

ART ROOM IN EVERY HOUSE: A PROPOSITION FOR MENTAL WELL-BEING

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ABSTRACT

Creativity is vital to many aspects of human life, including personal growth, innovation, problem-solving, and overall well-being. Since ancient times, humans have used art to express emotions, thoughts, and perceptions of the world. Art plays a transformative role in shaping people's thoughts, feelings, and relationships within a community. Generally, an art room is a designated area at a school, particularly for kids, to encourage creativity and mental well-being. It also works as an art therapy in medical terms. Urbanization, while representing development and progress, has led to a fast-paced lifestyle where individuals are increasingly losing their sense of humanity. This shift has worsened mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, violence, and substance abuse. Behavioural problems like sexual misconduct, corruption, and gambling have also become more frequent, highlighting the negative effects of city living. This study suggests creating a separate art room in every home, encompassing corporate and residential settings such as hotels, apartments, townhouses, single-family homes, residential complexes, multinational corporations, major business houses, and urban living areas. Hopefully, these art rooms would be a revolutionary way to improve mental health and influence community dynamics. Data were collected using interviews, observational methods, and existing literature on art and its impact on various aspects. The research highlights the importance of art rooms in promoting social engagement, emotional expression, psychological relaxation, creativity, and stronger interpersonal connections. Ultimately, this study suggests that art rooms can become vital elements of contemporary living spaces and promote a social change towards emphasising art in daily life to boost mental well-being.

Keywords: Art, Art Rooms, Mental well-being, Urbanization, Community Dynamics

Introduction

In recent years, conversations around mental health and well-being have become highly significant, especially in cities and metropolitan areas. The rapid growth of urban populations has emerged as a major global health concern in the 21st century. The United Nations estimates that by 2030, most people in developing countries will live in urban areas and by 2050, two-thirds of the world's population will be urban (Alexander 263). Urbanization brings with it many advantages and disadvantages. This shift in population has also been accompanied by significant changes in social structure, family living patterns, economic expansion and industrialization. Decreased social support, high levels of crime, crowded and polluted environments and other stressors are some of the factors that affect mental health with urbanization. As a result, spaces that foster creativity, relaxation, and emotional expression are becoming increasingly vital in our fast-paced urban lives (Schmid 213). This highlights the critical need for systems that support mental health and encourage emotional well-being. Therefore, this research paper explores the significant role of art rooms in this context, as they provide opportunities for creative activities and emotional expression. Engaging in art-making helps individuals build confidence in their abilities and improve their relationships with peers. Historically associated with educational environments, art rooms are now recognized as valuable tools for promoting mental health as well as artistic development. These areas give people a chance to express themselves creatively, which has been linked to stress reduction, improved emotional control, and overall improvements in mental health. The connection between mental health and the arts has been recognized for a long time. Engaging in creative activities is an effective way to enhance emotional well-being. Mental health encompasses our emotional, psychological, and social well-being, affecting our feelings, thoughts, and behaviours (Leckey 501). It also plays a significant role in how we cope with stress, interact with others, and make decisions. Mental health is essential at every stage of life, from childhood to adulthood, and should not be overlooked. This underscores the importance of art rooms, as they provide spaces for creative expression that can positively impact mental health.

Literature Review

The literature on art rooms highlights how important they are for encouraging creativity and mental health in a variety of learners. Lloyd et al. (2017) examine how participating in the arts can aid in mental health recovery, emphasising the therapeutic advantages of art as a medium for emotional processing and expression. The significance of creating inclusive art rooms that can support nonverbal and no auditory learners is also covered by Wexler and Luethi-Garreht (2014), who emphasise the need for flexible venues that can accommodate a range of demands. Cortina and Fazel (2015) assess "The Art Room," a focused school-based intervention that effectively uses structured creative activities to address children's emotional and behavioural challenges. This intervention is an essential tool that provides a haven for struggling kids. Willcox (2016) delves more into the idea of vulnerability in the art room, stressing the need to create psychologically secure spaces that promote self-discovery through visual diaries. Bryant (2021) discusses the integration of technology in contemporary art rooms, suggesting that such innovations can enhance creativity and engagement among students. Collectively, these studies underscore the critical role of art rooms as supportive environments that nurture emotional well-being and facilitate learning. Despite all this, there is still a need for research on the availability of art, its accessibility to the general public, its participation, and the outcomes associated with it.

