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**The Applied Effectiveness of Art Therapy
in Education for Children with Learning
Disabilities who have experienced
Aggression, Low Self- Esteem
and School readiness**

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The Applied Effectiveness of Art Therapy in Education for Children with Learning Disabilities who have experienced Aggression, Low Self- Esteem and School readiness

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Abstract:

This study investigates how art therapy can reduce aggressive behavior, improve self-esteem, and school readiness. The research was one control group pre-post study. A total of 30 children with (LDs) were selected randomly from inclusion classes, they received 120 minutes session per week along 12 weeks by undergraduate students in college of art education, Damietta University, and results show a positive effect of art therapy on dependent variables.

Introduction:

Anger is one of the most frequently experienced, it could be a difficult task of emotional intervention characterized by anger and aggression can lead substance abuse, and poor peer relationships in adolescence (Asher&Coiecited, Loebor,1991;Carins&Cairns, 1994; Williams, Waymouth, Lipman, Mills& Evans, 2004). In the past several decades, child aggression in a school has become a major concern since self-reported aggressive and violent behavior continuous to rise among children (Piko, Keresztes&Pluhar,2006). Three distinct traditions in the social science posit a link between low self-esteem and externalizing problems. First, Rosenberg (1965)

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suggested that low self-esteem weakness tie to society; according to social- bonding theory, weaker ties to society decrease conformity to social norms and increase delinquency. Second Humanistic psychologists such as Rogers (1961) have argued that a lack of unconditional positive self- regard is linked to psychological problems, including aggression. Finally, neo-Freudians claim that aggression is motivated by poor self-esteem. The study's goal was to determine how art therapy affected the socio-emotional development and academic performance of children with learning disabilities (LDs). It is normal for children with learning disabilities to experience academic challenges, and these children are usually helped by qualified teachers. However, many children with (LDs) also struggle socially and emotionally, and schools frequently neglect these issues. The present study, which focuses on providing socio-emotional support, looks at art therapy as a potential therapeutic strategy for these kids.

- Metaphor as therapeutic means:

"Feeling without symbolization is blind; symbolization without feeling is empty" (Gendlin,1962). According to Moon (2007), all works of art are symbolic representations of their creators. Psychological insights that beyond logical reasoning can be given to patients and therapists by use of metaphoric imagery. In response to metaphors from clients, often can write stories or songs about the images, and clients are encouraged to do the same.

- Art therapy:

Based on the idea that the creative process of creating art is therapeutic and life-improving, art therapy uses non-verbal communication to express thoughts and feelings (American Art Therapy Association, 1996, in Malchiodi, 2003). Early trauma or developmental conflict may not be accessible through typical verbal language, but may instead be stored in the unconscious as sensory, kinesthetic, or imaginal cognitions and associated emotional experiences represented in symbolic language, according to the theory underlying art therapy (Robbins, 2000; Wadson, 2010). The formation of an intentional therapeutic

connection or holding environment in which the therapist attunes to, participates with, and reflects the client's pre-verbal awareness is necessary for accessing these pre-verbal methods of knowing and experiencing. The art therapist chooses appropriate art methods to reflect the client's emotional and relational condition and, as a result, encourages the formation of metaphoric and symbolic language that re-constructs the client's personal narrative (Gerber, 2014; Robbins, 2000). Long-term individual art therapy was effective in boosting cognitive and emotional development, fostering connections, and reducing harmful behaviors in both adults and children, according to outcome studies. (Alders & Levine-Madori, 2010, Dudley, 2004; Evans & Dubowski, 2001; Henley, 2001; Klorer, 2000, 2005; Klorer & Robb, 2012; Kornreich & Schimmel, 1991; Kramer, 1977; McGregor, 1990; Ponteri, 2001; Smitheman-Brown & Church, 1996; Spring, 2001; Tipple, 2003).

