

RITUAL OF CIRCUMCISION, MOOD DISORDERS AND MANAGEMENT IN CAMARA LAYE'S *THE AFRICAN CHILD*

Friday Akporherhe and Peter Udi Oghenerioborue

University of Delta, Nigeria

Abstract

*This article examines the therapeutic strategies utilised in the management of mood disorders which characterise the ritual rites of circumcision in Camara Laye's *The African Child*. The article argues that circumcision rites for adolescents triggers mood disorders such as anxieties, phobia, insomnia, distress, and so on. These abnormal health conditions can be managed through various adjustments and coping strategies to provide healing to the circumcised patients, parents and society by diverting and alleviating their psychic and emotional pains. They are utilised as mood stimulants and self-coping strategies before the ritual of circumcision.*

Keywords: Ritual, Circumcision, Childhood, Mood Disorders and Management

Introduction

African societies have several cultural practices, beliefs, values and norms, which the people transmit from one generation to another. These include festivals, masquerade dances, marriages, funeral and child-naming ceremonies, singing, dancing and storytelling, to mention a few. All these have greatly influenced the literary works of African writers who are determined to preserve and project their cultural heritage to the outside world. From the pre-colonial era to-date, writers including Chinua Achebe, Elechi Amadi, Amos Tutuola, Ben Okri, Wole Soyinka, John Pepper Clark-Bekederemo, Helon Habila, Ayi Kwei Armah, Chimamanda Adichie, Ama Ata Aidoo, Helen Oyeyemi, Buchi Emecheta, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Thomas Mofolo, Ferdinand Oyono, Tayeb Salih, Nawal El-Saadawi, Bessie Head, Tsitsi Dangarembga and Camara Laye, to mention a few, have infused their oral traditions into their literary productions and these have added flavour and authenticity to their works.

The literary productions of most African writers are more of autobiographies or biographies than mere fictitious narratives because their sources are derived from personal experiences. 'Works of fiction... are devoid of any true-to-life information, as they are mere figments of the author's imagination' (p. 95). The scholar states further that, 'fiction is fiction simply because the plausible plots are imagined but the contents are anchored on the teller's observed and experienced reality. The point to stress here is that fiction is differentiated from the factual only in terms of actuality, not in terms of possibility' (p. 96). From the foregoing, fiction implies creative works of imagination which is quite different from autobiographies and biographies that focus on true life experiences of the author and narrated through the first personal technique. Benton (2005) corroborates Erasga (2014) findings by stressing that 'in auto/biographical writing, it is no longer the weaving process that is the fulcrum of contestation, but the nature of the album of experience (that is memory-

based) being recalled.’ In advancing the above view, Edgard (2005), posits that ‘the genre is still booming with more and more productions by both men and women who witnessed colonialism and post-colonialism. These autobiographical productions have the potential to document history from an African perspective: they may serve as testimony to the colonial and postcolonial eras.’ Apart from the documentation of histories, writers also employ the auto/biographical technique of portraying how individuals are educated formally or informally about their cultural practices, beliefs and values. Fredman (2007), acknowledged Lejeune’s (1989) view that autobiography is ‘Retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular, the story of his personality.’ This implies that all fictional works deal with imaginative narrations while non-fiction which includes biographies, autobiographies and memoirs are based on factual events, characters and settings as experienced personally by the writer. African writers including those mentioned earlier in this study are known for auto/biographical writings because they draw on the oral histories, values, beliefs, norms, practices, and so on, of their people. One of such cultural practices is the ritual of circumcision which cuts across every society. The focus of this study, therefore, is to examine the therapeutic strategies utilised in the management of mood disorders that characterise the ritual rites of circumcision among the Kouroussa people of Guinea as portrayed in Camara Laye’s *The African Child*.

The cultural practice of circumcision has been in existence from time immemorial and it cuts across most societies. According to the World Health Organisation (2009a), circumcision is the surgical removal of the foreskin, the fold of the skin that covers the head of the penis. It is widely practised for religious and traditional reasons, often within the first two weeks after birth, or at the beginning of adolescence as a rite of passage into adulthood. It may also be performed for medical reasons to treat problems involving the foreskin. Studies have shown that this cultural practice is primordial and cuts across most cultures in the world. Hutson (2004) established that circumcision is ‘a major part of the ritual for such religions as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and it is probably no accident that all of these arose in the Middle East. By contrast, in religions arising outside the arid Middle East such as Hinduism, Shintoism and Buddhism, there is no ritual of circumcision. In aboriginal society of Australia, circumcision is also practised. Hutson further revealed that circumcision has a long history in ancient societies of the Middle East, and is likely to have arisen as an early public health measure for preventing recurrent balanitis, caused by sand, accumulating under the foreskin (2004: 238). Circumcision as scholars have perceived is actually primordial because many religious bodies are associated with this practice although the purpose of this ritual is peculiar to each religion. The investigation conducted by Doyle (2005) revealed that the ‘ritual of male circumcision is known to have been practiced by South Sea Islanders, Australian Aborigines, Sumatrans, Incas, Aztecs, Mayans and Ancient Egyptians. Today it is still practised by the Jews, Muslims and many other tribes in East and Southern Africa.’

