

Challenges Faced By Art Therapists at School While Practicing Art Therapy

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the perceptions of facilitator towards Art Therapy which gives the faintest idea about the problems and challenges faced by the facilitators during practicing Art Therapy. Use of Art Therapy in rehabilitation centers cannot be neglected. Process of healing and recovering from inner wounds, trauma, grief and mental illness has a huge contribution to Art Therapy along with medication. It helps individuals in exploring new connections, relations and meanings in a safe and non-judgmental environment. For this, exploratory research method was applied in the qualitative paradigm as it allows the researcher to quality and insightful information to a study and collect ample amount of information and insight about any subject. For this exploratory research, 5 Art Therapists/ educators and Art teachers were taken and data was collected. As per study Art Therapy can benefit anyone regardless of any illness but still a lot needs to be done as it's comparatively new. It can be conducted by anyone with a little knowhow of psychology, Art and Meditation. This cannot be used as a diagnostic tool if it's conducted by any non- professional. It has a lot of challenges and a lot of work to be done.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the day this universe was formed and the very first human stepped on the Earth till date, Homosapiens are continuously evolving. This wasn't an overnight process but took millions of years. This transformation was huge. The journey from caves to high rise buildings, humans are continuously striving to prove themselves. In this race they have not only achieved a lot which cannot be dreamt about in the past but on the other hand they also lost their peace of mind. What we see around now is an increasing rate of anxiety, depression, anger, mental health issues and the list goes on. If we see in past, depression and anxiety is were treated through medicines and were considered as a taboo. Now, with time, an individual's mental Well-being is of much importance. Now experts not only work with medicine but also inculcate different types of therapies to heal the wounded souls.

Amongst all therapies, Art therapy is something which is highly regarded by professionals as it not only has any side effects but also can be done with any age bracket, in a group or individually. It's not an easy though. The facilitators, practitioners and professionals who work as an Art Therapist, consider this as quite a challenging task. There are different reasons and hurdles they face during implementation which sometimes make it tough for them to manage.

Rationale

The purpose behind conducting this study is to identify the perceptions of facilitators towards Art therapy. This study gives the researchers an idea about the present scenario of the individuals facing physical and mental health issues. In addition to this, researchers will be able to identify the problems and challenges faced by the facilitators during their facilitation. In more recent years researches have explored the benefits of art therapy for treating a variety of physical or mental health difficulties. Some of their findings show art therapy:

- This study can help people deal with strong emotions, increase self-awareness and self-worth and decrease stress and anxiety.
- This study can involve a variety of creative expression including drawing, painting, coloring or sculpting, to name a few.
- This study can help to reduce pain, decrease symptoms of stress and improve quality of life in adult cancer patients and improves ability to deal with pain and other frightening symptoms in children with cancer.
- This study can reduce stress and anxiety in children with asthma and it stimulates mental function in older adults with dementia. • This study indicates a reduction in depression in Parkinson's patients.

Objectives of the Study

The research intends to focus on the analysis of the challenges faced by facilitator of the rehab during practicing Art therapy. Following are the objectives of the study specifically.

- To explore facilitators' perception regarding Art therapy.
- To identify the challenges faced by facilitators' during Art therapy.
- To make the most of Art therapy for refining the individuals..

Research Questions

What are the perceptions and challenges faced by facilitators towards Art Therapy? What is the impact of Art therapy in 21st century?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW**Origin of Art Therapy:**

The old saying, “A picture is worth a thousand words,” “this applies perfectly when we talk about Art therapy. Art is always taken as a tool to express and communicate even when the languages were not there as a means of communication.

Art as a Therapy started as a formal program in somewhere near the 1940s. Professionals and doctors observed that people with mental illness were found more expressive while drawing and using colours or other artwork. That was the point where they realized that art can be used as a healing tool. Since then it has become an important part of the healing process. The best part is there are no age restrictions for this therapy. Art therapy is not limited to people with Mental illness but it also helps people in exploring their self-expression, personal insight and helps with developing coping skills. (Danielle Dresden, 2020)

Effectiveness of Art Therapy

An important question was raised in a research in 2020 regarding effectiveness of Art Therapy and if it really works? Several quantitative and qualitative research and studies are still carried out in terms of effectiveness of Art therapy according to population and different age groups. Different researches were focused on specifically adult clients. Which was further divided into seven clinical categories:

