



Youth Perspectives on Mental Health and Wellness

A PHOTO STORYTELLING PROJECT

CCMHCC

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Declaration of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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Funders:

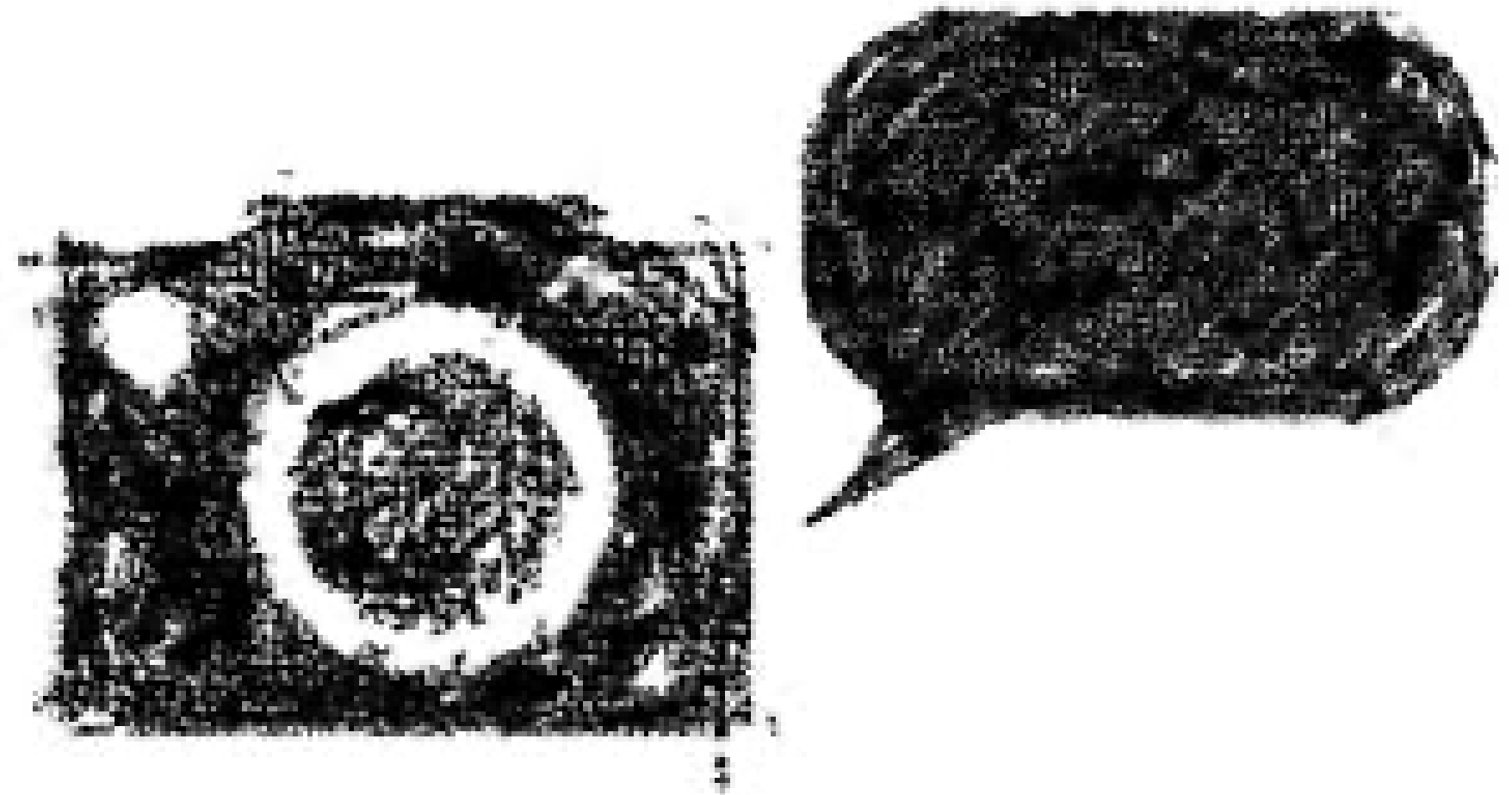
- Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada
- University of Calgary

Partners:

- Diversecities in Calgary
- Hull Services in Calgary
- Wood's Homes in Calgary
- Center for Young Parents in Grande Prairie
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Lethbridge and District
- Senator Joyce Gairbairn Middle School in Lethbridge
- McMan Youth, Family and Community Services Lethbridge and area
- Dept. of Family and Community Support Services in the County of Grande Prairie

