

Art Therapy & Care of Individuals

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ABSTRACT

Background

Art therapy is extensively documented, yet it needs to be introduced in India, especially for senior individuals with health concerns, be it mental or physical. Research states that art therapy can aid the elderly who are home-bound because of physical handicaps or any other medical problems in the home setting. This paper discusses new research and clinical efforts involving creativity in older individuals, as well as prior work that might be developed as creative treatments for the elderly population in India.

Purpose

This study aimed to explore the effectiveness of art therapy interventions for the elderly population in India.

Method

A search for the most relevant sources was executed from Medline, PsycInfo, Scopus, and Web of Science databases. The key search words were “art therapy,” “elderly care”, “effectiveness”, “treatment”, “outcomes”, and “interventions”. The search included those articles published as old as 1990 and later. A total of 3050 articles were identified. The results of the screening processes yielded n =13 sources which were incorporated into the study.

Results

The findings support the notion that art therapy is beneficial in treating a wide range of symptoms, social classes, and diseases. The FGD revealed that participants had difficult experiences at the start of therapy, but that they eventually learned to manage and discovered that the VAT was relevant and useful to their psychological and cognitive health. Moreover, personalized intervention programs with a time restriction, such as 10 to 12 weeks, are the best way to keep older people in exercise programs and improve their mental health.

Conclusion

Art therapy is no just a supplement to psychotherapy; rather, it is becoming increasingly vital in assisting persons living with various forms of dementia to maintain their creativity. When compared to physical treatment alone, imaginative art therapy paired with traditional physical therapy can dramatically reduce depression, enhance physical functioning, and improve quality of life.

Recommendation

As the population ages, the number of community clients will increase; hence, it is necessary to analyze the application of

art therapy from various perspectives and in a variety of settings. The current study suggests the need for future studies to focus on creativity as a means enhancing wellbeing, especially, among the elderly.

Keywords: Art therapy, expression, elderly, are, positive aging, painting.

Art Therapy & Elderly Care

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Depression is common among the elderly, and it has a severe influence on their health and quality of life. Depression can cause a lack of interest, trouble focusing, suicidal ideation, negative self, pessimism, and shame, in addition to affecting mood by manifesting itself as sorrow, dissatisfaction, anxiety, or impatience.¹ Psychomotor retardation, irritability, weeping, social isolation, clutching, and contemplated suicide are common behavioral manifestations of depression. According to nursing homes, 25% to 40% of its patients experience depression, which is more frequent among women. On the other hand, the physical and mental deterioration that comes with this illness, can be slowed down with effective diagnosis and treatment.

1.1 ELDERLY CARE

In India 2020, around 67.27 percent of the Indian population was between the ages of 15 and 64, while 6.57 percent were over the age of 65. With the general population aging, there is an increased need for services tailored to the unique needs of older adults. Art therapy images can educate us about significant life events and serve as a tool for expression and healing.² Art therapy may be a helpful way to alleviate the symptoms of various disorders that commonly affect older adults.

1.2 ART THERAPY

Art therapy is also referred to as alternative therapy. It is a type of treatment in which the major mode of expression and communication is via art. Art is not used as a diagnostic tool in this setting but as a means of confronting complex and painful emotional challenges. It is a psychosocial competency assessment instrument that, when delivered, has the potential to improve participants' overall well-being.

Art therapists work with children, adolescents, adults, and the elderly. Clients present with a range of difficulties, limits, and diagnoses. These may include challenges with emotional, behavioral, or mental health, learning or physical disabilities, life-threatening conditions, neurological disorders, or medical illnesses.

Depending on the client's needs, art therapy can be offered in groups or one-on-one. While the meetings are sometimes enjoyable, this is not a recreational activity or art instruction. Clients are not required to possess any prior knowledge or expertise in the subject matter.

