

## **Efficacy of Mandala Art in Social Anxiety, Emotion Regulation and Mental Well-Being among Working Professionals**

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Mandalas represent the ideal form of the universe. The act of creating a mandala represents the transformation of the universe from a reality of suffering to one of enlightenment. The present study aimed on efficacy of mandala art in social anxiety, emotion regulation and mental well-being among working professionals. Initially 239 participants were assessed, out of which fifty-three (29 male & 24 female) were screened in this before-after, without control group study. The tools administered were Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS-6) & Social Phobia Scale (SPS-6), Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) and Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (SWEMWB). The results revealed that social anxiety and emotion regulation; mental well-being and social anxiety are negatively correlated; emotion regulation and mental well-being are positively correlated. The findings concluded that mandala art therapy is effective in reducing the level of social anxiety, enhancing emotional regulation and mental well-being.

**Keywords:** Mandala Art Therapy, Social Anxiety, Emotion Regulation, Mental Well-being, Working Professionals.

Social Anxiety Disorder, sometimes referred to as social phobia, is characterized by a chronic and severe fear of social situations. People with social anxiety disorder experience irrational emotions of fear, anxiety, self-consciousness, and shame when they interact with people in daily life. Other symptoms include an overwhelming fear of criticism, anxiety about guilt or humiliation, or worry about offending someone. Saleem, Khan and Saleem (2019) investigated on anxiety and emotion regulation among undergraduate medical students. The findings concluded a notable significant positive correlation between anxiety, expressive suppression, and emotion regulation; negative correlation between anxiety and cognitive reappraisal. In comparison to their male peers, female medical students exhibit higher levels of anxiety and employ a more outspoken suppression emotion control method. Different levels of social anxiety can be

categorized as follows: Mild social anxiety – may encounter both physical and psychological symptoms of social anxiety. However, people are still able to engage in social situations and may even endure individuals. It is much feasible to experience symptoms only in specific social settings. Moderate social anxiety – also experience physical and psychological symptoms. However, they tend to participate in some social situations while avoiding others. Individuals may have a preference for certain types of social conditions where they feel more comfortable. Severe social anxiety – individuals face more intense symptoms, such as trembling and panic attacks in social settings. As a result, people tend to avoid social situations as much as possible. It is likely that they experience symptoms in all or many times in certain situations, making it challenging for them to engage in social interactions.

Emotion regulation is the capacity to exert control one's own emotions. The ability to manage and express a variety of emotions in a manner that is appropriate for the given social situation, while also being flexible enough to react naturally when needed, and the skill to control impulsive reactions when required.. It could entail actions like reviewing a difficult circumstance in order to lessen rage or worry, covering up obvious indications of fear or sadness, or concentrating on reasons to feel at ease or joyful. It is required for the adults to regulate their emotions in a way that is acceptable in society, particularly when it comes to anxiety and anger. People frequently express themselves or do things they later regret and wish they had been able to manage their emotions when emotional control falters. Katana, Rocke, Spain and Allemand (2019) conducted a study on emotion regulation, subjective well-being and perceived stress in daily life geriatric nurses. The findings showed that nurses with more years of work experience felt less stressed and had greater subjective well-being. These findings provide light on significant emotional processes that geriatric nurses deal with on a daily basis, both at work and in their free time. Some consequences of poor emotion regulation are obvious hazards of neglecting to properly control of emotions like anger, anxiety or fear can result in negative outcomes such as strained relationships caused by excessive reactions, unnecessary distress and missed opportunities that seemed overwhelming. Employing ineffective methods of emotion regulation, such as habitually suppressing emotions, may also contribute to reduce well-being and lower levels of relationship contentment.

Mental well-being encompasses both emotional and functional aspects, such as relationships, personal control, purpose, and independence. Mental well-being is often termed as subjective well-being, this involves individual's perception and evaluation of life.

Encompasses psychological, emotional, and social health. It's about navigating life's turbulence and responding to it. These variations can be caused by little life changes or major stressors that occur every day. The two main components are, Hedonia refers to joy and contentment. It refers to having a positive outlook on life and relishing good events in the context of mental well-being. Eudaimonia is a slightly more complicated concept, it basically means living a purposeful life and making an effort to realize one's full potential. Byrom, Dinu, Kirkman and Hughes (2020) concluded that higher mental wellness and lower stress levels were predicted by family support, excellent general health, sleep, and low levels of self-depreciation. Additionally, students who were achievement-oriented had better mental wellness, and those who were optimistic about their future careers and were well-prepared for their studies experienced less stress.

