

Demographic Determinants of Art Therapy Engagement for Mental Health: A Singaporean Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Art therapy has gained international recognition as an effective psychotherapeutic approach that enhances emotional resilience, fosters self-expression, and supports mental well-being. In Singapore, despite public mental health awareness has improved through government initiatives, the actual uptake of non-traditional therapies such as art therapy remains limited. This study investigates the demographic determinants influencing engagement with art therapy, focusing on age, income, and education among Singapore residents. A quantitative design was employed, utilizing a structured online survey with 110 participants aged 18–75 years. Data were analyzed using Spearman's rho correlation to assess relationships between demographic variables and art therapy uptake. Results revealed a statistically significant but weak negative correlation between age and art therapy engagement ($r_s = -0.216, p < .05$), indicating that younger adults are more receptive to art therapy than older participants. Conversely, correlations between income ($r_s = 0.067, p = .490$) and education ($r_s = 0.051, p = .599$) with art therapy utilization were weak and non-significant. Subgroup analysis suggested nuanced patterns: females aged 47–60 demonstrated greater engagement than males in the same age group, and paradoxically, affluent, highly educated individuals reported lower utilization rates, possibly due to stigma, skepticism, or lack of insurance coverage. These findings highlight a generational divide in openness to expressive therapies and reveal a disconnect between socioeconomic advantage and actual service uptake in Singapore. The results underscore the importance of addressing cultural stigma, enhancing public education on art therapy, and improving accessibility through subsidies and insurance coverage. Policymakers, healthcare providers, and educators can leverage these insights to design targeted interventions, ensuring broader and more equitable engagement with art therapy across Singapore's diverse demographic landscape.

Keywords: Art therapy, mental health, demographic determinants, therapy engagement, Singapore, psychosocial factors.

INTRODUCTION

Art therapy, defined as a psychotherapeutic practice that leverages creative art-making processes to improve emotional, cognitive, and physical well-being, has been increasingly recognized for its therapeutic efficacy (Gulbe et al., 2025). It provides individuals with an expressive medium through which they can explore feelings, reconcile emotional conflicts, foster self-awareness, manage stress, and improve self-esteem (Riley, 2001). The integrative approach of art therapy is beneficial not only for individuals struggling with mental health disorders but also for enhancing emotional resilience among broader populations (Shukla et al., 2022).

In recent decades, Singapore has demonstrated significant progress in mental health awareness, primarily facilitated by government initiatives such as the National Mental Health Blueprint (Hiang et al., 2025a). Despite increased visibility and resources allocated to mental health services, therapy uptake remains inconsistent. Public engagement in non-traditional therapeutic approaches, such as art therapy, is particularly variable (Carr et al., 2023). Recent surveys, including the Singapore Mental Health Study, have highlighted the persistent gap between mental health awareness and active engagement in therapeutic services. Key barriers identified include stigma, cost, limited awareness, and perceived efficacy. These factors collectively underscore the necessity for a deeper investigation into the demographic variables influencing the adoption of such innovative therapeutic modalities in the Singaporean context (Ng et al., 2003).

Within Singapore's mental health service landscape, art therapy occupies a unique position. It provides alternative support to conventional psychotherapy, especially useful for individuals who experience difficulty in verbalizing emotional distress or psychological issues. Although there is growing interest in art therapy, actual utilization remains lower than anticipated, particularly given Singapore's relatively affluent and educated demographic profile (H., 2025; Tan et al., 2021).

Understanding the demographic determinants of art therapy utilization is crucial for multiple stakeholders. Policymakers, healthcare providers, insurance companies, and educational institutions all benefit from understanding how factors such as age, education, and income influence therapy adoption. (Bitonte & Santo, 2014). This understanding can facilitate targeted strategies for improving public engagement, including focused awareness campaigns, subsidy programs, and training initiatives tailored to specific demographic needs (Hwang et al., 2025). Thus, the primary objective of this research is to systematically examine how key demographic factors—age, education, and income—correlate with the utilization of art therapy among Singaporean residents. By exploring these relationships, the study aims to identify and explain demographic trends that either facilitate or impede the public's use of art therapy services. Such insights are necessary to inform interventions and policies tailored to encourage greater participation across different segments of the population (Elkins & Deaver, 2013).

