

FACILITATORY ROLES OF ART THERAPY ON VICTIMS OF ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CRISES

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Abstract

This study attempted to examine how the victims of ethno-religious crises in Nigeria, especially children who are either orphans or have lost either of the parents during religious riots, would respond through creative activities using art media. Specifically, the objectives were to: find out the roles of art therapy in reducing trauma, depression, anger, stress, or other emotional related cases. The Study was carried out at Stephen Centre Children Home Ogun State, South West, Nigeria. Purposive or judgemental sampling was used by the researcher. All children in the Centre's boarding are from the crises ridden zones of the country and have lost their fathers, while few have lost both father and mother. The main research design used for the study was experimental. 50 subjects, distributed over junior secondary class one to senior secondary class 2. The data were collected through practical (creative) process measuring test (PPMT). With the help of 4 research assistants 2 caregivers (who provided records and information) and 1 psychologist, the researcher was able to administer the research instrument to collect the data. During the art therapy sessions, creative processes were observed while children interact with varieties of art materials ranging from colours to clay based on predetermined themes. Products were mounted for discussion and interaction. The children were able to draw and tell the stories of their painful incidences, looked beyond their predicaments to visualize positive and hopeful future. There was an average progress for 56% of the children in second term examination than first term examination.

Keywords: Vulnerable, Ethnic cleansing, Ethno-religious, Therapeutic, Adoptive parent, Foster Parent, NSC, Gnome, Emotional abuse, Physical abuse and Trauma.

Introduction

Religious intolerance has become more violent and bloody with more devastating results in Nigeria. Apart from loss of property and lives, the number of orphans and vulnerable children are on the increase. Uneze (2010) asserted that Nigeria has 17.5 million orphans and vulnerable, 7.3 million are orphaned by HIV/AIDS.

The vulnerability of these fatherless and orphans become worse when the reality of warmth and care from beloved ones are not forthcoming. They are much more likely to be unhappy, lonely, frustrated and angry than children who are secure in their families (Adenle and Oyeoku 2014). This painful thoughts leading to depression and anger as they grow up in life is referred to as Trauma. Trauma can be defined as either a physical or psychological injury, which is usually the result of an extremely life-threatening or stressful situation Herman (1998)).

He further explains that trauma can be a near-death experience or a consequence of witnessing the death, injury, treats to another person or family member. This affirms that the victims (children) who have been physically and emotionally abused are passing through untold trauma. If these children are taken through art therapy session, would there be a significant difference?

A male orphan was reported by his aunt (class teacher) to have vowed: "when I grow up I will kill those people that killed my parents". This is an indication that there was welling up of anger borne out of trauma whenever he remembers the ugly incidence that brought him thus far. This shows that he has the plan to avenge his parent's death in future and that will re- open the undesired ethno-religious crisis. Such children may enjoy free education, clothing, food and shelter, but such depressive mood occasioned by anger is a major psychiatric problem. This view is supported by Idu-Osawe (2008), he submitted that "it is estimated that more than 330 million people worldwide suffer from serious depression, a condition characterized by overwhelming sadness, anger and loss of pleasure in everyday activities". Therefore the effect of sadness, psychological depression or trauma among the children and youth who have passed through ethno-religious crisis cannot be over-emphasized. A lot of efforts are put in place by government, NGO's, religious bodies to help victims each time disaster occurs which soon disappeared perhaps because of continuous emotional and psychological vacuums unfilled. The adoptive parents or caregivers might give the necessary care to make these children happy, but if psychotherapy attention is added as treatment, it could appeal to their affective domain and ease off depressions and related complications. This study was carried out at a centre for "Nigeria Special Children" known as Stephen Centre International (SCI) Abeokuta.

The objectives of the study are to:

- Examine how Art activities serve as tools for reducing trauma, stress, depression, emotional cases and health related problems.
- Find out whether art therapy is effective in the self-healing process of children passing through difficult situations.

A Brief of Ethno-Religious Clashes in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

The series of violent confrontation being witnessed at present is a demonstration of the fundamental problem of religion that has created acute insecurity in the land. Generally speaking, communal and religious clashes which now occur at frequent intervals in Nigeria, especially during this democratic regime are not novel. A good case of ethnic crises similar to what obtained in the pre-Islamic Arabian land was cited by Albert (2005), that there was a scuffle between an Igbo trader, Mr Arthur Nwakwo, and a Fulani security guard, Mallam Abubakar Abdu, both operating at the Sabongari Kano market, led to community fracas as both were supported by their kinsmen, and more than thirty people were killed as a result of the incident. This explains why ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria are always devastating in their effects. These clashes have claimed thousands of lives, sent some families into extinction, maimed many and resulted to loss of valuable properties (Umejesi 2010).

