

# Effectiveness of Psychological Intervention and The Potential of Group Art Therapy in HIV: Review

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## **Abstract**

Living With Hiv Frequently Experience Depression, Anxiety, Stigma, And Reduced Self-Esteem, Which Compromise Quality Of Life And Adherence To Antiretroviral Therapy. This Reviews Aim To Analyze The Effectiveness Of Various Psychosocial Therapies, Used In The Care Of People Living With Hiv, Highlighting The Underexplored Potential Of Group Art Therapy. A Range Of Psychosocial Interventions Like Cognitive Behavior Therapy, Mindfulness Based Approach, Interpersonal Therapy, Family Based Intervention, Psychoeducation And Peer Support Have Demonstrated The Benefits In Improving Mental Health And Treatment Adherence. However, Group Art Therapy Has Demonstrated Positive Outcome In Diverse Population Such As Older Adults, Children, Cancer Patients, Trauma Survivors, Lgbtq+ Population And Chronic Illness Individuals. Given Its Ability To Reduce Depression, Anxiety And Stigma While Enhancing Self-Esteem And Coping, Group Art Therapy Emerges As A Promising Intervention For People Living With Hiv. This Review Recommends Integrating Group Art Therapy Into Hiv Care Frameworks To Provide A Culturally Adaptable, Non-Stigmatizing And Cost-Effective Approach To Enhance Psychological Well-Being And Support Treatment Adherence.

**Keywords:** Hiv, Group Art Therapy, Psychosocial Intervention,

## **1. Introduction**

Psychological Theories And Group Art Therapy Are Gaining Recognition As Vital Components Of Holistic Hiv Support, Especially As Individuals Living With Hiv Often Face Mental Health Issues Like Depression, Anxiety, And Adjustment Challenges That Affect Their Adherence To Antiretroviral Therapy And Overall Wellbeing (British Hiv Association, 2024). Individuals Living With Hiv Face Numerous Psychosocial Challenges Such As Stigma, Discrimination, Anxiety Regarding Disclosure, Ongoing Health Issues, Financial Difficulties, And Vulnerabilities Associated With Gender Or Sexual Orientation, All Of Which Greatly Impact Their Psychological Well-Being And Reduce Their Quality Of Life (Smith & Jones, 2023). Contemporary Hiv Treatment Depends On Lifelong Art For Viral Suppression And Lowering

Morbidity And Mortality, But The Effectiveness Of This Intervention Significantly Relies On Steady Engagement With Care, Which Is Greatly Affected By Psychological Well-Being (Brown Et Al., 2025).

Psychological Interventions For Hiv Typically Encompass Organized Methods Like Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (Cbt), Psychoeducation, Motivational Interviewing, Mindfulness Strategies, And Supportive Counseling, Frequently Administered By Multidisciplinary Teams To Improve Coping, Lessen Distress, And Encourage Adherence And Self-Management (Green & Patel, 2024). Formats That Involve Groups Improve Therapeutic Results By Integrating Peer Assistance, Normalization, And Collective Problem-Solving Chances, Resulting In Lasting Decreases In Depression And Enhanced Social Functioning And Care Participation Among Plhiv (Lee Et Al., 2024)

Art Therapy Utilizing Creative Methods Such As Drawing, Painting, Or Collage Provides A Non-Verbal, Symbolic Channel For Emotional Expression, Identity Exploration, And Trauma Processing, Especially Beneficial For Plhiv Who Might Find It Difficult To Articulate Complicated Emotions Tied To Stigma, Fear, Grief, Or Internalized Negative Beliefs (Johnson, 2019). In Group Settings, Art Therapy Combines Individual Creative Expression With The Dynamics Of Collective Support, Allowing Participants To Share Their Experiences, Observe Others' Narratives, And Reframe Their Understandings Of Illness And Identity .Research From Evaluation Studies Shows That Brief, Organized Group Art Therapy Is Practical, Well-Received, And Linked To Meaningful Reductions In Depressive Symptoms And Enhancements In Mental Health-Related Quality Of Life For Plhiv (Williams, 2014).

