

Trends in Workshops Utilizing Art Activities for People with Disabilities in Welfare Facilities in Japan

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, the use of art activities as a form of care has gained prominence in the field of interpersonal support, leading to widespread implementation of art programs for individuals with disabilities in various facilities. This study aims to synthesize the effects and evidence of these activities by reviewing research trends related to art activities in Japan from 2000 to 2020. The literature reviewed in this study was categorized into three perspectives: (1) the "Artistic Perspective," which analyzes the value of art created by individuals with disabilities from an artistic viewpoint; (2) the "Social Inclusion Perspective," which focuses on building an inclusive society and promoting the social reintegration of individuals with disabilities; and (3) the "Care and Effectiveness Perspective," which investigates the therapeutic effects of art. The characteristics and issues associated with each perspective were comprehensively examined, and critical considerations for conducting art activities in welfare facilities were discussed.

KEYWORDS

Art by People with Disabilities; Interpersonal Support; Literature Review; Art Activities for People with Disabilities; Disability Art.

1. INTRODUCTION

Art activities have gained recognition as a valuable form of care for individuals with disabilities, leading to widespread implementation in various facilities. This study reviews research trends in Japan from 2000 to 2020, categorizing the literature into three perspectives. The "Artistic Perspective" assesses the artistic value of works created by individuals with disabilities. The "Social Inclusion Perspective" examines the role of art in fostering inclusive societies and promoting social reintegration. The "Care and Effectiveness Perspective" investigates the therapeutic benefits of art.

By synthesizing these perspectives, the study highlights the multifaceted benefits of art activities and discusses critical considerations for their implementation in welfare facilities. The findings aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of art as a therapeutic tool, advocating for its broader adoption in support strategies for individuals with disabilities.

2. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Art activities for people with disabilities in Japan have evolved from initial leisure support activities conducted in welfare facilities, characterized by a strong connection with welfare (Tanaka, 2017).

Through engagement in art activities, individuals with disabilities experience various changes. For instance, participation in art activities enables them to create new expressions through interactions with others, engage in non-verbal communication, and achieve self-acceptance as well as acceptance of others (Nakamura, 2018; Shimizu, 2002). Various workshops and art activities have also been shown to enhance individual abilities, improve interpersonal skills through interactions with peers and community members, and enable the acquisition of roles (Ishikawa et al., 2009). Additionally, art activities have been found to foster imagination and creativity, as evidenced by the phrase "not imitating others, but moving from one's own imagination" (Inada, 2020). Moreover, disability art serves as a medium of communication, effectively connecting disability culture with mainstream society (Seki, 2018). Art activities also provide opportunities for individuals with disabilities to engage with society, potentially contributing to community revitalization (Matsumoto, 2018).

The promotion of a symbiotic society has led to an increase in art activities for people with disabilities, with numerous practices observed in fields such as visual arts, music, theater, and dance. The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare and the Agency for Cultural Affairs have expanded support projects for cultural and artistic activities for people with disabilities, establishing support centers for disability art and culture activities in 30 prefectures across Japan. Surveys targeting facilities for people with disabilities in Osaka and Iwate prefectures revealed that nearly 70% of these facilities conduct art workshops, indicating that art activities are regularly utilized in a significant number of regions and facilities (Kawaida, 2012; Sato, 2019).

Furthermore, government initiatives have actively promoted art activities for people with disabilities. For instance, the "Support Model Project for Art Activities of People with Disabilities," implemented from FY2014 to FY2016, was expanded nationwide as the "Support Project for the Promotion of Art and Cultural Activities by People with Disabilities" from FY2017. In FY2019, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare and the Agency for Cultural Affairs formulated the "Basic Plan for the Promotion of Cultural and Artistic Activities by People with Disabilities." Despite these efforts, a foundational survey by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare revealed that only 41.6% of the surveyed welfare facilities conducted cultural and artistic activities, highlighting challenges such as the lack of personnel with expertise in the arts and insufficient collaboration between welfare facilities.