In the recent times (2009-2012) the pattern of these attacks have changed to the use of guns and explosives in villages/communities, Churches or crowded places, car bombings and suicide bombings. It is however noted on a sad note that Boko Haram made news headlines every day, bombing public places such as markets, police stations, security vehicles, targeting uniformed men and destroying lives and properties on daily basis sparing no one with the sole aim of leading the

country into adopting Sharia law. In most of these ethno-religious crisis, the killings were selective because the rioters face the opposite religion, killing only the father or both parents sometimes kill the senior ones in the family, burn their house leaving the lucky children to their fate. In recent times the killings have taken further dimension, bombs and explosives are used indiscriminately all over the northern part of Nigeria and some areas in the south. These crises have become a recurring decimal, and up till now it could not be said that a lasting solution is at hand.

Therapy

The word “therapy” has its origin from Greek word *Therapies*, which means “to be attentive to”, This presupposes that a skilled professional on one hand is attending to an individual on the other hand that is making the art. Creative expression has been used for healing throughout history. One of the earliest healings happened in the Holy Bible 1 Sam. 16:23. “And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul that David took a harp, and played with his hand so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him”. This was done repeatedly by David to get King Saul out of his psychiatric problem. British Association of Art Therapists (BAAT) (2011) reported that art history documents the parallels between art and art therapy. It says long before there was a discipline of “art therapy, “artists explained themselves with their inner images as references to reality. Some of the most famous of them are: Francisco de Goya, Edvard Munch and, in a later time, Frieda Kahlo (San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Munch Museum and Voorhies 2000).

Gombrich (1983) refers to art therapy as a method that makes use of artistic creation to bring sub conscious problems to life. While AATA (2010) refers to it “art therapy as a mental health profession that uses the creative process of art making to improve and enhance the physical, mental and emotional well-being of individuals of all ages. Malchodi (2006), Ganim (1999), refer to this as the belief in the inherent healing power of the creative process of art making. Natural Standard (2011) also affirms that art therapy is based on the principle that creative self expression is inherently healing and life enhancing. Art expression, especially drawing, provides a mean of exposure that assists in constructing and organising a traumatic narrative. Fausek (1997), corroborates this that art therapy is based on assumption that visual symbols and images are the most accessible and natural form of communication to the human experience. It is based on the belief that the creative process involved in artistic self-expression helps people to resolve conflicts and problems, develop interpersonal skills, manage behaviour, reduce stress, increase self-esteem, self- awareness and achieve insight.

Therefore, art therapy is a process that uses drawing ink, crayons, pastel, charcoal colours, clay, fabrics, strings, wood, paper, adhesives, glazes, canvas, found and natural items (like shells, leaves and seeds etc) as means of assessment and treatment. Although art therapists have generated many definitions of art therapy, most of them fall into one or two general categories based on the **two** important factors to investigation and interpretation of drawing tests.

Canalside View (2012), quote Pablo Picasso referring to art therapy said “Art washes from the soul the dust of everyday life” Everyone has the dust of daily tasks blinding our souls. According to a report from *youtube* (2011), a series of pioneering brain-mapping experiments was conducted by Semir Zeki, Professor of Neurobiology and Neuroaesthetics at University College London. It revealed that viewing art can give just as much pleasure as being in love. When we look at things which we consider to be beautiful, the activity in the pleasure and reward centres of the brain goes up. There is a lot of dopamine, which is also known as a feel-good neurotransmitter in these areas. Basically, the

feel-good centres are being stimulated. The brain reacts in a similar way whether we are in love or whether we are looking at beautiful art work.

Methodology

Experimental research design was used this is because the design is appropriate for the study. A Practical Process Measuring test (PPMT) in which the children were taken through a series of creative clinical sessions. This study was carried out at a centre for "Nigeria Special Children" called Stephen Centre International Abeokuta, South West Nigeria an arm of Voice of Christian Martyrs Nigeria. Ethical approval was given following written application seeking for permission to conduct research in the institution.