1.3 EFFECT OF ART THERAPY ON THE BRAIN OF AN INDIVIDUAL

Art therapy influences a part of the brain that standard "talk" therapy does not, and this type of therapy can be quite beneficial in resolving a wide variety of issues. While it is essential to explain and analyze sentiments, speech is intellectual and may contribute to the divide between concepts and feelings. People can describe their feelings rather than truly experience them. When they engage the right half of their brains, the creative side, they are liberated from the need to explain and can feel more deeply. Creating something demands the use of the body and naturally elicits bodily sensations.

1.4. ART THERAPY AND COGNITION

Art therapy, for example, promotes creativity and productivity while also improving cognitive abilities and mental well-being. Even seriously handicapped people can uncover new capacities for knowledge via the creative process.³ Art therapy strengthens cognitive orientation, physiological well-being, fine motor development, tolerance of lifestyle change and loss, remembrance, and socializing skills while achieving these goals. The significance of the work is focused on the task's purpose rather than the actual outcome.

1.5. MEDICINE, HEALTH, AND REHABILITATION

For a long time, hospitals have been significant incubators for the area of art therapy. Medical model ideas such as assessment, illness, and medication have had a significant impact on the formation of most psychotherapy schools of thought, including art therapy.⁴ AIDS, allergies, injuries, cancer, substance addiction, trauma, TB, and other medical and rehabilitative requirements have all been managed by art therapists. The relationship between biochemistry, mental health, and imagination is still evolving, and a modern treatment specialty called art therapy has recently developed.⁵ All of them suggest that art therapy will remain to play a role in examining the relationships between the conscious and unconscious.

1.6. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

The purpose of this paper is to explore the effectiveness of art therapy interventions for the elderly population in India. This study uses a range of interventions and media to see whether art projects allow seniors to find serenity and happiness and make creative decisions reminisce, increase self-esteem, improve socializing skills, and reduce sadness, isolation, and anger. As the seniors' mental attitude changes, the art therapy sessions can enhance their health and wellbeing.

2.0 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

To identify the success of the art therapy approach and its applicability to the elderly in India, a systematic review of academic journals in the field of art therapy was conducted for this study. Wald maintains that the relationship between biochemistry, mental health, and imagination is still evolving, and a modern treatment specialty called art therapy has recently developed⁶. All of this suggests that art therapy will remain to play a role in examining the relationships between the conscious and unconscious. Despite their shared history, there are differences between the evaluation methods used in psychology and those employed in art therapy.

The major distinction is that art therapy believes that producing and seeing art has intrinsic therapeutic value for the client, whereas psychometricians do not necessarily believe this. A study conducted by Masika et al. shows that the risk of dementia development is higher among older individuals with moderate cognitive impairment (MCI) and no literacy. It is uncertain whether this demographic can benefit from visual art therapy (VAT) and see improvements in cognition and mood. In a group of community-dwelling older individuals with MCI, a pilot combined single-blinded systematic review was undertaken. Participants experienced difficult experiences at the start of treatment, but they were able to manage later on and discovered that the VAT was meaningful and useful to their psychological and cognitive health, according to the findings.⁷ This pilot study revealed preliminary evidence that VAT can improve the behavioral and motivational well-being of older individuals with MCI and limited literacy, as well as insight into how to effectively engage them in this cognitively demanding intervention.

Because art therapy allows for expression and communication, it can be especially beneficial for older adults who have difficulty expressing their thoughts and feelings through other therapeutic methods.⁸ An art therapist can create a safe space for a patient to express deep feelings that may not be vocal. Art therapy may be beneficial for older adults as the images they create can be sequential and thus depict change through time. Art therapists can assist older adults in establishing connections to generate solutions in life.⁹ It can also open a channel of contact with the befuddled elderly person that words alone cannot.¹⁰ Weisberg and Wilder quote octogenarian sculptor Edna Eckert in their book *Expressive Arts with Elders*: "I believe creative people have long lives because we are always reinventing life; what we created yesterday, we create again tomorrow." Hope is inherent in this process¹¹.

