

Methods of Healthy Aging for Older Adults: An Artistic Perspective

Min-Sheng Ku¹, Yi-Huang Shih^{2*}, Meng-Chin Hsu³, Chung-Liang Chang⁴,
Unik Ambar Wati⁵

¹Department of Senior Services Industry Management, Minghsin University of Science and Technology, Taiwan

²Center of Teacher Education, Minghsin University of Science and Technology, Taiwan

³Center of Teacher Education, Minghsin University of Science and Technology, Taiwan

⁴Department of Early Childhood Education and Care, Minghsin University of Science and Technology, Taiwan

⁵Faculty of Education and Psychology, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia

*Correspondence Author

Abstract: Healthy aging is about creating the environments and opportunities that enable people to be and do what they value throughout their lives. Everyone can experience healthy aging. Being free of disease or infirmity is not a requirement for healthy aging, as many older adults have one or more health conditions that, when well controlled, have little influence on their well-being (World Health Organization, 2024). Art plays a significant role in promoting healthy aging among older adults by enhancing both physical and mental well-being while fostering social connections and emotional fulfillment. Therefore, this article explored the methods of healthy aging for older adults from an artistic perspective. The methods of healthy aging from an artistic perspective are as follows: (1) Art participation and mental health for older adults; (2) Art creation and physical health for older adults; (3) Social interaction and cultural connection for older adults; (4) Art and spiritual health for older adults. It is hoped that the discussion in this article will promote healthy aging among older adults.

Keywords: aging, art, healthy aging, well-being

1. Introduction

The percentage of older adults is projected to nearly double between 2015 and 2050, from about 12 to 22% of the global population. Aging of the population causes an increase in multimorbidity. Beyond physical ailments, older age is associated with a higher risk of mental diseases, the most prevalent of which is depression: a study identified dimensional depression and lifetime major depression as the most prevalent mental health disorders in later life. Therefore, the issues of healthy aging among older adults has been gaining increasing attention (Galassi, Merizzi, D'Amen, & Santini, 2022).

Healthy aging is about creating the environments and opportunities that enable people to be and do what they value throughout their lives. Everybody can experience healthy aging. Being free of disease or infirmity is not a requirement for healthy aging, as many older adults have one or more health conditions that, when well controlled, have little influence on their well-being (World Health Organization, 2024). Empirical papers tend to focus on the outcomes of older people's participation in artistic activities, in particular the benefits. Most papers centred on facilitators to examine the antecedents of this type of participation among people in late life. Hence, art plays a significant role in promoting healthy aging among older adults by enhancing both physical and mental well-being while fostering social connections and emotional fulfillment. In fact, the growing population of older adults and the increasing life expectancy necessitate comprehensive approaches to promoting well-being, with a significant focus on healthy aging. Healthy aging encompasses physical, mental, emotional, and social dimensions, requiring a holistic view to ensure that older adults can thrive in later life (Chacur, Serrat & Villar, 2022; Hung, 2012; Ilmi, McKenna, Murphy & Kadar, 2024; Shih, 2022, 2024a; Shih, Ku, Tseng, Chiang & Lin, 2024). Therefore, this article explored the methods of healthy aging for older adults from an artistic perspective.

2. Healthy Aging

Ageing is an important global public health problem, while understanding and discussion of healthy ageing is diverse (Zhang & Wang, 2023). World Health Organization (2024) defines healthy ageing as "the process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables well-being in older age." Functional ability is about having the capabilities that enable all people to be and do what they have reason to value. This includes a person's ability to: meet their basic needs; learn, grow and make decisions; be mobile; build and maintain relationships; and contribute to society. Functional ability consists of the intrinsic capacity of the individual, relevant environmental characteristics and the interaction between them. In addition, the mission of

UN Decade of Healthy Ageing (2020–2030) is to improve the lives of older people, their families and their communities. The main components of healthy ageing: Environments (highlighting society and community) across life courses (of work and family) toward wellbeing (of individuals, family members and communities) (Beard et al, 2016; Zhang & Wang, 2023).

3. Explores the Methods of Healthy Aging from an Artistic Perspective

1. Art Participation and Mental Health for Older Adults

Creative activities have a significant impact on people's emotional well-being. From painting and music to writing and design, the act of creating art and expression not only triggers positive emotions, but can also improve mental and emotional health. Art activities (such as painting, music, and dance) provide a channel for emotional expression, helping to alleviate stress and anxiety, and promote inner peace for older adults. Engaging in artistic creation can stimulate brain activity, helping older adults to maintain cognitive abilities and prevent cognitive decline such as dementia (François Dubois, 2024).

2. Art Creation and Physical Health for Older Adults

Physical Activities like dance and pottery can enhance physical flexibility and muscle strength, promoting overall physical health. Art forms like painting and music stimulate sensory experiences, helping older adults maintain sensitivity and interest in their environment (Shih, 2024b). Regular physical activity is considered one of the most important factors for lifestyle, for maintaining good health in older ages and increasing life expectancy. Dance is considered an activity that involves coordinating movements with music, as well as brain activation because it is constantly necessary to learn and remember new steps (Douka, Zilidou, Lilou & Manou, 2019).

3. Social Interaction and Cultural Connection for Older Adults

As populations age, it is critical to understand how psycho-social wellbeing supports healthy ageing. The health sector is increasingly asking how best to improve social connection and affective state because of their positive influence on overall health. Art activities are often social, such as participating in a choir or community art exhibition, which helps older adults build and strengthen social support networks (Chacur, Serrat & Villar, 2022; Maury & Rickard, 2022; Shih, 2024b).

4. Art and Spiritual Health for Older Adults

Throughout history, artists have known that art provides benefits for both the creator and viewer. Current studies in the fields of art therapy, music therapy, and other creative modalities confirm that art can affect individuals in positive ways by inducing both psychological and physiological healing. We know that, in general, exercising our creative selves enhances quality of life and nurtures overall well-being. Art often involves reflecting on the meaning of life, and helping older adults find inner strength when facing life transitions (such as retirement or the loss of loved ones). Music or visual art can bring deep spiritual comfort, promoting overall health by nurturing the body, mind, and spirit for older adults (Barbara Bagan, 2024).

4. Conclusion and Look

Although populations around the world are rapidly ageing, evidence that increasing longevity is being accompanied by an extended period of good health is scarce. A coherent and focused public health response that spans multiple sectors and stakeholders is urgently needed. To guide this global response, WHO has released the first *World report on ageing and health*, reviewing current knowledge and gaps and providing a public health framework for action. The report is built around a redefinition of healthy ageing that centres on the notion of functional ability: the combination of the intrinsic capacity of the individual, relevant environmental characteristics, and the interactions between the individual and these characteristics. This Health Policy highlights key findings and recommendations from the report (Beard et al, 2016). Incorporating art into healthy aging strategies forms an integrated approach that promotes overall well-being. Advocating for government and community resources to support artistic activities for older adults, while enhancing public awareness of the connection between art and healthy aging for the bright future. The methods of healthy aging from an artistic perspective are as follows: (1) Art participation and mental health for older adults; (2) Art creation and physical health for older adults; (3) Social interaction and cultural connection for older adults; (4) Art and spiritual health for older adults. It is hoped that the discussion in this article will promote healthy aging among older adults.

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