

A Review Paper on Expressive Art Therapy and Its Implication on Mental Health

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ABSTRACT

This review paper aims to delve into the profound realm of art therapy and its potential impact on the mental health of individuals, it explores how expressive art therapy and profound implication that it has on the mental health. It thoroughly examines the existing literature to extract the findings from different studies in order to provide a greater understanding of the therapeutic effects of expressive art when used as an intervention. The review includes various of expressive art like dance, visual art, etc. and investigating how it helps in self-exploration, emotional catharsis, stress management etc thereby contribute to psychological well-being. By Critically analysing the available existing knowledge this paper aims to Explore all about expressive art therapy used as an application in the mental health settings. Findings from this study aim to contribute valuable insights to the fields of psychology, counselling, and art therapy. This review Paper will provide a bases for the research scholars, psychologist, and practitioners to further investigate, explore and integrate expressive art therapy as an intervention in mental health settings.

Keywords: Art Therapy, Mental health

Art is a diverse, most expressive and yet a very complex form of human expressions which covers a wide range of creative activities which could be a visual or performing art. From the ancient time it can be seen that art was used for various purposes it served as a means of communication, reflection, exploration which provided a very creative way to people in order to convey important information, thoughts, emotions, and ideas in a visual or very creative way. Art has the capacity to deliver the most complex message or idea very easily.

Various artist, author or philosophers and psychologist have defined art in different way such as “Art is the lie that enables us to realise the truth” (Pablo Picasso, artist), “Art is not a handicraft, it is a **transformation** of feeling the artist has experienced” (Leo Tolstoy, philosopher). “The intellect alone does not bring forth innovation; rather, it is the instinct to play driven by inner necessity that leads to the creation of something new”. the creative mind plays with the object it loves.” (Carl Jung, Psychiatrist, and psychoanalyst).

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Expressive art therapy Is the approach which uses different forms of creative expression to promote psychological emotional and physical well-being. Art is considered to be a creative process which in turn is a powerful tool for healing, personal growth, and self-discovery. Art therapy provides wide range of options for the individuals to engage in a creative process, for example- dance, music, painting, writing etc.

Types of art

- 1. Visual Arts:** Refers to wide category of artistic expressions that includes our visual senses. It includes wide range of mediums techniques and styles through which a person can communicate their ideas, **emotions, thoughts, and perspectives**. this type of art is usually appreciated through sight but it can also evoke other sensory experiences. Some examples of this type include Painting, drawing, sculpture etc.
- 2. Performing Arts:** It is an artistic expression which is performed in front of the audience. This art involves all those forms of art that uses body, voice and sometimes objects or props to convey the expression or the message. The main focus is on the performance that unfolds in real time and engage with the live audience. Examples of this type of art includes music, dance, opera etc
- 3. Literary Arts:** It is also referred as literature which includes written or spoken work that is done in order to express the ideas, emotions, and the stories through language. This form of Art uses word as the medium of expression, it can be found in various forms such as novels, short stories, poetry, essays, plays and much more. literary art has been a fundamental aspect of human culture and communication throughout the history. some examples of it includes novel, poetry etc.
- 4. Culinary Arts:** It is a unique type of art which includes practice of preparing and cooking food, as well as how to present the food aesthetically and in a pleasing manner. It is a combination of both science and an art, combines knowledge of ingredients, techniques, and flavours with a creative and artistic touch. This art requires a wide range of skills and activities related to food preparation and presentation.
- 5. Applied Arts:** It is the use of art to provide design and aesthetic to objects of function and practical use. unlike Fine Arts which primarily created for aesthetic or conceptual purpose, applied art aims to serve a utilitarian function while incorporating elements of design, creativity, and craftsmanship. This art form involves creation of objects which have both functional and artistic value, for example architecture, graphic design, fashion design, interior design etc.

“Mental Health” is a very broad term, which includes emotional, psychological, and social well-being of a person. It influences how a person thinks, act and behave. According to world health organization (W.H.O) “Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realise their abilities, learn well and work well and contribute to their community. It is an integral component of Health and well-being that underpins our individual and collective abilities to make decisions, build a relationship and shape the world will live. Mental health is a basic human right and it is crucial to personal community and socio-economic development.”

A good health is considered to be the state when there is an absence of any disease or disorder or physical disability but on the other hand mental health is much more than just the absence of mental disorder.

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Determinants of mental health Mainly talks about biological factors, psychological factors, and social factors. Biological factors such as physical health, sleep quality, diet etc. Psychological factors often include mental health issues, thoughts etc. and Social, factors include social setting where a person lives in, family, culture, workplace, housing etc. Health issues can occur at the any stage of life whether it is about physical health or psychological health but it is the person's prime responsibility to take care of his or her mental health Through different ways. It has been found that certain types of issues such as wrong parenting style bullying etc. are common risk factor when it comes to mental health.

