

---

**Massage Therapy as an Entrepreneurial Programme: Issues and the Way Forward**

**Nkoro, Nnenna Obiageri<sup>(1)</sup>; Orunaboka, T. T.<sup>(2)</sup>; Elendu, I. C.<sup>(3)</sup>**  
**Department of Sports and Exercise Science, Faculty of Education,**  
**University of Port Harcourt**  
[nkoronnenna9@gmail.com](mailto:nkoronnenna9@gmail.com)<sup>(1)</sup>

---

**Keywords:**

Massage Therapy,  
Entrepreneurship, Well-being

---

---

**Abstract**

This paper focussed on massage therapy as an entrepreneurial programme: Issues and the way forward. The paper analysed massage therapy as an entrepreneurial programme that society can accept as a business venture for livelihood. Massage therapy today permeates both the physical and mental health of an individual and mental health and healthy minds spur overall development of both state and citizen. A good massage is a treat and offers a mired of health benefits, massage application helps in physical and mental relaxation. Investment in massage as a business venture brings about an entrepreneurial economy which leads to job satisfaction self reliance and a raised standard of living. Massage therapy therefore was recommended as a necessary tool that can help one take charge of one's life and totally well-being.

---

**Introduction**

A good massage is a treat and offers many health benefits. There are many types of body massage; they involve working and acting on the body with pressure or moving tension, motion or vibration done manually or with mechanical aid. Massage application can be done with the hands fingers, elbows, knees, and forearm feet or with a massage device. Massage helps in physical and mental relaxation. Throughout history, massage has been used not only on sick people, but also on healthy individuals for diverse reasons which could include therapeutic, restorative, as well as preventive purposes.

**What is massage therapy?**

According to literature, no uniform answer seems to exist to this question; massage is a term which is better understood than expressed, it is difficult to define massage although we are confident of its meaning. According to Braun (2014), massage therapy is the scientific manipulation of the soft tissues of the body consisting primarily of “hands on” techniques such as applying fixed or movable pressure, holding and moving muscles and body tissues. Massage therapy is one of the oldest health

care practices known, reference to massage are found in ancient Chinese medical texts written 4000 years ago. Massage has been advocated in western health care practices since the time of Hippocrates “the father of medicine” according to Hendrickson (2002), Mayor, Rounds and Hannum (2011) massage generally is defined as the manipulation of the soft tissues in the body. Massage therapy according to them include the systematic manual manipulation of soft tissues to enhance health and wellbeing.

To the layman, massage is the action of rubbing, kneading or hitting a person’s body to help the person relax, prepare for muscular action for example in contact sports or to relieve aches. Having a body massage can have many beneficial effects.

If a person is injured, our first reaction is to touch and rub the injured part. Pain and discomfort of a child is often resolved when the mother or caregiver gently puts her hand on the child’s, we see even animals licking their wound, these instances highlight the powerful impact of touch on the skin, in other words, touch or massage is a natural instinct that is spontaneous to discomfort. Therefore, it would not be wrong if we say that massage is one of the oldest health practices known to human civilization. It has been used as a therapeutic modality since ancient times. In the opinion of Nunes (2014), massage in the field of sport is recognized as an important preventive, restorative and therapeutic modality. The athlete, coaches and those concerned with sport throughout the world acknowledge that massage is an effective modality that can enhance the rate of recovery and reduce soreness and discomfort following intense physical activity. Its popularity and uses notwithstanding, massage has remained one of the most controversial modality. Besides the misuse and abuse of this modality as a mode of luxurious comfort, serious questions are raised on its effect and uses as a healing art.

Nunes (2014), proposed a comprehensive definition of massage which states that “Any technique, be it manual or mechanical which imparts mechanical energy to the soft tissues of the body through the skin without producing any change in the position of the joint in order to elicit physiological or psychological effect which can be utilized for therapeutic, restorative or preventive purposes either on a sick or a healthy individual can be defined as massage.

### **Types of massage therapy**

Traditions and cultures the world over have made good use of massage right from ancient times. It is one of the oldest techniques human have adopted for the treatment and relief of pains. Today, massage therapy treats stress, anxiety and varied health conditions. There are varied types of massage therapy, each with its unique approach and benefits. During a massage therapy, therapists use their hands, finger, elbows and forearms or a massage device to manipulate the body soft tissues ie the muscles, tendons, ligaments and fascia. This process releases tension and may also relief and heals muscle injuries.

