

Article

The Effectiveness of Metaphoric Associative Card Workshop

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Received: 01 June 2024

Accepted: 01 August 2024

Abstract: Metaphoric associative card is a well-known communication tool that is used in various fields such as therapy, consultation and pedagogy. Nowadays, its usage is expanding in Malaysia. This type of picture card is a subjective tool as there is no specific interpretation provided. Hence, training is important in assisting the users. Workshops were organised to provide training to the users regarding the usage of metaphoric associative cards. This research aims to explore the perspectives of workshop participants on the content, materials, advertisement, structure, facilitators and facility of the metaphoric associative workshop conducted by the master trainer of Metaphoric Card Malaysia in Malaysia. The research also examines the impact of the workshop on participants. The informants of this research are five participants who attended the workshop. The researcher employed an in-depth interview method to collect data and a thematic analysis method to analyse the data. The analysis identified the strengths, weaknesses, suggestions and impacts of the workshop. The results indicate that the informants were able to apply what they learned in the workshop. Consequently, this research provides insights for the organiser to conduct better workshops in the future. To conclude, it is recommended that workshop effectiveness evaluation should be conducted frequently to ensure that the workshop content is relevant to the participants and able to attract more people to join.

Keywords: Metaphoric Associative Card; Metaphoric Associative Card Workshop; Workshop Effectiveness; Kirkpatrick Model; Experiential Learning

Introduction

Metaphoric associative cards (or metaphoric cards in short) are contemporary tools utilised in various fields such as therapy, consultation and pedagogy. These tools are also great for personal use. Individuals can explore their own personality, intuit their creativity and entertain themselves (Bickovska, 2021). These cards are built upon the principles of gestalt-therapy, humanistic psychology, Carl Gustav Jung archetypes and Joseph Campbell myth (Raman, 1995; Jung, 1991; Campbell, Moyers, 1991; Gatineau, 2010). They are also well-known projective techniques that can quickly obtain information about a person's inner state and experience, identify issues that need to be addressed, and observe the relationship between internal associative images with external life realities (Hrinchenko, 2018).

Metaphoric associative card is a form of expressive art therapy. According to the American Art Therapy Association, expressive art therapy encourages individuals to explore their feelings and is usually used as a communication tool for people who may find verbal expression challenging. Nowadays, art therapy is gaining recognition as a non-pharmacological treatment for individuals with health conditions (Bakri et al., 2024). It includes various art-based treatments such as painting, music, singing and similar techniques into

treatment plans for better outcomes. Art therapy helps individuals express their internal emotional conflicts, increase self-awareness, develop social skills, behavioural management, problem-solving skills and enhance self-esteem (Nazir et al., 2024).

The appearance of metaphoric associative card decks might look like a conventional card game for competitive purposes. However, their usage is more for cooperation and sharing where participants have to choose a card and communicate about it (Bickovska, 2021). The principle of these cards is that there is no definitive right or wrong answer in interpreting them. Each participant gives their own explanation of what they see on the card. This explanation is usually based on one's own past experiences. According to Ayalon (2007), the same card can trigger different reactions from different participants because the interpretations of metaphors featured in the cards are subjective.

The advantage of using metaphoric associative cards is that it can be used individually or even in group settings. They can also be used with people of any age such as adults and even children (Hrinchenko, 2018). The pictures immediately attract children, provide a calming effect on anxious clients and create a secure atmosphere (Dushina, 2019). These cards can also be applied to multicultural settings. A study by Ping (2009) presented the benefits and challenges of using OH Cards based on the experiences of three Malaysian therapists. This study highlighted that these cards provide a gentle approach as users are allowed to choose whether to proceed or pass the obtained cards. As a result, clients get a sense of empowerment. The therapists also mentioned that the cards are able to trigger the unconscious mind and assists in revealing one's truth.

In addition, metaphoric associative cards can be used to develop students' communication skills. Platonova et al. (2021) conducted a study on 136 students from higher education institutions in Russia. The first diagnostic data shows that these students have an average and below-average level of intrapersonal and interpersonal development, demonstrating a lack of social intelligence. However, the re-diagnosis data after using metaphoric associative cards shows an above average level of social intelligence development. The students demonstrated high skill development in controlling expression, managing their emotions, and understanding their own and others' emotions. Hence, the researchers concluded that metaphoric associative cards are an alternative tool to develop social intelligence skills more effectively in intrapersonal skills.

