



Personality Disorder and Art Therapy: Selected Personality Disorder in the Eket Psychiatric Hospital

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ABSTRACT

This study on personality disorder and therapy takes a look at the possibilities where art (painting) can affect the minds of personality disordered individuals as a form of effective psycho-therapy. The Display and Psychological Response (DPR) is considered apt for the investigation carried out on three categories of personality disorders, ordered on the plane of warm and cool colour scheme paintings involving six (6) patients, two each on the three levels of personality disordered examined. This therapy was used to help patients recognize the non-verbal symbols and metaphors that are communicated in the paintings. The findings revealed that the paintings in the warm colour category were quite un-nerving while the paintings with cool colours proved to be more soothing and preferred. The paper concludes that art therapy anaesthetizes emotional therapy. Art as therapy enables us to share someone else's pains as it communicates joy and happiness as exemplified in the application of cool colour paintings, whereas the warm colour paintings communicates pain and suffering. The paper recommends that a synergistic relationship could be established between the artists and psychiatrist as well as psychologists for an effective therapy for patients with emotionally unstable conditions

INTRODUCTION

Following Ronnie Mather's postulation on the idea of an excursions on the autonomy of the creative imagination, our article seeks to add the effect of creative art on the actions, reactions and effects on the therapy of patients in the Eket Psychiatric Hospital. Eket, Nigeria. Mather claims that the products of the creative process are, in certain specific instances, reducible to the psychological state of the individual that has produced it. He reiterates that the "psychologizing of arts" is reckoned by some to be very bad form, even by those who are somewhat engaged in doing so. Our work takes a measure of divergence here to look at the possibilities where art works effect the minds of the personality disordered individuals. The book of Samuel 18:10 states, 'And it happened on the next day that the distressing spirit from God

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came upon Saul, and he prophesied inside the house. So David played music with his harp as at other times”.

There is hardly a patient who does not in one way or other find his artistic expression the high way to health. Just as drama is a highway to health, so also this research considers art (painting in particular) as a form of effective psychotherapy.

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia defines art therapy as a form of expression, therapy that uses art materials, such as paints, chalk and markers. Arts therapy combines traditional psychotherapeutic theories and techniques with an understanding of the psychological aspects of the creative processes, especially the affective properties of the different art materials.

Wikipedia also enumerates on the purpose of Art Therapy and Art based Assessments such as ‘The Diagnostic Drawing Series’ (DDS), the Mandala Assessment Research Instrument (MARI) and the House – Tree-Person (HTP).

The contribution of this paper is the Display and Psychological Response (DPR). The Display and Psychological Response (DPR) is akin to the Mandala Assessment Research Instrument (MARI) in the choice of colour schemes and differs in the process of selection of the different Mandalas and designs enclosed in geometric shapes. The focus of the Display and Psychological Response (DPR) is the display of painting of different colour shades, warm and cool colours, observing the reaction of the patients of different kinds of personality disorders as affected by the painting. In a paper titled ‘This art piece could heal you’, in *The Nation* Newspaper of August 5, 2009, pg. A4, Ozolua Uhakheme examines the therapeutic power of art in Kent Onah’s paper *Art Therapy: Process and Production*, presented at *Life In My City* Art Festival in Enugu, Nigeria. Uhakheme clearly states that unlike drugs, the therapeutic essence of arts (music, drama, drawing and paintings) can be realized effectively through the creation of a natural environment or activity that can generate healing for the body and soul. He continues to say that art therapy engages the whole being and the healing one gets is not like drugs. “It is an experience beyond drugs, as its curative healing is holistic”

Uhakheme traces the history of colour therapy to the ancient Egyptians who bounced light off prisms and using the seven spectrum colours to heal the body, mind and spirit. Ancient civilization of India and China understood the negative and the positive, the stimulating and the depressing effects of colours on the human body and used them effectively to rejuvenate and heal. Hence, this study focuses on the use of two categories of warm and cool colour scheme paintings on three groups of personality disordered patients to determine their healing potentials or otherwise.

PERSONALITY DISORDERS

A personality disorder is a service disturbance in the characterological constitution and behavioural tendencies of the individual, usually involving

several areas of the personality, and nearly always associated with considerable personal and social disruption. Personality disorder tends to appear in late childhood or adolescence and continues to be manifest into adulthood. There are, however, various general diagnostic guidelines applying to all personality disorders. Some of these disorders include. Schizoid personality Disorders (SPD), which is characterized by a lack of interest in social relationships (a tendency towards solitary lifestyle, secretiveness, and emotional coldness); Emotionally Unstable Personality Disorder (EUPD), which can be grouped into the impulsive and borderline types respectively. This disorder exhibits a marked tendency to act unexpectedly and without consideration of the consequences; marked tendency to quarrelsome behaviour and to conflicts with others, as well as unstable and capricious mood.

