

Research Article

Exploring the Preferences for Chinese Freehand Painting among China Retired Elders by Using Nominal Group Technique (NGT)

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ABSTRACT

The present study delves into the artistic preferences of retired seniors regarding Chinese freehand painting by applying the Nominal Group Technique (NGT). While Chinese freehand brush painting boasts a rich historical tradition, little is known about the specific tastes of retired seniors who possess ample free time and maintain strong cultural ties. Utilizing NGT, a systematic brainstorming process, the study engaged retired senior citizens residing in China to solicit their insights. The findings underscore a pronounced interest in the floral motifs in freehand-painted flower and bird scenes. Additionally, participants displayed a fondness for particular aspects of Chinese freehand paintings, characterized by the expression of intense emotions, subtle yet elegant color palettes, and a simple brushstroke technique. This study advocates for integrating traditional art in therapeutic settings to enrich the quality of life for seniors. It offers valuable insights into the artistic preferences of this specific demographic, shedding light on how art can resonate with their sensibilities.

Keywords: Chinese traditional art; artistic preferences; elderly engagement; consensus-building methods

1. Introduction

This study focuses on the aesthetic preferences of retired senior citizens and explores the emotional responses evoked by Chinese freehand painting. The expressiveness and deep capacity to arouse spiritual and emotional resonance of freehand brushwork are widely recognized ^[1]. Its primary characteristic lies in its ability to capture an object's essence with minimal brushstrokes, making it an artistic endeavor beyond simple images ^[2]. ^[3] and ^[4] assert that perspective is not given priority in traditional Chinese painting, nor is the idea of object likeness followed. Neither are the changes in light and color of natural objects given significance. Instead, it places more emphasis on the artist's subjective preferences being expressed, which encourages psychological adaptation and inner expression. For many people, Chinese freehand painting facilitates both cognitive and emotional engagement in addition to its aesthetic value ^[1]). This study aims to clarify how older people feel about art, considering the significance of art in evoking solid emotional responses and its potential for therapeutic application. The study is based on recognizing art's creative potential ^[5], which ^[1] and ^[6] claim to closely align with the contemplative and introspective qualities sought

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in older adults.

The potential of the arts to enhance the general well-being of older individuals is highlighted by the current knowledge gap regarding the impact of traditional Chinese art on retired older adults, notably regarding emotional expression, cognitive engagement, and social interaction. Previous research has shown that social interaction improves an aged person's ability to function ([7]; [8]; and [9]). However, there are not many studies in China that concentrate on older people. Chinese freehand painting maintains unique aesthetic characteristics even in contemporary times, emphasizing a blend of culture, art, and cognition [6]. Nevertheless, there is a dearth of thorough research on the particular artistic tastes of senior citizens, especially regarding the possible therapeutic benefits of art [10]. This study aims to address the existing disparity by examining the various categories and characteristics of Chinese freehand paintings that strongly appeal to this particular group and explore how these preferences indicate their cultural and individual narratives. According to [11], [12], and [13], NGT is a style of group brainstorming that emphasizes individual contributions and the organizing of ideas. The process typically involves introduction and explanation, silent generation of ideas, idea sharing, group discussion, and voting and ranking [14]. The selection of this technique is based on its efficacy in navigating the intricate and subjective aspects of artistic tastes, facilitating in-depth deliberations, and establishing consensus among participants [15]. The objective is to clarify these preferences using the Nominal Group Technique (NGT). This study will highlight the significance of culturally aware and responsive art therapy programs that address senior citizens' unique preferences to promote significant therapeutic involvement.

Previous scholarly works suggesting a mismatch between modern art therapy programs and senior citizens' unique preferences further underscore the importance of this research and limit the possible efficacy of these therapeutic approaches [16]. This study proposes that examining the preferences of retired elderly individuals for Chinese freehand painting can improve engagement, satisfaction, and therapeutic results in art therapy. As a result, it advocates for a personalized approach to enhancing the quality of life among older people through art.

Regarding the Study of Traditional Chinese Art and the Preferences of the Elderly, the body of research that has already been done shows that traditional Chinese art and people's artistic inclinations are significantly correlated [17]. Elderly preferences are significantly influenced by the historical and philosophical roots of the art form, particularly its emphasis on environmental themes and Taoist beliefs ([18]; [19]). These preferences go beyond mere enjoyment of beauty, encompassing deeper qualities of harmony and balance that hold significant importance in traditional Chinese philosophy and spirituality, particularly among the senior population [20]. The concepts of harmony, balance, and interdependence with nature are highly valued in traditional Chinese culture [21].

The published literature thoroughly examines the psychological effects of color in art, how they relate to well-being, and the impact of color on well-being. [22] and [23] have shown that color preferences in older individuals can indicate broader psychosocial conditions, indicating the possibility of using color preferences for therapeutic purposes. This collection of research emphasizes the significance of comprehending color psychology while developing art therapy interventions for older adults.

In terms of the connection between emotions and the appreciation of art, according to [24], there is evidence that the assessment of art has evolved. There is a greater emphasis on emotional resonance rather than solely aesthetic or formal features concerning the relationship between emotions and art appreciation ([25]; [26]; [27]; [28]; and [29]). This change highlights the need for a nuanced and intelligent approach to art in

therapeutic settings and the importance of selecting artwork that speaks to older people's life experiences and personal narratives^[30].

Regarding the role of art in the therapeutic aging process, recent research has highlighted the therapeutic potential of Chinese freehand painting for older people. There is a particular emphasis on its expressive features and ability to address this demographic's contemplative and emotional needs ^(^[1]; ^[6]). Chinese freehand painting, renowned for its capacity to elicit emotions and convey a sense of spirit ^[1], offers therapeutic benefits for the older population. According to ^[31], spontaneous brushwork in this style has positively impacted older persons' lifestyles and psychological well-being. Moreover, the expressive nature of this art form stimulates increased brain activity and emotional involvement, especially compared to Western artistic traditions ^[4]. The current literature highlights a significant alignment between the attributes of Chinese freehand painting and the therapeutic needs of older adults, underscoring the importance of integrating art into their care strategies.

The importance and significance of cultural relevance in art therapy, the lack of necessity for more academic research on older people's creative tendencies, and the need for specialized art therapy programs highlight shortcomings in current approaches ^(^[10]; ^[32]). Older persons require art therapy programs tailored to their unique preferences and exhibit cultural sensitivity. This study suggests that people need art therapy programs tailored to their unique preferences and cultural sensitivity, advocating for a more thorough and effective practical approach to treatment.

2. Methods

During the initial meeting, researchers collected written documents from the respondents to gather various forms and subjects of Chinese freehand painting. Subsequently, thematic clustering was employed to identify the predominant themes, followed by inductive content analysis to establish their hierarchical significance.

During a subsequent session, the characteristics of Chinese freehand painting were examined, employing comparable analytical procedures to assess and classify these characteristics. The methodology yielded profound insights into the fundamental characteristics of Chinese freehand painting and substantiated its use in art therapy. The study thoroughly analyzed the essential elements of Chinese freehand painting and explored the retirees' preferences for this artistic medium, as depicted in **Figure 1**.

