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AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON FINGER KNITTING-
FACILITATED THERAPY

YAO MEI YU

Ph.D

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

2017

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
Institute of Textiles and Clothing

An Exploratory Study on Finger Knitting-Facilitated Therapy

Yao Mei Yu

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

August 2016

CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINALITY

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Yao Mei Yu

To those research participants who's earnest and trust provides me confidence and bravery to realize my study in creating positive change and more importantly, explore the world with empathy and passion. In the journey of life discovery and cognition, we can have more and more allies and be courage to be ushering in challenge yet positive growth.

Abstract

Mental health issues were common yet serious problems that should be confronted by everyone. People used many different methods to cope with their stress or negative mood. Recently, more and more people try to ease mental health problems or alleviate tense life by various psychotherapies, such as art therapy. The usual method related to “fashion” is retail therapy. However, the effectiveness of those methods was uncertain and some of them even bring drawbacks. Therefore, this study suggests a new “fashion” therapy to improve mental health.

Finger knitting, a form of knitting, is employed for this purpose. It has numerous benefits, including easing stress and calming. Also, it is a relatively easy that can be performed by various age groups. Nevertheless, people can still design and make unique knitwear by applying their own style. Thus they gain a sense of achievement and it could be considered as a tool for self-expression and discovering one’s inner world. Its major benefits are categorized as (1) nature or movements; (2) stimulation of visual and tactile sensation; (3) structural yet creative; and (4) social involvement and confidence.

Therefore, this study aims to develop an innovative knitting-facilitated therapy by finger knitting to alleviate the stress and alter negative mood of people. Also, its potential to be adopted as a creative medium for self-expression and self-understanding is assessed. To achieve these objectives, three stages of testing are employed.

In the first stage, it aims to find out the immediate impacts of finger knitting on self-esteem. Pre-posttest study is used and State Self-Esteem Scale is employed to measure the level of performance, social and appearance self-esteem. By comparing to the controlled group, tested group shows change in state self-esteem. The result shows that finger knitting is effective to improve state self-esteem of performance and social but not appearance.

In the second stage, undergraduates and elderly are invited as targets. Both of them join a 4-week finger knitting program separately to investigate the effectiveness of finger knitting in improving mood and enhancing self-esteem. For objective test, Depression Anxiety Stress Scales and Depression Anxiety Stress Scales are adopted for undergraduates test while a special designed questionnaire is used for elderly test. For subjective test, informal interviews and observation are employed to collect the insights and experience while thematic analysis is adopted for formal analysis. For the undergraduates test, the theme are on (1) calming and relaxation effect; (2) self-confidence and satisfaction; (3) social involvement and; (4) active lifestyle and productivity. In the test for the elderly, the themes are (1) warmth and happiness; (2) sense of life meaning and self-worth; (3) sense of involvement; and (4) social support and potential functional help. The result is strongly positive and the participants were extremely satisfied. It supports that finger knitting helps to improve self-esteem and facilitate mental health. It also provides a warm and comfort feeling. More than that, it encourages active lifestyle and social involvement. Also, the relationship between mood, self-esteem and finger knitting is clearly interacted.

In the third stage, participants join a 9-week workshop to accomplish a knit piece or garment. There is no obvious difference that shows the difficulty of the end product will change the result. It is found that their perception towards the workshop is highly positive. The perception of the participants towards finger knitting is mainly categorized into “enjoyment”, “peer support”, “creativity” and “personal growth and empowerment”. They find that it is a valuable learning experience with a bit challenging that contributes to personal growth. Moreover, it is found that participants were all able to use finger knitting as a medium to express their feelings and thoughts. The major themes of their knit piece or garment are (1) reflection/view towards the city; (2) view towards life or self-reflection; and (3) expression of feeling.

From the above study, it demonstrates the effectiveness of finger knitting therapy, and it implies that psychotherapies may help in mental health issues. This study also develops the finger knitting methods and how to apply it as a therapy. A framework of finger

knitting therapy is developed as the foundation. It shows the procedures of study, setting of the workshop, data collection methods and so on.

This study serves as a pilot study associating fashion design, knitting with therapy. Thus, it helps to arouse more attention on mental health and encourages further study. Additionally, it shows there is certain relationship between mood, self-esteem and finger knitting. Though there are some limitations of this study, there are still plenty of benefits promoting finger knitting as a therapy. Hence, it is suggested that finger knitting has high potential to develop as a therapy and deserve for further investigation.

Keywords: *Finger Knitting, Therapy, Mental Health, Self-Esteem, Self-Expression*

Acknowledgement

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the following people for their kindly support and encouragement throughout my working of this dissertation.

First of all, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to my supervisor, Dr. Li Li, for her constant guidance, useful advice and sustained encouragement. Her professional knowledge and assistance in tutorship were crucial to the successful completion of this dissertation.

In addition, I am grateful receiving the great and warm support from my family and friends. Their spiritual encouragements always accompany and embolden me.

More importantly, I would like to give special thank to all participants for spending their valuable time to join the study and provide valuable opinions. All conversation and sharing by them were extremely inspiring that acted as a catalyst in the process of positive personal change and growth affecting both the participants and myself.

Contents

List of Tables	12
List of Figures	13
Chapter One Introduction	15
1.1 Background of Study	15
1.2 Objectives of Study	21
1.3 Significance and Values	22
Chapter Two Literature Review	24
2.1 Introduction	24
2.2 Knitting and Finger Knitting	25
2.2.1 Research, Benefits and Potential of Knitting Development	27
2.3 Mental Health and Self-Esteem	35
2.3.1 Mental Health Problems – Causes and Current Treatments	36
2.3.2 Self-Esteem and Its Importance	39
2.4 Mood, Self-Esteem and Finger Knitting – Potential Relationship	40
2.5 Current Psychotherapy – Foundation of Knitting Therapy	42
2.5.1 Fashion Related Psychotherapies	43
2.5.2 Art Therapy	44
2.6 Development and Techniques of Finger Knitting	47

2.6.1	Development of Finger Knitting as a Therapy	47
2.6.2	Basic Techniques of Finger Knitting	49
2.6.3	The Methodology of Finger Knitting Therapy	55
2.6.4	Pre-Study Work Done	56
2.7	Basis of hypotheses	57
Chapter Three Methodology		59
3.1	Identification of the Immediate Impact of Finger Knitting	60
3.1.1	Research Design	60
3.1.2	Data Analysis	61
3.2	Investigation of the Potential of Finger Knitting on Altering Mood and Self-esteem and Their Relationship	62
3.2.1	Research Design	63
3.2.2	Sampling Method	66
3.2.3	Planning and Content of the Finger Knitting Program	66
3.2.4	Data Analysis	67
3.3	Examination of Finger Knitting as a Creative Medium for Self-expression and Self-understanding	69
3.3.1	Research Design	70
3.3.2	Sampling Method	72
3.3.3	Planning and Content of the Finger Knitting Program	72
3.3.4	Data Analysis	74
3.4	Sampling Size	74

3.5	Ethical Considerations	75
3.6	Summary	75
Chapter Four	Findings and Discussion	76
4.1	Immediate Impact of Finger Knitting – First Pilot Test	76
4.1.1	Results of the First Pilot Test	77
4.1.2	Discussion of the First Pilot Test	80
4.2	Development of a Systematic Method of Finger Knitting Program	81
	Associating with Therapy – Second Stage Test	
4.2.1	Undergraduate Test	82
4.2.2	Results of the Undergraduate Test	84
4.2.3	Observation and Informal Interview during the Undergraduate Test	87
4.2.4	Elderly Test	97
4.2.5	Results of the Elderly Test	98
4.2.6	Observation and Informal Interview during the Elderly Test	100
4.2.7	Discussion of Second Stage Tests	110
4.3	Finger Knitting as a Creative Medium for Self-expression and Self-understanding – Third Stage Test	114
4.3.1	Results of the Third Stage Test	116
4.3.2	Finding and Discussion of the Third Stage Test	128

Chapter Five	Conclusion and Recommendation	136
5.1	Conclusion	136
5.2	Implication and Research Framework	141
5.3	Limitation and Recommendation	147
Appendix		153
Reference		162

List of Tables

3.1	A table of the content and objectives of finger knitting program	67
3.2	A table of content and objectives of the 9-week finger knitting program	73
4.1	Means (and Standard Deviations) of Pretest and Posttest changes of State Self-Esteem of both tested and controlled group	77
4.2	2 Means (and standard deviations) of pretest and posttest changes of state self-esteem and level of depression, anxiety and stress	84
4.3	A table showing the mean and standard deviation of the elderly survey	98
4.4	A correlation table of the six aspects	99

List of Figures

1.1	Stress coping methods (Hong Kong Department of Health, 2011)	16
2.1	Benefits of knitting demonstrated by Maslow's Hierarchy of needs model	35
2.2	Samples of current market available yarns	50
2.3	Samples with various yarn design methods	51
2.4	Samples made by finger knitting	52
2.5	Single jersey by finger knitting	54
2.6	Activity photos during the collaboration project	57
4.1	A histogram showing that pretest and posttest changes of state self-esteem of tested group	78
4.2	A histogram showing that pretest and posttest changes of state self-esteem of controlled group	79
4.3	A photo showing the setting of the finger knitting workshop	82
4.4	Knit products by the participants	83
4.5	A histogram showing that pretest and posttest changes of state self-esteem	85
4.6	A histogram showing that pretest and posttest changes of level of depression, anxiety and stress	86
4.7	Activity photos during the finger knitting workshop of elderly	97
4.8	Photos showing some of the products that participants made	115

4.9	A knit piece by participant B19	117
4.10	A knit piece by participant B27	118
4.11	A knit piece by participant B20	119
4.12	A knit piece by participant B01	120
4.13	A knit piece by participant B13	121
4.14	A knit piece by participant B43	122
4.15	A knit piece by participant B26	123
4.16	A knit piece by participant B21	124
4.17	A knit piece by participant B17	125
4.18	A knit garment by participant A27	126
4.19	A knit garment by participant A48	126
4.20	A knit garment by participant A57	127
5.1	The framework of conducting finger knitting program and research	143

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background of Study

As ‘No health without mental health’, World Health Organization (WHO) emphasizes the importance of mental health since mental disorders are currently very common that approximately 13% of the global burden of disease has been attributed to neuropsychiatric disorders (World Health Organization, 2013). Common mental problems include depression, anxiety disorders, alcohol-use, substance-use disorders, eating disorders, psychoses and other mental disorders (Prince et al., 2007). These problems may contribute to long-term disability and even mortality. With reference to WHO, there are around 4,500,000 people experience mental problem (World Health Organization, 2010). Approximately 800,000 people commit suicide per year and 90% among those suffer from mental disorder (World Health Organization, 2013).

In Hong Kong, majority lives under high pressure due to pursuing of high efficiency living and working style. According to the report of Hong Kong Department of Health, only 5.9% of respondents think that they are stress-free (Hong Kong Department of Health, 2011). Sometimes, the feeling of stress and upset may pass, but sometimes may last in which leading to serious problems eventually and even mental problems, such as depression, insomnia or anxiety.

Period : April 2011

Question : What is your most frequently adopted stress coping mechanism? (one answer only)

Response	Male Number (%)	Female Number (%)	Overall Number (%)
Doing exercise	254 (26.2%)	135 (11.7%)	390 (18.4%)
Talking to somebody	58 (6.0%)	186 (16.1%)	244 (11.5%)
Listening to music	68 (7.0%)	104 (9.0%)	171 (8.1%)
Resting/sleeping	79 (8.1%)	87 (7.5%)	165 (7.8%)
Watching TV	64 (6.6%)	94 (8.2%)	158 (7.5%)
Eating	9 (0.9%)	65 (5.7%)	74 (3.5%)
Reading	23 (2.4%)	48 (4.1%)	71 (3.3%)
Shopping	7 (0.8%)	49 (4.3%)	57 (2.7%)
Drinking	29 (2.9%)	8 (0.7%)	36 (1.7%)
Doing leisure activities	26 (2.7%)	7 (0.6%)	33 (1.6%)
Smoking	6 (0.6%)	4 (0.3%)	9 (0.4%)
Others	234 (24.2%)	220 (19.1%)	455 (21.4%)
No method used	54 (5.6%)	78 (6.7%)	132 (6.2%)
No stress	58 (6.0%)	68 (5.9%)	126 (5.9%)
Unknown/Missing/Outliers	1 (0.1%)	1 (0.1%)	2 (0.1%)
Total	969 (100.0%)	1 154 (100.0%)	2 123 (100.0%)

Note: Add-ups may not be equal to total due to rounding.

Figure 1.1 Stress coping methods (Hong Kong Department of Health, 2011)

Mental health problems are associated with psychological or biological factors. The crucial strategy to treat mental health problems caused by psychological factors is to treat it as early as possible since they are formed by accumulating stress or upset feeling. There are various methods that people adopted to cope with stress. According to Hong Kong Department of Health, people usually do exercises or talk with others in order to release their pressure as shown in figure 1.1 (Hong Kong Department of Health, 2011). Nevertheless, the effectiveness of those methods is uncertain and difficult to assess. Also, some people even think that they have no method to cope with stress (Hong Kong Department of Health, 2011).

One of the effective methods to deal with mental health problems is to seek medical advice. However, mentally ill people in general are reluctant to do so or asking others

for help. Many people even avoid talking about the issue. What makes the situation worse is that the limited supports for them. The outpatient attendance of psychiatric department has increased significantly that more than 220,000 outpatient attendances were recorded in 2011-12 (Hong Kong Hospital Authority, 2013). Nevertheless, the queue is so long as the rate of mental health outpatient facilities is only 0.25 per 100,000 populations in Hong Kong (World Health Organization, 2011) and average consulting time is only 10 minutes per each outpatient service. The average waiting time in the non-government organization is not better off. It takes 4-8 months in general for the outpatients to wait for the community-based residential rehabilitation facilities (Chiu & Lam, 2008). Thus, there is a need to develop an effective method that everyone can access to it more easily in order to tackle with his/her mental health problems.

Recently, more and more people try to reduce mental health problems or alleviate tense life by various psychotherapies, such as art therapy, chess therapy, dance therapy, horticulture therapy and so on. Take art therapy as an example. Any type of visual arts, such as painting and photography, can be utilized as the medium for therapy. People's expressive or creative artworks act as a communication tools that therapists can interpret them. Through this process, people can release stress, enhance self-awareness, alleviate emotional problems and foster personal growth. Nevertheless, its effectiveness is still arguable. Reynolds, Nabors & Quinlan (2000)'s study points out that art therapy may have help for controlled trial without random assignment, however, there may not have significant difference between art therapy

and other therapies for the clinical trial with random assignment. In addition, Slayton, D'Archer & Kaplan (2010)'s study suggests that there are limited quantifiable data supporting the effectiveness of art therapy. Similar case can be found in other psychotherapies.

Regarding using 'fashion' as kinds of psychotherapy, retail therapy is the most common one that can be found. It was initially introduced by Schmich in 1986. For the retail therapy, it refers to alleviate negative feeling by shopping and purchase of self-treat (Atalay & Meloy, 2011). In order to escape from stressful feeling, people tend to focus on short-term goals and satisfaction. Thus, people will spent less energy on self-regulation but engage in impulsive behavior (Tice, Bratslavsky & Baumeister, 2001). Although previous study suggests that retail therapy has a positive influence on sentiment (Atalay & Meloy, 2011), as distress may impair one's ability of self-control, it may lead to unplanned purchase. For example, 33% consumers in European Union had 'high level of addiction to rash or unnecessary consumption' (Summerskill, 2001). Also, spending lots of money may make people feel worse and resulted in financial difficulty. Besides, serious impulsive purchase may even cause other psychological problems, namely oniomania or impulse control disorder. Hence, it may not be a good method to alter negative mood.

Apart from retail therapy, "fashion" still has great potential to be developed as a kind of therapy. Similar to art therapy, through practices of "fashion", pressure may be alleviated. Those practices include fashion design, garment making, styling and so on.

Nevertheless, there is limited work or research regarding these kinds of “fashion therapy”. Therefore, development and research in this area is needed. This study thus aims to develop a new type of fashion therapy in order to help alleviate negative emotion and pressure.

As mentioned before, mental health is essential to everyone. Nevertheless, nowadays, people suffer from great pressure and may have certain emotional problems. Although there are numerous ways to cope with high stress, the effectiveness is uncertain and difficult to assess. Therefore, this study suggests a new method to improve mental health and alleviate pressure of insufficient public facilities for mental health of the society. In addition, as current psychotherapies are having limited proof of their effectiveness and even, like retail therapy, there are drawbacks. Hence, this research is going to develop an innovative method that minimizes disadvantages yet maximize effectiveness and increase accessibility. Systematic evaluation will be conducted to test its effectiveness. It is hope that this research can acts as a pioneer on fashion therapy and arise public awareness about mental health. Also, it can provide an alternative way to those who would like to assuage their stress, alter negative mood, improve mental health and even enhance self-awareness and personal growth.

The following part will then introduce the new fashion therapy method that this study is going to develop.

As a new form of therapy, this study aims to develop a simple and effective therapy as the foundation. That's mean everyone can handle it easily to avoid negative effect due to failure. Also, its difficulty should be controllable, so that it is easier to control its outcome and assess its effectiveness. Thus, finger knitting, a form of knitting, will be employed for this purpose. Unlike traditional knitting, knitting needles are not required. To make a knitted cord, only hands and fingers are needed throughout the entire process. In addition, compared with traditional cut and sewn fashion design, less design skills are required. Nevertheless, people can still design and make their own style of knitwear and thus obtain a sense of achievement. Therefore, it is a relatively easy method and can be performed by various age groups.

Apart from above advantages, the reasons of its potential to be one of therapy are that (1) accomplishment of goal (making a knit product) may provide a sense of achievement and enhance self-worth as achievement attribution has affective effect that often let people feel happy, proud and relaxed (Forgas, Bower & Moylan, 1990; Arkin & Maruyama, 1979). (2) When people concentrate on making their knitted products, it may help to disperse their negative thought and stabilize their emotion. (3) Through finger knitting, it may address the significance of promoting active lifestyle and productivity (end products of finger knitting) by engaging people in enjoyable recreational and functional activities in which could lead to positive personal health gains. (4) Finger knitting, as a kind of fashion design, can be utilized as a medium to express thoughts and emotions so that people can express their unspeakable thoughts and feelings. Hence, they can release their stress and upset feelings.

Limited attempts are done to record or study finger knitting systemically. Hence, this research will review finger knitting and study its potential on developing into a kind of therapies.

1.2 Objectives of Study

This study aims to develop an innovative knitting-facilitated therapy, which is finger knitting, to alleviate the negative mood and stressful feeling of people.

The specific objectives of this study can be summarized as follows:

1. To develop and systematize finger knitting in therapeutic context in order to advocate it on both theoretical and practical aspects;
2. To investigate its outcomes and effectiveness by exploring participants' insights and experience in the trial, as well as analyzing the change of their mood and self-esteem before and after the trial;
3. To understand and establish the relationship between mood, self-esteem and the designed intervention (finger knitting) in order to facilitate further examination of the latest fashion-facilitated therapy; and

4. To examine the potential of finger knitting as a free creative medium or self-expression and self-understanding in which further foster personal growth.

1.3 Significance and Values

This study serves as a pilot study associating fashion design and knitting with therapy. Recently, psychotherapies become more popular and are adopted by many people to improve their mental health. In scholarly circles, the major fashion therapy and relevant study is retail therapy which has significant drawback. This study, as a pilot study, aims at developing an innovative fashion-facilitated therapy for people who suffered from negative mood and stressful life. This research also helps to arouse public awareness towards mental health in Hong Kong. As a result, more attention should be paid and related works maybe done to help in the future.

In addition, other psychotherapies, like art therapy, its effectiveness is still in doubt. With the successful completion of this study, it provides an alternative to current psychotherapies and enables better understanding of the outcomes and effectiveness of this newly developed fashion therapy. It is particularly helpful to design and systematize the method of fashion-facilitated therapy for better and sustainable applications on alleviate pressure and improve emotional feeling.

