



Music therapy using guided imagery with music intervention versus Indian classical raags: A comparative analysis

Tanvi Kashyap¹, Dr. Anuradha Sharma²

¹ Research Scholar, Department of Community Education and Disability Studies, Panjab University, Chandigarh, India

² Professor, Department of Community Education and Disability Studies, Panjab University, Chandigarh, India

Abstract

Guided Imagery with music is a therapeutic technique, first introduced by Helen Bonny in the 1970s. It incorporates music listening in a deeply relaxed state, to stimulate imagery, which is formed in the mind of the listener as he/she listens to the music. Raag is a unique set of selected musical notes. The term 'raag', refers to musical tunes or melodies that fill the mind with a particular emotion, feeling or passion. In India, the relationship between sound and emotion has been explored since centuries. The emotion associated with each raag affects the listener irrespective of the lyrics. Thus, Indian classical raags are used as a means of music therapy. This research paper compares music therapy using Guided Imagery with Music intervention and music therapy using Indian classical raags, and makes relevant suggestions.

Keywords: music therapy; imagery; Indian classical music; raags; therapy; intervention; guided imagery; ancient Indian music

Introduction

Music therapy interventions have become increasingly relevant for catering various physiological as well as psychological needs of individuals. Music has been used as a means of care to stabilize symptoms of various health issues, for several decades now (Raglio, 2015) [18].

According to Bruscia (1991), Music therapy is defined as "An interpersonal process in which the therapist uses music and all of its facets to help patients to improve, restore or maintain health." (Maratos, Gold, Wang & Crawford, 2008) [13].

Guided Imagery with Music

The Guided Imagery with Music (GIM) intervention is a music therapy technique used worldwide and was first introduced by Helen Bonny in the 1970s. Many extensions and variations of the technique have evolved in both individual and group forms. GIM has been used for children and adults with a wide range of psychological, emotional and physical difficulties. (Bruscia, 2018) [3].

As the listener listens to the music, this therapeutic technique intends to stimulate imagery in the mind of the listener while listening to the music. The listener is then asked to draw whatever image is being formed in his/her mind after listening to the music. The drawing can be a form of releasing emotional garbage being carried since years. It can be anything that comes naturally to the subject like scribbling, using particular colours of his/her choice, mandala drawing, doodling and painting. The effectiveness of this process is observed after a few sessions. The music is selected by the educator that is intended to help the subject in a significant way (www.integrativegim.org).

According to Jerling and Heyns (2020) [10], "Guided Imagery with Music is a method of music therapy that works on various levels, using receptive music to explore the psyche of the client for growth and transformation."

Steps of Guided Imagery with Music Intervention

The following steps are followed during a GIM session (Bruscia, 2018) [3]:

1st Step. The interventionist gives instructions to the subject that an audio instrumental music piece will be played and he/she has to listen to it carefully.

2nd Step. The interventionist plays the music.

3rd Step. While the music is being played, the interventionist provides a guided imagery in the form of a story or the description of a scene. For example, there was a huge tree with its branches going deep into the soil. On the tree, there was a wooden tree house. A bird was sitting on the top of the house.

4th Step. After the music stops, the subject is asked to recall and draw whatever image was formed in their mind while listening to the music and the guided instructions given by the interventionist.

5th Step. The interventionist and the subject discuss the subject's experience and the subject is given necessary feedback.

The intervention can be given in a group or individually.

Music used in GIM interventions:

Guided Imagery with Music is a music-centred approach to therapy that uses selected sequences of classical music that serves as a catalyst for creating imagery in the mind of the subject that help an individual to access both the height and depth of human experience. (<https://music.appstate.edu/academics/special-programs/bonny-method>)

Benefits of Guided Imagery with Music Intervention

Many artists, psychologists and musicologists believe that there is a relationship between music and painting. When we are asked to draw or paint while listening to music, it jointly affects our creative thinking, emotions and feelings. It can work as an effective mode of catharsis or emotional discharge through which, one can reach a state of liberation from anxiety or stress. Drawing while listening to music is

often termed as 'synesthesia' or the effect on one sense when another is stimulated. The Russian abstract painter Wassily Kandinsky was a synesthete. It is believed that he saw colours when he heard music and heard music when he painted (Higgins, 2020) ^[9]

