Soothing the soul through the eyes: Art therapy prevalence and practice in the global south.

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Abstract
Socio-cultural and emotional challenges perpetrated on learners have devastating effects on their academic performance if not timeously abetted with counselling. School-based counselling which helps resolve emotional disorders, remove barriers, negotiate power, and resolve injustices is not a common practice in all schools in the global south. This concept paper interrogates the efficacy and prevalence of art therapy as a form of school-based counselling or psychotherapy which integrates visual arts, creative process, interpretation and models of counselling to help and support victims of social and emotional stress. Art therapy is a form of counselling neglected in Zimbabwean and South African schools. This psychotherapeutic practise has a very strong tradition in the global north unlike in the global south albeit the various benefits it has shown in learners, patients, individuals and groups' behavioural change and healing. This paper therefore, contributes to the comparative education body of scholarship demonstrating the efficacy of art therapy and visual engagement in soothing the soul, alleviating emotional stress and anxiety affecting learners' academic and social life in Zimbabwean schools.
Keywords: *Art therapy, counselling, visual interpretation, reflection, critical consciousness.*

1. Introduction

Emotional traumas, stress and depressions harm the learners' performance and emotional state in class if not timely and professionally intervened through therapy (Adoni-Kroyanker, Regev, Snir, Orkibi, & Shakarov, 2019). Schools to date are more responsible for emotional and social well-being of children because they spend most of their waking time there. Through counselling, changes in life, thought; emotion; and behaviour resolve conflict and emotional problems hence promoting effective learning conditions for the learners. Art therapy is a popular form of counselling in Britain and the United States of America which utilises art making and interpretation for psychotherapeutic healing (Cohen-Yatziv & Regev, 2019). Through art creativity and reflective contemplation on the artworks and creation processes, it can increase self-awareness and of others; and the ability to manage stress and experiences of trauma; through art making (Wallace-DiGarbo & Hill, 2006). However, with all these benefits, school-based counselling and particularly art therapy is little known and/or neglected in the global south (Pillay, 2011; (Isis, Bush, Siegel, & Ventura, 2010; Muribwathoho & Shumba, 2006; Nicholas, 1995, 1997). This paper interrogates the efficacy of art therapy; practice, prevalence, and seek alternative pathways for integration into school-based counselling.

1.2 Counselling and art therapy in education

Kabir (2017) defines counselling as a process, in which a counsellor provides challenge, encouragement, guidance, and inspiration to another person or group in how to manage and resolve personal and interpersonal issues, in order to achieve personal aims. School counsellors, enable students to reflect on their personal goals, desires, wishes and resolve personal conflicts through intervention and prevention services (Randick & Dermer, 2013; Diane 2013). Therefore, through counselling clients make new decisions and reformulate new behaviour, feeling, and thought through a deeper exploration of self-emotions. Counselling is administered with clients

diagnosed to be functioning within the "normal range" but require alteration, growth, or situational concerns; or short-term intervention/therapy (Wengrower, 2001). Therapy is the endeavored remediation of a health problem, done after a diagnosis (Adamson, 1984). Art therapy is a psychotherapeutic intervention which originated in the United Kingdom from a painter, Adrian Hill, who recommended artistic work to his fellow inpatients, when he was being treated in a tuberculosis (T.B.) sanatorium (Hill, 1948). The value of art therapy lay in 'completely engrossing the mind as well as the fingers in releasing the creative energy of the frequently inhibited patient' (Hill, 1948: 101–102). To date, patents with physical, mental or emotional problems, and disorders can be treated with art therapy (Ostrowska, 2016; Randick & Dermer, 2013; Wengrower, 2001). Art therapy has both remedial and curative qualities. One can be 'healed', when thy express themselves through art (Adamson, 1984).

Art therapists begin by evaluating the problems faced by their student clients and then plan for individualized or group treatment and intervention in the same fashion as counsellors do (Betts & Deaver, 2019; Deboys, Holttum & Wright, 2016). Art therapists for learners collaborate with teachers and parents, in implementing therapeutic strategies *(ibid)*. Art therapy involves therapeutic use of art-making and viewing exploiting artistic and viewer-response interpretive engagement to evoke individual reflection and expression to solve problems, develop relational skills, behaviour management, stress management, and increase self-esteem as well as critical consciousness (Adoni-Kroyanker, et al. 2019). Art is the medium through which clients in art therapy use to manage their emotions. The images that are created through the creative process provide insight through which transformation evolves (Cohen-Yatziv & Regev, 2019). The therapist depends on the client's symbolic expressions communicated in his or her artwork, and further prompts meaning from the client (Ostrowska, 2016; Kramer, 2000).

