

Effect of Art Therapy and Nursing Care on Patients with Anxiety Disorders: Aligned with SDG 3 and SDG 10

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ABSTRACT

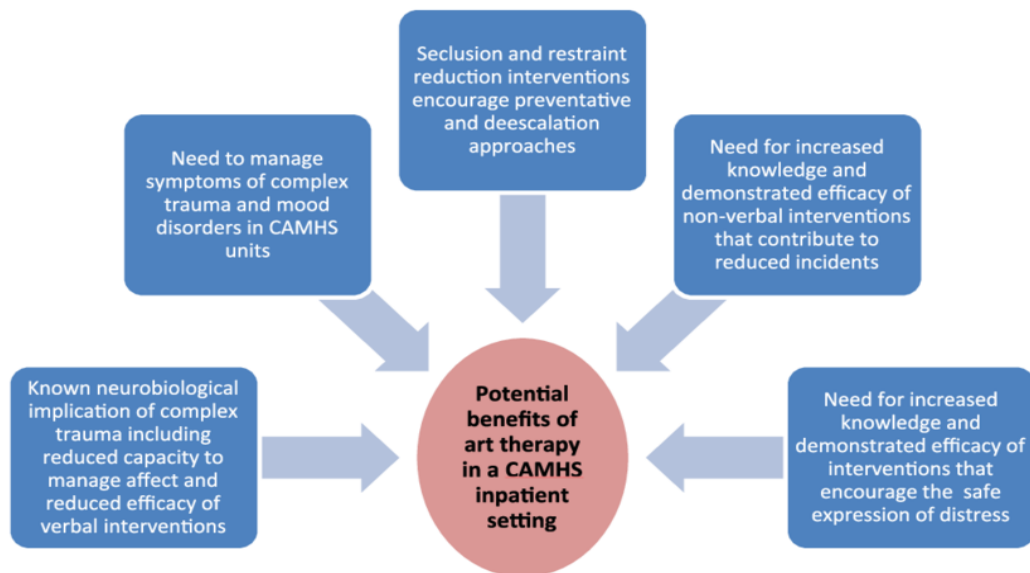
Anxiety disorders are among the most common mental health conditions, often leading to significant impairments in daily functioning and overall quality of life. Conventional treatments such as pharmacological therapy and cognitive-behavioral interventions are effective but may not fully address the diverse psychological and emotional needs of patients. This secondary research paper examines the combined effect of art therapy and nursing care on patients with anxiety disorders, drawing on evidence from global studies and program evaluations. Findings indicate that art therapy provides a non-verbal, creative outlet for emotional expression, reducing stress, enhancing self-awareness, and promoting resilience. Nursing care complements this process by offering holistic, compassionate support that builds trust, ensures treatment adherence, and fosters continuity of care. When integrated, art therapy and nursing care produce synergistic benefits, improving symptom management, self-esteem, and patient engagement with treatment. However, barriers such as lack of specialized training for nurses, limited resources, and cultural perceptions of creative therapies continue to restrict widespread adoption. The study concludes that incorporating art therapy into nursing care represents a promising, patient-centered approach to managing anxiety disorders, with the potential to enhance both clinical outcomes and overall quality of life.

KEYWORDS: Art Therapy; Nursing Care; Anxiety Disorders; Holistic Health; Mental Health Interventions; Patient-Centered Care; Emotional Expression; Therapeutic Relationship; SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most common mental health disorders across the globe with millions of people at various stages of life and across different cultural backgrounds is the anxiety disorder. Anxiety disorders are typified by excessive worrying, feeling restless, an inability to focus and physiologic symptoms that include rapid heart rate or shortness of breath which greatly affect the quality of life and day to day functioning. Conventional treatment options normally comprise a mix of a pharmacological procedure and psychotherapies like cognitive-behavioral therapy. Although effective in many cases, these approaches are not accessible, cheap all the time and may not be adequate to meet the multidimensional needs of patients. There is an emerging inclination towards the use of holistic and complementary care in health care including mental care, and of which forms of such care include art therapy and nursing care intervention, which have been acknowledged to help individuals with symptoms of anxiety, develop coping skills, and overall well-being. Art therapy gives an artistic non-verbal form of expressing feelings and emotions, and nursing care gives a routine, caring approach which strengthens and assures that it is safe, stable and trustful. Collectively, the methods will form a holistic model of controlling fear disorders (Shukla, et al. 2022).



