

15 APRIL 2024

Research Skills for Social Services Mentoring Programme

PROJECT ABSTRACTS



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Broadening the Lens: Social Workers' Perspective of Homeless Services Success in Singapore

Lim Joo Yang Vanessa (New Hope Community Services)

The pathway approach postulates that homelessness occurs due to a combination of both individual choices and structural factors. By extension, it should also inform practitioners about the helping process of homeless service intervention. However, little is known about the actual intervention process which occurs for homeless services such as the Transitional Shelter (TS). Being able to successfully exit homelessness is often simplified through an expected trajectory of attaining milestones such as secure housing and sustained employment. However, this straightforward idea omits the complexities and nuances of work done by Social Workers alongside homeless persons (TS residents).

Using a two-pronged mixed method approach, the master list of residents who have discharged from a Transitional Shelter in Singapore from 11 January 2021 to 31 March 2024 was analysed to understand the type of data collected for submission to funders. Data points identified included the general demographics of the residents, their duration of stay at the TS, their employment status at the point of exit, monthly income, as well as their type of exit and their exit destination. In addition, 3 Social Workers were interviewed to gather a deeper understanding of the working process, and to expand the definition of what counts as successful work done with TS residents.

This paper reveals that there appears to be a heavier emphasis placed on intervention done on the structural, observable level as compared to that on the individual, intrinsic level. Nevertheless, the different accounts from the Social Workers demonstrate that effects of work done on the individual level are equally critical data points to enable homeless persons to exit homelessness sustainably. Proposed measures include residents' perceived sense of good welfare (choice, autonomy), ability to sustain in long-term housing (independence, self-reliance), increased ability in navigating the system (knowledge), a seamless continuum of care (access), better compliance (agreeability, trust) and thriving in the community (social connection). The findings challenge the current measure of successful TS outcomes and inform a potential framework for Social Workers to document work done in a more standardised manner for holistic evaluation and improvement of services.

Faith-Based Rehabilitation Program: Evaluating the Effectiveness of FITRAH Religious Counselling Program on Muslim Inmates' Rehabilitation

Noor Hakeem Bin Azman (Masjid En-Naeem)

The study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the Religious Counselling Program provided by FITRAH for Muslim inmates at Singapore Changi Prison in supporting the Muslim inmates' rehabilitation. With the rising population of Muslim inmates, FITRAH stands as a guiding light of support, offering religious programs and counselling tailored to meet the spiritual needs of incarcerated individuals. FITRAH initiatives not only address their immediate spiritual concerns but also aim to foster their successful reintegration into society through rehabilitation-focused interventions.

The study employs qualitative exploratory methods, conducting semi-structured interviews with one Muslim desistor who attended FITRAH's religious program for at least four months before their release between 2022-2023. Interviews are audio recorded, transcribed, and thematically analysed to identify inmate's perspective and experiences.

The findings reveal that FITRAH's Religious Counselling Program aligns with several potential values associated with reduced recidivism rates. However, challenges in maintaining changes post-release and the need for ongoing support are highlighted as issues that play a major role in his rehabilitation and reintegration journey.

While FITRAH's Religious Counselling Program shows promising support in the inmate's rehabilitation and reintegration, additional research with larger sample sizes is necessary to establish patterns and connections with existing literature. The findings in this study can help enhance and refine research protocols, including interview techniques and data analysis methods, to better evaluate the effectiveness of FITRAH religious counselling programs for Muslim inmates in their rehabilitation.

A Study in Will-Making Amongst Singles in Singapore (Towards Encouraging Charitable Bequests)

Juliana Koh Pei Hoon

With a rapidly ageing population, growing singles, and increased environmental, social, economic, geopolitical, technological, and humanitarian meta-crises, there is an opportunity to encourage charitable legacy giving/bequest amongst singles, soon-to-be singles and those married without kids in Singapore. This will increase monetary and human capital resources and build financial sustainability and programme efficacy for charities, NPOs and NGOs to better serve the social sector and participate in global philanthropy.

General donors' behaviour needs and motivations for giving have been well-researched and interdisciplinary. However, studies on charitable bequest are limited and mostly Western-centric. Contributing to the nascent Asian and non-existent knowledge of single demographics on bequest giving, this study explores the understanding, expectations, needs and motivations about will-making, legacy, and charitable bequests amongst singles in Singapore.

Set as a pilot, three qualitative interviews were conducted and analysed using thematic analysis and constant comparative method. The interviews explored: the knowledge, mindsets, attitudes and decision-making process towards will-making; life variables including circumstance, the relationship with money and wealth, and desire for legacy in shaping the decision-making process for will-making and charitable bequests; target prioritisation for giving; barriers and trigger to charitable bequests and expectations.

The findings highlight distinctive characteristics of singlehood in shaping its motivation and decision-making process to will-making and charitable bequest. Life-stage, middle-class, and Asian culture, also seem to drive a different set of motivations for charitable bequests, compared to the prevailing literature on Western donors. This has implications on how to approach the middle-class Asian single in fund-raising for the charitable bequest.

Rocking the Boat With Children With Adverse Childhood Experiences: How Client Factors Can Build Therapeutic Alliance in the Local Singaporean Context

Diong Zoe Yi

Children with adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are found to be at higher risk of mental disorders later in life. Most interventions for children with ACEs yield limited effectiveness. Yet, one factor that has been found to consistently improve treatment outcomes is therapeutic alliance. However, there is a paucity of research on therapeutic alliance in child psychotherapy in the western psychological literature, and even more so in the Singaporean context. Most research also explore external or therapists' factors instead of client factors despite clients themselves being agents of change. Hence, it is important to focus research on how client factors can build a better therapeutic alliance in order to improve treatment outcomes. This exploratory qualitative study looks at how some Singaporean practitioners understand therapeutic alliance, its impact on treatment outcomes, and the inner client characteristics that affect it. Eight practitioners who practice as either a Clinical/Counselling Psychologist, Social Worker, or Counsellor were interviewed for this study. The findings showed that local practitioners have a similar understanding of therapeutic alliance to the western psychological literature, in that they defined therapeutic alliance as a relationship based on trust, where clients feel safe and understood, and there is collaboration and alignment in goals. Strong therapeutic alliance is defined by clients' ability to be willing, ready and emotionally expressive, the presence of open communication, and attunement between the therapist and client. It allows practitioners to rock the boat, increases clients' collaboration and motivation, leads to more attunement and improves treatment planning. On the other hand, weak therapeutic alliance occurs when the child is not engaged in therapy, is resistant and there is no alignment in therapy goals. It affects treatment outcomes negatively by creating barriers to effective treatment and increasing withdrawal rates. For general child clients and children with ACEs, the only difference is that for the latter, an additional characteristic that can help to build better alliance is if they are able to not generalise their experiences. Client factors that can build therapeutic alliance include certain personality traits such as being sociable and confident. Other factors include clients' abilities and clients' past relationship experiences.



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