

Use of Art Therapy in Health: A Literature Review.

Abstract

This study is based on a literature review within the EMALT project. In this context; art therapy is an expressionist therapy using art materials. The psychological aspect of the creative process combines traditional psychotherapeutic theories and techniques, especially understanding the emotional properties of different art materials. It includes applications in all areas of art such as painting, music, theatre, cinema, movement and dance. Art therapies have emerged as distinct professions and have a strong link with health. In some countries, art, music, drama and dance movement therapy professions are recognised as informal health disciplines and existing health and care services. In the 1940s, art therapy originating from art and psychotherapy was applied to improve the well-being of tuberculosis patients during treatment in order to develop a psychotherapeutic relationship between therapist and patient. As the disease progresses, patients' daily life and cognitive abilities gradually decline and their existing language skills make it impossible for them to communicate their negative emotions, thus making them susceptible to behavioural and psychological symptoms such as anxiety and depression and leading to a reduced quality of life. Art therapy provides patients with a non-verbal mode of expression through an intuitive graphic visual presentation that helps to prevent negative emotions, alleviate behavioural and psychological symptoms and improve quality of life. As a result of the literature review, many studies on the use of art therapy in the health field were found. The qualifications were made according to keywords and articles directly related to the topic were evaluated. Based on the timeliness of the use of art therapy in the field of health, studies conducted between 2010-2019 were included in the scope of the research. In this context, Science Direct, Medline, Web of Science and Google Scholar databases were used. Out of 158 studies in total, 20 studies were included in the scope of evaluation by making the necessary eliminations. The aim of this study is to determine the frequency and areas of use of art therapy in the field of health. The literature review clearly shows that art therapy is widely used in areas such as mental health, anxiety, assisted reproductive therapies, cancer diseases, post-traumatic treatments, psychiatry, mental illness, sexual health treatments.

Introduction

Art and the process of creation, a phenomenon that has been going on since the existence of humanity, are empowering, cathartic and healing in nature. For this reason, it is seen that the use of art as a therapy method dates back to prehistoric times and various cultures. The forms of expression provided by art can be used to express a range of emotions, including those that may be difficult for a patient or client to articulate. By integrating the patient into a treatment programme, the art therapist hopes to get more information from the patient through the product that takes form through artistic methods during the therapy, thus helping the patient to heal. Although art therapy has a multidisciplinary structure, it is a type of psychotherapy that integrates visual arts into treatment. Although art therapy as a concept began to be researched in the late 1900s, it became an official discipline in the 1940s, with the belief that art could have a valuable place in psychiatric treatment by an increasing number of psychologists, psychiatrists and other health professionals. The term was first used by Adrian Hill in 1942 (Case & Dalley, 2006; Malchiodi, 2011). Hill, a graduate of art school, experienced that his drawing works contributed positively to his recovery during the tuberculosis treatment he received in the hospital after the war. He published his book "Art Versus Illness" (Adrian, 1945), realising that in cases of illness where physical resistance is low, the mental and emotional structure is damaged along with the body, and the need for psychological healing. With this, art therapy became a method used within the scope of the National Health Service (Hogan, 2001). Since the beginning of art therapy, the concept of change has permeated the literature (Junge, 2010; Vick, 2003). Like other psychotherapeutic treatments, it is now generally accepted that art therapy aims to contribute to change and development in individuals (Edwards, 2014). Art therapists do not always share a common language in the definition of change and often cannot distinguish whether it is an internal change or a more temporary change. At a psychological level, intrinsic change can be defined as an individual movement from a situation that is considered to be inadequate to a more appropriate situation where more knowledge and understanding can lead to a change of improved well-being (Klimovsky et al., 1994). Change is often described as one of the outcomes or effects of art therapy (Springham, 2016). Art therapy can also be defined as the therapeutic use of art-making within a professional relationship by people facing illness, trauma or difficulties in life or seeking personal development. The aim of art therapy is to improve or maintain mental health and emotional well-being. Drawing, painting, sculpture, photography and other visual art expressions are used in art therapy (Malchiodi, 2013). Art therapy is often used to treat people with personality disorders who struggle with serious emotional and self-regulation problems. However, art therapy is generally not the first choice treatment according to the basic principles of evidence-based medicine. This is because

there is little empirical evidence of effectiveness. It is focused on multidisciplinary treatment programmes where art therapy is important but plays only a secondary role. Although there is limited evidence for art therapy, it is considered promising in practice (Haeyen et al., 2015). However, it is seen that there is an inconsistency between the studies. Although this is the case, the question of why art therapy is used so frequently is the main purpose of this study. In this direction, a literature review was conducted to determine the areas of use of art therapy in health.