Table 1: Distribution of the Study Sample

Sample	Student Population	NSC Selection	Community children
JSS 1	38	10	16
JSS 2	44	16	21
JSS3	50	10	31
SS1	44	10	19
SS2	38	4	25
TOTAL	214	50	112

Source: Author's Field work; October 2012

The sample for the study consisted of 5 arms of the secondary school, Junior Secondary class 1 to 3 and senior secondary 1 to 2. A total subject of 50 was sampled. There are a total number of 5 classes available for sampling. Senior Secondary School 3 were preparing for their final examination, they were not part of the sampling. Because of the nature of the study, the participants enthusiastically volunteered to participate. Verbal consent was obtained from children through explanation, but few dropped along the line through their absence for consecutive times.

Table 2: Population for Students Sampling

Classes	Stratified sample selected	Community children	Total No
JSS 1	22	16	38
JSS2	23	21	44
JSS 3	19	31	50
SSS1	25	19	44

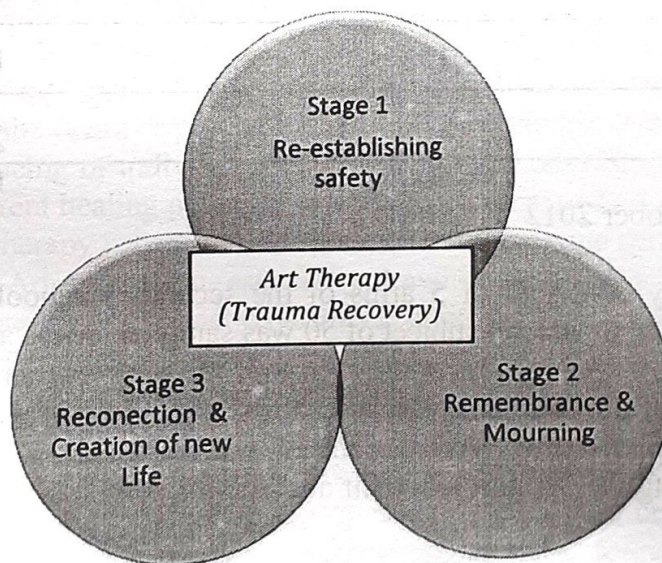
SSS 2	13	25	38
TOTAL	102	112	214

Source: Author's Field work; October 2012

Stratified samples were the population of children- victims of ethno-religious crises in boarding house, while community children were day- children from the nearby communities. The study relied on two of the three stages of theories of trauma and recovery from trauma to present the data collected. The first stage- re-establishing safety was done through discussion, interaction and questionnaire to give the victims assurance that no harm or negative intension would ensue. According to Herman (1998), the second and third stages of the theory are followed strictly during the clinical sessions. The findings were discussed under these main stages.

- Remembrance and mourning: Remembrance and mourning is referred to as trauma a narrative that is telling the story of the trauma which must include detailed images and emotions related to the traumatic experience.
- Reconnection with daily life and creation of new self.

Herman's Model of Trauma and Recovery From Trauma



The presentation of paintings and drawings below revealed the Practical (creative) Processes Measuring Test (PPMT) through which the researcher engaged the children. The children responded to different “**themes**” posed to them during each of the therapy session.

The few works presented below represents clinical sessions called Practical Process Measuring Test of 50 respondents.