Given the context outlined above, this paper addresses the following research objectives:

- To explore and analyze the demographic characteristics influencing public engagement with art therapy in Singapore.

- To statistically identify significant correlations between demographic variables (age, education, and income) and the utilization of art therapy services.
- To triangulate descriptive demographic data with inferential statistical analyses, providing comprehensive insights into factors influencing public attitudes and behaviors toward art therapy.

The justification for this investigation is clear. Despite high levels of general education and income among many Singapore residents, the expected positive correlations with higher utilization of therapeutic services, including art therapy, have not been robustly supported. Identifying and understanding these patterns will be instrumental in enhancing public health interventions and optimizing resource allocation for mental health services in Singapore.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Demographics and Therapy Utilization: A Global Perspective

Globally, mental health service utilization is significantly influenced by demographic variables, including age, income, and education. Age, for instance, has consistently emerged as a significant determinant (Goh, 2011). Studies conducted in Europe and North America suggest younger adults display higher acceptance and openness to psychological therapies, including art therapy, compared to older populations who might be influenced by cultural stigmas and traditional beliefs (Gulliver et al., 2010). Younger demographics, particularly millennials and Generation Z, are more likely to seek therapy proactively, reflecting greater mental health literacy and reduced stigma. (Lin & Cheung, 1999)

Income has also been a significant factor influencing therapy uptake. Globally, higher-income populations generally report higher utilization rates due to greater financial accessibility to mental health services (Wang et al., 2005). Conversely, lower-income groups often face substantial barriers to therapy, such as affordability and limited availability of subsidized services. However, while income facilitates access, it does not automatically guarantee utilization, as attitudinal and perceptual factors such as stigma and therapy efficacy beliefs also play pivotal roles (Omiyefa, 2025).

Education levels correlate strongly with therapy engagement, as education often enhances awareness of mental health issues and reduces stigma associated with therapy use. Educated individuals are generally more aware of mental health disorders and therapeutic options available, which significantly influences their decisions to seek professional help (Clement et al., 2014), including art therapy (Smriti et al., 2021).

Art Therapy Utilization and Demographics

Art therapy, as an expressive therapeutic modality, has been shown to resonate more significantly with specific demographic groups. Young adults and adolescents demonstrate higher engagement levels due to their openness to creative forms of expression, reduced resistance to non-verbal therapeutic modalities, and an increased likelihood of experiencing stress, anxiety, and emotional instability (Slayton et al., 2010).

In terms of income, research from the United States and Europe indicates that individuals with higher disposable income are more likely to invest in alternative therapeutic services, including

art therapy, as part of their overall health and wellness strategy. Despite this, the overall correlation between income and art therapy utilization is inconsistent, influenced by cultural attitudes toward mental health and availability of subsidies or insurance coverage (Regev & Cohen-Yatziv, 2018).

Educational attainment consistently influences engagement in art therapy, reflecting a broader understanding and appreciation of its psychological benefits. Highly educated individuals tend to perceive art therapy not just as a remedial intervention but also as a proactive mental wellness practice, reflecting a deeper cultural and educational integration of mental health awareness (Riley, 2001).

Regional and Local Insights: Focus on Asia and Singapore

Regionally, Asian contexts present unique challenges and opportunities in mental health service utilization due to deep-rooted cultural stigmas and varying levels of awareness. Countries like Japan, South Korea, and China demonstrate mixed results in terms of age, income, and education influencing therapy uptake (Bruha et al., 2018). Younger, urban, educated populations show increased willingness, whereas older, rural, and less educated groups maintain significant resistance due to entrenched traditional attitudes (Chen et al., 2020).

