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Effect of Art Therapy on Adolescents' Mental Health

Shruti Mittal¹✉, **Mamata Mahapatra**², **Shadab Ahamad Ansari**³

^{1,2} Amity Institute of Psychology and Allied sciences (AIPS), Noida, India

³ Galgotias University, Greater Noida, India

✉ mittalshruti36@gmail.com

Abstract: Introduction. Adolescent children continue to be vulnerable to issues of mental health. A significant population of these groups suffers from peer pressure, depression, anxiety and parental pressure. Many adolescent people fail to express their emotions to other people. As a result, they experience low self-esteem, fail to communicate effectively and sometimes even fail to appreciate their personalities. **Theoretical Basis.** A research study that employs the systematic review follows formulated questions. In this research, the formulated question guides understanding the relevance of studies in the matter under investigation. The method effectively identifies the research question using the PICOTS (Population, Intervention, Comparator, Outcome, Timing and Setting) framework. **Results and Discussion.** Research obtained from the American Art Therapy Association informs on the efficacy of art therapy. In various ways, researchers observe that it has a positive effect on general mental health regardless of the artistic experience. Thus, art therapy has a general benefit to the community at large while influencing the impact of mental and physical health. Researchers should plan to evaluate the extreme effects of art therapy on mental health diagnosis, treatment alternatives, and integration into learning environments in future studies. Art therapy is one of the important mental health interventions with significant benefits to these adolescents. The intervention tends to offer an integrated approach treatment that focuses on mental and emotional complications. Professional therapists argue that art therapy offers an innate communication and expressive chance for individuals with mental conditions. Additionally, the therapeutic intervention covers the needs of the patient, setting the creative engagement platform.

Keywords: art therapy, anxiety, depression, self-expression, color, emotion, intervention, mental health, therapy, adolescents

Highlights:

- Art therapy tends to offer an integrated approach treatment that focuses on mental and emotional complications.
- There is the firm belief that self-expression in artistic creation generates therapeutic value for individuals seeking deeper healing.

► The lack of certification for such professionals affects the treatment alternatives.

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Introduction

Adolescents phase several mental health challenges in contemporary society. Children that experience physical health long-term condition (LTCs) continue to be vulnerable to the risks of mental health complications compared to some of their other peers. Few of these children have immediate access to proper pediatric physical health services. Thus, adolescents face many mental health issues (Wigham et al., 2020). Art-based therapy emerges as the immediate alternatives and medical health intervention in the absence of mental health services. Few studies understand the concept of art-based therapies and their relation to mental health intervention in adolescences; this forms the foundation for the following systematic review research paper.

Art therapy is a healthcare intervention model that explores individual minds and emotions through visual expressive ways. Adolescents face several mental challenges that require the intervention of art therapy programs (Bergman et al., 2018). Healthcare providers understand the importance of using visual art applications to facilitate a supportive therapeutic environment for their patients (Wigham et al., 2020). Accordingly, different art and design professionals tend to engage adolescents diagnosed with mental illness in drawing and painting. Others choose different art forms that range from photography and sculpture, allowing individual development through creativity. Few studies tend to explore the effect of such commitment and determination. This scarcity of knowledge prompts the quest to explore the effect of art therapy on adolescents' mental health.

Mental health research reveals that adolescents tend to experience mental health challenges (Tollefsen et al., 2020). In various ways, these groups experience parental pressure, peer pressure and interpersonal or relationship burdens. The result of such complications results in compromised lifestyles and behavior that promotes unhealthy living. For that reason, many young people engage in drug abuse, intensive aggression and suicidal behavior. These are primary signs of poor mental stability and health at their age (Sharifi et al., 2019). Art therapy is a powerful remedy to dealing with some of these issues. Cognitive psychology posits that art therapy allows for self-discovery. It also creates a form of emotional growth for the individuals instilling a positive attitude. The various emotional triggers in the therapy also support healthy living and behavior among the affected groups.

Theoretical Basis

A scoping review of academic literature indicates that art therapy continues to have a significant impact on mental health recovery (Campbell et al., 2016). Accordingly, adolescents who face mental health challenges can receive therapeutic relief upon subjection to art therapy. Health care professionals also observe that it is possible to build an emotional connection by engaging adolescents in creative art. Importantly, the emotional build-up and connection tend to create an opportunity for reconnection to the real world (Lobban & Murphy, 2020). Some of the issues that affect young people revolve around peer pressure, self-perception, and emotional digress. Therefore, when subject to art therapy, many find the ultimate expressive point.

