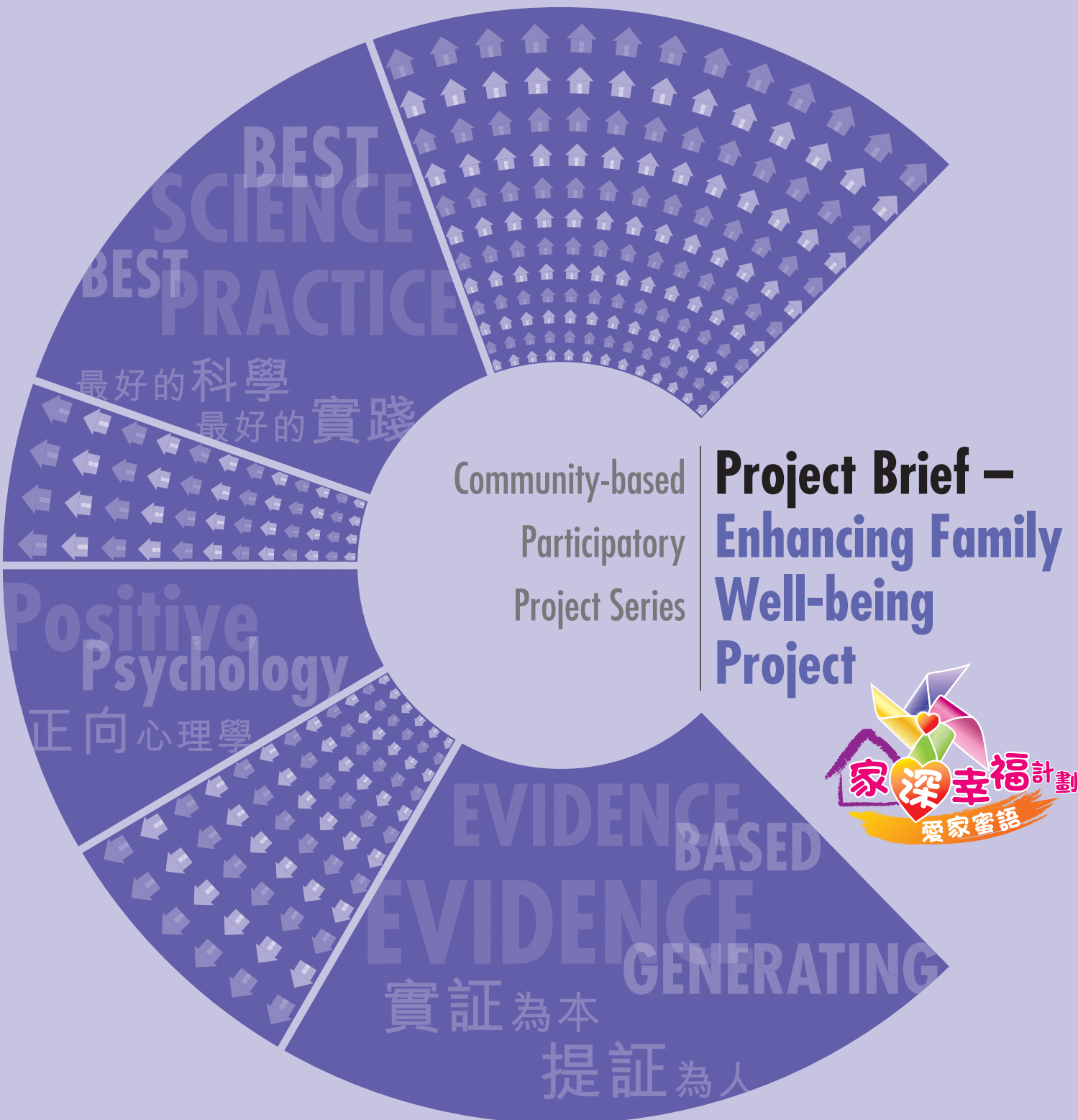


FAMILY: A Jockey Club Initiative for a Harmonious Society

愛+人：賽馬會和諧社會計劃



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ENHANCING FAMILY WELL-BEING PROJECT

INTRODUCTION



BACKGROUND

Maximizing family well-being is important. As an essential social unit, family is often a source of care and support. Suboptimal family functioning and poor family relationship have been documented to result in problematic behaviour among family members, such as increased risk for substance abuse among children and adolescents. Promoting the importance of family relationship that characterized by love, care and mutual support is therefore, fundamental. Focusing on underprivileged families that are constantly subjected to various stressors in life and therefore at highest risk could be particularly worthwhile, but requires innovative strategies to engage them and brief interventions to minimize demands on them.

