

Research Paper

Effect of Expressive Art Therapies on Quality of Life and Psychological Wellbeing of Teachers Who were Covid-19 Positive

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ABSTRACT

Within the mental health community, the expressive arts are gaining popularity as a respected form of therapy; however, there is still much to be discovered in regard to its effectiveness with individuals who have stable mental health. Research completed to date includes the exploration of a variety of modalities and their benefits to those with mental illness, but it lacks an examination of the effect that the expressive arts have on overall quality of life and psychological well-being. The main objective of the present research was to analyze the quality of life and psychological well-being of teachers who tested positive for COVID-19. The World Health Organization's Quality of Life (WHOQOL) and the Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWB) were tools used for the study. In addition, the study attempted and proved that an enhancement in the quality of life (QOL) and psychological well-being through Expressive Art Therapies as an intervention method, contributes to better Quality Of Life (QOL) and Psychological Well-being.

Keywords: *Quality of life, Psychological well-being, Expressive art therapies, COVID-19 Positive*

Art therapy, also known as expressive therapy, uses art as a means of communication and lets people explore and express their emotions and thoughts. And the good news is that one doesn't need to be very creative or artistic to take up this therapy. Malchiodi (2014) defined expressive arts therapy as "the use of art, music, dance/movement, drama, poetry/creative writing, play, and sand tray within the context of psychotherapy, counselling, rehabilitation or health care". Due to its versatility, art therapy is perfect for people of all ages. Art therapy is best for you when you have already tried verbal therapy and it did not work for you. Art therapy can help open up emotions you have been pushing back. The therapy forces you to notice them and work on them. According to the American Art Therapy Association, this process is used as a "therapeutic means of reconciling emotional conflicts, fostering self-awareness, developing social skills, managing behaviour,

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Received: February 21, 2025; Revision Received: July 18, 2025; Accepted: July 23, 2025

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solving problems, reducing anxiety, aiding reality orientation, and increasing self-esteem (as cited in Malchiodi, 2014, p. 2).

It is claimed that the corona virus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has had a negative impact on mental health. However, to date, prospective studies are lacking. Many of the patients recovered from the Covid-19 have been complaining of several issues such as crippling anxiety, chest pain, recurring headaches, persistent loss of smell and taste, breathing difficulties, sore throat and mild cough which is leading to lack of good quality and life and psychological well-being. Psychological distress is a common phenomenon experienced by humans in a variety of conditions, but is vaguely understood. It is defined as a state of mind where the emotional suffering is associated with depression and anxiety (Drapeau et al., 2011; Peddireddy, 2016). It is projected that individuals who experience immense psychological distress have less survival rates compared to the general population (NASMHPD, 2006). On the other hand, people affected with any disease also undergo psychological distress and the medical outcome in these individuals is dependent on the psychological interventions (Trangle et al., 2016). The necessity of psychological interventions during diseased conditions is important due to the fact that individuals with chronic diseases exhibit altered mental status resulting in risky behaviors such as non-adherence to treatment, altered life style (tobacco smoking, alcoholism) and indulging in unsafe sexual practices (Pasco et al., 2008; Huther et al., 2013; Moore and Posada, 2013; Pachi et al., 2013; Behera et al., 2014; Pezzoni and Kouimtsidis, 2015).

The risky behavior stems from the feeling that they will not survive for long and all the pleasures of life should be experienced as soon as possible. Because of the risky behavior resulting from psychological distress, these individuals are likely to die 25 years earlier than the normal population (NASMHPD, 2006). In addition to this, psychological distress induced inability to take care of their own health affects quality of life (QOF) in terms of physical inability and the extent of suffering from chronic pain (Veggi et al., 2004).

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) defined quality of life (QOL) as “a broad multidimensional concept that usually includes subjective evaluations of both positive and negative aspects of life” (“Health related quality of life”, 2016). Quality of Life for reason of assessment completion consists of five main categories: material and physical well-being; relationships with other people; social, community, and civic activities; personal development and fulfilment; and recreation. The symptoms of mental illness, depending on their severity, can greatly impact an individual’s functioning.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Over time, there has been a continued realization that forms of artistic expression can be incorporated into existing treatments as well as can be used to create their own forms of treatment. Expressive arts therapies can be beneficial when working with clients who are unable to communicate verbally; however, this is not the only situation in which it is effective. These therapies can be effectively utilized with individuals who are verbal to bring any subconscious feelings to the surface as well as to deepen understanding of their inner selves. This makes expressive arts therapies ideal not only for the acutely mentally ill, but also individuals who are higher functioning as discussion may take place during or following any modality processes. Another expressive arts modality relating to mental health that has been reviewed is clay therapy. It has been proposed that clay has therapeutic value such as to “promote the release of emotions and may lead the patients to feel pleasure

