

Sustainable Ways of Practicing Music Therapy in India: Education, Certification, and Regulations

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ABSTRACT

Music therapy is gaining recognition among professionals offering services worldwide as an experimental treatment approach. It is gradually picking up pace and being practised in India; thus, a proper framework is needed to make it more sustainable. This research paper aims to assess the current trends in music therapy in India, including its development, history, implementation, and practices in health and educational facilities. It affords a comprehensive guide to the academic progression of music therapists and offers information on undergraduate, postgraduate, and certificate courses. It also elaborates on the certification processes and describes the main activities of such key certifying organisations that are necessary to meet the requirements of the certification procedure. The paper also documents the changing policies and laws that help ensure and uphold professional and ethical practice in music therapy. By discussing these areas, this paper intends to positively contribute to the future of Music Therapy in the context of sustainable practices in India.

1. Introduction

Sustainable Practices in Music Therapy in India: Education, Certification, and Regulations

Music therapy broadly refers to the application of music to address a client's physical, emotional, cognitive and social needs. This approach is helpful for a variety of disorders, including mental health disorders, developmental and learning disorders, dementia, brain injuries, and chronic pain (Brancatisano et al., 2020). The practice of music therapy in both healthcare and educational facilities within India is still comparatively recent but developing at an accelerated rate. For music therapy to be practised sustainably in India, proper educational programs, courses, certifications, and laws must be created. Consequently, this research paper will analyse the background of music therapy in India and its current practice, outline the qualification process a practitioner must undergo to practice music therapy and delineate the necessary legislation to ensure professional standards are upheld in the field. This provides an informative account of the processes needed to continue and develop music therapy practice in India.

Historical Context and Current State of Music Therapy in India

India has a very vibrant music culture with diverse classical, folk, and modern styles of music. Music has a significant role in various communities and religious institutions, mainly ushering in the community's welfare. In the Indian tradition, it is available in various forms like Nada Yoga, Raga Chikitsa, and Sangeet Chikitsa, among others, because of the close relationship between music and treatment (Sundar, 2007). However, the implementation of music therapy as a clinical technique only dates from the late twentieth century.

Ms. Margaret Lobo can be credited for introducing Western forms of music therapy in India. Lobo, a music therapist, came up with the idea of The Music Therapy Trust in India, where she talked about music therapy in New Delhi and Mumbai (Sharma, 2018). Her work helped the organisation of musical therapy in the country, becoming more scientific, evidence-based and clinically proven. This meant that the people of India were formally introduced to the medical aspect of music and how it was administered to patients and clients professionally, thus closing the gap between conventional Indian music and modern music therapy.

In India, music therapy is described using various terms that reflect its rich cultural context. Some of these terms include:

- Musical Therapy and Therapeutic Use of Music: Reflecting the influence of Western practices (Sundar & Parmar, 2018).

- Musical Healing: A general term used to denote the healing power of music (Sundar & Parmar, 2018).
- Nada Chikitsa and Nada Yoga: Derived from Sanskrit, these terms emphasise sound's spiritual and meditative aspects (Tek & Koul, 2021).
- Raga Chikitsa and Raga Therapy: Specific to using Indian classical music ragas for therapeutic purposes (Tek & Koul, 2021).
- Sangeet Upchhaar and Sangeet Chikitsa: Hindi terms that translate to 'musical treatment' or 'music therapy' (Tek & Koul, 2021).

These diverse terminologies highlight integrating traditional Indian music healing practices with contemporary music therapy methodologies.

In 2000, the initiation of The Music Therapy Trust by Margaret Lobo could be regarded as the beginning of structured music therapy in India (Sharma, 2018). The Trust had developed a plan to offer professional training and therapeutic services, which set a benchmark across the country.

However, in the mid-2000s, other organisations started to appear after The Music Therapy Trust was established. The Chennai School of Music Therapy (CSMT) was launched in the same year, and it has courses from certificate to postgraduate diploma levels (Sharma, 2018). CSMT's curriculum synthesises Indian classical music with contemporary music therapy, showing the duality of cultural and modern practices in Indian society.

Another one was the Nada Centre for Music Therapy in Chennai in the late 2000s, which offered both short-term and long-term educational programs in music therapy. The Centre is dedicated to teaching people how Indian classical music can be used for therapeutic purposes, particularly regarding ragas for health purposes.