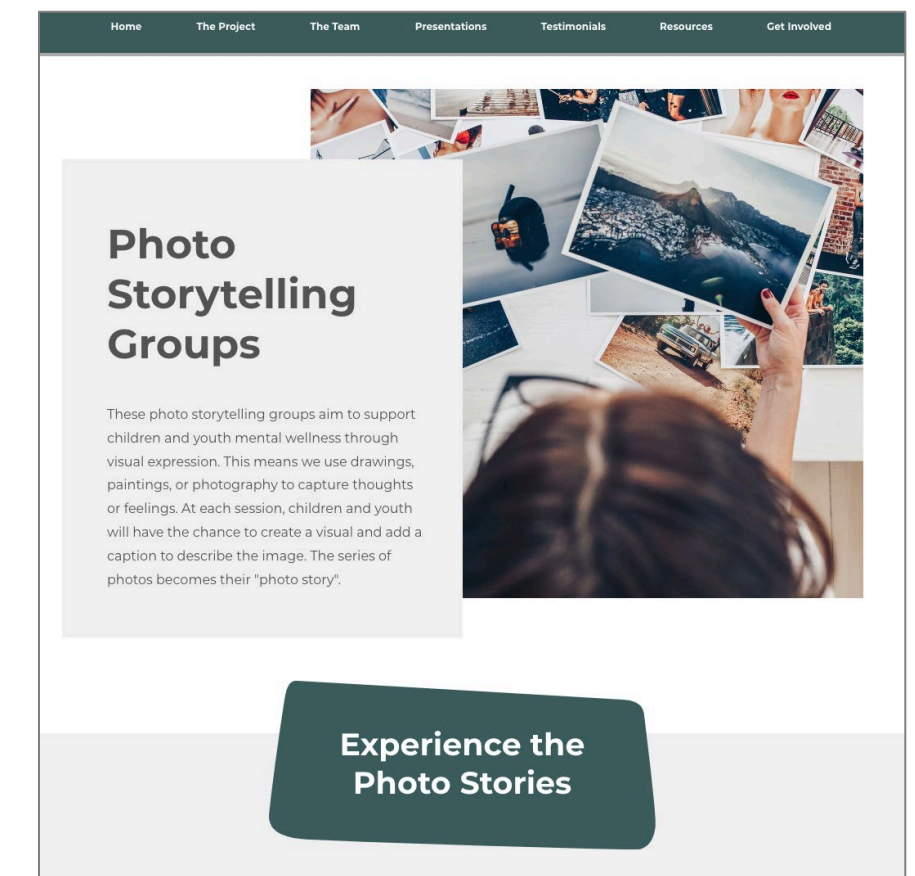
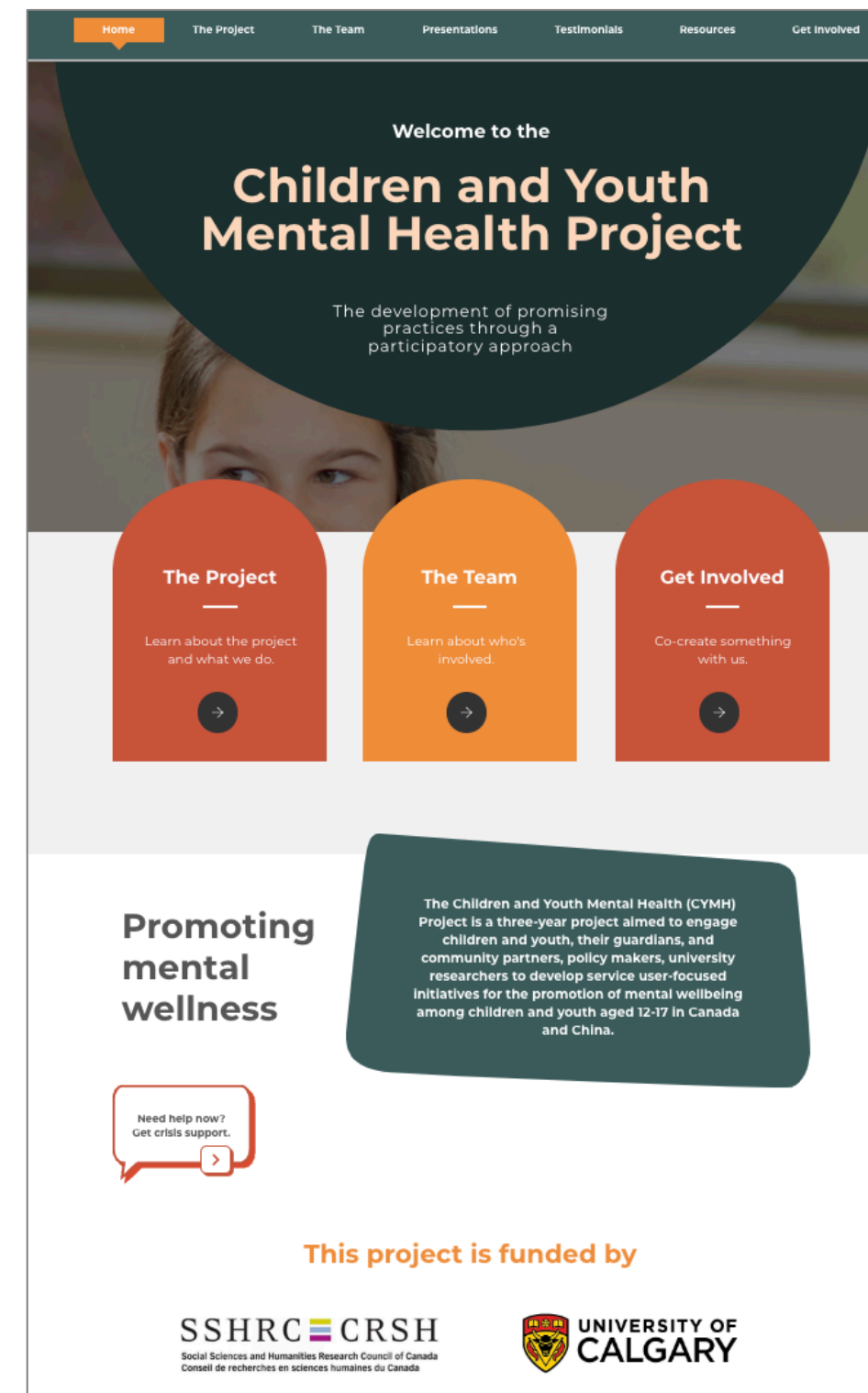
Objectives

