

The Effectiveness of Art Therapy on College Students

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Abstract

Mental health issues are common in our society, especially anxiety and depression. These issues threaten college students who experience these mental issues and do not always have a support system or outlet for their illnesses, which in turn causes long-term mental and physiological health issues. Therefore, therapeutic, supportive services, such as art therapy, should be introduced to universities and prioritized as other courses are. This study will use qualitative and literature research to focus on what art therapy method topics, such as receptive, expressive, cognitive, and media usage, can be practical and how the methods can be conducted in therapeutic sessions for college students. The study will also explore the challenges and solutions of art therapy that can affect the students and the counselor centers. The goal of this research will prove to show how art therapy can be used as an effective therapeutic form for college students.

Key Terms

CAT- Creative Arts Therapy

AT- Art Therapy

MBAT- Mindfulness-based Art Therapy

LP- Light Painting

ADHD- Attention-deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder

Chapter 1

Introduction

As you walk on a college campus, you see campus life firsthand. Students are playing sports, reading, playing music, and it all seems like the ideal college dream. However, studies have documented that around 76% percent of college students suffer from mental health illnesses and 43% from anxiety alone. Nevertheless, these numbers are viewed as part of the college journey to get through a successful experience. From the time students are first-year to their senior year, the university has an expectation that requires students to push past their bounds and break through their fears. However, many students cannot cope and handle new environments and pressures.

The lack of sleep, social pressures, poor eating habits, and the list can continue differently for each individual; students are more likely to develop mental illnesses than those out of school. For those who do not seek out prescriptions, legal or not, for help, it is not easy to seek help at counseling centers. In many instances, the waitlist is too long, and support is necessary when dealing with any form of an episode.

In recent years college students and universities have made mental health students a focus point and have begun more studies and therapeutic programs to help students. Many face the challenge of bringing in students who need support and others who struggle to admit that something is wrong. College life can already be judgmental, so it is difficult for students to overcome the fear of judgment or to take therapy seriously. New studies and interventions of alternative treatments are practical for those dealing with mental issues. Art therapy has been used for many decades and has been sought after in many settings. Using this alternative form of treatment has helped grow healthy mental wellness.

The primary purpose of this research will be to show how art therapy is effective in the wellness of college students dealing with their mental illnesses. This study focuses on art therapy's receptive, expressive, and cognitive forms. Promoting more research on art therapy will allow more universities to see the proven effectiveness and benefit of the well-being of each campus.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

As far as the 19th century, therapists have incorporated art into their therapy treatments. Art therapy is based on the idea that the creative process of art-making is healing and life-enhancing. It is a form of nonverbal communication of thoughts and feelings (American Art Therapy Association, 1996, in Malchiodi, 2003, p.1, as cited in Nguyen, 2015). It is an integrative mental health and human service that focuses on the mental well-being of individuals. Guided art media include clay, photography, painting, drawing, coloring, and sculpting, with the list growing. The National Alliance of Mental Illness states:

American college students believe there is a need for mental health programs that provide psychoeducation about risk factors of anxiety, provide coping mechanisms for stress, and prioritize mental health at the same level as physical health. (2012, cited in Beerse, Lith, Stanwood 2019).

Previous research and literature on this topic have shown that due to the amount of work and pressure that consumes college students, they have acquired general anxiety and psychological distress. (Beerse, Van Lith, Stanwood, 2020). As a result, the high levels of chronic stress and anxiety lead to an increased risk of cardiovascular disease, decreased sleep quality, weight gain, and cognitive functioning health. Anxiety and stress also negatively correlate to academic success in students' GPAs. (Beerse et al. 2020). Kagin and Lusebrink have been publishing their studies on the neurobiology of art therapy since 1978, creating the Expressive Therapies Continuum (ETC). Today art therapists continue to use this in their clinical and educational settings. This research will show how art therapy is effective with college

students and can be used in more universities. To understand how art therapy is effective, this study will explore the strengths of the therapeutic methods from previous research. Topics on receptive, expressive, cognitive, and media usage of artistic interventions have shown to be beneficial in healthy mental growth and the challenges that both students and counselors experience.

