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## RATTAN WEAVING ART AS A CONCEPTUAL APPROACH TO STRESS REDUCTION

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### ABSTRACT

*This innovation looks at how rattan weaving, a traditional craft can help reduce stress. As more people face mental health challenges, there is growing interest in using cultural and hands-on activities to support well-being. Rattan weaving involves repeated calming movements that match with ideas like mindfulness, focus and relaxation that are used in therapy. It also helps people feel connected to their culture and community. Based on ideas from psychology, art therapy and culture, this innovation suggests that rattan weaving can be part of mental health support. A case study was done, and the data for thematic analysis from interviews showed that most participants had never tried rattan weaving before but found it new, interesting and enjoyable. They joined out of curiosity or a love for art. At first, some found it hard but later felt calm, focused and happy. Most of the sample studies said it helped them manage stress, stay focused and feel peaceful. Some even used metaphors like waves or building structures to describe their feelings. These findings show that rattan weaving can be a useful and meaningful way to reduce stress.*

**Keywords:** weaving, stress, well-being, cultural

### INTRODUCTION

Stress is increasingly affecting people across all ages and cultures, prompting interest in affordable, culturally rooted methods of relief. One promising approach is rattan weaving, a traditional Southeast Asian craft known for its repetitive and calming process, which supports psychological benefits like focus, relaxation and emotional balance (Malchiodi, 2013; Riley, 2001). The hands-on activity encourages a flow state (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), helps reduce distressing thoughts (Berg & Mullaney, 2013) and activates the parasympathetic nervous system through sensory input (Wilcock, 2007; Pöllänen, 2015). Weaving also fosters mindfulness and emotional regulation (Moon, 2010; Kabat-Zinn, 1994; Garland et al., 2015), similar to outcomes found in art therapy (Reynolds, 2010; Collier, 2011).

Culturally, rattan weaving helps maintain identity, heritage and community connection, especially among Southeast Asian groups like the Orang Asli, Dayak and northern Thai communities (Rahman & Halim, 2020; Ahmad, 2017). It has been shown to support social bonds and well-being, particularly for the elderly and marginalised groups (Levine, 2008; Savin-Baden & Wimpenny, 2014). As a low-cost, accessible and adaptable activity, rattan weaving can be used in schools, community programs, and therapy settings (Deane et al., 2016; White & Epston, 1990). It also aligns with occupational and expressive arts therapy models (Kielhofner, 2008; McNiff, 2004) and encourages environmental awareness and psychological resilience through its use of natural materials (Clayton et al., 2017).

## METHODS

### *Research Design*

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore the therapeutic effects of rattan weaving on individuals experiencing stress. A case study approach was chosen to gain in-depth insights into participants' lived experiences, perceptions and emotional responses throughout the intervention. This design allowed for a rich contextualised understanding of how a traditional cultural practice could contribute to stress management and emotional well-being.

### *Participants*

A total of ten participants ( $N = 10$ ) were selected using purposive sampling. All participants were identified as experiencing mild to moderate stress based on their responses to a brief stress screening tool adapted from the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale 21. Participants were adults aged between 20 and 50 years from diverse backgrounds and had no prior experience with rattan weaving or formal art therapy. The group included students and working professionals to ensure a varied representation of stress-related experiences.

### *Procedure*

Participants took part in a guided rattan weaving session lasting approximately 2 hours, conducted in a calm and quiet environment. Before the session, participants were briefed on the purpose of the study and gave informed consent. The session began with a short mindfulness breathing activity to help participants settle. Participants were then introduced to the materials and basic weaving techniques. A facilitator was present to assist and observe, but participants were encouraged to weave at their own pace. After the session, participants were invited to reflect on their experience through a semi-structured interview.

### *Data Collection*

Data were collected through individual semi-structured interviews conducted immediately after the weaving session. Interviews lasted between 20 to 30 minutes and were audio-recorded with permission. The interview protocol focused on participants' emotional states before, during and after the activity, their thoughts on the process and any perceived mental or emotional changes. Interview questions were designed to elicit responses on themes such as calmness, focus, emotional release, cultural connection and perceived stress relief.

### *Data Analysis*

Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the interview data following a conceptual model adapted from Scorpio (2006), which values clarification, self-acceptance (characterised by openness and self-compassion), cognitive and behavioural flexibility and exposure to challenging experiences. Transcripts were read multiple times for accuracy and to identify emerging patterns. Codes were grouped into broader themes that reflected participants' shared experiences and individual insights regarding the therapeutic role of rattan weaving.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This study explored the effectiveness of rattan weaving as a therapeutic activity for stress reduction through interviews with participants. Several key themes emerged from the thematic analysis. Under the theme of 'experience', many participants described rattan weaving as a completely new activity. They expressed excitement and curiosity, highlighting it as their first encounter with both weaving and art therapy. The activity was also perceived as interesting and enjoyable, with participants describing it as "fun," "very interesting," and "a very enjoyable experience." In the theme of 'motivation', curiosity played a central role. Participants were drawn to the activity due to its uniqueness and their desire to try something unfamiliar. Some participants also expressed personal interest in art and crafts, which made them more inclined to participate and engage with the process.

The 'emotion' theme revealed a range of feelings. While some initially found the activity challenging due to its unfamiliarity, this quickly shifted to feelings of joy, calmness and increased focus once they began weaving. The repetitive and rhythmic nature of the activity was reported to induce a calming effect, with several participants noting that it helped them feel more peaceful and focused. Under the 'process' theme, participants shared how the act of weaving improved their concentration and allowed them to block out distractions. They also noted a sense of control over their thoughts and emotions, suggesting that the activity supported self-regulation and mental clarity.

The theme of 'emotional effects' highlighted the therapeutic benefits of calmness. Participants consistently reported that weaving helped them feel relaxed and mentally still, often describing the experience as meditative. The structured process seemed to ease emotional tension and bring about a sense of inner peace. In the 'therapy role theme', participants described how rattan weaving demanded attention and precision, which in turn fostered mindfulness and emotional grounding. The tactile interaction with the materials was also cited as therapeutic, supporting a deeper connection between physical activity and emotional regulation.

Participants also viewed 'weaving as therapy', expressing that it helped them manage overthinking, stabilise emotions and focus on themselves. They found it to be a meaningful form of therapy that encouraged creativity and provided relief from mental stress. Finally, the theme of 'metaphors' revealed the symbolic significance participants attached to the activity. Many used nature-based metaphors such as waves or clouds to describe the peaceful atmosphere. Others likened it to building structures, tying knots, or weaving dreams, highlighting patience, emotional effort and the deeper meaning behind the act of weaving.

## CONCLUSION

In summary, participants experienced rattan weaving as a calming, enjoyable and meaningful activity that promoted emotional regulation, concentration and a sense of cultural and personal connection. These findings support its potential use as a culturally relevant and non-clinical therapeutic method for stress reduction.

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