

# Therapeutic Value of Painting and Human Psychology in Nigeria

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## Abstract

The study examines the therapeutic value of painting and human psychology in Nigeria and it is intended to identify the emotional qualities derived from paintings through identification of the respondents' socio-economic characteristics, motivating factors, perception, benefits derived from paintings and to investigate the constraints to procurement of paintings. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to select respondents who have experienced emotional trauma, physical violence, domestic abuse, anxiety and depression from hospitals, private mental health offices, schools and community organization in Nigeria. The findings show that significant relationships exist between the selected socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and the perception of the respondents to the therapeutic value of painting. It was discovered that beauty was the major motivating factor to therapeutic value of painting and human psychology (WMS 2.6), while majority of the respondents have encountered one form of physical violence or the other (90.9%) and mood elevation was the principal perception factor (WMS 3.90). Improved aesthetic value (61.8%) was derived by the respondent and finance was the major constraint to procurement of painting (60%). The paper concludes that a colourful and calming environment encourage patient to express themselves and using various forms of creative art could help divert patient attention from their pains and respond to treatment better.

**Keywords:** Art therapy; Painting; Human psychology

## Introduction

Therapeutic value has the healing powers to restore psychological problem. It is a response used medically after a recovery from illness and diseases. It is useful to restore and improve person's health rather than preventing illness. It has a positive effect on the body or mind. There are various types of therapy in handling ailment of patients. Examples of such therapy includes Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), this invariably treats dysfunctional thinking that leads to maladaptive behaviours, mental illness and negative emotion. These can be achieved through diversionary activities such as play, hope counseling, listening to music, watching T.V. programmes and art. For example, it helps children with emotional behavioural problems; therapies using play have been developed by many therapists. Using play and play materials, children can be observed as they freely play. It is believed that children live through work out their anxieties by making connections with play experiences. Also, hope for HIV/AIDS affected people make them live a normal life and bring longevity to their life experiences. Music brings much joy and happiness to people of all ages. As it turns out, music is valuable as a therapy as well. However, music therapy is used by qualified professionals to effect positive changes in the psychological, physical, cognitive or social functioning of individuals who have health challenges.

In art therapy, the aesthetic value of the art collection was the initial goal that was achieved and surpassed by the realization of the additional therapeutic value it offers to patients, families, visitors and associates. Family members can relieve stress by reflecting on the artwork displayed in their sitting and bedroom. Art therapists have generated many specific definitions of art therapy, but most of them fall into one of two general categories. The first involves a belief in the

inherent healing power of the creative process of art making. This view embraces the idea that the process of making arts is therapeutic [1]. Art making is seen as an opportunity to express one's self imaginatively, authentically, and spontaneously, an experience that, over time, can lead to personal fulfillment, emotional reparation, and recovery [2]. The second definition of art therapy is based on the idea that art is a means of symbolic communication. This approach, often referred to as art psychotherapy, emphasizes the products of art such as painting and other art forms to solve communication issues, emotions, and conflicts. Artworks may serve practical functions, in addition to their decorative value. It can be defined by purposeful, creative interpretations of limitless concepts or ideas in order to communicate something to another person [3]. Artworks can be explicitly made for this purpose or interpreted on the basis of images or objects and is something that stimulates an individual's thoughts, emotions, beliefs or ideas through the senses. It is also an expression of ideas and it can take many different forms and serve many different purposes which include therapeutic value.

In other hand, human psychology is the science of behavior and mind, including conscious and unconscious phenomena, as well as feeling and thought [4]. It is an academic discipline of immense scope and diverse interests that, when taken together; seek an understanding of the emergent properties of brains and all the variety of epiphenomena they manifest. Human psychology in this study reflects life experience and all psychological processes that have perception, cognition, mental alertness, emotional stability and motivational qualities, which are diversionary and reflected in the composition of every painting.

