

Uses of Psychodramatic Therapy between Present and Absent Evaluating the Experience of its Application in Prisons

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Abstract:

The aim of this study was to investigate the specific uses of psychodramatic therapy for various psychological disorders and attempt to alleviate them, through an evaluation of the experience of female inmates in the prisons of Sidi Bel Abbas, estimated at 18 inmates suffering from various psychological disorders, who were indicated that psychodramatic therapy was effective in alleviating psychological disorders among the study sample. It was also found to be an effective treatment for a greater number of psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression, obsessions and social phobia, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Keywords: therapy, psychodrama, psychodramatic therapy, Psychological disorders, Experience evaluation.

Introduction:

Psychotherapeutic treatments are a range of methods and techniques employed by mental health professionals to help individuals overcome psychological, emotional, and behavioral challenges. These therapies vary widely depending on the theoretical frameworks and schools of thought that inform them. Among the less commonly used and lesser-known approaches is psychodrama, a therapeutic modality that utilizes drama to represent real-life experiences. Its primary objective is to assist individuals in understanding and addressing psychological difficulties and social relationships. Psychodrama fundamentally involves theatrical role-playing to enable individuals to express their emotions, thoughts, fears, and sensations. Research suggests that this approach is effective in treating a variety of psychological disorders, including anxiety, depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, social phobia, eating disorders, addiction, and trauma. It also facilitates the development of social and interpersonal skills while enhancing both personal and professional relationships. However, while psychodrama has demonstrated efficacy in addressing various psychological issues, it may not be appropriate for everyone, and it might require additional

time and effort from participants to become familiar with and adapt to its techniques.

Given the limited attention devoted to this form of therapy, this study seeks to highlight psychodrama as a psychological treatment by investigating its applications and limitations through the following research question:

- **Is psychodrama effective in alleviating the severity of psychological disorders?**

The following hypotheses were proposed:

- **Hypothesis 1:** Psychodrama is effective in reducing psychological disorders in the study sample.
- **Hypothesis 2:** Psychodrama is effective in addressing a wider range of psychological disorders in the study sample.

The primary objectives of the study are to explore this lesser-utilized form of psychotherapy, examine its significance and effectiveness, and evaluate its role in alleviating psychological disorders by assessing the experiences of female inmates in a rehabilitation institution who underwent psychodrama therapy. Additionally, the study aims to identify which psychological disorders are most responsive to psychodrama.

Previous research has not extensively explored this topic. However, a study by Anshirah Abdel Hamid Zaqout titled "The Effectiveness of a Psychodrama Program in Reducing Anxiety Levels in Women in the Northern Border Area of the Gaza Strip" is somewhat aligned with this research. Zaqout's experimental study involved an experimental group of 16 women with the highest anxiety levels, compared to a control group of 16 women with the lowest anxiety levels. While this study focused solely on anxiety, its results are comparable to our research goals. The findings revealed a significant reduction in anxiety levels in the experimental group, with a mean score of 28.06 after one month of psychodrama therapy, compared to 35.69 for the control group, demonstrating the effectiveness of the approach.

Study Methodology:

The study employed a descriptive research methodology, which is appropriate for the nature of the topic in order to analyze, identify, describe, and interpret the findings.

Study Sample:

The study sample consisted of 18 female inmates, aged between 21 and 42 years, who were receiving psychological follow-up at the rehabilitation institution in SidiBelAbbès and who suffered from various psychological disorders. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling method.

Theoretical Framework of the Study:

1. Historical Overview of the Emergence of Psychodrama:

Psychodrama was founded by Jacob Levy Moreno, who established the first association for this form of therapy, which continues to offer this treatment approach today. Moreno was an opponent of Freud's ideas and focused on

studying human relationships. He lived in Vienna, where he studied medicine, sports, and philosophy. He held various academic positions in the United States, most notably at the University of California and the New School for Social Research.

Moreno once attended a lecture by Freud, writing about the experience in his autobiography. He recalled that Freud singled him out among the students and asked what he did, to which Moreno responded: "You analyze people's dreams, and I give them the motivation to dream again; you break them down into psychological parts, and I help them put these parts back together." Moreno married Zerka Moreno, an expert in psychodrama, who continued her husband's work and research after his death. He passed away at the age of 84. In 2007, psychodrama was further developed into a new form of therapeutic psychology by Dr. Mustafa Merzouki, known as educational psychodrama.

