



# Evaluating the Effectiveness of Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) training among Asian Americans: A Randomized Controlled Trial Study

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## Introduction

- YMHFA is an evidence-based program that teaches adults signs and symptoms of common adolescent mental health illnesses, and appropriately supporting youth experiencing distress/crises.
- There are 31 published studies on effectiveness of MHFA in US; however most lack scientific rigor; used pre-post design.
- Thus, it is unclear whether post-training changes can be attributable to the intervention.
- No published studies in US on recipients of aid.
- Furthermore, research evaluating effectiveness of YMHFA among Asian Americans is lacking.
- Asian American adolescents experience greater mental health difficulties (e.g. depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts and behaviors) compared to their White peers (La Salle et al., 2017), yet they underutilize school-based and community-based mental health services (Wang et al., 2019).

## Current Study

We evaluated the efficacy of YMHFA among Asian American parents with children between ages 8-20 using an RCT design.

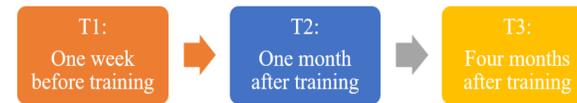
We examined if:

- YMHFA impacted:
  - Parents' mental health literacy (MHL)
  - Help-seeking-intentions
  - Stigma
  - Attitudes towards professional help
  - Confidence in MHFA skills
  - Engagement in first-aid behaviors
  - Youth mental health (both parent and youth report)
- Whether improvement was maintained four months after the training

## Method

**Participants:** 175 parents were randomly assigned to experimental and waitlist control groups; 99 parents ( $M_{age} = 46.24$ ;  $SD_{age} = 6.80$ ) completed measures at first two time points.

**Timeline for measures completion for experimental group:**



**Timeline for measures completion for waitlist control group:**



**Measures:**

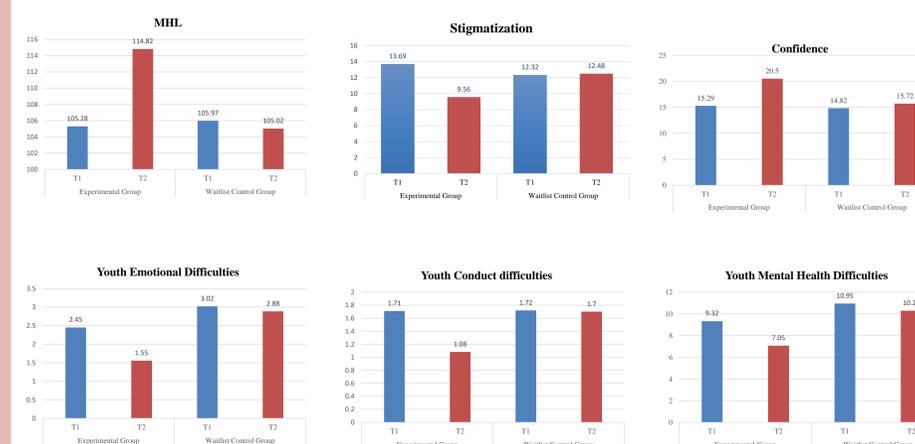
- Mental Health Literacy Scale (O'Conner & Casey, 2015)
- Parental Attitudes Towards Psychological Services Inventory (PATPSI; Turner, 2012)
- MHFA engagement behaviors (Kelly et al., 2011)
- Confidence in using MHFA steps (Haggerty et al., 2019)
- Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 1997)

**Cultural Adaptation of YMHFA** (informed via previous focus groups, interviews, essays):

- What are your concerns raising youth in the US?
- How does culture impact listening non-judgmentally?
- What are cultural barriers to seeking professional mental health services?
- What are strengths of Asian families that can promote positive youth mental health?

**Data analysis:** Repeated measures ANCOVA in SPSS (controlled for parents' age)

## Results



Note:

- Mean scores displayed
- Experimental group had received training at T2; Waitlist control group had not received training at T2

## Results

Compared to the waitlist control group, *the experimental group showed significant improvements in:*

- MHL ( $F(1,96) = 33.822, p < .000; \eta^2 = .26$ )
- Stigmatization ( $F(1,96) = 12.45, p < .001; \eta^2 = .115$ )
- Confidence in working with youth ( $F(1,95) = 27.45, p < .000; \eta^2 = .224$ )
- Parent-reported youth mental health difficulties ( $F(1,95) = 3.45, p = .07; \eta^2 = .035$ )
- Parent-reported emotional difficulties ( $F(1,95) = 4.63, p < .05; \eta^2 = .047$ )
- Parent-reported conduct difficulties ( $F(1,95) = 4.15, p < .05; \eta^2 = .042$ ),

*The experimental group showed marginally significant improvements in:*

- Help-seeking attitudes ( $F(1,96) = 3.14, p = .08; \eta^2 = .032$ )
- Engagement in MHFA behaviors ( $F(1,19) = 3.25, p = 0.087; \eta^2 = .146$ )

*The waitlist control group showed significant improvements one month after training in:*

- MHL ( $t(32) = -5.04; p < 0.001; d = .877$ )
- Help-seeking intentions ( $t(32) = -2.98; p < 0.01; d = .519$ )
- Stigmatization ( $t(32) = 2.59; p < 0.05; d = .451$ )
- Help-seeking attitudes ( $t(32) = -2.37; p < 0.05; d = .412$ )
- Confidence in working with youth ( $t(32) = -9.46; p < 0.000; d = .647$ )
- Child emotional difficulties ( $t(32) = 2.06; p < 0.05; d = .358$ )

*All changes maintained at 4-mnth follow up for both groups*

## Discussion and Implications

- First study in US to use an RCT design to test efficacy of YMHFA.
- Promising findings show importance of cultural adaptation.
- Findings highlight the importance of social support for immigrant Asian parents and delivering the intervention in a culturally responsive manner.
- Findings also highlight the importance of home-school collaboration.
- School psychologists can offer the training for Asian American parents in schools as part of Tier I services, that would reduce the need for Tier II and III.