



Internalizing Creativity: Student - Centered Art Education for Personal Expression

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Abstract

Creativity, critical thinking, and personal expression are central to art education. In recent years, the adoption of student-centered learning in art education has gained momentum by promoting autonomy, self-reflection, and active engagement while challenging traditional instructional approaches. The internalization of creativity plays a critical role in students' ability to engage deeply with artistic concepts and to articulate their personal artistic identities. This literature review synthesizes research published between 2015 and 2025 on student-centered art education, with a particular focus on its role in fostering creativity and personal artistic expression. The study employs a systematic literature review supported by chronologically structured descriptive synthesis. Six key search terms guided the review process: *Student-Centered Art Education*, *Internalization of Creativity in Art*, *Autonomy in Art Learning*, *Inquiry-Based Learning in Art*, *Art Education and Personal Expression*, and *Creative Thinking in Art Education*. Studies were selected based on relevance, empirical rigor, and contribution to the field. The review draws on sources accessed through JSTOR, ProQuest, Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and the National Thesis Center of the Council of Higher Education. The findings indicate that student-centered art education enhances students' engagement, motivation, and originality by supporting exploration, critical reflection, and autonomy. However, challenges related to balancing structure and freedom, teacher preparedness, and alternative assessment practices remain evident. The study concludes by offering recommendations for integrating reflective practices, choice-based curricula, and autonomy-supportive learning environments, while emphasizing the need for further empirical research on the long-term internalization of creativity in art education.

Keywords: Autonomy in Art Learning, Creativity, Inquiry-Based Learning, Internalization of Personal Artistic Expression, Student-Centered Art Education

1. Introduction

Art education is a multidimensional field of education that aims not only to equip individuals with technical skills but also to support their intellectual, emotional, and creative development. In recent educational discourse, greater emphasis has been placed on approaches that position students as active participants rather than passive recipients of knowledge. Within this context, student-centered learning approaches that foreground

individual experience, autonomy, and critical thinking have gained increasing attention in art education research (Felton et al., 2015; Ulger, 2018).

Student-centered art education enables students to structure their own learning processes by redistributing decision-making authority within the studio and emphasizing personal meaning-making. Within constructivist and choice-based frameworks, students engage in questioning artistic problems, exploring alternative solutions, and developing personally significant forms of expression (Gates, 2016; Thompson, 2015). Thus, creativity is approached as an internal quality of the individual rather than an external skill and is internalized throughout the learning process. The internalization of creativity is directly related to the individual developing their own language of expression in the artistic production process and being able to use this language consciously. Empirical and theoretical studies in art education indicate that inquiry-based and problem-centered learning environments positively influence students' creative thinking and artistic originality (Ulger, 2018). In addition, contemporary discussions on student-centered assessment emphasize that when students actively participate in evaluative and reflective processes, their autonomy and sustained creative engagement are strengthened (Quill, 2023). In such learning environments, students assume responsibility for artistic decision-making, discover their areas of interest, and gradually construct their artistic identities beyond teacher-directed instruction.

At the same time, the literature emphasizes that the effective implementation of student-centered art education requires careful reconsideration of the teacher's guiding role, the balance between structure and freedom, and the development of alternative assessment practices (Roth, 2017; Aytac & Kula, 2020). Therefore, the effects of student-centered art education on creativity and personal expression need to be systematically examined.

The aim of this study is to examine the role of student-centered art education in the internalization of creativity and personal artistic expression and to evaluate the existing literature from a holistic perspective in light of studies published between 2015 and 2025. The study aims to reveal the theoretical foundations of student-centered approaches in the field of art education and to offer guiding suggestions for future research. Despite the growing body of research on student-centered art education, limited attention has been paid to how creativity is internalized over time within a chronological and integrative framework.

Although creativity and the emphasis on "personal expression" have long held a central position in art education, the fact that these concepts are often treated as normative goals can overshadow the broader pedagogical aims of art education. Biesta (2019) emphasizes that approaches that justify art education solely through creativity and expression weaken the question of "what for" in education; the educational value of art must be discussed within a broader horizon of meaning. Therefore, when examining student-centered art education, it is important to approach the internalization of creativity not merely as output/product-oriented, but as a pedagogical issue related to the student's artistic meaning-making processes (Biesta, 2019).

