

## **The Benefit of Visual Art-Making in Nursing Homes in Indonesia**

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Globally, the prevalence of depression is higher in older adults (above 7.5% among females and above 5.5% among males, aged 55-74 years) than in people with the age of 15 years and below (World Health Organization, 2017). Apparently, depression is suffered more by older adults who live in a nursing home than in the community (Blazer, 2003; Djernes, 2006). As an example, in some of the nursing homes in developing countries such as in Indonesia, the prevalence of depression was found to be 42.5% (data refers to Indonesia with 31.5% in women and 11% in men; Pramesona & Taneepanichskul, 2018), which is considered high. Unfortunately, depression in nursing homes is often under-recognized and under-treated (Murphy, Bugeja, Pilgrim, & Ibrahim, 2015). Besides, the available health care programs are still underdeveloped (Arifianto, 2006).

Depression could reduce physical functioning and the quality of life of nursing home residents' (Casey, 2012). Therefore, a visual art-making program is essential for maintaining the health and quality of life of these residents. Art therapy is defined as "a form of psychotherapy that uses art media as its primary mode of communication" (Edwards, 2014, p. 3). Art activities facilitate non-verbal communication, which is quite suitable for individuals who have difficulties with self-expression. Art activities should be designed to have an optimum effect on older adults' health (Liebmann, 2004). One of the benefits of art activity is that it helps them express their thoughts and feelings in a safe way (Johnson & Sullivan-Marx, 2006). Art activities are quite appropriate to be used as a means of self-expression and self-exploration, as these activities stimulate the participants' awareness and, releasing negative or inappropriate feelings in the process, give them fresh eyes to assess their current situation and consider different ways of making changes (Liebmann, 2004). Accordingly, the previous study has found mixed results in the way that the art activities had increased an aspect of well-being and decreased depressive symptoms. To understand these results, we aimed to know the benefit of visual art-making in nursing homes in Indonesia.

### **Method**

This study was a follow up research from Roswiyani et al (2018). By using a qualitative study design, we adopted the Standards for Reporting Qualitative Research (SRQR; O'Brien, Harris, Beckman, Reed, & Cook, 2014). Participants were older adults from a nursing home in Jakarta, Indonesia. Residents were invited to participate in an interview 8 weeks after the visual art-making programs were held. In the process, the following inclusion and exclusion criteria had been applied; the visual art-making program specifically included adults who (a) aged 50 years or older, (b) showed an MMSE score of 18 or above, (c) were admitted to the nursing home at least 3 months earlier, and (d) in a healthy physical condition (able to walk and to do daily activities without assistance). The exclusion criteria applied were: (a) psychotic disorders, (b) severe physical illness/disability, and (c) alcohol or drug misuse.

### **Data Collection**

A semi-structured interview was used to understand the benefit of visual art-making. The interviewer used a paper-based interview guide that consisted of 6 open-ended questions based on seven themes developed from the related literature (Feen-Calligan & Nevedal, 2008). In this phase of data collecting, research

assistants with psychology backgrounds interviewed the participants face to face and the resultant answers were transcribed immediately into a Word™ document. The duration of the interviews varied between 45 and 60 minutes for each participant.

Table 1

*Interview Guide*

✓	Would you please describe any positive changes in yourself after the program?
✓	What did you like about the program?
✓	What didn't you like about the program?
✓	Describe how you felt before participating in the program.
✓	Describe how you felt during your participation in the program.
✓	Describe how you felt after participating in the program.

**Data Analysis**

The analysis was carried out using a thematic analysis with a template from Braun and Clarke (2006). The following steps were undertaken in the data analysis: familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). No participants were involved in the analysis process.

**Result**

Table 2 displays the demographics of the participants. The participants' ages 74.19 years old, they were mostly women, had finished primary school or a lower educational level. All participants had been living in a nursing home for one to five years. More than 50% of the participants had high adherence to the intervention.

Table 2

*Demographics of the Participants*

Variable	Art (n=63)
	M (SD) or frequency (%)
Age	74.19 (9.18)
Gender	
- Men	24 (38.1%)
- Women	39 (61.9%)
Education	
- Low	43 (68%)
- Middle	12 (19%)
- High	8 (13%)
Adherence	67.26 (32.84)
- High	35 (55.6%)
- Average	10 (15.9%)
- Low	18 (28.6%)

*Note.* Level of education: low (primary school and below), middle (high school), high (bachelor, master and above).

From the analysis, we described participants' responses into three themes as our findings. These themes were (1) the opinion of the intervention; (2) the benefit of the intervention, and (3) the feeling of the intervention.

### **The opinion of the intervention**

A variety of experiences were reported to be present during each type of the interventions which were identified into four aspects: cognitive, physical, psychological and social experiences.

*Cognitive experience.* The intervention gave chances for participants to get knowledge and skills about art activities for older adults, to learn some skills on how to use the activity for their health, to recall their past experiences, and to stimulate their cognitive ability.

*Physical experiences.* In general, art activities involved physical motor movements. Participants conducted tasks physically, but this was more involving fine motor functions, specifically in drawing, cutting and pasting.