There are a number of programmes that are active to promote and prevent mental health but it is also important that on an individual level every person must recognise and address risk factors of mental health which could be present in one's education system, transport, environment and even housing. For **care and treatment** of mental health there are number of services that are available at mental health Centres and not only that there are certain healthy practises that an individual must try in their everyday life by just following simple steps for example eating healthy food, being in touch with their social environment, openly expressing themselves, seeking support whenever required etc.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Engaging in artistic endeavours goes beyond being a mere hobby; it is an in-depth journey of self-expression and self-discovery. Throughout history, art has been held in high regard for its extraordinary capacity to transform, as it can delve into the most profound aspects of human emotion and reveal the hidden creative layers that are present in every person. But one aspect of this life-changing experience sticks out above the rest: its significant impact on mental health. it goes on an engrossing journey into the realm of art and its significant influence on mental health in this investigation. Its goal is to analyse the complex ways that could create something which can improve a person's sense of self-worth, self-love, etc. one striking finding is that people who actively pursue artistic endeavours frequently see a significant increase in their self-esteem when compared to those who do not. This review of literature emphasizes how expressive art therapy can have a profoundly positive impact on an individual's mental health by enhancing feelings of confidence and self-assurance.

What makes this journey even more compelling is that it is grounded in empirical evidence. Studies conducted by Franklin et al. (1992) vividly illustrate the profound connection between art and self-esteem. artist Adrian who had discovered the therapeutic benefits of drawing and painting while recovering from tuberculosis, the value of art therapy lay in 'completely engrossing the mind and releasing the creative energy of the frequently inhibited patient' (Hill, 1948) (Dilawari, Kanchan et.al 2014; Tripathi, Nishi et. al. 2014). A review study by Theresa van et. al. (2016) Talked about the presence of a bridge between what are therapists know and what they do in helping those with mental illnesses. A number of researchers have pointed to the value of art therapy for patients suffering from psychosis, in a study five patients benefitted from their participation in the art therapy group (Hilde Hanevik et. al. 2013; Knut A. Hestad et. al. 2013; Lars Lien et. al 2013; Hanne Stubbe Teglbjaerg et. al. 2013; Lars Johan Danbolt et. al. 2013). A systematic literature review was conducted and it was revealed that intervention programmes are devised in order to accommodate individual characteristics and cultural preferences it also suggests that expressive art integrates with different therapeutic practises and incorporates into school and professional training curricula for Preventive rehabilitative remedial and curative purposes and attaining cross disciplinary success (Fung Kei Cheng et. al. 2015). Creative art therapy (CAT) For severe mental illnesses (SMI) Represents an extremely heterogeneous body of

literature that encompasses the use of large variety of creative mediums that is visual arts, music dance, drama, writing in the treatment of mental disorders (Mathew Chiang et. al. 2019; William Bernard Reid-Varley et. al. 2019; Xiaoduo Fan et. al. 2019). despite many inconclusive studies, the effectiveness of creative arts therapies for a range of conditions is indicated. For music therapy, these are adults experiencing cancer, terminal illness, dementia and depression, and children diagnosed with Autism-Spectrum Disorder. For arts therapy these are mental illness, asthma, depression and coping with breast cancer. For dance-movement therapy these are schizophrenia, cancer, depression, stress, emotional eating, and dementia. Drama therapy has been documented to reduce behavioural issues for school students (Kim Dunphy et. al. 2014). Art therapy techniques are a great way to promote development of a child, and this is the reason of the wide application of the art therapy in education. Art therapy develops imagination and creativity, develops empathy, forms pro-social attitude, and what is important, shows that artistic abilities do not play any role in the process of creation (Hoffmann B. et. al. 2016). Another study states that Researchers in counselling, counsellors, parents, teachers, and people from all walks of life can utilise expressive art therapy treatment as a specific module to continue reaching out to adolescents to reduce social disorders, which is an issue and phenomenon that threatens peace and prosperity (John, s. et. al. 2022; Johari, K. S. K. et. al. 2022; Amat, S. et. al. 2022). A study conducted by (Sporild, I. A. et. al. 2014; Bonsaksen, T. et. al. 2014) suggest that therapists consider using expressive art groups as an element of treatment for persons with longstanding eating disorder. Expressive art groups may assist people in expressing themselves in another, and often more emotional, language than the verbal language used in daily encounters. Themes hidden and obscured by verbal language may be revealed in a picture. In this sense, a picture may be 'worth a thousand words.' Several studies (Alavinezhad et al., 2014; Mousavi et al., 4 2014; Sohrabi et al., 2014) emphasize how art therapy increases children's awareness of themselves and their surroundings, a vital component of a robust self-esteem foundation. Additionally, various programs rooted in creative arts have demonstrated their efficacy in enhancing self-esteem, social support, self-efficacy, and overall well-being, particularly among individuals living with conditions such as Multiple Sclerosis (Fraser et al., 2014; Cira et al., 2014; Keating et al., 2014; Michelle et al., 2014). Several studies (Ching-Teng et al., 2019; Ya-Ping et al., 2019; Yu-Chia et al., 2019) have also indicated the positive impact of art-related activities, such as art therapy, in alleviating depression and enhancing self-esteem. Notably, even orphans have experienced elevated self-esteem through participation in art-related interventions (Devidas, N.S.A.P. et al., 2017; Mendonca, T.L. et al., 2017). Another study consists of mask-making and mindfulness training as components of an expressive arts group intervention designed to help youth understand and manage their stress. With the assistance of a school counsellor, six eighth-grade students, who were having difficulty managing stress, were identified, and participated in a 12-hour group intervention over the course of six weeks resulted in significant self-reported reductions of anxiety and stress at the three-week follow-up (Lindsey, L. et. al. 2018; Lindsey, B. et. al. 2018). According to Song, X. et. al. (2023) The inclusion of expressive art therapy within mental health courses, as compared to traditional approaches, yields improvement in college student's mental health levels and classroom satisfaction while simultaneously promoting self-affirmation among college freshmen. Another interesting result was found in a study conducted by Joshua K. M. Nan et. al. 2017; Rainbow T. H. Ho et. al. 2017 that clay art therapy (CAT) is more effective than nondirective visual art (VA) in reducing depression levels and improving daily functioning, general mental health, and holistic body-mind-spirit (BMS) well-being. In an piolet study it was found that expressive art therapy (EAT) is a feasible and effective intervention for adults with mild cognitive impairment (MCI) with beneficial effects on general cognitive