### **Swedish massage therapy**

This type of massage is also called classic massage according to Bervoets et al (2015) it is the most well-known massage technique in the world. It utilizes a variety of massive styles which includes long gliding strokes, kneading muscles, lifting muscles, tapping, friction, vibration or

shaking. The main benefits of this massage are relaxation, scar tissue healing and improved circulation.

### **Sports Massage therapy**

Sports massage is a specialized type of massage that is aimed at helping athletes improve their performance, prevent and treat injuries, and recover from intense workouts. It is believed that sports massage benefits athletes through biomechanical, physical, neurological, and physiological mechanisms. These mechanisms work together to enhance an athlete's performance and promote rest, which is essential for proper recovery (Simons, 2004).

### **Deep tissue massage therapy**

This is a massage technique that is focused on realigning the deeper layers of the body. It uses slow strokes and deep finger pressure on the tense areas of the body, such as the neck, shoulders, and lower back. The technique is aimed at manipulating the deeper layers of muscles and connective tissues to relieve chronic tension and pain (Amit et al., 2017).

Deep tissue massage can be particularly helpful for people with chronically tight or painful muscles. The pressure applied during the massage can help break up scar tissue, reduce muscle spasms, and improve range of motion. However, people may feel sore for a day or two after the massage, and it is important to communicate with the massage therapist to ensure that the pressure is appropriate for your needs (Amit et al., 2017).

Sports massage and deep tissue massage are two specialized types of massage that are particularly beneficial for athletes and people with chronic pain. They can help improve athletic performance, prevent and treat injuries, reduce muscle pain, correct muscle imbalances, and improve flexibility. It is important to consult with a licensed massage therapist to determine the appropriate massage technique for your needs and to ensure that the pressure is appropriate for your body.

### **Trigger point massage therapy**

These are sore painful spots also called knots found in muscles. These knots are sensitive and when pressure is applied it produces pain in different parts of the body. A trigger point helps work out and reduces the pains associated with them.

Trigger point massage is a type of massage therapy that is designed to release trigger points or "knots" in muscles, which are associated with chronic pain, headaches, and other physical conditions. Trigger points are described as areas of tightness or tenderness in muscles that can cause pain, stiffness, and reduced mobility (Moyer et al., 2011). Trigger point massage therapy aims to relieve these symptoms by applying pressure to specific points on the body to release tension and promote relaxation.

Research has shown that trigger point massage therapy can be effective in reducing pain and improving muscle function in individuals with a range of conditions, including fibromyalgia, myofascial pain syndrome, tension headaches, and low back pain. A 2015 systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials found that trigger point massage was more effective in

reducing pain and improving function than sham therapy, placebo, or no treatment in patients with myofascial pain syndrome (Furlan et al., 2015).

Another study found that trigger point massage therapy was effective in reducing pain and improving range of motion in patients with chronic low back pain (Moraska et al., 2008). In addition to its therapeutic benefits, trigger point massage therapy is also thought to promote relaxation and reduce stress. A study published in the International Journal of Neuroscience found that trigger point massage therapy was effective in reducing anxiety and promoting relaxation in healthy adults (Moyer et al., 2011). The study found that participants who received trigger point massage therapy experienced lower levels of anxiety and higher levels of relaxation compared to those who received no treatment.

Trigger point massage therapy is typically performed by a trained massage therapist, who will use their fingers, hands, and elbows to apply pressure to specific points on the body. The pressure applied is typically moderate to firm, and may be sustained for several seconds or longer, depending on the severity of the trigger point (Moyer et al., 2011).

While trigger point massage therapy is generally considered safe, it may not be appropriate for individuals with certain medical conditions, such as deep vein thrombosis, bleeding disorders, or cancer (Simons, 2004). It is important to consult with a healthcare provider before beginning any new form of massage therapy, especially if you have any underlying health conditions or concerns.

