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A New World beyond boundaries: An exploration of Virtual Reality within Drama Therapeutic sessions by assessing Role Theory & Method in correlation to Avatars for clients displaying anxiety symptoms.

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

MASTERS IN DRAMA THERAPY

In the

Wits School of Arts – Drama for Life

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

Supervisor: Monique Hill

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this research report is my own original work and that it has not previously, whether in its entirety or in part, been submitted to the University of the Witwatersrand or any other for the purpose of a degree. I have used the author-date convention for citation and referencing. Each significant contribution to and quotation in this essay from the work or works of other people has been acknowledged through citation and reference. This reflection is my work. I have not allowed and will not allow anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as their own work. I understand that the University of the Witwatersrand may take disciplinary action against me if there is a belief that this is not my own unaided work or that I failed to acknowledge the source of the ideas or words in my writing. My Ethics Clearance number is WSOA202111002.

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Date: 10 February 2023

Signature: 

Abstract

This paper explored virtual reality as a means of providing a Drama Therapy session, particularly using Role Method and Theory in correlation with the use of avatars. The research was intended for clients displaying anxiety symptoms or those diagnosed with Social Anxiety Disorder and, as a result, are hindered by their symptoms from interacting with others. By engaging with several bodies of text, exploring Drama Therapy within virtual reality, particularly the use of avatars as roles, provided insight into building the client's role repertoire. By looking at the different applications of VR across various fields such as the medical, psychotherapeutic and the rehabilitation field, an account of how VR has helped improve their practice was scrutinised under the lens of how it may be applicable within the Drama Therapeutic space using role theory and method. The paper also looked at the various physiological considerations that go into conducting a VR session.

A 9-step process of VR was highlighted for the therapist to consider when using VR. The 8-step Role Method technique was used to highlight how a hypothetical nine-step Virtual Reality Drama Therapy (VRDT) session could occur. The application of VR from a South African context was scrutinised, taking into account aspects such as the socio-economic, historical and geographical factors that influence VR adoption in various practices.