As a collectivist culture, Chinese people put great emphasis on the importance of family. Nevertheless, the fast-paced lifestyle of many people in Hong Kong deprives them of sufficient time for family communication and mutual understanding. This was exemplified by results of a survey conducted by the Hong Kong Government which showed that up to 77.9% of adult respondents never, rarely or only occasionally listened to parents' views and concerns. The existence of suboptimal family relationship is therefore, unsurprising. Of concern, poor family relationship could negatively affect FAMILY Health, Happiness and Harmony (3Hs).

The Shamshuiipo district consisted 5.3% of the Hong Kong population and was the fourth most densely populated local district in year 2010. As would be expected for a district that was constituted of a high percentage of elderly, single parents, ethnic minorities, comprehensive social security assistance recipients and new immigrants from Mainland China, the median monthly domestic household income was the lowest among all districts in Hong Kong.

The Shamshuiipo Well-being Movement was initiated by the Shamshuiipo District Social Welfare Office of Social Welfare Department in year 2009 and was developed in line with the principles of positive psychology. The notion of positive psychology puts great emphasis on positive traits and virtues, including but not limited to tolerance, responsibility and the capacity for love. A substantial amount of evidence has demonstrated the effectiveness of applying the principles of positive psychology to enhance family well-being. Hence, adopting 4 major themes from positive psychology that included Gratitude, Hope, Resilience, and Open-mindedness, the Movement aimed to a) promote a sense of well-being among Shamshuiipo residents and b) strengthen their resilience against different adversities in life. Partnering with the Shamshuiipo District Council, other government departments, non-government organizations, schools and other local parties, the Movement spread positive messages throughout the district via different events and activities since its commencement.

Building on the success of the Movement, a community-based initiative entitled the Enhancing Family Well-being Project was developed by the Shamshuiipo District Social Welfare Office of Social Welfare Department in collaboration with the School of Public Health of The University of Hong Kong. Through integrating best science from the university and best practice from local social service providers and other stakeholders, the project focused on developing, delivering and evaluating community-based intervention programmes that were targeted at families in the Shamshuiipo district. These programmes were developed based on 3 main positive psychology themes including Gratitude, Hope/Resilience and Open-mindedness and emphasized the importance of family relationship as a contributor to optimal 3Hs.

PROJECT AIMS

1. To engage and build the capacity of the social workers and teachers through train-the-trainers programme on the application of positive psychology and the Logic Model;
2. To investigate the effectiveness of community-based intervention programmes in improving family relationship and the 3Hs;
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of a theory-based Participant Booklet in increasing participants' intention and practices of the suggested behaviours, as well as enhancing their family relationship;
4. To evaluate the various components of the project in terms of its structure, process, and outcomes;
5. To explore the social impact of the CBPR in collaboration with various organizations, schools and stakeholders in the Shamshuiipo district.

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PROJECT DESIGN AND METHODS



OVERALL PROJECT DESIGN AND METHODS

The project used a Community-based Participatory Research approach to improve FAMILY Health, Happiness and Harmony (3Hs) through enhancing family relationship in the Shamshuipo district. The project was carried out in 3 main stages, as depicted below:

Stage 1 – Project conception

Stage 1 encompassed a launching ceremony to publicize the project, to emphasize the importance of positive family relationship and ultimately, to promote 3Hs. Another component of stage 1 was a capacity building programme (train-the-trainers programme) that was targeted at social workers and teachers of the 39 participating organizations and schools. The aim of this programme was to equip social workers and teachers with necessary skills to design and evaluate community-based programmes targeted at families suited to the themes of the project. Additionally, this programme sought to enhance social workers' and teachers' knowledge about positive psychology which in turn, should be the key approach used in designing the community-based programmes.

Stage 2 – Project implementation

Stage 2 involved the implementation of community-based family intervention programmes organized by the 39 participating organizations and schools to promote positive family relationship and subsequently, the 3Hs. The programmes were designed in accordance with each organization/school's chosen theme (Gratitude, Hope/Resilience or Open-mindedness) alongside concepts conveyed during the train-the-trainers programme (including positive psychology). Ongoing process evaluation was conducted throughout this phase through the use of questionnaires, focus groups and in-depth interviews. Such data were deemed valuable for consolidation of experience that will potentially be useful for large scale community-based health education projects in the future.