Present Clinical Guidelines Advocate For The Incorporation Of Integrated Psychological Support Across The Hiv Care Spectrum, Highlighting The Importance Of Culturally Attuned And Innovative Group Approaches Such As Group Art Therapy To Meet The Diverse Needs Of Plhiv, Thus Fostering Holistic, Person-Centered Care That Considers Both The Biological And Psychosocial Dimensions Of Hiv Infection (Lee Et Al., 2024)

## **2. Interventions In Hiv Care**

### **2.1 Cognitive Behavior Therapy (Cbt)**

Cognitive Behavior Therapy (Cbt) Has Consistently Demonstrated Positive Psychological Outcomes Among People Living With Hiv (Plwh). Qin Et Al. (2022) Analyzed 16 Randomized Controlled Trials Involving Nearly 2,000 Participants And Found That Cbt Significantly Alleviated Depressive Symptoms, Particularly Over The Long Term, Though It Showed No Notable Effect On Antiretroviral Therapy (Art) Adherence.(Qin Et Al.,2022). Similarly, Li Et Al. (2020) Reported That A Tailored Group-Based Cbt Program For Chinese Plwh Was Both Feasible And Acceptable, Reducing Anxiety And Improving Short-Term Adherence, Though Long-Term Benefits Were Not Sustained.(Li Et Al., 2020).

In A Randomized Clinical Trial, Qasir Et Al. (2023) Showed That Brief Cbt (B-Cbt) Produced Significant Improvements In Depression, Stigma Reduction, Treatment Adherence, Social Support, And Quality Of Life Among Hiv-Positive Individuals On Art (Qasir Et Al.,2023). A Systematic Review By Pu Et Al. (2020) Specifically Focusing On Women Living With Hiv Revealed That Cbt Effectively Improved Quality Of Life, Depression, And Stress, Although Its Impact On Anxiety Remained Inconsistent Across Studies (Pu Et Al.,2020). Complementing These Findings, Joska Et Al. (2023) Found That Most South African Participants Responded Rapidly To Cbt-Ad Interventions Targeting Both Depression And Art

Adherence, With Social Support Enhancing Early Remission And Distress Aversion Hindering Therapeutic Response. (Joska Et Al., 2023)

## **2.2 Mindfulness Based Intervention**

Mindfulness-Based Interventions Have Shown Substantial Promise In Enhancing Psychological Wellbeing Among People Living With Hiv. Musanje Et Al. (2024) Reported That A Mindfulness And Acceptance-Based Program Significantly Reduced Depression, Anxiety, And Internalized Stigma Among Ugandan Adolescents With Hiv, Highlighting Its Potential As A Mental Health Support Tool In Youth Populations (Musanje Et Al.,2024). Similarly, Aghaie Et Al. (2021) Found That Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Training Improved Resilience Among Hiv-Positive Women In Tehran, With Continued Gains Observed Through Follow-Up Assessments (Aghaie Et Al., 2021). Expanding This Approach To A Cultural Context, Weiss Et Al. (2025) Introduced Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy Adapted For Vietnam, Suggesting That Delivering Sessions Within Buddhist Pagodas Could Be A Feasible, Low-Stigma Strategy For Treating Depression And Improving Quality Of Life Among Hiv-Affected Adults (Weiss Et Al.,2025). Complementing These Intervention Studies, Aliche And Idemudia (2024) Demonstrated That Mindfulness Buffered The Impact Of Death Anxiety And Depression On Health-Related Quality Of Life In Nigerian Plwh, Underscoring Its Mediating Role In Fostering Psychological Resilience (Aliche And Idemudia, 2024).