What is more, investigation of the relationship between mood, self-esteem and fashion therapy contributes to the development of mood intervention significantly. It also provides a theoretical and practical foundation of fashion therapy. Hence, it promotes further examination of fashion-facilitated therapy and mood moderation, as well as conduces to the improvement of quality of life.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The chapter reviews both popular and peer-reviewed literature on knitting, finger knitting, mood, self-esteem and therapy. Thus, it is mainly divided into four parts: (1) the background and benefits of knitting and finger knitting; (2) the background and current issues of mental health and self-esteem; (3) the potential relationship between finger knitting, mood and self-esteem; and (4) current art therapy as the foundation of developing “knitting therapy”.

Usually, literature review focuses on peer-reviewed literature that investigations and assumptions are supported by research evidence. Nevertheless, for knitting, especially finger knitting, there are limited peer reviews and only a few studies addressed its benefits. Hence, this research also focuses on the popular review and other non-peer reviewed literature on knitting. The information would be the basis of the hypotheses of this study.

Then, review on mood, mental health and self-esteem are addressed, including their relationship. Common mental health problems and current solutions are identified. Literature supports regarding the effectiveness and good being of therapy are

discussed. It focuses mainly on art therapy, as it is most relevant to “knitting therapy” developed in this study. These are then the foundation of the development of the “knitting therapy”.

2.2 Knitting and Finger Knitting

Knitting can be referred to the constitution of a continuous yarn into vertical columns of loops to fabricate textile structures and products (Spencer, 2001). The earliest knit product known could be traced back to the end of the first millennium AD. It was a “Coptic socks” found from Egypt (Theaker, 2006). For the hand pin knitting, it was first recorded by Italian painting in 1350 (Spencer, 2001). There are various types of knitting, includes flat knitting, circular knitting, arm knitting, finger knitting, needle felting and so on. Usually, for hand knitting, knit products are created by using knitting needles (also called knitting pins) or crochet hook. Regarding finger knitting, it utilizes hands and fingers instead of knitting needles to create knit products. There are very few records regarding finger knitting, especially for academic research. One of the latest records of finger knitting recorded in Guinness Book of World Records in 2004 is a 4,321-metre strand (Waikato Times, 2007).

Traditionally, knitting is associated with old-fashioned, elderly and femininity that not many young people are interested to engage in knitting activities. Nevertheless, knitting is undergoing revival and regains popularity. Thanks to the social network

like facebook and youtube, knitting techniques spread more quickly and become ubiquitous (Lewis, 2011). People can learn more easily and thus contributes to its growth. According to Craft Yarn Council of America (CYCA), there was a significant increase by 51% in knitting population from 1994 to 2004 (Gastonia, 2005). In UK, there were around 7.2 million knitters and growth rate is stable which is about 12% per year (The UK Hand Knitting Association, 2014). Also, a recent research shows that 87% of the knitting population has taught others how to knit and knitters were from different age groups, noticeably, nearly 20% of knitting population was people who were 18-34 years old (Gastonia, 2012). The term “knitting for beginners” and other terms related to knitting have been searched by 250% and 150% increases in a year (Lewis, 2011; The UK Hand Knitting Association, 2014). Thus, it is believed that more and more people, regardless of their age, participating in knitting activities at present. Moreover, there are campaigns regarding knitting activities, such as the “Stitch 'N Pitch Night” game held in 2005 that attracted more than 1600 people participated in it (Davila, 2005), the Knitted Textile Awards organized by UK Hand Knitting Association (The UK Hand Knitting Association, 2014) and various projects organized by Craft Yarn Council (CYC) (CYC, 2014). Hence, it is clear that knitting regains popularity.

Knitting is now far more than it was defined in the past. Since the promotion of green life and refusal of consumption culture, the trend of “Do-It-Yourself” and “Craft Revolution” rise rapidly (Joy, 2009). In the modern ages, this generation has a higher preference over hand-made products and seen knitting as a kind of artwork. For

instance, Sayeg make use of yarns with delightful colors and unique knitting techniques to perform some street art which cultivate a pleasant feeling to the unforgiving city (Derringer, 2013). Apart from the above, knitwear design has become an indispensable element in high fashion.

Also, knitting could be a phrase equal to art, design, political issues and social acts. For instance, Graffiti knitting (or yarn bombing), is an emerging term which refers to a new form of street art. Another famous example is “Knit the City” that aimed to take advantage of knitting and crochet with revolutionary, feminist and political objectives. Artists placed different knitted pieces in every corners of the city and told stories about stitches (Knit the City, 2015). Former research also suggested that knitting is closely related with feminist movement (Pentney, 2008; Minahan & Cox, 2007). Academic studies related to knitting often emphasize on feminist ideology instead of its possibility for psychological therapy.

2.2.1 Research, Benefits and Potential of Knitting Development

Doubtless that developing an interest or hobby is good in various aspects, including self-development, reducing stress, improving the quality of life and so on. The benefits of knitting can be found in different domains include physiology, psychology and social area.

With reference to both peer-reviewed literature and popular study, the advantages of knitting mainly include improvement of well-being, promoting of quality of life, reduction of stress and depression, diverting chronic pain, enhancement of self-esteem, facilitating social network and so forth.

Regarding the peer-reviewed literature, there was a first international conference on Therapeutic Knitting, “Knitting to Facilitate Change”, held in 2012. A range of specialties, includes academics, clinicians and patients, presented and shared a common view. That’s knitting has great benefits on human being (Stitchlinks CIC, 2012). Previous research showed that developing and participating in a hobby or leisure activity had great impact on quality of life, well-being and depression levels (Michalos, 2005; Dupuis & Smale, 1995; Silverstein & Parker, 2002; Riley, Corkhill & Morris, 2013; Blake, Mo, Malik & Thomas, 2009; Adam, De Linden, Juillerat & Salmon, 2000). Riley, Corkhill & Morris (2013)’s study also showed that knitting improved social connection and communication. In addition, Scarmeas, Levy, Tang, Manly & Stern (2001) and Valenzuela et al. (2012)’s study showed that knitting, as a kind of leisure activity, helped to reduce the chance of developing incident dementia.

Nevertheless, there were still limited peer-reviewed literatures regarding knitting. Previous research highlighted the benefits of leisure activities and knitting is only one of the examples (Michalos, 2005; Dupuis & Smale, 1995).

Specific study concerning the good sides of knitting was still very limited. Some papers focused just on case study or authors' experience of using knitting as a therapy method (Corkhill, 2012a; Corkhill, 2012b; Jones, 2012). These could not tell the casual relationship between knitting therapy and individual's improvement. Hence, further research regarding knitting and its benefits is needed.

Concerning the popular literature, there are numerous supports on the mass media and books stating the benefits of knitting. Knitting was even regarded as the new yoga that helped to claiming and relaxation (Abbott, 2009). Organizations had initiated projects and events that promote knitting and its benefits. For instance, CYC had launched a program called "Each One Teach Two" to encourage people to learn and teach others how to knit. This do not just enabled the promotion of benefits of knitting, but also improved social communication and facilitated friendly neighborhood (CYC, 2014). Also, these organizations had conducted surveys to find out the benefits of knitting. For example, TOFT's survey in 2014 pointed out that knitting helped reducing depression, anxiety and stress (The UK Hand Knitting Association, 2014). Articles also suggested the benefits and potential of knitting to be a kind of psychotherapy. For instance, an article from CNN suggested that knitting could alleviate depression and such creative activity could help protect against aging (Wilson, 2014). There were still lots of examples available. Although formal research is needed to prove the effectiveness of knitting, it is suggested

that knitting has great potential of being a kind of therapy and has gained public attention towards its benefits.

To be more specific of why finger knitting is chosen instead of other leisure activities, the following is going to explain the reasons.

In Corkhill (2012c)'s study, nature of movements of knitting was pointed out to be the reason why knitting should be used instead of other activities. The movements of knitting involved four parts; they were bilateral, rhythmic, repetitive and automatic movements. These can be reflected on finger knitting even more prominently.

For the bilateral and rhythmic movements, these kinds of movements helped to promote a meditative-like state that cross over the midline of body and normalizing spatial awareness (Corkhill, 2012c). Research showed that these had important influence on localizing one's tactile stimuli and reducing pain experience (Gallace, Torta, Moseley & Lannetti, 2011). These movements also helped to improve the motor function of patients with upper extremity hemiparesis (Whitall, Waller, Silver & Macko, 2000) and had an impact on controlling aging and Parkinson's diseases (Plotnik, Giladi & Hausdorff, 2007; Luft et al., 2004). The movements of finger knitting definitely involve bilateral and rhythmic movements. People need to utilize their fingers and arms for knitting. It thus helps to improve hand functions and muscle strength

and gain the benefits of having a meditative-like state. Also, knitters can control their rhythm of knitting and this rhythm had calming effect since it helps to mediate the beat of heart rate (Turney, 2009).

Finger knitting also involved repetitive and automatic movement. This kind of movements activated the release of serotonin in animals and serotonin had great impacts on pain, feeding, memory, mood and so forth (Jacobs & Fornal, 1997; Jacobs & Fornal, 1999; Jacobs, Martín-Cora & Fornal; 2002). Serotonin Uptake Inhibitors had even used for mood, anxiety disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder and so on (Misri & Kendrick, 2007; Kumar & Khanna, 2000). Serotonin is clearly a claiming and mood enhancer. Hence, repetitive movements may help in this function. Furthermore, automatic movements could encourage movements and pain experience would not be triggered (Corkhill, 2012c). It was especially helpful to those who suffered from dementia. They can memorize the knitting methods by repeated and automatic actions. People could also benefit from these motions as they could chat with others, watching TV or having meditative-like state while their hands were performing finger knitting.

In addition, Riley, Corkhill & Morris (2013)'s study suggested that 81.5% of respondents felt happier after knitting. Knitting also offered stimulation of visual and tactile sensation and texture even had more impact on mood (Riley, Corkhill & Morris, 2013; Corkhill, 2012c). Previous research suggested that

there were great relationship between colour and emotion (Ou, Luo, Woodcock & Wright, 2004; Simmons, 2011; Ou, Luo, Sun, Hu, & Chen, 2012). It was also proposed by previous studies that texture might even affect colour emotion (Lucassen, Gevers & Gijsenij, 2011; Riley, Corkhill & Morris, 2013). The yarns suit for finger knitting contains many colours and textures. Direct touch during knitting might enable people feel better via touching stimulation. In particular, yarns are usually soft and warmth that might promote happiness and affability (Alleyne, 2010). People became more attentive to touch stimuli when they had negative mood and they would then look for soft and pleasant textures that made them feel comfort (King & Janiszewski, 2011; University of Chicago Press Journals, 2011). Moreover, previous research found that appropriate touching brought positive therapeutic effect on people (Willison & Masson, 1986). Teaching and learning finger knitting may lead to acceptable touch between people and thus this might create warm, comfort and therapeutic impact.

What is more, the structural yet creative nature of knitting enabled people to develop from simple and basic techniques to sophisticated and creative skills (Corkhill, 2012c; Turney, 2009). Unlike other arts and crafts, knitting could be performed without high artistic ability. That's mean it could be done by everyone, regardless of one's age, sex, education and so on (Turney, 2009). It was also an activity that could across the lifespan (Turney, 2009; Riley, Corkhill & Morris, 2013). People could learn it gradually and explore new

methods of knitting. Nevertheless, it could still offer flexibility. People with fundamental skills of knitting could design and develop their own and unique products. These could provide a sense of achievement pleasantly (Tzanidaki & Reynolds, 2011). Knitting also required planning and preparation. People have to think of what they are going to do and how they are going to do first before the making of knit products. This helped to improve people's ability of management and enabled personal growth. In addition, since knitting could also involve creation, it provided an opportunity for self-expression (Blanche, 2007; Perruzza & Kinsella, 2010). Knitting, as a kind of fashion design, could be utilized as a medium or expressing thoughts and emotions. Hence, people could express their unspeakable thoughts and feelings.

Furthermore, knitting encouraged the social involvement and improved social confidence of people (Corkhill, 2012c; Minahan & Cox, 2007). It provided a chance for social connection. It is generally believed that common interests may build a sense of cohesion and sense of belonging that bring people with different background together. Some people who engaged in knitting activities might get together and form groups and these groups sometimes took part in social movements. For instance, "Knit for Peace" was an activity that gathered a group of knitters to knit for world peace (Visby, 2006). Stitch'n Bitch groups were also another examples of people gathered to knit and discuss knitting projects (Minahan & Cox, 2007). Additionally, knitting promoted the sense of ease during conversation since it allowed chatting and enabled eye

contact without contributed to the sense of hostile (Corkhill, 2012c). It was also acceptable to be quiet within the knitting group. These thus enhanced the social confidence, especially for those who were afraid of being in group situation or get along with others.

To sum up the advantages and potential therapeutic effect of knitting, Maslow's Hierarchy of needs model was utilized to demonstrate its benefits (Cole, 1998; Main, 2012). The benefits of knitting could reach all five levels of needs, ranging from physiological needs to self-actualization. It could provide warmth and comfort feeling to people. People could also benefit from its therapeutic effects, such as the improvement of muscle strength and hand functions. Knitting, either individually or by group, enabled a safe learning and teaching environment. Its nature of movements had calming effect that helped to stabilize emotion and reduce stress. Moreover, it provided opportunities for social connection and communication that promote the sense of belongings. Acceptance and respect would be gained from knitting group. Learning a skill and making a product facilitate the building up of the sense of achievement and self-esteem. Sharing and teaching others even enabled people to achieve self-fulfillment and spread the positive feeling that influence others affirmatively. Through creative works, people could also enhance self-awareness and foster personal growth. Hence, knitting has lots of advantages that have great potential of development in various aspects, especially psychotherapeutic domain.

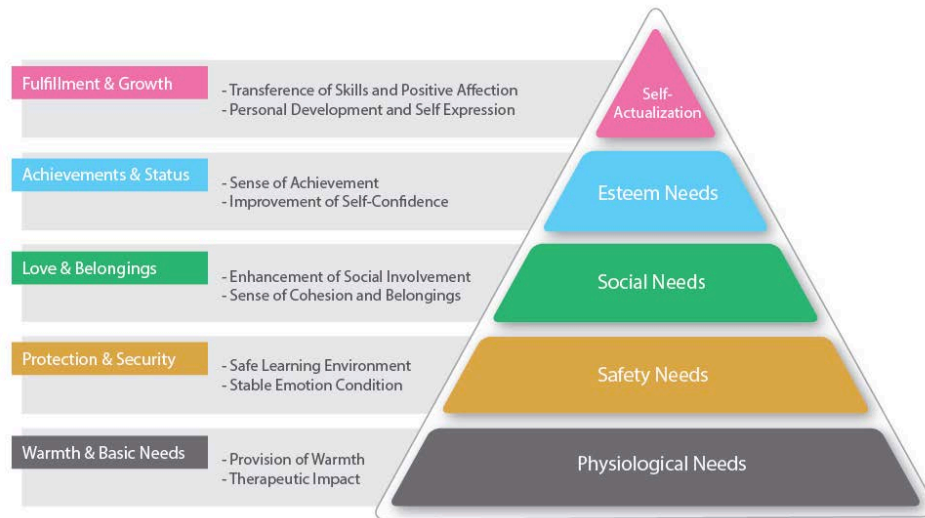


Figure 2.1. Benefits of knitting demonstrated by Maslow's Hierarchy of needs model

2.3 Mental Health and Self-Esteem

According to WHO, approximately 4.5 million people experienced mental health problems (World Health Organization, 2010) and around 90% of population who committed suicide suffered from mental disorders (World Health Organization, 2013). It was clear that mental health issues were common yet serious problems that should be confronted by everyone. Hence, the following parts discuss the causes and current treatments of mental health problems.

For the self-esteem, it is not hard to understand that having healthy self-esteem is important and beneficial to people's lives in various areas, such as enhancement of performance, maintenance of positive attitudes and being nature in social connection. Therefore, it is not unnatural that people try hard to strive for it and utilize different methods to boost their self-esteem. However, there are limit academic proof or support that those methods are effective. Thus, the following parts also discuss about the issues regarding self-esteem.

2.3.1 Mental Health Problems – Causes and Current Treatments

According to WHO, health could be referred to a state of both physical and mental wellness (World Health Organization, 2010). That means not only diseases causes health problems, but mental disorder might also lead to health concerns. There was no universal accepted definition of mental disorder. It was usually regarded as a general term that related to psychopathy and the symptom of mental illnesses, it might not be necessarily as serious as having psychopathy. The American Psychiatric Association (APA, 2013) defines mental disorder as “a syndrome characterized by clinically significant disturbance in an individual's cognition, emotion regulation, or behavior that reflects a dysfunction in the psychological, biological, or developmental processes underlying mental functioning” (p. 20). It is highly related to significant distress or disability.

The causes of mental health problems are associated with biological or psychological factors. The neurobiological explanation about the reasons of mental illness is related to human's neurotransmission process. Normally, neurotransmitters are released by the presynaptic neuron and then bind to postsynaptic receptor. Next, they are either reuptake, enzymatic degraded or metabolized (Videbeck, 2011). Nevertheless, excess transmission or responsiveness of receptors will cause mental disorders. Neurotransmitters, such as dopamine, serotonin and norepinephrine, are most likely related to mental illnesses. For instance, dopamine affects movements, cognition, and emotional response and so on. If there is insufficient dopamine, it may cause Parkinson's disease; however if there is excess dopamine, it may lead to serious mental illnesses, like schizophrenia (Videbeck, 2011).

For the psychological factors, it is usually related to individual, interpersonal and social/cultural elements. For example, people are having unrealistic worries, not able to differentiate their fantasy and reality, loss the meaning of life, facing poverty, homeless, violence and so forth (Videbeck, 2011). Sometimes, mental health problems are developed mainly by accumulating stress or upset feeling. Hence, the crucial strategy to treat mental health problems related to psychological factors is to treat it as early as possible.

People used many different methods to cope with their stress or negative mood. As mentioned in chapter one, people usually do exercises or talk with

others to release their stressful feeling (Hong Kong Department of Health, 2011). However, the effectiveness of those methods was uncertain and difficult to assess. Some people engaged in unhealthy behaviors, such as smoking, drinking, unnecessary diet etc and thus resulted in vicious cycle. Besides, some people even found that there was no method for them to reduce pressure. One of the common means of coping with mental health problems is seeking medical advice. However, people who suffered from mental health illness were reluctant to seek for medical advice or other help. Many people even did not want to talk about their mental health problems. What make the problem more serious was that the supports available were limited. According to Hong Kong Hospital Authority (2013), the outpatient attendance of psychiatric department had increased significantly to more than 220,000 outpatient attendances were recorded in year 2011-12 and was increased by 80% compared with the figure in 5 years ago. Nonetheless, the inevitable results of the insufficient mental health outpatient facilities was that the waiting time had grown and the rate of mental health outpatient facilities was only 0.25 per 100,000 populations in Hong Kong (World Health Organization, 2011) and average consulting time was only 10 minutes per each outpatient service. Even for the non-government organization, the average waiting time of community-based residential rehabilitation facilities can be 4-8 months (Chiu & Lam, 2008). Therefore, it is obvious that an effective method that can be easily accessed by people should be developed to tackle with this situation.

In the light of raising awareness and limited medical supports towards mental health, more and more people tried to reduce mental health problems or alleviate tense life by various psychotherapies, such as art therapy, chess therapy, dance therapy, horticulture therapy and so on. For instance, art therapy, as one of the psychotherapy, enabled people to create artworks that acted as a communication tool to express their feeling and thought. Therapist could thus interpret them. Nevertheless, their effectiveness was still not well known and research regarding those psychotherapies was limited. Similar case can be found in other psychotherapies. Related review is done on session 2.5.

2.3.2 Self-Esteem and Its Importance

It is commonly found that there are books provide recommendations to enhance self-confidence, courses helping people to raise their self-esteem and research studying topics regarding self-esteem (Crocker & Park, 2004). It was generally believed that having high self-esteem brought numerous benefits and previous research also demonstrated that people having high self-esteem were having more positive views of themselves (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger & Vohs, 2003). For example, people with high self-esteem thought that they were more smart and attractive (Baumeister et al., 2003) and believed that they were superior to other people (Campbell, 1986). Nevertheless, there were beliefs that having high self-esteem might not

necessarily bring benefits (Crocker & Park, 2004; Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger & Vohs, 2003). Crocker & Park (2004)'s study suggested that pursuing self-esteem brought benefits rather than just having high self-esteem brought benefits and there were also cost of pursuing self-esteem. People should balance the cost and benefits and should pursuing healthy self-esteem.

