



Coffee Table Book: The Stories of Women in Marillac Hills

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Abstract:

Nowadays, it is often difficult to understand the struggles faced emotionally by young women. This study explored how art can help people understand the difficulties faced by emotionally deprived young women in conflict with the law and young female abuse victims and bring attention to their challenges. A group of four (4) residents from Marillac Hills, Muntinlupa City, participated in an unstructured group interview recorded by audio. The transcripts, after being translated from Filipino to English, underwent thematic analysis. The results revealed that the residents of Marillac Hills prefer non-visual forms of art, and view art as a means of self-expression and healing. They expressed feelings of being the target of judgment from others. This research implies the importance of educational initiatives, awareness campaigns, public exhibitions, or tangible projects such as coffee table books, to spread awareness and combat stigma. It is recommended that future studies employ individual interviews and larger sample groups.

Keywords: coffee table book; art & emotional health; emotional deprivation; young women; marillac hills



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INTRODUCTION

Childhood deprivation can have lasting effects on a person's life, impacting both their behavior and mental health, whether it manifests through aggression or internally through conditions like depression (Amone-p'olak et al., 2009). Most deprived children come from families with significantly low socioeconomic positions, but there is no direct correlation between socioeconomic status and child deprivation (Bastos et al., 2004). This suggests that deprivation may affect children from various socioeconomic backgrounds. However, it is worth noting that research in this area is limited (Anderson et al., 1993). A study by Joseph et al. (2020) demonstrated that art therapy, specifically compassion-based visual art therapy, can effectively promote self-compassion and alleviate trauma-related shame in sexually abused young women. The artworks created for this study will be used to raise awareness and advocate for this important issue, as suggested by Willem Mostert (2022), who argued that a better understanding of visual perception can enhance learners' observational and problem-solving skills. This study advances the field in several ways. First, it addresses a research gap in the existing literature by



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focusing on emotionally deprived young women in conflict with the law and abuse victims. Second, it explores the use of art as a means for these young women to express their emotions. Third, it aims to utilize the art created for these young women as a tool for increasing awareness about their circumstances, which is a significant social problem that has received insufficient attention. The primary purpose of this study is to investigate how art can be utilized to raise awareness about emotionally deprived young women and gain a deeper understanding of their challenges.

Art as a tool for spreading awareness about emotional deprivation

There are many ways to spread awareness, and art is one of them. Art serves various purposes in human activities, such as relaxation, income, and self-expression. Therefore, it is an effective medium for spreading awareness, not only because it is visually compelling and appealing but also because it can leave a lasting and powerful impression on the viewer (Hornor, 2022). One of the issues that people can spread awareness about is childhood deprivation, which has not received sufficient attention (Anderson et al., 1993). According to Johnson et al. (2016),



children living in poverty are more likely to experience worse health, developmental delay, lower achievement, and behavioral and emotional problems than their more advantaged peers. Due to the challenges posed by poverty, these children often struggle to express themselves because of the unsafe environment they grow up in. Through various forms of art, individuals can promote awareness about such situations and assist children in need.

Art as a tool for supporting emotionally deprived young women

Sexual abuse of children is a problem that affects individuals from diverse ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds. As stated by Al Hwayyan & Mahamid (2020), “Children suffering from sexual abuse may be afraid to express their feelings of guilt, fearful of being accused or blamed for not taking action against the assault.” While this fear may hinder access to trauma-related emotions, visual arts proved to be an appropriate vessel for conveying and releasing emotions and thought processes that would have otherwise been inaccessible. Moreover, according to Huang, et al. (2021), art therapy promotes the organization of thoughts and encourages healthy self-expression among adolescents. Visual arts, such as mural painting,



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can also positively impact the moods of detained children as well, as they report feeling a sense of gratitude for regaining a sense of control over themselves (Venable, 2005). Another study by Ezell & Levy (2003) found that juvenile offenders aged 15–21, after joining various art workshops, reported positive changes in self-esteem, behavior, cultural awareness, peer relationships, goal accomplishment, and other aspects of their lives, with only 4 out of 24 participants regressing to criminal activity. Therefore, it is evident that art serves as a less intimidating form of therapy for young women who have experienced emotional deprivation. Additionally, art can also be used as a tool for spreading awareness about sexual abuse and helping others recognize the profound impact it has on survivors. In light of technological advancement, newer forms of art therapy may also help explore deeper, symbolic levels of meaning within artworks, therefore forming a deeper connection between therapist and client (Haywood & Grant, 2022).