Although some researchers argue that circumcision is traceable to Jewish or Islamic religions, it cannot be separated from culture as scholarly works have also indicated. For instance, in furtherance of his findings on the history of male circumcision, Doyle (*ibid*) posits that:

As important as circumcision is to Jews and Muslims, both of whom honour Abraham (the first named person recorded in history as being circumcised) as one of the founding fathers of their faith, the practice of circumcision did not originate with either Abraham or the prophet Mohammed. There is evidence that it was common practice in the Arabian Peninsula from where, in the fourth millennium BCE, two groups of people migrated into what we call Iraq today (p. 279).

From the above argument, one can argue that the practice of circumcision is both cultural and religious tradition; this has become an essential component in many societies and religions, most notably in Judaism and Islam. Doyle (*Ibid*) concurred with Glass (1999) who states that circumcision has been a part of Judaism from the very earliest days of the religion, since it was first performed by the patriarch Abraham.

Dunsmuir and Gordon (1999) also reveal that the tradition was prevalent among the Egyptians, the Kalahari bushmen, Australian aborigines, and other African communities. It has become obvious that circumcision is an archetypal ritual that cuts across most cultures in the world and the practice has been acknowledged by several scholars to be of great significance in several socio-cultural and religious settings. The significance of this ritual ceremony is an aspect that will also receive attention later in this study.

A study by Introcaso, Xu, Kilmarx, Zaidi and Markowitz (2013) revealed that circumcision in boys was most common in Muslim countries and Israel. However, it has also been widely performed in predominantly non-Muslim populations such as the United States and the United Kingdom. The estimated rate of circumcision in the United States was at 80.5 per cent. Unlike in modern clinical setting where the process of circumcision is carried out by the clinical expert(s) in the presence of the parents of the person to be circumcised. This is different in traditional settings. For instance, the World Health Organisation (WHO) (2009b) reports that community involvement before, during and after traditional male circumcision is strong, with different roles ascribed to different players, who include families, teachers, traditional circumcisers and traditional careers. Traditional circumcisers are not the only people in contact with initiates while they are at the circumcision school. This has demonstrated the communal lifestyle of rural dwellers against the principle and practice of individuality that characterised Western societies.

In some traditional African societies like the Malinke, Yoruba, Ibo, Urhobo, Ijaw and so on, neighbours share their feelings and ideas and celebrate together whenever a situation warrants that hence, the ritual of circumcision calls for ‘different players’ as stated above. Whatever the reasons for circumcision in society, this article examines the therapeutic strategies employed in the management of mood disorders that characterise the ritual rites of circumcision as portrayed in Camara Laye’s *The*

African Child. It also discusses the capability of the uncircumcised adolescents, parents and society to manage their psychological and emotional pains with available linguistic resources, verbal or nonverbal, to restore health and psychological wellness of the people in traditional settings. The article explores how mood disorders such as anxiety, phobia, insomnia and distress triggered by the stress of the ritual of circumcision are managed to improve the psychological wellbeing of the initiates (patients) and their caregivers. The significance of this cultural practice to the development of individuals and society will not be left out in this discourse.

African Culture and the Ritual of Circumcision

Like other African literary writers, Camara Laye has always demonstrated his profound knowledge of the custom and traditions of his people through his works. He presents these not only as a means of preservation but also as a way of showcasing their significance to the entire world to appreciate. In *The African Child*, the novelist vividly captures the annual ritual of circumcision that characterises his traditional society and how parents, relatives and the initiates react and interact during the ceremony. Camara presents an African society where the inhabitants collectively participate in traditional practices and uphold norms and beliefs which they inherited from their forefathers. The society promotes collectivism, especially during ceremonies such as Ramadan festival and the annual circumcision of youths rather than individualism as practiced in Western societies.

Through the lens of the narrator, the writer reveals two parts of the ritual: the public and the secret. The former is usually a great noisy festival for all indigenous of the community to participate and it lasts for days while the latter is strictly for the ritual participants alone and they are housed in a separate hut and their relatives are not allowed to visit them. The boys' heads are often shaved after the festival by men who perform the initiation. Thereafter, they are gathered and moved into the bush, lined up in front of stone, stark naked and the operator circumcises them one after the other. The circumcised ones are expected to sit down and allow the blood to flow freely until the 'sema' comes to cover the wound with a bandage. Through the eyes of the protagonist, we are also informed of the age of boys that are due for the initiation into adulthood in the society:

I was growing up. The time had come for me to join the society of the untainted. This rather mysterious society and at that age, it was very mysterious to me, though not very secret-contained all the young boys, all the uncircumcised of twelve, thirteen or fourteen years of age, and it was run by our elders, whom we called the big 'Kondens; I joined it one evening before the feast of Ramadan (p.78).

