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Research

UNDERSTANDING RESEARCH: AN OVERVIEW OF SOUND HEALING AND MUSIC THERAPY INTERVENTIONS

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Abstract

Music Therapy and the sub-genera of Sound Healing and Vibroacoustics is increasingly in popularity and becoming a well-known therapeutic application based on early scientific evidence. The purpose of this paper is to review and analyze existing evidence on music therapy interventions and the application of Sound Healing and Vibroacoustics which are used with the intention of bringing a state of harmony and health to people. There is a growing importance and need to give visibility to discussions related to the Sound Healing techniques as there is limited research in the area. A comprehensive discussion of the existing literature will support a foundation for future research. According to the limited existing research, patients reported significant improvements in spiritual well-being and reductions in the level of anxiety and depression post sound healing experiences. In addition to these benefits of Sound Healing and Vibroacoustics there are many anecdotal reports that suggest this may be a way to support an increase self-knowledge and quality of life.

Key Words: Music Therapy. Sound Healing. Vibroacoustic Therapy. Self-Knowledge. Anxiety. Depression.

Introduction

Sound Healing is increasingly becoming a well-known therapeutic application. It is practical as it uses musical instruments that emit robust sound vibrations, such as drums, singing bowl, tingsha, rattles, chime, and tuning fork.. The effect of these vibrations triggers harmonic resonances. These resonances reverberate in and through the human body (Crowe & Scovel, 1996; Goldsby et al., 2022; Heather, 2007).

Given the vibroacoustic nature of sound and the harmonic resonances produced, sound can be considered as synonymous with energy at its lowest levels. As such, sound is a form of expression of this energy, and capable of helping in the treatment of various physical and mental disorders. Sound can awaken physical, emotional, psychic and soul sensations in patients. This is due to the fact that humans are made up of electromagnetic energy (Kairalla & Smith, 2013). The confirmed effects include improving self-esteem, memory and improving many other problems, such as stress, depression, anxiety and autism (Goldsby et al., 2022).

Background

Sound Healing is recommended for a wide range of patients, bringing countless emotional and physical benefits. The cases of patients indicated for Sound Healing treatment are: patients with anxiety disorders and depression; cancer patients (Goldsby et al., 2022); patients with post-traumatic stress disorder; autism spectrum disorder and learning difficulties; behavioral disorders; physical disorders. For example, music therapy strategies for manipulating sounds can help increase the attention of a child diagnosed with autism or reduce the agitation of a person with Alzheimer's disease (Crowe & Scovel, 1996).

Vibroacoustic therapy (VAT) is a complementary psychosocial approach to rehabilitation. It can be defined as a combination of low-frequency sound

vibration and musical listening combined with therapeutic interaction, that is, there must be a therapist's intention in using this sound vibration. Kantor's study shows that some researchers recommend the use of VAT to treat acute and chronic pain. Research into pain response theories proposes first providing a pleasant physical sensation, rather than one that causes pain, to reset the destructive response (Kantor et al., 2022).

However, the reverberation of sound that brings physical benefits can also generate a contraindication in some specific cases. Sound Healing is not suitable for anyone with the following issues: any deep vein thrombosis in the leg or known thrombi; open wounds; acute inflammations and tumours; pacemaker or defibrillator (can not be placed on or near the affected area); a metallic implant (can not be placed on or near the affected area); if the person is post-operative (before the sutures are removed and the scar is not fully healed and closed).

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to analyze evidence on music therapy interventions and their application of Sound Healing and Vibroacoustic with the intention of bringing a state of harmony and health in people.

Besides the general objective, the specific objective of this article is threefold:

- (i) To explore what science says about the use of vibrations and music for therapeutic treatment;
- (ii) To examine whether the application of Sound Healing can provide the search for self-knowledge in the consciousness and essence of the being;
- (iii) To investigate whether the Sound Healing technique helps treat health problems such as anxiety and

depression, common problems in modern society.

Impact of Sound Therapies and Vibracoustics

It is important to highlight that Sound Healing and Vibracoustics can be applied solely or in conjunction with western medical therapies, including psychology. It is also important to underscore that each case is different. This implies individual planning and unique management for each client is necessary for good quality support. (Kairalla & Smith, 2013). Since each case is different the way the selection of the musical instrument and how it should be played will also depend on each patient's case. Prolonged Sound Healing treatment can provide significant impacts and diverse health benefits. From the combination of sounds and direction of vibrations, these therapies aim to treat physical or mental health problems (Crowe & Scovel, 1996).

