social and emotional skills in both research subjects. This achievement is partly attributed to the role of the teacher in implementing the intervention, as evidenced by the Single Subject Research (SSR) analysis and the students' finger-

painting artworks. However, there remains a consistent difference in abilities between the two subjects across all dimensions of social and emotional skills, with subject MR demonstrating higher competencies than subject AL. This disparity is due to the unique characteristics and individual differences of each autistic student. Moreover, the implementation of the therapeutic art model through finger painting in this study was conducted solely by the researcher and did not involve teachers as collaborative partners at SLBN Purwakarta. Consequently, some limitations and shortcomings remain.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The use of the therapeutic art model in finger painting learning is effective in enhancing the social and emotional skills of autistic students. In this study, both research subjects demonstrated improvements in social and emotional competencies, as evidenced by increased scores before and after the intervention. From an artistic learning experience perspective, the elements of art were embodied in the themes "My School," "My Family (Me)," and "My Favorite Animal." The students' finger painting artworks showed a one-stage advancement in their developmental age periods. During the finger painting process, neither student exhibited tantrums, and AL showed a reduction in flapping behaviors throughout the learning sessions. Both autistic students maintained a sufficient level of focus while painting; however, AL's concentration was more limited compared to MR, who was able to concentrate longer and was more diligent in painting. Both students also demonstrated improvements in communication skills, both verbal and nonverbal.

This success was facilitated by the teacher's ability to integrate Social Emotional Learning (SEL) into social-emotional instruction within the classroom. This was achieved through a conducive environment, strong relationships, explicit instruction, thoughtful modeling, opportunities for practice, and teachable moments.

The therapeutic art model in finger painting learning has a positive impact on the behavior of autistic students. Art, particularly finger painting, serves as a facilitator in building relationships with peers for autistic students and inherently enhances sensory and motor skills through the use of their fingers. Learning to cooperate, appreciate differences, and develop other social skills can be practiced in a fun and natural environment.

This study recommends that the therapeutic art model be implemented regularly using a variety of art materials and themes to provide a greater impact on the behavior of autistic students. It is also recommended to involve teachers in collaborative efforts at Special Needs Schools.

## 6. REFERENCES

- Edi, S. (2022). *MODUL AJAR. Perencanaan Pembelajaran (Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar)*. Erlangga.
- Fajarini, A., Soetjipto, B.E., & Hanurawan, F. (2016). Developing a social studies module by using problem based learning (PBL) with scaffolding for the seventh grade students in a junior high school in Malang, Indonesia. *IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 6(1).
- Fitriani, E. (2015). Korelasi tingkat pendidikan formal orang tua dengan prestasi belajar bidang studi Akidah Akhlak di MA Matholi'ul Huda Pucakwangi Pati tahun pelajaran 2015. *Eprints.Walisongo.Ac.Id*.
- Gazali, R. Y. (2016). Pengembangan bahan ajar matematika untuk siswa SMP berdasarkan teori belajar ausubel. *PYTHAGORAS: Jurnal Pendidikan Matematika*, 11(2). <https://doi.org/10.21831/pg.v11i2.10644>
- Handaini, M., & Zulfah, Z. (2021). Penerapan e-Learning melalui Media Schoology untuk Meningkatkan Motivasi Belajar Siswa SMP Negeri 3 Tapung. *Mathema: Jurnal Pendidikan Matematika*, 3(1), 16. <https://doi.org/10.33365/jm.v3i1.993>
- Iryanti, V. E. . & J. M. (2001). IryaMempertimbangkan Konsep Pendidikan Seni (Considering the Concept of Art Education). . *Harmonia: Journal of Arts Research and Education*, .
- Malalina, M., & Kesumawati, N. (2014). Pengembangan Bahan Ajar Interaktif Berbasis Komputer Pokok Bahasan Lingkaran Untuk Kelas Viii Sekolah Menengah Pertama. *Jurnal Pendidikan Matematika*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.22342/jpm.8.1.1861.55-70>
- Marselina, V., & Muhtadi, A. (2019). Pengembangan Buku Digital Interaktif Matematika Pada Materi Geometri. *Jurnal Inovasi Teknologi Pendidikan*, 6(2), 196–207.
- Mudlofir, A. (2011). Aplikasi pengembangan KTSP dan bahan ajar dalam pendidikan agama Islam. Jakarta: In *PT Raja Grafindo Persada*. PT Rajagrafindo Persada.
- Nasution. (2011). *berbagai pendekatan dalam proses belajar dan mengajar*. Universitas Negeri Malang.
- Oki Witasari. (2022). *Implementasi metode, media, dan penilaian pembelajaran mata pelajaran pendidikan agama islam dan budi pekerti berbasis blended learning di sd negeri mengganti banyumas*.
- Padmini, K. H. ., & Atika, B. P. (2016). Teknologi Pendidikan Sebagai Pembelajaran Kompetitif Untuk Meningkatkan Prestasi Siswa: Studi Kasus Di Salah Satu SMA Di Salatiga. . *Prociding Ilmu Pendidikan*.
- Sadjiati, I., M. (2017). Berbagai Pendekatan dalam Proses Belajar dan Mengajar. *Pendidikan*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004>
- Saniati, E. N. (2021). *PEMBELAJARAN TARI DODOGERAN MELALUI APLIKASI MULTIMEDIA INTERAKTIF BERBASIS ANDROID UNTUK PEMAHAMAN MULTIKULTUR SISWA DI SMAN 2 CIKARANG SELATAN*.
- Saswulan, F., Hadi, K., & Syamsu, F. D. (2020). Pengembangan Buku Digital Interaktif (BUDIN) pada Materi Struktur dan Fungsi Sel Terhadap Pemahaman Konsep Siswa Kelas XI SMA Negeri 2 Meulaboh. *Jurnal Genta Mulia*, 11(2), 77–84. <https://www.ejournal.stkipbbm.ac.id/index.php/gm/article/view/451/399>
- Wulandari, S., Wijaya, O. D., Laksono, I. T., & ... (2020). Penggunaan Media Pembelajaran Berbasis Teknologi Pada Guru Seni Budaya MTs Se-Kota Malang. ... (*Jurnal Pendidikan Dan ...*, 5(1), 82–95. <http://jurnal.untirta.ac.id/index.php/JPKS/article/view/7640>