



Application of Focusing-Oriented Art Therapy (FOAT) to establish a safe and supportive environment for adolescent victims of sexual abuse

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ABSTRACT

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The study explores the application of Focusing-oriented Art Therapy (FOAT) approaches, namely FOAT check-in and Clearing a space with Art (CAS-Art), among adolescent victims of sexual abuse in a shelter facility. Using an action research methodological framework, this qualitative research study aims to determine how FOAT may help the victims in their process of recovery and healing. Case narratives and artworks recount the insightful experiences of the participants. Prevailing themes are identified as a means of synthesizing the results gathered. Through the combined processes of focusing, mindfulness, and art-making, the participants were able to make use of art as a vehicle to express themselves in a nonjudgmental and safe space. There were also realizations of renewed empowerment, strength, and acceptance of their past. The participants recognized the value of hope especially in their difficult situation.

KEYWORDS:

focusing, mindfulness, art-making, sexual abuse, adolescent victims, FOAT, CAS-Art, FOAT Check-in

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background

Cases of sexual abuse of children and adolescents continue to rise not just in numbers but more importantly, in terms of extent and severity. It is a global public health problem and an outright human rights violation. It poses a serious threat to the health and well-being of the victims and the community at large. (WHO, 2017) The World Health Organization (2017) defined sexual abuse in childhood and adolescence as “the involvement of a child or adolescent in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend and is unable to give informed consent to, or for which one is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violates the laws or social taboos of society.... involves the intent to gratify or satisfy the needs of the perpetrator or another third party...” (p. vii). According to the national survey report submitted by United Nations Children’s Fund

(UNICEF) Philippines and Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC) in 2016, the lifetime prevalence of sexual abuse in children and adolescents in the Philippines is 21.5% - 24.7% for boys and 18.2% for girls. (UNICEF & CWC, 2016) In the global setting, UNICEF (2024) reported that more than 370 million girls and women or 1 in 8 experienced sexual violence before the age of 18. Global estimates of boys and men who experienced sexual violence before the age of 18 were measured to be 240 to 310 million or around 1 in 11. (UNICEF, 2024) With the emergence of digital technology and communications, online childhood sexual abuse and exploitation (OCSAE) cases continue to increase in alarming numbers. In a recent meta-analysis done by Fry and colleagues (2025), pooled global data showed prevalence estimates of 8.1% or 1 in 12 children worldwide have experienced online sexual exploitation or abuse. These reported figures are most likely underestimated especially since many cases remain hidden primarily due to its stigmatized nature (Moynihan, Pitcher & Saewyc, 2018).

Victims of sexual abuse face harmful consequences in their physical and reproductive health. Likewise, this adverse experience has a significant impact to their psychological and mental health. They are highly at risk for exposure to

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genitourinary infections, HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, early pregnancy and other associated physical injuries. (WHO, 2017) There have been well documented studies that show the psychological and behavioral effects of the abuse. Victims are at risk for developing depressive symptoms, suicidal tendencies and post-traumatic stress disorder. (Alix, et al., 2020). Sexual abuse has also been positively correlated with anxiety and personality disorders, aggression, relationship difficulties and conduct problems. (Springer, et al., 2003). Psychological interventions for sexual abuse victims are largely based on a trauma-focused approach. Although not all victims develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), the abusive experience is considered traumatic in a way that it causes significant psychological distress and damage to their self-concept and sense of security. (Shapiro, 2015). Considering the developmental stage of the victims, sexual abuse is a “shockingly strange and confusing experience for young people.” (Shapiro, 2015, p. 525).

B. Review of Related Literature

Trauma and its effects

Shapiro (2015) discusses the multi-dimensional effects of trauma in children and adolescents on the bases of neurophysiology, behavior and cognition.

Victims exhibit hyper-aroused and hyper-vigilance responses even when threat of abuse has already passed. This intensified state of “fight-and-flight” results from dysregulated brain systems, specifically, the autonomic nervous system (ANS) and the hypothalamic pituitary adrenal axis (HPA). The traumatic experience also affects higher brain functions of the amygdala and hippocampus resulting to dysfunctional memory acquisition and organization, respectively. Hence, the victim experiences flashbacks, distorted memories and sudden surges or triggers.

Behavioral and learned responses after trauma become conditioned and misapplied. Neutral stimuli such as sensory inputs, associated with the traumatic event become conditioned as fear stimuli. Because of this, some abuse victims become easily triggered with a certain smell or sound.

Traumatic experiences affect cognition in such a way that the victims develop a distorted worldview and self-concept. Abuse victims subscribe to self-blame, misattribution and insecurity. They tend to overgeneralize misfortune as something that they deserve or something that is

caused by them. They become distrustful in their relationships and feel inferior as compared to others.

Sexual abuse and Trauma

Based on the traumatogenic dynamics model by Finkelhor and Browne (1985), childhood sexual abuse results to (1) traumatic sexualization, (2) a sense of betrayal, (3) stigmatization and (4) loss of power. (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985 as cited by Castro, et al., 2019). *Traumatic sexualization* refers to the formation of distorted and dysfunctional views and patterns about sexuality as a result of sexual abuse. This can occur when the victim feels rewarded and praised after the abusive action. In the same manner, the victim develops a *sense of betrayal* by a figure of authority through manipulative and false understanding about the sexual act. This may result to conflicting perceptions of dependency, security, and relationships. The third dynamic is *stigmatization*, which refers to having feelings of shame and guilt over the abusive experience. In effect, the victim develops low self-esteem and alienation and may lead to self-destructive behaviors. The last dynamic in the model is *disempowerment* or losing one’s own agency, leading to maladaptive behaviors and poor coping skills. (Schram & Giovengo, 1991).

The traumatogenic dynamics model is just one of several theoretical frameworks often used in the study of sexual abuse in children and adolescents. It provides a contextual guide to better understand the traumatic effects of sexual abuse in the young population and to be able to develop appropriate and effective interventions.

Trauma-informed care and Trauma-specific interventions

Trauma-informed care is a “strengths-based service delivery approach that is grounded on an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma, that emphasizes physical, psychological and emotional safety for both providers and survivors, and that creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment.” (Hopper, Bassuk & Olivet, 2010, p.82). In the application of this paradigm, evidence-based treatment and preventive strategies are tagged as trauma-specific by addressing traumatic stress and the consequent and concurrent disorders and help facilitate recovery. (SAMHSA, 2014) Research studies show that cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), psychodynamic therapy, narrative therapy and dynamic therapy are effective therapeutic

interventions targeted for trauma cases such as sexual abuse. (Shapiro, 2015)