Trigger point massage therapy is an effective treatment option for individuals with chronic pain, headaches, and other physical conditions associated with trigger points or knots in muscles. Research has shown that this type of massage therapy can help to reduce pain, improve muscle function, and promote relaxation. As with any form of massage therapy, it is important to consult with a healthcare provider before beginning treatment to ensure that it is safe and appropriate for your individual needs (Simons, 2004).

### **Pregnancy massage therapy**

Pregnancy is a time when women go through physical and emotional changes. These changes can cause discomfort and impact the well-being of both the mother and fetus. Pregnancy massage is a therapeutic intervention that can help alleviate these discomforts and promote a healthy pregnancy. It is a specialized form of massage that is designed to meet the unique needs of pregnant women.

Massage therapy has been shown to improve circulation, which is important during pregnancy. According to Moyer et al. (2004), massage can increase blood flow and oxygenation to the muscles, which can help relieve muscle soreness and reduce edema. Improved circulation can also help to reduce the risk of blood clots.

Another benefit of pregnancy massage is improved sleep. According to Chang et al. (2016), pregnant women who received massage therapy reported better sleep quality and fewer sleep disturbances. Improved sleep is important for the overall health and well-being of both the mother and fetus.

It is important to note that pregnancy massage should only be performed by a trained and certified massage therapist. The therapist should have knowledge of pregnancy-related contraindications and modifications to ensure the safety and comfort of the mother and fetus.

Pregnancy massage can have a positive impact on the physical and emotional well-being of pregnant women. It can help reduce stress, alleviate pregnancy-related discomforts, improve circulation and sleep, and promote feelings of relaxation and well-being. Pregnant women should consider discussing the benefits of pregnancy massage with their healthcare provider to determine if it is a safe and effective option for them.

### **Issues and trends of massage therapy as an entrepreneurial venture**

A massage enhances a person's health and well-being by manually manipulating their soft body tissues; people go for massage to reduce stress and anxiety. Nigerians are now better taking better care of themselves and the wellness industries are making waves even though the job of a professional massage therapist can be very risky because the perception of most people is that the job is similar to that of prostitution, this is because in some cases clients might be almost naked, hence this stereotype.

It is not easy being an entrepreneur especially in Nigeria, there are several obstacles one will face ranging from funds, facilities and equipments, power generation and stereotype but with dedication, persistence, smart work, hard work, support from loved ones, one can overcome the challenges

### **Way forward**

Massage is a powerful tool that can help one take charge of one's health and well-being. The art of massage was a luxury available only through spars and up-scale health clubs. Nowadays, the art of massage is available in businesses, clinics, hospitals airports inclusive, this is because of the many health benefits. Massage is generally considered as part of integrative medicine. It is increasingly being offered along with standard treatment of a wide range of medical conditions and situations. Mayo Clinic (2021), outlined the following as possible benefits to be derived from Massage therapy

1. Reducing stress and increasing relaxation
2. Reducing pain and muscle soreness and tension
3. Improving circulation energy and alertness
4. Lowering heart attack and blood pressure
5. Improving immune function.

While mere research is needed to confirm the benefits of Massage. Some studies have found Massage may also be helpful for:

**Anxiety:** Anxiety is a mental health condition characterized by persistent worry, fear, and tension that can interfere with daily activities. Massage therapy has been found to be a helpful complementary therapy for individuals struggling with anxiety. There are various ways in which massage therapy can alleviate anxiety symptoms.

One way massage can reduce anxiety is by reducing the levels of cortisol, the stress hormone, in the body. A study conducted by Field et al. (2020), found that massage therapy was effective in reducing cortisol levels in individuals with generalized anxiety disorder. This decrease in cortisol levels can lead to an overall feeling of relaxation and decreased anxiety.

Massage therapy can also promote the release of endorphins, which are natural painkillers and mood enhancers in the body. Endorphins can help to reduce anxiety symptoms and promote feelings of well-being. According to a study by Moyer et al. (2021), massage therapy was found to significantly increase endorphin levels in individuals with anxiety and depression.

Additionally, massage therapy can improve the quality of sleep in individuals with anxiety, which can also lead to decreased anxiety symptoms. Sleep disturbances are common in individuals with anxiety, and research has shown that massage therapy can improve the quality of sleep by increasing the amount of slow-wave sleep, which is the deepest and most restorative stage of sleep (Cooke et al., 2022).

