

***Cinematherapy as Modeling Technique in Cognitive and Emotional Development  
in Educational Context of the Depressed Filipino Female Adolescents***

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**Abstract**

This study is a pioneering effort of the Psychological Section of the National Center for Mental Health. As basic research, it aimed to determine the efficacy of Cinematherapy as a modeling technique in reducing if not eliminating depressive symptoms so as to increase their competency level and improve their academic performance upon return to school of the 30 Filipino female adolescents aging from 15-18 years old admitted in Zonta, a female adolescents' pavilion. It employed quasi-experimental design involving the pre-and-post test data of the participants with depressive symptoms. Quantitative evidence was obtained from the administration of Basic Personality Inventory – Filipino Version to determine the change in the depressive level of the participants after watching selected films on self-confidence, persistence, optimistic attitude, sense of obligation and responsibility, and belief in one's own ability to accomplish/achieve one's goals for 12 sessions. This helps the participants realize the "reel" and real life experiences and that their viewing experience provides them the opportunity to have right perspective outside the experience and discover strengths in the midst of challenges thus, enhance cognitive and emotional skills. Findings showed the decrease depressive level thereby; Cinematherapy is a good therapeutic technique in enhancing competency skills and increasing achievement level of female adolescents to be prepared as they face again the challenges in education.

Keywords: child and adolescent psychology, depression, cinematherapy

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## **Introduction**

The challenges of adolescence lead the youth to become depressed (Fried, 2005 cited by Kail and Cavavaugh, 2016). This is the first onset of depression (Kessler, et al., 2005 cited by Waugh & Koster, 2015) and relapse may occur while on the adolescence stage as to the finding of Lewinsohn, et al., 1994 as mentioned by Waugh & Koster, 2015. It is also related to the recurrent and chronic depression in adulthood (Garber, et. al, 2009) and other mental illnesses like anxiety disorder, substance abuse and alcohol problem (Maughan, et al., 2013 & Thummathai, 2017).

Adolescent depression is common leading to distress and impairment for individuals and families (Jones, et al., 2017) on such aspects of life as academic performance; and peer and family functioning from the findings of Birmaher, et al, 1996 & Gootlib, et al, 1995 cited by Weeland, et al, 2017; loss of competency and reduced educational achievement from the studies of Garber, et al, 2009, Leahy, 2010, Smith and Smith, 2010 (Thummathai, 2017); social sphere and general well-being ( Cruz, et al., 2014); suicide prevalence (Weeland, et al, 2017, WHO, 2017 &Thummathai, 2017); and major personal, economic and societal costs (Strange, et al, 2017).

Adolescents have pervasive feelings of sadness, irritable, low self-esteem, unable to concentrate (Kail & Cavavaugh, 2016), feelings of hopelessness, changes in sleep and appetite, and suicidal ideation and such are externalized differently from adults (Cruz, et al, 2014). To deal with depressive symptoms in order not to recur in adulthood, psychotherapy involving cognitive and social skills whereby the adolescents learn social interaction by interpreting the social cues appropriately is recommended. It is then, the combination of cognitive behavioral model in which it is based on the insights of the adolescents with facilitation of the therapist; and social learning involving observational learning wherein they have to observe the modeled behavior to learn coping strategies. Cinematherapy applied these approaches for therapeutic effect on the adolescents' struggles with daily life complexities. Nowadays, the adolescents are greatly influenced by any kind of movies affirming the findings of various studies on Cinematherapy cited in Powell et al., 2006. Cinematherapy is effective for movies are a 'powerful medium' and as part of adolescents' culture (Hebert & Neumeister, 2001), link of inner life fantasy and current reality (Chethik,2000), and serves as means of preventing resistance in processing information to master the desired behaviors and connecting the knowledge gained within the therapeutic sessions to real life experience (Powell et al., 2006). As an Art Therapy, Cinematherapy is an avenue to freely express their emotions which are frightening and difficult to accept or current problems (Gramaglia, et al., 2011 & Marsick, 2010) or wide range of problems of various population involving individuals, couples and families ( Egeci & Gencoz, 2017) from different angles (Marsick, 2010). The intervention technique of watching a movie with a group of similar difficulties allow the adolescents to identify with characters in the film through analysis of the modeled behaviors and group discussion after watching providing an opportunity to share the experiences and coping styles of the characters. This process leads to gaining insight on how to resolve the issues, discover ways on dealing with the problems to avoid from having unpleasant emotions like being sad, irritable and lose hope in improving their performance or manifesting depressive symptoms. These are determined in the several researches conducted and confirmed the effectiveness of Cinematherapy as a non-directive therapeutic tool in managing depressive symptoms.