An art therapist may use a variety of art forms including drawing, painting, sculpture and others with clients ranging from young and old. Clients who have experienced emotional trauma, physical

violence, domestic abuse, anxiety, depression and other psychological issues can benefit from expressing themselves creatively and being exposed to a work of art. Hospitals, private mental health offices, schools and community organizations are all possible settings where art therapy services may be available. In art medicine fellowship in Nigeria, some experiences were shared on how art has helped solved some emotional trauma and other related illness [5]. Painting can be a versatile form of therapy that can help people of all ages to solve different degrees of psychological problems, it can deal with strong emotions, increase self-awareness and self-worth and decrease stress and anxiety. For example, a patient was diagnosed with an illness which was depressing, when he engaged himself in the art of drawing; he forgot the pain and the stress were reduced [5]. Yinka Ayefele, a popular Nigerian music producer and gospel singer, who was involved in an automobile accident which damaged his spinal cord and confined him to a wheelchair, also said recently that his music served therapeutic value to him, that he feels relief of the pains in his hip whenever he engages in singing. Also, some Sickle cell patients that engage in the painting of the Hope Towers installed inside the Sickle Cell Foundation office, Yaba, Lagos also admit that they were able to manage the crisis and pain of treatment that is peculiar to sickle cell warriors [5]. Also, at the drug rehabilitation unit of Federal Neuro-Psychiatric Hospital, Yaba, the excitement was high with over 50 patients actively participated in the creative and expressive arts including painting, singing, writing and even spoken word poetry. This helped in reducing anxiety and pains associated with different degrees illness.

Furthermore, client may enjoy art therapeutic services when they visit art gallery, museum, exhibition venues and other centers where artworks are displayed. Psychological content in painting is more of the activities of the mind, which addresses whether the painting actually speaks the mind of the audience or not. The psychology of painting is however a fascinating field of study as it analyses the core of creativity and provides explanation for the mental processes of the artist in particular and the creative individual in general. Yet interestingly, it is not just limited to understanding the mental process of the artist but also the mental processes involved in perceiving the art. Thus, a psychology of painting and by extension any other art form provides explanation and understanding of the phenomena of creativity, the mental processes of the artist, as well as the thought processes of the patient. Art therapy is an integrative mental health profession that combines knowledge and understanding of human development and psychological theories and techniques with visual arts and the creative process to improve a unique approach for helping clients improve psychological health, cognitive abilities and sensory-motor. Masoumeh [2] also provides an example of what an art therapy is all about; he said in most art therapy sessions, the focus is on your inner experience as regards the feelings, perceptions, and imagination. While art therapy may involve learning skills or art techniques, the emphasis is generally on developing and expressing images that come from inside the person, rather than those he or she sees in the outside world. Imaginative exercise enable deep thought of expression to quicken recovery in a depressed person. This implies that aside from performing and literary art, visual art form like painting have power to suppress any emotional difficulties through practicing or been exposed to it while therapy is the treatment of mental or psychological disorders by psychological means.

Psychological healing, however, is the process of meeting with a therapist to resolve problematic behaviours, beliefs, feelings, relationship issues, and somatic responses. This invariably, means that

art as an instrument of therapeutic value has come a long way to resolve various psychological problems in our society [6]. A depressed person can visits art galleries, museum, exhibition venues or cinema houses or pick an interesting novel as a means of relieving tension and stress while some can engage in painting of an imaginative subject as relaxation, regaining traumatic loss, happiness and emotional stability.

Art such as painting produce good platform for enhanced interaction with the human psychology [6]. Paintings are typical one of a kind and created solely by the artist to depict his emotion and ideas. The function of paintings has evolved over the ages. It is almost impossible to get a hold of classic paintings because they are either very expensive or so valuable that they are only made available for public viewing in museums in order to preserve them. Modern paintings, though can be equally fascinating, are mostly used for office and home decoration. However, those who display paintings to their walls might have recognized the benefits of doing so. Once the painting resonates into our heart, mind and emotions it brings a different effect on the psychology of the person and the atmosphere of the place where it is decorated through juxta-positioning of colour and form [7]. This reflects the feeling and understanding what the painter is trying to convey.