Art therapy is a tool, where therapists can assist clients in understanding, expressing, and resolving their thoughts and feelings. Collaboration with an art therapist, individuals explore their emotions, comprehend conflicts or feelings that are upsetting them, and use art to help them come to terms with those problems. Mandala art is the integrating psychological division, enhancing psychological harmony and preserving personal integrity (Jung, 2012). The Mandala art intervention is an art therapy approach - complementary and alternative medicine to treat physical and psychological symptoms, improve psychological distress, relieve anxiety, and promote relationships. Adults can improve cognitive and sensorimotor functions. Mandala meditation, designing a mandala, and colouring a mandala are three ways mandalas are utilized for healing. Making mandalas helps people focus their energies and ideas, which helps them let go of tension and anxiety. It also helps people create with awareness of

what they are drawing. Mandalas contribute to a life of greater optimism and harmony. Individuals who colour mandalas report feeling more at ease and their general well-being is enhanced. People of all ages can benefit from the health benefits of colouring mandalas. Abbing et. al. (2019) examined on effectiveness of art therapy for anxiety in adult women: a randomized controlled trial. Findings demonstrating a decrease in anxiety, a rise in subjective quality of life (both with significant effects), and an enhancement in the availability of techniques for regulating emotions (medium effect). Three months later, treatment effects were still present. A lower level of anxiety is linked to features of emotion regulation such as more goal-oriented action and higher acceptance of feelings. Art therapy is useful in lowering symptoms of anxiety, enhancing life quality, and addressing emotion regulation.

Thus, this research helps individuals to understand that social anxiety can result in feelings of inadequacy or inferiority, particularly in the workplace. Additionally, it may be extremely difficult for them to engage with co-workers, speak out in meetings, or go to work-related events, which may increase their sense of overburden at work. Since emotion regulation is the cornerstone of self-management, it is considered to be as one of the most important soft skills in person's life. Professionals who can intentionally regulate their emotions are able to remain composed in heated circumstances. Without adequate support, individual's fails to cope up their long term well-being, this can effect on a person's confidence level and identity at work, ability to work effectively, absences, and ease of retention or gainful employment. Hence, engaging in mandala art allows for unrestricted self-expression and creativity. Traditional forms of communication may limit self-exploration, but through art therapy individuals can freely delve into their inner

thoughts and emotions, uncovering and shaping new aspects of themselves.

### **Objectives**

- To understand the relationship of Social Anxiety, Emotion Regulation and Mental Well-Being among Working Professionals.
- To identify gender difference in Social Anxiety, Emotional Regulation and Mental Well-Being among Working Professionals.
- To explore the Effectiveness of Art Therapy in Managing Social Anxiety, Emotion Regulation and Enhancing Mental Well-Being among Working Professionals.

### **Hypotheses**

- There will be a significant relationship between Social Anxiety & Emotion Regulation; Emotion Regulation & Mental Well-Being and Social Anxiety & Mental Well-Being among Working Professionals.
- There will be significant difference between before and after phases in Social Anxiety among Working Professionals through Mandala Art Therapy.
- There will be significant difference between before and after phases in Emotion Regulation among Working Professionals through Mandala Art Therapy.
- There will be significant difference between before and after phases in Mental Well-Being among Working Professionals through Mandala Art Therapy.
- There will be significant differences in Social Anxiety, Emotion Regulation & Mental Well-Being among Working Professionals.

## Method

In Phase I, participants were selected through Simple Random Sampling Method in Coimbatore, Tamilnadu (N=239). Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS-6) & Social Phobia Scale (SPS-6) by Peters, Rapee, Sunderland, Andrews and Mattick, (2012); Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) by Gross, J. J. & John, O. P. (2003) and Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well Being Scale (WEMWBS) by Warwick and Edinburgh (2006) were used to collect the data.

In Phase II, selection of participants is based on certain criteria which involves, moderate and high level of social anxiety; Low and moderate level of emotion regulation; and Low and moderate level of mental well-being. Fifty three working professionals were screened in before and after without control group design. Fourteen sessions of Mandala Art Therapy was administered to the participants on twice in a week for 90 minutes. This session includes Mandala Meditation/ Mindfulness; Mandala Drawing/ Painting and Mandala Colouring.

In Phase III, the screened participants were assessed using the same psychological tools and data was analysed using Statistical Package of Social Sciences 23.

## Results

Table I. Socio-Demographic details of the samples (N=53)

		N	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	29	55
	Female	24	45
Place of Living	Urban	34	64
	Rural	19	36

Percentages are rounded off

Table I shows the socio-demographic data of the samples. 55% of the participants are male and 45% are female. Nearly 64% of the

individuals from urban and 36% from rural background.

