

Music Therapy and Mental Health

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ABSTRACT

Music therapy is a therapeutic process in which music is used to address various physical, spiritual, cognitive, social, and emotional needs of individuals of all age groups. Music plays an important part in the everyday lives of individuals belonging to all age groups. It allows one to express who and what they are as human beings. It helps in revealing those feelings which were buried deep inside. It has been inoculated with healing and therapeutic value all through history. It is used all over the world in the form of therapy because of its healing property. There is a strong link between music therapy and mental health. Mental health is defined as our social, emotional, and psychological well-being. It is a state in which a person realizes his or her capacities and can handle normal stresses in life. Many adult populations and even kids and teenagers are suffering from mental health issues. However, only a few of them receive the treatment because of the discrimination and social stigma which acts as a barrier to mental health. Music therapy has a great influence on mental health. It helps in alleviating both physical and mental pain and also acts as a medium through which negative emotions such as anger and hostility can be released more acceptably. It also plays a key role in improving anxiety and stress by reducing stress hormones such as cortisol. Moreover, it helps people suffering from other disorders such as addiction, personality disorders, PTSD, and many more.

Keywords: *Music Therapy, Music, Mental Health.*

“Music is powerful. As people listen to it, they can be affected. They respond”. - Ray Charles.

Music is regarded as the core function of our brains. It can access as well as activate the areas of our brain. Moreover, it can intensify and optimize the brain. It has a great impact on our lives and it also improves our immune system. Moreover, it helps in relaxing the mind and energizes the body. Whenever we listen to our preferred music, chemical hormones are released in the brain called dopamine which helps in promoting happiness and pleasure. We all know that music has various positive effects on mood and mental health and it also increases the efficiency of the processing of our brain. Many doctors around the world are using music in the form of therapy to heal their patients and clients. It is a therapeutic process and it helps in improving the quality of life of an individual and also treats several medical and mental problems. This therapy helps in

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processing emotions and trauma. Moreover, it helps in improving the self-confidence and self-concept of an individual.

Music therapy is very effective for treating people suffering from mental health issues such as depression, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, etc. According to Our World in Data (2018), 792 million people are living with mental health disorders and these disorders are convoluted and in many forms. Researches have shown that music therapy is a feasible and useful method of treatment for mental health issues and disorders and it was also reported that patients after this treatment have experienced a huge improvement in their moods, as well as their symptoms, which were also reduced. This therapy is excellent and safe for all ages of people. Moreover, it is very helpful for those individuals who are suffering from trauma or children with ASD or old age people with Alzheimer's disease.

The sessions in music therapy take place either in one-to-one sessions or in groups, depending upon the needs of the patient. Music therapy acts as a stress and anxiety reliever. Moreover, it also helps in increasing energy levels and alleviating pain. According to de Witte, Pinho, Stams, Moonen, Bos & van Hooren (2020), music therapy is frequently used as an intervention for reducing stress in the medical and mental healthcare settings. When there is a stress reduction, the levels of cortisol hormones also reduce, and the heart rate is also lowered. Music therapy helps in the promotion of well-being and also in the distraction from the pain in the patients. It decreases anxiety as well as pain related to surgery. It may increase caregiving behavior (Kemper & Danhauer, 2005).

Mental health problems are on the rise among all age groups over the past decade. Many people are going through depression and because of the social stigma, nobody takes it seriously. When people experience death or loss of loved ones, events of trauma, or abuses such as emotional, physical, or psychological, it can cause depression. According to Maratos, Crawford & Procter (2011), evidence showed that music therapy helps in improving the mental health of people suffering from depression. They suggested that active-making music provides the patients a chance for aesthetical, physical, and relational experiences. Researches have shown that music therapy additionally with standard care helps in improving the mental state and social functioning of the patients suffering from schizophrenia if they are provided with a sufficient number of sessions of music therapy (Gold, Heldal, Dahle & Wigram, 2005). It was concluded that music therapy may have a healing mechanism that helps in reducing the symptoms and improving the functioning of individuals suffering from trauma and PTSD (Landis-Shack, Heinz & Bonn-Miller, 2017). Music therapy has shown a significant decrease in the level of anxiety in people suffering from eating disorders (Bibb, Castle & Skewes McFerran, 2019). Different types of music can be used for therapy such as blues which helps in lowering down the heart rate of anxious clients and helps in making them feel calm. Listening to reggae can be helpful for those people who are suffering from anger management issues whereas punk and rock help in boosting the energy levels of the individuals. For people suffering from psychological issues, classical music can have an uplifting and calming effect. Research has shown that listening to soothing types of classical music for a longer time can help in reducing tension and nervousness among college students suffering from stress (Chi, 2020). According to Esfandiari & Mansouri (2014), research has shown that listening to light and heavy music helps in reducing the levels of depression among female students. Moreover, it can also be used in the form of therapy in psychiatric hospitals or individually for decreasing the symptoms of depressive disorder.

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Music Therapy

According to the American Psychological Association (2020), music therapy is the use of music as an adjunct to the treatment or rehabilitation of individuals to enhance their psychological, physical, cognitive, or social functioning. It involves singing, writing music, performing music, listening to music, and lyrics analysis, among other techniques.

Music therapy, an allied health profession is the clinical and evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship by a credentialed professional who has completed an approved music therapy program (Wikipedia, 2021).

