

Art Therapy as an Emerging Approach to Mental, Physical and Emotional Concerns: Exploring advantages for its establishment in India

Ms. Spriha Mukherjee¹ Prof. (Dr.) Roopali Sharma² Dr. Priyanka Tiwari³

¹Research Scholar, Amity Institute of Psychology and Allied Sciences, Amity University, Noida

²Professor, Amity Institute of Psychology and Allied Sciences, Amity University, Noida

³Professor & Officiating HOD, Department of Applied Psychology, Manav Rachna International Institute of Research and Studies

Abstract

Art Therapy is a form of psychotherapy that involves usage of art making as a part of therapeutic process to facilitate expression and insight creation on part of the clients during the session. This form of psychotherapy encourages expression and projection of emotions on part of the client in the most non-intimidating and non-invasive manner and hence yields to a safe space of interaction and sharing amongst both the therapist as well as the client. To understand the usage of Art Therapy as an Emerging Approach to Improve Mental, Emotional and Physical Health Concerns, given research study has an objective to reflect upon and understand the potential that art psychotherapy in positively influencing the management or improvement of mental, physical and emotional health concerns. The study is a non-quantitative systematic review comprising of analysis of fourteen studies which were screened out of forty selected studies for review purpose. The studies were selected from the database available of the past ten years to ensure relevancy in results and conclusions derived. Results showed positive significant relationship existing between Art Therapy and Mental, Physical as well as Emotional health concerns such as improvement in mood, symptoms of depression, anxiety and physical pain, induced more relaxation, enhanced self-efficacy etc. The findings of the study supported that hypotheses and hence could be considered as a resource to further support and encourage introduction and implementation of art therapy in India as a standard approach to psychotherapy. Art Psychotherapy or Art Therapy can be referred to as an emerging psychotherapy holding potential to serve mental emotional and physical health concerns.

Key Words: Art Therapy, Mental Health, Emotional Health, Physical Health, India, Emerging Psychotherapy

Introduction

Understanding from the definition of American Association of Art Therapy we can say that Art Therapy is a profession involving integrative mental health and human services with an aim to enrich the lives of individuals, communities and families through the creative activities involved in it. It is a blend of creative processes, applied psychological theory and experiences of human within a psychotherapeutic relationship.

Art Psychotherapy was introduced during 1940s and Margret Naumberg was known as the mother of Art therapy. She had a psychoanalytical approach to her practice. But Edith Karmar had emphasized on the psychodynamic approach to art therapy claiming that process of art making is as important as the product in form of an art work in a given therapy session. During the same era Adrian Hill in United Kingdom was bringing to people's awareness the therapeutic effects of art not only as an Art-Making process, but in terms of visual appreciation of art as well. Even Freud in a lot of his sessions involving dream analysis would encourage his clients to draw and express about their imaginations and visuals if it were difficult to be described alone in words. Interestingly the scope of application has evolved to be counted among not only mental health concerns, but physiological concerns too in various ways. It has been observed to have been able to expand its approach from addressing depression, Anxiety, Personality disorders, Learning disabilities and Dementia, Trauma and Developmental disorders to Cancer, Accidental Trauma, and Paralysis.

It has been in practice in western countries since 1940s while India and some more Asian countries it has slowly started to create its ground. Art Therapy as an emerging psychotherapy holding potential of creating significant positive effect upon individuals.

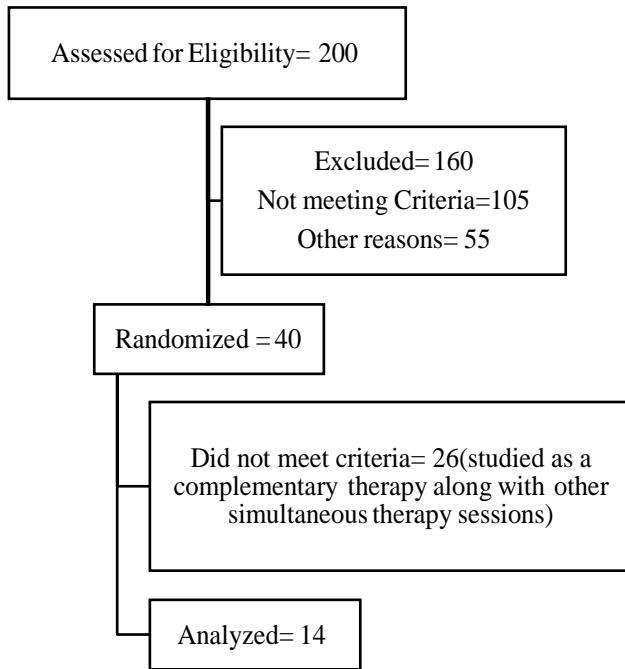
The study is a systematic review of researches that has been done in the area of art therapy among different kind of populations and concerns for the past ten years. It aims to bring to attention the importance of application of art therapy in introducing a positive effect on the participating individual. And intends to thereby create a scope of further research, training and encouragement of practices in the given field.