Contemporary learning environments present challenges to promote mental health among young people. Accordingly, educators promote active learning, which develops from cognitive abilities and stability. A developing challenge to such strategies is the fact that many young people fall victim to mental problems. Research on effective mental health strategies continues to omit the review on the effect of art therapy (Harpazi et al. 2020). This shortcoming creates a gap between mentally stable students and those who face challenges associated with good health. In this respect, educators adopt different mental health learning policies and practices upon the parents and student guardians (Mortazavi, 2018). Accordingly, this initiative follows the request of the World Health Organization that supports mental health stability for the adolescent groups (Owen et al., 2019). The WHO recognizes the positive impact of art therapy in dealing with mental health issues. In various ways, the organization observes that students with mental health challenges require special attention. This line of thinking follows reviewed evidence studies that point to the role of arts in mental health intervention. By far, students subject to art therapy can build learning skills and communicate effectively on their challenges while pursuing academic excellence.

Misluk-Gervase (2020) observes that the 21st century has witnessed increased research on arts and its effect on mental health and individual wellbeing. Several studies have attempted to expand the scope of research for mental health cases. Importantly, psychological studies tend to narrow areas of studies to expound on the relationship between art and mental health therapies (Shella, 2018). The findings obtained from study samples in various research fields remain to be restricted to specific themes. Thus, it is commonplace in research to find a direct correlation between mental health and art therapy. However, few studies have explained the effect on a specific patient group, such as the adolescent population. Further, past research studies have aimed to create awareness of the role of art in the management of mental health cases among young people (Chiang et al., 2019). Research studies have failed to elaborate on the exact effect of art therapy and mental health. These shortfalls in study research prompt a systematic review of the literature to understand the phenomena of interest fully. In this respect, the synthesis question for review aims to explore existing evidence on the role of art therapy in improving mental health and well-being among adolescent groups.

Khan & Moss (2017) argue that the research on art therapy and mental health in adolescent groups has to assume a significant approach. The choice to include the systematic review is to ensure that the study can cover various areas of study. Thus, subthemes act as the immediate guide into the matter under investigation. These include art influence on social determinants of health, support of child development, and support on health-promoting behaviors (Feen-Calligan et al., 2018). Importantly, other subthemes for consideration include prevention of ill mental health and support with regards to caregiving. Including these subthemes guarantees a wide scope of study of relevant issues associated with art therapy and mental health intervention. The focuses of the systematic review were also aimed at understanding art influence in managing mental health conditions and treatment even to other diverse patient groups (Koom et al., 2016). The interests of such sections are to understand art therapy impact on people diagnosed with different types of mental illness. Further, it is to understand the care requirements for patients diagnosed with acute conditions. These features provide an in-depth analysis of art therapy care impact, particularly during neurodevelopment and neurological disorder phases (Stunden et al., 2020). Thus, the end goal is to assist in managing non-communicable diseases and increasing survival chances at the end-of-life

care stages. Psychology studies explain that art therapy liberates human expression. Accordingly, humans have used art as an expressive remedy to communicate thoughts in place of written words over centuries. In various capacities, art therapy covers broad creative activities as defined by the American Psychology Association. APA explains that art therapy uses creative activities; painting, sketching, sculpting and photography for psychotherapeutic interventions and treatment.

Psychology research reveals that art therapy allows individuals to express thoughts in literal senses. This element of art therapy is the expressive therapy of mental intervention used for persons diagnosed with mental conditions (Alter-Muri, 2017). In learning institutions, art therapy tends to meet the needs of learning students with mental conditions. Accordingly, educators continue to invest their time and expertise in establishing an all-inclusive environment for their students. Therefore, a significant component of the education system accommodates therapeutic services (Zubala et al., 2021). The rationale for the support of such a system is to meet the requirements of specialized education systems. Art therapy is effective when offered in learning institutions and environments compared to clinical settings. Importantly, students may fail to disclose their emotions when in private clinics. Instead, they may willingly share their emotions and thoughts when subjected to ordinary learning environments. Therapists gain an interactive platform for the student and their educators in the school environments. They form part of the support system, which constitutes the teachers, staff and other students. This aspect of therapy forms the non-isolative environment, which becomes beneficial to adolescents with mental challenges. Including art, therapy develops from the drive to understand students' emotional state and perception of academic achievements. It is important to understand that the overall school environment has a general impact on the student's emotional, personal, and behavioral problems. Therefore, incorporate a program that deals with these issues are vital to promoting academic excellence within institutional parameters.