Mindfulness-based practices have also been incorporated into standard therapies for trauma, such as mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) and mindfulness stress reduction program (MBSR). Mindfulness is defined as a “practice of bringing awareness to the present moment with an attitude of acceptance and non-judgment.” (Rappaport, 2014, p.24) Boyd and colleagues (2018) hypothesized five mechanisms by which mindfulness helps relieve trauma symptoms, namely (1) shifting attention to the present moment; (2) increased openness to experience; (3) nonjudgmental acceptance of trauma-related cognitions; (4) reduced attention to trauma triggers and stimuli; and (5) connection and awareness to somatic sensations. A growing body of evidence reveals promising findings in the use of mindfulness practices either as supplementary or alternative intervention for trauma. Emerging neurobiological studies suggest that mindfulness-based therapies may help improve trauma symptoms by restoring modulation of the prefrontal and limbic brain regions, leading to emotional regulation. (Boyd, Lanius & McKinnon, 2018)

Arts-based interventions have also been found to be helpful in trauma cases, by “translating something unfamiliar or threatening, such as traumatic memories and their resultant sensations, to something that is familiar, tangible and under the control of the maker.” (Corrado, Wolf & Bills, 2022, p.170). Expressive arts therapy, i.e. visual arts, music, movement, drama, and writing, helps support trauma victims by offering an alternative pathway in accessing and resolving trauma by means of mind-body connection, self-soothing and engagement of the body and mind, rewriting the trauma story, containment and regulation of memories, finding meaning and restoring hope through artwork. (Malchiodi, 2020; Corrado, Wolf & Bills, 2022). Arts-based interventions can aid the victims in the preparation and presentation of trauma narratives through artwork. In doing so, they feel empowered and gain a sense of control. (Shuman, et al., 2022) The creative opportunity brought about by artmaking enables a release of energy and tension, and thus, sets the stage for therapy. (Pifalo, 2007) The abstract thoughts and emotions evoked by the trauma becomes concretized through the person’s unique work of art, thus promoting self-awareness and understanding of oneself and others (Brillantes-Evangelista, 2015) The artwork serves as the

sentiments and feelings...psychotherapy is the instrument that enables the therapists to understand their patient’s thoughts, behaviors and feelings, help their patients make sense of their circumstances and provide the necessary mechanisms for psychological integration and healing.” (Brillantes-Evangelista, 2013, p.72) Rappaport (2009) summarizes the key concepts of art therapy, namely (1) art as a safe container; (2) art as an experience beyond words; (3) art as a vehicle to engage the unconscious to the conscious; (4) art as a way for catharsis; (5) art as a way to engage one’s inner witness to the experience; (6) art as a way to acknowledge the experience in its wholeness; (7) art as a means to integrate the body, mind and spirit; and finally (8) using the creative spirit to uplift and affirm oneself. Findings from a systematic review done by Laird and Mulvihill (2022) underscored the benefits of arts-based therapy such as building rapport between the victim and therapist and alleviating symptoms of anxiety, post-traumatic stress and dissociation. There have been several studies on the efficacy of expressive arts therapies for trauma in combination with other therapeutic interventions, such as CBT. (Shuman, et.al, 2022; Pifalo, 2007) Findings in a recent meta-analysis done by Wang and colleagues (2025) highlight the utility of creative arts therapy as alternative treatment for PTSD.

Addressing trauma through Focusing-oriented arts therapy (FOAT):

An Integration of mindfulness and the arts

Focusing-oriented arts therapy (FOAT), developed by Rappaport (2009), integrates Gendlin’s (1981) Focusing-oriented theory, art therapy and mindfulness into a theoretical and practical framework. To better appreciate FOAT, the foundational theory of Gendlin is discussed herein.

Focusing is a process of intentional listening to one’s own experience – by connecting with the body, mind and spirit. It allows you to access “an embodied knowing, called the *felt sense* and helps bring you to a life-forward direction or resolution, called *felt shift*.” (Gendlin, 1981; as cited in Rappaport, 2009). The concept of focusing was introduced by Eugene Gendlin, which was originally based from his collaborative work with Carl Rogers about experiential psychotherapy. Their work has been widely adapted on different therapeutic applications, whereby the client’s perspective is acknowledged to be crucial for recovery. Gendlin’s philosophical approach in therapy presented a unique model of understanding the “situational

body”, that is, the interconnectedness of our bodies (felt sense) with the environment. (Hendricks, 2007) Gendlin further clarifies the *felt sense* as a “physical experience... a bodily awareness of a situation or person or event...that encompasses everything you feel and know about the given subject at a given time... and communicates it to you all at once...”(Gendlin, 1981, as cited in Rappaport, 2009, p. 28-29). Gendlin developed six basic focusing steps in therapy, namely (1) Clearing a space; (2) choosing an issue and felt sense; (3) handle/symbol; (4) resonating; (5) asking; and (6) receiving. In clearing a space, the client is encouraged to reflect on all the things that gets in the way of feeling fine or the “All Fine” place. The client is then asked to choose something to work on with the issues that has been cleared and reflect on how he or she feels about it, i.e. *felt sense*. After which, a handle or a symbol is used to represent the felt sense. The last 3 steps-- resonating, asking and receiving – involves the client’s dialogue with the *felt sense*, to check its rightness, to expound on it and to accept the wisdom and truth it may reveal, i.e. *felt shift*. (Gendlin, 1981; as cited in Rappaport, 2009)

Focusing-oriented arts therapy (FOAT) is a mindfulness-based approach based on Gendlin’s focusing-oriented theory and incorporates the use of creative arts. (Rappaport, 2009, 2014) FOAT has four approaches namely (1) FOAT Check-in; (2) Clearing a space with art (CAS-Art); (3) Theme-directed FOAT; and (4) Focusing-oriented arts psychotherapy. Each approach fosters mindfulness in its process and is complemented with creative arts. During a FOAT Check-in, the client is guided to display a focusing attitude by being attuned to the *felt sense* at the present moment. Additionally, the client learns the value of self-understanding. The client is then asked to find a symbol or handle to represent the felt sense and express it through one’s chosen artwork. In clearing a space with art, the client is guided to explore and identify the things that gets in the way of feeling fine or those that hinder one from being in an “All Fine place” at the present moment. As the client symbolically moves out the stressors inside the body, either through artwork or just by imagining it, he or she realizes his or her wholeness, as a separate entity from the stressors. Theme-directed FOAT addresses the current themes that are relevant to the client such as compassion, gratitude and forgiveness. The client is guided to focus and find a handle to represent it through artwork. In focusing-oriented arts psychotherapy, the focusing steps are practiced as needed throughout the therapy process, emphasizing

the dual roles of the self as a witness and an insider in the whole experience or situation in the present moment. Art creation becomes a platform to enhance connection to the felt sense as it is realized moment by moment.

The guiding principles of FOAT underscore the need to create a sense of safety for the client before proceeding to guided focusing and the intended intervention. By upholding these principles, namely, therapeutic presence, a focusing attitude, sensitivity to the client’s needs and grounding, the client feels safe and validated. Another important guiding principle for the therapist is to display empathetic understanding by actively listening to the client’s experience and mirroring the client’s artistic and body language. (Rappaport, 2010)

FOAT has been adapted for use in different settings, either as an intervention for varied clinical groups and specific cases or as a preventive health strategy for stress reduction and self-care. In particular, FOAT has been applied in trauma cases, given that both focusing and the arts have been shown to be effective tools in dealing with trauma.

