



Emotions in Colours: Enhancing Creativity and Self-Care in Children in Social Care through the Creative Journal

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Abstract

The “Colour and Emotions” workshop was designed to enhance emotional well-being and resilience in children residing in foster care at the Galtee Clinic, Ireland. This study integrates principles of social pedagogy and the Diamond Model to create a safe and inclusive environment where children can explore, express, and validate their emotions through creative journaling with colour. By engaging in these activities, the children developed improved emotional awareness, effective coping strategies, and enhanced communication skills. The workshop not only fostered their immediate emotional expression but also contributed to their long-term psychological resilience and well-being. The findings suggest that colour-based journaling is a valuable tool for emotional education in foster care settings, providing practical insights for future interventions aimed at supporting the emotional and social development of vulnerable children.

Subject Areas

Social Pedagogy, Child and Youth Studies, Emotional and Mental Health in Children, Art and Creative Therapies, Educational Psychology/Emotional Education

Keywords

Colour Psychology, Emotional Resilience, Social Pedagogy, Foster Care, Creative Journaling

1. Introduction

Social pedagogy is dedicated to fostering learning environments that transcend

technical methods, emphasising introspection and connectivity. This approach values the distinctiveness of each person, establishing a foundation for dialogue and comprehensive growth among children and adolescents. Arising as a response to specific social challenges, social pedagogy stands out for its focus on leveraging educational means to effect change, aiming to cultivate a more equitable and just society. It endeavours to reshape social landscapes by addressing disparities while maintaining the diverse identities within the societal mosaic.

Eichsteller & Holthoff (2011) [1] introduced the “Diamond Model”, an approach centred on promoting individual and collective well-being. This model encourages holistic learning experiences and the formation of robust, compassionate relationships, thereby enhancing communal bonds, mutual support, and a sense of responsibility. Importantly, it equips individuals and communities with the tools to direct their own lives.

The Diamond Model, as expanded upon by Alius Art (2023) [2], positions creativity as a core element in fostering social inclusion. It suggests that engaging individuals in creative processes facilitates self-expression, strengthens connections, and nurtures a sense of belonging. In the context of children in social care, this model’s emphasis on creativity aligns seamlessly with the objectives of our workshops. By integrating creative journaling, we not only encourage emotional expression but also empower children to take ownership of their emotional and social development. The model’s focus on inclusivity and personal empowerment directly informs the methodology employed in this study, where creative activities are designed to be accessible and meaningful to each child, regardless of their background or circumstances.

The link between colours and emotional expression provides a crucial bridge between the theoretical framework and the practical methodology of this study. German psychologist Eva Heller (2004) [3] explored how colours evoke culturally and emotionally charged associations. For instance, blue suggests harmony and fidelity, red connotes passion, yellow embodies both optimism and jealousy, and green conveys hope. These associations inform the ways in which children can represent their emotions in visual form, especially in the creation of a personalised “emotions dictionary” within their journals.

Psychological research affirms that colour influences human perception and behaviour. Corbin (2017) [4] noted that colours can evoke sensations of warmth or coldness, relaxation or stimulation, and order or chaos. While perceptions of colour are subjective, they are also shaped by cultural and contextual factors. Similarly, Molina (2019) [5] argued that each colour possesses expressive capacity, capable of eliciting varied emotional responses depending on spatial, temporal, and cultural contexts. This subjectivity plays a key role in the journaling process, as children attach personal meanings to colours based on their lived experiences.

This study builds upon a growing body of literature at the intersection of creativity, emotional development, and social inclusion. For example, Ebert *et al.* [6] (2015) demonstrated that art-based workshops enhanced emotional literacy and

creativity in children, highlighting the value of creative methods in fostering emotional and cognitive growth. By integrating such insights with the Diamond Model, our study contributes a novel approach to emotional self-expression and regulation through colour-based journaling.

The primary aim of this study is to investigate how colour-based journaling, guided by the principles of social pedagogy and the Diamond Model, can enhance emotional awareness and self-care among children in social care. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following research questions: How does colour-based journaling influence emotional expression among participants? What role does the Diamond Model play in facilitating this process? And how can these findings inform future interventions in social care settings?