Research Gap

Most research on art and its arrangement has been conducted in medical and school settings, but discussions on how it can be beneficial for everyone are still limited at the research level.

Objectives of the Study

To focus on the role of art and artistic activities in promoting mental well-being, examining their effects, and exploring the existence and functioning of art rooms in facilitating these benefits.

Methodology

This research is based on autoethnography, a qualitative research method in which the researcher uses personal experience to explore and analyze cultural, social, or personal phenomena. Search engines like Google Scholar, JSTOR, Artstor, ResearchGate, Academia.edu, Project MUSE, DOAJ, PubMed Central, Zenodo, Wiley Online Library, Science Direct, Elsevier, Web of Science, and the Design and Applied Arts Index were used to find relevant research.

Discussion

What are art rooms?



Figure 1: Art Room at Triveni Kala Sangam. Photo by the author, 28 September 2023.

An art room is a designated space thoughtfully designed to foster creativity and support mental well-being. It is commonly associated with schools and medical settings, where it functions as a space for artistic creativity. This setting encourages individual expression and promotes group interaction, which raises the standard of artistic expression as a whole. These rooms were frequently found in temples or public spaces in ancient cultures when art was used for ceremonial or religious purposes. But in the 21st century, the form of art rooms has changed over

time, in recent years, particularly in urban areas, schools have increasingly recognized the value of art education for students' overall growth (Bryant 43). Art rooms' calm and inviting atmosphere enhances students' creativity and focus, promoting emotional health and relaxation. This nurturing environment is essential to students' intellectual and personal development. To facilitate a range of artistic endeavours, from painting and drawing to sculpture and digital art, contemporary art rooms frequently come equipped with a variety of supplies and equipment. A variety of activities promote self-expression and creativity in an art space (Henriksen Andrews 40). While utilising pencils and charcoal, participants can experiment with drawing approaches or painting using watercolours and acrylics. In college activities, mixed-media pieces are created using various materials, while sculpting enables the creation of three-dimensional art using clay and other materials. Techniques from Printmaking like screen printing and stamping offer an additional creative layer. Additionally, craft projects offer practical experiences, such as producing paper or jewellery. Art therapy sessions, which involve facilitated activities intended to encourage emotional expression and enhance mental health, are also available in many art rooms. These varied pursuits, taken together, generate a vibrant and encouraging creative atmosphere.

They act as gathering places for people to experiment, learn, and discover the healing potential of art. Today, art rooms are not very accessible to the general public, although they are gradually becoming available in specific areas of metropolitan cities. Schools often have dedicated art rooms for students, while some art galleries and museums provide spaces for creative activities and workshops. Today, various types of art rooms play a significant role in promoting mental well-being in our society. Art therapy rooms are specially designed for therapeutic purposes, allowing individuals to express their emotions and experiences through artistic activities. These spaces often contain a range of materials, such as paintings, clay, and mixed media that are appropriate for different therapeutic methods. In community art studios, people of all ages can engage in artistic endeavours in a welcoming environment that encourages social contact and reduces feelings of isolation. Additionally, school art rooms help children develop self-worth and emotional control by giving them a space to express their creativity. In a range of contexts, art centres and workshops promote engagement in artistic endeavours that enhance self-expression and mindfulness. All things considered, art rooms are stimulating and safe places that promote creativity and support mental and emotional well-being.

Role of Art in Promoting Mental Well-Being



Figure 2: Sensorimotor art therapy session. Adapted from "How to Do Sensorimotor Art Therapy," by C. Storm, Institute for Sensorimotor Art Therapy and School for Initiatic Art Therapy, February 24, 2022.

