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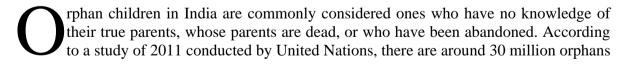
Effects of Art and Movement Training for Aggression in Orphans in a Government-funded institutional Home

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ABSTRACT

Background: The number of orphans in India is so massive that their basic needs are rarely met. The budget allotment for orphans is meagre and their psycho-social needs are neglected. In addition to this, they sometimes come out from difficult and traumatic situations and the resources are not enough to alleviate the distress that comes out of their emotional dysregulation. This can sometimes channelize into aggressive behaviour which gets difficult to understand in such set ups. Objective: This study aims to see the effects of art and movement training techniques on aggression in orphan children. Participants and setting: A pre-test post-test experimental design was adopted with two different samples of 40 and 34 orphan children each, between the age group of 11-17 in a government-funded institutional home in Haldia, West Bengal. Methods: The RPQ was used as a screening tool to help select moderately and highly aggressive children and to collect scores for further comparison. The intervention was for 7 days and the Reactive-Proactive Aggression Questionnaire (RPQ) developed by Adrian Raine and Kenneth Dodge was administered for the two groups, once before and once after the intervention. The two groups had orphan children exposed to art and movement techniques and no exposure respectively. **Results:** Based on the results, the overall aggression was reduced for the experimental group due to the intervention. The Wilcoxon test p value for the whole group is very close to 0.05 which may signify some effect of the intervention. The experimental group showed reduced scores of proactive aggressions but there was no difference in the reactive aggression scores after the intervention. **Conclusions:** The results of the study imply that proactive aggression can be managed and therapeutic arts is a good tool for the reduction of such behaviours. It opens a door for more such research on aggression, therapeutic arts and acting upon the need of orphans.

Keywords: Art and Movement Training, Aggression, Orphans, Government-funded institutional Home



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in India (Kalra, 2018). The planning Commission in India has never done an official survey of Orphans in India and the funding allotted is around Rs. 2 per child with a total budget of only 1500 crores for over 30 million children (Pavini, 2019).

More needs to be done in the financial arena for orphans in India but there are other psychosocial issues that need to be considered. It has been reported that exploitation, abuse of various kinds, psychological and sexual violence are very common in orphanages in India (Child Protection, 2017). Adolescents and/or children with a history of psychological abuse between the age of 10-14 reported moderate levels of aggression and this was true for both males and females (Saboula et al, 2015).

Even in the absence of abuse or violence, immense psychological turmoil and poor social cognition has been observed in Orphans in institutional setup (Saraswat & Unisa, 2017). It was observed in a qualitative study that orphans tend to have problems with adjustment, emotion expression and even building and managing interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, they had prolonged needs to deal with the absence of parents and this led them to engage in aggressive acts (Abdulla & Kasese-Hara, 2020).

Orphan children living in institutionalized setups showed prevalence of verbal aggression with added total aggression in most children. Children with depression even showcased severe physical aggression (El-Slamoni & Hussien, 2019). Those with previous experiences to aggression and violence had a higher chance of engaging in aggressive behaviours as compared to others (Hermenau, 2011).

In a study done in Lucknow's Orphanage, over 50% children were occasionally aggressive and around 20% were mildly aggressive. Male children were seen to be more aggressive than females but no further difference was seen in terms of age or duration of stay in the institutional homes. Children with behavioural problems and adjustment reactions lean towards highly aggressive behaviours as compared to those without (Chaturvedi et al, 1984). Lacking in essential attention and provision and no protection from physical and psychological stressors, orphans are more irritable and have low hopes from life. This has major effects on their development, image and consciousness about self. Simply by the virtue of having added stressors in life, their aggressive tendencies are heightened. They are in fact positively related (Dey, 2013).

A study conducted in Karnataka on orphans showed that externalizing behaviours like aggression, hyperactivity and irritation with respect to socio-emotional problems were in over 50% of children in the severe category and around 33% were in the borderline category (Onkari & Itagi, 2018). Additionally, it was seen that the longer the stay in institutions for orphans, more was the tendency to engage in more aggressive behaviours and other behavioural problems that have relatively externalizing tendencies (Rahman et al, 2012).

Some aggression theories are, namely, the instinct theory as given by Sigmund Freud, which speaks about aggression being a basic drive; the frustration-aggression theory which says that it is always frustration or the blocks to the goal that leads to aggression; and the theory of social learning, which speaks about the influence of previously learned behaviours and thoughts that are responsible for aggressive acts (Sharma, n.d.).

