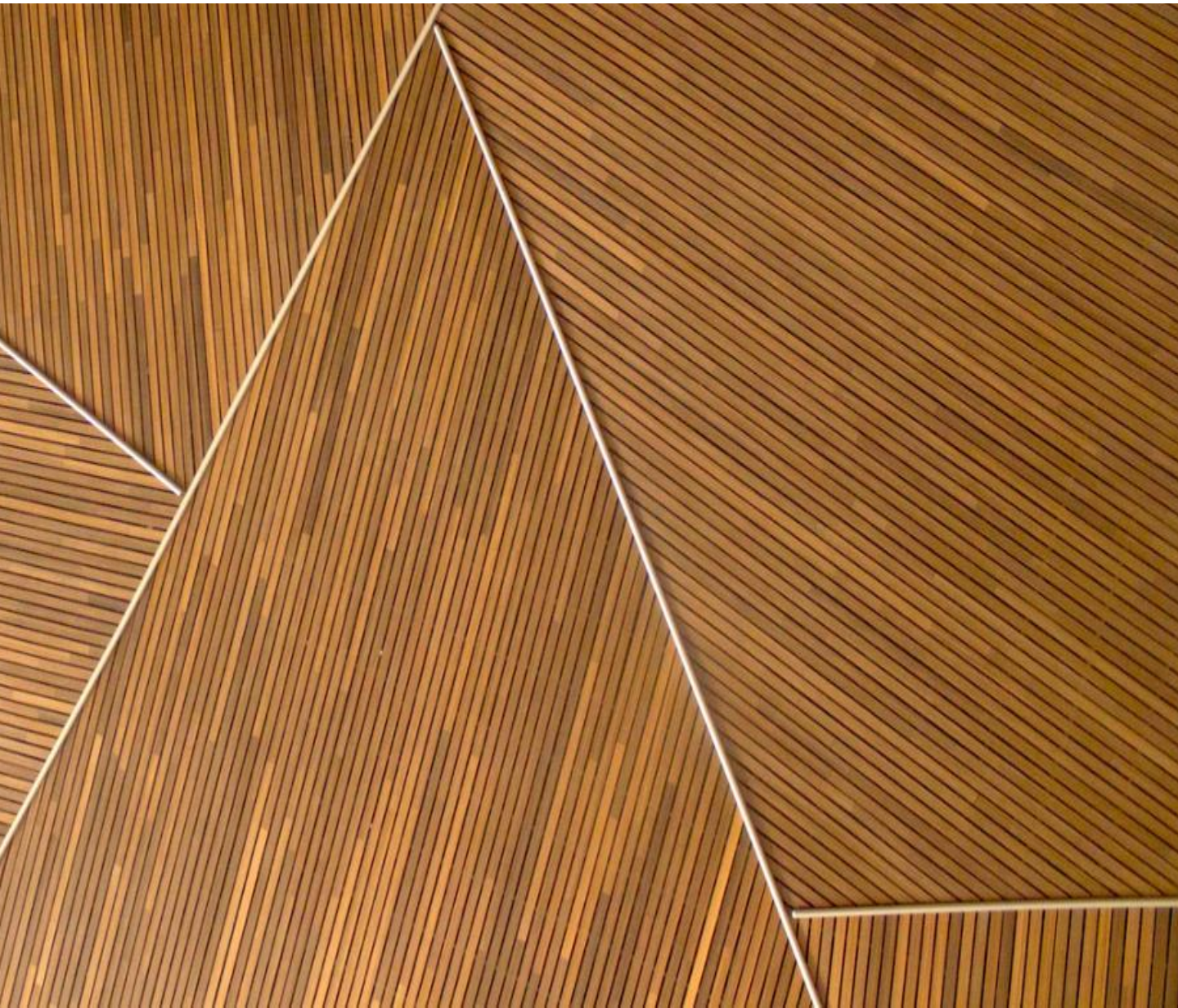


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**SSR RESEARCH SKILLS
FOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND
IMPLEMENTATION RESEARCH
FOR SOCIAL SERVICES
MENTORING PROGRAMMES**

Abstracts



CONTENTS

Social service mobile app for the low-income <i>Muhammad Nor Karno Bin Mohamed</i>	4
Everyday struggles and hopes of low-income single-parent families (in the HOPE Scheme) served by TOUCH Community Services <i>Jennifer Koh Hui Nee Deborah Ng Xuan Min</i>	5
A review of the H.O.M.E. based parenting programme <i>Toh Shumin</i>	6
How may I assist you? : An investigation of library improvement to support student research and learning <i>Kanmany Doraisamy</i>	7
Understanding the food consumption of low-income Chinese families: The relationship between food choice and food expenses <i>Diana Ong Sze Shun</i>	8
Understanding the roles and responsibilities of social workers in advocacy work in Singapore <i>Lin Ling</i>	9

