

A Phenomenological Exploration of "Write on the Ground" and Its Positive Effects on Elderly Well-being

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ABSTRACT

With the global aging population, the quest for enhancing the well-being of the elderly has become increasingly crucial. Many scholars have demonstrated the positive impact of artistic activities and elderly education on improving the well-being of elderly individuals. Chinese calligraphy, as an ancient and enduring art form, has played a significant role in this regard. "Write on the Ground" is an intriguing phenomenon where Chinese elderly individuals engage in the study of calligraphy. Grounded in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory, this study aims to examine the needs and positive effects of elderly individuals participating in "Write on the Ground" while learning Chinese calligraphy. Through purposive sampling, this research conducted interviews with eight individuals aged 60 and above in Guangzhou, China, who were learning Chinese calligraphy through "Write on the Ground". Qualitative data analysis was applied to the interview findings. The study's findings indicate that learning Chinese calligraphy positively impacts the elderly, improving their social interactions, fostering a sense of accomplishment, and facilitating personal growth, ultimately contributing to their overall well-being. Additionally, the research unveils issues concerning the educational needs of the elderly. It not only emphasizes the positive impact of art education on elderly well-being but also underscore the importance of addressing the unique needs of the elderly in terms of education. This study offers valuable insights for administrators and education practitioners, emphasizing the need to focus on the effectiveness of art education for the elderly in promoting their well-being.

Contribution/Originality: This study documented the intriguing phenomenon of elderly individuals aged 60 and above who voluntarily engage in the "Write on the Ground" Chinese calligraphy activity in Guangzhou, China. It proposes that this activity has a positive impact on the elderly, enhancing their overall health and well-being.

1. Introduction

The world is currently experiencing a demographic revolution, with the population aged 60 and above increasing rapidly in nearly every country (Dsouza et al., 2023). Liu (2021) point out that population aging is an inevitable consequence of demographic transition and a significant challenge facing human society in the 21st century. Similarly, China's population aging trend exhibits a distinct pattern of rapid growth (Lee et al., 2024). Statistics show that as of 2021, China's population aged 65 and above has exceeded 190 million people, accounting for 13.5% of the total population. It is projected to reach around 25% by 2035, at which point China will enter the status of a super-aged society. Despite being categorized as a developing country, China has the largest elderly population globally (Zhu & Walker 2022). In this context, Guangzhou, as the most populous provincial capital city in China, faces the pressing challenge of how to enhance the well-being of its substantial elderly population.

Art education has been shown to enhance social and emotional learning (SEL) by improving goal setting, enhancing empathy, building relationships, and improving decision-making (Mogro & Tredinick, 2020). Chinese calligraphy, an extremely expressive and iconic art form in China, reflects human emotions (Han et al., 2023). With its rich history, Chinese calligraphy is an integral part of China's outstanding traditional culture (Wang, 2023a). Chinese calligraphy, as a comprehensive art form, serves as a window into traditional Chinese cultural values through its unique artistic expression and language (Peng, 2023). Moreover, Chinese calligraphy holds widespread appeal in China, attracting diverse demographics, including the elderly. The phenomenon of "Write on the Ground" reflects the engagement of Chinese seniors in learning calligraphy. Many elderly people in China gather in groups of three to five at parks, equipped with specially designed large brushes to practice calligraphy on the ground using water. As shown in Figure 1, they share insights and experiences related to calligraphy and convene at a fixed time and location spontaneously. Furthermore, they derive a sense of fulfillment from their need for learning calligraphy. This study focuses on the gains experienced by elderly individuals in learning Chinese calligraphy through "Write on the Ground" and whether it has a positive impact on their well-being.

Figure 1: Chinese Calligraphy Scene of "Writing on the Ground" in Tianhe Park, Guangzhou, China