Forms such as dancing, painting, and singing have been used for therapeutic purposes for thousands of years. Art is still used in contemporary healthcare settings to treat certain ailments, promote general health, and even assist avoid diseases (Hacking et al. 121). The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 also highlights the value of the arts in giving pupils a thorough, well-rounded education. It encourages the curriculum to incorporate the arts so that

students can engage with concepts through dance, theatre, music, and visual arts, among other genres. Beyond merely being a subject of study, this theory holds that the arts are vital for fostering creativity and enhancing students' overall educational experiences (Kumar 36). Young children naturally use their imaginations, cognitive abilities, and problem-solving skills, and art helps them to conceive, design, innovate, and compose new ideas. Exposure to art benefits children by teaching them abstract and representational thinking. They recognise their viewpoints and see a range of approaches to problem-solving and development. Children learn that everyone has a different way of expressing their ideas and emotions via examining and analysing a variety of artistic creations. It has been demonstrated that engaging in creative endeavours reduces cortisol levels, a hormone the body releases in reaction to stress. For people who are struggling with emotional trauma or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), painting can be very beneficial since it gives them a way to communicate their emotions, share their suffering, and unwind. Dopamine, also referred to as the "happiness hormone," is released during pleasurable experiences, and research indicates that creating art might raise dopamine levels (Chapman et al. 100). People can enhance their mental health, interpersonal relationships, and freedom of expression through art therapy. The foundation of art therapy is the notion that artistic expression can aid in healing and well-being (Stuckey and Nobel 254). Increases in self-confidence and self-esteem were attributed to the art therapy course. It offered a secure setting for considering mental health concerns. Stress is harmful to both our mental and physical well-being. Creating art is a great method to deal with stress! Numerous studies have demonstrated that just spending more than twenty minutes doing anything, such as colouring, sketching, or drawing, lowers cortisol levels. Research has indicated that artistic expression might be beneficial for individuals suffering from stress, anxiety, and depression. In older adults, art has also been associated with enhanced resilience, memory, and thinking. The arts can foster a sense of belonging. At the community level, the arts are also beneficial. Participating in artistic programs can help older adults re-establish their social networks and increase the support system in their communities. Loneliness and isolation can be lessened by connecting with people. This also holds for assisted living facilities, where an increase in social connections between residents and staff through the arts can enhance patients' moods and general well-being (Dadswell et al. 109). Employee performance, emotions, and physical health can all be improved by art displays in the office. They can also strengthen relationships between staff and clients. Installing carefully chosen art in the workplace can enhance employee experience and achievement and help convey the right message to guests in a variety of ways, from the obvious to the obscure, according to dozens of research studies carried out in the US and Europe over the past ten years. "Arts and creativity are an important part of the programs we run at the Mental Health Foundation," says Jolie Goodman. Art may be a unique and enjoyable means of discussing and expressing feelings. This emphasises how important art is as a useful medium for discussing and expressing emotions in mental health programs.

Benefits of an Art Room



Figure 2 Nishant engaging in art activity with guest.
Photo retrieved from Nishant's Facebook Profile, 25 May 2023.



Figure 4 Kaushal Sharma engaging in art activity with children
Photo retrieved from Kaushal's Facebook Profile.

