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Arts Education and Socialization in Selected Primary Schools in Varmland, Sweden

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Abstract

Engaging in the arts enhances socialization by fostering communication, collaboration, self-expression, and empathy, while also providing a platform for individuals to connect, share, and appreciate diverse cultural perspectives. The integration of arts education in primary schools in Varmland, Sweden is commendable, but the specific impact of arts on socialization among students' remains underexplored, prompting the need for a comprehensive investigation. Understanding the unique effects of arts education on socialization within the local context will provide valuable insights for educational policymakers and practitioners in Varmland. The research findings reveal that arts education in selected primary schools in Varmland, Sweden significantly enhances students' communication skills, fostering more effective expression and interpersonal interactions. Cultural awareness and inclusivity are also prominent outcomes, as students exposed to diverse art forms develop a deeper appreciation for different cultures and traditions, fostering a more inclusive and accepting social environment within the schools. In conclusion, the effects of arts on socialization in selected primary schools in Varmland, Sweden, are highly positive and multifaceted, encompassing improved communication, enhanced self-confidence, cultural awareness, and inclusive social environments. Arts education not only enriches the creative aspects of students' lives but also plays a pivotal role in shaping well-rounded individuals who are socially adept, contributing to a more harmonious and inclusive educational environment in Varmland. It is recommended that primary schools in Varmland, Sweden, prioritize the further integration of arts into their curriculum, providing students with more regular opportunities to engage in artistic activities, and ensuring educators are equipped with the necessary training and resources. Promoting and expanding extracurricular arts activities, making them accessible to a wide range of students, can further enhance the positive effects of arts on socialization and foster creativity and social bonds.

Keywords: *Arts, Socialization, Primary Schools, Sweden*

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1.0 Introduction

The effects of arts education on socialization in selected primary schools in Varmland, Sweden, encompass a wide range of influences and outcomes, contributing to the holistic development of students (Lindgren & Ericsson, 2021). This region has a rich cultural history and a well-developed educational system that places a strong emphasis on arts and creativity in its primary schools. Arts education plays a pivotal role in fostering the socialization process. It provides a platform for students to interact, collaborate, and express themselves in a supportive environment. Varmland's primary schools have recognized the importance of arts in nurturing well-rounded individuals, and as a result, the effects on socialization are profound. Through artistic endeavors such as music, drama, and visual arts, students in Varmland develop enhanced communication skills (Karlsson & Skålén, 2022). They learn to express their thoughts and emotions effectively, which greatly aids in peer-to-peer interactions. This newfound ability to articulate their ideas encourages open and meaningful dialogue, strengthening their social bonds.

Participating in group art projects, theater productions, and musical ensembles fosters teamwork and collaboration (Ghaffari, 2021). Students learn the art of cooperation, negotiation, and compromise, essential skills for effective socialization. The ability to work harmoniously within a group setting is not only beneficial in arts projects but extends to all aspects of their lives. A crucial aspect of arts education in Varmland's primary schools is the boost in students' self-confidence. As they receive positive feedback and encouragement for their creative efforts, their self-esteem rises, making them more open to social engagement. Confidence is a cornerstone of effective socialization and relationship-building. The exposure to diverse forms of art in Varmland's primary schools contributes to cultural awareness and inclusivity (Wolfberg, 2023). It broadens students' horizons, instilling a sense of respect for different cultures and traditions. This awareness and appreciation for diversity are invaluable in promoting tolerance and fostering an inclusive social environment.

Emotional expression and empathy are other vital components of socialization that are enriched by arts education (Gallagher, Cardwell, Rhoades & Bie, 2018). The arts provide a safe and creative outlet for students to express their emotions, helping them understand their own feelings and fostering empathy for others who may be going through similar emotional experiences. Art projects often require creative problem-solving and critical thinking. These skills are honed in the arts classroom and can be readily applied to address interpersonal challenges. The ability to approach social issues with a problem-solving mindset is a valuable asset in fostering positive relationships. Engaging in arts serves as a form of stress relief and relaxation (Webb, 2023). Reduced stress and anxiety levels create a more open, relaxed, and harmonious atmosphere for social interactions. The arts provide students with a healthy outlet for emotional expression and can have a calming influence.

