

The Diagnostic and Therapeutic Role of Music in Mental Health: Implications to National Development

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Abstract This paper observes that from time immemorial, mental illness has been a global disease, yet its causes are still foggy to mankind. It further observes the powerful correlation between mental health and the role of music therapy as a means of advancing the physical, emotional, intellectual and social behaviour of students in schools. The music for the mentally ill has been observed to have both diagnostic and therapeutic values inherent in them when applied. The paper traces the development of music therapy, implications to music education and national development. It is the view of this paper that Universities, hospitals and churches in the country should establish music therapeutic centres in their institutions to enhance the practice of music therapy.

Keywords: *mental health, music therapy, national development psychological disorder*

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1. Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) [21] defines health as "a state of physical, mental and social well-being, and not only the absence of disease". An examination of their definition further underscores other difficulties involved in the measurement of human health. Our common indicators measures only the later part of this definition, which is, the absence or presence of disease. Furthermore, reliable and valid statistical indexes are noticeably lacking in our society that tend to measure mental and social well-being.

2. Mental Health

Schiffers [17] holds that the mentally healthy or "normal" people are not so evidently different from the mentally ill. Indeed, they are the same people at different times. Also the Macmillan Publishing Company; Inc. [13] asserted that individuals are considered mentally healthy if they did not suffer from a severe psychological disorder. A line has therefore been drawn between the mentally healthy (the same and the mentally sick (the sane). Perhaps the best definition was expressed by Menninger [13] when he said;

Mental health is the adjustment of human beings to each other and to the world about them with a maximum of effectiveness and happiness. Not just efficiency or just contentment or the grace of playing the rules of the game cheerfully. It is all of these together. It is the ability to maintain an even temper, an alert intelligence socially considerate behavior and a happy disposition. This I think is a healthy mind (p.94).

3. Diagnostic and Therapeutic Role of Music in Mental Health

According to the CNN report of 23rd September, 1970, over 500 million people worldwide are affected by mental illness and three - quarters of the afflicted population are said to be living in developing countries. Several studies confirm the global spread of this scourge. Okafor and Okafor [14] in their studies revealed that mental illness accounts for about 7% of the world's disease burden. Another report of the World Health Organization (WHO) [21] attributed 10% of the diseases experienced around the globe to neurological and psychological conditions and later predicted an increase of 15% over the next twenty-five years. Serious as this condition is, several governments the world over, pay lip service to this very important aspect of our health. Consequently whereas millions of dollars are budgeted yearly for combating the spread of diseases such as tuberculosis, Aids, Hepatitis, Malaria, diabetes, etc rarely no budgetary provisions are made to combat the growing threat of mental illness. Even the current Declaration of the Millennium Development Goals adopted by 189 nations and signed by 147 heads of state and governments on eight goals to be achieved by 2015 excluded the progress to be made in combating the menace of mental illness. This is in spite of the reported widespread of this illness.

Bernard [4] had earlier on painted a gloomy picture of the global spread of mental illness when he asserted that:

...One of every ten babies born today will be hospitalized for mental illness at some time during their life time... of forty elementary pupils, two will spend some time in an institution for treatment of the severe

form of mental illness known as psychosis, five will have marriages terminated by the distress of divorce and many will find it necessary to consult physicians for functional ailment ...many will fail to realize the best of their potentials.

The above description presents the global as well as the national dimension of this awful disease, which is also commonly referred to as madness or clinical emotional disorder.

4. Occurrence

Mental illness according to Raab and Selznick [15] occurs irrespective of tribe, race, religion or level of intelligence. Even those far above the normal intelligence level can fall victims. But of greater concern is the revelation that mental illness commonly afflicts the young, vibrant and energetic that are between the ages of fifteen and forty-five years, in the society. The social and economic implication are great because it interferes significantly with their ability to work, play, enjoy normal life, fend for the basic necessities of life such as food, clothing and shelter.

There are different types of mental illness. These include neurosis, psychosis and schizophrenia.

5. Definition of Concepts

Music: Music has been defined by Sadie (1993:13) as “organized sound”. A musical tone is the product of regular vibration in the air and is perceived when an inner part of the listener’s ear is made to vibrate in sympathy. Music has also been called both the most mathematical and the most abstract of the arts. Unlike words, pictorial images or bodily movement. However, musical tones in themselves have no concrete associations and only gain meaning when they are combined into musical patterns. Grolier ([9]: 662) therefore emphasized that “Music is born of emotion”.

