

Research Paper

Artistic Bridges to Emotional Cohesion: An Action Research on Children's Social-Emotional Development

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ABSTRACT

The research studied the role of Arts Based Therapy (ABT) in expanding the range of self-expression of clients and its effect on their self-image, confidence and social-emotional adjustment. The study was conducted on a group of 6 children (all boys) affected by the pandemic between the age of 10 and 12 years. The data for the study was collected using ABT Tools, Observation formats (Rating Scales – filled by other observers) and Video Recording of sessions. The results show a significant improvement in the assessed domains with an average growth of 20% for the group. There have been obvious shifts in the clients' abilities to express themselves (verbally or non-verbally). The method of the arts has helped the clients share personal stories and find integration and experience a sense of belongingness with the group. From the results it can be inferred that Arts Based Therapy can be used as an effective intervention strategy to help children who are affected due to pandemic gained confidence and have an enhanced self-image, resulting in better social-emotional adjustment with their environment. It has also opened up interesting possibilities of non-verbal art forms (visual arts, dance) providing an impetus to expressive capabilities.

Keywords: *Arts Based Therapy, Emotional enhancement, Self-expression empowerment, Children, Pandemic effects, Social adjustment, Behavior adjustment*

The COVID-19 pandemic is affecting children's health, social life, and overall well-being worldwide. Things like schools closing, social distancing, and staying at home can cause problems for children. They might not get enough good food to eat, and they might see or experience violence at home. This can make them feel worried and stressed. They might also not be able to get important services they need.

More people are using the internet for school, which can help, but not everyone has what they need to learn well at home, like a good place to study or the internet. Some kids are spending more time online, and that can lead to problems like bullying and people trying to hurt them.

The pandemic has been going on for a while now, over a year and a half. During this time, many kids are facing challenges like changes in their behavior and not being as interested in

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Artistic Bridges to Emotional Cohesion: An Action Research on Children's Social-Emotional Development

school. They're also spending a lot of time with screens and not moving around as much. This can be bad for their health.

Even though kids might not be getting sick from the virus as much, the effects of the pandemic on them can be really serious. Things like eating problems, feeling sad all the time, and fights in families can happen. Also, because kids are spending so much time with screens, they might become more aggressive, using mean words or even hitting.

Parents are worried about how their kids are acting and not being interested in school. When we watch kids, we can see that they're not very good at showing their feelings in a good way. They need to learn how to do that, and they can do it by being creative and understanding how others feel. If they don't, they might not get along well with their family, friends, or others. This can make them feel alone and very sad later on.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, the relationship between education and children's health has gained recognition, leading to a shift in the perception of schooling as not only an academic environment but also a critical platform for addressing children's overall well-being. With children spending a substantial amount of time at school, the educational setting has emerged as a crucial space for identifying and intervening in children's problems, both for treatment and prevention. Against this backdrop, the integration of arts therapies within the educational system has surfaced as a potential avenue to cater to the evolving needs of children and fostering positive impacts on their well-being.

The study conducted by Moula, Powell, and Karkou (2020) aimed to investigate the effectiveness of arts therapies interventions on various outcome measures related to children's health and well-being. Employing a pilot cross-over randomized controlled design, the research examined child- and teacher-reported measures, encompassing health-related quality of life, well-being, life functioning, emotional and behavioral difficulties, and sleep duration. The intervention, informed by a systematic review of school-based arts therapies interventions, demonstrated a pluralistic theoretical and therapeutic framework.

Results of the study revealed promising outcomes, as engagement in arts therapies interventions was associated with greater improvements in health-related quality of life and life functioning when compared to control groups. Particularly, the intervention showcased a positive effect on children's quality of life, with a notable emphasis on addressing life functioning, which encompasses interpersonal relationships. By illuminating the potential of arts therapies to positively impact children's well-being and quality of life, this study underscores the significance of integrating creative therapeutic approaches within educational settings to address the multifaceted needs of children.

The unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic has drawn attention to the potential adverse effects on children's mental health, necessitating the development of preventive strategies and interventions to mitigate its impact. This is particularly relevant within the context of school settings, where children's mental well-being is closely intertwined with their learning experiences. Amidst this backdrop, art-based therapies have emerged as a potential avenue to enhance children's well-being and alleviate psychological distress.

Artistic Bridges to Emotional Cohesion: An Action Research on Children's Social-Emotional Development

Malboeuf-Hurtubise et al. (2020) conducted a pilot and feasibility study to explore the impact of online emotion-based directed drawing and mandala drawing interventions on mental health among elementary school children during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through a randomized cluster design, the study compared the effects of both interventions on child anxiety, depression, inattention, and hyperactivity symptoms.

Results indicated that the emotion-based directed drawing intervention had a significant effect on reducing inattention levels, showcasing its potential to mitigate attention-related challenges. Moreover, sensitivity analyses revealed decreases in hyperactivity levels for the overall sample, emphasizing the potential benefits of both interventions in improving mental health among elementary school children.

The study's findings not only underscore the potential of art-based interventions to positively influence children's mental well-being but also highlight the feasibility of delivering these interventions online and remotely, even within the constraints of the pandemic. While this pilot study provides promising insights, future research incorporating larger samples and longitudinal data will be essential to establish the long-term impacts of these interventions on children's mental health within the evolving educational landscape.

Hypotheses

- a) Arts Based Therapy (ABT) is expected to significantly enhance participants' effective expression of emotions and thoughts through artistic skills, while also facilitating the exploration of adaptive coping strategies for the ongoing COVID-19 situation.
- b) Arts Based Therapy (ABT) is anticipated to notably improve participants' focus, attention, and concentration levels. This is particularly relevant due to heightened academic demands, including assignments, presentations, and projects, which have led to challenges in task completion.

METHODS

Eligibility criteria for client & control group

Demographics of the group:

Age	10-12 years
Gender	Male
Background	Behaviour and emotional concerns due to the pandemic situation. Difficulty managing impulsive behaviour in unfavourable and challenging situations with siblings, cousins, and peers
Other relevant info	Most participants are familiar with each other as they are from the same vicinity.

Logistics

Pilot Phase

Pilot Sessions Timeline and Duration:

The Pilot Phase began on August 28th and ended on October 20th, during which I conducted two to three sessions every week. A total of 15 sessions were held. Each session lasted approximately 70 to 85 minutes.

Artistic Bridges to Emotional Cohesion: An Action Research on Children's Social-Emotional Development

Setting: The pilot sessions were conducted at my house in a well-lit and ventilated hall area. While the available space is smaller, movement has become somewhat restricted. However, there are no time constraints at home.

