

Effects of Collage-oriented Group Art Therapy on the University Life Adaptation and Life Satisfaction of University Students with Disabilities

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Abstract

Introduction: Students' maladjustment to college life not only negatively affects individual psychological health and social adaptation but also increases the dropout rate, which incurs social costs such as re-admission; if this situation persists, such students may experience difficulties in adapting to college life as well as lower life satisfaction. Therefore, intervention methods are required to help students with disabilities adapt to college life and increase their life satisfaction.

Objectives: This study aimed to investigate how collage-oriented group art therapy affects college life adaptation and quality of life among university students with disabilities.

Methods: The subjects of the study were nine university students with disabilities attending B University in area A. Group art therapy was conducted one to two times a week from January to February 2025, at 90 minutes per session for a total of 10 sessions.

Tools and Techniques: To verify the effectiveness of the study, college life adaptation and life satisfaction tests were conducted before and after collage-oriented group art therapy to determine any changes, and the test results were analyzed using the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, a nonparametric analysis.

Results: As a result of the study, first, it was found that collage-oriented group art therapy is effective in improving the college life adaptation of university students with disabilities. Second, such therapy was effective in improving the life satisfaction of these students.

Conclusion: In conclusion, collage-oriented group art therapy proved to be an effective approach that can be applied to college life counseling scenes related to college students with disabilities. Moreover, it was confirmed that it can be applied in counseling and psychotherapy sites for these students.

Keywords: Collage-oriented Group Art Therapy, University Students with Disabilities, Adaptation to University Life, Life Satisfaction

1. Introduction

When individuals become college students, they encounter new roles that differ from those of high school students and are required to perform various tasks. If students successfully perform the various tasks given to them, they develop satisfaction and confidence in college life; however, if they do not, they may have difficulty adapting.

University students with disabilities enter the specific environment called a university and have more difficulties with convenience facilities, teaching-learning, interpersonal relationships, and professional careers than university students without disabilities do when entering a university(Cho & Park, 2013). In particular, the proportion of students with disabilities who decide to take a leave of absence, drop out, or fail to complete the university curriculum is currently relatively higher than that of college students with no disabilities, and the number of students with disabilities entering universities increases every year after implementing a special admission system for individuals with disabilities(Kim, D. I., Jeong, Koh, Kim, J. S., & Kim, S. Y., 2013; Lee & Choi, 2018), suggesting that it is important to help students with disabilities adapt to university life.

Baker and Siryk(2018) describe college life adaptation in four ways: academic, social, personal-emotional, and general. First, academic adaptation evaluates how successfully students adapt to academic needs, such as the credits required by universities. Second, social adaptation evaluates social activities, relationships with school members, and satisfaction with the environment within the university. Third, personal-emotional adaptation evaluates individual internal psychological and physical or health problems. Finally, general adaptation represents attachment to the university, the quality of the university, and the degree of immersion in academic goals(Kim & Jang, 2021). Studies related to the adaptation of college students with disabilities to college life have been actively conducted on these factors. These studies examine academic adaptation, such as careers and academics(Kim, 2014; Jeong & Park, 2013); social adaptation, such as social support(Cho, 2024; Kim, Shin & Jang, 2017); personal and emotional adaptation, such as depression and anxiety as well as self-determination(Kim, J. K., Kang & Kim, J. Y., 2007; Kim, R. K., & Jang, 2020, 2021); and general adaptation, such as the effect of college students' achievement goal orientation on academic commitment(Kim & Au, 2018).

In addition, a study was conducted on the perception that college life adaptation acts as an important factor affecting the life satisfaction of college students(Kim, 2020; Lyu, 2015; You & Park, 2015). Life satisfaction is a concept that includes emotional well-being and cognitively evaluating that one is satisfied with one's life. It is an evaluation of how one's life

is conducted by comparing how positively each individual evaluates their life with the standards set by the individual and reality(You, 2015) According to "University Tomorrow's Top 20 Research Institutes," a comparison of 1,357 university students from seven countries, including Korea, China, Japan, India, the United States, Germany, and Brazil, showed an average life satisfaction of 52%, and Korean university students showed life satisfaction of 41.5%(<https://www.20slab.org/archives/12759>), lower than the average. Because college students' life satisfaction is a barometer of their current lives and affects their goals and motivation for the future, the life satisfaction of university students with disabilities, who will play a role in leading society in the future, is an individual issue that has an important impact on society as a whole.