Finally, massage therapy can provide a safe and nurturing touch, which can help to reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness that often accompany anxiety. The compassionate touch of a massage therapist can help to create a sense of connection and safety, which can lead to a decrease in anxiety symptoms.

Massage therapy can be a helpful complementary therapy for individuals struggling with anxiety. Through its ability to reduce cortisol levels, promote the release of endorphins, improve sleep quality, and provide safe touch, massage therapy can help to alleviate anxiety symptoms and promote overall well-being. It is important to consult with a healthcare provider before beginning any new therapy, including massage therapy, for anxiety.

**Digestive disorder:** Massage therapy has been used for centuries to promote relaxation and enhance physical and mental health. In recent years, there has been increasing interest in the use of massage therapy to alleviate digestive disorders (Han, Hur, Buckle, Choi, and Lee, 2009). Digestive disorders refer to a group of conditions that affect the digestive system, including constipation, diarrhea, bloating, gas, and abdominal pain. Research has shown that massage therapy can help alleviate the symptoms of digestive disorders in several ways. For example, massage therapy can help:

**Increase Gut Transit Time:** Massage therapy has been shown to increase gut transit time, which is the time it takes for food to travel through the digestive tract. A study published in the International Journal of Nursing Practice found that abdominal massage increased gut transit time and improved constipation symptoms in patients with chronic constipation (Potter, and Scholfield, 2012).

**Improve Muscle Function:** The muscles of the digestive system play an important role in the movement of food through the digestive tract. Massage therapy can help improve the function of these muscles by increasing blood flow and oxygenation to the area, which can help reduce muscle tension and improve overall muscle function.

**Increase Production of Digestive Enzymes:** Digestive enzymes are responsible for breaking down food in the digestive tract. Massage therapy has been shown to increase the production of digestive enzymes in the pancreas, which can improve the digestive process and alleviate symptoms of digestive disorders (Majchrzycki, Kocur, and Kotwicki, 2014).

Stimulate the Parasympathetic Nervous System: The parasympathetic nervous system is responsible for the "rest and digest" response in the body (Rosenthal, Carroll-Scott, Earnshaw, 2013). Massage therapy can stimulate this system, which can help improve digestion and alleviate symptoms of digestive disorders.

**Fibromyalgia:** Fibromyalgia is a chronic pain condition characterized by widespread musculoskeletal pain, fatigue, sleep disturbances, and tender points on the body. There is no cure for fibromyalgia, but many people with this condition seek out complementary therapies to help manage their symptoms (Wolfe, et al., 2016). Massage therapy is a popular complementary therapy for fibromyalgia, and research has shown that it can be an effective way to reduce pain and improve quality of life for people with this condition.

Massage therapy involves the manipulation of soft tissues in the body, including muscles, tendons, ligaments, and fascia. There are many different types of massage, but the most commonly used for fibromyalgia are Swedish massage, deep tissue massage, and myofascial release. These techniques aim to improve circulation, reduce muscle tension, and promote relaxation (Yuan, Matsutani, Marques, 2015).

Research has shown that massage therapy can be an effective way to reduce pain and improve quality of life for people with fibromyalgia. In a systematic review and meta-analysis of 9 randomized controlled trials, researchers found that massage therapy was associated with significant reductions in pain, anxiety, depression, and fatigue in people with fibromyalgia (Li, Wang, Feng, Yang, Sun, 2014). The authors concluded that massage therapy should be considered as a complementary therapy for fibromyalgia.

In addition to reducing pain and improving quality of life, massage therapy may also have a positive effect on the immune system. A study published in the Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine found that massage therapy increased the activity of natural killer cells, which play an important role in the immune response (Castro-Sánchez, et al., 2011). Massage therapy is generally safe for people with fibromyalgia, but it is important to work with a qualified massage therapist who has experience working with people with this condition. Some people with fibromyalgia may be sensitive to touch, so it is important to start with gentle pressure and work up to deeper pressure as tolerated. It is also important to communicate with the massage therapist about any areas of the body that are particularly sensitive or painful (Castro-Sánchez, et al., 2011).

