Enhancing Good Health and Well-Being through Creative Art and Aesthetic Expressions

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Abstract

This paper explores the association between creativity and health. To find out if engaging in creative arts including dance and movement, music, visual art therapy, and creative writing improves health and well-being, we reviewed the research. The study of how responsive and participatory arts might improve wellness has gained more attention recently. A growing body of recent research indicates a link between enhanced well-being, creativity, and other favourable health outcomes. According to studies in this field, participating in creative arts activities results in behavioural, physiological, and psychosocial reactions that may lessen pain, loneliness, sadness, and a host of other health-related problems. We looked at and examined how the arts can foster emotional expression and enhance mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. In this analysis, we define and talk about: 1) Health and Creative Art Activities 2) Participatory and Receptive Engagement: Happiness and Social Interaction 3) Health and Well-Being in Later Life 4) Children and Art Therapy 5) Innovation and Health During COVID-19 6) Particular Art Therapies and Their Advantageous Impacts. We hope that this evaluation will serve as a foundation for future health promotion research. In order to explore strategies to advance their collaboration, we also hope to promote partnerships between the creative arts and health professions.

Keywords: *Creativity, Creative Art, Mental Health and Well-Being.*

Introduction:-

The mysterious was the most exquisite experience we could have had. The foundation of both great art and true science is the underlying emotion (Einstein, 1931). Many civilisations have utilised the arts and creativity to promote healing and feelings of wellbeing over the millennia. "Throughout recorded history, people have used pictures, stories, dances, and chants as healing rituals. According to Stuckey and Nobel (2010). Only in the last 20 years have health researchers and practitioners conducted empirical studies on the impact of creative arts on health, despite the fact that there have been numerous philosophical conversations on the subjects of creativity, healing, and wellness throughout the years. Across cultures and across the health spectrum, numerous studies demonstrate the positive and therapeutic effects of diverse creative arts on people's physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being (Daykin et al., 2021; Stuckey & Nobel, 2010; Tang et al., 2021; Tymoszuk et al., 2021). We must first comprehend the ideas of health and the creative arts separately in order to comprehend how these subjects are related. The relationship between creative art and health will be covered in more detail later. "A state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" is how the World Health Organisation [WHO] (2022) defines health. Furthermore, WHO maintains that everyone has the right to the best possible health, irrespective of socioeconomic background, political views, religion, or race. The concept of health is based on social variables and the cultural context, and each person and culture may have different health goals. Some people's health objectives may involve controlling their chronic conditions while continuing to make significant contributions to society. For others, maintaining health promotion and illness prevention could be the health objectives (Fancourt & Finn, 2019). Regardless of particular health objectives, health is a dynamic process that can be self-managed (Fancourt & Finn, 2019;

WHO, 2022). Though it has a number of widely acknowledged common traits, the concept of art can also be defined in a variety of ways.Culturally accepted aspects of art include the following: art is creative and demands specific talents to perform; it is valued for its own sake rather than just for its practical applications; and it evokes emotional and expressive reactions in both the creator and the audience (Fancourt & Finn, 2019). The term "creative arts" refers to a wide range of activities, some of which can be done alone (e.g., reading, writing, painting, drawing, and crafts) and others of which can be done in groups (e.g., visiting museums and exhibitions, attending a movie or theatre, or taking in live music and dance) (Tymoszuk et al., 2021). These artistic endeavours have the potential to improve health in a number of ways. Additionally, each art practice can have a variety of beneficial effects (such as psychological, emotional, and physical ones), which could help reduce health problems and associated medical expenses (Fancourt & Finn, 2019; Tymoszuk et al., 2021). We define and go over the following in the review:

Creative Art Activities and Health:

One type of health intervention that employs several elements to promote health is getting people involved in creative art projects. "Aesthetic engagement, involvement of the imagination, sensory activation, evocation of emotion, cognitive stimulation, social interaction, physical activity, engagement with themes of health, and interaction with healthcare settings" are the components listed by Fancourt and Finn (2019) as being essential to health promotion. According to Fancourt and Finn (2019), these elements of the creative arts cause a range of behavioural, social, physiological, and psychological reactions. "Enhanced self-efficacy, coping and emotional regulation, enhanced immune function and cardiovascular reactivity, lower stress hormone response, reduced loneliness and isolation, enhanced social support and improved social behaviours, increased exercise, adoption of healthier behaviours, and skills development" are some of these responses. Health prevention, promotion, management, and treatment are among the results of the various components of creative art therapy and the reactions they elicit in people (Fancourt & Finn, 2019). More and more research indicate that participating in receptive and participatory art therapy promotes feelings of wellbeing and speeds up the healing process (Stuckey & Nobel, 2010; Tymoszuk et al., 2021).

