



Slow Art Plus: Developing and Piloting a Single Session Art Gallery-based Intervention for Mental Health Promotion via a Mixed Method Waitlist Randomised Control Trial (RCT)

Executive Summary

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Made possible by



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Executive Summary

Background. Recognising the vast mental health concerns that accompany COVID-19, National Gallery Singapore (the Gallery) developed their own Slow Art programme in 2020 with the aim of providing interested individuals with a meaningful platform for social connection, conversation, and art appreciation through an online visual art experience. The current study builds on the industrial expertise of National Gallery Singapore and harnesses the clinical and empirical expertise of the Action Research for Community Health Lab, Nanyang Technological University (NTU) in developing and piloting an enhanced version of the Slow Art programme, namely “Slow Art Plus”, to promote mental health and wellness.

Methods. Slow Art Plus consists of a full 90-minute engagement—one that is built upon the existing Slow Art programme with added layers of mindfulness and self-compassion practices—as well as a response art activity that fosters symbolic dialogue and an emotional aesthetic experience between participants and the selected artwork. A single-site, open-label, waitlist Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT) design comprising two arms: (i) treatment group and (ii) waitlist control group was used in the study. Participants were invited to complete three online questionnaires. Prior to Day 1 of the programme, all participants completed the baseline assessment [T1]. The treatment group participants then underwent the 90-minute programme on Day 2 and subsequently completed an immediate post-intervention assessment [T2], and a final follow-up on Day 3 [T3]. The waitlist control group completed a pre-intervention assessment on Day 2 [T2] and underwent the same programme on Day 3, followed by the completion of an immediate post-intervention assessment. An embedded qualitative focus group evaluation study was conducted to evaluate programme acceptability and feasibility.

Results. A total of 225 participants were successfully recruited, with 196 participants completing the study. Among them were 15 healthcare workers. Results from the mixed model ANOVA and Mann-Whitney U test showed a significant group and time interaction effect where participants experienced a significant reduction in perceived stress and increase in quality of life immediately after intervention completion. Follow-up one-way repeated measures ANOVA and Friedman test with follow-up Wilcoxon signed rank test was conducted to examine the changes across time for each group. The results revealed significant improvements across time points for perceived stress, mindfulness, resilience, quality of life, self-compassion, and spiritual well-being. Sub-group analysis by artwork were also conducted. Using a framework analysis, a total of two themes (1: Experiences of Slow Art Plus, 2: Insights to Effective Implementation) and six subthemes (1a: Peaceful Relaxation, 1b: Self-Compassion, 1c: Widened Perspective, 2a: Valuable Components, 2b: Execution Requisites, 2c: Suggested Enhancements) were identified, providing insights to the overall experience and implementation of the intervention.

Conclusion. Slow Art Plus is a first-of-its kind standardised intervention that integrates slow-looking, mindfulness and self-compassion practices, as well as reflective and creative expressions with Singapore and Southeast Asian art for addressing the mental health promotion needs of the general population. Slow Art Plus has great potential to create a completely new paradigm of mental health self-care across the arts industry, fuelling hope and vitality into the lives of people in Singapore and around the world.



"I have learnt that taking time to appreciate a work of art can truly help me to express my feelings, even deep seated feelings. I felt a great sense of relief after the experience."

- Slow Art Plus Participant

- End -

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