2. Literature Review

The significant trend of population aging is primarily attributed to the extension of life expectancy, declining birth rates, and improved health conditions (Dsouza et al., 2023). Dsouza et al. (2023) and Yang et al. (2022) share the same view that the escalating severity of population aging is an indisputable fact. Yang et al. (2022) emphasizes that population aging has become a global phenomenon. According to data from the "World Population Prospects: 2019 Revision" (Leong et al., 2018), the global age group proportions reveal a significant increase in the elderly population after 2020. By 2050, the proportion of the global population aged 65 and above is projected to surge from around 703 million in 2020 to approximately 2.13 billion, accounting for 9% to 16% of the total population age group. In addition, Yu (2022) aligns with Peng (2021) in asserting that China must address the array of challenges posed by its aging population and actively seek response strategies. Yu (2022) points out that one of the most significant economic challenges facing China in the coming decades is population aging. The primary obstacle to China's response to the aging challenge is not just the "aging before prosperity" issue but also the lack of adequate preparation for aging (Peng, 2021). Therefore, the enhancement of elderly well-being has become a topic of concern not only within the realms of medicine, gerontology, and psychology but also a focal point of attention in the field of education.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory suggests that human motivation is rooted in five fundamental needs, spanning from physiological and safety needs to social, esteem, and self-actualization needs, individuals must first satisfy their lower-level deficit needs before progressing to fulfill higher-level growth needs (Desmet & Fokkinga, 2020). Although this theory has faced criticism for its hierarchy and lack of empirical basis, it has also received praise for its positive heuristic impact. Despite these criticisms, the theory has still withstood the test of time (Segbenya et al., 2024). Many scholars have emphasized the importance of different levels of needs (Lacoe, 2020; Gopinath, 2020). The significance of safety is apparent, closely tied to academic accomplishment, as well as mental and physical well-being (Lacoe, 2020). Similarly, Mohammadi et al. (2024) pointed out that the level of self-actualization is the highest level of human needs, and the characteristics of self-actualization include self-acceptance, creativity, humor, and independence, which means strong mental health. Moreover, Gopinath (2020) points out that self-actualization is a lifelong journey. For the elderly, these principles hold true. They also need a sense of security, respect, and the chance for self-fulfillment.

Simo-Tabue et al. (2024) demonstrated that the incidence of severe cognitive decline increases with age, and the lack of education is one of the three main factors related to cognitive decline in older adults. Elderly education serves as a vital means to uphold the concept of lifelong learning (Xia & Yu, 2020). On the one hand, Song (2020) concurs with Xia and Yu (2020) and adds that elderly education is a holistic form of social education designed to continually meet the spiritual and cultural needs of the elderly. On the other hand, Yang et al. (2022) points out that the purpose of elderly education is to meet the learning needs of the elderly, improve their quality of life, psychological well-being, and overall welfare. Lai, Zhang and Li (2023) align with Yang et al. (2022) and point out that the demand structure of the elderly is shifting from survival oriented to development oriented in the context of aging population. Their learning and developmental needs are escalating, requiring an enhancement of their elderly life, the preservation of physical and mental well-being, the attainment of cultural and educational fulfillment, and the

realization of their intrinsic value. This contributes to fostering positive aging development within society. Furthermore, education is listed as an important goal in the Sustainable Development Goals. China's first senior university was established in 1983 (Zhu & Li, 2021). So far, despite the substantial elderly education resources in Guangzhou, the city is faced with the challenge of catering to its large and continually growing elderly population (Mao, 2021).

Chinese calligraphy is an ancient art form that originated in China and is popular in Asia (Zeng, 2021). Chinese calligraphy art is a topic of concern for many scholars. Peng (2023) points out that the art of calligraphy is a comprehensive discipline, with a broad scope encompassing various fields such as aesthetics, philosophy, history, literature, and more. Wu (2020) indicate that holds a significant place in Chinese traditional culture and boasts a rich and extensive history. Similar, Zhao (2023) points out that while calligraphy is essentially a form of personal expression through writing, it thrives within the context of social culture, representing a convergence of public and private writing. In addition, Chinese calligraphy is not only a highly respected art form, but also has certain benefits (Wong et al., 2024). Many scholars have proven the positive role of learning Chinese calligraph. Wang (2023b) pointed out that learning Chinese calligraphy fosters learners' powers of observation, thinking, imagination, and appreciation. Similar, Wang et al. (2023) elaborate on adolescents studying Chinese calligraphy experience enhanced positive emotions. Han et al. (2023) agree with Wang et al. (2023) and add that Chinese calligraphy is an art form that powerfully reflects human emotions, showcasing expressive and exemplary artistic features. Not only that, Wong et al. (2024) pointed out that Chinese calligraphy has practical benefits such as improving the cognition of the elderly and assisting in the diagnosis of Parkinson's disease. However, Normaliza et al. (2018) postulated that learning gives benefits to the elderly in order to have an active activity which led to happy lives.