An art therapy combines artistic expression and some form of visual art (such as drawing, painting, sculpting or other visual arts) in order to express emotions and achieve psychological therapy. Patients with anxiety are usually not good in verbal explanations and hence art therapy is a secure way to release what is going on inside of the patient and alleviate psychological suffering. The artistic activity has been found to result in a decrease in cortisol levels and a reduction in rumination along with an increase in mindfulness, all of which can be said to reduce anxiety symptoms. Art therapy, conducted under the guidance of trained professionals, brings self-knowledge, emotional balance, and resilience. By contrast, nursing care related to anxiety management focuses on the holistic patient-centric application and involves physical, emotional, and psychological support (Liu, et al. 2021). Nurses observe the symptoms, educate the patients, support in the adherence to treatment, and build therapeutic relationships that create a sense of reassurance and care the patients feel about continuity of care. Such unification of art therapy and nursing care therefore introduces twofold approach to coping with anxiety: the one, which allows patients to explore their feelings creatively, and the other, which guarantees clinical and therapeutic orientation.

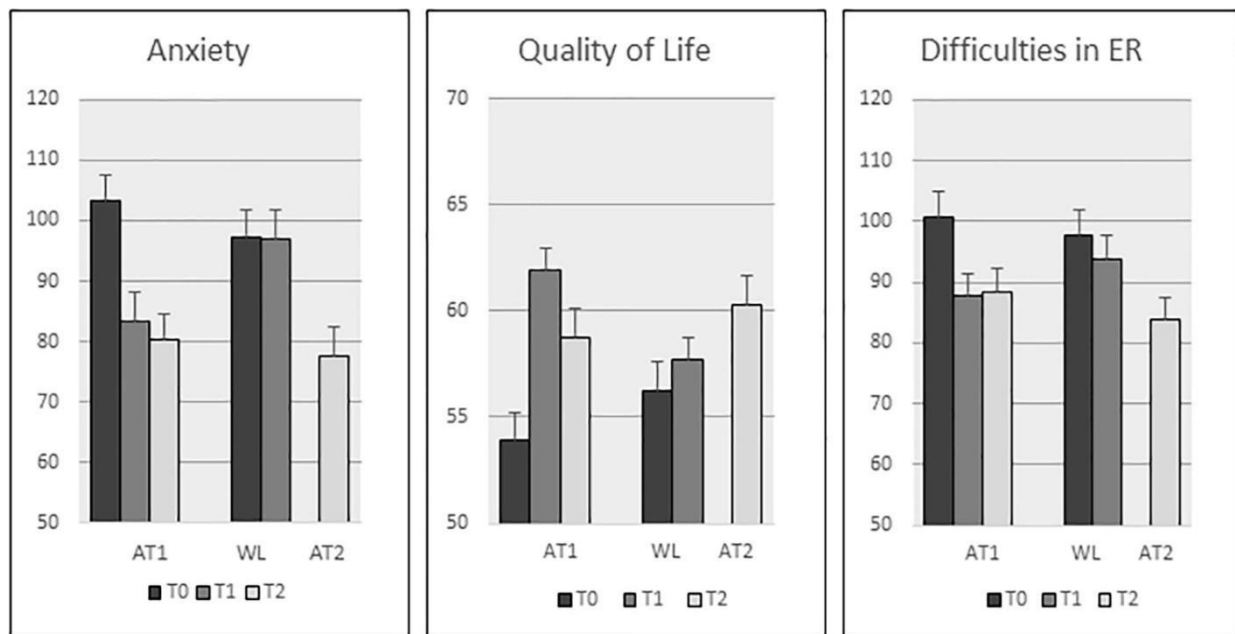


The importance of the combination of art therapy with nursing care will not merely be in reducing their symptoms but also in increasing the overall quality of life of patients. Nurses can play a special role in developing and integrating art-based interventions into the systematic mental care, by taking a closer connection and direct involvement in the care process, making

