

Music therapy for children with learning disabilities



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Music therapy: A psychotherapy for the well being of children with learning disabilities

- Zahra Sultan Somani

Music is an inbuilt piece of every culture. The impact of music in children's lives may be demonstrated through children's literature in different languages, through lullabies and traditional plays (Dastgheib et al. , 2013). In my opinion, music therapy plays a pivotal role in shaping different domains of the personality. " Music therapy is the prescribed use of music by a board-certified person to effect positive changes in the psychological, physical, cognitive, or social functioning of individuals with health or educational problems. "(Barksdale, 2003). (Gilroy & Lee 1995). Layman (1999) states that music therapy is the controlled use of music with the objective of helping people to overcome their problems. Whereas Bruscia (1987), suggests that music therapy involves the use of organized music in the development of the client-therapist relationship to promote the physical, mental, social and emotional well-being of the client. (Savarimuthu & Bunnell, 2002) The various types of music therapy activities consist of either playing songs or improvisational music (i. e. , spontaneous music making).

During my mental health clinical rotation, I visited " Ma Ayesha Memorial Hospital" where I encountered many children with developmental and learning disabilities. They were being taught music in their school curriculum. The students took an active part in the singing, instrument playing and were clapping as well. they all were happy and learning via the therapy. This experience propelled me to take up this topic in order to understand how music affects children with learning disabilities, how it

<https://assignbuster.com/music-therapy-for-children-with-learning-disabilities/>

shapes one's life towards betterment. There are some questions running in my head: what is the philosophy behind music therapies, how these therapies brings in change? The paper is Organized in the following sections: (1) Background of music (2) Music therapy Approaches (3) importance of music (4) impact of music therapy and its contributions (5) recommendations for the implications

Background

The development of music therapy as a profession has continued since the power of music as a universal means of communication was first discovered in ancient times. In literature ranging from that of the Egyptians and Greeks to that of the present day, the power of music is evident. The shaman or medicine man in many cultures used music directly in healing and was aware of its curative powers long before the advent of the profession of music therapy. In classical Greece, Pythagoras described the healthful properties of specific musical intervals and modes to promote health. Plato's *Laws*, a work that contains a description of music and movement as a prescription for restoring health and harmony, drew associations between music and the moral welfare of the nation. (Barksdale, 2003).

Music Therapy Approaches

Major approaches to music therapy include analytical psychology theory and classical conditioning theory. Analytical psychology theory is given by Carl Jung. According to Jung, the aim of any therapy should be one of the realizations of the authentic self, or making one's issues conscious where they were once unconscious. By dealing with these issues, one reveals the

<https://assignbuster.com/music-therapy-for-children-with-learning-disabilities/>

true self residing underneath the once unconscious issue. Music therapy can therefore be seen as sharing the same goals as the Jungian model of psychotherapy and musical preference, using music to express unconscious or inexpressible emotions (McClary 2007).

Pavlov's behavioural concept of classical conditioning suggests that a preferred song or piece, if paired with a neutral product will produce a positive, or negative association between the two stimuli (Zander 2006). So, when a positive piece of music is amalgamated with positive object, the result will be positive or depending how the client perceives it.

The concept of music and its therapeutic effects are dated eons of years back, it's gaining the limelight lately for 10-20 years in the field of health and in specific for learning disabilities. Though many children are termed as slow learners, but the prevalent cases are not much reported in specific. The former Lahore High Court judge and noted women's and child rights activist Nasir Iqbal stated that 1.8 million Pakistanis had learning disabilities, of which 0.5 million lived in urban and 1.3 million in rural areas. (The Express Tribune, 2013).

Importance of music

. Plato has beautifully described music as " Music is a moral law. It gives soul to the universe, wings to the mind, and life to everything. Without music, life would be an error. " Music is a way of life. It brings calmness in the mood. Not only humans, but birds, animals are capable to understand the melodies.