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in the act itself, as well as have control over their feelings through their hands” (de Morais, Roecker, Salvagioni, & Eler, 2014, p. 129-130). Several themes were explored in one study through means of patient statements: “becoming familiar with clay art therapy; feeling clay therapy; and realizing the effect of clay therapy” (de Morais et al., 2014, p. 131).

Another expressive arts modality relating to mental health that has been reviewed is clay therapy. It has been proposed that clay has therapeutic value such as to “promote the release of emotions and may lead the patients to feel pleasure in the act itself, as well as have control over their feelings through their hands” (de Morais, Roecker, Salvagioni, & Eler, 2014, p. 129-130). Several themes were explored in one study through means of patient statements: “becoming familiar with clay art therapy; feeling clay therapy; and realizing the effect of clay therapy” (de Morais et al., 2014, p. 131). “While patients worked with the clay, they expressed themes that demonstrated painful way” (de Morais et al., 2014, p. 134). These results then proposed that clay therapy can improve relationships with other people; social, community, and civic activities; personal development and fulfilment; and recreation. Dance movement therapy may be an effective treatment for individuals with serious mental illness as well as its goal are to “help a person to dissolve acts of immobilization and to rediscover flow in the living body” (Hayes, 2013, p. 25).

This literature review aims to explore the effectiveness of expressive arts therapy combined with spirituality to enhance the wellbeing of Hong Kong traumatized protestors or activists. Spirituality is known as a “the quality of being concerned with the human spirit or soul as opposed to material or physical things” (Oxford, 2020) and trauma is understood as “a deeply distressing or disturbing experience” (Oxford, 2020). This writer felt that due to the benefits experienced by each modality individually, it would be of value to examine the incorporation of various modalities as they could appropriately be utilized to improve quality of life. The researcher feels that this gap in the research of identifying the less or poor quality of life, less psychological wellbeing or mental health in workplace and no or very less effort in enhancing them. The researcher feels expressive art therapies can be an intervention module for enhancing the quality of life and psychological well-being of the employees which is lacking in prior research.

METHODS

Aim:

To study the effect of expressive art therapies on quality of life and psychological well-being of teachers who were COVID-19 positive.

Objectives:

1. To assess the pre quality of life and psychological well-being of teachers who were COVID-19 positive.
2. To apply the intervention of expressive art therapies on domains of Quality of Life for teachers who were COVID-19 positive.
3. To assess the post quality of life and psychological well-being of teachers who were COVID-19 positive.

Hypothesis

1. There will be a significant difference in pre and post assessment of quality of life of teachers who were COVID-19 positive after intervention of expressive art therapies.

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2. There will be a significant difference in pre and post assessment of psychological well-being of teachers who were COVID-19 positive after intervention of expressive art therapies.

Participants:

For the present study the researcher included 130 participants who were working as teachers in school, colleges and who were from private institutions. The age group of the participants were from 25 to 55 years. The data was obtained through purposive sampling method. The researcher chose purposive sampling technique to qualify the conditions or criteria and to save time of the study.

Inclusion criteria:

1. People who were working as teachers in college/schools.
2. Both men and women teachers were included for the study.

Exclusion criteria:

1. Those who were Not COVID-19 positive are excluded.
2. Those who were COVID-19 positive at the time of the study.

Materials and Data Collections Measures

- **WHOQOL-BREF:** Whilst the WHOQOL-100 allows a detailed assessment of individual facets relating to quality of life, it may be too lengthy for some uses, for example, in large epidemiological studies where quality of life is only one amongst many variables of interest. In these instances, assessments will be more willingly incorporated into studies if they are brief, convenient and accurate (Berwick et al, 1991). The WHOQOL-BREF Field Trial Version has therefore been developed to look at domain level profiles that assess quality of life. At a conceptual level, it was agreed by the WHOQOL Group that comprehensiveness ought to be maintained in any abbreviated version of the WHOQOL-100, by selecting at least one question from each of the 24 facets relating to quality of life as well as two items from overall quality of life and health. The most general question from each facet (i.e. the item that correlated most highly with the total score, calculated as the mean of all facets) was chosen for inclusion in the WHOQOL-BREF. Cronbach alpha values for each of the four domain scores ranged from .66 (for domain 3) to .84 (for domain 1), demonstrating good internal consistency.
- **Psychological Well-being Scale** Ryff, C. D., & Keyes, C. L. M. (1995) measures Psychological wellbeing: The Psychological Well-being Scale is a theoretically grounded, multidimensional model of well-being that was designed to include six distinct components of positive psychological functioning including positive self-regard (self-acceptance) ($\alpha = 0.71$), mastery of the surrounding environment ($\alpha = 0.77$), quality relations with others ($\alpha = 0.77$), continued growth and development ($\alpha = 0.78$), purposeful living ($\alpha = 0.70$), and the capacity for self-determination (autonomy) ($\alpha = 0.78$). The test-retest reliability coefficient is 0.82. It is an 18-item scale with a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1-7, 1, “strongly agree” and 7, “strongly disagree”. Items within each subscale are summed, yielding a range from 18 to 126. Higher scores indicate greater psychological well-being for each subscale.

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Research Design

The present study research adopts single group design. This study consists of only a single group of subjects, in which all subjects received a single intervention and the outcomes are assessed over time. Therefore, the study includes single group design.

Operational Defining

- **Quality of life:** Quality of life is a broad-ranging concept affected in a complex way by the person's physical health, psychological state, personal beliefs, social relationships, and their relationship to salient features of their environment (WHO, 2005).
- **Psychological Well-being:** In the present study Psychological well-being refers to inter and intra-individual levels of positive functioning that can include one's relatedness with others and self-referent attitudes that include one's sense of mastery and personal growth.
- **COVID-19 positive:** Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. When tested and detects the presence of COVID-19 in your nasal secretions then it is said to be COVID-19 positive and is infected with this virus.

Experimental manipulations or interventions

The present study included expressive art therapy interventions. Since there was an established relationship between quality of life and psychological well-being in reviews stated. This means if there is an increased quality of life there is an increased psychological well-being and vice-versa. Therefore, the intervention was planned for the domains of quality of life that are physical health, psychological health, social relations and environment. The influence of intervention was analyzed on quality of life and psychological well-being in the research as post-assessment.

Procedure:

The study would be conducted in three stages viz., Selection & Screening stage, testing stage, and Intervention stage.

Selection and Screening stage:

In this stage, the participants and their interest in the participation to the research was ascertained. Participants who expressed their willingness to participate were included, and those few who expressed difficulty dropped from the study. A total of 130 participants' data was collected for this study. Participants, who were at least once COVID-19 positive earlier for the study, but participants who were COVID-19 positive at the time of data collection was excluded from the study.

Testing Stage:

Once the selection of participants was completed for the main study, depending on their convenience and willingness, the location and timing were fixed to commence the consent of participation in the research for administration of assessments and intervention. The interview started with an informal chat with the subjects and their details on socio-demographic characteristics through the Personal Data Sheet. After completion of the personal data, the standardized questionnaires were administered in one session. The WHOQOL was administered following with psychological well-being questionnaire to 130 participants on to one individual basis.

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Details of Intervention

The intervention carried out with an objective to understand the efficacy of expressive art therapies Intervention on enhancing quality of life and psychological well being. Out of 130 participants, 56 participants were divided into 4 groups (14 participants in each group) with the idea of meeting small groups for the intervention. The remaining 74 participants, few were dropped by the researcher as they had higher quality of life and few participants were dropped due to unwillingness to participate in the intervention research. Among 56 participants of intervention, each group were met 4 times for application of intervention. Each domain of quality of life was planned with different kinds of expressive art therapy applications, which spread for 4 weeks (met once a week). The feedback of the intervention was administered in 5th week (the next week of completing the intervention). The post-assessment of quality of life and psychological well-being was administered after a month of the intervention of expressive art therapies to the same participants to cross-check the effectiveness of these interventions.

Data Analysis

The obtained data of teachers who were COVID-19 positive was further scored according to the scoring norms of quality of life and psychological well-being questionnaires. The scored data was analyzed using SPSS software, version 20. The research used paired sample 't' test for assessing the difference of pre and post assessment after the expressive art therapies intervention as the obtained data is from single group.