It is important that the therapist do a medical intake with a complete case history. The case history needs to include patient identification data, the main complaints, and the physical and emotional state of the patient. The therapist can also document the client's personal emotional and spiritual states in addition to the physical health. (illnesses, surgeries, pregnancy and medication use, including the current situation). This is all extremely important data, taking into account the cases of contraindication of these therapies. All sessions must be set up and guided according to the particular demands of each patient (Kairalla & Smith, 2013).

As with any health intervention there are benefits as well as contraindications. Some of the benefits are that it stimulates the immune system; relaxes deeply; revitalizes cells; reduces stress; improves physical and emotional disorders; improves anxiety, depression

and insomnia; offers reconnection to the state of unity of consciousness; provides a state of serenity and tranquility; promotes integral balance; provides a feeling of pleasure and calm; activates unconscious states; reduces blood pressure; dissolves emotional blockages; assists in motor rehabilitation treatment (Crowe & Scovel, 1996; Goldsby et al., 2022; Heather, 2007).

As in any health intervention it is also critical to consult a doctor before beginning with the first intervention, so they can check for any contraindications. These especially include people with carotid stenosis, people with cardiac pacemakers, artificial heart valves, or cardiac arrhythmias, people with a stent, with a shunt, with a deep brain stimulation device (DBS), epileptics and pregnant women. Also, it is important to inform the music therapist if the patient has implants, screws, artificial joints, inflamed joints and veins, inflammatory skin disorders, weeping eczema, or diseased veins, as they can not work near to this affected area. Any other inflammatory processes generally associated with fever should be reported.

Because Sound Healing and Vibracoustics work using the phenomenon of resonance, even hard of hearing and deaf people can benefit. This is because the vibratory impulse will affect body physiology independent of hearing. The body consists of a large number of interlocking and interdependent vibrational systems of various frequencies and densities. The substance of the body is a virtual symphony of frequencies, sounds, and biological, mental and emotional rhythms in a state of continuous flow which seek to achieve and maintain the state of positive homeostatic balance and equilibrium (Crowe & Scovel, 1996). Studies have been done on the actual sounds of the body produced at microscopic levels and they include snaps,

pops, whistles and humms. (Kirmizis & Logothetids, 2010)

Range of Impacts for the Sound Healing Intervention

Exposure to sound vibrations can awaken physical, emotional and psychic and soul sensations in clients. As for physical aspects, heartbeat, breathing, warming of the extremities, muscle relaxation and pain relief stand out. On the other hand, psychic sensations are more related to language, colors, recovery of memories, expansion of hearing, and sensation of transcending (Frizzo et al., 2020; Heather, 2007). Vibrations, sounds, resonance, vibratory figures and silence can reverberate in the patient, bringing something latent into the session, often at an unconscious level (Ferreira et al., 2014).

The search for self-knowledge and consciousness and the essence of being seeks, within therapy, to raise questions and enable patients to answer them, including such questions as, Who am I? Where do I come from? Where am I going? Such therapy can also reach the injured inner child. Healing helps the inner child to live with their wounds, modeling the patient's choice of how to act, based on their new perceptions about the world and themselves. When the therapist uses an inner child's theme, it does not just represent a memory or event that has remained in the past, but a compensatory system of consciousness, an attempt to correct what happened. This part, that can be considered childish in an adult, symbolizes the human need to return to the beginning, the child's originality and emotion in the face of stress and the reason, logic and logicity of adult life (Martini, 2016). Many walk through life as adults, but within them they carry a child who may have survived many types of childhood abuse and trauma. It may happen that the adult has a certain chronological age and a much lower mental or emotional age. These are

children who did not feel confirmed by parental figures, but rather felt a lot of shame for being who they were, which affected their emotional development (Martini, 2016).

In addition to Sound Healing enabling an immersion in the inner child, rescuing memories, it also enables reflection on the importance of silence. At any time, the music therapist can feel free to bring the question into therapy: "What does silence say when it presents itself?" Silence is also a way of promoting self-knowledge, taking into account that silence reveals personal truth, identity and history. Sound Healing can help with the fear of silence, the fear of what silence can reveal, the fear of knowing yourself better. The fear of the silent causes the individual to be absent from the deeper life that unfolds within themselves. Music therapy has been defined as the art of harmonizing silences to allow communication (Ferreira et al., 2014). Silence, emptiness and quietness are advisable in therapy as a fundamental unit of perception of reference. Because silence allows listening, emptiness allows filling and quietness allows observation of movement (Benenson, 2011).