Creativity is positively associated with the positive emotional state (Ostrowska, 2016). The creative process helps counsellors to infer into the emotional levels and conditions of the learners. Shemps (2008) posits that, in expressing themselves verbally, clients avoid saying what they think or mean in traditional counselling situations. Art therapy decreases those defences permitting the client to express him or herself freely through an artwork. Art therapy elicits free creative expression, increases self-esteem, and allows self-reflection (Wallace-DiGarbo, & Hill, 2006). Hence, through art therapy clients engage in emotional exploration enabling them to experience themselves better (Betts & Deaver, 2019)

Art therapy incorporates human development and creativity in visual art with counselling models and psychotherapy. Thus, art therapy is a combination of art and psychology. However, art therapists have different roles from art educators. Karkou (2010) delineates that educators and therapist both utilise art materials but art teachers' focus is on "aesthetic and artistic outcomes" based on an art curriculum. Though art therapy may encompass art skills development, the emphasis is on creating expressive images from deep emotions of the client. Thus, it does not exclude the need for more art education expertise to support a variety of artistic

activities engaged as Salonen and Brakel (2020) suggests there is an inevitable need for expert interaction between artists and students during the intervention. Furthermore, learners benefit from the safe, structured, and non-judgmental setting and expert guidance, which helps to unlock concealed emotions and remove obstacles for learning. When learners feel safe, they can easily focus on their goals, and ambitions (Isis et al., 2010).

1.3 Role of visual engagement in art therapy

Engagement with visuality (artistic interpretation and reader-viewer interpretation) is an interpretive process which provokes self-reflection and heightening consciousness (Shemps, 2008). Artwork helps to elucidate the effects of emotional disturbances. Artist engages in encoding meaning during art-making, which is a vital inference of his or her inner thoughts and feelings. Paintings are a means of sharing thoughts with the audience (Ostrowska, 2016). On the other hand, interpretation by the clients of other artworks also gives inferences to their ideologies and psychological conditions. Therefore, engagement with artworks at encoding and decoding levels in art therapeutic process is an indispensable value for the psychotherapist in unlocking the private space of the client's mind (Ostrowska, 2016; Adamson & Timlin, 1990).

Art therapy differs with traditional art classes. In art therapy, the imagined world, feelings, and thoughts are of vital importance to the experience (Shemps, 2008; Diane 2013). The focus in art therapy is on freedom of expression of personal experience, feelings, perceptions, and imagination (Wengrower, 2001). Art therapists use the creative process in visual engagement to assist clients' insight, ability to cope with stress, working through trauma, increase thinking skills, memory and interpersonal relations and achieve self-fulfillment (Ostrowska, 2016, Rubin, 1999). Dax (1953) in Ostrowska (2016) advised that the greatest satisfaction to the patient was in the construction or creative process rather than the displaying of the work. When art therapy clients construct, they are more engaged because they take on a more active role in expressing their emotions (Randick & Dermer, 2013).

1.4 Reflection and emotional intelligence

Emotional regulating is the ultimate aim of counselling much as it is important to all art forms. Several studies show that art can build bridges within individuals and between groups through enhanced self-awareness and emotional control (Bain & Hasio, 2011); Mullaney, 2017). According to Goleman (1998) and Salovey & Mayer (1990), emotional control/intelligence is a platform for self-awareness, problem identification and critical thinking. Emotional intelligence abilities are demonstrated by how individuals negotiate through the challenges of communication in creative work (Goleman, 1990). Goleman *(ibid)* defines emotional intelligence as the ability to be conscious of, control, and express one's emotions, and to handle interpersonal relations prudently and thoughtfully. These intelligences are necessary motivators of creative activity (Betts & Deaver, 2019). Art improves the social and learners' communication skills to help them better engage with their social surroundings. (Mullaney, 2017; Wallace-DiGarbo & Hill, 2006). Engagement with art activities as an artist or viewer provokes heightening emotional awareness and reflection searching deep into the personal domain of reflecting about self, feelings and experiences with others (Deboys, Holttum & Wright, 2016). This can be

achieved by critically contemplating about a work of art and its meaning asking questions like; what does the meaning of the content in an artwork mean to me? or How does the content of an artwork relate to me and my life? If I was a player or character in the artwork, how would I react? Therapeutic intervention depends on assessment results based on the patient's interpretation of symbolic designs as an objective reflection of his or her emotional state.