Methodology:

The given systematic review was conducted as per PRISMA guidelines, to study and observe Art Therapy as an Emerging Approach to Mental, Emotional and Physical Health Concerns, in positively impacting mental, emotional and physical health concerns of individuals, and scope of establishment in India. It was hypothesized that there would exist a positive relation between the effect of Art Therapy and mental, emotional and physical health concerns of individuals. The research articles considered for reviewing were from the last ten years and the key words referred to were "Art therapy" and Therapeutic effect of Art" combined with "Depression", "Anxiety", "Trauma", "Psychosis", "Schizophrenia", "Cancer", "Paralysis", "Autism", "Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder" and "Physical Trauma". The search for relevant articles, research papers and abstract reviews were carried out during the month of June 2022 till November 2022. Major electronic databases were considered for searching relevant content for study and analysis. These electronic databases included Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, Research Gate and PsycInfo.

Total 200 research papers were downloaded out of which 14 research papers were found to be relevant for analysis.

Selection of research studies for review and analysis:



Analysis:

This section deals with the tabular representation of the data reviewed and analyzed based on the selected key words and other criteria, as well as the findings that points towards the positive effects of application of Art Therapy for mental, emotional and physical health concerns.

Table 1. shares the analysis of studies on Art Therapy in relation to Physical, Biological and Neurological health conditions, and Table 2. Art Therapy in relation to Emotional and Psychological Health Conditions (Depression, Stress, Anxiety, Schizophrenia, Psychosis, Trauma and Personality Disorder).

Table 1. Art Therapy in relation to Physical, Biological and Neurological health conditions

Year and Author	Research Title	Findings	Future Implications
2012; Frances Reynolds	Art Therapy after Stroke: Evidence and a need for further research.	addresses emotional, functional and diverse cognitive needs among people. Attention, sequencing, planning and spatial processing seem to improve.	Usage of Quantitative scale can help in gaining more certain results upon the emotional and physical functioning. Qualitative inquiry can be done to understand insights of the stroke patient.
2016.J. Czamanski-Cohen and K.L. Weihs. D	The Body-Mind Model: A Platform for studying the Mechanisms of Change induced by Art Therapy	Art Therapy can be used as a Mind-Body Model as it has unique salutary effects on individuals in relation to their ability to cope with health-related challenges.	Using quantitative tools for analysis of effect of Mind-Body Model of Art Therapy could help in further standardization of the results and methods.
2017, Seung Ho Jang et.al	Effect of Mindfulness Based Art Therapy on Psychological Symptoms in Patients with Coronary Artery Disease	Mindfulness Based Art Therapy intervention can be used as an effective treatment method to improve psychological stability among patients with Coronary Artery Disease.	Large scale research findings in this area can help us understand the scope of application for the given method even better.
2017, Girija Kaimal, et.al	Art Therapist-Facilitated Open Studio Versus Coloring: Differences in Outcomes of Affect, Stress, Creative Agency, and Self-Efficacy.	Improvement in self-efficacy, creative agency and positive affect when participants attended open studio sessions facilitated by the trained therapist.	Studying the effect of coloring and art therapy separately among people based on psychodynamic approach can help with better understanding of the difference in results.
2018, Tamara A.Shella	Art Therapy improves mood, and reduces pain and anxiety when offered at bedside during acute hospital treatment.	Regardless of age it was observed that application of art therapy to patients with severe medical conditions on their bedside showed positive improvements in their level of pain, anxiety and mood disturbances.	The comprised of results obtained more from women than men, hence to explore the standard efficacy of therapy more men should be encouraged to be a part of such research studies.
2019, Yong Tang et. al	Art Therapy for anxiety, depression, and fatigue in females with breast cancer: A systematic review.	Application of Art Therapy among patients with breast cancer was observed to be yielding better results in the level of fatigue, depression and anxiety.	Studies conducted on larger population with longer duration of intervention can help us understand the scope of application even better.

Table 2. Art Therapy in relation to Emotional and Psychological Health Conditions (Depression, Stress, Anxiety, Schizophrenia, Psychosis, Trauma and Personality Disorder)