Art therapy provides an unparalleled chance to assist elderly people in engaging in the creative process to enhance communication, control emotions, and engage in the life review process. It facilitates social connection, provides a sense of control and choice, promotes physical and mental health, and serves as a vehicle for nonverbal assessment. It enables persons to be seen and heard in a nonverbal manner and provides an alternate mode of communication for those with language impairments. According to Drucker, art therapy can also be used to communicate missed chances and make sense of past life situations.¹¹ Art therapy contributes to older adults' psychodynamic knowledge, particularly concerning bereavement.¹⁰ Additionally, it can aid someone who is dying with grace and dignity. According to a study conducted in a nursing home, art therapy utilizing pottery increased psychological well-being and decreased depression.¹² Sezaki and Bloomgarden define art therapy as a means of enhancing life in a paper offering two case studies of home-bound art therapy for elderly adults.¹³ While both of these articles are valuable, their technique is limited.

Case and Dalley emphasize the critical nature of maintaining a consistent environment during therapy. This may not be possible at all times.¹⁴ In these instances, the art therapist must establish appropriate limits and continue to focus the intervention on the images produced (14). Regardless of the

location, art therapists must design an art therapy atmosphere that includes physical space and high-quality resources.¹⁵ Hyland-Moon established a therapeutic space in the family kitchen for a young male client, illustrating the realities of home-based art therapy practice. Bell claimed that when working with clients who have cancer in their homes, the environment might stimulate the therapeutic process¹⁶. Bell also emphasized the need for art therapists to collaborate with and learning from other professions in the community. Sezaki and Bloomgarden concurred, identifying the necessity for art therapists to acquire new roles and responsibilities.¹³

Following a study of the art therapy literature, it was discovered that several studies are descriptive and incorporate art therapists' narratives detailing their practices. Research by Jardim et al. shows that it is critical to examine the numerous changes that occur as a result of aging, such as physiological, mental, and cultural shifts.¹⁷ These alterations may have a direct impact on neurocognitive functions, lowering the demographic's quality of life.

The maintenance of functional ability and autonomy is linked to the elderly population's wellbeing.¹⁸ The scholars posit that controlling frequent health issues in this age range necessitates health promotion programs. Such acts assist older individuals to cope with the restrictions or ailments they may face by providing a more optimistic outlook on their personal and social lives. Protecting the intellect and reducing its degeneration requires activities that engage the sensory, intellectual, and motor skills of older individuals. These activities help the mental and cognitive faculties to be maintained, resulting in a higher quality of life in old age.

According to Leuty et al., participation in creative activities may be beneficial to those with dementia.¹⁹ These individuals, on the other hand, may face some difficulties in various jobs for various reasons, including a lack of motivation to contribute in an engagement and a lack of capacity to self-engage in a task. Many of these constraints might be solved with the use of computer-based technology, which can provide an interactive framework that encourages involvement in art activities as well as a method for tracking participants' levels of engagement. This method might be utilized for both therapeutic and diagnostic reasons in a therapy environment. A study by Ezell shows that for the elderly person, expressive therapies overall, and art therapy in specific, can provide mind-body integration, consciousness, and life review.²⁰

Art therapy groups for senior citizens have been found to improve quality of life and social connectivity, stimulate remembering, control emotions of cognitive and behavioral decline, relieve stress, reduce loneliness, and provide physical and mental stimulation. Art therapy groups, in particular, are appropriate for clients with anxiety because of the structure of the modality, which enables the consumer to creatively express an emotion that may be difficult to describe verbally and provides a way of repression for these feelings. On the other hand, Shella argues that anxiety is common in severely sick people since it is compounded by emotions of insecurity, dread of the unknown, and biological parameters such as increased adrenaline and cortisol that frequently precede hospitalization.²¹

Art therapy may help with anxiety reduction not just by using thoughtful and calming art materials, but also by creating feelings of connection and comfort through the triangle interaction between the art, the art procedure, and the art therapist. Making art with older people can help healthcare staff and families view and appreciate the older person as a resource rather than a liability. Art may also help older individuals realize their full potential in later years while also challenging younger people to reconsider what is achievable in later life.²² Due to a series of losses, many older individuals develop sadness and/or panic later in life.