Applying this pedagogy, a child-centric activity was developed to enable participants to use colour as a medium to articulate emotions, serving as an alternative communication channel. During the activity, children created an “emotions dictionary”, associating colours with specific words and daily scenarios. This not only supported emotional expression but also helped children understand and manage their emotions, contributing to long-term emotional resilience.

It is therefore crucial to design activities that aid in recognising emotional triggers and empower children to manage their feelings effectively. While social pedagogy focuses on fostering reflection and connection, tailored creative interventions such as these provide tangible and functional tools to address emotional needs.

This study contributes to the existing literature by offering empirical evidence of the effectiveness of colour-based journaling within a social care context, grounded in the Diamond Model. It also presents practical insights for practitioners aiming to implement creative, child-centred strategies to support emotional and social development among vulnerable populations.

2. Review of the Literature

2.1. Social Pedagogy: The Difficult Connection between Theory and Practice

Social pedagogy, a discipline that blends educational principles with social care, often encounters challenges in bridging the gap between theory and practice. Storø (2012) [7] highlights this disconnect, observing that while theorists focus on conceptual frameworks, practitioners engage directly with the lived experiences of children and young people. He argues that theory in social pedagogy must not only offer explanations but also provide actionable guidance, equipping practitioners with effective tools for intervention.

Routine activities in social pedagogy—such as helping with homework or offering emotional support—are informed by underlying theoretical principles. Storø emphasises reflective practice as key to ensuring that these activities align with both theory and the needs of the children. This reflective approach fosters a responsive and adaptive form of care. In the context of this study, social pedagogy

serves as the foundational framework, informing the design of creative journaling activities aimed at promoting emotional growth among children in foster care. The integration of theoretical understanding with daily practice ensures the relevance and efficacy of the intervention.

2.2. The Diamond Model

The Diamond Model, developed by Eichsteller & Holthoff (2012) [1], is a conceptual framework within social pedagogy that foregrounds the intrinsic worth and capabilities of each individual. Its four central pillars—well-being and happiness, holistic learning, relationship building, and empowerment—are interdependent and essential for fostering human development.

Well-being and happiness provide the basis for healthy emotional growth, particularly significant for children in foster care, who may have experienced instability and trauma. Holistic learning promotes the development of emotional, social, and intellectual capacities. In this study, colour-based journaling acts as a medium for such learning, encouraging emotional literacy through reflective practice.

Relationship building, a core tenet of the model, is facilitated through journaling as children express their emotions and experiences in ways that can be shared and understood by caregivers and educators. Empowerment, finally, is realised through the act of journaling itself, allowing children to take ownership of their emotional narratives and develop a sense of agency. The Diamond Model thus provides a robust framework for the intervention, supporting the study's goals of emotional development and self-expression.

2.3. Emotional Education and Development in Foster Care

Children in foster care often face considerable emotional challenges due to histories of neglect, trauma, or repeated placement disruptions. Such experiences can result in elevated risks for depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) Elad, Tremper, & McNamara, 2023 [8]. The absence of stable relationships and secure attachments further compounds emotional difficulties.

Interventions that prioritise emotional education have shown promise in mitigating these effects. Studies suggest that fostering emotional literacy and teaching coping strategies contribute to improved psychological resilience, reduced anxiety, and enhanced social functioning Elad *et al.*, 2023 [8]. In the current study, colour-based creative journaling serves as an emotional education tool, offering children a non-verbal medium to articulate and regulate their feelings. Embedding this practice within the daily routines of foster care environments supports long-term emotional well-being.

2.4. Use of Creative Journaling and Colour in Emotional Expression

Creative journaling, particularly when combined with colour, is increasingly recognised as a powerful therapeutic tool for children experiencing emotional dis-

tress. Children in foster care, who may struggle with verbal expression, can benefit from alternative methods that facilitate emotional processing. Research in art therapy, such as Malchiodi (2012) [9], supports the idea that creative practices enhance emotional awareness, encourage reflection, and provide a safe outlet for trauma-related feelings.

The chromatic model of the affective system proposed by Díaz & Flores (2001) [10] connects specific colours to emotional states, offering a structured approach to emotional articulation. In this study, children created an “emotions dictionary” through journaling, linking colours to feelings and scenarios. This practice aligns with both colour psychology and art therapy principles, enabling participants to externalise and manage their emotional experiences. The structured use of colour supports emotional categorisation and encourages introspective engagement, laying a foundation for improved emotional regulation.