In Singapore specifically, despite robust governmental efforts to boost mental health awareness, significant gaps remain in therapy uptake, particularly for alternative modalities like art therapy (Tonsing, 2017). Local studies suggest that the public's understanding of the benefits and applications of art therapy remains limited. Key barriers identified include perceptions of therapy cost, limited insurance coverage, and ongoing societal stigma, even among highly educated demographics (Tan et al., 2021).

Gaps in Current Research

Current literature highlights several notable gaps, particularly within the Singaporean context. There is limited quantitative research focusing explicitly on demographic correlations with art therapy utilization. While qualitative insights exist regarding societal attitudes and general barriers, robust quantitative evidence identifying demographic determinants is scant (Huang, 2021; Park & Hong, 2010).

Further, existing local studies often focus narrowly on specific groups, such as elderly populations or dementia patients, overlooking broader demographic representation. Additionally, comparative studies assessing the efficacy and acceptance of art therapy versus traditional psychotherapy are rare, limiting comprehensive understanding and policy formulation (Mirabella, 2015).

Conclusion

Understanding demographic influences on art therapy utilization is essential for bridging gaps between mental health awareness and actual service engagement. This review highlights significant global patterns and regional variations, emphasizing the need for targeted research in Singapore (Kua & Rathi, 2019). By addressing these gaps through robust quantitative analysis, this research seeks to inform effective strategies to enhance public engagement with art therapy, ultimately improving mental health outcomes within the diverse demographic landscape of Singapore (Hiang et al., 2025a).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Ethical Considerations

This research employed a quantitative design aimed at understanding the public's perspective on art therapy engagement in Singapore, specifically assessing demographic correlations such as age, income, and education levels. A structured online questionnaire was chosen for its ability to efficiently gather data from a substantial sample, enabling statistical analysis and generalization of results.

Ethical considerations were rigorously adhered to throughout the study. Ethical approval was obtained prior to initiating data collection, aligning with guidelines provided by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), Singapore Association for Counselling (SAC), and the Association of Psychotherapists and Counsellors Singapore (APACS). All participants received clear and comprehensive consent forms, debriefing statements, and were explicitly informed of their rights to confidentiality, anonymity, and withdrawal. Data protection protocols included anonymous coding of responses using unique participant numbers and secure storage of data with password encryption, ensuring confidentiality and privacy at all times. To minimize any potential harm, sensitive population segments such as minors (below age 18) and vulnerable groups were explicitly excluded. Additionally, participants were informed that no financial incentives were offered to prevent biased responses motivated by monetary gain. However, as a token of appreciation and transparency, respondents were offered the final aggregated research results upon request.

Sampling Strategies and Rationale

Given resource constraints and the preliminary nature of this research within Singapore's context, non-probability sampling methods were adopted, specifically convenience sampling and voluntary response sampling. Convenience sampling involved disseminating the electronic survey through personal contacts and appropriate social media platforms. Voluntary response sampling complemented this by distributing flyers strategically in mature housing estates such as Toa Payoh (targeting senior residents), newer estates like Sengkang (aimed at younger families), and local tertiary institutions (to capture young adults aged 18 and above). These strategies were intentionally diversified to enhance demographic representation across different age groups, socioeconomic statuses, and educational levels. A total of 110 eligible Singapore residents participated, falling within the targeted age bracket of 18 to 75 years. Eligibility was strictly defined by residential status, aligning with the Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore's definition, encompassing Singapore Citizens, Permanent Residents, and foreign nationals residing long-term. This demographic breadth ensured an adequately diverse dataset reflective of Singapore's general adult population, allowing for meaningful statistical analyses of demographic correlations.

Quantitative Survey Design and Demographic Variables

The quantitative survey instrument consisted of structured closed-ended questions, systematically developed based on literature from the Singapore Mental Health Study (2016), Singapore Department of Statistics Census data (2022), and guidelines from the World Health Organization (WHO) (2022). Key demographic variables captured were clearly defined and categorized as follows:

- **Age:** Participants reported their chronological age, categorized into structured age bands (18–32, 33–46, 47–60, 61–75).
- **Income:** Monthly household income data was segmented into bands reflecting typical Singaporean income distribution (below SGD 2,000; SGD 2,000–3,999; SGD 4,000–5,999; SGD 6,000–9,999; SGD 10,000 and above).
- **Education Level:** Educational attainment was categorized into no formal education, primary, secondary, vocational/ITE, diploma, pre-university/junior college, university, and others.
- **Gender and Ethnicity:** Additional demographic variables were collected to contextualize findings and support further subgroup analyses.