Making art may boost morale and enhance mood by allowing older adults to gain a new perspective on past issues, reflect on the positive aspects of their lives, and make them feel better with current challenges. Making art in a care and holding situation may provide a positive focus, pleasant sentiments, and meaningful interaction for the older adult. Rawtaer et al. established that Art therapy has a strong record in psychiatric treatment, but it has received less attention in late-life sadness and anxiety.²³ The production of an art piece and the following storytelling of inner feelings and ideas are usually the two components of art therapy. An RCT investigating the benefits of art therapy on healthy aging in elderly persons discovered that it decreases intense behaviors and anxiety while also increasing self-esteem.

To improve the quality of life of elderly adults, art therapy is widely used. Individuals benefit from it in the treatment of physical diseases like Alzheimer's, as well as emotional ones like trauma.²⁴ Because art therapy has previously been used to address difficulties linked to health and wellbeing, the researcher felt that when applied to social concerns, art therapy might provide advantages such as greater contact, peer support, and a better feeling of personal wellness. Dunphy et al. also discovered that internationally, creative arts treatments, such as painting, dance movement, theatre, and music, are used to treat depression and mood disorders in older individuals.²⁵ Interventions led by certified art therapists and other healthcare and arts professionals are included.

Because of higher life expectancy and lower fertility, the number and share of older individuals in the population have grown in nearly every country throughout the world in recent decades. Additional treatments are utilized in therapeutic practice to improve the success of panic disorder medication.²⁶ According to the researchers, art therapy (AT), for example, is used in a variety of mental health treatment programs for persons with anxiety and is also available as a stand-alone solution. Although AT is seen as a crucial supportive intervention for those suffering from mental disorders, there is presently no consensus on its effectiveness. AT employs fine arts such as painting, sketching, sculpture, and clay modeling as a medium. The emphasis is on the process of creating and (related) experiencing, to make it easier to communicate recollections, emotions, and feelings, enhance self-reflection, and learn and practice new coping strategies.

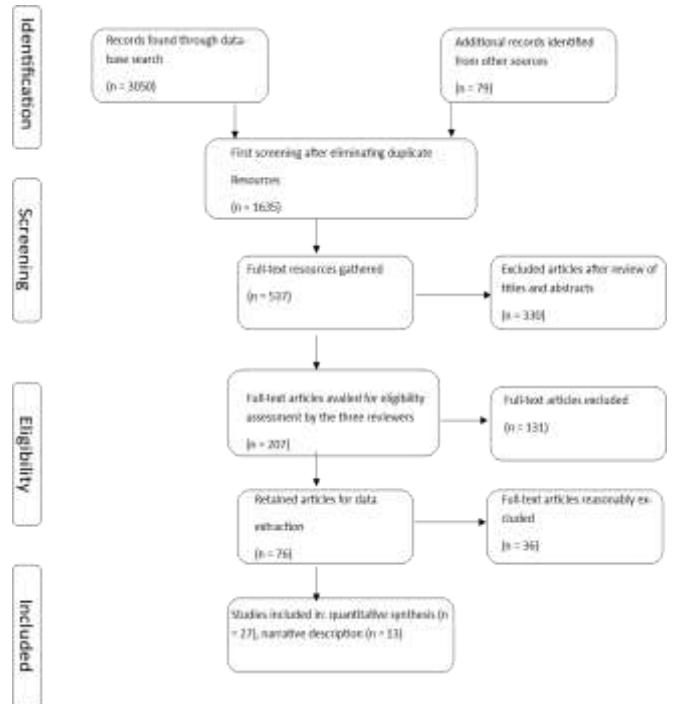
According to Edwards, the goals of art therapy often change depending on the needs of the people with whom the therapist works.²⁷ As the therapy partnership progresses, these demands may vary. For one individual, art therapy may be focused on