In this study, the main research problem is how to gauge the effects of art in helping young women in conflict with the law and victims of abuse. In this context, art assumes the role



of a tool for spreading awareness about young female residents, as well as a tool to spread awareness among outsiders. The research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How can art be an emotional tool in helping the female residents in Marillac Hills?
2. How can art be utilized to address the emotional health of young women?
3. How can a coffee table book be used to inform others about the emotional deprivation among young women?

In the current study, the participants are young residents from Marillac Hills, Muntinlupa City. Marillac Hills is a national training school that provides rehabilitation and residential care for young female survivors of sexual abuse, human trafficking, and children in conflict with the law (DSWD, n.d.). Overall, the study holds significant implications for art and its current significance to the women of Marillac Hills, while simultaneously providing them with a space to express themselves and spreading awareness about their circumstances.



This study could serve as a means for aiding non-artists in spreading awareness of the challenges faced by emotionally deprived women face, and also invoke a sense of service regarding how they can help these young women cope with their past trauma; it aims to benefit artists, offering them effective ways to utilize their talents to raise awareness about their chosen social issue; it aims to also enhance empathy and understanding among individuals who are not women towards emotionally deprived young women; it aims to aid future researchers interested in exploring the use of art in socially significant contexts, this study may serve as an inspiration. It will also function as a reliable source for future studies on this topic.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study aimed to find the effect of art and how it can help the residents of Marillac Hills. Therefore, the researchers conducted a qualitative unstructured interview to gain an understanding of the participants' perspectives regarding art. Participation was voluntary and



purposive sampling was employed. The participants were chosen by the Marillac Hills staff.

The researchers had chosen this method and design of research as it is the most efficient way to retrieve nuanced and raw answers. This method would also maximize the use of time and enable the researchers to gain all the information that is needed quickly.

Participants

This study took place in Marillac Hills, a National Training School for Girls (NTSG) under the Department of Social Welfare Development (DSWD) located at Northgate Avenue, Filinvest Corporate City, Alabang, Muntinlupa City. This organization serves as a reform center to provide young female individuals with residential care, rehabilitation, and education. The center is a good place to host the research because of its purpose of providing care, rehabilitation, and pre-existing educational services that offer extracurricular activities for our target population of young women in conflict with the law and abuse victims. This research involved four residents from Marillac Hills who are Senior High School Students.



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Participation in the study was voluntary; the respondents were permitted to withdraw from the procedure at any time and were not required to disclose information they were uncomfortable with sharing. The researchers also considered the availability of the partnering organization and the participants.

Data Gathering

To gather data, the researchers used an interview about the values and art-related perspectives of the chosen participants.

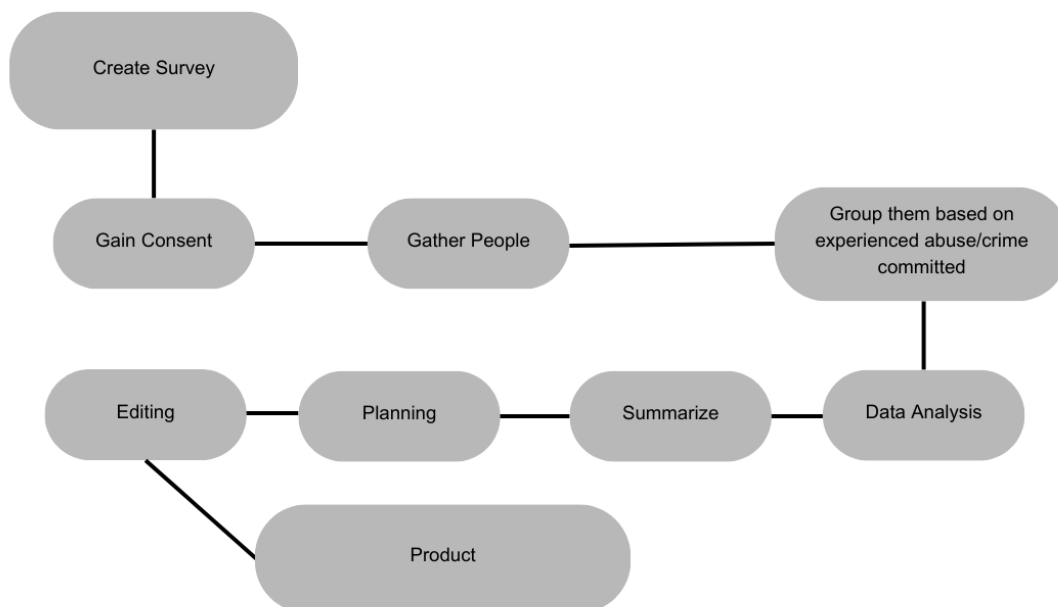
The interview was conducted in a conference room, with Marillac Hills staff and teachers from De La Salle Santiago Zobel School on the other side of the room. The respondents were given sheets of paper and pencils, in case they wished to produce artwork that could be included in the coffee table book.