Action Research Project:

Action Research Sessions Timeline and Duration:

The Action Research Project began on November 29th and concluded on March 4th, during which I facilitated two sessions every week. A total of 24 sessions were conducted. Each session lasted approximately 70 to 85 minutes.

Setting: The sessions for the action research were also conducted at my house in a well-lit and ventilated hall area. Similar to the pilot phase, the space was smaller, which somewhat restricted movement. However, there were no time constraints at home.

Data sources & data collection protocols

While a majority of the parents have not granted permission for video recording, they have allowed the collection of photographs and audio recordings. The clients' work samples will be retained to track their progress and changes throughout the action research. To discern any advancements, an impartial observer will be engaged for the assessment of ABT Tools before and after the intervention.

Observation Formats

A questionnaire will be developed for the neutral observer to fill in when he comes to observe the client. It will be filled by her in the first week of action research, and on last week of the research.

Name of the test	Filled by	Frequency	Administration schedule
Social-Emotional Skills	Facilitator, Observer	Twice	First and Last week of Action Research
Child Behavior Scale	Facilitator, Observer	Twice	First and Last week of Action Research
Questionnaire	Parent	Twice	First and Last week of Action Research
Standardized test			
Reactive-Proactive Aggression Questionnaire	Client	Twice	First and Last week of Action Research
Moss Attention Rating Scale	Parent, School Teacher	Twice	First and Last week of Action Research

ABT Tools (To be filled by the Facilitator):

Objective	Name of the Test	Frequency	Administration schedule
To study their expressive ability through artistic skills	Comparison of Drawings & Paintings	Thrice	First week, mid and last week of Action research
To analyse the development of recognizing the emotions in oneself and self-identify the ways to deal with that emotion.	Simulated Task: Color your feelings	Thrice	First week, mid and last week of Action research

METHODS USED

Over the course of the past eight months, encompassing both the pilot project and the subsequent action research phase, the primary focus of this study has been on utilizing diverse art forms to empower the client group. This empowerment has been manifested through the exploration of their boundaries and the cultivation of confidence, ultimately working towards the achievement of individual therapeutic goals within a collective environment. The therapeutic role of arts becomes particularly pronounced as it offers a non-threatening avenue to reach milestones that might have previously seemed unattainable.

The Pilot Project, consisting of 15 sessions conducted from August to September 2021, initiated the study. During this phase, participants were evaluated using the WCCL-designed Rating Scale (General Assessment). Analysis of scores across different domains led to the identification of individual and group goals for the therapeutic intervention. Notably, the key areas that emerged for the study group were Mindfulness, Group Interaction, and Communication (Expressive and Narrative Capabilities).

The Session Record Sheet (SRS) format was meticulously adhered to for documenting each session. This served a dual purpose: tracking the progress of each session and providing feedback to the facilitator, thus enabling refinement of subsequent session plans (see Appendix C for SRS Summary).

The chosen client group was exposed to an array of artistic forms, including visual arts, body and movement, rhythm, voice, theatre, and interactive games. Throughout the study, the group displayed positive responses to these sessions, which were harnessed to assess advancements in Narrative and Expressive Capability, Group Interaction, Self-Image, Emotional Comprehension, and Working Memory.

Visual Arts: Diverse mediums such as paints, crayons, sketch pens, and clay were employed at various intervals. The group exhibited considerable interest in these visual art sessions.

Body and Movement: While initially needing encouragement to engage, participants eventually found enjoyment in movement sessions, which included dance, embodiment, mirroring, and movement to music.

Rhythm: Drumming sessions were a prominent feature, also serving as a non-verbal expressive outlet. Participants' innate connection to rhythm yielded intriguing observations, with individual expressions manifested through drumming, body tapping, and vocalizations.

Voice: Vocal sessions, involving breath work, warm-ups, singing, and chanting, stood out as highly enjoyable and engaging.

Theatre: Theatre sessions encompassed role-play, dressing up, and simple story enactment. They effectively prompted participants to attempt verbal expression while utilizing various props.

Games and Exercises: Group games and interactive exercise sessions fostered engagement and collaboration. Incorporating participants' movement suggestions into exercise drills, coupled with music, added a dynamic element.

Artistic Bridges to Emotional Cohesion: An Action Research on Children's Social-Emotional Development

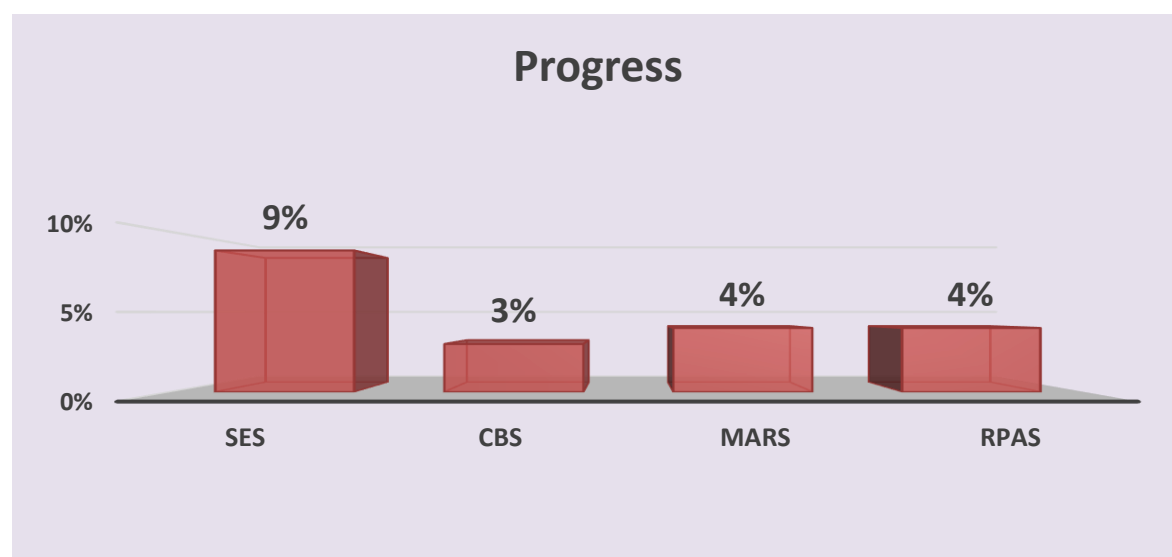
Data analysis was undertaken using the ABT tools tailored for this action research. These tools scored the group's therapeutic goals, encompassing various artistic skills, with evaluations carried out by the ABT facilitator. Furthermore, rating scales gauging "Language and Communication Skills" and "Social-Emotional Skills" were devised. These scales were assessed by both the ABT facilitator and another teacher working with the group, with average values being considered. Additionally, Observation Formats (Rating Scales) were administered to parents/caregivers, covering language, communication, social-emotional development, daily activities, and self-awareness.