Receptive and Participatory Engagement: Well-Being and Social Connectedness:

In keeping with earlier research, Tymoszuk et al. (2021) came to the conclusion that longer-term, more frequent participation in the arts is linked to higher levels of social connectivity and well-being as well as lower levels of social loneliness. The design of arts-based therapies targeted at populations at risk for social isolation and loneliness could benefit from an understanding of which art activities were more social (receptive arts), according to the authors. Participating in and being receptive to the creative arts promotes improved social well-being. However, engaging in more social art activities may be a better and more beneficial choice for people who experience extreme emotional loneliness. According to Daykin et al.'s systematic study from 2021, art forms that use both receptive and participatory engagement are included in the category of participatory arts. Positive social experiences are essential for health and well-being, according to Daykin et al. (2021). Since well-being is linked to personal happiness and good health, it is being investigated more and more in populations. According to Daykin et al. (2021), as research on the relationship between the arts and wellbeing has grown, loneliness is becoming more widely acknowledged as a health barrier. Being alone is seen as a bad thing that can result in ill health and lower levels of happiness. Creative arts participation improved well-being, reduced loneliness, and promoted social ties through "bonding and bridging," according to an analysis of the research in the review by Daykin et al. (2021).

Health and Well-being in Later Stages of Life:

As the number of people in later life increases worldwide, we must identify effective ways to enhance their health and quality of life while reducing the possibility of an increase in global health expenses. For example, depression in older persons can have a detrimental effect on physical, psychological, and emotional health and contribute up to 27% to the global health burden (Dunphy et al., 2019). The impact of four creative arts therapies—dance, music, theatre, and art—on depression in older individuals as well as their potential to enhance health and well-being were investigated by Dunphy et al. (2019). In their systematic review, Dunphy et al. (2019) analysed 75 papers and came to the conclusion that creative art interventions significantly and favourably improved the health of older people with depression. "Physical (e.g., increased muscle strength; neurochemical effects, such as endorphin release), intra-personal (e.g., enhanced self-concept, strengthened agency and mastery; processing and communication of emotions), cultural (e.g., creative expression, aesthetic pleasure), cognitive (e.g., stimulation of memory), and social (e.g., increased social skills and connection), that were all considered to contribute to reduced depression and symptoms," according to Dunphy et al. (2019). For example, Dunphy et al. More research should be done on the potential benefits of using the creative arts to enhance health and lower medical expenses.

Art Therapy and Children:

According to Bosgraf et al. (2020), between 10% and 20% of children globally suffer from psychosocial issues that may hinder their ability to function in daily life and perform well in school. Anxiety, depression, and withdrawal are examples of emotional disturbances; hyperactivity and aggressive behaviour are examples of behavioural disorders; and social dysfunctions are examples of social dysfunctions that can negatively affect children's lives and put a burden on families and the healthcare system. In order to help children improve their quality of life, affordable and easily tolerated interventions are required to treat these psychosocial dysfunctions. In their respective studies, Bosgraf et al. (2020) and came to the conclusion that art therapy had varying degrees of favourable effects across areas. While some art-related activities were more beneficial for particular dysfunctions, all art-related endeavours demonstrated advantages in all domains. The usefulness of art therapy for kids should be further studied, according to the authors (Bosgraf et al., 2020; Cohen-Yatziv & Regev, 2019).

Creativity and Well-Being during COVID-19:

People all throughout the world had to deal with pressures unique to the new pandemic conditions when the Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) first appeared. Mental health conditions as post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and depression were common and pervasive. Tang et al. (2021) investigated the potential for creative involvement to improve well-being and the potential for creativity to mitigate disasters. With data collected from China, Germany, and the United States, the Tang et al. (2021) study was one of the few to examine the association between creative engagement, pandemic stressors, and well-being across cultural boundaries. First, Tang et al. (2021) defined well-being. They came to the conclusion that well-being is a broad notion that may be defined by a number of factors. People use terms like life satisfaction, happiness, pleasant emotions, engagement, and meaning and purpose in life to describe their level of well-being (Tang et al., 2021). The study by Tang et al. (2021) concentrated on how people were able to cultivate good emotions and their positive experiences amid the pandemic crisis. Previous studies have demonstrated a link between happy emotions and longevity and good health. According to Tang et al. (2021), those who feel good most of the time have better health and live longer. Some other studies concluded that crises prompted

creative processes, promoted creative growth, and raised levels of well-being, notwithstanding certain cultural variations. Tang et al. came to the conclusion that "This mediating effect is significant for three historically and culturally different countries, and our study suggests that for people, creativity is an effective way to deal with crisis and to achieve flourishing experiences."