Self-esteem composed of various domains. For example, Heatherton & Polivy (1991)'s study included performance, appearance and social self-esteem and Bolognini, Plancherel, Bettchart & Halfon (1996)'s research employed family and peer self-esteem. Hence, when considering the methods of boosting self-esteem, the areas should be also determined.

2.4 Mood, Self-Esteem and Finger Knitting – Potential Relationship

Previous research suggested that self-esteem was highly related to various emotional states, such as happiness (Baumeister et al., 2003), anxiety (Pyszczynski, Greenberg, Solomon, Arndt & Schimel, 2004), hostility (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998) and so on. As mentioned by Brown & Marshall (2001), self-esteem was more related to self-relevant emotions than other emotional states. Those self-relevant emotions usually utilized self as a reference (Brown & Weiner, 1984; Brown & Marshall, 2001). For instance, a student get excellent result in his/her examination might feel pride and happy. The pride feeling but not happiness might contribute to enhancement of self-

esteem since self-esteem was usually related to motivation or goals (Brown & Marshall, 2001). Nevertheless, enhancement of self-esteem might arouse happiness as people might feel self-worth when being successful in the pursuing of their goals. Thus, it was clear that self-esteem was related to mood and proper and successful pursuit of self-esteem might contribute to improvement of mood.

It is generally believed that “people simply feel better about themselves when they’re good at something” (Covey, n.d.). Also as mentioned, self-esteem was usually related to motivation or goals (Brown & Marshall, 2001), accomplishment of a goal might provide a sense of achievement and improve the sense of self-worth. Being successful in something or ability to manage skills might cause people to value themselves positively. That is what learning a new yet easily manageable skill, like finger knitting, might bring. In addition, avoiding failure is another method to enhance self-esteem and minimize the chance of negative effect on self-esteem (Brown & Marshall, 2001). Finger knitting is such a relatively easy skill that everyone can grasp it without great difficulty. Moreover, achievement had affective influence on people’s mood that it might make people feel happy, proud and relaxed (Forgas et al., 1990). Self-worth also could be enhanced by gift-giving activities (Corkhill, 2012c). Knit products usually utilized as a present and employed for charity purposes that might enhance people’s self-esteem. The social interaction and communication within the finger knitting group might facilitate social self-esteem since social hostility might be minimized while the sense of cohesion and sense of belonging might be maximized

as mentioned before. Hence, finger knitting has great potential in boosting both performance and social self-esteem.

For the mood enhancement, as mentioned in session 2.2.3, the nature of knitting might have significant impacts on mood as it enabled a meditative-like state and visual and tactile sensation. It is not hard to understand that finger knitting might have potential influence on mood so that study is needed.

2.5 Current Psychotherapy – Foundation of Knitting Therapy

As mentioned before, various psychotherapies were utilized to achieve mental health recently. Notwithstanding their increasing popularity, research regarding their effectiveness was still limited. For instance, though there was increasing support that participating in creative works, like visual and performing arts, could help to improve well-being and health, limited studies were found regarding domestic arts and crafts, like knitting (Staricoff, 2004; Riley, Corkhill & Morris, 2013). Nevertheless, those psychotherapies could act as reference for developing the finger knitting therapy. Hence, the following part is going to review current fashion related psychotherapy and art therapy as the basis of finger knitting therapy.

2.5.1. Fashion Related Psychotherapies

Regarding using ‘fashion’ as kinds of psychotherapy, retail therapy was the most common one that can be found. It was first suggested by Schmich in 1986. For the retail therapy, it refers to alleviate negative feeling by shopping and purchase of self-treat (Atalay & Meloy, 2011). In order to escape from stressful feeling, people would focus on short-term goals and satisfaction. Thus, people would spend less energy on self-regulation but engaged in impulsive behavior (Tice, Bratslavsky & Baumeister, 2001). Although previous study suggested that retail therapy had a positive influence on sentiment (Atalay & Meloy, 2011), as distress may impair one’s ability of self-control, it might lead to unplanned purchase. For example, 33% consumers in European Union had “high level of addiction to rash or unnecessary consumption” (Summerskill, 2001). Also, spending lots of money may let people feel worse and resulted in debt. Besides, serious impulsive purchase might even cause another psychological problem, namely oniomania or impulse control disorder. Hence, it might not a good method to alter negative mood.

Apart from retail therapy, ‘fashion’ still has great potential to be developed as a kind of psychotherapy. Similar to art therapy, through practices of ‘fashion’, pressure may be alleviated. Those practices can be fashion design, garment making, styling and so on. Nevertheless, there is limited work or research

regarding these kinds of 'fashion therapy'. Therefore, development and research on it is needed. This study then aims to develop a new type of fashion therapy in order to help alleviate negative emotion and pressure.

2.5.2. Art Therapy

Art therapy refers to a human service profession that acts as catalysts to facilitate constructive development and promote positive thoughts via art making or other creative processes (Deaver, 2002; Rubin, 1999; Rubin, 2001). That means the practice of art therapy includes the use of knowledge of various aspects, such as emotional, social, and behavioral aspects, to foster personal growth and enable self-discovery (Reynolds, Nabors & Quinlan, 2000). Through the creation of arts, it reflects people's will to response to their problems and mood. As suggested by Pablo Picasso (Gilot, Lake & Carse, 1964):

“... Men had made those masks and other objects for a sacred purpose, a magic purpose, as a kind of mediation between themselves and the unknown hostile forces that surround them, in order to overcome their fear and horror by giving it a form and an image... it's a form of magic designed as a mediator between this strange, hostile world and us, a

way of seizing the power by giving form to our terrors as well as our desires...” (p.242)

It showed that art making provided opportunity for self-expression, especially for non-verbal and unconscious expression in which turning unexpressed feeling into image or comprehensible forms (Wadeson, 2010). Pablo Picasso also said in 1923, “Art is a lie that makes us realize the truth, at least the truth that is given us to understand” (Picasso, 1972, p.3). This was highly related to the creation of meaning. Although in most of the time, not everyone were having great capability to make fantastic art pieces, people could still create something that reflecting upon them (Wadeson, 2010; Barron, 1968). Art therapy is such a creative medium for self-expression and self-understanding.

There were mainly two levels of art therapy. The first one was a psychoanalytic level that art-making convey unconscious things to forms and therapeutic process was interpreting the unconscious things and dealing with the symbolic meaning of images (Malchiodi, 1998; Jung, 1964). The second level of art therapy was that the creative process was also a therapeutic process that could bring information regarding inner world, physiology and somatic states to light (Furth & Kubler-Ross, 2002; Wadeson, 2010; Borgmann, 2002). It could also be utilized as the tool to alleviate stress or anxiety and improve negative moods (Levy, 1995; Kramer, 2000). There were no standards or judgment of the artworks (Puig, Lee, Goodwin & Sherrard,

2006). Pleasant feeling was thus gained during the art creation process (Kramer, 2000).

For the application of art therapy, it has become more common in western countries. This could be exemplified by the found of the American Art therapy Association and the establishment of the American Journal of Art Therapy (Wadeson, 2010). Indeed, art therapy is an umbrella term that many types of art expression methods and various settings could be utilized (Wadeson, 2010). That means any type of visual arts, such as painting and photography, can be utilized as the medium for therapy. The setting and art media should be sensitive to people's needs and interests. It was usually determined by the goals of the art therapy (Wadeson, 2010). For instance, some art media, like clay, were more difficult to control. It might not be good for people who have technical problem when making it; nevertheless, it allowed body expression and brought up unconscious thing (Sholt & Gavron, 2006). Notwithstanding the popularity of art therapy, its effectiveness was still not well known. Reynolds, Nabors & Quinlan (2000)'s research suggested that art therapy might help for controlled trial without random assignment. Nonetheless, there may not have significant difference between art therapy and other therapies in the clinical trial with random assignment. In addition, Slayton, D'Archer & Kaplan (2010)'s study pointed out that there were still limited quantifiable data to provide support to the effectiveness of art therapy.

For this study, finger knitting is chosen as the medium. Its nature is similar to an art medium that enables free creation and self-expression. Nevertheless, it has much more benefits as mentioned. Hence, the setting of study refers to the setting of art therapy.

2.6 Development and Techniques of Finger Knitting

As mentioned before, mental health is essential to everyone. Despite of numerous ways to cope with high stress, the effectiveness of those methods was uncertain and difficult to assess. Therefore, this study suggests a new method to improve mental health and alleviate pressure of insufficient public facilities for mental health of the society.

2.6.1 Development of Finger Knitting as a Therapy

As a new form of therapy, a simple and effective therapy is the fundamental requirement. Everyone should be able to handle it easily to avoid negative effect due to failure or difficulties in learning. Also, its difficulty should be controllable, so that it is easier to control its effect and assess its effectiveness. Thus, finger knitting is employed for this purpose. Different from traditional knitting methods, knitting needles or crochet hook are not required for finger

knitting. For making a knitted cord, only hands and fingers are needed throughout the entire process. In addition, finger knitting is structural yet creative in nature. Compared with traditional cut and sewn fashion design, less design skills are required. Nevertheless, people can still design and make their own style of knitwear and thus have a sense of achievement pleasantly. Therefore, it is a relative easy method and can be performed by various age groups.

The benefits of finger knitting could be referred to session 2.2.3. Finger knitting shares all the benefits that knitting brought to participants and has even more advantages over it. Accomplishment of goal (making a knit product) provided a sense of achievement and enhanced self-worth as achievement attribution had affective effect that often let people feel happy, proud and relaxed (Forgas et al., 1990; Arkin & Maruyama, 1979). Finger knitting also can promote active lifestyle and productivity (end products of finger knitting) that resulted in positive personal health gains. Knitting products usually used as a gift to others. This kind of gift giving activities could enhance people's sense of self-worth, especially if they were knit for charity purpose (Corkhill, 2012c). Numerous good sides of finger knitting could be found and thus it has great potential to develop as a kind of psychotherapy.

2.6.2 Basic Techniques of Finger Knitting

Similar to traditional knitting, finger knitting involves three major steps; they are setting up, knitting and binding off. Yarns are used to wrap around the fingers to form loop, course and thus patterns. Finger knitting also like knitting that has various patterns and knitting methods. There were limited systematic research on the finger knitting skills and patterns. The most commonly found record regarding finger knitting was the simple jersey from Internet, mainly YouTube. Nevertheless, the methods vary. Hence, before developing the finger knitting therapy, the techniques should be unified in the planned workshops.

Before introducing the finger knitting methods, yarn selection is crucial for knitting as it is the bridge stone of knit products' construction. Choosing the inappropriate yarn may seriously affect designer's idea and make the ideal product being impossible to be fabricated. However, it is impractical to mention all yarn types and properties here. Hence, some suggested yarn characteristics are shared below.

One of the important criteria of selection of yarn is the fineness. As fingers are thicker than both hand knitting needles and machine needles, it affects the gauge seriously and increases difficulties for knitters if finer yarns are chosen. For the strength and extendibility, more flexible and high tensile strength

yarns, such as wool and nylon, is suggested to enable knitters to pull over the loop the yarns by fingers. For the twist, as knitting may causes untwist of the yarns, lower twist level yarns are suggested to minimize its negative impact. For example, some yarns available on the market, like slub, loop yarn and spiral yarn, are shown in figure 2.2. Most of them are suitable for finger knitting as they are thick in size with low twist and soft handle.



Figure 2.2 Samples of current market available yarns



Figure 2.3 Samples with various yarn design methods

Apart from this, fancy yarn is favorable for finger knitting as it delighted knitting. Yarns design is also recommended to be included in knitting process in order to create unique textures and appearances. This type of creation procedures enable participants to express their feeling and be pleased with the yarns since they are then not bound to choose from yarns available on the market.

For the knitting methods, finger knitting enables almost all different stitches and knitting patterns, such as jersey, cable, jacquard, float stitch, tuck stitch, missing stitch and so on.



Figure 2.4 Samples made by finger knitting

Below take single jersey as an example to demonstrate the procedures of finger knitting and this is the essential technique that participants must grasp it:

Step 1: Put the long end of the yarn on top of the short end of the yarn

Step 2: Pull the long end from the inside of the loop

Step 3: Pick the on the new loop formed and take it off the index finger

Step 4: Pull the long end from the inside of the loop

Step 5: Turn around both ends to leave it at the back of the hand

Step 6: Use the long end to wrap around the middle, ring finger and the pinky

Step 7: Repeat step 6 in reverse order, wrap around from pinky, ring, middle
and index finger to form a new row of loops

Step 8: Pull the loops at the bottom over all four fingers

Step 9: Repeat wrapping as step 7 shows and repeat step 8 continuously to
knit for an appropriate length

Step 10: Start from the ring finger, take it off and place it at the top of the
pinky

Step 11: Pull the old loop on the pinky over

Step 12: Take the loop on the pinky off and place it on the ring finger

Step 13: Take the loop on the middle finger off and place it at the top of the
ring finger

Step 14: Pull the old loop on the ring finger over

Step 15: Take the loop on the ring finger off and place it at the top of the
middle finger

Step 16: Take the loop on the index finger off and place it at the top of the middle finger

Step 17: Pull the old loop on the middle finger over

Step 18: Take the loop off then pull the tail from the outside of the loop

Step 19: Tighten the knot and cut the unnecessary part off



Figure 2.5 Single jersey by finger knitting

Step 1-6 refers to the casting on process while step 7-9 shows the knitting process of single jersey and step 10-19 shows the binding off method. Although there are many ways of casting on and binding off, this standard and straight-forwarded method will be used as the basic technique shared at the beginning of the workshop to reduce difficulty. Certainly, other knitting

methods, patterns and stitches can be employed to best fit the participants' need.

2.6.3 The Methodology of Finger Knitting Therapy

Finger knitting in this study was developed and organized as a therapy that involves both structured and creative processes that enabled self-expression, self-understanding and social growth. It hoped that it could help to improve mood and enhance self- esteem.

The design of the finger knitting workshop was inspired by art therapy. It is a bit challenging at the beginning when learning a new skill; however, it is achievable and interesting. The complexity would be adjusted according to participants' progress and background. For example, if the group of participants were all elderly and did not have any experience on knitting, simple jersey finger knitting would be instructed first and more complicated patterns and stitches would be used when they grasped the skill. Hence, they could learn finger knitting gradually and enjoy the progress pleasantly. The duration of the workshop would be around 1 to 2 hours each session to minimize upper limb hand fatigue. Close supervision and assistance must be provided during the workshop. During the workshop, conversation and interaction should be encouraged. Sharing and mutual appreciation should

also be promoted to build up a supportive and friendly environment. Continuous finger knitting after workshop would be encouraged to extend the potential help.

2.6.4 Pre-Study Work Done

Prior to this study, a collaboration finger knitting project with The Hong Kong Association of University Women had done. It aimed to utilize finger knitting and upper limb exercise to improve elderly's hand function and muscle strength. 12 elderly completed the whole training that there were 6 sessions and each session lasted for 1.5 hours. Apart from the upper limb training, elderly learned finger knitting to make a simple jersey scarf. In that study, depression level of the elderly was also measured. Also, there were chatting with the elderly as unstructured interviews and observation to gather their opinions. The pretest and posttest results showed a positive improvement of hand functions. Elderly were all satisfied with the program and happy with their final knit products. They interacted with other elderly well. Sharing and mutual support were found during the program. Hence, due to the preliminary success of this program and the positive feedbacks from the participated elderly, further investigation was encouraged to be done.



Figure 2.6 Activity photos during the collaboration project

2.7 Basis of hypotheses

The major objective of this study is developing finger knitting as a therapy that helps to improve mood, reduce stress and enhance self-esteem. Therefore, the main hypotheses are that finger knitting has positive impact on mood and it has significant influence on self-esteem. The following are the sub-hypotheses and testing methods based on the main hypotheses:

First of all, it is hypothesized that people who engaged in finger knitting consider this activity is helpful with their mood and self-esteem. Participants may be asked in informal interview during and after the workshop regarding their views on finger knitting. These helps to understand their opinions on finger knitting, especially whether changes take place before and after the workshop. Those changes not just include mood and self-esteem, but also some other changes, like habits.

Apart from the subjective views of the participants, their depression, anxiety and stress level would be tested while their state self-esteem would be measured objectively by published and commonly used scale. This also tested whether finger knitting could provide both positive effects subjectively and objectively. Nevertheless, this study would focus on the subjective tests more than objective testes at this stage as this newly developed therapy is still exploring, more comments and modification is needed. Therefore, participants' opinions are more important and taken for improvements.

What is more, the relationship between mood, self-esteem and finger knitting would also be tested to understand their interaction and impacts. It is suggested that self-esteem may affect mood while finger knitting would affect both of them.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Thanks to pursuing of high efficiency living and working style in Hong Kong, stabilize emotion, reduce stress and improve quality of life tends to be a prolonged and complicated process. Findings from literatures and emergence of various psychotherapies recognized the use of art or other medias in to alleviate the negative mood and stressful feeling of people. Nevertheless, apart from retail therapy, applying fashion-facilitated therapy is not been developed and studied systematically. In this chapter, the research methodology adopted in this study to examine the development of finger knitting as a type of fashion therapy (or called knitting therapy) is discussed. This study consists of three stages, includes (1) a pilot test that focus on immediate impact of finger knitting on self-esteem to explore the potential of finger Knitting as a therapy preliminarily; (2) development of a systematic method of sharing finger knitting associated with therapy and two pilot tests to explore its potential on alleviating stress or negative mood and facilitating personal growth, and understand participants' insights towards this designed intervention; and (3) another pilot tests to further assess its outcomes and effectiveness as a creative medium for self-expression and self-understanding. These help to examine the relationship between mood, self-esteem and the designed intervention.

3.1 Identification of the Immediate Impact of Finger Knitting

In this stage, a pilot test that mainly aims to explore finger knitting's potential to improve self-esteem immediately was carried out. It is important to have a preliminary knowledge of whether finger knitting has effect on people's self-esteem before develop it into therapeutic usage.

3.1.1 Research Design

The test was a single-subject pre/posttest designed one. That's state self-esteem level was measured at two points, includes at the beginning of the test and at the end of the whole test.

Recruitment of participants was conducted through word of mouth and posters. Around 20 people were employed to be the participants. Demographics data includes sex and age was recorded prior to the test. Participants entered a lecture room in groups of 5. After completing the consent, participants had to fill the State Self-Esteem Scale (ab. SSES) developed by Heatherton & Polivy (1991)¹. After then, participants were randomly assigned into 2 conditions. One was having finger-knitting exercise (tested group) and one was having a rest (controlled group). For the tested group, participants were taught simple jersey

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finger knitting for 30 minutes; while for the controlled group, they could have their own resting time, but talking and other active activities were discouraged. Finally, all participants were asked to finish the same assessment form again.

According to Heatherton & Polivy (1991)'s study, state self-esteem could be divided into three areas; they were performance, appearance and social. As mentioned before, finger knitting was suggested to have influence on one's self-esteem due to their success or goal-achieving (performance) and improvement in social context (social). Nevertheless, finger knitting was less related to attractiveness of looking (appearance). It was thus hypothesized that finger knitting had influence on state self-esteem of performance and social but not appearance.

3.1.2 Data Analysis

The levels of anxiety and stress of various points were compared by their means, standard deviations (SD), as well as 95% confidence interval (CI). Then a t-test was done to examine the effects of finger knitting exercise on depression, anxiety and stress levels. All the data was analyzed by using SPSS software. A significant level of 0.05 was set for all statistical tests.

3.2 Investigation of the Potential of Finger Knitting on Altering Mood and Self-esteem and Their Relationship

After exploring the immediate impact of finger knitting and reviewing finger knitting and psychotherapies, a systematic method will be developed. It includes the classification of finger knitting according to its difficulties, ways of teaching finger knitting to let participants feel more comfortable, and more importantly, how to alter negative mood through the practice.

Then, pilot tests were conducted. It aims to find out (1) the potential of finger knitting to alleviate negative mood, (2) its effect on state self-esteem, mainly on performance and social aspects, which are related to achievement and; (3) the relationship between self-esteem, mood repair and the designed intervention (finger knitting).