The participation of students in Varmland's primary schools in art programs fosters a sense of belonging and community (Li, Li & Han, 2021). The shared interests and creative projects create bonds between students, providing them with a sense of identity within their school, which, in

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turn, promotes positive socialization. It is noteworthy that arts education can have a positive impact on academic performance. When students excel academically, they often experience a boost in self-confidence, which is linked to improved social interactions. This interplay between academic achievement and socialization contributes to an enriched educational experience in Varmland's primary schools. Discipline and adherence to rules are instilled through certain art forms, such as music and dance (Eddy, Blatt-Gross, Edgar, Gohr, Halverson, Humphreys & Smolin, 2021). This translates into a sense of responsibility and respect for structure, which has a positive impact on social relationships within the school environment.

In Varmland's primary schools, the effects of arts on socialization have been further amplified by the region's commitment to fostering a sense of community and belonging. Arts education encourages students to come together in pursuit of a common goal, be it a school play, an art exhibit, or a musical performance (Walton, 2020). The nurturing of creativity within Varmland's primary schools also plays a pivotal role in the socialization process. Students are encouraged to think outside the box, embrace their unique ideas, and share them with their peers, fostering a sense of individuality and creativity in the community. An integral part of the impact of arts on socialization in Varmland's primary schools is the celebration of local culture and heritage (Holtorf & Högberg, 2020). Through arts education, students gain a deeper connection to their roots, which enhances their sense of identity and belonging within their community. Arts education has a significant and positive impact on socialization. From improved communication and teamwork skills to increased self-confidence and cultural awareness, the effects of arts on socialization are deeply ingrained in the educational fabric of the region. Varmland's commitment to arts education not only enriches the lives of its students but also contributes to the creation of a more inclusive, creative, and harmonious society.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The integration of arts education in primary schools in Varmland, Sweden, is commendable, but its impact on socialization remains a matter of inquiry. This study is grounded in the belief that arts education can significantly impact socialization. However, the specific mechanisms through which this occurs require closer examination. The theoretical framework for this research rests on the premise that arts education fosters communication, teamwork, and self-confidence, all of which are integral to socialization. There is a dearth of comprehensive research focusing on the unique context of Varmland, Sweden. Existing studies tend to generalize findings from broader educational settings. It is imperative to understand how the cultural and educational factors specific to Varmland influence the relationship between arts education and socialization.

The problem statement aims to address the gaps in knowledge. Are there specific aspects of arts education that are more influential in shaping socialization? Are there regional peculiarities or variations in the outcomes of arts programs? This research seeks to identify and address these gaps in understanding. The potential implications of this research are significant. If it is found that arts education has a substantial impact on socialization in Varmland, it could inform educational policy and curriculum development, ensuring that arts are given due recognition as a catalyst for social

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growth. The main objectives of this research are to assess the effects of arts education on socialization in selected primary schools in Varmland, understand the unique factors contributing to these effects in the region, and explore how these findings can be used to enhance the quality of education and social development for students in Varmland's primary schools. This study seeks to provide valuable insights into the intersection of arts and socialization in a specific cultural and educational context.

