

Art Therapy for Sexually Abused Children in the Arab Society

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Abstract

Awareness to child sexual abuse in Arab societies increases with the acknowledgement that reported cases are only a fraction in relation to the width of this phenomenon. Research exploring art-therapy for sexually abused children has flourished since the 1990's. New streams of research in the last 3 years look at culturally adjusting art-therapy to the needs and characteristics of Arab societies. Nevertheless, no research looked into art-therapy as treatment for sexually abused children in the Arab society.

The goal of this article is to integrate literature exploring art-therapy as treatment for children who have been sexually abused and literature exploring art-therapy practices' adaptation to Arab societies. This is to understand which of the knowledge-gaps can be bridged using current literature, and which aspects need further research.

The review conducted revealed seven aspects where a clash between art-therapy characteristics and the values and norms Arab societies exist. Two of these relate to art-therapy as a diagnostic tool: sexual abuse indicators and mandatory reporting. Five relate to therapy itself: perception of art, religion and faith, perception of privacy and secrecy, perception of emotions, and family integration in therapy. Practical recommendations and recommendations for further research are detailed in the article.

Keywords: Art Therapy, Arab society in Israel, Cultural differences, Child sexual abuse.

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