Participants' perceptions and experiences regarding art therapy were quantitatively assessed, examining awareness, misconceptions, efficacy expectations, preferred session types (face-to-face versus online), and anticipated cost concerns. This allowed comprehensive triangulation of demographic characteristics with participants' art therapy-related attitudes and behaviors. The questionnaire was hosted securely online and distributed via URL links and QR codes. Prior to accessing the questions, each participant digitally affirmed consent and eligibility. After data collection was completed, the URL was deactivated, and data downloaded for encrypted storage and analysis.

Statistical Methods and Justification

Given the nature of the collected data—primarily ordinal (e.g., education and income bands, ranked perceptions) and non-normally distributed—the Spearman's rho (Spearman rank correlation coefficient) was the chosen statistical method for correlation analysis. Spearman's rho is a non-parametric test that assesses the strength and direction of monotonic relationships between two ordinal or continuous variables, providing reliable correlation measures even in the absence of linearity or normal distribution. Specifically, Spearman's rho evaluates whether variables tend to increase or decrease together without requiring data normality, making it ideal for ordinal datasets and smaller sample sizes typical of preliminary quantitative studies. It assigns ranks to data values and calculates correlation based on differences between these ranks, effectively reducing the impact of outliers and enhancing robustness in analyses involving subjective survey responses and categorized demographic bands.

Hypotheses testing via Spearman's rho involved the following null hypotheses:

- **H₀₁:** No correlation exists between participants' age and their likelihood of taking up art therapy.
- **H₀₂:** No correlation exists between participants' monthly household income and their likelihood of taking up art therapy.
- **H₀₃:** No correlation exists between participants' education level and their likelihood of taking up art therapy.

The analysis was executed using IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28.0.1.1. Each hypothesis was evaluated for statistical significance at $p < 0.05$. Significant correlation findings informed meaningful interpretations about demographic influences on art therapy uptake.

Conclusion of Methodology

In summary, the adopted methodology provided a robust framework suitable for examining demographic determinants of art therapy engagement within Singapore's sociocultural context. Ethical protocols were thoroughly observed, sampling strategies balanced demographic representation with practicality, and a structured quantitative survey facilitated systematic data collection. Spearman's rho was appropriately selected for statistical rigor given the nature and structure of the collected demographic and attitudinal data, ensuring validity and reliability in the findings and subsequent analyses.

RESULTS

Detailed Demographic Overview

A comprehensive analysis was conducted based on responses from 110 eligible participants residing in Singapore. The survey captured detailed demographic data including age, gender, income, and education levels to accurately depict the profile of respondents and to facilitate subsequent correlation analyses.

Age Distribution

The age of participants ranged from 18 to 73 years. The mean age was 43.6 years, indicating a relatively middle-aged skew in the respondent population. Specifically, the median age was 46 years, with the mode recorded at 50 years, underscoring that middle-aged adults dominated the sample. When categorized into structured age bands, participant distribution was as follows:

- 18–32 years: approximately 23%
- 33–46 years: around 26%
- 47–60 years: approximately 37%
- 61–75 years: roughly 14%

This distribution is indicative of a representative cross-section of adult residents, capturing both younger and older demographics.

Gender Distribution

Regarding gender, the respondent group was predominantly female, with females accounting for 70% of the respondents, compared to 30% males. This imbalance aligns with typical response patterns observed in mental health research, wherein females often demonstrate higher participation rates.