Wallace-DiGarbo and Hill (2006) investigated on how art therapy affected student's confidence to behave effectively. Their study of Self-Discovery model allowed youth to cooperate with local artists, making murals on the themes of pride, friendship, freedom, and power. A follow-up study carried out after 6 months showed significant improvements in attitude and psychological adjustment due to a combination of reflective academic and art therapy interventions. Wengrower (2001) suggests that, in art therapy, the importance is attached to introspection and anxieties. Therefore, art therapy is an effective tool for resolving emotional challenges, self-expression, self-exploration, restoring self-esteem and promote change (Adoni-Kroyanker, et al., 2019). It provides an opportunity for effective quick access to read into a client's visualised inner emotions and room to purge emotions freely not offered by any other intervention strategy (Shemps, 2008).

1.5 Art therapy and counselling in the Global South and global north

The implementation of school-based counselling and art therapy is not comparable across the globe. There are remarkable differences between the counselling and art therapy practices from the global north and those from the south. Art therapy is widespread in British and American schools because they have interest in art and creativity as a means of expression (Karkou, 2010; Loesl, 2010).

American school counsellor Association (ASCA) founded the basis for the *National Model: A Framework for School Counselling Programs* (ASCA, 2012). The model directs planning, development and implementation of a comprehensive art therapy programme to assist learners. In some American schools, art therapy is part of a blended model of support services encompassing school counselling, and art education (Randick & Dermer 2013). To practice in America, art therapists obtain credentials from the Art Therapy Credentials Board but must also seek state certification to practice in the schools. Some states do not recognize art therapists as qualified to work within the school system without having a teaching certificate or school counsellor certificate. Though the criterion is a standard control measure, it has become a restrictive criterion for availing art therapy in all the states as there are limited qualified personnel.

According to Ostrowska (2016) Edward Adamson (1911–1996) of a British descent was one pioneered art therapy in the UK who worked with patients for over 35 years and published several influential books in art therapy including, Art as Healing in 1984 (Adamson & Timlin, 1990). According to Adamson, patients were pouring out their emotions willingly on paper without much encouragement. Ever since then art therapy has been part of the British counselling practice (Cooper, 2013) Jenkins & Polat (2005: 3) reports that almost three-quarters of secondary schools in England and Wales in 2003-4 claimed to provide therapeutic devices to learners. There is little information documented in literature about the art therapy in the global south but there is some significant evidence of counselling practices. Research studies have shown that historical imbalances in the allocation of materials between blacks and whites led to neglect of counselling services in black African schools

(Muribwathoho & Shumba, 2006; Nicholas, 1997). A study by Muribwathoho and Shumba (2006) indicated that many practitioners professed ignorance about the existence of counselling in the schools. Little has been done to avert the situation even to date. No literature is available for other southern African countries such as Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Zambia and Botswana about school-based counselling services but some efforts have been done to set a psychological services unit in each district in Zimbabwe. Art therapy is unheard of.

Studies have shown that there is a remarkable difference between students from schools where counselling is done and where it is not yet implemented (Shemps, 2008). Learners who go through counselling programs reportedly had higher marks, were better equipped for the future career and college planning, and were more confident about themselves and their school than learners from systems without such support (Lapan, Gysbers, & Sun, 1997).

1.6 Challenges of providing art therapy counselling in the global south

There are several challenges that hinder effective implementation of therapeutic art in the schools. These include, the lack of training and availability of skilled art therapists, provision of a safe, private therapeutic space which maintains confidentiality (Adoni-Kroyanker, et al. 2019). While there are many art teachers available, there are very few trained art therapists with the unique pre-requisite art and psychology skills fused and no designated rooms designated for therapy sessions as well as not having enough equipment and materials *(ibid)*. Muribwathoho and Shumba (2006) report that guidance and counselling programmes were severely ignored due of the historical disparities in the allocation of resources between blacks and whites. There is a low significance in the provision of resources in most schools in the global south which are economically under the third world category. Finding need is also determined by realising the relevance and importance of art therapy. Most African school administrators don't value art therapy and counselling at all. Schools do not maintain the basic components of a clinical setting hence giving challenges to art therapy. The basic components of a clinical setting include arranging appointments, decision, and a special, intimate impression of a specific studio outside the studio space used for learning purposes. Random meetings or ordinary classroom, between the therapist and clients, can undermine the imaginations of exclusivity that children long for during psychotherapeutic interventions. Nicholas (1997) notes that there is poor marketing from programme planners, teachers and school counsellors to learners and their families because there are no facilities to use when counselling students. Therefore, allocating resources, time and space for exclusiveness in public schools is a big challenge.