RESULTS

The application of Arts Based intervention for the client group throughout the project duration, along with the subsequent analysis of the collected data, has yielded the following outcomes:

- An evident and positive trend is observed in the scores, reflecting an overall improvement across various capabilities and therapeutic domains.
- The utilization of diverse observation tools and rating scales has resulted in an average score increase of 20%. Notably, the most substantial score enhancement is observed in the Social-Emotional scale. The rise in scores recorded on the ABT tools is also aligned with advancements in attention and social-emotional skills.
- The graphical representation highlights a notable upward shift, attributed to the spontaneity of engagement and growing familiarity with artistic skills. Importantly, these shifts serve as indicators of increased confidence, evolved group dynamics, and enhanced self-expression.
- The collective progress of the group is evident through a significant transformation in utilizing drawing and painting as a means of expression, signifying a considerable shift in their creative engagement.

In conclusion, the Arts Based intervention has not only influenced observable improvements in various dimensions but has also contributed to internal transformations, fostering enhanced confidence, harmonious group interactions, and more profound modes of self-expression.



DETAILED RESULTS

Client A

a. Family Background

Client A, a 12-year-old student in grade 7, has both an elder sister, aged 14, and a younger brother, aged 8. The mother is a homemaker, while the father manages a small restaurant. Concerns have arisen regarding the child's behavior, as he demonstrates a consistent inclination towards using mobile phones and watching television. The family primarily communicates in Urdu and Hindi. They reside in a reputable housing society.

b. Input from Academic & Rehabilitation Teacher

Client A exhibits a strong fondness for sports and games, both indoor and outdoor. His preference leans towards cricket and football for outdoor activities, while he enjoys engaging in carrom for indoor games. He maintains commendable academic performance and has been attending the same school for three years. He actively participated in physical activities prior to the pandemic-induced shift to online classes. However, in the current virtual learning environment, he appears distracted, often missing classes. Formerly attentive in a classroom setting, he now tends to stay muted during online sessions and responds with uncertainty when questioned. Despite reminders, he struggles to submit homework on time.

c. Medical Background

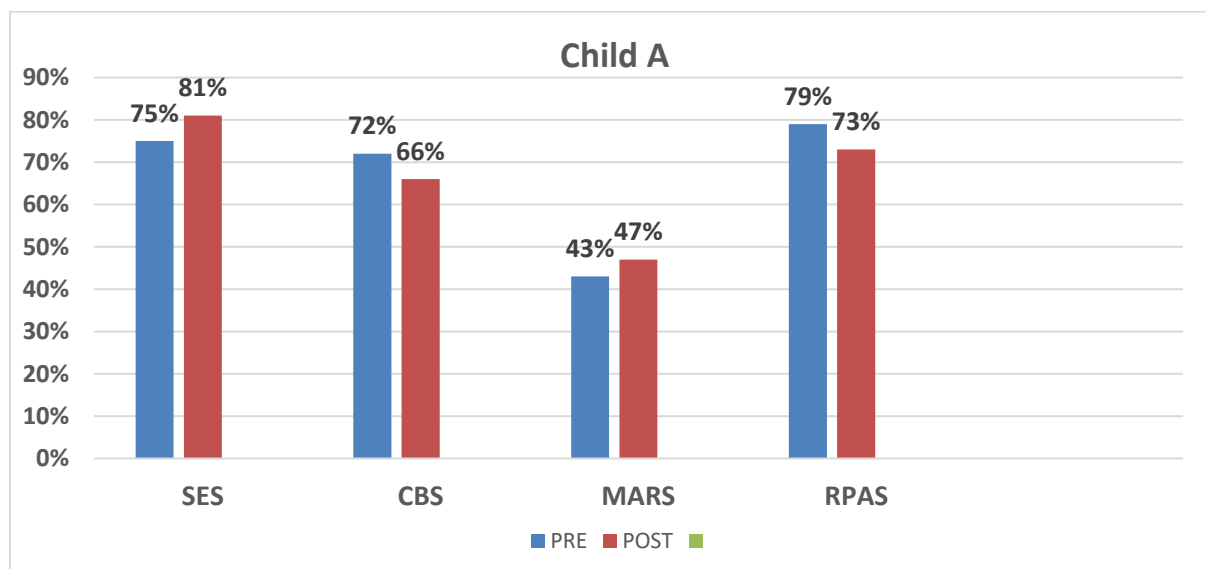
No known medical history or diagnosis is present.

d. Behavioral Concerns

The primary concern area revolves around Client A's social interactions with peers and siblings. It is imperative for him to acquire appropriate coping strategies for challenging situations.

Results

Client A exhibited positive responsiveness to the various art-based interventions. Notably, there was a favorable upward trajectory in scores across all observation formats. These score improvements align with ratings gathered through triangulation, encompassing inputs from parents, the ABT facilitator, and another teacher.



Artistic Bridges to Emotional Cohesion: An Action Research on Children's Social-Emotional Development

Interpretation

The shifts observed in the assessments demonstrate a noteworthy correlation with group dynamics and changes in social-emotional aspects. These shifts not only reflect a growing familiarity and competence in artistic skills but also point to the effective addressing of therapeutic needs through the artistic medium. This includes the cultivation of mindfulness, improved impulse control, heightened self-awareness, and the development of empathy. Evidently, the client has exhibited substantial advancement within the social and emotional domains.

The recorded scores incorporate evaluations from both the facilitator and an additional observer, a factor that aligns with the observed score increments on ABT tools. Moreover, the outcomes from parent questionnaires also highlight encouraging developments, particularly in areas related to reduced aggression and enhanced behavior control.

Comparisons of Artworks

A possesses a vibrant imagination and excellent fine motor dexterity, enabling him to effortlessly engage with various visual art mediums.