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

This study is a systematic literature review supported by descriptive narrative synthesis and qualitative content analysis. The research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of academic studies addressing the concepts of student-centered art education, internalization of creativity, and personal artistic expression. The systematic procedure included predefined search terms, database selection, screening criteria, and structured study selection steps to enhance transparency and replicability.

2.2. Data Collection Process

The literature review was limited to studies published between 2015 and 2025. The following key concepts were used in the review process: student-centered art education, creativity, autonomy, inquiry-based learning, personal artistic expression. The sources included in the study consist only of articles published in peer-reviewed journals, graduate theses, and academic book chapters within the specified time frame.

2.3. Search Strategy

The literature search was conducted between February and April 2025. Databases searched included JSTOR, ProQuest, Google Scholar, ERIC, ResearchGate (used as a supplementary source) , and the National Thesis Center of the Council of Higher Education (Türkiye). The final search was completed on April 15, 2025.

Example search string:

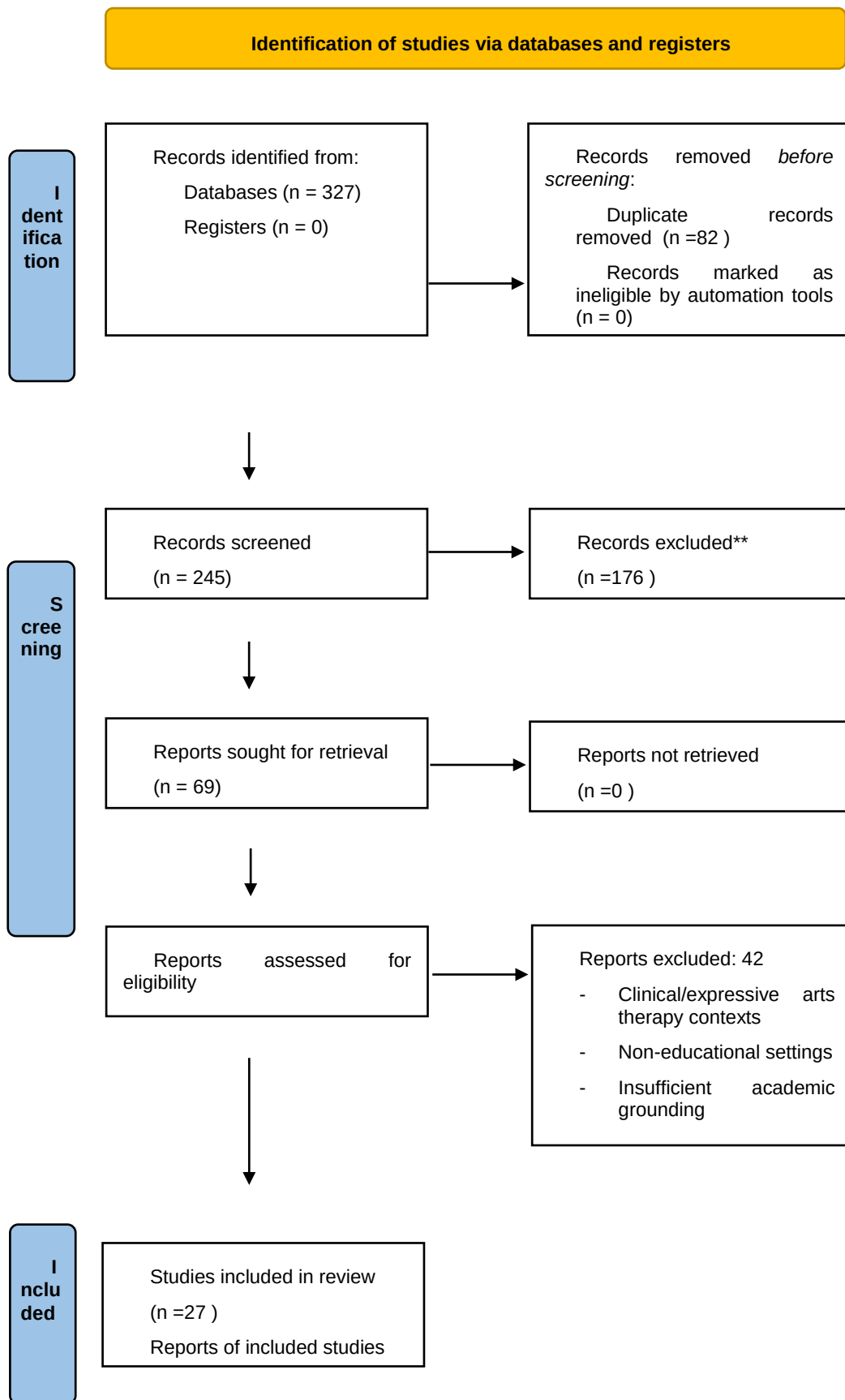
("student-centered art education" OR "learner-centered art education") AND ("creativity" OR "creative thinking") AND ("personal expression" OR "artistic identity" OR "internalization").