Subsequently, in the 2010s, the efficacy of music therapy gained Indian society's visibility and respect. Bodily, organisations like the Indian Association of Music Therapy (IAMT) were formed to promote the practice of music therapy, support its practitioners, and encourage research. Organised learning environments such as workshops, conferences, and seminars were observed to grace society more frequently as avenues for sharing knowledge and enhancing skills and expertise.

Music therapy practice, education, and research in India are gradually advancing through the establishment of many practitioners, educators, and researchers. Organisations are still diversifying their portfolios, and the need for music therapy is increasing, especially in large cities (Street et al., 2020). Mainstream healthcare and educational institutions and organisations are slowly incorporating music therapy into their setting due to improving perceptions of Music Therapy.

However, it is crucial to have music therapy in India for several reasons. Firstly, it embraces every aspect of human health – physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. Music therapy can be an effective solution for numerous mental health disorders like anxiety, depression, and stress as it is accessible and culturally appropriate (Sravanti et al., 2023). Furthermore, it plays a social role in communities by supporting patients, especially those in hospitals, children, and the elderly. Also, music therapy in India maintains and carries on the historical culture of India through the utilisation of the rich music of their culture in the modern context of therapy (Saxena, 2022). Such cases allow musicians and therapists to work together and develop new approaches and knowledge in the field of music therapy.

Global Recognition of Music Therapy vs. Its Development in India

Music therapy is globally acknowledged as a credible and effective therapeutic practice, supported by established frameworks and standards that guide its implementation and research. Music therapy is well-integrated into healthcare systems and educational institutions in countries like the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia. For instance, organisations such as the American Music Therapy Association (AMTA) and the British Association for Music Therapy (BAMT) have established strict guidelines for training, registration and practice of music therapists, meaning most practitioners are highly competent and very professional (American Music Therapy Association, 2019). These organisations define and regulate the education and practice of music therapists by endorsing certain programs, supervised clinical practice, and passing proficiency tests (BAMT, 2020).

Music therapy is widely used in these countries in treating various conditions such as autism, Alzheimer's, chronic pain, and other mental illnesses, including depression and anxiety. A systematic analysis of the literature

also substantiate that music therapy has positive impact over the mental health, cognitive functioning and overall quality of life of the patients (González-Ojea et al., 2022). For example, research by Gassner et al. (2021) shows that music can help cancer patients minimise anxiety and depression, autistic individuals improve their communication skills as well, and patients with dementia improve their cognitive ability. The general acceptance of music therapy in healthcare is further evidenced by insurance reimbursement of music therapy services and the allowance of music therapists in an interdisciplinary team.

However, India has yet to exhibit significant growth in the acceptance of music therapy. Though there is awareness, some beginning from IAMT and CSMT, music therapy is more professionally defined and then in many developed countries. The growth of music therapy in India is still in its infancy and has been slow due to scarcity of research, poor regulation, and institutional commitment (says, 2019). Despite IAMT's and the National Centre for Music Therapy's efforts to work on certification and training, music therapy is not accepted and employed yet as a standard practice.

India has a culturally diverse setting, which makes the prospects of using music therapy both advantageous and disadvantageous. Music therapy is a localised affair in that therapists modify practices adopted worldwide to suit culture. For example, Hindustani and Carnatic music from India is slowly being infused into therapies, enabling clients to address problems in culturally sensitive ways (Pingle & Ragha, 2023). The integration of international and cultural practices enhances the therapy procedure and ensures the incorporation of practices that can be more easily understood and applied by the clients.

However, to optimally utilise music therapy across India with a holistic incorporation in various sectors, there is a dire need for proper standardisation and official recognition of music therapy. This is because setting clear policies for training and practice ensures that the practitioners have adequate skills and competence for offering therapy. It is, therefore, essential to enhance training and development frameworks that are in place as this will assist institutions in churning out well-equipped professionals to provide quality music therapy services. Also, strengthening the certification procedures can help build the credibility of the occupation and develop trusting relationships between healthcare workers and their patients.

Enhancing awareness of the value and contribution of music therapy in general healthcare practice is critical in assimilating music therapy into routine clinical practice. Incorporation of music therapy into platforms such as national health care plans and policies can increase access to services by intended beneficiaries (Pingle & Ragha, 2023). Thus, India has an opportunity and a responsibility to build a strong practice of music therapy that would respond to the needs of the Indian people and, at the same time, contribute to expanding the knowledge of this therapeutic field on the international level.