Addressing trauma through Focusing-oriented arts therapy (FOAT):

Application of Judith Herman’s recovery model

Rappaport (2009) utilized Judith Herman’s (1992) three-stage model of recovery to underpin FOAT’s application for trauma. According to this model, recovery from trauma occurs in three stages, namely, (1) establishment of safety; (2) remembrance and mourning and; (3) reconnection with ordinary life. (Herman, 1992, 2002) It should be emphasized that although this model presents a stepwise approach, working through trauma is much more complex such that regression, overlaps and protracted progress across stages may occur. Aligning with FOAT’s guiding principle, establishing safety is the first stage of recovery. This is attained by ensuring that the trauma victim gains back a sense of control of one’s body and the external environment. It is essential that a strong therapeutic alliance is built with trust and empathy in order for the trauma victim to feel secure and open. In FOAT, the actual focusing and arts intervention is preceded by establishment of safety. This is done through The FOAT check-in and CAS-Art approaches as discussed earlier. The second stage of recovery is remembrance and mourning. In this stage, trauma is revisited, processed and reconstructed until “it occurs to the survivor that

perhaps the trauma is only one part, and perhaps not even the most important part, of her life story.” (Herman, 2002) In FOAT, the focusing attitude is practiced to help clients to view their pains with compassion and understanding, as expressed through the felt sense. Art making serves to offer a non-threatening way of cathartic release from the painful experience through reliving, witnessing and acknowledging the painful experience. The focusing steps of asking and receiving are applied to aid in self-examination. The last stage of recovery is reconnection with ordinary life. In this stage, the client has gained renewed self-identity separate from the trauma of the past. The client has now begun to develop a sense of trust, autonomy and social connection. In FOAT, this translates to attainment of the *felt shift* towards a life-forward direction.

C. Addressing the research gap

Based on literature search, published studies on FOAT application to trauma are limited. Moreso, research evidence on FOAT application to trauma-specific cases such as sexual abuse in the adolescent population still lack empirical support. In a local study by Brillantes-Evangelista (2013), recognized as one of the few certified Filipino FOAT practitioners, the effectiveness of visual arts and poetry as intervention to address depressive and PTSD symptoms among abused adolescents was investigated. The participants were selected adolescents living in home shelters and who were physically and sexually abused. Despite study limitations, findings revealed promising results.

To address the research gap, this study aims to examine how the use of FOAT approaches - *FOAT Check-in and CAS-Art* – can contribute to psychological healing and recovery of female adolescent victims of sexual abuse. As mentioned, these two approaches specifically target the primary need of abused victims, that is, to achieve a sense of safety. An action research methodological framework will be utilized to provide real-time and reflective implementation of the proposed intervention. A qualitative exploration using a case study design inquiry presented through narratives and corresponding artwork will be carried out to obtain in-depth understanding of the experience.

D. Objectives of the study:

1. To explore how focusing-oriented art therapy approaches, namely FOAT check-in and Clearing a Space with Art (CAS-Art) can help adolescent

victims of sexual abuse in their process of healing and recovery

2. To explore insights of self-discovery post-intervention, through narratives relayed by adolescent victims of sexual abuse by means of their artwork

II.

METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

The methodological framework used in this study is action research. Action research has been used in social sciences and business operations to address pressing concerns and issues in a participatory and practical manner. According to Lewin (1946), this method allows the researcher to perform dual roles of conducting actionable steps for change and contributing to existing knowledge base. (Lewin, 1946 as cited in Cronemyr & Huge-Brodin, 2024) Coughlan and Coughlan (2022) further defined action research as “research in action, rather than research about action; concurrent with action; participative; and entails a sequence of events or approach to problem solving.” The researcher is involved in a continuous process of developing a plan of action, performing the action, observing, reflecting on its results and proposing improvements for the next cycle. For this specific study, qualitative methods will be employed to better appreciate and capture the richness of the narratives presented by our participants through their artwork. Focused group discussions and follow-up individual interviews (as deemed necessary) were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide to allow a balance of structure and flexibility in the flow of discussion.

B. Sampling and Data Collection

The study population target are adolescent victims of sexual abuse living in an organized shelter in Antipolo City. The home shelter, a recognized Non-government Organization, caters to child and adolescent victims of abuse, including human trafficking, under the supervision of registered social workers and an attending psychologist. Apart from psychosocial care and management, the victims are also provided with educational and skill-building opportunities. Victims who experienced multiple forms of abuse (physical abuse, trafficking or solicitation, neglect), aside from sexual abuse, were excluded in this

study. Sample selection was done through purposive sampling, with the assistance of the attending psychologist and social workers in the chosen shelter. Four (4) female participants, whose ages are within the range of 10 to 15 years old, and are currently residing in the shelter were selected for this particular study. The selected participants have undergone at least 3 months of psychological treatment prior to enrollment to this study.

A total of four (4) weekly sessions was conducted with the participants in a private room within the shelter's premises, with ample space, lighting and ventilation. A dedicated time schedule was set together with the attending psychologist and social workers in charge to ensure that the daily activities and current therapeutic management of the adolescents will not be hampered. Each session (except session 4) was considered as one (1) action research cycle. Each participant was seated in a designated area with a tabletop space. All art materials were provided by the researcher. Each session lasted for 1-2 hours. All sessions were facilitated solely by the researcher. After each session, the researcher endorsed pertinent observations and reflections to the social worker in charge, to be relayed to the attending psychologist for real-time feedback. Session 4 was done to formally integrate all the learnings and debrief the participants. Due to unavoidable scheduling issues, Session 4 was done through online zoom meeting. Filipino language (Tagalog dialect) was used as the medium of communication to ensure clear understanding and to help establish good rapport.

Session 1: Orientation

FOAT check-in (integration of mindfulness practices and arts)

Short FGD post-intervention (follow-up individual interviews may be done if deemed necessary)

Session 2: FOAT check-in (integration of mindfulness practices and arts)

Clearing a Space with Art (CAS-Art), part 1 "Things that gets in the way of the All Fine Place"

Short FGD post-intervention (follow-up individual

interviews may be done if deemed necessary)

Session 3: FOAT check-in (integration of mindfulness practices and arts)

Clearing a Space with Art (CAS-Art), part 2 "The All Fine Place"

Short FGD post-intervention (follow-up individual interviews may be done if deemed necessary)

Session 4: Integration and debriefing

Session activities:

1. Orientation

The researcher gathered the group to introduce art-making and discuss the primary goals of this activity. Expectation setting was be done to ascertain that everyone was made aware of whole procedure of this study and to address any concerns about it.

