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The role of art, music, and dance on mental health and healing in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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Background: The role of the arts, including music, dance, and creative expression can be a means of improving community health. The purpose of this paper is to describe the role of a cultural center on community health and healing.

Methods: This qualitative study conducted interviews and focus groups with audience members, artists, and staff at Fendika Cultural Center, Addis Ababa, January 2023. Participants were recruited via word of mouth and purposive sampling. Focus groups and interviews were done in English or Amharic and recorded, transcribed and translated as needed. Questions included their experiences with Fendika Cultural Center and psychological, physical, social and economic influences. Deductive analysis was used, guided by the Arts and Culture in Public Health Framework.

Results: Two focus groups (n=11 participants, 5 female, 6 males) and five key informant interviews (3 females, 2 males) were completed. Findings supported the Arts and Culture in Public Health Framework with strong evidence to support four outcomes and mechanisms (chosen a priori) for the relationship between the arts and public health including 1) providing direct health benefits; 2) creating safe, inclusive and engaging environments; 3) support social, cultural and policy change; and 4) increase health service equity.

Conclusion: The arts play an important role in community health. Further research is need to establish the scope of impact and if impactful arts centers can be replicated.

Biography:

Dr. Mary Hearst is a Social Epidemiologist and Professor in the School of Nursing at the University of Minnesota, USA. Her work is centered on community partnerships, de-colonizing research, equity and inclusion, access to food and nutrition, and improving the lives of women and children through integrated early intervention.