

# Investigating the Effect of Engagement in Artistic Activities on Mental Health Considering the Mediating Role of Self-Acceptance

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## ABSTRACT

Mental health is a critical issue whose positive presence can significantly influence the well-being of society as a whole and contribute to the reduction of numerous social adversities, crimes, and societal problems. Therefore, this issue should be seriously considered, and the factors affecting it should be thoroughly examined. In the present study, based on the assumption that engagement in artistic activities can improve mental health, a model grounded in structural equation modeling was designed to investigate the effect of artistic activities on individuals' mental health through the mediating role of self-acceptance. Data were collected using a statistical sample of individuals active in the field of art in Tehran through the Goldberg Mental Health Questionnaire, the Unconditional Self-Acceptance Questionnaire, and a researcher-developed questionnaire based on engagement in artistic activities. The findings indicate that engagement in artistic activities, specifically in terms of frequency per week, duration of involvement in artistic activities, level of artistic ability, and diversity of artistic activities, can enhance mental health. In other words, higher levels of these variables are associated with better mental health outcomes. Furthermore, the mediating role of self-acceptance in the proposed model was confirmed, indicating that self-acceptance can be influenced by the four variables related to artistic activities and, in turn, affect mental health.

**Keywords:** Mental health, artistic activities, self-acceptance.

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## Introduction

Mental health is one of the fundamental dimensions of human well-being and plays a critical role in the stability, productivity, and social functioning of individuals within society. Contemporary psychological perspectives consider mental health not merely as the absence of psychological disorders, but as a dynamic state involving emotional balance, psychological resilience, adaptive functioning, social compatibility, and life satisfaction (1). The growing prevalence of psychological distress, anxiety disorders, depression, emotional instability, and social isolation in modern societies has increased scholarly attention toward identifying protective psychological factors and effective interventions that can strengthen mental health and improve overall quality of life (2). Mental health has substantial implications not only for individual functioning but also for educational achievement, occupational productivity, interpersonal relationships, and social cohesion. Research has consistently shown that psychological well-being influences behavioral

adjustment, emotional regulation, and adaptive coping strategies in different populations (3). Consequently, understanding the factors that contribute to mental health enhancement has become a major priority in psychological and social sciences research.

Among the various factors influencing mental health, engagement in artistic activities has increasingly attracted the attention of researchers and clinicians. Artistic activities such as painting, music, photography, theater, cinema, creative writing, and other forms of artistic expression are considered important mechanisms for emotional expression, cognitive processing, identity formation, and stress reduction (4). Art provides individuals with opportunities to externalize emotions, process internal conflicts, and communicate experiences that may be difficult to express verbally. In recent years, art-based interventions and creative therapeutic approaches have demonstrated significant effectiveness in reducing psychological symptoms and promoting emotional well-being (5). The growing integration of art therapy into psychological treatment frameworks reflects the recognition that artistic engagement can facilitate emotional healing, self-awareness, and psychological growth. Studies have shown that participation in artistic activities contributes to reduced stress, enhanced emotional regulation, improved self-esteem, and greater social connectedness (6).

The relationship between art and psychological well-being has been examined across different populations and contexts. Kashaka emphasized that artistic engagement allows individuals to experience emotional release and cognitive restructuring, thereby promoting mental stability and resilience (4). Similarly, Nyambura reported that the arts positively influence mental health by fostering emotional expression, social participation, and psychological satisfaction (6). Kumar and colleagues highlighted that creative pursuits contribute substantially to psychological well-being by reducing anxiety, enhancing emotional flexibility, and increasing subjective happiness (7). Furthermore, Esmaeili Farsi argued that artistic activities can function as preventive psychological strategies by improving emotional adjustment and reducing mental health vulnerabilities (8). In educational environments, artistic participation has also been associated with improved emotional functioning among students and enhanced school mental health outcomes (9). These findings collectively indicate that artistic engagement can serve as a protective factor against psychological distress and contribute positively to mental health promotion.