2. Literature Review

2.1. What is Art Therapy?

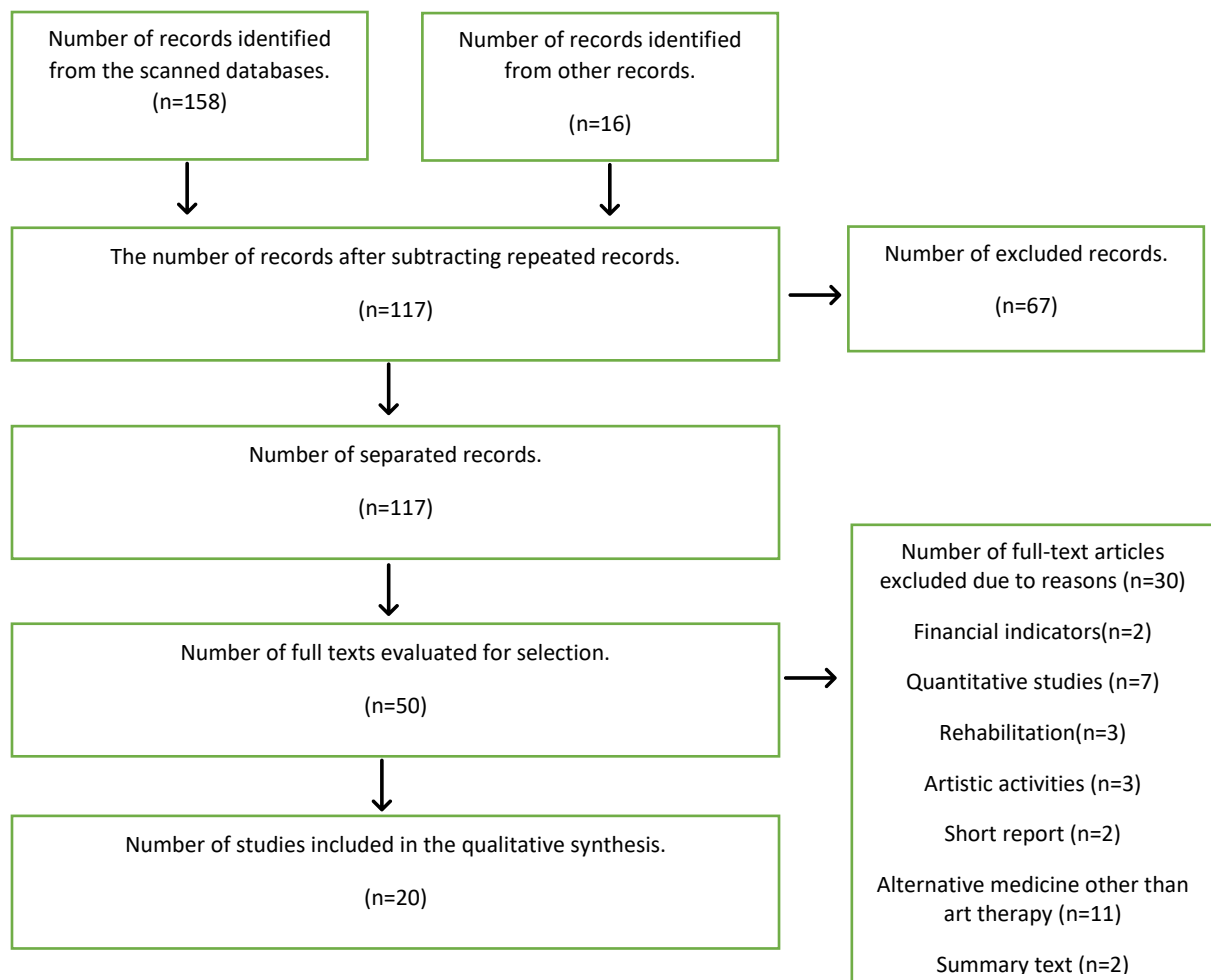
Art therapy is a form of expression that helps people to give meaning to their inner world and to reflect their unconscious emotions by expressing them. In this respect, it also activates creative problem solving activities. Since the early 21st century, art therapy has been considered therapeutic in the sense that it reconciles emotional conflicts, increases awareness, improves social skills, manages behaviour, solves problems, reduces anxiety, directs to reality and increases self-esteem. Art therapy includes many media applications of the field of art such as painting, sculpture, music, theatre-drama, cinema, literature, photography, movement and dance (Case & Dalley, 2006). Art therapy is the process of expressing one's inner experiences, suppressed and non-verbal feelings with the help of artistic elements. The focus of the therapist is not on the aesthetic values of making art or the resulting artistic material, but on the therapeutic needs that the person can express without performance concerns (Malchiodi, 2011). Art therapists are often motivated by the belief that the nature of the creative process itself has inherent healing power (Spaniol, 2001). What is important in the therapy session is the client's involvement in the creative process during the therapy, the selection of art activities that are specific to the situation and beneficial to the client, and facilitating the sharing of visual, auditory or sensory imagery and experiences that the client encounters as a result of the creative process with the therapist. At this point, what makes art therapy stronger than many other methods is that it can address even the most painful issues without disturbing the person (Steele & Kuban, 2003). The hidden feelings, wishes or fears of the client are seen as products that emerge in a non-verbal and symbolic language. In this respect, psychological problems of different severity and diagnosis can be treated using this method. It is very important that the artistic tools and techniques to be used in the therapy session are chosen in a way that makes it possible to stretch to the extent that the client is ready, taking into account that the process of creation in art can lower the person to the deepest layers of the person, while preserving the defence mechanisms of the client when necessary. Since the 21st century, art therapy has been used in a wide variety of settings with children, adults, families and groups, as in other forms of psychotherapy and counselling, to increase self-understanding and help emotional repair. It is considered therapeutic in the sense that it reconciles emotional conflicts, increases awareness, reduces anxiety, provides relief from destructive emotions and traumas, creates opportunities to solve problems, directs to reality, improves social skills and increases self-esteem (Malchiodi, 2011). Art therapy is compatible with the theories of human