Income Distribution

Income data, collected as monthly household income, showed considerable variability, with respondents spanning across multiple socioeconomic categories:

- Below SGD 2,000: 8%
- SGD 2,000–3,999: 12%
- SGD 4,000–5,999: 20%
- SGD 6,000–9,999: 24%
- SGD 10,000 and above: 36%

This distribution highlights a generally affluent participant pool, reflective of Singapore's developed economy, with over a third of participants earning above SGD 10,000 monthly.

Education Level Distribution

Education levels among participants were predominantly high, reflecting Singapore's robust educational landscape:

- Secondary education and below: approximately 9%
- Vocational/Institute of Technical Education (ITE): 2%
- Diploma holders: 19%
- Pre-university/Junior College education: 7%
- University graduates: 62%
- Others: 1%

University-educated respondents thus represented the clear majority, illustrating that the sample largely comprised educated professionals likely familiar with healthcare and wellness services.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Participants

Demographic Variable	Category	Sample Distribution (%)
Age	18-32	23%
	33-46	26%
	47-60	37%
	61-75	14%
Gender	Male	30%
	Female	70%
Monthly Income (SGD)	Below 2000	8%
	2000-3999	12%
	4000-5999	20%
	6000-9999	24%
	10000 and above	36%
Education Level	Secondary and below	9%
	Vocational/ITE	2%
	Diploma	19%
	Pre-U/Junior College	7%
	University	62%
	Others	1%

Table 2: Spearman Correlation between Demographics and Art Therapy Uptake

Variable Pair	Spearman's rho (r_s)	p-value	Interpretation
Age vs. Art Therapy Uptake	-0.216	< 0.05	Weak negative correlation (Significant)
Income vs. Art Therapy Uptake	0.067	0.490	Very weak correlation (Not significant)
Education vs. Art Therapy Uptake	0.051	0.599	Very weak correlation (Not significant)

Correlation Analysis

To understand how these demographic variables correlated with the uptake or interest in art therapy, Spearman's rho correlations were utilized due to their suitability for ordinal demographic data.

Correlation between Age and Art Therapy Utilization

Spearman's rho analysis indicated a statistically significant but weak negative correlation ($r_s = -0.216$, $p < .05$) between age and likelihood of taking up art therapy. Younger participants showed slightly higher willingness and openness toward art therapy than older counterparts. This finding aligns with global patterns suggesting younger demographics typically demonstrate greater openness to non-traditional therapeutic practices.

Correlation between Income and Art Therapy Utilization

Spearman's rho analysis revealed a non-significant, very weak correlation ($r_s = 0.067$, $p = .490$) between income levels and engagement with art therapy services. While traditionally higher incomes predict greater access to healthcare services, this was not conclusively evident in this Singaporean context, potentially reflecting unique local perceptions, insurance coverage limitations, or awareness gaps regarding art therapy.

Correlation between Education Level and Art Therapy Utilization

The correlation between educational attainment and art therapy utilization was similarly weak and non-significant ($r_s = 0.051$, $p = .599$). Despite theoretical expectations that higher education correlates with greater mental health awareness and service utilization, results indicated only negligible influence. Such findings underscore a potential disconnect between educational awareness and practical engagement in therapeutic services in Singapore.

Exploratory and Subgroup Analyses:

Recognizing the limited strength of direct correlations, additional exploratory subgroup analyses were conducted to deepen insights.

Age and Gender Interaction Analysis:

A notable subgroup interaction emerged within the 47–60 age bracket, where females were significantly more engaged in previous counseling, including art therapy, compared to males. Within this demographic, 22 females reported previous counseling experiences compared to only 6 males. This highlights a potential gendered pattern in mental health engagement, warranting further qualitative investigation (Schofield & Khan, 2008).

Income and Education Interaction Analysis:

Given the complexity of income and education interactions, further analysis was performed. Participants with university education earning SGD 10,000 or higher exhibited paradoxically lower rates of prior art therapy experience. This unexpected trend might indicate that despite financial capability and higher educational attainment, perceived efficacy, availability, or attitudinal barriers, such as stigma or skepticism, could significantly impact art therapy engagement among affluent, educated groups (Campbell et al., 2016).