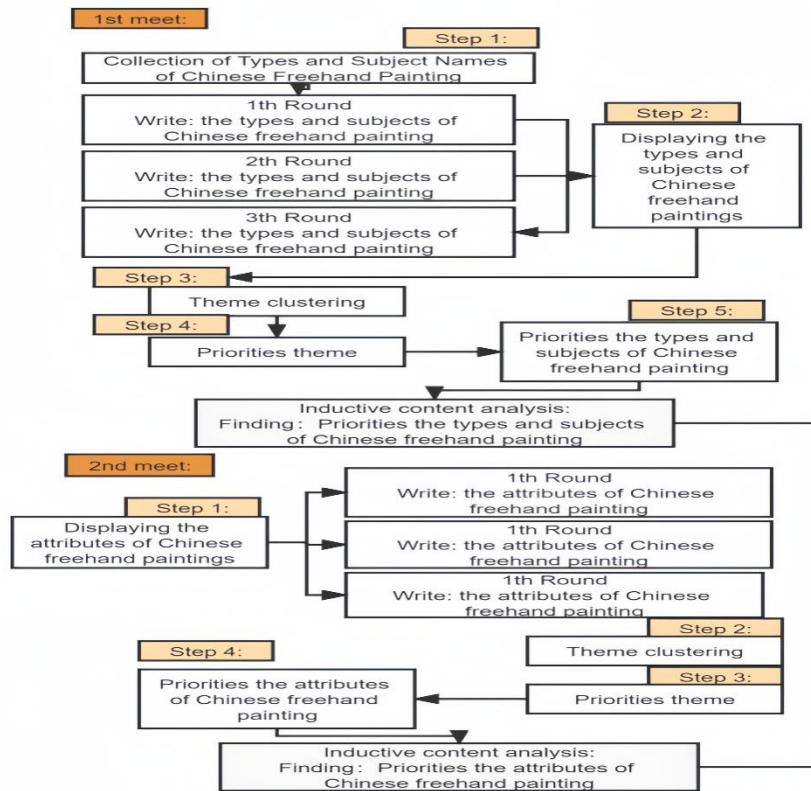


Figure 1. Research design with Nominal Group Technique (NGT), [33].

This study aims to determine and ascertain the preferences of retired old adults regarding the forms and characteristics of Chinese freehand painting using the Nominal Group Technique (NGT). The NGT approach was utilized in this study to ascertain and determine the preferences of retired older individuals regarding the various forms and qualities of Chinese freehand painting. The participants' ideas were documented on adhesive notes to facilitate group deliberations and rankings, enabling a democratic assessment of their preferences. The Susong County Art Museum was selected as the location, and the entire procedure lasted approximately 2 hours in June 2023. The agenda was partitioned into two distinct meeting activities.

The first and second meetings were divided into five phases to understand retirees' preferences for the types and attributes of Chinese freehand brushwork paintings. This nominal group technique was employed for this purpose. Following a comprehensive introduction to the concept and criteria, the participants reflected individually and selected their preferred types. These preferences were further refined through group consensus, wherein specific categories were excluded, and the remaining ones were thematically organized. The voting procedure determined the most preferred categories, accompanied by which specific categories were excluded, and the remaining ones were thematically organized. The voting procedure determined the most preferred categories, accompanied by deliberations for additional elucidation. The procedure above, repeated during the subsequent meeting to gather individuals' choices for painting attributes, effectively facilitated a democratic manifestation of preferences, as depicted in **Figure 2**.

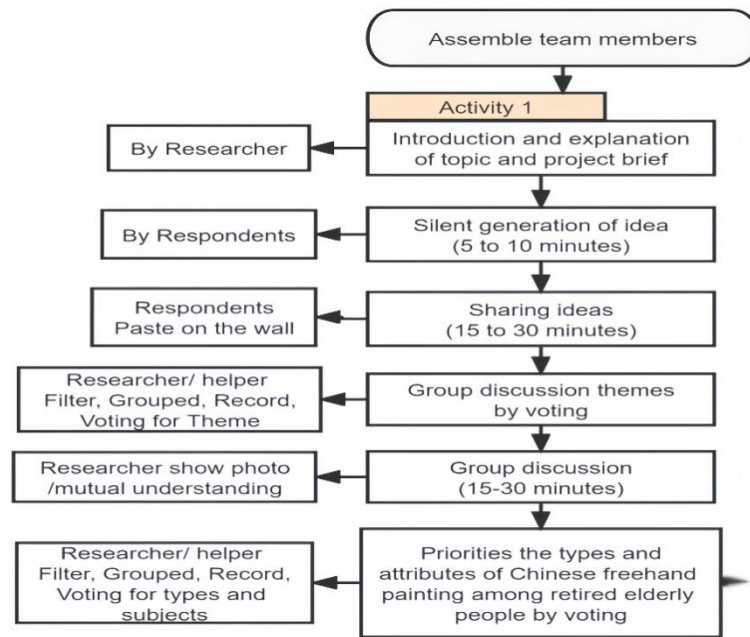


Figure 2. Detail flow of nominal group technique (Adapted from ^[34]).

The individuals selected for this research were selected using snowball sampling, following the purposive methodology described by ^[35], ^[36] suggests that a sample size of 8 individuals would suit the NGT investigation. The study sample comprised eight male volunteers aged 55 to 75, with a minimum of five years of experience in Chinese painting. This requirement exists because participants in NGT discussions should have basic knowledge or at least five years of experience or exposure to the relevant topic ^[37]. Before the survey, participants provided their permission by signing an informed consent form, confirming their comprehension of the study's objectives and entitlements, encompassing the option to withdraw at any stage. The study emphasized ethical considerations, implementing thorough methods to safeguard participant privacy and ensure data integrity. The Human Research Ethics Committee of Universiti Putra Malaysia (JKEUPM) approved the study with project identification number JKEUPM-2023-1342 (see **Appendix 1**).

Table 1 presents the link between the participants' ages, years of study in Chinese painting, nationality, and pre-retirement occupations.

Table 1. Participant information statistics.

Participants name	Gender	Age	Occupation before retirement	Years of studying	Nation
Liu Zajing	Male	68	Teacher	30	China
Liu Zhiwang	Male	55	Merchant	15	China
Peng Feng	Male	56	Bank employee	15	China
Qian Yanlin	Male	65	Business Manager	40	China
Shi Futian	Male	74	Artist	15	China
Wang Dunlun	Male	61	Artist	16	China
Wang Jian	Male	55	Teacher	30	China

3. Results

3.1. The first Nominal Group Technique (NGT)

The researcher provided a table displaying various styles and topics. Participants were instructed to silently contemplate their chosen Chinese freehand paintings for 10 minutes. They were given a question paper and 15 flip cards to express their opinions; the question was what types of Chinese hand-painting do you prefer?. They were given a question paper and 15 flip cards to express their opinions. The question was, what types of Chinese hand-painting do you prefer?. Discussion was strictly prohibited during this time. Once the cards were gathered, they were subsequently presented for study. The categories from the cards underwent a process of evaluation, clarification, and occasional rephrasing, taking into account the input provided by the participants. By consensus, several categories were excluded. The 30-minute meeting was intended to promote fair and impartial sharing of ideas. After extensive deliberations, all duplicate entries and excluded categories were eliminated, resulting in a refined and thematically categorized compilation of favored Chinese freehand painting genres. The distribution of preferences among participants is depicted in **Figure 3**, whereby each slice represents the proportion of favor for each painting kind. This visual representation provides insight into the frequency distribution of favorite Chinese freehand painting forms.