Therefore, apart from the main hypothesis that finger knitting has the potential to be developed as a therapy for improving mood and enhancing self-esteem, it was hypothesized that finger knitting has positive impact on mood. In addition, self-esteem may affect mood while finger knitting would affect both of them.

There were totally two pilot tests carried out, one was for undergraduates and one was for elderly. These two targeted groups were selected since they faced different kinds of stress or life problems in order to understand the concrete effect of finger knitting therapy and thus reduce the bias that may cause during the study. Moreover,

according to Robins, Trzesniewski, Tracy, Gosling & Potter (2002)'s study, youth and older people had relatively lower self-esteem than child and adults. Therefore, this study focuses on youth and elderly to help with their self-esteem.

3.2.1 Research Design

Both of them were a 4-week experimental study aiming to explore the potential of finger knitting to alleviate negative mood continuously. Also, it aims to explore the potential of finger knitting to create a sense of achievement that helps participants to enhance self-confidence and become positive.

In the first test, undergraduates were employed as the targeted participants since they were usually suffered from high academic pressure while they were more easily affected by sense of achievement. Also, as mentioned before, this age range had a significant ratio and an increasing participating rate of knitting population (Gastonia, 2012; CYC, 2014). 12 undergraduates aged from 18 to 25 were invited to participate in this test.

The assessment of stress and depression level and self-evaluation was measured twice by using the assessment form, including the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (ab. DASS) developed by Antony, Bieling, Cox, Enns & Swinson (1998) and the SSES used in previous pilot test. One was before the

finger exercise program and one was after. Participants also had to finish a satisfaction survey after the program (for the survey, please refer to Appendix I & II). There was a finger exercise training once a week and totally 4 training. Each session lasted for 60 minutes. Participants were encouraged to practice 2 more times a week at home. It was hoped that participants could accomplish a designated product after 4 weeks. Observation and informal interview was undertaken during the program to understand their background, their stress and insights regarding this program during those 4 weeks.

In the second test, elderly were the targets since there is an increasing ageing population over the world in which is a worldwide concern at present. Successful ageing is not just about the physical health, but also the quality of life and active engagement with life (Rowe & Kahn, 1997; Baltes & Carstensen, 1996). Hence, this study also investigated the effectiveness of the designed intervention on this specific group.

This pilot test was cooperated with Wong Cho Tong Day Care Centre for the Elderly, Tung Wah Group of Hospitals and took place there. 21 elderly aged from 74 to 90 were invited to participate in this study. There was a finger knitting exercise training once a week and totally 4 training. Each training lasts for 60 minutes. Participants were encouraged to practice 1 to 2 more times a week. It was hoped that participants could accomplish a designated product after 4 weeks. Observation and informal interview was undertaken during the

program to understand their background, their feeling and insights. A simplified and special design questionnaire was used to record their comments objectively (see Appendix III for the questionnaire). The questions could be classified into six aspects, including workshop setting, perception regarding finger knitting, mood improvement, stress reduction, communication and self-feeling. Each aspect contained at least two questions. The reliability level of this survey is 0.973.

Different from stage 1, tests in stage 2 involves no control group since the purposes and settings of two stages are quite different. Stage 1 is aimed to find out the immediate effect of the designed intervention while stage 2 is aimed to find out the long-term effectiveness. The duration is short and no interview or opinion is obtained from participants for this stage. Thus, control group is needed to ensure the change is caused by the designed intervention. Nevertheless, for the tests of stage 2, since informal interviews and questionnaires are employed, it can determine the change is caused by the designed intervention or not. Hence, control group may not be necessarily needed. Also, Gantt (2004) pointed out that informal test is as important as formal clinical test for art therapy. It is useful to develop standardized method based on pilot test or informal assessment. Therefore, it is not a must for tests of stage 2 to involve control group.

3.2.2 Sampling Method

Subjects of undergraduates were recruited by convenience sampling method. Poster regarding the program was post up (see Appendix IV for the poster) and subject respond to it was selected according to the following criteria:

1. Willing to participate in the study
2. Must not undergo other psychotherapeutic treatment during the program

Elderly participants were recruited with the help of the social worker and staff of the cooperated elderly centre. They were also recruited by convenience sampling and the selected criteria were the same with undergraduates.

3.2.3 Planning and Content of the Finger Knitting Program

Facilitator who had experience in executing finger knitting leaded all sessions. A four-stage method suggested by Campbell (1993) was employed, which includes warming up, core activity, feedback and ending. Both pilot tests used almost the same method and content. Minor adjustments might be done during the workshops for elderly to match with the knitting process.

Table 3.1 demonstrates the content of the finger knitting program in this stage.

Table 3.1 A table of the content and objectives of finger knitting program

Session	Activity and Objectives
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To get know with each other within the group - To understand the objectives and procedures of this program - To familiar with finger knitting and learn single jersey
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To learn other simple knitting stitches - To improve the skills and stimulate dexterity
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To learn the binding off and combination methods of knitting pieces - To improve the skills and stimulate dexterity
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To encourage creativity by different knitting stitches - To improve the skills and stimulate dexterity - To recognize and appreciate their and other participants' products

3.2.4 Data Analysis

All the data of the assessment form were analyzed by using SPSS software. A significant level of 0.05 was set for all statistical tests. The description of the data was presented as means and standard deviations (SD), as well as 95% confidence interval (CI). Then a t-test was done to examine the effects of finger knitting exercise on depression levels.

Field notes from observation and informal sharing were analyzed. It mainly included the things that subjects were doing during the program, their

behavioral change, insight and experience about this program and their perception regarding themselves. For the test of elderly, opinions from the responsible social worker and staff of the elderly centre were also collected since they interacted with the elderly on daily basis and understand elderly's situation well.

For the analysis method, thematic analysis was adopted (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is commonly employed in qualitative research to organize data and find out important themes that provided meaning within the data. It is flexible and useful in finding out participants' perception and experiences in psychological study since it allows free discussion with unstructured questions. Hence, this method fits the setting of this research.

According to Braun & Clarke (2006), there are totally 6 phrases regarding thematic analysis ranging from studying the data, identifying code, searching for theme, reviewing it, naming it to reporting the results. This research follows these 6 phrases as the guidelines to analyze the data. For the codes to be a theme, data deduction and complication are mainly used. However, the frequency might not be the most important criteria for defining a theme. Rather, the relationship between them and how different patterns and levels of the data integrate to bring meaning is of great significance. Therefore, when analyzing the data, it should not only capture the surface meaning of data, but also go into in-depth semantic meaning. When defining the themes, understanding the

implication of the themes and whether it helps to tell the story of the data is essential to identify a valid theme. This then helps to understand the overall story regarding the findings and the study.

Finally, Validity examination with the subjects was done to ensure the credibility of the findings.

3.3 Examination of Finger Knitting as a Creative Medium for Self-expression and Self-understanding

Other pilot tests were carried out at this stage to further investigate the outcomes and effectiveness of finger knitting as psychotherapy and the relationship between mood, self-esteem and finger knitting. Also, as free creation of finger knitting products was encouraged, finger knitting as a self-expression and self-understanding process could be examined.

It is aimed to find out that (1) the effectiveness of finger knitting on altering mood; (2) the influence of level of difficulties on sense of achievement and self-evaluation; (3) the relationship between self-esteem, mood repair and the designed intervention (finger knitting) and; (4) the potential of finger knitting to promote self-understanding and self-expression.

3.3.1 Research Design

Undergraduates were invited to join the finger knitting program since they were more easily to be affected in terms of sense of achievement and they were more willing to express themselves. Also, similar to the rationale of previous stage, they were in the significantly increased knitting population. In addition, they had relatively lower self-esteem (Robins et al., 2002). This program is then employed to enhance their self-esteem.

The pilot tests at this stage were divided into two large groups; they were Group A and Group B. The setting was almost the same, only the end products were different.

The study design will be a 9-week experimental study. There were totally 67 participants from Group A while 43 in group B who had completed the whole workshop. Participants, either in Group A or B, were further divided into small groups for better monitoring.

There was a finger exercise training once a week and totally 9 sessions. Each session lasts for 90 minutes. Participants were encouraged to practice 2 more times a week at home. The whole program was divided into three. Difficulties were increased at each part gradually. In the first part, a few finger knitting skills were shared. In the second part, other finger knitting skills will be shared

and own design and expressions were encouraged. In the third part, participants may continue to complete their own creation. For Group A, each participant made a knit apparel product. For Group B, each participant manufactured a knitted art creation.

Similar to stage 2, stage 3 employs no control group. The reasons are the same. The testing methods used already enable the understanding of the nature of the change. Hence, control group is not necessarily needed. Furthermore, according to Wadeson (2002), standardized clinical test might hinder development of art therapy. Art should be personal art and should not be structured. The model and testing method should be generated based on the way of how specific case or study works rather than just following previous established testing method. Stage 3 enables free expression and creation. The setting is different from formal clinical test to ensure the help of the intervention can be fully reflected. Finger knitting therapy is rather a new concept, it is more important to understand its potential help and how it works, and related method can be developed accordingly.

3.3.2 Sampling Method

Subjects of undergraduates were recruited by convenient sampling method. The major method was through words-of-mouth and subject respond to it was selected according to the following criteria:

1. Willing to participate in the study
2. Do not have severe functional or cognitive problem that having adverse impact on their participation
3. Must not undergo other psychotherapeutic treatment during the program

3.3.3 Planning and Content of the Finger Knitting Program

Similar to the previous stage, facilitator who had experience in executing finger knitting leaded all sessions. A four-stage method suggested by Campbell (1993) was employed It includes warming up, core activity, feedback and ending. Despite of different end product, both groups shared the same content as shown on table 3.2.

Table 3.2 A table of content and objectives of the 9-week finger knitting program

Session	Activity and Objectives
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To get know with each other within the group - To understand the objectives and procedures of this program - To familiar with finger knitting and learn single jersey
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To learn basic finger knitting techniques, including casting on methods, and simple knitting stitches - To improve the skills and stimulate dexterity
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To learn the binding off and combination methods of knitting pieces - To improve the skills and stimulate dexterity
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To learn the increasing and decreasing methods of finger knitting - To improve the skills and stimulate dexterity
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To review the finger knitting skills and learn other knitting stitches based on participants' interests - To encourage creativity by different knitting patterns
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To encourage development of participants' own design - To motivate expression with design and knitting
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To learn the skills that required by participants' design - To motivate expression with design and knitting
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To continue finger knitting in order to accomplish the product - To motivate expression with design and knitting
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To share idea and product development with each other - To recognize and appreciate their and other participants' product

3.3.4 Data Analysis

Field notes from the observation and informal sharing were analyzed. It mainly included the things about subjects were doing during the program, their behavioral change, insight and experience about this program and their perception regarding themselves.

3.4 Sampling Size

For stage 1 study, it serves as a pilot test that aimed to obtain preliminary knowledge to justify the possibility of finger knitting therapy and helped to provide reference to stage 2 and 3 studies. As it is only a pilot test, its sample size is not required to be as large as an actual test. Moreover, there are limited academic published regulations or standard requirements for the size of a pilot test. According to Hertzog (2008)'s study regarding the sample size setting of a pilot test, the sample size of a pilot test is based on its nature of decision done with the results and 10-15 subjects may be enough. For example, if the purpose of the pilot test is going to demonstrate the effectiveness of the intervention, 20-25 subjects are sufficient. Hence, the stage 1 study had 20 subjects that met the requirements.

Regarding stage 2 and 3, for the number of participants, there is no established and specific regulation concerning the size of sample for qualitative research. Previous

research suggested that 6-8 subjects were required for testing a homogenous group while 12-20 subjects were essential for testing a heterogeneous group (Holloway & Wheeler, 1996; Holloway & Wheeler, 2013). Therefore, each stages of study had more than 12 participants in each targeted group.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval from The Human Subject Ethics Committee of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University was applied before carrying out this study. The participants had received information regarding the objectives and procedures of study before the tests. They were required to sign a consent form prior to their participation.

3.6 Summary

This study aims to develop an innovative fashion-facilitated therapy. After the two pilot tests, the potential of finger knitting as a type of therapy was established. After then, the second pilot test and the final trial will investigate its outcomes and effectiveness and explore participants' insights and experience. The final trial also helps to understand the relationship between mood, self-esteem and the designed intervention (finger knitting).

Chapter Four

Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents the findings and discussion of the three-stage test of this study. The findings are divided according to different stages.

4.1 Immediate Impact of Finger Knitting – First Pilot Test

In the first pilot test, 20 participants had engaged in the study. 6 of them are male while 14 of them are female. Their ages were ranging from 20 to 35. All of them were not participating in other psychotherapy. Half of them were still students while another half was working full-time. They were randomly assigned into two groups; one was tested group with 12 participants while one was controlled group with 8 participants.

The test was conducted in a university classroom under a comfort environment and minimal distractions. There were around 5 participants in a group and the whole session required around 1 hour.

For the assessment, participants had to rate self-esteem at a 5-point scale on the assessment form. The state self-esteem form included three aspects that were

performance, social and appearance. Higher scores indicated higher state self-esteem. It was suggested that only the performance and social self-esteem would be influenced by finger knitting exercise.

4.1.1 Results of the First Pilot Test

Table 4.1 Means (and Standard Deviations) of Pretest and Posttest changes of State Self-Esteem of both tested and controlled group

		Pretest	Posttest	After - Before
Tested Group	Performance	24.83 (4.85)	27.08 (3.60)	2.25 (3.28)
	Social	26.50 (4.98)	28.25 (4.86)	1.75 (2.49)
	Appearance	18.75 (3.25)	19.33 (3.58)	0.58 (2.02)
Controlled Group	Performance	22.75 (3.99)	23.38 (4.24)	0.63 (1.85)
	Social	24.25 (5.28)	24.75 (6.81)	0.50 (2.78)
	Appearance	18.25 (3.77)	17.75 (4.95)	-0.50 (1.77)

* Correct to 2 decimal places

The data were analyzed by using SPSS software. Means and paired t-tests were mainly employed to find out the impacts of finger knitting on state self-esteem. Table 4.1 shows the means and standard deviations of the state self-esteem of both tested and controlled group before and after the finger knitting exercise.

To examine whether there were significant difference of different aspects of state self-esteem between pretest and posttest, paired t-test was employed. For the tested group, it was found that the results were aligned with the hypothesis that finger knitting had influence on state self-esteem of performance and social but not appearance. There were increase in performance state self-esteem by a mean of 2.25 with $t(20)=-2.377$, $p<0.05$ and increase in social state self-esteem by a mean of 1.75 with $t(20)=-2.434$, $p<0.05$. They were statistically significant. However, for appearance state self-esteem, although there was an increase by a mean of 0.58, it was statistically insignificant as $t(20)=-1$, $p>0.05$. Changes are demonstrated on figure 4.1.

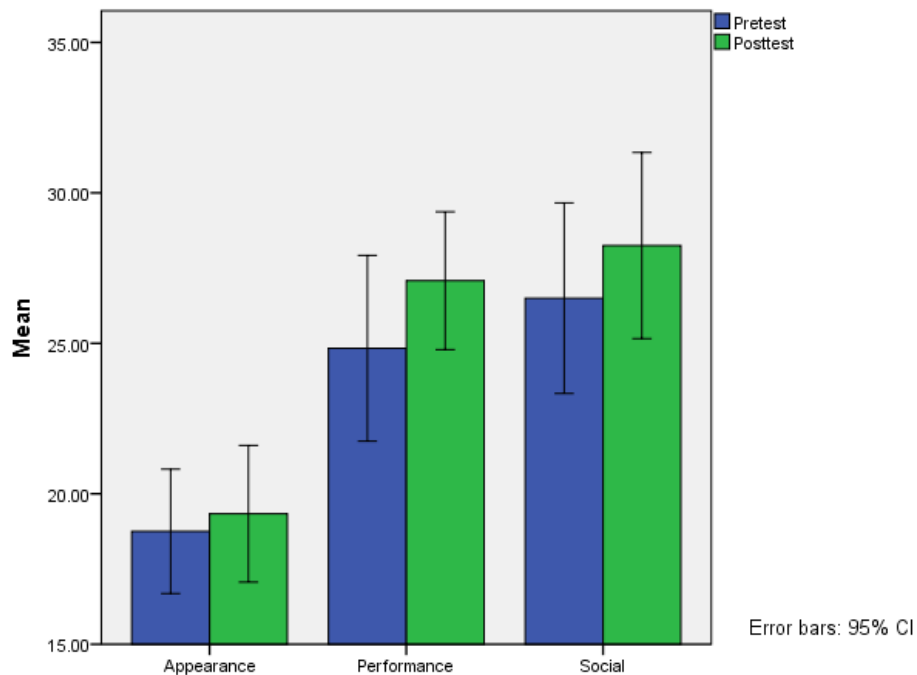


Figure 4.1 A histogram showing that pretest and posttest changes of state self-esteem of tested group

For the controlled group, as there was no intervention (learning finger knitting), it was expected to have no significant change. The results also demonstrated this case. The difference between pretest and posttest state self-esteem was quite small. Furthermore, the paired t-test results showed that there was no significant difference between pretest and posttest state self-esteem. The t-value were as $t(20)=-0.957$, $p>0.05$ for performance state self-esteem, as $t(20)=-0.509$, $p>0.05$ for social state self-esteem and as $t(20)=0.798$, $p>0.05$ for appearance state self-esteem. Figure 4.2 shows that result clearly.

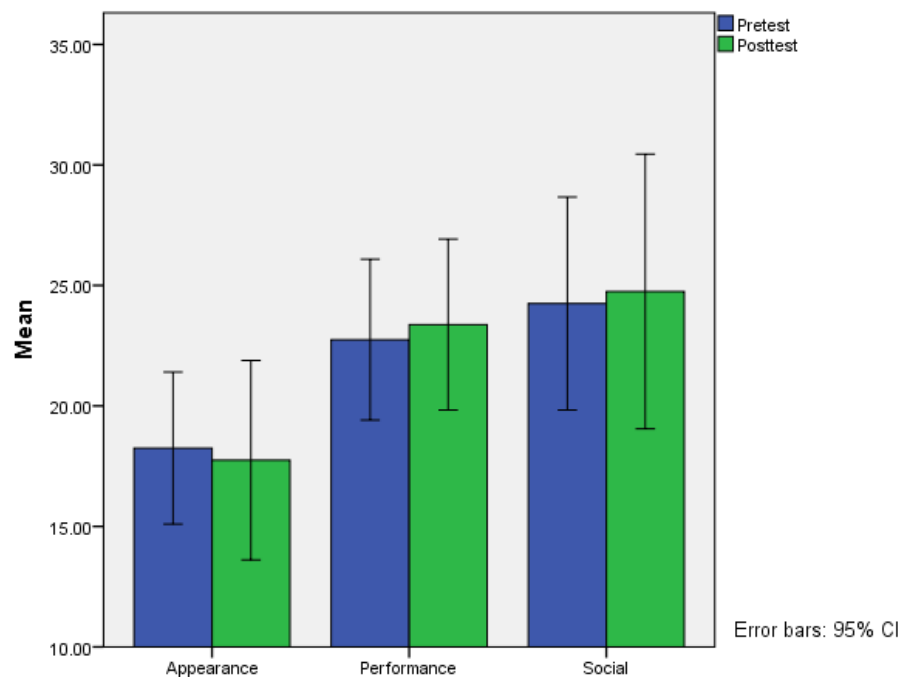


Figure 4.2 A histogram showing that pretest and posttest changes of state self-esteem of controlled group

Hence, the hypothesis that finger knitting had influence on state self-esteem of performance and social but appearance was not supported.

4.1.2 Discussion of the First Pilot Test

As mentioned, the hypothesis that finger knitting is effective to improve state self-esteem of performance and social but appearance was not supported by comparing their pretest state self-esteem as the baseline with the posttest state self-esteem. It was believed that learning a new skill had impact on performance state self-esteem and friendly group-learning conditions enabled communication that affected social state self-esteem. However, finger knitting was unrelated to attractiveness of appearance. Hence, it was suggested that only performance and social state self-esteem had significant changes statistically. For appearance state self-esteem, especially in a very short-term, it was not expected to change. It thus might serve as an indicator to check whether participants had filled in the assessment form seriously.