The author reveals the actual ages of children that are qualified for the ritual of circumcision and the responsibility of elders of Kouroussa, his society. In African societies, elders are expected to educate their children informally and prepare them ahead of challenges or future tasks. Significantly, the annual festival in this novel

coincides with the period of Ramadan making every household to prepare food and drinks for the great celebration.

Psychological Sufferings and Treatments

The entire process of the ritual rites of circumcision triggers anxiety, emotional distress, phobia, nervousness and solitude, to mention a few, on circumcision candidates, their parents and the society at large. There are certain activities that characterise the major event, which are organised to stimulate happy mood of all parties and improve their health and wellness before and after the ritual rites which holds annually in the community. For instance, the activities that precede the rites of initiation in Kouroussa help to ease tension hence, the gathering of the uncircumcised boys is accompanied with the companies of praise-singers, balaphonists and guitarists, drum and tom-tom players (p. 79). These are meant to regulate the mood of the boys and divert their attention from the anxieties and phobia of the ritual rites which they must undergo as a mandatory process of transition from childhood to manhood. The musical performances attest to Nilsson's (2014), claim that music is a dynamic experience that can elicit both physiological and psychological responses in the listener. In advancing this submission, the scholar acknowledged McCaffery (1992) and Mok and Wong (2003) who affirmed that music can act as a distracting agent to refocus the attention from negative stimuli causing the stress, to something that is pleasant. It occupies one's mind with something familiar, soothing and preferred. The author describes the effect of the song performance on the protagonist, thus:

As soon as the sun had gone down, the tom-tom had begun to beat. Even though it was being played in a remote part of the compound, the notes had roused me at once, had struck my breast, had struck right at my heart, just as if Kodoke, our best player, had been playing for me alone (p. 78).

The sound of the tom-tom functions as a mental stimulant in the text, stimulating the protagonist's emotions and subjecting him to psychological reflection on his past memory.

In corroborating the foregoing, Baker and Bor (2008) posited that music can be used as a temporary escape from thoughts or feelings, to validate current thought and feelings, or to release pent-up emotions including anxiety and anger (cited in Esala, 2013). It creates emotional imbalance in the minds of some candidates for the circumcision ritual. This is recounted through the voice of the major character thus:

I had heard faintly the shrill voices of boys accompanying the tom-tom with their cries and singing... yes, the time had come for me... (p. 79).

The singing carried out by the boys serves as a medium of purgation of their emotional pains and also as a way of self-encouragement. The echo of the tom-tom resonates in the mind of the major character and he utilises this to know the direction or movement of the big *Kondens*:

The screaming crowd that surrounded kodoke and his tom-tom was getting nearer. It was going from one compound to another; it would stop for a

moment in each compound where there was a boy of an age, as I was, to join the society, and it would take the boy away (p. 79).

This assertion is corroborated by Kovac (2014), who states that preoperative anxiety is common, and research has shown that such anxiety is prevalent no matter the type of anesthesia or procedure or the patient demographic population. The protagonist can image the movement of the Kondens and the uncircumcised boys from one place to another. Although he has not been taken away by the elders, he has the conviction that their delay would not prevent them from getting him. He confirms their movement, thus:

It was so slow in coming, yet so sure, so ineluctable; as sure, as ineluctable as the fate that awaited me (p. 79).

Bradt, Dileo and Shim (2018) observe that music interventions influence patients physiologically (especially in regulation of heart rate and blood pressure), and emotionally (ease of anxiety) in ways that could mediate the need for anti-anxiety medications and sedatives, decrease post-operative pain, and facilitate quicker recovery (cited in Kovac, 2014).

The rhythmical effects of the music produced by the tom-tom and other performances in the novel have become so prominent in the psyche of the central character that he could not suppress it. He responds to the music, thus:

I could hear now very plainly the beating of the tom-tom-kodoke was much nearer. I could hear perfectly the chanting and the shouts that rose into the dark, I could make out distinctly the rather hollow, crisp, well-marked beats of the coros, that and are beaten with a bit of wood (p. 80).

The foregoing verbal statements are forms of repressive coping strategy employed by the protagonist to manage his phobia and anxiety symptoms. The sounds produced by music instruments and the songs are meant to help patients cope, resulting in reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety (Dediego, 2015). Also, in the viewpoint of Owolabi (2016), songs and chants are capable of changing a man of melancholy state for him to regain his fortune... they are capable of removing pain, suffering, thirst, and healing the wounded souls. The application of these verbal acts helps in diverting unpleasant events or experiences of people to something more exciting and sedating. They serve as distractive strategies to alleviate mental and emotional disturbances in socio-cultural settings.