Education in Music Therapy

The concept of music therapy as an educational facet is a fluid and developing domain in India, owing mainly to the tireless work of pioneers such as Dr. Margaret Lobo. Music Therapy Trust India, started by Dr. Lobo, has worked assiduously to incorporate music therapy into the advanced healthcare systems today. The Trust and several institutions, including the Chennai School of Music Therapy (CSMT) (Sharma, 2018). Since the establishment of the Chennai School of Music Therapy (CSMT) and the Nada Centre for Music Therapy, there has been progress in mainstreaming music therapy education and training in the country. These institutions provide many courses to provide students with all the knowledge and experience they would require to practice music therapy proficiently.

Undergraduate and Postgraduate Programs

Education and training must be considered the cornerstone of a solid and sustainable music therapy practice. Regarding music therapy education, India offers training at different degrees, namely undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Institutions such as the CSMT, Ashwaas, Yenepoya Medical College, Santosh Ghatpande, TV Sairam Foundation, Dr Nishindra Kinjalk, Symbiosis, Kolkata and the Nada Centre offer online and in-person certificate and diploma programs in music therapy, sound healing, holistic healing, raga therapy and Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth offer a degree programs to prepare students with the needed theories and skills for music therapy careers (Mir, 2016).

Curriculum Content

The programs are then structured with learning curricula that are carefully developed to embrace a wide area of interest. These are modules in psychology, music theory, different therapeutic approaches, and clinical practice.

For example, in the CSMT curriculum, a substantial focus is made on the history and theory of music therapy, and this will ensure that a student in this field is well-informed about the background and the evolution of this discipline (Mir, 2016). Furthermore, courses comprise strengths-based assessment and evaluation, guaranteeing that students understand diagnostic procedures to develop appropriate therapeutic strategies.

Another critical aspect of the music therapy curriculum should be how it intersects with different population groups, which is very important to learn in India due to diversity and cultural impacts. This comprises an exploration of how music therapy can be applied to students, the elderly, patients, and people with different psychological and physiological problems coming from different geographical and religious backgrounds. Thus, including various culture-centred evidence-based applications can guarantee the efficacy of the curriculum, which can guarantee that graduates learn the adequate skills to solve problems in different environments and settings.

Practical Training

The practical training is a crucial component of the music therapy education. This enables students to practice what is taught in the classroom through real-life experiences (Gonzalo Marcos Treceño & Rosa, 2023). Students are expected to complete internships and gain clinical exposure in hospitals, rehabilitation facilities, NGO's and schools for special children. This kind of practical experience is essential in acquiring the enumerated competencies that are relevant in facilitating music therapy.

For instance, a learner can study and be placed in a hospital setting to engage with patients who require physical therapy. They would apply specific treatment skills acquired during training, like visualisation or thriving motions on rhythm, to help patients get well. This direct interaction with patients is educationally constructive and assists students in gaining confidence in their therapeutic endeavours (Gonzalo Marcos Treceño & Rosa, 2023). Practically, in India, no fixed hours of clinical practice are required or asked before certification by any of the governing bodies, which can cause serious lapses while sustaining as a therapist for young learners.

Certificate and Diploma Courses

Several institutions offer certificate and diploma courses for individuals who cannot commit to long-term degree programs. These shorter courses provide foundational knowledge and skills in music therapy, making them accessible to a broader audience. The Nada Centre, for instance, offers a six-month certificate course in music therapy that includes both theoretical and practical components (TV Sairam Foundation, 2019).

These courses are designed to be intensive and focused, providing a comprehensive overview of music therapy in a shorter time frame (Vidyapeeth, 2022). They are ideal for professionals in related fields, such as psychology or education, who wish to incorporate music knowledge into their practice. The condensed format allows them to gain the necessary skills in Indian music without the extensive time commitment required for degree programs.

Online Courses and Workshops

With the advent of digital learning platforms, many institutions now offer online courses and workshops in music therapy. These online programs are particularly beneficial for professionals who wish to enhance their skills without interrupting their careers (Heiderscheit & Short, 2024). Platforms like Coursera and Udemy offer courses in collaboration with Indian and international experts, providing flexible learning options.

Online courses cover various topics, from the basics of music therapy to advanced therapeutic techniques (Vidyapeeth, 2022). They often include video lectures, interactive assignments, and virtual workshops, ensuring students receive a comprehensive education despite the physical distance. This learning mode is especially advantageous for those living with limited access to traditional music therapy programs.