2. FOAT check-in (integration of mindfulness and arts)

a. Box breathing exercise

Using a visual illustration of a box, the participants were guided in a timed breathing exercise. This exercise brought attention to the breathing process at the present moment. (inhaling, holding the breath, exhaling, holding the breath, then repeat).

b. 5-4-3-2-1 exercise

This exercise was done by focusing and engaging with the 5 senses of our body by acknowledging things around us – 5 things we see, 4 things we can touch, 3 things we can hear, 2 things we can smell, and 1 thing we can taste. The participants were encouraged to write their answers on a notebook.

c. Creation with artwork

The researcher invited the participants to create a form of artwork (ex. sketch, colored drawing, collage, clay art) to describe their thoughts and feelings during or after the exercise.

3. Clearing a Space with Art (CAS-Art) part 1 "Things that get in the way of the All Fine place"

In Clearing a space with art (CAS-Art), the participants were

guided to sort out all the “things (i.e., issues, feelings, concerns) that get in the way” of experiencing a sense of wellbeing or the “All Fine Place”. The participants were guided on how to visually represent these “things” through artwork. Art materials were provided to create sketches, collage, colored drawings and clay figures. The researcher also suggested that the participants may simply tear up pieces of paper to represent these “things”.

4. Clearing a Space with Art (CAS-Art) part 2 “The All Fine place”

In the second part of CAS-Art, the participants were guided on how to visually represent their own “All Fine Place” (i.e., a place of peace and safety) through artwork. Art materials were provided to create sketches, collage, colored drawings and clay figures.

5. Focus group discussion

After each art-based activity, a focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted to allow sharing of artwork

with the group. Questions were asked about the activity. (*See Appendix for the guide questions*) The discussion was done in a free-flowing manner. The participants were comfortable with sharing their insights with the group. Hence, there was no need for any follow-up solo interview.

6. Integration and Debriefing

A short integration and debriefing activity were done to review the past sessions via online Zoom meeting. Experiences and learnings from the sessions were discussed. The group reflected about the past activities, including its positive outcomes and areas of improvement. (*See Appendix for the guide questions*) The researcher discussed preliminary findings of the research study with the group.

The attending psychologist and the shelter facility administrator were given copies of the final research output. This was done to formally endorse all case information and study results for its continuity and possible application for other sheltered victims.

Table 1. Summary of FOAT sessions

Session number	Session venue	Session activities
1	On-site	Orientation FOAT Check-in Post-intervention FGD
2	On-site	FOAT Check-in Clearing a Space with ART part 1 “ <i>Things that get in the way of the All Fine Place</i> ” Post-intervention FGD
3	On-site	FOAT Check-in Clearing a Space with ART part 2 “ <i>The All Fine Place</i> ” Post-intervention FGD
4	Zoom meeting	Integration and debriefing

Informed assent and consent

Informed assent and consent forms were drafted using the WHO Research Ethics Review Committee template. Informed assent (for minors) was obtained before proceeding with the study. The form was translated to Filipino (Tagalog) language for better understanding. The adolescents were given ample time to read this form on their own. After which, the researcher read along with them and discussed any prevailing concern. Informed consent from acting guardian (i.e., social worker in charge) was also secured. The objectives and the procedure proper were thoroughly explained with the teen participants in a manner that was easily understood and without any form of force for participation.

Since sensitive cases were to be dealt with, the researcher immediately provided feedback after each session to the social worker-in-charge onsite, who in turn, relayed the information to the attending psychologist. The researcher also reported any pertinent observations that may have caused triggers for psychological distress. This immediate feedback system was done to ensure that no further harm will be brought about by the sessions and that trauma-sensitive approach is implemented.

Data collection strategies

A field log notebook was used to record detailed accounts of each session, which included observations during the session and concurrent reflections. Personal experiences, thoughts and feelings of the researcher about the whole research process were accounted for as well. Audiotape recordings during FGDs and individual interviews (upon agreement in the consent/assent forms) were done to help the researcher transcribe and ascertain that all relevant information and verbatim messages were recorded and verified. The *voice memo app of the Apple iphone* was used. Artworks done by the participants were recorded via image capture using the *camera app of the*

Apple iphone. The participants were instructed to take home their original artwork pieces.

Data collected was secured and made available only to the researcher for the purpose of data analysis and verification. Password locks were used for audio and image files. The field log of the researcher was kept in a secure and guarded space. Transcribed and summarized text from the field log was encoded in an electronic data file. Pseudonyms were used as case study labels to protect the identity of the participants. All files (image, audio, text) were saved in a protected electronic file folder for the use of the researcher. Only the researcher had prime access of this file folder. The researcher may share access with an external auditor/s for the purpose of data verification and use for future publication.

After all necessary processes for the conduct of this study have finished, including data verification and use for future publication, all raw and digitized data will be properly disposed.

C. Measurements

Since this is a qualitative study based on focus group discussions and individual interviews, narrative case studies will be presented. Integration of experiences and insights were made to highlight the richness of data gathered from the stories of the participants. Individual artworks were included to visually represent their narratives. The research also noted observations regarding the sessions conducted to evaluate each session or action cycle.

D. Data Analysis

In the analysis of the results, prevailing themes across all case studies will be discussed to integrate the experiences and insights of the participants. Tesch' (1990) eight steps in coding were employed in determining the themes under study. (Tesch, 1990, as cited in Creswell, 2014)

Table 9.4 Tesch's Eight Steps in the Coding Process

1. Get a sense of the whole. Read all the transcriptions carefully. Perhaps jot down some ideas as they come to mind as you read.
2. Pick one document (i.e., one interview)—the most interesting one, the shortest, the one on the top of the pile. Go through it, asking yourself, "What is this about?" Do not think about the substance of the information but its underlying meaning. Write thoughts in the margin.
3. When you have completed this task for several participants, make a list of all topics. Cluster together similar topics. Form these topics into columns, perhaps arrayed as major, unique, and leftover topics.
4. Now take this list and go back to your data. Abbreviate the topics as codes and write the codes next to the appropriate segments of the text. Try this preliminary organizing scheme to see if new categories and codes emerge.
5. Find the most descriptive wording for your topics and turn them into categories. Look for ways of reducing your total list of categories by grouping topics that relate to each other. Perhaps draw lines between your categories to show interrelationships.
6. Make a final decision on the abbreviation for each category and alphabetize these codes.
7. Assemble the data material belonging to each category in one place and perform a preliminary analysis.
8. If necessary, recode your existing data. (pp. 142–149)

Action research cycles (sessions 1-3) will also be reflected upon to determine proposals for recommendations.

Data verification methods such as triangulation of data, member checking, external audit examination and clarification of researcher bias were explicitly stipulated in the study.

E. Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations such as privacy and confidentiality, voluntary participation and freedom to drop out anytime were strictly followed. Pseudonyms were used in the reporting of data to protect the identity of the participants. Informed assent and consent were obtained before proceeding with the study. It was disclosed that the researcher had no formal training in FOAT and Expressive arts therapy. The researcher only conducted two FOAT approaches that were succinct and did not involve psychotherapy or any intention to treat. The researcher's professional experience in general pediatrics, which includes adolescent health and well-being, helped in building rapport and connection. Given the sensitivity of the cases to be handled, a real-time feedback communication system with the social worker and attending psychologist was implemented.

This study was approved by the Ethics Review Board of Miriam College for implementation.