Examples of Specific Application of Sound Healing

The World Health Organization (WHO) has shown increasing concern regarding the numerous cases of people affected by mental disorders, mainly anxiety and depression. According to Ibiapina et al. (2022), this phenomenon has affected around 700 million people worldwide. Furthermore, epidemiologists indicate that depression affects 4.4% of the global population and 3.6% additionally suffer from anxiety. An individual with depression may experience symptoms such as sadness, feelings of guilt, low or even lack of self-esteem, sleep and appetite problems, tiredness, discouragement and lack of concentration (Ibiapina et al., 2022). On the other hand, anxiety, often related to or even confused with

depression, is characterized by worry and tension. Unlike depression, anxiety is associated with physical symptoms such as agitation, palpitations, chills, and nervousness.

These two mental disorders are chronic and classified as mild, moderate or severe. Although they are still unknown by society due to lack of knowledge or prejudice, this disease can have a devastating effect on the lives of individuals undergoing long-term treatment. Numerous things can happen, such as patients becoming unmotivated to continue treatment, interruption of treatment for financial reasons, increased frequency of hospitalizations and triggering changes in lifestyle (Ibiapina et al., 2022).

Sound Healing has been identified as a good strategy for treating the symptoms of mental illnesses, as it is a low-cost and easily accessible therapeutic approach that enables biopsychosocial and spiritual care, the maintenance of personal balance, self-knowledge, consciousness and the essence of being, well-being, communication, and integration of the person (Crowe & Scovel, 1996; Goldsby et al., 2022). It modulates immune responses in adults, resulting in a significant increase in the number of lymphocytes, cells T, CD4s +, cells NK, in addition to the decrease in pro-inflammatory cytokines, such as: IFN- γ e IL-6 (Ibiapina et al., 2022).

Goldsby et al. (2022) conducted an observational study with 62 participants using structured questionnaires. The purpose of the study was to examine the effect of bowls on emotional and spiritual well-being and the interrelationships between changes in spiritual well-being with changes in tension and mood in patients with depression. After music therapy intervention, it is possible to identify improvement in the symptoms of

depression in these patients (Goldsby et al., 2022).

Goldsby's results revealed significant correlations between improved spiritual well-being and reductions in stress points and depression post-sound healing. Furthermore, the effects varied depending on the age of the participant. The association between improved spiritual well-being and depression was strongest for ages 31 to 40, while improved spiritual well-being and tension were strongest for ages 51 to 60. The authors concluded that the application of Sound Healing using vibrational sounds is a potential low-cost, low-technology therapeutic technique that promotes spiritual well-being. This may be a viable alternative to be implemented in the short term in public health systems around the world, taking into account its practicality and low cost. However, the benefits of music therapy in treating depression do not happen by chance. The improvement of depressive symptoms is achieved through activity (Hagemann et al., 2019), which is nothing more than playing musical instruments and singing together with the music therapist in the therapeutic relationship.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while there are a limited number of academic studies published on the topic Sound Healing has been practiced for decades and is one of the forms of intervention that promote greater pleasure and well-being. Due to growing concern on the part of the World Health Organization (WHO) regarding the numerous cases of people affected by mental disorders, mainly anxiety and depression. Taking into account that an individual with depression may experience symptoms such as sadness, feelings of guilt, low or even lack of self-esteem, sleep problems and loses appetite, tiredness, discouragement and lack of concentration, the need for such patients suffering from these mental disorders to seek

complementary therapies, such as music therapy and Sound Healing, is evident.

The results point to the fact that music therapy works in areas where medications do not have the desired effectiveness. Such therapy modulates immune responses in adults, such as a significant increase in the number of lymphocytes and some cells, in addition to

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Ingrid Torres is a licensed and board certified music therapist in Brazil. Her practice focuses on autistic children and adolescents. She received her Master's degree in Education, Culture and Semi-Arid Territories from University of the State of Bahia, Juazeiro. She received her specialization in music therapy from CENSUPEG and her degree in music is from Federal Institute of Sertão Pernambucano. She taught at the Federal Institute of Sertão Pernambucano on the undergraduate music course from 2020 to 2022. She has been teaching music at Fundação Nilo Coelho in Petrolina for over six years. She has been a singer and a music teacher for over nine years and has now completed her specialization, helping many patients who are on the spectrum to develop different skills.

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