The method is a form of inquiry of adolescents' inner life in order to come into contact with their emotions by acknowledging and accepting of thoughts and behaviors to effect cognitive and affective change from the study of Gramaglia (2011) on patients with eating disorders using Cinematherapy. Egeci and Gencoz (2017) posited that movie is a functional medium for discussing interconnected issues as it is seen as a safe distance for self-exploration. By identifying with the characters, they are able to identify their blockages, present needs, and concealed or unspoken desires and expectations hence; re-signify, restructure and transformed their life scripts so as to discover new coping strategies as what found out by Dumtrache's study in 2014. This technique is utilized to improve the hope and optimism of an adult with Major Depression in the case study of Lee Powell, et al (2008) in which it is statistically and clinically effective at improving hope and clinically effective at improving optimism in individuals with depressive symptoms. Further, in the study of Egeci & Gencoz (2017) of 2 cases of depression whereby movie discussion made them aware of the causes of depressive symptoms thus; change was made possible. Similarly, the study of Abedin & Molaie in 2010 found that Cinematherapy is effective in decreasing depression through facilitating cognitive, emotive and behavioral modeling.

As a basic research and pioneering effort of the Psychological Section of the National Center for Mental Health in the field of Clinical Psychology and the area of specialization, the Child and Adolescent, the researchers aimed to determine the efficacy of Cinematherapy as a modeling technique in reducing if not eliminating depressive symptoms among thirty (30) Filipino girl adolescents aged 15-18 years old admitted in Zonta, a female adolescents pavilion. With the best knowledge and efforts of the researchers, to date, there is a limited number of studies that provided quantitative evidence (Egeci & Gencoz, 2017). In response to the scarcity of quantitative studies on Cinematherapy as therapeutic tool, this study utilized quasi-experimental design with pre-posttest using standardized test. Further, it was conducted on in-patient girls manifesting depressive symptoms proving that 5 - 15% of girls are affected than boys with depression. It is related with social challenges in adolescence that is greater for girls than boys (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2016). The researchers then would like to find out if this therapeutic technique is effective to the in-patient adolescents with depressive symptoms as with the findings in the Western countries and other Southeast Asian countries.

The objectives of this research are to determine the efficacy of Cinematherapy among the depressed girls of Zonta Pavilion of National Center for Mental Health and utilize the findings in designing the Psychological intervention program for both boys and girls of the Outpatient Section. Specifically, this study sought to confirm the efficacy of Cinematherapy as an intervention technique by determining the significant differences between the mean scores of experimental and comparison groups before and after the movie showing to the participants.

The participants are 30 girls aged 15-18, at least Grade 3 level and admitted in Zonta, a Child and Adolescent Pavilion manifesting depressive symptoms as measured by Basic Personality Inventory Filipino version and are selected through purposive sampling. They have not undergone any therapeutic intervention nor watched the movies before the study.

The participants' Information Sheet was designed by the researchers for personal information gathering including age; educational attainment; mental health status like the date and number of times of admission, and duration of manifestation of depressive symptoms; Basic Personality Inventory scores and interpretation; and therapeutic and movie experiences. Explanatory Statement for the Participants and their Significant Others; and Informed Assent and Consent for the participants of the study as well as their Significant Others were provided to the participants and their significant others.

The Basic Personality Inventory – Filipino Version consists of 240 true/false items, and may be used with both adolescents and adults. The 12 bipolar scales measure broad dimensions of personality that relate an individual's intrapsychic and interpersonal functioning. Scale names were chosen to avoid potentially inaccurate diagnostic labels include (1) Hypochondriasis, (2) Depression, (3) Denial, (4) Interpersonal Problems, (5) Alienation, (6) Persecutory Ideas, (7) Anxiety, (8) Thinking Disorder, (9) Impulse Expression, (10) Social Introversion, (11) Self Depreciation, and (12) Deviation. Several studies indicate strong support for the reliability and validity of the BPI. In this study, the researcher focused on the measure of depressive symptoms such that high scores on Depression and Self-depreciation; and low scores on Alienation and Persecutory Ideas.