The rationale of finger knitting helped to improve self-esteem on performance and social aspects might be because of its benefits in providing a sense of achievement when grasping a skill. Finger knitting enabled them to learn a skill in a relatively easy and quick way that might improve the sense of achievements pleasantly. This enabled them to gain a performance state self-esteem.

Furthermore, repetitive nature of finger knitting might discourage them to make comparison with other participants while friendly learning and communication environment let them feel comfort. These might enhanced their social state self-esteem.

4.2 Development of a Systematic Method of Finger Knitting Program Associating with Therapy – Second Stage Test

In the second stage test, two pilot tests were carried out in total. One was for undergraduates and another one was for elderly. Apart from the potential of alleviating negative mood and promoting positive self-esteem, it helps the understanding of the relationship between self-esteem, mood repair and the designed intervention (finger knitting).

Qualitative test, such as informal interviews and observation were used to find out the perception and feelings of the participants. It was especially useful and commonly used in social science study. Since this study was an exploratory study, it aimed to investigate opinions, perception, feelings and attitudes. Qualitative methods were more appropriate. Nevertheless, questionnaires were also employed as a supplementary part. It helped to understand the mood and self-esteem change and the feelings more objectively. It would be more reliable and useful for identifying

relationship between mood, self-esteem and designed intervention (finger knitting). Below are the findings and discussion of both methods.

4.2.1 Undergraduate Test

This was a 4-week study that 12 participants joined the workshop. Two of them are male while 10 of them are female. Their age were ranging from 19 to 24. All of them fulfilled the criteria. That means they were willing to participate in the study and not participating other psychotherapeutic treatment during the program. All of them were undergraduate student.



Figure 4.3 A photo showing the setting of the finger knitting workshop



Figure 4.4 Knit products by the participants

The workshop and assessments were conducted in comfort setting that also enabled interacted and communication between participants. Figure 4.3 shows the setting of the workshop. Chatting and sharing were highly encouraged. After all 4 sessions, some participants made a little jersey handbag while some created a jersey scarf. The products were developed according to their will and preference. Figure 4.4 shows some of their knit products.

4.2.2 Results of the Undergraduate Test

Table 4.2 Means (and standard deviations) of pretest and posttest changes of state self-esteem and level of depression, anxiety and stress

	Pretest	Posttest	After - Before
Performance	22.42 (2.27)	25.92 (3.75)	3.50 (2.94)
Social	21.08 (5.20)	25.83 (4.43)	4.75 (5.07)
Appearance	19.33 (3.87)	22.17 (4.67)	2.83 (3.79)
Depression	6.83 (4.63)	3.33 (2.74)	-3.50 (2.84)
Anxiety	10.33 (8.81)	3.17 (3.01)	-7.17 (7.55)
Stress	15.50 (8.49)	8.67 (6.57)	-6.83 (7.26)

* Correct to 2 decimal places

The data were analyzed by using SPSS software. Means and paired t-tests were mainly employed to find out the impacts of finger knitting on state self-esteem and the level of depression, anxiety and stress. Table 4.2 shows the

means and standard deviations of both tested and controlled group before and after the finger knitting exercise. Higher scores referred to a higher self-esteem for the state self-esteem while lower scores indicated a lower level of depression, anxiety and stress.

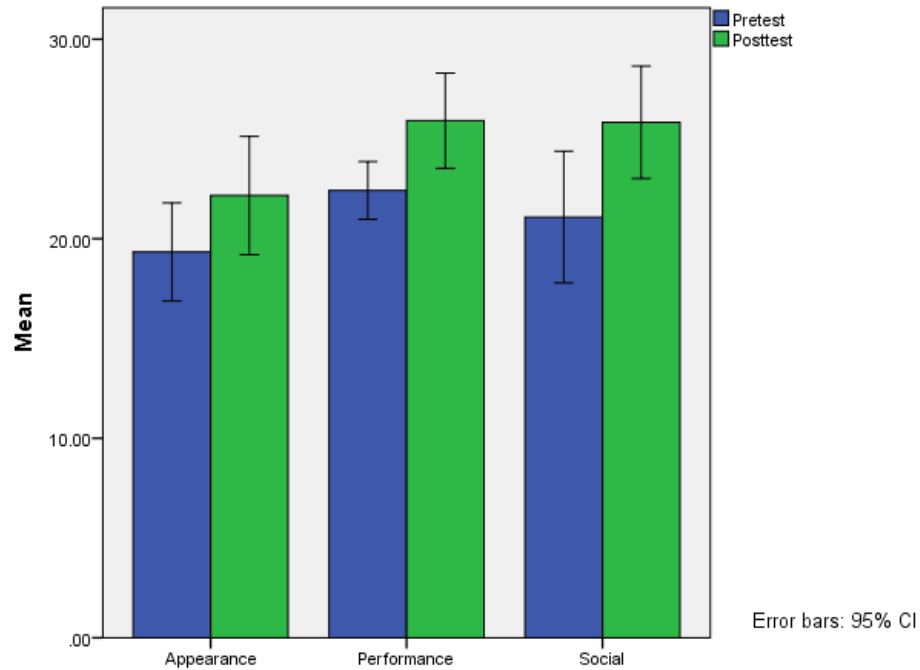


Figure 4.5 A histogram showing that pretest and posttest changes of state self-esteem

Regarding the self-esteem, the hypothesis that finger knitting had influence on state self-esteem of performance and social but not appearance was partially supported. All performance, social and appearance state self-esteem had statistically significant differences before and after the 4-week finger knitting workshop. They were increased by a mean of 3.5, 4.75 and 2.83 respectively. The t-value were $t(12)=-4.126$, $p<0.05$ for performance state self-esteem, as

$t(12)=-3.248$, $p<0.05$ for social state self-esteem and as $t(12)=-2.592$, $p<0.05$ for appearance state self-esteem. Figure 4.5 shows that result clearly.

Concerning the depression, anxiety and stress level, the hypothesis that that finger knitting has positive impact on mood was supported. All of them were decreased after the 4-week finger knitting workshop. Depression level was reduced by a mean of 3.5 with $t(12)=4.262$, $p<0.05$ and anxiety level was decreased by a mean of 7.17 with $t(12)=3.287$, $p<0.05$. The average decrease of stress level was 6.83 and the $t(12)=3.261$, $p<0.05$. All of them were statistically significant. The changes were demonstrated on figure 4.6.

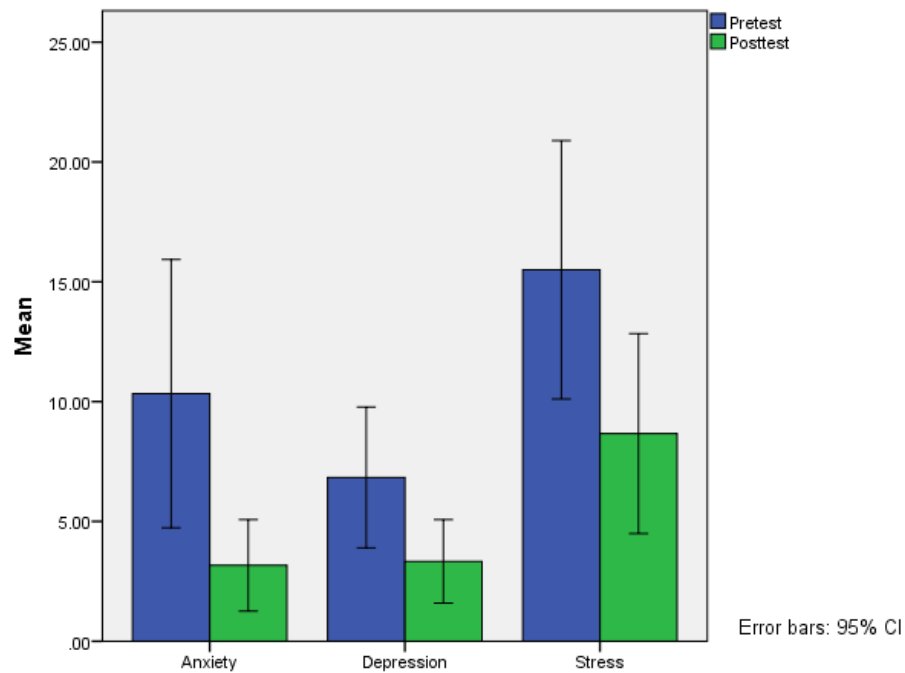


Figure 4.6 A histogram showing that pretest and posttest changes of level of depression, anxiety and stress

Hence, the hypothesis that finger knitting had influence on state self-esteem of performance and social but not appearance was partially supported while the hypothesis that finger knitting has positive impact on mood was supported.

For the satisfaction level of the whole workshop, participants indicated a very high satisfaction level of the workshop that the average was 4.6 out of a 5-point scale.

4.2.3 Observation and Informal Interview during the Undergraduate Test

Apart from the objective assessment, the observation and informal sharing were carried out during the 4-week finger knitting workshop. Below were the summarized findings by thematic analysis based on observation results and some participants' feedbacks. The themes were (1) calming and relaxation effect; (2) self-confidence and satisfaction; (3) social involvement and; (4) active lifestyle and productivity. In the following, summary and detail discussion over the discovery are provided.

Calming and Relaxation Effect

After all, comments from participants were extremely satisfied and highly appreciated with advantages and the therapeutic effect brought by finger

knitting. They all agreed that finger knitting has certain influence in improving well-being and promoting mental health. Before they join the workshops, objects considered themselves suffering from anxiety, impetuous and difficulty in concentration. All are common symptoms of stress (Vlisides, Eddy & Mozie, 1994). Yet, carrying out finger knitting enabled them to stay focus and escape from negative mindsets or worse situation. This could then brought a calming and relaxation effect.

“I feel relax when working on finger knitting. Besides, it is a different felling when I focus on what I am doing.”

“It does help in easing my stress. You would be benefited if you sit back and enjoy knitting when undergoing difficult situation.”

Some others felt that they were overthinking and induced the feeling of confusion and depression when alone. Focusing on finger knitting kept them away from unrealistic apprehension:

“Finger knitting provides me an interest to concentrate on and temporarily forget the sad stuff.”

“When I am bored, I can have fun, so I would not think too much.”

Apart from the mentioned, a lady shared her experience of how finger knitting calmed her bad emotions. She was having examinations when taking part in this study. She was nervous and stressful due to the fear of failure. In consequence, she could not concentrate on studying and other daily works. What is worse, she became too sensitive and bad-tempered which affected her social life. Fortunately, she remembered the wonderful moment in finger knitting workshop. Then she knitted and found that it was helpful in emotion control.

“I can sit back and glare at the nice view outside the window when performing finger knitting and thus I calmed down and felt less irritable.”

Such outcomes of releasing tension and lighten up the mood might cause by the features of the movement in finger knitting as mentioned before. The movements were described as bilateral, rhythmic, repetitive and automatic in which was proposed by Corkhill (2012). When performing, the action cross over the midline of human body and thus thoughtless awareness and mediation state can be reached and the release of serotonin, which is a substance releasing tension and lighten up the mood, can be stimulated (Corkhill, 2012; Jacobs & Fornal, 1997; Jacobs & Fornal, 1999; Jacobs, Martín-Cora & Fornal; 2002). Rhythmical knitting contributes to stabilizing heartbeat so that it also plays a part in mood controlling effect (Turney, 2009). In addition, the movements strengthen the muscle and the upper extremity

functions (Whitall, Waller, Silver & Macko, 2000) and train the patience of participants:

“My fingers’ action was not nimble...but when I keep knitting, I found the situation is improved and now I become more patient due to the repeated movement.”

“In the past, my fingers were not so flexible that I could only use one of them to touch the screen of the mobile, but now I can use all of them. The flexibility of my fingers has increased.

Almost all the participants stated that they continued to knit by fingers after completion of the workshop. The excited news is that they tried to look for information regarding knitting and new skills from the web or books. More than half of the participants highly recommended this workshop to the others and looking forward to new workshop if there is any. They appreciated the usefulness and accessibility of the work. A lady believed that finger knitting is another good option for metropolitans not just always stuck to the virtual world.

Self-confidence and Satisfaction

More scholars believed that establishing a positive self-esteem allows one to live with positive mind, such as believing themselves more superior and attractive (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger & Vohs, 2003). Moreover, with reference to Crocker & Park (2004)'s research, the actions of establish self-esteem itself could already benefit people. In the view of this, improving self-esteem was one the goals of this workshop. Quite a majority of participants owe a low level of confidence and fear to fail. However, they refuse to take part in any art therapy as usually it involves complex skills to complete and again they were not confident to do so. Before the workshop started, they had empty mind or misunderstanding of finger knitting that it required complicated skills as traditional knitting. Unsurprisingly, they all thought that it was "easy to learn" by the end of first session. The level of difficulty is considered as appropriate due to the experience that participants enjoyed the sense of achievement while avoid the negative feeling aroused by failure:

"I resisted traditional knitting as the use of needle is time-consuming and difficult to handle. In contrast, finger knitting is easy to learn and quick to perform, I could make it so I feel that I am smart."

A few of them struggled a bit at the beginning but soon all of them caught up by the end of first session and even said it was fantastic. They all perform

indifferently well and finished the artwork after four sessions. Several participants finished earlier and learned new stitches other than scheduled:

“Sometimes I may be confused and has to reverse the steps but I become more confident and skillful when continuing on.”

Take a male participant as a reference. He was a bit behind the others but he felt that it was a good chance for him to take one step a time. In particular, he was more satisfied when finally finished the product as he paid extra effort to overcome the tardiness and catch up the progress:

“Then sense of achievement is so great when you hand made a product turning it from yarns to a handbag.”

Former research also pointed out that self-esteem was vital to mental health and co-related to emotion states, for example, happiness (Baumeister et al., 2003), stress (Pyszczynski, Greenberg, Solomon, Arndt & Schimel, 2004), enmity (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998). More than that, goal achievement, which in this case, the construction of a knit product, boost self-worth as they feel happy, relieved and arrogant in the process of chasing the goal (Forgas et al., 1990; Arkin & Maruyama, 1979). This was verified by the participants:

“After successfully created the knit product and when I starred at it, I feel happy and pleasant.”

They were all joyful, cheerful and very satisfied about the workshop:

“I think that this activity is quite playful and the content is easy to learn. Overall, the whole process is very jolly.”

“With a few easy steps, (I) can get the finished product. I feel satisfied.”

The elements of self-esteem cover more than performance and achievement. It is also about social self-esteem. Participants did not know each before they joined but at the end they build up friendship when the four sessions were done. One of the participants was introverted and afraid of talking to strangers. She remained silence in the first session but then she made friends with the other so the feeling of being alone was dispersed. More benefits from the viewpoint of social aspect would be further investigated in the third theme.

Social Involvement

There was research supported the point of view that finger knitting workshop encouraged social involvement and thence boost social confidence of participants (Corkhill, 2012; Minahan & Cox, 2007). In this study, finger

knitting was their common interest so the participants felt a sense of cohesion and belongings. When the action was in progress, the friendly atmosphere provided them a chance to chat freely and have certain eye contact (Corkhill, 2012). Besides, as mentioned previously, participants always had an option to remain silence during finger knitting. Therefore, participants would be more comfortable when they were not active in making friends. All in all, participants could build up their social confidence bit by bit even when they were uncomfortable staying in a group or talking to strangers.

More than that, finger knitting workshop facilitated sharing and mutual support. The act of appreciating and recognizing each other were observed. They panegyricized the others and their work and also cheered slow learners up. When they shared the skills, they did not compare against each other. One of the participants said:

“There are always chances we could talk to each other as it is a group activity. If anything we are uncertain or unclear, we can ask, share or teach each other so that our communication is improved.”

In short, the workshop was undoubtedly successful in creating a harmonious atmosphere. Smile and laugh could always be found. Such positive feeling could spread to everyone in the group. Some reported that they would soon forget the sadness when attending the workshop.

According to Willison & Masson (1986), proper body contact gave positive therapeutic influence. Teaching and sharing knitting involved acceptable touch to one another. This could warm people's heart and comfort them so that it facilitated a therapeutic effect.

Active Lifestyle and Productivity

Sharing a common interest improves life quality and well-being. Finger knitting can be treated as a leisure activity and this is supported in the workshop that most participants turned it as a hobby and continue on even when the workshop was finished. Another advantage is that there is no limitation on one's age to take this interest. They could do it across his/her lifespan (Turney, 2009; Riley, Corkhill & Morris, 2013). Further advancement is allowed as they could apply their idea on and design the products in their own way or learning new knitting methods. Knitting is now under the spot light in the field of fashion design. Designers have to plan and prepare beforehand such as selection of materials, patterns, stitches and costs. It might help in a person's management skills and foster personal growth. A woman shared her experience in planning as her time was enriched and better utilized by calculating the time, yarns and time required.

Participants also considered finger knitting as a meaningful hobby as it is productive and a product would be accomplished:

“It is useful to me as I could relax when knitted with fingers and there is a finished product I could obtain.”

The majority of the participants thought that they have some personal growth like learn to be patient and able to handle multi-tasks:

“The repeated movements during knitting trained my patience and perseverance.”

“When I am performing finger knitting, I can chat with others at the same time ...can train my ability to handle multi-tasks.”

Moreover, it is not uncommon that knit products are treated as a gift or utilized for charitable purpose. Such act might improve knitters' self-worth. A man said that he send his girl-friend the finished work which is a knitted handbag as a gift. His girl-friend liked it and appreciated his thought and thus he was happy too and had higher self-confidence.

To conclude, the participants all agreed that they had fun in the workshop and discovered lots of advantages of performing finger knitting. They were well satisfied and had positive change.

4.2.4 Elderly Test

This test was cooperated with Wong Cho Tong Day Care Centre for the Elderly, Tung Wah Group of Hospitals, and took place there. 21 elderly aged from 74 to 90 were invited to participate in this study. Four of them are male while 17 of them are female. All of them fulfilled the criteria. That means they were willing to participate in the study and not participating other psychotherapeutic treatment during the program.



Figure 4.7 Activity photos during the finger knitting workshop of elderly

The workshop and assessments were conducted in comfort setting that also enabled interaction and communication between participants. Apart from the workshop instructors, social workers and staff of the elderly centre helped to ensure a comfort environment for the participants and monitor the situation, especially the health situation. Hence, their observation and opinions regarding the workshop were essential and helpful.

4.2.5 Results of Elderly Test

Table 4.3 A table showing the mean and standard deviation of the elderly survey

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Workshop Setting	4.51	0.41
Perception	4.44	0.43
Mood Improvement	4.57	0.46
Stress Reduction	4.55	0.52
Communication	4.48	0.58
Self-feeling	4.62	0.47

* Correct to 2 decimal places

This part focuses on the objective survey analysis. The questionnaire was specially designed for elderly. Since they might not be able to understand and answer complicated questions, more direct and simple questions were employed. There were 21 questions regarding workshop setting, perception

regarding finger knitting, mood improvement, stress reduction, communication and self-feeling. Table 4.3 shows the mean and standard deviation of each aspect. Participants indicated their level of agreement in each question by scale of 1 (definitely disagree) to 5 (definitely agree).

Generally, the results of each aspect showed a scoring over 4 indicated that participants found positive change after joining the workshop and were highly satisfied with the program. This also pointed out that the setting of the workshop was appropriate and helped learning finger knitting step-by-step.

Table 4.4 A correlation table of the six aspects

		Setting	Perception	Mood	Stress	Communication	Self
Setting	Pearson Correlation	1	.870**	.866**	.855**	.805**	.851**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Perception	Pearson Correlation	.870**	1	.901**	.929**	.882**	.901**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
Mood	Pearson Correlation	.866**	.901**	1	.885**	.832**	.897**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
Stress	Pearson Correlation	.855**	.929**	.885**	1	.911**	.889**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
Communication	Pearson Correlation	.805**	.882**	.832**	.911**	1	.787**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
Self	Pearson Correlation	.851**	.901**	.897**	.889**	.787**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

This questionnaire also helped to understand the relationship between finger knitting, mood and self-esteem. As shown in table 4.4, they are highly correlated with each other.