Talking Therapy and Caregiving

Talking therapy and caregiving are therapeutic strategies that play vital roles in the treatment and management of physical and psychological problems as evident in the novel. Camara has demonstrated that Africans have various methods of treatment which are similar to those practised in Western societies. For instance, in the narrative, although the protagonist has made up his mind to join the society, the delay has created phobic anxiety in his mind:

I was standing at the entrance to the compound, waiting. I, too, was holding, ready to play it, my coro, with the stick clutched nervously in my hand. I was waiting, hidden by the shadow of the hut. I was waiting, filled with a dreadful anxiety, my eyes searching the darkness (p. 80).

However, the anxiety of the eponymous character became alleviated with the words of his father who had had similar experiences during his youthful age. The authorial voice recounts the words, thus:

Are you afraid, it's all right. Don't worry (p. 80).

Talking therapy is a predominant strategy employed by Africans especially in traditional settings to douse psychic and emotional conflicts. Words can create both sad and happy mood, provide hope, succor and evoke fear in the minds of people hence, in the text, the hero reveals the clinical role of his own father:

He laid his hand on my shoulder. He drew me to him, and I could feel his warmth; it warmed me, too, and I began to feel less frightened, my heart did not beat so fast (p. 80).

Besides the verbal form of treatment provided by the hero's father, there is the clinical method of caregiving and the compassionate care of touching which shows his level of sensitivity, kindness and warmth towards his emotionally disturbed son. Yet another therapeutic technique that is employed in the novel is touching which can relieve nerves of patients and restore hope to them. However, Dickinson and Maryniuk (2017) argue that negative words are not helping people to better manage their disease and may even be hurting them. The scholars further argue that another way we can send messages that empower and encourage is by using strengths-based language-words that focus on people's strengths rather than their weaknesses (p. 52). More utterances of the hero's father provide therapy to him, when he says:

I, too, went through this test... Nothing you need really be afraid of, nothing you cannot overcome by your own will-power. Remember: you have to control your fear, you have to control yourself. Konden Diara will not take you away; he will roar; but he won't do more than roar. You won't be frightened, now, will you? (p. 80).

These words serve as projective defense strategy employed by the hero's father to stabilise the homeostatic mechanism in the candidate to be circumcised, by boosting his morale, inhibit the fear and calm his nerves. As a response to the words (stimuli), the hero assures his father:

I'll try not to be (afraid) (p. 80).

The protagonist has been equipped with supportive skills in form of advice and encouragement. Such words serve as anti-anxiety medication and antidepressants, replacing pharmacotherapy treatments for the character who is emotionally unstable. One of the significance of the rites of initiation into manhood is to, besides instilling

confidence in the boys, make them courageous in facing challenges in life. This is conveyed through the words of the protagonist's father:

Given if you are frightened, do not show it (p. 80).

The sound generated by the lion activates anxiety and phobia in the minds of the boys but the hero has to adopt suppressive defense strategy to cope with the situation. By implication, words are powerful and they can create phobia or courage in the minds of people and make them brave, hopeful and remain purposeful in life; depending on their application in life. This is evident in the report by the authorial voice that after his father's words of encouragement, he regained confidence.

He went away, and I began waiting again, and the disturbing uproar came nearer and nearer. Suddenly, I saw the crowd emerging from the dark and rushing towards me; Kodoke, his tom-tom slung over one shoulder, was marching at their head, followed by the drummers (p. 81).

The sight of the crowd horrified the hero and since he could not withstand it, he ran back quickly into the yard, and standing in the middle of it. The roaring creates tension in the minds of the uncircumcised but their ability to cope and remain courageous is the essence of the exercise. With this, they should be able to handle life threatening issues confidently and purposefully. He describes the emergence of the crowd as 'awful invasion' but he could not escape as they surrounded him 'tumultuously' and overwhelming with shouts and cries and beating tom-toms, beating drums (p.81). The narrator, at this point, describes his helpless state in the hands of this Kondens who he regards as captors:

It formed a circle, and I found myself in the centre, alone, curiously isolated, still free and yet already captive. Inside the circle, I recognised Louyate and others, many of them friends of mine who had been collected as the crowd moved on, collected as I was to be, as I already was (p. 81).

The emotional conflict of the protagonist became resolved as he noticed his friends who are uncircumcised boys in the crowd. He entertains fear and anxiety over the circumcision that he will undergo as a process of transformation into adulthood. However, his mind became diverted from the imagination of emotional and physical pains to something exciting.

Song Performance, Dance and Drumming

In African traditional societies, songs are of great significance because they are utilised to express thoughts, emotional feelings and regulate certain behavioural patterns. In this narrative, they signify the success of the circumcision ritual and also as therapeutic techniques such as preoperative mood stabiliser and distractive therapy, diverting the boys' minds from their state of phobic-anxiety to pleasurable activities.

For instance, in the novel, after the successful completion of the initiation that was characterised with free flow of blood, tiredness, and ‘fear during the night... on the bombax tree’ (p. 86), the initiates eliminate their emotional and physical pains with songs. The autobiographical voice reports that the operation was carried out not without difficulty, not without shouts and some rough treatment.