Figure 3 illustrates the preferences of retirees regarding Chinese freehand painting, showing a notable inclination towards depictions of flowers and birds. This preference is evident in the “Small Freehand” and “Big Freehand” categories, each receiving a preference percentage of 7.1%. “Small freehand landscape painting (Rocks and trees)” follows closely at a rate of 6.8%. The “Small Freehand Landscape” and “Flowers and Birds” categories collectively represent 6.5% of the total, indicating a diverse range of artistic preferences within this group.

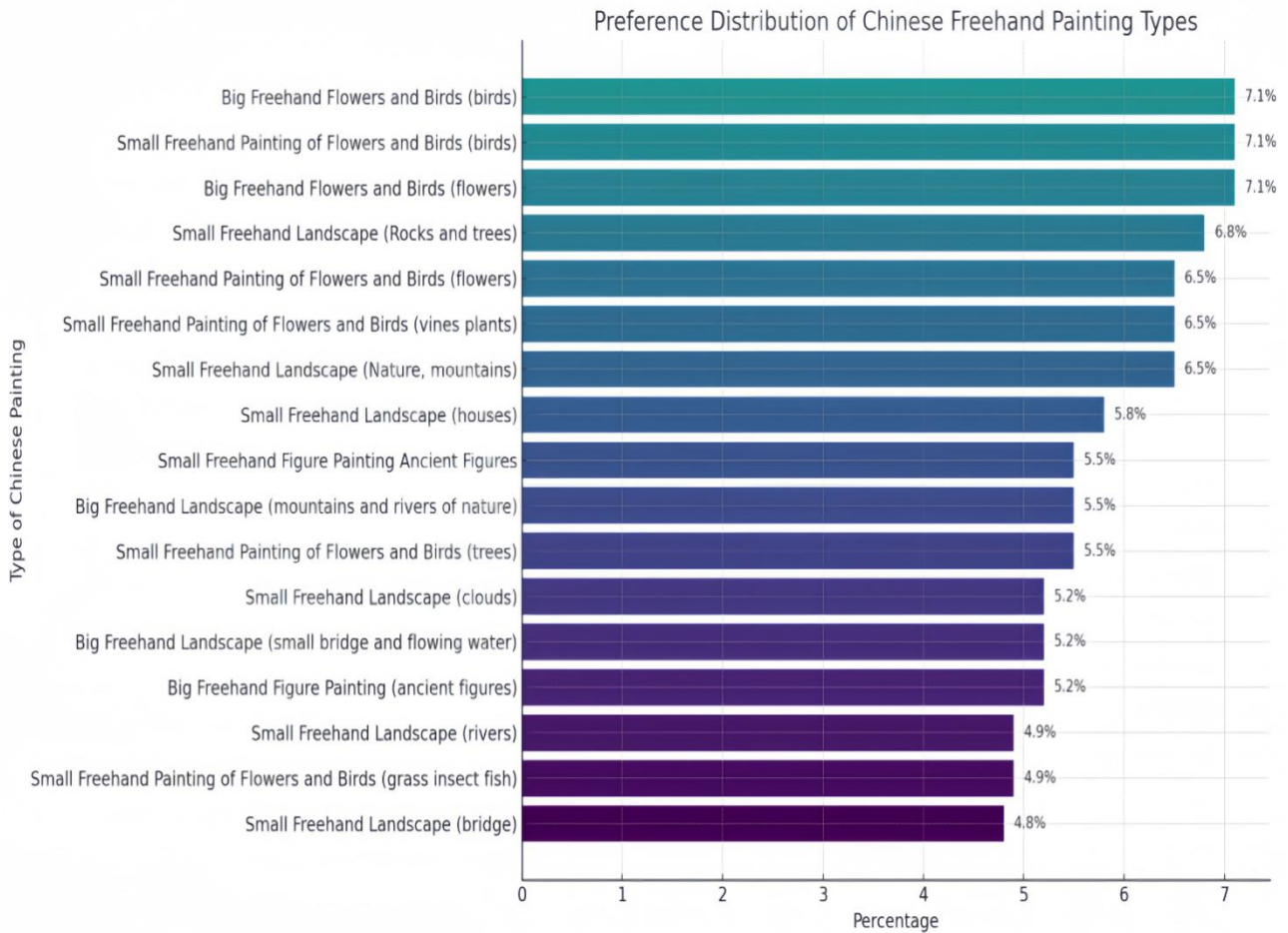


Figure 3. Frequency distribution of the type of preferred Chinese freehand painting.

Currently, issues are ranked using conventional voting techniques, where participants rank them in order of importance. In traditional voting methods, participants order issues or options by importance through a voting process. Each participant typically ranks all options or selects a predefined number of top choices, and priorities are determined based on the number of votes received. This straightforward method effectively consolidates group preferences and opinions. By engaging in brainstorming sessions followed by voting, the themes generated were systematically organized in an orderly manner to ensure that they corresponded to the original questions of the study and thus achieved the research objectives. This process is initiated by collecting participants' opinions and suggestions on a specific topic and then clarifying and refining these ideas through group discussions. Finally, participants voted on these discussed and revised themes to determine their priority in the study. This approach facilitates detailed discussions and establishes a ranking of topic importance through collective consensus, thereby more accurately reflecting participants' views and preferences on research topics. The symposium culminated in a compilation of survey findings that enumerated the prevailing categories of Chinese paintings. The ratings are categorized on a scale of 3 to 0, where a rating of 3 indicates a solid preference, 2 signifies a moderate preference, 2 represents a mild preference, and 1 represents a fair preference. A value rating of 0 indicates denotes the absence of a vote. The voting results are depicted shown in **Figure 4**.

