

An Introduction to Art Therapy and Creativity in Organisations

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Abstract

Various opportunities exist in Art therapy, which has found its base all around the world, except for Southeast Asia. During the seventy-five years since art therapy was termed, several different techniques have been explored adopting art in psychotherapy. Art therapists in America have achieved more than what was foreseen; they have associated art therapy with a number of modalities like education, medicine, psychotherapy etc. However, these opportunities are novel and have a huge scope in India as the foundation and knowledge of art therapy are gradually advancing. The objectives of the study were to examine the concept of art therapy, identify its characteristics, ascertain the introduction of art therapy in India, and to investigate limitations we may experience in initiating. Initially, art therapy was recognised in the field of social science and had a difficult beginning, and art therapists had less to do than other therapists. This paper explore the hypothesis that art making is beneficial for all age, groups and organisations by reviewing the existing literature. To begin with, in India, art therapy can be studied as a social science subject, and free art sessions can be introduced in various organisations to bring upon self-awareness, self-esteem, progress, and growth in its members perceptions. There is an opportunity open for a national organization of art therapy and its advancements in promoting a positive impact of art in health. There are few people concentrating on art therapy in India and there is a need for improvement of educating people on art benefits. Whether it is making art or a display of finished artwork, it produces a gratification deep within, and hence a number of research reports signifies physiological and psychological improvement in their clients. This research highlights the importance of art in bringing upon certain positive impact on the human mind.

1. Introduction

Art therapy is intended to guide and assist overall well-being and investigate emotional states of a client. Art therapy is not a mere understanding of client; nor a set of instructions to teach art; but is a modality through which we try to analyse and heal a person by understanding his feelings and thoughts. The purpose of this science, therefore, is to demonstrate the power of art in describing and healing the disorder of human mind; which might have been bottled-up and also hidden due to verbal barrier.

People of all age, gender and race can be benefited by art therapy, as images stimulate emotions making mind and body respond to the process of art making (Malchiodi, 2003, 16). In art therapy, therapy is the primary goal, and an art therapist must know who and what they are treating, and the procedure generally include assessment and treatment (Rubin J.A, 2010, 27). Art making heals and augments life by bringing out the thoughts and feelings while art helps one to bypass the communication barrier (Malchiodi, 2003, 1). Hence, though therapy is the goal, 'art' in art therapy and 'counselling' in psychotherapy respectively becomes the primary communication mode in the treatment.

There exist two distinct kinds of art therapies; 'art as therapy' and 'art psychotherapy', former believes that self-indulgence in art making for the purpose of pleasure is therapeutic by itself, whereas, the later believes in psychotherapeutic understandings, and relation between therapist and the client is apparent for healing (Edwards, David, 2004, 2).

From time immemorial art is utilized to promote healing and soothing, but for the first time in 1942 Adrian hill from UK, terms these benefits of art as: art therapy (Susan, 2001, 25; Jones-Smith, Elsie, 2014, 346), being an in-patient for tuberculosis he comprehends the therapeutical benefits of drawing and painting (Edwards, David, 2004, 1). During 1940's to 1950's using 'art as therapy' in UK hospitals was recognisably amplified into a new impression (34); whereas, at about same time, Naumburg a psychologist in America started art therapy with the concept of releasing unconscious by expressing through art (1), hence two parallel aspects of 'art as' and 'art in' therapy were instinctively developed. But most art therapists work with psychodynamic perspective, including psychoanalytic, object relations, and Jungian approaches (Malchiodi (Ed.), 2005, 22).

According to New York University's website¹, Naumburg around 1950's initiated art therapy courses and training seminars on graduation level in the art department for art professions. In 1973 Kramer, who extensively works on the concept of art as therapy, developed a master's of art in art therapy program and continued the trend. Hence art therapy in America was initiated and remained for a long time as a field of social science.