2.5. Psychological Resilience and Coping Mechanisms in Children

Foster children often contend with adverse childhood experiences that impact emotional resilience. Building resilience—defined as the capacity to adapt positively despite adversity—is therefore central to improving outcomes for this population. Lemos *et al.* (2021) [11] highlight that resilience develops through both internal resources (e.g., self-efficacy) and external supports (e.g., positive adult relationships).

Creative journaling offers a dual function: it nurtures internal resilience by giving children tools for emotional expression, and it invites external support by allowing caregivers to better understand children’s emotional states. The integration of colour in journaling enhances this by making emotions more tangible. Studies in expressive arts therapy Coholic, 2011 [12] have similarly shown that creative activities contribute to resilience by reducing stress, increasing self-confidence, and supporting emotional regulation, especially in vulnerable children.

2.6. The Role of Educators and Caregivers in Emotional Development

The active role of educators and caregivers is critical in supporting the emotional development of children in care settings. According to Gibson (2012) [13], caregiving goes beyond behavioural management and includes co-constructing meaning through everyday interactions. Establishing emotionally attuned relationships enables children to feel understood and supported.

In the context of this study, creative journaling functions as a relational tool, enabling caregivers to engage in meaningful conversations about emotions. By observing children’s use of colour and narrative in their journals, caregivers can better identify emotional needs and respond appropriately. This practice encourages a shift from behaviour-focused care towards emotionally responsive caregiving, reinforcing the therapeutic potential of creative interventions within the caregiving dynamic.

2.7. The Role of Colour Psychology in Emotional Development

Colour psychology offers valuable insights into how children perceive and express emotion. As Cañellas (1979) [14] observed, colours carry symbolic and psychological meaning—blue may evoke calm, red can signal excitement or anger, and yellow may reflect optimism or anxiety. While these associations are shaped by cultural context, they provide a language of emotion that children can access intuitively.

In this study, children used colour within journaling to represent and reflect on their emotional states. Their choices served as indicators of inner experiences that might otherwise remain unspoken. Incorporating colour into emotional education strengthens emotional literacy by linking feelings to visible, external symbols. This approach echoes findings in art therapy Malchiodi, 2012 [9], where colour is often used to explore identity, trauma, and healing, making it especially relevant for children in foster care.

3. Materials

In this initiative, the principles of social pedagogy were integrated with creative strategies aimed at supporting the emotional needs of children in social care. A central element of this approach was the use of colour as a primary medium for emotional exploration, culminating in the creation of a personalised “emotions dictionary” in which colours were used to symbolise a range of feelings. This method served as an alternative to more traditional modes of expression, such as verbal articulation or illustrative drawing, allowing children to communicate affective states in a more intuitive and accessible way. The dual objectives were to promote emotional development and to provide a novel, empowering medium for children to reflect on and articulate their emotions.

To implement this, a carefully curated set of materials was introduced. Each child was provided with a customised journal, designed with input from the children themselves in terms of cover design, paper type, and layout preferences. This element of personalisation was intended to foster a sense of ownership and emotional safety, encouraging sustained engagement with the activity. Writing and drawing tools such as coloured pencils, felt-tip markers, and pastels were selected for their sensory appeal, ease of use, and range of expressive potential. The materials were non-toxic, age-appropriate, and chosen specifically to facilitate both precision and freedom in creative expression.

The inclusion of a personalised instruction booklet or guide, co-developed with the children, further enhanced the accessibility of the activity. This guide outlined steps for associating colours with emotions and provided prompts and examples to stimulate reflection. By offering a variety of tools and allowing for customisation, the materials supported individual expression styles and learning preferences. This inclusive and child-centred approach contributed to the development of emotional literacy while offering practitioners a deeper understanding of each child’s internal emotional landscape.

4. Method

In this study, a series of structured activities were designed to encourage children to express their emotions through the medium of colour. These activities led to the collaborative creation of a unique emotions dictionary and individualized creative journals. Within these journals, the children recorded their emotional experiences from various daily activities, using colours to represent different emotions. The children were actively involved at every stage, from participating in the activities to the final compilation of their journals. To cater to their individual preferences, a variety of decorative options and crafting techniques were introduced, empowering them to effectively and vividly express their daily emotional experiences.