F. Disclosure of interest

The researcher disclosed no conflict of interest in the conduct of this study. No monetary incentives and reimbursements were given.

G. Sociocultural considerations

The intervention to be employed does not intend to treat and cure the psychological disorders and conditions of the participants. Being aware of the sensitivity and gravity of the current state of the participants, the researcher approached the group with an empathetic and nonjudgmental stance, with no intention of overstepping boundaries of their current treatment and management.

This research was intended to help alleviate feelings of insecurity and inadequacy and provide added support through mindfulness practice, arts-based expression and establishment of strong therapeutic alliance. The researcher hopes that this project will be continued and incorporated in the care and management of the adolescents, even after the study has been completed.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Narrative case studies

A. "Diane"

"Diane" is a 15-year-old victim of sexual abuse, who has been staying in the shelter facility for six months. She was fairly excited to start the FOAT sessions. She led the group in welcoming the researcher during the first meeting and also acted as the *ate* of the group, who helped in keeping order and active participation.

Session 1

In the first session, “Diane” easily understood the instructions for the mindfulness exercises. While doing the box breathing, she opted to have her eyes closed. For the 54321 activity, “Diane” wrote her answers in her notebook after a few minutes of silence.

The researcher then instructed the participants to create an artwork (*felt sense*) to describe their thoughts and feelings while doing the mindfulness exercises. Together with the other participants, “Diane” asked for clarification about the meaning of *felt sense*. The researcher explained the concept again in simpler terms and also gave some concrete examples. After the participants expressed better understanding, the researcher asked them to proceed with art making. “Diane” requested for some background music while they did their work. She was intently focused while drawing the lines and curves of the flower image that she was creating.



Figure 1. Flower by “Diane” (Session 1 output)

“Diane” drew flowers with butterflies around it (Figure 1). This image showed how flowers help ease her burdens away just by looking at their beauty. She also likened flowers to the positive things in her life that makes her happy. For her, the butterflies symbolized the hope that she holds on to amidst all the problems surrounding her life in the present. During the FGD session, she shared that she felt calm and at ease while doing her artwork. She was quick to decide what image to draw that will best represent her *felt sense* at the moment. After sharing the meaning of her drawing to the group, she looked content and satisfied. She also shared that this art session was similar to her experience of journaling, as she was able to express her thoughts and feelings freely.

Session 2

Before the session proper, the researcher did a quick recap of what took place in Session 1. The second session started with the FOAT check-in. After which, the researcher introduced a new activity, Clearing a space with Art part 1, which focused on the things that get in the way of the All Fine Place. While doing the box breathing exercise, “Diane” opted

to close her eyes once again. She wrote the things that came to mind in her notebook after doing the 54321 exercise.

“Diane” was now more comfortable in creating her artwork during the FOAT check-in. Once again, she requested for background music for the group, while doing the artwork. She was observed to be more focused on finishing work as compared to Session 1. This time, she did not only draw and color, but she added some shredded colored paper as part of her artwork.



Figure 2. Peace of Mind by “Diane” (Session 2 – FOAT check-in output)

“Diane” shared that she chose this theme “Peace of Mind” as this echoed her longing for rest and calmness especially during the difficult times when she feels like her problems and issues continue to haunt her (Figure 2). She chose blue-colored collages to symbolize the sky, together with some little drawings of birds. For “Diane”, *looking at the sky* and *hearing the sound of the birds* give her a certain sense of peace. She dreams of going to this quiet place, with blue skies and tweeting birds.

For the second activity, Clearing a space with Art part 1, there were no image captures available, as the researcher felt that this part was highly sensitive, to which the participants agreed. Background music was requested to be played while doing this activity. “Diane” took some time of reflection before finally deciding to do the activity. She was more silent as compared to the previous activity. Her output for this activity were “two crumpled papers”, which symbolized her (1) past and (2) the other people who were blocking her way to happiness. She felt sad while doing this second activity as she remembered these two crumpled papers in her life. She placed the crumpled papers inside the brown paper bag and placed it near her feet. When asked why she placed it there, she said that she did not want to see it, just as she did not want to check back on her painful experiences. She realized that even if she seemed to think that she is already recovering, her past continues to affect her in a negative manner. The researcher asked “Diane” if she needed

a private session, but she respectfully declined and said that she would be okay. After the session, the researcher immediately consulted with the social worker-in charge. The social worker assured the researcher that she would send feedback to the attending psychologist.

Session 3

A short review of the previous sessions was done before the researcher proceeded with the introduction of the third session. By this time, the participants, including “Diane” have grown more comfortable with the researcher, exchanging stories about likes and dislikes in music and drama idols. “Diane” closed her eyes while doing the box breathing exercise. When it was time to do the 54321 exercise, she opted to make mental notes instead of writing down the words on her notebook. Background music was again requested to be played. “Diane” hummed, together with the other participants, while doing their artwork. In the middle of sketching, she started singing the lyrics of the song being played.



Figure 3. Buwan ng Wika by “Diane” (Session 3 – FOAT check-in output)

During this time, schools were having *Buwan ng Wika* celebrations. “Diane” drew an interpretation of “Buwan ng Wika” as she was also busy preparing for her school event (Figure 3). She shared that there was more to this picture than just the “Buwan ng Wika.” This chosen theme represented how much she valued her roots and identity. “Diane” told the group that she specifically drew a tree on the side to remind her, that despite the busyness, she still needed a time to rest under her tree. The car on the side of the image was a reminder that she also has dreams of travelling. The buildings at the bottom of the image represented her ambition to have a successful career in the near future.

After the FOAT check-in activity, the researcher introduced the next activity, Clearing a Space with Art part 2 – the All Fine Place. “Diane” excitedly listened to the instructions for this last artwork activity. The researcher reminded the participants that the second part of Clearing a Space with Art was a lighter activity as compared to the part

1. As the background music played, “Diane” started humming and singing again. For her last artwork, she drew herself on a cliff, as she wanted to get a better glimpse of the moon (Figure 4). She shared that being on a cliff meant that she would be in a high place, where she would be able to get the best views of both the sky and the ground. This place was her “All Fine Place” as this brings her solace and comfort. Even if it seemed that the girl in the picture was alone, she knew that there would always be people, especially her family, who loves her so much. Additionally, she realized that in moments of solitude like this, she felt empowered to be independent and strong in this big world.



Figure 4. Untitled by “Diane” (Session 3 – CAS Art Part 2 output)

B. “Baby”

“Baby” is a 11-year-old victim of sexual abuse, who has been staying in the shelter facility for 2 years. She was the youngest and most reserved among the participants. During the orientation, she did not say much. She was just smiling and nodding to express that she understood what the researcher was saying. But as the sessions carried on, “Baby” started opening up and talking more.

Session 1

In the first session, “Baby” took some time before she felt comfortable in following the mindfulness exercises. The researcher consoled her that it was okay if she was not yet ready to join and she may opt to observe first. After some prodding by the other participants, “Baby” joined the exercises. While doing the box breathing, she chose to close her eyes. For the 54321 activity, “Baby” seemed to be in deep thought. She didn’t write on her notebook and had a far-off look on her face.