I believe music plays an integral part in a child's growth. It gives a sense of upliftment and binds the children altogether. The Department of Education, UK, also agrees to it that music plays a pivotal role in the development of children. Children's participation in music connects children, boosting their self-esteem, and gets the most out of their improvement in education and not merely in music. (Department of Education, 2011)

Many researches have exhibited a direct relation between music and improvement in reading abilities in children. It illustrates that children who were guided with a certain type of music instruction had better skills of comprehending the reading material as compared to those who were not given instructions. (Department of Education, 2011)

Straum (n. d.) states that music can be used as a tool to encourage human development in cognitive, learning, perceptual, motor, social and emotional development. (Sze & Yu, 2004)

The impact of music therapy: Music therapy is a way to connect to one's emotional side as well to increase memory and attention span. "It aids to achieve individual ambitions in assistance with a licensed professional." (American Music Therapy Association, 2007). It is a nonverbal and verbal processing along with physical activities (e. g. Playing instruments) for expressing feelings by provoking unconscious psyche of an individual. (Erkkilä et al, 2011 & Malchiodi 2005). Today music has gained significant recognition in many different clinical settings and is playing an important part in the field of learning disabilities (Dimond 1998), especially with people who have severe and profound disabilities. (Savarimuthu & Bunnell, 2002)

<https://assignbuster.com/music-therapy-for-children-with-learning-disabilities/>

In my opinion, the positive points of music therapy are unlimited and it's currently being used in different health sectors. According to Dastgheib et al. , 2013, studies have reported many benefits of music therapy in managing different diseases, particularly in disorders related to the central nervous system. Widespread research has studied the impact of music on the brain and its role in neural cell growth. The process of music interpretation in the human brain is very similar to that of language processing. Indeed, many language areas overlap with those of music.

Music can offer people with learning disabilities an environment in which they can develop and expand their social, cognitive and physical skills and improve their life (MacDonald et al. 1999) and in which they can learn to build a sound rapport with others and enjoy healthy behaviour (Alvin & Warwick 1994).

Personally, I believe in order to avail benefits from the therapy, clients' needs to be motivated and requires to take part in therapy to the fullest. The mentioned authors also agrees to my view point. Both the involvement of Bunnell (1997) and Holford (1999) with clients with learning disabilities suggests that active participation can make music therapy more interesting and successful. They believe that clients should be encouraged to participate in music making as it promotes self-esteem and confidence.

Music integration provides children with concrete, hands-on experiences that are essential to developing each The child's ability to reason, think, solve problems, analyze, evaluate, and to enhancing creativity (Houchens, 1983).

Music has a direct effect on speech and communication portion of the brain. It assists in differentiating sounds. Also, it has a major effect in communicating information and in budding an understanding of language patterns. In regard to cognitive and academic, music helps in generating and memorizing mnemonics to teach specific academic information such as an address, telephone number etc. Music therapy also has a positive impact in the progress of hand-eye coordination and gross and fine motor skills by playing an instrument. In the social sector, music therapy is proved to be a motivating agent. It instills the concept of group work and each group member contributes an idea or word to a song in song writing. In this manner, music is being utilized to create a bonding where the child can enhance their self-esteem with other peers. (The music therapy center of California', 2005)

On the other hand, musical intervention may have a negative impact on clients. One example is when the client is attached to a particular piece of music and rejects what the facilitator offers. Another example is when a client displays inappropriate behaviour, which does not allow the aims and objectives of the musical intervention to be met, and which hinders therapeutic contact with the facilitator (Schalkwijk 1994). In such cases, music-based interventions should be ceased, but reintroduced at a later phase when the client is receptive to collaborate with the facilitator. The age and culture of clients are key factors, which need to be considered for their choice of music may differ. Past experiences can also be set off by specific music where clients may feel distress. Evidence also suggests that music

associated with violent lyrics such as 'heavy metal' can have a negative impact on clients (McCarty et al. 1998).

Strategies/Recommendations

There are certain interventions that must be done at all three levels, i. e. local, national and international level to cater different domains of learning by applying music therapy and achieve progress. As a student nurse and responsible citizen of society, it is my duty to help and guide people in the effective use of music therapy in dealing with people with learning disabilities. Firstly, it is essential to devise a method whereby it is possible to measure small changes which can be tailored to each individual (Oldfield & Adams 1995). This would help to detect very small changes in behaviour. Secondly, it is also important to accept that change may take a long time to occur so the facilitator must not lose hope and discontinue the intervention. Difficulty can also arise when observing and interpreting the response of clients to sound or music (Alvin & Warwick 1994). This exercise may become easier after a few sessions with the clients where the responses are identified and understood. This can be done by teaching individuals or families in particular schools, colleges and university, hospital for instance, in Maa Ayesha; music therapy is being used for children with learning disabilities. While at national and international levels, attention should be given on providing awareness to people regarding the use of music therapy. People should be encouraged to listen and learn music. Furthermore, different courses for music therapies should be introduced at institutional level and certain policies could be made to enhance the productivity and benefits from the therapy. at the governmental level, music therapist career <https://assignbuster.com/music-therapy-for-children-with-learning-disabilities/>

option and courses could be out. . According to Fatima (2013), clinical Psychologist Qudsia Mahmood states that the Pakistani population lacks the awareness about the significance of music therapy. Fatima (2013) cited Mr. Sohail Khan as he had established Music therapy center in Karachi, Pakistan and has widely worked on “ The Prism Project, A Multidimensional Approach to Music in Education”.