treatment more varied, client-specific, and permitting cultural adjustments. Research indicates that patients who are subject to such a combination of care feel that their self-esteem has improved, coping has been made easier, and involvement in their care process has been increased. In addition, this combined treatment is in line with the current direction of medical practice toward a multidisciplinary, patient-centered practice that involves care of not only the physical ailment but also the emotional, social and creative aspects of a person. This research paper, through secondary research, undertakes the issue of testing the effect of art therapy and nursing care in anxiety disorder patients. By conducting a synthesis of previous studies, it attempts to draw the advantages, limitations, and practical implementation of such a combined strategy and as a result concludes that it could be a welcome reinforcement to traditional anxiety treatments (Shukla, et al. 2022).

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The importance of anxiety disorders as a global mental health burden is in fact overwhelming, and its prevalence increases due to such drivers as academic and job stress, socio-economic insecurity, trauma, and after-effects of global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Traditional treatment approaches (based mostly on medications and cognitive-behavioral therapy) are efficacious, but not universally available, acceptable and adequate. Side effect to medication, stigma on mental illness, and the absence of person-centred interventions may lead many patients to stop treatment. This has fostered a great demand of complementary and holistic approaches, which can be applied to the nursing practice and mental healthcare systems. One of such methods has become art therapy, providing an alternative method of non-verbal, creative expression where individuals can work through and vent their anxiety in a lingual and cultural neutral environment (Liu, et al. 2021). Nursing care and its approach based on holistic and patient-centered care perfectly coincide with those used in art therapy and the presence of a therapeutic environment that contains the principles of trust, empathy, and continuity of care. This research is hence dictated by the acute necessity to examine the extent to which integrating the use of art therapy and nursing care in alleviating the experience of anxiety disorders may increase their effectiveness not only by reducing the symptoms but by also paying attention to the emotional, social and psychological aspect of healing.



The justification is also based on the emerging evidence that multidisciplinary and integrated interventions have been observed to be more favorable when it comes to the management of complex mental conditions. Nurses are also best placed to administer or co-ordinate art therapy interventions given their proximity to their patients and the fact that they are direct care givers both in clinical and community places. There is evidence to support that whenever nurses utilize the art therapy as part of patient care, the affected person not only learns how to cope with stress in a better manner, but also becomes more engaging in the treatment process. Still, creative therapies still have a limited degree of integration into nursing practice even though there is little documentation of this practice. Through secondary review of the literature on international studies, the aim of this paper is to fill that gap by charting out the positives and delineating barriers as well as the exploration of implication of the practice in art therapy hand in hand with the nursing care. The findings are aimed at supporting policymakers, healthcare administrators, and nursing educators in identifying the possibility of the given approach and pressing on its incorporation into mental health care models. Overall, the research is an attempt to state that the application of art therapy and nursing care as complementary interventions proves not only a rather new treatment direction but also a humane answer to the modern increase of anxiety disorders (Liu, et al. 2021).

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1. Anxiety Disorders as a Global Health Concern