The Value of Music Therapy Education in India

Education in music therapy is a valuable addition in India since its benefits are not just limited to the personal growth of individuals. Education is beneficial in developing music therapy as it ensures that the people who practice music therapy are qualified and capable (Vidyapeeth, 2022). Specialised education programs enable music therapists to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to deliver good therapy that enhances the patient's quality of life. Furthermore, education in music therapy also promotes the intention and the creation of new research & knowledge in the subject. Institutions such as TMTT, The Centre for the Study of Music Therapy (CSMT), and Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth are involved in research that generates some knowledge based on clinical

practices in music therapy. This research is essential in the ongoing growth and evolution of therapeutic methodologies so that clinical practices in music therapy remain credible.

Certification in Music Therapy

Certification is, therefore, essential in enhancing the image of professionalism of music therapists. The globalisation and widening trends of certification in India can ensure that practitioners receive the appreciation and relevance of the required competencies necessary for the development of the profession and competence (Saxena, 2022). Nowadays, the Indian Association of Music Therapy (IAMT) and Certification Board for Music Therapists (CBMT) set up the rules and requirements for obtaining certification in music therapy.

Certification Bodies

Indian Association of Music Therapy (IAMT)

IAMT is a professional body and is already striving for recognition and the provision of regulation of music therapy in India. Its main goal is to facilitate a prescribed educational advancement in the field of music therapy to the highest professional level. The IAMT offers certifications to the candidates who have passed an accredited certification course and have also appeared for a competency test (IAMT, 2019). It has a vital role in providing direction on education in music therapy, as well as in giving accreditation to course and training programs for music therapists and granting the right certification to both male and female music therapists.

The IAMT is also involved in other activities like organizing workshops, seminars, and conferences that assist the practicing music therapists in getting more knowledge and experiences. IAMT also participates in the development and evaluation of national curriculum standards in the education programs offered by various institutions of learning to ensure that programs offered by various institutions of learning meet international standards (IAMT, 2019). Thus, through creating professional affiliations and programs for continuing education, the IAMT should look widely into not only Indian music therapy/ healing practices but also clinical and cultural-centred ways and should continue to preserve skilled and ethical music therapists in India.

Certification Board for Music Therapists (CBMT)

The CBMT, associated with different universities and healthcare facilities, provides professional certification for music therapists. The CBMT's certification process ensures that music therapists are fully equipped with theoretical expertise and hands-on experience (CBMT, 2024). It comprises professional training, substantial clinical practice, and evaluation of the specific therapeutic skills.

The CBMT organizes and offers postgraduate educational programs, such as specialized courses in music therapy, workshops, and clinical internships. These programs stress the importance of practical training for specific dispositions, expecting candidates to complete many practicum hours (CBMT, 2024). Also, through affiliations with healthcare organisations, the CBMT secures practical training affiliations through real-world scenarios, thus building the practical expertise of future music therapists. This partnership ensures that candidates are exposed to different clinical areas, making them efficient music therapists in their work.

Certification Requirements

Certification in music therapy typically requires candidates to fulfil several essential requirements, ensuring they possess the necessary knowledge and practical skills to practice professionally and ethically. According to the National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professionals Act 'healthcare professional' includes a scientist, therapist or other professional who studies, advises, researches, supervises or provides preventive, curative, rehabilitative, therapeutic or promotional health services and who has obtained any qualification of degree under this Act, the duration of which shall not be less than three thousand six hundred hours spread over a period of three years to six years divided into specific semesters (NCAHP, 2021).

Completion of an Accredited Program

The candidates must have undergone an accredited educational program in music therapy. These programs range from institutions like the Chennai School of Music Therapy (CSMT) and Ashwaas, which include academic and clinical components. The coursework consists of such disciplines as music theory, psychology of music, methods of music therapy, note taking and practical work with patients and different settings, allowing graduates to receive a solid preparation for their future profession.

These programs are prepared to prepare the students to meet specific standards set by bodies such as the CBMT. They make provisions for students in order to offer them an education that not only involves theoretical components but also practice. This intense training helps the students to be in a position to perform the duties expected of them in practice and for them to offer efficient music therapy. In India, we still lack Indian governing bodies and universities which can certify music therapists to practice in clinical settings.