development and psychology. Therapists may have various theoretical perspectives such as psychoanalytic, cognitive behavioural, humanistic or existential theory, and no matter which theory they adopt, they can work with art therapy techniques with their own approaches (Rubin, 1999). Finding a place for art in psychotherapy has been within the scope of analytical psychology theory. Freud, while defining art as a useful tool for psychoanalysis, thought that making art, the unique processes of creation or the interaction of watching works of art are activities that provide happiness on human nature. According to Freud, the formal or aesthetic features of a work of art often carry a defensive meaning, and what is really noteworthy are the unconscious imaginations expressed in art practice (Freud, 1977). With Jung (1964), a student of Freud, who was one of the first to use analytical art psychotherapy in the field of art therapy, artworks have become one of the tools used to draw unconscious material into the unconscious and to make sense of it (Guttmann & Regev, 2004). The function of what W. Winnicott described as the "third space" between two people, which each individual perceives according to his/her own perception in order to make sense of the interaction between people, becomes evident with the artistic product that emerges during therapy, making the creation process concrete (Winnicott, 2012). By using the expressive languages of art, the therapy process allows the client to express himself/herself with a metaphorical approach through symbols and to give form to his/her dreams, fantasies, feelings, impressions and experiences. The products of the process between the client and the therapist find meaning as "transitional objects" with compositions such as line, form, colour, texture, rhythm, sound sequence. Approaches such as Gestalt therapy and Cognitive Behavioural therapy make more use of verbal forms of expression such as theatre, drama and sketches as therapy methods. Image creation and staging helps the client to improve self-control against internal impulses. Especially Gestalt therapy is a verbal psychotherapy that uses the psychodrama method in which imagery is included. In this way, part of the process creates an opportunity to look at how the present is influenced by the past (Hogan, 2015). The structure of art, which provides a therapeutic environment that allows people to become better versions of themselves, balances the person's innate inner or physical weaknesses, mental or psychological maladjustments. De Botton and Armstrong defined seven functions - remembrance, hope, pain, rebalancing, self-understanding, growth-development, appreciation-value awareness - to examine which psychological difficulties art can help (De Botton & Armstrong, 2013). In most of the approaches to psychotherapy, there are factors that motivate the client to creative problem solving and to find functional solutions, activating and revealing the creative power in the essence of the person. Art therapy also uses the healing touch and healing power of art in the treatment of many psychological and physical diseases or problems.