Workshop setting and the perception regarding finger knitting and the opinions regarding the designed intervention (finger knitting) were collected. For the mood improvement and stress reduction, they were related to mood repair while for the communication and self-feeling, they were related to the self-esteem. The results showed a highly correlated relationship between each other. Accomplishment of a knit product in this workshop provided a sense of achievement and caused participants to value themselves positively (supported with the high scores of self-feeling). Participants also felt happier and alleviated stress by joining this workshop (supported by the high scores of mood improvement and stress reduction). These factors were highly related and showed a positive relationship. This questionnaire was a supplementary to observation and informal interview. It provided a basic support to the suggested relationship.

4.2.6 Observation and Informal Interview during the Elderly Test

Apart from the objective assessment, observation and informal sharing were carried out during the 4-week finger knitting workshop. Below were the

summarized findings from thematic analysis based on observation results and a social worker, staff of the elderly centre and some of the participants' feedbacks. The themes were (1) warmth and happiness; (2) sense of life meaning and self-worth; (3) sense of involvement; and (4) social support and potential functional help.

Warmth and Happiness

Previous study suggested that people might feel happier when they engaged in knitting activity (Corkhill & Morris, 2013). Also, participating in a hobby or leisure activity promoted well-being in many aspects and helped the reduction of depression levels. As mentioned, yarns, the major materials for finger knitting, are soft and warmth that let knitter feel comfort and thus facilitate happiness and affability (Alleyne, 2010).

“The yarns are beautiful, soft and good in qualities that make me feel comfortable. I love those yarns... And it is good to have different colours.”

“The yarns are warm. The workshop is also warm.”

Apart from the touch stimuli provided by the yarns that helped to alleviate negative mood (King & Janiszewski, 2011; University of Chicago Press

Journals, 2011), the colours might also have similar effects. Colours might affect the perception and had great impact on our feelings (Valdez & Mehrabian, 1994; Kaya & Epps, 2004). Additionally, elderly were free to choose the colours that they preferred. This might increased their satisfaction.

What is more, acceptable touching during teaching and learning of finger knitting also brought positive therapeutic effect. Accompany with instructors and staff of the elderly centre, elderly might felt being cared and warm. Through sharing and conversation, mutual understanding is also achieved and brought people closer. As pointed out by the staff of the elderly centre:

“Elderly are happy to being cared. Although they may not able to express themselves well, they enjoy the workshops. There were instructors talked to them, teach them how to knit and gave support to them.”

Elderly were observed to have more smiling face and more willing to chat with others after the first two sessions. Noticeably, a few of they even started to express their comments on the workshop.

“It is an interesting knitting technique and I am happy to learn it and have the knit product.”

“I felt warm because of the instructors.”

Therefore, it was obvious that finger knitting workshop brought warmth and happiness to the elderly. It was attributed to special elements of finger knitting, such as the feature of yarns, and the “love and care” atmosphere created.

Sense of Life Meaning and Self-worth

Sense of Life meaning, which contributed to health, could be enhanced by social participation (Kawachi & Berkman, 2001). Especially for those who had played an important role in the organization or group, their depression level might be lowered (Takagi, Kondo & Kawachi, 2013). For elderly, their role of being financial or productive support might be lost. Also, they might have plenty of free time due to retirement. Hence, they might be loss about the meaning of life and had declined confidence. Some elderly, especially if they were suffered from illness, might even think that they were the burdens of their family. Nevertheless, participation in activities might be a compensation for them, particularly, if the activities were productive in nature or helpful to their functional health (Havighurst, Neugarten & Tobin, 1968; Silverstein & Parker, 2002).

This finger knitting workshop was obviously a choice for them:

“It is an interesting and meaningful activity that I enjoyed.”

“I don’t know knitting before. (However) It is a new skill that I can manage it now and I am satisfied with my knit product.”

Finger knitting was productive in nature and provided an achievable goal for them. People might felt happy and self-worth when being success in the pursuing of their goals. Also, being successful in something or ability to manage skills might cause people to value themselves positively (Brown & Marshall, 2001). Thus, finger knitting in this case showed a function of providing meaning and productive goal for elderly and compensated for their productive role in their family before.

“I can make something useful by myself.”

“I would like to make a scarf for myself.”

Additionally, finger knitting might help to improve elderly’s hand function, reduce their cognition decline rate and enhance their social involvement (Silverstein & Parker, 2002) as it involved a learning process of skills and enable social communication. Therefore, it might contribute to a successful ageing, which included physical health, quality of life and active engagement with life (Rowe & Kahn, 1997; Baltes & Carstensen, 1996). Elderly’s life might be enriched by participating in different activities and this provided them a meaning of life. With appropriate achievement, they might also have a

sense of self-worth. On that account, joining activities, like finger knitting, brought benefits for them and contributed to a better life.

Sense of Involvement

There were studies pointed out that social involvement brought benefits, such as social support (Kawachi & Berkman, 2001) which would be mentioned in next part of social support and potential functional help. Participation in social activity also related to higher life's satisfaction and better quality of life. This should be considered as successful ageing (Rowe & Kahn, 1997; Baltes & Carstensen, 1996; Everard, Lach, Fisher & Baum, 2000). This finger knitting workshop brought elderly from different backgrounds together by sharing a common interest and thus helped social involvement and boost social confidence (Corkhill, 2012; Minahan & Cox, 2007). Although this workshop was voluntary-based on the will of elderly, some of them were not actively involved at the beginning. Particularly, there were two elderly left earlier at the first and second sessions. They claimed that they were going to toilet for a while only, but did not come back. Nonetheless, this situation changed from third session, they tended to stay till the end of the workshop. Especially, as mentioned by the staff of the elderly centre, one of them was having difficulty on concentration. However, at the last session, the observation was very different from the past:

“It is quite surprise that XXX (name of the elderly) stays till the end. It is difficult for him to concentrate on something and sit there for a long time.”

For other elderly, as pointed out, they might not have high intention to join the workshop even they agreed to join with their own will. A very good change showing their sense of involvement and sense of belonging increased was observed. For the first session, most of the participants did not appear at the workshop venue until the staff of elderly centre brought them there and this process, took almost 10 minutes. However, in the third session, most of them came on time and in the fourth session; all of them came a bit earlier than the starting time and already started to knit. For instance, when instructors come, an elderly said,

“We are waiting for you... see I almost accomplish a piece of knit.”

Also, some elderly expressed their views that they would like to continue after four sessions:

“It is interesting that I would like to continue next week.”

After the discussion with the staff of the elderly centre and with observation, they thought that the workshop was appropriately planned. Most of the elderly

can grasped the skill of finger knitting within the first or second sessions and started to show a positive change since the third sessions.

“Elderly may feel boring with lengthy workshop, but they may not able to grasp the skills within two sessions. Thus, four to six sessions may be appropriated that elderly can accomplish their product. Certainly, it depends on the ability of elderly. Some of them, especially those relatively younger, are able to learn quickly and follow all steps of knitting and session plan.”

Although the plan was fit this time, some modification might have to make depend on case. For the duration of the workshop, it should be controlled within four to six sessions.

Social Support and Potential Functional Help

Previous study suggested that participating in social activities helped the improvement of elderly’s functional health and reduced the decline rate (Unger, Johnson & Marks, 1997), especially for productive activities (Horgas, Wilms & Baltes, 1998; Everard et al., 2000). In addition, social support helped to reduce mortality (House, Robbins & Metzner, 1982) and had positive help to cardiovascular, endocrine and immune system (Uchino, Cacioppo & Kiecolt-Glaser, 1996). Taking part in social activity provided an

access to social support (Kawachi & Berkman, 2001). This study offered a comfort environment for social interaction and mutual support.

Elderly were able to meet more people in similar age group and made friends. Although some of them were stayed at the elderly centre together before, they seldom talked to each other. This workshop acted as an opportunity provider to let them sit together and have interaction. The frequency of spontaneous talking and length of their conversation increased significantly. Staff at the elderly centre also reported that some of those elderly started to have simple greetings with others instead of being passive and kept silence at the elderly centre. They also showed their support to others. For example, an old lady was lack of confidence and always said negative words, like “I’m useless”, “I can’t accomplish it” and “The knit product is credit to instructor, but not me”. Nevertheless, apart from instructors, other participants tried to console her and appreciate her works:

“You are smart and skillful.”

“You can manage it.”

“A beautiful piece of knit.”

Her confidence was built gradually and believed that her contribution to her work was valuable. This kind of mutual support was often observed during the workshop.

Although this study did not have any objective testing regarding the improvement of functional help, its contribution in building a social supportive community was obvious. Also, the relationship between social support and functional health cannot be neglected as supported by literatures. Besides, there was still a report from the staff of the elderly centre that an elderly who suffered from severe dementia could remember this workshop and her work:

“XXX (name of the elderly) is suffered from severe dementia and always forget things... just now she told me that she remembered the knit piece and that was made by her.”

This elderly joined the workshop inactively and usually relied on instructor to help her to accomplish the knit product. She always forgot the steps and could not concentrate towards the end of the workshop. Each workshop, she was just like the first session that she forgot all the steps. This situation started to improve in the third session. She tried to knit for a while without the help of the instructor.

As mentioned before, knitting might help in dementia case (Scarmeas et al., 2001; Valenzuela et al., 2012). This observation supported the view and worth further objective test.

4.2.7 Discussion of the Tests in Second Stage

The test of the undergraduates in second stage partially supported the hypothesis that finger knitting had influence on state self-esteem of performance and social but not appearance since all self-esteem showed a statistically significant increase after the 4-week workshop.

For the performance and social state self-esteem, it was not difficult to understand that it had improvement. Similar to the first pilot test, learning a new skill and accomplishment of a knit product provided them a sense of achievement and satisfaction. Their goal (make a knit product) was fulfilled and they felt self-worth. They felt good with themselves and thus the performance state self-esteem increased. As being in a friendly group-learning condition, participants were able to make new friends, freely discuss and share with the others so that they felt comfort. Mutual appreciation and support had positive effect on communication. Hence, social state self-esteem also improved.

Nevertheless, the appearance state self-esteem was unexpectedly increased that it was also good news for participants. This might be due to various possible reasons. For instance, the workshop lasted for a month that they might have general improvement of their self-esteem. Thus, they felt better with themselves and thus became more confident in themselves, even their appearance. Also, since mutual appreciation and positive thinking was encouraged during the workshop, they might feel better with themselves, especially when there was someone who praised them. Another reason might be because of the duration of the workshop. Since the workshop lasted for a month that they might have improvement in their outlook, like being successful in weight loss.

For the mood, the hypothesis that finger knitting has a positive impact on mood is supported since there was a statistically significant decrease in depression, anxiety and stress.

For the elderly test, it also supported the hypothesis that self-esteem and mood were improved after the workshop. Although different types of self-esteem could not be separated due to the setting of the simplified questionnaire, it showed a high rating of improvement. Generally, they were very satisfied with the workshop and being happier. This study also found that there might be a relationship between finger knitting, mood and self-esteem as they showed a high correlation in the test. This supported the hypothesis. As

mentioned, self-esteem was related to goal and completion of it might lead to higher sense of self-worth (Brown & Marshall, 2001). Being success in something let people value themselves positively. Also, achievement had positive impact on people' mood as it makes people feel happy and relaxed (Forgas et al., 1990). Hence, self-esteem, mood and finger knitting showed positive correlation and worth for further investigation.

From the informal interview and observation, both tests showed supportive results to the hypotheses. Both of them felt better about their mood as they were satisfied with the workshop and found it useful to brought happiness, although their causes might not be the same. Undergraduates were more focusing on claiming and relaxation while elderly were more emphasized on warmth and care. Though the need seemed not the same, the results were the same that both of them had improvement of the mood.

Besides, it suggested that undergraduates were more independent and enjoyed learning of new skills, while elderly were easier to satisfy and tended to enjoy the process with others. As a result, the methodology of the finger knitting workshop might adjust slightly for different targets to maximize its effects. For youth participants, the workshop could involve adjustment that more skills could be shared and enabled them to create by themselves. For the older adults or elderly, as they tended to stick with what they learned at first regardless of the techniques shared afterwards, it was suggested that less

complicated skills should be shared. Also, although negative saying like “wrong” was not preferred, correction of the skill at the beginning was important. Otherwise, they would stick with the inappropriate skill.

Notwithstanding the difference between different targets, they showed same positive improvement. Finger knitting involves bilateral, rhythmic, repetitive and automatic movements. Participants were able to distract themselves from negative thinking and mood during finger knitting. They might have a meditative-like state that calming them down. Visual and touch sensation also enabled them to have a warm and comfort feeling and thus had therapeutic impact. This was especially important for elderly as they were seek for being loved and cared.

Friendly environment provided them chance of making new friends and not being alone. Mutual appreciation and support enhanced their positive attitude towards themselves and others. Hence, it was not surprised that there were improvement in their mood.

There were still lots of benefits brought by finger knitting, like what the participants had mentioned, such as being patient, developing new hobby, being able to be multi-tasking and so on. Take developing a hobby as an example, having healthy hobbies discouraged people to engage in unhealthy acts to reduce their stress like drunks and drug-abuse (Stamber, 2006).

Furthermore, though this study did not have any direct objective testing regarding the improvement of functional help, it showed a contribution to building a social support linkage. Besides, there was still a report from the staff of the elderly centre that an elderly who suffered from severe dementia had a bit improvement. Therefore, its potential could not be neglected.

Hence, the hypothesis that finger knitting has positive impact on mood and self-esteem was supported. They were highly correlated. It was also supported that finger knitting has the potential to be developed into a therapy.

4.3 Finger Knitting as a Creative Medium for Self-expression and Self-understanding – Third Stage Test

Apart from the influence of finger knitting on mood and self-esteem, finger knitting as a self-expression and self-understanding process was examined in this stage. Although there were two groups (A and B) and their products were different, the major purpose and content of the workshops were the same. Therefore, the results would not be discussed separately. Group A involved 67 undergraduates while 43 undergraduates were assigned to group B. Hence, there were 110 participants in total. 93 of them were female while 17 of them were male. The ages were ranged from 16 to 27. The 9-week workshops took place in the Hong Kong Polytechnic University classroom. Informal sharing was the major method of collecting their opinions and

self-expression idea of their end products. Although there were 110 participants, the following discussion would not introduce them individually. Figure 4.8 shows some of the end products that participants made (some participants wore their knit product while shooting).



Figure 4.8 Photos showing some of the products that participants made

This stage involved only qualitative test as this part aimed to find out the expressive side of finger knitting. Expression and self-understanding were highly related to self, perception, feelings and opinions, which were all very personal and subjective. It might not be suitable to be quantified by objective test methods, especially as an exploratory stage of study. Nevertheless, it helped to provide very useful insights for the study. Sometimes, common ideas and findings might also be generated by subjective measurements and used for future study on quantitative aspect. Hence, this stage of study focused on the exploratory level by using qualitative research method.

4.3.1 Results of the Third Stage Test

During the second and third parts of this test, participants were motivated to integrate their feelings into their design and knit products. Although most of them might not have much experience in design and apparel making, encouragement and support were even more important than the fashion design skills. Hence, the workshop focused on the idea and feelings that participants would like to express and how they could express their feelings. These could lead to self-awareness and self-understanding, which was the main objective for them, rather than learning fashion design skills.

For the workshop, the theme of participants' design and knit product was suggested to relate to "self" and "feeling". Certainly, they could choose their own theme. The common themes could be categorized into three aspects. They were (1) reflection/view towards the city; (2) view towards life or self-reflection; and (3) expression of feeling. The following parts would show some of the their design pieces as examples.

Reflection/view towards the city



Figure 4.9 A knit piece by participant B19

This participant would like to present “intensive construction” in Hong Kong.

“There is a place which is surrounded by intensive architecture, and many geometric lines that created the confusing and oppressing feeling. That allows us to feel very stressful under the intensive building and want to escape from there... Also, it implied that Hong Kong is a concrete jungle that made citizen live in the intensive place and cannot released their pressure.”

The knit piece was formed by different square panel that represented the intensive building found in most part of Hong Kong. The hole was the only free area and represented the wish to escape from this place and free from pressure.

“This would like to represent someone is surrounded by many tall building, thus she feels stressful and oppressed in this environment. Just only has a small hole can see through to the outside.”



Figure 4.10 A knit piece by participant B27

This design employed the theme of “a cursed tree” to convey the resentful feeling of deforestation.

“My design is inspired by a cursed city, “Yharnam”, which came from a video game. I used the trees in "Yharnam" to present the horror and creepy mood. Also I would like to warn people to stop deforestation and protect the trees.”

The participant believed that even trees have feeling. One cannot overlook their right to live and their importance to the ecological equilibrium. Apart from this, this design also had an ironic idea. He would like to express his dissatisfaction with the political situation that the government usually neglect the sound from the public and makes them breathless.



Figure 4.11 A knit piece by participant B20

This participant used the theme of starry night to represent her disgust over light pollution.

“I would like to enjoy the true colour of sky.”

Hong Kong is famous for its night with lights. Nonetheless, this caused light pollution and it was impossible to see the starry night in urban area. The participant thought that the development of a city could not base on the sacrifice of the nature and the natural beauty is irreplaceable.

View towards life or self-reflection



Figure 4.12 A knit piece by participant B01

This design was a self-painting with the theme of “artist”. The participant believed that life was filled with unlimited possibilities and should not be limited by the society.

“Do what you want, be what you want to be. Take a new step, we will be able to find endless possibilities in life.”

He would like to be an artist that might not be an ideal and acceptable occupation to general public in Hong Kong since it implicated the risk of unstable income. Nevertheless, he would like to use this self-painting to reflect his true heart to be an artist.



Figure 4.13 A knit piece by participant B13

The participant would like to use this knit piece to represent his past four years life. The theme is “all the best, XXX (name of the participant) a loose self portrait”.

“This is inspired by the last four years and those ahead. A life split into four month intervals with common threads throughout... the basic colours inspired by the interior of my home, the only constant in all of my moving to and from.”

During the past four years, he had lived in different cities due to various reasons. He was studying in Hong Kong when participating in this workshop. He believed that the past stories built him and he would back home (starting point) in the future. These tightened the memory and gave birth to the best self.



Figure 4.14 A knit piece by participant B43

The theme of this design was “catch the stars”. It was inspired by the landscape of starry night and the falling star crossing the sky.

“Catching the falling star represents grasping an opportunity as soon as it arises. Do not let any chance pass by and life is too short to miss out on anything.”

This participant used a stair on the middle to represent her wish to go up to catch the star. After a few sessions of the workshop, this participant reflected her past and expressed her view that she would not like to miss any chance again and would like to be more positive. This reflected from her design piece fully.

Expression of feeling



Figure 4.15 A knit piece by participant B26

This participant would like to use this “little monster” to represent her theme of tsunami. She thought that tsunami was full of unhappiness and uncontrollable factors that scared her. With this creation, she tried to

represent her feelings though the colours and the shape (a combination of dinosaur and fish).



Figure 4.16 A knit piece by participant B21

This participant believed in “love and peace” and thus her theme was “sky of peace”.

“It is inspired to develop the theme of Sky. Nowadays, disputes and conflicts often occur in our daily life. However, we are all under the same sky even though we came from different countries or different cities. Love and Peace is the most important thing in the real world.”

Hence, her design would like to bring out the feeling of sky and comfort. Also, she would like to remind people the importance of peace.

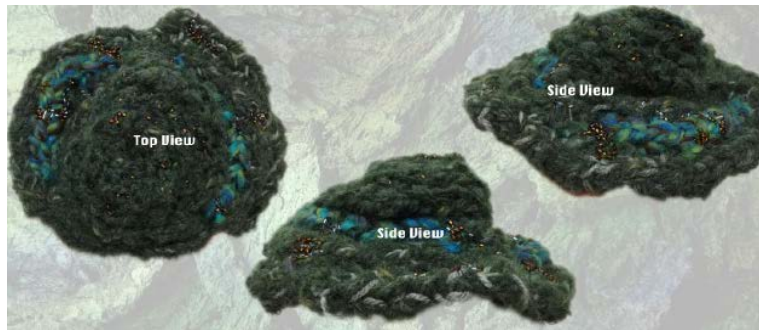


Figure 4.17 A knit piece by participant B17

This participant employed 3D effect and irregular shape by finger knitting to represent her theme of “hidden beauty”.

“Lichen comes in different form, sharp and color and is affected by the growth environment. Surprisingly, it works as a decoration to the plant. However, not everyone notice those beauties. The message that I want to say is some unexpected things are actually very beautiful but you may never notice. To remind the busy urbanite, stop and pay attention to things surrounding us.”