Finally, we started off back to the town singing our new songs, and we sang them with unbelievably care-free abandon (p. 87).

Again, the narrator recounts:

...now our elders begin our initiation; all night long, they will teach us the songs of the uncircumcised; and we must remain quite still, repeating the words after them, singing the melody after them (p.86).

The songs the boys rendered after the elders above serve as emotional tranquilisers and enhancers. They heal the disturbed minds of the boys by reposing confidence in them. The application of songs and dances is of great significance in socio-cultural settings as evident in the narrative. At various stages of the circumcision ritual, these expressive forms of treatment are introduced where necessary to calm frayed nerves of the boys and also to enhance their emotions.

The writer is very conscious of the African society where the people cherish song performances and the playing of music instruments. In the literary text under study, the central character acknowledges the psychotherapeutic effect of the rhythm produced by the drumming on him when he says:

I began to beat my coro, as they were doing; perhaps, I was beating it with less confidence than they (p. 81).

The beating serves as music therapy to the protagonist and according to Nilsson (2014), this is a non-pharmacological activity that can be administered to the surgical patient to develop their own ability to gain control over negative symptoms. During surgery and postoperative recovery, music can become an integral part of the multimodal regime administered to the patient. The narrator presents songs and dance as therapy for anxiety disorders as evident in the text.

Songs and dances are part of life in African societies because they are means of entertainment, purgation of personal emotional pains and physical exercise. For instance, the protagonist describes the reaction of people to the beating of tom-toms and his coro:

At this point, young girls and women joined the circle and began to dance; young men and adolescent, stepping out of the crowd, moved into the circle too and began to dance facing the women (p. 81).

While commenting on the role of music and dance in society, Odunuga and Ogunrinade (2015) state that they are activities that characterise an African musical

expression and this plays an important role in the lives of the people. The authors further reveal that the utilitarian function which involves the use of music in Africa is used as a psychological tonic. For example, the nightly dancing in the village square provides the villagers with physical, psychological, social and spiritual renewal (p. 16). The ritual of circumcision is strictly for festival celebrated in honour of the youth in the traditional Kouroussa society hence, the major participants are the men while the girls and women only play secondary roles. In the text, for instance, we are told that the 'young girls and women' dance while the men render songs. This is another therapeutic approach that is meant to alleviate psychic and emotional pains of candidates that shall undergo the circumcision ritual as custom demands.

The dancers provide treatment to the candidates and also to themselves in the process since their body mechanism will become regulated and toxic substances excreted with sweat. As expressive and physical therapeutic techniques, they activate the mental consciousness and regulate their mood disorders such as anxiety and phobia. In affirming the foregoing, Chiwome (1992) posits that dance synchronises the limbs, the imagination and the intellect. It makes the body function as a single entity, reducing fragmentation of the body and the mind. He specifically describes the effects of the expressive therapy in clear terms, that dances help children cope with stage fright which is necessary if they are to become effective speakers and to participate meaningfully in the activities of the community as adults (p. 6). This assertion is affirmed by the narrator and protagonist in the text:

The men sang, the women clapped their hands. Soon, the only ones left to form the circle were the uncircumcised boys. They, too, began to sing, they were not allowed to dance, and as a circle again, the crowd left our compound. I went with it, almost willingly, beating my coro with great enthusiasm. Kouyate was on my right (p. 81).

The protagonist releases his personal fear by beating a musical instrument. Besides, his friend whose presence gives him happiness is also recounted in the narrative initiation process. Dancing to the songs rendered by the men and women in this narrative is common in most African societies hence, the novelist infused it into his work. Significantly, the men compose songs that are relevant to all cultural activities such as those of circumcision while the women partake in the performance by clapping and dancing. All these are meant to reduce the anxieties of the uncircumcised boys and instill confidence in them.

The narrator in the story has revealed the significance of male circumcision in traditional society and so, the villagers derive joy in partaking in the singing and dancing that precede the ritual ceremony:

That year, I danced for a whole week in the main square of Kouroussa the dance of the soli, which is the dance of those who are to be circumcised. Every afternoon, my companies and I would go to the dancing place, wearing a cap and a boubou which reached to cap and a boubou which reached to our heels (p. 94).

Africans are conscious of the healing effects of dance and movement (physical exercise) hence, the turnout in the narrative is much as recounted by the protagonist.

In the opinion of Martinec (2013), dance movement therapy helps in improving the quality of life, shoulder range motion and body image. In patients with depression, psychological distress was reduced by dance therapy. In corroborating the foregoing, the author of this article acknowledged Levy (1988) and Payne (2006) who claimed that in dance movement, therapy body is dominant media of the therapeutic process. So, this kind of therapy may have positive influence on physiological awareness, body expression of emotions, inducing unconscious impulses, and improving new strategies of behaviour through exploring new patterns and qualities of movement (Martinec, 2013). The dance that preludes or precedes the ritual rite of circumcision as stated above is not meant for only the candidates but an occasion for all:

We would dance, as I was saying, until we were out of breaths but we were not the only ones dancing: the whole town would dance with us! (p. 94).