Other notable personality disorders include; Avoidant Personality Disorder (APD). This disorder is usually first noticed in early adulthood, and is associated with perceived or actual rejection by parents or peers during childhood. It is characterized by a pervasive pattern of social inhibition, feelings of inadequacy, express sensitivity to negative evaluation and avoidance of social interaction. Whereas the Dependent Personality Disorder (DPD), is a personality disorder that is characterized by a pervasive psychological dependence on other people.

The focus of this discourse is to use the DPR to see the responses and possible therapy for patients with disorders that visual art (painting using warm and cool colour scheme) as therapy could assist or ascertain its effectiveness; in order to improve or maintain mental health and emotional well-being through the themes and what they mean to them. But whereas some of the other expressive therapies utilize the performing arts for expressive purposes, art therapy generally utilizes drawing, painting, sculpture, photography and other forms of visual art expression.

PSYCHOTHERAPY

Psychotherapy is any psychological technique adopted to facilitate positive change in an individual personality, behavioural patterns and adjustment in relationship with others. Coon (1995:568) succinctly puts psychotherapy as the use of psychological methods of treating mentally ill people, rather than the physical methods that may include the use of drugs or surgery.

Psychotherapy encompasses various methods and the techniques all of which are intended to help emotionally disturbed individuals to modify their behaviours, thoughts and emotions in order to achieve personal growth and be able to cope with stress and with other people.(Nasir 2006 :154).

Adebusuyi, quoting Kundu and Tutoo (2002) defines psychotherapy as a method of treatment which aims at helping distressed individuals by influencing and stimulating their emotional process, their evaluation of

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themselves and others, and their method and manner of coping with their problems. Similarly,

Idemudia (2005; 333) defines psychotherapy as the treatment of mental disorders by psychological rather than physical or biological means.

We however, see psychotherapy as a process of investigating the root source of personality disorder, realigning the disorder to order and making the patient gradually regain mental consciousness through the use of psychology stimulated by colour patterns. Cole's (1975; 107) visual therapy, which he describes as a non-verbal way of working through issues, concerns, among others. In a therapeutic setting is apt for our investigation as we use art therapy which allows the patient to work with a tangible product- the paintings which symbolize the patients' inner world. The process of the patient interpreting the themes of the paintings, and by reacting to cool and warm colour patterns, reveals the patients inner emotions ,and opens new vistas to the therapist and the doctor for positive treatment.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this study is the participant observation method. This includes visits to the psychiatric hospital in Eket, and interacting with the psycho therapists and patients in the categories earlier identified. Based on this, certain research questions were formulated to guide the study. The research questions are:

1. How do patients in the three categories of personality disorder react to painting of warm and cool colours?
2. Can the patients in these categories guess the themes of the realistic paintings?
3. How do the colours of the painting affect them psychologically?
4. Is there any improvement in their coordination, after the test?

Phase 2 of the methodology includes:

exposing the paintings to the 3 categories of patients. In the first instance, paintings with warm colours were shown to the patients, while their reactions was observed and recorded.

The paintings were exposed to two (2) patients each in the three categories listed .This was a collaboration with two staff members of the Eket Psychiatric Hospital, a psychiatrist and a psychologist, both of whom were quite cooperative. The friendly disposition of the psychologist towards the patients made it possible for the test to be administered, as they all have personal rapport with the psychologist.

The visual therapy administration was based on two sets of paintings - two warm colours paintings with varied themes;

- (a) "dog in a manger"(Fig. 1)
- (b) "Village at sunset."(Fig.11)

And two cool colour paintings

- (a) "lonely hut". (Fig. iii).

(b) “the river”(Fig. iv)

The method used is similar to the ink block or Rochsach method, but differs in the sense that separate colour charts were not used, but paintings with pictures of scenery. Its close association is with the Mandala Assessment Instrument (MARI), where a person is asked to select a card from a deck with different mandalas; designs enclosed in a geometric shape, and then must choose a colour from a set of coloured cards, the patient is then asked to draw any picture, then guided to draw a specific object, e.g. a ‘tree’. Thereafter, the patients are asked to express their emotions, and interpret what they have done, based on many different factors.

In this case, the Display and Psychological Response (DPR) was used to advance the wellness of the patients. The patients involved were informed of the motive for the therapy to be applied and what our expectations of them will be. This research was conducted purely on the basis of independent practice for academic advancement.

Whereas the MARI involves the patients participating in the practice of drawing, this study involved the patients observing the paintings in the warm and cool colour categories, and making their observations based on the questions put forward by the therapist. The test is based on the feelings of the patients as they perceive the paintings in the warm and cool colour categories. The interpretation of the paintings were based on a combination of many different factors, such as the title of work, colour effect, preferred association with each work and choice of work suitable for display in each patients room. This therapy was used to help patients recognize the nonverbal symbols and metaphors that are communicated in the paintings shown to patients.