-Art therapy vs. Art Education:

According to Rubin (1978), the role of the relationship between the therapist and client is possibly one way which art therapy varies from art in other contexts, because drawing by oneself or working in a group is different from creating art as part of a therapeutic relationship. When one person provides a physical and psychological atmosphere that allows one or more individuals to completely explore and understand themselves via art, it is a special type of protected situation. The child learns to look at himself and his creative expressions with the other person in this interaction when he freely exposes himself to them. Even though there are frequently few or no words, the participation of everyone and the sharing of the process and product provide the event protection, legitimacy, and sometimes permanence when it may otherwise be so vulnerable and fragile (Rubin, 1978, p. 270). Art Therapy supports the belief that everyone has the ability to express themselves creatively and that the therapeutic process itself is more essential than the final output. The therapist's focus is directed toward the patient's therapeutic requirements for expression rather than on the aesthetic merits of the artwork (Malchiodi, 1998).

Relationship oriented humans are sociable creatures by nature (Vygotsky, 1987).

To survive and grow, we rely on our interactions with others. Interpersonal relationships are the foundation of human existence, and they provide the environment for the majority of human behavior. According to psychologists, a human's omnipresent social context has a significant impact on both his or her behavior and development over the course of a lifetime (Reis, Collins, & Berscheid, 2000). Clients who get art therapy typically express feelings of alienation and disconnection from others or from themselves. They could feel overwhelmed or tormented by them at other times. Art therapists believe that these issues have their origins in previous relationship problems (Edwards, 2014). Art therapy continuously strive to make aesthetic expression a complement to self-expression in one's relationship with others. During that process, the art therapist works with the client's character defenses and gradually assists him in processing emotionally the full impact of the symbolic communications so that the client has a true awareness of what is being said in symbolic form and how to manifest that in ongoing relationships with others Robbins (2000)

Deny (1972) has included a diverse viewpoint into his art therapy methods. He says that art may be useful in a variety of behavioral processes, including catharsis, a rise or reduction in effective communication, self-disclosure, and changes in attitude and behavior, with an emphasis on the requirements of the client (p. 118). He goes on to describe art therapy procedures under the following six headings: exploration, rapport-building, inner-emotional expression, self-perception, interpersonal relationships, and the human's place in his or her environment. These classifications, which each have a particular focus, offer one method for directing the art therapy process (Williams & Wood, 1977, p. 6).

- Art therapy as a developmental process:

Art Therapy understands child's developmental phases which helps in evaluating a child's or adult's psychological composition and normative growth. (Gerber & Lyon, 1980;

Lowenfeld, 1947) Through painting, a kid may learn independence and autonomy while taking responsibility for both the process and the final result, he can learn how to make decisions, act on them, change his mind, analyze them, and learn from his mistakes. A child may experiment metaphorically, test out emotions and ideas that could one day become real, and do so in both the process and the finished output. He can control passive media, giving him the opportunity to feel a sense of power and control without taking any risks. He has the ability to feel competent and master tools and processes. The Child also can develop a profound sense of self-worth by learning to cherish both his creative and productive selves and his regressive and violent symbolic selves. He may identify, cultivate, and define his individuality, developing a feeling of his specialness in and through his creativity. In addition; he can enjoy the pleasure of a beautiful product, the delight of sharing it with a loved one, and the satisfaction of another's affirmation (Rubin, 1978).

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-The Use of Media in Art therapy:

It's common to perceive the intentional manipulation and gripping of art therapy materials as a nonverbal language (Hass-Cohen, 2007). Naumburg thought that using only pastels and poster paints would result in successful therapeutic effects (Naumburg, 1966). Offering a variety of example media was emphasized by Robbins and Sibley in 1976, but in art therapy, art production and intentional use of art media rather than just creative arts the therapeutic function. For instance, forming collages was linked to a reduction in negative mood in one research, while viewing and sorting photographs alone did not (Bell & Robbins, 2007). When writing and drawing (both with a black pen) were tested to reduce bad moods, drawing was found to have noticeably major beneficial effects than drawing. (Drake et al, 2011)

Curl (2008) Studied the effects of drawing and collage with either a positive or negative mental framework which revealed that both artistic activities decreased stress when combined with a positive cognitive emphasis.