Clinical Hours

Some certification bodies prescribe a recommended number of supervised clinical hours that candidates must fulfil before sitting for the examination. For instance, the IAMT prescribes a minimum of 1200 hours of supervised clinical practice for those aspiring to be certified (IAMT, 2019). These clinical hours are essential for practicing clinical skills and accumulating the required number of hours for experience in clinical facilities. Supervised clinical practice works to enable the candidates to implement the theoretical knowledge acquired on clients under the supervision of trainers – qualified music therapists. Practical sessions are essential to provide confidence and adequate mastery of theories and methods of intervention that are to be employed. It also allows candidates to practice and get feedback from supervisors or managers about their experiences. No governing body or policy has defined the clinical practicing hours of music therapists in India. It is all defined by the institutions themselves.

Examination

The student has to complete a final exam aimed at evaluating the candidate's abilities, competencies, and knowledge in music therapy. It usually comprises both the theory and the practical, where the candidates have to sit for examinations on principles of music, therapeutic music, and clinical implementation (Hsiao et al., 2019). Certification in this field is aimed at the conscientious testing of candidate music therapists to guarantee continued professional proficiency. They test the relative performance of the candidates in applying the acquired knowledge to real-life cases, which shows the candidates' competence to practice independently. In setting examination standards, the certification bodies ensure that only professionals with the necessary competence and training receive certification in music therapy (Lim & Quant, 2018). To date, all music therapy organisations are private in the country. India is yet looking upon the National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professions or authorised governing bodies to approve music therapy education and certification policies for ethical practices.

Impact and Role of Certification

Establishing the certification of music therapists in India has significantly improved this field's status, working standards, and efficiency. Music therapists are now competent experts who deliver good-quality therapeutic services (Knott et al., 2020). This recognition aspect is crucial in attaining the approval of clients, health Organizations, and the entire society. It also consolidates this profession by maintaining a standard of practice for all music therapist professionals, especially regarding ethical requirements (Knott et al., 2020). This standardization increases the coherence of quality of care given by different practitioners regarding music therapy, improving the general efficiency of music therapy as an intervention.

In addition, these certification bodies, such as IAMT and CBMT are very instrumental in the promotion of the field of music therapy through education and lobbying. They ensure that education and practice standards remain high as music therapy sustains its path as an essential and effective profession (Knott et al., 2020). Their activities of raising funds for research, training professionals, and creating public awareness of music therapy also help develop and establish the profession in India.

Regulations for Music Therapy Practice

Regulations for maintaining professional standards are crucial aspects that Governments should implement while promoting music therapy. Music therapy and its national standards for practicing music therapy in India are still developing, but attempts are underway. Such regulations assist in safeguarding clients, setting up guidelines for handling them and maintaining professional, ethical standards among its members. The following subcategories are the main categories of the regulatory framework: ethical standards and guidelines, government regulations, and institutional regulations.

Ethical Standards and Guidelines

Some professional organizations, such as the Indian Association of Music Therapy (IAMT) and the Certification Board for Music Therapists (CBMT), have developed guidelines and standard procedures for music therapists. These guidelines shall help the practitioner avoid malpractice and deliver safe and efficient therapy. CBMT guilders are designed and practised worldwide and are very well recognized. India can look upon CBMT's practitioners' guidelines for efficacy in delivering services.

Confidentiality

Like any recognized code of ethics, confidentiality takes a central stage in the delivery of professional services. Music therapists are also bound by professional ethics and privacy laws that prevent the disclosure of clients' private and health-related details. This principle is vital in developing rapport between the therapist and the client, thus creating a platform that makes the clients comfortable to open up (Wilhelm & Wilhelm, 2021). Another aspect of confidentiality is how records that relate to clients are stored and dealt with. All documentation related to the use of therapies must be kept confidential and be disclosed to only authorised persons. The Leakage of information from the counselling process leads to explicit ethical violations and compromises the counselling relationship. While teaching and learning, the therapist should acknowledge and understand confidentiality and keep the evidence and records according to standard and organisational policies.

Informed Consent

Getting informed consent is also another significant ethical principle. This means that therapists must inform the clients about the existence of therapy, the type of therapy to be administered to them, the benefits of the therapy, and the risks that come with it before they are put through therapy. Clients should be allowed to raise questions and consent to therapy voluntarily (DiMaio & Engen, 2020). Informed consent means clients are well informed of what to expect or undergo during therapy, hence making rational decisions. It also safeguards the sovereignty of unique clients so that they can engage in their therapeutic process without much outside interference.