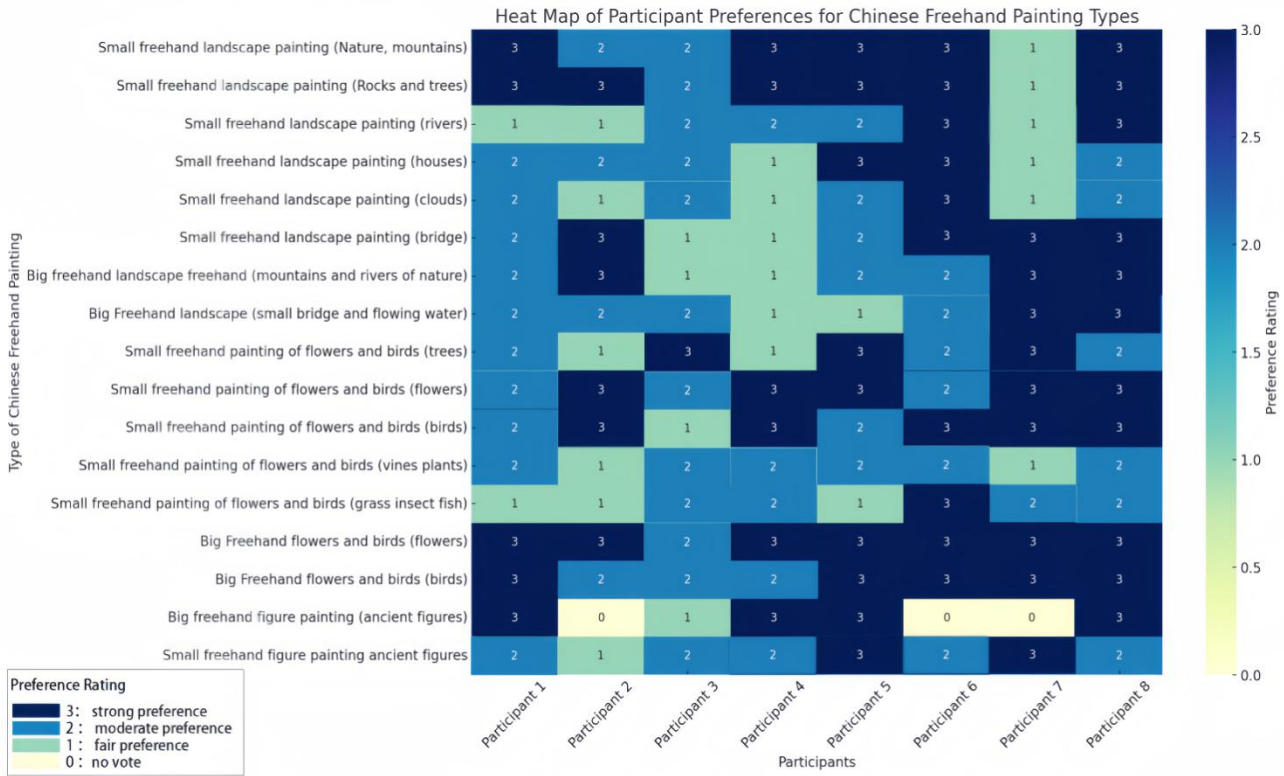


Figure 4. Participant preferences for different types of Chinese Freehand Painting.

Figure 4 displays a heatmap that illustrates the diverse preferences for various forms of Chinese Freehand Painting, highlighting a broad spectrum of interests. The artwork titled 'Big Freehand Flowers and Birds (flowers)' received high scores from most participants, suggesting a broad appeal. On the other hand, the scores for 'Big Freehand Figure Painting (ancient figures)' exhibit significant variation, indicating a division in the participants' preferences. The top five voting results are as follows: 'Big Freehand flowers and birds (flowers),' 'Small freehand landscape painting (Rocks and trees),' 'Small freehand landscape painting (Nature, mountains),' 'Small freehand painting of flowers and birds (flowers),' and 'Big Freehand flowers and birds (birds).'

During the 15-30 minute group session, participants improved ambiguous ideas, creating an environment free from prejudice and promoting inclusivity. The facilitator provided equitable participation from all participants and efficiently managed time. The team embraced and classified new ideas without excluding any, appreciating each member's contributions based on [38] and [39] qualitative research approach. This research identified four additional categories for the upcoming vote, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Additional generalizations generated during the group discussion.

Additional generalizations generated during the group discussion			
Freehand coloring	Meticulous flower and	Literati landscape	Meticulous landscape
characters	bird painting		painting

In the last stage, participants were asked to choose their five preferred types of Chinese hand-painting, with the possibility of including more varieties in the final list. Participants were given a printed list of Chinese hand-painting types to aid voting. This voting procedure established the favored categories. The conclusive outcomes of the ultimate voting process are presented in Figure 5.

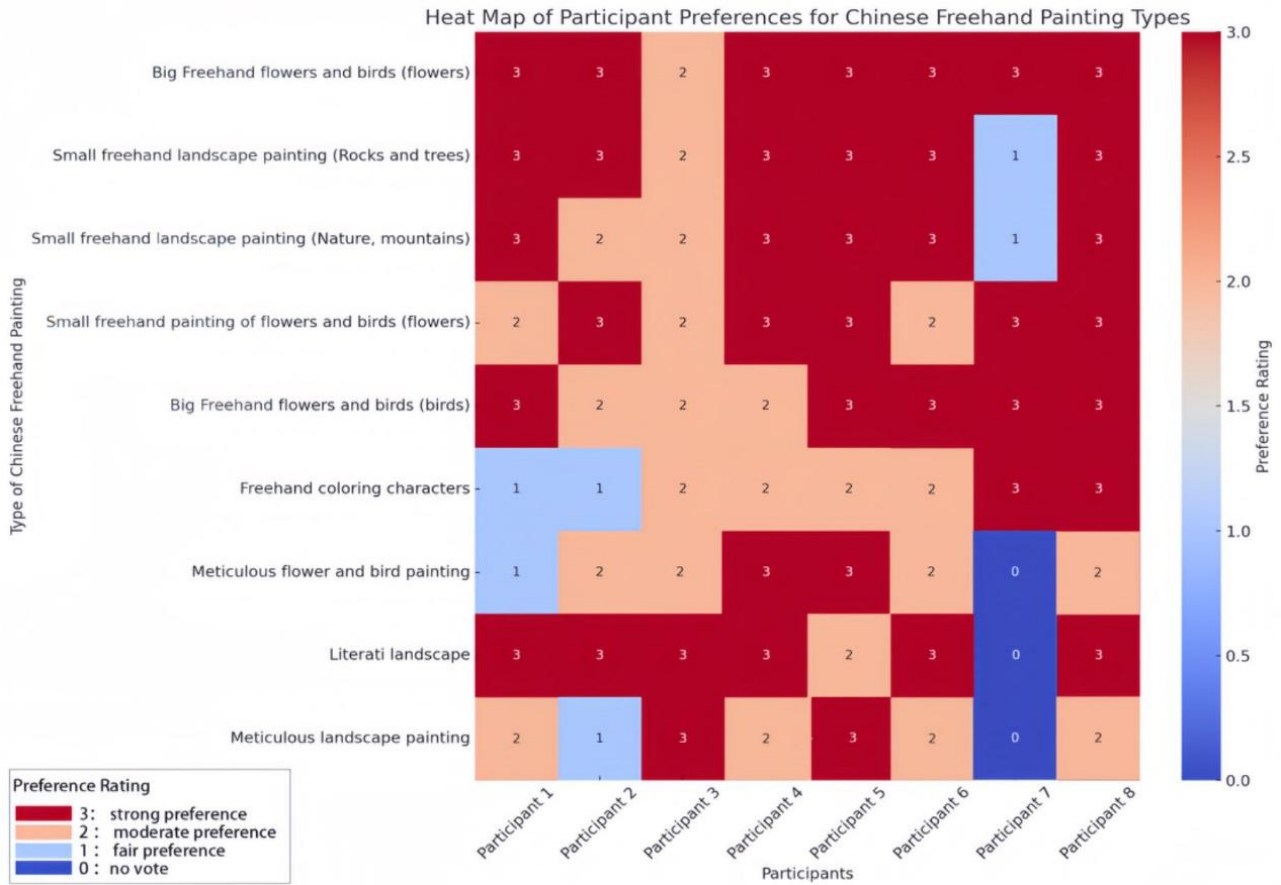


Figure 5. Heat map of participant preferences for Chinese freehand painting types.

