

SNIPPET

CUTTING-EDGE APPLIED RESEARCH



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EDITOR'S NOTE

by Dr. Rosaleen Ow (Reviewing Editor)

Practice research is an important aspect of social service provision and delivery worthy of a deeper focus. The two articles in this second issue of Snippet 2022 showcase two major contributions of Social Service Research Centre to the efforts in capacity building of practice research in the social services.

The **first** article by Karen Lee and Gerard Chung argues for a shift in paradigm from evaluation research to intervention research where the design and development of interventions comes forth in our thinking of social interventions. The authors present the application of program theory, problem theory, and the logic model from the Intervention Research Model to highlight the creative processes in intervention development and the internal logic of an intervention. It outlines the theoretical concepts behind the model and illustrates the translation of the theory behind the model to practice intervention. It is a 'must read' for practitioners, researchers and policy makers engaged in understanding the difference in the process of evaluation and intervention research

The **second** article is a collection of research abstracts from practitioner-led research projects conducted under the SSR 'Research Skills and Implementation for Social Services Mentoring Programmes' and shared in the Snippet for the first time. The collection of research abstracts identifies the various social needs in the community that had been given attention in service provision and research under the SSR mentoring programme. It is also a platform for sharing ideas among social service agencies about how future social needs in the community can, through practice research, gain more clarity and how these needs can be met and possibly funded in different ways. Obtaining practice research data is important for planning and evaluating the efficacy of an intervention programme. SSR provides opportunities to partner with agencies to do this in a systematic manner that will also lead to capacity building among practitioners in the future. The second run of the [research mentoring programme](#) will begin in August 2022. Remember to sign up for it!

Hope you will find time to run through the Snippet 2022 Issue 2 and enjoy the read.

The Design and Development of Interventions: An Application to an After-school Program by CampusImpact for Disadvantaged Families in Singapore

by Karen Lee Yih Chee, Research Executive, CampusImpact

and Dr. Gerard Chung, Research Fellow, NUS Social Service Research Centre

Keywords: Logic model, intervention, after-school care, evaluation, Singapore

Introduction

This article explains why a shift in paradigm from evaluation research to intervention research is useful for social service practitioners in Singapore. We suggest the use of program theory, problem theory, and the logic model from the Intervention Research Model to describe the internal logic of an intervention. We then demonstrate its use by applying it to an innovative after-school care program StudyBuddy from the CampusImpact social service agency in Yishun.

Evaluation research as a part of Intervention research

The design and development of social interventions is “bread-and-butter” work in the social service sector. When I (Gerard) was a social worker at Fei Yue Family Service Centre, my team designed and developed a group-work intervention to provide informational and emotional support to women who experienced spousal abuse at home and their children who witnessed the violence. We evaluated the intervention on some outcomes to assess if the intervention was effective. While the *evaluative* process is key, the design and development of interventions also entail a *creative* process. This creative process consists of the formulation of the program and revision of the intervention. In our family violence intervention, we developed detailed session-by-session outlines that comprehensively described what and how specific intervention strategies will be implemented to support these women and their children. A logic model for the intervention was also laid out to explain the processes that produced the outcomes in our intervention.

The point here is this: evaluation is only a component of a broader process that includes formulation of the program and revision of the intervention (creative process). Together, this creative and the evaluative processes often result in two products: a detailed description of the new intervention or program as well as an evaluation of the effectiveness of that program. Evaluation research is part of a broader and elaborated process of designing and developing an intervention for use in the community. This elaborated process is intervention research. Evaluation focuses on assessing the processes and outcomes related to an existing intervention, service or program. The design and development of an intervention is what distinguishes intervention research from evaluation research (Fraser et al., 2009; Fraser & Galinsky, 2010).

But first, what are interventions?

Interventions are purposively implemented change strategies. In the social service sector, social interventions often are intended to reduce social problems (e.g., family violence, peer bullying) or health-related issues (e.g., mental health,

suicide). As purposeful or intentional actions, interventions can operate at individual, family, organizational (e.g., school-wide interventions to prevent bullying), community, or national level. Interventions could be designed as a single-action strategy (e.g., e-counseling, parenting support group) or as a cluster of actions (e.g., an early childhood home-visitation program providing parenting support, child development education, financial assistance, and counseling).

Interventions target risk processes

What do interventions target for change? A key target of interventions is the *risk processes*. Social interventions are designed to interrupt the risk processes that are hypothesized and supported by evidence to lead to the social or health problems. For instance, during the Circuit-Breaker in Singapore, I found that parenting stress was a risk factor for increased harsh parenting behaviors among a sample of Singaporean parents (Chung, Lanier, et al., 2020). Interventions such as community support groups or individual-level skills training (e.g., stress management or parenting coaching) could be *logical* change strategies targeted at these parents' stress or skills levels that can interrupt the risk sequela. Interventions can also (and often do) mitigate the effects of risk by strengthening protective factors (e.g. parenting programs often increases parents' self-efficacy which is a protective factor).