Simulated task



Comparison of drawing and painting

Client B

a. Family Background

Client B is a 12-year-old student in grade 7. He shares his family with an elder brother, aged 15, and a younger brother, aged 10 (Client C). The mother is a homemaker, while the father holds a managerial position in a corporate company. Urdu and Hindi serve as their mother tongues. The family resides in a joint family setup within a building.

b. Input from Academic & Rehabilitation Teacher

Client B derives enjoyment from outdoor sports such as running, football, and badminton. While he maintains an average academic performance, he actively participates in physical training classes. His association with the school dates back to his kindergarten years. However, transitioning to online classes has posed challenges. He reportedly becomes distracted approximately 50% of the time, leading to difficulty concentrating on the subject matter. This has consequently impacted his academic achievements, resulting in lower

Artistic Bridges to Emotional Cohesion: An Action Research on Children's Social-Emotional Development

scores compared to his previous performance. Online participation appears minimal when juxtaposed with the engagement he displayed in a physical classroom environment.

c. Medical Background

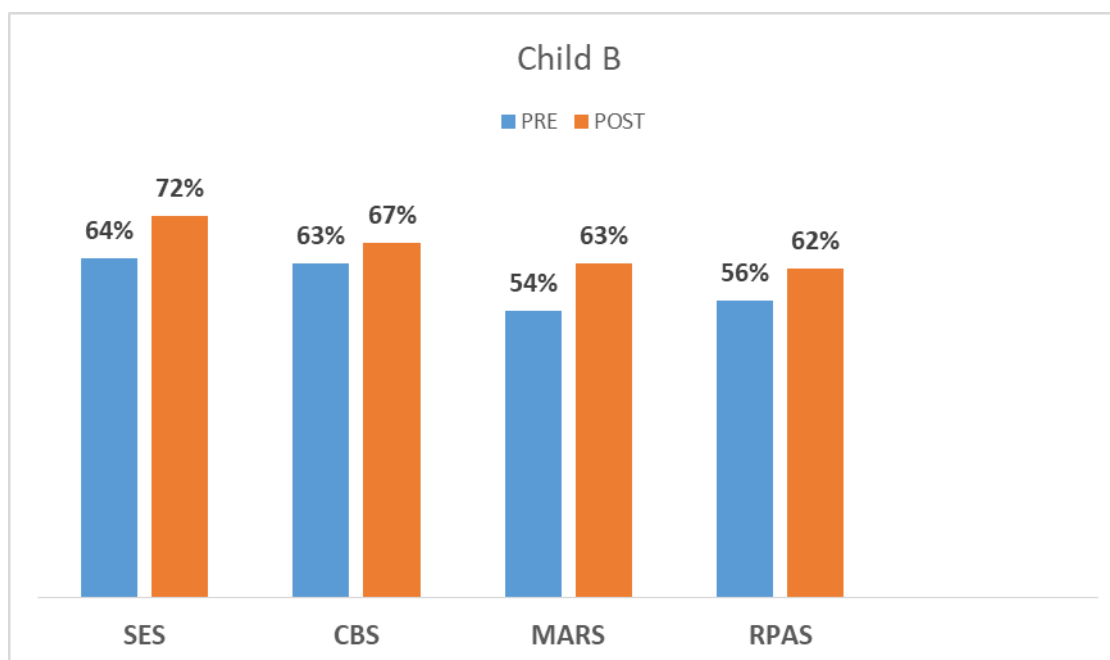
No known medical history or diagnosis is present.

d. Behavioral Concerns

The central area of concern pertains to emotional expression. While Client B tends to be quiet and yielding in the presence of dominant individuals, his behavior takes a different turn at home. Here, he exhibits anger and frustration by slamming doors, physically engaging with his sibling, and even resorting to throwing water.

Results

Client B has embraced ABT interventions positively, showcasing notable progress in attempting verbal expression, particularly in Hindi. His most significant transformation lies in self-expression through various art forms, particularly theater and drawing/painting. Notably, his immersion in the artistic process has fostered enhanced group interaction and empathy, leading to a more inclusive engagement within the arts context.



Interpretation:

- The client has exhibited a positive shift across all therapeutic domains, signifying a favorable response to the artistic interventions employed. This trend is visually illustrated through the accompanying graphs.
- Notably, the intervention targeted enhancing Expressive Capability, yielding notable progress across its various facets. This encompasses improved utilization of communicative vocabulary, descriptive language, and even attempts at humor without any negative implications.
- Expressive Capability has also surfaced as a result of engagement in games, exercises, and theater activities, further highlighting the comprehensive impact of the intervention.

Artistic Bridges to Emotional Cohesion: An Action Research on Children's Social-Emotional Development

- It is noteworthy that the scores documented on the ABT tools align with similar improvements observed in other rating scales that gauge behavior, social interactions, and emotional skills. This correspondence implies that the benefits accrued during ABT sessions extend beyond the confines of the artistic setting, manifesting in observable improvements in various facets of the client's life.

Comparisons of Artworks

Client B exhibits a keen interest in visual art sessions. Engaging with paints, he orchestrates vibrant splashes of color on paper, often using his hands and fingers to create distinctive effects. The creation process, in this case, lacks specific direction. Remarkably, these artworks tend to elicit personal narratives from him, enabling him to express himself more openly and authentically when discussing his artistic compositions.



Simulated task



Comparison of drawing and painting

Client C

a. Family Background

Client C, an 11-year-old enrolled in grade 6, has two elder brothers—one aged 15 and the other, aged 11 (Client B). The mother's role is that of a homemaker, while the father holds a managerial position within a corporate company. The family communicates primarily in Urdu and Hindi. Their residence is situated within a joint family setting within a building. The mother has expressed concerns regarding his exhibited tantrums at home, noting instances of aggression towards his siblings and cousins.

b. Input from Academic & Rehabilitation Teacher

Client C is characterized as outgoing and talkative, displaying a preference for spending time with both friends and siblings. His inclination towards asserting control over others, influencing them according to his convictions, has led to his assignment to leadership roles. These responsibilities encompass monitoring the class, assisting teachers, and being designated as a team leader. He has been an integral part of the current school since a

Artistic Bridges to Emotional Cohesion: An Action Research on Children's Social-Emotional Development

younger grade. However, the extended period of pandemic-related school closures appears to have impacted his mood, resulting in increased instances of despondency. During online classes, he tends to resist discussions related to studies, homework, and assignments, often resorting to tantrums. He has also demonstrated a proclivity for requesting videos during classes and asking for hints during examinations, particularly for longer answers.

c. Medical Background

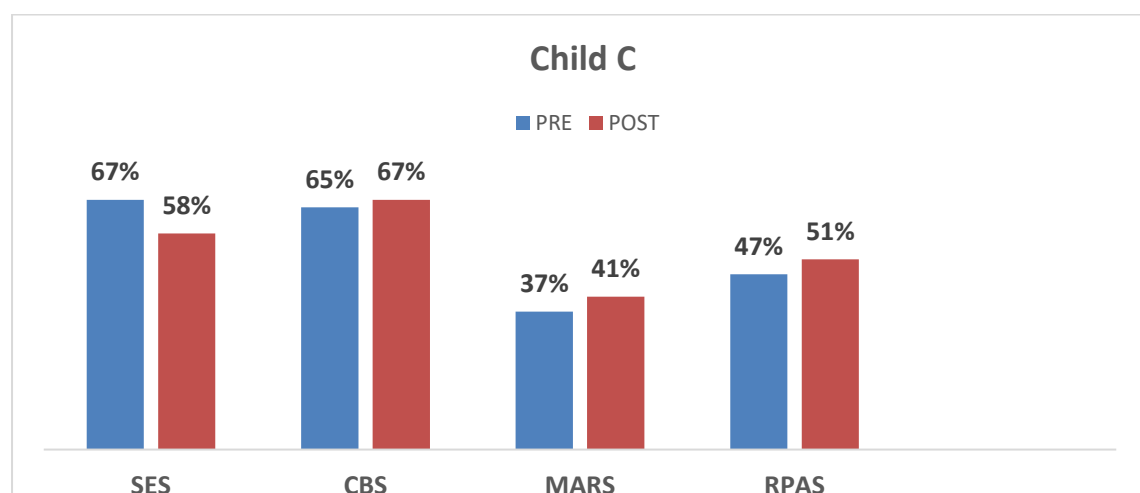
No recorded medical history or diagnosis is present.

