



The Effect of Environmental Therapy on Mental Disorder Patients: A Literature Review

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Abstract:

Background: Mental disorders are a condition of disruption of thought, and mental, behavioral, emotional, and verbal functions which constitute a group of clinical symptoms characterized by suffering. There are various types of mental disorders, such as hallucinations, delusions, low self-esteem, violence, risk of suicide, and many more. One effort to overcome these mental disorders is to use environmental therapy. There are also many types of environmental therapy, for example gardening, raising animals, creating a supportive environment, dhikr therapy, music therapy and so on. **Research objective:** This is to analyze the effect of environmental therapy on the healing or recovery of mental disorder patients. **Search method:** the database searches were used to identify potential articles: Scopus, ScienceDirect, PubMed, and Elsevier databases. The inclusion criteria were open-access, English-language, and full-text articles published in journals between December 2016 and December 2020. A total of fifteen articles were reviewed to answer the research question. The data were analyzed by PRISMA flow chart.. **Results and analysis:** researchers found 15 journals that met the inclusion criteria. Environmental therapy for mental disorders is mostly quasi-experimental, pre-experimental and pre-experimental. **Conclusion:** So it can be concluded that environmental therapy for patients with mental disorders is very important to support the healing or recovery of patients with mental disorders.

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INTRODUCTION

Health is the most important thing in life. Health is a condition where an individual is not weak and can carry out any activity without any interference or obstacles originating from his own body (Farhud, 2015). According to WHO, health is a state of well-being that includes physical, mental, and social well-being that is not only free from disease or disability (World Health Organization, 2022). Apart from physical health, mental or mental health is also very important, mental health is a condition where the mental/spirit is prosperous and does not experience any disturbances either subjectively or objectively so that one can assess one's feelings and abilities (Gautam et al., 2024). So it can be concluded that mental health is a condition of physical, psychological, and social well-being and not only freedom from disease (Bin Baz et al., 2023).

Mental disorders are not just about being free from an illness (Malla, Joober, & Garcia, 2015). This mental disorder is also an object of great concern in Indonesia because it includes a high level of health cases which is quite worrying (Gustiani, 2022). In

Indonesia, cases of mental disorders always increase every year. The prevalence figures are quite large according to WHO, such as 35 million cases of depression, 60 million people affected by bipolar disorder, 21 million affected by schizophrenia, and many more cases of mental disorders which always increase from year to year (World Health Organization, 2022).

These alarming numbers illustrate the increasing need for effective mental health interventions, such as family therapy, to address the complex challenges faced by patients and their families (Mongelli, Georgakopoulos, & Pato, 2020). As the prevalence of mental health disorders continues to rise annually, family therapy becomes even more crucial in providing emotional, psychological, and practical support, not only to individuals with schizophrenia but also to their caregivers (Caqueo-Urizar, Rus-Calafell, Urzúa, Escudero, & Gutiérrez-Maldonado, 2015). This approach can play a pivotal role in mitigating the impact of these disorders by promoting recovery and improving the overall quality of life for those affected (AbdulRaheem, 2023).

Mental disorders, though prevalent across all age groups, are particularly common among teenagers. These young individuals, who are meant to be the future of the nation, often find themselves struggling with mental health challenges that disrupt their lives (Scheiner, Grashoff, Kleindienst, & Buerger, 2022). Many are unable to cope with their condition due to the lack of emotional support, leading some to tragically end their lives. This highlights the urgent need for effective interventions to address mental health issues across all ages, including teenagers, adults, and children (Kirkbride et al., 2024).

One such intervention is environmental therapy, which provides a form of positive support to facilitate healing and recovery (Hesselink et al., 2020). Environmental therapy, much like family therapy, focuses on creating a supportive and comforting environment for individuals with mental disorders. By manipulating and modifying elements in the patient's surroundings, this type of therapy can positively impact their physical and psychological well-being. In the same way that family therapy fosters emotional support within the family unit, environmental therapy enhances the overall treatment process by improving the external environment, making it more conducive to recovery (Sui, McDermott, Harris, & Hsin, 2023). Both approaches are essential in tackling the increasing number of mental health cases globally and ensuring better outcomes for individuals struggling with these conditions.

Based on the brief explanation above, researchers are interested in researching the effect of environmental therapy on the healing and recovery of patients with mental disorders using literature review techniques.