Due to time constraints, the researchers were only allowed four (4) participants.



Figure 1

Framework of the coffee table book creation



To conduct the interview and gather data, the researchers gained consent from the participants through the distribution of written consent forms. The interview was audio-recorded using a mobile device.



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Data Analysis

The interview transcripts were translated into English from Filipino. These transcripts were then analyzed thematically by all research members. The analysis, as well as the artworks that will be created based on the study, are to be presented in the form of a coffee table book, which will be sold to the campus members of De La Salle Santiago Zobel School - Vermosa. The earnings shall be donated to Marillac Hills.

The interview was conducted in the conference room of Marillac Hills. All three researchers were present in the interview: one led the interview, one provided a recording device, and one sketched pictures of the participants.



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In the recorded interview, the participants talked about themselves and how they perceive art. They also talked about how art helped them during their dark times. These themes will be used as inspiration behind the visual artworks in the coffee table book.

Results

From the thematic analysis of the interview, multiple themes were drawn regarding the participants' views of art and life experiences.

The data was categorized into 6 themes after thematically analyzed; (1) Art for Spreading Awareness, (2) Art Enjoyability, (3) Art for Addressing Emotions, (4) Art Utility, (5) Opinions, and (6) Possible Solutions.



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Figure 2

Various uses of art as a form of expression and communication

Themes	Codes
1. Art for Spreading Awareness	1.1 Improving Emotions through Art
2. Art Enjoyability	2.1 Enjoys Creating Other Art Forms
3. Art for Addressing Emotions	3.1 Art for Self Expression
4. Art Utility	4.1 Communication
5. Opinions	5.1 Prejudice 5.2 Judgment
6. Possible Solutions	6.1 Open-Mindedness



1. How can art be an emotional tool in helping the female residents in Marillac Hills?

Theme 1.1: Improving Emotions through Art

The participants have shared and said that through art, their emotions have improved. They express themselves and their feelings through their art, which makes their feelings more light and their pain lessened.

The participants emphasized how art can help in improving their emotions.

Participants shared:

“It’s not just a drawing. There’s still something else... Something we can’t say. Like we’re scared of saying it, then we put it in the drawing... so that we can say it”

“It’s there that I can express myself through art”



Theme 2.1: Enjoys Creating Other Art Forms

When asked about the importance of arts in their lives, participants expressed that they were not that passionate about drawing, and found it too difficult. Non-visual forms of art, however, were favored. Participants mentioned numerous forms of art when asked about their hobbies, such as music and literary arts.

The participants explained their preferences against visual arts. Participants shared:

“We get to draw, but it’s not something we really, really like.”

“When it comes to arts, I really can’t do it.”

The participants expressed interest in other forms of art:

“Sometimes when I’m not reading, I dance, then write stories.”

“Writing books and reading.”

“Sometimes I try to compose songs.”



2. How can art be utilized to address the emotional health of young women-in-conflict with the law and young female abuse victims?

Theme 3.1: Art for Self Expression

Art, according to the participants, can help with expressing emotions that might otherwise be left unsaid. Art is also associated with emotional healing.

The participants emphasized how important art is as a tool to express themselves.

Participants shared:

“I express my emotions through art. For example, the things we feel that we cannot say to someone, we can say it through art.”

“When we’re able to express it through art, it’s like the pain lessens.”

“Like, your drawing is so dark. But as time passes, while you’re already healing, it starts to gain color.”



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Theme 4.1: Communication

Most of the participants have been misunderstood. They want people to talk to them instead of spreading stories and only seeing one side.

The participants highlight a need for understanding through communication. One of them shared:

“For me, communication. I want them to talk. It would be good if they just ask”

3. How can a coffee table book be used to inform others about the emotional deprivation among young women?



Theme 5.1: Prejudice

Participants shared their perspective that a lot of people are prejudiced. According to the participants, people only look at their own side, which leads them to make judgements about someone without knowing the full story.