Art therapy is a creative process that allows an individual to express their inner-self. The mental intervention program improves a patient's physical, mental and emotional welfare (Solvang, 2018). In various dynamics, it is a process that resolves personal issues while developing management potency related to behavior and emotions (Aguilar, 2017). Psychology studies reveal that art therapy reduces stress levels in adolescents while boosting self-esteem and awareness—professionals administering art therapy work with people with even less talent (Lazar et al., 2018). Therefore, an individual does not necessarily have to exhibit creative art potential to use the therapy. Instead, therapists tend to work with patients by diving into the underlying messages communicated by an individual (Haeyen et al., 2018). Adolescents tend to benefit from this form of intervention as they get absorbed in the process that supports a healing process. Art therapy mainly achieves different behavior elements from people. Therefore, it plays an influential role in healing and treatment (Killick & Greenwood, 2019). Psychology research also reveals that art therapy offers the chance for individual rehabilitation and psychotherapy. Extensively, the cognitive intervention tends to massage an inner-self. Additionally, art therapy offers an individual the chance to gain a deeper understanding of one. In this respect, a person experiencing mental challenges may secure an opportunity to understand their inner-self, making peace with their personality.

Methodology

A research study that employs the systematic review follows formulated questions. In this research, the formulated question guides understanding the relevance of studies in the matter

under investigation. Art therapy is a healthcare intervention program that benefits different patient groups (Kim et al., 2020). The lack of an understanding forms the imperative to use the methodology to compare studies. It also prompts the researcher in retrieving evidence with the explicit methodology. Accordingly, the systematic literature review will distinguish literature content from different databases to accommodate a rigorous quality of the necessary information. Different search terms also directed the study review to guarantee accuracy in defending opposing views of the study focus.

The sensitive nature of the study prompted the decision to use the systematic review approach. In many ways, this methodology approach tends to appraise and collate relevant empirical evidence. As a result, a researcher can obtain a complete interpretation of research results. Additionally, the method effectively identifies the research question using the PICOTS (Population, Intervention, Comparator, Outcome, Timing and Setting) framework. In the following study, the protocols helped to reduce any forms of bias and resources waste. As a result, the research followed a strict approach with high accuracy levels.

Results and Discussion

Mental health issues continue to raise concerns among healthcare providers. In learning institutions, children continue to face mental health complications affecting their ability to attain academic excellence (Roberts et al., 2021). The growth and developmental pattern change also create mental health complications for young people (Birnbaum et al., 2017). Additionally, some of the social environments also affect mental stability among different age groups. A growing concern develops on the adolescent groups exposed to different social settings. Many adolescents tend to succumb to social life pressure which affects their ability to reason and think. Consequentially, adolescents fail to maintain stable mental health patterns evidenced by their behavioral changes.

Art therapists understand the mental health challenges among different groups of young people. Therefore, they present the tailored treatment alternatives that aim to improve mood, behavior and way of expression (Chesin et al., 2017). In various capacities, art therapists rely on specific creativity, the expressive model, to understand the inner-self of an example patient. Though they understand the challenge of communication, these professionals struggle to learn and observe subjects through expressive ways (Palmer et al., 2018). This approach offers evidence that art tends to create a link between cognitive personality and the outside world (Malhi et al., 2021). Importantly, adolescents' challenges with mental stability use art to express their moods.

Therapists administering art therapy understand that adolescents face various mental health challenges. Thus, they engage in ineffective patient groups, which mainly start by communicating their feelings (Aguirre Velasco et al., 2020). The therapist tends to inquire about student feeling about the learning approach and their perception of themselves (McDonald et al., 2019). As a result, they develop a treatment plan with the student who comes in developing artworks. Therapists allow students to embark on their piece of work without interfering or passing judgment about their work. In these instances, the professional can read through their patient's thoughts from the representative artwork underway. As a result, the therapists pose questions about the artistic work. These falls mainly along the lines of the ease of drawing, painting or coloring. In some cases, the therapists question the mood or appeal of the artwork.

