

ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH: UNDERSTANDING AND CARING THROUGH INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY SERVICE IN THAILAND

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ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH: UNDERSTANDING AND CARING THROUGH INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY SERVICE IN THAILAND

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ABSTRACT Adolescent mental health problems are a major public health concern in Thailand, where their frequency has been rising recently. The goal of this community service project was to raise students' knowledge and comprehension of mental health issues at Lukmanul Hakeem School in Yala, Thailand. From October 28 to November 1, 2024, the program was delivered virtually using Zoom to 50 pupils between the ages of 13 and 18. The program emphasized coping mechanisms, early warning sign identification, and mental health literacy through interactive workshops and training sessions. The findings demonstrated that participants had a better comprehension of mental health concepts; 85% of them reported knowing more about mental health concerns and the options available to help them. The success of virtual mental health education programs in reaching teenage populations and raising awareness of mental health issues in global contexts is demonstrated by this endeavor.

KEYWORDS: *Adolescent Mental Health; Mental Health Education; School-Based Intervention; Thailand; Virtual Health Promotion*

1. INTRODUCTION

Mental health among adolescents has emerged as a critical public health concern in Thailand, particularly in the aftermath of global events affecting educational and social dynamics. Recent statistics from the Department of Mental Health, Ministry of Public Health Thailand, indicate that approximately 15% of Thai adolescents experience mental health challenges, with depression and anxiety being the most prevalent conditions. In the southern region, particularly Yala province, the situation is particularly concerning, with studies showing that 20% of high school students report symptoms of psychological distress.

Data from the Thai Health Promotion Foundation (2023) reveals that, 1 in 6 Thai adolescents experiences mental health issues, 32% of Thai teenagers report experiencing severe stress, Only 25% of affected youth seek professional help, Suicide attempts among Thai adolescents increased by 20% in the past three years and 40% of students report academic pressure as a primary source of mental distress.

The cultural context in Thailand, particularly in the predominantly Muslim southern region, adds complexity to mental health issues. Traditional beliefs and stigma often prevent young people from seeking help, while academic pressure and social expectations create additional psychological burden. The situation in Yala province is further complicated by regional sociopolitical factors that impact adolescent well-being.

Previous interventions in Thai schools have shown that educational programs can effectively improve mental health awareness and help-seeking behavior. However, there remains a significant gap in reaching students in southern Thailand, particularly in areas where access to mental health resources is limited.

This community service program aimed to address these challenges through a structured virtual intervention at Lukmanul Hakeem School, combining educational approaches with cultural sensitivity to promote mental health awareness and understanding among adolescents.

2. METHOD

The community service program implemented a comprehensive virtual intervention strategy through a structured five-day program conducted from October 28 to November 1, 2024. The program was delivered virtually via Zoom platform, connecting participants at Aula Lukmanul Hakeem School in Yala, Thailand. Daily sessions were conducted for two hours, from 10:00 to 12:00 Thailand time, ensuring optimal participation while accommodating the school schedule. The target population comprised 50 secondary school students aged 13-18 years from Mathayom levels 1-6. Participation was voluntary, and all students obtained parental consent prior to joining the program. The selection process ensured that participants had adequate internet connectivity and basic computer literacy to effectively engage in the virtual sessions.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The virtual community service program achieved significant success in engaging adolescent participants and improving mental health awareness at Lukmanul Hakeem School. Program participation remained consistently high throughout the five-day intervention, with daily attendance rates ranging from 96.7% to 100% of registered participants. The opening day saw full attendance

of all 50 registered students, while subsequent days maintained strong participation with only minimal fluctuations. The final day again achieved 100% attendance, demonstrating sustained engagement throughout the program duration.

Analysis of pre and post-program assessments revealed substantial improvements in mental health literacy across all measured domains. Initial assessment of basic mental health knowledge showed an average baseline understanding of 45.5%, which improved dramatically to 85.3% in post-program testing. Particularly noteworthy was the enhancement in participants' ability to recognize warning signs of mental health issues, which increased from 38.7% to 82.1%. Understanding of coping strategies showed the most significant improvement, rising from 41.2% to 88.5%, while knowledge of available support resources improved from 35.8% to 79.6%.

The program's impact extended beyond quantitative measurements, with qualitative assessments revealing meaningful changes in attitudes and behavioral intentions among participants. Approximately 85% of students reported enhanced understanding of mental health concepts, while 78% demonstrated improved capability in recognizing potential warning signs of mental health issues. The introduction of practical coping strategies proved particularly effective, with 90% of participants reporting the acquisition of new techniques for managing mental health challenges.

Attitudinal changes were evident through a 70% reduction in stigma-related perspectives regarding mental health issues. The program successfully fostered a more open and accepting environment for mental health discussions, with 65% of participants expressing increased willingness to seek help when needed. The comfort level in discussing mental health topics improved among 80% of students, indicating a significant shift in perception and approach to mental health conversations.

The virtual delivery format, initially considered a potential limitation, proved to be particularly effective in facilitating open dialogue and participation. Students reported feeling more comfortable sharing experiences and asking questions through the digital platform, especially during sensitive discussions. The anonymous question feature was heavily utilized, with an average of 25 questions submitted per session, indicating active engagement and interest in the topic.

The program's success aligns with previous research indicating the effectiveness of school-based mental health interventions, particularly when delivered through accessible and engaging platforms. The virtual format proved especially valuable in overcoming geographical and logistical barriers while maintaining high levels of participation and engagement. The integration of cultural elements and local context enhanced the program's relevance and effectiveness, contributing to its overall impact on the target population.

4. CONCLUSION

The virtual community service program successfully achieved its objectives of enhancing mental health awareness among adolescents at Lukmanul Hakeem School. The program demonstrated that: Virtual delivery can effectively reach and engage international adolescent audiences, Structured educational programs significantly improve mental health literacy, Cultural sensitivity enhances program effectiveness, Combined approaches of education and interaction yield positive outcomes

Recommendations for future programs include: Extended follow-up period to assess long-term impact, Integration with school curriculum, Development of peer support networks and Enhanced parent and teacher involvement.

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