Underlying any intervention should be a logical sequence between risk and change strategies

If interventions are purposively implemented change strategies, then the internal logic of an intervention can be assessed as the extent to which malleable risk factors are matched to change strategies of adequate strength or intensity to produce the desired positive outcomes (or reduction of negative outcomes). Specifically, the design of an intervention often involves delineating a *problem theory* in which potentially malleable risk factors are identified (e.g., insufficient knowledge of age-appropriate parenting disciplinary methods). Then in specifying the *program theory*, we match these risk factors—also called mediators—with change strategies, such as the provision of parenting skills coaching. The *logic model*, which is familiar to most social service practitioners in Singapore, can be a useful tool to connect these links between risk factors and change strategy/ies that underlie the internal logic of a social intervention.

Intervention research model: 5 steps in designing and developing

Evaluation research is limited in helping us to consider other key issues related to the design and development of interventions. These issues include developing program theory, specifying program content, creating treatment manuals, validation of measurement tools, pilot testing, identifying mediators and moderators of treatment effects, implementing as well as disseminating program materials. Another problem is that evaluation research is often associated with quantitative research methods though the process of optimizing an intervention and its components can include a full range of tools that should not preclude qualitative methods. A focus on intervention research can help to overcome these limitations.

Intervention research has been defined by Fraser et. al. (2009) as the “process of creating the elements of an intervention and refining those elements in a series of studies” (p. 28). The authors (all social work researchers) presented a 5-step model of intervention research that lays out the core activities in designing and developing social interventions (Figure 1). The model is useful for the social service sector in Singapore because many of these core activities are often done by the social service professionals here in developing and disseminating interventions. The risk and protective factor framework (Jenson & Fraser, 2011), familiar to social service practitioners, also provides a useful framework to design an intervention and to adapt it for new settings and populations.

Figure 1: Steps in Intervention Research

<p>Step 1:</p> <p>Develop problem & program theories</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop problem theory of risk, promotive, protective factors • Develop program theory of malleable mediators • Identify intervention level, setting, and agent(s) • Develop theory of change and logic model
<p>Step 2:</p> <p>Design program materials and measures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop first draft and submit for expert review • Specify essential program elements and fidelity criteria • Pilot program and measures (i.e., outcome and fidelity measures) • Expand content to address training and implementation
<p>Step 3:</p> <p>Refine & confirm in efficacy tests</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain high control and test intervention components • Estimate effect sizes and test for moderation and mediation • Develop rules for adaptation based on moderation and mediation tests, community values and needs, other issues
<p>Step 4:</p> <p>Test effectiveness in practice settings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test intervention under scale conditions in multiple sites • Estimate effects under ITT • Estimate effects on efficacy subsets
<p>Step 5:</p> <p>Disseminate program findings & materials</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish findings • Publish program materials • Develop training materials and certification

Note. Steps in intervention research. From “*Steps in Intervention Research: Designing and Developing Social Programs*” by Fraser et al., 2010, *Research on Social Work Practice*, 20(5), p. 463.

Problem theory, program theory, and logic model

Unlike other models, the 5-step model of intervention research places greater emphasis on the use of *problem theory* and the *program theory* in the first step of identifying the problem and designing the intervention. We recommend that the

problem theory and program theory be two key conceptualizations that social service practitioners in Singapore use to design and develop their interventions.

Problem theory refers to understanding the psychosocial processes that leads to the development of the social problems or health issues. This includes defining the problem, understanding the prevalence of the problem in the community and the mechanisms that produce or suppresses the problem (i.e., risk or protective factors). Often, these mechanisms are combinations of risk and protective factors at the different ecological levels (individuals, families, organizations, community). These mechanisms are key because they form the targets for change in the program theory.

The program theory should then clearly articulate a logical link between the *problem theory* — typically the risk and protective factors — and program content and components. The program theory does this by specifying and matching intervention methods to a range of proximal and distal outcomes. The key idea here is that the program theory should explicate and explain the causal logic of an intervention and describe how the intervention activities are expected to produce the outcomes desired through the targeting of mediators (risk factors) as well as moderators of the treatment effects (Chung, Ansong, et al., 2020).

One useful tool that can be used to express both problem theory and the program theory is the logic model. The logic model specifies an intervention process in terms of core program elements (i.e., objectives, inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes). The advantage of logic models lies in planning and evaluation. From a planning perspective, specifying the logic model helps managers to delineate the program inputs and to make resource planning, such as the resources needed to train the staff or to conduct the activities. From an evaluation perspective, clearly describing the intervention logic also guides the focus of the evaluation and the selection of measures to assess the effects of the intervention.

A shift in paradigm to an intervention research model and the use of problem theory, program theory, and the logic model can be beneficial for the social service sector in Singapore. The rest of this paper shows how CampusImpact, a social service agency in Yishun, uses a logic model to develop their intervention and to plan an outcome evaluation of their signature after-school care program, Study Buddy.

Background of StudyBuddy

The StudyBuddy (SB) program serves disadvantaged children and families mainly residing in Yishun. SB was established as an after-school program that seeks to improve the accessibility of after-school care and enrichment activities amongst families of low income and disadvantaged (e.g., single parent households) backgrounds.