After clarifying the instructions for the next activity, FOAT check-in, the participants proceeded with their art making. Background music was requested to be played. “Baby” proceeded with her work, while glancing at the works of the other participants.



Figure 5. Sunflower by “Baby” (Session 1 output)

“Baby” decided to draw and not write words anymore, as she previously requested. She drew a big sunflower with two hearts at the top (Figure 5). When asked why she drew this image, she simply smiled and muttered that this flower made her happy. She didn’t share much during the FGD session, and did not want others to see her drawing. She listened to the other participants, while covering her own artwork. The researcher asked permission if “Baby” could share it privately, which she happily obliged. When asked about how she felt while doing the activity, she softly answered that it made her a bit happy. The researcher decided not to prod anymore and thanked “Baby” for sharing.

Session 2

After a quick recap of what took place in Session 1, the group proceeded with Session 2. While doing the box breathing exercise, “Baby” opted not to close her eyes. After the 54321 exercise, she did not write anything on her notebook and preferred to make mental notes instead. She was in a jollier mood at the start of the session and looked more comfortable as compared to the previous session. Background music was requested to be played again while doing their artwork during the FOAT check-in activity.

“Baby” proceeded immediately into sketching and coloring her drawing. She was observed folding and cutting pieces of paper. She was more focused on her work and minimized her glances to the works of the other participants.



Figure 6. Gusto kong maging doktor by “Baby” (Session 2 – FOAT check-in output)

“Baby” drew a flower, a black image and lettering, *Doc- Gusto ko* (Figure 6). Once again, she did not want to share her work to the group. She told the group that she would only show it to the researcher. When the researcher asked her if it was okay to share some details of her without showing the artwork, she agreed. During the FGD session, “Baby” shared that her work was about her dream of becoming a doctor. When the other participants asked for more details, she turned away smiling and looked down. The researcher decided not to probe for more information.

For the Clearing a space with Art part 1, background music was requested to be played again. No image capture of the artworks was done due to the sensitive nature of the activity. “Baby” quickly knew what to do after she heard the instructions. She was the first to finish the activity. She tore up pieces of paper and placed them all inside the brown paper bag. She shared that while tearing the papers, she felt furious and *nanggigigil*. The moment she placed the pieces inside the paper bag, she felt relieved and somewhat happy. She realized that these pieces of paper could be tucked in away from her and that she had the option to move away from them. When asked why she placed the paper bag within her site, she failed to give a straight answer. The researcher asked “Baby” if she needed a private session, but she refused and said that she felt good after the activity.

Session 3

Before the session proper, a brief recap of the previous sessions was done. “Baby” has grown to be more at ease and comfortable, exchanging banters with the other participants. Her voice sounded loud and confident. “Baby” preferred to close her eyes while doing the box breathing exercise. For the 54321 exercise, she preferred to take mental notes instead of writing down the words on her notebook. Background music was again requested to be played for the artmaking activity that followed. Like the rest of the participants, “Baby” hummed to the tune of the music being played.



Figure 7. Untitled by “Baby” (Session 3 – FOAT check-in output)

“Baby” folded papers and made a small booklet (Figure 7). She was observed to be extremely focused while doing her artwork. She did not glance on the sides as compared in the previous sessions. On the first page, she drew squares. On the second page, she drew circles. On the last page, she drew a flower. When asked about the meaning of her drawings, she was not able to answer. She shrugged and said that she just wanted to make something unique.

For the Clearing a space with Art part 2, background music was again requested to be played. “Baby” asked permission to check the window to find some inspiration for her All Fine Place. The researcher agreed and told her to take her time. Not long after, she started drawing.



Figure 8. Untitled by “Baby” (Session 3 – CAS Art Part 2 output)

For “Baby”, this extraordinary moon symbolized her All Fine Place (Figure 8). The small circle was the moon, and the large circle was a reflection from its surrounding, the sky and the seas. She shared that whenever she looks at the moon, she feels a sense of awe and wonder. She added that looking something beautiful like the moon brings happiness to her. If given a chance, she would want to visit the moon and have a

closer look. “Baby” shared how much she enjoyed doing this last artwork activity.

C. “Lyn”

“Lyn” is a 12-year-old victim of sexual abuse, who has been staying in the shelter facility for 2 years. Like “Baby”, she was a bit shy at the start of the sessions. She listened quietly during the orientation and when asked by the researcher if she had some questions, she just shook her head. But in the succeeding sessions, “Lyn” became more open in discussing her thoughts and feelings with the group and the researcher.

Session 1

“Lyn” closed her eyes while doing the box breathing exercise. For the 54321 activity, “Lyn” seemed to be lost in thought while the others were either writing on their notebooks or doing active mental notes.

The researcher spent some time explaining the meaning of *felt sense*, as the group asked for clarification. After the clearing things up, the group proceeded to do the activity. Background music was requested to be played during the art making activity. “Lyn” softly spoke and asked if she could just write some words instead of drawing. The researcher gladly approved and encouraged her to pursue whatever she felt was right for her at that moment. The researcher echoed this reminder to the other participants as well. “Lyn” remained silent while doing her artwork. She had several erasures before sticking to a final idea. “Lyn” was also observed to be glancing a lot on her sides, to check the works of the other participants.



Figure 9. Family by “Lyn” (Session 1 output)

“Lyn” wrote the word family and drew a tree in the middle of the paper (Figure 9). This image showed how much she misses her family since she has been away from them for a long time. The tree was a reminder of her memory with her siblings when they used to play around their favorite tree. “Lyn” felt sad while sharing her artwork with the group. But despite the sadness on her face, she stressed that she is still hopeful that her dream to be reunited with her family will

happen very soon. The researcher asked if she wanted to have a follow-up session, but “Lyn” was quick to refuse and said that she would be okay.

Session 2

After a quick review of Session 1, the group proceeded to the next session. While doing the box breathing exercise, “Lyn” opted to close her eyes. She preferred making mental notes after the 54321 exercise. Like “Baby”, she was in a better mood and looked giddy. She told the researcher that for this session, she would be participating well. Music played in the background while the participants did their artwork.

“Lyn” was focused in creating her artwork. She was observed to be in full concentration while she did her strokes and colors.



Figure 10. Bird and baby by “Lyn” (Session 2 – FOAT check-in output)

“Lyn” drew a big blue bird and a small image of a baby on the side (Figure 10). The bird acted as a protector and provider for the child. “Lyn” shared that the baby represented her, and that she wished for this bird to be constantly present in her life. She added that the bird looked above as it was also saying a prayer for the child. “Lyn” excitedly shared her artwork with the group. She seemed proud as she described the images.