HISTORY

By the late nineteen-sixties, Art Therapy was legally seen as part of the psychological world as its independent study. Art therapy is based upon the theory that early trauma or developmental conflict may not be accessible through typical verbal language but rather is stored in the unconscious in ore-verbal forms of sensory, kinesthetic, or imaginal cognitions and associated emotional experiences represented in symbolic language (Robbins, 200; Wadeson, 2010, as cited in Nguyen, 2015). In 1967, the US offered its first Art Therapy master's degree program, opening doors for psychologists already studying the usage of art in therapy. Two women who, alongside many others, pioneered this movement were Margaret Naumburg and Edith Kramer. Nguyen (2015) found that:

Margaret Naumburg taught art therapy in New York City and in Washington D.C. at the Washington School of Psychiatry. Art therapy was finally able to stand as a legitimate discipline incorporating elements of both art and therapy in 1970 when the American Art Therapy Association held its first annual conference. (p. 2)

Naumburg and Kramer had different views on how art should be integrated with therapy, with Naumburg focusing on expression and Kramer's coined term theory of "art as therapy" (p. 3). However, each showed the differences that can reach other students and benefit them with each technique. In 1915, Naumburg founded the Walden School, which encouraged free art

expression. Through this ideal, she was “convicted that “such free art expression in children was a symbolic form of speech basic to all education... that such spontaneous art expression was also basic psychotherapeutic treatment” (p.2). Despite their differences, both pulled ideals from psychoanalysis founder Sigmund Freud for their interventions. Even though Naumburg applied the Freudian belief of “the dynamics of unconscious communication with its facilitation through the images and symbols of art” (p.2), she disagreed with the notion that the images from the unconscious need to be translated into words. Instead, she used the process of therapy over the process of art-making. In contrast, Kramer saw that the art process allowed the client to recreate primary experiences and feelings, thereby offering the opportunity to “re-experience, resolve and integrate conflict” (p.3).

Throughout other research, there has been a dialogue discussing how art therapy can be easily taught in schools during art classes. However, as art classes are beneficial and allow students to express themselves through art for a period, it can be limiting to assist students with a safe space for learning and understanding their emotions. Creating art within a therapeutic relationship differs from drawing by oneself or working in a class. It is a kind of special protected situation where one person creates an environment, physical and psychological, in which one or more others can fully explore, expand, and understand themselves through art (Nguyen, 2015).

RECEPTIVE

Receptive art therapy allows students to gain social skills by analyzing different works of art in group therapy. Artwork can be provided by a therapist or by the student. This method may be used to encourage group connectedness and endorse the feelings of the group (Sanders, 2013, p.8).

Group Therapy. Creative arts therapy (CAT) groups offer university students powerful ways to address intrapersonal and interpersonal concerns. These groups combine the strengths of a traditional process group with the benefits of participation in the expressive arts (Bodlt, Paul, 2011). Within group therapy, students can express themselves and interact with their peers growing deeper bonds and connections rather than isolating themselves. Corey and Corey (1997) suggested, "Groups are the treatment of choice, not a second-rate approach to helping people change." (Bodlt et al., 2011). While group therapy is a choice, students must be open to the therapy.

For example, at a group session at Baylor University, a student was reluctant to join the conversation, later expressing her abusive childhood. Rather than giving their own opinion, the facilitator allowed the group to speak, who then began "outpouring of affection, validation, and questions that helped her process her experiences safely" (p. 48). Likewise, allowing students to use their artwork and see others lets them understand a deeper meaning to which they can relate. Such as, facilitators continued during another session, showing students their art based on their view of the group's progress using the "here-and-now- feedback." As a result of its popularity, the program provided two groups each semester and continued onto their fourth year" (p. 51).

EXPRESSIVE

Expressive arts are an umbrella of visual arts and dance that allows students to experience a peaceful state of mind, enduring the pain yet using metaphoric interventions and affirmations in their art to grow. (Price, Swan, 2020, p. 380). For students unable to find the vocabulary or feel as if talking or writing is an emotional barrier, expressive arts allow the body and mind to work through the experiences they struggle with.