CONTENTS

Aspirations of Muslim women <i>Norhanna Yumi Ibrahim Nur Farreha Abdul Jalil</i>	10
Social participation among families: An exploratory study on what is required to maintain healthy family relationships <i>Murnira Binte Sulaiman Nur Syahirah Binti Idris</i>	11
Dirty not my problem?: A Co-Design approach to revitalising the Jalan Kukoh neighbourhood <i>Teo Shuek Chian Toh Song Ming</i>	12
Implementation research proposal: A psychosocial work- based intervention for people with young-onset and early stage dementia <i>Janrius Goh Chong Min Ong Wei Jie Tan Tee Hng Shazana Binte Mohamed Shahwan</i>	13
A qualitative exploration of the relationship dynamics between older persons and adult children for Malay cases of elder mistreatment at TRANS SAFE Centre <i>Masjedah Binte Arial</i>	14

Social service mobile app for the low-income

Muhammad Nor Karno Bin Mohamed

The Empowerment Partnership Scheme (EPS) is a two-year family-based programme run by the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS) to help Zakat-receiving families become self-reliant. The programme requires each member of the family to attend customised courses such as skills-upgrading for better job opportunities, religious, life skills and education programmes for the children. A review of the programme was conducted in 2018 to evaluate the programme's effectiveness and outcomes. Based on this review, a new EPS6 programme design was proposed and the utilisation of a social service mobile application as facilitator of the programme will be introduced. The social service mobile application allows the families to set their goals, manage their grants, attend free or paid activities and monitor their own progress towards achieving their goals.

This study aims to propose a relevant evaluation framework for EPS6, based on its logic model, to assess both the programme processes and outcomes when the mobile application is launched. The proposed process and outcome evaluation framework will enable MUIS to monitor the utilisation of the programme and to find out if intended outcomes are met for the beneficiaries. A literature review on various evaluation frameworks for similar family-based programmes is used to further the discussion on the strengths and limitations of the proposed research plan for the EPS6.

Everyday struggles and hopes of low-income single-parent families (in the HOPE Scheme) served by TOUCH Community Services

Jennifer Koh Hui Nee | Deborah Ng Xuan Min

There is a rising trend of single-parent families in Singapore in recent years. However, there has been limited discussion on the needs and struggles of low-income single-parent families, including those headed by foreign-born mothers. There is also insufficient understanding of the perspectives and roles of children who grow up in these families.

This study aimed to explore the needs of low-income single-parent families served by TOUCH Community Services via the Home Ownership Plus Education (HOPE) Scheme. Furthermore, their utilisation of community assistance was explored. The study also sought to give a voice to the children who grew up in such families who may otherwise be neglected in research related to poverty.

This study adopted a mixed method design. 9 low-income single-parent families participated in the study after being selected via purposive sampling of the HOPE Client Database. Primary data was obtained via interviews with the families to surface needs related to finances, employment, parenting, marriage, and social support. Demographic data was retrieved from the database to form a profile of these families. A focus group discussion was then conducted with TOUCH's staff who worked with families under the HOPE Scheme to compare and triangulate earlier findings.

Preliminary findings found that the interviewed families struggle with meeting their basic, psychological, and self-fulfilment needs. They have limited financial resources for daily expenses, struggle with multiple roles and responsibilities, and lack support from ex-spouses. They have reservations making friends with male counterparts or finding a partner, hence compromising their need for love and belonging. Some children have difficulties managing their relationship with their biological fathers. The inability to cope with multiple stressors has also affected the families' mental wellbeing. These findings have strengthened TOUCH's understanding of the needs of these families and the resources that may be provided to address service gaps.

A review of the H.O.M.E. based parenting programme

Toh Shumin

The H.O.M.E. Based Parenting Programme, anchored by Big Love Child Protection Specialist Centre, serves families known to Big Love as well as the 3 family service centres of Montfort Care. The programme targets parents with children of ages 0 to 12 years old who face parenting stress and difficulties and whose children have conduct and behavioural issues. The programme aims to support these parents in enhancing their parent-child relationship through promoting play and positive parenting, with a long-term goal of reducing their child's behavioural issues and alleviating parental stress. Volunteers, who receive training and supervision from the programme staff, are matched with referred families and expected to conduct 12 to 14 home visiting sessions over a period of 3 to 4 months.

The H.O.M.E. programme was started in 2009 by Marine Parade FSC. It has evolved over the years, but no formal evaluation has been done till now. This research project seeks to conduct a review of the programme, exploring how effective it is in meeting the needs of parents and families, the strengths and weaknesses of programme delivery, and how the programme can be modified or strengthened to better meet the needs of parents. These perceptions and experiences are explored with the various stakeholders, including volunteers, families, and case/social workers. Two focus group discussions were conducted: one with a group of six volunteers and another with nine case/social workers from Big Love. In addition, semi-structured interviews with four clients were conducted.

