

# Promote Campus Mental Health From Community Psychology Perspective

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This research aims to explore the most suitable strategies which assist school to promote campus (including teachers and students) mental health. Researcher was first approached by PY Secondary School and some basic issues and ideas were being raised and discussed by principal and head of counsellor. In order to find out the most suitable solution, action research method which introduced by Rowell (2005) was being used in this research. This research had been conducted for a year. Researcher assessed and planned the action through community psychology's lens which focuses on seeing the problems from the ecological way instead of traditional way. Researcher took initiative to join some of the enrichment class (cooking class and nursery class) together with the students in order to observe and find out their real needs. After the observation, researcher made an assessment and proposed some ideas (including conduct activities, group counselling, resources sharing) which help to promote student's mental health. The findings of the research have shown that students felt themselves were being more supported by teachers, the school teachers found their interaction with students is stronger, and student's disciplinary issues had been reduced.

*Keywords:* school counselling, community psychology, action research

## Introduction

PY Secondary School is a school which is located in remote mountainous area. The capacity of PY School is between 200 to 300 students. The management of PY School seeks assistance from our department, Department of Counselling Psychology (DCP) which is located in the same county but different township for enhancing school mental health. DCP Team formed a workforce which led by a Ph.D. student, a Master student and three Degree students under a professor's consultation for the tasks.

The management of PY School first met with DCP Team, the principal of PY School addressed the issues which the school encountered. According to the depiction of the principal, most of the PY School students come from single-parent family or are parented by grandparents. Although grandparents are able to provide the basic living needs, they can't replace their parents to love and educate their children. The students will still feel lost and helpless in their future. Moreover, gangster activities are very savage in the mountainous school area, and they will become a member of the gangster team easily if they are being invited to join. Therefore, the author of this study was assigned to lead students to complete the task by collaborating with PY School in order

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to promote mental health of PY School students. To carry out the task, action research process was used to answer the following questions: (1) What's the real needs of PY School? (2) How to promote PY School mental health from community counselling perspective?

## **Literature Review**

### **The Key Concepts of Community Counselling**

Community counselling is basically supported by the theory of community psychology. Community counselling can be defined as “a comprehensive helping framework that is grounded in multicultural competence and oriented toward social justice. Because human behaviour is powerfully affected by context, community counsellors use strategies that facilitate the healthy development both of their clients and of the communities that nourish them” (J. A. Lewis, M. D. Lewis, Daniels, & D'Andrea, 2011, p. 9).

Community intervention is multifaceted and comprehensive, and it can be seen as any programs or planning related to promote mental health on a community basis, which brings positive changes to a community (Trickett, Espino, & Hawe, 2011). By reviewing community counselling research, four major concepts grounded in community counselling need to be discussed in order to provide comprehensive helping framework for helping people. First of all, the roles of community counsellor are crucial in launching a successful community counselling-based intervention. Community counsellor plays multiple roles in bringing positive changes to a community. Therefore, community counsellor must have good interpersonal skills to work with others or groups which are professional enough to perform skills or knowledge and are able to have interpersonal interactions in academic and professional settings (Duba, Paez, & Kindsvatter, 2010).

Besides, community counselling also emphasized on the ecological system of a client, an organizations or a community. The four levels of ecological systems model which proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1979) have been widely used in community counselling. Bronfenbrenner's ecological model enables community counsellor to assess the relatedness between the micro level (such as home, school, and work), meso-level (such as home-work, interactions of teachers and family), exo-level (such as parent's workplace) and macro-level (such as policy of country) of client or group and understand how the systems and policy affects them in mental health. Trickett (2009) indicated that ecological perspective not only provides a view of “person-environment interdependence”, but also assists on developing resource or building capacity towards community intervention. Undoubtedly, it is the crucial part to form collaboration while conducting community intervention.