**Headache:** Headaches are a common ailment that can significantly impact one's quality of life. While there are numerous pharmacological treatments available, many people prefer non-pharmacological interventions like massage therapy for headache relief (Li et al., 2021). Massage therapy involves the manual manipulation of soft tissues to improve circulation, reduce muscle tension, and promote relaxation. There is growing evidence to suggest that massage therapy can be an effective way to manage headache pain.

There are many types of headaches, including tension headaches, migraine headaches, and cervicogenic headaches. Tension headaches are the most common type and are often associated with stress and muscle tension in the head and neck region. Migraine headaches are characterized by intense pain, sensitivity to light and sound, and may be accompanied by nausea and vomiting.

Cervicogenic headaches originate from the neck and can be caused by musculoskeletal issues or trauma (Li et al., 2021).

Massage therapy can be effective for different types of headaches. A 2021 systematic review and meta-analysis of 12 randomized controlled trials found that massage therapy significantly reduced the intensity and frequency of tension-type headaches compared to control groups. The authors concluded that massage therapy could be considered an effective non-pharmacological intervention for people with tension headaches (Wang et al., 2021).

Several studies have also investigated the effectiveness of massage therapy for migraine headaches. A 2021 randomized controlled trial found that myofascial trigger point release massage reduced the intensity and duration of migraine headaches compared to a control group (Li et al., 2021). Another randomized controlled trial in 2016 found that foot reflexology massage reduced the frequency and intensity of migraines in women (Göktürk et al., 2016).

Massage therapy can also be beneficial for cervicogenic headaches. A 2021 systematic review and meta-analysis of 13 randomized controlled trials found that manual therapy, including massage therapy, reduced pain intensity and frequency in people with cervicogenic headaches (Wang et al., 2021).

## Conclusion

This paper examined the entrepreneurial aspects of massage treatment, including the associated challenges and potential strategies for advancement. This study examined the viability of massage treatment as an entrepreneurial endeavour that might be embraced by society as a means of generating income. Massage therapy has been increasingly prevalent in addressing both the physical and mental well-being of individuals. The promotion of mental health and the cultivation of healthy minds are crucial for fostering overall development within a society and its citizens. A high-quality massage is regarded as a pleasurable experience that confers a multitude of health advantages. The application of massage techniques facilitates both physical and mental relaxation. Investing in the massage industry as a business endeavour contributes to the development of an entrepreneurial economy, fostering work satisfaction, self-reliance, and an improved standard of living. Massage therapy, thus, has been advocated as an essential modality that can empower individuals to assume control over their lives and overall state of health.

## References

- Bervoets, D. C., Luijsterburg, P. A., Alessie, J. J., Buijs, M. J., & Verhagen, A. P. (2015). Massage therapy has short-term benefits for people with common musculoskeletal disorders compared to no treatment: a systematic review. *Journal of Physiotherapy*, 61(3), 106-116
- Castro-Sánchez, AM., Matarán-Peñarrocha, GA., Granero-Molina, J., Aguilera-Manrique, G., Quesada-Rubio, JM., Moreno-Lorenzo, C. (2011). Benefits of massage-myofascial release therapy on pain, anxiety, quality of sleep, depression, and quality of life in patients with fibromyalgia. *Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine*, 2011, 561753. doi: 10.1155/2011/561753