2.4. Study Selection Process

The study selection process was conducted in sequential stages including identification, duplicate removal, title and abstract screening, full-text eligibility assessment, and final inclusion. The initial search yielded 327 records. After removing duplicates (n = 82), 245 records remained for title and abstract screening. Following screening, 176 records were excluded due to irrelevance. A total of 69 full-text studies were assessed for eligibility. Of these, 42 were excluded because they focused exclusively on clinical expressive arts therapy or non-educational settings. Finally, 27 studies were included in the review.

Of the 27 studies included in the review, 15 were empirical investigations (including qualitative case studies, quantitative analyses, experimental designs, and one meta-analysis), and 12 were conceptual or theoretical discussions addressing pedagogical frameworks in art education. The empirical studies represented diverse educational contexts, including K–12 art education (n = 9) and higher education art and design programs (n = 6). Conceptual studies primarily focused on learner-centered pedagogy, structured freedom, autonomy, assessment practices, and identity formation in contemporary art education. This distribution reflects the methodological and contextual diversity of research informing student-centered art education between 2015 and 2025.

Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram of Study Selection



2.5. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria:

- Published between 2015–2025
 - Conducted in formal art education settings (school or university)
 - Student-centered or learner-centered approaches
 - Focus on creativity, personal expression, or artistic identity
- Peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, and graduate theses with academic grounding

Exclusion criteria:

- Studies focused solely on expressive arts therapy or clinical contexts
- Studies outside educational settings
- Opinion-based texts without academic grounding

2.6. Data Analysis

The selected studies were examined using chronologically structured descriptive synthesis. The studies were inspected and organized according to the themes of internalization of creativity, autonomy, artistic expression, and the role of the teacher. The findings were interpreted and presented within a chronological and conceptual framework, considering the prominent trends of each period.

In this review, internalization was identified in studies that reported sustained student autonomy, reflective engagement, identity formation, or evidence of creativity becoming self-directed rather than teacher-imposed. These indicators guided the thematic categorization of findings. These operational indicators were used to interpret how creativity shifted from externally guided performance toward internally regulated artistic engagement.

2.7. Analytical Approach

In this review, studies were examined through a descriptive and thematic synthesis rather than a formal coding procedure. Themes such as autonomy, personal expression, creativity, and the role of the teacher were identified inductively through repeated reading of the literature. To ensure analytical consistency, the synthesis process involved revisiting the literature across different stages of writing. As this review was conducted by a single researcher, formal inter-coder reliability procedures were not applied; however, consistency was ensured through repeated review and cross-checking of thematic categorizations.