Table II. Correlation between Social Anxiety, Emotion Regulation and Mental Well-Being among Working Professionals (N=53)

		Social Anxiety	Emotion Regulation	Mental Well-Being
Social Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	1	-0.71**	-0.89
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.00	0.00
Emotion Regulation	Pearson Correlation	-0.71**	1	0.69
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.00		0.00
Mental Well-Being	Pearson Correlation	-0.89	0.69	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.00	0.00	

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table II shows that there is a negative relationship between social anxiety and emotion regulation, which is statistically significant at 0.01 level implies that anxious individuals expose less positive emotions, less aware of their feelings and find it harder to articulate them. There is a positive relationship between emotion regulation and mental well-being, which is statistically significant at 0.01 level entails metacognitive awareness of one's current emotional state and knows to impose successful problem solving or coping strategies. A negative relationship between social anxiety and mental well-being, which is statistically significant at 0.01 level states that individuals who struggle to control their emotions are more prone to encounter maladaptive feelings that are more intense and persistent.

Table III. Effect on Mandala Art Therapy in Social Anxiety, Emotion Regulation and Mental Well-Being among Working Professionals (N=53)

		Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean Difference	t	Cohen's d
Social Anxiety	Before	41.34	3.18	19.59	47.28**	6.71
	After	21.75	2.63			
Emotion Regulation	Before	37.28	2.32	19.04	62.47**	7.41
	After	56.32	2.80			
Mental Well-Being	Before	29.02	3.57	23.09	41.38**	5.56
	After	52.11	4.67			

\*\* . Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table III indicates that mean, standard deviation and mean difference among working professionals. It clearly shows that level of social anxiety decreases when mandala art therapy is implemented and also helps the individuals to relieve and treat social anxiety. Utilizing drawing as a tool can greatly benefit individuals struggling with social anxiety by enabling them to express themselves non-verbally. The effect of mandala art therapy in emotional regulation, which entails practicing mandalas intensify individuals to translate their innermost feelings and ideas into visual representations using symbols, patterns, colours, and shapes

within circular forms. Mandalas are utilized in art therapy as a means of promoting mindfulness, alleviating stress, fostering personal growth and facilitating emotional recovery. Mandala art boosts mental well-being which are constructed with concentric rings that radiate outward, embodying harmony and wholeness with the universe and intellect. Engaging in colouring mandalas can promote relaxation, calm the nervous system, attract positive energy, and harmonize the body's energies. By embracing this therapeutic practice, individuals can unlock the numerous advantages of self-care, leading to an enhanced quality of life.

Table IV Level of Significance among Psychological Variables based on Gender (N=53)

		N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t
Social Anxiety	Male	29	41.24	3.41	0.25N.S
	Female	24	41.46	2.93	
Emotion Regulation	Male	29	37.21	2.14	0.26N.S
	Female	24	37.38	2.56	
Mental Well-Being	Male	29	29.48	4.01	1.04N.S
	Female	24	28.46	2.93	

N.S. – Not Significant

Table IV explains about the t value and significance of the psychological variables based on gender shows that social anxiety, emotion regulation and mental well-being is not significant with the value of 0.25, 0.26 & 1.04 respectively.

## Discussion

The purpose of the study is to understand the efficacy of mandala art therapy in social anxiety, emotion regulation and mental well-being among working professionals. People are consistently confronted with tough scenarios; the decisions made by management can add pressure to the fragile shoulders of employees. This not only harms their job performance, but also significantly impacts their mental and physical well-being. Individuals afflicted with social anxiety disorder tend to harbour more negative beliefs regarding their aptitude to regulate their negative mood states, especially in social scenarios. In contrast, their beliefs about managing emotions in solitude are akin to those of individuals without social anxiety. These negative beliefs about emotion regulation are associated with a diminished quality of life. Individuals encounter a meditative experience, which allows them to gain profound insights into their own being and uncover deeper significance in the complexities of life. Similar findings (Store & Jakobsson, 2022) suggested that mandala colouring was effective methods for reducing anxiety. Art serves as a safe and constructive means for individuals to express their emotions. Over time, art therapy has garnered increasing recognition as an effective intervention for individuals grappling with mental illnesses. Extensive research substantiates the favourable effects of art therapy on specific mental health conditions, notably anxiety and depression (Whitenburg, 2020). Coordinated and individual mandala drawing having various effects on mindfulness, spirituality and subjective well-being (Liu, Chen, Lin & Chiou, 2020) found that participating in mandala drawing, especially through cooperative mandala drawing, can have a constructive effect on spirituality and subjective wellbeing. This practice presents individuals with an uncomplicated and convenient way to

enhance their sense of happiness. Moreover, engaging in art works can serve as a calming practice, assisting in the reduction of anxiety levels and promoting mental well-being.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be inferred that people with elevated social anxiety typically exhibit lower levels of emotion regulation and mental well-being. Additionally, it is apparent that engaging in Mandala art can reduce anxiety levels and enhance self-regulation and mental health in individuals. The inclination to decrease anxious thoughts can be achieved through participation in various forms of art therapy and mindfulness, cultivating a growth mind set, and increasing awareness of their surroundings. Furthermore, undergoing guided mindfulness meditation sessions along with practicing relaxation techniques can aid in achieving a better work-life balance and enhancing one's cognitive processes.

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