The focus for this paper will be on the lattermost theory of social learning because forms of art and dance will be used as a psycho-social intervention where aggression will be targeted and worked. Being able to channelize their aggressive energy into different forms of behaviour and making it an automatic behaviour can help reduce such acts of aggression. Benefits and efficacy of this approach has been explained through psychodynamic, Jungian, behaviourists and phenomenological approaches (Miceli, 2014).

Art techniques are often used with psychosocial problems and focus on the experiential process of creation through art materials (Bosgraf et al, 2020). This also helps increase self-esteem and social acceptance in sensitive populations like that of female offenders (Liz & Lynettee, 2005). Acquisition of vocational skills and a positive feeling towards goal accomplishment has been achieved through use of art in incarcerated children (Ezell & Levy, 2003).

Dance and movement have been used in therapies for a long time and help improve physical and psychological performance (Ritter, 1996). It helps find a connection between mind and body (Cherry, 2021) and helps with various issues like body image and self-esteem (GoodTherapy Editor Team, 2015). It is also found to be very helpful for those who are very aggressive and find it difficult to verbally express themselves (Twemlo et al, 2008).

Art and dance forms have been combined with various primary therapeutic modules to help reduce aggressive tendencies. Students of class 12 were put through an experimental study where the results showed that there was a significant reduction in social aggression after an intervention of Solution-focused Brief therapy based on creative arts (Putri, 2019). Other studies also show changes in extreme psychosocial behaviours with the help of engaging in creative ways of expression and therapist behaviour and correct match of the art forms based on the needs of the children and adolescents (Bosgraaf et al, 2020).

Use of different forms of communication helps self and people understand that they are going through a creative process and makes it easy for them to bring changes and eventually make it a mindful practice (Cook, 2017). One intervention designed on aggression to promote a "World Without Aggression", showed that use of art and the focus on its processes helps promoting the correction and overcoming of aggression in adolescents (2016).

Besides aggression, simply the use of art forms with orphan children can help them express themselves better and add to their healthy development considering they might not have optimal emotion expression or the understanding of their own psychological state (Ivanova, 2004). Art and dance forms have been used with different populations and age groups but in India, not a lot of literature is based on orphans and how it affects their aggressive and externalizing behaviours.

Statement of Problem

Orphan children in India will benefit from interventions to reduce aggressive and violent acts using art and dance forms. This can help them find a personalized way of doing so, channelizing their energy differently.

Research Question

Can different forms of art and movement be useful on aggression for the orphan population?

Objectives of the study

The specific goals of the research were to be able to discern whether engaging in forms of dance, movement and expressing self through these mediums is useful in making a difference in the aggression levels of the orphan children.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

- The sample of 74 orphan children between the age of 11-17 was selected from the government-funded orphanage through the screening tool. The number and the age-group were decided keeping the provisions and limitations of the institutional Home in mind.
- Children who got the required scores were matched and assigned to either the
 experimental or the control group since it was a randomized control group pre-test
 post-test design. Simple randomization was used to put the children into the two
 groups after matching scores.
- The following inclusion and exclusion criteria were determined keeping the
 experimental nature and the permissions given by the institution in mind. To
 comprise the participants excluded, primary interventions and a collaborative team of
 mental health professionals would be required.

Inclusion criteria

- Orphan children between the age of 11-17
- Orphan children who have been institutionalized for 3 years or more.

Exclusion Criteria

- Orphan children with some mental disorder or medical condition that the researcher is not equipped to handle.
- Orphan children with some physical disorder or condition that might make it difficult for them to participate in the study.
- Orphan children who are not allowed to attend the intervention by the authorities.

Procedure

The study was conducted in one of the institutional homes in Haldia, located south-west of Kolkata in the month of July, 2021 for a period of 7 days including two days for pre-test and post-test. A total of 74 children were shortlisted from the total in the facility based on the Reactive-Proactive Aggression Questionnaire (RPQ) which was the screening tool and these were divided into the experimental and control group after being matched and keeping in mind the logistical demands of the study and the institution.

The procedure was laid down to uphold the quantitative nature of the study in mind and to be able to tabulate the results. The intervention was conducted for 4 hours daily, only with the experimental group where the modalities of art and movement were used to design activities and psychoeducation such that the orphan children became more aware of their aggression and learn to control it as they want, resulting in reduction in aggression.

These activities were conducted by the researcher while being guided by an expert. Permission to do these activities were taken from the head of the facility. One teacher or a caretaker from the facility was present to help keep discipline and order with the children.

The intervention was held on consecutive days, underlying factors for it being the receptive power of the children and institutional demand.