¹ <http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/art/therapy/>

2. Therapeutic art – art as therapy

Americans and Europeans have worked on the benefits of art extensively, proving the enormous power that art holds in healing mind and body. Few of the fields that benefit from art therapy are schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, clinics, art studios and workshops².

There have been number of studies which conclude that even free art sessions provided without any assessment, intervention, or treatment too is physiologically and psychologically beneficial. This does by no way means art as therapy is a substitute for art in therapy or psychotherapy; but provides a kind of satisfaction and self-appreciation. Art as therapy is not for highly troubled or psychiatric patients and is generally evidenced that for common individuals benefits are reaped without psychotherapy (Kaplan, Frances. 2000, 100).

Inspiring patients, staff, and carers to engage in the process of art making has benefited in the medical field, Staricoff, summarises that local artists and museums can blend with medical schools to bring these objectives fulfilled (staricoff, 2004). In a study; cancer patients from North-western Memorial Hospital were subjected to free art sessions of their choice for an hour, and found that their eight of nine suffering symptoms reduced considerably measured by Edmonton symptom assessment scale³. Notably they were not involved in art psychotherapy but were exposed to simple art activity of their choice, which is an archetypal example of therapeutic properties underlying in art by itself, what we know as art as therapy. When diseases take control over life, art therapy encourages and uplifts the patient above his illness, this is been forgotten in today's modern medicine⁴.

When we observe the client making drawing, we understand their state of mind through synthesis; but by conducting art assessments we acquire the same knowledge through analysis in bits and pieces while supporting the validity and reliability of the analysis. Hence, it is perfectly alright to use art assessments or psychological assessments to analyse clients; be it art as therapy or art in therapy.

Literature review was conducted using art therapy texts and Journals and the study suggests that art making brings in behavioural improvement along with several other benefits. Such behavioural improvements are welcoming in the workforce of any organisations.

3. Introducing art therapy in India

Benefits of art as life enhancing is widely accepted from time immemorial⁵, such views exist all around the world as ancient understandings. There is a need for making Indians understand the

² www.uwsuper.edu/acaddept/art/arttherapy/.../ArtTherapyProfession.pdf

³ Geue, Goetze, Buttstaedt, Kleinert, Richter, Singer 2010. 160-170 psychcentral.com/news/archives/2006-01/nmh-atc122705.html

⁴ Sømme J H. Medical Art Therapy A useful supplement to classical medicine? Advances in relational mental health Vol.4, núm. 2 - Julio 2005

⁵ Akila L. K. Forms and Boundaries of Art with Aesthetic Cognition in Art Therapy, HR Pub, Sport and Art 2(3): 46-54, 2014

benefits of art, which is especially useful for children who won't vent out their difficulties. Many parents do not acknowledge their child's disorder, and some feel annoyed when administrated to a psychologist, as though we are claiming the child to be mentally ill. An epidemiological study conducted by Nimhans, Bangalore found that only about 37.5 percent of the parents were aware of their children having problem⁶. A meta-analysis of psychiatric disorders in India concludes that the reporting system of disorders in child and adolescent are quite scarce⁷. If such is the state of psychiatric disorders, problems in normal children like depression, and anxiety can be more neglected, ignored, or un-detected by parents, and this may lead to producing morbid society for the future.

But art therapy can produce a comfortable and non-clinical atmosphere to the children and most welcoming for them to execute and produce something that describes their feelings and emotions. In India, art therapy is one where parents may not feel wrong when administrated to as against to psychiatrists, and children willingly may attend the art therapy sessions as it is more accommodating.

Malchiodi (2003, 39) says "All approaches to art therapy have a powerful capacity to tap elements of experiences, thoughts, and emotions that verbal therapy alone cannot. This ability to capture through visual image the internal world of feeling, sensations, perceptions, and cognitions makes art therapy, whether from a psychoanalytic, humanistic, developmental, or other approach, a unique, creative, and effective way to work with clients of all ages", and groups.