*Psychological experiences.* Joining the intervention had made the participants have leisure activities and experience both pleasant and unpleasant emotions. The participants perceived that the interventions could help them fill their spare time with positive activities, and that they could actually have an alternative activity that was fun and healthy.

*Social Experiences.* Most of the participants in the art intervention group were engaged in communication with other residents. This did not usually happen every day in the nursing homes. They were involved in an activity together and they exchanged humorous remarks one another. During the activity, there was a chance to listen to others' stories and exchange ideas.

### **The benefits of the intervention**

Generally, the interventions are perceived to meet the participants' expectation as they have benefited from the intervention, especially in physical and psychological aspects. Most participants in the art group have benefited from the intervention in both psychological and social aspects. Most of the participants in the art intervention perceived that the activity made them have a positive activity and a variety of activities in the nursing home. One of the psychological benefits that the participants got was that the art intervention could heighten the feeling of happiness and increase self-confidence. Moreover, the stress level was reduced to a great portion when the participants were able to think positively, and when they had less sad feelings and became more cheerful and patient. They became calm in the social relationship with other residents, had less boredom and felt lively at the same time. An illustrative answer from Subject#23 reflects this: "I feel positive changes. I feel better with positive and meaningful activities. I was taught to be able to draw and also to be more patient."

In terms of social benefit, the art intervention was able to help participants to have more friends, and to get closer to and to know each other better than before. The art intervention further increased the feeling of togetherness and the feeling of friendship with other residents. They became more open to initiate communication. For example, Subject#30 said that "I feel more able to get to know the character of other residents."

### **Feeling or emotions of the intervention**

Mostly, the participants felt happier and less bored during the interventions. They felt enjoyment and being entertained. Nevertheless, a few participants experienced unpleasant emotions during the visual

art-making programs. The unpleasant emotion that they experienced was feeling inferior because they perceived that they could not follow the visual art-making program correctly.

## **Discussion**

The aim of the current study is to understand the benefit of visual art-making in nursing homes in Indonesia. Results were shown that all participants gained some benefits and experienced mixed emotions. All participants in the visual art-making group experienced positive emotions, gained psychological benefits. In overall, the participants responded positively to the visual art-making programs and would like to continue participating in the program again in the future. In sum, this study confirms our previous study which found that art activities were efficacious in increasing the well-being of nursing homes residents on the social relationships domain and reducing depressive symptoms (Roswiyani et al., 2018).

There are several possible explanations for these results. First, the participants in the visual art-making group gained social experience when they exchanged stories and ideas, did the activity together, cooperated with each other, and made jokes. This finding further supports the idea that holding art activities in group setting can provide the participants with a chance for communication and interaction and enhance their feelings of connection to community (Stephenson, 2013). This connection feeling to the community could reduce feelings of isolation, build shared experiences, and give hopes to the individual (Moon, 2010). Art activities make older adults involved in the social relation and social engagement that has a significant impact on the mental and physical health of older adults (Mair & Thivierge-Rikard, 2010; Zunzunegui, Alvarado, Del Ser, & Otero, 2003).

Second, the older adults experienced mixed emotions during the visual art-making but toward more positive emotions. The positive emotions were described as a happy feeling, feeling entertained, enthusiastic, interested, and satisfied. The present finding seems to be consistent with another research which found that the art-making process potentially evokes a multitude of emotions and memories (Eksell, 2015).

Third, the visual art-making contribute to the psychological benefit more than the other activities do. To a large degree, the participants' experiences were in line with the earlier studies (Greer, Fleuriet, & Cantu, 2013; Kim, 2013; Rankanen, 2014; Reynolds, 2010; Stephenson, 2013). The psychological benefits were explained in terms of heightening the feeling of happiness and being alive, increased self-confidence and sense of self-mastery, positive thinking, becoming more cheerful and patient, having emotional stability, reduced stress, boredom, and sad feelings. This finding showed us that the effect of the visual art-making could increase older adults' psychological well-being (Johnson & Sullivan-Marx, 2006).

This study, however, has shown some visible strengths. First, the visual art-making program was considered as a new activity for the participants which can be added as one of the programs in the nursing homes. Second, the adherence to the visual art-making program was considered high, making participants really involved in the activity. Thus, their responses can reflect their actual experience to the activities. Third, giving visual art-making programs for the participants who had been living in a nursing home for one to five years could make a big difference in their daily activity, which might give positive influence for the participants.

## **Limitation**

Each of the individual experiences was unique and there were varied responses from the participants which made it difficult to generalize the results. Thus, the results need to be interpreted with caution.

**Recommendations for future studies**

The findings of the present study suggest the need for more creative or novel nursing home programs for older adult residents. Future research should focus on designing a variety of leisure activity that includes social interaction to enhance functioning and quality of life in older populations. Specifically, nursing home staff should motivate their residents to be active participating in the activities in order to prevent functional decline.

**Conclusion**

As a regular activity in the nursing homes, the visual art-making program could make older adults remain active in their aging process. Thus, multidisciplinary collaborative work and supportive environments are necessary for designing activities that involve socialization for the health of older adults' in nursing homes in Indonesia.