The heat map illustrates the consensus ratings a sample of eight people provided. The evaluations are measured on a continuum ranging from 0 (representing nothing preference) to 3 (representing a significant preference). The choice for 'Big Freehand Flowers and Birds (flowers)' is consistently higher among participants, as indicated by the darker colors.

Upon examining the heat map (refer to **Figure 6**) illustrating participant ratings for different categories of Chinese Freehand Painting, it becomes evident that there is a significant inclination towards 'Big Freehand Flowers and Birds (flowers).' All participants unanimously assigned the highest rating (3), indicating a unanimous agreement on this style's preference. On the other hand, there is a difference in how participants rate 'Meticulous Landscape Painting' and 'Literati Landscape.' At least one person strongly dislikes both styles (rating of 0), suggesting a divided attitude within these categories.

In the present study, a sample of eight individuals was examined using ANOVA to evaluate their preferences for various Chinese freehand painting styles. The results indicated no statistically significant variations in preferences among different styles of paintings ($F(16) = 0, p = 1.000$). The study provided a detailed description of tape aesthetic preferences, explicitly highlighting a preference for floral motifs in freehand flower and bird paintings, as seen in **Table 3**. **Figure 6** shows the average value of the type of preferences.

Table 3. Type aesthetic preferences.

Type aesthetic preferences					
Types	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Small freehand landscape painting(Nature, mountains)	8	1	3	2.50	.756
Small freehand landscape painting;(Rocks and trees)	8	1	3	2.63	.744
Small freehand painting of flowers and birds (flowers)	8	2	3	2.63	.518
Big Freehand flowers and birds (flowers)	8	2	3	2.88	.354
Big Freehand flowers and birds (birds)	8	2	3	2.63	.518
Literati landscape	8	0	3	2.38	1.061
Meticulous landscape painting	8	.00	3.00	1.8750	.99103
Meticulous flower and bird painting	8	.00	3.00	1.8750	.99103
Freehand coloring characters	8	1.00	3.00	2.0000	.75593
Valid N (listwise)	8				

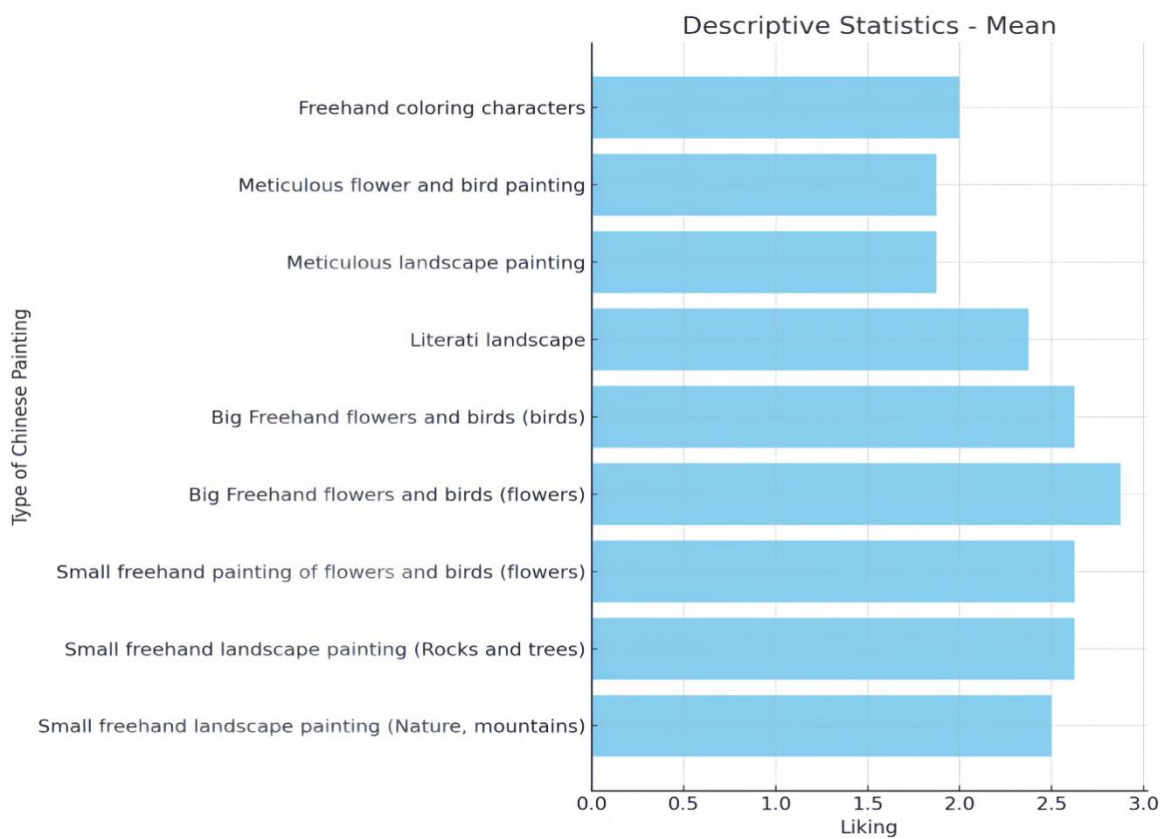


Figure 6. Type preference average.

3.2. Discussion the second Nominal Group Technique (NGT)

Following a brief one-hour break after the initial session, the subsequent segment of the conference proceeded to intend to identify intended to identify the preferred characteristics of Chinese freehand painting among elderly individuals who have retired individuals. The participants engaged in a 10-minute reflection on the appealing features of Chinese hand-paintings, guided by the preliminary research question, "Why do you think these types of Chinese hand-paintings are preferred?".

Each participant was given a questionnaire and 15 flip cards and instructed to independently record one idea per card. After 10 minutes of writing, the cards were gathered and exhibited. Although the number of cards collected was usually less than 15, the recorded concepts demonstrated a focused inclination towards particular, frequently comparable categories of hand-paintings. The attributes above were recorded and are depicted in **Figure 7**. Supplementary perspectives were incorporated with the explicit agreement of the participants during the interaction.