Because of the nature of their disabilities, students with disabilities receive a great deal of support from their families in their daily lives before coming to university and live under parental protection rather than making decisions according to their own choices(Lee, 2013). However, in an open environment in which autonomy is guaranteed, the university environment is structured to require them to compete with other university students along with taking individual responsibility for their actions(Kim & Jang, 2021). Therefore, it can be difficult to respond and live appropriately according to the situation when exposed to various life needs and challenges. If students are highly adaptable to college life, they are satisfied with their majors and will form smooth interpersonal relationships(Chae & Kim, 2023), and they feel happy(Hwang, 2022). On the other hand, students' maladjustment to college life will negatively affect individual psychological health and social adaptation(Jung & Chung, 2012), and the dropout rate will increase, resulting in social costs such as readmission(Jeon & Yune, 2017). If this situation persists, they may experience difficulties in adapting to college life and experience further reduced life satisfaction. If college students with disabilities adapt well to college life in the context of the possibility that they can grow into healthy and satisfied members of society by experiencing a smaller society before moving on to overall society, active psychological support and effort to adapt to college life and improve life satisfaction are essential.

Recently, a study using collages was reported to be effective in a school maladjustment intervention study of university students(An & Yang, 2025; Kwon & Kim, 2024; Yang, Kuon & Jeong, 2022). Collaging is a technique for composing work by selecting pictures from magazines and tearing or cutting them. This technique is more accurate and intensive than language expression, allows the individual to easily open up, increases their sense of stability, and demonstrates their interest, spontaneity, and activity(Lee & Yang, 2015) and thus has advantages. Lee Geun-mae(2014). reported that the style of expressing collage works differs depending on university students' level of adaptation to college life and that the more difficult it is to adapt to college life, the more problems they will have with paper deviation and integration; moreover, gaps appear in certain areas, and more abstract expressions appear. Therefore, it is valuable to conduct collage-oriented group art therapy for university students with disabilities to examine its impact on college life adaptation and life satisfaction.

Therefore, this study aimed to determine how collage-oriented group art therapy affects college life adaptation and satisfaction among college students with disabilities. We intend to provide basic data on intervention methods that help students with disabilities adapt to college life and further increase their life satisfaction.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Subjects of Study

The subjects of this study were nine students with disabilities who wanted to participate in a group art therapy program at University B, located in A city. The group members who participated in the study were students who had no problem with eye-hand coordination, students who had difficulty adapting to college life, students who expressed their intention to participate in group art therapy, and students who agreed to the research purpose and questionnaire. The characteristics of the study participants are listed in [Table 1].

[Table 1] General Information of the Participants

Subject of study	Age (Gender)	Grade	Disability	General characteristic
A	20 (Female)	2	Brain lesion disorder	Experience difficulties in adapting academically, such as classes and assignments
B	25 (Female)	3	Brain lesion disorder	Due to health reasons caused by disability, they returned to school after a long period of absence and experienced difficulties in adapting to class, assignments, and school life
C	21 (Male)	3	Brain lesion disorder	After entering university, I experienced internal conflicts due to personal psychological problems

D	21 (Male)	2	Intellectual disability	He entered school, lived in a dormitory apart from his parents, and thought of dropping out due to the fear of interpersonal relationships
E	21 (Male)	2	Intellectual disability	It was difficult to adapt to the major department and transferred to a different school due to difficulty in interpersonal relationships with friends
F	22 (Male)	2	Physical disability	It was difficult to adapt due to the high difficulty of class and assignment, and experienced difficulties such as nervousness in relation to the professor
G	19 (Female)	1	Brain lesion disorder	Experience difficulties in adapting academically, such as classes and assignments
H	21 (Male)	1	Intellectual disability	Experience difficulties in adapting academically, such as classes and assignments
I	26 (Male)	2	Intellectual disability	Experience difficulties in interpersonal relationships and difficulties in academic adaptation such as classes and assignments

2.2 Research Tool

2.2.1 Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire

The Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ), developed by Baker and Siryk(1984) and adapted and modified by Lee Yun-jung(2013), was used to measure the degree of adaptation of students with disabilities to college life. The SACQ consists of 25 questions, and each question is rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'not at all' (1 point) to 'very much' (5 points). The SACQ consists of five sub-factors: 'academic adaptation,' 'social adaptation,' 'emotional adaptation,' 'physical adaptation,' and 'attachment to university,' each of which consists of five questions. In this study, the Cronbach's *a* for the sub-areas of the college life adaptation scale was calculated as .721, with social adaptation at .820, emotional adaptation at .799, physical adaptation at .715, attachment to college at .766, and overall college life adaptation at .781.