Transparency and Openness

The study investigated the effect of expressive art therapies on the quality of life and psychological well-being of teachers who were COVID-19 positive exemplifies these principles by clearly delineating its methodology, tools, and findings.

This research aimed to assess how expressive art therapies might enhance the quality of life (QOL) and psychological well-being (PWB) among teachers who had recovered from COVID-19. Employing well-established tools like the WHOQOL-BREF for quality of life and Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale, the study ensured a vigorous and impartial measurement of outcomes. By detailing the pre-and post-intervention assessments, the study provided a transparent interpretation of its methodological rigor.

The use of purposive sampling to include 130 teachers and the following application of expressive art therapies—such as dance movement therapy, mandala colouring, and story creation—reveals a commitment to comprehensive and reproducible research practices. This choice of interventions was conversant with prior literature that highlighted the therapeutic benefits of various art modalities.

Ethics

The study sought permission from the research-conduct-ethics-committee (RCEC) of the University to carry out the present study. It took informed consent from the participants during the survey. The questionnaire had informed consent at the beginning. Only upon agreeing to the consent form can the participants respond to the survey. Researchers ensured the anonymity of the data collected to the entire range of participants with the declaration at the beginning, including the privilege to withdraw from responding to the survey at any point of time by the participants, if they found themselves not comfortable responding to the

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questions. Researchers stored the data collected in a password protected file and made it available only to the researchers to ensure data safety.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The obtained data was subjected to analysis and the results of the analysis are discussed as below:

1. Quality of life

Table 1: Shows the difference in pre and post-assessment of quality of life of teachers who were COVID-19.

Domains of Quality of life	Pre Intervention		Post Intervention		't' value	Sig (2 tailed)
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Physical Health	26.64	4.44	31.48	2.72	-11.90	0.00
Psychological	24.34	3.52	29.64	2.36	-12.64	0.00
Social Relations	14.14	5.42	15.10	1.52	-1.26	0.20
Environmental	32.54	5.46	37.22	4.55	-16.26	0.00

The above table shows the pre and post assessment values of mean and SD of the domains of Quality of life. the mean value and SD of pre-assessment of physical health is 26.64 with SD being 4.44, in the psychological domain the mean is 24.64 with SD being 3.52. In the domain of social relations, the mean is 14.14 with SD of 5.42. In the domain of environment, the obtained mean is 32.54 with SD being 5.46. After the intervention of expressive art therapies, the obtained scores in post-assessment are in the domain of physical health the mean value is 31.48 with SD being 2.72. In the domain of psychology, the mean is 29.64 with an SD of 2.36. In the domain of social relations, the mean value is 15.10 with SD of 1.52 and in the domain of environmental the mean is 37.22 with SD being 4.55 respectively. The 't' value is -11.90 for physical health, -12.64 for psychological domain, -1.26 for social relations and -16.26 for environmental domain. The obtained 't' values shows that there is difference in pre and post assessment of teachers who were COVID-19 positive in the domain of physical health, psychological and environmental at 0.01 level. The domain of social relations shows that there is significant difference in pre and post assessment of quality of life of teachers who were COVID-19 positive at 0.05 level. This shows that the hypothesis stating that 'There will be a significant difference in pre and post assessment of quality of life of teachers who were COVID-19 positive after intervention of expressive art therapies' is accepted.

Since many review studies of shown that there is a relationship between Quality of life and psychological well-being the research planed the expressive art therapies intervention for the domains of quality of life. So, if there is an increase in quality of life of teachers who were COVID-19 positive there will be an increase in psychological well-being also after the intervention. As shown in the results there was a significant difference in quality of life after intervention of expressive art therapies and in turn there was a significant difference in psychological well-being also.

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2. Well-being

Table 2 Shows the difference in pre and post-assessment of psychological well-being of teachers who were COVID-19.