Research has shown that GIM intervention has a positive effect on well-being, quality of life, mood states and sense of coherence. (Jerling, 2020) ^[10]

A study was conducted on 16 adult refugees with post-traumatic stress disorder and were given 16 GIM sessions with each session lasting for an hour. PTSD symptoms, sleep quality, well-being and social function were assessed at the pre-test and post-test levels. Trauma focused modified GIM was found to be an effective treatment for refugees with PTSD (Beck, 2017) Guided Imagery with music sessions were given for 50 hours to women with complex post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The results after the intervention showed significant improvement in the levels of PTSD among the participants. (Maack, 2012) ^[12]

A systematic research review was conducted to study the effect of a series of Bonny method of GIM sessions on health outcomes. They conducted a systematic review in which 270 non-duplicate titles were retrieved, all these studies included 275 participants within the age group of 18 to 78 years and a variety of populations were included. The findings indicated that in most of the studies, a series of GIM sessions proved to be helpful for improving both psychological and physiological health including anxiety, depression, mood disturbance, interpersonal problems, quality of life, sense of coherence, pain, systolic and diastolic blood pressure, beta- endorphin and cortisol. (Mckinney, 2017) ^[15]

Guided Imagery has been proved to be an effective technique in reducing examination anxiety among Secondary school students (Panneerselvam, 2016) ^[17]

Beck, Hansen and Gold (2015) conducted a study to examine the effect of Guided Imagery and Music (GIM) intervention on biopsychosocial measures of work-related stress. Twenty Danish workers on sick leave were randomly assigned to music therapy and wait-list groups. Self-reported data on psychological stress-related symptoms like mood disturbance, sleep quality, physical distress, work-readiness, well-being, anxiety, depression and immediate stress. Data regarding sick leave status and job return of the participants were collected after the intervention was given. The results showed significant effect of GIM intervention on well-being, mood disturbance, physical distress, and cortisol concentrations. Thus, the results indicated that GIM is a promising treatment for work- related chronic stress.

Music Therapy Using Indian Classical Raags

Raag is a unique set of selected notes. The term 'raag', refers to musical tunes or melodies that fill the mind with a particular emotion, feeling or passion. In India, the relationship between sound and emotion has been explored ever since the 5th century. For example, raags are sung at a certain time of the day or night, or even during a particular season, all of which is believed to affect the emotion associated with the tune (Sanivarapu, 2015) ^[20].

The emotion associated with each raag affects the listener irrespective of the lyrics. In conditions such as anxiety and stress, Indian raags are considered beneficial for emotional healing (Sairam, 2014) ^[19]

Eight basic emotions or rasas that are evoked by the various Indian classical raags are love, fear, anger, laughter, pathos, enthusiasm, disgust and wonder (Nizamie, 2014).

Ragamala paintings were one of the earliest attempts in the medieval period to express the moods depicted by various Indian classical tunes or raags in the form of paintings. An attempt to explore a relationship between sound and emotion in the 5th Century text, Narada Shiksha, gave rise to the trend of ragamala paintings. For example, a raag in North Indian classical music called Hindol is sung when the sun rises and dawn breaks. The painting depicting the emotion of this raag shows the sun, a temple and its empty walls which indicate that it is so early that no one has woken up yet. Thus, a sense of calm that is depicted through the raag is also depicted through the painting that is expressing the emotion of the raag. The sense of calm that we feel early in the morning with no distractions of routine life is depicted both by singing/playing the raag or by the ragamala painting that represents this raag (Khetarpal, 2019) ^[11].

Thus, music therapy using Indian classical raags can be given individually and in combination with other therapeutic techniques, that have proved to be beneficial in improving physical, mental and emotional well- being of children as well as adults.