In addition, using a randomized controlled trial design, the effectiveness of a theory-based action planning Participant Booklet was assessed.

Stage 3 – Project consolidation

Stage 3 of the project involved the organization of the practice wisdom forum. Social workers, teachers and major stakeholders were invited to share their experiences with taking part in the project, and to discuss project outcomes. The forum also aimed to increase public understanding on community-based projects and the use of evidence-based and evidence-generating approaches.

The Positive Family Book and the Positive Family Practice Manual were published at this stage of the project. The former was distributed to members of the public and contained advice for maintaining positive family communication as well as several case studies. The latter was distributed to individuals working in the social service sector and consolidated the project rationale, theoretical framework, training materials as well as practical experience gained. Both publications contained evaluation questionnaires.

Various strategies were implemented to publicize and promote the project, including:

1. Websites
2. Newspapers
3. Roadshow promotional videos
4. Banners
5. Community events
6. Positive Family Book
7. Positive Family Practice Manual

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PROJECT SUMMARY



The Enhancing Family Well-being Project was a community-based project initiated by the Shamshuiipo District Social Welfare Office of Social Welfare Department in collaboration with the School of Public Health of The University of Hong Kong. This project built on the success of the Shamshuiipo Well-being Movement and was implemented from February 2012 to May 2013.

This project adopted a Community-based Participatory Research (CBPR) approach that focused on developing, delivering and evaluating community-based intervention programmes designed by community organizations and schools to enhance the family well-being of Shamshuiipo residents. A 1-day train-the-trainers programme was organized to equip participating social workers and teachers with relevant knowledge and skills for translating the project aims into effective intervention programmes. The intervention programmes were developed in accordance to 1 of the 3 main themes in positive psychology, including “Gratitude”, “Hope/Resilience” or “Open-mindedness”. Each programme was designed to emphasize the importance of family relationship as a contributor to optimize the 3Hs. To test the effectiveness of a supplementary theory-based Participant Booklet, community organizations and schools were randomized into “Basic Programme” (n=15) and “Enhanced Programme” (n=14) intervention groups. A family education book and a professional practice manual were published and a 1-day forum was organized to disseminate findings of this project to the social service sector and to members of the public. Data were collected at pre- and immediately post-intervention (T1 and T2 respectively), 6 weeks (T3) and 3 months (T4) after core intervention session. Intention-to-treat (ITT) analysis was conducted among participants aged 12 years or above.

At T4, family health (effect size [ES]=0.14, $p<0.001$), happiness (ES=0.10, $p<0.001$) and harmony (ES=0.10, $p<0.001$) improved significantly alongside family relationship (ES=0.06, $p=0.03$) compared to T1 values. Additionally, compared to the Basic Programme group, the Enhanced Programme group experienced a greater increase in family health (ES=0.11, $p=0.04$) and happiness (ES=0.13, $p=0.01$) scores from T1 to T4. Qualitative findings also supported the programme effectiveness. Many participants described the changes they have made to improve relationships, notably in family relationships and shared the positive experiences gained. Although some participants had no time or found it awkward to carry out the suggested behavioural indicators, they were still able to witness some improvements in their FAMILY Health, Happiness and Harmony.

The train-the-trainers programme evaluation findings showed the social workers’ and teachers’ general attitude towards positive psychology and its application to programme design improved significantly immediately after training with moderate to large effect size, although the improvement was not extended to 12-month post-training for most items (all $p<0.05$). The perception that social workers and teachers had towards their ability to apply positive psychology in programme design significantly improved immediately (ES=1.09, $p<0.001$), and at 6-month (ES=0.57, $p<0.001$) and 12-month (ES=0.4, $p<0.001$) after training with moderate to large effect size. The mean score for capturing their intention to apply positive psychology to programme design in future projects was 4.71 and 4.75 out of 6 at 6-month and 12-month post-training respectively. At 12-month post-training, up to 72.0% of trained social workers and teachers had the intention or strong intention to apply positive psychology when designing programmes in future.

This project demonstrated that the simple community-based intervention programmes significantly improved family relationship and the 3Hs. The supplementary Participant Booklet strengthened the effect. The results support the further development of community-based practice models implemented with supplementary booklets to enhance family well-being. The train-the-trainers programme was useful for the training of social workers and teachers as they were able to learn more about the theoretical models which were used to design effective intervention programmes. The positive results of the project reflected the success of the strong academic-social service sector partnership between The University of Hong Kong, the Shamshuiipo District Social Welfare Office of Social Welfare Department and other collaborators and further follow-up work should be promoted.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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