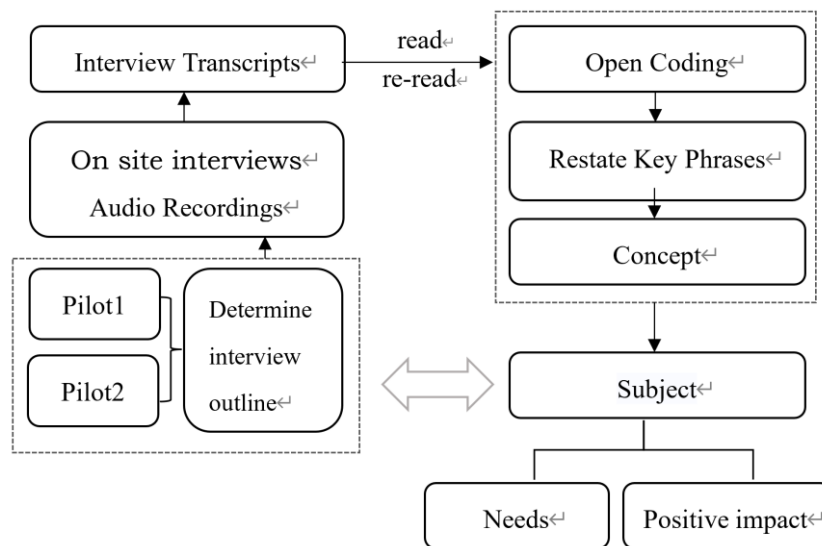
This study comprises two primary research objectives. The first objective aims to scrutinize the learning demand among elderly individuals for Chinese calligraphy. Meanwhile, the second objective delves into the positive impacts of elderly individuals engaging in the study of Chinese calligraphy.

3. Methodology

Guangzhou city is the provincial capital of Guangdong which boasts the highest population among all provinces in China. As of 2022, the city is segmented into 11 districts, encompassing a total area of 7,434.40 square kilometers, with a permanent population of 18.7341 million individuals. Guangzhou strategically sits adjacent to Hong Kong and Macau, playing a pivotal role as a port city for China's foreign trade. It holds a central position in the Greater Bay Area, the Pan-Pearl River Delta economic region, and plays a pivotal role in the Belt and Road Initiative. It has been designated as one of the first national historical and cultural cities and serves as the starting point of the Maritime Silk Road. Creswell and Poth (2016) emphasize that a crucial aspect of a purposeful sampling strategy involves the selection of participants or sites. In this study, a purposeful sampling strategy was employed to specifically target elderly individuals in Tianhe Park, Guangzhou, China. Participation criteria for the elderly in this study include being 60 years and older (the legal retirement age in China) and actively involved in "Write on the Ground" which is a form of learning Chinese calligraphy.

Concerning sample size and interview structure, [Creswell and Poth \(2016\)](#) recommend that phenomenological studies usually encompass a participant range of 3 to 10 individuals. Similarly, [Morse \(1994\)](#) observes that when the sample is homogeneous, conducting 6 to 8 interviews is generally adequate. Hence, this study employed interviews as a research instrument, conducting interviews with the target group. It utilized a purposeful sampling strategy to select and analyze data from 8 sources. Analysis was typical of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Read each record multiple times to ensure that the participant's experience is at the core of the analysis ([Ketley et al., 2024](#)). The process of analysis is iterative, paying attention to the similarity and differences in accounts. All authors have contributed to the consideration of alternative explanations, thereby improving credibility. Moreover, this study analyzed the needs of elderly individuals engaging in the "Write on the Ground" Chinese calligraphy phenomenon and assessed the favorable impacts of calligraphy learning on the elderly in Guangzhou, China. As illustrated in [Figure 2](#), this study employed interviews as the research instrument, with the figure depicting the research framework.