Furthermore, metaphoric associative cards can be used with long-term unemployed individuals. Bickovska (2021) implemented pilot research on eight long-term unemployed women aged between 27 to 58 years old. The researcher found that long-term unemployed individuals have difficulties expressing emotions and developing soft skills and emotional intelligence. This demonstrates that metaphoric associative cards are appropriate tools for long-term unemployed career counselling. The previous studies done by Chong et al. (2021a; 2021b) found that metaphorical cards help students be more efficient in making career decisions which are in line with his or her own desires and abilities.

Past research on other workshops' effectiveness are utilised since this is the first study on effectiveness of metaphoric associative cards workshop. Sim et al. (2022) conducted a study on the effectiveness of online consultation skills courses for education leaders. The independent variables of this research were participants' reactions towards management, facilitator and facilities, whereas the dependent variables were learning achievement, behavioural changes and results. Only 52 out of the total attendees participated in this research. The researchers employed a questionnaire and interviewed them. The questionnaire was designed based on the Kirkpatrick Model, which consists of four phases: reaction of participants, learning achievement, behaviour changes and results. The highlights of the results of Sim's (2022) study are that participants are satisfied with the content of the course despite having low satisfaction of the duration of the course. The relevancy of the course helped them with their work performance. Besides that participants expressed that they are satisfied with the communication style of facilitators. However, most of the participants are contented with the digital resources provided. In conclusion, it is important to take into account the above factors in designing the online consultation skill course.

In another research, Kannan et al. (2021) investigated the effectiveness of implementing classroom assessment workshops. This descriptive study was implemented in the Gombak and Hulu Districts of Selangor. The participants were 37 SJKT teachers who joined the one-day classroom assessment workshop. The participants were asked to answer a questionnaire. There were five sections included in the questionnaire: 1)

workshop objectives; 2) infrastructure; 3) duration of the workshop, 4) content delivery; and 5) workshop content. This research concluded that similar workshops are necessary for promoting and encouraging knowledge and skills regarding classroom assessments.

Similarly, Ekhwan et al. (2020) administered a questionnaire to participants to measure the effectiveness of short-term courses organised by the Ledang Community College. The participants of this study were 250 alumni of the courses. The questionnaire was divided into four sections: Section A (Participants' Information); Section B (Factors in Choosing Course); Section C (Facilities); and Section D (Level of Understanding Post-Course). The items of the questionnaire were measured on a 4-point Likert scale. The researchers analyzed data using the descriptive method by presenting frequency, percentage, mean score and standard deviation. The results showed that the majority of the participants were satisfied with the course offered. Other than that, participants were also satisfied with the facilities provided by the organiser. The researchers concluded that the short-term courses organised by the Ledang Community College meet the needs of the participants.

Based on these past studies, none of them explored the effectiveness of metaphoric associative cards workshop. Studies regarding metaphoric associative cards helped the researcher further understand its history, theory, function and usage. Whereas for the workshop effectiveness, the researcher utilized studies mentioned to refer to what needs to be measured, such as the workshop's content, material, facilitator and facilities.

Theoretical Framework

1. Kirkpatrick Model

The Kirkpatrick Model was created by Donald Kirkpatrick in 1959. This model is among the earliest models that evaluate the efficacy of training and it is still widely used until today. This model helped in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of training. The Kirkpatrick Model consists of four levels: reaction, learning, behaviour and results. The first level measures how the participant perceives the training. This is crucial because a participant's perspectives towards the training program, either positive or negative influence learning process. If the reactions are positive, participants are more motivated to learn. For the second level, it evaluates participant's learning progress in terms of knowledge acquired, skills developed and attitude changes after joining a training programme. The third level measures participant's learning transfer. This level measures whether the participant applies what they have learned in the training to their work. As for the final level, it assesses the effect of training to a positive work culture transformation on the participant. In the context of this research, the researcher utilizes this model to understand further about workshop effectiveness. Level one to level three of this model were referred as guidance in creating interview questions. Level four was not included in this study because it is time-consuming and not cost-effective to evaluate participants' work with their organizations.

2. Experiential Learning Theory

Experiential learning theory was founded in 1984 by a psychologist named David Kolb. The theory derives from Dewey's philosophical pragmatism, Lewin's social psychology and Piaget's cognitive developmental genetic epistemology. This theory provides a holistic approach to learning and a multilinear approach to adult development. In other words, ways people learn, grow and develop. Experiential learning theory emphasizes that experience plays a crucial role in learning. Kolb described two different ways of grasping experience: 1) concrete experience and 2) abstract conceptualization, and two ways of transforming experience: 1) reflective observation and 2) active experimentation. These four ways of learning are learning cycle stages. The basis of this cycle is concrete experience. In the concrete experience stage, people learn to be open-minded and adaptable to change. The next stage is reflective observation, where people learn from different perspectives and, depending on their thoughts and feelings to form opinions. In the following stage, the abstract conceptualization stage, people learn to connect previous experience with knowledge. Then, in the active experimentation stage, people learn through a practical approach and improve themselves. In the context of this research, training provided in the workshop allowed participants to experience how to play the cards and

learn how others interpret their cards. They also can relate the knowledge obtained from the workshop with their experience in using metaphoric associative cards as a tool in their work.