The effectiveness of art-based interventions has also been documented within clinical and therapeutic settings. Çataldaş and colleagues demonstrated that art therapy significantly improved quality of life and social functioning among individuals with schizophrenia, suggesting that artistic engagement may strengthen adaptive psychological functioning in vulnerable populations (10). Likewise, Zhang and colleagues conducted a meta-analysis showing that art therapy interventions significantly enhanced the mental health of clinical nurses by reducing emotional exhaustion and improving psychological resilience (11). Mohagheghian and Sajadian further reported that acceptance and commitment-based art therapy effectively reduced psychological symptoms among lower secondary female students, emphasizing the integrative role of art in cognitive-emotional interventions (12). These studies suggest that artistic engagement is not merely recreational in nature but may constitute a meaningful psychological mechanism capable of influencing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions of mental health.

One of the important psychological variables associated with mental health is self-acceptance. Self-acceptance refers to an individual's ability to recognize and accept personal characteristics, emotions,

strengths, and weaknesses without excessive self-criticism or conditional evaluation (13). It involves developing a balanced and compassionate perception of oneself and has been identified as a central component of psychological well-being. Individuals with high levels of self-acceptance generally demonstrate greater emotional stability, higher resilience, lower psychological distress, and improved interpersonal functioning (14). In contrast, low self-acceptance is often associated with self-rejection, negative self-evaluation, depression, anxiety, and emotional vulnerability. Contemporary humanistic and positive psychology theories emphasize self-acceptance as a prerequisite for psychological growth and authentic self-development (13).

Recent empirical studies have confirmed the significant role of self-acceptance in psychological well-being and mental health outcomes. Cordaro and colleagues argued that self-acceptance contributes to contentment and long-term well-being beyond temporary happiness by facilitating emotional balance and internal peace (14). Similarly, Li and colleagues demonstrated that self-acceptance mediated the relationship between loneliness and subjective well-being among older adults, suggesting that self-acceptance functions as an important psychological protective factor (15). Yao and colleagues found that self-acceptance moderated the relationship between depressive tendencies and self-rated health among university students during the COVID-19 pandemic, indicating its critical role in psychological adaptation during stressful circumstances (16). Moreover, Mazousaz and colleagues reported that self-acceptance mediated the relationship between basic psychological needs and psychological well-being, highlighting its importance within motivational and emotional processes (17). These findings collectively demonstrate that self-acceptance is strongly associated with mental health and may serve as a mediating psychological mechanism through which various experiences influence psychological outcomes.

The development of self-acceptance has also been associated with therapeutic and educational interventions aimed at strengthening emotional functioning. Hidayat demonstrated that Butterfly Hug Therapy significantly enhanced self-acceptance among female high school students by improving emotional regulation and reducing self-critical tendencies (18). Arab Baferani and colleagues further reported that both emotion-focused therapy and hope therapy significantly improved self-acceptance among patients with migraine, suggesting that emotional interventions can strengthen adaptive self-perception (19). Moradpour Sheikhkanlou and Karami proposed that self-acceptance mediates the relationship between maladaptive schemas and meaning in life, indicating that self-acceptance may facilitate positive identity formation and psychological coherence (20). These findings suggest that self-acceptance is not a static trait but rather a dynamic psychological construct that can be strengthened through emotional experiences, cognitive processes, and therapeutic interventions.

Although previous research has independently examined the effects of artistic engagement on mental health and the role of self-acceptance in psychological well-being, limited studies have investigated the integrated relationship among these variables within a unified structural framework. Existing evidence suggests that artistic activities may improve emotional expression, increase self-awareness, strengthen identity formation, and foster positive self-perceptions, all of which may contribute to higher levels of self-acceptance (7). Individuals who participate in artistic activities often experience opportunities for creativity, mastery, emotional release, and social recognition, which may positively influence how they perceive and accept themselves. In turn, increased self-acceptance may enhance psychological adjustment and mental

health outcomes. Therefore, it is theoretically plausible that self-acceptance mediates the relationship between artistic engagement and mental health.