Figure 2: Research framework

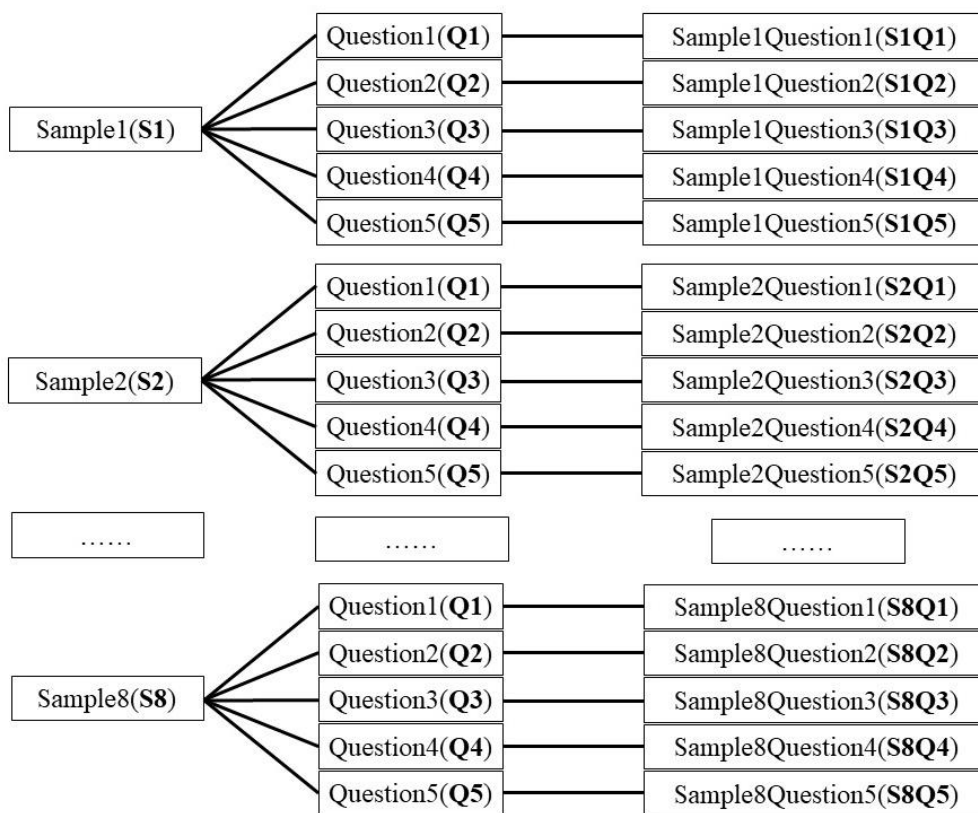


Finally, this study devised an interview protocol in accordance with its research objectives. The outline comprises two distinct dimensions ("Need" and "Effects"), which encompass five questions: Question 1 ("What is your perspective on Chinese calligraphy?"), Question 2 ("Do you believe that learning Chinese calligraphy is beneficial for the elderly?"), Question 3 ("What motivates your pursuit of Chinese calligraphy?"), Question 4 ("In comparison to the past, what transformations have occurred in your life since undertaking the study of Chinese calligraphy?"), and Question 5 ("What aspirations do you harbor for acquiring Chinese calligraphy skills?"). Specifically, Question 1, Question 3, and Question 5 fall within the thematic domain of "Need" while Question 2 and Question 4 are classified under the domain of "Effects".

Moreover, before the formal collection of interview data, two pilot interviews were conducted to ensure that the elderly participants in the study could correctly comprehend the questions. Additionally, [Figure 3](#) presents the relevant key information. As shown in this figure, 'S1' represents Sample 1, 'Q1' represents Question 1, 'S1Q1' represents the answer of Sample 1 to Question 1, 'S1Q2' represents the answer of

Sample 1 to Question 2, 'S2Q1' represents the answer of Sample 2 to Question 1, and so forth.

Figure 3: Code the interview data



4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Demographic Description

The study participants comprise individuals aged 60 and above, with a minimum age of 62, a maximum age of 85, and an average age of 72.6. In terms of age distribution, 37.5% fall within the 60 to 70 age range (3 individuals), 50% within the 71 to 80 range (4 individuals), and 12.5% are over 81 years old (1 individual). All participants are male. The duration of their participation in the activity of "writing on the ground" Chinese calligraphy varies from one month to nearly five years, as shown in [Table 1](#). All participants in this study gathered at a designated location in Tianhe Park (Tianhe District, Guangzhou, China) at a set time every day to engage in Chinese calligraphy practice in the morning. They participate on a daily basis, unless there are adverse weather conditions such as wind or rain, or if they experience significant physical discomfort. Simultaneously, while their arrival time is predetermined, there is variability among individuals. Four elderly individuals typically arrive before 7 am, one arrives around 8 am, and the remaining three arrive at 8:30 am. Similarly, as indicated in [Table 1](#), their departure times from the practice are generally predetermined, yet they vary among individuals. Departure times are primarily clustered around 9:30, 10:00, and 10:30 in the morning.

Table 1: Information of the participants

Coding	Gender	Age	Years of participation	Write time	Visit frequency
S1	male	85	4.7	7:00-10:00am	7/week
S2	male	76	0.4	8:00-10:30am	7/week
S3	male	66	0.1	8:30-10:00am	7/week
S4	male	74	2.3	7:00-9:30am	7/week
S5	male	78	4.5	7:00-9:00am	7/week
S6	male	72	3.7	8:30-10:00am	7/week
S7	male	68	2.6	8:30-9:30am	7/week
S8	male	62	1.4	7:00-10:30am	7/week