Professional Conduct

Ethical guidelines are also important for playing the following functions to protect the professional integrity of music therapy: The ethical guidelines in therapy do not allow the therapist to engage in a sexual relationship with the client, to have any self-interest in the case, or be insincere or dishonest in any way (Biasutti, 2019). These are limits created by the therapist so that the relationship created with the client is not reduced to the level of the client being a victim of abuse. Therapists must also avoid conflicts of interest, whereby the therapist has a professional association with the client outside therapy practice, which may undermine their impartiality or neutrality. Being in a culture-centred country, this becomes an extremely difficult task as post therapies clients expect to stay in touch regularly post-intervention, which should be considered carefully and taught mindfully as a curriculum.

Evolving Government and Institutional Regulations

The Indian government is gradually accepting the need for regulation in the context of music therapy. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the respective professional bodies are framing policies and laws regulating music therapy in healthcare facilities (Murakami, 2021). These new regulations, by the name of THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR ALLIED AND HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONS, will set the standards for acceptable practice and ensure that everyone who offers services meets minimum competency standards and produces quality care. Essential aspects of this action plan involve setting up professional practice boundaries, outlining practice requirements, and outlining certification and licensing processes. Such policies will come in handy to set the standards and ensure that quality and consistency of work are maintained in the field.

Another essential area of interest for the government is identifying and implementing music therapy in the primary healthcare delivery framework. Incorporation of music therapy into healthcare system strategic frameworks is essential for it to be recognized officially as a healthcare profession (Foster et al., 2021). This recognition will help in requests for funding and the strengthening process in various healthcare organisations, such as hospitals and rehabilitation centres. The government of the country in question has recently sought to enhance music therapy by integrating it into the national healthcare system in a bid to make the services offered more accessible to a more significant number of people who can benefit from musical treatments through professional therapy, thus supporting and complementing traditional treatment processes.

Apart from legal regulations, private and public organisations such as hospitals, rehabilitation centres, and education institutes have formulated their own standards and policies to maintain the quality and safety of Music Therapy services. Some policies that are usually established in the management of music therapy programs in hospitals include the training and qualification of therapists, procedures on the use of informed consent, and measures for ensuring patient privacy (Stegemann et al., 2019). Such establishments might also have guidelines on how music therapy can be incorporated into the overall treatment strategies and how practitioners can collaborate with others in medicine. Rehabilitation centers also set up policies that adapt to the therapeutic objectives of music therapy, such as motor control and advanced cognitive capacities, and often enlist other experts (Vinolo-Gil et al., 2021). The teaching institutions that offer music therapy ensure strict educational and clinical practice requirements whereby curriculum, placement of students, and conduct are honored to enhance professionalism and ethical standards in the offering of music therapy services.

2. Discussion

Another critical aspect of the music therapy curriculum should be how it intersects with different population groups, which is important to learn in India due to diversity and cultural impacts. This comprises an exploration of how music therapy can be applied to students, the elderly, patients, and people with different psychological and physiological problems from different geographical and religious backgrounds. Thus, including various culture-centred evidence-based applications can guarantee the efficacy of the curriculum, which can ensure that graduates learn the adequate skills to solve problems in different environments and settings.

To grow music therapy as an effective practice in India, it is essential to design a curriculum that takes into account the cultural and demographic variations present in the region. A vital factor for this curriculum is its applicability to diverse populations, considering the cultural and demographic diversities of the country. In this respect, music therapy has the potential to be practised with a vast number of people such as students, elderly people, patients both in health care institutions and outpatients, and persons with psychological and physiological disorders of different origins from various geographical and religious zones of the world (Mir, 2016). For example, the behavioural and developmental therapies that target school-going children with developmental delays can involve age-appropriate, culturally equipped, language-centred musical experiences aided with instruments and melodic tunes to make those children feel comfortable, receptive and emotionally responsive. Similarly, in geriatric care, music therapy for the elderly can help to improve and sustain their emotional, physical and even psychological condition and establish a connection with their past to cherish their cultural memories by using folk songs or time-bound songs with which the elderly individuals could feel associated.