She would also like to remind herself and the others that do not take thing for granted. People might not notice the importance of something but those were “beauty” and “gift”. She believed that people should appreciate the beauty and works by the others and the nature.



Figure 4.18 A knit garment by participant A27

This participant would like to utilize this knit garment to present her love to God and thanks God. The word “A-men” and the big cross at the back echo the love of God.



Figure 4.19 A knit garment by participant A48

The theme of this participant's product was "Little Twins Star". She loved Little Twins Star very much and thought that it represented childhood. Children should be full of imagination and happiness. She thus used bright colours to make a very cute garment that suit the feeling of childhood. This reminded the story of childhood.



Figure 4.20 A knit garment by participant A57

This participant used the theme of "home sweet home" to represent his feeling towards his home and family. He thought that was a very comfortable

and warm place. Hence, he made a comfortable and warm garment that he could wear it at home.

4.3.2 Finding and Discussion of the Test in Third Stage

This test in third stage aimed at finding out (1) the effectiveness of finger knitting on altering mood; (2) the influence of level of difficulties on sense of achievement and self-evaluation; (3) the relationship between self-esteem, mood repair and the designed intervention (finger knitting) and; (4) the potential of finger knitting to promote self-understanding and self-expression. From the informal interviews, questions regarding participants' perception towards finger knitting, and their self-reflection were recorded. Below was the discussion concerning their opinions and this responded to the objectives of the test.

Perception towards finger knitting

Most of the participants mentioned their thought regarding finger knitting mainly fell into the following categories: “enjoyment”, “peer support”, “creativity” and “personal growth and empowerment”.

As they were student during participating the workshop and the workshop were carried out aligned with the academic semester, they had to face the pressure from the assignments and examinations, especially towards the last sessions. Nevertheless, they felt comfort and relax during finger knitting. They could also distract themselves from negative thoughts.

“When I am stressful with studying, I try to do something else as a break. As I am working on my knit design and would like to finish it before my exam, I choose to knit. A bit surprise that after half an hour of knitting, I was free from the nervous feeling of studying and concentrate on knitting. Although I still feel pressure from the exam, I am more relax and happier.”

“Hong Kong people are too stressful. People have to be relax... finger knitting could be the solution.”

Apart from stress-free, they found that finger knitting was interesting, unique and enjoy it very much.

“I never knit or crochet before. I think it is fun, cute and enjoyable.”

“Machine knitting is convenient but finger knitting bring satisfaction.”

One of the major reason of enjoying the workshop and felt happy might related to peer support. Some of them joined the workshop with their friends while some of them made new friends during workshop. Regardless of when they became friends, they felt support from others. They could ask for help when they had problems. As mentioned before, this kind of social support and involvement brought benefits. Hence, it is supported that this finger knitting helped in mood.

The creative power is doubtless that every participant created a piece of knit or a garment successfully. This also brought them a sense of achievement and empowered them to express their views. All of them were able to transform their idea into a knit piece or knit garment.

“Organizing the knit pieces and knitting enable me to understand myself and achieve my work. It relates to how I can grow and how I can realize my concept. I feel comfort and relax with finger knitting.”

Some participants also thought that finger knitting might be good training for them. Not just physical training as it involved hand working, but also a training to be patient. It also involved management skills. Hence, it helped personal growth.

“It involves planning, like pattern making and yarns selection. It is more interesting and challenge than I thought. I learned a lot.”

In short, participants found benefits of finger knitting and it is related to mood and personal growth. Generally, they felt relaxed, happy and satisfied with the workshop. They were pleased to make friends and have mutual support. Hence, they were more confident in social interaction. Additionally, they enjoyed a sense of achievement that contributed to performance self-esteem. Hence, the objectives of this workshop were achieved and the hypothesis of finger knitting help to improve mood should be supported. Also, the hypothesis of finger knitting helped in social and performance self-esteem should be supported.

Learning and challenge

During the finger knitting process, challenges did occurred. All of the participants did not know finger knitting and they learn it during the workshops. They found that finger knitting was amazing that no tool was required for it. Nonetheless, not all of them learn it without any difficulties. Some of them needed repeated trials to grasp the skills. However, all of them were able to grasp the basic techniques at the end of the first session. After a few sessions, they started to ask for new skills and created their own piece.

This achieved the objective of providing a new method to improve sense of achievement and confidence with limited chance of failure.

“It is a bit challenging at first. I need to pay attention and follow the steps carefully. But after I grasp the basic techniques, I find it very interesting to change a little step to create new patterns.”

“It is a fun experience of doing finger knitting. I thought knitting must involve tools like needles before... Sometimes, it is hard to keep every space in each finger equally leading the tension and spacing between each wale to be the same. However, after trying a few times, it becomes better.”

Finger knitting also involved planning and preparation on yarn selection, time control, costs control and design. People have to think of what they are going to do and how they are going to do first. This helped to improve people’s ability of management and enabled personal growth.

“Challenging but a good learning process. I look for online resources and practice to learn new skills.”

“Interesting. I need to find suitable yarn and choose suitable knitting construction to match my theme. Next time, I may try to create yarn as well.”

“A good learning process for me. I learned problem-solving skill and became more patient.”

As this workshop had increased level of difficulties and two groups had different end products. Their sense of achievement during each stage seemed increased as they were learning gradually. It was found that they were more satisfied when they completed the products. It might not necessarily that the sense of achievement was related to the level of difficulties. Rather, it was more related to the ability to accomplish the products. Hence, even two groups had made different end products, their satisfaction level and sense of achievement was indifferent. This was reflected by the observation of their response. They were happy with their products. For those participants with knit garment as the end product, it was not hard to image their happiness and satisfaction. All the garments they made were wearable. For those participants with knit piece as the end product, they still treated them as a very valuable art piece.

Self-reflection and self-understanding

Finger knitting in this workshop used as a self-expression tool to convey participants' intangible idea or feelings into tangible knit product. As mentioned before, all of them were able to achieve this. The design process enabled them to externalize their idea and feelings. It also provided an outlet to their negative emotion. Although not everyone could create a fantastic knit piece, they could still create something meaningful. Therefore, finger knitting not only had a potential to be the therapeutic tool for altering mood, but also should be considered as a method for self-expression.

With the process of self-reflection before creating a knit piece belonged to them and related to their own stories, they also underwent a process of self-reflection and self-awareness. As mentioned and demonstrated by samples before, participants made knit piece or garment that involved "meaning" to them. All of them used their own experience or own feeling successfully to create the end product. Although other people might not be able to understand well without creator's explanation, this provided a way for participants to express themselves. Some of them claimed that they were touched by their own creation. Furthermore, after the completion of the knit piece, they were encouraged to have self-reflection of joining the workshop. They were able to understand themselves more. They knew more about their strength and weakness and this help in facilitating positive change.

“I found change of myself. I think that everything could be positive if I have a positive mindset.”

“My knit piece is about my secret. After self-reflection, I think that the point of views of everyone is different. It is not important to know what the actual view is. The important thing is to find my own view.”

To sum up, this test has sought to find out the ability of using finger knitting as a mean for self-expression and self-understanding. Creation of knit piece or garment was recognized by the participants to assist them to understand their inner self and express their unspoken feelings and thoughts. It also helped to promote personal growth as they might have positive change.

Chapter Five

Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Conclusion

The pursuit of high efficiency living and working style in Hong Kong contributes to high pressure. Unfortunately, this kind of stress and bad feeling is accumulated and thus leads to more serious problems like depression, insomnia and anxiety. Medical supports for people who suffered from mental health problem are not enough. Also, the methods that people adopted to cope with stress have uncertain effectiveness. Currently, people try various psychotherapies to alleviate stress and improve mood. One of the common methods is art therapy; nevertheless, its effectiveness had limited support. Regarding using “fashion” as a kind of psychotherapy, retail therapy is the one that most commonly found. However, it even has drawbacks. In the light of this situation, this study suggests a new “fashion therapy” to improve mental health with high accessibility to public. Thus, finger knitting, a form of knitting, will be employed for this purpose.

Finger knitting has great potential to exploit as a treatment. It allows people to apply their creativity, for example, materials selection and design, so that it could be considered as a tool for self-expression and discovering one’s inner world. By completing a knit product, participants might enjoy the sense of fulfillment and it too

has good influence on their self-worth and self-esteem. Besides, knitters could have a breath from their life, or to be more specific, one may escape from negative mindset and focus on finishing their artwork. It thus dedicates to easing the stress and calming. Papers also indicate that knitting could stabilize heart rate and maintain the meditative-wise state (Corkhill, 2012; Turney, 2009). Furthermore, knitting, particularly when it becomes group activity, encourages social involvement and boost their confidence to talk to strangers by providing a common interest for discussion among the group (Corkhill, 2012; Minahan & Cox, 2007). They could benefit from improvement in social skills and enlarge the social circle. Through peer learning or sharing, positive thinking could be spread and sense of belongings is therefore existed.

Therefore, this study aims to develop an innovative knitting-facilitated therapy by finger knitting to alleviate the stress and alter negative mood of people. To achieve this aim, three stages of test are employed.

In the first test, it aims to find out the immediate impact of finger knitting on self-esteem. It is hypothesized that finger knitting is effective to improve state self-esteem of performance and social but not appearance. The participants are randomly assigned into tested group and controlled group. After an hour experiment, their pretest state self-esteem as the baseline is compared with the posttest state self-esteem. It shows that finger knitting is effective to improve state self-esteem of performance and social but not appearance.

In the second stage, two tests were involved. Undergraduates and elderly were the targets. Both of them undergo a 4-week finger knitting program. They have made a knit product by finger knitting within a month. Informal interviews and observation are used to collect participants' opinions about the program and the perception about finger knitting. Thematic analysis is adopted. For the undergraduates test, the theme are on (1) calming and relaxation effect; (2) self-confidence and satisfaction; (3) social involvement and; (4) active lifestyle and productivity. In the test for the elderly, the themes are (1) warmth and happiness; (2) sense of life meaning and self-worth; (3) sense of involvement; and (4) social support and potential functional help. The discovery is that finger knitting worked on reducing negative mood by tension releasing and improving people's self-esteem. Participants feel happier and warm. Sense of belonging is established and it changed one's life to a brighter side. Hence, it supported the hypothesis that finger knitting helped in altering mood and improving self-esteem. In addition, the findings show that mood, self-esteem and finger knitting have a certain relationship. Therefore, it also supports the hypothesis that mood, self-esteem and finger knitting have a positive relationship. They interact together to bring positive change to participants.

Finally, to examine the potential of finger knitting as a free creative medium for self-expression, the third stage is employed. Undergraduates were invited to join the 9-week workshop. There are two groups. The only difference is their end product; one is a knit piece while one is a knit garment. It is found that they are all very satisfied with the workshop and their end product. There is no obvious difference that shows

the difficulty of the end product will change the result. The perception of the participants towards finger knitting is mainly categorized into “enjoyment”, “peer support”, “creativity” and “personal growth and empowerment”. They think that it is a very good learning experience yet a bit challenging. This contributes to personal growth. Moreover, it is found that participants were all able to use finger knitting as a medium to express their feelings and thoughts. The major themes of their knit piece or garment are (1) reflection/view towards the city; (2) view towards life or self-reflection; and (3) expression of feeling. They were able to understand themselves more. They knew more about their strength and weakness and this help in facilitating positive change. Hence, the aim of using finger knitting as a medium of self-expression and self-understanding is realized.

From the above tests, it supported that finger knitting has the potential to develop into therapeutic context. To make it practical, it can be a 4-week program or 9-week program depending on the major output. For a whole garment, 9-week program is suggested. The workshop should be carried out with comfortable environment that mutual support and mutual appreciate should be encouraged. The workshop should include warming up and feedback to let participants be more familiar with each other and reflect and understand themselves.

Apart from this, three stages tests help to investigate the outcomes and effectiveness of finger knitting. With the participants’ insight and experience, it shows that mood can be improved and self-esteem can be enhanced. It is mainly because of nature of

finger knitting and the related benefits brought. For example, accomplishment of goal (making a knit product) may provide a sense of achievement and enhance self-worth. Also, participants can concentrate on finger knitting that they can disperse their negatives thoughts and stabilize their emotion. Moreover, it provides a comfort social supportive environment. They can feel warm and receive support from others and improve their social confidence. Hence, the tests also help to understand the relationship between mood, self-esteem and finger knitting. Achievement may contribute to a positive impact on people mood (Forgas et al., 1990; Arkin & Maruyama, 1979). People feel happier, confident and proud with successful creation of knit product. The relationship between mood, self-esteem and finger knitting is clearly interacted.

The last test also help to examine of finger knitting on its potential on being a free creative medium for self-expression or self-understanding. Participants can have a method for self-expression and self-understanding. It is an outlet for negative feelings. Also, the process of creation enables them to undergo self-reflection. This fosters positive personal growth.

There are still numerous of benefits of developing finger knitting as a therapy. This study only serves as a pilot study associating fashion design, knitting with therapy. It is hoped that more public awareness towards mental health can be paid and more related works can be done to help the mental health issues.

5.2 Implication and Research Framework

This study is a pioneer of studying finger knitting therapy that is highly associated with fashion, knitting and therapy. This study demonstrated the effectiveness of finger knitting therapy, and it implies that psychotherapies may help in mental health issues. It not just helps to provide implication for a specific therapy (finger knitting therapy), but also future study on other psychotherapies, especially those related to fashion and knitting. This study also develops the finger knitting methods and how to apply it as a therapy. It indicates many benefits brought by finger knitting and its potential to be a useful therapy. This, thus, provides a foundation for finger knitting therapy.

Moreover, it discusses certain relationship between mood, self-esteem and finger knitting therapy. The finger knitting therapy brings calming effect, warm and happiness to the participants. They feel a sense of achievement and a sense of self-worth by accomplish of knit products and learning of new skill. Also, they are enabled to communicate with others well and being supportive to others. This implies the interrelationship of mood, self-esteem and finger knitting. Therefore, when considering the improvement of mood, self-esteem may be an important factor that affecting it and finger knitting may be a good method to help.

In addition, the help of finger knitting to serve as a free creative medium for self-expression and self-understanding is considered being useful. It further implies that

artworks or handicraft works enable people to free from negative thinking. It has a therapeutic effect. Also, the “works” may imply certain meaning of it. The study of those meaning and intangible thoughts help to find out people’s underlying problems or feelings. When conducting therapy or deal with people who suffered from mental health problems, attention should be paid to these “visible” thoughts.

In organizing future finger knitting workshops or conducting further study of finger knitting therapy, a framework is developed (as shown in figure 5.1). The framework indicates the procedures of studying finger knitting step-by-step, including recruitment, data collection, workshop setting, measurement methods and so on.

To start with the study of finger knitting, recruitment of participants is essential and their will to join should be respected. Although everyone should be encouraged to join the program regardless of their age and sex, people with severe hand function problems may not able to join. For example, people who are paralysis and not able move may not able to finger knit. Nevertheless, the situation of each person may not be the same, this kind of cases should be considered with clinical advice before joining the program. Briefing regarding the program should be given and participants should sign the consent.

After the recruitment, baseline measurements should be carried out to understand the demographical information and health situation of the participants. More importantly,

their depression, anxiety, stress level and self-esteem should be recorded. This can be helped by internationally used scale such as DASS and SESS that used in this study.

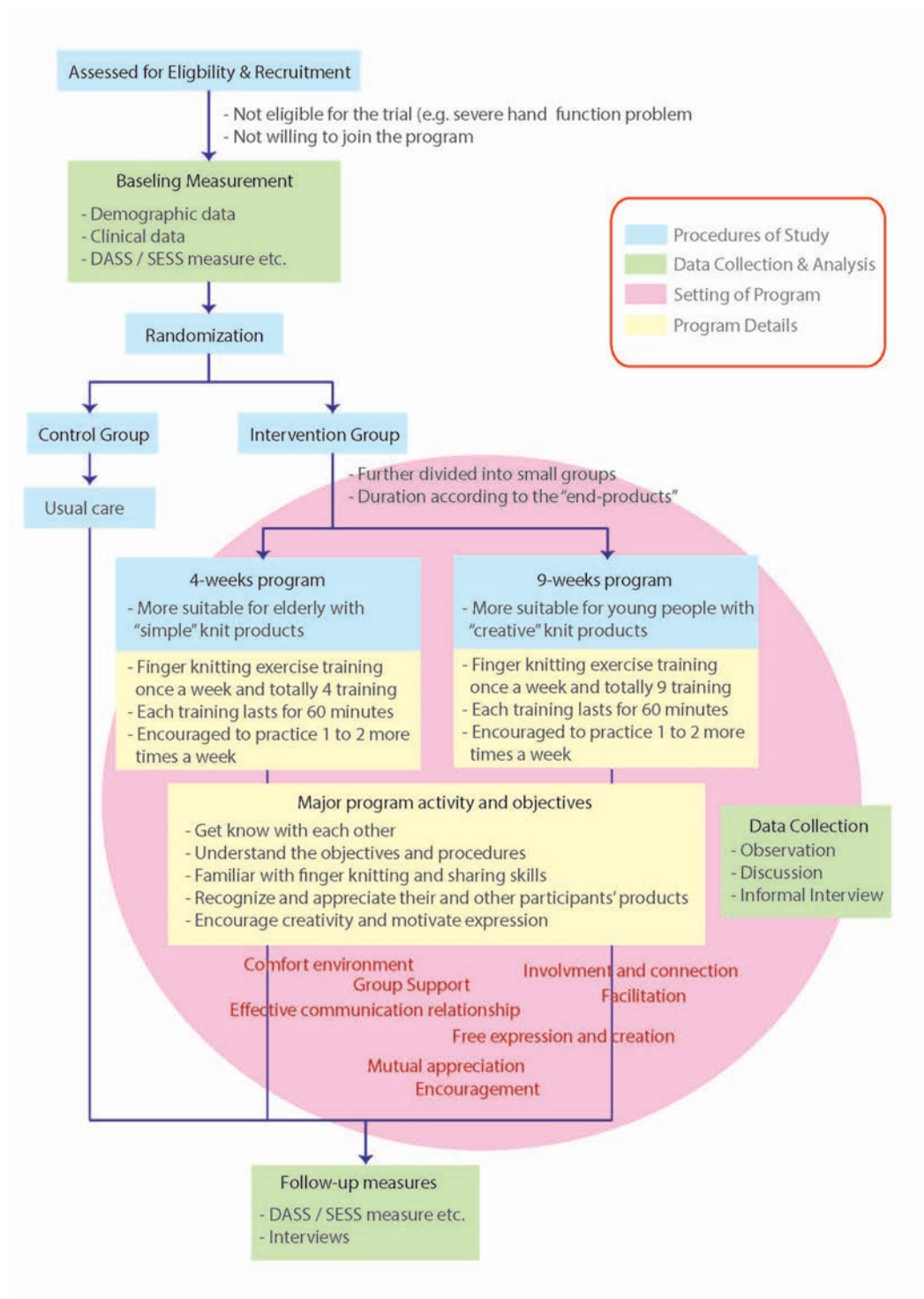


Figure 5.1 The framework of conducting finger knitting program and research

In some case, randomization is needed to divide participants into controlled group and intervention group. For instance, more specific understanding of the causes of change may involve controlled group. In this study, except the first stage test, most tests used the testing methods that already enable the understanding of the nature of the change. Hence, no controlled group is employed.

For the controlled group, usual care is enough to minimize the intervention of the results. For the intervention group, participants should be further divided into small groups for better monitoring and care. There are two suggested durations for the test. The consideration is the end product and the difficulty level. For example, for elderly, it is easier for them to learn simple techniques. Hence, 4-weeks program is more suitable. For the young people, they love to learn more techniques, it seems that 9 weeks program is a better choice. Especially, for using finger knitting as a creative medium, longer duration enable to have deeper self-understanding and more time to accomplish the products. Similarly, the workshop should be carried out once a week and each of the training should be an hour. They are encouraged to practice 1 to 2 times a week.