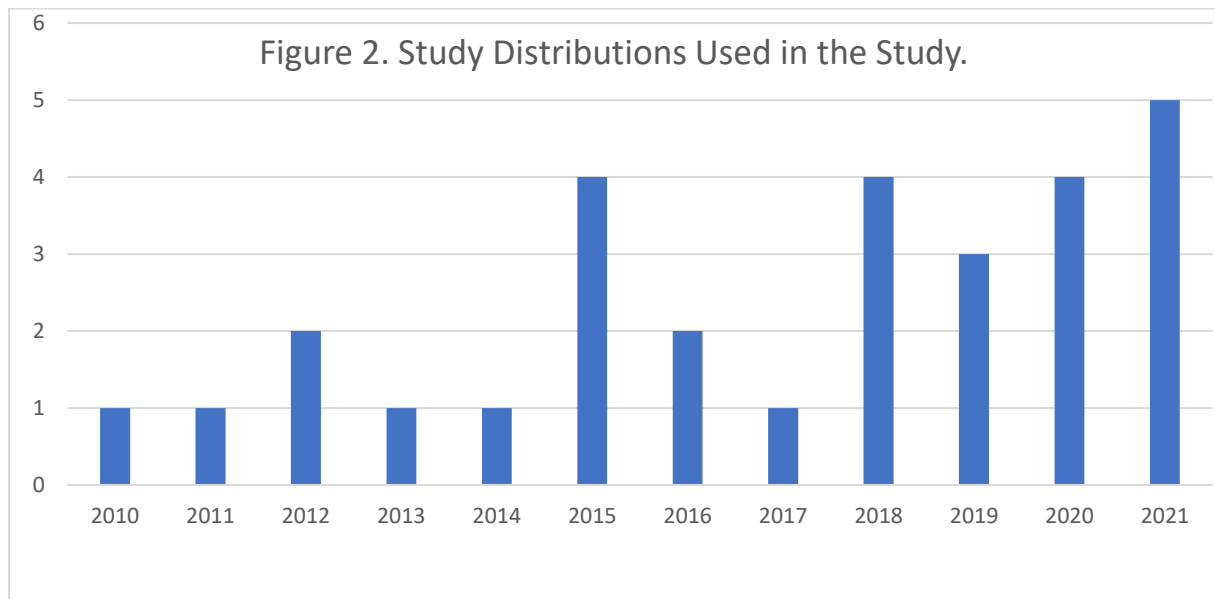
2.2. Research Method

As a result of the literature review conducted within the scope of the research, studies proving that art therapy is used in the field of health were included. In this context, scans were made from Science Direct, Medline, Web of Science

and Google Scholar databases. As a result of the literature review, many studies on treatment with art therapy in health institutions were found. A total of 158 articles directly related to art therapy and its use in the field of health were identified. 67 studies were excluded from the study by using keywords. Considering the actuality of the subject of treatment with art therapy in health institutions, studies conducted between 2010-2021 were considered. It was observed that most of the studies on the subject were in the form of literature review. Studies using the survey method were not included in the study due to the low number of studies and method differences. As can be seen in Figure 1, many studies have been conducted in the field and the number of studies directly on treatment with art therapy in health institutions is quite limited.



The distribution of the articles evaluated within the scope of the research is shown in Figure 2. It was observed that there was an increase in the number of studies on the use of art therapy in the field of health after 2015. It was clearly determined as a result of the literature review that the interest in this field has increased recently.



3. Discussion and Conclusion

Literature review shows that art therapy is widely used in health fields such as mental illnesses, anxiety, assisted reproductive therapies, cancer diseases, post-traumatic treatments, psychiatry, etc. In particular, it is seen that the interest in traditional and complementary medicine in the field of health has increased in recent years worldwide. In this context, treatment with art therapy draws attention as a treatment method preferred by people among medical alternative treatment methods, and the increase in the number of studies is thought to be the result of the increasing interest in this field. Farokhi (2011) concluded in his study that art therapy is applied with various patient populations in individual, couples, family and group therapy formats in mental health, rehabilitation, medical, educational and forensic settings. Art therapy is an effective treatment for people experiencing developmental, medical, educational, and social or psychological impairment. The aim of art therapy is to improve the patient's sense of personal well-being. Cristina and Aneta (2012) found that art therapy had no effect on the treatment of patients with diagnoses such as traumatic stress, schizophrenia and depression. Khadar et al. (2013) concluded that art therapy can improve people's lives by helping them improve their mental, emotional and even physical conditions. Petruta-Maria (2015) examined the areas of use of music therapy, one of the sub-branches of art therapy, in health. The study concluded that music therapy can improve cardiac disorders and affective and neurological disorders (such as schizophrenia, amnesia, depression, aphasia and speech disorders). According to Mousavi and Sohrabi (2014), art therapy is an important intervention tool that reduces aggressive children's anger and increases self-esteem. According to Haeyen et al. (2015), using art therapy methods, disorders in emotions such as emotional awareness, constructive emotion regulation, a stable self-image, contact with self and others, psychological perspective and sense of control, integration of emotions and possible insight can be eliminated. Dain et al. (2015) concluded that art therapy used as traditional and complementary medicine has the potential to improve pain, symptoms and other quality of life measures for patients and families. According to Walker et al. (2016), there is not enough information about art therapy applications for refugees co-morbid traumatic brain injury (TBI) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Especially for people with symptoms of PTSD and TBI, the inclusion of these techniques in a broader interdisciplinary team assessment and treatment strategy holds great promise to identify the disease faster and return it to its former functions. In their study, Wang and Li (2016) proved that art therapy has some effects on improving the attention and orientation of dementia. In addition, it has been proven as a result of studies that it has many benefits such as reducing behavioural and psychological symptoms, improving patients' social skills and alleviating the burden of dementia caregivers. According to Holmqvist et al. (2017), art therapy has