The field of music is vital and holds its own importance, yet it remains unexplored in Psychotherapy. Music and art plays a pivotal role in shaping children’s lives, especially those with learning disabilities. There is a very close knitted affiliation between music therapy and the recovery of children with learning disabilities. There is an urgent need to initiate music therapies in hospitals in Pakistan, to enhance understanding of these professional caretakers to help patients overcome the disabilities in a fun and learning environment. Also, there is a need to include it nursing education, as foremost priority, as being a nurse who is in close contact with patients’ needs to know about therapies in order to enhance the productivity of patients and help them in recovery at a faster pace.

References

Barksdale, A. (2003). *Music therapy and leisure for persons with disabilities* (1st ed.). Champaign, IL: Sagamore Pub.

Bushra Fatima, B. F. , 1st December, 2013. *Health Music Therapy - What is it and How to get it in? Blush* , retrieved from: <http://blush.com.pk/music-therapy-in-pakistan>

<https://assignbuster.com/music-therapy-for-children-with-learning-disabilities/>

Cathy. A. Malchiodi, C. A. M. , (2005). ' *History, Theory, and Practice* ' . In: Cathy A. Malchiodi (Ed), *Expressive Therapies* . 1st Ed. New York: Guilford Publications. Pp. 1-15.

Darren Henley, D. H. , (2012). The importance of music: A national plan for music education. 1st ed. England

Dastgheib, S. , Riyassi, M. , Anvari, M. , Niknejad, H. , Hoseini, M. , Rajati, M. , &Ghasemi, M. (2013). Music Training Program: A Method Based on Language Development and Principles of Neuroscience to Optimize Speech and Language Skills in Hearing-Impaired Children. *Iranian Journal Of Otorhinolaryngology* , 25 (71), 91.

David Butler, D. B. , (01 October 1982). Music Theory, Theories of Music, and Systematic

Musicology. Journal of the collage music society. 22, pp. 1-15, Retrieved from: http://symposium.music.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=1933:music-theory-theories-of-music-and-systematic-musicology&Itemid=124

Department of Education, . (2011). *The Importance of Music A National Plan for Music Education* . Crown.

Freilich, R. , &Shechtman, Z. (2010). The contribution of art therapy to the social, emotional, and academic adjustment of children with learning disabilities. *The Arts In Psychotherapy* , 37 (2), 97-105. doi: 10.1016/j.aip.2010.02.003

<https://assignbuster.com/music-therapy-for-children-with-learning-disabilities/>

JaakkoErkkilä, J. K. , Marko Punkanen, M. P. , JörgFachner, J. F. , EsaAla-Ruona, E. A. R. , Inga

Pöntiö, I. P. , Mari Tervaniemi, M. T. , MaunoVanhala M. V. , & Christian Gold C. G. , (2011). *Individual music therapy for depression: randomized controlled trial. The British journal of Psychiatry* . 199, pp. 132-139

Savarimuthu, D. , &Bunnell, T. (2002). The effects of music on clients with learning disabilities: a literature review. *Complementary Therapies In Nursing And Midwifery* , 8 (3), 160-165. doi: 10. 1054/ctnm. 2001. 0629

Shafron, G. (2010). The Science and Psychology Behind Music and Emotion. *Journal Of Young Investigators* .

Sze, S. , & Yu, S. (2004). Effect of music therapy on children with learning disabilities. In *Proceedings of the 8th international on music perception and cognition* . Australia: Adelaide.

The music therapy center of California. (2005). Retrieved 29 August 2014, from<http://www.themusictherapycenter.com/>. . .
[/factsheets/mtcca_learningdisabilities](http://www.themusictherapycenter.com/factsheets/mtcca_learningdisabilities).

www.musictherapy.org, . (2007). American Music Therapy Association. Retrieved fromhttp://www.musictherapy.org/assets/1/7/bib_psychopathology.pdf.

The Express Tribune, . (2013). Dyslexia. Retrieved from: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/578452/workshop-1-8-million-affected-by-learning-disabilities/>

<https://assignbuster.com/music-therapy-for-children-with-learning-disabilities/>