Moreover, community counselling process is a process of political action, and it involves many elements, including power, systems, policy, interpersonal skill, collaboration and etc. (Montero, 2009; Case, Todd, & Kral, 2014). “Empowerment”, “Social Justice” and “Advocacy” are the main concepts which almost are being mentioned in every community counselling moment. Empowerment is the central concept in community counselling, it can be a state or a process, the purpose of empowering over a person or a group is gaining influence, control, commitment and etc. (Orford, 2008). On the other hand, social justice stands on the point of seeing clients' issues by connecting human development with the environmental factors such as inequity, oppression, racism which obstruct the growth of a person (Ratts, 2009). Both social justice towards any inequity or unfairness can be alleviated through the process of advocacy and empowerment.

Finally, culture plays an important role in conducting community counselling intervention. People live in context and each context is a unique culture. Therefore, culture is a crucial element while carrying out any community counselling planning such as social justice, advocacy, empowerment, ecological method (Grothaus,

McAuliffe, & Craigen, 2012). In conclusion, the concepts being mentioned above are the key features of community counselling. However, the community counselling theory being mentioned is very brief and each concept has its very own profound knowledge.

### School Mental Health Programs

Prevention is better than cure, the promotion of prevention programs are strongly recommended in the field of community counselling practice. The levels of prevention in community counselling can be classified into three tiers, which are primary prevention, secondary prevention, and tertiary prevention. The purpose of launching prevention programs is to prevent mental health disturbance, enhance human development and bring positive impact to clients' daily lives via education and advocacy (Lewis et al., 2011).

School is an ideal place to promote mental health since it plays an important role in communities and engages with the parents and children within the community (Weist, Evans, & Lever, 2003). Normally, school would conduct or organize primary prevention programs such as parenting programs, relationship enhancement programs, family programs and etc., to promote the mental health on their family lives. In addition, secondary prevention programs such as violence prevention program will be conducted by targeting high-risk students.

In recent years, many researchers focus on both translating intervention research into practice and building capacity for supporting those intervention practice within school settings (Taylor, Weist, & DeLoach, 2012; Chinman et al., 2012; Flaspohler, Meehan, Maras, & Keller, 2012; Halgunseth, Carmack, & Childs, 2012; Saldana & Chamberlain, 2012). Most of the researches are evidence-based, various types of programs (such as trauma-focused intervention, school-based prevention programs) are facilitating for the research. By bringing the scientific research results into community counselling practice, the Interactive Systems Framework for Dissemination and Implementation (ISF, Figure 1) proposed by Wandersman et al. (2008) is widely used.

