

The Effectiveness of Art Therapy on Decreasing on Anxiety and Aggression in Preschoolers

Maryam Saeedynia¹, Arezoo Farajloo², Leyla Pashapoor³, Atefeh Raadi^{3*}

¹Lecturer, Department of Psychology, Islamic Azad University, Tehran Shargh, Tehran, Iran

²M.A. in General Psychology, Islamic Azad University, Sari, Branch, Sari, Iran

³M.A. in General Psychology, Islamic Azad University, Garmsar Branch, Garmsar, Iran

*Corresponding Author Email: tc.sari96@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT: In this study, the effectiveness of painting-based art therapy on reducing anxiety and aggression in preschool children has been investigated. This study was conducted as Semi-experimental study in which 30 children aged 4-6 years with psychological problems were randomly selected and placed in two groups of 15 subjects. The instrument used in this study was questionnaire of Spence children anxiety and a single preschool aggression questionnaire. Participants were arranged on the basis of art therapy for 10 sessions. Data were analyzed by covariance test. The findings showed that the mean scores of anxiety and aggression in the experimental group had a significant decrease in the post-test stage compared to the control group ($P = 0.001$). The findings of the study showed the effectiveness of painting-based art therapy on reducing Anxiety and aggression in preschool children. Regarding the reduction of anxiety and aggression of pre-school aging children, the role of art therapy based on painting should be considered as one of the strategies for treatment of disorders in children.

Keywords: Art Therapy Paintings, Anxiety, Aggression.

INTRODUCTION

Childhood is suitable to identify children problems, on time intervention and preventing affective, social and educational problems in future. In fact, on time intervention and improving child's abnormal behaviors may increase social skills and makes ready child to accept later responsibilities (Shahim, 2007).

Aggression is the most prevalent children problems (Sukhodolsky et al., 2004). Identifying this problem and on time intervention may prevent this behavior continuity (Goodwin et al., 2003). Aggression is any behavior to injure others (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). According to some research, aggressive children tend to show aggression until adulthood (Crick et al., 2007). Aggression and aggressive behaviors have been increased in schools during recent years (Mac Kin, 2011). These behaviors may have irreparable effects upon children like weak self-concept and depression (Matsuura et al., 2009), impulsiveness and hyperactivity (Hamel, 2013) and rejected by peers (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995) may result to some problems like delinquency and aggression (Smith & Hart, 2011).

Anxiety is a prevalent disorder among preschool children. It is the most usual reaction against stressful factors and is related to personality factors, biologic features, cultural effects, educational effects (Shirzad, 2014). Anxiety appears in different shapes like enuresis, sleep disorder and feeding disorder. It is important to identify main factors before therapy. 1-5 ages children have more tendencies to show anxiety (Mac Kin, 2011). Researchers emphasize upon childhood attachment communications and caring method in anxiety and anxiety disorders continuity (Bennet & Stirling, 1998).

According to some research, painting-based art therapy may reduce anxiety, depression and aggression in children. Katz and Hamama (2013) found that children can use painting to show some emotions like aggression. Pifalo and Charleston (2006) found that art therapy with cognitive-behavioral therapy is effective upon reducing PTSD symptoms (like anxiety) in raped children. Perrin et al (2000) found that children anxiety signs appear in the form of play, painting and telling story. Jangi Ghoje Bigloo et al (2014) found that painting-based art therapy is effective upon anxiety reducing among stuttering children. According to Rezaee et al (2014), painting therapy may improve anxiety and aggression symptoms in elementary school children. Gholamzadekhadar et al (2013) showed that painting-based art therapy may reduce phobia disorder symptoms among 7-12 aged boys.

Painting-based art therapy is a relative therapy method to remedy children disorders. It may result to physical, mental and emotional growth. Art helps people to solve their conflicts and problems and extend interpersonal skills, behavior management, anxiety reducing, self-esteem improving and finally become informed (Khadar et al., 2013).

Is self-initiated drawing of images to communicate with others (Iverach, 2009). Drawing lines show child's affective and emotional states and painting becomes improved with consciousness increasing (Dadsetan, 2004). According to mentioned subjects, research main question is:

Is painting-based art therapy effective upon anxiety and aggression reducing in preschool children?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was conducted as semi-experimental study in which 30 children aged 4-6 years with psychological problems in 2014- 2015 were randomly selected and placed in two groups of 15 subjects. These persons were selected among 10 centers randomly. Participants of experimental group (15 persons) were arranged on the basis of art therapy for 10 sessions. After painting-based art therapy sessions, preschool teachers completed anxiety and aggression questionnaires.

Research instrument

A) Spens children anxiety questionnaire: This questionnaire has been designed by Spence (1997). This scale consists of 28 items based on 5-degrees likert. According to factor analysis, morbid symptoms clustering are accommodated with mental disorders list. (DSM). All of its sub-scales shows positive correlation with internalized problems in child behavioral list (CBCL) and all correlations are more than 0.42 (Spence, 1997).