## Therapeutic Value of Painting

Painting, as an aspect of visual art, is one form of art which expresses messages, codifies them and allows the spectator or viewer to decode and interpret the hidden messages or meaning. Therefore, painting is not only a tool of recording human history, but also a tool of conveying a wide range of the stories, emotions, feelings, inner world symbolically or in a hidden mode that could be therapeutic [3]. In painting, various media, subject matter, styles and techniques are adopted to achieve various degree of creative expression which is of great value to the society. Painting, however, is not limited to being just an artistic endeavour, but also serves many health benefits. It's extremely effective therapeutic and calming techniques, for one, can help increase mental and physical fitness. Painting as a product of colour and form can perform chromotherapy function through the use of colour.

Colour therapy can be done by shining an appropriate colour on an area of the body [8]. It can also be done through exposition to a particular colour, though this could be done with the utmost care to avoid any strain on the eyes. It is therefore seen as a complimentary therapy which does not rule out professional medical care. Some basic colours effectively enhance spiritual healing treatments. There are several potent colours in the range of green, yellow, orange, red, blue and violet. The physiological influence of colour in one's surroundings, as been observed by Goethe in Osborne [9], shows that in red illumination, and to a lesser extent orange or yellow light, one will tend to experience an increase of muscular tension. Various hormones are released into the bloodstream, including adrenalin, which constricts the blood vessels and steps up blood pressure and heartbeat. Increased oxygen intake (the consequence of a faster rate of respiration) coupled with the necessary increase of haemoglobin in the blood cells in turn raises body temperature.

On the contrary, on exposure to bright green or blue light, one will tend to experience a release of muscular tension, a slowing of heartbeat and slight lowering of body temperature [9]. After a period of time which may vary between different individuals, the activity promoted by a specific colour is reversed; blood pressure increased by red light

becomes more than normally depressed and blood pressure lowered by blue light will subsequently register an abnormal rise. Colour vision can provide information about objects which aids their identification, description and position in space, indeed this may be its principal therapeutic value. Evidence exists which proves that colour as a product of painting also influences thought and feeling which both artists and the audience have embraced intuitively for centuries. The power of paintings to invoke clinical healing into human life lies in the use of colour and form. Using painting as a medium for healing promotes self-exploration, understanding, self-esteem, and awareness. It is a way for a person to improve their mental, emotional, and physical states, as well as their overall health.

However, when colour and forms are used for imagery for therapeutic process, ones thoughts and feelings are articulated together which in turns bring happiness, relaxation of muscle, trauma loss and emotional balance. This can be achieved by practicing painting anywhere either at work, at home, or during any downtime, it does not necessarily mean you are professional artists before you can enjoy the benefits of art therapy. After all, the goal is not to create a masterpiece but to express yourself freely through painting; the artistic results are secondary to the emotional benefits. Human can release negative emotions through painting which in turn helps overcome the stress and further avoids upset and creates a coping strategy for future stressful times. However, the study is the therapeutic value of painting and human psychology and it is intended to identify the emotional qualities derived from painting through identification of the respondents' socio-economic characteristics, determine the motivating factors to therapeutic value of painting, respondents' perception towards therapeutic value, specific benefits derived from paintings and to investigate the constraints to procurement of paintings.

## Methodology

The study was carried out in Lagos State, Nigeria, being a centre for major artistic activities for paintings that are located in private and public space such as galleries, exhibition venues, catalogues, corporate offices, hotels and private homes. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to select respondents who have experienced emotional trauma, physical violence, domestic abuse anxiety and depression in three hospitals and one community organization. They are: General Hospital Igando, Igando, Lagos; Lagos State Teaching Hospital, Ikeja; Ikotun Health Care Center; and Abilat Company Limited, Ikotun, Lagos. The concept of validity within the context of this study was done by face and content. The items in the collection were developed to provide answers to the research questions. Content validity pertains to the degree to which the instrument fully assesses or measures the construct of interest while face validity is a component in content validity and is established when an individual reviewing the instrument concludes that it measures the characteristics or traits of interest. Face validity of the instrument was done by the experts in the field and content rating of the instrument was carried out by computing the amount of agreements among 5 judges from the discipline concerning the appropriateness of content of the survey instrument. The reliability of the instrument was tested with the use of test-retest method which involved administering the same instrument twice to selected respondents but outside the sample area within two weeks interval. After each administration, the total score for each respondent was calculated on the scale items. A reliability coefficient 0.82 was given which was considered adequate for the determination of reliability of the instrument. Qualitative and Quantitative

