

# Silent Poetry: Art Therapy and Schizophrenia

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## Introduction



Art therapy is considered a useful tool to enhance individuals' communication as it is a non-intrusive and less threatening treatment in comparison to other treatments (Dere-Meyer, Bender, Metz, & Diaz 2011). This study aimed to investigate the effect of art therapy with inpatients in a hospital in Jordan, all of whom have received a diagnosis of schizophrenia.

Art therapy may help both children and adults who may find it difficult to express themselves verbally. According to Franklin (1992) art acts as a vehicle for patients to express themselves. Art Therapy is a useful medium, which can enhance individuals' self-esteem, well being and communication (Walsh, 1993).

This mixed-methods study measured the effectiveness of art therapy in schizophrenic patients who, prior to the therapy sessions, reported feeling isolated, institutionalized and found it hard to communicate.

## Method



The study was conducted at Al-Rashid Hospital for Addiction and Mental Health in Amman, Jordan with 6 schizophrenic patients from the same ward. Patients' ages ranged from 21-57. They were all from different ethnic backgrounds but all from the Middle East.

All six patients participated together in four art sessions. In each session, a different art medium and technique was used including collage, clay modelling, watercolor painting, and mask-painting. All art materials and supplies such as paints, magazines, clay, crayons and blank masks were provided for each session.

Following each art therapy session, patients took part in a focus group to discuss their drawings, their feelings, and thoughts about the sessions conducted.

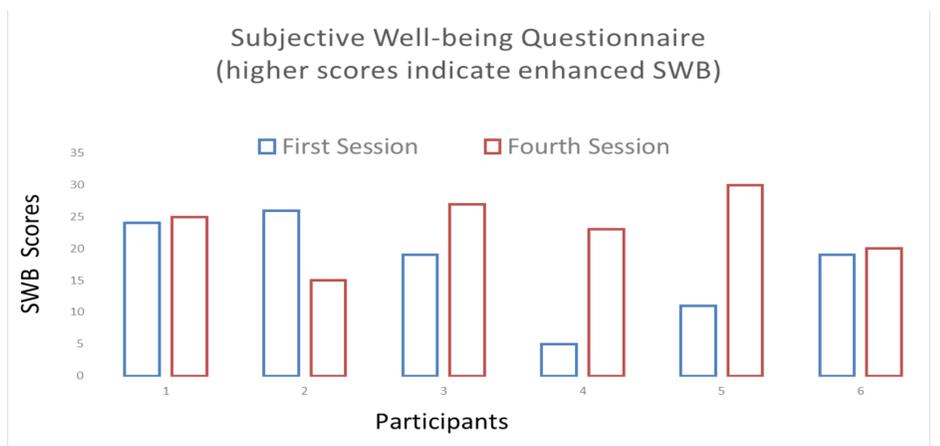
Each patient completed the Subjective Well-Being Questionnaire (Diener *et al.*, 1985) before the start of the first art therapy session and at the end of the last session.

## Results



### Subjective Well-Being (SWB)

Questionnaire data were analyzed using a paired-samples t-test. Due to the small sample size, results showed no significant difference in their SWB before and after treatment. However as can be seen in the chart below improvements in the participants' SWB can clearly be seen.



### Focus Groups

A grounded theory approach was used to analyze the data collected. Several themes emerged when interpreting the results. These included cognitive, behavioral and emotional engagement.

Patients reported that the art therapy sessions reminded them of their childhood, art making brought many memories mainly happy ones from their past. Patients reported feeling relaxed and calm after each session, one describing the rare experience of painting as "silent poetry".

## Discussion



The benefits of art therapy for these patients were substantial and multifaceted. Being able to express their creativity and inner feelings through their art was perceived to be enlightening and calming, as well as enabling communication. Whether these beneficial effects were lasting is not known but, in the short term at least, the sessions brought a new and very positive experience to the patients.

## References

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