During these stages, the therapists predict the mental state of their patient or client to understand their thoughts and memory when working. In this regard, therapists maximize on common

principles of cognitive learning and communication (Fenner, 2021). There is the firm belief that self-expression in artistic creation generates therapeutic value for individuals seeking deeper healing. Predominantly, belief and self-expression help clients understand their personalities (Quinlan-Davidson et al., 2021). Several elements of this thinking develop from connecting to color, texture and various art media, which are central to the therapeutic process. The American Art Therapy Association explains that therapists are practitioners trained to interpret various artistic tools (Rowe et al., 2017). They use a categorical tool to connect with a person's thoughts, feeling and psychological disposition. Importantly, these professionals relate with their clients in the psychotherapy process using visual art as the specifics. In some cases, they have to combine the therapies with other intervention programs to derive the desired outcome at a patient level.

The literature review section explains that art therapy has a permanent role in treating psychological disorders. Research studies reveal that art therapy forms part of other creative therapy types. It is among common interventions such as dance, drama, expressive, and music therapy to offer a healing opportunity for the patient population (Kim et al., 2021). The technique used in art therapy tends to encourage people to utilize creative art by exploring self-expression possibilities. These approaches guarantee building on personal insight while fostering means to adapt to new coping skills. In this respect, it is evident that art therapy influences the appreciation of creative works to help patients (adolescents to explore emotions, develop a self-sense of awareness and manage stress (Potash et al., 2017). In other cases, it is proven to boost self-esteem and building on social skills. The diverse research material presented informs that art therapy treat mental disorders and relieve a patient of psychological distress. Patients that choose art therapy are subjected to additional psychotherapy combinations such as cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) for effective functioning. This combination of therapies helps treat conditions such as anxiety, depression, emotional distress, and psychological issues.

Research obtained from the American Art Therapy Association informs on the efficacy of art therapy. In various ways, researchers observe that it has a positive effect on general mental health regardless of the artistic experience. Therapists engaging patients with mental complications can use any form of creative arts. They may include drawing, colorful painting and even collage. The strategies apply to different patient groups regardless of their age. Thus, art therapy has a general benefit to the community at large while influencing the impact of mental and physical health. Mental health is of pivotal interest in the study that has observed its efficacy when dealing with different people. The AATA association also explains that a specific clientele group (adolescents) can benefit from creative expression through art therapy. These young people may be victims of domestic abuse, anxiety, depression and even some relationship complication. Thus, a subjection to creative expression helps relieve their frustration to change their behavior and perception of life. The research presented offers significant learning points and a deeper understanding of art therapy. In various ways, the literature material presented indicates that art therapy covers a broad patient population. This element of the mental health intervention is beneficial and has high efficacy standards. The certification of therapists is important to expand on the delivery of the treatment services. The lack of certification for such professionals affects the treatment alternatives. Importantly, in the future, learning institutions should accommodate changing learner demands, especially in the special education category. Researchers should plan to evaluate the extreme effects of art therapy on mental health diagnosis, treatment alternatives, and integration into learning environments in future studies.

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Author Contribution

Shruti Mittal – wrote the paper, concept.

Dr. Mamata Mahapatra – finally approved, edited.

Dr. Shadab Ahamad Ansari – edited, approved and reviewed the manuscript.

Author Details

Shruti Mittal – PhD Scholar, Amity University, Amity Institute of Psychology and Allied Sciences (AIPS), Noida, India; Scopus Author ID: 57823052200; e-mail: mittalshruti36@gmail.com

Dr. Mamata Mahapatra – Professor, Amity University, Amity Institute of Psychology and Allied Sciences (AIPS), Noida, India; Scopus Author ID: 57822807200; e-mail: mmahapatra@amity.edu

Dr. Shadab Ahamad Ansari – Associate Professor Psychology, Galgotias University, Greater Noida, India; Scopus Author ID: 57561214200, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1831-9912>; e-mail: shadab0002003@gmail.com, shadab.ansari@galgotiasuniversity.edu.in

Conflict of Interest Information

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.