The SB program provides academic supervision (e.g., homework completion) and enrichment opportunities (e.g., activities promoting social-emotional learning) in a routine and structured manner to children aged 7 to 14 (primary one to secondary two). At present, approximately 40% of SB enrolment are referred by school counsellors and family service centres for after-school support. Such children are often from latchkey families (home alone after school) or might require more adult supervision to support their needs (i.e., learning, emotional, behavioural, character development).

The Importance of After-school Care for Disadvantaged Families

It is known that education inequality remains a problem in Singapore (Chiong, 2019; Teng, 2018) and children from disadvantaged backgrounds are not enrolled into educational services that they are most likely to benefit from (Magnuson,

2010). In improving the affordability and accessibility to after-school learning and enrichment opportunities within the Yishun geographical area, important needs of families from low-income and disadvantaged backgrounds are addressed.

The affordability and accessibility for after-school care is a likely concern for families residing in Yishun. According to the 2015 Singapore General Household Survey¹ the income demographic in Yishun is 8 times less than affluent neighbourhoods (e.g., Bukit Timah). In terms of important non-economic indicators, Yishun has two times the proportion of people (4.8 per cent) who are divorced or separated compared to residents in Bukit Panjang (2.42 per cent)².

With a need in Yishun for affordable social services to support the disadvantaged (i.e., low income, single parent) families, the provision of childcare as a type of intervention is reiterated. This is because, when the parent/parents are at work (and/or are working long hours), the number of latchkey children have increased significantly. The effects on children of having both parents or single parents in paid employment have increased the likelihood of children needing to attend childcare (Zhang, 2015). The need for childcare is also shared by those unemployed. The Ministry of Social and Family Development³ found that 27.6% of unemployed respondents cited family-related responsibilities (housework/childcare etc) as their main reason for not actively looking for a job. Of which, women aged 30 to 39 years old formed the largest proportion of those who cited childcare as the main reason for not working (38.9%). Therefore, the need for SB as an intervention is justified at uplifting disadvantaged families in Yishun.

There are two important benefits of after-school care in meeting the needs of these families. Firstly, families need more support for their children's education. Such disadvantaged families are at risk of helplessness, particularly with Singapore's 'parentocracy' (Ong, 2014) where wealthier parents can draw on their comparative advantages in social and cultural capital to help children move ahead. For children of low-income families, the inability to afford educational services increases the weight of responsibility for educational progress which in turn affects family wellbeing. This need for more learning support reflects the educational inequalities prevalent in Singapore. Lim & Kwek (2006) found that one third of the recipients of the Public Service Commission scholarship come from households earning less than S\$10,000/month with a mere 7% coming from households earning less than S\$2000. Secondly, these disadvantaged families need support for other holistic developmental opportunities. With a desire for 'education' to be more than about academic results; these disadvantaged families also value the social, emotional and higher-order thinking competencies that formal education could develop (Chiong, 2019).

Therefore, it may well be the case that the provision of good quality childcare and family support can contribute to the financial stability and harmony of the families. This may have in turn contributed in some way to the maintenance of school progress in Singapore (Sharpe, 1994). With a focus of providing holistic support for these children of disadvantaged backgrounds, SB is therefore an important intervention that addresses the needs of such families residing in Yishun.

Problem Theory

After identifying the problem of educational and enrichment inequalities amongst children and youths from disadvantaged backgrounds, a problem theory was constructed to identify which risk factors faced by such families that SB hopes to reduce. These risk factors are hypothesised to contribute to poorer outcomes in child development. For example, a