d. Behavioral Concerns

The core area of concern revolves around Client C's social interactions with siblings and cousins. Addressing this concern involves providing him with a support system to channel his emotions and feelings in a suitable manner. Additionally, he requires guidance to cultivate a habit of channeling internal disturbances creatively through the utilization of artistic mediums.

Results

Client C enthusiastically participates within the group, actively engaging in a variety of activities. Notably, he exhibits a distinct fondness for visual arts and theater, where his spontaneous expressions are readily evident. Over the duration of the action research, notable advancements have been recorded in terms of attention, behavior, and expressive capabilities.



Interpretation:

- An evident shift is observable in the ratings, aligning effectively with the established therapeutic objectives for the client. Positive alterations have been noted in expressive capabilities as well as reductions in aggressive behaviors.
- Qualitative advancements are evident in the comprehension of emotions and the ability to assert oneself within group dynamics. Notably, the client displays an enhanced capacity for expression, particularly through painting and drawing.
- Throughout the project duration, significant progress has been witnessed in the client's overall Social-Emotional skills. Remarkably, these improvements extend beyond the confines of ABT sessions, as reflected in the pre and post-test scores across corresponding rating scales.

Artistic Bridges to Emotional Cohesion: An Action Research on Children's Social-Emotional Development

- Parent observation questionnaires have highlighted a discernible positive shift in aggression, social interactions, and behavior skills. These findings harmonize seamlessly with observations from the online classroom context and the client's interactions at home with siblings.

Comparisons of Artworks:

Client C exhibits a distinct penchant for working with paints. He also demonstrates enthusiasm for coloring within predefined shapes and figures. Notably proactive, he frequently seeks assistance in generating ideas for his drawings. While his visual art skills may be somewhat limited to lines and colors, his engagement with theater-like dramatic activities showcases notable competence. Importantly, C possesses the ability to articulate his thoughts concerning the creations he produces.



Simulated task



Comparison of drawing and painting

Client D

a. Family Background

Client D, a 10-year-old enrolled in grade 5, is situated within a nuclear family structure. His three elder sisters are aged 12, 14, and 16. The mother fulfills the role of a homemaker, while the father is engaged in real estate business. The family predominantly communicates in Urdu and Hindi. They reside in a cooperative society.

b. Input from Academic & Rehabilitation Teacher

Client D is characterized as an interactive student within the classroom environment. He possesses a strong fondness for listening to and reading stories. Engaging in class activities is a source of enjoyment for him, particularly structured artistic tasks involving geometric shapes, symmetry, and stencil paintings. His association with the current school spans four years. However, the transition to online classes has led to challenges. He tends to exhibit reduced attentiveness during concept delivery and frequently disrupts the class with inquiries unrelated to the topic at hand.

Artistic Bridges to Emotional Cohesion: An Action Research on Children's Social-Emotional Development

c. Medical Background

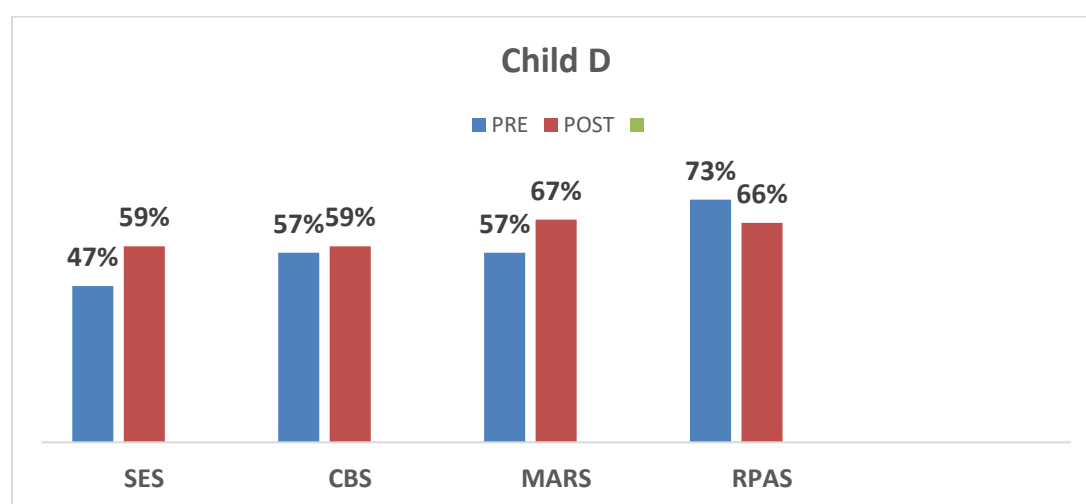
No recorded medical history or diagnosis is present.

d. Behavioral Concerns

Client D's primary area of concern lies within attention and focus. His affinity for mobile and laptop gaming applications tends to divert his attention away from more constructive pursuits.

Results

Client D has participated in ABT sessions, although his involvement has been somewhat limited. The ensuing graphs provide an illustration of his journey throughout the ABT action research phase.



Interpretation

- The client's performance across ABT tools reflects an upward trajectory. His seamless integration into arts-based interventions, observed through active participation in sessions, is noteworthy. Remarkably, the advancement in expressive capabilities surpasses the progress recorded in behavior skills. This suggests a heightened comfort level with non-verbal modes of expression, contrasting with verbal forms.
- Notable progress is evident in Client D's exploration of non-verbal avenues for expression. He has exhibited an inclination to engage with diverse art materials during sessions centered around visual arts and theater.
- A slight enhancement in scores is observed across Behavior Scales and Social-Emotional Skills rating scales. Client D has notably strengthened his connections with both his peer group and the facilitator, demonstrating improved social interactions.
- The outcomes from parent questionnaires underscore positive transformations within the social-emotional domains.

Comparisons of Artworks:

Client D showcases a mild reluctance toward exploring various art materials. His preference gravitates towards watercolor paints, albeit with a tendency to limit his material choices. In drawing and painting endeavors, he commonly fuses colors to create unique combinations.