Art therapy profession uses art materials, the creative process, and a finished art piece as therapeutic interaction methods. Regardless of the art therapy approach used, patients or clients will engage with art materials and learn something about themselves via the process of utilizing these materials on purpose. This will lead to personal awareness and improvement. Various elements of art therapy include relationship orientation, metaphoric meaning, and nonverbal communication, these characteristics combined with the stages of the Expressive Therapies Continuum, give art therapy therapeutic and developmental purposes.

The effect of colors in psychology:

Apparently, colors have a significant effect on individuals lives, this influence goes beyond visual experience, a person might waste this strong tool if they don't know how to apply it well. There is a connection between the brain and our behavior. Depending on how the brain is stimulated, a person may become happy, angry, or anxious. The central nervous system primarily affects the brain, and the entire nervous system which are both affected by colors, which also have an impact on bodily functions and the development of brain creativity, productivity, and learning. A study by Goldstein in 1942 investigated how colors affected people and studied patients. The findings revealed that colors had both positive as well as negative impacts on patient's heart rates and responses to objects. In 1957 Red was found to have stimulating effects on the nervous system functions compared to Blue. Based on the color combinations selected by the human, the psychological effect of colors.

Meanwhile, Balch Friars Bridge in London, England, was repainted blue in an effort to cut down on the number of people who commit suicide from it. Moreover, blood transfusions were replaced by blue light baths as the primary therapy for 30,000 premature newborns who were born each year with deadly neonatal jaundice. Additionally, hospitals added gold light to calm their staff because the blue light disturbed the nurses who worked there.

Children with learning disabilities (LDs):

The National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities made the recommendation for the definition of LD that is currently used by the majority of researchers (NJCLD, 1998). As a result, LD is perceived as a neurological condition that may appear as cognitive challenges with understanding, reading, writing, and math.

Although social challenges are not included in this definition, a significant amount of literature has been devoted to the social and emotional challenges faced by children with LD. In general, children with LD experience more socioemotional challenges than do children without LD (Auerbach, Gross-Tsur, Manor, & Shalev, 2008; Klassen & Lynch, 2007; Sideridis, 2007).

According to research, between 38 and 78% of children with emotional issues also have learning challenges (Fessler, Rosenberg, & Rosenberg, 1991; Fristad, Topolosky, Weller, & Weller, 1992). In particular, these kids have problems processing social information (Bauminger & Kimhi-Kind, 2008), poor interpersonal skills (Ladd & Troop-Gordon, 2003; Wiener, 2004), high levels of social rejection and loneliness (Estell et al. 2008; Margalit & Efrati, 1996), mood disturbances and depression (Sideridis, 2007; Wiener & Schneider, 2002), and adjustment issues of both an internalizing and externalizing nature. (Al-Yagon & Mikulincer, 2004; Auerbach et al., 2008; Sharma, 2004; Wiener, 2004) The main dependent variable will be adjustment problems since they compensate many of the socio-emotional challenges discussed above (Achenbach & McConaughy, 1987). The question is, do children with learning disabilities (LDs) cope better after receiving art therapy?

Treatment of children with (LDs):

The most common method of treating children with LD is to help them with their academic challenges under the assumption that better academic performance will boost children' self-esteem, enhance their social interactions and status, and result in less emotional issues (Morgan, Farkas,

Tufis, & Sperling, 2008). There is clear evidence linking academic performance, readiness, and socio-emotional health (Bakker, Denessen, Bosman, Krijger, & Bouts, 2007; Elias & Arnold, 2006). Additionally, studies have shown that supportive schools and teachers are important in enabling students with learning disabilities to operate more effectively in the classroom (Margalit, 2004). Even when a kid with LD is receiving therapy, such treatment is often cognitive-behavioral oriented (Kavale & Mostert, 2004; Kazdin & Weisz, 2003) Based on the theory cognitive disorders might cause learning problems and social challenges. However, recently, new humanistic therapies that concentrate on emotions have been proposed for treating kids with (LDs). According to Greenberg (2001), connecting to one's feelings via exploration and reflection may hold the secret to successful treatment.