Tools

The study used the Reactive-Proactive Aggression Questionnaire (RPQ), available freely, developed by Adrian Raine and Kenneth Dodge to identify the reactive aggression scores for the orphan children. The scale has 23 items in total, 11 for proactive and 12 for reactive aggression. The Likert scale for this ranges from 0-3 and higher the score, more the aggression. The statements are rather easy to understand and this has been chosen so the children will understand them better.

The scale has seen to be reliable with adolescent boys and was tested for 4 types of validities. The overall internal reliability is 0.83 and 0.45 to 0.58 for the reactive scale. Construct validity is established through self-reports of psychopathy, schizotypy, impulsivity, stimulation-seeking, anxiety and psychosocial measures. Criterion validity is established by instances of physical behaviour like fights. Convergent validity is achieved through other aggression scales and divergent validity through non-externalizing behaviours scale (Raine et al, 2006).

Data Analysis

The normality test of Shapiro Wilk was used to check the distribution of data. The pre-test groups were compared to check for similarity such that the difference after intervention would be the result of the experiment. Based on the normality test, the scores of the pre-test and the post-test were compared to see the effectiveness of the intervention. The post-tests were compared to see if there was any difference between the group which would also signal the efficacy of the intervention.

Ethical Considerations

- The study considered all ethical considerations keeping in mind the working with a distinctive population and not adults. Firstly, permission was taken from the authorities of the institution to carry out research in the facility.
- An informed consent was given to each participant and they were briefed on how the study is structured. They were informed of the aim of the study only after it was over. Debriefing was done with all of them so they know what they have been a part of.
- They were told that their identity and other demographic details will be kept anonymous and what happens during the study is confidential. The findings, however, they were told will be shared with the supervisor for academic purposes. The legal issues and their rights were considered while conducting the study.

RESULTS							
Table 1. Shapiro Wilk Normality for Pre-test groups							
Variable	Group	df	statistic	significance			
Proactive A	Experimental	39	0.905	0.003			
	Control	33	0.955	0.177			
Reactive A	Experimental	39	0.930	0.016			
	Control	33	0.969	0.445			
Aggression	Experimental	40	0.965	0.246			
(Combined)	Control	34	0.965	0.328			

Table 2. Shapiro Wilk Normality for Post-Test groups

Variable	Group	df	statistic	significance
Proactive A	Experimental	39	0.923	0.010
	Control	33	0.964	0.309
Reactive A	Experimental	39	0.977	0.577
	Control	33	0.956	0.190
Aggression	Experimental	40	0.968	0.314
(combined)	Control	34	0.961	0.254

The p value for the groups except experimental Proactive Pre-test is more than 0.05 which says that the groups are normally distributed. This then becomes the basis for the comparison tests where parametric tests can be used for all groups except the proactive experimental group.

Table 3. Independent sample tests for Pre-test Group

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Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	t	p	
Proactive	Experimental	40	8.50	4.17	0.122	0.905	0.895
	Control	34	8.38	3.35	0.132	0.893	
Reactive	Experimental	40	9.90	4.11	1 102	0.274	0.274
	Control	34	8.91	3.49	1.103	0.274	
Aggression	Experimental	40	18.40	4.86	0.011	0.265	
	Control	34	17.3	5.59	0.911	0.303	0.365

The table tries to compare the pre-tests of the three groups so that the experimental and control group differences are evaluated. The significance value for all the group is more than 0.05 which shows that there is no significant difference between the groups. This means that all the groups are similar and the change in the post-test, if any will be the result of the intervention.

Table 4. Paired Sample t-test

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Groups	N	Mean	SD	Statistic	p	
Pro- Pre	74	8.45	3.79	1 6/11	0.105	
Pro-Post	74	7.81	3.56	1.641	0.105	
Rea-Pre	74	9.45	3.85	0.265	0.792	
Rea-Post	74	9.34	3.71	0.203	0.792	
Agg-Pre	74	17.89	5.20	1 011	0.074	
Agg-Post	74	17.15	5.90	1.811	0.074	

The significance values in the table are above 0.05 for all the three paired tests which says that there is no significant difference in the scores of the groups after the intervention. The Wilcoxon test p value for the whole group is very close to 0.05 which may signify some effect of the intervention.

Table 5 Independent sample tests for Post-test Groups

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	t	р
Proactive	Experimental	40	6.80	3.66	-2.77	0.007
	Control	34	9.00	3.08	-2.11	0.007
Reactive	Experimental	40	10.1	3.80	1.88	0.064
	Control	34	8.47	3.47	1.00	
Aggression	Experimental	40	16.9	6.25	0.420	0.669
	Control	34	17.5	5.54	-0.430	0.668

The post-tests of the three conditions of the experimental and control group were compared to see the difference between these groups and the significance value for the pro-active post-test shows that there is a difference between the experimental and control group which does signify that the intervention was effective on the proactive aggression in the orphan children.