Only a handful of people in India are working towards art therapy, one such is renowned art therapist and author Dr. Sangeeta Prasad⁸, her contributions to the field of art therapy and the efforts made towards bringing art therapy to India are immeasurable. Through her teachings, writings, and art therapy programs both in US and India she has worked with variety of populations. Most welcomed latest publication is "Using Art Therapy with Diverse Populations, Crossing Cultures and Abilities", and it treatise on techniques of art therapy with distinct populations.

India in its own realm of culture has lot of diversity from north to south and east to west, this within-cultural variation creates a flowery platform for art therapy with distinct population and would be great to explore. It would take many more years for art therapy to flourish here in India; in the meantime, it can be introduced as social science concept where we can understand the underpinnings of art therapy concepts theoretically. Also the concept of art as therapy can be experimented with groups of students, artists, families, and non-psychiatric patients.

⁶ Srinath S, Girimaji SC, Gururaj G, Seshadri S, Subbakrishna DK, Bhola P, Kumar N. Epidemiological study of child & adolescent psychiatric disorders in urban & rural areas of Bangalore, India. *Indian J Med Res.* 2005 Jul; 122(1):67-79.

⁷ Malhotra, Patra BN, Prevalence of child and adolescent psychiatric disorders in India: a systematic review and meta-analysis, *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health* 2014, 8:22

⁸ www.linkedin.com/in/sayitwithart/en

Art as therapy can be useful in understanding and appeasing human behaviour in an organisational environment, and it can affect the performance by motivating both internal and external perspectives of a staff. Liebmann (2004, 13) specifies the benefits of working in group art therapy as:

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1. Awareness, recognition, and appreciation of others
 2. Co-operation, involvement in group activity
 3. Communication
 4. Sharing of problems, experiences and insights
 5. Discovery of universality of experience/uniqueness of individual
 6. Relate to others in a group, understanding of effect of self on others, and relationships
 7. Social support and trust
 8. Cohesion of group
 9. Examine group issues
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Women in India from thousands of years have the practice of drawing geometrical patterns called Rangoli, it's not just an art, but many believe it to be a kind of stress buster, Similarly Mandala drawings are practised in art therapy, portraying anything they wish within a circle. Carl Jung recognised this art form as “a representation of the unconscious self”, hence, mandala art therapy is a source to represent and reflect one's soul⁹.

Since there are not many art therapists working in India, and the knowledge of art therapy is negligible, we will have to depend on self-report of individuals to understand the therapeutic factors of art therapy. People with high-stress in the organisations may find it difficult to fit in art therapy session's schedules. An employer should know that art therapy may not increase the employee productivity but is a way to care for the health of workforce.

Hereby, three components i.e. healthcare, companies, and educational organisations are reviewed briefly on benefit of art and art therapy.

1. Arts in healthcare organisations

In her exhaustive review of literature Staricoff (2004) accrued an enormous amount of 385 references from medical literature into her research report and concludes, different art forms induce physiological and psychological betterment in patients, helps fighting drug addiction, reduces the length of hospitalization, expands doctor-patient relation, improves mental healthcare, and Increases practitioner's understanding of gender and cultural diversities.

Through art works adolescent's life circumstances can be understood by therapists, especially experiences which are hard and humiliating to reveal, and therapists can put in effort to safeguard the child from their difficult times¹⁰. Compared to art teachers, Clinical training provided to art therapists makes them more comfortable to work with impaired students (Rubin, 2010, 31), hence the mere knowledge of art and education will not suffice an art therapist's occupation and clinical training becomes bare necessity (Rubin, 2005, 8).

⁹ <http://www.arttherapyblog.com/art-therapy-ideas/healing-with-mandala-art-a-multi-cultural-idea-worth-exploring/#.VRl8wfmUdZk>

¹⁰ Riley, Art therapy with adolescents, West J Med. 2001 Jul; 175(1): 54–57.