2.2.2 Life Satisfaction

The Korean version of the life satisfaction scale developed by Diener, Emons, Larsen, and Griffin(1985) and adapted by Lee Eun-kyung(2004) was used to measure the life satisfaction of students with disabilities. For this scale, life satisfaction refers to the satisfaction and attitude that an individual feels in life and universal satisfaction with the present situation in the past. The scale consists of five questions, one each in five areas, and is rated on a seven-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating higher life satisfaction. In this study, Cronbach's *a* coefficient was .838.

2.3 Research Procedures

This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of collage-oriented group art therapy on college life adaptation and satisfaction among university students with disabilities. To this end, nine students who were informed of the purpose of the study, had difficulty adapting to college life, were willing to participate in group art therapy, and agreed to the study purpose and questionnaire were selected as the subjects. Collage-oriented group art therapy was conducted once or twice a week for a total of 10 sessions 90 minutes in length to determine the effectiveness of group art therapy. The college life adaptation scale and life satisfaction scale were administered to university students with disabilities before and after the program was implemented to examine changes.

2.4 Collage-oriented Group Art Therapy Program

2.4.1 Program Configuration

Each session of the collage-oriented group art therapy was conducted in three stages. The first stage was the introduction (5 minutes) stage to introduce the week's safety and activities, and the second stage was the activity (70 minutes) stage, during which students conducted art activities according to the theme of each session, introduced their works, and shared feedback among group members. The third and final stage (15 minutes) involved sharing one's feelings, organizing the session, and guiding the next session.

Competency in self-determination among students with disabilities can increase adaptation to college life by inspiring confidence through skills and improved abilities acquired during this period, and the stronger the relationship is, the better the adaptation to college life through positive effects in terms of companionship and interpersonal relations(Kim & Jang, 2021). In addition, self-determination has a positive effect on college life adaptation (emotional, environmental, academic, and social adaptation)(Seo, Lee & Choi, 2021). In this study, a group art therapy program was constructed based on Field and Hoffman's(1995) self-determination program to verify its effectiveness, and Kim Soo-jin's(2014) work was reorganized and used according to the subject and purpose of this study.

Regarding the composition of the group art therapy program, the first and second sessions focused on the stages of self-awareness, with themes of self-introduction and college life. In the third and fourth sessions, the stage of recognizing one's own values, were conducted on the themes of what one is good at, what one cannot do, and dreams. In the fifth and sixth sessions, we examined how to achieve our dreams in the planning stage, and in the seventh and eighth sessions, we examined what hindered us from achieving our goals, how to solve them, and how to use our resources. In the ninth and tenth sessions, which were the final sessions, we had time to determine the situations in which we had to insist on our decisions and how to assert ourselves effectively as an evaluation stage for the results as well as to look back on the program and pledge what we should do to achieve what we want. This allowed group members to freely express their experiences and emotions in the course of art activities in all sessions and focused on creating a natural dynamic between group members through the results of the activities for each session. Details on the group art therapy program are shown in [Table 2].

[Table 2] Program Details

Phase	Session	Subject	Goal	Content and Method
Self-Awareness	1	Let me introduce myself	Program Introduction Introduce yourself	Create interest in counseling through self-expression Building rapport and having a sense of belonging to a group
	2	My university life	Difficulties in college life	Explore my university life and recognize the changed me
Recognition of one's Worth	3	Look at me right away	What I'm good at and what I'm not good at	Recognize what you are good at and what you are not good at I acknowledge my characteristics as a strength
	4	My dream	The life I want in the future	Through the process of exploring my dreams, I recognize that dreams play a role in letting me know what is important to me and what I want
Plan	5	A list to achieve your dreams	Dream action list	I image myself in 10 years and know what I have to do to achieve my dream
	6	Planning activities	Prioritizing	I know that the possibility can be increased only when the goal is implemented in small steps Establish an activity plan to achieve long-term and short-term goals
Practice	7	Execute the goal	Removal of obstruction	After recognizing the obstacles to achieve your goals and solving them, you know that positive changes will come
	8	My Resource	The resources I have	I know about the resources I have and think about how to use them properly I know how the resources I have help me achieve my goals
An Assessment of the Results	9	It's my right to claim it	This is my idea	Know how to effectively and positively assert yourself to be respected for your thoughts and rights about what you face in life
	10	My life that I make	My life is my choice	You will have time to look back on the entire program and look back and organize the actions and minds you need to take to make your own decisions in life in the future