Mindfulness-based Art Therapy. Apart from this umbrella is Mindfulness-based Art Therapy (MBAT), which suggests using mindfulness practices to promote health and wellness to alleviate stress. These forms include yoga and meditation interventions (Van Lith, Cheshure, Pickett, Stanwood, Beerse, 2021). Both forms call for a relaxing state of mind and allow the body to rest for students with a fast-paced lifestyle. In addition, it requires focusing on the practice, deviating from their challenges. According to the study by Beerse et al. (2020), “A four-minute yoga video for ameliorating anxiety and stress was provided along with the directive to spend 10 min making a form out of the clay while reflecting on how the body is feeling in the present.” (p.423). This intervention will allow students to use these forms to relay their stress and create a visual interpretation of what they feel. In addition, this intervention can let them see unspoken words and emotions they have kept hidden or could not vocalize.

Metaphoric Art Interventions. Metaphor means “to carry across” in Greek. Without metaphor, language conveys isolated, unidimensional experiences (Nguyen, 2015). This intervention allows counselors to interpret the student’s dreams and emotions deeper. During the Baylor University study by Bodlt et al. (2011), art therapy groups received a deeper understanding and connection with their peers by engaging in the "walk a mile in my shoes." Intervention. (p. 47). Sculpturing using materials such as paper-mâché was explored by one student creating a self-reflection piece in which she explained, "Wolves run in packs" (Boldt et al., 2011, p. 40). She saw herself as a strong yet lonely wolf searching for her pack in this new setting. (p. 40). Another task given to students was to draw their family and friends using metaphoric expressions showing their relationship. The groups' art resulted in one with a brick wall representing a stubborn caregiver, another of an illuminating flashlight for their helpful

mentor, and their overbearing and power-wielding father, Zeus, being drawn. Each student could visualize their emotions and physically put them on paper.

Light Painting. As visual arts expand, art therapy continues to do the same. Light painting (LP) or light drawing is a technique that is starting to grow. LP is a form of photography done in the dark in which a light source is used as a brush moving in any shape desired and captured during a long exposure. LP allows the wielder to create light strokes and forms, making beautiful pictures and words. In a study by Hu, Lu, Zhu, Li, Wang, and Gu (2020), researchers explored college students' positive results after a LP session. "Light painting can integrate elements of painting and dance/movement to music resulting in an interesting, relaxed, and comprehensive movement intervention" (Hu et al., 2020, p. 2). They were allowing college students to use movement and cognitive skills regarding the memory of where their actions are to create a cohesive piece. Even though this form is very new and little research is known on its effectiveness, cognitive-behavioral methods such as spatial orientation tasks and the Positive Affect and Negative Affect Schedule help assess mood status while performing the intervention. Students' results proved increased creativity, emotional and mental, spatial orientation, and social skills.

Suchlike the previous study, another study done by Junhong Yu, Iris Rawtaer, Lee Gan Goh, Alan Prem Kumar, Lei Feng, Ee Heok Kua, and Rathi Mahendran (2020) evaluates the lack of research on how AT benefits cognitive aging. Research has focused on the elderly to find ways to retain memory by observing the "cortical thickness (CT)" (Yu, 2015) as well as the right middle frontal gyrus (MFG) cluster (p. 79). Although the findings from the MFG neuroplasticity were victorious in a short period, long-term stimulation was not. An additional study Yu et al. evaluated was on a group of older adults involving drawing, coloring, collage, and simple

crafting activities, or an active control (AC) group, and observed significant improvements in the clock drawing test (i.e., visuospatial processing) in the former group (Pike, 2013 as cited in Yu et al., 2020). Subsequently, they concluded that other research fell short of aiding individuals with dementia and later said,

Perhaps, the MMSE, which measures global cognition, may not be sensitive enough to detect AT-related treatment gains on certain specific cognitive domains... Although a previous study has identified AT-associated functional changes in the brain, especially in the default mode network (Bolwerk, Mack-Andrick, Lang, Dörfler and Maihöfner, 2014), the neuroplastic mechanisms of AT remained unstudied thus far. (p. 80)

The research continues to push for more studies on different models and cognitive tests to improve AT in diseases such as dementia. This research could likewise improve how students retain information in their education. Nevertheless, there are limited studies to draw from, and there is a need for more psychotherapists to explore the possibilities. For example, such research as Beerse et al. (2020) found that through the concurrence of the activation and reorganizing of the neurobiological process, MBAT could improve the mind and body of college students. (p. 421). A similar study using a qEEG implied meditative brain waves showed frequencies and activated memory processes during a short art-making session. (Monti et al., 2012, as cited in Beerse et al., 2020, p.421).

