Evaluating the Effectiveness of Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) training among Asian Americans: A Randomized Controlled Trial Study
Mazneen Havewala, M.A., and Cixin Wang, Ph.D.

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

Results

- Compared to the waitlist control group, the experimental group showed significant improvements in:
  - MHL (F(1,96) = 33.822, p < .000; Ρ² = .26)
  - Stigmatization (F(1,96) = 12.45, p < .001; Ρ² = .115)
  - Confidence in working with youth (F(1,95) = 27.45, p < .000; Ρ² = .224)
  - Parent-reported youth mental health difficulties (F(1,95) = 3.45, p = .07; Ρ² = .035)
  - Parent-reported emotional difficulties (F(1,95) = 4.63, p < .005; Ρ² = .047)
  - Parent-reported conduct difficulties (F(1,95) = 4.15, p < .05; Ρ² = .042),

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

- Help-seeking attitudes (F(1,96) = 3.14, p = .08; Ρ² = .032)
- Engagement in MHFA behaviors (F(1,19) = 3.25, p = .087; Ρ² = .146)

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.