Theme 1: Painful Memories

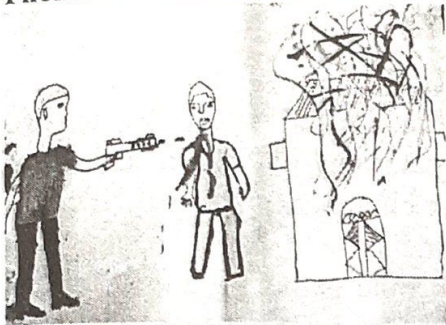


Fig. 1 G G.'s Painful incident

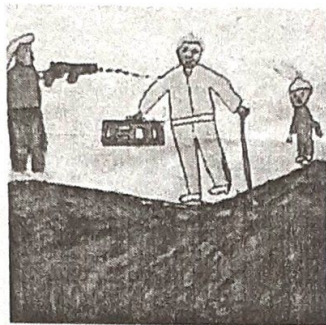


Fig. 2: BE's Painful incident

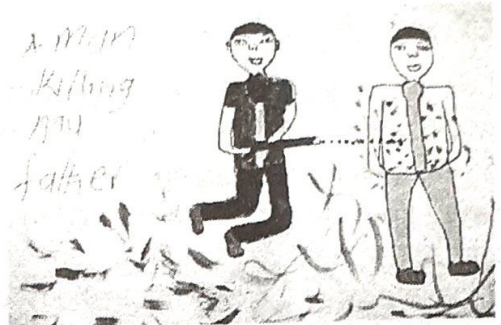


Fig. 3: JP's Painful incident

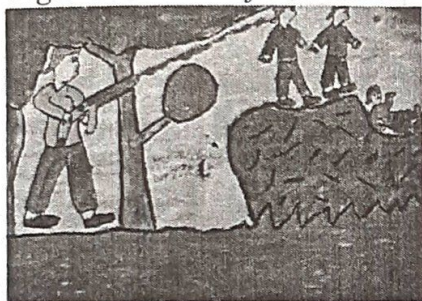


Fig. 4: PY's Painful incident



Fig. 5: MI's Painful incident



Fig. 6: GM's Painful incident

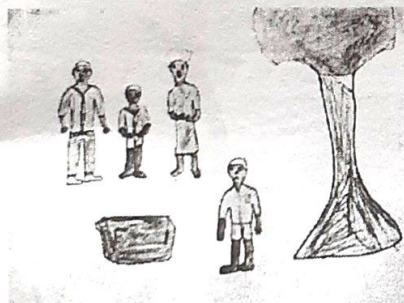


Fig. 7: YG's Painful incidents

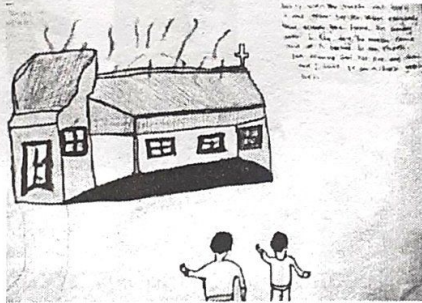


Fig. 8: BB's Painful incident

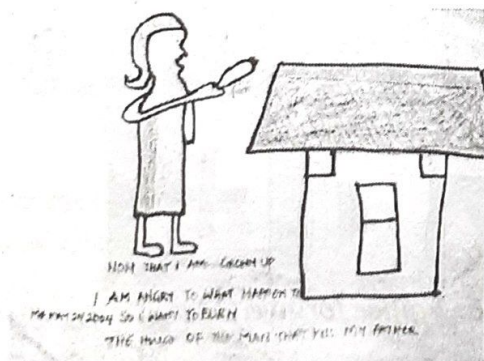


Fig. 9: Deborah's revenge mission

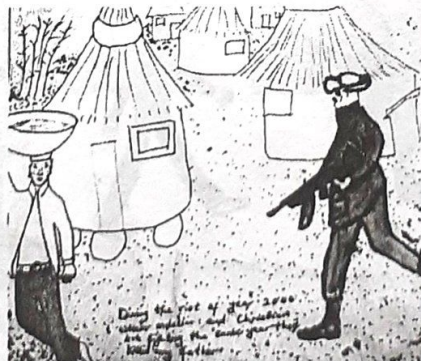
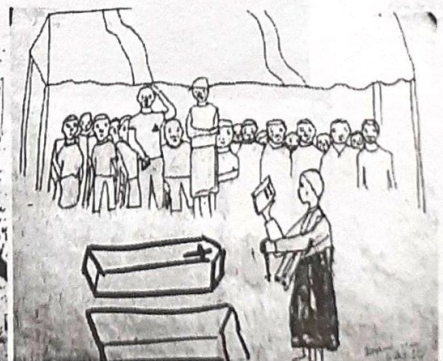


Fig. 10: MI's Painful memory



Themes 1: Discussions

Figures 1- 10 were samples of works done by the respondents while reacting to themes like: draw whatever comes to your mind; something that happened to you but wished it never happen and

Figures 1- 10 were samples of works done by the respondents while reacting to themes like: draw whatever comes to your mind; something that happened to you but wished it never happen and painful incidents that happen to my family. The themes revealed paintings of painful incidences showing how either the father, a relative or friend was killed; houses or church set on fire, rioters with fire arms, rampage, escaping from snake bite or fire disaster, accidents, evil pasts, maimed and headless body or head without body on the ground before rioters, people gathering around coffin, burial of beloved ones, armed robbery attack and juvenile delinquent. These paintings were narratives such that they included detailed images and emotions relating to what they have either personally or their family passed through. Discussing with each of the children during these sessions confirmed the position of Herman (1998) and Chery (2011), that telling the narrative story brings about a sense of loss, followed by grief, but after working through this stage they are able to come to term with the traumatic event.