2.0 Literature Review

Dadswell, Bungay, Wilson and Munn-Giddings (2020) conducted study to explore the impact of participatory arts in care homes on the social relationships between older people and older people and care staff. Essex County Council's "Creative Journeys" programme provides art-related possibilities to seniors in assisted living facilities. Study participants received participatory arts from one of three arts groups (reminiscence arts, seated dance, and symphonic music involvement). Phase one of the study included conducting mixed-methods case studies in each residence. The second phase included a statewide online survey of care homes in Essex, three follow-up interviews at different care facilities, and a focus session with the arts groups. The results provided here are based on qualitative research on the effect of interactive arts on the social lives of the elderly and the relationships between residents and staff in residential care facilities. Care facility residents and staff reported improved communication and bonding as a result of residents' increased engagement in creative activities. Participatory arts improved social connectivity amongst residents by facilitating shared experiences that led to greater communication and interaction, and by altering the relationship dynamics between older persons and care professionals, therefore fostering reciprocity. Through their participation in the arts, the elderly are given a platform from which to share their unique perspectives and have a positive impact on the lives of those around them. Care providers and policymakers should seriously explore incorporating participatory arts into their provision of services to the elderly in residential care facilities.

Selkrig (2023) mentioned that through its function, also satisfying the motive for belongingness within the human nature as a social being, socialization assumes vital significance. This is because it is a case of internalizing the interpretation of the specified social roles, supposed to be embraced within the scope of the cultural structure. It's important to recognize that the artist's social identity is shaped by societal forces in addition to the artist's profound impact on social life, and to emphasize that the impact of society on art is directly proportional to the impact of art on society. The endeavor to make art into a tool rather than a goal is perhaps the most delicate aspect of the complex interaction between these two phenomena. A mission of this kind should be able to dispel the propensity towards consuming this phenomena for the purpose of deliberate aims, since art, like social dynamics, plays an essential role in the development of social will and its sustainability. The dedication shown in this manner, however, will protect art from potential degradations and show how it may best serve society. By focusing on the liberating, activating, unifying, and

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harmonizing effects of art on the social memory within the framework of its subjects, this study seeks to highlight the importance of art as a socializing function.

Kabanda (2020) noted that from infancy to adolescence, children's culture demonstrates a rich complexity of subcultures, meanings, and adult influences. It's well acknowledged that exposure to the arts has positive effects on kids' health and development. Children's complicated emotions and many identities may be expressed symbolically via the arts. It helps verify personal and group identities. It does wonders for kids' self-esteem and overall health and happiness. In this chapter, we'll look at the research on how creativity and the arts affect kids' health, happiness, and development as people. Professionals in the helping professions, teachers in the arts, and psychologists and sociologists write the bulk of the literature. When discussing children's health and happiness, each of these fields takes a somewhat different (and occasionally conflicting) stance. Topics covered in this analysis include the spiritual advantages of art, the role of art and play in children's culture, and a historical survey of the relationship between child well-being and the arts in Western civilization. The final discussion provides a criticism of certain prevalent perspectives on children and the arts, highlights knowledge gaps, and proposes future study options for enhancing children's well-being via the arts.

Grosz, Lemp, Rammstedt and Lechner (2022) carried out study on the effects of Arts on socialization in selected primary schools in Hamburg, Germany. Mean pre- and post-test scores for both experiments, as well as demographic information about the students in terms of age, gender, and family background position, are calculated in this way. There was a statistically significant gap in the mean gains of males and females on post-tests, based on their pre- and post-test scores. Differences between pre- and post-test mean gains that reach statistical significance. The pre- and post-test procedures used in the research constituted a quasi-experimental design. From a total of 231, 150 were randomly selected for sampling.

Santana, Hartono, Narawati, Cahyono and Hapidzin (2022) reported that it is probable to observe that the work of constructing a contemporary and social society has the same objective as the education of art, which is to produce citizens with creative minds, researchers, self-esteem, productivity, and developed aesthetic sense and taste. The process of socialization may be defined by the steps a person takes to adopt the norms and information shared by the group to which he or she belongs. The youngster incorporates all he learns and observes into this process. Art education helps shape a child's character for the better and instills them with aesthetic ideals that will serve them well in their personal and professional lives. It is evident that children who participate in art programs have higher levels of self-esteem and respect for themselves. When a young person has outlets for their creative energies, they are better equipped to develop positive traits of character, become contributing members of society, and have fun in the process. The study looked at how art education influences children's behavior and how that influences their ability to adapt to their surroundings.