The relevance of investigating these relationships has become increasingly important within contemporary societies characterized by rapid technological changes, social pressures, emotional stress, and psychological instability. Modern lifestyles, excessive digital engagement, and social comparison processes have been associated with reduced psychological well-being and increased emotional vulnerability (21). Furthermore, technological environments and self-regulated learning contexts may influence acceptance processes and psychological functioning through their impact on emotional and cognitive adaptation (22). Consequently, identifying non-pharmacological and psychologically enriching activities such as artistic engagement may provide valuable strategies for enhancing mental health and strengthening adaptive psychological resources. Artistic activities represent accessible, culturally adaptable, and emotionally expressive experiences that may promote psychological resilience and emotional well-being in diverse populations.

Moreover, mental health interventions emphasizing emotional awareness, self-expression, and self-compassion are increasingly recognized as effective approaches for psychological improvement. Mindfulness-based interventions, for example, have demonstrated significant positive effects on mental health and quality of life among women at risk of divorce (23). Similarly, psychological interventions aimed at satisfying basic psychological needs have been associated with greater well-being and emotional adjustment (21). These findings suggest that psychological constructs associated with emotional awareness and self-related perceptions may play essential roles in psychological functioning. Because artistic engagement often involves emotional reflection and self-expression, it may facilitate similar psychological mechanisms and contribute to improved mental health through enhanced self-acceptance.

Despite the increasing attention given to art and mental health in recent literature, several gaps remain within the existing body of knowledge. First, many previous studies have focused primarily on clinical art therapy interventions rather than naturally occurring artistic engagement in everyday life. Second, limited research has quantitatively examined different dimensions of artistic participation, including frequency of artistic activities, duration of artistic engagement, diversity of artistic experiences, and level of artistic ability. Third, the mediating role of self-acceptance within the relationship between artistic activities and mental health has not been sufficiently investigated through structural equation modeling approaches. Addressing these gaps may contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological mechanisms through which artistic engagement influences mental health outcomes.

Therefore, the present study aimed to investigate the effect of engagement in artistic activities on mental health with consideration of the mediating role of self-acceptance among individuals involved in artistic activities in Tehran.

## **Methods and Materials**

### *Study Design and Participants*

The present study was applied in terms of purpose and descriptive-analytical in terms of data collection. The research employed a quantitative approach and, from the perspective of data analysis, was correlational in nature. The study sought to investigate the quantitative effect of engagement in artistic activities on

mental health through the mediating role of self-acceptance. The statistical population consisted of all individuals in Tehran who were engaged in artistic activities such as painting, music, theater, cinema, photography, and similar artistic fields, either professionally or amateurlly, over periods ranging from several months to several years. Given the unlimited size of the population, the Morgan table was used to determine the sample size, resulting in a sample of 384 participants. The participants were selected using a cluster random sampling method. Sampling was conducted from different regions of Tehran rather than from a single concentrated area in order to ensure that all members of the population had an equal probability of being selected for participation in the study.

### *Data Collection*

Data collection was carried out using three questionnaires. The first instrument was a researcher-developed questionnaire designed to assess the quantity and quality of engagement in artistic activities. This questionnaire included items related to the frequency of artistic activities per week, duration of engagement in artistic activities, diversity of artistic activities, and the individual's level of ability in performing artistic activities. The questionnaire specifically examined the number of hours spent on artistic activities each week, the number of years or months participants had been involved in artistic activities, the number of artistic fields in which participants were active, and participants' self-reported level of artistic ability. To evaluate the validity of the researcher-developed questionnaire, factor loading analysis was employed, while reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

The second instrument was the Unconditional Self-Acceptance Questionnaire developed by Chamberlain and Haaga in 2001. This questionnaire consists of 20 items and includes two subscales: unconditional self-acceptance and conditional self-acceptance. The instrument is designed to assess the extent to which individuals accept themselves regardless of external achievements, failures, or evaluations. Previous studies have confirmed the validity and reliability of this questionnaire across different populations.

The third instrument was the Goldberg General Health Questionnaire (GHQ). Although the original version of the questionnaire contains 60 items, shortened forms with 30, 28, and 12 items have been widely used in previous studies. Researchers such as Mari and Williams (1985) and Shamsunder et al. (1986) reported that the different forms of the General Health Questionnaire possess high validity and reliability, and that the reliability of the 12-item form is approximately comparable to that of the original 60-item form. In the present study, the 28-item version of the questionnaire was utilized. This version includes four subscales, each consisting of seven items. Items 1–7 assess somatic symptoms and general health status, items 8–14 measure anxiety symptoms, items 15–21 evaluate social dysfunction, and items 22–28 assess depressive symptoms. All items of the General Health Questionnaire are scored using a four-point Likert scale. The validity and reliability of this instrument have been confirmed in numerous previous studies.