Moreover, this review was conducted in alignment with PRISMA 2020 reporting guidelines for systematic reviews to enhance transparency in identification, screening, and eligibility procedures. While a formal risk-of-bias assessment was not applied due to the conceptual and exploratory focus of the review, structured study selection procedures were followed to ensure methodological rigor.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. The Place of Student-Centered Learning Approach in Art Education

The student-centered learning approach is a pedagogical understanding based on the individual taking an active role in the learning process, structuring their own learning experiences, and establishing a personal connection with knowledge. In this approach, the teacher is not an authority who directly imparts knowledge, but rather a guide who directs the learning process and supports the student's discovery process. In the context of art education, student-centered learning deepens the creative process by allowing students to incorporate

their unique experiences, feelings, and thoughts into the artistic production process (Felton et al., 2015).

Student-centered approaches, which are strongly linked to constructivist learning theory in art education, encourage students to construct meaning through inquiry, exploration, and reflective engagement rather than passively consuming transmitted knowledge. From this perspective, the art classroom shifts from a technically driven instructional space toward a studio environment in which personal agency, choice, and meaning making are central to learning (Gates, 2016; Thompson, 2015).

Student-centered art education also contributes to the development of artistic autonomy by supporting students in making choices based on their own interests. In choice-based learning environments, students are involved in decision-making processes regarding subject matter, materials, and forms of expression; this allows for increased artistic motivation and originality (Roth, 2017). In this context, the student-centered approach makes artistic production a process shaped by the individual's internal orientations, independent of external expectations.

3.2. The Concept of Creativity and Internalizing Creativity

Creativity, as one of the fundamental components of art education, is not limited to the ability to produce new and original works. Contemporary approaches view creativity as an integrated process encompassing an individual's way of thinking, problem-solving strategies, and means of self-expression. In this context, internalizing creativity means making creative thinking a natural part of the individual's learning process (Ulger, 2018).

In art education settings, internalizing creativity is possible when students experience artistic production not only as a requirement of the curriculum but also as a personal means of expression. Environments where students can experiment freely and where making mistakes is accepted as a natural part of the learning process support the development of creativity (Ulger, 2018; Samaniego et al., 2024). Such learning environments encourage students to take artistic risks and contribute to the development of creative self-confidence.

Research in visual arts education further demonstrates that inquiry-based and problem-centered approaches deepen creative thinking by engaging students in nonroutine problem solving and reflective evaluation of their artistic processes (Ulger, 2018). When students actively question artistic problems, generate alternative solutions, and critically assess their own work, creativity shifts from being teacher-directed to becoming a competency shaped through individual experience and sustained engagement.

3.3. Autonomy, Artistic Identity, and Personal Expression

Autonomy, as one of the fundamental concepts of student-centered art education, refers to the student having a say in the learning process. Artistic autonomy is directly related to the student's ability to reflect their own thoughts, feelings, and life experiences in artistic production. In this context, art education is considered an important area where individuals construct their artistic identity (Thompson, 2015).

Artistic identity is shaped by how an individual defines and expresses themselves through art. Expressionist approaches to art aim to make the individual's inner world visible, thereby contributing to the strengthening of personal expression. Expressive painting and self-portraiture, in particular, enable individuals to incorporate their search for identity and emotional experiences into the artistic production process (Dilmaç & Akalan, 2018; Özdemir & Yılmaz, 2021).

In art education environments that support personal expression, students use art as a means of communication and integrate their life experiences with artistic expression. This process increases students' self-awareness and transforms artistic production into a meaningful experience (Hasırcı, 2021). Furthermore, expressive and therapy-based art practices are reported to be effective in regulating individuals' emotional processes and expressing their inner experiences (Akaroğlu et al., 2023). Therapy-focused studies are referenced only to clarify conceptual boundaries and are not treated as evidence from formal art education settings.

3.4. The Role of the Teacher: Guidance and Structured Freedom

In student-centered art education, the role of the teacher is redefined as a guide who directs the learning process. In this approach, the teacher is a facilitator who structures the learning environment and supports student autonomy, rather than an authority who intervenes in the student's artistic process. However, the literature also emphasizes that completely free learning environments do not always produce effective results (Aytaç & Kula, 2020).