Methodology

1. Research Design

Research design is guidance for researchers that sets the direction of the research process appropriately according to the objectives set (Sarwono 2022). This qualitative study implements an in-depth interview method. Kvale (1996) mentioned that when the researcher needs to obtain in-depth information from informants, an in-depth interview method is used. This method is a powerful tool for extracting data, which enables the researcher to investigate people's views in greater depth. An in-depth interview is valuable as it provides the opportunity for the informants to speak their thoughts and express their feelings. This method also allows the researcher to obtain unattainable information using questionnaires and observation techniques (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight 2006). Semi-structured interviews were employed to collect data so the informants feel more relaxed and comfortable sharing their perspectives. Key questions that were most related to the research questions were included in the semi-structured format so that informants could be asked follow-up questions. The interview questions were verified by the supervisor to increase the reliability and validity of this research. The researcher constructed interview questions based on 16 past literature and Google Form feedbacks from the workshop organiser. The interview questions consisted of five sections: a) clarifying informed consent; b) personal information; c) informants' reaction; d) overall experience and e) conclusion.

2. Participants

In accordance with the need to explore the effectiveness of the metaphoric associative card workshop from different perspectives, participants were recruited using the purposive sampling method. The workshop organiser was contacted and informed about the study and the sampling criteria. The sampling criteria required were informants who joined metaphoric associative card workshops organised by Metaphoric Card Malaysia. There were 80 potential participants provided in the list. Only 54 workshop participants were interested to be interviewed. After a few rounds of phone call invitations, only 12 informants responded and finally five informants were being interviewed. Table 1 shows the informants' demographic details.

Table 1. Informants' Background

Informant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Occupation
Informant 1	Female	40	Chinese	Counselling Student
Informant 2	Male	28	Chinese	Counsellor
Informant 3	Male	52	Indian	Counsellor
Informant 4	Female	39	Malay	Counselling Student
Informant 5	Male	44	Chinese	Fund-Raising Manager

3. Data Collection Process

The informants were briefed on the implications and consequences of the interview. It was to ensure they participate willingly. The informants were also asked to sign the informed consent form to acquire their permission. Each interview was conducted between 45 to 60 minutes. Interviews were either face-to-face or video conferencing via Zoom. The informants were recorded using audio-visual recording with consent. The interview questions were derived from the feedback forms provided by the workshop organiser and from the past studies and guided by the interview protocol. The interview protocol helped the researcher to achieve the

objective and to maintain consistency across interviews. The guideline questions as follow were used in interviewing the informants:

Clarify Informed Consent

i. Personal information

Reaction:	a. Content and materials:	i. What have you learned from the workshop? ii. What do you think about the activities prepared? iii. What is your opinion on the materials provided?
	b. Structure	:i. What do you think about the advertisement? ii. Can you share your experience with the registration process? iii. What is your opinion on the schedule and duration of the workshop? iv: Is the number of participants appropriate? Describe your experience.
	c. Facilitator	: i. What do you think about the facilitator’s knowledge and skills about the workshop content? ii. Can you share your opinion on how the facilitator explain the content? iii. How does the facilitator respond towards participants’ questions? iv. How does the facilitator communicate with participants?
	d. Facilities	: i. What do you think about the workshop location? ii. Describe the condition of the workshop room and how you feel about it? iii. What is your opinion about the facilities and equipment? iv. What do you think about the food provided?
Overall experience: What were your expectations when you first joined the workshop? Do you use metaphoric associative cards and apply what you have learned into your work or personal life? Explain further on the usage. What do you think is the best part of the workshop and why? What can be added or improved? Share any concern or knowledge gaps.		

Figure 1. Interview Protocol

4. Data Analysis

Based on the interview sessions, the recordings were converted into verbatim transcription. Reflective notes were used during the interview to document any non-verbal behaviours of informants, including facial expressions and gestures. These notes helped in probing informants. The verbatim transcriptions of each participant were analysed using the QDA Miner Lite software. Thematic analysis methods with a deductive approach were utilised. Then, the data obtained were combined into a chart. Identified perspectives were divided into a few themes. These themes were developed into stages based on distinguishable similarities.

Findings

In this section, the findings and discussion of the study are explained further. There were three main factors that were discussed: the new perspective emerged from the workshop; learning progress of the participants and how the learning was transferred. The following were the themes emerging from the interview sessions in relation to the interview questions. Firstly, the three new perspectives were discussed: 1) workshop strengths; 2) workshop weaknesses; 3) suggestions.