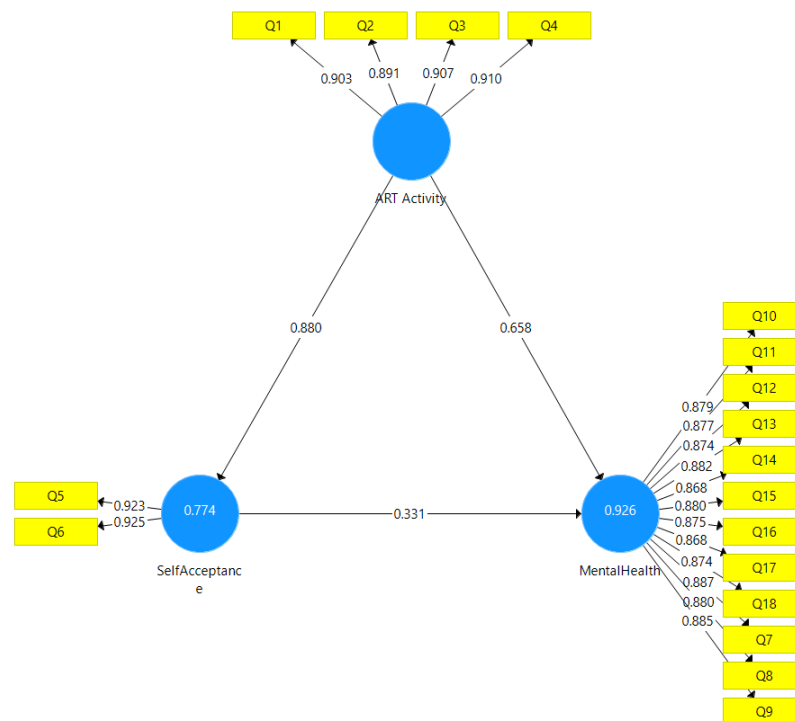
### *Data Analysis*

After distributing and collecting the questionnaires, the relationships between the quantity and quality of engagement in artistic activities, mental health, and self-acceptance were examined. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to analyze the proposed relationships among the variables. In the conceptual model of the study, engagement in artistic activities was considered the independent variable, self-

acceptance was considered the mediating variable, and mental health was regarded as the dependent variable. The conceptual framework of the study was designed based on these relationships. The hypotheses of the study examined the effects of frequency of artistic activities, duration of artistic engagement, diversity of artistic activities, and level of artistic ability on both self-acceptance and mental health, as well as the effect of self-acceptance on mental health. Within the structural equation modeling framework, relationships between latent variables were considered significant when the significance level was less than 0.05 at the 95% confidence level. Furthermore, factor analysis was conducted to examine the construct validity of the questionnaire items and to determine whether significant relationships existed between the observed variables and the latent constructs.

### Findings and Results

The conceptual model was implemented and analyzed as a structural equation model using the SmartPLS software. The structural model included the latent variables of engagement in artistic activities, self-acceptance, and mental health, along with the observed variables associated with each construct. The model illustrated the relationships among the latent variables as well as the relationships between latent and observed variables together with their path coefficients.



**Figure 1. Structural Equation Model of the Present Study**

As illustrated in the structural model, the relationships between the latent constructs and their corresponding indicators were associated with high path coefficients, indicating strong relationships among the study variables. The findings of the path analysis demonstrated that engagement in artistic activities had a substantial direct effect on mental health ( $\beta = 0.658$ ) and self-acceptance ( $\beta = 0.880$ ), while self-acceptance also had a direct positive effect on mental health ( $\beta = 0.331$ ). Furthermore, the total effects analysis indicated that engagement in artistic activities exerted a very strong overall effect on mental health

( $\beta = 0.949$ ) and self-acceptance ( $\beta = 0.880$ ). These findings suggest that higher levels of participation in artistic activities are associated with improved mental health outcomes and greater self-acceptance among participants.

