

# The Influence of Arts Participation on Subjective Well-Being, Emotional Regulation as a Mediator

Tianyu Wang, Alexander anak Chelum

Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), Kota Samarahan, Sarawak, Malaysia

**Abstract:** This study examined whether arts participation (AP) predicts subjective well-being (SWB) among Chinese undergraduates and whether emotional regulation (ER) mediates this relationship. A cross-sectional survey of 215 students in Shandong showed that AP significantly predicted SWB both directly and indirectly through ER, confirming partial mediation. Findings suggest that arts engagement enhances well-being partly by improving emotional regulation, highlighting the value of integrating arts modules, creative labs, and emotion-regulation workshops into university programs. Limitations include the cross-sectional design, self-report data, single-province sample, and potential self-selection bias. Future research should use longitudinal or experimental designs, broader samples, and explore additional mediators and moderators.

**Keywords:** arts participation, subjective well-being, emotional regulation

## 1. Introduction

Arts participation involves engaging in artistic activities for enjoyment or creative expression [1]. While research on college students' well-being is growing, few studies have examined how arts participation affects subjective well-being among young adults in China. Previous research on older adults shows mixed results, with some reporting positive effects on happiness and life satisfaction [2] and others finding benefits only from sustained participation [3]. The mediating role of emotional regulation in this context remains underexplored. This study addresses this gap by examining how emotional regulation mediates the relationship between arts participation and subjective well-being among Chinese undergraduates in Shandong Province.

## 2. Literature Review

Arts participation contributes to subjective well-being by supporting self-expression, emotional regulation, and social connection, enhancing life satisfaction. Such creative experiences can also promote flow, strengthen resilience, and improve perceived life quality [4]. Overall, higher levels of arts participation are expected to be positively associated with greater subjective well-being.

Emotional regulation refers to how individuals manage their emotions and influences their psychological well-being by helping them handle negative feelings, sustain positive affect, and remain resilient [5]. In arts participation, emotional regulation can boost well-being, as artistic activities provide opportunities for emotional expression and management [6]. People with stronger emotional regulation may gain deeper emotional benefits from the arts, while those with weaker skills may experience less impact on their well-being. Based on the above rationale, this study proposes the following hypotheses.

H1: Arts participation positively predicts subjective well-being.

H2: Emotional regulation partially mediates the relationship between arts participation and subjective well-being.

## 3. Methodology

This study used a quantitative cross-sectional design with a self-administered online questionnaire to examine arts participation, emotional regulation, social connections, and subjective well-being among university students in Shandong Province. Purposive sampling was applied to target students who had engaged in arts activities within the past 12 months. A total of 215 valid responses were collected through Wenjuanxing (86% response rate). G\*Power analysis ( $f^2 = 0.15$ ,  $\alpha = 0.05$ , power = 0.95) indicated a minimum sample of 129, confirming that the final sample of 215 provided sufficient statistical power.

This study used a 19-item questionnaire, including 6 items on arts participation, 6 on emotional regulation, and 7 on subjective well-being, all measured on a 5-point Likert scale. All scales were pre-tested for linguistic and cultural fit, and a pilot study with 40 students in Shandong confirmed good reliability, with Cronbach's  $\alpha$  values of .859 (AP), .867 (ER), and .840 (SWB), indicating strong internal consistency.

**Table 1. Reliability of Variables**

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	interpretation
AP	0.859	good reliability
ER	0.867	good reliability
SWB	0.840	good reliability

## 4. Data Analysis

The regression analysis in Table 2 showed that arts participation significantly and positively predicts subjective well-being ( $B = .90$ ,  $\beta = .884$ ,  $t = 27.58$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The model explains 78.1% of the variance in subjective well-being (adjusted  $R^2 = .78$ ), indicating a strong relationship. The variance inflation factor ( $VIF = 1.000$ ) suggests no multicollinearity issue, confirming the model's stability. These results support the hypothesis that greater engagement in arts activities is associated with higher subjective well-being among college students.