4.2. The Need for Elderly People to Learn Chinese Calligraphy

Concerning Q1, which explores participants' opinions on Chinese calligraphy, all interviewees proudly stated that "Chinese calligraphy is an integral aspect of Chinese culture". On one hand, S2Q1 indicates, "The elegance and beauty of these brushstrokes, like an art form cherished for centuries, truly reflect the rich culture and history of China". Similarly, S3Q1 states, "It is a beautiful way to preserve the Chinese language and culture". S7Q1 indicates, "Chinese calligraphy is an important part of Chinese traditional culture, with a long history and profound cultural connotations". Additionally, the viewpoint in S8Q1 is similar to S2Q1, S3Q1, and S7Q1, and it adds that "it is not just a form of writing but also a traditional art that carries rich cultural connotations and history". Similarly, the opinion in S1Q1 is akin to S8Q1, where S1Q1 expresses, "Chinese calligraphy is vast and profound, with much worth learning and accumulating. Through appreciating and learning calligraphy, I feel the charm of traditional culture and take pride in my cultural heritage". On the other hand, the opinions of S6Q1 and S4Q1 are consistent, emphasizing not only that Chinese calligraphy is a part of Chinese culture but also highlighting its development and inheritance. S6Q1 points out, "Chinese calligraphy is one of the treasures of Chinese traditional culture, with a long history and a unique artistic form. Learning calligraphy helps understand and inherit the traditional culture of the Chinese nation. Learning calligraphy can deepen the understanding and appreciation of Chinese traditional culture and pass on this knowledge to future generations". Similarly, S4Q1 states, "I appreciate its evolution over centuries and its continued significance as a crucial part of Chinese culture. It's a connection to the past, and I'm delighted to see it thriving in the modern world". Moreover, S5Q1 suggests, "I've always felt that Chinese calligraphy is a calm and contemplative art form. The way the characters flow on paper is almost like a dance. It reminds us of the importance of simplicity and elegance in our lives".

In the interview, regarding Q3: What is your reason for learning Chinese calligraphy? Participants provided different answers to this question. Firstly, many of them commonly mentioned "interest". S1Q3, S3Q3, S5Q3, and S6Q3 share the view that their interest motivates them to participate in the "writing on the ground" Chinese calligraphy learning activity. S1Q3 says, "I do things I'm interested in, and it feels fulfilling". S3Q3 states, "My main reason for learning calligraphy is because of my interest". Similarly, S5Q3 mentions, "When I was young, although I didn't receive specialized training in Chinese calligraphy, I have always been interested in writing." S6Q3 points out, "I have a great love and interest in Chinese calligraphy". In addition, S2Q3 and S4Q3 share a similar perspective; they are attracted to the activity of "writing on the ground" Chinese calligraphy itself. S2Q3 explains, "I used to walk in the park and saw them writing here. I

used to like writing, but I hadn't tried writing in this way. I was interested, so I joined in". Similarly, S4Q3 states, "This way of writing on the ground attracted me a lot". Secondly, some of them mentioned "pleasant feelings". S6Q3 states, "Learning calligraphy can promote physical and mental health. Learning Chinese calligraphy has become an important and enjoyable thing in my life". Similarly, S5Q3 mentions, "Practicing Chinese calligraphy is my happiest moment". In the bargain, S7Q3 says, "During the writing process, by slowly and attentively depicting each stroke, I can enter a meditative state, helping me relax physically and mentally". Similarly, S8Q3 states, "Through learning calligraphy, I can enter a tranquil state of mind, experiencing the joy of focused creation, thereby alleviating the stress and anxiety in life". Thirdly, some of them mentioned family support. S2Q3 mentions that his daughter supports him in participating in this activity, saying, "My daughter strongly supports me in joining this activity". Analogous, S5Q3 mentions, "Now that I'm retired, my two sons have their own families, and they encourage me to do what I love". Additionally, S3Q3 points out the mutual support and influence within the family, saying, "My son also likes Chinese calligraphy; he completed his university studies in the art academy". Lastly, some of them mentioned "friends and socializing". S2Q3, S3Q3, and S7Q3 maintain similar views, stating that friends and socializing are one of the reasons for participating in the Chinese calligraphy learning activity. S7Q3 states, "Participating in calligraphy learning can provide a social platform for us elderly people, sharing experiences with other calligraphy enthusiasts, helping to alleviate the social isolation that may come with retirement". Similarly, S3Q3 shares, "I've made new friends here; look, this is a new practice brush that a friend helped me make today. The pen I bought before had poor water control, not as good as this one". S2Q3 states, "I didn't know them before, and now we are friends".