Theme 2: Forgiveness and Love



Fig.11: GG. Forgiving offender

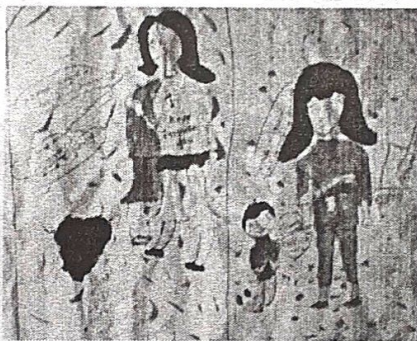


Fig.12: Reconciliation and forgiveness

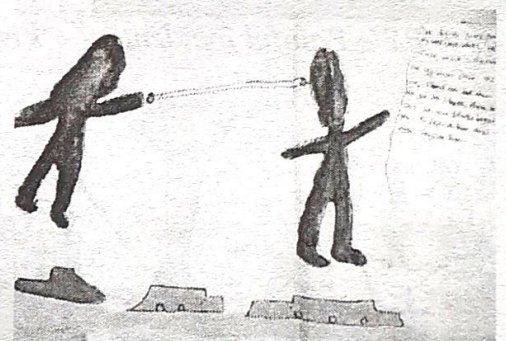


Fig. 13: Forgiveness

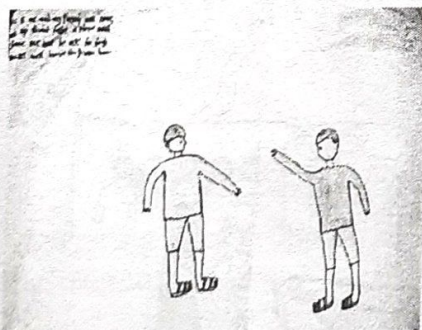


Fig.14: Friendship



Fig.15: Forgiveness

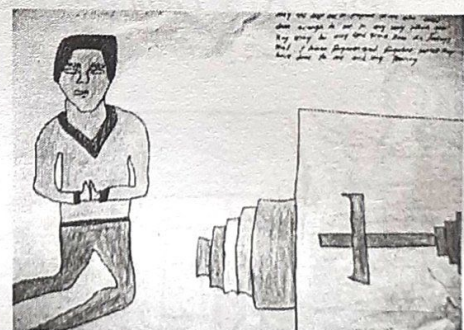


Fig.16: Father forgive them

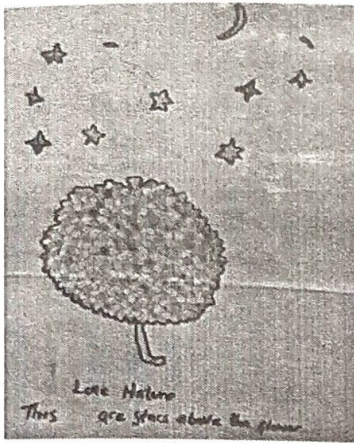


Fig.17: Love nature



Fig. 18: Prize-giving day

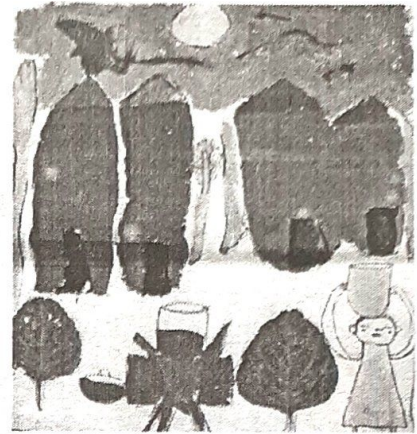


Fig. 19: My Village

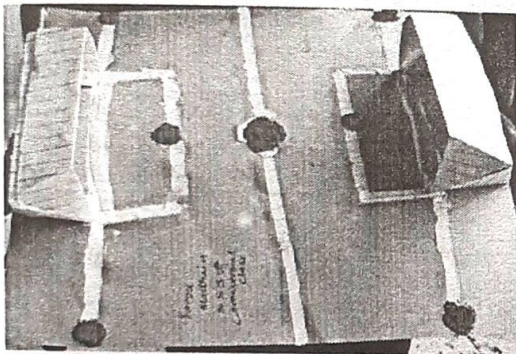


Fig.20: Football arena



Fig.21: My family



Fig.22: Mother's care

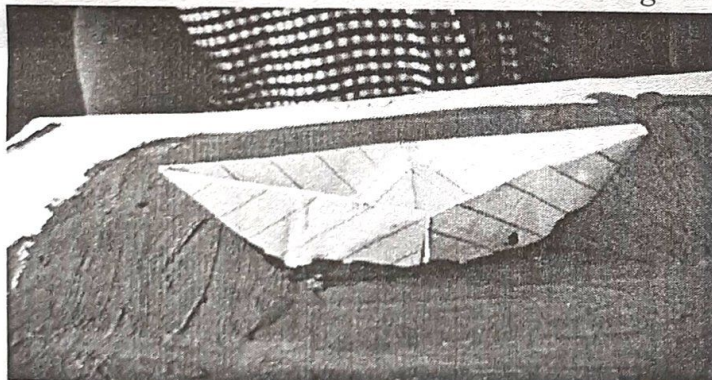


Fig.23: A boat on the sea

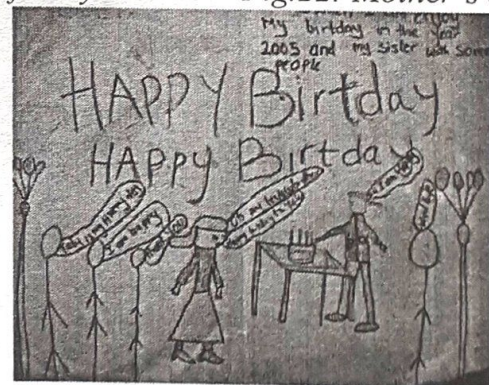


Fig.24: BE's birthday

Themes 2 and 3:

Discussions

In figures 11- 24, respondents responded to themes like: draw what you like, forgiving my offenders, happiest day, who/what do you love most. These themes were given to serve as link between mourning and reconnection with daily life, to