ADMINISTRATION AND OBSERVATION

The paintings in warm and cool colours were administered to three categories of patients; viz: Emotionally Unstable, Avoidance Personality Disorders and Schizoids. Two patients were tested in each of the three categories to determine their impression about the paintings they were exposed to, based on their state of insight, hence the need to evaluate the triad of the patients. This serves as personality assessment, as well as an aid in some cognitive functions.

RESULT OF FINDING

The following results recorded were based on our findings after the test have been administered.

A. Emotionally Unstable Patients:

The result reveals that patients in this condition were more comfortable with the cool colour paintings. While one of the patients was unable to identify the

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paintings by theme, the other patient was able to do so, nevertheless, they both showed a more relaxed and calm condition.

The patients showed a lot of indifference to the paintings in the warm category, and felt more agitated as they refused to focus attention on the paintings.

B. Avoidance Personality Or Deficit Disorder Patients

The patients in this category exhibit poor concentration even though they both appreciated the paintings with cool colours, one of the patients showed disdain for the painting – “Lonely Hut” as it has no figures or life and tends to be more isolating. This might not be unconnected with the patient’s isolation at the psychiatric home. When the patients were exposed to the paintings in warm colours, they both exhibited a tendency to avoid completely, the heat of the colours as they felt its assault on their psych. Though able to identify the colours, they did not like the colour scheme.

C. Schizoids

This being a classical case of dopaminergic excess, the patients were more receptive to the cool colour paintings; they could even arrive at sensible guess of the themes and could describe the scenes with near accuracy. This revealed a strong sense of soothing effect. When exposed to paintings with warm colours, they became repulsive as the colours affected their personality. Hence, their preference to cool colour paintings because of hallucinatory tendencies of warm colours. They tend to refuse the warm colour paintings because of their deep rooted medical condition. This is a clear case of photophobic condition.

CONCLUSION

Novitz (1997:247-.250) points out that works of art frequently challenge our everyday understandings of the world because through the means of art, artists have been able to suggest, and even subvert values and beliefs of observers in a way that anaesthetizes emotional response. Similarly, Downs (2008:13) asserts that art begs observers to focus on qualities of the world that people both accidentally and intentionally fail to consider. Art stands to remind us of the beauty and complexity of our world, and this cannot be fully done without communicating pain hence, the choice for use of art in therapy. Using art as a language for personality disorders, one can vanish into another’s afflictions, or emotions. Art as therapy makes it possible for us to share in another’s pain. Art therapy is about sharing someone else’s pain. It is a willingness to take on another’s personality condition, so that they do not have to bear any longer themselves. Art communicates joy and happiness as it soothes our mental condition, same as it communicates pain and suffering

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in such a way that meaning can be found in the most tragic situations as evidence in the administration of warm, and cool colour paintings on psychiatric patients in the three categories identified.

The research effort has shown that a painting could serve multiple purposes while the painter could become a therapist and his painting as tools for therapy. Also Art Therapy would create a platform for collaboration between artists, medical doctors and psychologists in the treatment of patients.

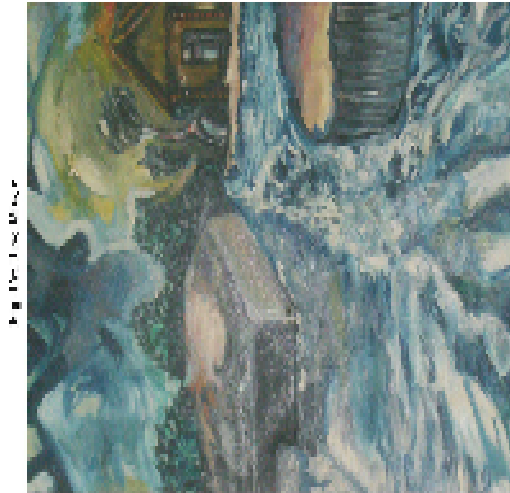
Through the nonverbal symbols and metaphors communicated to patients with personality disorders, this research has been able to help patients develop a better understanding of themselves, with an endowing potential that can lead to patients personal fulfillment, emotional reparation, and transformation. This method of therapy, if pursued to a logical conclusion, can bring about a health-enhancing and mental development experience that can bring about ultimate healing of personality disorders, Especially, this can be achieved when the patients' abode are painted in cool colors, in contrast to the warm colours of yellow cells used to isolate the patients, as observed in this psychiatry. Paintings depicted in cool color schemes are recommended based on the observation of its effects and response of patients. Art therapy purpose is to help human conditions and to provide healing alternatives other than the orthodox methods. It is hereby recommended that psychiatric hospitals collaborate with artists in order to effectively manage patients in the disorders identified, for a curative healing that is holistic.

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Ozolua Ukakheme. This art piece could heal you *The Nation* Newspaper
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