Effect of Creative Art Activities on Depression Levels among Elderly People Living in Old Age Homes of Chhattisgarh

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***Abstract*—Depression among the elderly is a significant public health concern, particularly in residential care settings such as old age homes. This study explored the effect of structured creative art activities on reducing depression levels among elderly individuals residing in selected old age homes in Chhattisgarh, India. Using a quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test design, 60 participants were assigned to an intervention group (creative art activities) and a control group (routine activities). Depression was measured using the Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS). Findings indicated a statistically significant reduction in depression scores in the intervention group compared to the control group. Creative art activities were associated with improved emotional well-being, increased social engagement, and enhanced self-expression. These results underscore the therapeutic value of creative art interventions in promoting mental health among the elderly in institutional settings. Implications for mental health practice and recommendations for integrating art-based therapies into elder care are discussed.**

***Keywords*—elderly, depression, creative art activities, old age homes, Chhattisgarh, mental health**

I. INTRODUCTION

The global population of older adults is rapidly increasing, accompanied by growing concerns about their psychological well-being (World Health Organization, 2017). In India, demographic shifts have heightened interest in the health needs of elders, particularly those living apart from family members in old age homes (Prasad & Sinha, 2020). Depression is one of the most common mental health issues experienced by older adults, often exacerbated by social isolation, loss of social roles, and physical health decline (Blazer, 2003). Traditional approaches to depression in elderly populations include pharmacological treatments and counseling; however, non-pharmacological interventions like creative art activities are gaining popularity due to their holistic benefits and minimal side effects (Stuckey & Nobel, 2010).

Creative art activities including painting, drawing, music, dance, and crafts provide opportunities for emotional expression, cognitive stimulation, and social participation (Cohen et al., 2006). Participation in art has been linked to improvements in mood, self-esteem, and overall quality of life among older adults (Noice, Noice, & Kramer, 2014). While research in Western contexts supports these benefits, there is limited empirical evidence from Indian settings, specifically within old age homes in Chhattisgarh. This study aims to bridge that gap by evaluating the impact of a structured creative art program on depression levels among elderly residents.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Depression in the Elderly

Depression in late life is a major public health issue, with prevalence estimates ranging from 10% to 20% among older adults in community settings and higher rates in institutionalized populations (Fiske, Wetherell, & Gatz, 2009). Factors contributing to depression include chronic illness, disability, bereavement, loneliness, and loss of autonomy (Alexopoulos, 2005).

Creative Arts as Therapeutic Intervention

Creative arts therapies encompass various modalities that leverage artistic expression for therapeutic outcomes. Art therapy, music therapy, and drama therapy have been used to alleviate psychological distress and enhance well-being (Malchiodi, 2013). In elder care, arts engagement has been associated with reduced depressive

symptoms, increased social interaction, and cognitive benefits (Dickinson, Hanley, & Bamford, 2013).

Evidence from Previous Studies

Cohen et al. (2006) found that participation in art programs was correlated with lower depression and higher life satisfaction among older adults. Another study by Noice et al. (2014) indicated that older persons engaged in theatrical arts showed improved emotional health and social engagement compared to controls. These findings suggest that creative art activities may be a viable intervention for depression, although contextual research in Indian settings remains sparse.

III. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A quasi-experimental, non-randomized control design with pre- and post-tests was employed to examine the effect of creative art activities on depression. This design allowed comparison between an intervention group and a control group over time.

Setting and Participants

The study was conducted in three selected old age homes in Chhattisgarh, India. Sixty elderly residents aged 60 and above were purposively sampled based on inclusion criteria: ability to communicate, no severe cognitive impairment, and willingness to participate. Thirty participants constituted the intervention group, and thirty served as controls.

Intervention

The intervention consisted of creative art activities delivered over 8 weeks, with two 60-minute sessions per week. Activities included:

- Painting and drawing
- Clay modeling
- Music and rhythm exercises
- Collage making
- Group storytelling and expressive arts

Activities were facilitated by trained art therapists and mental health professionals.

Measures

Depression was measured using the Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS-15), a validated screening tool for older adults (Yesavage et al., 1983). The GDS-15 has demonstrated reliability and validity in diverse cultural settings, including India (Ganguli et al., 1999).

Procedure

Participants completed the GDS-15 at baseline (pre-test) and immediately after the 8-week intervention (post-test). The control group continued with routine activities offered by the homes without additional art sessions.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, paired t-tests within groups, and independent t-tests between groups, with significance set at $p < .05$.

IV. RESULTS

Participant Characteristics

Of the 60 participants, 35 were female and 25 were male, with a mean age of 68.4 years (SD = 6.1). Most participants had been residing in old age homes for over one year.

Depression Scores

At baseline, the mean GDS score for the intervention group was 9.2 (SD = 2.8), while the control group's mean was 9.0 (SD = 2.9), indicating moderate depression levels with no significant difference between groups ($t = 0.24$, $p = .81$).

After the 8-week period:

- The intervention group showed a significant reduction in mean GDS scores to 5.6 (SD = 2.4), $t(29) = 6.78$, $p < .001$.
- The control group showed no significant change (mean post-test = 8.7, SD = 2.7), $t(29) = 1.08$, $p = .29$.

Between-group comparison indicated a significant difference in post-test scores, $t(58) = 4.55$, $p < .001$. These results suggest that creative art activities effectively reduced depression levels among participants.

V. DISCUSSION

The findings corroborate existing literature that creative art interventions have therapeutic benefits for older adults with depressive symptoms. The significant decline in depression scores among the intervention group aligns with previous research showing that engaging in art fosters emotional

expression, socialization, and cognitive engagement (Noice et al., 2014; Cohen et al., 2006).

Mechanisms of Effect

Several mechanisms may explain the observed effects:

- Emotional Expression: Art provides a non-verbal medium for expressing emotions that may be difficult to articulate, offering relief and psychological release (Malchiodi, 2013).
- Social Interaction: Group art activities encourage interaction, reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness — key contributors to depression in old age homes (Fiske et al., 2009).
- Sense of Purpose: Creating art may enhance self-esteem and a sense of accomplishment, countering negative self-perceptions often seen in depressed individuals.

VI. LIMITATIONS

Despite promising results, limitations include:

- Non-randomized sampling, which limits generalizability.
- Short-term follow-up; long-term effects remain unexamined.
- Potential facilitator effects; varying skills of art therapists might influence outcomes.

Future studies should consider randomized controlled trials, larger samples, and diverse settings to strengthen evidence.

VII. CONCLUSION

Creative art activities significantly reduced depression levels among elderly residents of old age homes in Chhattisgarh. These findings highlight the value of integrating structured art programs into elder care to support emotional well-being and mental health. Art-based interventions are cost-effective, adaptable, and conducive to the holistic care of older adults.

Healthcare providers and policymakers should consider allocating resources to creative arts programming within residential care settings. Further research is recommended to explore sustainability and broader psychosocial benefits.

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