1. Participants will be able to articulate the strengths and limitations of photo storytelling approaches to address youth mental health issues.
2. Participants will be able to describe the benefits and challenges of conducting a community-university partnership research project.
3. Participants will be able to identify promising practices for youth mental health services.



Background

The Photo Storytelling Project is part of a 3-year community based children and youth mental health (CYMH) project to engage youth, ages 12-17, parents, and community partners in the development of user focused initiatives for the promotion and early intervention of mental health in Canada and China.



Self-determination theory



Self-determination theory

- A theory of how social contexts influence motivation.
- Competence, autonomy, and connection help to motivate and influence how people function, engage and perform.

(Ryan & Deci, 2022)

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2022). Self-determination theory. In *Encyclopedia of quality of life and well-being research* (pp. 1-7). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Research Questions

1. How do youth conceptualize mental health and wellness through photos and images?
2. How do youth perceive and assess their own mental health and wellness?
3. What is the impact of photo storytelling on youth mental health?



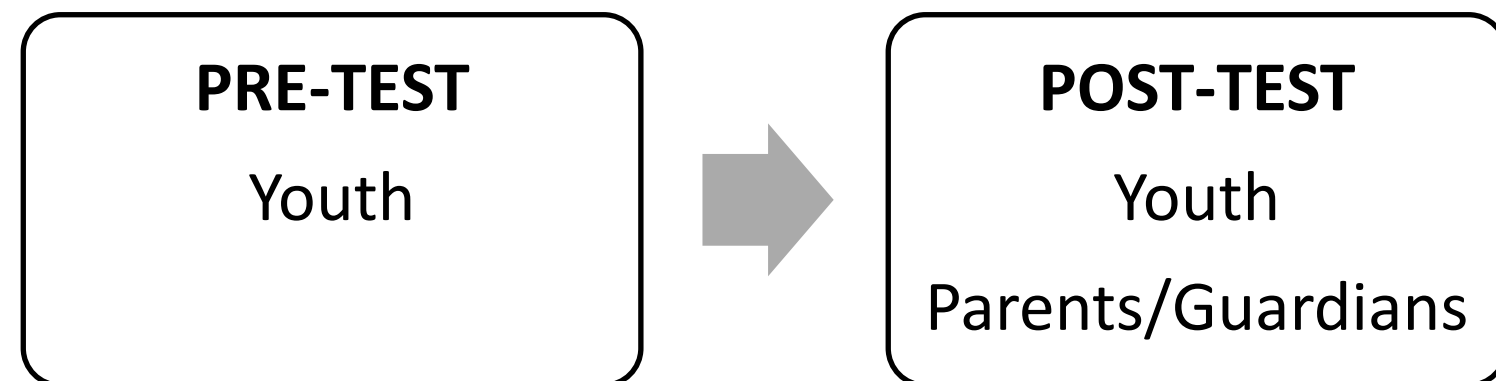
Methods – Photo Story



- This study uses a community-based participatory approach to engage youth, aged 12 to 17, in 7-weeks of photo storytelling to explore issues related to mental health and well-being.
- Six photo story groups were offered in collaboration with community social service partners in Calgary, Lethbridge, and Grande Prairie, Alberta.

