Research

3 SMK Bukit Rangin students create Therapaint, an art therapy innovation to help students' mental health, wins gold at CITREX UMPSA 2025

Thu, 08/07/2025 - 16:39

PEKAN, 3 July 2025 – Concerned with the declining mental health among students, three students from Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan (SMK) Bukit Rangin, Kuantan, Putri Siti Nurshahira Balqis Shazriyana Noriman, Rabiatul Firzanah Rosman, and Aienin Suraya Shahril Abdul Hakim, have introduced an art therapy-based innovation titled Therapaint.

Therapaint won a gold medal in the student category at the Creation, Innovation, Technology and Research Exposition (CITREX) 2025, organised by Universiti Malaysia Pahang Al-Sultan Abdullah (UMPSA) from 18 to 19 June 2025 at the UMPSA Sports Complex Hall, Gambang Campus.

They were guided by the Visual Arts Education teacher at SMK Bukit Rangin, Rizuan Shah Hapipi.

According to Rizuan Shah, Therapaint is an innovative study in the field of Visual Arts Education.

"It focuses on exploring the role of art in students' emotional health and mental well-being, especially for STEM and TVET students who do not have access to Visual Arts Education.

"This module integrates elements of colour psychology, guided freeform doodle colouring techniques, reflection writing activities, and a simple questionnaire.

"Its purpose is to help students express emotions, reduce stress, and build self-awareness through the art therapy painting approach," he said.

He added that in the effort to explore the potential of art as an emotional support medium among students, the study began in early 2025 and was fully completed in prototype form in early June 2025.

"The development phase included the design of the module, field testing with students, and evaluation of its effects on students' emotions and well-being.

"This idea was sparked from observations of the stress experienced by secondary school students, especially those in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) streams.

"A survey was conducted and student feedback indicated the need for an alternative method that was not academic or formal counselling in nature, but still supported emotional needs," he explained.

Based on that survey, Therapaint was developed as an alternative tool to provide emotional support and improve students' mental health.

He further explained that the module is packaged as a toolkit called the Therapaint Box, which contains a guided module set including a questionnaire, three doodle sheets for colouring activities, a colour psychology chart, a brush, a colour palette, colour tubes, and a pen.

“Students can colour according to the provided chart or freely based on their creativity.

“Technical evaluation is done through questionnaires completed after each colouring activity to determine whether the module effectively reduces stress and improves emotional well-being.

“Finally, students are given the opportunity to write a personal reflection through a journal as part of the self-awareness process,” he said.

According to him, the study was developed to make art and science alternative mediums for supporting students’ emotions, especially teenagers facing stress.

“It targets reduced student stress levels, improved self-expression, and the use of visual arts as an inclusive, easily implemented alternative support method that avoids the stigma of traditional counselling.

“This Therapaint Box is also intended for commercialisation for secondary school students nationwide.

“We also hope to introduce Therapaint as an elective module under the Counselling and Guidance Unit, integrate technology into the module for digital production, or incorporate this innovation into school counselling and guidance programmes,” he added.

In addition, he said that to refine the module, they plan to involve psychologists and psychiatrists to strengthen the activities and better define the target users.

“So far, this project has been conducted internally, but is open to collaborations with external agencies such as the Malaysian Board of Counsellors, Ministry of Education Malaysia, State Education Departments, pilot schools, and school Psychology and Counselling Units.

“We are also targeting potential sponsorships through IPTA Educational Innovation Grants or private sector CSR programmes.

“The estimated production cost for one set of Therapaint Box is between RM10 and RM15, depending on the materials and paper size used,” he further explained.

Although it is specially designed for STEM and TVET students, this module remains flexible and can be utilised by all groups.

He also expressed hope that the Therapaint Box can be integrated as part of the emotional support system in schools, either through the Visual Arts subject or existing emotional intervention programmes.

Beyond its role in schools, the module also shows potential for commercialisation to therapy centres, orphanages, and youth rehabilitation centres as a practical and user-friendly self-help tool.

As their first participation in the field of research, he hopes this victory by his students will be a

stepping stone towards greater achievements in the field of educational innovation in the future.

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