COGNITIVE

As reported by the American College Health Association (2018), 64 percent of 88,178 students said that they felt symptoms of anxiety caused by feeling overwhelmed over the past twelve months by the spring semester (Beerse et al., 2020). Continuing the study, over half shared that they scored from 'more than average' to 'tremendous' based on their overall stress level.

Physiological. In recent research, it has been found that clinicians will be able to target specific “psychological and physiological” outcomes through different art materials that can activate specific sensory pathways and mechanisms (Kaimal et al., 2017; Kaimal, Ray, & Muniz, 2016; Kruk et al., 2014, as cited in Beerse, 2020). With this research, art therapists and counselors can establish the necessary AT methods for students. To answer the question if AT can be physiologically effective, recent research has documented that there have been significant decreases in the stress hormone during art-making sessions through the results of salivary cortisol analysis (Kaimal et al., 2016, as cited in Beerse, 2020). With such tests, it will be accessible to track the student’s progress and see what treatment works best. In addition, doctors can use tests such as the “Expressive Therapies Continuum (ETC) (Nguyen, 2015). This model of expression and interaction with media on different levels... consists of four levels organized in a developmental sequence of image information process” (p. 5). The kinesthetic/sensory level focuses on the preverbal stages. Although college students have surpassed this stage, art therapy is used as a substitute for such cases. According to Hinz and Lusebrink's (Nguyen, 2015) study, this particular level fixates on the release of energy and expression through bodily action and movement (kinesthetic), as well as tactile and haptic, internal or external sensations experienced by interacting with art media (sensory) (p.5). Through art making, students can connect deeper with their emotions, and through guided art therapy, students can safely heal.

Behavioral Techniques. Alongside college students dealing with anxiety and depression, many live with other mental illnesses, such as Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). For almost three decades, behavioral treatments and techniques based on medicine and multimodal treatment have been used to treat individuals with ADHD (Habib, Ali 2015). Art therapy has been found to reduce the symptoms of ADHD and improve cognitive development.

ADHD is linked to many necessary but concealed cognitive processes that can, in the future, affect students' attention spans and cognitive development (Habib, Ali 2015). According to (Habib et al., 2015), a study conducted by Henley (1998) stated that aggressive or impulsive behaviors related to hyperactivity or social anxiety could be channelized into socially productive forms of self-regulation through facilitated creativity. In cohesive to the previous study, a new approach called "Roth's behavioral techniques" was created specifically for art therapy (Habib, Ali 2015). Results show that art therapy effectively decreases the symptoms of ADHD, which include developmental improvement, inattentiveness, impulsivity, and hyperactivity (Habib, Ali 2015). This concept is the future of AT that will allow clinicians, counselors, and facilitators to appropriately diagnose and aid in students' health.

Counselors and students. As AT opportunities are increasing, Pedrelli et al. (2015) found that in the last five years, 88% of counselor centers have reported higher cases of “severe psychological problems including learning disabilities, self-injury incidents, eating disorders, substance abuse, and sexual assaults.” (as cited in Price and Swan, 2020, p. 379). The ratio of counselors to students is dangerously high, creating a challenge for both students and counselors. Brunner et al. found that one-third of college counseling centers cannot fully meet the demands of the student population because of extended waiting limits (2014, cited in Price, Swan 2020, p. 381). To resolve this issue, research shows that group therapy is beneficial in counseling centers, providing more students with therapeutic services. It also encourages group dynamics and peers support (p. 381). Though counselors face challenges within the mental health system at universities, AT group therapy is an option for college students and counselors.

MEDIA USAGE

Media usage for art therapy has broadened from paints, pastels, collages, photography, and many more. Art therapy media's manipulation and purposeful grasping can often be experienced as a non-verbal language (Hass- Cohen, 2007, as cited in Nguyen, 2015). Media manipulation is essential to the process because it is part of what makes the intervention helpful. A study by Krista Curl stated that “the effects of drawing and collage carried out either a positive or negative mental framework and found that both art tasks, paired with a positive cognitive focus, reduced stress” (p. 5). A safe space corresponds to the media a student works with to have a positive outcome.