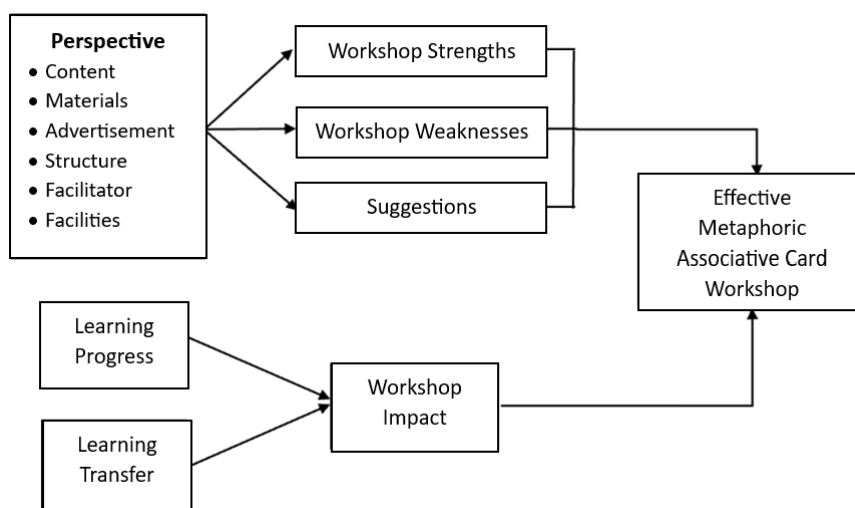


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework between Questions and Themes Emerged

1. Workshop Strengths

Hands-on Experience

Based on the analysis, the majority of the informants stated that the strength of the workshop content is the hands-on experience. This shows that hands-on experience or also known as experiential learning is an important approach in delivering the workshop content. Informant 1 mentioned that her favourite part of the workshop is the hands-on experience. She was able to try and use the metaphoric associative cards directly during the workshop.

“The best part is of course the hands-on part. When you got to try on the spot, that’s when you go, ‘okay, best’. Because if there are many lectures, although it’s nice to know all from the PowerPoint, I’m the type that if I listen to the PowerPoint presentation for so long, I will fall asleep. Because it’s already hands-on, then you can see the effect. Then from there also you can analyze. Can it be use for this situation? What other cards you can add on by yourself to make the thing better?”

(Informant 1, Female, 40 years old)

Informant 4 stated that she loves how the workshop trainer demonstrates how to use the card and also hands-on experience that she can understand things faster.

“The best part of the workshop is of course when we see how she uses the cards. I love when things are hands-on. Probably because I don’t like reading because it’s hard for me to grasp when I’m just reading. I like to see it. How it’s being applied. I think I’m one of those people if only read, I can’t. I need to watch people do it. I understand things faster when its hands-on.”

(Informant 4, Female, 39 years old)

PowerPoint Sharing by the Organiser

Informant 1 mentioned that the organiser forwarded the workshop material to the participants. The workshop material or the PowerPoint contained various ways to use the metaphoric associative cards.

“Also, the PowerPoint presentation was good. And after that she send back another PowerPoint but on how to use it in different ways. Those materials are actually good.”

(Informant 1, Female, 40 years old)

Another informant added that PowerPoint shared by facilitator can be used as revision material.

“If we’re like a first timer, who doesn’t know about the cards or for beginners, we are given chance to take the picture of the PowerPoint. Maybe after the workshop we can do our own revision, right. In the future if we buy cards with the facilitator, we want to play it with our family, friends or with our colleagues, we can do revision. ‘Oh no, what’s the next step?’, ‘How to play?’ Then we can look back.”

(Informant 5, Female, 44 years old)

Attractive Metaphoric Associative Card Corner

Informants were impressed by the decorative corner that prepared by the trainer. They appreciated the freedom to explore and to read various types of metaphoric associative cards in the market. An informant mentioned the cards and books displayed are good for them to explore:

“That’s for students when they are free, they get to see the cards. And see if they want to buy it. She (the facilitator) let the students see, touch, and look at her book, her cards. In terms of that, it’s good.”

(Informant 3, Male, 52 years old)

Another informant added that the cards displayed give them exposure on the variety of different cards:

“I like it because properly laid out. And then got small poster like bunting. And then we took pictures with it. Very good. Nobody will force you. The cards are there and you can go there and look. From that section, it was also easy to see this card is use for what, this card is for what. And then the facilitator will show all example and how you want to use it and things like that. So, we know what are the cards are there out there. You get to know not only two or three cards. So, there are many cards that you can choose.”