2. Concept of Psychodrama:

Psychodrama is a type of psychotherapy that combines drama as an art form with psychology. Its effectiveness lies in helping the individual discharge their emotions and reactions by playing roles related to situations they currently face, have experienced in the past, or may face in the future. Psychodrama therapy sessions usually last between 90 minutes to two hours. It is not group therapy, though it shares the group catharsis principle. Psychodrama is often used to treat emotional trauma, violence survivors, and alcohol addicts. (Chip, Clark, 1-6)

Several definitions of psychodrama have been provided in the literature:

- According to Moreno (1968), psychodrama is a revolution against existing therapeutic methods, incorporating the use of the body for expression, making it a universal language of communication. From a psychodramatic perspective, it involves the deepest forms of language, pre-dating verbal communication in a child's development—body language. Therefore, psychodrama is a therapeutic technique suitable for individuals at various stages of life. (Azazi, 46, 1999)
- Hans Strupp (1971) stated that psychodrama is essentially a role-playing procedure aimed at providing the patient (client) with an opportunity to confront challenges, promoting spontaneity and assisting the individual in understanding maladaptive behaviors in interpersonal relationships, both on a civil and emotional level. (Hamouda, 83, 1999)
- Lotze (1990) defined psychodrama as a term combining "Psycho" (mind) and "Drama" (action, movement, or activity), meaning "movement of the mind." It is a form of psychotherapy that uses theatrical techniques to uncover the dynamics of the individual's disturbed personality. (Ghanem, 122, 2003)
- Ibrahim (1994) viewed psychodrama as a projective therapeutic technique employed for diagnostic and counseling purposes, based on theatrical role-playing of situations chosen by the patient from their life experiences. Its goals are spontaneity, creativity, and releasing individuals

from internal conflicts through the emotional catharsis provided by role-play, helping them gain insight and understand themselves, as well as build positive relationships with others. (Ibrahim, 11, 1994)

- Samia Fayyad (1996) emphasized that the core principle of psychodrama is spontaneity, which Moreno defined as the individual's ability to confront new situations appropriately. The aim of psychodrama is to develop the person's capacity for creative life roles that enable them to face life's challenges in new situations in a healthy way, rather than relying on automatic, maladaptive responses.

New Response Patterns in Psychodrama:

Psychodrama encourages the development of new response patterns, where the child can either be the creator of the scene or have the supervisor narrate a story that the children then express in their own way, using play as a form of self-expression. (Shahata, 30, 1999).

Suleiman (1999) defines psychodrama as a form of group psychotherapy based on the principle of role-playing. This approach allows individuals to express the emotions that distress them and confront deep conflicts in a relatively protected environment during the therapeutic phase. (Suleiman, 172, 1999).

Thus, psychodrama (Psychodrama) is a therapeutic method aimed at enhancing personal growth and self-development by expressing feelings, thoughts, and reflecting on personal problems and social relationships through role-playing and dramatic play.

3. Objectives of Psychodrama:

The primary goal of psychodrama is to provide solutions to problems by helping individuals understand their emotions through representational enactment, which aims to free them from psychological isolation. Psychodrama is considered a practical method for solving personal issues, as opposed to traditional verbal therapies like visualization and hypnosis.

Psychodrama, as a technique for modifying and shaping human behavior, aims to achieve the following objectives:

- **Re-orienting and re-educating the individual:** Helping the individual re-establish appropriate behavior and understanding of social norms.
- **Achieving proper social interaction and adjustment:** Enhancing social adaptation and promoting healthy interpersonal relationships.
- **Uncovering individual problems and fostering self-awareness:** Helping individuals gain insight into their desires, emotional needs, and life challenges.
- **Developing awareness of inappropriate behavior patterns:** Helping individuals recognize their maladaptive behaviors, see reality objectively, and make better decisions to face their problems.
- **Learning from social experiences and enhancing emotional expression:** Training individuals to express their emotions appropriately, defend their rights, and engage in suitable social responses.

- **Providing opportunities for fulfilling different needs:** Such as the need for play, which allows individuals to reframe and understand their strengths and weaknesses, ultimately leading to greater self-awareness.
- **Emotional release and catharsis:** Psychodrama provides a space to express and release emotional tensions. Participants can act out roles they encounter in their real life, such as the role of a parent, teacher, or authority figure, to express repressed emotions and reduce psychological stress.
- **Training on social skills:** Individuals practice and learn how to react appropriately to social situations, offering them alternative, healthier ways to respond.
- **Role-playing important figures in their lives:** By acting out the roles of significant people in their life, individuals experience emotional catharsis and are able to free themselves from psychological stress, gain insight into their true selves, and better understand others. This role-playing also helps them prepare for real-life situations they may fear confronting.
- **Preparation for future life situations:** Psychodrama allows individuals to rehearse and gain confidence in dealing with future life challenges, reducing the fear of encountering such challenges in reality.
- **Self-awareness and discovering new patterns:** It enables individuals to recognize new potential life paths they may not have been aware of, offering new perspectives on their current and future circumstances.
- **Facilitating social cooperation and self-understanding:** It provides opportunities for individuals to understand their social environment and develop better interpersonal relationships. This can help overcome feelings of inferiority, introversion, and lack of self-confidence.