Many individuals with disabilities utilize welfare facilities after graduating from special needs schools or being discharged from medical institutions, often having limited connections with society outside of welfare and medical institutions. Therefore, promoting art activities in welfare facilities could potentially enhance their quality of life, social participation, lifelong learning, and opportunities for new forms of independence and social reintegration.

As noted, the promotion of art activities for people with disabilities has increased, with research reported in various fields. However, a comprehensive understanding of how to further promote these activities in welfare facilities, starting from these facilities, and the associated challenges is necessary. Young researchers specializing in disability art and interpersonal support providers must understand recent research trends to improve support and policies. This study aims to provide academic evidence on the significance and effectiveness of cultural and artistic activities for people with disabilities in welfare facilities by reviewing the current state and issues of art activities for people with disabilities through literature review.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1) Grouping (Coding, Table 1): Based on the content of the target literature, the "abstract," "introduction," "results," and "discussion" or equivalent sections were coded using the qualitative coding method of the Grounded Theory Approach (GTA) by Strauss. The coding was based on the "goals of the art activities discussed in the literature," and the papers were categorized into three groups: "Artistic Perspective" (15 papers), "Social Inclusion Perspective" (14 papers), and "Care and

Effectiveness Perspective" (4 papers). As shown in Table 1, words were extracted from the papers for coding, and the validity of the grouping and induction was double-checked by research staff and student staff who frequently handle qualitative research in the same lab as the author.

2)Text Mining: Text mining was used in this study to conduct co-occurrence network analysis and correspondence analysis. The analysis software used was MaxQDA 2022.

Table 1. Code Table

Ravel	Code	Frequency of Occurrence	
Artistic Perspective	Serve as a medium of expression	2	
	Draw out new methods of expression	3	
	Promote acceptance of various diversities	7	
	Promote the development of disability art	9	
	Realize social value	3	
Social Inclusion Perspective	Encourage social participation	3	
	Elicit empathy between people with disabilities and those around them	4	
	Create a space for coexistence	5	
	Generate new values	1	
	Lead to the independence of people with disabilities	6	
	Provide support through cultural policies	4	
	Lead to a transformation in relationships	2	
	Promote acceptance of diverse beings	8	
	Create new connections	10	
	Contribute to the creation of a safe and secure environment	4	
	Provide a place of belonging	11	
	<i>Care and Effectiveness Perspective</i>	Lead to life support	1
		Lead to the resolution of problematic behaviors	1
Elicit joy from people with disabilities		2	
Elicit confidence in people with disabilities		7	
Promote communication		8	
Restore mental well-being		4	
Elicit courage		1	
Acceptance of the current situation		1	
Draw out methods for expressing the feelings of people with disabilities		13	
Lead to leisure support	7		

In this study, keywords such as "art activities for people with disabilities," "welfare facilities for people with disabilities," "art activities in welfare facilities," "workshops for people with disabilities," and "art and care" were used. The literature search covered the period from 2000 to 2022, focusing on Japanese literature from the 1990s onwards, when art activities for people with disabilities became prominent. For this purpose, databases such as Google Scholar, CiNii (National Institute of Informatics), and J-Stage were utilized. Additionally, literature from fields with numerous studies on art activities, such as the Art Meets Care Society and the Co-Creation Society, was also searched. To ensure the validity and reliability of the research results, only scholarly articles in the form of "research papers" and "research notes" published in academic journals and bulletins were included in the analysis.

4. RESULTS

This study aimed to provide academic evidence for the promotion of cultural and artistic activities for individuals with disabilities by examining the current state and issues of art activities in welfare facilities.