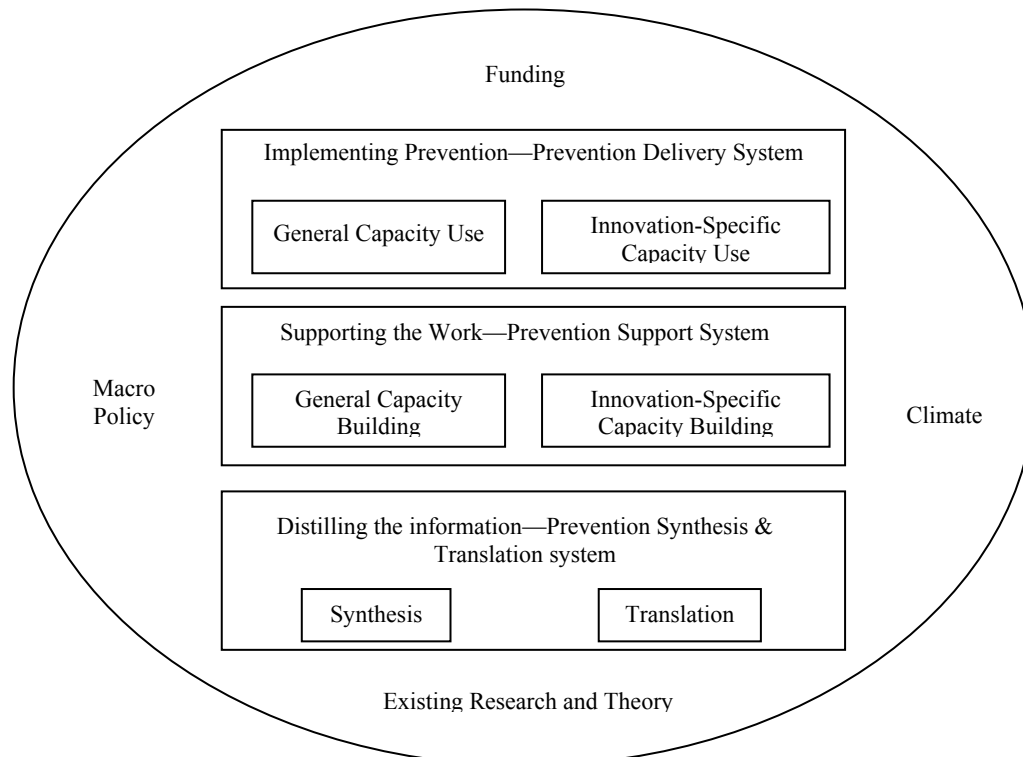


Figure 1. Interactive systems framework for dissemination and implementation, ISF (Wandersman et al., 2008).

As per Figure 1, there are three systems to support the transfer from prevention research into practical field. The first system named as Prevention Synthesis and Translation System, the function of this system is to collect, synthesize, and translate the current research in order to ready for practitioners to use. The second system called as Prevention Support System, the function of this system is to assist, support, and facilitate the prevention into research by carrying out both general capacity building and innovation-specific capacity building. The last system is prevention delivery system which conducts any necessary activities in order to implement the programs.

In conclusion, school plays a very important role in promoting mental health. Due to the unique community position of school, prevention programs are encouraging to be conducted in school in order to bring positive impact for the particular community. Besides, ISF is a useful tool for implementing new programs, policies, or innovative ideas from scientific research to practical field.

## **Research Protocol**

### **Research Method**

Action Research Method which introduced by Rowell (2005) was being used in this research in order to find out the most suitable strategies in promoting the campus mental health (Figure 1). The purpose of choosing this action research is to find out the most optimal strategies which fit the context of the PY students through a trial and error process. Besides, it could reduce the gap between theory and practicum. Moreover, this research was collaboration based between PY Secondary School and Department of Counselling Psychology of university, action research will be the best choice in partner with other organizer who looked for changes or solutions.

### **Participants**

This study is basically based on collaboration between DCP and PY Secondary School. Therefore, the department head of DCP and the principal of PY Secondary School are playing a role as consultant. This study was led by author, along with a master student and three BA degree students and supported by PY School Counselling Office and Office of Students Affairs. On the other hand, PY Secondary School has appointed head of counsellor as coordinator in assisting the programs (see Table 1).

Table 1

#### *Research Participants*

|   |  |
|---|--|
| DCP Team  | PY School Team   |
| Consultant: YJ professor                                | Consultant: Principal  |
| Led by: Ph.D. student (Author)                          | Main Contact: Head of counselling office                       |
| Supported by: A master student and 3 BA degree students | Supported by: Counselling office and office of student affairs |

### **Procedures**

The research had been conducted for a year and yet to be continued. This study adopted the action research cycle which proposed by Rowell (2005), however, some amendments were made according to the need and the development of this study (Figure 2). The process of this study can be classified into six major parts, which are: (1) Initial ideas about improving practice; (2) Fact findings based on observation of DCP Team; (3) Strategies planning for community-based intervention; (4) Take action and evaluation of actions; (5) Modifications were made based on the evaluation on part 4; (6) Evaluation was made based on the modifications on part 5.