In this presentation, the different data sources will be triangulated to find similarities and differences in perceptions among the 3 stakeholder groups. Preliminary hypotheses generated from these findings will be discussed, along with the study limitations and recommendations for future research.

How may I assist you?: An investigation of library improvement to support student research and learning

Kanmany Doraisamy

This study aimed to examine students' views on the role of the school library services in facilitating their research and their satisfaction with the resources and services. The data was collected from 66 senior students through an online survey. Findings of the survey indicated that the majority (85%) of respondents acknowledged that the library was actually used as a space for studying rather than a facility for research. The study provides a better understanding of the senior students' attitudes and views towards library resources and how they use the internet for their research. In conclusion, it is vital for the school library to "rebrand" itself with a better library website and to use social media platforms as communication/marketing tools to attract/advocate for the senior students to use its resources and services for their extended essay research.

Understanding the food consumption of low-income Chinese families: The relationship between food choice and food expenses

Diana Ong Sze Shun

Food is a commonly used welfare indicator for the measurement of poverty, nutrition, health and food security of individuals and families. Some factors that affect the food consumption among low-income families are their limited resources, time constraints and difficulty faced in adopting healthy eating habits.

This study seeks to understand the relationship between food choice and food expenses of low-income families. It examines the monthly food expenses of these families based on their household size, household type and number of primary school-going children. It also explores the healthy and less healthy food choices frequently purchased by these families.

The methodology used was a one-to-one survey interview with 77 respondents from low-income families with primary school-going children. Through the survey interview, data on the families' food consumption was collected.

The preliminary findings indicate that these families spend an average of 36% of their household income on food, of which, 57% goes to home-cooked food. Those families who seem to have a healthier diet tend to spend more on their food expenses regardless of eating in or out.

Understanding the roles and responsibilities of social workers in advocacy work in Singapore

Lin Ling

Advocacy is a part of social workers' responsibility under the Singapore Association of Social Workers' (SASW) Code of Professional Ethics. In general, social workers differentiate between case and cause advocacy work. The aim of this research project is to study how social workers within a Family Service Centre (FSC) perceive their roles and responsibilities of advocacy work in Singapore and the difficulties they face when undertaking these professional duties. A qualitative research approach based on focused group discussions and an in-depth semi-structured interview is used in this study. This study shows that case advocacy is practised more than cause advocacy in social workers' daily work. However, cause advocacy plays a vital role in shaping social workers' advocacy competency at the macro level. The main factors that contribute to the perceived limited exposure to cause advocacy work include not having sufficient time or skills, as well as a sense of disempowerment among social workers who participated in this study. It is suggested that further research and discussions among social workers from other institutional settings are necessary to tackle these difficulties related to performing cause advocacy work.

Aspirations of Muslim women

Norhanna Yumi Ibrahim | Nur Farreha Abdul Jalil

This study explores the aspirations of Muslim women in Singapore. It is important as the Singapore Muslim Women's Association (PPIS) aims to encourage an inclusive community that supports Muslim women's aspirations and there has been no study of aspirations of this group. This qualitative research is based on a focus group discussion to examine the salient themes that emerge when Muslim women reflect on their aspirations. These themes will then inform PPIS on the conceptualisation of a larger, more representative survey to be conducted among Muslim women. Through the findings of this study, we found that participants focused their discussions on non-material aspirations, such as being self-sufficient in order to contribute to the family and community. There were also distinctive aspirational differences between the younger and older participants because they were at different life stages. Nevertheless, both younger and older participants face mainly structural barriers when they strive to achieve their life goals. This study suggests that the survey will need to consider non-material aspirations and that efforts to help women achieve their aspirations need to address structural challenges.

Social participation among families: An exploratory study on what is required to maintain healthy family relationships

Murnira Binte Sulaiman | Nur Syahirah Binti Idris

This study aims to explore the basic required level of family activities and resources to maintain meaningful and healthy family bonds among low-income families in Singapore. Literature shows that social capital mediates against the negative effects of poverty. However, low-income families are often less well-embedded within their social network due to their lack of resources. The conceptualisation and methodology of this study take reference from the UK's "Minimum Income Standard" research that establishes minimum required budgetary standards for different household types using a consensual method. This approach not only looks at basic physical needs but also considers what is required for individuals to fulfil their social obligations and roles. In this study, we focused our scope of inquiry to finding out the basic required level of social participation for a couple-based household with school-going children from a low-income background. Using a consensual method, our participants deliberated as a group on what kinds of family relationships were important to them and what activities they felt were required in order to maintain these relationships. The participants agree that family-centric leisure activities, couple time, individual "me time" as well as parental involvement in a child's daily life were important and necessary to maintain healthy family bonds. Our results also found that while financial resources, time and logistics were needed to carry out these activities, participants expressed a scarcity of these resources. This discussion on a minimum standard of social participation for low-income families will inform and contribute to a deeper understanding of the social dimensions of poverty in Singapore.