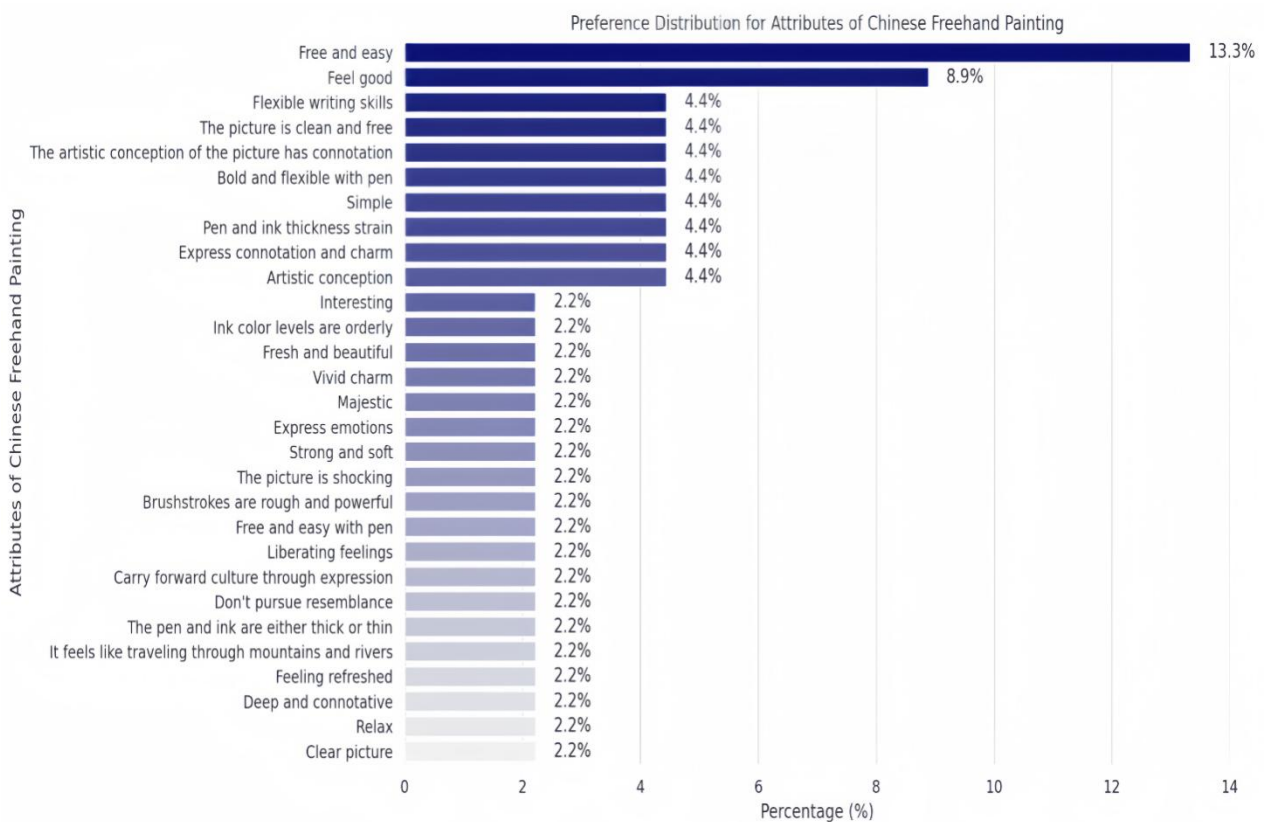


Figure 7. Frequency distribution of preferred Chinese freehand painting attributes.

According to the participants, **Figure 7** depicts the distribution of traits favored in Chinese freehand-painted works. The feature “Free and easy” is the most commonly reported at the top of the chart, with 13.3% of participants noting it. The subsequent factors mentioned by participants, namely “Feel good” and “Flexible writing skills,” were each reported by 8.9% of the respondents. The attributes “The picture is clean and free,” “The artistic conception of the picture has a connotation,” “Bold and flexible with a pen,” and “Simple,” among others, are all mentioned similarly, accounting for 4.4% of the total. 2.2% of participants cited the remaining traits, which include “Interesting,” “Orderly ink color levels,” “Fresh and beautiful,” and “Clear picture.”

Every attribute in the chart underwent a thorough review and clarification process involving researchers and participants. Input was actively sought from participants, and any necessary rephrasing was made. Certain valued qualities of Chinese freehand painting were excluded with the participants' approval. The attributes that had been filtered and finished were subsequently combined and given thematic labels, as depicted in the following **Table 4** manner:

Table 4. The filtered and finalized attributes.

The filtered and finalized attributes
The combination of pen and ink thickness
Free and easy
Brushstrokes are rough and powerful.
Pleasure (expression of emotions)
Relaxed, simple, and flexible with the brush
Fresh and beautiful
Vivid charm
Emotional expression is better than form (do not pursue similarity in form; pursue artistic conception), traces are simple, and meaning is profound)
The ink color has clear layers; pay attention to the ink color.
Expression of emotional sentiments
Interesting picture

After the training, a concentrated group conversation occurred where participants were prompted to provide further details on ambiguous concepts. The conversation sought to be impartial, cultivating a non-evaluative atmosphere where all comments were considered and classified without dismissing any. Several novel attribute concepts surfaced during the deliberations, leading to a collective agreement regarding the imperative nature of incorporating four essential traits in the ensuing voting process. The researchers documented these proposed qualities in an Excel file, which took approximately 15-30 minutes. The newly found qualities are displayed in **Table 5**.

Table 5. Additional generalizations generated during the group discussion.

Some new supplementary generalizations were generated during the group discussion (generating new ideas and valuable insights)								
The	color	Improve	Have a sense of	Like	nature	Make	people	Regulate
should	not	ideological level	achievement,	scenery		calm and	avoid	emotions
too	bright,		satisfaction, and			impetuoussness.		mood.
and	a		self-confidence					
simple	ink							
should	be	used.						

The study's ultimate stage focused on the most preferred characteristics of Chinese hand-painted styles. The desired traits were determined by voting on the top five attributes and fresh ideas from the fourth round of discussions. **Figure 8** presents the conclusive outcomes of this ultimate voting process.

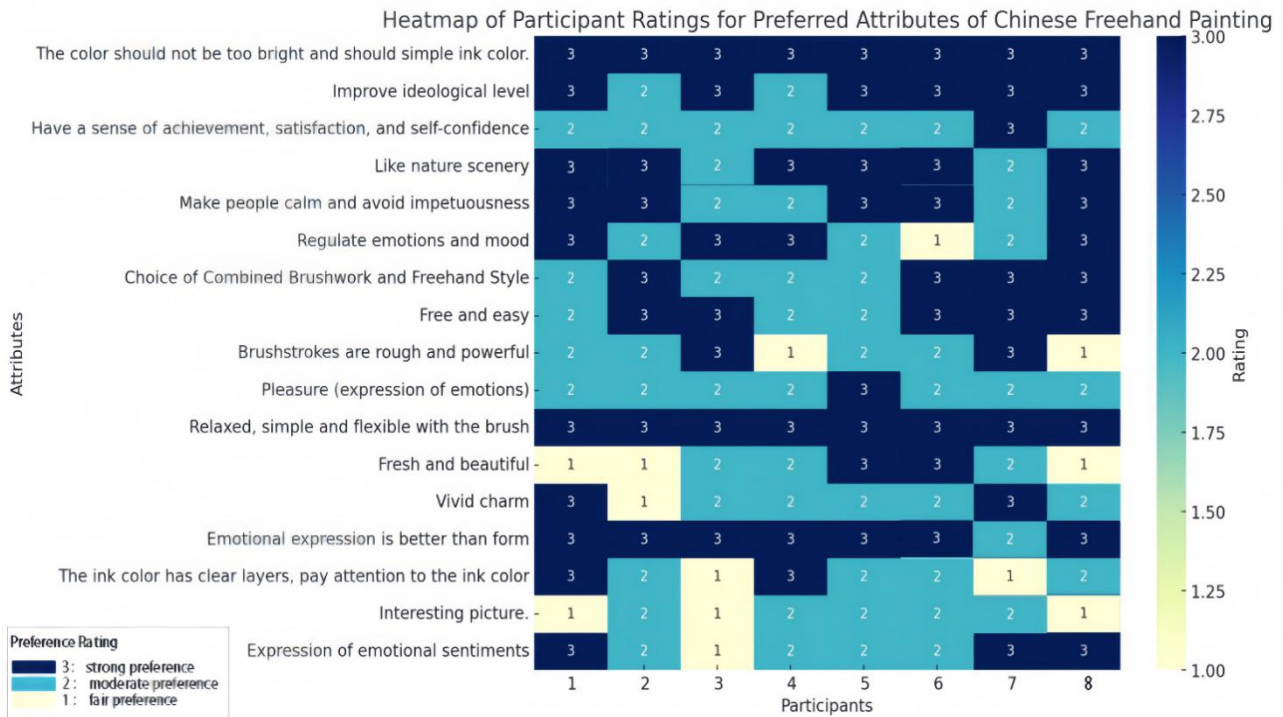


Figure 8. Heat map of preferred attributes of Chinese Freehand Painting.