However, for Indian audiences, the music therapy curriculum must also address the development of therapeutic practices appropriate for the particular culture of the people served. It involves choosing suitable styles and approaches in music and perceiving how people of certain cultures think of health and treatment (King, 2022). For example, incorporating Indigenous musical elements can foster a culturally familiar environment for clients from different cultures, which requires thorough knowledge of cultures. It will improve the therapeutic environment. From this perspective, emphasising these cultural areas in music therapy education can train qualified music therapists who can work with people from different cultural backgrounds with good communication and understanding.

Another essential component of music therapy education is practical training since it allows students to apply all of the learnt theory in practice. Field practice and internships are vital components of learning, as students can apply what they have been taught in the classroom and gain practical experience in hospitals, rehabilitation centres, NGOs, and schools for children with developmental disabilities (Treceño & Rosa, 2023). These practical skills help students understand how to make an assessment, plan, and put into practice strategies and methods to help clients and assess the improvement made by a client.

For example, a student who interns in a rehabilitation centre, treating patients who suffered from a stroke or head trauma, might use music in rehabilitation to improve the patient's cognitive and motor functions, as well as provide emotional support. Engaging with such clients directly provides the student with deeper insight into the benefits of music therapy. It nurtures the healthcare professional's empathy and flexibility, the core values for exercising the profession (Dobrovolska, 2023). Further, working with different clients makes the student appreciate how clients differ and require a unique approach to managing them depending on age, culture, or type of disability.

For this reason, it is recommended that students undertake a final examination to determine their abilities, competencies, and knowledge in music therapy to enable them to graduate and practice independently. This examination generally entails elements which test factual knowledge and practical skills, particularly on principles of music, therapeutic approaches, and clinical application (Hsiao et al., 2019). For example, students could be asked to prove their knowledge of music therapy theories, use therapeutic role-playing techniques to illustrate particular situations and explore appropriate therapeutic methods for specific conditions by analysing case studies.

The certification process is equally vital in music therapy because it helps define and maintain the professional standards of practice and monitor the competence of practitioners in the field. Thus, since certification involves the keen assessment of the relative performance of the candidates in the practical application of the imparted knowledge, it is inevitable that certification ensures that music therapists have the required skills and competencies to offer effective service (Saxena, 2022). Also, this process assists in upholding professionalism in the field since Certified Music Therapists have to meet a specific set code of ethics and practice standards and supervision.

Furthermore, the certification examination functions to assess the candidates' knowledge and skills and mirrors the lifelong learning process inherent in this constantly developing profession. In essence, given that new knowledge is constructed all the time and as therapeutic interventions evolve, music therapists must preserve the spirit of life-long learning (Saxena, 2022). The commitment displayed in endeavouring to improve one's knowledge and skills in the chosen field increases efficiency and quality in performing responsibilities. It proves valuable to the clients who receive the services.

Promoting a sound certification structure and supporting theoretical and practical training along with cultural sensitivity will assist in enhancing music therapy status in India. Thus, focusing on these aspects, educational institutions provide meaningful input towards qualifying the workforce necessary for addressing the population's needs. Moreover, developing cooperation and collaboration with healthcare institutions as potential practice sites and partners can enhance collaboration in training aspects related to the implementation of the music therapy profession within the healthcare sector.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper aims to outline the assessment of the current state of music therapy in India and the synthesis of history, education, certification, and regulation. Several empirical studies prove music therapy to be an effective intervention in meeting physical, emotional, cognitive, and social needs; nevertheless, it is a developing field in India. The growth of competent professionals who know music therapy fundamentals and can establish complex and effective educational programs is vital, supported by schools and centres like the Chennai School of Music Therapy and Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth. There are accreditation norms by organisations such as the Indian Association of Music Therapy (IAMT) and the Certification Board for Music Therapists (CBMT) to ensure that the practitioner fulfils the set quality requirements.

However, several challenges persist. Among them are the absence of standardised guidelines that govern this profession, the low awareness of music therapy, and the need to expand access to health care and educational systems. In order to overcome these issues, the government of India should partner with professional organisations to come up with a specific and coherent groundwork of recommendations for music therapy practice across the country. Furthering public and professional awareness of music therapy through workshops, seminars, and media also has a high potential to realise the importance of such therapy. In addition, by increasing its density in research and evidence-based approaches and practices, the area will be more credible and beneficial.

By addressing the above concerns, India has the potential to create channels for a better, worthwhile practice of music therapy to help improve the quality of life in different settings.

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