function, language function, anxiety, depression, and quality of life, randomized controlled trials with a larger sample size (Yan, Y. J., et. al. 2021; Lin, R. et. al. 2021; Zhou, Y. et. al. 2021; Luo Y. T. et. al. 2021; Cai, Z. Z. et. al. 2021; Zhu, K.Y. et. al. 2021; Li, H. et. al. 2021).

Outbreak of COVID-19 was indeed a tough time for everyone no matter if it's a young child or an old age person, concept of mental health was always there but it got highlighted during the time of COVID-19. People starting talking about it more openly and even it became the priority for majority of people and maybe this is the only reason tele counselling came into spot light as it was helping people all over world by increasing the outreach of mental health facilities for people. An important study was done by Li, Y. et. al. (2022); Peng, J. et. al. (2022) provided evidence that supports the effectiveness of expressive art therapy in advancing resilience and changing the structure of resilience in the context of COVID-19. Result of a statistical test proves that seven sessions of expressive art therapy group is effective to reduce the stress level of participants. Additionally, the intervention provides opportunities for participants to release their emotional tension, explore themselves, express their emotion, identify their challenges, find solutions and insights (Sunaringsih, M. S. et. al. 2019; Tiatri, S. et. al. 2019; Patmonodewo, S. et. al. 2020). Although there is a study which was done using studies from 1999-2007 that measured outcomes of art therapy effectiveness with all ages of clinical and nonclinical populations. The result of this study suggested that there is a small body of quantifiable data to support the claim that art therapy is effective in treating a variety of symptoms, age groups, and disorders (Slayton, S. C. et. al. 2010; D'Archer, J. et. al 2010; Kaplan, F. et. al. 2010). These findings underscore the therapeutic potential of art in fostering personal development among adolescents, particularly by providing a channel to express complex emotions, resolve internal conflicts, alleviate anxiety, and much more.

In summation, the comprehensive review of literature underscores a compelling and robust connection between expressive art therapy and mental health. The evidence overwhelmingly suggests that engaging in these kinds of artistic activities can have a significant, positive impact on an individual's psychological well-being. This impact extends across diverse populations, from troubled youth to those grappling with chronic illnesses, emphasizing the universal and transformative nature of art's influence on mental health.

CONCLUSION

Based on the review of existing literature, it was found that there are number of studies with evidences which are supporting that the art therapy or expressive art therapy is having significant impact on mental health. There are numerous studies that have correlated positive effect of expressive art therapy on people with specific mental health conditions or people with anxiety, depression etc which suggests that expressive art therapy, by engaging the client in certain type of activities such as drawing, painting, writing etc. helps them in their emotional catharsis and by self-exploration people are able to express themselves more openly. There are also many studies that support positive impact of expressive art therapy with increased level of self-esteem and psychological well-being The literature review highlights that there are number of people with different issues or conditions are getting the benefit from art therapy and not only that, it has shown its greater potential to help people during the challenging times like COVID-19 Pandemic. Additionally, there are studies that underscore the therapeutic effect of art therapy in fostering increased resilience, emotional expression, Reduced anxiety, stress management, ability to cope better and helping people in

personal development. All these together highlights the importance of incorporating art therapy as a intervention in the mental health settings.

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Conflict of Interest

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