Connecting with and appreciating art can significantly benefit society. At Triveni Kala Sangam in Delhi, art instructor Kaushal Sharma explains that the Art Department, which includes programs for arts, children's art, and sculpture, attracts a diverse group of people. Many participants come from the working class, employed in government or corporate sectors, and people of all ages, including those in the 50–60 age range, are drawn to this space because of their interest in art. They can pursue their favourite art activities for an affordable fee, with weekly classes available. This art room provides opportunities for ceramics, sculpture, and clay modelling, making it a welcoming and accessible environment for creative expression. Another artist, Nishant, who studied at Banaras Hindu University and now runs his studio in Delhi, has also worked as an art instructor for many years. Recalling his experience working at the Taj Hotel, he said that the activity rooms, which also included an art room, provided guests with a unique opportunity to connect with art. Nishant explains that visitors would come to participate in various art activities, and found the experience meditative in today's fast-paced world. It was a way to reduce stress, free from the expectations of being a professional artist. They also found joy in the imperfection of the process, like the clay slipping from their hands, embracing the beauty of the natural and imperfect form of art. People would carve their nameplates, and create festival items and handmade gifts for their loved ones, which served to add a personal touch to their artistic expression. In recent years, the residents of Commonwealth Games Village Society, New Delhi, near Akshardham, have transformed the way they celebrate traditional festivals like Dussehra, Govardhan Pooja, and Janmashtami. Under the guidance of an art-based initiative, the community actively engages in creating festival-related structures, such as effigies of Ravana and representations of Govardhan Hill. This involvement includes all members of the society—men, women, children, and elders—fostering a deep sense of community and shared experience. Professor Kripal Singh, a resident of the society, notes that the sense of connection and attachment developed through hands-on participation is far more profound than simply purchasing readymade items. He emphasizes that when individuals contribute from their homes and engage in this collective artistic process, it not only strengthens community bonds but also evokes a range of human emotions, enriching the spirit of the festivities. Research from the University of Illinois at Chicago indicates that art involvement fosters civic engagement and social tolerance, Art rooms often incorporate activities that align with festive seasons and themes, adding excitement and cultural significance to the creative process (Quinn 85).

Designing an Ideal Art Room

Arranging an ideal art room can be complex, as classrooms vary based on different settings, spaces, and age groups. Designing an art room to effectively support both two-dimensional (2D) and three-dimensional (3D) art activities while ensuring safety is essential. Art instructors must consider numerous factors when planning their spaces, much like urban planners organizing city streets. An art room is not just a place to store pencils, paintbrushes, paper, clay, or other art materials. Its design should create an environment where people feel comfortable. Nearly every element, including books, chairs, tables, sofas, and display boards, should be part of the design, contributing to a creative atmosphere. Electricity is needed in art rooms to run necessary devices including laptops, projectors, and camera battery chargers. Specialised equipment and tools, like pug mills, hot glue guns, pottery wheels, pencil sharpeners, and finishing tools like drills and grinders, are also necessary for many art processes. To accommodate a variety of artistic endeavours, art rooms may also require spray booths, encaustic heaters, fans, electric irons, enamelling kilns, mixers, blenders, and microwaves (Kroeger). Additionally, arranging proper storage is a crucial task, especially in urban areas where space is often a significant challenge. Without adequate storage solutions, an art room cannot be considered ideal. Just as eggs are essential for making an omelette, a sink is vital for an art room. It makes cleaning easy and ensures that materials are handled properly. Without a sink, the room's functionality diminishes, leaving it incomplete (Roberts). Effective management of the art classroom is also critical. Thoughtful organizations should include secure storage for supplies, given the high cost of art materials, to protect equipment and artwork from damage (Thomson and Hall 599). An art room should ideally be located in an area with windows that offer pleasant views, as these spaces are valuable for teaching essential art concepts like depth, shape, and perspective, as well as for creating observational drawings. If an ideal view is not available, it is still necessary to have windows for natural light and proper ventilation. In the context of a school, an ideal art room benefits significantly more from having windows and scenic views compared to any regular classroom or office. Such features positively impact students' emotional well-being, reduce stress, and

promote positive feelings (Lee & Sullivan, 2016; Sharma et al., 2023). To achieve this, the presence of a trained art instructor is essential.

Conclusion

By encouraging independence, igniting curiosity, and providing joy, the creation of art profoundly impacts our health and can inspire individuals to take greater responsibility for their well-being. Art is a powerful tool for self-care and mental health as it enables us to express who we are and connect with the world in meaningful ways. The appeal of art lies in its accessibility and individuality; it breaks down barriers and allows anyone to engage, providing a unique and life-changing experience for all. The concept of art rooms can serve as an effective medium for introducing the general public to art. Just as initiatives like yoga classes and meditation centres are being integrated into neighbourhoods, community clinics, sports clubs, and large societies, the introduction of art rooms for mental well-being could be a significant step forward.

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