The study was conducted with two children residing in the Galtee Clinic, a residential care facility in County Tipperary, Ireland. The clinic consists of four houses, each accommodating up to four young people. The participants were selected based on their age, which was deemed ideal for this research. To protect their identities, pseudonyms or initials are used throughout this report. E, an 11-year-old girl from Dublin who has been in care since she was 7, and P, an 8-year-old boy from Limerick who has been in care since he was 7, were the only children in the clinic who met the age criteria for this study.

Before commencing the study, both children were asked if they would like to participate, to which they expressed interest and agreed. Following this, consent was obtained from the house manager and the children's social workers. The study adhered to ethical procedures, including obtaining signed consent forms, complying with the Clinic's and Government's protocols, and ensuring the protection of participants' confidentiality and welfare. All results and findings were anonymized to safeguard the privacy of the participants, and any identifying information was carefully omitted from the final reports.

The "Colour and Emotions" workshop was divided into multiple sessions, each carefully designed to create a safe and supportive environment for the children to explore and articulate their emotions through colour. The initial session focused on building rapport and establishing a comfortable space for the children, where they were introduced to the concept of expressing emotions through colour. Subsequent sessions involved activities where the children used colour to represent their feelings, which were then recorded in their creative journals.

During the workshop, the children were guided to create an "emotions dictionary," correlating specific colours with words and scenarios that reflected their daily experiences. For example, blue was associated with feelings of calmness or sadness, while red represented excitement or anger. The children were encouraged to use these associations in their journaling activities, allowing them to visually articulate their emotional states.

Throughout the study, measures were taken to protect the confidentiality and welfare of the participants. All sessions were conducted in a private setting within the clinic to ensure a secure and distraction-free environment. The children were

reminded regularly that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without any repercussions. The researcher also adhered to strict confidentiality protocols, ensuring that all data was securely stored and only accessible to authorized personnel involved in the study.

The overall design of the activities aimed to create a safe and supportive space, facilitating the children's exploration and creative articulation of their feelings with colour as a central element. This innovative approach played a vital role in fostering not only emotional expression but also in developing a deeper awareness of their emotional states. It is anticipated that this method will significantly contribute to the children's emotional literacy and provide them with practical skills for emotional management, essential for their psychological well-being and personal growth.

5. Results

During the colour discovery stage, children received a three-page personalised guide. The first page, a custom cover, featured their names in capital letters alongside representative images, instilling a sense of importance and recognition by the social pedagogue. This personalised approach supported the empowerment dimension of the Diamond Model, by fostering a sense of ownership and value in the child. The carefully selected visual elements reflected each child's interests and personality, reinforcing their engagement and enhancing the relationship between the educator and participant, thus also contributing to relationship building.

The second page began with a greeting, "Hello..." followed by instructions and a two-column table. On the left, various words (actions, emotions, holidays, etc.) were listed. The right column was for assigning a colour, either written or painted, to each word from their perspective as children. This activity enabled children to explore and communicate emotional associations non-verbally, encouraging holistic learning by connecting cognitive, emotional, and creative expression. By offering both written and painted responses, the task honoured individual learning preferences and allowed for emotional differentiation. This responsiveness to the child's chosen method of engagement reflects both empowerment and well-being, providing them with a safe and accessible way to articulate emotions.

On the third page, their names appeared in the header, explaining the purpose of their responses: to create an emotions dictionary. Additionally, they were asked, "If you were a colour, what colour would you be?" followed by an invitation to draw themselves using the chosen colour. This encouraged introspection and emotional identity formation, central to well-being and happiness, as it provided space for the child to articulate not only their current state but their self-perception. Through this, children began to understand and take ownership of their internal emotional landscape.

In the case of Girl 1, aged 11, she assigned colours to her responses as follows: out of 19 words, red was chosen for ten, blue for three, grey for three, magenta for one, green for one, and a combination of red and green for another. This distri-

bution of colours reflects the complexity and intensity of her emotional experiences. Red, a dominant choice, was linked with strong and often contradictory feelings—sports, family, anger, love, lying, laziness, tiredness, loneliness, nightmares, and affection. Notably, red was also her response to the prompt “If you were a colour, what colour would you be?”