Promoting health and well-being is a part of art's influence which can be described by clinical neuroscience (Cohen, and Carr, 2008, 21), physical sufferings are greatly reduced and chaotic emotions are well balanced with the process of making art¹¹, thus in America and Europe, art has taken roots in modern healthcare. Indians who have studied art therapy in abroad would be eager to work in Indian Hospitals, once healthcare organisations assume the art therapy modality into our system.

2. Arts in business organisations

A study was conducted on quality of life of elderly females in a Japan's company, people who had art and music education in early life were found with higher cognitive functions than the general female group. Those who continued with their hobbies were found to have better quality of life and social activities with an overall positive attitude¹². Thus, we can understand that, mere act of getting involved in art making can be therapeutic, as Rubin (2005, 238) says: *"Art classes—taught by clinically sensitive teachers or art therapists—can also be therapeutic..... Art exercises can be helpful in looking at both individual and interpersonal dynamics—as applicable to a staff group as to a family. Such workshops help employees to function more effectively in the work place, since art is a dramatic tool for clarifying interpersonal issues"*.

Hence this aspect of art therapy can be introduced more easily than clinical art therapy where organisations can be benefited by the outcomes of art classes.

3. Arts in Educational organisations

Progressive educators emphasised on art benefits, that bring upon children's overall development, this development is continued in education till today (Malchiodi, 2003, 7), according to professor Caterall's study, students who were attending art classes and continued the hobby outside were better performers in standardized tests¹³. Study conducted by Guggenheim museum suggests that: *"Arts Education Increases Fundamental Literacy Skills in Elementary School Students"*¹⁴

Put under test, number of possibilities children can come out with is immeasurable, Figure 1 represents several drawings made by children below five years, with given two circles. Their creativity represents the cognitive abilities they comprehend; we witnessed 3D face, teddy footsteps, clock and pendulum and many more that is difficult to think for a grown up. Though art is introduced in schools, the scope and importance of art needs to be increased in educational organisations.

¹¹ Sømme J H. Medical Art Therapy A useful supplement to classical medicine? Advances in relational mental health Vol.4, núm. 2 - Julio 2005

¹² Masutani, T., Yamamoto, Y., Konishi, J. and Maeda, K. (2010), Effects of music and art education in early life and oral functions on the QOL of the Takarazuka Revue Company OG compared with general elderly females. Psychogeriatrics, 10: 4–14. doi: 10.1111/j.1479-8301.2010.00314.x

¹³ <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/04/arts/design/04stud.html?pagewanted=print>

¹⁴ http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/27/books/27gugg.html?_r=0

Figure 1 Cognitive abilities of 3 to 5 years children (Courtesy Palette'n'Art, Bangalore)



Figure: 2. Children engrossed in collage art work (Courtesy: Blue elephant art foundation, Bangalore)



Figure 2 exhibits children engrossed in a collage work, free art sessions conducted in schools or art studios, using different art materials improves children's observation, concentration and make them engrossed in art activity.

4. Conclusion

Hopefully, artists, educators, psychologists, and organisations will welcome art therapy modality into their realms. Whether going to a psychologist or an art therapist, it can help your children to develop self-awareness and grow more positive insights. Introduction to art therapy is a

new avenue and less explored in India, although we have limited option; exploring with art is fun and potentially a healing one.

Since painting and drawing brings out both chaotic and pleasure full feelings, maximum care should be taken to avoid experimenting with psychiatric patients; this introduction proposes only to provide free art sessions to students and working staff for motivation and empathy.

A basic knowledge of psychology is required to do any kind of experiments, hence, it is not suggested to provide directives or anything other than free art sessions to their clients, it's always better and sensible to have a psychologist along with if not an art therapist.

Both children and working class often experience anxiety threat and lacks the ability to manage stress, hence, introducing free art sessions would help the organisations by improving their individual's perspectives and coping skills.

Many large organisations, like educational institutions, hospitals and companies, can develop positive relationships amongst their members and witness the impact of art therapy, which is easily accommodating. To participate in art therapy one need not be an artist, hence, just scribble and run the brushes, experience the therapeutic art that brings in deep satisfaction and understanding.

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