Previous Counseling Experience Analysis:

A critical observation was that among participants who had previously engaged in counseling, only 10% had experienced art therapy specifically. This subgroup analysis implies low penetration and awareness of art therapy even within populations already open to counseling services, reflecting possible gaps in referral practices or awareness among healthcare professionals.

Demographic Distributions

The demographic profile revealed that the sample was skewed toward mid-aged respondents (40–60 years). Higher-income groups, particularly those earning above SGD 6,000 monthly, were strongly represented. In terms of education, university graduates constituted the dominant segment, providing important context for interpreting the correlation results.

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Triangulation of Results

Triangulating descriptive demographic insights with correlation outcomes, several key patterns emerged:

- **Younger demographics** exhibited greater openness towards art therapy, aligning with global literature emphasizing younger individuals' flexibility toward novel interventions.
- **Income and education** showed unexpectedly weak relationships with art therapy uptake, highlighting that socio-economic advantages do not straightforwardly translate into higher engagement. This indicates potential barriers beyond financial capacity, such as cultural stigma, lack of insurance coverage, or skepticism about therapy efficacy.

Summary of Results

In summary, demographic data revealed a predominantly female, affluent, educated, and middle-aged respondent group. Correlation analyses indicated only age significantly influenced

art therapy engagement, albeit weakly. Income and education correlations were negligible, suggesting complex attitudinal or systemic barriers. Exploratory subgroup analyses reinforced the necessity of addressing specific population segments, particularly affluent, highly educated adults and older males, to optimize art therapy utilization. These findings provide valuable demographic insights, foundational for targeted interventions enhancing art therapy awareness and accessibility in Singapore.

DISCUSSION

The primary objective of this research was to investigate the demographic determinants—age, income, and education—of art therapy engagement among Singapore residents. The correlation analyses yielded insightful but nuanced findings, illuminating demographic patterns and highlighting complex underlying factors influencing art therapy adoption.

Interpretation of Correlation Findings

The correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant, albeit weak, negative correlation between age and art therapy utilization ($r_s = -0.216$, $p < .05$). Younger participants were marginally more inclined toward engaging in art therapy compared to their older counterparts. This finding resonates with global literature indicating greater mental health service acceptance among younger populations. Younger adults typically possess increased mental health literacy, are less affected by traditional stigmas, and display more openness toward expressive therapies (Gulliver et al., 2010). In contrast, older respondents' lesser engagement could reflect deeply ingrained traditional attitudes or reduced familiarity with innovative therapeutic modalities like art therapy, suggesting a generational gap in awareness and acceptance (Galassi et al., 2022).

Surprisingly, neither income nor education level demonstrated significant correlations with art therapy utilization. The negligible relationship between income ($r_s = 0.067$, $p = .490$) and art therapy engagement was unexpected, as global research consistently identifies financial capacity as a crucial determinant of mental health service utilization (Wang et al., 2005). This suggests that financial capability alone does not predict art therapy uptake in Singapore, potentially indicating other influential barriers such as perceived efficacy, lack of insurance coverage, or cultural attitudes. These barriers might overshadow the financial accessibility otherwise presumed to encourage greater mental health service use (Beshai et al., 2019).

Similarly, educational attainment did not significantly correlate with art therapy engagement ($r_s = 0.051$, $p = .599$), deviating from the expectation based on existing literature that suggests education typically enhances mental health awareness and therapy acceptance (Clement et al., 2014). This suggests a disconnect in the Singaporean context between theoretical awareness—likely facilitated by education—and actual service utilization. The limited impact of education might reflect nuanced local factors, such as cultural skepticism or a gap in educational curricula addressing practical mental health service utilization, especially for alternative interventions like art therapy (Miller, 2016).

Comparative Analysis with Previous Research

The finding that younger individuals are more receptive to art therapy aligns well with previous studies emphasizing youth openness to novel psychological interventions (Slayton et al., 2010). Globally, millennials and Generation Z have exhibited greater acceptance of diverse and

innovative therapeutic modalities, attributed largely to reduced stigma, heightened mental health literacy, and familiarity with creative methods of self-expression (Akbar et al., 2024). The observed weak but significant age correlation thus reaffirms this global trend within a Singaporean context.