**Table 1. Path Coefficients and Total Effects Among the Study Variables**

| Variables                                         | Mental Health | Self-Acceptance |
|---------------------------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Engagement in Artistic Activities (Direct Effect) | 0.658         | 0.880           |
| Self-Acceptance (Direct Effect on Mental Health)  | 0.331         | —               |
| Engagement in Artistic Activities (Total Effect)  | 0.949         | 0.880           |

The factor loading analysis was subsequently conducted in order to examine the construct validity of the questionnaire items. The results indicated that all factor loadings exceeded 0.80, demonstrating a strong relationship between the observed variables and their corresponding latent constructs. Specifically, the factor loadings related to engagement in artistic activities ranged from 0.891 to 0.910, the loadings associated with mental health ranged from 0.868 to 0.887, and the factor loadings related to self-acceptance ranged from 0.923 to 0.925. These findings confirm the high validity of all questionnaire items included in the study.

The analysis of latent variable correlations and covariances also demonstrated strong relationships among the constructs. The correlation coefficient between engagement in artistic activities and mental health was 0.949, while the correlation between engagement in artistic activities and self-acceptance was 0.880. In addition, the correlation between self-acceptance and mental health was 0.910. Similarly, covariance values among the latent variables were all above 0.80, indicating substantial shared variance and strong conceptual relationships among the constructs included in the model.

**Table 2. Factor Loadings, Correlations, and Covariances of Latent Variables**

| Variable/Indicator | Factor Loading |
|--------------------|----------------|
| Q1                 | 0.903          |
| Q2                 | 0.891          |
| Q3                 | 0.907          |
| Q4                 | 0.910          |
| Q5                 | 0.923          |
| Q6                 | 0.925          |
| Q7                 | 0.887          |
| Q8                 | 0.880          |
| Q9                 | 0.885          |
| Q10                | 0.879          |
| Q11                | 0.877          |
| Q12                | 0.874          |
| Q13                | 0.882          |
| Q14                | 0.868          |
| Q15                | 0.880          |
| Q16                | 0.875          |
| Q17                | 0.868          |
| Q18                | 0.874          |

The correlation analysis further showed that engagement in artistic activities had a correlation of 0.949 with mental health and 0.880 with self-acceptance, while self-acceptance demonstrated a correlation coefficient of 0.910 with mental health. The covariance analysis produced similar values, confirming the strong relationships among the latent variables in the structural model.

The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) was examined to evaluate the predictive power of the model. The  $R^2$  value for mental health was 0.926, indicating that approximately 92.6% of the variance in mental health

could be explained by the predictor variables included in the model. Similarly, the  $R^2$  value for self-acceptance was 0.774, suggesting that 77.4% of the variance in self-acceptance was explained by engagement in artistic activities. These findings indicate a high predictive accuracy for the proposed structural model.

The effect size analysis using Cohen’s  $F^2$  criterion demonstrated large effect sizes for the relationships among the variables. Engagement in artistic activities had a large effect on mental health ( $F^2 = 1.323$ ) and self-acceptance ( $F^2 = 3.423$ ), while self-acceptance had a moderate-to-large effect on mental health ( $F^2 = 0.336$ ). According to Cohen’s criteria, values above 0.35 indicate large effect sizes, confirming the substantial influence of artistic activities on both self-acceptance and mental health.

**Table 3. Coefficient of Determination ( $R^2$ ), Effect Size ( $F^2$ ), and Reliability Indices**

| Variable                          | $R^2$ | Adjusted $R^2$ | Cronbach’s Alpha | rho_A | Composite Reliability | AVE   |
|-----------------------------------|-------|----------------|------------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|
| Mental Health                     | 0.926 | 0.926          | 0.973            | 0.973 | 0.976                 | 0.770 |
| Self-Acceptance                   | 0.774 | 0.773          | 0.829            | 0.829 | 0.921                 | 0.854 |
| Engagement in Artistic Activities | —     | —              | 0.924            | 0.925 | 0.946                 | 0.815 |

The reliability analysis confirmed the internal consistency and stability of the study variables. Cronbach’s alpha coefficients ranged from 0.829 to 0.973, composite reliability values ranged from 0.921 to 0.976, and average variance extracted (AVE) values ranged from 0.770 to 0.854. Since all reliability indices exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.70, the reliability of the research instruments was confirmed. These findings demonstrate a high degree of consistency among participants’ responses and indicate that the questionnaires possessed strong psychometric properties.