serve a neutral platform from which they could break from the past and imagine a new self. These creative sessions show painting of landscape, village scenes, friendship, forgiving offenders/plea for forgiveness, houses, prize giving day, birthday, father's house, uncle's car, football field, penalty kick out, family pictures, presentation of gift, mother getting me ready for school, mother before the minor, excitement, my house that uncle bought

for me, my dream, empty village and praying for forgiveness at the altar, which is the creation of a new self.

Theme 4: Love for My Country

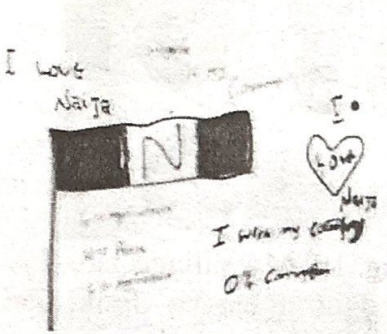


Fig.25: KM's wish for his country



Fig.26: Message to my Country



Fig.27: G. G' wish for his Country.

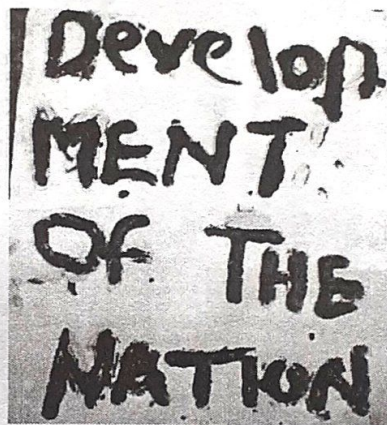


Fig.28: GS's wish for his Country

Theme 5: My Wish

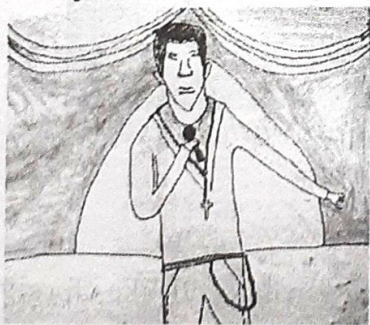


Fig.29: BL's wish

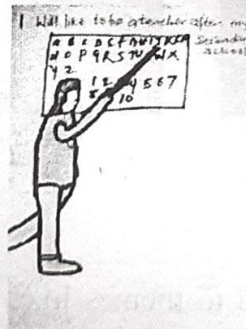


Fig.30: GS's wishes

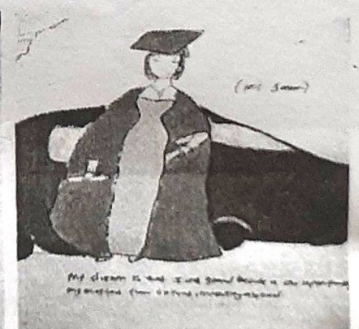
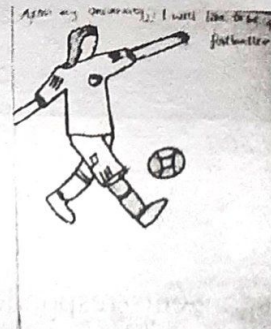