The heatmap provides a visual representation of the evaluations given by participants regarding their selected attributes of Chinese Freehand Painting. It offers a comprehensive overview of the relative importance assigned to each attribute among the eight participants. The data indicates a general agreement among participants regarding several essential characteristics. Notably, the attributes “The color should not be excessively bright and should be a simple ink color” and “Relaxed, simple, and flexible with the brush” consistently received the highest ratings from all participants. These attributes were predominantly rated at 3, suggesting a strong preference for them. The study provided a detailed description of attribute aesthetic preferences, as seen in Table 6. Furthermore, the participants also conveyed their inclination towards the notion that “Emotional expression is superior to form.” The average attribute choice is depicted in Figure 9.

Table 6. Attribute aesthetic preferences.

Attributes	Attribute aesthetic preferences				
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std.Deviation
liking (The color should not be too bright and should simple ink color)	8	3	3	3.00	.000
liking (Relaxed, simple and flexible with the brush)	8	3	3	3.00	.000
liking (Emotional expression is better than form (do not pursue similarity in form, pursue artistic conception), traces are simple, and meaning is profound)	8	2	3	2.88	.354
liking (Elevation of thought)	8	2	3	2.75	.463
liking (nature scenery)	8	2	3	2.75	.463

Have a sense of achievement, satisfaction, and self-confidence	8	2	3	2.13	.354
Make people calm and avoid impetuosity	8	2	3	2.63	.518
Regulate emotions and mood	8	1	3	2.38	.744
Choice of Combined Brushwork and Freehand Style	8	2	3	2.50	.535
Free and easy	8	2	3	2.63	.518
Brushstrokes are rough and powerful	8	1	3	2.00	.756
Pleasure (expression of emotions)	8	2	3	2.13	.354
Fresh and beautiful	8	1	3	1.88	.835
Vivid charm	8	1	3	2.13	.641
The ink color has clear layers; pay attention to the ink color	8	1	3	2.00	.756
Interesting picture	8	1	2	1.63	.518
Expression of emotional sentiments	8	1	3	2.25	.707
Valid N (listwise)	8				

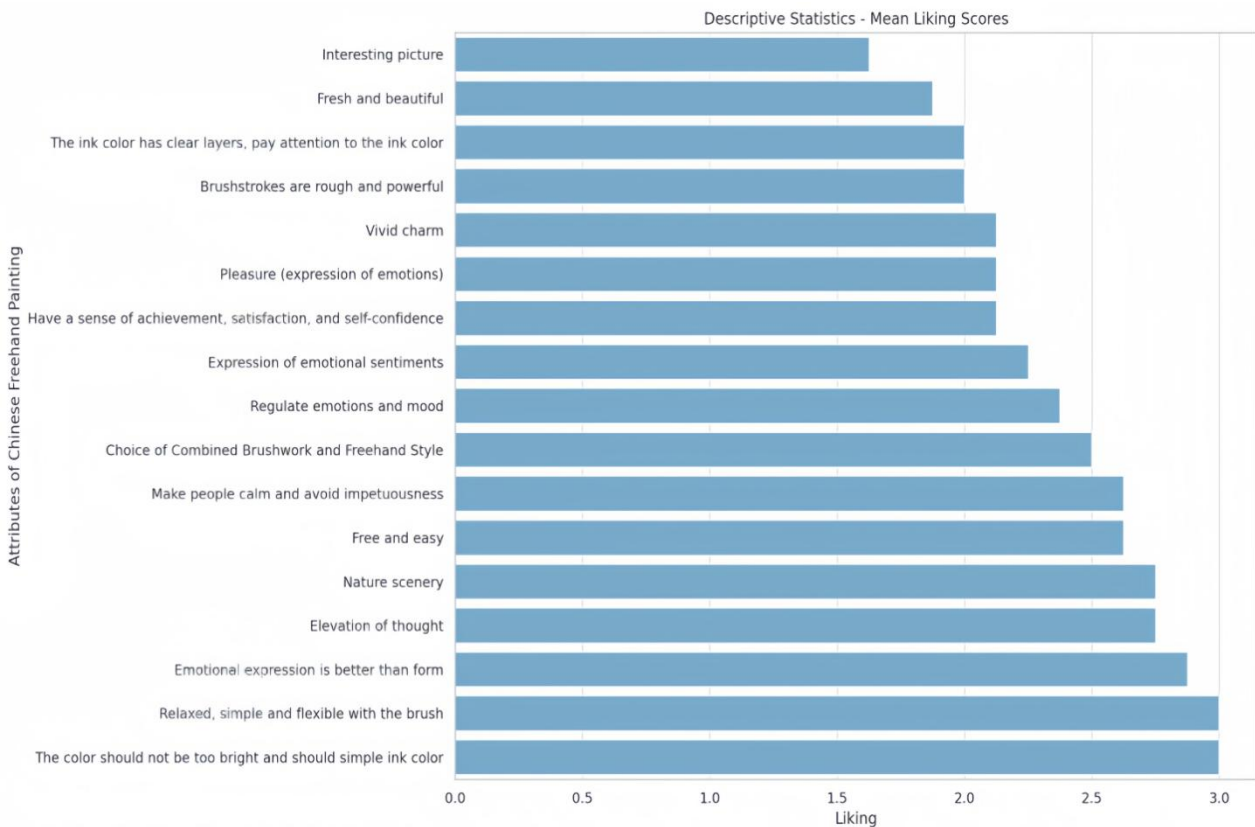


Figure 9. Attributes preference average.

The chart displays the average scores indicating participants' preferences for various drawing qualities. The like scores, arranged left-to-right, span from 1.625 to 3. These scores encompass multiple aspects, such

as the preference for less vibrant colors and lighter inks, relaxed, simple, and flexible brushstrokes, and emotional expressions that do not seek common ground. All three attributes obtained the highest average preference scores, making them the most favored by participants. These findings may indicate the participants' inclination towards various painting characteristics.