2.5 Data Analysis

Data obtained from the study were analyzed using SPSS. 24.0. This study used a nonparametric test that does not assume a normal distribution of data because the number of samples in the subject does not sufficiently satisfy the assumption of parameter statistics, and the specific data analysis method according to the research problem is as follows:

First, the reliability coefficient (Cronbach's α) value was calculated to verify the internal consistency of the measurement tool.

Second, to test the effectiveness of collage-oriented group art therapy, a college life adaptation test was conducted before and after the intervention, and the results were analyzed using the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, a nonparametric test.

Third, life satisfaction tests were conducted before and after the intervention to test the effectiveness of the collage-oriented group art therapy program, and the results were again analyzed using the Wilcoxon signed-rank test.

3. Results

3.1 Effects of Collage-oriented Group Art Therapy on the Adaptation to University Life of Students with Disabilities

To determine the effect of the collage-oriented group art therapy on college life adaptation among students with disabilities, a college life adaptation test was conducted before and after the program was implemented. The results are shown in [Table 3].

[Table 3] Pre-Post Test Results for College Life Adaptation

Sub-factor	N	Pre		Post		-RANK(n)	+RANK(n)	Ties	Z
		M	SD	M	SD				
Academic adaptation	9	2.98	.55	3.11	.61	3.00(2)	3.75(4)	3	-.957
Social adaptation	9	3.16	.58	3.69	.70	2.00(1)	4.33(6)	2	-2.047*
Emotional adaptation	9	2.13	.39	3.22	.44	.00(0)	5.00(9)	0	-2.692**
Physical adaptation	9	2.76	.36	3.11	.28	1.00(1)	4.00(5)	3	-2.003*
Attachment to college	9	3.36	.70	3.62	.60	3.50(3)	5.10(5)	1	-1.053
The entire	9	2.88	.31	3.35	.35	.00(0)	5.00(9)	0	-2.670**

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

As a result of the analysis of the subfactors of college life adaptation, social adaptation showed a statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-tests ($Z = -2.047$, $p < .05$). Emotional adaptation showed statistically significant differences between the pre- and post-tests ($Z = -2.692$, $p < .01$). Physical adaptation showed statistically significant differences between the pre- and post-tests ($Z = -2.003$, $p < .05$). Finally, college life adaptation (whole) showed statistically significant differences between the pre- and post-tests ($Z = -2.670$, $p < .01$). In contrast, academic adaptation ($Z = -.957$, $p > .05$) and college attachment ($Z = -1.053$, $p > .05$) showed no statistically significant differences between the pre- and post-test scores of students with disabilities.

As described above, collage-oriented group art therapy has a positive effect on the social, emotional, physical, and college life adaptation of students with disabilities.

3.2 Effects of Collage-oriented Collective Art Values on the Life Satisfaction of Students with Disabilities

To determine the effect of collage-oriented group art therapy on the life satisfaction of college students with disabilities, a life satisfaction test was conducted before and after the program was implemented. The results are shown in [Table 4].

[Table 4] Pre-Post Test Results for Life Satisfaction

	N	Pre		Post		-RANK(n)	+RANK(n)	Ties	Z
		M	SD	M	SD				
Life satisfaction	9	3.76	.82	5.09	1.02	.00(0)	4.50(8)	1	-2.533*

* $p < .05$

Analysis of the pre- and post-test results for life satisfaction showed a statistically significant difference ($Z = -2.047$, $p < .05$). This means that collage-oriented group art therapy had a positive effect on the life satisfaction of college students with disabilities.