Year and Author	Research Title	Findings	Future Implications
2015, Vibeke Skoy	Integrative Art Therapy and Depression	Art Therapy can be brought into application for development of different domains of life thereby acting as a transformative approach.	Researches can be encouraged based on the concepts explained in the given book to establish such approach at a standard level.
2016, Debra Kalmanowitz and Rainbow T.H. Ho	Out of our Mind. Art Therapy and Mindfulness with refugees, political violence and trauma.	Combined application of art therapy along with meditation sessions can help people deal with traumatic experiences by enhancing level of resilience, safety and sense of support among them.	Mindfulness based art therapy sessions can explore combining art therapy with yoga, transcendental meditation and other mindful practices too.
2017, Deepali Bedi	Efficacy of Art Therapy in Treating Patients with Paranoid Schizophrenia	Art Therapy can be a good intervention to improve among those with schizophrenia their communication pattern and rapport formation during therapy processes.	Studies on reflection of self among those with schizophrenia can be done based on the idea of exploring ways to deescalate psychotic symptoms.
2017, Batya Swift Yasgur	Art Therapy as an Intervention for Psychosis	Art Therapy helps in enhanced level of understanding of self and others, emotional expressions and insights and communication ability among those with clinical health issues.	Detailed study on willing to create meaning of art work in relation to self-development can be explored as an existential approach.
2018, Suzanne Haeyen et.al	Efficacy of Art Therapy in Individuals with Personality Disorders Cluster B/C: A Randomized Controlled Trial.	Art Therapy can help in enhancing self-regulation among those with personality disorders by reducing maladaptive behavior patterns among them.	Application of Art therapy integrated with Dialectical Behavioral therapy can be studied as an approach to help those with personality disorders.
2018, Oyindrila Basu	Role of Art Therapy in Curing Psychosis	Participation in art therapy sessions helps in releasing of serotonin in the brain of an individual's having psychosis as color selection influences positively their mind functioning.	Color therapy and art therapy integrated approach can be explored as an intervention.
2018, Jacqueline Jones. P, Melissa Walker S, Jessica Drass Masino and Girija Kaimal	Art therapy Interventions for Active Duty Military Service Members with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders and Traumatic Brain Injury	Art Therapy could help in the processing of traumatic experiences by encouraging externalization, identity integration and self-expression.	Further studies on impact of art therapy on the caregivers of Active Duty Military service members with PTSD and Traumatic Brain Injury can help us with deeper highlights of its efficacy.
2019, Kathryn Kost	Fostering Creativity for Healing: A Literature Review on the use of Art Therapy and Mindfulness with Traumatized Adults	Application of Art Therapy intervention helps individuals in coping with trauma experiences by enhancing resilience, better emotional regulation and acceptance towards traumatic experiences.	In reference to exploring the window of tolerance of an individual towards trauma, art therapy can be surveyed as a tool of developing healthier coping skills.

Discussion and Conclusion:

The given research study has a qualitative approach as it comprised of review of studies which had qualitative research data backed by test scores for more accurate interpretation of results. The selection of studies comprised of interventions, case studies, systematic review of other quantitative studies and experiments. Structured and detailed abstracts as well full research papers have been considered of the past ten years to obtain scientific and authentic understanding on the efficacy of application of art therapy among people. The idea of conducting the given research study emerged as intention to introduce in India a psychotherapy complimenting the Cure as well as Prevention Model in the area of Mental Health. Art Therapy or Art Psychotherapy is still at an emerging stage and better progress in its visibility of application can be made only upon substantiating its efficiency in generating promising results.

Art Therapy has been found to be useful in addressing depression, anxiety, trauma, personality disorders as well as neurophysiological concerns like brain stroke. It has been found helpful even among the population psychosis which has been given focus in this study for some important observations. Given the understanding of how the level of insight among those with psychosis tends to be at a challenging level, if application of art therapy can help in introducing positive impact to their development and management, then in cases with insight it shall act as a transformative tool holding tremendous potential of improvement. It has been observed to be an effective measure to help individual rehabilitate their maladaptive behaviors.

Some of the benefits as well as important points to be noted for its administration can be observed through this systematic review analysis such as the role of art therapy in working as a Mind- Body Integration tool. How it can only be administered by a trained art therapist and not by those interested in art or is an artist as it is like any other psychotherapy involving psychotherapeutic ethics in play. Art Therapy can be used to address emotional, cognitive and behavioral concerns. Mindfulness Based Art Therapy interventions can be considered as an approach applicable to all concerns ranging from physiological conditions leading to psychological issues, as well as psychological conditions affecting physical health, art therapy is applicable on all age group, holds various therapeutic properties which itself holds potential of generating scope for exhaustive research work, like coloring, material usage, duration etc. Further it holds compatibility in terms of being integrated with any other therapy or medication process. Participation of more men in such studies could help break many stereotypical barriers to creative therapies among male population. Art Therapy acts as a transformative tool for self-development of an individual. It is effective in therapeutically treating Depression, Anxiety, Personality Disorders, Developmental Disorders and Psychotic disorders. In case of severe clinical cases shall serve as a complementary therapy along with medication such as schizophrenia. Also, art therapy helps with externalization of emotions, enhancing expressions, coping with trauma and developing resilience among individuals. Longer duration of application of Art Therapy based intervention can be helpful in generating more standard improvement among participating individuals as well as helps in addressing adaptive behaviors thereby being a tool to be considered for behavior rehabilitation. With more application, better results can be observed for study and hence such practices should be encouraged.

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