Therefore, the concept of “structured freedom” provides an important balance point in the context of student-centered art education. A specific pedagogical framework must be provided so that students can freely experience their creative processes. The teacher's guidance contributes to students clarifying their artistic goals, evaluating their production processes, and developing their critical thinking skills (Adizova, 2021).

Table 1. Representative Empirical and Theoretical Studies Illustrating Key Trends in Student-Centered Art Education (2015–2025)

Author	Year	Educational context	Method	Key findings (as used in this review)
Felton et al.	2015	Higher education	Qualitative	Autonomy-supportive learning relates to engagement and motivation
Gates	2016	K–12 art education	Conceptual/choice-based curriculum analysis	Choice-based art education redistributes decision-making authority and strengthens student agency, autonomy, and intrinsic motivation
Roth	2017	School-based art education	Case study	Choice-based learning supports artistic ownership and exploration
Ulger	2018	Secondary education	Experimental	Problem-based learning is associated with gains in creative thinking
Taşkesen	2019	Fine arts education	Quantitative	Interest in art predicts critical thinking tendencies
Aytaç & Kula	2020	Mixed educational contexts	Meta-analysis	Student-centered approaches show positive effects on achievement/creativity outcomes
Özdemir & Yılmaz	2021	Art education courses	Qualitative	Expressive practices strengthen personal expression
Vanada	2022	Graduate-level art + design education (USA)	Conceptual pedagogical framework with design-based	Learner-centered and inquiry-driven pedagogy strengthens creative confidence, autonomy, and reflective engagement in art and design

			exemplars	education
Quill	2023	Higher education (art & design)	Conceptual discussion on student-centered assessment	Student-centered assessment strengthens autonomy, self-regulation, and sustained creative engagement
Samaniego et al.	2024	Art & design education	Systematic review	Instructional design elements support creative thinking processes
Tinaliyeva	2024	Contemporary art education	Conceptual	Holistic/embodied approaches contribute to identity development in art education
Arifoğlu	2025	Art education (higher education)	Qualitative research with experiential workshop design	Somatic and expressive approaches support the internalization of creativity in art education contexts

Note: The table presents selected illustrative studies rather than an exhaustive list of all included sources.

4. Findings

This section examines studies published between 2015 and 2025 under four main periods: 2015–2017, 2018–2020, 2021–2023, and 2024–2025. The findings have been evaluated in terms of the prominent pedagogical approaches, conceptual orientations, and art education practices in each period, as well as their effects on the internalization of creativity and personal artistic expression.

4.1. 2015–2017 Period: Establishing Student-Centered Approaches in Art Education

The studies conducted between 2015 and 2017 represent a period in which the student-centered learning approach began to be theoretically grounded in the context of art education. Research conducted during this period emphasizes that art education is a learning area that supports not only the individual's aesthetic production but also their social, emotional, and cognitive development (Felton et al., 2015).

Grounded in constructivist learning theory, these studies highlight that positioning students as active participants and decision-makers within the studio environment plays a decisive role in enhancing creativity and intrinsic motivation (Gates, 2016). By redistributing authority and encouraging voluntary artistic engagement, student-centered approaches transformed artistic production from a teacher-directed activity into a personally meaningful and inquiry-driven process.

Another prominent finding of this period is that giving students the right to choose increases artistic ownership. Student-centered environments supported the development of artistic autonomy by allowing students to participate in decision-making processes regarding subject matter, materials, and forms of expression (Roth, 2017). As a result, creativity began to be shaped more strongly by students' internal orientations, interests, and emerging artistic identities rather than by externally imposed expectations.

4.2. 2018–2020 Period: Deepening Creative and Critical Thinking

The work carried out between 2018 and 2020 represents a period in which the effects of student-centered art education on creative and critical thinking skills were addressed more

systematically. During this period, the integration of problem-based and inquiry-based learning approaches into art education came to the fore (Ulger, 2018).

Research shows that students' active role in the process of solving artistic problems supports the development of their creative thinking skills. Expressive art practices have contributed to the strengthening of personal expression by facilitating students' reflection of their internal experiences in artistic production (Dilmaç & Akalan, 2018).