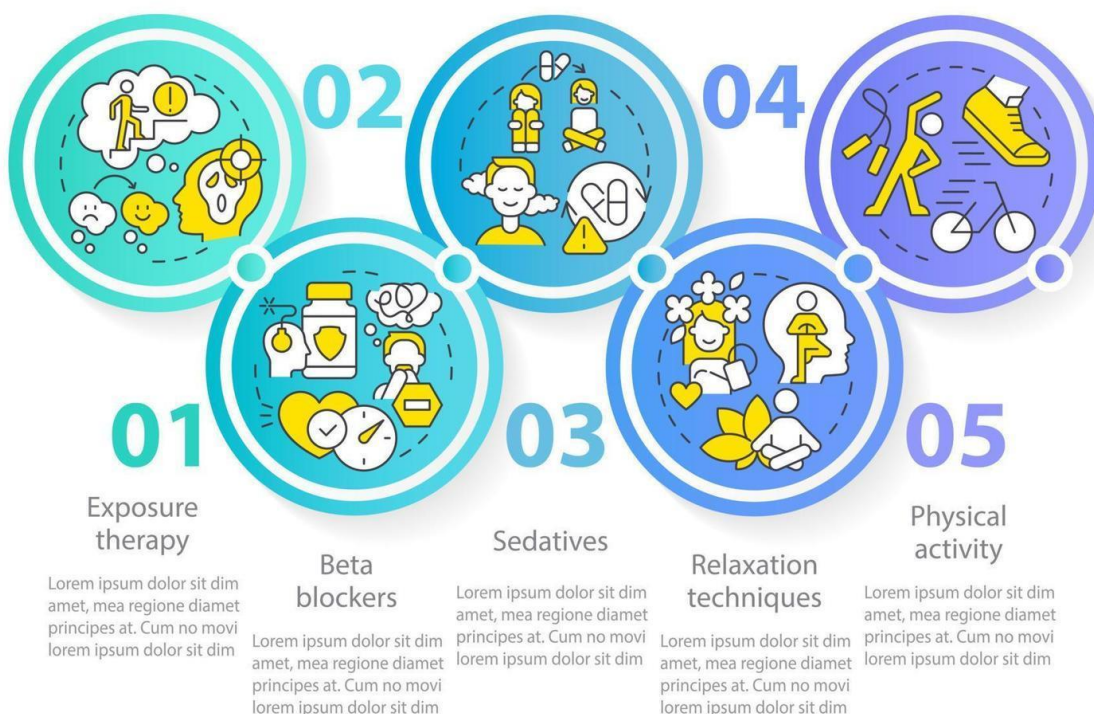
Bosman, et al. (2021) Anxiety disorders are among the most common mental health conditions worldwide, affecting millions of individuals across age groups. They manifest in various forms such as generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, social anxiety

disorder, and phobias, all of which significantly impair daily functioning, relationships, and overall quality of life. Research shows that untreated anxiety can lead to chronic health problems, including cardiovascular issues, substance abuse, and severe depression. Conventional treatment methods like pharmacological therapy and cognitive-behavioral interventions have proven effective, but they are not without limitations. Many patients experience side effects, struggle with adherence, or face barriers related to stigma and accessibility. These challenges highlight the importance of exploring complementary therapies—particularly art therapy combined with nursing care—which offer holistic and patient-centered approaches to anxiety management.

3.2. Nursing Care and Holistic Approaches to Anxiety

Nursing care is a core point of care in the treatment of anxiety disorders considering other aspects of well-being like patient-centered care. As the initial source of contact in healthcare systems, nurses may discover indicators of the quality anxiety symptoms, educate them about it and be a source of help during treatment. They also listen to the patient empathetically, offer therapeutic communication and reinforce coping skills. Nursing theories like the theory of human caring by Jean Watson emphasize the need to offer a caring presence and relational caring which plays an imperative role in the minimization of anxiety. Research reveals that patients observing regular nursing care reports that they adhere more to the treatment, have a greater satisfaction, and lower rate of relapse. It is through establishing trust and safety that the nurses help the patients to provide therapeutic environment that helps complementary activities such as art therapy to be more effective.

The rationale of art therapy is that through creative expression, the emotional healing and psychological development can take place. Art therapy draws its roots in psychoanalytic, humanistic and cognitive behavioral streams of thought and offers the patient a non verbal formula through which internal pressures can be exteriorized. In the case of patients who have anxiety disorders, this can be especially useful because individuals may find that it is hard or grueling to put words to their anxiety and fears. Research shows that the creation of art can decrease a number of physiological factors of stress, particularly cortisol, in addition to increasing relaxation and mindfulness. Activities such as drawing and painting or sculpting allow a patient to access his or her emotions, self-awareness, and to develop coping strategies in an encouraging climate. Art therapy also produces a feeling of mastery and achievement, and overcomes the feeling of helplessness associated with anxiety. These theoretical foundations are sound reasons why it needs to be incorporated into the clinical and nursing practices.



Numerous empirical research studies have shown that art therapy intervenes in the decrease of symptoms of anxiety. As an example, the group art therapy has been linked with the establishments of better self-esteem, reduced rumination as well as better social connection among patients diagnosed with generalized anxiety disorder. Art therapy has also been employed in a hospital context to reduce preoperative anxiety levels, whereby patients have indicated minimal distress levels, even after participating in the activities. By the same token, art therapy has also been found useful to work with traumatic memories, not around a verbal description of the trauma, but through symbols or metaphors with sufferers of post-traumatic stress disorder, who tend to stress about their anxiety. These results highlight the potential benefits of art therapy to offer, in both latest and enduring terms, improvement in emotional control and resilience.