To evaluate the overall performance of the structural model, goodness-of-fit indices were assessed. The SRMR value for both the saturated and estimated models was 0.029, which is below the acceptable threshold of 0.08, indicating a satisfactory model fit. Furthermore, the Normed Fit Index (NFI) was 0.916, suggesting a strong fit between the conceptual model and the observed data.

**Table 4. Goodness-of-Fit Indices and Hypothesis Testing Results**

| Index/Hypothesis                                   | Value/Significance Level | Result         |
|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| SRMR                                               | 0.029                    | Acceptable Fit |
| d_ULS                                              | 0.146                    | Acceptable Fit |
| d_G                                                | 0.343                    | Acceptable Fit |
| $\chi^2$                                           | 703.167                  | —              |
| NFI                                                | 0.916                    | Acceptable Fit |
| Frequency of artistic activities → Self-acceptance | $p = 0.001$              | Confirmed      |
| Duration of artistic activities → Self-acceptance  | $p = 0.000$              | Confirmed      |
| Diversity of artistic activities → Self-acceptance | $p = 0.002$              | Confirmed      |
| Artistic ability level → Self-acceptance           | $p = 0.001$              | Confirmed      |
| Frequency of artistic activities → Mental health   | $p = 0.000$              | Confirmed      |
| Duration of artistic activities → Mental health    | $p = 0.000$              | Confirmed      |
| Diversity of artistic activities → Mental health   | $p = 0.001$              | Confirmed      |
| Artistic ability level → Mental health             | $p = 0.000$              | Confirmed      |
| Self-acceptance → Mental health                    | $p = 0.000$              | Confirmed      |

Based on the obtained results, all research hypotheses were confirmed. The findings demonstrated that frequency of artistic activities, duration of artistic engagement, diversity of artistic activities, and level of artistic ability significantly influenced both self-acceptance and mental health. In addition, self-acceptance significantly affected mental health. These findings support the proposed mediating role of self-acceptance in the relationship between engagement in artistic activities and mental health outcomes.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to investigate the effect of engagement in artistic activities on mental health with consideration of the mediating role of self-acceptance among individuals involved in artistic activities in Tehran. The findings demonstrated that engagement in artistic activities had a significant positive effect on both mental health and self-acceptance. In addition, self-acceptance significantly influenced mental health and played a mediating role in the relationship between artistic engagement and psychological well-being. The results further indicated that different dimensions of artistic participation, including frequency of artistic activities, duration of engagement, diversity of artistic experiences, and level of artistic ability, all contributed significantly to mental health outcomes. Overall, the structural model demonstrated strong explanatory and predictive power, suggesting that artistic engagement represents an important psychological and behavioral factor associated with mental health improvement.

One of the major findings of the present study was that engagement in artistic activities significantly improved mental health. This finding is consistent with previous studies emphasizing the psychological benefits of artistic participation and creative engagement. Kashaka argued that artistic activities facilitate emotional expression, reduce internal psychological pressure, and contribute to emotional balance and resilience (4). Similarly, Nyambura reported that engagement in artistic experiences enhances psychological well-being through emotional release, social interaction, and identity development (6). The findings of the present study also align with Kumar and colleagues, who found that creative pursuits improve mental health by reducing anxiety, promoting emotional flexibility, and enhancing subjective well-being (7). Artistic activities appear to provide individuals with opportunities for emotional regulation and psychological discharge, enabling them to cope more effectively with stressors and emotional challenges.