Hill (2005) believes that exploring emotions on a cognitive and emotional level results in insight and ultimately changes in behavior. In fact, Elliott (2001) demonstrated that an emotional focus in treatment enhanced children's functioning in a meta-analysis of humanistic treatment of children with (LDs). The use of the arts in therapy is one form of humanistic therapy that Metz, 2008 found to be suitable for the treatment of children. Other studies have used humanistic group therapy with children with LD to show that such treatment improved children with a variety of social and emotional difficulties in comparison to control groups (Shechtman, Gilat, Fos, & Flasher, 1996; Shechtman & Katz, 2007; Shechtman & Pastor, 2005) (Gladding, 2005; Shechtman, 2009).

Art Therapy is a treatment that focuses on the interaction of the creator, the creation, and the therapist. Repressed emotions become obvious and can be explored through the images produced. Art therapy in particular is suitable for working with children as they connect with the art spontaneously. Non-verbal treatment method has the benefit of being suitable for children who have language difficulties (Liebmann, 1990). Additionally, producing art enables kids to envision their struggles and understand them better. (Safran, 2002). According to Murray and Schwartz-Mirman (2001), the

use of art in therapy has shown to reduce resistance to therapy, increase the expression of feelings and personal experiences, and strengthen the therapeutic alliance with the specialist (Eaton, Doherty, & Widrick, 2007). The use of art therapy in the treatment of LD children makes sense, however there isn't much research done to confirm this topic. In order to finally explain the results, the current study aims to investigate this problem as well as to cast light on how art therapy works with kids. (Barlow, Burlingame, & Fuhriman, 2000).

- Method

Design

This Experimental study used one group pre-post design for 12 weeks. The group received 120 minutes art therapy sessions per week with pre teachers.

Sample

This art therapy study was announced to the children with (LDs) who are in-between (3-9Y) along fall semester 2020-2021. This study applied program based on art therapy, included 12 sessions (120) minutes each, divided into (12) weeks. This study conducted on randomized sample consists of 30 children selected randomly from 40 children from (2) Inclusion classes for children with (LDs) registered in Royal International School, pre-teachers in Art Education college\ Damietta University applied program sessions as a part of their field training.

Measures

To examine the effect of art therapy on aggression, low self-stem, and school readiness, we used scales as follows:

- Intelligent scale by Eglal Serry version, we used this scale to be ensured that the sample is (LDs) children. This scale aimed to measure the mental ability for children from (3:9 Y) it consists of two domains 1st domain included (45) illustrations with (3) guide examples with three levels (3-5\ 5-7\ 7-9). 2nd domain consists of (45) statements into three levels each contains (15) statements for each age level.

- Self- Esteem scale for children with (LDs) Egyptian Academic for Special Education version, this scale answered by the person who is in responsibility (Parents- teachers- specialists). Scale consists of (33) statements with follows grading, (0) zero for never (1) for often, and (2) for usually, as follows (1-22) equals minimum degree of low self- esteem (23- 42) equals medium degree of low self- esteem, and (43- 66) maximum degree of low self- esteem.
- School readiness version developed by Ahmad Awad ;for measuring sample school readiness we used this scale which consists of (7) cards:
 - 1- Identifying numbers. 2- Identifying colors. 3- Identifying photos. 4-Identifying shapes. 5- Identifying Alphabetical. 6- Identifying photos positioning. 7- Ability of counting. (SR) scale from (66) for high scale to (27) for low (SR).
- Aggression behavior scale version developed by: Udoveski et al., to measure children aggression indirectly applied by (parents- teachers- specialists). ABS consists of (16) statements distributed into (4) types of aggression; (4) statements each: 1- Physical. 2- Verbal. 3- against self. 4- against things.

Scale from (8) = aggressive behavior, (9+) = high aggressive behavior.