## **2.3. Interpersonal Therapy**

Interpersonal Therapy (Ipt) Has Been Widely Applied To Address Depressive And Trauma-Related Symptoms In People Living With Hiv, Particularly Within Low-Resource And Task-Shifting Contexts. Meffert Et Al. (2021) Demonstrated That Ipt Delivered By Trained Nonspecialists Effectively Reduced Depression And Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Among Hiv-Positive Kenyan Women With Histories Of Gender-Based Violence, While Also Improving Functioning And Reducing Intimate Partner Violence. (Meffert Et Al.,2021).Similarly, Asrat Et Al. (2021) Found That Peer-Administered Group Ipt In Northwest Ethiopia Was Highly Acceptable And Feasible, Substantially Decreasing Depressive Symptoms And Enhancing Social Support And Quality Of Life (Asrat Et Al.,2021). Extending This Model, Bernard Et Al. (2023) And Lam Et Al. (2025) Evaluated Group Ipt For Depressive Symptoms Among Plwh In Senegal, Both Following The World Health Organization Protocol Under Task-Shifting Frameworks. Their Findings Revealed Strong Feasibility, High Attendance, And Sustained Improvements In Depression And Functioning Over Time. Participants And Facilitators Reported High Satisfaction, Though Lam Et Al. (2025) Noted Ongoing Challenges With Depression Screening And Confidentiality. (Bernard Et Al., 2023) And (Lam Et Al., 2025)

## **2.4. Family Based Intervention**

Family-Based Interventions Have Shown Potential In Hiv Prevention And Support, Particularly Among Youth And Adolescents Living With Hiv. Eslami Et Al. (2023) Reviewed Seven Studies And Found That Such Interventions Generally Improve Hiv Knowledge And Parent-Youth Communication About Sexual Decision-Making, Though Results Were Somewhat Inconsistent, Indicating A Need For Further Research With More Rigorous Designs.(Eslami Et Al.,2023). Mukerenge Et Al. (2025) Highlighted A Scarcity Of Context-Specific, Evidence-Based Educational Programs For Adolescents Living With Hiv, Emphasizing

The Importance Of Comprehensive, Age-Appropriate Interventions To Enhance Self-Management And Treatment Adherence (Mukerenge Et Al.,2025). Adjorlolo Et Al. (2025) Synthesized Findings From Eight Studies In Sub-Saharan Africa, Noting Mixed Effects On Mental Health Outcomes But Identifying Family-Based Approaches, Peer Support, And Digital Interventions As Promising Strategies For Improving Depression And Antiretroviral Therapy Adherence Among Young Plwh.(Adjorlolo Et Al.,2025) Additionally, Nkhoma Et Al. (2022) Found That Health System Factors Such As Human Resource Challenges, Policy Gaps, And Infrastructure Weaknesses Limit The Integration Of Family Planning Within Hiv Services, While Provider Training, Supportive Policies, And Positive Attitudes Facilitate More Effective Program Integration. (Nkhoma Et Al., 2022)

## **2.5. Psychoeducation**

Psychoeducational Interventions Play A Crucial Role In Improving Mental Health And Treatment Adherence Among People Living With Hiv. Wang Et Al. (2022) Observed Favorable Psychosocial Trends Among Hiv-Positive Women In China Between 2015 And 2020, Noting Decreases In Depression And Anxiety Alongside Increased Support From Friends, Despite Decreases In Partner Intimacy And Family Support (Wang Et Al.,2022). Okonji Et Al. (2020) Identified Key Psychosocial Support Modalities For Young People Living With Hiv Including Individual Counseling, Support Groups, Family-Centered Services, And Treatment Supporters Yet Highlighted A Gap In Tailored Interventions Specifically For Adolescents And Young Adults To Enhance Antiretroviral Therapy (Art) Adherence And Retention. (Okonji Et Al., 2020).