Artistic Bridges to Emotional Cohesion: An Action Research on Children's Social-Emotional Development

Painting emerges as a favored medium, surpassing other art forms in appeal. Impressively, the client adeptly follows activity instructions, showcasing independent capability in crafting paintings.



Simulated task



Comparison of drawing and painting

Client E

a. Family Background

Client E, a 10-year-old enrolled in grade 4, shares his familial space with an elder sister aged 15, and two younger sisters aged 7 and 1 respectively. The mother is dedicated to homemaking, while the father manages a stationary shop within their local vicinity. The parents have expressed concerns regarding the child's behavior, notably his inclination to spend excessive time on mobile phones, engage in gaming, and indulge in cartoon watching. Urdu and Hindi serve as the family's primary languages of communication. They reside within a respectable housing society.

b. Input from Academic & Rehabilitation Teacher

Client E emerges as a lively and responsive student, demonstrating a particular affinity for geography and science concepts. During the period of offline schooling, he showcased regular attendance and infrequent instances of absenteeism. His association with the school spans back to Kindergarten. Transitioning to online classes has, however, altered his patterns. He tends to be absent approximately twice a week out of the total of five school days. Additionally, his homework submissions have declined in quality.

c. Medical Background

No recorded medical history or diagnosis is present.

d. Behavioral Concerns

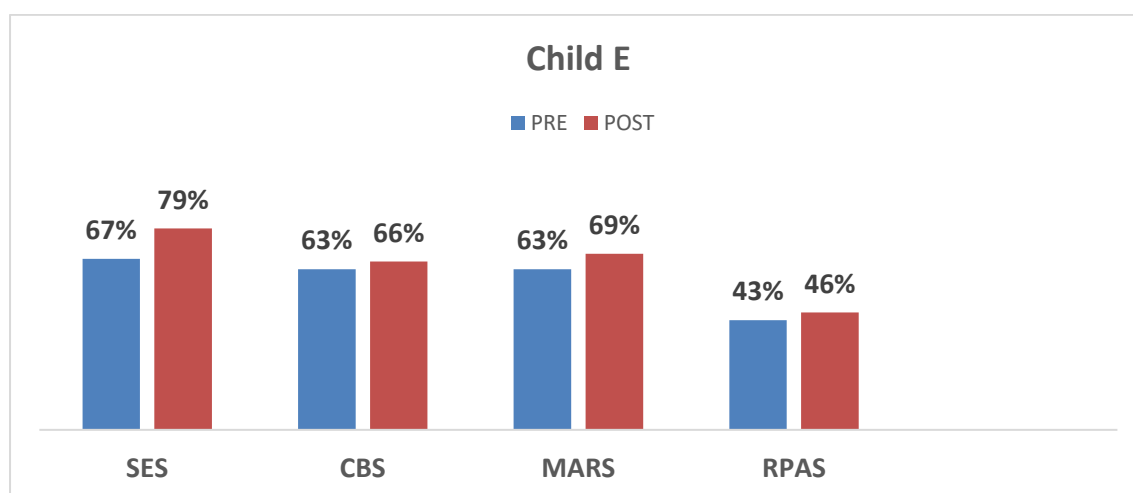
Client E's aggressive behavior towards peers of similar or younger ages has become a focal point of concern. His propensity to resort to physical actions is notable. A need exists to

Artistic Bridges to Emotional Cohesion: An Action Research on Children's Social-Emotional Development

guide him in comprehending the repercussions of mistreatment on others, while also facilitating the adoption of artistic expressions as outlets for disappointments. Furthermore, support is required to equip him with effective strategies to manage unfavorable situations. The lack of physical activity has also led to an issue of overweight.

Results

Client E has exhibited favorable responses to ABT sessions. Significantly, he has displayed notable growth in his capacity to engage freely without overly fixating on his weight. The subsequent graphs aptly capture the progression documented throughout the action research phase.



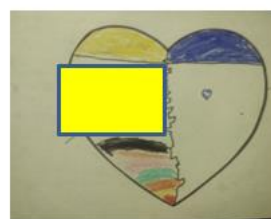
Interpretation

- Notably, the client's scores on ABT tools exhibit a promising positive shift. This shift is emblematic of a notable internal transformation, indicating a heightened engagement and participation within expressive arts.
- Focused efforts were directed towards addressing aggression, refining non-verbal communication, fostering expressive abilities, and enhancing role-playing skills within theater activities. The outcome is reflected in the scores garnered from the observation tools, underscoring the efficacy of these interventions.
- A marginal upward shift is witnessed in the scores on Social-Emotional rating scales, indicative of an encouraging advancement in this realm.
- A comparison of scores recorded on parent observation formats reinforces the constructive impact of ABT sessions. The positive shifts observed in Social skills and attention underscore the successful transfer of acquired skills to the home environment. Moreover, this signifies improved social adaptability—a pivotal objective for the client's growth.

Comparisons of Artworks:

E consistently finds solace in art sessions, using them as platforms to unveil personal narratives. This therapeutic avenue has facilitated emotional expression, nurtured self-confidence, and encouraged sharing. His inclination to articulate his creative endeavors supports the development of expressive capabilities, fostering a deeper connection with the arts.

Artistic Bridges to Emotional Cohesion: An Action Research on Children's Social-Emotional Development



Simulated task



Comparison of drawing and painting

Client F

a. Family Background

Client F, a 10-year-old enrolled in grade 5, is the sole offspring of his parents. His mother is a dedicated homemaker, while his father is employed in the UAE. The family's linguistic foundation comprises Urdu and Hindi. They reside within a building that also accommodates the child's grandparents, as well as his uncle's family. The mother has shared that the child experiences bouts of frustration and tantrums frequently throughout the week. Additionally, F expresses a desire to rejoin his Taekwondo class, which he was compelled to leave due to discontinuing attendance in online sessions.

b. Input from Academic & Rehabilitation Teacher

Client F is characterized as a quiet and composed student within the classroom environment. He diligently completes his homework within the stipulated time. Notably, he does not engage in mischief or teasing behavior towards others. His association with the school traces back to his preprimary school years.

c. Medical Background

No medical history or diagnosed conditions are reported.