The positive relationship between artistic engagement and mental health can also be explained through the cognitive-emotional functions of art. Artistic activities often require concentration, imagination, symbolic thinking, and emotional processing. These processes may distract individuals from psychological distress while simultaneously helping them process complex emotions in adaptive ways. Esmaeili Farsi suggested that artistic engagement contributes to mental health by strengthening emotional awareness and reducing emotional suppression (8). Likewise, Doosti Moghadam emphasized that participation in artistic activities within educational settings improves students' emotional functioning and psychological adjustment (9). The current findings support these interpretations and suggest that artistic engagement functions not only as recreational behavior but also as a psychologically meaningful activity capable of enhancing emotional well-being.

Another important finding of the study was that self-acceptance significantly mediated the relationship between artistic activities and mental health. This finding indicates that artistic engagement may improve mental health partly by increasing individuals' acceptance of themselves. The mediating role of self-acceptance is theoretically important because it highlights the psychological mechanisms underlying the effects of artistic participation. Individuals involved in artistic activities may experience greater self-expression, authenticity, and personal validation, which can foster more positive self-perceptions and greater acceptance of personal strengths and weaknesses. These experiences may subsequently improve emotional functioning and reduce psychological distress.

The mediating role of self-acceptance observed in the present study is consistent with previous research emphasizing the importance of self-acceptance in psychological well-being. Cordaro and colleagues argued that self-acceptance contributes to enduring forms of well-being by creating emotional contentment and reducing internal self-conflict (14). Similarly, Li and colleagues demonstrated that self-acceptance mediates the relationship between loneliness and subjective well-being, indicating that individuals who accept themselves more fully are psychologically more resilient (15). Yao and colleagues also found that self-acceptance moderated the relationship between depressive tendencies and perceived health among university students, further supporting the protective role of self-acceptance in psychological functioning (16). The present findings extend these results by demonstrating that self-acceptance may also mediate the effects of artistic engagement on mental health.

The significant effect of artistic activities on self-acceptance observed in this study may be explained by the self-expressive nature of artistic experiences. Artistic engagement often allows individuals to externalize emotions, communicate personal experiences, and construct meaningful representations of the self. Through these processes, individuals may develop a stronger sense of identity and self-worth, resulting in greater self-acceptance. Henschke conceptualized self-love and self-acceptance as adaptive forms of self-related awareness involving compassion toward oneself and recognition of personal value (13). Artistic activities may facilitate these processes by allowing individuals to engage in reflective and emotionally meaningful experiences. Moreover, artistic accomplishment and skill development may increase feelings of competence and self-efficacy, thereby contributing to more positive self-evaluations.

The findings related to the dimensions of artistic engagement are also noteworthy. The results demonstrated that frequency of artistic activities, duration of artistic engagement, diversity of artistic experiences, and level of artistic ability all significantly influenced self-acceptance and mental health. This finding suggests that the psychological benefits of artistic engagement are strengthened when artistic participation becomes more sustained, diverse, and personally meaningful. Individuals who spend more time engaging in artistic activities may experience greater emotional immersion and psychological involvement, thereby increasing the therapeutic and developmental effects of art. Similarly, participation in multiple artistic domains may provide broader opportunities for self-expression, creativity, and emotional exploration.

The finding regarding the level of artistic ability may indicate that perceptions of competence and mastery contribute to psychological well-being. According to psychological theories of competence and self-determination, individuals experience higher levels of well-being when they perceive themselves as capable and effective in valued activities. Sharifi Fard and colleagues emphasized that satisfaction of basic psychological needs significantly contributes to psychological well-being (21). Artistic competence may satisfy needs related to autonomy, competence, and self-expression, thereby improving mental health outcomes. In addition, artistic achievement may strengthen social identity and increase social validation, which can positively affect emotional functioning and self-acceptance.

The findings of the present study are also consistent with previous research on art therapy and psychologically oriented creative interventions. Çataldaş and colleagues demonstrated that art therapy significantly improved quality of life and social functioning among individuals with schizophrenia (10). Similarly, Zhang and colleagues found that art therapy interventions improved the mental health of clinical

nurses by reducing stress and emotional exhaustion (11). Mohagheghian and Sajadian also reported that acceptance and commitment-based art therapy reduced psychological symptoms among adolescent girls (12). Although the present study examined general artistic engagement rather than formal art therapy interventions, the findings suggest that even non-clinical artistic participation may produce meaningful psychological benefits.