For the Clearing a space with Art part 1, music was played in the background again. No image capture of the artworks was done due to the sensitive nature of the activity. After a few minutes of silence, “Lyn” chose to crumple one piece of paper and placed it inside the paper bag. She finished early, next to “Baby.” She shared that this giant piece of crumpled paper was like a large vehicle or a bus, that was huge enough to block her way. When asked to expound more about this bus, she just smiled sheepishly and did not answer

anymore. It seemed that she wanted the attention to be shifted immediately to the next participant. The researcher decided not to probe further.

Session 3

Before proceeding to the third session, the researcher did a quick review of the previous sessions. “Lyn”, like “Baby” seemed to be more at ease and even eager to participate in the activity. She opted to close her eyes while doing the box breathing exercise. She wrote her answers on her notebook after doing the 54321 exercise. Background music was again requested to be played for the artmaking activity that followed. Like the rest of the participants, “Lyn” hummed to the tune of the music being played.



Figure 11. Nag-iisang bulaklak sa hardin by “Lyn” (Session 3 – FOAT check-in output)

“Lyn” drew an image of a flower on a pot (Figure 11). She shared that she feels happy and relaxed whenever she sees a flower. She added that even if there was only one flower in the garden, it was enough to brighten the whole space. She also said that the single flower in the garden could be likened to her, who could stand on its own.

For the Clearing a space with Art part 2, background music was again requested to be played. “Lyn” was hesitant to start the activity and told the researcher that she was confused about the task. After some clarification, “Lyn” proceeded with her work.

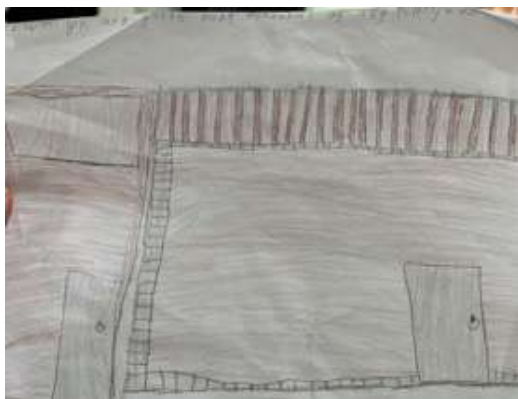


Figure 12. Bahay namin by “Lyn” (Session 3 – CAS Art Part 2 output)

For “Lyn”, her All Fine Place was their home. She shared how much she wanted to go home and see her family. Her home was not only a place where she can be with her family. It was also a place full of wonderful childhood memories, which for her, was her treasure. “Lyn” had a big smile on her face while she was sharing these insights with the group.

D. “Shin Won Ho”

“Shin Won Ho” is a 14-year-old victim of sexual abuse, who has been staying in the shelter facility for 2 years. She was eager to participate in the sessions. But there were times when she would lose focus and would be telling some random stories while the sessions were in progress. When the researcher tries to divert her attention back to the activity, she would follow immediately.

Session 1

“Shin Won Ho” closed her eyes and stood up while doing the box breathing exercise. She wrote words in her notebook after the 54321 activity.

After the researcher spent some time to clarify the meaning of *felt sense*, the group proceeded with art making. Background music was requested to be played during the art making activity. “Shin Won Ho” chatted with the other participants while doing her work. When the other participants did not answer her, she would just mumble and went on to continue with the task.



Figure 13. Masakit by “Shin Won Ho” (Session 1 output)

“Shin Won Ho” did not draw anymore, instead, used letterings to describe what she was feeling in the moment (Figure 13). She said that just like drawings, words are also powerful in conveying her thoughts and feelings. She shared that with the use of words, there would be no ambiguity nor confusion. These words described how she presently felt, that is, feeling stressed since the start of school. Alongside other activities in the shelter, she also needed to complete modular school work.

Session 2

The group proceeded to Session 2 after a quick recap of the previous session. While doing the box breathing exercise, “Shin Won Ho” opted not to close her eyes. She preferred making mental notes after the 54321 exercise. Music played in the background while the participants did their artwork.

“Shin Won Ho” was observed humming along with the music while doing her work. She glanced frequently from side to side to check the works of the other participants. She also shared a random story while the group was busy at work. The researcher tried to divert her attention back by asking about her drawing.

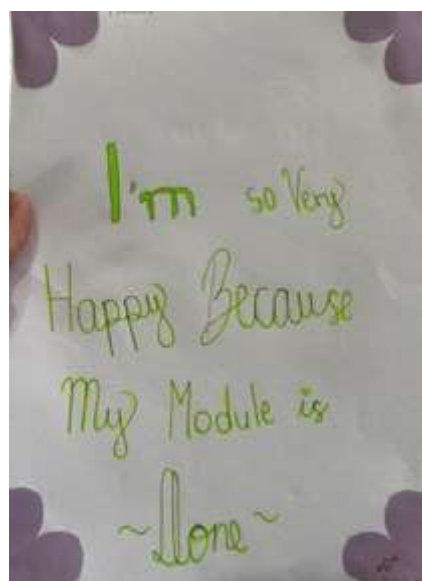


Figure 14. Happy now by “Shin Won Ho” (Session 2 – FOAT check-in output)

Once again, “Shin Won Ho” preferred to write words than draw. This time, the message of her work was about the happiness that she feels now that her modular work is already finished. (Figure 14) She did not expound on this anymore and just said that the message was clear enough. While sharing with the group, she was in a more positive mood as compared to the previous session.

For the Clearing a space with Art part 1, music was played in the background again. No image capture of the artworks was done due to the sensitive nature of the activity.

After a few minutes of silence, “Shin Won Ho” proceeded with her work. She looked serious as she drew something on a big piece of paper, then crumpled it and placed it inside the paper bag. She placed the paper bag at the top of the table, by her side. She shared that the crumpled piece of paper was her mind, the one thing that blocks her way. She went on to say that her greatest enemy was herself, specifically, her mind. When asked what she drew on the paper before crumpling it, she answered saying, that it did not matter anymore. She realized that with this activity, she learned that it is possible to separate her mind from herself. She felt empowered knowing, that there is a way to control her thoughts and keep the negative parts away from herself.

Session 3

A quick review was done by the researcher before proceeding to Session 3. “Shin Won Ho” opted not to close her eyes while doing the box breathing exercise. She wrote her answers on her notebook after doing the 54321 exercise. Background music was again requested to be played for the artmaking activity that followed. Like the rest of the participants, “Shin Won Ho” hummed to the tune of the music being played.



Figure 15. Ang sakit ng ulo ko by “Shin Won Ho” (Session 3 – FOAT check-in output)

This time, “Shin Won Ho” drew an image and did not do her usual letterings. It was an image of herself, with a bubble balloon, saying that she has a headache (Figure 15). She was complaining how irritating her headache was, keeping her from concentrating and doing her tasks well. She said that sickness makes her feel helpless and tired. But she was quick to add, that despite this sickness, she must not surrender and stop.

For the Clearing a space with Art part 2, background music was again requested to be played. “Shin Won Ho” asked permission to check the surroundings outside for some inspiration. The researcher agreed and told her to take her

time. After a few minutes, she got the clay and started her work.