¹ <https://www.singstat.gov.sg/publications/ghs/ghs2015content>

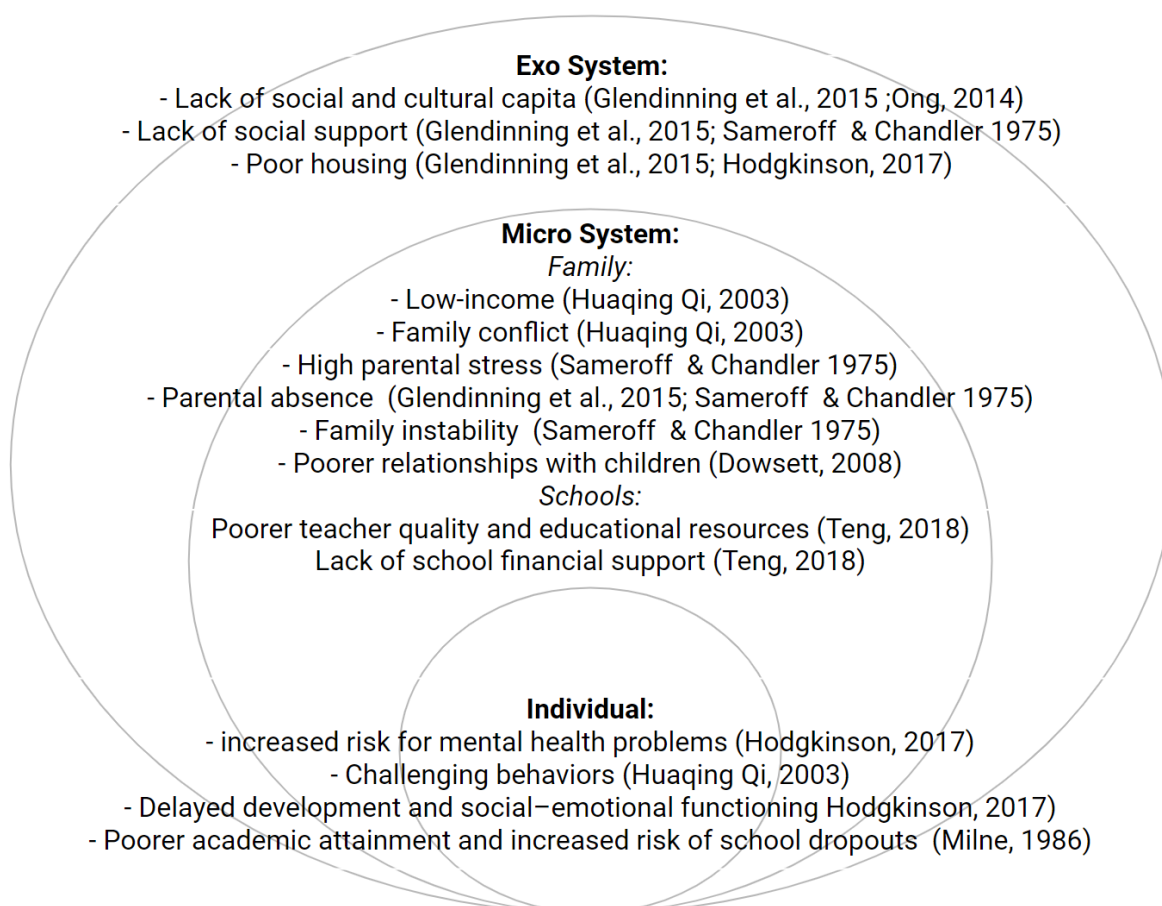
² <https://ipscommons.sg/inequality-has-a-geographic-dimension-between-and-within-neighbourhoods-in-singapore/>

³ <https://www.msf.gov.sg/research-and-data/Research-and-Data-Series/Documents/Family%20and%20Work%20Report.pdf>

systematic review conducted by Huaqing (2013) showed that parental stress is found to predict challenging behaviours in children.

The risk factors outlined in the problem theory in Figure 2 are derived from clinical experience supported with evidence on the risk factors affecting the children and youths of disadvantaged backgrounds. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds are exposed to multiple risks, and interrelationships among these risk factors influence a child's development (Huaqing Qi, 2003). As such, these factors were systematically conceptualised using the Bronfenbrenner ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1989) to better understand the contexts of change SB operates within a child's ecosystem. Using the problem theory, specific risk factors targeted in the SB program are shown to reside primarily within the individuals themselves. Assuming interactions exist between the ecological systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1989), families and schools are likely to benefit indirectly from SB when they in turn are enabled to benefit from the students' holistic developmental outcomes. To complement this ripple effect, CampusImpact also works closely with schools and families for casework outside of its SB program if applicable.

Figure 2: Problem Theory for StudyBuddy



The Problem Theory for StudyBuddy

The problem theory is a key tool in this intervention research for multiple reasons. Firstly, it contextualises the role that SB plays in each child's ecological system. Next, it also frames the significance of its intervention activities (i.e., academic supervision, enrichment activities) to strengthen the protective factors in the students' environment (e.g., academic competence after homework completion to reduce the risks of poor academic achievement). Finally, it shows why the primary aims of SB are to support their students' learning, behavioural, socio-emotional and character development.

Program Theory

The next phase in the intervention research is outlining how activities in SB are linked to reducing the risk factors identified and targeted in the problem theory. The development of a program theory with a logic model was used to conceptualise the important intervention activities in SB, and how it should be delivered to achieve SB's primary program aims.

The logic model for SB is outlined in Figure 3. The model seeks to explain the mechanisms in SB that produce its positive outcomes and allows for a consideration of various design and development factors affecting these outcomes. This concise representation of how the SB program works to achieve its aims enables a logical identification of process and outcome factors to be further evaluated in intervention research.

As illustrated, the model provides a logical map of how the activities⁴ carried out in SB can lead to its intended primary and secondary outcomes for its beneficiaries. It outlines key assumptions⁵ and enablers⁶ that are necessary for the change processes leading to its outcomes, along with contextual factors⁷ and potential confounds that might influence these change processes. For example, in improving self-esteem (intermediate outcome), socially desirable behaviour and sense of belonging (final goal), the implementation of a reward system (activity) with teachers using descriptive and immediate praise effectively (enablers) to acknowledge positive behaviours from all students (assumptions) is required for this change process to work in SB.

