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POWER OF MUSIC: ENHANCING LIVES OF ELDERLY PEOPLE THROUGH MUSIC THERAPY.

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Abstract

Music, with its instantaneous soothing effect, is said to be the medicine the heart and soul need. Music is powerful and has some kind of positive influence upon the listener. Listening to music is an easy way to alter mood or relieve stress. Music is a form of art that is easily accessible anytime and anywhere. Due to the aging process the elderly people may be vulnerable to health or psychosocial problems. This paper has reviewed seven Indian studies conducted on elderly people, mostly from old age homes. The paper provides valuable information about music therapy in promoting the quality of life of elderly people. The studies selected are few in number, but it is an encouraging effort of the researchers, adding to a positive note. The paper emphasizes the importance of methodical research on music therapy and suggests further research.

Key words: Music therapy, elderly people, quality of life.

Introduction

Music may be regarded as projecting ideas and emotions through significant sounds produced by an instrument, vocally, or both. Music has different elements like melody, rhythm, and harmony. Montagu (2017), in his paper, mentioned music to be different from speech and animal and bird cries. Music was created with four evident purposes: dance, ritual, personal and communal entertainment, and above all, social cohesion, again on both personal and communal levels. Music plays a vital role in everyone's life. Music is known to have healing power.

Music has been used as a therapy to help improve a person's overall health and well-being. It may include creating, singing, moving, listening, and/or relaxing to music (NCI Dictionary, 2022). American Music Therapy Association (AMTA) defines 'music therapy' as the clinical & evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship by a credentialed professional who has completed an approved music therapy program. Music therapy interventions can address a variety of healthcare & educational goals. APA dictionary of psychology states that music therapy is the use of music as an adjunct to the treatment or rehabilitation of individuals to enhance their psychological, physical, cognitive, or social functioning.

The process of aging depends on many factors such as socio-economic status, healthy life style and many other psychosocial factors. Elderly people face numerous physical, psychological and social role changes that challenge their sense of self and capacity to live happily (Singh & Mishra, 2009). It has been a long time since people have discussed apathy, dependency and problems of elderly people. Music is one such boon for good mental health amidst ageing problems. It has been observed that the aged population in India needs recreational activities in the form of therapies, especially music therapy, which can enhance the well-being status of the elderly (Lakshmi & Sharma, 2018).

This paper reviewed seven studies from India that have significantly contributed to enhancing mental health, particularly that of elderly people. The paper discusses the effectiveness of music therapy concerning the mental health aspects of elderly people. The studies on chronically ill or elderly people suffering from neurological problems such as dementia or Alzheimer's were not considered because there are multiple issues involved. The studies considered in this paper are most effective and demonstrate an easy application of music

therapy. Secondly, the studies can inspire aspiring researchers to expand the volume of research evidence related to the effectiveness of music therapy. Thirdly, the paper focuses on promoting music therapy for elderly people irrespective of gender and living arrangements.

Review of studies

Chatterjee and Mukherjee (2020) examined the changes in blood pressure, pulse rate and respiratory rate, thereby improving the overall quality of life of the people (nearing the age of sixty) on completion of 30 days of music therapy intervention. The researchers formed two groups: the experimental (40 males) and the control group (40 males). Subjects of the experimental group were exposed to music therapy (a twenty-minute instrumental session based on Raga Todi of Hindustani Classical Music). In contrast, the control group was not exposed to the raga. Before and after the intervention, the subjects' blood pressure, pulse rate, and respiratory rate from experimental and control groups were measured. Results of the study showed that raga Todi of Hindustani Classical Music has the potential to maintain healthy blood pressure levels and thereby may restrict the development of cardiovascular disorders.

Mathew et al. (2017) evaluated the effect of group music therapy in the form of group singing, led by a music therapist, on depressive symptoms and loneliness in institutionalized geriatric individuals having mild depression. The study was conducted as a randomized control trial. The experiment group (n = 40) received daily music therapy in the form of group singing headed by a music therapist for three weeks. The control group (n = 40) did not receive any specific intervention. Results showed lower scores on depression and loneliness in the experimental group at the end of 3 weeks compared to baseline but not in the control group. The researchers concluded that group singing significantly reduced depression and loneliness in institutionalized geriatric adults having mild depression at the end of 3 weeks.

Lakshmi & Sharma (2018) assessed the effect of music therapy on the psychological problems of the elderly residing in selected geriatric homes. The study was conducted in 'Little Drops' old age home (experimental group) and 'Little Angles' old age home (control group), Chennai, Tamil Nadu. Elderly samples of 101 in the experimental group and 100 in the control group were selected. The effect of music therapy on psychological problems was assessed by using the Subjective Well Being Inventory Scale, a modified WHO scale. A pre-test was done before the intervention of the administration of music therapy. It was administered to the

participants who were included in listening to a piece of predesigned instrumental music based on raga Malkauns, for 22 minutes at a specified time in the evening for 30 days. The study results revealed a significant relationship between the effect of music therapy and the level of well-being among the elderly. In association between the effects of music therapy with the demographic variables, it was found that females had better influenced with music than males, those elderly with higher education and family income scored higher on well being than those with lower family income.