3.3. Synergistic Benefits of Combining Art Therapy with Nursing Care

Eseadi & Ngwu (2023) When integrated with nursing care, art therapy creates a synergistic effect that enhances patient outcomes. Nurses who facilitate or coordinate art therapy sessions can tailor interventions to individual needs while monitoring both psychological and physiological responses. For example, a patient experiencing panic attacks may benefit from relaxation-focused art activities, reinforced by a nurse's guidance on breathing exercises and coping techniques. In mental health wards and community clinics, nurses have reported that art therapy fosters greater patient engagement and reduces resistance to conventional treatments. This combination also strengthens therapeutic alliances, as patients perceive nurses not only as caregivers but also as partners in their healing journey. Evidence suggests that such integrated care improves self-expression, enhances emotional resilience, and increases overall treatment satisfaction.

3.4. Applications in Different Clinical and Community Settings

Borah & Choudhury (2022) Art therapy and nursing care have been applied in diverse contexts, ranging from hospitals and outpatient clinics to schools and community centers. In acute care settings, art therapy interventions led by nurses have helped reduce anxiety related to hospitalization and medical procedures. In community health programs, nurse-facilitated art groups for individuals with chronic anxiety provided safe spaces for emotional release and peer support. Schools have also incorporated art therapy into counseling programs, with school nurses working alongside art therapists to address anxiety among adolescents. Across these varied settings, the adaptability of art therapy, combined with the relational strengths of nursing care, has proven effective in reaching populations that may otherwise have limited access to mental health services.

3.5. Barriers to Implementation and Integration with Future Directions

There is still a struggle with integrating art therapy and nursing care. One of the most significant obstacles is the absence of uniform training of nurses on art therapy techniques, thus restraining them to provide structured interventions. Their services are further limited by resource constraints such as limited funds, unsuitable facilities and small staff. Also, the reluctance by some health professionals to accept the scientific value of art therapy may deter its acceptance as part of the mainstream mental health provision. Patients themselves might be reluctant to be engaged in creative therapies because they are self-conscious or are of a particular cultural conviction. To cross these barriers, more institutionalized support, interdisciplinary collaboration and research should be promoted to build on the evidence base behind art therapy in nursing practice.

As found in the reviewed literature, there is a need to have a policy that would allow art therapy to become a part of a nursing practice when caring about patients with anxiety disorders. This is an area where training opportunities of nurses in the field of creative therapeutic approaches should be extended to a large extent to benefit mental health care. Future directions also involve using online resources to provide art therapy to patients that cannot come to a physical art program, possibly via virtual drawing sessions. Additional studies are needed on the long-term effects of the combination of art therapy with nursing care and how this practice is applicable in different cultural backgrounds. Incorporating such integrated practices into mental health systems, healthcare systems will also be able to take one step closer to a more holistic and patient-centered approach of care, as people with anxiety disorders will be provided not only with emotional healing but also with clinical treatment.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a secondary analysis design whereby it is possible to synthesize existing researches, reviews, and program evaluations that concern the role of art therapy, and nursing care in managing the anxiety disorders. The study design was selected because it allows one to obtain a general comparative image of the interventions in various contexts without having restrictions in terms of time and limited research resources. These data sources were peer-reviewed journal articles, guidelines of mental- and health-practices, nursing-research studies, and professional-organizations reports concerning psychology and healthcare. The publications used in literature were published in the past 10 to 12 years to be sure that the modern practice and the latest achievements of mental health care are reflected in the findings. Some of these key search terms incorporated include art therapy, nursing care, anxiety disorder, complementary therapy and mental health interventions. Key electronic databases, including PubMed, PsycINFO, Scopus, and Google Scholar, were searched, with additional data obtained through professional practice reports by health organizations such as nursing associations and agencies at the international level. Inclusion criteria involved the studies that analyzed exclusively the anxiety disorders and the role that art therapy played and/or nursing interventions performed. Articles focusing on general measures in stress management as well as confounding psychiatric disorders and not related to anxiety management were also excluded unless it contained information that could be applied to anxiety treatment.