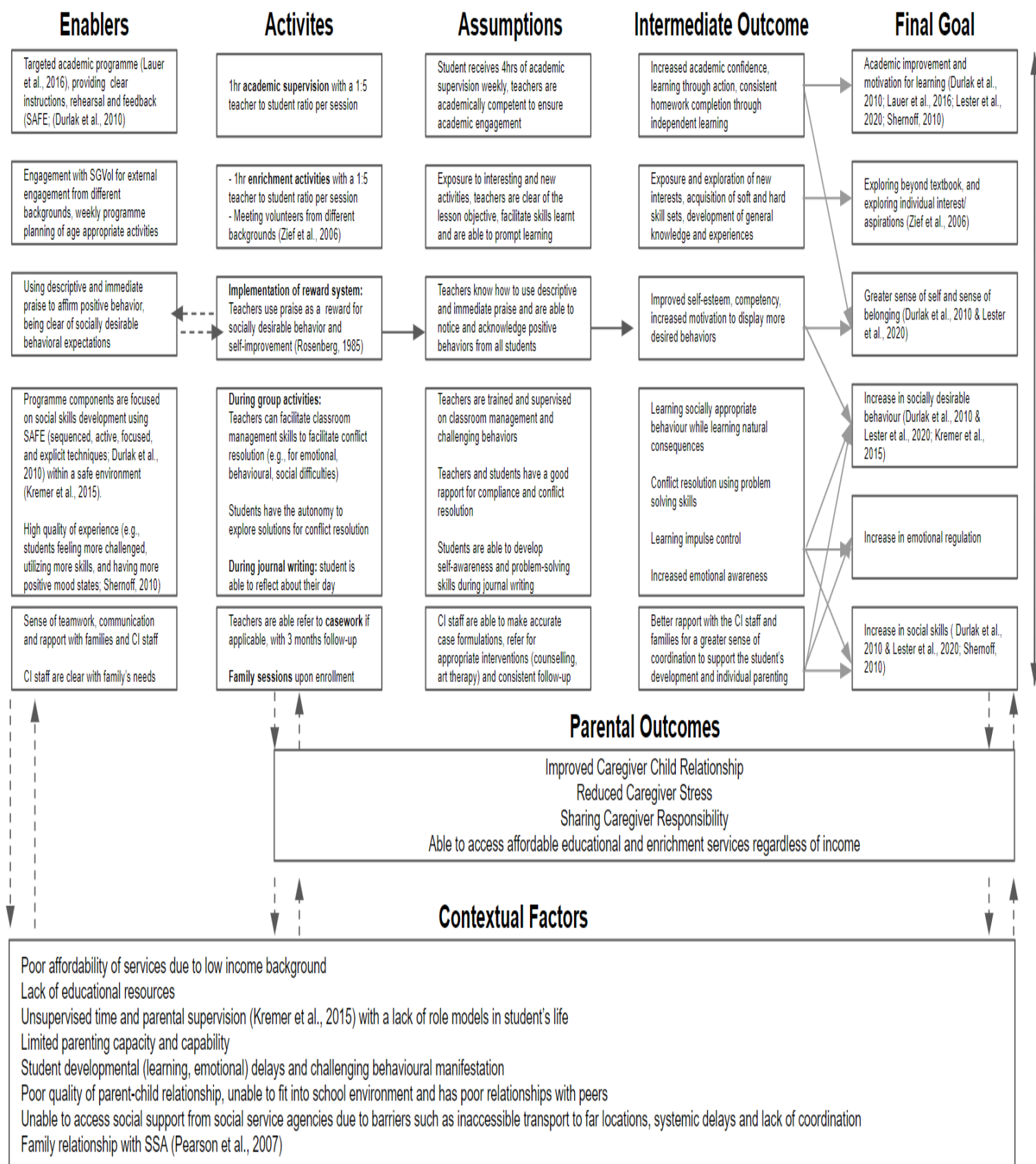
⁴ The things that an organisation or project does or the way it chooses to deliver a project day-to-day.

⁵ The underlying beliefs about how a project will work, the people involved and the context.

⁶ Conditions or factors that need to be present or absent to allow an organisation or project's work to succeed.

⁷ The context in which your organisation and its beneficiaries operate.

Figure 3: Logic Model for Study Buddy



Conceptualising the Logic Model

The logic model for SB was conceptualised using clinical experience and research supporting the change processes outlined in Figure 3. It is important to ensure that the logic model is applicable to the real-life service implementation of SB. This is done by first identifying intervention activities carried out in the program that result in realistic intermediate and long-term outcomes for students attending SB. Next, enablers and assumptions were identified based on CampusImpact's training programs that ensure the quality implementation of SB. Finally, gathering consistent feedback from service practitioners ensures the transferability of the logic model into clinical work.

Overview

Specific to this paper, the problem and program theories are used to inform an ongoing process and outcome evaluation for SB. In process evaluation, important change processes in the logic model were identified to test the fidelity and quality of executing such processes in the SB program. For example, with reference to Figure 3, to understand the quality of academic supervision (activity) in improving academic improvement and motivation for learning (final goal), a qualitative and quantitative questionnaire can be administered to investigate quality of teaching (enablers; i.e. teachers giving clear instruction, rehearsal and feedback) and the effectiveness of current training programs to equip teachers with relevant skills (assumptions; i.e. being able to engage a child academically) to enable effective program implementation.