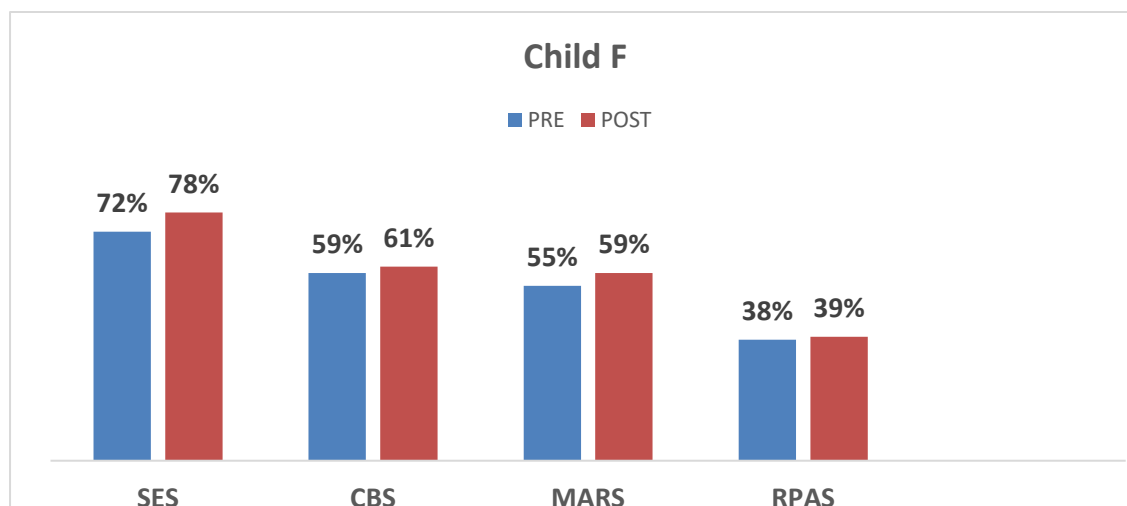
d. Expression and Creation

F's struggle lies in articulating and conveying his emotions effectively. There is a distinct need for fostering his ability to channel emotions through expressive means. The utilization of arts as a medium offers promise in aiding this development.

Results

Client F has experienced gratification through arts-based sessions, a journey that has translated into progress concerning his personal therapeutic goals in a group setting. The subsequent graphical representations effectively portray his trajectory throughout the ABT action research phase.

Artistic Bridges to Emotional Cohesion: An Action Research on Children's Social-Emotional Development



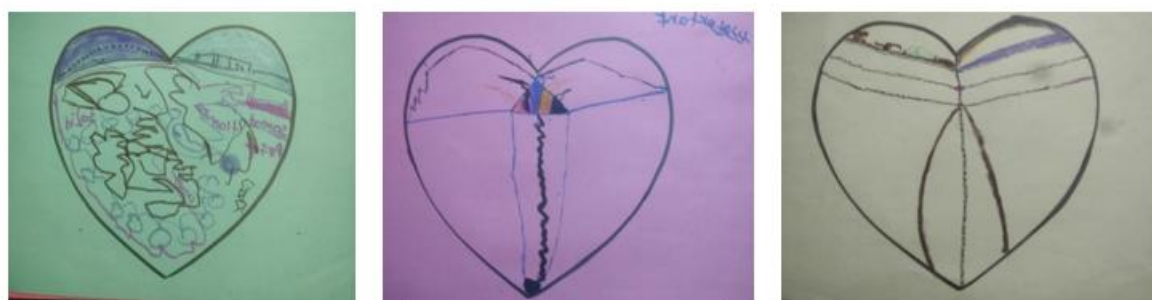
Interpretation

- The client's advancement is marked by notable qualitative strides, particularly evident in the sessions. These advancements have translated into discernible positive shifts reflected in diverse observation formats.
- A discernible ascending trajectory is evident across ABT-based observation tools, prominently within Expressive Capability and pro-social skills—aligning harmoniously with the client's personalized therapeutic objectives.
- An upward surge in the performance metrics is discernible within the Social-Emotional skills rating scales, underscoring that the benefits derived are not confined to the ABT sessions alone but are extended to the client's familial setting.
- The elevated scores in the parent questionnaire, specifically in the realm of social skills, suggest that the client has effectively assimilated and translated the acquired knowledge to his domestic environment. This further substantiates the sustainability of the progress achieved.

Comparisons of Artworks

The client's artistic inclinations are fueled by a vibrant imagination. He exhibits a commendable effort in shaping, shading, and crafting basic forms using a range of media, such as crayons and paints. Notably, he derives immense pleasure from the act of painting, demonstrating a penchant for utilizing a contrasting palette—marked by both bright and deep hues—in his creative expressions.

Artistic Bridges to Emotional Cohesion: An Action Research on Children's Social-Emotional Development



Simulated task



Comparison of drawing and painting

Comparison of Domains and Differential Assessment

- **Expressive Capability:** Clients A, B, C, and E have shown a significant or positive shift in their expressive capabilities. Their ability to convey feelings and ideas has notably improved through artistic means. Client F displays qualitative gains, reflecting an increased adeptness in this area.
- **Social-Emotional Skills:** Positive shifts or improvements are visible in the social-emotional skills of Clients A, B, C, E, and F. This indicates growth in their ability to interact, understand emotions, and navigate social situations.
- **Behavior Improvement:** Clients A, B, C, and E have exhibited positive shifts in their behavior, indicating more constructive responses to challenges. Clients D and F display slight improvement, while their behavior improvements need further attention.
- **Attention & Focus:** Clients A, B, and E have shown improved attention and focus, particularly valuable for academic engagement. Clients D and F exhibit limited improvement in this domain.
- **Artistic Engagement:** Active participation in arts-based sessions is evident for Clients A, B, C, E, and F. Clients D and F have demonstrated limited engagement, potentially requiring additional encouragement and strategies.

Artistic Bridges to Emotional Cohesion: An Action Research on Children's Social-Emotional Development

Client	Expressive Capability	Social-Emotional Skills	Behavior Improvement	Attention & Focus	Artistic Engagement
A	Significant	Positive Shift	Positive Shift	Improved	Active Participant
B	Positive Shift	Improved	Positive Shift	Improved	Active Participant
C	Positive Shift	Positive Shift	Positive Shift	Improved	Active Participant
D	Positive Shift	Slight Improvement	Slight Improvement	Limited	Limited
E	Positive Shift	Positive Shift	Positive Shift	Positive Shift	Active Participant
F	Qualitative Gains	Positive Shift	Positive Shift	Positive Shift	Active Participant

This table summarizes the differential progress of each client across various domains, providing insights into the unique response and development achieved through the Arts Based Therapy intervention.