The strong relationship between self-acceptance and mental health observed in this study also supports the broader literature on psychological adjustment and emotional well-being. Mazousaz and colleagues found that self-acceptance mediated the relationship between basic psychological needs and psychological well-being (17). Similarly, Moradpour Sheikhanlou and Karami demonstrated that self-acceptance mediates relationships involving maladaptive schemas and meaning in life (20). These findings suggest that self-acceptance operates as a core psychological mechanism influencing emotional adaptation and mental health. Individuals with higher self-acceptance are likely to experience lower levels of self-criticism, emotional instability, and psychological distress, enabling them to maintain healthier emotional functioning.

Another important implication of the present findings concerns the increasing psychological challenges associated with modern social environments. Contemporary societies are characterized by rapid technological changes, social comparison, emotional isolation, and psychological stress, all of which may negatively affect mental health. Saregar and colleagues highlighted the importance of adaptive acceptance processes in technologically mediated learning and behavioral contexts (22). Likewise, excessive digital involvement and problematic social media engagement have been associated with poorer psychological well-being (21). In this context, artistic activities may function as psychologically restorative experiences that promote emotional authenticity, creativity, and self-reflection. Artistic engagement may therefore serve as an effective counterbalance to emotionally stressful and technologically saturated environments.

The findings may also be interpreted within the framework of positive psychology and humanistic psychology. Artistic activities may enhance positive emotions, facilitate flow experiences, and strengthen meaning in life, all of which contribute to psychological well-being. Furthermore, self-acceptance reflects an essential dimension of humanistic functioning involving unconditional positive regard toward oneself. The relationship between artistic expression and self-acceptance may therefore represent a pathway through which individuals achieve greater psychological integration and emotional authenticity. The present study contributes to this perspective by empirically demonstrating that artistic engagement can influence mental health through self-related psychological mechanisms.

The strong goodness-of-fit indices and high coefficients of determination obtained in the structural model indicate that the proposed model possesses substantial explanatory power. The model explained a large proportion of the variance in both self-acceptance and mental health, suggesting that artistic engagement and self-acceptance together constitute meaningful predictors of psychological well-being. These findings highlight the importance of considering psychological mediators when examining the effects of behavioral and lifestyle variables on mental health outcomes. Rather than influencing mental health directly alone, artistic engagement appears to affect broader emotional and self-related processes that subsequently contribute to psychological adjustment.

Despite the valuable findings of the present study, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study employed a cross-sectional correlational design, which limits the ability to establish causal relationships among the variables. Second, the data were collected through self-report questionnaires, which may be influenced by response bias and subjective interpretation. Third, the study sample consisted only of individuals involved in artistic activities in Tehran, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other cultural or demographic populations. Additionally, the study did not differentiate between specific forms of artistic activities in detail, and it is possible that different artistic domains exert distinct psychological effects. Finally, other potentially influential psychological variables such as personality traits, emotional intelligence, or social support were not included in the proposed model.

Future research should employ longitudinal and experimental designs to examine the causal relationships between artistic engagement, self-acceptance, and mental health more precisely. Researchers may also investigate the differential effects of specific artistic domains such as music, painting, theater, photography, and digital arts on various dimensions of psychological well-being. Furthermore, future studies should examine additional mediating and moderating variables, including emotional regulation, resilience, self-esteem, social connectedness, and personality characteristics. Comparative studies across different age groups, cultures, and clinical populations may also provide a deeper understanding of how artistic engagement influences mental health under diverse psychological and social conditions.

The findings of the present study have important practical implications for mental health promotion and psychological interventions. Educational institutions, counseling centers, and community organizations may incorporate artistic programs and creative activities into mental health promotion strategies. Schools and universities can develop art-based workshops aimed at improving emotional expression and self-acceptance among students. Mental health professionals may also integrate artistic activities into therapeutic and preventive interventions to enhance emotional well-being and psychological resilience. In addition, policymakers and cultural institutions should recognize the psychological value of artistic participation and support greater public access to artistic and creative opportunities as part of broader mental health promotion initiatives.

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## **Authors' Contributions**

All authors equally contributed to this study.

## **Declaration of Interest**

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

## **Ethical Considerations**

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

## Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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