(Informant 4, Female, 39 years old)

Facilitator is an expert in Metaphoric Associative Card

Informants reported that the facilitator is an expert and well versed in using the metaphoric associative cards.

“I think she’s an expert. That every different card, she knows the functions clearly and how we are going to use that card. And then in terms of thing that I amazed the most is like how she can mix the cards.”

(Informant 2, Male, 28 years old)

Informant 4 stated the facilitator is knowledgeable:

“Very knowledgeable and expert in it I would say. She knows her cards very well. What’s good for what.”

(Informant 4, Female, 39 years old)

Facilitator Answer Questions Thoroughly

An informant mentioned that facilitator answered questions asked in detail manner and also provided in-depth explanation on the steps in using the cards.

“Ask anything, she can answer. She gives you even extra from what you asked.”

(Informant 1, Female, 40 years old)

Another informant added the facilitator giving explanation by showing example and it is helpful:

“She answered questions in details. She answered everyone’s questions sincerely. After she explain, she takes another card and give example. Show an example by using the card, besides than just talking. That one really helps.”

(Informant 5, Female, 44 years old)

2. Workshop Weaknesses

Limited advertisement

A few comments on advertisement and workshop duration were mentioned. Informants wished that more promotional work would be done to increase the publicity of the workshops and also to increase the duration of the workshop. An informant said he knew the workshop from his friend and there was only poster on the facebook:

“... her metaphoric card in Facebook but I don't think I knew it from her Facebook, I knew it from my friends. There's only Poster from her Facebook.”

(Informant 3, Male, 52 years old)

Informant 5 mentioned she knew about the workshop from facilitator's facebook:

“Maybe you know to make it, to promote advertisement more. Make it more expose to more people so there will be more participant. Yeah, can further promote the poster. Because I only know from the facilitator's Facebook.”

(Informant 5, Female, 44 years old)

Time-constraint

Informant said that the duration for the workshop is short as there are a lot to learn. An informant commented:

“The duration was like too long but too short also. But the thing is you can't go on for more than 24hours. So, it's a whole day course la, from morning to evening time but if possible maybe instead of one day, two days better because there's so many things to learn.”

(Informant 1, Female, 40 years old)

3. Suggestions

More Advertisement

Following the discussion of the weaknesses of the workshop, informants suggested that more advertisement and longer duration of the coming workshops.

“Maybe you know to make it, to promote advertisement more. Make it more expose to more people so there will be more participant. Yeah, can further promote the poster. Because I only know from the facilitator's Facebook.” “I don't mind if in future the facilitator come out with a 2-day or 3-day workshop. Yeah, so that we can learn deeper, more skills or more activity, way to use different cards right, better.”

(Informant 5, Female, 44 years old)

Increase Workshop Duration

Informant 1 proposed extending the workshop to two days due to the time taken for participants to deal with catharsis.

“If possible, maybe instead of one day, two days are better because there's so many things to learn. And the thing is when you go with many people there, even though we went to learn, suddenly, when we are experiencing the card course very hands-on, suddenly got catharsis session. We can't stop the participants from not crying, so we wait. So have to factor in there, suddenly catharsis people.”

(Informant 1, Female, 40 years old)

4. Workshop Impacts

Overall, the informants mentioned that the workshop had a huge impact towards them both professionally and personally. Even though few of the informants did not come from psychology or counselling background, they were able to acquire new knowledge and experiences through the workshop. The workshop impacts presented what informants have grasped throughout the workshop and what they have applied post workshop.

Professional skills

Informants shared the two professional skills, i.e. probing and helping skills, which they obtained from the workshop that further improved their professional counselling skills.

i. Probing skills

Informant 2 mentioned that he has learned technique in asking open questions in the workshop.

“Techniques that I learned is like how we are going to ask them in open questions. Using the card with open questions and also how to give the reflection for them. Getting the respond from them.”

(Informant 2, Male, 28 years old)

Informant 4 explained the questioning style facilitator asked the participant is helpful to her.

“We were thinking in our head, ‘oh, the card she (participant) chose is interesting.’ And then when we listened to the explanation it is like totally different than what is on the card. Okay this is very interesting. And to see the facilitator how she proceeds from participant’s explanation about the card, what kind of questions to ask, I found it really helpful for me.”

(Informant 4, Female, 39 years old)

ii. Helping skills

Informant 4 stated that she likes to use metaphoric associative cards as it is beneficial for her and helpful for others too.