The processes of the workshop may follow four-stage method suggested by Campbell (1993), which includes warming up, core activity, feedback and ending. The major activity and objectives of the whole program are similar in nature. Both of them should involve part to get know with each other and understand the program's objectives and procedures. Certainly, it includes the sharing of finger knitting skills

and practice of it. It also encourages participants to recognize and appreciate their and other works. It hopes that supportive environment can be cultivated, and eventually they can have higher confidence with other support and recognition. Furthermore, creativity and expression should be encouraged. Though it is observed in this study that elderly may tends to follow steps instead of creating new things, it should not limit their creativity. If they have idea or they want to learn new things, they should be encouraged as it is a very useful way for self-expression and very helpful way to enhance sense of achievement. In addition, expression should be encouraged. Not only the expression of intangible feelings on the creation, but also expression of themselves during the conversation. This enables better understanding of the problems or feelings of the participants. Expression of unhappy feeling helps to release negative mood sometimes and “solutions” may come out with clear “problem” defined.

To ensure the smooth and effective procedures, the setting of the workshop is extremely important. The environment should be comfortable that participants can relax, finger knit and chat with other. As mentioned, the cultivation of a mutual support and appreciation condition is helpful for them to be involved and build up a connection. They may then have a sense of belongings and sense of cohesion to improve their social self-esteem and being nature to share their views. Comparison and hostile feeling should be minimized. This may rely on facilitator’s observation and efforts to build up an effective communication relationship. This, in return, helps the study since participants are more willing to share their perception, feelings and

stories with closer relationship. Moreover, some participants may be shy in group setting or not active to create their own product, acceptable encouragement should be given. It cannot pose another pressure on them. What is more, to facilitate their creation and enhance visual and touch stimulation, sometimes, different types of yarns with different colours can be provided. As mentioned, people may have a more comfort feelings with soft and warm objects and they may be happier with more colours. Hence, it is one of the strategies to boost their mood and inspire their creation.

During the program, data collection should be carried out at the same times. The useful methods are observation, discussion and informal interview. Observation with their mood change, body language or level of commitment may help to understand the help of finger knitting and their feelings change. Certainly, their verbal expression during discussion and informal interviews provided much useful information. Qualitative methods are always useful for finding out underlying beliefs, perception, feelings and attitudes. Since psychotherapies and mental health issues are concerned more with intangible feelings, perception and personal issues, subjective methods cannot be overlooked.

To supplement the qualitative methods, objective measurements, like the internationally used questionnaire, may be used. For example, as mentioned, the DASS and SESS can be adopted. This can help to understand the change more

objectively. For instance, pre-posttest measurement with t-test analysis can help to work out the significant level of change.

Although this study does not have further follow up measurement after a period of time after the end of the program, it is suggested a further measurement should be conducted. For example, one more interview or survey should be carried out after a month or 3 months after the end of the workshop. This helps to trace the habits building of participants and understand the prolonged benefits or shortcomings of finger knitting.

All in all, there are numerous of procedures involved in conducting finger knitting therapy. Each steps requires careful planning and are essential for the data collection. This framework hopes to serves as a foundation to finger knitting therapy study. As this study implies plenty of benefits promoting finger knitting as a therapy, it hopes to promote further examination of fashion-facilitated therapy, as well as conduces to the improvement of quality of life.

5.3 Limitation and Recommendation

Still, this study was only a pilot test that investigated the possibility of finger knitting in improving mental health and self-esteem. Further examinations are required to

study the effectiveness and strengthen the statement. Hence, this study has the following limitation and recommendation for future investigation.

First of all, the number and types of participants may not be able to represent the whole situation. Especially for the test of stage 1, as mentioned, this was only a pilot test. To verify its accuracy of effectiveness, a large-scale quantitative test with large sample size in the future is required. Also, the tests mainly focused on undergraduates and elderly. There are limited participants aged from 30 to 60. In particular, participants in this case are those normal with no mental illness recorded. Therefore, for future studies, participants with different level of mental illness or from different backgrounds should be invited.

It also refers to that the study should take demographics data into the account for accurate analysis. Understanding demographics data helps to modify the finger knitting program to best fit the participants and maximize the effectiveness. Like test of stage 3, with free expression and creation, undergraduates were not just enjoy the good side of finger knitting, such as enjoyment and higher self-esteem, but also able to express themselves. Thus, they were further benefited from the program. Additionally, people with different sex, educational background, occupation etc. may have different views on finger knitting and its effects on mood moderation. To further investigate the help of finger knitting, this is a very essential direction. Take sex as an example of those factors. Traditionally, male and female are having different response to arts or handicrafts. Their different perception on knitting is more obvious.

Knitting is regarded as domestic works done by housewives. Hence, male may not willing to join the workshop or may not actively engage in it even they join the workshop. Though male participants showed no great differences with female participants on this study, the number of male participants was obviously less than female participants. This may affects the spread of finger knitting therapy and limit its potential. Therefore, for future study, demographic data are important criteria that worth of study. Distinctive perception and views should be investigated. It also suggests that more effective promotion to attract male participants, and to let them understand the help of finger knitting and its difference with traditional knitting.

Moreover, there are other factors affecting the help of finger knitting that worth of study. For example, as mentioned in literature review part, colours and materials texture may affect people's mood since there is great relationship between colour, texture and emotion. Knitting provides a juncture for visual and tactile sensation. Brighter colours may attribute to a happier feeling. Also, soft and warmth feeling may bring affable sentiment. Hence, yarns, as a colourful, soft and warmth product, help to stimulate visual and touch sensation. Besides, there are still other factors regarding the workshop may affect the effectiveness or outcomes of the therapy. Like the length of training, short training time may affect the learning or discussion quality while long training time may lead to tiredness and bored. These kinds of factors may affect the effectiveness of finger knitting as a therapy. Nevertheless, they are not examined much in this study. In future study, the factors affecting the effectiveness of finger

knitting therapy should be investigated to build up a more solid and effective finger knitting therapy methodology.

In addition to this, control group may add to help standardize the whole program. Although longitudinal tests, like tests of stage 2 and 3, help to measure change already, control group can help to further verify the cause of change and modify the program to a standardized testing method. As mentioned, standardized clinical test may hinder the development of finger knitting therapy as it still on the exploratory and development stage and art should not be structured. The model and testing method should be generated based on the way of how specific case or study works. However, in future, the current study and framework help to provide a foundation for further study. Clinical study can then take place to understand the causes of change more objectively.

What is more, although some tests adopted objective testing methods, like using internationally adopted questionnaires, most of the tests utilize subjective methods like interview and observation. Subjective methods are usually employed for exploratory study like this research. One cannot neglect the importance of participants' opinions, insights and experience. It helps to provide very useful insights for the study. Sometimes, common ideas and findings might also be generated by subjective measurements and used for future study on quantitative aspect. Nevertheless, to make the effectiveness of finger knitting therapy more obvious and reliable, it is true that objective tests in the future should be adopted. For example, quantifiable data, such as

depression, anxiety and stress level should be recorded. Pre-posttest differences should be measured to find out the change objectively.

Moreover, the immediate effects of the finger knitting workshop were recorded. However, most tests lack controlled group and further interviews or observations for the post-workshop period. The duration of effectiveness may not be accessed in this case. Hence, to have a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of finger knitting, further in-depth research is needed. For example, either questionnaire or interviews should be done at least three times (right before the program, immediately after the program and at least a month after the program). This helps to trace the habits building of participants and understand the prolonged benefits or shortcomings of finger knitting.

Apart from this, as mentioned that art therapy involves two levels. One is psychoanalytic level and another one is creative process is also therapeutic process. Although stage 3 involves test that enable participants to express feelings and bring intangible world out, all tests on different level mainly focus on therapeutic process. It hopes that the finger knitting process can have a therapeutic effect that help to calm people and bring them happiness. Though they feel better with self-expression and self-understanding on stage 3, more works can be done to understand their unconscious thoughts. That's mean future study can target more on psychoanalytic level that symbolic meaning of artworks should be studied. For instance, sometimes the use of different colours may reflect people's feelings. People may use darker

colours with bad mood while using bright colours with good mood, although sometimes it may be due to their preferences. For finger knitting, tight knitting or loose knitting may reflect one's anxiety level. People who are being tense and having high stress may knit tightly. These kinds of non-verbal meaning should be observed and studied. So that the problems or the inner world of people with mental problems can be interpreted well and thus help them accordingly. It is very advantageous that finger knitting can reach both levels. It is thus worth of future study on finger knitting therapy and its help in both levels.

It is obvious that there are still rooms for further study as developing finger knitting to be a therapy is a relatively new concept. Yet, it is worth for examination as the excessive benefits is covered. As mentioned before, generally, art therapy has limited quantifiable data to support its effectiveness, the results not just provide academic supports and insights for improvements, but also participants can understand and be confident to finger knitting therapy when they are facing challenge. Therefore, future research is a must to supplement the development of finger knitting therapy.

Appendix I



Hong Kong Polytechnic University Institute of Textiles and Clothing



香港理工大學服裝及紡織學系

This survey aims to find out the possibility of the newly developed fashion-facilitated psychotherapy and its relationship with self-esteem. Please spend a few minutes to answer the following questions. The personal data provided will be collected and only used academically to compile aggregate statistics. Aggregate statistics refer to a form of survey results in which the individual data subjects will not be identified. The confidentiality of the information you provide will be carefully protected. Thank you for your participation.

此問卷調查旨在研究紡織藝術治療的可行性及其與自信的關係。請您用數分鐘的時間回答以下問題。你所提供的個人資料，將會被收集作為總體統計之學術用途。有關資料只供本調查使用。總體統計是指一種概括性的調查結果，個別人士的資料或數據將不會被顯示。我們將會小心處理你所提供的資料，並嚴加保密。多謝您的參與。

Date 日期： _____

Source of the scales:

Psychology Foundation of Australia (Nov 10, 2014). Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS). Psychology Foundation of Australia. Retrieved from <http://www2.psy.unsw.edu.au/dass/> (For the Chinese translation, the reference is Taouk, M., Lovibond, P.F. & Laube, R. (2001). *Psychometric properties of a Chinese version of the short Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS21)*. Report for New South Wales Transcultural Mental Health Centre, Cumberland Hospital, Sydney.)

Heatherton, T. F., & Polivy, J. (1991). Development and validation of a scale for measuring state self-esteem. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 60(6), 895-910. Copyright © 1991 by the American Psychological Association. Reproduced [or Adapted] with permission. The official citation that should be used in referencing this material is [list the original APA bibliographic citation]. No further reproduction or distribution is permitted without written permission from the American Psychological Association.

Please read each statement and circle a number 0, 1, 2 or 3 which indicates how much the statement applied to you over the past week. There are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time on any statement.

請小心閱讀以下每一個句子，並在其右方圈上一數字，表示「過往一個星期」如何適用於你。答案並無對錯之分。請不要花太多時間在某一句子上。

	Never 不適用	Sometimes 間中適用	Often 經常適用	Almost always 最適用
1. I was intolerant of anything that kept me from getting on with what I was doing 我無法容忍任何阻礙我繼續工作的事情	0	1	2	3
2. I felt I was rather touchy 我感到忐忑不安	0	1	2	3
3. I found it difficult to relax 我感到很難放鬆自己	0	1	2	3
4. I found myself getting agitated 我發覺自己很容易被觸怒	0	1	2	3
5. I felt that I was using a lot of nervous energy 我覺得自己消耗很多精神	0	1	2	3
6. I found it hard to wind down 我覺得很難讓自己安靜下來	0	1	2	3
7. I tended to over-react to situations 我對事情往往作出過敏反應	0	1	2	3
8. I felt that life was meaningless 我感到生命毫無意義	0	1	2	3
9. I felt that I had nothing to look forward to 我覺得自己對將來沒有甚麼可盼望	0	1	2	3
10. I couldn't seem to experience any positive feeling at all 我好像不能再有任何愉快、舒暢的感覺	0	1	2	3
11. I was unable to become enthusiastic about anything 我對任何事也不能熱衷	0	1	2	3
12. I felt that I wasn't worth much as a person 我覺得自己不怎麼配做人	0	1	2	3
13. I felt down-hearted and blue 我感到憂鬱沮喪	0	1	2	3
14. I found it difficult to work up the initiative to do things 我感到很難自動去開始工作	0	1	2	3

15. I was aware of the action of my heart in the absence of physical exertion 我察覺自己在沒有明顯的體力勞動時，也感到心律不正常	0	1	2	3
16. I experienced breathing difficulty (e.g., excessively rapid breathing, breathlessness in the absence of physical exertion) 我感到呼吸困難（例如不是做運動時也感到氣促或透不過氣來）	0	1	2	3
17. I experienced trembling (e.g., in the hands) 我感到顫抖（例如手震）	0	1	2	3
18. I felt I was close to panic 我感到快要恐慌了	0	1	2	3
19. I felt scared without any good reason 我無緣無故地感到害怕	0	1	2	3
20. I was worried about situations in which I might panic and make a fool of myself 我憂慮一些令自己恐慌或出醜的場合	0	1	2	3
21. I was aware of dryness of my mouth 我感到口乾	0	1	2	3

This is a questionnaire designed to measure what you are thinking at this moment. There is, of course, no right answer for any statement. The best answer is what you feel is true of yourself at this moment. Be sure to answer all of the items, even if you are not certain of the best answer. Again, answer these questions as they are true for you RIGHT NOW.

	Not at all					Extremely
22. I feel confident about my abilities	1	2	3	4	5	
23. I am worried about whether I am regarded as a success or failure	1	2	3	4	5	
24. I feel satisfied with the way my body looks right now	1	2	3	4	5	
25. I feel frustrated or rattled about my performance	1	2	3	4	5	
26. I feel that I am having trouble understanding things that I read	1	2	3	4	5	
27. I feel that others respect and admire me	1	2	3	4	5	
28. I am dissatisfied with my weight	1	2	3	4	5	
29. I feel self-conscious	1	2	3	4	5	
30. I feel as smart as others	1	2	3	4	5	
31. I feel displeased with myself	1	2	3	4	5	
32. I feel good about myself	1	2	3	4	5	
33. I am pleased with my appearance right now	1	2	3	4	5	
34. I am worried about what other people think of me	1	2	3	4	5	
35. I feel confident that I understand things	1	2	3	4	5	
36. I feel inferior to others at this moment	1	2	3	4	5	
37. I feel unattractive	1	2	3	4	5	
38. I feel concerned about the impression I am making	1	2	3	4	5	
39. I feel that I have less scholastic ability right now than others	1	2	3	4	5	

40. I feel like I'm not doing well	1	2	3	4	5
41. I am worried about looking foolish	1	2	3	4	5



Please spend a few minutes to answer the following questions. 請您用數分鐘的時間回答以下問題。

Please circle a number on the scale below to indicate your agreement. 請在下列陳述句子中圈出您的同意度。

	Definitely disagree					Definitely agree				
	絕對不同意					絕對同意				
1. Instructor provides clear guidance 導師指導清晰	1	2	3	4	5					
2. The workshop has adequate assistance 工作坊所提供的協助足夠	1	2	3	4	5					
3. The types of activities are appropriate 活動種類合適	1	2	3	4	5					
4. The activities are interesting 此活動有趣	1	2	3	4	5					
5. The techniques of finger knitting are easy to learn 手指編織的技巧簡單易學	1	2	3	4	5					
6. The length of the activity is appropriate 每次活動時間適中	1	2	3	4	5					
7. The number of sessions is appropriate 活動堂數合適	1	2	3	4	5					
8. The notes are helpful for learning 筆記有助學習	1	2	3	4	5					
9. The arrangements help me to learn step by step 活動安排能幫助我循序漸進學習	1	2	3	4	5					
10. Home Exercise helps me to build up the habit 家居練習有助我培養習慣	1	2	3	4	5					
11. This activity benefit my daily life 此活動對我日常生活有益處	1	2	3	4	5					
12. This activity help my mood management 此活動對我的情緒管理有幫助	1	2	3	4	5					
13. This activity helps to alleviate my pressure 此活動對我舒緩壓力有幫助	1	2	3	4	5					
14. This activity improve my self-confidence 此活動對我的自信有幫助	1	2	3	4	5					
15. This activity is meaningful and important 此活動有意義及重要	1	2	3	4	5					
16. I will recommend this activity to my friends 我會向其他朋友推介此活動	1	2	3	4	5					

The personal data provided will be collected and only used academically to compile aggregate statistics. Aggregate statistics refer to a form of survey results in which the individual data subjects will not be identified. The confidentiality of the information you provide will be carefully protected. Thank you for your participation.

你所提供的個人資料，將會被收集作為總體統計之學術用途。有關資料只供本調查使用。總體統計是指一種概括性的調查結果，個別人仕的資料或數據將不會被顯示。我們將會小心處理你所提供的資料，並嚴加保密。多謝您的參與。

Appendix III

Questionnaire Reference Code 問卷參考編號： _____



Hong Kong Polytechnic University Institute of Textiles and Clothing
香港理工大學服裝及紡織學系



This survey aims to find out the possibility of the newly developed fashion-facilitated psychotherapy and its relationship with self-esteem. Please spend a few minutes to answer the following questions.

此問卷調查旨在研究紡織藝術治療的可行性及其與自信的關係。請您用數分鐘的時間回答以下問題。

Date 日期： _____

Please circle a number on the scale below to indicate your agreement.

請在下列陳述句子中圈出您的同意度。

	Definitely disagree				Definitely agree
	絕對不同意				絕對同意
1. Instructors provide clear guidance 導師指導清晰	1	2	3	4	5
2. The workshop has adequate assistance 工作坊所提供的協助足夠	1	2	3	4	5
3. The types of activities are appropriate 活動種類合適	1	2	3	4	5
4. The activity is interesting 此活動有趣	1	2	3	4	5
5. The techniques of finger knitting are easy to learn 手指編織的技巧簡單易學	1	2	3	4	5
6. The length of the activity is appropriate 每次活動時間適中	1	2	3	4	5
7. The number of sessions is appropriate 活動堂數合適	1	2	3	4	5
8. The arrangements help me to learn step by step 活動安排能幫助我循序漸進學習	1	2	3	4	5
9. This activity helps me to cultivate the habit 此活動有助我培養習慣	1	2	3	4	5
10. This activity benefits my daily life 此活動對我日常生活有益處	1	2	3	4	5

11. This activity helps my mood management 此活動對我的情緒管理有幫助	1	2	3	4	5
12. This activity helps to build up positive thinking 此活動能幫助我建立正面的思想	1	2	3	4	5
13. Participating in this activity makes me happy 參加此活動讓我感到快樂	1	2	3	4	5
14. This activity helps to alleviate my pressure 此活動對我紓緩壓力有幫助	1	2	3	4	5
15. This activity improves my self-confidence 此活動對我的自信有幫助	1	2	3	4	5
16. This activity enhances my social communication 此活動能加強我與其他人的交流	1	2	3	4	5
17. This activity helps to establish communication topic 此活動能幫助我建立溝通話題	1	2	3	4	5
18. Satisfaction is obtained when the product is accomplished 完成製成品使我感到滿足	1	2	3	4	5
19. I am proud of my completed product 完成製成品使我感到驕傲	1	2	3	4	5
20. This activity is meaningful and important 此活動有意義及重要	1	2	3	4	5
21. I will recommend this activity to my friends 我會向其他朋友推介此活動	1	2	3	4	5

The personal data provided will be collected and only used academically to compile aggregate statistics. Aggregate statistics refer to a form of survey results in which the individual data subjects will not be identified. The confidentiality of the information you provide will be carefully protected. Thank you for your participation.

你所提供的個人資料，將會被收集作為總體統計之學術用途。有關資料只供本調查使用。總體統計是指一種概括性的調查結果，個別人仕的資料或數據將不會被顯示。我們將會小心處理你所提供的資料，並嚴加保密。多謝您的參與。

Appendix IV



The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
香港理工大學

INSTITUTE OF TEXTILES & CLOTHING
紡織及服裝學系

迷茫
情緒低落
壓力大

你能想像下面的服裝是由手指編織出來的嗎？



針織藝術治療

此工作坊通過創新的手指針織編織，在創作過程中自我探索，
達致緩解負面情緒，緊張感覺及壓力，促進成長和提昇生活情趣。

請預先報名，我們將通知您各 **針織藝術工作坊** 的詳情。



項目統籌人：Dr. Li Li (ITC) 項目負責人：Alice Yao (Ph.D Candidate)
查詢 Enquiries: finger.knitting.fashion@gmail.com

網上報名地址 Application Link: <http://goo.gl/RvkXNK>

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