## **2.6. Support Group**

Peer-Led And Community-Based Support Groups Significantly Enhance Hiv Treatment Outcomes And Survival Among People Living With Hiv (Plwh). Meng Et Al. (2023) Found That Plwh In Wuxi, China, Who Received Peer-Led Support Had Higher Antiretroviral Therapy (Art) Adherence, Viral Suppression, And Retention In Care, Alongside Markedly Reduced Aids-Related And All-Cause Mortality. (Meng Et Al., 2023). Similarly, Kitaw Et Al. (2025) Reported That Hiv-Positive Individuals In Ethiopia Accessing Support Groups Were Over Three Times More Likely To Achieve Viral Suppression Compared To Non-Participants, Underscoring The Critical Role Of Integrating Support Groups Into Standard Hiv Care (Kitaw Et Al., 2025). Ayala Et Al. (2021) Reviewed Evidence From 48 Studies, Highlighting Community-Led Hiv Responses' Wide-Ranging Benefits Including Improved Knowledge, Treatment Adherence, Viral Suppression, Service Access, And Structural Health System Enhancements. (Ayala Et Al., 2021). Han Et Al. (2023) Further Elaborated Key Mechanisms In Peer Support Interventions, Identifying Five Core Support Types Informational, Instrumental, Emotional, Affiliational, And Appraisal And Linking These To Diverse Positive Physiological, Psychological, Behavioral, Cognitive, And Social Outcomes (Han Et Al., 2023) Mazambara Et Al. (2022) Illustrated The Multifaceted Benefits Of A Longstanding Hiv Peer-Support Group In Zimbabwe, Emphasizing Its Impact On Psychosocial Support, Adherence Education, Economic Empowerment, And Implementation Research Participation. (Mazambara Et Al., 2022).

### **3. Group Art Therapy In Other Population**

#### **3.1. Older Adults**

Arts-Based Interventions Have Shown Efficacy In Improving Mental Health, Cognitive Function, And Quality Of Life Among Older Adults. Quinn Et Al. (2025) Synthesized Data From 39 Controlled Studies, Demonstrating That Group Arts Interventions Moderately Reduce Depression And Anxiety, With Stronger Effects Observed In Care Home Settings Compared To Community Environments Quinn Et Al., (2025). Zhuo Et Al. (2025) Found That A Caregiver-Accompanied Expressive Art-Based Storytelling Program Significantly Decreased Behavioral And Psychological Symptoms Of Dementia (Bpsd) And Caregiver Burden, While Enhancing Communication And Quality Of Life, With Benefits Sustained At 24-Week Follow-Up (Zhuo Et Al., 2025). Putri Et Al. (2025) Reported That Coloring Therapy Effectively Reduced Anxiety Levels In Community-Dwelling Older Adults, Supporting Its Role As A Non-Pharmacological Intervention (Putri Et Al., 2025). Liao Et Al. (2024) Observed That Art Therapy Improved Social Interaction, Self-Esteem, And Well-Being Among Residents Of Long-Term Care Institutions In Taiwan (Liao Et Al., 2024). Complementing These Findings, Demirel Et Al. (2025) Demonstrated That Art Therapy Enhanced Both Cognitive Status And Psychological Well-Being Among Elderly Individuals Residing In Nursing Homes In Turkey. (Demirel Et Al., 2025)

#### **3.2. Children**

Art Therapy Has Demonstrated Significant Benefits For Psychological Well-Being In Children And Adolescents Across Diverse Contexts. Zhou Et Al. (2025) Conducted A Systematic Review And Meta-Analysis Of Studies Involving Pediatric Cancer Patients, Finding That Art Therapy Effectively Reduced Anxiety, Depression, Stress, And Anger, Though They Highlighted The Need For More Rigorous Trials. (Zhou Et Al., 2025). Khosla And Sharma (2025) Observed Significant Decreases In Anxiety, Depression, And Stress Alongside Improved Psychological Well-Being In School-Age Children Following Art Therapy Sessions Emphasizing Emotional Awareness And Relaxation Techniques Like Mandala Art (Khosla And Sharma,2025). Bosgraaf Et Al. (2020) Reviewed 37 Studies With Various Art Therapy Modalities And Therapist Approaches, Concluding That Art Therapy Is Adaptable And Generally Improves Psychosocial Outcomes In Children And Adolescents With Psychosocial Problems (Bosgraaf Et Al. ,2020). Zhang Et Al. (2024) Further Confirmed Art Therapy's Efficacy In Reducing Anxiety Symptoms, Especially State Anxiety, In This Population Based On A Meta-Analysis Of Six Randomized Controlled Trials (Zhang Et Al., 2024).