The prospective findings from the process evaluation elaborate on the findings from the outcome evaluation for SB. For example, the data on the quality and fidelity in academic supervision provides further elaboration on the outcomes in academic motivation in SB students across time. Taken together, the process and outcome evaluation provide a holistic overview of the implementation and effectiveness of SB. Using such tools in intervention research, recommendations for program implementation to improve its outcomes can be outlined.

In conclusion, the problem and program theory are useful for many reasons. Firstly, it elevates program reporting as it can be used by CampusImpact to understand what the program is about. Next, it allows CampusImpact to present the importance of SB in a concise and clear manner to external stakeholders for better funding, evaluation and intervention support. Finally, it provides a framework to identify key processes and outcomes for intervention research to review and improve the effectiveness of SB. Together, applying a problem and program theory to understand the design and outcomes of social interventions can spearhead improvements in the delivery and effectiveness of such interventions in the social service sector.

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Research Skills & Implementation Research for Social Services

Mentoring Programmes: Project Abstracts

9 participants from SSAs attended our mentoring programs for the Research Skills and Implementation Research workshop in January 2022. These are the abstracts from their practice-based research projects.

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Suicide Attempters' Perception of Support Group Intervention: A Qualitative Study Based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour

Chiang Xing Ling, Lynn (Samaritans of Singapore)

Suicide has been a prevalent problem in Singapore. With suicide attempters being at a higher risk of completing suicide, a multi-pronged approach to suicide prevention that includes a focus on intervention among suicide attempters is critical. Beyond individual counselling and therapy, a relatively new intervention format is support groups for suicide attempters. As Samaritans of Singapore (SOS) will be starting a new support group for suicide attempters, this qualitative study explores factors that influence a suicide attempter's help-seeking behaviour and perception towards support group as an intervention.

Drawing on the theory of planned behaviour (TPB), interviews (n=3) were conducted using convenient sampling with SOS's counselling clients within 3 weeks. Interviews were transcribed and thematic analysis was used to identify themes that were organised corresponding to the 3 factors of TPB: attitude towards behaviour (ATB), subjective norm (SN)), and perceived behavioural control (PBC).

The analysis yielded 15 categories under the 3 TPB factors. Some salient categories include alleviation of symptoms, psychological safety, and social connections under ATB, friends and family under SN, and accessibility and availability of services under PBC.

In conclusion, participants' beliefs in the importance and usefulness of help-seeking and support groups were important motivating factors to reach out despite the low support they have from family and friends. However, as friends and family are the first level of support participants usually turn to, it is still important to raise awareness and mental health literacy to reduce delays in initial help-seeking behaviour and allow early intervention. The findings also have implications for social service agencies to relook at ways they spread awareness of their services and programmes, and accessibility of information on website and social media pages. As sample size is small, a more in-depth study will be required to further verify the results of these findings.

Evaluation of the Collaborative Assessment and Management of Suicidality Framework (CAMS) in Crisis Counselling: A Mixed Methods Study

Leong Yee Teng, Janice (Samaritans of Singapore)

With increasing focus on suicide-specific interventions, the collaborative assessment and management of suicidality (CAMS) framework emerges as a leading evidence-based framework for treating suicidality. The present study aims to explore counsellors' perceptions and experiences with CAMS's current state of adoption in crisis counselling, and better understand the factors that influence adoption. A secondary aim is to determine the effectiveness of CAMS on reducing suicidality.

Purposive sampling was used to recruit crisis counsellors who utilise CAMS (n=4). Two focus group discussions were conducted over one month. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data in-depth. To address the secondary aim, descriptive analysis and independent paired samples T-tests were used to analyse self-reported measures of the initial and outcome CAMS Suicide Status Forms (SSF) completed by past clients (n=8).

Thematic analysis yielded 14 categories and 3 themes: (1) Perceived Strengths of CAMS, (2) Challenges faced with CAMS and (3) Factors that influence the adoption of CAMS. Some salient categories include the strengths of the philosophical approach of CAMS, challenges navigating cultural nuances and the need for organisational and sectoral support. The quantitative analysis suggest that clients reported a significant improvement in scores in 4 factors that measure suicidality (emotional pain, stress, hopelessness, self-hate), but not agitation.

Counsellors recognise CAMS' value as a structured evidence-based tool, with its unique underlying philosophy of care and collaboration. Cultural adaptation and allowing flexibility in the use of the framework is recognised as important. Beyond theoretical understanding, counsellors need more context-specific training and supervision to build competency and confidence in applying CAMS in regular practice. Based on preliminary findings, CAMS shows promise as a viable framework to guide practice in Singapore. Recognising the study's constraints with the small sample size, further investigation is required to determine CAMS' effectiveness in our local context.