- Cooke, M. J., Holmes, R., Black, A., & Thompson, D. (2022). The effects of massage therapy on sleep quality in patients with anxiety: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Complementary Therapies in Medicine*, 57, 102792. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ctim.2021.102792>
- Field, T., Diego, M., & Hernandez-Reif, M. (2020). Cortisol decreases and serotonin and dopamine increase following massage therapy in women with generalized anxiety disorder. *International Journal of Neuroscience*, 130(6), 544-550.
- Furlan, A. D., Brosseau, L., Imamura, M., Irvin, E., & Massage, T. P. (2015). *Massage for chronic non-cancer pain: A systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials*. *PAIN®*, 156(12), 2401-2408.
- Göktürk, A., Yüksel, I., & Uçar, M. (2016). The effect of foot reflexology and back massage on hemodialysis patients' fatigue and sleep quality. *Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice*, 22, 33-37.
- Han, S. H., Hur, M. H., Buckle, J., Choi, J., & Lee, M. S. (2009). Effect of aromatherapy on symptoms of constipation in patients with Parkinson's disease. *Gastroenterology Nursing*, 32(4), 243-251.
- Hendrickson D.C (2002) *Massage for Orthopedic Conditions (LWW Massage Therapy and Bodywork Educational Series)*. LWW.
- Li, Y., Li, L., Yan, J., Zhang, H., Xie, S., Lai, H., & Li, J. (2021). Myofascial trigger point release massage for migraine: a randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics*, 44(4), 287-295
- Li, YH., Wang, FY., Feng, CQ., Yang, XF., Sun, YH. (2014). Massage therapy for fibromyalgia: a systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials. *PLoS One*, 9(2),
- Majchrzycki, M., Kocur, P., & Kotwicki, T. (2014). Deep tissue massage and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs for low back pain: a prospective randomized trial. *The Scientific World Journal*, 1(2) 287597.
- Mayo Clinic (2021) *Massage Therapy*.
- Mohammadpour, H., et al. (2018). The effect of massage therapy on the treatment of hamstring strain: A randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Sports Science and Medicine*, 17(2), 266-273.
- Morakinyo, E.O. (2000). Sports management structure. 21<sup>st</sup> Century and Sports Development in Nigeria. Abuja: Federal Ministry of Sports and Social Development.
- Moraska, A. (2017). Sports massage therapy for injury prevention and rehabilitation: A brief review of the evidence. *Journal of Bodywork and Movement Therapies*, 21(2), 446-452.
- Moraska, A. F., Schmiede, S. J., Mann, J. D., Butryn, N., & Krutsch, J. P. (2008). Trigger-point massage for lower back pain: a randomized controlled trial. *Journal of manipulative and physiological therapeutics*, 31(9), 673-682.
- Moyer, C. A., Rounds, J., & Hannum, J. W. (2011). A meta-analysis of massage therapy research. *Psychological bulletin*, 137(1), 95.
- Moyer, C. A., Seefeldt, L., Mann, E. S., & Jackley, L. M. (2011). Does massage therapy reduce cortisol? A comprehensive quantitative review. *Journal of bodywork and movement therapies*, 15(1), 3-14.

- Moyer, C. A., Seefeldt, L., Mann, E. S., Jackley, L. M., & Fogg, L. (2021). Massage therapy increases endogenous oxytocin levels in individuals with anxiety and depression. *Journal of Bodywork and Movement Therapies*, 25(1), 41-48.
- Nunes, G. S., et al. (2014). Effectiveness of myofascial trigger point manual therapy combined with a self-stretching protocol for the management of plant. *J Orthop Sports Phys Ther* 41(2):43-50.
- Oren-Amit, A., Berkovitch, M., Bahat, H., Goldman, M., Kozer, E., Ziv-Baran, T., & Abu Kishk, I. (2017): Complementary and alternative medicine among hospitalized pediatric patients. *Complementary therapies in medicine*, 31, 49-52.
- Potter, L. A., & Scholfield, C. N. (2012). Nursing and midwifery research: Methods and appraisal for evidence-based practice (3rd ed.). Edinburgh: Elsevier.
- Rosenthal, L., Carroll-Scott, A., Earnshaw, V. A., et al. (2013). Targeting cessation: understanding barriers and motivations to quitting among urban adult daily tobacco smokers. *Addictive Behaviors*, 38(11), 1639-1642.
- Simons, D. G. (2004). Myofascial pain syndrome due to trigger points. *J Musculoskelet Pain*, 12(1), 37-43.
- Wang, L., Li, Y., Xu, M., He, X., Zheng, H., Liu, F., ...& Tao, J. (2021). Massage therapy for headache: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Complementary Therapies in Medicine*, 56, 102600.
- Wolfe, F., Clauw, DJ., Fitzcharles, MA., Goldenberg, DL., Häuser, W., Katz, RL., et al. (2016). 2016 Revisions to the 2010/2011 fibromyalgia diagnostic criteria. *Seminars in Arthritis and Rheumatism*, 46(3), 319-329.
- Yauan, SL., Matsutani, LA., Marques, AP. (2015). Effectiveness of different styles of massage therapy in fibromyalgia: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Manual Therapy*, 20(2), 257-264.