Specific Art Therapies and Their Beneficial Effects:

a) Dance and Movement:

While all types of physical activity are known to have advantageous effects on health, most studies, to date, have concentrated on moderate-intensity aerobic exercise and its benefits on cardiovascular health (Marschin & Herbert, 2021). Recently, health researchers have included dance, yoga, and gentle, dance-like martial arts (like tai chi) in their studies (John Hopkins Medicine, 2022; Marschin & Herbert, 2021; Mayo Clinic, 2022; Stuckey & Nobel, 2010). Newer studies indicate that dance and movement have valuable, though less intense, benefits to the cardiovascular system, and these exercises also provide considerable advantages for muscular strength, coordination, flexibility, balance, gait, and relaxation John Hopkins Medicine (2022) states that dance and movement (like yoga) alleviate chronic pain, stress, sleep disturbances, and fatigue. Further, dance, yoga, and tai chi also boost physical and mental energy, improve quality of life, and decrease negative feelings. For older individuals or those with chronic diseases such as cancer, dance and movement can have many health benefits for physical, psychological, and spiritual health (Bungay et al., 2020; Stuckey & Nobel, 2010). In the study by Bungay et al. (2020), dance therapy positively impacted older adults by encouraging physical activity and social interaction that they found meaningful and enjoyable. Studies of breast cancer survivors indicated that dance and movement therapy relieved stress and anxiety, increased self-esteem and self-awareness, and improved body function, body image, and quality of life (Stuckey & Nobel, 2010). We believe further research into the advantages of dance and movement therapy and other creative art therapy would be of value.

b) Music:

The study on the effect of music on pain sensitivity by LiKam Wa et al. (2022) found that music and singing can impact people's central pain responses and may be effective as an addition to pain management programs. Martin-Saavedra et al. (2018) concurred that music is effective for pain management though they cautioned that further studies were needed to standardize successful music characteristics as a pain mitigation intervention. The Canadian Cancer Society (2022) also supports using art therapy in conjunction with conventional cancer treatments to reduce some of the debilitating effects of chemotherapy and help with pain and stress relief. The Canadian Cancer Society writes that music therapy assists in relaxation and can potentially reduce pain, stress, and anxiety and improve quality of life. Cancer patients use integrative medicines (such as music and other art therapy) in conjunction with traditional cancer treatments to add natural approaches to managing cancer-related symptoms (Yun et al., 2017).

c) Creative Writing:

As with the other art therapies, creative writing, narrative, and poetry can play a positive role in health and well-being and will not contradict the medical view on healing but rather complement it by holistically treating the whole person. Wall et al. (2020) note that creative writing is one of several arts-based therapies, with an increasing empirical base of evidence, fostering positive health and well-being outcomes. Mazza (2017) concurs, stating that there has been significant progress, with a scholarly base, promoting poetry as one of the crucial creative art therapies. Cooper (2010), in the study on the use of creative writing as a therapeutic activity for mental health, found that participants benefited from belonging and sharing in a group and reported an increase in self-knowledge. Patients

wrote about painful memories that they could not verbally express, and most were able to facilitate healing by distancing themselves from their traumatic experiences in writing (Cooper, 2010). Similarly, Punzi (2021) described creative writing as an activity that involves "contemplation and self-reflection." In interviewing the authors who guided psychiatric inpatients through creative writing classes, Punzi (2021) learned that creative writing included "curiosity and joy as well as reflections on difficult emotions and existential questions". The creative writing sessions became an opportunity for sharing emotions, encouraging meaning-making, and promoting a sense of belonging (Punzi, 2021). In writing about and sharing feelings and experiences, participants improved their feelings of well-being and aided themselves in recovery (Punzi, 2021).

Conclusion:

Empirical studies show the potential of art therapies to improve overall well-being and health and deserve further research. Our review has shown that creative art interventions can be adapted to be culturally relevant to individuals from differing backgrounds and effectively improve a broad spectrum of health issues spanning a person's life. Participants of creative art therapy describe it as meaningful and enjoyable and say it eases their preoccupation with serious health issues. Art therapies allow individuals to express themselves creatively in various art mediums, promoting their autonomy in self-expression and allowing self-reflection. Creative art activities are holistic and complement traditional medical treatments. Finally, creative art activities can treat complex physiological, psychosocial, emotional, social, and behavioural problems providing multifactorial benefits to well-being and health and may prove to be cost-efficient to an already burdened healthcare system. We believe that health practitioners and researchers should continue to explore the benefits of using art therapies on well-being and health. Studies show that creative art activities have an advantageous effect on health prevention, health promotion, treatment, and management of individuals in various stages of life who may face diverse health challenges. Through this literature review, we hope to encourage the continued collaboration of the health and creative arts fields.

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