“Like it was inspirational to see the facilitator do it (demonstrated the exploration process). And then we’re like, ‘I want to do this too.’ Because I feel like it was beneficial for me. I ‘ve used it and then it might be helpful for others. And then we saw this boy (workshop participant) who says few words only (in the workshop). Doesn’t talk much. And then towards the end (of the workshop) he talks a lot. So, this kid can (be active), maybe I can help others too? So, I felt like, okay I want to use it, want to try too.”

(Informant 4, Female, 39 years old)

Metaphoric Associative Card Characteristics

Informants shared their thoughts about the unique characteristics of metaphoric associative cards that allow them to use it freely and also provide autonomy for clients to express themselves. It is especially useful for bringing the unconscious conscious hence the clients could understand their issue in a deeper sense. Also, the cards are merely a tool, and the understanding of counselling theories are far more important to assist clients in facing their issues.

i. Versatile Tool

Informant 1 mentioned the card is useful to help clients who have past trauma:

“Many of my clients have issues that stemmed from past trauma or memory. Growing up in an Asian community, and parenting, they have learnt to bury these negative incidences so deep in their unconscious mind, that in their conscious state, they cannot even remember them. Though they cannot remember all these events, they have contributed to many of their current mental and emotional complications. The method that I find useful is to use metaphoric cards to bring the unconscious into the conscious mind.”

(Informant 1, Female, 40 years old)

Informant 2 stated that metaphoric associative cards are a versatile tool.

“I have tried with teenagers as well. Especially, to explore their feelings. They have some unspeakable issue that are hardly to share if we just ask like ‘What type of emotional struggle that you have?’ If we are using the cards, we are able to identify all. And then, I think like children, we are able to identify more what they are afraid of. I got a case with families. There are two children. So, we know that actually the children are not happy with one of the family members, got conflict. From that conflict we also know about how they think about each other.”

(Informant 2, Male, 28 years old)

ii. Subjective interpretation

Informant 1 added metaphoric cards have been useful in exploring client’s hidden issues.

“Many of my clients have issues that stemmed from past trauma or memory. Growing up in an Asian community, and parenting, they have learnt to bury these negative incidences so deep in their unconscious mind, that in their conscious state, they cannot even remember them. Though they cannot remember all these events, they have contributed to many of their current mental and emotional complications. The method that I find useful, is to use metaphoric cards to bring the unconscious into the conscious mind.”

(Informant 1, Female, 40 years old)

Informant 4 reported the card client chose brought up different meaning to her even though she had chosen a pleasant one:

“I remember she chose a card. So, we all thought that’s a very happy card. So, it was supposed to be like the card that reminds you of your family or something like that. Not something’s that bothering you. And then it was Participant A’s card and then the facilitator asked what makes you chose the card. So, from there, the way she approached it and then Participant A explain everything. When we see it, that’s not what we thought. I thought she is very happy. Especially very happy as this person at the back got children (the picture of the card) following but actually it wasn’t.”

(Informant 4, Female, 39 years old)

iii. Awaken unconscious mind

Informant 1 shared her experience in using the card on her clients that awaken the unconscious mind.

“Many of my clients have issues that stem from past trauma or memory. Growing up in an Asian community, and parenting, they have learnt to bury these negative incidences so deep in their unconscious mind, that in their conscious state, they cannot even remember them. Though they cannot remember all these events, they have contributed to many of their current mental and emotional complications. The method that I find useful, is to use metaphoric cards to bring the unconscious into the conscious mind. To create more awareness in my clients, so we can work towards a more effective solution, which is to address the root cause.”

(Informant 1, Female, 40 years old)

Iv. Theoretical foundation

Informant 1 mentioned that knowledge is needed in using the card with clients.

“Even if you own like 20 decks of cards but you don’t have the knowledge of psychology or the knowledge of counselling or the knowledge of psychiatric or the basic human function and how their mind works, actually this card is useless. So, the thing becomes like a normal play card but the minute you have the knowledge of all this plus together with the cards, you can make magic happen.”

(Informant 1, Female, 40 years old)

Informant 4 mentioned that having a basic foundation is important in order to use the cards:

“I feel like it’s good to have the foundation. If not, you don’t know. You join and don’t know anything but just keep using it. It’s not good either. So, it’s important to have that basic foundation.”

(Informant 4, Female, 39 years old)

Exploration on Family Issues

Informants reported that they managed to explore family issues with their clients especially the complex dynamics between parents and children, and also among the siblings.

i. Relationship exploration

Informant 3 stated that she used this card to explore the relationship of the client’s family.

“I’ve also used this one card, picture card only to reflect relationship between people who’s at home. Like with mother, father, siblings. So let say he take five cards. ‘This is me. this is my mom.’ I ask him to put other cards anywhere from his card like his relationship with them. So maybe the father’s card is far means that their relationship is not so good. The mother card is put close to his card. All these cards are facing down. So, after putting those cards at their place, the client opened them. Then he sees something and will tell you what is it. I ask him what do you see from the cards about your relationship with your mother, siblings and so on. He shared it with me.”