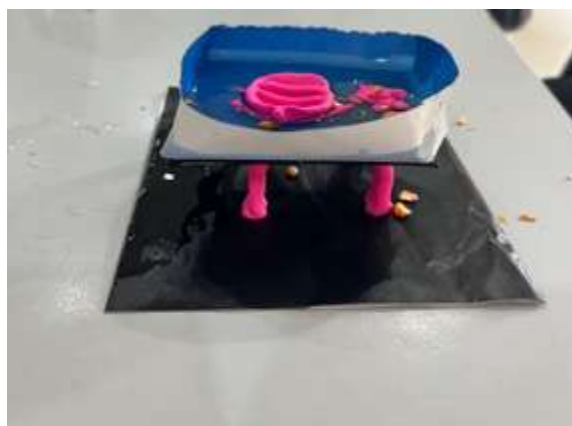


Figure 16. Bangka by “Shin Won Ho” (Session 3 – CAS Art Part 2 output)

“Shin Won Ho” shared that this was her All Fine Place, an image of a boat (using pink colored molded clay) sailing on the sea (using the blue colored paper) (Figure 16). She even added water in the blue box. The other pink clay materials on the blue box were the fish in the sea. This reminded her of her past memory with her family when they were still living in a seaside area in Bicol. She also remembered riding a boat when going to school. Thinking about this memory while doing the artwork made her happy and sentimental. She realized how this activity could actually bring therapeutic relief. By sharing her artwork, she felt seen and heard.

Integration: Prevailing themes – debriefing summary

For Session 4, debriefing and integration were done. An online zoom meeting was set up for a short FGD together with the participants. The participants expressed their gratitude and happiness for being given the opportunity to take part in this research study. Some felt shy and nervous in the beginning, but became more comfortable as they went along. Some were excited from the very start. The participants shared that even if the sessions were done for a limited time, they learned a lot about themselves. Also, by participating in the group, they were also given the chance to learn from others’ stories as well. The art-making activities served as a vehicle for them to release their bottled-up emotions and thoughts, resulting to *pagka-gaan ng loob*. They were sad, though, that the sessions have already come to an end. They hoped that this kind of activity would be offered again, not just for them, but for the other adolescent residents of their shelter facility.

There were three prevailing themes that summarize the learnings and experiences of the participants in this research activity.

1. It is okay not to be okay.

The participants were able to acknowledge and visualize their personal hindrances and obstacles in life at the moment. “Lyn” learned that she can take control of some things in life, including the negative experiences. “Baby” realized that even if her situation seemed chaotic, she should learn to be calm. “Shin Won Ho” learned the value of holding on to one’s All Fine Place, whenever one feels lost and down. “Diane” accepted that the recovery process of her trauma is long and could be tiring at times, but she still wanted to pursue it no matter what.

2. I am strong and capable.

The strength and capabilities of the participants were somehow brought to light by the FOAT sessions. “Lyn” shared that these bad things do not solely define them and life has so much more to offer. “Shin Won Ho” realized that her greatest enemy is no one but herself, particularly her mind. If she could challenge her negative thoughts, she thinks that she would be able to do well. Both “Diane” and “Baby” were reminded of their dreams and ambitions in life, keeping them in check that they have the ability to make them a reality if they continue to work hard.

3. There is still goodness in this world.

Having recognized that there are bad things in life, the participants also realized that there are good things as well. “Diane” realized that even if she feels alone at times, in truth, there will always be people who are ready to help her. “Lyn” and “Shin Won Ho” were reminded by their good memories of family, their All Fine Place. “Lyn” added that the love and protection of someone so great and big will always be around to make sure that she is safe. “Baby” realized how simple joys may be experienced just by looking at the beauty of her surroundings. The participants felt hopeful that indeed, goodness will always prevail.

IV. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The effectivity of the intervention may have been overestimated because of the small sample size and the limited FOAT approaches employed in this study. Likewise, generalizations cannot be done using data from narrative case studies, although thematic evaluation may be considered for further study. Since the researcher employed a qualitative research design, obtained data is considered to be subjective, and thus, data may be hard to replicate and measure. Due to time constraints, only a limited number of action research cycles were implemented.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the narrative stories of the adolescent participants of this study, the FOAT approaches, particularly FOAT check-in and Clearing a space with Art, insightful experiences were drawn and shared. They learned a lot about

themselves and through the experiences of the other participants as well. Through the processes of focusing, mindfulness, and art-making, they were able to express their deepest thoughts and feelings in a nonjudgmental and safe space. The participants were able to feel a sense of renewed strength and confidence, as well as an acceptance of the truth of their traumas. They realized that though the recovery process may be a long and arduous undertaking, these painful memories are separate from their beings and that there is hope to live by.

In the debriefing and integration session, the researcher asked the participants for recommendations about the delivery of the FOAT approaches, to which the former also agreed to. It is recommended that an extended time schedule will be allotted for the sessions. A larger number of participants per group may also be included for future study. It is also recommended that the main facilitator is FOAT-trained or directly supervised by a certified FOAT facilitator, especially if the other FOAT approaches will be applied. A real-time feedback support system together with the social workers and psychologist is needed to ensure that psychological support will be given in a timely manner. A nature-based setting may also be considered as a good venue for facilitating FOAT-related activities, as this may help in creating a more inviting and friendly space for the participants.

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APPENDIX

GUIDE QUESTIONS for FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION:

1. Explain the meaning behind your artwork.
Ano ang ibig sabihin ng iyong nilikhang larawan? Ano ang ipinapahiwatig na mensahe ng iyong drawing?
The researcher may probe on the use of colors, darkness and lightness of shades, choice of materials used, strokes and images.
2. Describe your experience while making the art. How did you feel? (before, during and after you finished your artwork)
Ilarawan ang iyong karanasan habang ginagawa ang iyong artwork? (habang gumuguhit at nagkukulay; o minomolde ang clay; o pinupunit ang mga papel; gumagawa ng collage)
Ano ang iyong nararamdaman sa umpisa ng session?... habang nagaganap ang session? ...pagkatapos ng session?
3. Do you have any new discovery about yourself? Explain.
Mayroon ka bang bagong natuklasan tungkol sa iyong sarili? ... o bagong natutunan tungkol sa iyong sarili? Ipaliwanag.

GUIDE QUESTIONS for INTEGRATION AND DEBRIEFING:

1. What did you learn about yourself after the activity?
Ilahad ang inyong natutunan tungkol sa inyong sarili pagkatapos ng activity.
2. How did you feel after the activity? (before; during)
Ano ang inyong nagging pakiramdam pagkatapos ng activity? Ipaliwanag. (bago natin gawin ang activity; habang ginagawa ang activity)
3. What can you say about your experience of art-making? Was it helpful or not?
Maaari ninyo bang ilarawan ang inyong karanasan sa paggawa ng art? Nakatulong bai to sa inyo kahit papaano o hindi? Ipaliwanag.
4. What are your suggestions to improve and enhance the activity?
Ano ang inyong mga suhestiyon o rekomendasyon upang mapabuti pa ang activity?