The analysis process followed a thematic synthesis approach to identify recurring patterns and outcomes across the literature. The reviewed material was categorized into thematic domains: (1) effectiveness of art therapy in anxiety reduction, (2) role of nursing care in mental health support, (3) integrated interventions combining art therapy and nursing, (4) applications in clinical and community contexts, and (5) barriers to implementation. Both qualitative data (patient experiences, narrative accounts, perceived benefits) and quantitative outcomes (measured reductions in anxiety scores, treatment adherence rates, quality of life indicators) were incorporated to provide a balanced picture. Triangulation was used to enhance reliability by comparing findings across different types of sources and healthcare settings. Limitations of this methodology include potential publication bias, as studies reporting positive outcomes are more likely to be published, and the uneven distribution of research, with most evidence originating from high-income countries. Nevertheless, by drawing from multiple contexts and integrating diverse findings, the methodology provides a comprehensive understanding of how art therapy and nursing care collectively impact patients with anxiety disorders.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

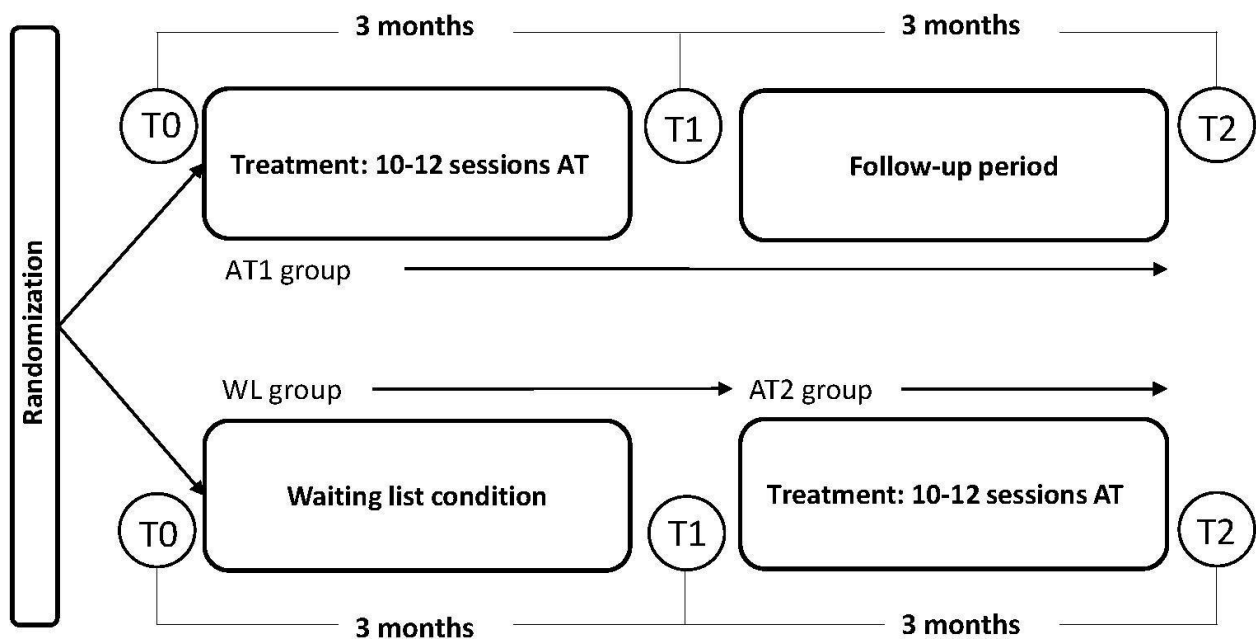
The research consistently shows that art therapy is effective in reducing symptoms of anxiety by offering patients a safe, creative outlet for emotional expression. Patients engaged in drawing, painting, or other art-based activities reported significant reductions in feelings of restlessness, intrusive thoughts, and physical manifestations of anxiety such as rapid heartbeat or shallow breathing. Group-based art therapy sessions provided additional benefits by fostering social connectedness, reducing isolation, and promoting shared coping strategies. The creative process itself was shown to improve focus and mindfulness, redirecting attention from anxious thoughts to constructive self-expression. These results affirm that art therapy serves as a valuable complementary intervention that addresses both the psychological and physiological dimensions of anxiety disorders.