4. Discussion

This study aimed to investigate how collage-oriented group art therapy affects college life adaptation and life satisfaction among college students with disabilities. To this end, collage-oriented group art therapy was performed once or twice a week at 90 minutes per session for a total of 10 times for nine students with disabilities. To verify the effectiveness of the collage-oriented group art therapy, college life adaptation and life satisfaction tests were conducted before and after the program, and the differences were compared. The discussion of the results is presented below.

First, college students with disabilities who underwent collage-oriented group art therapy showed significantly improved overall scores for college life adaptation. This is similar to the findings of Kwon So-seon and Kim Hyun-jung (Kwon & Kim, 2024), who reported that college life adaptability was improved by applying collage art therapy to college students, improving the overall area and all subareas of college life adaptation. Moreover, the changes in college students with disabilities could also be confirmed through their works, and in one to two sessions, the number of sculptures increased from one to two, and integration was low, such as gaps (top, right) in certain areas or attaching sculptures to one side.

However, as the session passed, the space was evenly used, and concrete expressions rather than abstract expressions increased. In the case of collage activities, one can more easily express your inner self and desires through nonverbal tools such as pictures, imagine their desires in the moment, and review them repeatedly. When expressed in language, the image flows into one's mind as a short afterimage. However, in the case of collage work, concrete data remain. This is consistent with the findings of the study showing that group dynamics and interactions take place actively because Pole students can specify and clarify their needs and characteristics through collage work and can easily check what concerns they have and what they desire in their college or current life. In addition, in the case of high-risk students who are maladapted to college life, the gap in certain areas is high, and integration is low(Lee, 2014). Students with disabilities can improve their adaptation to college life by inspiring confidence through the skills and improved abilities acquired during this period. Research results show that the stronger the relationship is, the better the adaptation to college life through positive effects on companionship and interpersonal relationships(Kim & Jang, 2021). Moreover, self-determination has a positive effect on college life adaptation (emotional, environmental, academic, and social adaptation)(Seo et al, 2021), in line with the research results.

Second, the collage-oriented group art therapy program was effective in improving the life satisfaction of college students with disabilities. Collaboration is a dynamic task(Lee & Yang, 2018) in which stories can be created. These characteristics of cokeism demonstrate that collaboration positively affects life satisfaction. This is similar to the findings of Jang Myung-ok(2010) showing that the ability to divide space increased due to stable changes in the diversity and form of artwork and that the quality of life of individuals with physical disabilities improved with positive self-awareness. In addition, by expressing one's desires and conflicts through collage group art therapy, the dynamic interaction between group members increased(Hong & Lee, 2010), which, in the process of producing collage works, induced aesthetic pleasure and achievement, reducing negative emotions and motivating positive emotions and a positive life(Yang & Lee, 2013), which is in line with the existing research results.

5. Conclusion

Based on the results, the several conclusions were drawn. First, through collage-oriented group art therapy, students with disabilities positively changed their social, emotional, and physical adaptability by visualizing, expressing, and clarifying their interests, desires, and college life. This suggests that the general group art chips can help improve the college life adaptation of university students with disabilities. Second, the life satisfaction of college students with disabilities changed positively through collage-oriented group art therapy. This suggests that this may be an effective arbitration method to help improve life satisfaction among students.

The limitations of this study and suggestions based on them are fourfold. First, this study had limitations in confirming the continuity of changes in college life and life satisfaction among college students with disabilities as a short-term program for collage-oriented group art therapy. Therefore, in subsequent studies, research on long-term effectiveness is needed by increasing the duration and frequency of research, and more in-depth research on the adaptation to college life and life satisfaction of college students with disabilities needs to be conducted on an ongoing basis. Second, the collage-oriented group art therapy in this study consisted only of experimental groups and was conducted only before and after the collage-oriented group art therapy effect; therefore, a follow-up comparative study on the effectiveness and persistence of collage-oriented group art therapy is necessary. Third, because this study was composed of students with disabilities in only some regions, it is difficult to generalize the results to students with disabilities in other regions. Therefore, a repeated study is needed to verify the effectiveness of collage-oriented group art therapy considering region, number of people, gender balance, and age for various groups of students with disabilities. Finally, the research results suggest that collaboration methods based on the level of college life adaptation can be used as an auxiliary resin capable of predicting college life adaptation levels; therefore, research on Guan and the application of programs in consideration of various obstacles or characteristics of students with disabilities is needed.

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