Selection of movies was based on the objective of the study which is reducing the depressive symptoms thus; dealing with emotions and developing self-confidence, persistence, optimistic attitude; sense of obligation and responsibility; and belief in one's self to accomplish/achieve one's goals. These movies were reviewed by three clinical psychologists to ensure the appropriateness in meeting the objectives of the study prior to showing. The following are shown to the participants in the scheduled dates:

Inside Out is about emotions namely joy, anger, fear, disgust and sadness in adjusting to different life situations.

Moana focuses on sense of obligation to the family and community.

Mulan stresses on the acceptance of responsibility to save one's family member and to defend the community from any harm or danger.

Frozen emphasizes on giving assurance in dealing and relating with others specifically to one's family member and the community as well.

This study is of quasi-experimental design involving pre-post-test and experimental and comparison groups. The participants were asked to read and understand the Explanatory Statements and then sign the Informed Assent/Consent so with their Parents/Guardians before starting the sessions.

The 12 sessions activities for about 45 minutes began with the administration of the Basic Personality Inventory Filipino version to assess the presence of depressive symptoms. Basing from the test findings, those with depressive symptoms were assigned to either experimental and comparison group. The participants in the experimental group received Cinematherapy in 10 sessions for 45 minutes with guided viewing on selected movies followed by sharing of experiences in reel and real situations and answering the questions formulated for each movie. The comparison

group took Basic Personality Inventory Filipino version before and after the activity; and received no intervention for the duration of study.

The second session is the Introduction of Cinematherapy as a therapeutic technique and the questions about the activity by the participants.

In the third and fourth sessions, the movie *Inside Out* which depicts 5 emotions namely Joy, Sadness, Anger, Fear and Disgust experienced by an 11-year old girl named Riley as she deals with social situations with emphasized on positivity to life-changing events was shown to the participants. After watching, the following questions about the movie were asked:

1. Describe the main character of the film.
2. How does Riley feel in different situations?
3. If you are Riley, would you feel the same when you move to a new place?

The fifth and sixth sessions is the showing and processing of the movie *Moana* that is about the heroic act of an island girl who is ready to save the island from hunger by going beyond the reef though it was prohibited by her father because of enchantment but the encouragement and guidance of her grandmother she becomes confident that she will succeed with her mission of giving back the stolen heart of Te Fiti, the living mother island and restore their beautiful and fruitful island. The questions were as follow:

1. Describe the main character of the film.
2. How did Moana show her sense of obligation to their people?
3. Was there an instance that you did like that of Moana?

On the seventh and eight sessions, the participants watched *Mulan* tells a story about a brave girl who disguised as a boy to represent her family so that her ailing old father will not be forced to join the army for a special mission. For this viewing, the participants are required to answer the following:

1. Describe the characteristics of Mulan.
2. What are the ways that show Mulan accepting the responsibility of her father?
3. In what way that you accepted the responsibility like that of Mulan?

Ninth and tenth sessions are intended for the showing of *Frozen* which explores the ideas of true love toward family and strengthen siblings' relationship just as Elsa and Anna who did extraordinary things to save one from danger and to prove their love to one another. The following questions were:

1. Describe the characters of Elsa and Anna as sisters.
2. How did they assure that they truly love each other and the kingdom?
3. In your experience, how did you assure your sister/family that you really love them?

Eleventh session is the administration of the Post-test of Basic Personality Test-Filipino Version.

Twelfth session is the wrap-up activities wherein the participants are given the opportunity to ask further questions about the activity.

## Results

**Table 1 Pre-test and Post-test Mean Scores, Standard Deviation and t -Test Values of Experimental Group**

Scales	Pre-test		Post-test		t	Sig	Decision
	M	SD	M	SD			
Depression	64.33	5.31	54.13	12.11	4.203	.001	Reject
Alienation	41.27	4.67	52.60	9.17	-5.937	.000	Reject
Persecutory Ideas	47.20	8.06	54.67	8.16	-5.453	.000	Reject
Self-Depreciation	64.53	12.04	59.40	14.01	2.964	.010	Reject

To determine the efficacy of Cinematherapy as an intervention technique, the researchers subjected the pre-test and post-test mean scores of each group to a paired sample t-test.

As seen in Table 1, all scales have significant differences indicating that the Cinematherapy as an intervention is effective in lowering levels of Depression ( $t (14) = 4.203$ ,  $p=.001$ ) and Self-Depreciation ( $t (14) = 2.964$ ,  $p= .010$ ); and increasing the alienation ( $t (14) = -5.937$ ,  $p=.000$ ) and Persecutory Idea levels ( $t (14) =-5.453$ ,  $p=.000$ ). The significant t-test values of 4.203, -5.937, -5.453 and 2.964 for Depression, Alienation, Persecutory Ideas and Self-Depreciation respectively confirm the efficacy of Cinematherapy as an intervention technique.