Such media can be defined as more structured and less structured to determine patients' needs according to their comfortability and what emotion(s) they are trying to express. At the most structured end are media like graphite pencils and colored pencils. These media with the more inherent structure are resistive because they resist easy alteration (p. 6). With more structure, the student can have more control in promoting thoughtful and intentional pieces. Anxious individuals will often feel more comfortable with structured media, giving them a greater sense of safety and control during the art-making experience. The most structured materials are usually provided at the beginning of art therapy treatment to help clients feel comfortable with the process (p.6). On the other hand, students may need media where they can express their emotions without restraint and freely.

The less structured or more fluid media are watercolor paints, oil paint, chalk pastels, and clay. The media can be very expressive but are more difficult to control (p. 7). Similarly to the Expressive art movement at the end of the 19th century, artists and students alike have used this form to express deep emotions through brushstrokes and color choices. Fluid media are also believed to access unconscious processes, mediated on a preverbal level by the right hemisphere

of the brain, and thus aid in the integration of long-term memory and trauma recovery (Morley et al., 2007; Gantt et al., 2009, as cited in Nguyen, 2015). Knowing how to use media to strengthen specific interventions will assist the counselor in continuing to create comfortable spaces that will empower students to concentrate on their education and invoke confidence in their daily lives.

In order to understand how a student can fully express themselves through art, we must understand the feeling of how art-making has on the individual. Colp and Martin (2020) researched what happens to artists as they engulf themselves in their art-making. They suggested that the perceivable shift from one mental state to another is somehow caused by making visual art. This shift in mental states echoes similar phenomena observed in artists studied in the field of positive psychology and the happiness studies of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1975). As a psychologist, Csikszentmihalyi is known for his theory and coined the term “flow” (p.160). Within his studies, he noted

that when artists were ultimately engaged, they entered into a novel mental state in which they were completely absorbed in their process, so much so that they would lose track of time. Then, rather bed exhausted by such work intensity, they would emerge from their artistic process feeling mentally energized. (p.160)

Continuing their study, they found an art educator, Betty Edwards, to find opinions outside the psychology field. In her research, she believed that artists shift into the second mode of thinking during art making and feel mentally engaged as they holistically manage complex patterns, space, and visual relationships. In this second mode, Edward observed that concentration is entirely on the visual task to the point of losing time, and the mind and body feel connected, as one (p. 159).

Flow can also be experienced as feeling in the zone when doing a task. Students can also access this feeling when expressing themselves holding nothing back once comfortable. This concept can benefit the student and counselor by entering the student's unconscious and unlocking genuine emotions, allowing the intervention to mend the student's concerns.

CONCLUSION

In today's society, mental health is seen as vital, and college students realize the need for more places to seek guidance on campuses. For students to achieve a successful college experience, universities must prioritize their mental health. The current and future generations seek mental health aid more than before, stepping away from its taboo stereotype. However, there is still a disconnect between students and counselors that can be connected with more efficient methods such as AT. Universities can learn how to integrate and create safe spaces for this method. College can determine a student's future just as much as their mental well-being. Both go hand in hand, and universities have a responsibility to be accountable for their attendees. These studies have shown what forms of art therapy there are and how they can be used in treating college students with mental health issues in the future. From the art therapist's and counselor's environment to the brushstroke style, this therapeutic form can help college students obtain control back into their lives.

Chapter 3

Methods

The design of my study will be qualitative research. I began my research searching for more information on the benefits of art therapy and was successful in my findings. However, many articles were from the United Kingdom and Australia, so I refined my search to the U.S. For my study to have accurate information, I needed to find previous and current studies to understand what has been found and documented on art therapy benefits. The search engines used were from the Purchase College Library Database to find more information. The databases used were: PsychInfo, SUNY Purchase Exlibris Group, ProQuest: Psychology Database, Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection Database, ScienceDirects, and ProQuest: Health and Medicine. Outside of Purchase College Library Database, sources were found from Google Scholar, art therapy forums, and art therapy reviews. As I used each database, the keywords used were: Benefits of art therapy, art therapy effectiveness, the effectiveness of art therapy, art as therapy, art therapy, and psychotherapy, Gestalt psychology, light painting, light drawing, drawing light, therapeutic photography, and finally art therapy in college students.