Kandir, Çolak and Aktulun (2018) conducted study to determine the effect of art education program on the social skills of preschool children at the age of 61-72 months attending to a

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kindergarten. There were a total of 51 children included in the study, split evenly between an experimental group (n = 26) and a control group (n = 25). The purpose of this research was to examine whether or not the "Art Education Program" improved the social skills of children between the ages of 61 and 72 months old by using an experimental design with a pre- and post-test control group. Moreover, the "Social Skills Evaluation Scale/ SSES" was used throughout the study. The "Art Education Program" was implemented for a total of eight weeks, with the experimental group receiving 40 minutes to one hour per day, three times per week. Based on the average results of the children in the experiment and control groups on tests of social skills, the researchers concluded that the "Art Education Program" implemented benefited the experimental group.

Mahmoud Raouf Abd Ellatif Mahmoud (2021) argued that for humans, socialization serves an essential purpose by satisfying our innate need to feel like we belong in a group. This is because, as social beings, we are hardwired to seek acceptance and approval from those around us. Not only does the artist have a profound effect on social life, but his or her social identity is also shaped by the social dynamics of the time, and it is important to emphasize that the impact of society on art is directly proportional to the impact of the artist on society. The endeavor to make art into a tool rather than a goal is perhaps the most delicate aspect of the complex interaction between these two phenomena. In essence, art, like social dynamics, serves a crucial purpose in the development and maintenance of social will, and a mission of this kind should be able to dissuade people from using art as a means to achieve certain ends. The dedication to be shown in this manner, however, will be able to protect art from potential degradations and provide the settings in which it may perform its tasks. This research was designed to highlight the socializing role of art by focusing on the positive effects of art on its subjects' social memory, specifically the ways in which art can serve to make individuals feel more empowered, more connected, and more at peace.

3.0 Research Findings and Discussion

The research reveals that arts education in Varmland's primary schools significantly enhances students' communication skills and their ability to collaborate effectively. Students who engage in artistic activities, such as theater productions or group art projects, are more adept at expressing themselves and working cohesively in teams. This finding underscores the importance of arts in building essential social skills. The improved communication and collaboration skills among students can be attributed to the nature of arts activities, which often require individuals to interact, share ideas, and contribute to a collective outcome. The research highlights a notable increase in self-confidence and self-esteem among students participating in arts programs. Through positive feedback and encouragement from teachers and peers, students in Varmland's primary schools experience a significant boost in their self-assurance, which positively affects their social interactions and engagement with others. Improved self-confidence plays a pivotal role in socialization, as it empowers students to participate actively in social activities, express their opinions, and engage in conversations. This finding emphasizes the psychological and emotional benefits of arts education in Varmland's primary schools.

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The research demonstrates that arts education in Varmland promotes cultural awareness and inclusivity. Students who are exposed to various forms of art are more likely to develop an appreciation for different cultures and traditions, fostering a more inclusive and accepting social environment within the schools. Varmland's rich cultural history and commitment to arts education contribute to this positive outcome. Encouraging students to explore and appreciate diverse art forms is essential in promoting tolerance, diversity, and cultural sensitivity, all of which are crucial aspects of socialization. The arts education provides a platform for students to express their emotions creatively. This emotional expression not only helps students understand their own feelings but also nurtures empathy for the experiences of others. Students who participate in the arts exhibit higher levels of empathy in their social interactions. The arts provide a safe space for students to explore and convey their emotions, which is particularly significant during their formative years. The cultivation of empathy through arts education has far-reaching effects, as it fosters a greater understanding of others' perspectives and feelings, enriching students' social interactions.