DISCUSSION

The aim of the study was to establish if art and movement techniques helped with reduction in aggression. A pre-test was conducted as a screening tool and after the intervention, the post test was conducted. The scores of the two tests were compared and a conclusion was reached as to whether aggression was affected by a significant amount.

Findings report that although there was no significant difference in the aggression scores after the short intervention, the score of the post test for the experimental group was 0.053 which is very close to the threshold value and does say that the group was affected due to the intervention to some extent. This was further illustrated by the change in score of the experimental and the control group of proactive aggression where the difference was significant. This illustrated that the intervention did have an effect in proactive aggression for the orphans.

Proactive aggression is intentional and more in control, the art and movement techniques, as planned helped the orphans better understand their sources of aggression and how to control it. The self-awareness and the ability to control it was shown across the 5 days through various techniques so it consciously or unconsciously made an impact on the children. The intervention spanned a week long.

Activities such as introduction through movement, mirroring each other during fights, feeling how anger and terror feels like, expressing emotions through their bodies, painting to explore self-expression, painting their animal of aggression were conducted. The discussion after each activity focused on how destructive aggression can be but also how it can be channelized well and is an emotion to understand and sublimate.

Reactive aggression on the other side is more instant and spontaneous which was not targeted through the interventions. Different and more specific activities would have helped target reactive aggression and a longer intervention might have helped in bringing a difference for something that can be so deep-rooted in the children.

The children who did not enjoy art were also present in the group and it was challenging to have them follow through the activity but as the activities got more diluted, an elevation in interest was noticed. Caretakers present during the intervention made a difference as they tried to participate in the program with a known face helping them understand the importance of the same.

Language was a minor barrier in instructions and questionnaire filling, because they were not able to understand all the words even in Bengali. The help of their teachers was taken so the children understood what was going on. A few words were replaced and a singular replacement was done for a group of words in English.

The logistical problems due to the institutional rules and the sample they chose to allow for the study led to changes in the modus operandi and the use of many techniques had to be altered to fit the needs of the orphan children. This was a challenge well overcome with the help of the guidance of a mentor and the head of the institutions.

The implication of the study is positive from the lens of therapeutic arts usage, work with orphans and even the different types of aggression noticed in children, both males and females. The reduction in proactive aggression shows that art and movement can be used with aggression and may be beneficial for work with other such issues with children of similar age groups and circumstances. Art and movement might be new in terms of practice but it may be helpful in reducing destructive behaviours to some extent, the effectiveness of which increases when it is used as a secondary modality in therapy.

Working with orphans in the study was insightful in knowing how various elements in the research process can help better with the sensitive group, like the rapport building and matching their art modality for the study to work well. It may be relevant to orphans not just for these behaviours but also in helping them understand their emotions, deal better with feeling abandoned and what they can do in the future.

Further studies can also add other types of behaviours, destructive or otherwise, make it emotionally focused and make the intervention longer so the children have more time to go through the entire process and come out feeling more self-aware and equipped with better form of self-expression. A learning from this study is to know the children better so the intervention can be carved accordingly in the further studies.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Limitations

- Keeping in mind that the two groups were from the same facility, the intervention was planned accordingly. Even so there are chances that there was interaction between the two affecting the efficacy of the study.
- A follow-up study was not planned and the actual benefits of the study will be clearer when that can be possible.
- Since this is distinctive population, further work with them may be difficult even though the study bores positive results.
- The demand of the students and their capacity to engage in the program was different than was fathomed, which might have affected the results.

• Language barriers and the answering of the questionnaire was a challenge and an alternative can be sought next.

Future Directions

Future studies may use more time to build rapport with the students, conduct a study for a longer period, try and frame and select activities as per the interests of the orphan children and more focus should be given on understanding their expression of reactive and proactive aggression. A larger study with many institutions and a larger sample with both boys and girls of equal numbers can be conducted to understand the importance of the use of art and movement modality and its implications on aggression.

CONCLUSION

The study showed significant change in the level of proactive aggression in the experimental group thus opening an avenue to explore non-traditional techniques helping with issues like aggression. The various modalities and its training may improve self-expression, self-awareness and help understand what goes on in the body and the mind such that it can be controlled to a larger extent than is imagined.

With a larger population, longer intervention and follow-up studies, a wider knowledge base can be constructed to try and tackle serious issues amongst sensitive population so that change and improvement is seen in the true sense for everyone, irrespective of where they come from and who they are.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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