#### **3.3. Cancer Patients**

Art Therapy Demonstrates Promising Benefits For Psychological Well-Being And Quality Of Life In Cancer Patients Across Various Stages And Age Groups. Fenner Et Al. (2024) Qualitatively Explored The Experiences Of Adults In Post-Acute Cancer Care Undergoing An Eight-Session Group Art Therapy Program, Identifying Key Themes Such As Use Of Visual Metaphors, Personal Insight, Identity Reconstruction, And Group-Facilitated Growth, Indicating That Art Therapy Supports Recovery And Post-Traumatic Growth (Fenner Et Al., 2024). Bosman Et Al. (2020) Reviewed Quantitative Studies And Found Evidence That Art Therapy Reduces Anxiety And Depression While Enhancing Quality Of Life In Adult Cancer Patients, Although Heterogeneity And Methodological Weaknesses Call For Further



Rigorous Trials (Bosman Et Al., 2020). Zou Et Al. (2025) Meta-Analyzed 22 Randomized Controlled Trials In Breast Cancer Patients, Confirming That Art Therapy Significantly Improves Quality Of Life, Especially With Interventions Lasting Two Months Or Longer And Including Music, While Effects On Fatigue Were Less Consistent And Time-Sensitive.(Zou Et Al., 2025)

### **3.4. Lgbtq+**

Art Therapy For Lgbtq+ Clients Emphasizes Creating Safe, Affirming Spaces That Foster Connection, Narrative Processing, And Emotional Exploration. Shems (2025) Found That Collage-Making Facilitated Deeper Therapeutic Rapport And Enhanced Clients' Sense Of Belonging And Self-Connection, Aiding In Processing Relational Barriers (Shems, 2025). Hetherington (2020) Highlighted The Necessity Of Vigilant Self-Reflectivity Among Art Therapists To Challenge Unconscious Biases Rooted In Heteronormative And Phallogocentric Frameworks, Advocating For Integrating Social Justice And Intersectional Awareness Into Therapy Practice To Better Serve Lgbtqi Clients (Hetherington,2020). Diéguez Et Al. (2024) Reported That Art Therapy Is A Valuable Component Within Multidisciplinary Mental Health Programs For Narrative Regulation And Metacognition, With Successful Integration Depending On Tailored Interdisciplinary Collaboration And Ongoing Clinical Debriefings (Diéguez Et Al., 2024). Blausey (2025) Explored Therapists' Engagement With Sexuality Topics, Revealing That Confidence To Address Gender Nonconformity And Sexual Dynamics Grows With Experience, While Underscoring The Need For Standardized Training In Sexuality To Promote Sex-Positive, Safe Therapeutic Environments. (Blausey, 2025)

### **3.5. Trauma Survivor**

Trauma-Informed Art Therapy Has Shown Effectiveness In Reducing Trauma-Related Symptoms And Enhancing Psychological Well-Being Across Diverse Populations. Gong And Santoso (2025) Reported That An Eight-Week Trauma-Informed Art Therapy Program Significantly Decreased Dissociative Symptoms And Improved Self-Esteem Among Indonesian Individuals With Trauma Histories, With Sustained Benefits At Five-Month Follow-Up. (Gong And Santoso, 2025). Haeyen And Wanten (2024) Evaluated Trauma-Focused Art Therapy (Tfat) In A Single Case Study Involving Ptsd Patients, Observing Substantial Reductions In Ptsd And Depression Symptoms Alongside Improvements In Resilience, Emotional Regulation, And Self-Compassion (Haeyen And Wanten, 2024). Wang Et Al. (2025) Meta-Analyzed Creative Arts Therapies For Ptsd In Adults, Finding Drama Therapy Most Effective In Symptom Reduction, Although Other Modalities Like Music And Dance Showed Lesser Effects, Highlighting The Need For Further Rigorous Research. Woollett Et Al. (2020) Piloted A Trauma-Informed Intervention Combining Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy With Art And Play Therapy For Children And Mothers In Domestic Violence Shelters, Demonstrating Significant Decreases In Children's Depression And Qualitative Improvements In Emotional Expression And Behavior Management. (Woollett Et Al., 2020)