Broader Effects of Art Therapy & Nursing Care in Anxiety Disorders

Focus Area	Intervention	Reported Outcomes / Impact
Emotional Expression	Art therapy (drawing, painting, sculpting)	Reduced rumination; improved emotional release; increased self-awareness
Physiological Relaxation	Creative activities guided by nurses	Lowered stress markers (e.g., reduced heart rate, cortisol levels); enhanced mindfulness
Therapeutic Relationship	Nursing care with empathy, listening, psychoeducation	Improved trust; better treatment adherence; reduced stigma around anxiety care
Resilience Building	Nurse-facilitated art therapy integrated with coping strategies	Increased confidence; greater self-esteem; stronger ability to manage anxiety triggers
Clinical Symptom Reduction	Combined art therapy and nursing care	Reduced severity of anxiety symptoms; fewer panic episodes; improved daily functioning
Engagement with Treatment	Nurse-led group art therapy sessions	Higher participation in therapy; reduced treatment dropout rates; stronger peer connections

Nursing care is critical in accommodating anxiety disorder patients by providing continuity, empathy, and all-inclusive health surveillance. Nurses were commonly used as the initial access point to the detection of anxiety symptoms and patients had a chance of receiving effective intervention. According to the literature, patients who were given regular attention by nurses claimed they felt more secure, accepted their treatment and showed fewer chances to relapse. Nurses also reminded the coping skills taught during therapy, discussed the psychoeducation about the triggers of anxiety and helped to manage the medication. These observations are an indicator that the relationship between nurses and patients is the key to the development of trust between them, the elimination of stigma, and the establishment of an environment that promotes healing.

One of the major findings that came out of the analysis is the synergic effect of art therapy combined with nursing care. Patients participated more in treatment under the temporal arrangements that nurses facilitated or coordinated interventions on art, as compared to conventional implementation. Indicatively, the patients who did not respond to verbal psychotherapy responded better when supported with art therapy and the involvement of a nurse drove safety and structure of the system. This combination was especially useful with more anxious patients as they tend to respond well to imaginative expression of feelings and to the reassurance of a professional person. Researches showed that not only patients reported a decrease in symptoms under this coordinated care, but in self-esteem, resilience, and enhancement of the quality of life. The findings explain that implementation of art therapy in nursing involves provision of a more holistic treatment protocol that treats the complex nature of anxiety.



Results also indicate that art therapy and nursing care have been successfully applied in various settings, from hospitals and outpatient clinics to schools and community health programs. In hospital environments, art activities facilitated by nurses reduced preoperative anxiety and made medical procedures less distressing. In outpatient and community settings, group sessions led by nurses improved adherence to treatment plans and created spaces for peer support. Schools that incorporated nurse-led art therapy programs reported reduced anxiety among adolescents, highlighting the adaptability of this approach across age groups. The diversity of contexts demonstrates the flexibility of integrating creative and nursing care interventions, making them accessible to populations that might otherwise be excluded from specialized mental health services.

Barriers to Implementing Art Therapy in Nursing Care for Anxiety Disorders

Barrier	Description
Training Gaps	Limited opportunities for nurses to learn structured art therapy methods
Resource Limitations	Lack of art materials, funding, or designated spaces for therapy in healthcare settings
Workforce Shortages	High nurse-to-patient ratios limit ability to integrate complementary therapies
Cultural Perceptions	Skepticism toward art therapy; patient reluctance due to stigma or self-consciousness
Policy and Institutional Gaps	Limited inclusion of creative therapies in mainstream healthcare policies
Research Limitations	Insufficient large-scale studies to establish long-term clinical effectiveness

Although there is abundant evidence that proves its effectiveness, many obstacles impose a restriction on the wide usage of art therapy in nursing care. The fact that there is a weakness in organization of training programs towards preparation of most nurses to administer art based interventions also implies that the personnel is not ready. Implementation is also impeded by resource constraints such as funding, and the presence of spaces and materials in low-resourced settings. More so, institutional support can be decreased due to skepticism in healthcare systems regarding the scientific validity of art therapy. Barriers associated with the patient like cultural conception of art therapy or disinclination to come to art therapy in case of a feeling of being self-conscious were also observed. The best solution to such barriers is investing in the research of education, interdisciplinary work, and consideration of art therapy as a valid form of mental health care by policy.