What's Behind the Clutter? An Exploratory Study on Social Work Professionals' Management of Hoarding Cases in Montfort Care

Lim Jia Min (Montfort Care)

Hoarding disorder is characterised by excessive acquisition of, and persistent difficulty in discarding possessions regardless of its actual value. Social Work Professionals (SWPs) are usually involved in direct work with persons with hoarding behaviour in the community. However, there is no established literature documenting effective social work interventions. A survey of SWPs in Montfort Care (MFC) found that decluttering took place in 60% of the cases. Amongst these, 94.4% had recurrent hoarding after decluttering. This study examines (1) SWPs' rationale for decluttering and the (2) types of hoarding interventions and its effectiveness. This study also hopes to (3) generate internal hoarding management guidelines for SWPs in MFC.

Ten SWPs with eight months to 12 years of experience participated in a three-hour focus group discussion (FGD) held virtually via Zoom. The FGD was facilitated by a senior social worker to understand SWPs' rationale for decluttering, the effectiveness and barriers of hoarding interventions in MFC. A short survey administered during the FGD evaluated two proposed hoarding interventions. The session was transcribed and analysed using inductive thematic analysis.

The results showed that decluttering arises from concerns of safety and health risk of people living in a cluttered home, pressure from stakeholders and SWPs' lack of knowledge of alternative interventions. Rapport building, service linkage and communication with stakeholders were identified as common interventions used. Common challenges faced include the client's lack of insight and lack of clear inter-agency protocols for hoarding management. SWPs hoped that future work can focus on preventive work, stronger collaborations between stakeholders and more hoarding-related training. SWPs preferred intervention 1 (categorisation, decision-making; exposure and habituation to discarding; cognitive restructuring) over intervention 2 (group and individual treatment).

In conclusion, the challenges SWPs face in hoarding management are similar to those reported in the literature. Further research to evaluate hoarding management by SWPs in Singapore is important to necessitate timely and cost-effective intervention. The current study also has implications on legislation and national efforts to curb hoarding behaviour.

How Nature Walks Promote the Emotional Health of Children/Youth with Autism and their Families

Sim Jia En (National Youth Council)

Parents of children with autism tend to experience a higher level of stress and a greater risk of mental health distress. Their children, as compared to the neurotypical, have higher emotional and behavioural needs. As nature walks have been proven to promote physiological health-related outcomes for the general population, this study seeks to examine the emotional health benefits of nature walks for both children/youth with autism and their caregiver(s).

Four families, comprising five caregivers, three children and one youth, aged 5 to 17, with varying levels of needs participated in 2-hour nature walks over two consecutive Saturdays. Caregivers completed four weekly self-administered e-questionnaires which inquired on them and their child's overall mood, sleep hours and number of sleep disturbances. Caregivers also reported their individual stress levels, number of emotional meltdowns their child experienced and the time taken to regulate them. Additionally, an e-survey was completed after each walk to report on their overall mood and experience. One caregiver was also interviewed to further examine observable changes for her and her child.

Overall moods of the children/youth and caregivers saw an immediate improvement after one or both of the nature walks. All four children/youth had 1 to 3-point improvement and all five caregivers experienced 1 to 5-point improvement and 2 to 4-point decrease in stress levels. Two children and their caregivers experienced an increase in sleep hours and reduction in sleep disturbances in a week. From the interview results, the walks provided a sense of safety and belonging and improved the child's emotional regulation.

In conclusion, nature walks provide some emotional benefits for families with children/youth with autism. A study of at least two months with randomised controlled trial would better determine the emotional benefits. Future studies could engage behavioural therapists to observe changes and explore the impacts of organised and self-directed nature walks.

Study Buddy After-School Programme: A Process and Outcome Evaluation Study

Lee Yih Chee, Karen (CampusImpact)

CampusImpact is a social service agency that conducts Study Buddy (SB), an affordable after-school programme for children from disadvantaged families. Study Buddy mainly provides homework supervision and enrichment opportunities to develop their students' holistic growth and well-being. At present, there has been an absence of any process or outcome evaluation research conducted on Study Buddy. Such research is integral to generate insights to the effectiveness of SB and enhance the continuation and extension of this programme.

This research presentation aims to evaluate the process of planning and designing a process and outcome evaluation research on Study Buddy.

The research questions to be investigated are: What are the key processes in planning (i.e., formulating a problem and process theory) and designing (i.e., methodology design for children) a process and outcome evaluation study? What are some key considerations and challenges in planning applied research? What are some key considerations and challenges in designing applied research for children aged 6 to 12?

A longitudinal process and outcome evaluation research framework is being outlined. Potential recommendations for future research and limitations for the present study will be discussed.

Finding Suitable Business Models for Small NPO in Singapore

Toh Jia Min

There is no guarantee that non-profit organisations (NPO) can always secure sponsorships to keep its operations going. As such, it is important for these organisations to self-sustain financially through innovative means. However, there are few studies on well-established business models for small NPOs. This study aims to explore ways in which Changing Minds, a small volunteer-run NPO that was established in Singapore 1 year ago can improve its business model to enhance its financial sustainability.

A discussion with the CEO of Changing Minds and another small NPO was initiated to understand its current business models and the various ways to enhance its financial stability. SWOT analysis was used to further analyse current and proposed business models for Changing Minds.