Thus, the objectives of psychodrama can be summarized as follows:

1. **Enhancing self-awareness:** Helping individuals identify and appropriately express their emotions and thoughts.
2. **Fostering social interaction:** Encouraging individuals to engage with others and explore new and different behavioral responses.
3. **Improving social relationships:** Promoting better communication, understanding, and the development of social skills.

- **Reducing Psychological Stress:** Psychodrama encourages patients to express their emotions, allowing them to release stress, anxiety, and psychological pressures.

- **Improving Self-Esteem:** It aims to boost self-confidence and develop personal, social, and relational skills.

- **Fostering Creativity and Positive Thinking:** Patients are encouraged to think positively and experiment with creative ideas and solutions for their problems.

Overall, psychodrama aims to achieve psychological, emotional, and physical balance, improving quality of life and promoting mental well-being.

4. Elements and Techniques of Psychodrama:

Psychodrama is based on three main elements:

1. Director: The psychodrama therapist is also the director of the session. The therapist is an expert in psychodrama and is responsible for selecting the actors, preparing the script, and choosing the appropriate setting for the therapy while ensuring complete confidentiality about what occurs during the session.

2. Group: These are the other actors who assist the patient in performing their role by playing other roles in the drama. Typically, the group consists of 10 to 15 people, but it can go up to 25. A smaller group usually enhances the effectiveness of therapy.

3. Protagonist: This is the patient around whom the dramatic events revolve. The protagonist plays a role that represents a real-life issue they are dealing with, seeking to find a solution to the problem.

Techniques Used in Psychodrama:

The primary techniques used in psychodrama include:

1. Role Reversal: In this technique, the patient plays the role of another person whom they see as part of the problem. For example, if the patient has difficulty interacting with their spouse, they might perform the role of their spouse. This allows the patient to experience the situation from another person's perspective, helping them understand the issue more clearly.

2. The Mirror Role: Here, the patient becomes a passive observer. An actor plays the role of the patient, and through watching the performance, the patient gains insight into their own patterns of behavior, speech, and body language. This helps them recognize actions that may have worsened the problem and prevented a solution.

3. The Model Role: In this technique, the patient is again an observer, but this time, the role performed is ideal—showing how the patient should ideally behave in the situation. This provides the patient with an example of positive or desired behavior in real-life situations.

4. The Doubling Role: In this technique, another person plays the role of the patient's "shadow" and verbally expresses the patient's body language. The director may stop the performance to ask the patient if the shadow character accurately reflects their body language. This technique provides the patient an opportunity to identify unspoken messages in their movements and behaviors.

5. Advantages of Psychodrama:

Psychodrama has many advantages and unique characteristics, including:

- It helps reduce factors contributing to psychological and social anxiety.
- It is a modern, sophisticated technique for modifying human behavior.
- Psychodrama can be used to modify learned behavioral patterns, such as phobias and aggressive behavior.
- It is an economical method of therapy in terms of time, effort, and practical results.
- It is a method that is generally well-received and accepted by clients, particularly students.

Advantages of Psychodrama (Continued):

- It provides educational experience for both the actors and the observers, enhancing their ability to express negative emotions such as fear, pain, and stress, as well as positive feelings like joy, love, and fun.
- Psychodrama is used by schools, teachers, and counselors to modify unwanted behaviors in students, diagnose, and treat issues related to poor social adjustment.
- It is considered one of the most effective guidance methods for addressing problems in social situations, such as difficulties with social adjustment.

Psychometry Therapy:

Psychometric therapy is a therapeutic approach that is based on the theory that the subconscious mind influences an individual's behavior and thinking. It includes various techniques such as progressive muscle relaxation, dream analysis, and cognitive behavioral changes. Several studies have been conducted to assess the effectiveness of psychometry in different contexts, such as:

- **Progressive Muscle Relaxation for Anxiety Treatment:** This study showed that psychometry using relaxation techniques can reduce anxiety and tension in individuals suffering from general anxiety disorder.
- **Psychoanalysis for Depression Treatment:** This study found that psychometry, using psychoanalytic techniques, can improve depression symptoms and increase psychological satisfaction.
- **Cognitive Behavioral Changes for Social Phobia Treatment:** This study demonstrated that psychometry, incorporating cognitive behavioral changes, can improve social phobia symptoms in individuals.