Diagnosis: In medicine, diagnosis is the determination of the nature of a disease. Quoting Bram ([5]: 185) he said, “Modern diagnosis combines, the taking of the patient’s health history, a physical examination and laboratory and radiological examinations”. However some diseases such as measles and mumps may be fairly easy to identify through simple observations.

Therapy: this can generally be defined as a curative treatment of diseases [12]. However, Bram ([5]: 314) defined therapy as the:

Treatment of disease by various approaches. It involves the management and care of the patient for the purpose of combating a mental or physical disorder. The different aspects of therapy include, Acupuncture, Cancer, Surgery and Radiation, Chiropractic, Homeopathy, Hydrotherapy, Hypnosis, occupational therapy, Medicine, Osteopathy, physical therapy, psychotherapy.

A very important aspect of this approach is concerned with the total management of patients including supportive measures that will relieve pains and ease comfort.

6. Music Therapy

The New Harvard Dictionary of Music defines Music therapy as “the clinical use of music in the treatment especially, though not exclusively of mental illness or disability ([23]: 522-523), Natasha Spender [19] simply defined Music Therapy as “the use of music to cure, alleviate or stimulate while Hirnsie and Campbell [10] saw music therapy as the “Treatment of nervous and mental disorders by means of music, such as David’s harp playing, which is said to have cured King Saul of his depression.” Music is said to be the most widely practiced and accessible of all the arts. This is because it is readily available and is associated with entertainment and relaxation as well as its application of notion, human – sympathy and Understanding. A vital use of music here (Music therapy is the development of social services that helps patients to cope with the social consequences and hardships with which diseases are frequently associated with).

Music therapy has developed an extensive field of applicability within the last fifty years. It is used in various fields of intervention in medicine, gynecology, pediatrics, angiology, cardiology, geriatrics, psychiatry, surgery, etc. In other humanistic disciplines as education, humanities and the social sciences, music therapy has proved an efficacious tool for furthering learning among the handicapped and ameliorating the behavior of the neglected members of the society. For instance, music therapy is recognized as one of the most appropriate and efficacious tools for helping both children, adolescent and adults develop their capacities for emotional and social interaction [1,3].

In the United Kingdom, music therapists collaborating with other specialist teams in special schools, child and family centers, child-development and assessment units are, increasingly contributing to the multi-disciplinary assessment and treatment of children and young people with emotional or psychiatric problems, including autism [6,8,24].

Music therapy is employed in the rehabilitation of ex-convicts, drug-addicts, and juvenile delinquents. It has gained steady acclamation and recognition in various capacities as diagnostic medium and also as therapeutic tool for various ailments.

Clinical music therapy is so widely applied in contemporary times that one is strongly reminded of the ubiquitous presence of music in African traditional healing interventions. One could imagine music to be an appropriate treatment or therapy for emotional ailments since it is the language of emotion. Schools, hospitals and churches especially the African Independent Churches have been identified as institutions where music therapy is applied in the healing process of children and adults mentally retarded.

7. Types of Music Therapy

There are three types of music therapy and the aim and objective pursued in the course of a music therapy session is therapeutic intervention. They include:

- a) Clinical music therapy (Here the remediation of the client’s specific pathology targeted).

b) Pedagogical music therapy. Here the aim of the intervention is learning.

c) Recreational music therapy. Here the aim of the intervention is for relaxation and socialization.

However, the clients overall need the reason for his seeking the therapy intervention is what determines, which designation the intervention will follow.

8. The Music Therapist – Methodology

An operative definition of music therapy states that it is: “work undertaken by a qualified music therapist who seeks, through a mutually developing relationship, to assist in the remediation of specific emotional, physical (sensory, motor), social learning disorder [2]. The above definition was released by the British Association of Professional Music special bulletin of January 1992. The music therapist must be a person qualified having studied music and its use for therapeutic purposes. The APMTS document indicates that the practice of music therapy is based on the inter relationship of three factors. These include;

- i) A high degree of proficiency in music skills including knowledge of the psychology of music;
- ii) An understanding of medical and paramedical pathologies;
- iii) Maturity of personality and the ability to combine these elements as appropriate in music therapy situations.