B) Preschool aggression scale: This scale consists of 43 items with likert scale to assess physical aggression, verbal-reactional relations of preschool children. Vahid et al (2008) have designed it. This instrument has been completed by child parents or teacher consists of a total score and 4 sub-scales:

A) Verbal-invasive aggression, B) physical-invasive aggression C) communicational aggression and D) impulsive anger.

They were used from first 3-subscalses in the present study. Cut-off point in selecting aggressive persons is 2 standard deviation more than mean. Alfa-cronbakh validity coefficient is 0.98 in whole scale and 0.93, 0.92, 0.94 and 0.88 in these factors, verbal-invasive aggression, physical- invasive aggression, communicational aggression and impulsive anger orderly.

Executing method

Painting-based art therapy sessions consisted of 10 sessions 45-minutes. The executing method was as follows: at first, all children came to painting room and became familiar with therapy space and researcher in order to reduce their anxiety.

Table 1. Structure of painting therapy sessions.

Sessions	activity
Session 1	Becoming familiar with each other. Becoming familiar with total process, doing art activities with optional subjects by painting pencil and water-color
Session 2	Making ready by some techniques like drawing line, finding pictures among lines and then painting.
Sessions 3 & 4	Drawing and group painting in the form of purpose activity by painting pencil, water-color and magic
Sessions 5 & 6	Experiencing group paintings and completing by painting pencil, magic and water-color with concentration upon positive feedbacks and effective interaction among group members
Session 7	Sculpture from group members and completing group image, showing to the others group members and discussing about their features.
Session 8	Drawing group members by painting pencils, magic, with discussing about feeling and emotion, their cognition by these activities.
Session 9	Remembering before subjects, making ready children to finish group, comparing child feeling and behavior by him/herself before and after sessions
Session10	Making ready to finish sessions, making order to opinions in the form of drawing imaginative works.

RESULTS

Table 2. Mean and standard deviation of research variables pretest & post-test for experimental and control groups

Variable	State	Group	Mean	SD	Least	Uttermost	Number
Anxiety	Pretest	Experimental	63.33	9.04	54	87	15
		Control	62.40	7.72	50	85	15
	Posttest	Experimental	39.33	2.92	35	43	15
		Control	63.47	12.09	43	88	15
Aggression	Pretest	Experimental	97.27	9.28	85	120	15
		Control	96.47	10.58	81	128	15
	Posttest	Experimental	59.67	9.84	40	75	
		Control	95.47	9.99	79	120	

According to table 2, there are differences between pretest and posttest means in research variables. It was used covariance analysis to survey significance of this difference.

Table 3. Results of covariance for children anxiety variable scores.

Variable	Changes Source	SS	df	SM	F	Sig.	Eta Coefficient
Anxiety	Pretest	723.51	1	723.51	13.53	0.001	0.334
	Group	4540.93	1	4540.93	84.93	0.001	0.759
	Error	1443.54	27	53.46			
	Total	85794.00	30				

Anxiety scores were compared between experimental and control groups by covariance analysis. According to table 4, there are significant difference among experimental and control groups scores (F=84.93 , P<0.001). It indicates that painting-based art therapy is effective upon anxiety for preschool children.

Table 4. Results of covariance analysis for children aggression variable scores.

Variable	Changes Source	SS	Df	SM	F	Sig.	Eta Coefficient
Aggression	Pretest	1511.74	1	1511.74	32.82	0.001	0.549
	Group	9914.86	1	9914.86	215.31	0.001	0.889
	Error	1243.32	27	46.04			
	Total	192865.00	30				

Aggression scores of experimental and control groups were compared by covariance analysis.

According to table 4 results, there are significant difference among experimental and control groups scores ($F=215.31$, $P<0.001$). It indicates that painting-based art therapy is effective upon aggression reduction for preschool children.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the present study was efficiency of painting-based art therapy upon preschool children anxiety and aggression reduction. According to research results, painting-based art therapy has been effective upon children anxiety and aggression. Total score mean of anxiety and aggression have been reduced after therapy interventions for all variables. These results are congruent with painting-based art therapy interventions results of other researchers and therapists in preschool children disorders field. Jangi Ghoje Bigloo et al (2014) found that painting-based art therapy is effective upon anxiety reducing among stuttering children. According to Rezaee et al (2014) painting-based art therapy may improve anxiety and aggression symptoms in elementary school children. Gholamzadekhadar et al (2013) showed that painting-based art therapy may reduce phobia disorder symptoms among 7-12 aged boys. Katz and Hamama (2013) showed that children can use painting to show some emotions like aggression. The present study results are congruent with Iverach (2009), Perrin et al (2000). Painting-based art therapy emphasizes upon encountering skills instruction, improving self-control and self-efficiency. Painting-based art therapy instructs performance improving skills to children. Child communicates with therapist and understands events, communications and feels comfort and use it as a tool to communicate and encounter with environment.