RESEARCH METHODS

This type of research is a type of literature review research, which is a literature survey about findings carried out by previous researchers (empirical findings) related to the research topic, namely environmental therapy carried out for mental disorder patients. The strategy used to search for articles uses the PICOT framework

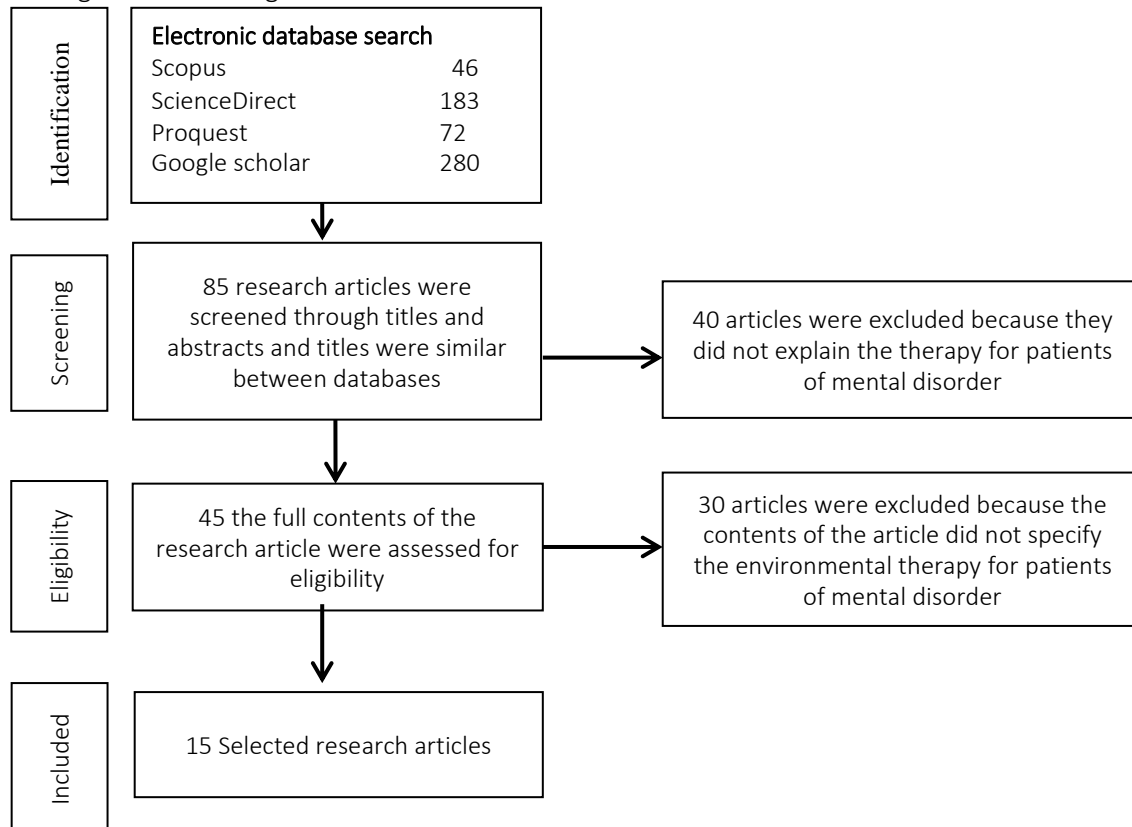
Inclusion criteria in the systematic review include (1) open access (2) English language (3) full-text articles published in the same study design journal are quasi-experimental, pre-experimental, while the exclusion criteria in this systematic review are (1) articles that use a qualitative design, (2) studies that focus on mental disorders patients without involving environmental therapy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results:

The initial literature search found 95 articles. Researchers select articles with the same title, then the remaining 85 articles. The screening based on the title was then adjusted to the theme of a systematic review, which resulted in 50 articles. Selection based on abstract were excluded and obtained 40 articles. 40 articles were then selected according to the eligibility criteria and 15 articles which were subsequently used in a systematic review as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Flow diagram and article selection



Discussion:

After reviewing the results of the literature analysis, 15 pieces of literature were found that met the researchers' criteria for exploring environmental therapy for patients with mental disorders. Most of the literature employed quasi-experimental methods, while two pieces used the literature review method, thereby further validating this research as it builds upon existing comprehensive reviews. The studies examined various forms of environmental therapy aimed at supporting the recovery of mental disorder patients. These ranged from spiritual guidance therapy based on environmental approaches for drug addiction victims to environmental therapy applied in nursing homes, and music therapy for patients experiencing hallucinations. Additionally, dhikr therapy (a form of Islamic meditation) was used for patients with auditory hallucinations, while environment and family support were shown to improve medication adherence in mental disorder patients. Other therapies included affirmation therapy for individuals with a low quality of life, group activity therapy for hallucinations and schizophrenia

patients, farming therapy for schizophrenia recovery, desensitization therapy for patients with HDR, as well as supportive therapy, occupational therapy, and thought-stopping techniques.