Methods - Evaluation

- A mixed methods approach



Measurement

Quantitative

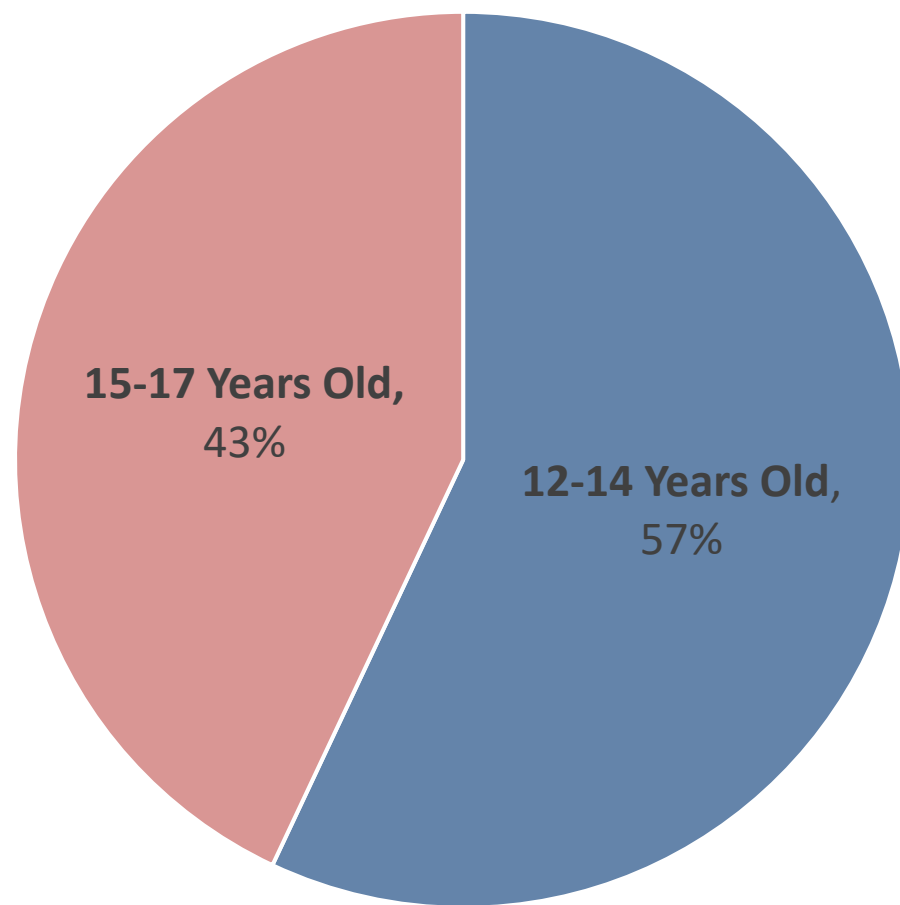
- General Self-Efficacy Scale (Jerusalem & Schwarzer, 1981)
- Talking About Mental Health Scale (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2001)
- Workshop Feedback (developed by the team)
- Parental Observation on the Impact of the Photo Story Group on Child (developed by the team)

Qualitative

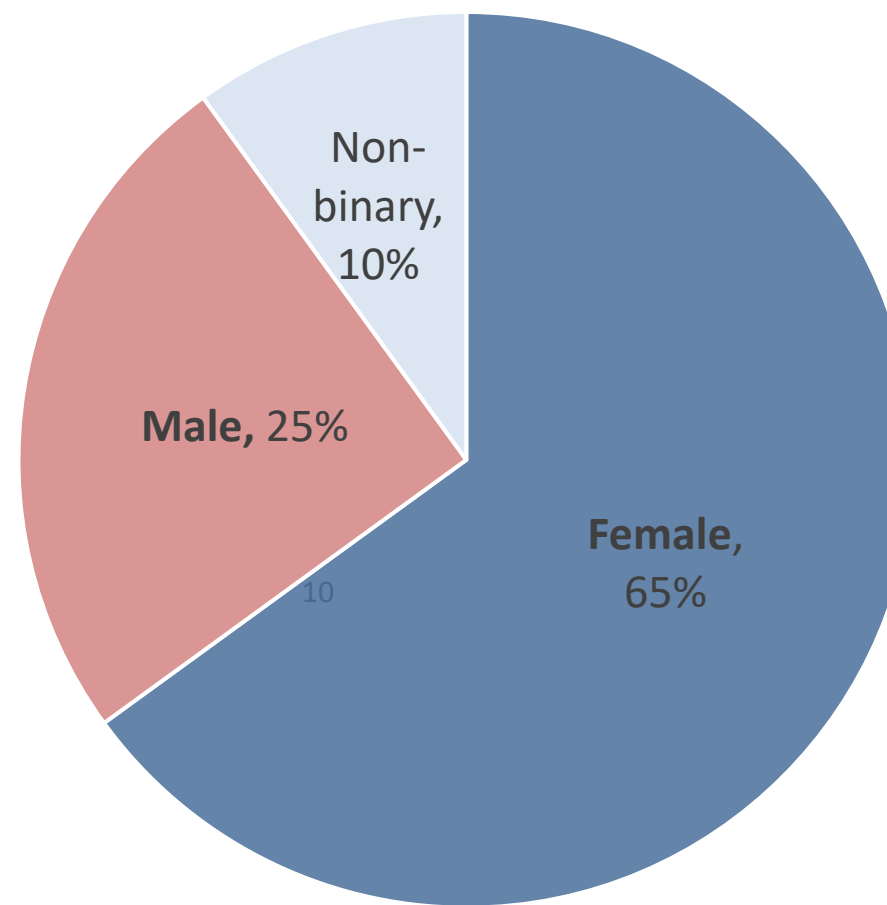
- Five open ended question

Workshop Sample (N=44)