Fig.31: AC's wishes

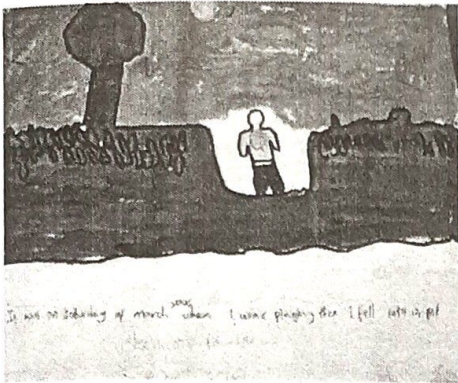


Fig.32: My dream

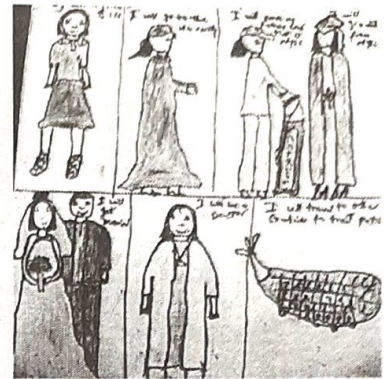
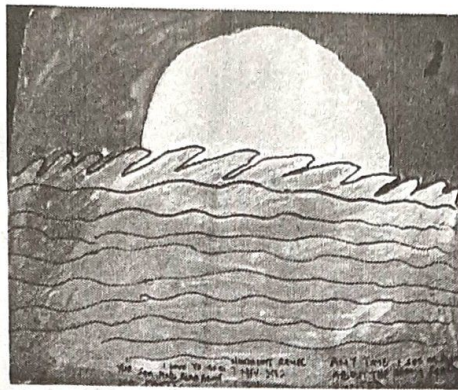


Fig.33 BB's wishes

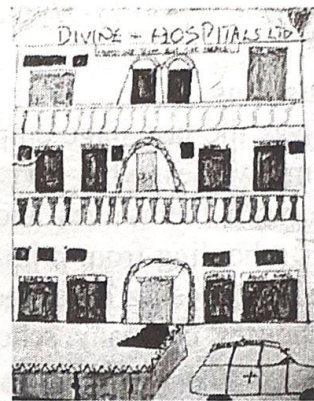
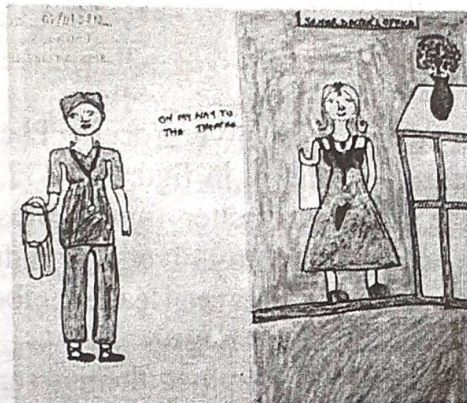
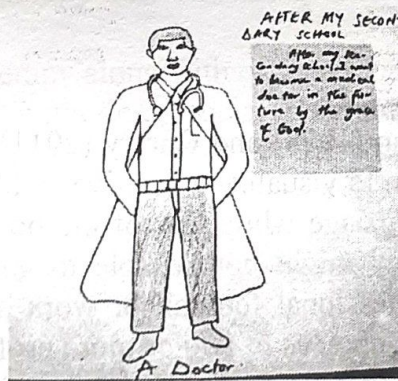


Fig.34: LE's wishes



AFTER MY SECOND-
ARY SCHOOL
After my second-
ary school I want
to become a medical
doctor in the future
by the grace
of God.