Procedures

- Art therapy Intervention Program

Throughout the 12-week intervention of the study, participants had the choice of attending a weekly 2-hour art therapy session. The cognitive-behavioral approach, which included narrative therapy principles, served as the foundation of the structured group art therapy program. Children with their parents attended and after collecting data within the first session some explanations about length of the art therapy program, privacy of information and introducing art therapy were given to children and their parents. After that some rules were defined. For instance, being on time, behave respectfully and preparing

supplies, including watercolor paint, finger-paint color and some other materials. When children and their guardians begin to see more clearly how they relate with one another in the group they gain awareness of the roles they bring to their interactions with others (Sutherland, Waldman & Colins, 2010).

Due to parents' tendency for involvement and their critical situations, the second session was scheduled right following the first.

With the intention of encouraging self-expression, promoting a feeling of belonging, and addressing children' dysfunctional expectations of being "artistic," image production and imaginative sketching exercises were carried out.

As a result, they were engaged in observing a model created by pre-service teacher. Later on, children began to create images and then draw anything they like in their made-up space. Art therapy was applied in a special room with all the supplies required for creative projects, including paper, paint, images, and journals.

The child undergoing such therapy usually selects a topic, and the materials, for a project of interest, and the pre teachers support them in carrying it out. The proposition in art therapy is that the project selected is never incidental; it is a reflection of important issues in the child's life that cannot be expressed directly. Pre teachers used types of Plastic and visual arts for instance, collage, stencil, color bubble, reforming illustrations using soft wood; using colors freely was very important to let child express his feelings and thoughts the way he wants, All strategies are under supervision of researchers.

Statistical Analysis

Results

The current study employed a one-group pretest-posttest design. This is a type of research design used most commonly by behavioral researchers to determine the effect of a treatment or intervention on a given sample (Knapp, 2016). The dependent variable is measured twice in this design: once before and once

after the treatment is implemented. The treatment effect is calculated by calculating the statistical differences between the two tests (Al-Hadabi et al., in press).

Hypothesis

- 1- There are statistically significant differences between the mean of the pre and post measurement of school readiness, self-esteem, and aggressive behavior among the study sample after using art therapy in the favor of post-measurement.
- 2- There are no statistically significant differences between the mean of the post- and follow-up measurement of school readiness, self-esteem, and aggressive behavior among the study sample.

To test the validity of the first hypothesis, which states that "There are statistically significant differences between the mean of the pre and post measurement of low school readiness, low self-esteem, and aggressive behavior among the study sample after using art therapy in favor of the post - measurement." The researchers used Paired-sample t.test². Means, standard deviations, t-value and its level of significance for the pre and post measurement of low school readiness, low self-esteem and aggressive behavior.

Table1. Descriptive statistics

Sample Variable	Measurement						T	Sig
	Pre			Post				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation		
School readiness	30	33.8	6.1	30	53.7	5.4	13.3	0.01
Self-esteem	30	54.3	5.1	30	21.6	5.8	28.8	0.01
Aggressive behavior	30	12.4	1.7	30	6.5	2.1	10.7	0.01

Previous table shows that the values of "t" are statistically significant at the 0.01 level. That indicates that there are differences between the mean of the pre and post-

A statistical package for social science (SPSS) V.23 has been used.^y

measurement of school readiness, self-esteem, and aggressive behavior among the study sample after using art therapy. This indicates a positive effect of using art therapy in developing school readiness, improving low self-esteem, and decreasing aggressive behavior in children.

After a month researchers tried to test the validity of the second hypothesis, which states that "There are no statistically significant differences between the mean of the post- and follow-up measurement of school readiness, low self-esteem, and aggressive behavior among the study sample." A paired-sample t-test was used by the researchers. The findings of this hypothesis are presented in Table (2).

Means, standard deviations, t-value and its level of significance for the post and follow-up measurement of school readiness, self-esteem and aggressive behavior.