4. Discussion

Based on the knowledge acquired from existing scholarly works, the results of the study establish a coherent storyline that corresponds with previous investigations of the artistic inclinations of retired older adults towards study's results develop a cohesive storyline corresponding to earlier investigations of the artistic inclinations of retired older adults toward Chinese freehand paintings. The strong inclination towards natural flower motifs, the intrinsic simplicity of natural flower motifs, and the inherent simplicity of Chinese freehand paintings highlight a profound respect for traditional Chinese art styles. This artistic form is renowned for its emphasis on natural motifs and minimalism, encapsulating Chinese heritage's philosophical and cultural principles, resonating with Taoist beliefs in the harmonious coexistence with the natural world, as seen by [18], [19], [40] and [41]. These themes, intricately connected to reverting to a "transcendent" condition, align with older people's yearning for simplicity and self-reflection throughout their later stages of life. This preference for simplicity can manifest in their desire for inner tranquillity and decreased intricacy in their surroundings [42], a concept corroborated by [43] and [44], indicating a broader pattern of desiring peace and simplicity as individuals grow old.

The retirees' inclination towards understated colors and their preference for art emphasizing emotional expression rather than exact structure further exemplify a sophisticated taste that values art as a means for profound emotional and intellectual involvement. The expressed choice demonstrates a wise recognition of the ability of traditional art to foster spiritual communion, a viewpoint supported by the findings of [45]. The preference of retirees for subtle colors, which corresponds to their psychological requirement for serenity and internal balance, is substantiated by the studies conducted by [22] and [23] in the field of color psychology. This study highlights the therapeutic capacity of art, utilizing color to provide a break from everyday pressures and cultivate a bond with one's spiritual center.

Furthermore, the creative focus on prioritizing "emotion over form" observed in our research encompasses a sophisticated visual style emphasizing conveying emotions and ideas rather than just reproducing reality. This study is consistent with the findings of [24] and [46], indicating that retired older individuals with diverse life experiences are attracted to artworks that evoke deep emotional connections. The present study supports the existing body of literature highlighting the profound emotional and cognitive impact of Chinese freehand painting on elderly adults. It underscores the significance of employing expressive brushwork and achieving color harmony to evoke spiritual and introspective reactions ([1], [6]).

The study's findings on the artistic preferences of retired individuals indicate a notable inclination towards the naturalistic motifs and understated refinement found in Chinese freehand painting. This observation is consistent with the cultural and philosophical inclination towards traditional artistic styles. The findings above resonate with the absence of studies conducted on older persons' aesthetic preferences, as noted by [10]. The present study highlights the importance of customizing art therapy to suit older adults' distinct artistic and cultural contexts, as [32] proposed, to [10] observation that studies conducted on older persons' aesthetic preferences are lacking. The current study emphasizes the importance of customizing art therapy to suit older adults' distinct artistic and cultural contexts, as [32] proposed, to promote meaningful involvement and enhance therapeutic effectiveness.

By integrating our research with current knowledge, we have found that art therapy can significantly enhance cognitive and emotional well-being when tailored to older individuals' artistic and cultural tastes ([47,48]). This research supports the viewpoint presented by [43], which suggests that incorporating natural elements such as flowers, light colors, and uncomplicated themes into freehand flower and bird painting within the context of art therapy may address retirees' emotional expression needs and potentially mitigate issues related to loneliness and cognitive decline.

In summary, this research establishes a connection between the artistic preferences of retired individuals in the older population and the practical implementation of these findings within art therapy. By promoting culturally sensitive and customized art therapy programs that align with retirees' preferences, we advocate for improved care standards in China. This approach positions traditional art forms as a means of creative expression and a therapeutic instrument to increase the well-being of retired individuals.

5. Conclusions

This research's thorough examination elucidates the complex correlation between the artistic inclinations of retired older adults towards Chinese freehand painting and the consequent implications for art therapy. The study successfully integrates established theoretical frameworks with empirical evidence, boosting our comprehension of the potential of art, especially Chinese freehand painting, as a powerful tool for enhancing the mental health and overall well-being of retired seniors.

The retirees' apparent inclination towards natural flower themes and the minimalist style of Chinese freehand painting highlights their profound admiration for classic Chinese art. This inclination, by Taoist beliefs and the quest for simplicity and self-reflection, underscores a cultural and philosophical ongoingness that extends beyond successive generations. The retirees' preference for understated colors and a concentration focus on conveying emotions rather than focusing on physical appearance further demonstrates that they exemplify a refined taste that appreciates art as a means of emotional and intellectual involvement. These preferences reflect a refined, sophisticated comprehension of art and indicate a potential for art therapy interventions to promote a profound spiritual and emotional connection.

Furthermore, our research emphasizes the importance of synchronizing art therapy techniques with older individuals' distinct artistic and cultural heritages. Art therapy can meet older people's need for calmness, inner balance, and meaningful emotional expression by including themes of natural beauty and highlighting expressive brushwork and color harmony. The customized methodology can mitigate challenges linked to the aging process, including feelings of isolation and cognitive deterioration, consequently augmenting the general standard of living for individuals in their retirement years.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to recognize this study's constraints, including its concentration on a limited demographic group and the possibility of conducting more research to include a broader range of participants. Further investigation is warranted to examine the artistic inclinations and therapeutic requirements of a wider demographic of retired individuals to guarantee that art therapy interventions are comprehensive, productive, and attuned to older adults' varied experiences and histories.

In summary, this research not only provides insights into the distinct artistic tastes of retired old adults about Chinese freehand painting but also emphasizes the considerable potential of art therapy programs that are culturally adapted. This research promotes a personalized and successful approach to art therapy by arguing for interventions that align with seniors' interests and cultural heritage. This methodology holds the potential to not only enhance the therapeutic environment in China but also provide vital perspectives for the

international community in utilizing traditional art forms to improve the mental health and overall well-being of older individuals.

Conflict of interest

Authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Appendix 1



PEJABAT TIMBALAN NAIB CANCELOR (PENYELIDIKAN DAN INOVASI)

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY VICE CHANCELLOR (RESEARCH AND INNOVATION)

Rujukan kami : UPM.TNCPI.800-2/1/7

Tarikh : 16 January 2024

Dr. Shureen Faris binti Abd. Shukor
Department of Landscape Architecture
Faculty of Design and Architecture
Universiti Putra Malaysia
Serdang, Selangor

Dear Madam/Sir,

RESEARCH PROJECT: THE APPLICATION OF CHINESE FREEHAND PAINTING AS A TOOL FOR ART THERAPY TO SUPPORT MENTAL WELL-BEING AMONG RETIRED ELDERLY IN CHINA

REFERENCE NO: JKEUPM-2023-1342

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: ASSOC. PROF DR. SHUREEN FARIS BINTI ABD. SHUKOR

CO-INVESTIGATOR: DR. MOHD FABIAN BIN HASNA, DR. MOHD NAJMI DAUD, WU JIAMEI (STUDENT)

The Ethics Committee for Research involving Human Subjects of University Putra Malaysia (JKEUPM) has studied the proposal for the above project and found that there were no objectionable ethical issues involved in the proposed study.

Please find the list of documents received and reviewed with reference to the study and committee members who reviewed the documents (as attached).

Notwithstanding above, we will not be responsible for any misconduct on the part of researcher in the course of carrying out the research.

Ethical approval is required in the case of amendments/ changes to the study documents/ study sites/ study team.

Thank you.

“WITH KNOWLEDGE WE SERVE”

Sincerely yours,

PROF. DR. NORMALA BINTI IBRAHIM

Chair
Ethics Committee for Research involving Human Subjects
Universiti Putra Malaysia