facilitating them to keep a crayon and leave a splash, thereby creating new ways of providing form to initially unstated feelings; for another, it may be focused on simply sharing and discover an emotional difficulty through the establishment of pictures and discussion. Psychotherapy has been used to treat a range of mental illnesses from the dawn of time; it became well-established during the Freudian era when the word "psychotherapy" was invented.²⁸ Until the introduction of medicines and other somatic treatments, psychotherapy was the sole therapeutic option accessible to psychiatrists and psychotherapists for almost a century. People went to psychiatric providers for two types of problems: those that seem to have their origins primarily in the distant past, and those that appear to come largely from present pressures, both internal and external.²⁹ In dealing with the previous, psychoanalysis became the favored method, while in coping with the latter, a variety of alternative therapies arose, some of which were highly innovative and smart, and took considerably less time than the traditional psychoanalytical method.

Art therapy has been shown to enhance the senses, elicit latent memories, and promote dialogue. Through the advantages that result from utilizing the visual arts to convey inner feelings and communicate with others, employing art therapy in treatment for seniors increases well-being and social connection.³⁰ Psychological treatments can assist older individuals by participating in therapeutic activities that target specific difficulties and requirements, such as boosting issues with self and accomplishment and lowering depressed and negative feelings.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

A search for the most relevant sources was executed from Medline, PsycInfo, Scopus, and Web of Science databases. The key search words were "art therapy," "elderly care", "effectiveness", "treatment", "outcomes", and "interventions". The search included those articles published as old as 1990 and later. The vast scope for the resources search was because the primary interest was to get articles that were most relevant and accurate without much emphasis on recency. Besides, there are just a few studies on "art therapy" thus prompting the research to increase the scope of search to obtain adequate relevant resources. At the initial screening stage, a total of 3050 articles were identified. Two reviewers working independently screened the articles based on their eligibility. The results of the screening processes yielded n =13 sources which were incorporated into the study. The search strategy and screening process are shown below.



The sources were selected based on three eligibility criteria. First, the reviewers considered the quantitative assessment of effectiveness of art therapy on the population studied. As such, studies whose methods, qualitative analyses and literature review did not meet these criteria were removed. Secondly, the reviewers assessed the unique impacts of art therapy on the sample population studied. Therefore, studies that used a combination of interventions other than art therapy were omitted. Lastly, reviewers considered the context of therapy among elderly people, and so, case studies that were off this context were eliminated.

Therefore, studies that met the criteria were reliably considered to portray "effectiveness" of art therapy among the elderly population.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The articles express how vital art therapy is in improving the lives of the elderly population. Art therapy is effective in a range of therapeutic settings, including hospitals, schools, clinics, and private practice. Art therapy employs integrative ways to engage the mind, body, and soul.³¹ This treatment technique incorporates additional modalities in addition to verbal articulation. Elderly adults may have a particularly difficult time verbally expressing themselves. While promoting their artistic, emotional, and spiritual growth/development, the art therapist will respect their perspectives, beliefs, and values.

Art activities, in particular, are appropriate for older adults who have difficulty expressing themselves since they allow them to express their emotions and may help with the process of individuation, which is critical for older adults to achieve well-being. Art enables people to examine personal issues without relying on verbal communication, thereby assisting them in coping with symptoms, stress, and traumatic situations in their lives. The FGD revealed that participants had difficult experiences at the start of therapy, but that they eventually learned to manage and discovered that the VAT was relevant and useful to their psychological and cognitive

health. This pilot study by Jardim et al. revealed preliminary evidence that VAT can improve the biological and behavioral well-being of older individuals with MCI and limited literacy, as well as insight into how to better involve them in this cognitively demanding intervention. During the practice session, therapists showed little or no fear of using the ePad appeared to be able to set up and activate the system quickly, and said that personalizing ePAD was simple. In future trials, however, therapists should seek a substantial amount of assistance from the researcher, stating that navigating setup and post-trial setting changes were inconvenient. This view did not appear to change throughout the research, but given that there were only five tests (held weekly), it may fade with further exposure. The type of content, age, sex, or illness had no significant impact on the outcomes, and the race was excluded in the demographic data. This shows that independent of other circumstances, art therapy can affect mood, anxiety, and pain.²¹