One of the findings highlighting the significance of critical thinking in art education during this period emerges from quantitative research conducted with fine arts education students. A study examining the relationship between students' interest in art and their critical thinking tendencies found that higher levels of interest in art were significantly associated with stronger critical thinking dispositions (Taşkesen, 2019). This finding suggests that student-centered and inquiry-based art learning environments may support not only creative production but also the development of critical thinking skills.

Meta-analytic studies conducted during this period evaluated the impact of student-centered approaches on learning outcomes using larger samples. The findings revealed that student-centered teaching approaches have positive effects on creativity and academic achievement, but that this process must be balanced with the teacher's guiding role (Aytaç & Kula, 2020). Thus, the balance between structure and freedom has become an important topic of discussion in the context of art education.

4.3. 2021–2023 Period: Personal Expression, Emotional Processes, and Internalization

Studies published between 2021 and 2023 focused on the effects of student-centered art education on personal expression and emotional processes. During this period, art education was approached as a field of expression that makes the individual's inner world visible. Applications combining expressive painting and literary expression contributed to the deepening of artistic expression (Özdemir & Yılmaz, 2021; Hasırcı, 2021).

In 2022, scholarship in art and design education further emphasized the importance of learner-centered and inquiry-driven paradigms that promote connection-making, collaboration, and student self-direction (Vanada, 2022). Within such environments, creativity is cultivated through sustained exploration and reflective engagement, positioning artistic learning as a dynamic and process-oriented experience rather than a product-focused task.

Building on this pedagogical shift, studies published in 2023 highlighted both the affective and reflective dimensions of artistic engagement. Research grounded in expressive practices demonstrated that artistic production could support emotional awareness and interpersonal openness (Akaroğlu et al., 2023). At the same time, discussions on student-centered assessment practices emphasized that involving students in evaluative and reflective processes strengthens self-regulation and sustained creative engagement in art and design education (Quill, 2023).

Taken together, research from this period suggests that the internalization of creativity emerges through the interaction of pedagogical structure and affective engagement. When learner-centered environments provide space for inquiry, reflection, and emotional articulation, creativity evolves beyond a discrete skill into a gradually integrated disposition supporting self-discovery and the formation of artistic identity.

4.4. 2024–2025 Period: Contemporary Approaches and Holistic Learning Experiences

The work carried out in 2024–2025 represents a period in which student-centered art education is re-examined within the framework of contemporary pedagogical approaches.

Research conducted during this period emphasizes that art education offers a holistic experience that encompasses not only cognitive and affective learning processes, but also embodied and sensory learning processes (Tinaliyeva, 2024).

Recent systematic reviews indicate that creative thinking in art and design education is supported not by a single method, but by the integration of various pedagogical components. Samaniego et al. (2024) systematically reviewed studies on creative thinking in the context of art and design education and reported that structures and instructional designs that make the student's active participation and the steps of thinking in the problem-solving and production process visible are prominent in supporting creative thinking (Samaniego et al., 2024). This framework supports the emphasis on holistic and experiential learning discussed in the 2024–2025 period with current review findings.

The integration of somatic and expressive methods into art education has emerged as one of the innovative approaches that support the internalization of creativity. These methods have enabled students to experience artistic production not only as a mental activity but also as a physical and sensory experience (Arifoğlu, 2025).

Findings from this period show that student-centered art education aims to develop the individual's artistic identity holistically, in line with contemporary educational understandings. Creativity has become a natural and internalized component of the learning process in this context.

Table 2. Conceptual model illustrating the cyclical relationship between student-centered pedagogy, structured freedom, autonomy, and the internalization of creativity leading to artistic identity formation.