While these experiments suggest the effectiveness of psychometry in improving psychological conditions, psychometry is not a universal solution and requires careful assessment and individualized attention.

Field Aspect of the Study:

1. Evaluation of the Experience:

As part of the psychological follow-up for inmates, psychometric therapy was applied to a group of female inmates with various psychological disorders. Psychodrama is used in prisons as a way to treat psychological issues like depression, anxiety, behavioral disorders, and violence. The therapy utilizes several psychological and behavioral strategies to change harmful behavior patterns and enhance inmates' overall mental health. It also focuses on learning essential life skills, including effective communication, problem-solving, anger management, and positive thinking. Psychodrama encourages patients to replace negative thoughts and behaviors with more positive ones, which can improve their quality of life and reduce their psychological burden. Below are the methodological details:

2. Sample Characteristics:

This study used specific variables to analyze and predict the use of psychodrama therapy. These variables include age and associated psychological disorders. The following tables outline the sample characteristics by age and type of psychological disorders:

• **Table 1: Sample Characteristics by Age:**

| Age Range | Number of Participants |
|-------------|------------------------|
| 21-25 years | 06 |
| 26-30 years | 07 |
| 31-35 years | 03 |
| 36-42 years | 02 |

This breakdown of the sample will help to examine the age-related impact of psychodrama therapy and its effectiveness across different age groups.

Table 2: Sample Characteristics by Type of Psychological Disorder:

| Type of Disorder | Number of Participants |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Anxiety | 05 |
| Depression | 07 |
| Obsessive-Compulsive | 03 |
| Social Phobia | 02 |
| Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) | 01 |

3. Proposed Psychodrama Program:

1.3 First Section: Theoretical Framework of the Program:

The general structure of the psychodrama performance was built around common life issues such as marital problems (like divorce and marital breakdown), family problems (such as neglect and family deprivation), and various life circumstances. The group members were divided into three subgroups:

- **Group 1:** Six female inmates facing life challenges, seeking a decent life by any means.
- **Group 2:** Six female inmates dealing with marital problems, with a focus on divorce and family disintegration.
- **Group 3:** Six female inmates, focusing on daily life problems, the search for personal identity, and self-esteem.

The scenario for the performances was created based on the participants' own experiences, under the guidance and supervision of psychological specialist Mohammed Moussa, as part of the psychological follow-up and support through artistic activities.

2.3 Second Section: Program Objectives

The objectives of the program are derived from various psychological theories:

- **Free association** (from psychoanalytic theory) which encourages the expression of emotions and the projection of inner conflicts.
- **Insight** (from gestalt and humanistic theories) where participants gain insight into their problems and the underlying causes through role-playing.
- **Behavioral modification** (from behavioral theory), focusing on techniques such as modeling, observation, and imitation, with the goal of altering or changing problematic behaviors.

3.3 Third Section: Importance of the Program and Its Main Goal

1.3.3

Importance:

The program's importance lies in the following points:

- It addresses common behavioral issues in daily life and the psychological pressures that arise from them.
- The program targets female inmates in correctional institutions, a vulnerable group.
- The treatment method used in this program is psychodrama, which serves as a therapeutic mechanism.

2.3.3

Goal:

The primary goal of the psychodrama program is to reduce psychological disorders and pressures among female inmates, ranging in age from 21 to 42 years old, residing in correctional institutions.

4. Results and Discussion:

1.4 Discussion of Hypothesis One:

The hypothesis states: "Psychodrama therapy is effective in alleviating psychological disorders among the study sample."

After implementing psychodrama therapy on the study sample, which was divided into three subgroups (Group 1 focusing on marital issues, Group 2 on family problems, and Group 3 on various life circumstances), the following results were observed:

- **Variation in Results:** The results varied depending on each participant's personal situation and their response to therapy.
- **Improvement:** Twelve cases showed significant improvement, with some gradually recovering, particularly in conjunction with continued psychological follow-up from the specialist.
- **Social Relationship Improvement:** There was a noticeable improvement in social relationships between the female inmates, which serves as an initial and preparatory indicator for reintegration and rehabilitation post-incarceration.

These results suggest that psychodrama can play an essential role in addressing psychological issues, improving social interactions, and aiding the rehabilitation process for inmates.

- **Increased Demand for Reapplying the Experience :**

The repeated requests by the inmates to reapply the psychodrama sessions indicate a sense of psychological relief, well-being, and the restoration of self-confidence.