The therapeutic effect of music and dance on people in Kouroussa is further revealed by the narrator when he says:

In our country, all dance have this cumulative tendency, because each beat of the tom-tom has an almost irresistible appeal. Soon those who were just spectators would be dancing too; they would crowd into the open space (p. 94).

Based on the foregoing, the therapeutic effect of dance on people is irresistible just as the circumcision rite is considered paramount to be regarded as an adult rather than the stature or height of individuals. The hero, for instance, recounts that although he was in his 'final scholarship year' and was 'among the big boys'; all these did not qualify him as a man. He says:

We had to be big in every sense of the word, and that meant we had to become men. But I was still a child: I was considered not to have reached the age of discretion yet! (p. 92).

The knowledge and skills acquired at school does not make one a man. Rather one must be 'big' in all ramifications especially beginning with circumcision and then the lessons learnt during the initiation rite into adulthood.

The Use of Heat Therapy

Laye (1954), has further demonstrated through his literary work that Africans have the indigenous knowledge and practice of heat therapy. This is evident in the sacred place where the ritual of circumcision was to be performed. According to the narrator, the boys were arrested with fear even as they 'sat down in front of the fire' to provide warmth to them (p. 86). Heat therapy is meant to regulate the body temperature of patients and maintain their blood pressure. According to Nadler, Weingand and Kruse

(2004), heat therapy is the application of heat to the body resulting in increased tissue temperature (cited in Malanga, Yan and Stark (2015)). He further reveals that the physiological effects of heat therapy include pain relief, increase in blood flow and metabolism, and increased elasticity of connective tissue (p. 5). African societies have several healthcare practices which traditional healers employ to address both physical and mental health disorders of patients.

The application of heat therapy is carried out in various communities especially during rainy season and harmattan period. It is meant to regulate the body temperature of patients to maintain good health. The hero points out the importance of the fire to their wellbeing; 'if there was only a little more light... but the light from the fire is sufficient: Great drops of sweat are still beading our foreheads; yet the night is chill... yes, we were afraid. We were not able to conceal our fear...' (p. 86).

These statements of the protagonist reveal his personal emotional conflict and the physical challenges that the entire boys experience before the circumcision rites.

Discussion

The focus of this article is to examine mood disorders triggered by the stressor of circumcision operation, the physical and emotional pains candidates undergo and how they are managed in traditional African society as captured in Laye's (1954) *The African Child*. However, a discourse of the significance of the ritual to the people is also important. For instance, studies have revealed that male circumcision has been performed on boys and young men for many years, primarily for religious and cultural reasons or as a rite of passage to mark transition to adulthood (WHO, 2009a). Here, the ritual is perceived as cultural and religious and which every individual must experience because of its symbolic connotation. From a diverse viewpoint, Hargreave (2010), argues that the main benefit of male circumcision is that it reduces the chance of acquisition of the HIV virus. He later found that although some experts argued for immediate adoption of male circumcision as an HIV preventive measure, others thought the difference was more likely to be a result of less promiscuous male sexual behaviour or other factors in the circumcising, predominantly Islamic, African countries (p. 30). This submission is related to Hutson's (2004) view that circumcision does reduce the risk of urinary infection in baby boys. Studies have shown that male and female circumcision is still being practised in most African societies today for cultural and religious reasons.

Some scholars have argued that besides the above reasons, the exercise is important for health reasons. Therefore, the World Health Organisation (WHO) (2009a) maintains that if circumcision is being done for reasons other than the treatment of a specific medical problem, the health benefits are primarily preventive, and may only be realised long after the procedure. Circumcision may reduce the risk of acquiring some infections and related complications, but does not guarantee complete protection. They argue further that the main benefits of circumcision are

improved penile hygiene, reduced risk of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, and reduced risk of cancer of the penis (p. 25). In another study, WHO (Ibid) observed that:

the social status accorded to male circumcision is of crucial significance in traditionally circumcising communities, because being circumcised is the only possible way of attaining manhood. In Xhosa culture, male development starts during the first six to seven years of life, when a boy is not yet able to distinguish right from wrong, and is thus, not held responsible for any wrong that he might commit (p. 14).

The above submission, shows that in some cultures, circumcision marks the transition to adulthood and the ritual occurs between the ages of 'six to seven' which is in variance with the World Health Organisation's (Ibid) report that older boys are considered more capable of making informed judgements although they are still not held fully responsible for their actions. It is only once they are circumcised that they are entitled to businesses, property or marriage, or to participate in other features of community life, such as feasts and beer-drinking ceremonies.