DISCUSSION

Based on the comprehensive analysis of both group and individual client data, several meaningful inferences can be drawn:

- **Significant Therapeutic Enhancement:** Arts Based interventions have demonstrated a substantial and notable enhancement in the performance of clients, both in terms of individual therapeutic goals and group dynamics. This reflects the efficacy of artistic interventions in fostering positive developmental changes.
- **Consistent Trends in Observation Formats:** The congruent trends observed across diverse observation formats, each completed by different observers, underscore the effectiveness of the interventions. These consistent trends not only showcase heightened participation but also underscore the acquisition of enduring skills that manifest across varied contexts.
- **Transformative Expressive Capability:** The improvement in clients' expressive capabilities has extended beyond artistic endeavors. This development has led to heightened mindfulness and awareness, indicating the potent impact of Arts Based interventions on holistic well-being.
- **Promising Potential for Long-Term Application:** The success of Arts Based Therapy (ABT) as an intervention strategy within this study sets a precedent for its broader application. ABT exhibits potential as a sustained and enduring medium for instructional interventions aimed at skill development, suggesting its viability for long-term implementation.
- **The comprehensive results and inferences drawn** from this research underscore the positive influence of Arts Based interventions on various aspects of individual and

Artistic Bridges to Emotional Cohesion: An Action Research on Children's Social-Emotional Development

group growth, making a compelling case for its continued integration in therapeutic settings.

Limitations

While the Action Research Project has been a profoundly enriching journey, it is important to acknowledge the study's limitations:

- ***Participant Discontinuation:*** The unfortunate discontinuation of two group members from the Action Research Project due to illness after the pilot phase was disheartening. Their absence introduced an element of incompleteness to the project.
- ***Heterogeneous Group Dynamics:*** The group's diverse range of abilities, interests, preferences, and challenges posed a challenge in designing sessions that equally catered to all participants. Integrating new participants unfamiliar with the group dynamics also required sessions to be thoughtfully inclusive.
- ***Impact of Irregular Attendance:*** The irregular attendance of clients not only affected the overall group dynamics but also had implications on their individual progress and results.
- ***Subjective Nature of ABT Tools:*** The inherent subjectivity of Arts Based Therapy (ABT) tools introduced an element of individual perception into the study. Ratings given by the facilitator and observers were influenced by their subjective interpretations, potentially affecting result objectivity.
- ***Limitation in Documentation:*** Video documentation failed to capture some of the most remarkable moments and qualitative shifts observed during the sessions. This limitation hindered the comprehensive depiction of the transformative process.
- ***Time Constraints:*** The limited time allocated for the Action Research Project posed a challenge in fully exploring the potential of all art forms. A more extended duration could have allowed for deeper exploration and improvisation based on various artistic mediums, possibly leading to more comprehensive results.
- ***Scope for Longitudinal Study:*** Lastly, the relatively brief timeframe of the study restricted the examination of long-term effects. A longitudinal approach would offer greater insight into the sustained impact of arts-based interventions on participants' development and well-being.

These limitations serve as valuable insights for future research endeavours in the realm of Arts Based Therapy, enabling more comprehensive and informed study designs and outcomes.

Key Learnings:

The ABT Action Research Project has been an immensely enlightening journey, uncovering the profound therapeutic potential of the arts. This exploration revealed how art, as a therapeutic medium, intertwines with every facet of our existence. At the heart of this approach lies the Subtle Energy Guide (SEG), a foundational element of ABT, which intricately merges body, mind, and spirit, opening up boundless horizons for both practitioner and client alike.

The project's outcomes harmoniously align with the insights gleaned from the literature review on expressive art therapies. By engaging with diverse art forms, the client group experienced learning as an immersive and transformative process. The tangible shifts witnessed in their therapeutic domains underscored the measurable impact of arts

Artistic Bridges to Emotional Cohesion: An Action Research on Children's Social-Emotional Development

interventions. Additionally, the subtle internal transformations observed in the clients were profoundly encouraging for the facilitator throughout the study.

Visual and Performing Arts, specifically painting and theatre, emerged as catalysts for enhancing the group's expressive capabilities. Irrespective of individual artistic prowess, the act of creation and the sheer delight derived from the process became paramount. Artworks became conduits for personal narratives, fortifying the sense of unity within the group. Vocalizing thoughts about their creations granted participants a means of creative release, acceptance, and closure.

Games and Exercises introduced an element of fun and camaraderie to the group dynamics, fostering solidarity as participants cheered and supported one another. While not exclusively artistic, when intertwined with melody or rhythm, these activities harmoniously united the group. These sessions also witnessed a rich flow of ideas, suggestions, and improvisations.

The findings validated the hypotheses, showcasing that arts-based interventions effectively enhance clients' expressive capabilities, consequently fostering emotional, behavioral, and social adjustment. The positive shifts observed support these assertions, although the degree of correlation could be further established through an extended longitudinal study.

Above all, the most profound lesson derived from this experience is the immense joy and fulfillment inherent in embarking on such a project. The clients themselves have been remarkable teachers, willingly placing trust and acceptance in the journey. Their courage to push boundaries, coupled with an unwavering spirit, has become a source of inspiration, teaching the invaluable lesson of embracing challenges and persistently striving for growth. Their fearlessness in transcending limits stands as a testament to the infinite potential inherent within each individual.

Future Prospects

This project has been a profoundly enriching journey, a chapter filled with moments of growth and connection with my client group. Each step has illuminated the power of diverse art forms, offering me first-hand experiences that have kindled a deep interest beyond their artistic essence. This endeavor has ignited my curiosity about arts as a transformative tool for teaching and learning, extending far beyond conventional boundaries.

The modest triumphs achieved with the group have ignited a fervor within me to push the boundaries of these achievements even further. I aspire to sustain my engagement with this group, nurturing their independence through the versatile medium of ABT. Beyond this, I envision collaborating closely with the families of these clients, understanding their concerns to align them with the client group's goals. By incorporating families into this journey, a comprehensive and holistic approach to development through ABT can be pursued.

The Action Research Project serves as a promising foundation for future longitudinal studies. By revisiting the client group's goals after a substantial duration, we can comprehensively comprehend the lasting impact forged by ABT through a sustained partnership.

Artistic Bridges to Emotional Cohesion: An Action Research on Children's Social-Emotional Development

My aspirations also extend to working with diverse populations and age groups, refining my skills as an ABT practitioner. A special focus lies in delving into expressive arts therapies, particularly the role of theatre in imparting educational concepts, thereby infusing education with enjoyment and inclusivity.

Looking ahead, I envision delving into the realm of training and capacity building, broadening the horizon of ABT's reach. This pursuit seeks to encompass a wider array of communities, enabling them to embrace the benefits of ABT. Ultimately, my overarching goal is to serve every individual, extending my contribution to all sentient beings.

In the words of Lewis Carroll, "*One of the secrets of life is that all that is really worth the doing is what we do for others.*" This guiding principle will continue to steer my path as I endeavor to make a meaningful impact through the transformative potential of arts-based interventions.

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Artistic Bridges to Emotional Cohesion: An Action Research on Children's Social-Emotional Development

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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