Regarding Q5 What do you hope to gain from learning Chinese calligraphy. In the interview, the elders provided excellent answers about their expectations from learning Chinese calligraphy, including understanding the cultural connotations of Chinese calligraphy, communication with friends, a joyful mood, and personal growth. In terms of the artistic significance of Chinese calligraphy, S1Q5 expressed, "I hope to gain a deeper understanding of the Chinese language itself from learning Chinese calligraphy". S7Q5's view is similar to S1Q5, stating, "I hope to not only enhance my artistic accomplishment and aesthetic taste but also to nourish my soul and enrich my life experience on a spiritual level". Regarding communication with friends, S4Q5, S5Q5, and S8Q5 share a common perspective. S4Q5 mentioned, "I also enjoy discussing and trying to control the strokes and beauty of writing with these old friends; we are happy together". Similarly, S5Q5 said, "I have more and more friends. Everyone is happily participating in this activity, learning, discussing, and progressing together. I think this is the biggest gain I hope for". Additionally, S8Q5 expressed, "I hope to have communication with friends and receive feedback from friends". In a similar vein, S1Q5 stated, "I am happy to communicate with friends". In terms of maintaining a pleasant mood and a sense of fulfillment, S3Q5, S4Q5, and S6Q5 share a similar perspective. S4Q5 stated, "I look forward to gaining more sense of achievement". S3Q5's viewpoint aligns with S4Q5 and adds, "At my age, persisting in learning a skill is very fulfilling. Mastering the strokes and characters of Chinese calligraphy has given me a real sense of achievement". Analogical, S6Q5 stated, "Learning Chinese calligraphy can not only enhance my artistic accomplishment but also allow me to feel the joy and satisfaction in my soul". Regarding self-improvement and personal growth, S1Q5, S2Q5, S7Q5, and S8Q5 all affirmed that learning Chinese calligraphy satisfies the needs of self-growth for the elderly. S1Q5 stated, "The biggest gain is feeling fulfilled every day. I hope for new

progress in my calligraphy". S2Q5 expressed, "I hope I can continue to persist; that would be good. As long as I can persist, there will always be gains". Similarly, S7Q5 pointed out, "Through calligraphy learning, cultivate a habit of lifelong learning, maintain curiosity about new things, and have a desire for exploration". S8Q5 expressed, "I hope to achieve physical and mental health, and then it's about persisting in learning. As the saying goes, 'Keep learning until old age'; seniors also need to persist in learning to make life better".

4.3. The Positive Effect of Learning Chinese Calligraphy on the Elderly in Guangzhou, China

In the interview, regarding the question of whether learning Chinese calligraphy is beneficial for the elderly, participants provided affirmative answers and cited relevant evidence. Firstly, S1Q2, S3Q2, and S4Q2 maintained a consistent viewpoint, believing that participating in the "Writing on the Ground" Chinese calligraphy learning activity is beneficial for physical health. S1Q2 stated, "Certainly! Learning Chinese calligraphy is very beneficial for the elderly. It's a wonderful way to keep the mind sharp and improve flexibility". S3Q2 expressed, "Totally agree! You see, this is also a physical exercise". Similarly, S4Q2 pointed out, "Chinese calligraphy is an art form that transcends age. It's a gentle hand movement that can even help treat arthritis by improving fine motor skills. So yes, picking up a brush to try is definitely beneficial for us elderly". Additionally, S5Q2 and S8Q2's views align with S6Q2, who stated, "Learning calligraphy is beneficial for the physical and mental health of the elderly. Through brushwork and ink splashing, it can cultivate concentration, enhance focus, and relieve stress. In the creative process, we need to relax and refine our sentiments, thereby achieving the goal of balanced physical and mental health development". S5Q2 stated, "It's a hobby that keeps our minds active and filled with joy". Similarly, S8Q2 expressed, "Yes, I believe learning Chinese calligraphy is very beneficial for the physical and mental health of the elderly". Secondly, S2Q2, S7Q2, and S8Q2 shared a unanimous viewpoint, believing that participating in the "Writing on the Ground" Chinese calligraphy learning enriches their retirement life. S2Q2 noted, "It's a peaceful and creative activity that can help overcome feelings of loneliness and boredom, making it a wonderful pastime for us elderly". S7Q2 expressed, "Calligraphy is an art that emphasizes personal expression and aesthetic sense. Through learning calligraphy, the elderly can cultivate their creativity, enhance sensitivity to beauty, and enrich retirement life". Similarly, S8Q2 stated, "Learning Chinese calligraphy can add new colors to our lives and make late-life more fulfilling and interesting". Thirdly, S2Q2, S3Q2, S1Q2, and S5Q2 had similar views, believing that learning Chinese calligraphy is beneficial for the elderly to maintain learning, self-improvement, and a sense of achievement. S2Q2 expressed, "I think yes! Learning Chinese calligraphy is very beneficial for the elderly. Learning Chinese calligraphy in later life can provide a sense of purpose and achievement". S3Q2 pointed out, "It's a good way to stay connected with the world and nurture creativity, even at our retired age". Similarly, S5Q2 stated, "Calligraphy requires persistent practice and patience. By continuously challenging themselves, the elderly can cultivate resilience and perseverance, which is beneficial for various challenges in life". S1Q2 noted, "You're never too old to learn something new". Fourthly, S1Q2, S3Q2, and S5Q2 shared a common perspective on the connection between learning Chinese calligraphy and a sense of cultural belonging. S1Q2 stated, "It's a way to connect with Chinese culture". S3Q2 expressed, "Chinese calligraphy also provides an opportunity for self-expression and establishes a deeper connection with the beauty of Chinese culture". Similarly, S5Q2 indicated, "Learning Chinese calligraphy is certainly very beneficial for the elderly, so I have persisted until now. Learning

Chinese calligraphy is like an exploration journey". Finally, S5Q2 added, "It's a good way to connect with younger family members who are also interested in art".