However, the absence of significant correlations for income and education diverges from findings in broader global contexts, particularly in Western societies where higher income and education typically predict increased therapy utilization (Regev & Cohen-Yatziv, 2018). This divergence underscores unique cultural and systemic factors in Singapore, where despite substantial education and financial resources, practical barriers such as insurance coverage limitations, limited governmental subsidies for art therapy, or persistent social stigma around therapy services likely constrain utilization (Kee, 2004).

Regionally, Asian contexts frequently report substantial influence of cultural stigma on mental health service uptake (Chen et al., 2020). Despite Singapore's relatively progressive stance on mental health compared to many regional peers, deep-rooted cultural reservations could continue influencing public willingness to adopt art therapy. Local research highlights misconceptions about art therapy's suitability for adults, perceived necessity of artistic talent, and uncertainty about therapeutic efficacy as persistent barriers within Singapore (Tan et al., 2021). Such misconceptions, along with limited public education campaigns explicitly addressing art therapy, may contribute significantly to the weak demographic correlations observed.

Potential Reasons Behind Demographic Patterns

Several interrelated factors potentially explain the demographic patterns observed in this study. Societal attitudes appear especially influential, as traditional cultural perceptions about mental health services—including alternative methods like art therapy—remain prevalent, especially among older Singaporeans (Lin & Cheung, 1999). The negative age correlation aligns closely with this cultural context, suggesting that older adults' reservations might reflect deeply internalized cultural stigmas or limited exposure to innovative therapeutic practices (Kee, 2004).

Awareness gaps also likely contribute significantly. Despite governmental initiatives, public education specifically tailored toward alternative therapies remains insufficient. Respondents demonstrated limited knowledge about the rigorous qualifications required for art therapists, reflecting a broader lack of clarity and appreciation for the professional standards and therapeutic benefits of art therapy. Such awareness deficits might dissuade utilization, even among educated, affluent populations who typically demonstrate openness to health innovations (Hiang et al., 2025b).

Additionally, systemic policy factors significantly shape art therapy accessibility. Current Singaporean health policy does not widely subsidize art therapy, nor is it routinely covered by private insurance schemes. This financial barrier disproportionately impacts individuals who, despite having sufficient income, perceive art therapy as financially inaccessible or unjustifiable without institutional support or subsidies. The lack of direct referrals from healthcare providers further compounds this barrier, potentially limiting awareness and perceived legitimacy of art therapy (Hu et al., 2021; Lith & Ettenberger, 2023).

Policy and Practical Implications

The findings emphasize the need for tailored public health initiatives aimed explicitly at overcoming demographic and attitudinal barriers. Targeted awareness campaigns highlighting art therapy's broad applicability, professional credibility, and therapeutic benefits could effectively reduce misconceptions and stigma (Lith & Ettenberger, 2023). Policy interventions, such as integrating art therapy into mainstream healthcare services and expanding insurance coverage or governmental subsidies, would substantially alleviate financial and practical barriers, enhancing accessibility (Miller, 2016).

Furthermore, healthcare provider education on art therapy's benefits and referral pathways could significantly improve uptake. Given respondents' clear preference for receiving information via healthcare professionals, equipping doctors and counselors with adequate knowledge and referral capabilities could bridge existing awareness gaps effectively (Khanahmadi, 2020).

Conclusion of Discussion

In summary, while younger age correlated modestly with increased art therapy engagement, education and income surprisingly did not significantly predict therapy utilization in Singapore. These findings highlight distinct cultural, systemic, and policy-driven barriers influencing demographic trends (Tan et al., 2021). Addressing societal attitudes, enhancing public awareness through targeted education, and policy interventions aimed at practical accessibility can effectively mitigate these barriers. This approach holds promise for increasing public engagement with art therapy, thereby optimizing its potential to enhance mental health outcomes in Singapore (Lith & Ettenberger, 2023).

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