From the perspective of care and effectiveness, it has been reported that participants in art activities experienced significant benefits. These benefits included the ability to freely express themselves, enjoy participation, and enhance communication, leading to increased interactions with others who share similar disabilities and fostering acceptance of their disabilities (Matsumoto, 2019; Hayashi, 2002). Nakamura (2018) also stated that through participation in art activities, individuals with disabilities could create new forms of expression through interactions with others, engage in non-verbal communication, and achieve self-acceptance as well as acceptance of others. In the correspondence analysis (Figure 3), terms such as "participation" and "participants" emerged as characteristic words. The selected papers from the care and effectiveness perspective emphasized the importance of participant involvement and collaboration. The prominence of the term "change" suggests a focus on the effects observed after participating in art activities. These reports indicate that art activities aim not merely at art creation but at using art as a medium to transform emotional and social connections. However, similarities between the effects of art activities and those of art therapy and occupational therapy are notable. For example, in occupational therapy, participation has been reported to increase participant satisfaction and improve social participation (Noguchi, 2019), as well as enhance mood by reducing negative emotions and increasing vitality (Tachinai, 2004). Despite these similarities, prior studies focusing on care and effectiveness have not thoroughly addressed the distinctions and overlaps between art activities, art therapy, and occupational therapy. Given the current shortage of healthcare and welfare professionals, it is anticipated that patients and welfare facility users who require care but cannot receive it as desired may benefit from accessible art activities, potentially achieving similar positive effects to those of art therapy and occupational therapy.

From the perspective of social inclusion, art activities for individuals with disabilities focus on creating a "shared space" that respects individual personalities and maintains diversity. For instance, Sugimoto (2013) introduced a case where individuals experiencing "difficulty in living" deepened their connections with others through performances such as self-authored poetry readings. This approach did not deny the negative image of "difficulty in living" but recognized it as valuable artistic expression, fostering mutual understanding and interaction between individuals with disabilities and the general public. Sato (2019) described the ideal disability art as characterized by "free expression, not confined to form or time," "originality, individuality, and the demonstration of abilities," and "something that can be continued for a lifetime, providing a sense of purpose." Nagatsu (2020) also noted that art activities aimed at social inclusion create a "space" that tolerates "discrepancies," constantly evolving and making it easier for each participant to express their ideas freely. This public space of "appearance," where everyone is "off-track" somewhere, was evident from the

correspondence analysis, which showed that the term "discrimination" appeared farther from the center, indicating its distinctiveness, while terms like "welfare," "society," "culture," and "expression" were frequently used. Social inclusion in art activities implies recognizing disability not as a negative but as a type of individuality, and such activities have the potential to maximize the abilities of all participants, regardless of disability.

From an artistic perspective, the strong connection between disability art activities and welfare aligns with previous research (Kawaida, 2014). The correspondence analysis also revealed frequent use of terms such as "art activities," "value," "art," "office," and "staff," indicating their central importance. Zhao (2017) noted that the development of "Art Brut" in Japan has spread strongly with attributes of welfare and disability. Highly artistic works have garnered interest and appreciation from both the general society and welfare settings. However, Zhao warned of the risk of labeling inherent in the perception of "Art Brut" as "works by people with disabilities." Indeed, the current situation frequently uses the prefix "by people with disabilities" when referring to their art activities (Ikegami, 2020). Art by individuals with disabilities is expected to seek not only artistic value but also broader effects beyond art. Zhao (2018) stated that "the true meaning of art lies in capturing the existence of a person from the works created through activities and reconnecting it to the perspective of life support." Handa (2018) similarly noted that "art inherently possesses the ability to resolve social inclusion and social exclusion," advocating for inclusive art that allows anyone to participate freely and express themselves, recognizing each individual's uniqueness.

5. DISCUSSION

However, in Japan, the current situation leaves those who cannot participate in art activities behind, resulting in polarized activities that fail to integrate "welfare" and "art." In contrast, the American Disabled Artists Association supports both those with and without artistic talent, allowing them to engage in their desired art and receive expert advice (Honma, 2011). As noted, there are areas for improvement in the current state of disability art activities in Japan. Many practitioners of disability art in Japan do not derive direct benefits from their art, often seeking other livelihoods while creating art, making it difficult for them to be recognized by art professionals (Seino, 2016). Numerous prior studies have suggested solutions, such as "raising awareness among supporters," "training professional staff," "mutual exchange across disciplines," "enriching tools," and "creating and securing spaces for expression" (Honma, 2011), as well as "support inside and outside of educational institutions" and "creating opportunities to showcase work to others" (Takahashi, 2018). Therefore, future efforts should summarize similar previous studies from abroad and implement practices to improve the current state in Japan.

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