In response to the question of how life has changed in various aspects after participating in the "Writing on the Ground" Chinese calligraphy learning compared to before, participants provided enthusiastic answers based on their specific situations. Firstly, friends and social interactions were mentioned by many. S1Q4, S2Q4, S5Q4, and S7Q4 shared a common view that they have made more friends after joining the activity. S1Q4 mentioned, "I've made many friends; we exchange ideas and chat together. These friends include those who practice together and those who stop by to chat". S2Q4 said, "There are many friends here; we can learn and discuss together. They even taught me how to DIY this water bucket for controlling the water on the brush to the right level". Similarly, S5Q4 pointed out, "There are many friends here; we help each other". S7Q4 expressed, "My life is more fulfilling now; I have more friends, and we share experiences in writing". Additionally, S1Q4 and S5Q4 both mentioned the positive impact of socializing and receiving feedback from others. S1Q4 stated, "I'm happy that people like my calligraphy; it motivates me to continue". Similarly, S5Q4 said, "The most significant difference is that my works receive more discussions and evaluations. Previously, when I wrote at home, only I evaluated the completed works. Now, people passing by during a park walk also evaluate them. Every time I see them appreciate my works; I feel a great sense of achievement; I feel like I'm back to my youth working in a factory". Secondly, S1Q4, S2Q4, and S7Q4 collectively mentioned the positive impact on physical health after learning Chinese calligraphy. S2Q4 stated, "The most significant change is that my health is getting better". S1Q4 said, "My life schedule is more regular; I come here to practice every morning". Similarly, S7Q4 indicated, "Compared to before, through continuous calligraphy practice, I can maintain hand flexibility, prevent stiffness in hand joints, and help maintain independence in daily life". Thirdly, S2Q4, S3Q4, and S4Q4 shared a common viewpoint that learning Chinese calligraphy increased their life satisfaction and happiness. S2Q4 said, "Now my life is satisfying because I've found something I love to do". S3Q4 pointed out, "After practicing Chinese calligraphy here, compared to before, I'm busy every day, but I have a high sense of happiness". Similarly, S4Q4 stated, "Learning in such a beautiful environment is enjoying life. My calligraphy is getting better, and I'm satisfied. Previously, at this time, I just stayed at home watching TV, and TV commercials are too boring". Additionally, S2Q4, S3Q4, and S4Q4 also collectively mentioned the impact on self-improvement and a sense of achievement. S2Q4 said, "Compared to before, practicing calligraphy in the park, with good air and environment, I feel my calligraphy has improved significantly, and I like practicing calligraphy more and more". S3Q4 indicated, "Compared to before, I now feel a sense of achievement every day". S4Q4 mentioned, "After learning Chinese calligraphy, I gained new creativity. I find myself looking at the world from different perspectives and seeing beauty and art in daily life". Similarly, S6Q4's view aligns with S4Q4; S6Q4 said, "Learning Chinese calligraphy can enhance self-cultivation and personal temperament. Writing requires maintaining a proper posture, stretching the body, adjusting breathing. This concentration and meticulousness bring inner tranquility and relaxation, allowing me to express elegance and self-discipline in daily life". Finally, S5Q4, S7Q4, and S8Q4 collectively expressed a similar view that learning Chinese calligraphy helps them better adapt to retirement life. S5Q4 said, "During the Spring Festival, I even help friends write couplets, contributing to my later life. Don't feel that you have no contribution after retirement". S7Q4 indicated, "My life is very fulfilling now; I'm no longer as anxious as when I first retired. I'm more accepting of the reality of gradually getting older". Similarly, S8Q4 stated, "After practicing Chinese calligraphy here, compared to before,

the most significant change is that I'm starting to adapt to my retirement life. At the beginning of retirement, I had a lot of free time, which made me very uncomfortable. Learning calligraphy can fill this gap and give me a sense of security and belonging".