approaches were adopted to analyze the data and the data were subjected to descriptive statistical tools such as frequency counts, percentages, mean, standard deviation and weighted Mean scores (WMS). Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used in testing the relationships between the selected socio-economic characteristics of respondents and their perception towards therapeutic value of painting. That is, the PPMC was used to determine the degree to which the socio-economic characteristics as causer factors have influenced the outcome which is the perception of the respondents towards the therapeutic value of painting. The socio-economic characteristics were used as the causal factors and the perception as the outcome. A total number of one hundred and twenty (120) questionnaires were distributed out of which one hundred (110) were returned for analysis. A control group of 40 respondents which is a one third (1/3) of the entire population were randomly selected from the study area to ascertain that painting could relief patients of their pains.

## Results and Discussion

### Socio-economic characteristics of the respondents

The distribution of respondents by age revealed that 5.46% of the respondents were less than equal to twenty years old, 41.82% of the respondents were between twenty one and thirty years of age while 30.9% of the respondents were between thirty one and forty years of age. Also, 14.6% of the respondents were between forty one and fifty years of age while only 7.27% of the respondents were above fifty years of age. The mean age of the respondents was 33.5 years (Table 1). The implication of this is that conscious awareness of painting began mainly at the middle age. The distribution of respondents by sex revealed that 52.7% of the respondents were male while 46.3% of the respondents were female. This shows that male respondents were a little more than the female in terms of interest in painting (Table 2).

Age	Frequency	Percentage
< 20	6	5.46
21 – 30	46	41.82
31 – 40	34	30.90
41 – 50	16	14.55
Above 50	8	7.27
Total	110	100

**Table 1:** Distribution of respondents by age.

The distribution of respondents by marital status also revealed that 63.3% of the respondents were married, 34.5% were single while 1.89% of the respondents were separated. The results show that married people were more involved in emotional issues than single respondents (Table 3). The distribution of the respondents by Religion revealed that 63.6% of the respondents were Christians, 30.9% were Muslims while 5.5% of the respondents were practicing traditional religion. The results indicates that Christianity as a religion permits exposition to artistic objects than any other religion; therefore therapeutic value of painting is more experienced among Christian respondents (Table 4). The distribution of respondents by level of education revealed that 5.5% of the respondents completed primary school, 10.9% of the respondents completed secondary school while 83.6% of the

respondents had tertiary education. The mean year of schooling was 15 years. The result implies that majority of the respondents attained higher level of education for better exposure to importance of therapeutic value of painting (Table 5).

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	58	52.7
Female	52	46.3
Total	110	100

**Table 2:** Distribution of the respondents by sex.

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	70	63.6
Single	38	34.5
Separated	2	1.89
Total	110	100

**Table 3:** Distribution of the respondents by marital status.

Religion	Frequency	Percentage
Christian	70	63.6
Islam	34	30.90
Traditional	6	5.50
Total	110	100

**Table 4:** Distribution of the respondents by religion.

Education	Frequency	Percentage
Primary School Completed	6	5.50
Secondary School Completed	12	10.90
Tertiary Education	92	83.6
Total	110	100

**Table 5:** Distribution of the respondents by level of education.

The level of income of the respondents revealed that 43.6% of the respondents did not indicate their income, 9.1% of the respondents earned less or equal one hundred thousand naira, 16.4% of the respondents earned between one hundred and one thousand and five hundred thousand naira while 10.9% of the respondents earned between five hundred and one thousand naira and one million naira. Also, 5.5% of the respondents earned between one million and one thousand naira and one million five hundred thousand naira and lastly, only 14.6% of the respondents earned above one million five hundred thousand naira. The mean income of the respondents was eight hundred and twenty three thousand, six hundred and thirty six naira only (Table 6). The respondents hide their income possibly because of the social implication which Nigeria society attached to issues of

personal emoluments; hence, level of income is highly significant to procurement of painting.