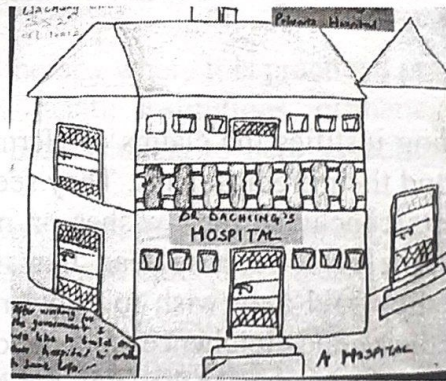


Fig. 35: DC's wishes

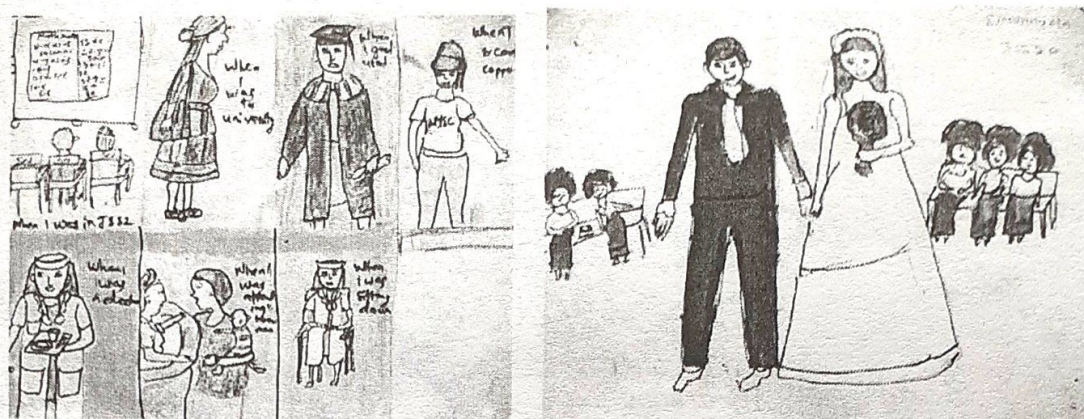


Fig.36: UE's wishes

Theme 4 and 5: Discussions

Reconnection was the last stage employed in the creative process. The children were given themes on 4 stages of my wishes, what I wish for my country. In figure 25- 37, the children painted scenes that show they wish themselves and the country a better future. Most of them presented different stages of their schooling from primary to secondary to university graduation, youth service year, picture of the school, posing as accountant, doctor, lawyer, teacher, footballer, a musician, nurse, pastor, personal houses, company, school, cars, pilot, marriage.

These revealing creative works done based on predetermined themes serve as open windows through which a therapist or observers could have access into the ordeals they passed through or their intentions. The children were engaged at appointed days between 4-6pm for three consecutive months.

Findings

The finding justifies the claims of Herman (1998) and Cherry (2011), all the children were able to look beyond their predicaments. They seem to visualize a positive and hopeful future. Almost all girl participants concluded their wishes on marriage while few of the boy participants also did. Although few of the boys exercise fear, that they might not be able to go directly to university because of fund they said they wish to play professional football or work as post man then raise money to further their education hence some made choices of two or more professions. When pressed further they said if there is sponsor they will not hesitate to further their education.

Through creative sessions, interaction and verbal discussion about their works reveal that there are noticeable benefits that emerge for the children:

- The process of art therapy permitted the use of visual expressions to externalize emotions. This allowed the children to resolve conflicts that arose.
- Creating art increased the children, self-worth and confidence, alleviated feelings of rejection depression and trauma.
- Engaging in art promoted self disclosure; it encouraged the children to express themselves in an acceptable form.
- The creative exercise provided safe environment to bring to clarity personal issues.
- The children also used problem solving skills when given a theme to work on materials.

Conclusion and Recommendations

- The children were able to draw and tell the stories of their painful incidences, a stage called “mourning” by Herman called.
- The children were able to look beyond their predicaments to visualize positive and hopeful future.
- The creative sessions helped them to alleviate feelings of rejection and depression.
- The sessions allowed them to use visual expression to externalise emotions, which allowed them to resolve internal struggles. For instance, “I wish my country 0% corruption”, “development of the nation”, “stop the violence” were revealing posters.

Although there are other forms of therapy used in medical circle, the closer one to art therapy is vocational or occupational therapy department (OTD) in Neuro-psychiatry. Occupational therapy focuses on promoting health through acquisition of skills to enable the disabled individual to resume productive employment. This is not the same with art therapy, which informed why it is still not practiced in Nigeria. Exposing victims of any kind, prison inmates, patients and individuals with psychological and emotional related cases to art therapy is gaining ground in Britain, America and other parts of the world. Nigeria with a growing record of crises should adopt additional means of aiding victims of any occurrence than financial and material interventions.

Therefore government should:

- Encourage and train people on art therapy. Interested people in medical, psychology and creative art could be trained professionally.
- Introduce art therapy into university educational system and gazette the practice of art therapy.
- Introduce art therapy along with occupational therapy where it is practiced presently.
- Authorities of motherless, social institution, health institutions, orphanages and prisons should allow the practice of art therapy by professionals to help in complementing other forms of care given to them.
- Individuals and parents should also show interest in art therapy, knowing that interacting with art media helps in reparation of broken mind stress and emotional related experiences.

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