

Asian Youth Mental Health and Wellness: A Photovoice Project

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Joint Conference on Social Work,
Education and Social Development
Panama City, April 5, 2024



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Presentation Objectives

- The audience will increase their understanding on mental health issues among Asian youth
- The audience will learn about the usefulness of Photovoice (or photo storytelling) in capturing youth mental health issues

Definitions



Source: <https://www.bing.com/images>

- Youth refer to those who aged between 12 to 17 and are born in Canada or immigrated to Canada
- Asian youth refer to those who self-identified themselves with Asian heritage

Issues of Youth Mental Health in Canada

- 1 in 5 children experienced mental health issues, yet less than 20% will received treatment (MHCC, 2018)
- Youth aged 15-24 reported the lowest self-perceived mental health compared to other age groups during the early stage of the pandemic (Statistics Canada, 2021)
- Youth with racial or ethnic minority status, immigration background, and the lack of social support experienced additional challenges (Emerson et al., 2021; Tulli et al., 2020; Salami et al., 2020; Xiong et al., 2022)
- Added to that is the dramatic increase of the anti-Asian racism since the COVID-19 pandemic (Wu et al., 2021; Zhao et al., 2022)

Theoretical Framework

- Self-Determination Theory (SDT) was used (Ryan & Deci, 2000)

According to SDT, youth are able to set goals and develop coping skills, and are able of self-regulate when adequate external encouragement and recognition are available



Research Questions

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- 1) How do youth conceptualize mental health and wellness through photos and images?
 - 2) How do youth perceive challenges to their mental health?
 - 3) What strategies do youth use to maintain mental wellness?
 - 4) What community support would youth find helpful to improve mental wellness?

Methods

- Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach was used (Bozlak & Kelley, 2015; Chevalier & Buckles, 2019).
 - Aimed at actively engaging participants to:
 - Address issues that are relevant to them
 - Amplify youth's voices
 - Transform their lives
 - Facilitate social change
- Photovoice was also used (Wang & Burris, 1994; 1997)
 - A research tool corroborated with PAR to promote social change
 - Actively engage participants in taking images that reflect their live situations and/or thoughts

Data Analysis

- Three-stage participatory analysis process was used (Wang & Burris; 1997)
 - **Selection:** Youth select 1-2 photo(s) that are most representative to their thoughts on the theme questions (e.g., what mental health and wellbeing looks like, and means to you?)
 - **Contextualizing:** In the subsequent session, youth shared their photo(s) and the meaning/story behind the photo
 - **Contextualizing & Codifying:** Data analysis meetings were held, youth help the researchers understand more of the context/background of the photos being taken from their lens as well as commented on the suggested codes

Participants

This presentation focused on the photo stories developed by 15 Asian youth

- 44 youth participated the study
 - 57% of these youth aged between 12 and 14, and the other 43% aged between 15 and 17;
 - 65% of these youth were female, 25% were male, and another 10% identified themselves as non-binary
 - 53% of these youth were White/Caucasian, 34% were East/South Asian, and the rest came from diverse racial backgrounds

Findings

Findings were developed in the four theme areas:

1. Conceptualization on mental health and wellness
2. Challenges to their mental health
3. Strategies for maintaining mental wellness
4. Community support on youth mental health

Finding 1:

Conceptualization on mental health and wellness

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS MEAN TO ME



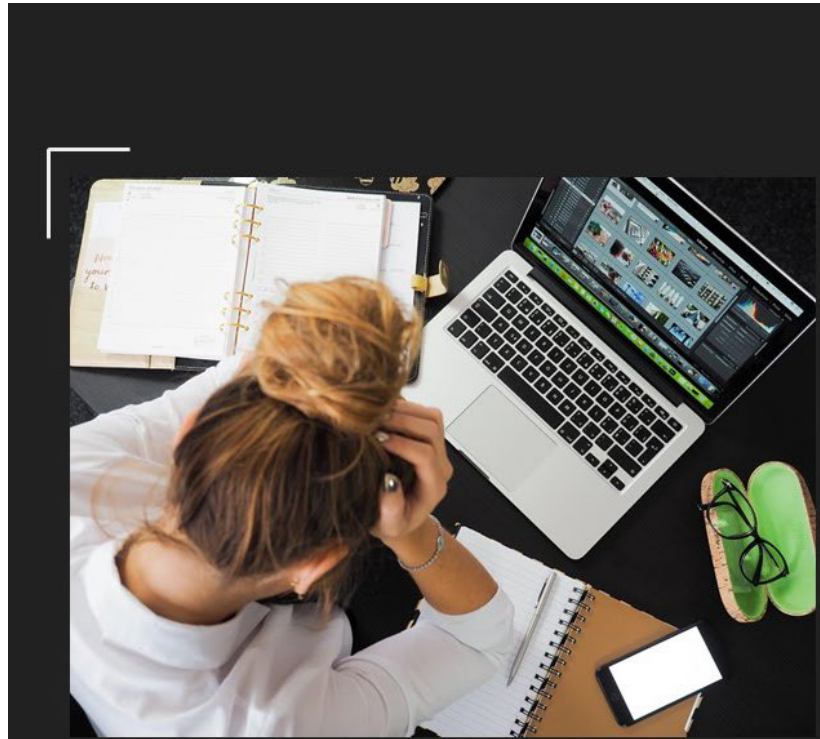
- From my perspective, mental wellness means physical, social, and financial well-being. It is the ability to maintain healthy relationships with friends and family, solve problems I am facing, overcome challenges in my life, and manage my emotions.

~M.C.

- Ability to maintain good routine and take care of oneself (013, 0613, 068)
- Unpredictability nature of mental health (062, 064, 0611)
 - This is a unique theme that we did not find from the photo stories of non-Asian youth

Finding 2: Challenges to their mental health

- Stress from school including academic performance and bullying (013, 0611)
- Lack of (family/social) support and sense of loneliness (012, 063)
- Being different as a racialized person (062)
- Sense of fear (0612)



Source: Energiepic.com, 2017

What are challenges to
mental health &
wellbeing?

Sometimes we can
feel a bit overwhelmed
and we might need a
break.

~ Daniel

Finding 3:

Strategies for maintaining mental wellness



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

Hang out with your friends, finding new hobbies could distress. fighting mental health is a long journey, finding activities that could helps you recharge is useful.

~ Charlie

- Do something one enjoys (012, 013, 063)
- Develop positive mindset (013, 0611)
- Connect with nature or outdoor activities (0612, 062, 064)
- Connect with other and the community (068, 0610)

Finding 4:

Community support on youth mental health

- Support programs from school/communities (012, 062, 064)
- Support programs for immigrants/racialized groups (063, 068, 0612)
- Community education (062, 0613)
- Preserve/increase shared and safe community space (e.g., library) (063, 064, 0611)

4. Identifying support for youth mental health & wellbeing.

Over the summer, I've found Diversecities has been an excellent tool for free education surrounding mental health. What's more, this photovoice project has been an especially cathartic outlet for reflecting on my own mental health, and the resources I have to care for it.

~ Nadya D.



Discussion

- Stress from school, sense of loneliness for being an newcomer and different, and limited social/familial support were reported most often among these Asian youth
- However, the coping strategies being used/shared are very versatile
 - One uniqueness is that all these suggestions are “free” or does not cost much

Implications to SW Practice

Need to provide/ensure:

- 1) additional outreach efforts to connect with the Asian/racialized communities, specifically for newcomers
- 2) more publicly funded, subsidies, or free services and programs for Asian/racialized youth
- 3) community education and addressing discrimination issues against Asians, specifically the increase of anti-Asian racism after the COVID-19 pandemic

Implication to SW Education

Needs to:

- 1) Integrate greater cultural awareness and education on the heterogeneity of Asian communities
- 2) Incorporate core courses in addressing anti-Asian racism; and
- 3) Address how societal anti-immigrant and anti-Asian sentiment have impacted the wellbeing of Asian youth

Implications to SW Research

- A community-based and participatory approach to work with youth is well served with “hidden/marginalized population,” in this case Asian youth
- Findings of this participatory project is about engagement and evolving change and growth
 - This Photovoice project is part of a larger 3-year project
 - Has involved a dozen youth, who have played various roles from as a volunteer/participant to a project assistant or a co-presenter/co-author in knowledge mobilization
 - The growth and confidence these youth have demonstrated are encouraging and corroborated with the SDT and PAR

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Acknowledgements

This project is funded by

SSHRC  CRSH

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada



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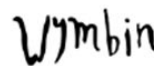
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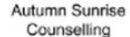
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