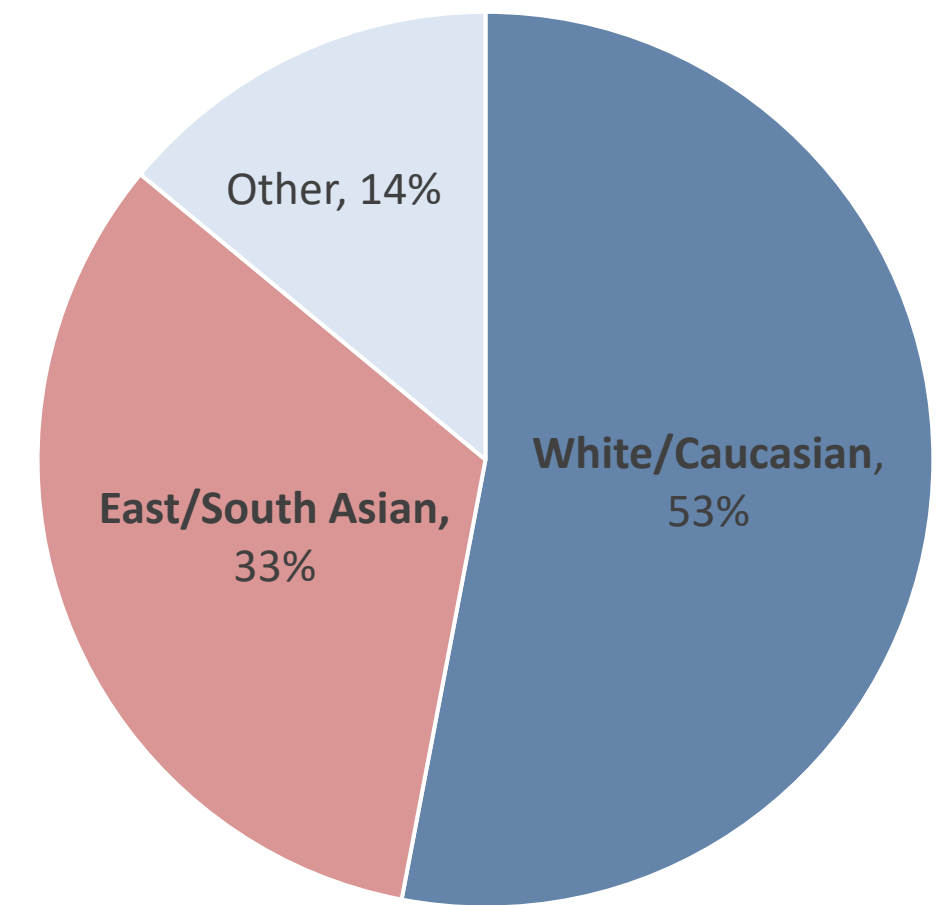
Age



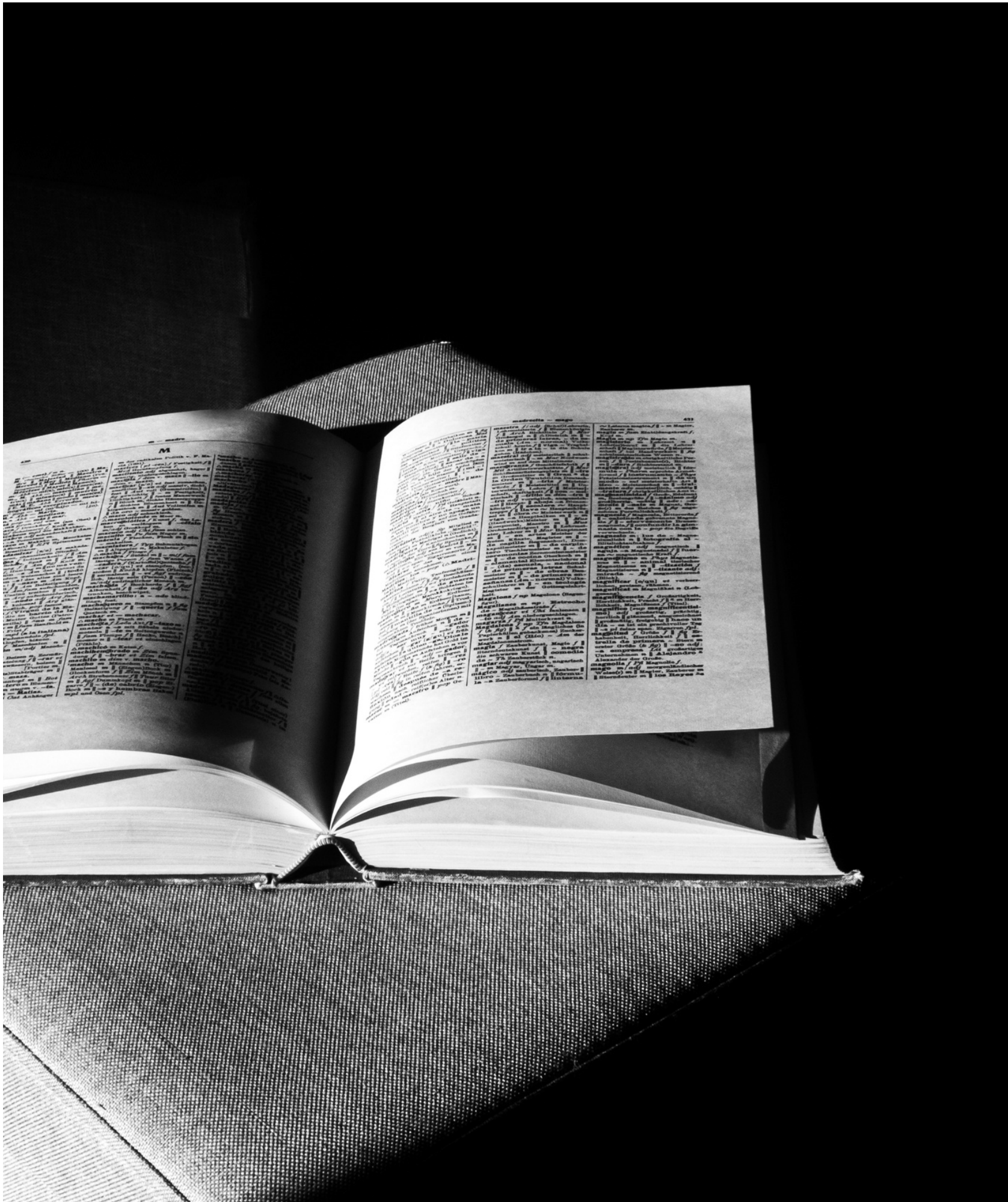
Gender Identity



Ethno-cultural Identity



Twenty (n=20) participants completed the pre-test and post-test outcome evaluation
Seventeen (n=17) parents/guardians completed the post-test outcome evaluation



1

**How do youth
conceptualize
mental health
and wellness
through photos
and images?**

Connections with Others and their Environment

My cat eating my worries away. (033)



Family is an important piece of my life. (034)



Hiking is a symbol of mental health for me because it can be a challenge at times. I enjoy hiking as a way to decompress. (042)



Connections Supports their Pursuit of Recreational Activities

Rugby is an outlet for my mental health. (043)



This photo represents my mental health because I love to go dirt biking in my spare time. Dirt Biking is something I look forward to every summer and helps to release a lot of my stress. Me and my dad go together, I enjoy going with my dad because I get to spend time with him doing something that makes us both happy. (G041)





2

**How do youth
perceive and
assess their own
mental health
and wellness?**

Youth Engaged in Self-reflection and Self-Regulation

What are the challenges to mental health and wellbeing?



Electronics and the internet is something I find myself spending too much time on everyday. It's a very big challenge to control my electronic time, and it's definitely a barrier keeping me from spending more time doing more productive and fulfilling things. (M.N. – 064)

15

What are the strategies for supporting positive mental health and wellbeing?



I maintain my mental health by seeking out experiences to keep myself in the present moment. Recently, that has come in the form of volunteering, which has done wonders for my well-being. Not only do I feel better by making a positive impact on my community, but opportunities like the community farm I took this photo at offer the instant mental refresher of being in nature. (N.D. – 65)