Art therapy has been proven to reduce pain, tension, and mood in early tests, albeit not in an inpatient setting or when the subjects were not grouped. The overall effect of these psychosocial prevention programs on depression and anxiety symptoms can be favorable.³² However, in the personal intervention phase, favorable increases in SDS and SAS scores do not approach predictive value in all groups. This might be due to lower attendances during the combo period. It is conceivable that seniors who are feeling better are less motivated to attend sessions, which influenced the symptom scores at 24 and 52 weeks. It may also imply that personalized intervention programs with a time restriction, such as 10 to 12 weeks, are the best way to keep older people in exercise programs and improve their mental health.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recent evidence now supports the notion that all humans are creative. Additionally, research demonstrates the importance of keeping creative to maintain our well-being and quality of life. The ability of older adults to be creative, despite health concerns such as dementia, is part of a growing knowledge that individuals can retain their creativity throughout their lives, provided they have the opportunity to do so. Dr. Gene Cohen coined the tagline "Potential beyond difficulties" to encapsulate the concept of "positive aging."

Art therapy is no just a supplement to psychotherapy; rather, it is becoming increasingly vital in assisting persons living with various forms of dementia to maintain their creativity. Whereas spoken words "disappear," paintings and poems persist as tangible artifacts that can be discovered repeatedly.

Art therapy places a premium on the creative process, on the idea that creating an image (whether in pictures or words) reveals something about the individual.

Self-expression improves self-esteem and enables those suffering from various types of memory loss to communicate their emotions. Although empirical research on art therapy is currently sparse, what is known attests to its therapeutic usefulness. According to research conducted in the United Kingdom, 40 sessions of art therapy may be sufficient to create significant improvements in mood and cognition in adults with dementia. Apart from dealing through sadness, rage, and annoyance with one's brain being "fuzzy" or "not right," creating images can become an important and fulfilling means of interacting with people, feeling valuable, and enjoying profound pleasure. As a result, in the future decades,

health concerns affecting older individuals are anticipated to contribute significantly to the global health burden.

Art therapy works, as artists and others with real-world experience intuitively know. On any given day, they may believe that art therapy was the catalyst for a client's progress. When art therapy is the greatest answer for a client or works in the same manner for another client, their viewpoint limits out alternative options. As a result, providing evidence of the efficacy of our preferred treatment for the elderly in India is critical. Many individuals are interested in the success of a client's therapy; most significantly, the clients themselves ought to know that the art therapy intervention they are receiving has been demonstrated to help them overcome the problems they are facing. Given the complex clinical challenges of the twenty-first century, it may be disheartening to work in the field of art therapy without a constant reminder that the occupation not only has value but also produces actual progress in the areas where clients are struggling.

Evaluation of outcome studies that have clearly over time, as well as greater effectiveness studies, in the long run, should be used to continue to develop the discipline. Many elderly individuals feel alone as their peers, friends, families, and social settings fade away as they age. When compared to physical treatment alone, imaginative art therapy paired with traditional physical therapy can dramatically reduce depression, enhance physical functioning, and improve quality of life.

Art may act as a social connector, reuniting the older adult in India with relatives and allowing them to meet new acquaintances. With group artwork with peers, exchanging art with family, and engaging in group fine art, the elderly persons in India can improve social connections. Creating art may also be a person's greatest legacy as they get older. They may act as role models for new generations and conserve and pass on their ideas, opinions, and life stories via creating art. Therefore, this review is a tiny step toward better understanding how art therapy may help with diverse difficulties and which aspects of the art therapeutic encounter contribute to beneficial outcomes among the elderly individuals in India. There has been conjecture and preliminary research regarding the use of art therapy with older adults living in their homes. As the population ages, the number of community clients will increase; hence, it is necessary to analyze the application of art therapy from various perspectives and in a variety of settings.

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