According to Heller (2004) [3], red evokes both positive and negative polarities: courage, love, passion, and initiative on one hand, and anger, hatred, or urgency on the other. Girl 1’s identification with red suggests a profound inner intensity and a heightened emotional sensitivity, which may reflect her ongoing negotiation of identity, typical of her developmental stage.

This intensity is particularly apparent in her views on family and sports. For example, although she trains enthusiastically for Camogie and enjoys the game, she avoids receiving the ball in competition. This reflects an internal conflict—between her desire for achievement and fear of exposure or failure. Here, the relationship building element of the Diamond Model becomes vital: her emotional ambivalence suggests a need for stronger emotional containment and reassurance from trusted adults. Similarly, her deep love for her family coexists with disappointment and sadness when communication breaks down or visits are cancelled. This leads to feelings of anger and loneliness, and at times, rejection of her caregivers, who are not her biological family. These emotional fluctuations reflect her longing for secure attachments and a consistent sense of connection—essential to the Diamond Model’s vision of well-being and happiness.

Blue, which she used to represent sadness, nerves, and fear, is traditionally linked to reason and introspection. Her use of this colour for negative emotions may suggest an attempt to rationalise or cognitively regulate distressing feelings, demonstrating early emotional literacy and reflective capacity—a clear example of holistic learning. Grey was applied to joy, laziness, and tiredness [15]. Brusatin (1987) notes that grey’s duality—between calm neutrality and emotional ambiguity—may reflect the girl’s more subdued or regulated approach to these emotions, which are not necessarily viewed as entirely positive or negative.

Magenta, chosen for boredom, can signal creative potential and inner conflict. Her use of this colour may indicate an awareness of untapped abilities, resonating with the Diamond Model’s emphasis on recognising individual strengths (empowerment). Green, used for happiness, and the red-green combination for Christmas, signal a stable attachment to cultural traditions and moments of joy. These colour choices show how personal and symbolic meaning is attached to events and values, providing a foundation for emotional integration.

In the case of Boy 2, aged 8, his expressive approach differed. He favoured colouring over writing, though he occasionally provided written responses for more precise articulation. Out of 19 words, he assigned green three times, blue four times, brown four times, lilac once, pink once, black once, and red-green for Christmas. For three words, he provided written responses without colour, including “red Liverpool” (his favourite football team) for sports, “giddy” for play-

ing, and “nothing” for laziness. These examples reveal a flexible, intuitive approach to emotional expression and indicate the importance of empowerment, where children choose how they wish to communicate feelings. His ability to express feelings through both colour and language demonstrates an emerging self-awareness and autonomy in emotional processing.

Brown, associated with love, affection, anger, and nightmares, suggests grounded emotional experiences. This colour, evoking nature and comfort but also melancholy, could reflect his desire for safety and predictability—a critical component of well-being and happiness in children who experience residential care. Lilac, chosen for family, conveys imagination, idealism, and calm. This suggests that he holds a hopeful, perhaps idealised image of family, underpinned by a longing for emotional stability. This longing underscores the relationship building aspect of the Diamond Model, where stable and empathetic adult-child relationships support emotional resilience.

His selection of pink for boredom—typically associated with childhood, care, and innocence—may reflect a deeper need for nurturing and a secure environment, which he perhaps feels is lacking. Green, associated with joy, lying, nerves, and excitement, shows how he links this colour with both positive and morally ambiguous feelings. This complexity demonstrates holistic learning, where emotions are understood as nuanced and context-dependent. His use of black for sadness aligns with traditional associations of fear and darkness but also offers insight into how overwhelming feelings can overshadow other emotions—supporting well-being through externalised emotional representation.

Blue, assigned to happiness, fear, tiredness, and loneliness, was also the colour he chose to represent himself. According to colour psychology, blue conveys truth, loyalty, and reflection. This selection may represent his aspiration for stability, trust, and emotional clarity. Choosing a colour tied to both positive and negative states indicates emotional sophistication and a balanced self-concept. This self-selection supports empowerment and holistic learning, demonstrating his capacity to process conflicting emotions with growing maturity.