Benefits of Music Therapy through Indian Classical Raags

A study was conducted on the effect of music therapy on ICU induced anxiety and physiological parameters among ICU patients. Pre-test and post-test scores on Zung self-rating anxiety scale were calculated and physiological parameters were also studied. Music therapy was highly effective in reducing anxiety among experimental group subjects as compared to the control group. Music therapy was significantly effective in stabilizing physiological parameters in the experimental group as well. (Chahal, 2021) ^[4]

Different combinations of musical notes create musical tunes known as raags. Indian classical raags are used therapeutically to heal multiple diseases. These raags are sung or played at a specific time during the day or night to get maximum therapeutic benefits. Each raag is associated with a certain emotion like sadness, anger, excitement, fear, disgust etc. and helps to release these emotions. The mental or physical ailments healed by the therapeutic effects of various raags are tuberculosis, chronic headache, depression, diabetes, hypertension, acidity, insomnia, high blood pressure, asthma, memory disorders, cardiac issues, stress, anxiety and constipation. (Gandhe, 2020) ^[7]

The effect of music therapy using Indian classical raags was studied on physiological and psychological parameters of hypertension in geriatric patients. 60 geriatrics with hypertension were randomly assigned to an experimental and a control group with 30 patients in each group. The experimental group, received four sessions of pre-recorded Indian classical music therapy (along with conventional treatment). The control group received conventional treatment only. Assessing both the pre-test and post-test results indicated statistically significant reduction in BP, PR and RR and anxiety levels in the experimental group as compared to the control group. (Godbole, 2018) ^[8]

Research has shown that group singing music therapy intervention has a positive impact on depressive symptoms and loneliness in institutionalised geriatric individuals having

mild depression. A sample of 80 geriatrics were selected and divided into a control group (n=40) and an experimental group (n=40) from St. Mary's Home for the aged in Tamil Nadu. The intervention was given to the experimental group by a music therapist for 3 weeks. The control group did not receive any intervention. Pre and post-test scores of Geriatric depression scale and UCLA loneliness scale were recorded. The results indicated statistically significant improvement in the post- test scores of both the tests for the experimental group. Thus, group singing helps in reducing depression and loneliness in institutionalised geriatric adults. (Mathew, 2017) ^[14] Some research studies have also proved that music therapy can increase depression, stress and can increase pro social behaviour (Dash, 2017) ^[6]

An overview of music therapy practiced in ancient India, and the clinical applications of Indian classical music in the modern era based on existing research literature indicates that listening to Indian classical music is scientifically proved to have many therapeutic benefits for the mind and body. It helps to reduce the negative symptoms of schizophrenia and related disorders. It helps improve executive functions in patients with traumatic brain injury and is also effective in relieving chronic pain. (Sanivarapu, 2015) ^[20]

Music therapy using Indian Classical music has been proved to be helpful in improving attention and memory of upper primary school children. Sivakumar (2013) ^[21] conducted a study on enhancing scholastic achievement of upper primary children by improving memory and attention through exposure to Carnatic instrumental music. The researcher conducted an experimental study taking music as the independent variable and memory, attention and academic marks obtained as dependant variables. 46 children of Sri Sivananda Balalaya, Tiruchirapalli studying in the sixth standard were made to listen to audio clippings of Carnatic instrumental music and on the basis of their responses to a 'Music Interest checklist', 27 children were finally selected as the sample of the study. Pre testing of memory, attention and scholastic achievement were done on the sample. The intervention was undertaken by making the children listen to instrumental Carnatic music for a period of 3 months. The sample was administered a Progressive test to assess their memory, attention and scholastic achievement at that time. After that, the intervention was again given to the sample for a period of 3 months and post-tests were administered. The results showed that exposure to Classical Carnatic Instrumental music significantly improved the scholastic achievement of the sample (0.05 level). The findings of the study also suggested that exposure to Carnatic Classical instrumental music significantly improved attention and memory of the sample.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Music therapy is a way of using different types of music by trained professionals in order to meet physical, emotional, cognitive and social needs of every individual. The above analysis suggests that the benefits derived from music therapy through Indian classical raags surpasses the benefits derived from Guided imagery with music therapy intervention. Hence, it becomes clear that the therapeutic benefits derived from guided imagery with music intervention can be amplified using Indian classical raags and go beyond its limited horizon. Using Indian classical raags during GIM therapy sessions can enhance the benefits

of the therapy manifold times and can be applicable for clients with a varied range of psychological and physiological needs. Indian classical raags and its wide range of emotions can help in creating imagery by using the emotions as per the needs of the client. Further scientific investigations are suggested that provide empirical evidence on the applicability of western music therapy techniques using Indian classical raags.

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