From the selected literature, it is clear that a wide array of environmental therapy techniques can be applied to aid in the healing and recovery of patients with various mental disorders. Whether the patient is suffering from hallucinations, schizophrenia, substance abuse, stress, or other conditions, environmental therapy presents versatile and effective interventions.

The studies highlight that environmental therapy not only addresses the physical space in which patients live but also manipulates it in a way that positively impacts their mental and emotional states. This dual focus is crucial, as mental disorders are often influenced by both the internal psychological world of the patient and the external environment in which they exist. By creating a therapeutic environment that is conducive to healing, environmental therapy takes a holistic approach, addressing not just the symptoms of the disorder but the overall well-being of the individual.

The manipulation of the environment can take many forms, each tailored to meet the unique needs of the patient (Gregory, Stichler, & Zborowsky, 2022). For instance, the physical arrangement of space such as lighting, sound, color, and layout can be adjusted to create a calming and supportive atmosphere (Woodbridge et al., 2018). In nursing homes or mental health facilities, this may involve using soft lighting and soothing colors to reduce anxiety and agitation in patients. Quiet spaces for reflection or meditation can also be incorporated to help patients experiencing overwhelming stress or sensory overload, which is common in mental disorders like schizophrenia or bipolar disorder.

Moreover, environmental therapy goes beyond just altering the physical space; it integrates various therapeutic activities that engage patients in meaningful ways. For example, music therapy, a form of environmental therapy, utilizes sound to stimulate emotional responses and help patients process difficult feelings (Rossetti, 2020). This can be particularly beneficial for individuals experiencing auditory hallucinations, as it redirects their focus and provides a therapeutic outlet for expression. Similarly, therapies like gardening or farming, which involve engaging with nature, not only provide patients with a peaceful and structured environment but also offer physical activity that has been shown to boost mood, reduce depression, and improve cognitive function.

Another key aspect of environmental therapy is the involvement of social dynamics within the therapeutic space. The presence of supportive family members, caregivers, or peer groups plays a significant role in enhancing the emotional well-being of patients (Marques, Mcintosh, & Kershaw, 2021). Studies have shown that when patients feel socially connected and supported in their environment, they experience less stress and anxiety. This is particularly true in therapies that incorporate group activities, such as group counseling or creative workshops, where patients can share their experiences and feel a sense of community (Marmarosh, Sandage, Wade, Captari, & Crabtree, 2022). In such settings, the environment is designed to foster positive social interactions, which helps reduce feelings of isolation and promotes mental health recovery.

Furthermore, the statistical tests conducted in the studies consistently yielded significant results, demonstrating the effectiveness of environmental therapy in the healing process (Jimenez et al., 2021). Across all studies, environmental therapy was shown to have a positive impact on the recovery of mental disorder patients. The diverse

range of therapeutic techniques examined in the literature reinforces the notion that tailoring environmental therapy to the specific needs of each patient can lead to successful outcomes (Singh, Kumar, & Gupta, 2022). Whether through structured group activities, supportive occupational therapies, or more individualized approaches such as affirmation and thought-stopping techniques, these methods contribute to the holistic recovery of individuals. This holistic approach provides patients with a supportive framework that enhances both their physical surroundings and psychological well-being, ultimately fostering recovery and improving their quality of life.

Implications for Public Health:

These findings highlight that Environmental therapy, such as exposure to nature, has been shown to reduce stress and anxiety levels. This can lead to decreased use of medications and other more invasive treatments. Access to green spaces and natural light can alleviate symptoms of depression, contributing to better overall mental health. Environmental therapy offers a promising adjunct to traditional mental health treatments with wide-ranging public health benefits. It supports mental well-being, enhances physical health, and can be an economically viable option for improving community health outcomes.

Limitations and Future Research:

In summary, while environmental therapy shows promise as a complementary approach to treating mental disorders, there are significant limitations in the current body of research. Addressing these limitations through future studies will be crucial in understanding the full potential of environmental therapy and ensuring its equitable and effective application in mental health care.

CONCLUSION

So it can be concluded that environmental therapy for patients with mental disorders is very important to support the healing or recovery of patients with mental disorders.

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