In **Table 1**, the classification of colours assigned to emotional categories reveals the unique internal frameworks that each child uses to navigate their emotional worlds. The act of constructing an “emotions dictionary” not only offered a method of emotional articulation but also promoted reflective engagement with feelings. This process is a practical embodiment of the Diamond Model in action—linking emotional experience with symbolic representation in ways that facilitate understanding, learning, and growth.

The experience allowed children to visually and cognitively represent their emotional worlds, linking abstract feelings to tangible colours. This created a practical tool for self-reflection and emotional regulation, while also enhancing educator-child relationships by offering insight into each child’s emotional associations. The structured nature of the journal encouraged autonomy and emotional ownership, enabling children to choose how and what they shared, in direct

alignment with the Diamond Model's empowerment principle. By integrating creative journaling into daily routines, educators were better able to identify emotional patterns and respond with greater attunement and empathy—thus reinforcing relationship building and emotional stability in the care environment.

Table 1. Responses to the activity: Use colours or markers, read carefully, and select your preferred colour for each question.

Word	Colour									
	Red	Blue	Green	Brown	light violet	Pink	Magenta	Black	Grey	Other
Happiness		x	x							
Sadness		x						x		
Joy					x				x	
Sports	xx									
Christmas	xx		xx							
Family	x				x					
Boredom						x	x			
Anger	x			x						
Love	x			x						
Lying	x		x							
Nervousness		x	x							
Fear		xx								
Laziness									x	nothing
Fatigue		x							x	
Loneliness	x	x								
Nightmares	x			x						
Affection	x			x						
To Play	x									giddy
Excitement	x		x							

Over the six months following the intervention, the children demonstrated improved capacity for emotional expression, a growing vocabulary for self-reflection, and increased use of the journal as a constructive outlet for navigating everyday challenges. These developments reflect key outcomes associated with the Diamond Model's four pillars—well-being, holistic learning, empowerment, and relationship building—and are consistent with the goals of social pedagogy in fostering meaningful, emotionally attuned educational practices.

Furthermore, this approach shows promise for wider application in both residential and educational settings, including schools and group care environments, where emotional development and behavioural regulation remain critical concerns. With further adaptation, the creative journal model could serve as a valuable tool in supporting traumatised or socially marginalised children, offering a

personalised and culturally sensitive method for building emotional literacy and resilience. Its longitudinal use also suggests potential for tracking emotional development over time, enabling more responsive and preventative interventions in social care and educational contexts.

6. Discussion

Children in foster care often grapple with a wide array of complex emotions due to turmoil and uncertainty in their lives. Structured activities such as the one explored in this study help in identifying, expressing, and validating these emotions, thereby fostering greater emotional awareness and resilience. This aligns with the principles of social pedagogy, which emphasise the importance of creating learning environments that address both cognitive development and the emotional and social needs of children. By integrating the Diamond Model into this approach, the workshop encourages holistic learning experiences and the development of strong, empathetic relationships—factors known to be crucial for the well-being of children in foster care.

However, the implementation of such activities is often contingent upon the approval of each child's social workers, who typically request written justification based on specific criteria. This can result in delays to initiating potentially beneficial interventions. The use of a structured framework like the Diamond Model provides a theoretically grounded justification that can help streamline this process. The model's focus on individual and collective well-being serves as a compelling foundation for embedding emotional education as a core, rather than supplementary, component of care practices.

Creating a secure, non-critical environment where children can express themselves freely provides an inclusive space that respects each child's unique experiences and emotional perceptions. This contributes to the identification of emotional triggers in everyday situations and supports emotional self-regulation. The Diamond Model, with its emphasis on inclusivity and empowerment, aligns well with this goal. Using colour-based journaling, educators and caregivers gain insights into the emotional landscapes of each child, potentially enhancing the effectiveness of emotional support strategies. However, while these insights are meaningful at an individual level, the small sample size in this study limits the extent to which conclusions can be generalised. The findings should therefore be viewed as indicative rather than definitive, with future research needed to explore whether similar outcomes would be observed across a broader and more diverse group of children.