Stage	Concept	Description
1	Student-Centered Pedagogy	Inquiry-based and choice-based learning environments positioning students as active meaning-makers
2	Structured Freedom	Teacher as facilitator balancing guidance and autonomy within pedagogical boundaries
3	Autonomy & Reflective Engagement	Students take ownership of artistic decisions, processes, and evaluative reflection
4	Artistic Identity & Personal Expression	Creativity becomes an internalized and sustained personal competency

5. Discussion

This study examines research published between 2015 and 2025 to evaluate the effects of student-centered art education on the internalization of creativity and personal artistic expression within a chronological framework. The findings reveal that student-centered approaches are not merely a pedagogical method in art education but also a fundamental learning paradigm that shapes the individual's artistic identity.

5.1. The Contribution of Student-Centered Approaches to the Internalization of Creativity

The findings show that student-centered art education removes creativity as an external goal and makes it an internal component of the learning process. Studies from the 2015–2017 period demonstrate that student agency and active decision-making within the studio

environment play a decisive role in fostering creativity and intrinsic motivation (Felton et al., 2015; Gates, 2016). When students assume responsibility for artistic choices and inquiry, creativity is experienced not as a task requirement but as a personally meaningful process and a competency internalized through sustained engagement.

Studies conducted between 2018 and 2020 show that problem-based and inquiry-based learning approaches systematically support the development of creativity (Ulger, 2018; Aytaç & Kula, 2020). These findings show that creativity is embedded not only in artistic products but also in cognitive engagement, reflective inquiry, and iterative exploration. In alignment with the constructivist framework, creativity deepens and becomes more enduring when students actively construct meaning through sustained engagement.

5.2. The Relationship Between Autonomy and Artistic Ownership

The findings of the study show that artistic autonomy is one of the cornerstones of student-centered art education. Research conducted between 2015 and 2017 revealed that giving students the right to choose facilitates their ownership of the artistic process (Roth, 2017). This finding coincides with the concept of autonomy discussed in the theoretical framework and shows that artistic production is shaped according to the individual's internal orientations.

Studies published during the 2021–2023 period, in particular, reveal that autonomy is not only a pedagogical preference but also a fundamental element in the process of constructing an individual's artistic identity (Özdemir & Yılmaz, 2021; Hasırcı, 2021). Learning environments where students can reflect their own life experiences in artistic production contribute to the strengthening of personal expression and the clarification of artistic identity. This shows that student-centered art education provides a learning space that increases the individual's capacity for self-expression.

5.3. The Role of Personal Expression and Emotional Processes in Art Education

The findings also reveal that student-centered art education intersects with affective and experiential dimensions of learning. Studies from the 2021–2023 period show that expressive practices enable students to externalize internal experiences and transform artistic production into a meaningful field of self-expression (Özdemir & Yılmaz, 2021; Hasırcı, 2021).

Although some research conducted in therapeutic contexts highlights the emotional and regulatory potential of artistic engagement (Akaroğlu et al., 2023), such findings primarily illuminate the affective depth of artistic processes rather than serving as direct classroom evidence. Together, these perspectives suggest that creativity becomes internalized when cognitive engagement is integrated with emotional awareness and reflective experience. This reinforces the view of student-centered art education as a holistic learning space.

5.4. The Role of the Teacher and Structured Freedom

One of the important findings of the study is that student-centered art education is not limited to completely free learning environments. Meta-analytic studies conducted particularly during the 2018–2020 period have revealed that the teacher's guiding role is of critical importance in the artistic learning process (Aytaç & Kula, 2020). This finding supports the concept of “structured freedom” discussed in the theoretical framework.

Studies from the 2024–2025 period show that the teacher's support of the student's creative process by providing a pedagogical framework facilitates the internalization of creativity (Tinaliyeva, 2024; Arifoğlu, 2025). In this respect, the teacher's role shifts from authority to facilitator of reflective structure, enabling students to clarify artistic intentions and consciously evaluate their processes. Thus, structured freedom becomes the balancing mechanism through which autonomy translates into sustained creative disposition.

5.5. Contribution of the Study

This study provides a comprehensive chronological synthesis of student-centered art education literature between 2015 and 2025, demonstrating how creativity evolves from a pedagogical objective into an internalized disposition shaped by autonomy, inquiry, emotional engagement, and structured guidance.