**Table 2. Regression Analysis of AP & SWB**

Variables	B	SE	Beta	t	p	Adjusted $R^2$	F	VIF
Constant	.31	.105	-	2.965	.003	0.78	760.699	1.000
AP	.9	.033	.884	27.581	<.001			

Note. dependent variable: subjective well-being, Predictors: arts participation

**Table 3. The Mediating Effect of ER on AP & SWB**

Effect Type	Effect	SE	t	p	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
AP → ER	.805	.033	24.355	<.001	0.74	.87
ER → SWB	.447	.061	7.395	<.001	0.328	.566
AP → SWB (Direct effect)	.54	.057	9.52	<.001	0.428	.652
AP → SWB (Indirect effect via ER)	.36	.053	—	—	0.255	.46

Table 3 shows that arts participation (AP) significantly predicted emotional regulation (ER),  $\beta = .805$ ,  $SE = .033$ ,  $t(213) = 24.355$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [.74, .87]. In turn, ER significantly predicted subjective well-being (SWB),  $\beta = .45$ ,  $SE = .06$ ,  $t(213) = 7.40$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [.33, .57]. The direct effect of AP on SWB remained significant,  $\beta = .54$ ,  $SE = .06$ ,  $t(213) = 9.52$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [.43, .65]. The indirect effect via ER was also significant,  $\beta_{\text{indirect}} = .36$ ,  $SE = .05$ , 95% BCa CI [.26, .46], indicating that emotional regulation partially mediates the relationship between arts participation and subjective well-being.

## 5. Discussion

The findings show that arts participation enhances college students' subjective well-being both directly and indirectly through emotional regulation, which partially mediates this relationship [7]. This study provides new evidence from Chinese undergraduates, highlighting the value of arts in promoting enjoyment, emotional resilience, and mental health. Theoretically, it demonstrates emotional regulation as a key mechanism in an underrepresented cultural context. Practically, the results support incorporating arts-based programs into university curricula and wellness initiatives to foster emotional competence and well-being. Future research should examine other mediators, such as social support or self-efficacy, and explore structured arts interventions for sustainable mental health.

## 6. Conclusion

This study examined how arts participation affects college students' subjective well-being, with emotional regulation as a mediator. Results show that arts participation enhances well-being both directly and indirectly by improving emotional regulation. Practically, universities can support student well-being through arts modules, workshops, labs, and accessible exhibitions or performances. Limitations include the cross-sectional design, self-report data, and a single-province sample.

Future research should use longitudinal or experimental designs, broader samples, and examine additional mediators (e.g., self-efficacy, social support) and moderators (e.g., gender, engagement intensity, online vs. offline participation).

## References

---

- [1] Kemp, E. (2015). Engaging consumers in esthetic offerings: conceptualizing and developing a measure for arts engagement. *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 20(2), 137-148. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nvsm.1525>
- [2] Bradfield, E. (2021). Subjective experiences of participatory arts engagement of healthy older people and explorations of creative ageing. *Public health*, 198, 53-58. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.puhe.2021.06.019>
- [3] Tymoszuk, U., Perkins, R., Spiro, N., Williamon, A., & Fancourt, D. (2020). Longitudinal associations between short-term, repeated, and sustained arts engagement and well-being outcomes in older adults. *The Journals of Gerontology: Series B*, 75(7), 1609-1619. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geronb/gbz085>
- [4] Zhang, Y. (2025). Impact of arts activities on psychological well-being: Emotional intelligence as mediator and perceived stress as moderator. *Acta psychologica*, 254, 104865. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2025.104865>
- [5] Su, M., & Adenan, A. (2025). Arts Education and Self-Efficacy: Exploring Its Dual Impact on Students' Academic Performance and Emotional Attitudes. *Uniglobal Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 4(1), 223-229. <https://doi.org/10.53797/ujssh.v4i1.27.2025>
- [6] Perkins, R., Mason-Bertrand, A., Tymoszuk, U., Spiro, N., Gee, K., & Williamon, A. (2021). Arts engagement supports social connectedness in adulthood: findings from the HEartS Survey. *BMC public health*, 21(1), 1208. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-021-11233-6>.
- [7] Jean-Berluce, D. (2024). Creative expression and mental health. *Journal of Creativity*, 34(2), 100083. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.yjoc.2024.100083>

## Author Bio

Wang Tianyu (born 1992), male, Han Chinese, from Jinan, Shandong Province, holds a bachelor's degree. His research focuses on art education and mental health, as well as art management and social innovation.