Several basic principles of music therapy reflect through mental health recovery. Moreover, music therapy helps in building up the strengths and capacities of clients in mental health recovery (McCaffrey, Edwards & Fannon, 2011). Among different genres of music, rock music, in particular, provides adolescents the chance to express and share themselves feelings of anger, rage, grief, and longing. It also delivers them the chance to experience closeness and isolation and also grants them to explore their sexual fantasies and feelings (Tervo, 2001). In music therapy, the use of lullabies which included listening, lyric interpretation, etc. helps in improving the bonding between the infant and the mentally ill mother. Moreover, it decreases maternal distress, and therefore the physiological signs of chronic stress in the baby also decrease. Overall, there's an increase in relaxation (Friedman, Kaplan, Rosenthal & Console, 2010).

Mental Health

Mental health should get the same priority as physical health does but nowadays humans are very much focused on keeping their physical bodies healthy. They are unaware of the fact that there is a deep connection between the mind and the body. How we think can affect our feelings and how we feel can affect our thinking. If we have negative attitudes and feelings then it can lead to stress which damages our immune system. Whereas if we have positive thoughts and feelings then it will lead to an optimistic, healthy life and may help us to live longer.

According to the American Psychological Association (2020), mental health is a state of mind characterized by emotional well-being, good behavioral adjustment, relative freedom from anxiety and disabling symptoms, and a capacity to establish constructive relationships and cope with ordinary demands and stresses of life.

According to World Health Organization, mental health is defined as “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and can make a contribution to her or his community (Wikipedia, 2021).

Stigma acts as a barrier for those people seeking help for their mental health problems (Clement, Schauman, Graham, Maggioni, Evans-Lacko, Bezborodovs, Morgan, Rüsçh, Brown & Thornicroft, 2014). The reason for poor mental health can be due to health and development concerns in young people, low educational achievements, substance abuse, or violence (Patel, Flisher, Hetrick & McGorry, 2007). According to Belle (1990), because of low income and low socioeconomic status, there is an increase in the rates of mental health problems. Proper attention must tend to the psychological state risks that go alongside poverty.

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Music therapy can contribute to the standard of psychological state care by providing an arena for stimulation and development of strengths and resources which will contribute to the expansion of positive identity and hope for people with the mental disease (Solli, Rolvsjord & Borg, 2013). According to Edwards (2006), when patients with major depressive disorders were subjected to music listening for over two weeks, it was observed that their depressive scores were reduced.

Studies have shown that music helps regulate mood, restoring well-being, and promoting emotional self-regulation in adolescents (Saarikallio & Erkkilä, 2007).

Research has shown that music therapy was found to be a great medium that helps in stabilizing and improving the quality of life of young adults suffering from mental illness and alcohol/drug abuse (Bednarz & Nikkel, 1992).

According to Wang, Wang & Zhang (2011), music therapy is effective in reducing depressive symptoms and helps in improving mental health levels among college-going students. Studies have shown that when passive music listening is used as an additional therapy to regular treatment, it helps in reducing obsessions and compulsion severities in patients suffering from obsessive-compulsive disorder (Abdulah, Miho Alhakem & Piro, 2018).

According to de l'Etoile (2002), group music therapy helps in reducing psychiatric symptoms related to anxiety in patients suffering from mental illness and also helps in improving their attitudes towards seeking help and openness about their problems. Evidence has shown that music therapy is very effective in treating mothers suffering from postpartum depression. It helps in alleviating depression and it also helps in improving the pain, sleep, and satisfaction of mothers with postpartum depression. Moreover, it is safe and cost-effective than the standard treatment and it is also an effective intervention and should be promoted (Yang, Bai, Qin, Xu, Bao, Xiao & Ding, 2019).

Suggestion

Although the demand for music therapy is expected to rise still many people are not aware of this field. Only a handful of colleges and universities are providing music therapy as a course ranging from certificate to doctorate level. It is suggested that people should be made aware of the benefits of music therapy and it should be introduced as a proper course in the universities of every country so that the people do understand that what music therapy is all about.

In today's world, many human beings are negligent towards their mental health. And even though there is awareness about it but still people don't have proper clarity about why it is important to be mentally healthy. Maximum people are dependent on medicine which leads to addiction and harmful side effects. So, it is suggested that music therapy should be incorporated more in the treatment of mental health problems as it is side-affect-free and helps in self-expression and boosting mood. And it is also suggested that people should educate themselves and others about mental health and its disorders, talk more openly about it, and also support people and take a stand against discrimination to reduce stigma related to mental health.

CONCLUSION

Mental health is essential for living a healthy and happy life. It affects our feelings, thoughts, and behavior and also plays an important part in our decision-making process. Many people are not exposed to the issues of mental health even though there are treatments and awareness about it. The recognition of mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, PTSD, etc., and the importance of its awareness is limited so it is important to take care of our mental health and promote its issues and disorders. Music therapy has become a trending form of treatment for mental health issues. It helps in forming connections with our subconsciousness and brings emotions that were buried deep inside. It also helps in improving communication, social interaction, self-concept, and self-esteem. Music has the power to excite the reward centers and bring out positive emotions in the brain and that's why it is used as a form of therapy in improving the symptoms of mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, etc. This form of therapy provides other benefits too such as calming effect, lowered blood pressure, and also happiness and pleasure by releasing dopamine hormones.

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Conflict of Interest

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