

Impact of “Theatre Therapy” on Special Need Children: A Pre- and Post-Interventional Study

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the transformative effects of theatre therapy on children with disabilities through a comprehensive pre- and post-interventional analysis. Theatre therapy is employed as an innovative and inclusive approach to address the unique needs of children facing various disabilities. This in-depth study was conducted on 30 students with multiple disabilities in the age range of 14-18 and 19-23 years. All the subjects were taken from Disha-Centre for Special education, Jaipur, Rajasthan. Assessment and Observation inventory was used to assess and observe existing behaviour, Skills, and aptitude of the students. Respond behaviour and observed skills of the students with lower scores at pretesting indicated need and significance of the strategic planning and programme. This research investigates changes in emotional, social, and cognitive aspects, providing valuable insights into the potential benefits of incorporating theatre therapy into intervention programs for this demographic.

Key Words : Theatre therapy, Interventional programme, Students-Special need boys and girls

INTRODUCTION

Children with disabilities often navigate a complex landscape marked by unique challenges in communication, social interaction, and emotional expression. Traditional therapeutic interventions, while beneficial, may not always encompass the diverse needs of this population. In recent years, there has been a growing interest in alternative and innovative approaches to address the multifaceted aspects of children’s development, and one such promising avenue is theatre therapy. Théâtre therapy, rooted in the principles of drama and expressive arts, provides a dynamic platform for individuals to explore and express their thoughts, emotions, and experiences. It is, also known as drama therapy, is a creative and expressive form of therapy that uses theatrical techniques to help special need children, explore and express emotions, thoughts, and experiences. It can be a highly effective therapeutic tool for promoting emotional, social, and cognitive development in these children. Further it

can be defined as an active, experiential approach that promotes change through projection, play, storytelling, deliberate improvisation, and performance.

Theatre Therapy has emerged as a powerful tool in enhancing the behavior and life skills of special needs children. This innovative approach harnesses the transformative potential of the performing arts to address a wide range of developmental, emotional, and social challenges that these children may face. By fostering communication, social interaction, emotional regulation, and self-confidence, theatre therapy offers a unique avenue for personal growth and empowerment, overall well-being, and integration into society. While this therapeutic modality has been increasingly recognized for its efficacy in various contexts, its potential impact on children with disabilities remains a relatively under explored domain. This research endeavors to bridge this gap by conducting a meticulous pre- and post-interventional study to examine the transformative effects of theatre therapy on children facing diverse disabilities.

Understanding the intricate interplay between a child's cognitive, emotional, and social development is crucial for tailoring interventions that go beyond conventional methodologies. Theatre therapy, with its emphasis on creativity, imagination, and interpersonal dynamics, presents a unique opportunity to address the holistic needs of children with disabilities. By engaging participants in a structured and supportive theatrical environment, this study aims to unravel the nuanced changes in emotional regulation, social skills, and cognitive abilities resulting from theatre therapy interventions.

Drama therapy is a proven method that helps children with a variety of disabilities improve their ability to interact successfully with others. This means the use of theatrical exercises such as improvisation, stage action, and physical effects to enhance social communication skills. For some verbal children with autism, it can be effective and fun (Emunah, 2013).

Drama therapy for children with special needs enhances comfort levels. Drama therapy provides an opportunity not only to learn to speak in a larger group, but also to improve life-enhancing skills. Engaging in theater in such a creative and dynamic learning platform and environment enhances life and social skills. Participating in new experiences that are unique and fun is a great form of exercise and self-expression that has a positive impact on nearly every area of life (Elaldi and Yerliyurt, 2017).

Objective of the Research:

Assess Pre-Interventional Baseline:

Conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the emotional, social, sensory and skill development of children with disabilities participating in the study before the commencement of the theatre therapy interventions.

Implement structured Theatre Therapy Program:

Design and implement structured theatre program tailored to the unique needs of the participants, emphasizing creative expression, social interaction, and cognitive engagement.

Document changes in behavioral and life skills of special needs children:

Synthesize findings and implement best practices in incorporating theatre therapy into interventions for special need children, contributing to the development of evidence-based approaches in therapeutic and educational

settings.

METHODOLOGY

Sample:

A sample of 30 Students in the age range-14-18 and 19-23 with multiple disabilities was selected from Disha-a center for special education, Jaipur, Rajasthan. A pre- and post-interventional design is employed, involving a carefully selected group of children with diverse disabilities. Participants engage in a structured theatre therapy program over a 100-day period.

Tools and measures:

1. General background information Performa
2. Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire
3. Social Support Scale for Children
4. Conversational Skills Rating Scale

Procedure:

Data collection includes pre-intervention assessments, therapeutic intervention; in-depth observations; and post-intervention evaluations; to measure Skill Development, Self Confidence, Emotional Intelligence, Sensory Intelligence and Quality of Life.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present work was designed as a structured programme for enhancing the existing level and overall quality of the subjects with multiple disabilities. Preliminary findings indicate notable improvements across various domains of post-theatre therapy intervention. Children demonstrate enhanced self-confidence, improved communication skills, and increased social engagement. Cognitive advancements are observed, suggesting the potential cognitive benefits of theatre-based interventions for this population. As shown in Table 1 the differences between the score of pre and post testing after the implementation of therapeutic intervention.

The positive outcomes highlight the significance of theatre therapy as a holistic approach for children with disabilities. The interactive nature of theatre facilitates a supportive environment, promoting self-discovery, empathy, and social integration. The findings encourage further exploration of theatre therapy as a complementary intervention in multidisciplinary programs tailored to the unique needs of children with disabilities.

Various studies also investigated the benefits of

Table 1 : differences between the score of pre and post testing

Domain	% Gain after Therapeutic intervention (difference between pre-post assessment)	
	Age Group 14-18 years	Age Group 19-23 years
Quality of Life	14.58	19.01
Skill Development	22.93	27.75
Self Confidence	17.03	19.37
Emotional Intelligence	24.37	27.97
Sensory Intelligence	19.27	33.33

drama therapy sessions on children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorders and found benefits across five broad themes. Drama therapy sessions gave children a safe place to identify their feelings. The children felt included and made friends with their peers during these sessions. Role-playing games provided the children with a shortcut to learning and practicing their social skills. The predictability and structure of these sessions made participants feel less anxious (Schottelkorb, 2020)

Implications:

This research paper unfolds by presenting the methodology employed in our study, followed by a detailed analysis of pre- and post-interventional data, culminating in a discussion of the implications of our findings and avenues for future research. As we embark on this exploration of theatre therapy’s role in enhancing the well-being and development of children with disabilities, we anticipate that our research will shed light on the transformative power of the arts in therapeutic interventions and inspire further investigations in this promising and dynamic field. By delving into the transformative potential of theatre-based interventions, we aspire to contribute valuable insights to the fields of psychology, education, and therapy, fostering a deeper understanding of how creative arts can serve as a catalyst for positive change in the lives of these children.

Conclusion:

This pre- and post-interventional study underscores the transformative impact of theatre therapy on children with disabilities. As an innovative and engaging modality, theatre therapy offers a promising avenue for enhancing the overall well-being and development of children facing diverse challenges. Future research and implementation efforts should continue to explore the full potential of theatre therapy within inclusive educational and therapeutic frameworks.

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