Income	Frequency	Percentage
0	44	43.6
< 100,000	10	9.1
101,000 – 500,000	18	16.4
501,000 – 1,000,000	12	10.9
1,100,000 – 1,500,000	6	5.5
Above 1,500,000	16	14.6
Total	110	100

**Table 6:** Distribution of respondents by level of income.

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Hospital Staff	34	32.7
Hospital Patient	40	30.9
Community Organization	36	36.4
Total	110	100

**Table 7:** Distribution of respondents by categories.

The respondents by categories revealed that 32.7% were hospital staff, 30.9% were hospital patients while 36.4% of the respondents were members of community organizations (Table 7). The motivating factors of the respondents to painting was measured on a 3-point scale of highly motivating, fairly motivating and not motivating and the results were ranked with Weighted mean score (WMS). Out of all the motivating factors, beauty ranked first with the WMS of 2.56, while arrangement of colours (WMS 2.53), exposure (WMS 2.44), passion (WMS 2.40) ranked second, third and fourth respectively. Lastly, art background had the least ranking of sixth with the WMS of 2.08 (Table 8). This shows that majority of the respondents were motivated to painting because of the aesthetic value attached to it. Also, the respondents were tested based on different circumstances. It was shown that majority (90.9%) of the respondents have experienced physical violence at one time or the other while others like emotional trauma (25.5%), domestic violence (7.3%), anxiety (34.5%) and depression (18.2%) were the identified circumstances the respondents found themselves (Table 9). The implication of this is that virtually all the respondents have in one way or the other been exposed to one form of psychological disorder that necessitated therapeutic value of painting.

The perception of the respondents to the therapeutic value of painting was also measured using 5 point-Likert scale of strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree, and ranked with Weighted Mean Score (WMS). Of all the perceptual statements, Mood elevation ranked first with the weighted mean score of 3.90, respondents connecting emotionally with the artwork ranked second with the WMS of 3.87, Administration of the story behind the art ranked third with the WMS of 3.80 while attraction to the colour arrangement ranked fourth with the WMS of 3.69. Furthermore, alignment with social status ranked fifth with the WMS of 3.52 while



physical connection with the artist had the least ranking of sixth with the WMS of 3.40 (Table 10).

Factors	Highly Motivating	Fairly Motivating	Not Motivating	WMS	Rank
Beauty	72 (65.5)	26(23.6)	14(12.73)	2.56	1st
Passion	56(50.9)	42(38.2)	12(10.90)	2.40	4th
Exposure	54(49.1)	50(45.5)	6(5.5)	2.44	3rd
Family Background	44(40.0)	44(40.0)	22(20.0)	2.20	5th
Art Background	30(27.3)	56(50.9)	24(21.8)	2.08	6th
Arrangement of colours	68(61.8)	32(29.1)	10(9.1)	2.53	2nd

**Table 8:** Distribution of the respondents by motivating factors to painting.

Circumstances	Frequency	Percentage
Emotional trauma	28	25.5
Physical Violence	100	90.9
Domestic Abuse	8	7.3
Anxiety	38	34.5
Depression	20	18.2

**Table 9:** Distribution of the respondents by different circumstances they have experienced.

This shows that majority of the respondents were been motivated to painting because it elevates there mood when exposed to it. The distribution of respondents by benefits derived from painting revealed that 45.5% of the respondents derived emotional stability, 61.8% derived improved in aesthetic value while 29.1% of the respondents identified improved in social status as the benefit derived from painting. Also, 38.1% of the respondents identified building of self-confidence as the benefit derived, 43.6% says it gives psychological stability while 32.7% says it gives therapeutic value. Furthermore, 47.3% of the respondents identified promotion of knowledge of various cultures as the benefit derived from painting while 60% of the respondents identified boosting of creativity as the major benefit derived from painting (Table 11).