(Informant 3, Male, 52 years old)

ii. Disagreements among siblings

Informant 1 mentioned about the cards helped client bring up family issues that not sorted out .

“She has issue to talk to her, expressing to her family members. So apparently, she got that because the brothers are getting married. They don’t agree. So, it became from no issue to so many issues, down to her past issue because she felt like she has to do everything for the family and then nobody really cares about her.”

(Informant 1, Female, 40 years old)

Workshop Interactions

i. Support between workshop mates

Informant 4 mentioned that the workshop managed to provide opportunities for networking that could support counsellors in their professional life.

“It felt good to be able to share knowledge with other participants and learn from one another, Learning that others also face difficulties during their counselling sessions, it made me feel less alone”

(Informant 4, Female, 39 years old)

Open Communication

Two informants reported that the metaphoric associative cards were a great tool to assist open communication with clients, especially clients who have difficulties in expressing their inner thoughts.

i. Providing Detail Information

Informant 1 reported she was able to explore more about the client using the card as the client was very quiet:

“I got this client. She’s very quiet, very hard. But with the second session, then I brought out the card and then she could talk more. Then apparently, she has unresolved issue with her mother and the sister and a lot of resentment for the brother”

(Informant 1, Female, 40 years old)

Informant 2 shared that the metaphoric associative cards can collect more detailed information regarding client’s issues.

“What I learn as well the cards really help me to know more, collect more information related to their issues. Some of the issues, if client just share by verbally, it will be very brief and hardly to go to have more information. But if we are using the metaphoric cards, we are able to ask more details about that. That is what I learned from the workshop.”

(Informant 2, Male, 28 years old)

Expressing Feelings

Informant 4 mentioned that the cards helped clients express their feelings.

“I asked why you chose bird? Because she drew birds even though in the other card only got scenery picture. Then got rainbow, there's everything that reminds her of her hometown. And then she said, ‘I want to be free like the bird because right now I feel like a prisoner.’ Before that I asked her how are you feeling? ‘Normal.’ How's your day? She answered few words only. It was so hard. So, it's hard went we want to explore more. Can you define what normal is? ‘Normal.’ After I take out the cards then she cried...She wants to go home.”

(Informant 4, Female, 39 years old)

Discussion

Based on the analysis, the majority of the informants stated that the strength of the workshop content is the hands-on experience. This shows that hands-on experience or also known as experiential learning is an important approach in delivering workshop content. Besides that, the study also highlighted that the workshop organiser forwarded the material to the participants and allowed them to save it. The workshop material or the PowerPoint contained various ways to use the metaphoric associative cards. The informants expressed that it is useful for future reference. Also, all of the informants shared their perspectives about the metaphoric associative card corner. This indicates that the idea is a success. According to the informants, the corner was decorated with various types of metaphoric associative cards and additional information about it. Participants were also allowed to see and touch the cards displayed at the corner before buying them. This type of experience instills trust in participants and enhances their satisfaction. Majority of the informants emphasized that the facilitator has an extensive knowledge of metaphoric associative cards. They were also amazed with the facilitator's ability to mix different types of metaphoric associative cards in one session.

The informants were also impressed with the facilitator's knowledge of metaphoric associative cards and appreciated her thorough answers to their questions, which included examples and additional information. This is in line with a study done by Sim et al.(2022) where the participants expressed that they are satisfied with the communication style of facilitators.

There were some weaknesses from the workshop. Analysis found that the workshop material was full of text. An informant pointed out that the PowerPoint slides contained too much text. As a result, she found it difficult to read the slides. However, she also expressed concern that the facilitator might overlook important information if the slides were simplified. Few participants stated that the workshop was only advertised on Facebook. This decreases the workshop visibility among potential participants. The majority of the informants expressed their dissatisfaction with the time-constraint. They stated that there were so many things to learn and ask regarding the cards but they had to rush themselves due to the short workshop duration.

The suggestions given by informants are such as in order to conduct better future workshops and increase participation, the workshop organiser has to implement improvements. The results of the study found that the informant recommended the organiser to provide more concise materials. This is because it will be easier for participants to read the PowerPoints slides. In addition to that, the informant also suggested publicizing the workshop widely to encourage greater participation. In response to the time constraint weakness, the majority of the informants recommended increasing the number of workshop days. Besides being rushed to learn, the organiser also has to consider the time taken for participants to deal with catharsis.