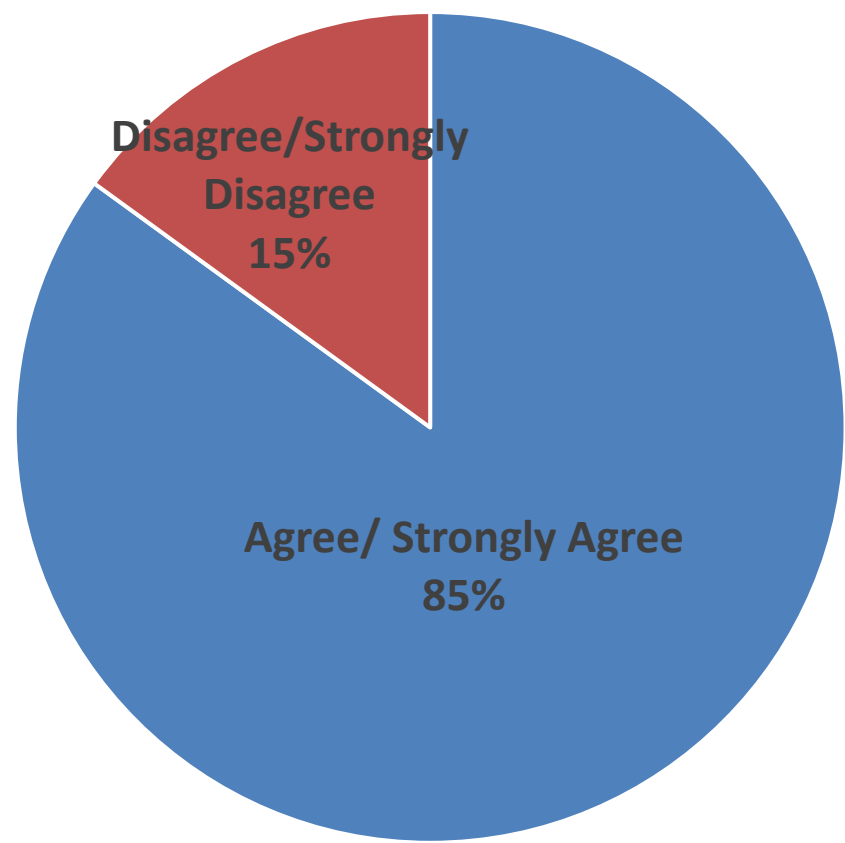
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What is the impact of photo storytelling on youth mental health?

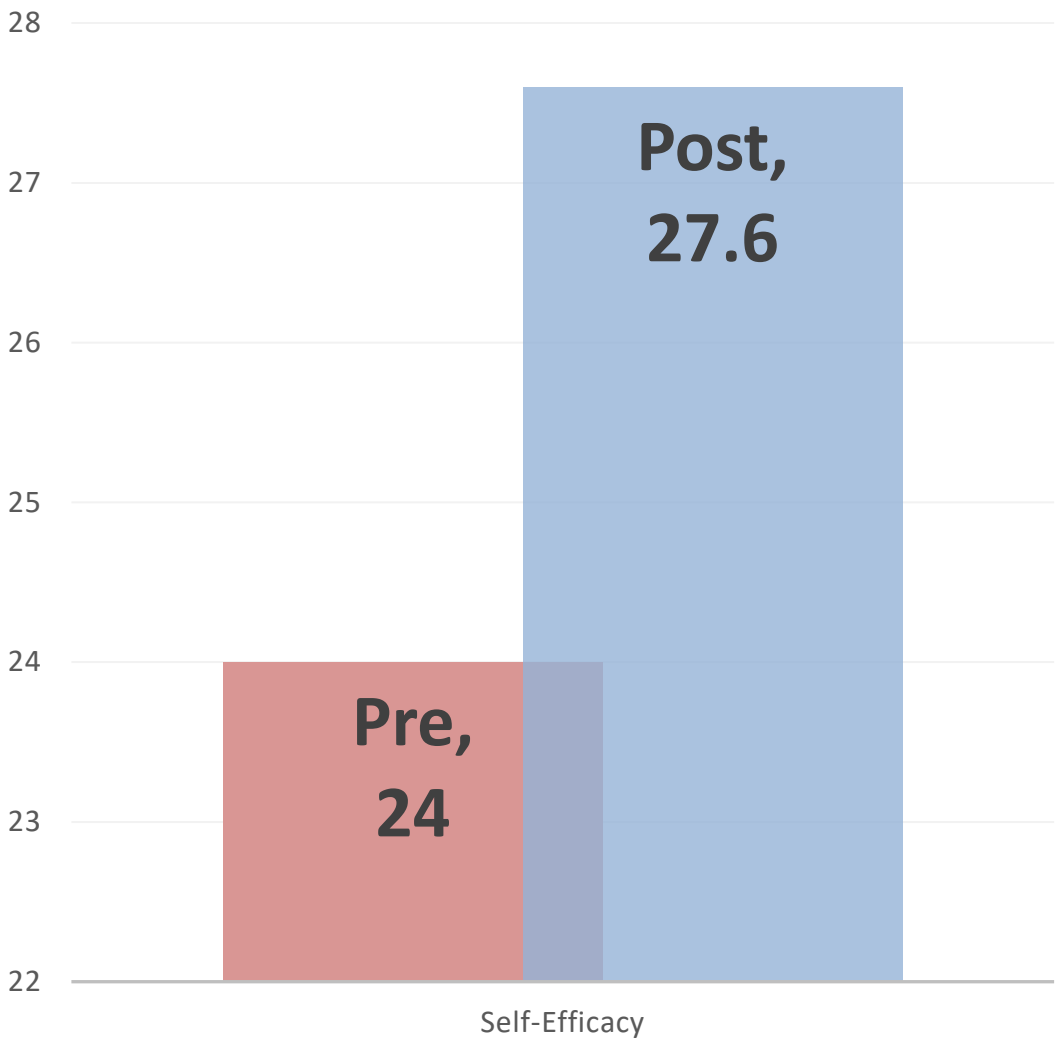
*“I learned how much a single photo can
relate to a person's mental health.”*