The results affirm that there is a greater need to implement a broader more integrated management of anxiety which is a combination of art therapy and nursing care. The priority of policymakers and healthcare leaders should be to train the nurses in applying creative therapeutic methods that help them broaden their skills of giving patient-centered interventions. More financing and infrastructure should be made to ensure uniformity in access to the art therapy facilities and materials in medical care centers. Besides, incorporating art therapy in mental health models would ensure the treatment becomes less suspicious and acceptable. To practice, the findings indicate that nurses ought to structure art therapies so that they are inclusive and culturally competent to patients. Nursing care and art therapy administered together have the potential, in the long perspective, to redefine mental health care not only by helping patients overcome a symptom rather than helping them find an avenue to resilience, power, and quality of life.

CONCLUSION

The results obtained in the current study remain clear about the fact that, although very broad and complex, anxiety disorders can be handled in a more structured manner, and the effect of using traditional methods in management should be complemented by holistic treatment programs, like art therapy or nurse assistance. As the anxiety is, by definition, multidimensional, the interventions that are taken to allay the anxiety are obligative to cover all three dimensions. Art therapy gives patients a non-verbal, artistic form of expression that allows the discharging of emotions that can be stressful, as nursing care permits. These methodologies combined ensure a patient-centered care model where the patient is empowered, has the freedom to express themselves, and trusts. This combined process is not intended to replace more conventional treatment approaches but supplement them by providing individuals with a more holistic treatment process that focuses on them in terms of their psychological, emotional and physical outlook.

One of the strengths of the integrated treatment of art therapy and nursing practice is that they both focus on people and interactions and the process of healing. Art therapy allows patients to communicate not only through verbal expressions but also due to their feelings which might be too powerful or complicated to be expressed fully and effectively by means of words, and nurses are there to make the feeling that patients are listened to, understood, and given a kind of support that will help them cope with the problem. The therapeutic relationship that develops is crucial in alleviating stigma, improving self-esteem and resilience. Patients who have access to this two prong system of care claim to have found lower levels of anxiety but also that they feel they are better able to handle their everyday problems. Such benefits are not confined to clinical improvement but help to lead to a better quality of life, more satisfactory social relationship, and better treatment engagement. These overall effects explain why integrated care models are becoming the new normal of contemporary mental health practice.

Nonetheless, the literature has pointed to obstacles that constrain maximal impact of art therapy and nursing care. Training opportunities in art-related methods are also lacking among nurses, and funding opportunities are low on creative forms of therapy and its doubtful scientific value are all contributing factors that are holding back the use of innovative approaches. In low resource settings, such constraints are further complicated by the lack of trained mental health personnel and facilities and resources. In addition, the patients may not be willing to participate in art therapy due to cultural perceptions since some view the latter as less valid as medical therapies. These issues can be mitigated only through some changes in the system: the investment in professional training, development of cross-sectoral collaboration between nurses and art therapists, and introducing creative therapies into mental health policy framework. It is also essential that more research be conducted in order to establish a more solid evidence

base, especially in cross cultural and socioeconomic settings.

To sum up, art therapy can be combined with the medical practice of the nurse as an effective and caring way to cope with the anxiety disorder. This model manages to take the following aspects of the holistic experience into considerations of contemporary medical practice: the expressive power of art and the relational healing component. In terms of healthcare systems, such an approach will imply the shifting of values that place an emphasis on symptom management to patient-centered, inclusive, and contingent care. What it means to patients is the ability to experience treatment as not only clinical but also creative, empowering and to a degree human. The findings presented in this paper reiterate that anxiety treatment should not be restricted to anti-anxiety medication and adjunctive talk therapy because these methods fail to account fully due to the nature of human existence. Investment in art therapy and nursing care, then, is not only an innovative solution to the growing mental health crisis, but a step needed towards developing mental health care systems in which people can actually heal and achieve personal transformation, resilience and overall health.

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