Regarding the skills they obtained from the workshop, informants stated that one of the skills they learned during the workshop is to probe questions and elaborate responses. This showed that probing questions and elaborating responses is one of the most important skills in using metaphoric associative cards for the informants. The analysis found that the informants were motivated to help others after joining the metaphoric

associative card workshop. The informants were inspired to help their clients by using the cards as their counselling tool and also helped their course mates by introducing the cards and promoting this workshop. The informants also learned that people of different ages can use metaphoric associative cards. They even applied it post workshop. One of the informants even shared his experience in using metaphoric associative cards with both children and teenagers.

Metaphoric associative cards are also versatile in terms of culture. Initially, they were developed by Western people but it is also applicable to Eastern cultures. One of the informants mentioned that most of her clients are Asians and she is able to use the card with them in their counselling sessions. Informants acquired that metaphoric associative cards are interpreted subjectively. There is no specific interpretation for the cards. Informant 4 shared her experience of having a different interpretation about this one card compared to another participant during the workshop. The metaphoric associative card is a unique tool that helps people awaken their unconscious mind. The informant highlighted that this process allowed her to work better with her client in counselling sessions. Even though it is not a requirement to have the basic knowledge of metaphoric associative cards before using them, the informants found it beneficial to have such knowledge as it would help them use the cards more effectively. Metaphoric associative cards helped informants with their client's family relationship exploration. The informant explained his own way of using these cards to explore client's relationship with the family. The usage of metaphoric associative cards assisted informants in recognizing client's disagreements among siblings' issues. The findings show consistency as reported by Ayalon (2007) And Ping (2009) that the interpretations of metaphors featured in the cards can trigger different reactions and the unconscious mind from different participants.

In the context of workshop training, supporting each other creates a positive learning environment that helps participants with their learning process. An informant mentioned that during the workshop, participants supported each other by sharing and learning together. Instead of just talking with clients, informant found that metaphoric associative cards are more effective in helping clients share more details with the counsellor. Obtaining detailed information from clients allows counsellors to assist them better. The informants shared their experience using metaphoric associative cards with clients who initially resisted talking but were able to express their feelings at the end of the session. One of the informants asked her client to draw something out of the card she got, she found out that her client felt sad and missed her hometown so much. This shows that metaphoric associative cards can be used to open up communication and express feelings.

Conclusion

The metaphoric associative card workshops were held to train users on how to utilise the cards. Hence, this study is implemented to explore participants' perspectives regarding the workshop and examine the impact of it. Selected informants were required to share their perspectives through interview sessions. The informants shared their opinions on both strengths and weaknesses of the workshop. They also recommended their ideas on how the workshop can be better in future. Other than that, the informants revealed that the workshop helped them to acquire both knowledge and skills regarding metaphoric associative cards and utilize them effectively. For instance, they learned about the characteristics of metaphoric associative cards and how to apply probing skills. They also shared their experiences post workshops where their clients were able to express better after utilizing the cards. This shows that the workshop was effective in assisting users. Apart from that, informants also achieved personal growth as they were more inspired to help others after joining the workshop.

However, the limitations of this study must be stated. One of the limitations of this research is four out of five informants were from counselling backgrounds. Only one informant works as a fund-raising manager. The data were limited more to the perspectives of a counsellor. Hence the usage of metaphoric associative cards in other field was limited. The final limitation of this research is the lack of past literature on workshop effectiveness from both outside and in Malaysia.

According to the research limitations, there are a few suggestions that can be done for future research so better results can be achieved. The first suggestion is to appoint more informants from various professions. This is to ensure the effectiveness of workshops on other people besides counsellors are understood. The future researcher can also gather data by distributing workshop evaluation questionnaires pre and post-workshop.

This will allow the researcher to analyse data inferentially and increase research validation by conducting triangulation.

Finally, there are several implications of this research. This research analysis will help the organiser to plan a better workshop in the future in terms of workshop content, materials, advertisement, structure, facilitator and facility. Informants' positive and negative perspectives will notify the organiser on what needs to be improved or stopped. This is important because positive perspectives will motivate workshop participants to learn. Other than that, the implication of this study is able to identify the impact of the metaphoric associative card workshop. This helps the organiser to know whether the participants apply what they have learned during the workshop. As a result, this study will increase the confidence of people who are hesitant to either invest and learn about the metaphoric associative cards or not. This research also adds to the limited literature about metaphoric associative cards in Malaysia compared to overseas. Specifically, literature about the effectiveness of metaphoric associative workshops in Malaysia.

Acknowledgement: This research was supported by Geran Galakan Penyelidikan (University Research Grant), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (GGP 2019-018).

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all informants involved in the study. The ethics approval reference is JEP-2020-777.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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