9. Historical Development of Music Therapy

The origin of Music Therapy has always been traced to the antiquity period as it was discovered in the ancient Jewish and Greek religious cultures [19]. Thus it could be said that Music Therapy has a religious bearing in its origin, while that of Saul has always been the reference point in the Scriptures (1 Samuel 16:23). Other literatures have attested to the practice of music therapy among the ancient Greek [18]. Since then, music has increasingly been used in the treatment of mental and physical handicaps and emotional disturbance [19]. Bibliographic references in the write up of Natash Spender indicates that Music Therapy had started to be studied in the 18th Century.

The second half of this century witnessed the beginning of drastic developments in the study and practice of Music Therapy in Medicine. This fact is drawn from numerous literatures on the subject and the birth of the National Association for Music Therapy in America in the year 1950, Will ([22]: 522-523) confirmed the report when he said “Research and literature on the subject have it that 9 Universities established programs leading to degrees in the field”

In Nigeria for example, Music Therapy has been practiced in one form or the other in the Medical profession. Apart from this, it has been practiced in schools, churches and homes, Spender, [19] stated as follows:

Personal interviews with some relevant medical professionals have revealed that music has /been found

helpful and effective in treating many diseases, maintaining physical fitness of pregnant mothers and giving relaxations and relief to patients. Other therapies such as physiotherapy and psychotherapy have always made use of music.

Presently, there is no Department of Music Therapy in any university, hospital or church throughout the country. As it is, it is not a healthy development taking a closer look at the benefits of this field of study to the society at large.

10. Implications to Music Education

The importance of music in entire education of the Greek society was recognized by Plato. He therefore recommended music as an instrument by which early training (the reduction of the soul) is to be affected. He believed strongly that musical exercises have much influence upon the emotions and man’s character.

Aristotle was another philosopher who laid much emphasis on the inclusion of music in education. The Chief object in teaching music, according to him should be to develop the power of appreciation and to influence the formation of character. He believed that music is the most imitative of all the arts, agreed that music can imitate different emotional dispositions and bring up the child to imitate virile, orderly, and noble things which would not only turn him into a good citizen but also assist him in freeing himself of petit-up energies and feelings.

To some extent every music classroom must become a special education class for the application of music therapy methods when the need arises. Children’s music can be a tremendously important factor in their development. Supporting the above view, Juliet Alvin, a British music therapist said:

...physical, intellectual, emotional and social developments, are so closely interwoven that a handicapped affecting only a specific area of the child’s development is bound to hamper his harmonious growth. It is thought that the most valuable means of maturation are those which can integrate the different parts of the child’s development and appeal to his whole being. This applies particularly well to music, since it can offer the handicapped child, a vast number of sensory emotional, intellectual and social experiences some of which he may not be able to get by any other means. Moreover, it is flexible enough to be adapted not only to the specific disability of the child but also to each of the stages of maturation ([2]: 25-27).

Music therapy is aimed at teaching non-musical behaviours and requires specific understanding on the part of the therapist in psychology and behavioral sciences. However, with some individuals’ educative goals in music can be achieved while others, music experiences are primarily therapeutic – a means of advancing their physical, emotional, intellectual or social behaviours.

11. Implication to National Development

If music teachers and therapists in schools are more concerned with the primary and secondary prevention of emotional problems than with the treatment of these

disorders then, there will be room for optimal personality development of all children. This will therefore lead to an advancement in the physical emotional, intellectual and social behavior that will invariably ensure an improvement in our national development.

12. Conclusion

Music can claim to be the expression or art that is most accessible to all people in any situation of their lives, in crisis or calm situation, work and worship, play or war, recreation or reflection. It tends to set the mind free from problems. Therefore, a true way to escapism. But if it is "as handled so that as it enters, wins, it builds and creates, then it becomes of benefit to the society.

13. Recommendations

The writer recommends as follows.

- i) A democratic philosophy of education which reflects an atmosphere of academic freedom, initiative and shared activity between teachers and students should be encouraged.
- ii) Attention to a physical health and growth which includes the giving of periodic health care to be encouraged and to be alert to symptoms of health disabilities.
- iii) Music therapeutic services should be applied in the rehabilitation process of the ex-convicts especially those recently granted amnesty by the Federal Government of Nigeria [7].
- iv) Universities, hospitals and churches all over the country should endeavour to establish music therapeutic centres in their institutions to enhance the practice of music therapy.

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