Dirty not my problem?: A Co-Design Approach to revitalising the Jalan Kukoh Neighbourhood

Teo Shuek Chian | Toh Song Ming

The Kukoh Klean and Kopi (KKK) community programme was developed in 2018 with the aim of improving engagement and retention of resident volunteers through cleaning of the environment. However, after a 6-month implementation, there was no noticeable improvement to the environmental quality of the community despite the cleaning efforts. As a result, the programme underwent a review and took on a new direction. Moving forward, the revamped KKK programme would focus on the development of the community at large, instead of the current group of resident volunteers. As such, the revised aim of the programme is to increase the sense of ownership of space in residents, where environmental cleanliness is the common interest.

For the scope of this study, we first identified 2 new intended outcomes of the programme: (1) improve community residents' perception of their environment, and (2) enhance social networking opportunities to promote social connectedness, through literature review. Second, we explored the co-design of solutions (activities) with residents and agency staff through a group ideation exercise informed by Asset Based Community Development framework and Design Thinking approaches.

The study findings were then plotted against the prioritisation matrix, which is a decision-making tool that is used to determine the feasibility of solutions generated based on resources required (difficulties) and alignment with the intended outcomes (importance). The shortlisted solutions seek to inform the “activities” and “outputs” for the refined theory of change, which will be evaluated in the course of programme implementation subsequently.

Implementation research proposal: A psychosocial work-based intervention for people with young-onset and early stage dementia

Janrius Goh Chong Min | Ong Wei Jie | Tan Tee Hng |
Shazana Binte Mohamed Shahwan

Young-onset dementia afflicts individuals under the age of 60, and Singapore has seen a rise in cases from previous years. Research has indicated that people with young onset dementia (PYOD) not only experience similar decline in cognition, and alterations of affect and behaviour, but greater loss in psychosocial domains such as self-esteem, self-identity, and finances than typical-onset dementia. To address this issue, an innovation was developed by a community dementia service provider to support PYOD. IMH investigators were tasked by an external funder to conduct an implementation research of a psychosocial work-based innovation targeting PYOD. Kitwood's personhood and well-being approach is the underlining theoretical-basis of the innovation, and the service provider hopes to address PYOD's need for meaningful activity through a work-based session. The investigators seek to identify and expound on factors that influence the implementation of the innovation, as well as to evaluate whether the innovation was successfully implemented in Singapore. The study will employ a mixed-methods design, and approach 10 participants for each stakeholder group: 1) service users, 2) caregivers, 3) service providers, 4) employers/community partners. The semi-structured interview (SSI) will be guided by the consolidated framework for implementation research to evaluate the fidelity, and identify facilitators and barriers of the implementation. An observation guide will be used to complement the findings of the SSI by an external evaluator (i.e. IMH investigators) for a comprehensive perspective of the implementation. Secondary measures and outcomes identified by the funder as key performance indicators namely cognition, mood, and caregiver respite as an evaluation of the innovations' effectiveness and efficacy as a service in Singapore will also be examined. As the study described above is in the process of ethical review, the investigators are unable to commence data collection and thus have no data or results to display. Nevertheless, a detailed proposal of the implementation research that the investigators are engaged in will be presented today.

A qualitative exploration of the relationship dynamics between older persons and adult children for Malay cases of elder mistreatment at TRANS SAFE Centre

Masjedah Binte Arial

This study is a qualitative exploration of the experiences of Malay older persons who had experienced elder mistreatment, specifically focusing on the relationship dynamics of older persons who were abused by their adult children. The findings could potentially help to provide an accurate assessment and appropriate intervention for cases of elder mistreatment, informed by an understanding of this relationship. A conceptual framework was developed to examine the extent to which prevailing theories on elder abuse, such as interpersonal theory and sociocultural theory, could help us better understand the relationship between the older persons and their adult children who abuse.

The study uses a multi-method approach. First, case documentation reviews of identified elder abuse cases managed by TRANS SAFE Centre were used to provide a synopsis of the cases. Second, in-depth qualitative interviews with the older persons who were mistreated were conducted.

A pilot study was first conducted with interviews of 3 elder abuse cases. The learning points gathered from this process were then used to revise the interview guide and sampling strategy. It also strengthened the interviewing skills of the interviewers for the study.

Moving forward, the plan is to extend the study to include other ethnic groups of elder abuse cases managed by TRANS SAFE Centre. Thematic analysis to subsequently be undertaken to uncover if there is any correlation between elder abuse with the relationship dynamic between the older person and their adult children. The scope of the study will also be expanded to encompass how the older person copes with abuse and what makes them continue to stay in an abusive relationship.

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