The workshop further supports children in understanding the origins of their emotional responses, thereby strengthening their emotional intelligence and coping mechanisms. This directly addresses the first research question: How does colour-based journaling influence emotional expression among participants? The results suggest that colour enables children to articulate emotions they may not be ready or able to express verbally, offering a valuable alternative form of emotional

communication. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that emotional responses to colour may be influenced by a range of personal, developmental, and cultural factors. The interpretation of colour is not universally fixed; for example, while red may symbolise passion or anger in some cultures, it can represent good fortune or joy in others. These subjective associations highlight the potential for cultural bias in interpreting colour choices, and suggest the need for contextual sensitivity when applying this method in culturally diverse settings.

Emotional management should be considered a fundamental component in the processes of rights restoration for children and adolescents in foster care. Although this study offers promising insights into the benefits of colour-based journaling, its small scale warrants a cautious approach to claiming broader impact. The findings contribute to a growing body of evidence advocating for integrated emotional education in care contexts, yet further empirical work is necessary to confirm their effectiveness in more varied environments. The integration of the Diamond Model ensures that emotional education is not viewed as an ancillary intervention, but rather as a foundational practice supporting the holistic development and psychological resilience of children in care. This reflects the second research question: What role does the Diamond Model play in facilitating this process?

Finally, the study offers a practice-informed perspective on how emotional education programmes can be adapted within foster care settings. By tailoring interventions to each child's emotional needs, practitioners can foster stronger attachments and more responsive caregiving relationships. This supports the third research question: How can these findings inform future interventions in social care settings? While the findings indicate that colour-based journaling has strong potential as a creative and empowering tool, future studies should explore its application with larger cohorts and in varied care contexts to test its consistency and refine its methodology. Cultural adaptations may also be required to ensure that symbolic interpretations remain relevant and meaningful across different social groups. In this way, creative journaling—grounded in social pedagogy and the Diamond Model—can continue to evolve as a flexible, inclusive, and child-centred approach to supporting emotional development in vulnerable populations.

7. Conclusions

Using colour-based journaling, this study found that children were able to articulate complex emotions that they might otherwise struggle to express verbally. The Diamond Model provided a robust framework that emphasised the interconnectedness of well-being, holistic learning, relationship building, and empowerment, all of which were crucial in fostering a supportive environment for emotional expression. These findings suggest that creative journaling is an effective tool for enhancing emotional literacy and resilience in children in foster care.

However, the study was conducted with only two children, which, while offering rich and meaningful insights into individual experiences, presents clear limi-

tations in terms of generalisability. The small sample size restricts the extent to which the findings can be applied to broader populations, as individual differences may significantly influence the outcomes. Consequently, the results should be interpreted with caution, recognising that they may not be representative of the wider population of children in foster care.

Future researchers should consider applying these methods to larger, more diverse samples in order to examine the consistency of the findings across different contexts and to refine the techniques used. Expanding the participant base would also enable more robust statistical analysis and comparative evaluation, contributing to the development of general principles and evidence-based practices.

Additionally, while the research was well-supported by existing theories and literature, it is recommended that future studies continue to explore the integration of colour psychology and creative journaling in a variety of social care settings. This could lead to the development of more tailored emotional education programmes that address the diverse needs of children in foster care, ultimately contributing to improved psychological outcomes and long-term well-being.

8. Theoretical and Contextual Contribution

This research contributes significantly to the existing body of knowledge in emotional education and social pedagogy by demonstrating the applicability of colour-based journaling as an intervention in foster care settings. The study aligns with the Diamond Model's emphasis on well-being, holistic learning, relationship building, and empowerment, reinforcing the role of creative methods in fostering emotional resilience among vulnerable children. By integrating colour psychology and social pedagogy principles, this research expands on previous findings in emotional education, offering a structured approach to non-verbal emotional expression.

From a contextual perspective, this study highlights the importance of inclusive and creative educational strategies in social care environments. In settings where children may experience emotional trauma or difficulty in verbal expression, the findings suggest that visual and artistic tools can serve as effective communication channels. This underscores the need for policy adjustments that incorporate creative journaling as a standard practice within emotional education programmes in foster care institutions. Additionally, the insights derived from this research provide a foundation for further exploration into child-centred, therapeutic, and educational interventions aimed at enhancing emotional intelligence and psychological resilience in children facing social vulnerability.

By addressing these theoretical and contextual aspects, the study not only advances academic discourse but also provides practical implications for educators, caregivers, and policymakers working in child welfare and emotional education.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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