Painting-based art therapy is a relative therapy method to remedy children disorders. It may result to physical, mental and emotional growth. Art helps children to solve their conflicts and problems and extend interpersonal skills, behavior management, anxiety reducing, self-esteem improving and finally become informed (Khadar et al., 2013), painting is self-initiated drawing of images to communicate with others (Iverach, 2009). Drawing lines show child's affective and emotional states and painting becomes improved with consciousness increasing (Dadsetan, 2004).

The present study was executed upon preschool children that their sex did not become matched. Anxiety and aggression scales indicators are comparable between girls & boys groups. We suggest that some research become executed with regard to both sex matching.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, C. A., & Bushman, B. J. (2002). Human aggression. *Journal of Annual Review Psychology*, 53, 27-51.
- Bennet, A., & Stirling, J. (1998). Vulnerability factors in the anxiety disorders. *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 3, 311-321.
- Crick, N. R., & Grotpeter, J. K. (1995). Relational aggression, gender, and social-psychological adjustment. *Journal of Child Development*, 66, 710-722.
- Crick, N. R., Casas, J. F., & Masher, M. (2007). Relational and overt aggression in preschool. *Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 33, 579-588.
- Dadsetan, P. (2004). *Evolutionary morbid psychology from childhood until adulthood*. Copy 1. Tehran: Samt publications.

- Gholamzadekhadar, M., Babapour, J., Sabourimoghaddam, H. (2013). The effect of art therapy based on painting therapy in reducing symptoms of separation anxiety disorder in elementary school boys. *Proce Soc Behavior*, 84, 1697-1703.
- Goodwin, T., Pacey, K., & Grace, M. (2003). Children: Violence prevention in preschool settings. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing*, 16, 52-59.
- Hamel, N. (2013). Children's understanding and experience of anger within their peer groups. MA, school of graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, Western University, London, Ontario.
- Iverach, L. (2009). prevalence of anxiety disorders among adults seeking speech therapy for stuttering .*J Anxiety Disorder*.
- Jangi Ghoje Bigloo, S. H., Shirabadi, A., & Jony, S. (2014). The efficiency of painting-based art therapy upon stuttering children anxiety reduction. *Ilam medical sciences University journal*, 23th period, 2.
- Katz, C., & Hamama, L. (2013). Draw me everything that happened to you. Exploring children's drawings of sexual abuse. *Child Youth ServRev*, 35(5), 877-82.
- Khadar, M. G., Babapour, J., & Sabouri, M. H. (2013). The effect of art therapy based on painting therapy in reducing symptoms of oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) in elementary School Boys. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 84, 1872-1878.
- Mac Kin, G. (2001). School bullying: An overview. In L. Rapp- Paglicci, A. Roberts, & J. Wodarski (Eds.), *Handbook of violence*. New York: Wiley.
- Matsuura, N., Hashimoto, T., & Toichi, M. (2009). Correlations among self-esteem, aggression, adverse childhood experiences and depression in inmates of a female juvenile correctional facility in Japan. *Journal of Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences*, 63(4), 478-85.
- Perrin, S., Smith, P., & Yule, W. (2000). Practitioner review: The assessment and treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder in children and adolescents. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 41(03), 277-289.
- Pifalo, T., & Charleston, S. C. (2006). Art therapy with sexually abused children and adolescents. *Ext Res Stu*, 23, 181-5.
- Rezaee, S., Khodabakhshi kolae, A., & Taghvae, D.(2014). The efficiency of painting therapy upon elementary school students anxiety & aggression with externalized disorders. *Children nursing magazine*. 2(2), 10-19
- Shahim, S. (2007). The effect of telling story upon aggression therapy. The presented article at first international association of child & adolescence psychiatry, 154.
- Shirzad, S. (2014). The survey of music therapy efficiency upon retarded and normal children anxiety reduction; general psychology M.A thesis Islamic Azad university of Garmsar.
- Smith, P. K., & Hart, C. H. (2011). *The Wiley-Blackwell Handbook of Childhood Social Development*. 2n ed. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Spence, S. (1997). A measure of anxiety symptoms among children. *Behavior, research and therapy*, 36(5), 545-566.
- Sukhodolsky, D. G., Kassinove, H., & Gorman, B. S. (2004). Cognitive-behavioral therapy for anger in children and adolescents: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 9, 247-269.
- Vahid, S., Fathi Azar, E., Hoseini nasab, D., & Moghaddam, M. (2008). The survey of preschool aggression scale validity & reliability and evaluating Orumiyeh preschool children aggression rate. *Mental health principles magazine*, 10th year, 37.