I found thousands of articles on art therapy and combined them with the terms in college students. However, the issue was the need for articles on light painting, which also resulted in misleading articles about chemotherapy and sun therapy. This abundance of articles led me to focus on more research regarding college students. In this case, I put aside my bias as a college student and prospective art therapy major if such results suggest that art therapy is not beneficial. Subsequently, I changed the topic to show how art therapy is effective in college students because of the importance of mental health, primarily in college students. Again, I found sources

that benefited my study and a few that included the risks or questioned what direction psychologists should take to find other methods of “flow.”

In the long run, a literature search from ProQuest: Psychology Database and Ex Libris Discovery allowed my research to contain multiple well-rounded resources and subtopics in my literature review. I continued my research outside of school-based websites and peer-reviewed sourced websites. I obtained more sources that included history and theologians on the subject matter. This narrowing helped give background to the field and showed its connection with psychology and the art world.

By refining my focus on the U.S. rather than the global aspect, I found fewer studies, as the U.S. needs to catch up in research towards Art Therapy. Nevertheless, I found more current studies that allowed my research to view the progression throughout the years. Therefore, I analyzed according to the main topics and sub-topics by highlighting and separating the sources by thematic analysis. Each source was determined by the year and how relative it was to the topics. As I began this study, I had a bias because, as a college student, I understand the stresses and waves of depression that comes with each semester. I also believe in art therapy as a new benefit that should be introduced into schools. However, I was open to the challenges against my study and allowed those to conjure solutions found in other articles. This method was necessary to portray the different types of art therapy methods and uses to allow the reader to search for alternative media to use for students.

I struggled with time management and motivation when there were difficulties finding the proper sources. I overcame the difficulties with my family and my professor’s encouragement to continue. I had to remind myself that this study could help my knowledge in the field and others to continue researching. I also wanted this study to encourage others to view

art therapy as a potential therapeutic method for themselves. This study aims to help students, counselors, and universities understand the potential and risks of art therapy. This world should not only cater to individuals comfortable with talk therapy but to individuals who step outside the box.

Chapter 4

Results

Conjoining the findings from my literature review, I believe that art therapy benefits college students and should be integrated into the educational system. Mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and mental factors such as ADHD are common in our society.

Unfortunately, students do not always have a support system or outlet for their illnesses, which causes long-term mental and physiological health issues. Therefore, students' mental health should be prioritized in universities and other educational establishments.

Earlier in the study, it was noted that there are four methods in which art therapy can be analyzed as beneficial to counselors and students alike. Firstly, Receptive focuses on group therapy in aiding in social skills. The ability to converse with others about their artwork helped them grow bonds and connections rather than isolating themselves. Such as, facilitators continued during another session, showing students their art based on their view of the group's progress using the "here-and-now- feedback." As a result of its popularity, the program provided two groups each semester and continued onto their fourth year” (Boldt et al., 2010). It is a choice in which students can participate with others or choose one-on-one sessions; however, it is proven that in college settings, many students are more comfortable and encouraged to work with others. In a conversation with a friend, she expressed how art therapy helped her cope with her emotions and enjoyed the group session. With the use of grounding guided meditation, she experienced decreased stress and the ability to overcome anxiety and escape dark head space moments.

Secondly, Expressive arts such as mindfulness-based art therapy, metaphoric art intervention, and light painting have been used with students and adults. Promoting health and

wellness through stress-releasing interventions allows students to focus on their bodies and movements while participating. The mindfulness-based interventions included a short yoga video and a directed clay-making activity, improving anxiety levels. Students at Baylor University also participated in the “walk a mile in my shoes” intervention (p. 47), a form of metaphoric art intervention. The use of symbolism within art making has shown students to create self-reflection pieces and connect with others to find more profound understandings.

While photography is not popular in art therapy in many places, a study by Hu et al. (2020) showed that students, as a group using their memory and creativity, could create light paintings and release stress by finding a relaxed state. Using the light painting technique, combined with dancing and music, the individuals let their bodies guide them and use cognitive skills to work together. Using spatial orientation tasks and the Positive Affect and Negative Affect Schedule, researchers tracked the mood status of the individuals during the process finding positive results. However, in research done by Yu (2015), they concluded that although a previous study has identified AT-associated functional changes in the brain, especially in the default mode network...the neuroplastic mechanisms of AT remained unstudied thus far (p. 80).