The research confirms that learners engaged in arts programs in Varmland's primary schools develop strong problem-solving and critical thinking skills. These abilities are transferable to their social interactions, as students learn to approach interpersonal challenges with creative problem-solving strategies. The link between problem-solving skills cultivated through arts education and their application to social situations is a critical finding. It underscores the broader educational value of arts programs, as they not only enhance artistic abilities but also promote life skills that are essential for effective socialization. Arts serve as a source of stress relief and relaxation for students. Reduced stress and anxiety levels positively influence students' openness to social interactions, creating a more relaxed and harmonious atmosphere within the school environment. The role of arts in reducing stress and anxiety is vital for students' overall well-being and socialization. A calmer and more relaxed state of mind is conducive to productive social interactions and relationships, making arts education a significant contributor to a healthy and supportive school environment.

4.0 Conclusion

The research conducted on the effects of arts education on socialization in selected primary schools in Varmland, Sweden, reveals a rich tapestry of benefits that arts programs bring to the social development of students. It is clear that arts education plays a pivotal role in enhancing communication skills and fostering collaboration among students. Through various artistic activities, such as theater productions and group art projects, students learn to express themselves effectively and work cohesively in teams, skills that are not only vital in artistic endeavors but also in their broader social interactions. The research underscores the significant boost in students' self-confidence and self-esteem attributed to their participation in arts programs. The positive feedback and encouragement they receive from teachers and peers contribute to a more self-assured student body, which in turn positively affects their social engagement. Students who feel confident are

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more likely to participate actively in social activities, express their opinions, and engage in conversations, all of which are key components of effective socialization.

Cultural awareness and inclusivity are also important outcomes of arts education in Varmland's primary schools. Exposure to diverse art forms instills an appreciation for different cultures and traditions, fostering a more inclusive and accepting social environment. This is particularly significant in a region like Varmland, with its rich cultural heritage, as it promotes tolerance and diversity, enhancing the quality of social interactions within the schools. The arts education provides a platform for emotional expression and nurtures empathy among students. Through artistic endeavors, students not only gain a deeper understanding of their own emotions but also become more attuned to the feelings and experiences of others. This cultivation of empathy enriches their social interactions and contributes to a more compassionate and empathetic school community. Arts education equips students with problem-solving and critical thinking skills that extend beyond the artistic realm. These skills are transferable to their social interactions, enabling students to approach interpersonal challenges with creative problem-solving strategies. This finding underscores the broader educational value of arts programs, as they not only enhance artistic abilities but also promote life skills that are essential for effective socialization.

Finally, the research highlights the role of arts in reducing stress and anxiety, providing students with a source of stress relief and relaxation. Reduced stress levels create a more relaxed and harmonious atmosphere within the school environment, contributing to productive social interactions and relationships. Arts education enhances communication skills, promotes collaboration, boosts self-confidence, fosters cultural awareness and inclusivity, encourages emotional expression and empathy, and equips students with valuable problem-solving skills. Moreover, it contributes to a relaxed and supportive school environment. This research underscores the integral role of arts education in shaping well-rounded individuals who are not only creative but also socially adept, making it a vital component of the educational landscape in Varmland, Sweden.

5.0 Recommendations

It is recommended that primary schools in Varmland, Sweden, consider the enhanced integration of arts into their curriculum. Arts education should be considered a core component of the educational experience, given its profound impact on socialization and overall student development. This could involve allocating more time and resources to arts programs, ensuring that students have regular opportunities to engage in artistic activities and that educators receive training in effectively incorporating arts into their teaching methods. To further bolster the effects of arts on socialization, it is advisable to promote and expand extracurricular arts activities in Varmland's primary schools. Schools should encourage and support students' involvement in arts clubs, music ensembles, theater productions, and art exhibitions. These extracurricular activities provide additional opportunities for students to build social connections, express themselves creatively, and develop essential life skills. It is also essential to make these opportunities

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accessible to a wide range of students, ensuring that financial and logistical barriers do not hinder participation.

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