Alanivelu (2015) evaluated the effectiveness of music therapy on the quality of life among the elderly. A single group pre- and post-test design was implemented to evaluate the effectiveness of music therapy on quality of life with 40 elderly inmates at an old age home (Inba Illam), Pasumalai at Madurai. Study subjects were given music therapy (classical instrumental relaxing music composed by Dr. T. Mythily, music therapist) in open mode technique to all samples daily for 30 minutes for 24 days. Results showed that the overall pre-test mean score was 69.83, and the post-test mean score of quality of life was 94.93. There was a significant difference in the mean score of quality of life before and after music therapy, i.e. the calculated 't' value was 31.078, and it was statistically significant. The study finding concluded that music therapy was significantly effective in improving the quality of life among the elderly. Further, it concludes that music therapy is cost effective, non-invasive, non-pharmacological, complementary and alternative therapy to improve the quality of life among the elderly.

Dev et al. (2015) assessed the level of depressive symptoms in 40 institutionalized elderly persons before and after the music therapy and evaluated the effect of music therapy on depressive symptoms in the elderly. Each one was given music therapy through an individual Walkman for 30 minutes in the evening hours for 21 days. Post-test was conducted a week after the completion of this exercise. The results showed a significant reduction in the depressive symptoms before and after the experiment ($t=3.65$, $p<0.001$). The researchers mentioned that the study has significant implications for mental health practice, education, administration, and research. It is a cost-effective and safe nursing intervention proven effective in reducing depressive symptoms. Providing music therapy shall augment the effect of alternative therapies, and there is no need for the nursing professionals to undergo any additional training while using it.

Gunthey et al. (2012) investigated the effect of music therapy on 60 depressive elderly adults. Living in institutionalized homes or old age homes. Subjects got music therapy for 45 mm. every morning and evening for 30 days. Their depression level was measured before and after the introduction of music therapy. Results of the study indicated that music therapy lowered depression scores and promoted the quality of life of elderly people.

For his master dissertation, Arun (2012) evaluated 'The Effectiveness of Music Therapy on Sleep Quality Among Senior Citizens at Selected Old Age Home in Dindigul District.' Pre-test and post-test design was used for this study. The investigator selected 50 samples with sleep disturbances through the convenience sampling technique. Music therapy was given for 30-45 minutes for 14 consecutive days, and a post-test was done after the completion of the intervention. Results of the study revealed that there was a significant difference found between the mean pre-test score ($10.05(\pm 1.72)$) and post-test score ($3.02(\pm 1.78)$) of sleep quality. A significant association was found between the level of sleep quality and age, gender, education, and marital status. The findings of the study show that music therapy is effective in increasing the level of sleep quality among senior citizens. So, music therapy can be practiced in old age homes and in other set-ups to help patients and family members cope with sleep disturbances.

Conclusion

This review aimed to demonstrate the effectiveness of music therapy in the betterment of the mental health conditions of elderly people. Music therapy is capable of enhancing the quality of life of elderly people. The studies have revealed that music can positively affect mental health even in a short span (most of the interventions were for 2 to 4 weeks). Music therapy is a very cost effective and easy method for bringing comfort and happiness to elderly people.

The studies reviewed herein were only seven, but since they had been conducted methodically, an attempt was made to emphasize the importance of music therapy in the lives of elderly people. Concentrating on the different musical notes for some time of their life, the elderly people may have psychologically been aided with music therapy. More and more methodical research on music therapy can be conducted, particularly on emotional states and nuances of music. In addition, studies can investigate functions of rhythm concerning

the emotional states of elderly people. In other words, can music effectively replace sadness, tension, anxiety or any negative emotions with happiness, calmness or any other positive emotions?

The qualitative studies on music therapy in enhancing mental health aspects of elderly people can add more value to research in the field of music. Particularly with the help of interviews and case studies, it can be understood that music therapy instils any particular memories of the old people. It is fascinating to note that generally, old people tend to remember past life experiences, whether good or bad. Correlating music with their experiences would be quality research work.

In this paper, a few pieces of research were reviewed, which are speculative and hoping that researchers will be inspired to contribute to the area of music therapy, particularly for elderly people. Since music is directly related to emotions and cognitive aspects, further intervention studies should also probe whether interest in music, mainly raga-based music therapy, is a contributing factor. Future comparative research to examine whether listening to music or singing has a better effect is also recommended.

Whilst the main aim of this review was to describe why music therapy is uniquely helpful in the betterment of the lives of old people, there still is a long way to go and keep adding more and more information to improve the quality of human life. As said by Sanivarapu (2015), listening to the right kind of music brings out the best in an average individual, helping him reach his fullest potential. Lakshmi & Sharma (2018) have mentioned that careful selection of music as complementary therapy is crucial for the reason because wrong selection of music will lead to adverse reactions, as undesired sound becomes nuisance.

The scope of music therapy is undeniably bright; however, efforts must go into popularizing it by emphasizing the scientific basis of its benefits, which more clinical trials in this area can establish. More research using classical and traditional genres of music from India is needed.

On a final, related point, it is essential to note that the effectiveness of music therapy in the context of personality differences has not been investigated. Though the studies reviewed herein show the benefits of music therapy on the quality of life of the elderly, how an individual can take the best of it remains unanswered. On the final note, hoping that this review brings the unique experimental value of music therapy to the attention of researchers for investigating music concerning various aspects of elderly people.

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