

## Focuses of this Presentation

In this poster presentation, we share the outcome and progress evaluation feedback received from six photo story (a.k.a. photovoice) groups conducted in Alberta, Canada. The project objectives were to engage and empower young persons through photo storytelling, and to enhance their knowledge and understanding on mental health and wellness.

## Background

- In Canada, an estimated one in five children experiences mental health challenges, yet less than 20 per cent will receive treatment (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2018). Moreover, research has shown that more than 6 in 10 participants aged 15 to 34 reported worsening mental health since the onset of COVID-19 (Statistics Canada, 2021).
- We believe that providing a safe and fun environment for young persons to have their voices heard, to make friends, and to do something they are interested in together would help young persons develop a strong sense of self and enhance knowledge and attitudes towards mental wellness.

## Methodology

- Each photo storytelling group consisted of seven sessions and met weekly for 1.5 hours.
- Four main themes were discussed throughout:
  - 1) understanding on mental health and wellbeing; 2) identified challenges to child and youth mental health and wellbeing; 3) strategies for healthy development of child and youth mental health and wellbeing; and 4) community support to child and youth mental health
- Program evaluations
  - 1) Outcome: pre-test and post-test design
    - a. General Self-Efficacy Scale (Jerusalem & Schwarzer, 1981)
    - b. Talking about Mental Health Scale (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2001)
    - c. Overall experience 7-point Likert Scale developed by the team
  - 2) Process: Five open-ended questions for the mid-term

## Theoretical Approach

- We adopted a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach to develop and deliver these photo story groups (Suprpto et al., 2020; Wang & Burris, 1994).
- PAR is considered well-suited for young people as it is action-oriented and is aimed at actively engaging participants throughout the process to address issues for change that are relevant to the individual or the community (Oosterbroek et al., 2021; Shneider, 2012).
- Sharing assumptions with PAR, Photo Story can provide a tool to help young people have their voice heard, and also can assist participants in exploring strengths and resiliencies within themselves and their communities (Ciotti et al., 2021; Mayfield-Johnson & Butler, 2017).

## Findings

- Demographics
  - Forty-four young people participated in six Photovoice Groups. Two of the groups were facilitated via zoom ( $n=14$ ), and the other four groups were facilitated in-person ( $n=30$ )
  - Slightly higher percentage of youth in the younger age group aged 12 to 14 (57%) versus the older group aged 15 to 17 (43%)
  - Majority of the youth were female (65%), a quarter of them were male (25%), and there were 10 percent of youth who identified themselves as non-binary
  - Majority of the youth were White/Caucasian (53%), next was East/South Asians (33%), and the remaining from different races (14%).
- Outcome Evaluation
  - Twenty participants completed the pre-test and post-test outcome evaluation.
  - In general, self-efficacy, paired t test result showed significant increase ( $t_{(19)} = -2.62a, p = .008$ , one-sided) from pre-test ( $M=24.0; SD=4.66$ ) to post-test ( $M=27.6, SD=3.15$ )
  - No significant difference on knowledge about mental illness and attitudes toward people with mental illness
  - Eighty-five percent (85%) of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that their voice was heard the group.
  - Seventy-five percent (75%) of the participants indicated that the group sessions have helped them better understand what photo storytelling is about.
  - However, 25% disagreed or strongly disagreed on practical arrangements (e.g., length of each session or being an online session)
- Process Evaluation: Six main themes identified
  - An increase in mental health, and increased knowledge on the impact of mental health
  - Development of strategies to address mental health, and value of sharing with peers
  - Practical challenges (e.g. not enough time to share), and areas that could have been covered (e.g., some advice on how to get help)

## Discussions and Implications

- Findings of this project supports the use of photo story group (a.k.a. Photovoice) to engage and empower youth, and to serve as prevention and early intervention on mental health concern among youth
- The pros and cons on online versus face-to-face delivering of the photo story group, specifically groups for youth, worth for further research as participants valued the accessibility via online, specifically during the time of social distancing; but they also like the connectedness and rich conversations in face-to-face sessions
- Heterogeneity versus homogeneity on the levels of understanding on mental health worth for further consideration

## Selected References:

Suprpto, N., Sunarti, T., Wulandari, D., Hidayaatullaah, H. N., Adam, A. S., & Mubarak, H. (2020). A Systematic Review of Photovoice as Participatory Action Research Strategies. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education*, 9(3), 675-683. DOI: 10.11591/ijere.v9i3.20581

Wang C. & Burris M.A. (1994) Empowerment through Photovoice: Portraits of Participation. *Health Education Quarterly*, 21(2): 171-186