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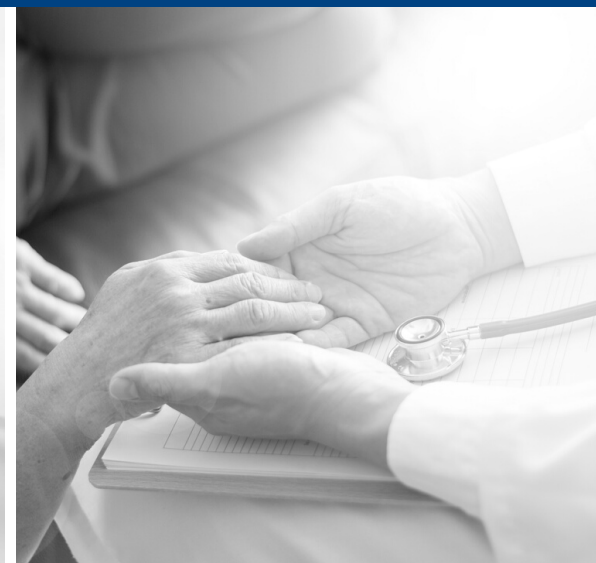
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Research Skills & Implementation Research for Social Services Mentoring Programmes

PROJECT ABSTRACTS

CONTENTS

Assessing Outcomes of Open Visitation: A Pilot Study on Perspectives of Children on Incarcerated Mothers using Art-Based Interviews

Lim Wee Lee (New Life Stories)

This pilot study investigates the outcomes of open visitation programs on the relationship between incarcerated mothers and their school-going children, who range from 9 to 14 years old (n = 3, M = 11.3 year-old). The study's primary objective is to explore the outcomes in terms of social, emotional, psychological outcomes, and relationship strengths in children resulting from open visitation, while also recognising and understanding the role of caregivers in shaping these experiences.

Using a mixed-method research design, the study employed diverse methodologies and data triangulation for comprehensive insights. Art-based interviews allowed school-going children to share their perceptions and experiences regarding open visitation. Children self-report Kidscreen-30 assesses psychological, emotional, and parental relation aspects of Quality of Life (QoL) right after open visitation and compares the changes in pre-assessments that have been collected, while caregiver interviews provided insights into their role in shaping the children's open visitation experiences. Scales quantifying parent-child relationship were given to incarcerated mothers pre and post-intervention and compared.

Findings from this research carry significance in describing and explaining the outcomes, both positive and negative, of open visitation experiences by the school-going children. The study reveals positive outcomes on emotional, psychological, and relationship strengths. However, there is also one drawback to the psychological aspect. Apparently, no social outcomes were identified among the children in terms of peer interactions beyond their families. The study's outcomes hold relevance for future researchers, social practitioners, and institutions striving to improve the programs, the well-being of children and families impacted by incarceration. Insights could guide the refinement of open visitation schemes in prison, fostering healthier parent-child relationships and overall family well-being.

A "Big Space": Social and Spatial Practices of Street-Involved Adolescents

Flora Tan Chunxiu (Care Corner)

The role of the environment has always been a central feature in social work, as practitioners consider how various systems have an impact on issues clients are experiencing. In considering the environment, research has emphasised the importance of paying attention to issues of space and place as they influence human development (Proshansky, 1983). One such environment pertinent to a subculture of adolescents in Singapore are public spaces, which refers to spaces that are "publicly owned or of public use, accessible and enjoyable by all for free and without profit motive" (UN Habitat, 2015: 15). Current perceptions of adolescents who use public spaces are predominantly negative as evidenced in both overseas and local research and news outlets.

Through investigating the perspectives and lived experiences of adolescents who are frequent users of public spaces, as well as members of the public and social service practitioners who observe and interact with such adolescents, this study seeks to explore and discuss the following questions:
a)   What are the social and spatial practices of street-involved adolescents using public spaces in Singapore?
b)   What are societal perceptions of adolescents in public spaces?
c)   What opportunities do public spaces afford for adolescent development?

This study employed the use of photo-elicitation to explore the experiences of 2 adolescents between the ages of 13 to 18 years old and through semi-structured interviews, explored their perceptions of a space they use in the Northeast of Singapore. A security guard who oversees the space was also interviewed to investigate public perceptions of adolescents who use the space. The documentation notes of youth workers who interact with the adolescents in this space were also studied. Using narrative analysis, the data was coded according to a conceptual framework representing key place attachment processes (Cross, 2015) through the lens of temporality, sociality, and place to tell a story of the place processes adolescents engaged in when using the space (Rodriguez, 2016). The findings demonstrate which place attachment processes are more salient in adolescence, prevailing negative perceptions society has of street-involved adolescents, and the opportunities that public space offers for adolescent development. This study can inform youth workers conducting street outreach programmes on how they can navigate public space and harness it for engagement of youths.

Incorporating Trauma-Informed Teaching Practices Into Volunteer Tutors Programme for Children and Adolescents in Out-of-Home Residential Care in Singapore: A Qualitative Investigation of Children and Adolescents' Perspectives

Dede Tham Kam Tyng (Chen Su Lan Methodist Children's Home)

Children and adolescents in out-of-home residential care have a high level of school performance needs as compared to their peers in the general population. The presence of school performance needs was related to their higher overall behavioural and emotional needs, as well as risk behaviour needs (Liu et al., 2014). However, staff in out-of-home residential care are often overloaded with tasks, hence they cannot routinely support the school needs of the children and adolescents.