proved that there are situations in which an internal change can be observed in patients by affecting consciousness, self-awareness and ego-power in the therapeutic process. Blomdahl et al. (2018), in their study, reveal that the patient contributes to more knowledge by deepening the understanding of the importance of talking to the patient's self in an internal dialogue that occurs when the patient participates in the image, art materials and the art-making process. The external dialogue with the therapist illuminates and deepens the internal dialogue. Both the processes of making art and describing experience expand and change understanding through internal dialogue, making the self and the situation visible. According to Bilgin et al. (2018), patients with cancer can keep their physical and mental health at a higher level through art therapy. Studies have shown that art therapy organisations, which will be included in cancer diagnosis and treatment centres established by investing millions of dollars, will colour the system and make individuals with cancer and their relatives feel better psychologically and physiologically. In this respect, it will help them to improve their quality of life. In their study, Wahlbeck et al. (2018) proved that therapy acts as a catalyst for the healing process in women using art therapy. Art therapy was accepted by the women and they gained hope and self-confidence in the face of their upcoming birth by sharing their burden of fear by creating visible images. According to Cucca et al. (2018), art therapy improves perceptual symptoms in Parkinson's patients by acting as a restorative behavioural training. Art therapy can enable individuals with disabilities to understand their emotions and express them through artistic creation and creative thinking, thus promoting self-awareness, relaxation, confidence and self-efficacy. Kaimal et al. (2019) stated in their study that cancer patients and caregivers exhibited positive behaviours such as enjoyment, relaxation, creative problem solving after treatment with art therapy. It suggests that short-term art interventions may be useful for cancer patients and their stressed carers. In his study, Özcan (2012) revealed that art therapy had positive effects on children with cancer. Demir (2017) stated that the therapy programme had a positive effect on reducing the symptom levels of hopelessness, dysfunctional attitudes, somatisation, obsessive-compulsive disorder, interpersonal sensitivity, depression, anxiety, phobic anxiety, paranoid ideation and psychoticism, but it was not effective in reducing anger levels. In the study conducted by Kartın (2015), it was found that music therapy applied to patients with breast cancer reduced heart rate (77%), nausea decreased by 100% after the first musical playback and 85% after the second application. Cancer patients apply to art therapy practices in order to cope with symptoms such as pain, nausea, vomiting, fatigue, anxiety, improve their quality of life, do something for themselves, maintain physical-emotional well-being and support medical treatment (Karadağ & Uğur, 2015). According to Bostancıoğlu and Kahraman (2017), the art therapy method will make the health system simpler, more effective, cheaper and more sustainable with health promotion, prevention, self-care, lifestyle changes, the use of complementary therapies when possible, and the application of conventional treatments when necessary. Art can help

us to develop our emotional, intellectual and spiritual life, but also our capacity to know our deeper being. The effects of art therapies are often expressed as reduced aggression, anger, tension, stress and cognitive impairment. Art therapy is widely used in health fields such as mental illness, anxiety, assisted reproductive therapies, cancer diseases, post-traumatic treatments, psychiatry, etc. As a result, it is seen that the interest in art therapy has increased in Turkey in recent years; however, the Turkish literature on the subject is insufficient to meet this interest. The lack of sufficient studies conducted in our country on this subject limits our comparison of the results we obtained.

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