Apart from the above reasons for ritual of circumcision, the novelist presents the ritual as a cultural practice that is of great significance to individuals and African society in general. First, it is meant to promote moral development among the youth in society. Through the entire process, certain moral values such as coping skills, discipline, obedience and confidentiality, among others, are inculcated in the candidates. For instance, the narrator reports that the roaring lions (Konden Diara) serve as 'a test, a training in hardship, a rite; the prelude to a tribal rite' (p. 91). Every African society has their ways of instilling confidence in the minds of individuals especially the youth and in this narrative, we are made to understand that the roaring of the artificial lion as part of the ritual rites is for bravery and determination in time of adversaries and existential challenges. The test is meant to make the boys courageous, purposeful and determined in future. It is a trial of 'fear, that occasion when there is given to every boy the opportunity to overcome his own baser nature' (p. 92). It is 'the painful tribal rite of circumcision' that makes the transformation from childhood of innocence into adulthood of experience. The narrator expresses his emotional conflict before the ritual was done and according to him:

It was not without misgivings that I approached this transition from childhood to manhood; the thought of it really caused me great distress as it did those who were to share the ordeal (p. 93).

The public events that accentuate the ritual rites provide healings to the candidates, their families and well-wishers. The hero describes this as being different from the circumcision, secret rite:

The public ceremony is one of rejoicing. It is the occasion of a great festival, a very noisy festival in which the whole town participates and which lasts several days... And it is almost as if by dint of noise and activity and dancing

and merry-making people were trying to make us forget our anxiety about the coming ordeal, and its very real physical pain (p. 93).

In spite of the phobic anxiety that mars the ritual of circumcision, the transition from childhood into adulthood is unavoidable. There have been anxieties over the ordeal of the lions, however, the hero says:

I wanted to be born; to be born again. I knew perfectly well that I was going to be hurt, but I wanted to be a man and it seemed to me that nothing could be too painful if, by enduring it, I was to come to a man's estate (p. 93).

The dance and merry-making of the people serves as diversionary, distracting the minds of the uncircumcised boys to something that will stabilise their emotional feelings and the author through the hero brings to the consciousness of readers that there is a sacrifice for transition from one particular stage to another in the life of man. So, for the candidates to be transformed into adulthood, they have to pay with their blood and this must be allowed to flow freely. The words of the narrator attest to the above assertion:

My companions felt the same; like myself, they were prepared to pay for it with their blood. Our elders before us had paid for it thus; those who were born after us would pay for it in their turn. Why should we be spared? Life itself would spring from the shedding of our blood (p. 93).

The narrator at this juncture employed projective coping mechanism to manage his emotional conflicts. He affirmed that the ritual has been in existence from time immemorial and even his own father also had a similar experience in time past. The protagonist concludes after careful observation that while those who had been circumcised are accorded respect in the traditional society, the uncircumcised ones are considered as children. He asserts that:

Among my companions, most of whom were circumcised; I was still looked upon as a child. Whatever the reason, I had now reached the age at which I, too, must be reborn, at which I, too, must abandon my childhood and my innocence, and become a man (p. 92-93).

Since the boys have been exposed to horrible experiences during their preparation for the circumcision, it is believed that they can courageously face existential challenges in future. The roaring of the lions, therefore, is meant to ensure emotional stability in the minds of the boys as they metamorphose into manhood.

Conclusion

The study revealed that Africans have various strategies for the treatment and management of mood disorders experienced by patients especially those who undergo surgical operations in traditional settings. The author has clearly portrayed through his creative work that forms of mood disorders such as anxiety, phobia, agitation, and distress, just to mention a few, are triggered by stressors. However, in this narrative, the stressor which is the annual ritual of circumcision marks the transformation of male children from their childhood into manhood. Their mood disorders are, therefore, managed through social supports, relaxation techniques, and projective coping skills, diversionary and supplementary therapies in form of songs, dance and storytelling. The songs and dances function as anti-anxiety medications, antidepressants, and mood regulators, replacing the conventional method of treatments during surgical operations in traditional society.

References

- Benton, M. (2005), Literary Biography: The Cinderella of Literary Studies. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 39(3), 44-57.
- Erasga, D.S. (2014), Lives in Fiction. Autobiographies as Theoretical Narratives. *Asia-Pacific Social Science Review*, 14(2), 94-111.
- Edgard, S. (2005), History and the Production and Reception of Autobiography in Francophone Africa. *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature Association*, pp. 441-458.
- Fredman, J. (2007) 'Autobiography is Storytelling, all Writing is Autobiography.' Autobiographies and the Theme of Otherness, in J.M. Coetzee's *Boyhood: Scenes from Provincial Life*. School of Humanities, Vaxjo University.
- Lejeune, P. (1989) *On Autobiography*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- World Health Organisation 2009a. *Male Circumcision under Local Anaesthesia*. Version 3.1. Department of Reproductive Health and Research. <https://www.who.int/hiv/pub/malecircumcision>.
- Hutson, J.M. (2004), Circumcision: A Surgeon's Perspective. *Journal of Medical Ethics*. 30, (3) 238-240.
- Doyle, D. (2005), Ritual Male Circumcision: A Brief History. *Journal Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh*, 35:279–285
- Glass J.M. (1999), *Religious Circumcision: A Jewish View*. *BJU International*, 83: 17-21.
- Dunsmuir, W.D., and Gordon, E.M. (1999) The History of Circumcision. *BJU int*. 83(Suppl 1): 1-12.
- Introcaso C.E, Xu F, Kilmarx P.H, Zaidi A, Markowitz L.E. (2013), *Prevalence of Circumcision among Men and Boys Aged 14 to 59 Years in the United States, National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys 2005-2010*. *Sex Transm Dis.*; 40: 521-5.
- World Health Organisation (2009b), *Traditional Male Circumcision among Young People: A Public Health Perspective in the Context of HIV Prevention*: Geneva: World Health Organisation Press.