A trauma-informed volunteer tutor program has been implemented in a local children's residential home to meet the children and adolescents' school performance needs with the goal of establishing a trauma-informed positive learning climate. This research investigates the influence of trauma-informed volunteer tutor programs on these children and adolescents. Using a qualitative approach, 3 children and adolescents between 11 and 16 years will be asked for their thoughts and feelings in a semi-structured interview at the end of the school semester.

The thematic analysis of the interview data was organised into three main themes: Perceptions of the role of the volunteer tutor; Motivations of the children and adolescents to improve their academic performances; and how they perceive a trauma-informed learning climate. Each superordinate theme contained several sub-themes. The sub-themes for the perception of the role of volunteer tutors included academic support, positive social interaction, giving life advice, and reinforcing study strategies while motivations to improve academic performances were reward and consequences, positive peer models, desire to impress and desire for autonomy. Lastly, the sub-themes for the perception of a trauma-informed learning environment included supporting, nurturing and conducive environment, resources available and effective pedagogy. The results could aid decision-making and inform case management in order to effectively meet the needs of these children and adolescents in an out-of-home residential care setting.

Using the RE-AIM framework to explore the challenges in conducting a pilot preventive health program ("Kopi and Loti with You")

Loh Sing Ping (Sengkang General Hospital)

Studies have shown that people of lower socio-economic status (SES) have higher hospitalisation rates and longer average number of stays. Knowledge and attitudes are cited as potential barriers for healthcare utilisation, and health literacy is seen as a tool for empowerment of individuals. As such, in order to increase usage of ambulatory healthcare services and to reduce hospitalisation rates among these individuals, it is important to improve their health literacy.

This programme utilised a ground-up approach to engage rental flat residents in Singapore in defining social and health challenges, as well as their perspectives of 'good health'. Following which, the Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) came together to plan and execute a series of educational and engagement activities for the participants.

Following the end of the programme, a 45-minutes Focus Group Discussion (FGD) involving five members of the core planning team was conducted as part of evaluation. The objective was to identify the challenges encountered during the planning and execution phases of the programme, strategies adopted by the team to overcome these challenges, as well as brainstorming on future rooms for improvement. The RE-AIM model was used as a guiding framework.

The findings were categorised into the five key domains of RE-AIM framework: 1) reach, 2) effectiveness, 3) adoption, 4) implementation and 5) maintenance. Results show that the team faced the greatest number of challenges in the 'reach' domain, which include engaging the stakeholders, and identifying participants of the target language group. In terms of strategies adopted to overcome these challenges, the team exhibited flexibility in making changes to the content of the programme to cater to the literacy level of the participants. Cooperation and rapport between different stakeholders (e.g., AHPs) were identified as important factors in helping the team to manage ongoing challenges. Attrition rate and language barriers are identified as ongoing challenges which will likely remain in subsequent runs of the programme.

In conclusion, the findings from the study provided the team with valuable insights regarding the challenges associated with the programme. This can help the team to improve future runs or expansion of the programme with greater effectiveness. The study findings can also value add to hospitals and community organisations which are interested in running similar programmes.

Exploring Home Care Nurses' Perspectives on Psychosocial and Spiritual Needs in Palliative Care: A Qualitative Study at Assisi Hospice, Singapore

Ooi Yinn Shan (Assisi Hospice)

This qualitative study investigated the perspectives of home care nurses at Assisi Hospice, Singapore, regarding palliative care patients' psychosocial and spiritual needs. Recognizing that nurses serve as the primary case managers, understanding their perceptions becomes crucial in the early identification of patient needs and timely referrals, ensuring that patients receive the comprehensive, holistic care advocated by the World Health Organisation for individuals facing life-limiting illnesses. The WHO emphasises the significance of holistic care, encompassing physical, psychological, social, and spiritual well-being. However, there remains a critical need to comprehend how home care nurses perceive and effectively address these dimensions in palliative care.

Three home care nurses were interviewed using a phenomenological approach to gain insights into their experiences and perspectives. Following Braun and Clarke's reflexive approach, thematic analysis was employed to identify and analyse emergent themes and sub-themes. The study aimed to illuminate the diverse range of psychosocial and spiritual needs experienced by palliative care patients, offering a comprehensive understanding from the perspective of these dedicated nurses. This insight contributes significantly to the ongoing effort to enhance palliative care services.

The analysis revealed six distinct overarching themes, each shedding light on different facets of the patient's experiences in palliative care. These themes included Psychological and Emotional Impact, Social Impact and Relationships, Dreams, Aspirations and Fulfilment, Practical Support and Information Needs, Religious and Spiritual Coping, and Overall Importance and Interconnectedness. Each theme was further enriched by a range of subthemes, offering a detailed understanding of the patients' diverse perspectives.

This research delved into the perspectives of home care nurses, offering profound insights into the psychosocial and spiritual dimensions of palliative care. Crucially, this study highlighted that nurses, as primary case managers, play a pivotal role in recognising and addressing patients' psychosocial and spiritual needs, making timely referrals a paramount aspect of their care.

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