5. Summary of Results

This study interviewed 8 elderly people aged 60 and above in Guangzhou, China, who participated in the "Writing on the Ground" Chinese calligraphy learning activity at Tianhe Park in Guangzhou, China, paying special attention to their needs and positive impact in this activity. As revealed by the analysis, the "writing on the ground" Chinese calligraphy learning activity meets the needs of the elderly at various levels such as physiology, safety, society, respect, and self-actualization. The research findings are parallel to the viewpoint proposed by [Wong et al. \(2024\)](#) that Chinese calligraphy is not only a highly respected art form, but also has certain benefits. From the perspective of physiological needs, learning Chinese calligraphy can bring about physical and mental health. At the level of safety needs, the "writing on the ground" Chinese calligraphy learning activity can provide a stable and safe artistic field. Elderly people may feel like they have lost their work and social environment after retirement, and the "writing on the ground" Chinese calligraphy learning activity can fill this gap and give them a sense of security and belonging. Firstly, the results of the study in terms on psychological need and safety need where learning Chinese calligraphy can effectively cultivate one's personal character and overcome external pressure and negative influences, practicing calligraphy can regulate tense atmosphere and pressure. Secondly, the viewpoint proposed that education can promote communication has been proven. In terms of social needs, the calligraphy learning activity of "writing on the ground" meets the social and social needs of the elderly. Third, at the level of respect, the "Write on the Ground" Chinese calligraphy learning activity allows elderly people to feel their progress and gain appreciation and affirmation from others, thereby meeting their needs at the level of respect. The results of the study in terms on Social and respectful are parallel to the study of [Čereškevičiūtė and Ratnikaitė \(2023\)](#) that the possibility of art activities alleviating the communication needs of the elderly. Last, at the level of self-actualization needs, learning Chinese calligraphy through "writing on the ground" provides opportunities for artistic expression and personal growth. By creating their own works and continuously improving their skills, elderly people can gain a sense of achievement. This pursuit of personal goals and continuous growth is also necessary to meet the needs of self-realization. In addition, the results of the study in terms on ability improvement are parallel to the study of [Wang \(2023b\)](#) and [Wong et al. \(2024\)](#) where learning Chinese calligraphy Can develop intelligence, enhance thinking ability and imagination, learning Chinese calligraphy can improve the cognitive abilities of the elderly. In addition, [Rahim et al. \(2018\)](#) claims that learning will never stop at any age and therefore learning among the elderly must be considered as important in their everyday lives.

Elderly education is an important means of practicing the concept of lifelong learning ([Xia & Yu, 2020](#)). According to the analysis of this study, the "writing on the ground" Chinese calligraphy learning activity effectively enhances participants' sense of happiness through social recognition, self-satisfaction, and self-realization. The results of the study in terms on well-being are parallel to the study of [Yang et al. \(2022\)](#) where the purpose of elderly education is to meet the learning needs of the elderly, improve their quality of life, mental health, and well-being. The "Writing on the Ground" Chinese calligraphy learning activity provides a platform for learning and communication,

allowing elderly people to experience their continuous progress and growth. This sense of achievement helps to improve self-esteem and cultivate a positive and upward attitude. This is consistent with the viewpoint proposed by Wang et al. (2023) that learning Chinese calligraphy is beneficial for individuals' positive emotions. The participants in the "Write on the Ground" Chinese calligraphy learning activity are all elderly men, who develop a sense of self improvement and satisfaction through peer guidance and mutual communication. The cultural connotation of Chinese calligraphy gives elderly people a sense of cultural belonging and pride. By learning Chinese calligraphy, elderly people can expand themselves, enjoy a joyful and meaningful life, and comprehensively improve their psychological well-being.

6. Conclusion

Art education for the elderly yields positive outcomes. Participation in the "Write on the Ground" Chinese calligraphy program enhances social interactions, fosters a sense of accomplishment, and facilitates self-growth among seniors, ultimately contributing to their well-being. At the same time, the results of this study also reveal that elderly education should meet the needs of seniors at social, esteem, and self-actualization levels. It emphasizes the impact of art education on the well-being of the elderly and underscores the necessity of improving their well-being. The study calls for attention to the effectiveness of elderly art education in enhancing the well-being of seniors. However, this study's limitation included a purposive sampling method employed for individuals residing in Guangzhou, China. Moreover, this study is a cross-sectional analysis, lacking long-term follow-up or comparative analysis, suggesting the need for further exploration.

Furthermore, given the imbalance in elderly education resources, future research will focus on the impact of the spontaneous and informal learning method of "writing on the ground" Chinese calligraphy activities on elderly education. Additionally, the attitudes of female elderly individuals toward learning Chinese calligraphy will be explored in subsequent studies.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

The researchers used the research ethics provided by the Research Ethics Committee of Infrastructure University Kuala Lumpur (IUKL). All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee. Informed consent was obtained from all participants according to the Declaration of Helsinki.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors reported no conflicts of interest for this work and declare that there is no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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