Statements	Strongly Agreed	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagreed	WMS	Rank
Connect emotionally with the artwork	54(47.3)	26(23.6)	10(9.1)	10(9.1)	12(10.9)	3.87	2nd
Alignment with social status	20(18.2)	50(45.5)	22(20.0)	6(5.3)	10(9.1)	3.52	5th
Administration of the story behind the art	40(36.4)	32(29.1)	22(20.0)	8(7.3)	6(5.4)	3.80	3rd
Physical connection with the artist	38(34.5)	28(25.5)	14(12.7)	20(18.3)	10(9.1)	3.40	6th
Attraction to the colour Arrangement	44(40.0)	42(38.2)	12(10.9)	6(5.5)	6(5.5)	3.69	4th
Mood Elevation	46(41.8)	38(34.0)	8(7.3)	6(5.5)	12(10.9)	3.90	1st

**Table 10:** The distribution of the respondents by their perception to the therapeutic value of painting.

Benefits	Frequency	Percentage
Emotional stability	50	45.5
Improved aesthetic value	68	61.8
Improved social status	32	29.1
Builds self confidence	42	38.1
Psychological stability	48	43.6
Therapeutic value	36	32.7
Promotes Knowledge of various cultures	52	47.3

Boosting Creativity	66	60.0
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**Table 11:** Distribution of respondents by benefits derived from painting.

Distribution of the respondents by constraints to the procurement of paintings revealed that majority (60%) of the respondents identified finance as the major constraint while other constraints like theft cases (5.5%), High cost of painting materials (27.3%), adverse weather condition (14.5%) and pirated work of art (20%) were also identified as the constraints to the procurement of paintings by the respondents (Table 12). This inferred that cost of buying painting is high and thereby militating access of low income earner to the purchase of painting for therapeutic value.

Constraints	Frequency	Percentage
Financial constraint	66	60.0
Theft cases	6	5.5
High cost of painting materials	30	27.3
Adverse weather condition	16	14.5
Pirated original artwork	22	20.0

**Table 12:** Distribution of the respondents by constraints to the procurement of painting.

## Test of Hypothesis

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between the selected socio-economic characteristics of respondents and their perception to the therapeutic value of painting.

Variables	Correlation efficient	co-	P-value	Remark
Age	0.337**		0.000	Significant
Marital status	0.376**		0.001	Significant
Level of Education	-0.083*		0.000	Significant
Annual of Income	0.250**		0.006	Significant

**Table 13:** Pearson product moment correlation test of relationship between the socio-economic characteristics of the Respondents and their perception towards the therapeutic value of painting. \*Correlation is significant at 0.01% (2-tailed), \*\*Correlation is significant at 0.05% (2-tailed).

The result of Pearson Product Moment Correlation reveals that a significant relationship was found between age, marital status, level of

education and annual income and their perception towards the therapeutic value of painting, which implies that age of the respondents, marital status, level of education and annual income of the respondents significantly influenced the perception of the respondents towards the therapeutic value of painting (Table 13).

## Conclusion

The study concluded that majority of the respondents were male, married, in their middle age, agile and expected to love creativity and the work of art. Beauty and arrangement of colours were the major motivating factors of the respondents while mood elevation and emotional stability were the major perception of the respondents to therapeutic value of painting. Improved aesthetic value and boosting creativity were some of the benefits of painting while lack of finance was the main identified constraint to procurement of painting. A significant relationship was found between the selected socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and the perception of the respondents to the therapeutic value of painting. However, the study recommends that making the environment more colourful and calming, and encouraging patients to express themselves using various forms of creative arts helps divert their attention from their pains and to tolerate their treatments better.

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