- Nilsson, U. (2014), Music and Health: How to Use Music in Surgical Care. *International Academy for Design and Health*.
- McCaffery, M. (1992), 'Responses to Quantification of the Effects of Listening to Music as a Non-invasive Method of Pain Control.' *Scholarly Inquiry for Nursing Practice: An International Journal*, 6: 59-62.
- Mok, E., and Wong, K.Y. (2003), *Effect of Music on Patient Anxiety*. *AORN*, 77: 396-410.
- Baker, F., and Bor, W. (2008), Can Music Preference Indicate Mental Health Status in Young People? *Australasian Psychiatry*. 16(4), 284-288.
- Esala, H.L. (2013), *The Effectiveness of Music Intervention in Psychotherapy with Adolescent Clients*. Masters Project, Faculty of the Adler Graduate School.
- Kovac, M. (2014), Music Interventions for the Treatment of Preoperative Anxiety. *Journal of Consumer Health on the Internet*, 18 (2), 193-201.
- Bradt, J., Dileo, C., and Shim, M. (2018), *Music Interventions for Preoperative Anxiety*. *Conchrane System Review*. Department of Creative Arts Therapies, College of Nursing and Health Professions. Drexel University, Philadelphia, USA.
- Kovac, M. (2014), Music Interventions for the Treatment of Preoperative Anxiety. *Journal of Consumer Health on the Internet*, 18 (2), 193-201.
- Dediego, A.C. (2015), *The Use of Song Lyrics as an Expressive Arts Tool in Counseling: A Literature Review*. Ideas and Research You Can Use.
- Owolabi, A.M. (2016), *Songs and Chants as Multi-media Aesthetics and Ideology in Femi Osofisan's Drama*. A Paper Presented at the Staff/Postgraduate Students' Seminar, Department of English, University of Ibadan: Ibadan.
- Dickinson, J.K., and Maryniuk, M.D. (2017), *Building Therapeutic Clinical Diabetes Journal*. 35, (1), 51-54.
- Nilsson, U. (2014), Music and Health; How to Use Music in Surgical Care. *International Academy for Design and Health*.
- Odunuga, A.F., and Ogunrinade, D.O.A. (2015), Requests and Veracities of African Indigenous Knowledge System as a Means of Improving Music Education. *International Journal of African Society, Cultures and Traditions*. 3 (4), 11-22.
- Chiwome, E.M. (1992), *Traditional Shona Poetry and Mental Health*. Department of African Languages and Literature. University of Zimbabwe. Zambezia, XIX (i).
- Martinec, R. (2013), *Dance Movement Therapy in the Concept of Expressive Arts-Therapy*. Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Zagreb. Vol 49, Supplement, p. 143-153.
- Levy, F.J. (1988), *Dance Movement Therapy: A Healing Art*. Reston, VA: The America Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance.
- Payne, H. (2006), *Dance Movement Therapy: Theory, Research, and Practice*. Hove, East Ok Sussex: Routledge.
- Laye, C. (1954), *The African Child*. Trans. James Kirkup and Ernest Jones. New York: The Noonday Press.
- Nadler, S.F., Weingand, K., and Kruse, R.J. (2004), The Physiologic Basis and Clinical Applications of Cryotherapy and Thermotherapy for the Brain Practitioner. *Pain Physical*, 7: 395-399.

- Malanga, G.A., Yan, N., and Stark, J. (2015), *Mechanisms and Efficacy of Heat and Cold Therapies for Musculoskeletal Injury*. Postgraduate Medicine. Early Online, 1-9.
- Laye, C. (1954), *The African Child*. Trans. James Kirkup and Ernest Jones. New York: The Noonday Press.
- Hargreave, T. (2010), Male Circumcision: Cutting into the HIV Epidemic in Africa. Trends in Urology and Men's Health. www.trendsingurology.com
- Hutson, J.M. (2004), Circumcision: A Surgeon's Perspective. *Journal of Medical Ethics*. 30 (3) 238-240.
- World Health Organisation (2009b), *Traditional Male Circumcision among Young People: A Public Health Perspective in the Context of HIV Prevention*: Geneva, World Health Organisation Press.
- World Health Organisation (2009a), *Male Circumcision under Local Anaesthesia*. Version 3.1. Department of Reproductive Health and Research.