**Table 2. Pre-test and Post-test Mean Scores, Standard Deviation and t-Test Values of the Comparison Group**

Scales	Pre-test		Post-test		t	Sig	Decision
	M	SD	M	SD			
Depression	65.87	5.07	66.00	4.66	-.152	.881	Accept
Alienation	44.60	8.01	45.33	6.11	-.416	.684	Accept
Persecutory Ideas	47.60	5.87	48.93	7.34	-.552	.590	Accept
Self-Depreciation	60.20	6.81	58.73	7.59	.987	.340	Accept

This shows the statistical computation on determining the significant differences between the pre-test and post-test mean scores of the comparison group using paired sample t-test.

The t values of 4 scales of BPI Filipino namely: depression ( $t (14)= -.152$ ,  $p=.881$ ), alienation ( $t (14) = -.416$ ,  $p= .684$ ), persecutory ideas ( $t (14) = -.552$ ,  $p = .590$ ), and self-depreciation ( $t(14) = .987$ ,  $p = .340$ ) obtained in pre-test and post-test were not significant at .05 level of significance. Therefore, the researchers accept the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between pre-test and post-test mean scores of the comparison group. The insignificance of the obtained t values could be interpreted as there is no change in the level of depressive symptoms as they attended to their regular daily living activities in the pavilion.

To establish the homogeneity of the participants of the experimental and comparison group, significant differences were determined by using the paired sample t-test.

**Table 3. Pre-test Mean Scores, Standard Deviation, and t-Test Values of Experimental and Comparison Groups**

Scales	Experimental Comparison				t	Sig	Decision
	M	SD	M	SD			
Depression	64.33	5.31	65.87	5.07	-.492	.626	Accept
Alienation	41.27	4.67	44.60	8.01	-1.393	.175	Accept
Persecutory Ideas	47.20	8.06	47.60	5.86	-.155	.878	Accept
Self-Depreciation	64.53	12.04	60.20	6.81	1.213	.235	Accept

Table 3 presents the pre-test mean scores of participants of Experimental group (Depression M=64.33, SD = 5.31; Alienation M=41.27, SD = 4.67; Persecutory Ideas M=47.20, SD=8.06 and Self-Depreciation M= 64.53, SD =12.04) and Comparison group (Depression M=65.87, SD = 5.07; Alienation M=44.60, SD = 8.01; Persecutory Ideas M=47.60, SD = 5.86 and Self-Depreciation M= 60.20, SD = 6.81). The obtained t-test values are not significant at the .05 level of significance for Depression ( $t(28) = -.492$ ,  $p=.626$ ), Alienation ( $t(28) = -1.393$ ,  $p= .175$ ), Persecutory Ideas ( $t(28) = -.155$ ,  $p = .878$ ), and Self-Depreciation ( $t(28) = 1.213$ ,  $p= .235$ ). It can be inferred that all participants have the same level of depressive symptoms which is accounted for by the random assignment of the participants. Individual differences are equalized – values of all variables – age, grade level and level of depressive symptoms. The researchers then could avoid coming up with erroneous conclusions.

After establishing that there is no significant difference between the experimental and comparison groups before the therapy, the researchers would now like to look into the possible differences between the two groups after the conduct of Cinematherapy. The mean scores of both groups in the different scales were subjected to paired sample t-test.

**Table 4. Post-test Mean Scores, Standard Deviation and t-Test Values of Experimental and Comparison Groups**

Scales	Experimental		Control		t	Sig	Decision
	M	SD	M	SD			
Depression	54.13	12.12	66.00	4.65	-3.540	.001	Reject
Alienation	52.60	9.17	45.33	6.11	2.553	.016	Reject
Persecutory Ideas	54.67	8.16	48.93	7.34	2.023	.053	Reject
Self-Depreciation	59.40	14.01	58.73	7.59	.162	.872	Accept