From the discussion, it was found that value creation is a top priority for small NPOs like Changing Minds. In the short term, small NPOs may have to organise free events to attract participants to return for upcoming events and enhance the value of the organisation. It is only when the value of the NPO is visible, then people will be more willing to pay for the services offered or even invest in the NPO. An expansion plan with meaningful activities is required to attract manpower to work on both short and long-term goals. With these inputs from the discussions, a focus group discussion (FGD) guide was created to assess the acceptability, appropriateness and feasibility of the three proposed business models.

With inputs from the discussions, a FGD guide has been created. The FGD will be conducted with volunteers and staff of Changing Minds within the next 3 months to identify the most acceptable, appropriate, and feasible business model for Changing Minds to adopt in the near term.

Effectiveness of Safe and Strong Families - Reunification (SSF-R)

Ek Xin Rong (Chen Su Lan Methodist Children's Home)

Every year from 2011 to 2020 in Singapore, an average of 1073 children reside in an out-of-home care (OOHC) setting, either in residential institutions or foster care, due to child welfare concerns. The Safe and Strong Family – Reunification (SSF-R) programme intervenes with caregivers and children to return OOHC children safely back to the care of their families in a timely manner. This study examined the effectiveness of the SSF-R programme by using administrative data to compare

outcomes between the treatment group (SSF-R) and a treatment-as-usual comparison group to find 1) group differences in the length of children's total out-of-home stay duration, and 2) changes in children's well-being at point of reunification.

Administrative data from a team that runs the SSF-R programme; including the Family Strengths and Needs Assessment (FSNA) tool, and a residential institution; including Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) tool, were used to examine a sample of 109 children (treatment = 59, control = 50). Using a quasi-experimental design, appropriate linear regression models were used to control for potential confounding variables (e.g., child age and sex) to estimate the programme's effectiveness.

Controlling for child age and gender, children in the SSF-R group experienced significantly lesser months ($M = 24$ months) than the children in the comparison group. No significant group differences in the well-being of the children were found.

Based on this study, SSF-R is effective in reunifying children with their families in a shorter period of time. Further studies will be needed to explain the lack of significant changes between treatment and control group in terms of the children's well-being needs. A longitudinal study looking into the sustainability of discharging the children from the child welfare system might also bring about more meaningful discussions on the effectiveness of the treatment in place.

Using Cluster Analysis to Identify Family Needs Profiles of Children Staying in Residential Care: Insights for Reunification Work

Chen Wenwei (Chen Su Lan Methodist Children's Home)

Reunification is a priority for children who are in out-of-home care (OOHC) due to child welfare issues such as child abuse or neglect. Hence, being able to understand the needs and profiles of families leading to children entering OOHC would allow for better family engagement in the planning for services and interventions as preparation for the reunification process.

The long-term caregivers of a sample of 63 residents staying in Chen Su Lan Methodist Children's Home in Singapore between 2016 to 2021 were analysed using ratings from the Child and Adolescent Strengths and Needs (CANS) tool. K-means cluster analysis was performed using three family and caregiver-related factors.

A three-clusters model was determined as optimal and the model differentiated the families based on their levels of needs relating to social resources, family stress and family relationships: (a) the "disadvantaged" family group had moderate needs in accessing social resources but lower needs in family stress and relationships than the other groups, (b) the "tense" family group characterised by high family stress and poor family relationships, and (c) the "isolated" family group defined by limited social resources and high family stress. Subsequent multiple linear regressions found that child maltreatment was significantly less likely to occur in the "disadvantaged" family group as compared to the "tense" and "isolated" family groups. Significant differences were also observed between the family groups relating to type of maltreatment and length of stay.

These findings suggest that family stress and family relationships could be significant contributing factors towards child maltreatment among children who are in residential care, which would highlight the need for interventions to be targeted at strengthening family relationships and equipping family members with healthy coping skills during the process of returning children.

Implementation Study of Peer Support Leader Training for Migrant Workers

Paul Justin, Yongzheng (HealthServe)

As part of the national effort to improve the mental well-being of migrant workers, the Peer Support Leader (PSL) training was developed to help migrant workers community leaders acquire basic mental health skills and become first responders to distressed workers in the community. At the pilot stages of implementation, there is a need to develop programme content that is appropriate and adaptable to the different cultures and languages. In addition, there is a need to ensure some level of consistency in the delivery across the different facilitators.

This implementation research seeks (1) to refine the theory of change for the PLS training and (2) to assess the implementation, focusing on dosage, adaptation and fidelity. Findings can possibly contribute towards building a framework for the auditing of PSL training, in terms of its content and delivery, for future runs. This presentation will reflect on the research process: (1) Conducting research with migrant workers, given the cultural and linguistic diversity and (2) Incorporating research into operational work on the ground.

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Editorial Team

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Executive Editor: Dr. Gerard Chung

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Questions for us? Want to write for us?

Contact us at:

NUS Social Service Research Centre

Faculty of Arts and Social Science

National University of Singapore

The Shaw Foundation Building, Block AS7,

Level 3, 5 Arts Link,

Singapore 117570

Email: ssr@nus.edu.sg

Phone: 6601-5019

Website: <https://fass.nus.edu.sg/ssr/>

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