

Covid-19 Lockdown Experience of Elderly Female as Reflected in Their Artwork

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Abstract : Today the world as a whole is attempting to cope with the COVID-19, which has affected all facets of personal and social life from country-wide confinement to maintaining social distance and taking protective measures to maintain hygiene. One of the populations faced with the most severe restrictions is seniors. Various studies have shown that creativity plays a crucial role in dealing with crisis events. Painting - regardless of media - allows for emotional and cognitive processing of these situations, and enables the expression of experiences in a tangible creative way that conveys and endows meaning to the artwork. The current study was conducted in Israel immediately after a 6-week lockdown. It was designed to specifically examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the quality of life of elderly women as reflected in their artworks. The sample was composed of 21 Israeli women aged 60-90, in good mental health (without diagnosed dementia or Alzheimer's), all of whom were Hebrew-speaking, and retired with an extended family, who indicated that they painted and had engaged in artwork on an ongoing basis throughout the lockdown (from March 12 to May 30, 2020). The participants' artworks were collected, and a semi-structured in-depth interview was conducted that lasted one to two hours. The participants were asked about their feelings during the pandemic and the artworks they produced during this time, and completed a questionnaire on well-being and mental health. The initial analysis of the interviews and artworks revealed themes related to the specific role of each piece of artwork. The first theme included notions that the artwork was an activity and a framework for doing, which supported positive emotions, and provided a sense of vitality during the closure. Most of the participants painted images of nature and growth which were ascribed concrete and symbolic meaning. The second theme was that the artwork enabled the processing of difficult and /or conflicting emotions related to the situation, including anxiety about death and loneliness that were symbolically expressed in the artworks, such as images of the Corona virus and the respiratory machines. The third theme suggested that the time and space prompted by the lockdown gave the participants time for a gathering together of the self, and freed up time for creative activities. Many participants stated that they painted more and more frequently during the Corona lockdown. At the conference, additional themes and findings will be presented.

Keywords : Corona virus, artwork, quality of life of elderly

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