Domains of Quality of life	Pre Intervention		Post Intervention		‘t’ value	Sig tailed) (2
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Autonomy	29.08	4.64	34.78	3.72	-14.58	0.00
Environmental mastery	26.7	3.75	32.00	3.03	-13.06	0.00
Personal Growth	28.41	5.76	33.57	4.33	-11.06	0.00
Positive Relations	31.76	4.39	36.19	3.36	-11.36	0.00
Purpose in life	29.82	4.95	35.16	3.94	-13.83	0.00
Self-acceptance	35.25	4.12	35.51	4.22	-0.90	0.37

Table 2 shows the result of the difference between the pre and post-assessment of teachers who were COVID-19 positive. In the pre-assessment the mean value in the area of autonomy is 29.08 with an SD of 34.78, in Environmental mastery the mean is 26.7 with an SD of 3.75. personal growth area the mean value is 28.41 with an SD of 5.76. In positive relations, the mean value is 31.76 with an SD of 4.39. In the area of the purpose of life, the man is 29.82 with an SD of 4.95. In the area of self-acceptance the obtained mean is 35.25 with SD being 4.12. In the results of post assessment the obtained mean in autonomy is 34.78 with SD of 3.72. In the area of environmental mastery, the mean is 32.00 with an SD of 3.03. in personal growth, the mean is 33.57 with an SD of 4.33. In the area of positive relations, the mean is 36.19 with an SD of 3.36. In the purpose in life area, the mean is 35.16 with an SD of 3.94. In the self-acceptance area, the mean is 35.51. The ‘t’ value in the area of autonomy is -14.58, environmental mastery is -13.06, personal growth is -11.06, positive relations is -11.36, the purpose of life is -13.83, and in self-acceptance -0.90. This shows that there is a difference in pre and post-assessment after the intervention of expressive art therapies at 0.01 level in the areas of autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, and purpose in life. The area of self-acceptance shows the difference at 0.05 level. Therefore the hypothesis stating that ‘there will be a significant difference in pre and post assessment of psychological well-being of teachers who were COVID-19 positive after intervention of expressive art therapies’ is accepted.

In a study of expressive art intervention of Dance Movement therapy (DMT) the results proved that DMT may be an effective treatment for individuals to help a person to dissolve acts of control and to experience again the flow in the living body” (Hayes, 2013, p. 25). An expressive arts form relating to mental health that has been rediscovered is clay therapy. It has been also seen that clay, drawing, and colouring has therapeutic value such as “promote the release of emotions and may lead the patients to feel pleasure in the act itself, as well as have control over their feelings through their hands” (de Morais, Roecker, Salvagioni, & Eler, 2014, p. 129-130). In the present study the researcher introduced Dance movement therapy as an intervention for physical health, Colouring mandalas for a psychological domain, creating stories for pictures for social relations, and exploring the self through play therapy for enhancing the environmental domain. The study proved that expressive art therapies can make a difference if introduced in day-to-life activities for teachers and also for their overall well-being and in turn have a better quality of life as well as psychological well-being. These expressive art therapies enhance the quality of life and psychological

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well-being as well help in enhancing their coping skills if introduced in their day to day aspect of life.

SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

The study aimed to understand the effect of expressive art therapies on the quality of life and psychological well-being of teachers who were COVID-19 positive. As there is an established relationship between quality of life and psychological well-being as stated in reviews, an intervention (expressive art therapy - Dance movement Therapy) was planned for the domains of quality of life that are physical health, psychological health, social relations and environment. The study proved that expressive art therapies can make a difference if introduced in day-to-day life activities for teachers, also for their overall well-being and in turn have a better quality of life as well as psychological well-being. In addition, it was found that expressive art therapies aided in enhancing their coping skills if introduced in their day-to-day aspect of life.

Limitations

1. The participants for the study could have included different groups for example government teachers and private teachers, school teachers and college teachers as the nature of work among this group varies.
2. The intervention planned for each domain could have been extended for a longer duration so as to keenly observe the impact of the intervention.

Suggestions for further study

1. The study can be carried further as said in the limitations with more number of sessions using expressive art therapies as intervention.
2. The researcher can also plan and observe the impact of expressive art therapy intervention in the areas of psychological well-being.
3. The study can be carried out for other ailments of chronic life style disorders.
4. The researcher can plan a comparative study by carrying out an intervention for individuals who were COVID-19-positive, homemakers.

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Acknowledgment

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Rashmi, R., Ms. Ferin M.L.R., & Jethwani, L.M. (2025). Effect of Expressive Art Therapies on Quality of Life and Psychological Wellbeing of Teachers Who were Covid-19 Positive. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 13(3), 652-661. DIP:18.01.058.20251303, DOI:10.25215/1303.058