



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.

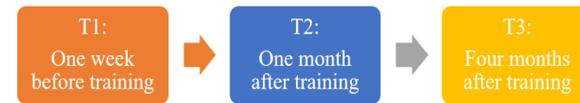
We examined if:

- 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:

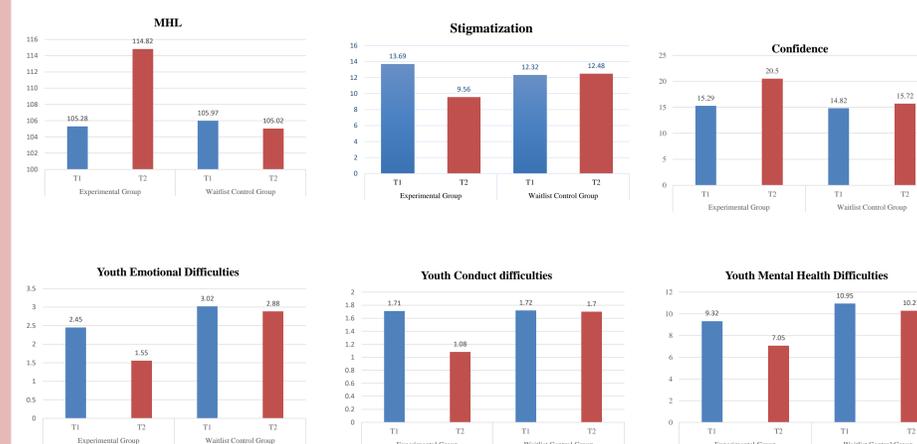
- Mental Health Literacy Scale (O'Conner & Casey, 2015)
- Parental Attitudes Towards Psychological Services Inventory (PATPSI; Turner, 2012)
- MHFA engagement behaviors (Kelly et al., 2011)
- Confidence in using MHFA steps (Haggerty et al., 2019)
- Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman,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