Presented in Table 4 are the post –test mean scores and t values of the participants from the Experimental group (Depression M=54.13, SD = 12.12; Alienation M=52.60, SD = 9.17; Persecutory Ideas M=54.67, SD = 8.16; and Self-Depreciation M= 59.40, SD = 14.01); and Comparison group (Depression M=66.00, SD = 4.65; Alienation M=45.33, SD = 6.11; Persecutory Ideas M=48.93, SD = 7.34 and Self-Depreciation M= 58.73, SD = 7.59).The obtained t-test values of Depression ( $t(28) = -3.540$ ,  $p = .001$ ), Alienation ( $t (28) = 2.553$ ,  $p = .016$ ) and Persecutory Ideas ( $t (28) = 2.023$ ,  $p=.053$ ) were significant at the .05 level of significance. In Self-depreciation, the t-test value ( $t (28) = .162$ ,  $p = .872$ ) was found to be insignificant. The significant t values of Depression, Alienation, and Persecutory Ideas indicate a change in the level of depressive symptoms in both groups. The insignificant t-test value of Self-Depreciation means that there is no significant difference in the self-assurance level of participants who undergo Cinematherapy and those who did not.

## Conclusion

The study on determining the efficacy of Cinematherapy in reducing depressive symptoms among female adolescents admitted in a government psychiatric facility showed positive results.

The twelve (12) sessions with the girls provided them the opportunities to experience the real and reel life situations as they relate to what they had experienced to the scenes in the movies being watched. It is reflected in their responses to the questions asked during the processing part of the activity and the insights shared in every scene. This proved that truly movies are a “powerful medium” as posited by Herbert and Neumeister in their study of 2001 so with establishing linkage to their inner life fantasy and reality situations (Chetnik, 2000) in which they were able to distinguish what is really happening to them from what they are wishing for like mentioning “so sad to be transferring to a new house for we don’t have friends there but happy because we are with our families and be in a new place and house”. The sessions allowed the participants to regain confidence and enhance their positive attitude of having hope and optimism (Powell, et al, 2008) thus, the movie about emotions and that Riley in Inside Out modelled positive behaviors (Powell et al, 2006). It leads to changing their feelings/emotions and thinking which is similar to the findings of the study of Gramaglia in 2011. These are manifested by the experimental group who attentively watched every action of the characters thereby; learning ways to deal with difficulties and challenges whenever they will be out/discharge from the center and go back to their normal life just as the Dumtrache’s findings. Further, it implies lessening of depressive symptom.

The identification with the strong character/modelled behavior of the actor enabled them to accept responsibility without any fear or with courage as Mulan. The girls bravely responded that they were also “ready to protect their family, to be good in all ways”. With this realization, competence to come up with effective strategies to be more responsible in facing the tasks with courage is enhanced implying that the movie is a functional medium for self-exploration as stated by Egeci & Gencoz in their research study in 2017.

The young adolescents from the experimental group further developed their social skills - a sense of obligation toward others and the society (Alienation) after watching

and processing the movie - Moana though not so assured in dealing with others as there are doubts in their capacity to be liked by others as in Frozen but the main character is ready to make sacrifice for the love of her sister. The modelled behaviors are observed in the girls during the processing activity in which their common response was they could do everything for the love of their siblings, willingly help the family in all ways at all times, and always on guard for they are also at their side whenever they needed them". The movies then, provided them an opportunity to watch the modelled behaviors that influenced the change in their cognition, emotions and behaviors as what mentioned in the study of Abedin and Molaie, 2010 thus; improvement in their performance in daily living activities is shown.

Although the obtained post-test results of Self-depreciation of experimental group as well as with comparison group is not significant, the intervention technique is still found effective as the three (3) indicators of depressive symptoms improved at the end of the study specifically in the experimental group who were exposed with Cinematherapy. The comparison group on the other hand, who did not receive any treatment still showed depressive symptoms at the end of the study.

In relation to the findings, it is emphasized that viewing the chosen films should be processed by the therapist in order that the participants are to be in contact with their emotions by acknowledging and accepting of thoughts and behaviors to effect cognitive and affect change (Gramaglia, 2011) and to discover new coping strategies (Dumtrache, 2014) was implemented in the study. However, since this is a pilot study the researchers did not measure the prolonged effects of the intervention.

Summing up, the obtained results adhere to the efficacy of Cinematherapy as an intervention technique in terms of reducing the depressive symptoms experienced by the female adolescents of the Zonta Pavilion thus, it enhances cognitive and emotional skills. Thereby; Cinematherapy is a good therapeutic technique in enhancing competency skills and increasing achievement level of female adolescents to be prepared as they face again the challenges in education.

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