Cancer patients, clients coping with different medical conditions, mental health , people coping with trauma, prison inmates, the elderly, and the people who have not been diagnosed by any particular issue but are struggling in daily challenges. The discussed article deals with the research which mainly focuses on measuring the effectiveness of art therapy. It also caters two major concerns or challenges. Keeping in mind that Art Therapy is comparatively new and yet its effectiveness is questioned and needs to be researched upon. The first is the definition of “effectiveness”. The definition suggested in Hill et al. (1979); namely, “the attribute of an intervention or maneuver that results in more good than harm to those to whom it is offered” (p. 1203)

The second is the definition of “Art Therapy”. This can be best defined as “Art therapy, facilitated by a professional art therapist, effectively supports personal and relational treatment goals, as well as community concerns. Art therapy is used to improve cognitive and sensorimotor functions, foster self-esteem and self-awareness, cultivate emotional resilience, promote insight, enhance social skills, reduce and resolve conflicts and distress, and advance societal and ecological change (American Art Therapy Association, 2018).”

This definition makes it quite obvious that it has to be carried out in the presence of a certified and qualified therapist. This will also help in diagnosis of the areas where the client is suffering and the targeted goals and their desired outcomes. (Dafna Regev and Liat Cohen-Yatziv , 2018)

Defining Art Therapy in Rehabilitation Centers

Need of Art Therapy in rehabilitation centers can not be denied. Process of healing and recovering from inner wounds, trauma, grief and mental illness has a huge contribution to Art Therapy along with medication. It helps individuals in exploring new connections, relations and meanings in a safe and non-judgmental environment. Since Art not only support in expression and communication but also works best with individual’s sensory-motor, cognitive, emotional, physical, social and spiritual aspects.(Karkou and Sanderson 2006).

Art has always been an innate part of human civilizations. Therefore art therapy’s constructive impact was observed since the 2nd world war. (Hogan Zool ; Waller 1991). As Jones (2005) clarified, we are still in the early stages of understanding and discovering how art therapy works and why it’s effective.

Those who become art therapists, must have experience in at least one field, like medicine, psychology, education, visual art or social work. It helps them understand and work with their clients more effectively. Art Therapists works in multiple rehabilitation settings and with different individuals having various issues like Learning Problems, Emotional and Mental problems, Mental illness etc. Each and every setting and individual has their own needs and requirements. Here rehabilitation and therapists has to keep in mind the aspects in the process of rehabilitation. (Jones 2005) Art Therapy in prisons:

Johnson (2008) discussed how this works at prisons with inmates. It serves four major area; therapeutic, educational, prison quality of life management and societal. He further said, since Art is a form of communication and expression, so it works on their moods, boredom and

helps and building better relations between prisoners and staff and creates a safer and cooperative atmosphere.

How Art Therapists Practice in Rehabilitation Settings

While working at rehabs, art therapists should avoid using medical terminology and diagnostic tags on their clients. They will restrict their individuality and their individual needs. The specific terms used for the client is not only going to effect the process but also create a judgmental environment which is restricted for any therapist, counselor or psychologist. As per Allen (1995, 2008), it's not therapist's role to change, fix or cure the art but help his client to express the flow. When the artwork is done, the therapist may provide support to his client by helping them with the words by asking meaningful descriptions and questions. (January 2009

In book: International Encyclopedia of Rehabilitation

Difficulties faced by Therapists While Integrating Art Therapy in the School System

School is considered to be a safe place for children and adolescents. Therefore creative therapy is giving them a platform to express and explore themselves. Art therapy in combination with Art techniques; material and process plus the final product itself serves as a tool of self-exploration and exploration for a better understanding of one's own self and to bring a change.

Art is a nonverbal and indirect form of communication. Hence considered to be effective for dealing with children. Art is something natural, play based and colorful means of expression. (Waller, 2006) This also helps teenagers who might find verbal communication threatening due to some reasons. (Karoo and Glassman 2004).

According to professional literature several studies and cases which were reported have proved the impact and power of art as a therapy in schools. It not only work on emotional needs but also on academics as well for e.g. art therapy helps in reducing symptoms of ADHD (Ottarsdottir 2009), reduces dropout rates (Isis, Bush Siegal & Ventura, 2010), improves academics progress and behavioral problems (Deboys, Holttum & Wright 2016), symptoms of Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) in school (Khadar & Sheckman, 2010).

With so many advantages of this therapeutic approach, it's still difficult to implement it completely. The main hindrance is the academic schedule and the continuity required to complete the healing process of an individual.