The participants emphasized the constant prejudice they face due to their experiences. A participant shared:

“It’s because they only look at their own one side, like only their side is what they look at.

They just make judgments about me, but they don’t even know why I did that.”

“But the deep parts, they don’t know it. That’s why they just keep judging and judging.”

Theme 5.2: Judgment

Participants have described judgmental people as an inevitable, hard-to-avoid occurrence who would rather be ignorant than seeking a deeper understanding of others.



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The participants observed that people base their opinions on external traits:

“Because the first thing they see is what’s outside, not what’s inside.”

“They’re quick to judge. Even if they don’t really know about it.”

Theme 6.1: Open-Mindedness

People need to be more open-minded and learn how to understand people instead of making judgments.

The participants expressed the need for deeper understanding through not only communication, but companionship. They shared:

“For me it’s that I also have weaknesses. That I also get sad. Because here, they know that I’m loud, always laughing. They don’t think that this person, does she feel sad or... even once, has she ever cried, like that.”

“And sometimes, what’s this, it can’t be solved through— through talking. For me, for you to understand a person, be with them.”



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Discussion

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of effective methods of raising awareness about the challenges encountered by Marillac Hills residents through the use of art, with the ultimate objective of promoting understanding on the underlying issues they confront.

The results indicate that participants were not significantly passionate about drawing, but demonstrated a preference for non-visual forms of art, including music and literary arts, indicating a diverse range of artistic preferences among the residents. The participants expressed that engaging in art not only helped them improve their emotional states but also provided a means to express emotions that may be difficult to express verbally, thereby contributing to emotional healing and reducing pain. Additionally, the participants expressed a strong desire for communication and understanding, as they were feeling misunderstood. The participants



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emphasized the importance of engaging in dialogue instead of making assumptions or spreading one-sided perspectives. They reported experiencing prejudice, with judgments formed based on incomplete information and external appearances rather than an understanding of their internal struggles. In response to these challenges, residents called for open-mindedness and a deeper understanding of individuals, expressing a need for others to recognize their vulnerabilities and complexities beyond superficial traits.

The themes in this research hold significant implications through the potential of art to enhance the emotional well-being of residents. As implied by Al Hwayyan & Mahamid (2020), visual arts could be used as a way of releasing emotions that would otherwise be inaccessible due to fear. The study at hand reinforces this idea, as the participants have shared that when there are emotions one cannot say, it is in art that those emotions can be expressed. As stated by Hornor (2022), art, given its visual appeal and emotional impression, is an effective way of spreading awareness. To counteract prejudiced views, it is recommended to implement public exhibitions, or tangible projects such as coffee table books along with educational initiatives and awareness



campaigns. These initiatives can foster open conversations, raise awareness about individual vulnerabilities, and provide tools to challenge stigmatizing narratives. Furthermore, the role of art in improving emotional well-being can be incorporated into interventions that resonate with the diverse artistic preferences of the participants. Establishing collaborative efforts that involve both residents and the broader community is essential for creating a more supportive and understanding environment. This collective approach has the potential to contribute significantly to the overall well-being and enjoyment of the community.

Limitations & Recommendations

There are at least three notable limitations to consider in interpreting the results of this study. Firstly, the small sample size, composed of only four participants, all falling within the same age range initially intended for the study. To enhance the insights, it is necessary to broaden the participant pool by including young women of a more varied age range with diverse life experiences. Secondly, a potential limitation is the language barrier between the researchers and



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the participants. However, measures were taken to address this concern by consulting with native speakers of the participants' language to ensure the accuracy of the translations. Thirdly, the interview method employed simultaneous questioning of participants for the sake of time efficiency. While this approach was pragmatic, it introduces a potential limitation in terms of the depth and nuance of individual responses. Adjustments to the interview format, such as sequential individual interviews, could be considered to mitigate this limitation and allow for more in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study shows the potential of art as a tool for raising awareness about the challenges faced by Marillac Hills residents, emphasizing diverse artistic preferences and the benefits of non-visual forms of expression. The findings suggest the residents' strong desire for communication and understanding, urging a shift towards open-mindedness. To counteract prejudice, the study recommends practical initiatives like educational programs, awareness



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campaigns, and integrating art into interventions tailored to diverse preferences. While limitations, such as a small sample size and a narrow age range, are acknowledged, the study contributes valuable insights and recommendations for creating a more supportive and understanding environment in Marillac Hills through collaborative community efforts.



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