By integrating conceptual, empirical, and meta-analytic evidence, the study offers a multidimensional understanding of internalization in art education. Rather than reducing creativity to technical skill acquisition, the findings position it as a sustained, identity-forming process supported by pedagogically structured autonomy. In doing so, the study contributes both theoretical clarity and practical implications to contemporary art education discourse.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1. Conclusion

This study examined research published between 2015 and 2025 to evaluate the role of student-centered art education in internalizing creativity and personal artistic expression. Analyses conducted across chronological periods revealed that student-centered approaches are not merely a methodological choice in art education but a fundamental pedagogical paradigm that shapes the individual's artistic identity and creative thinking.

The findings indicate that student-centered art education supports students in taking ownership of the artistic process, developing autonomy, and experiencing artistic production as a personal space for expression. Particularly in early studies (2015–2017), the theoretical foundations of student-centered approaches were laid; in subsequent periods, the effects of these approaches on creative thinking, critical inquiry, and intrinsic motivation were addressed more systematically.

Studies from the 2018–2020 period revealed that problem-based and inquiry-based learning approaches deepened creativity and made the learning process meaningful. Between 2021 and 2023, the relationship between art education and personal expression and emotional processes became more visible; expressive and expression-based art practices were found to play an important role in internalizing creativity. Studies from the 2024–2025 period show that holistic, physical, and sensory learning approaches have come to the fore in art education and that creativity is approached not only as a cognitive but also as a multidimensional process.

These results support the notion that creativity cannot be reduced solely to a teachable technique, but rather a competency that develops and is internalized in appropriate learning environments. Student-centered art education, in this context, enables students to experience artistic production as a meaningful and personal process, independent of external expectations.

Ultimately, this study suggests that student-centered art education provides a compelling answer to Biesta's (2019) question regarding the 'what for' of art in schools. By moving beyond the normative goals of mere creativity or technical output, these approaches position art education as a site for the development of the individual's 'learning power'. The internalization of creativity is not merely an artistic achievement; it is a pedagogical transformation that equips students with the autonomy and reflective capacity needed to navigate a complex world. Thus, student-centered pedagogy transforms the art studio into a space where students do not just 'do' art, but where they cultivate a sustained, agentic identity that serves as a foundation for lifelong personal expression and democratic participation.

6.2. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations can be developed:

1. Restructuring Art Education Programs:

Art education programs should be restructured in line with student-centered approaches that grant students the right to choose, are inquiry-based, and support experiential learning. Such programs will support students in internalizing creativity and developing their artistic identities.

2. Teacher Training and Pedagogical Support:

In order for student-centered art education to be implemented effectively, teachers' pedagogical competencies regarding their guidance role must be strengthened. Teacher training programs should place greater emphasis on structured freedom, alternative assessment methods, and teaching strategies that support the creative process.

3. Use of Alternative Assessment Approaches:

In art education, it is recommended to adopt process-oriented and reflective assessment methods instead of product-oriented assessment. Methods such as portfolios, self-assessment, and peer assessment will reveal students' artistic development in a more comprehensive manner.

4. Strengthening Emotional and Experiential Dimensions:

It is important to create learning environments in art education practices where students can express their emotional experiences and personal lives. Expressive and expression-based art practices can be considered effective tools that support the internalization of creativity.

5. Recommendations for Future Research:

Future studies may examine the long-term effects of student-centered art education through longitudinal research. Additionally, studies conducted across different age groups, cultural contexts, and interdisciplinary approaches will provide new insights to literature.

6.3. Limitations

Although this study followed a systematic literature review procedure, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the review is limited to studies published between 2015 and 2025 and indexed within the selected databases; therefore, relevant studies outside these sources may not have been captured. Second, the review relies on descriptive narrative synthesis rather than statistical aggregation, which means findings are interpretive. Third, as this review was conducted by a single researcher, the thematic categorization and selection process involve an element of subjective judgment, though this was mitigated through repeated cycles of cross-checking and thematic refinement. Lastly, the review was limited primarily to English and Turkish-language publications, which may have excluded relevant studies from other linguistic contexts.

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