Not only this but integration becomes difficult due to insufficient tools, art materials, colours, safe space for Art Session, time limitations , qualified therapists , no specifically

assigned room , lack of resources, clashes between academic blocks and therapy sessions and workload.

One should not forget the fact that like other therapies Art Therapy also requires privacy, confidentiality and safe and therapeutic environment to carry out the session to attain the maximum benefits from this natural therapy. (Glassman & Prasad, 2013). The hurdles which were commonly faced by the therapists while working in schools with children and teens were about maintenance of the schedules. Though the blocks were assigned and specific rooms were allotted to the art therapists to carry out their sessions but it was still difficult to uphold the therapeutic schedule.

Consistency of the session and continuity was also one of the major concerns from therapists. The major reason they quoted were scheduled and unscheduled holidays.

Summer and winter vacation, spring break and other gazetted holidays were also hurdles in continuity. Sometimes school year end parties, festivals, sports week, spring festival, gala and other curricular activities also made it difficult to carry on the session on the scheduled dates which of course were not compensated.

Changes in the academic year was yet another concern. Sometimes clients or therapists were ill and that also disrupted the regularity of the sessions. Some therapists felt that such disturbances which were throughout the academic year made it difficult for them to build connectivity and rapport with their clients or once if it was built, got disconnected due to mentioned reasons.

Schools often used art therapy rooms for carrying out other activities like rehearsal of programs, used by school nurses or giving remediation sessions. Since the room had children's art materials and their artwork so this resulted in loss of artwork or it was misplaced. Art supplies and other resources used or lost.

Another major concern was when the therapy room was used for other activities by teachers and students, the artwork was revealed to other students. Of Course this also resulted in breach of confidentiality. In many schools it wasn't taken seriously so the rooms allotted were small. Therefore made it difficult for the facilitators to roam around the room for instructions and support during group sessions.

Transitions from one room to another for certain reasons also create difficulty to maintain the permanent setting and atmosphere. Due to more strength half of the sessions were passed in

getting to know each other and building rapport. Migration of the child or vacations were the toughest challenge. The child who started to build a connection and agreed to open up about his fear, anxiety and grief was again gone back to the point where it started.

Many times children initiated art work which helped the therapists in knowing them but due to long vacation when the child came back, the tempo was broken. So he felt detached and showed a lack of interest. These were the major setbacks or challenges which were faced by therapists who were working at a school setting. Though the early intervention to the problem or trauma could have saved many individuals yet the percentage of success cannot be ignored neither the art therapy's importance nor nature (Adoni-Kroyanker et al, 2018).

Ethical Issues Concerning the Referral to the Therapy:

Soon as a therapist is assigned for a school he or she faces ethical hurdles. It starts with the referral to the therapy. Sometimes it happens that the school teachers approach a therapist. Most of the time there are fewer spots than the candidates. That's the reason mostly the class teacher, school psychologist, counselor and the art therapist herself sort out the cases which need immediate attention.

Sometimes the principal also takes part in sorting out the cases. Is mostly based on the feeling of the referral form basis of the urgency and attention the case needs.

Many times it has been observed that parents also reach out to the counselor or therapist but very rarely it's observed the child themselves apply or initiate for the art therapy.

Legally the therapist cannot have a session without parents' consent but what if the child denies it? Does the child's consent really matter? In this case the therapist tries to build connection and rapport with the child for his best treatment and betterment of the child's mental health. But the main question is do the parents and child really know that this is a therapy or they just take it as an art of fun class.

Cooperation and Confidentiality

Important to keep the class teacher in loop since she is the class teacher and she knows more about a student as compared to a therapist who just stepped in. It is very important to make the class teacher as a partner to know and share the initial information with her. The biggest problem with this is when the teacher starts expecting everything to be discussed and shared with her whatever the therapist is doing in the session with the child and the diagnosis or information

shared by the child. If the therapist does not protect the privacy then this therapy might be of no use but rather than being harmful for the child. Legal Implication:

Here the major concern is, if in any case the therapist has to testify in front of law then she or he has to expose it publicly so basically it's trust and not complete confidentiality. So for legal purposes sometimes the information is being shared in front of the public for the public service and betterment.

Documentation of the Therapy Session

Another problem arises when it is about the documentation of treatment. Clients name, session's date, the problem with the client, duration of the treatment, everything needs to be documented. So it's a responsibility to note down in a way which cannot create trouble if it's read by the family.