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the **first hypothesis has been confirmed**, demonstrating that **psychodrama therapy is effective in alleviating psychological disorders** among the study sample.

Discussion of the Second Hypothesis

The second hypothesis stated: *"Psychodrama therapy is effective in addressing a broader range of psychological disorders within the study sample."*

The following table presents the key psychological disorders treated—both stabilized and non-stabilized—after the application of psychodrama therapy:

Table (03): Stabilized and Non-Stabilized Psychological Disorders Following Psychodrama Therapy

| Group | Stabilized Cases | Non-Stabilized Cases |
|----------------|--|--|
| Group 1 | Anxiety: 01 Depression: 02 Social Phobia: 01 | Depression: 01 |
| Group 2 | Anxiety: 01 Depression: 02 Social Phobia: 01 Obsessive Thoughts: 01 | Anxiety: 01 |
| Group 3 | Depression: 01 Post-Traumatic Neurosis: 01 Anxiety: 02 Obsessive Thoughts: 01 | Depression: 01 Obsessive Thoughts: 01 |
| Total | 14 | 04 |

As shown in **Table (03)**, a total of **14 cases achieved stability** following psychodrama therapy, compared to only **4 cases that remained unstable**. This **significant disparity underscores the effectiveness** of psychodrama therapy as a psychological intervention.

Moreover, psychodrama therapy offers multiple advantages that enhance its efficacy in treating various psychological disorders. By employing diverse communication techniques, it has the capacity to **influence individuals' psychological and social dimensions, fostering meaningful change**. This approach also **enhances social relationships, strengthens communication and interaction skills, boosts self-confidence, and fosters a sense of security**. Additionally, it plays a role in reducing **anxiety and depression**, while

improving **problem-solving and decision-making skills**, ultimately **enhancing overall quality of life**.

One of the **key strengths** of psychodrama therapy lies in its emphasis on **active patient participation** during therapeutic sessions. This engagement allows individuals to **identify personal goals** and work towards achieving them more effectively.

Based on these results, **psychodrama therapy is a highly effective intervention for treating various psychological and social disorders**. The findings presented in the table further validate this conclusion, confirming the **second hypothesis**, which posits that **psychodrama therapy effectively addresses a wide range of psychological disorders** within the study sample.

Conclusion

Psychodrama therapy is a **psychotherapeutic approach** that focuses on **behavioral and cognitive modification**, aiming to **reshape negative thought patterns and maladaptive behaviors** that contribute to psychological distress. It is widely utilized in the treatment of numerous psychological disorders, including **depression, anxiety, phobias, eating disorders, addiction, and autism**.

The **effectiveness** of psychodrama therapy lies in its ability to **replace dysfunctional behaviors with healthier alternatives, enhance cognitive and emotional awareness, and strengthen interpersonal relationships**. Given its diverse applications, **psychodrama therapy stands as a valuable therapeutic tool for promoting mental well-being and psychological resilience**

Psychodrama Therapy and Its Impact on Social Interaction and Psychological Health

Psychodrama therapy is typically conducted through dialogue-based sessions between the patient and therapist, making it effective in treating a range of psychological issues. However, results may vary from one individual to another and depend on several factors, such as the severity of the psychological issue, the duration of the therapy, and the patient's commitment to the treatment. It is important to note that psychodrama therapy is not the only option for addressing psychological issues, and other therapeutic approaches may be more effective for some individuals.

Recommendations and Suggestions:

- **Prioritize Drama and Art Therapies** as effective therapeutic methods for reducing and alleviating psychological problems and disorders.
- **Incorporate Group Therapies** such as psychodrama in psychiatric clinics and schools to encourage interaction between patients and peers,

fostering collaboration and engagement during therapeutic sessions, which enhances communication skills.

- **Provide Necessary Support and Guidance** to participants in these sessions, including offering advice on how to manage the various interactions and emotions that may arise during the sessions. It is also essential to ensure the availability of the required resources for the efficient and cost-effective implementation of this therapeutic approach.
- **Expand Research** in the field of psychodrama therapy to better understand its potential and effectiveness.
- **Design Therapeutic and Advisory Programs** within the realm of psychodrama to help individuals confront psychological problems and improve their quality of life, relying on experts and specialists in this field.
- **Organize Seminars and Lectures** for psychologists and social workers to raise awareness about psychodrama therapies, their significance, and their effectiveness.
- **Train Psychologists and Social Workers** in art therapies and encourage their application with various patient groups.
- **Use Psychodrama Approaches** for other psychological disorders that may be present in different populations experiencing mental health issues.

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