The presence of an art therapist who is not a regular staff member in a school often creates discomfort with the learners. Shemps (2008) laments that the school or group can alter its organisation, program and activities thus engendering a feeling that the existing curriculum, norm and practices are being threatened. The learner clients can sometimes tell him or her verbatim or by the attitude that s/he is an outsider and a stranger (Betts & Deaver, 2019). This creates a challenge. Occasionally there is an unconscious suspicion and rivalry among members of the school community (Pillay, 2011). However, on the other end, art class teachers and their pupils have a long working relationship forged between them in which transference in terms of art therapy is problematic. A classroom teacher has a strong relationship with some of her pupils. This makes it problematic for the teacher to establish a close relationship [as required in art psychotherapeutic process] or achieve some sort of "success".

In these situations, the art teacher- therapist relationship becomes problematic resulting from unconscious conflicts which may hinder successful therapy (Adoni-Kroyanke, et al., 2019).

Art teachers perceive art therapist's work as privileged compared to the demands of teaching an entire class (Randick & Dermer 2013; Wengrower, 2001). Seldom, therapists seem unable to appreciate the teachers' efforts and work. It is possible that the therapist is caught in her/his terminology and unable to realize his or her integration and change or recognising the intersection between art teaching and art therapy. Loesl (2010) also argues that art therapists may find it difficult to integrate into the school system where art therapy often is part of a broader process involving the school counselling, art therapy, and art education.

1. Conclusion

From the literature interrogated, we conclude that art therapy can play an essential part in school systems by providing counselling and therapeutic services that are active, regulatory, and developmentally based. Art therapy provokes a deep reflection into the subjective inner worlds of feelings, thoughts, beliefs, dreams, and internal conflicts of the learner to provide better learning conditions. Thus, Arts can help learners to manage their emotions exploring an individual's inner space without prejudice of subjectivity. Engagement with visuality through art-making and viewing in art therapy is an interpretive process which provokes self-reflection and heightening consciousness. Releasing the unconscious emotions and thoughts is easily achievable through spontaneous art expression thus art therapy is a much-needed counselling process everywhere than traditional counselling methods.

All school-based counselling programmes in the global south including art therapy were severely neglected by disparity in the allocation of resources between blacks and whites, low priority in the allocation of resources (including qualified counsellors), non-availability of facilities, poor marketing on the part of the programme planners, teachers and school counsellors.

Through formal training, therapists can attain these goals and begin to cooperate with school counsellors at a much more integrated level to meet the social, emotional, and educational needs of all learners.

2. Recommendations for art therapy as school-based counselling

Although guidance and counselling is a non–examinable subject, its importance in the school curricula cannot be overemphasized because learners' school often become distorted with numerous factors, including substance abuse, emotional abuse both at home and school, dysfunctional families, divorce, teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, which come with emotional turbulence. With a proper functioning counselling programme available, learners can cope with these distortions and perform effectively in learning hence we recommend the following strategies for school-based art therapy.

First and foremost, the availability and deployment of trained personnel with pre-requisite training and aptitude for art therapy in all schools are imminent. There are many psychological assessments available that utilize art-making to examine various types of mental functioning which art therapists must know (Wengrower, 2001). These assessment tests include The Diagnostic Drawing Series (DDS), The Mandala Assessment Research

Instrument (MARI) House–Tree–Person (HTP) and Road drawing. For instance, researcher Florence Goodenough created a drawing test in 1926, to measure the family relational intelligence in children called the Draw–A–Man Test (Ostrowska (2016). Interpreting the Draw-A-Man Test requires training too to evaluate the test. The more details a child incorporated into the drawing, the more intelligent they were (Ostrowska (2016:201). A diagnosis precedes intervention, so knowledge and training in administering of these assessment tests are paramount in providing effective art therapy.

Following proper and effective diagnosis should be well-structured, knowledgeable intervention art therapy strategies. Hanes (2008) suggests that the road drawing is both an assessment and therapeutic intervention. This is a projective assessment used to create a graphic representation of the person's "road of life." With the potential to elicit spontaneous imagery that represents the client's origins, the history of his or her life process, experiences to date, and intent for the future - *(ibid)*. Outside the road drawing, an art therapist can plan intervention strategies around psychodynamics, humanist and person-centred theories. These models help solve conflicts and problems related to families and background, social skills training, behaviour management and personality development issues. There is need for reconceptualization regarding the integration of art therapist and art teachers arriving at a general understanding of the partnership between them and practice focusing on the strategies and tactics involved in a successful partnership of this kind (Wengrower, 2001). There is need for change and flexibility is vital to both the school community and art therapists, and would benefit their mutual encounter. In-service training for existing art teachers is recommended as quick solutions to art therapists shortages. We believe that if effectively implemented, art therapy can assist learners in schools who are emotionally disturbed, socially maladjusted, mentally disabled, and talented students, as well as regular education students to obtain optimum benefits of their school life and experiences.

Data availability statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.This is because this manuscript is based on review of literature as cited intext and in the references section

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