

Abstract

This study presented the first empirical investigation of the effectiveness of expressive arts therapy in enhancing mental health awareness and knowledge. Expressive Arts Therapy (EAT) is a multimodal approach that utilizes the integration of different art forms in a therapy process, which is gaining popularity and significance in recent years. In cooperation with Hong Kong Expressive Arts Therapy Service Center, 320 participants of the event “Be Together Mind-Body-Spirit Wellness Expressive Arts Cultural Festival 2021” took part in the study which examines how EAT could enhance mental health awareness and knowledge. Five different art genres used in these workshops were classified into three types: (a) active-based, which included drama and body movement, (b) passive-based, which included music, writing, and visual arts, and (c) various types, which is when the workshops incorporate more than one modality. Results indicated that active-based workshops were significantly more effective than various-type workshops in enhancing mental health awareness. Within the two genres of active-based workshops, drama was significantly more effective than body-movement in enhancing mental health knowledge. We also found that effectiveness of the workshop could differ depending on whether the facilitator was an artist or an expressive art therapist. Interestingly, artists may be more effective than expressive art therapist in a specific art genre. These differential effectiveness of different art genre was speculated to be caused by the incorporation of body movements and facial expression in the workshops.

Keywords: *Expressive Arts Therapy, one-off workshops, effectiveness, mental health awareness, mental health knowledge*