### **3.6. Chronic Illnesses**

Arts Therapies Show Promise In Managing Chronic Illnesses By Addressing Physical Symptoms, Psychological Distress, And Quality Of Life. Raudenská Et Al. (2023) Reviewed 16 Studies On Arts Therapy Modalities Such As Visual Art, Music, Dance/Movement, And Writing For Chronic

Nonmalignant Pain, Highlighting Reductions In Pain Intensity, Mood Improvement, And Emotional Relief, Though Methodological Limitations Preclude Definitive Conclusions. (Raudenská Et Al., 2023). Kong Et Al. (2024) Demonstrated That Dance Art Therapy Significantly Improved Psychiatric Symptoms, Cognitive Function, And Body Mass Index In Hospitalized Patients With Chronic Schizophrenia, Indicating Broader Clinical Benefits (Kong Et Al., 2024). Joschko Et Al. (2024) Analyzed 69 Studies On Active Visual Art Therapy Across Diverse Conditions, Finding Modest Improvements In Outcomes Including Depression, Anxiety, Self-Esteem, And Social Adjustment; However, High Heterogeneity And Low Study Quality Warrant Further Research (Joschko Et Al., 2024). Heidler (2024) Emphasized Art Therapy's Role In Enhancing Self-Esteem And Coping In Chronic Illness By Providing Nonverbal Expression, Fostering Belonging, And Supporting Emotional Regulation, While Calling For More Focused Research On Self-Esteem Effects. (Heidler, 2024)

### **Recommendation**

This Review Demonstrates That While Interventions Such As Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy, Mindfulness, And Interpersonal Therapy Have Shown Effectiveness In Improving Mental Health Among People Living With Hiv, There Remains A Pressing Need For Interventions That Are Accessible, Culturally Adaptable, And Stigma-Reducing. Group Art Therapy Meets These Needs And Should Be Regarded As An Essential Component Of Comprehensive Hiv Care.

We Therefore Recommend The Systematic Implementation Of Group Art Therapy Within Hiv Treatment Settings. Evidence From Diverse Populations Including Older Adults, Children, Cancer Patients, Lgbtq Individuals, Trauma Survivors, And Those Living With Chronic Illnesses Consistently Shows That Group Art Therapy Reduces Depression, Enhances Self-Esteem, And Fosters Resilience. These Psychosocial Benefits Directly Address The Challenges Experienced By Plwh, Suggesting That The Positive Outcomes Observed Elsewhere Can Be Effectively Translated Into Hiv Care.

Specifically, Group Art Therapy Should Be:

- Integrated Into Institutional And Community-Based Hiv Programs, Providing Regular, Structured Sessions Alongside Standard Medical Treatment.
- Facilitated Through Task-Shifting Approaches, Enabling Trained Lay Counselors And Peer Educators To Deliver Sessions, Thereby Ensuring Scalability And Sustainability In Low-Resource Settings.
- Combined With Established Psychosocial Interventions Such As Support Groups And Psychoeducation To Maximize Comprehensive Benefits On Treatment Adherence, Stigma Reduction, And Quality Of Life.
- Subject To Rigorous Evaluation Through Clinical Research Employing Standardized Outcome Measures To Build An Evidence Base Demonstrating Long-Term Effectiveness.

### **Conclusion**

Psychological And Social Challenges Significantly Impact Mental Health And Treatment Adherence Among People Living With Hiv. Group Art Therapy, As An Accessible And Stigma Reducing Intervention, Holds Promise To Improve Psychosocial Well-Being And Support Sustained Hiv Care.

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