Ownership of the Artwork

Spaniol (1994) At this stage the main question arises: who owns the artwork? Some say to the treatment facility, some suggest to the client, others think to the treatment staff. But what happens if its group work?

Displaying Artwork

Hamond and Gantt (1998) chess that artwork is personal for the client and not for the audience. For clinics rehabs where the adults are under treatments it is fine to display the artwork but in case of school this becomes a challenge for the therapist. Here if the artwork is displayed the therapist can omit the information and the diagnosis along with the client name.

Privacy, Safety and Predictability

The biggest challenge for the art therapist is when it comes to the safety and the privacy of the room which is going to be used for art therapy.

Most of the art therapists are part timers. The room is used for different purposes by other teachers too. Here it's become difficult for the art therapist to maintain the predictable setting for the next session.

Breaching Confidentiality

It is the utmost duty of the counselor, psychologist and therapist to maintain the confidentiality and privacy of their client. Or unless the client or the others are in danger of

health or life. The ATTa ethical standards for therapists state that therapists shall keep the welfare of all the patients and their mind.

So overall an art therapist working at any setting isn't easy and it has a lot of risks and challenges. It is the biggest responsibility when it comes to children as your client..

3. METHODOLOGY

The qualitative research paradigm was selected to conduct this research because it deals with words instead of numbers in the collection and data analysis (Creswell, 2013). Additionally, qualitative research also allows the researcher to identify the conceptual understanding of the study in all situations, while also trying to understand occasions in terms of the meaning people gave to them.

For this proposed study, exploratory research method was applied in the qualitative paradigm. Exploratory research was selected as it allows the researcher to at quality and insightful information to a study and is important for a study. Exploratory research I lost the researchers to be creative and it allows the researchers to collect ample amount of information and insight about any subject. For this exploratory research, 5 Art Therapists/ educators and Art teachers were taken and data was collected.

Sample and Sampling Method

Purposive Sampling was used as it is often used in qualitative research, where the researcher wants to have detailed knowledge about a specific phenomenon rather than make statistical inferences, or where the population is very small and specific. Here researcher interview someone who is expert in their field or have enough know how. As this play a vital role in the project. In this specific research the researcher interviewed 5 Art Therapists , educationists and Art teachers.

4. FINDINGS

Therapeutic Use

From the data it is clear that teachers use art therapy in their classroom in therapeutic manner. This is quite clear when one of the therapists said, "Yes , along with other subjects, we also take sessions on Therapeutic use of Art". Another teacher said that,

"I teach use of different forms of art in a therapeutic manner to all ages including children."

Art has healing powers

The data collected helps us rule out that Art has certain healing powers. It works on emotional, physical and Mental Health of individual. The response from therapist supports this when he said, “Art has healing powers using art as therapy provides a strong support system to the students and those who engage themselves in creative activity to stay positive and away from stresses.”

Art Therapy has its own challenges

While discussion we came to know that lack of awareness, resources and acceptance and Art supplies limitations and unavailability. Though therapists are facing multiple challenges but the major of all is lack of awareness and acceptance. As one of the teachers responded.

“Challenges that as a teacher we face during our therapy are lack of patience in kids, hurdles and focus, limited to less knowhow of art supplies.”

5. DISCUSSION

From the data extracted during research and interview it was prominent that Art Therapy or therapeutic use of art can help individual in many ways. It not only help in improving mental health but also helps children who are going through trauma or struggling in academics. The major discussion was about if it will benefit each and every age group or any specific age group. The conclusion was that ages where children are mature enough to understand art and use of paints can benefit more.

The problem most of the facilitators faced was the lack resources and awareness. They also emphasized on the ambiance and environmental. As Art Therapy calls for peaceful and soothing surrounding to get the maximum benefit from it.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Therapeutic use of Art is not age specific. It's a time taking therapy. It can benefit anyone regardless of any illness but still a lot needs to be done as it is comparatively new. It can be conducted by anyone with a little knowhow of psychology, Art and Meditation. This cannot be

used as a diagnostic tool if it's conducted by any non- professional. It has a lot of challenges and a lot of research to be done.

For future recommendations, it's important to observe different settings and age group closely. Need to see the perspective of therapists from other countries and the lacking from our side. What are the major difference between an underdeveloped and developed background. How responses and impact differ from social, economic and cultural background.

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