There is a need for more research on AT interventions connected to the cognitive side of this method. Thirdly through Cognitive studies, clinicians targeted specific psychological and physiological outcomes through art materials. It is essential to find how art therapy can affect the brain and body to ensure the methods positively change the individual. Beerse (2020) found that through salivary cortisol analysis, psychologists can document that stress hormones decrease during art making. Also, activating specific kinesthetic/ sensory pathways found in Nguyen (2015), known for its preverbal stage, can ultimately aid in the process of art therapy, where art takes place for speech. Research has shown that by using the Expressive Therapies Continuum

(ETC) (Nguyen, 2015), psychologists can track the progress of students to determine whether or not the specific media is working. This test works well with individuals with ADHD, allowing psychologists to learn more about the individuals' strengths and weaknesses and what media to use in the sessions, as art therapy effectively decreases the symptoms of ADHD, which include developmental improvement, inattentiveness, impulsivity, and hyperactivity (Habib, 2015). In addition, university counselors are understaffed, and the ratio of counselors to students is dangerously high, creating a challenge for both students and counselors. In a recent conversation with a psychologist and mentor, she explained that schools have a hundred-to-one ratio and little to no representation of students of color. She added that counseling through telehealth has increased because individuals are more comfortable at home. She has used art media and music in her sessions with positive outcomes and individuals excited to enter the safe space she provided.

Lastly, Media Usage has been broken down into terms such as most structured and less structured (Nguyen, 2015). Each structure can be used to determine patients' comfort and what they need to express. An example of most structured media is graphite pencils and colored pencils. These are media with a more inherent structure called resistive because they resist easy alteration (p. 6). In contrast, less structured gives off fluidity effects, such as watercolor paints, oil paint, chalk pastels, and clay. The media can be very expressive but are more difficult to control (p. 7). The most structured media should be given to individuals who are more anxious and need control over their artwork. On the other hand, individuals needing to express more emotions without restraint are inclined to work with the most structured media.

Notwithstanding the lack of research on how art therapy affects individuals cognitively, it has been used globally since the 19th century. It continues to broaden the media used and how it

can be established in universities and spaces for students. However, the risks of universities already being understaffed, and according to a colleague, her college counseling center is not accessible on weekends, negatively affecting her and the students in need. Due to this experience, other students have said they feel judged, have no safe space, and have trouble being honest with counselors, especially during the covid epidemic. As a result of my research, universities must take responsibility and invest in their student's mental well-being. Their programs cannot continue for excellence if their students struggle without help from a place they are also investing in.

Chapter 5

Discussion

College students have been reported to be suffering from mental illnesses and need an alternative method of therapeutic assistance. Art therapy is based on the idea that the creative process of art-making is healing and life-enhancing and is a form of nonverbal communication of thoughts and feelings. Therapists have used this method to help individuals express their emotions, relieve stress, and help with mental illnesses. Universities should integrate art therapy into their programs to help and promote mental health and well-being in their students other than talk therapy. The research provided more details on how to connect art-making cognitively and its effects on the body.

Despite the lack of research, psychologists are on the path to creating more models and tests that will be sufficient to explore how art therapy can be better utilized in the future. Not only can tests be used to show progress, but using media materials and brushstroke analyses can aid counselors in better understanding their clients and students to assist them during the intervention sessions. The future academics will soon run our businesses and establishments and teach their future generations. It is crucial globally that society recognizes the importance of student's mental well-being. College is perceived to be vigorous and pushes students to improve. However, many students cannot withstand the pressures of school and the social circles that universities provide.

With art therapy, students have found an alternative positive source that allows them to find social skills, control emotions, and find more profound resolutions for their internal issues. Through guided meditation, clay-making, light painting, and yoga, research has proven that these methods benefit college students and can advance their cognitive processes skills. There is a

need for colleges and other academic establishments to budget reasonably and adequately to provide counselors and students the budget needed to finance the supplies, whether on or off campus, space, time, and effort to give students better opportunities to sustain in schools. College students should mirror the pamphlets universities give and receive the best education and counseling they deserve.

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