Table2. Descriptive statistics

Sample Variable	Measurement						T	Sig
	Post			Follow-up				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation		
School readiness	30	53.7	5.4	30	53.9	5.2	0.52	No statistically significant
Self-esteem	30	21.6	5.8	30	21.3	5.3	1.1	
Aggressive behavior	30	6.5	2.1	30	6.4	1.8	0.24	

Previous table shows that the values of "t" are not statistically significant. This means that there are no statistically significant differences between the mean of the post- and follow-up measurement of school readiness, self-esteem, and aggressive behavior in children. This indicates that continuing positive impact of using art therapy in developing school readiness, improving low self-esteem, and reducing aggressive behavior in children.

The researchers also calculated the effect size of art therapy on developing school readiness, improving low self-esteem, and reduce aggressive behavior:

Effect size is calculated from the following equations:

$$\frac{T^2}{T2 DF} = \eta^2 \text{ where } t2 \text{ is the square of the value of } t.$$

$$d = \frac{\sqrt{2 \eta^2}}{\sqrt{1 - \eta^2}}$$

Effect size is detected through following norms:

- If the value of $d = 0.2$ to less than 0.5 , the effect size is small.
- If the value of $d =$ from 0.5 to less than 0.8 , the effect size is average.
- If the value of $d =$ from 0.8 to more than that, the effect size is large

Roshdy Fam Mansour (1997). Effect size "the complement of statistical significance". The Egyptian Journal of Psychological Studies, Volume (7), Number (16), 56-75.

Table 3. Effect size

Independent variable	Dependent variable	T	DF	η^2	D	Effect size
Art therapy	School readiness	13.3	29	0.86	3.5	Large
	Self-esteem	28.8	29	0.96	8	Large
	Aggressive behavior	10.7	29	0.79	2.7	Large

Previous table shows that the size of the effect of independent variable (art therapy) on the dependent variables (school readiness, low self-esteem, and aggressive behavior) is large because the value of (d) is greater than (0.8). This means that a large proportion of the total variance of the dependent variables is due to the effect of the independent variable. This indicates that practicing art therapy has a major impact on developing school readiness, improving self-esteem, and decreasing aggressive behavior in children.

Discussion

The results of the current research showed that the effectiveness of art therapy contribute to improve positive self-esteem, school readiness, and reduce aggressive behavior in children with (LDs) who exposed to the intervention program. Study based on Gestalt theory therefore most of its principles are applied specifically reforming, and recreate illustrations freely but under pre teacher supervision to alliance art therapy and Gestalt principles. For instance, illustration (7, 8, 9, 10, 11,12, 16, 23)) is a collage art which consists of harmonized, safe materials (journals& scraps) with color variety chose spontaneously by the child ,each movement in the process helps the child to express himself individually or with peers , and ventilate his negative feelings. Pre teacher role is to print out original image, and prepare purposed colored materials then let child use them to reform illustration. Sometimes pre teacher show image to the child before she hide it to help him recall details included in the printed image as a training to improve visual memory as a part of cognitive process so it can helps children with (LDs).

Illustrations (1,2,3,4,5,6,14,22) are another type of art called mosaic it based on collecting free parts creatively and spontaneously using glass, wood, cloth,and papers, in current program mainly all materials used were safe, soft, and colorful, all activities applied in current program can be individually, in peers, in group.

Illustrations (17, 18, 19, 20) are a type of visual art called stencil and colorful bubbles researchers used safe color bubble to help child ventilate his\her anger issues and turn it to the extreme fun by blowing colorful bubble into a paper as a background of the illustration then used stencil and chose dependently color to fill the stencil with his own sponge.

Conclusion

Art therapy was beneficial to the sample of this study, as it supported the hypothesis of current study which participated in the program and resulted elevation in school readiness, self-

esteem, and reduce anger issues. Meanwhile there is an important factor to emphasize which is pre-teacher's belief and her view on the inclusion of children with (LDs).

Current study indicated that techniques of art therapy course must be one of the basic courses to learn in the undergraduate stage, in addition to following up with students to apply these techniques in field training.

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Illustrations



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