IMPACT OF MUSIC THERAPY PROGRAM IN IMPROVING SOCIAL SKILLS OF CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

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ABSTRACT
In this study, children with autism in the Chennai city population were tested using a pretest and posttest design, as well as a control group. A total of 30 children with mild to moderate autism were enlisted and divided into two groups: experiment (15 Children) and control (15 Children). The level of social skills in both groups was assessed and documented using the social skills rating system scale. The children in the experiment group participated in 12-week training sessions, while the youngsters in the control group did not get any treatment. To compare groups, the data were examined using analysis of covariance. The experimental group was divided into two subgroups after the initial screening for selection criteria, such as music therapy (MTG), and the control group, which was not subjected to any experimental training other than their ordinary everyday activities. Musical therapy has been demonstrated to be more effective in treating social skills deficits.

Keywords: Music Therapy, Social Skills, Autism.

I. INTRODUCTION
Music is a time-based art form that uses melody, harmony, and color to express thoughts and emotions in meaningful ways (1). The professional use of music and its elements as an intervention in the medical, educational, and everyday environment with individuals, groups, families, or communities who seek to improve their physical, social, communicative, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual health and well-being, according to the American Music Therapy Association. Music therapy research, practice, education, and clinical training are founded on professional standards that are culturally, socially, and politically relevant (2).

Music therapy can be used in a variety of settings (e.g. mental health, medical, community, developmental, and educational contexts). Participants may drop into an open group or be recommended and assessed by the music therapist before being placed in individual treatment or closed group therapy (3). Social reciprocity deficiencies, nonverbal communicative behaviors utilized for social interaction, and skills in creating, sustaining, and comprehending relationships are all hallmarks of autism spectrum disorder (4).

Individuals' social skills are the specific behaviors they utilize to complete social activities properly (5). This definition is heavily influenced by the individual, context, and individuals in his or her immediate environment (6,7,8). Regardless, social skills are behaviors that are demonstrated in specific settings and lead to social competency, whereas social competency refers to people's opinions of social behavior.

Successful social, emotional, and cognitive development necessitates the development of social interaction skills. Most crucially, lack of social skills makes it difficult to form meaningful social relationships, leading to withdrawal and a life of social isolation (9,10). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate how participation in a music therapy program influences changes in social skills.

II. METHODOLOGY
Selection of Subjects
In this study, children with autism in the Chennai city population were tested using a pretest and posttest design, as well as a control group. A total of 30 children with mild to moderate autism were enlisted and divided into two groups: experiment (15 Children) and control (15 Children). The level of social skills in both groups was assessed...
and documented using the social skills rating system scale. The children in the experiment group participated in 12-week training sessions, while the youngsters in the control group did not get any treatment. To compare groups, the data were examined using analysis of covariance.

**Experimental Design**

The experimental group was divided into two subgroups after the initial screening for selection criteria, such as music therapy (MTG), and the control group, which was not subjected to any experimental training other than their ordinary everyday activities.

**Statistical Analysis**

ANCOVA with a post-hoc test was used. The threshold of significance 0.05 was chosen to examine the acquired results on variables and was deemed sufficient for the investigation.

### III. RESULTS

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experiment</strong></td>
<td>Pre Test</td>
<td>25.54</td>
<td>3.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post Test</td>
<td>28.23</td>
<td>3.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adjusted Post Test</td>
<td>28.77</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control</strong></td>
<td>Pre Test</td>
<td>26.13</td>
<td>3.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post Test</td>
<td>26.79</td>
<td>4.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adjusted Post Test</td>
<td>26.75</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is obvious that the children in the experiment group improved their social skills much more than the children in the control group in the posttest.

Table 2. Mixed design ANOVA on social skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variance</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre Test Mean</td>
<td>BG</td>
<td>0.023</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WG</td>
<td>0.975</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Test Mean</td>
<td>BG</td>
<td>0.597</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.597</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WG</td>
<td>0.388</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted Post Mean</td>
<td>BG</td>
<td>0.424</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WG</td>
<td>0.305</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0.011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was a significant difference in social skills \( \text{F(1,27)=37.53, p=0.004} \) between the experimental and control groups.

**Figure 1.**

**Graphical representations on social skills**
IV. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to see how music therapy affects youngsters with autism's social abilities. As seen in the results of the study, the music therapy intervention was able to greatly improve children's social skills, which is consistent with the findings of other studies. (11-25). Children with autism have a hard time engaging in direct social interactions; as a result, the socially embedded group's musical activities provide exceptional chances for engaging in predictable and comfortable interactions with social partners (26,27,28).

Another factor that contributes to the effectiveness of MT in improving social skills in children with autism is the fact that the Children music therapy Program was done in a group setting (29). Another factor for the success of music therapy for children with autism could be their improved musical sense and lack of difficulties in processing musical feelings. Children with autism may detect affective signals conveyed through music, despite their difficulties in recognizing emotions conveyed through speech (31,32).

V. CONCLUSION

1. The study found that music therapy is a successful strategy for developing social skills in children with autism, with long-term impacts.

2. Musical therapy has been demonstrated to be more effective in treating social skills deficits.

REFERENCES