Overall Positive Impact for Youth

YOUTH FELT THEIR VOICE WAS HEARD



IMPROVED SELF-EFFICACY AMONG YOUTH



$t_{(19)} = -2.62a, p = .008$
pre-test ($M=24.0$; $SD=4.66$)
post-test ($M=27.6$, $SD=3.15$)

Increased understanding on mental health

“I know more about my mental health and have a better understanding”

Enjoyed the social connection and sharing with other youth

“Working with other people of my age”

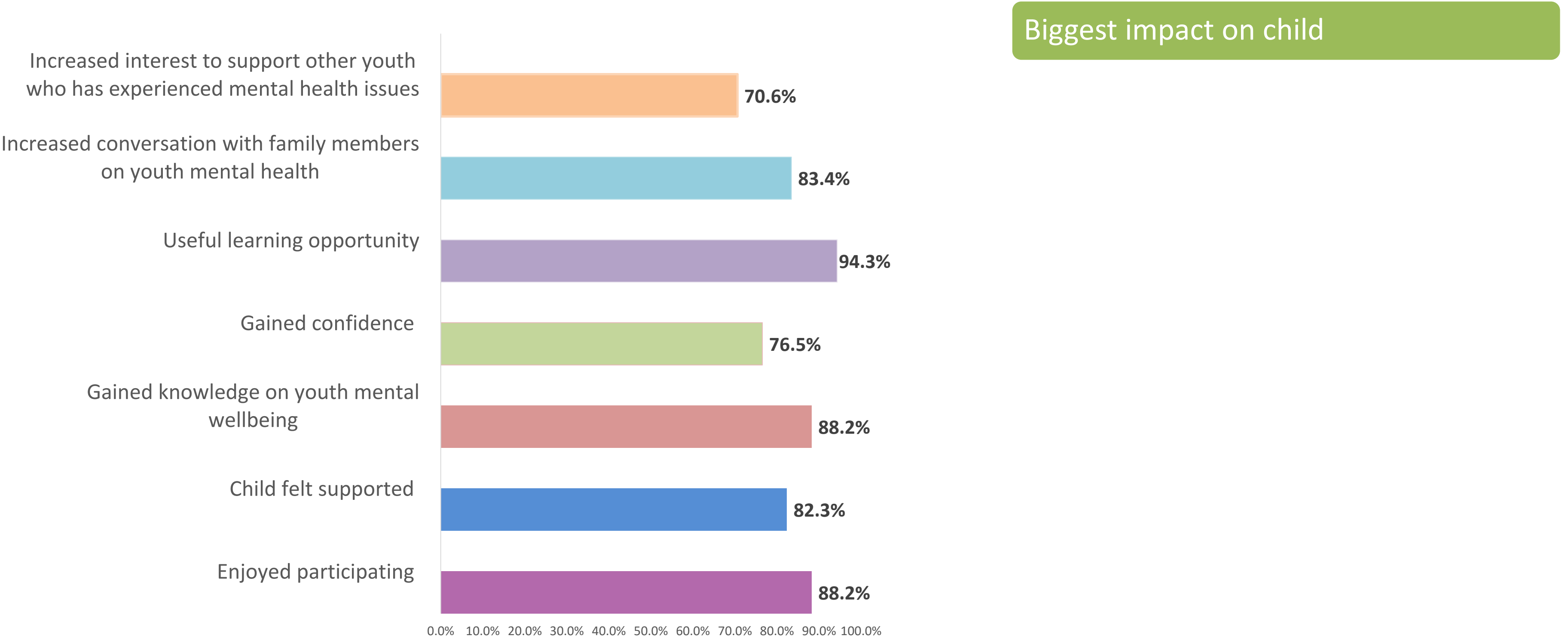
Enhanced knowledge to develop strategies to address personal mental health

“I learned how to manage my mental health and seek help when I need to.”

Enjoyed the engagement and empowerment through the group

“I had a good opportunity to be involved in the group because everyone get chances to share.”

Parents Observed Positive Impact



Conclusion



- Overall this project demonstrated that photovoice groups can be helpful for the prevention and intervention of mental health issues among youth.
- Photovoice can be a powerful way to engage young people and support them in change.
- Youth found engagement and discussion with peers to be particularly beneficial to their mental health suggesting that more time for dialogue in future photovoice groups should be incorporated.

A black and white photograph of two hands shaking, symbolizing agreement or partnership. The hands are positioned centrally, with one hand slightly above the other. A wristwatch is visible on the right wrist. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

Thank You

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