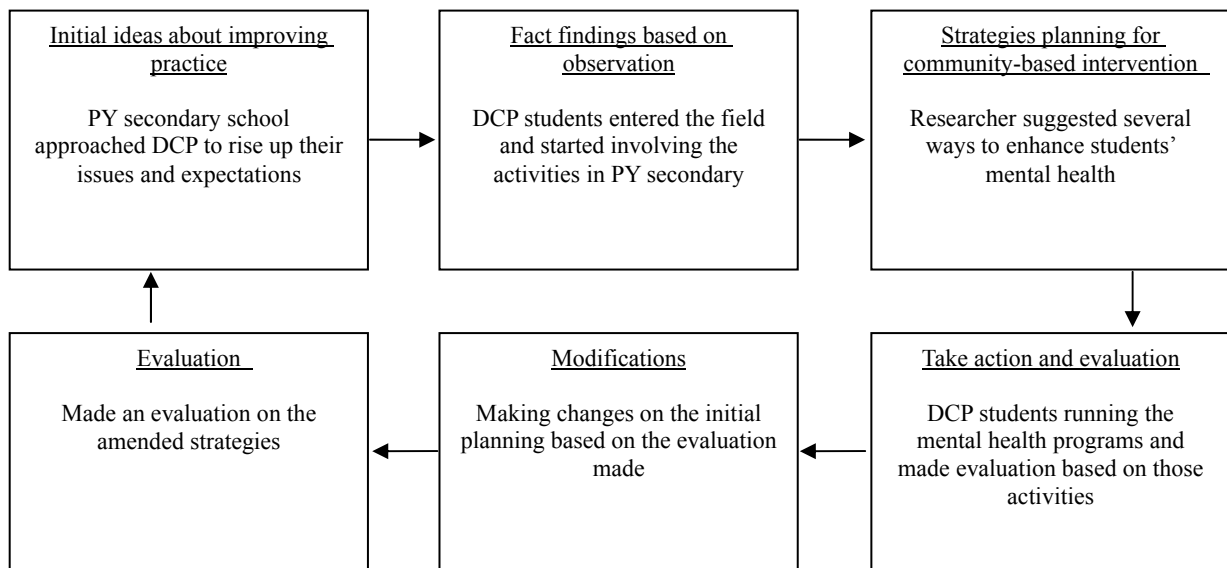


Figure 2. Flow of action research.

First of all, principal of PY Secondary School met up with DCP team and addressed the issues which the school encountered. During the discussion, some of the ideas and expectations of PY School principal were shared. In order to have a better understanding of the PY student (regarding to their growing background, their context and how their situations in school, etc.), PY Secondary School arranged DCP Team to involve in student's enrichment classes (such as cooking class and nursery class) to build bonds with students and observe their real needs.

After the observation, strategies were planned according to the needs of students. In order to enhance and promote student's mental health, community-based intervention strategies (which is inclusive of group counselling, therapeutic accompany program, resources sharing, and counselling assistance service) were being proposed and accepted by PY Secondary School. After launching all the mental health programs, researcher would evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention and made some modifications if it is necessary. At the end of the year, the final evaluation was made in order to have a better intervention method in the following year.

## Results

This research is mainly focuses on the collaboration between DCP and PY School. The purpose of the collaboration is to find out the most suitable ways to enhance the mental health of PY School. The research results of this study can be put into three phrases, which are communication and resources exploration phrase, strategies planning and implementation phrase, and modification and evaluation phrase (see Figure 3).

In communication and resources exploration phrase, there's a lot of work which community counsellor need to carry out. While community counsellor went into the field, the first thing that counsellor need to do is to engage with the practical field. The engagement includes having a better understanding of the organization's culture, management style, engaging with people and analysing the potential resources within the school. By doing the field analysis, counsellor would impose ability of empowerment and advocacy which being conducted later. DCP Team first met with PY School, several issues had been addressed by PY School. After

the discussion, both team have discussed and exchanged ideas. At the meanwhile, DCP seize the opportunity to exchange ideas with PY School by advocating and translating the relevant professional knowledge. Based on the available resources, DCP Team decided to do some fact findings based on the observation. PY School agreed and involved DCP Team in some school activities (e.g., cooking class and nursery class).

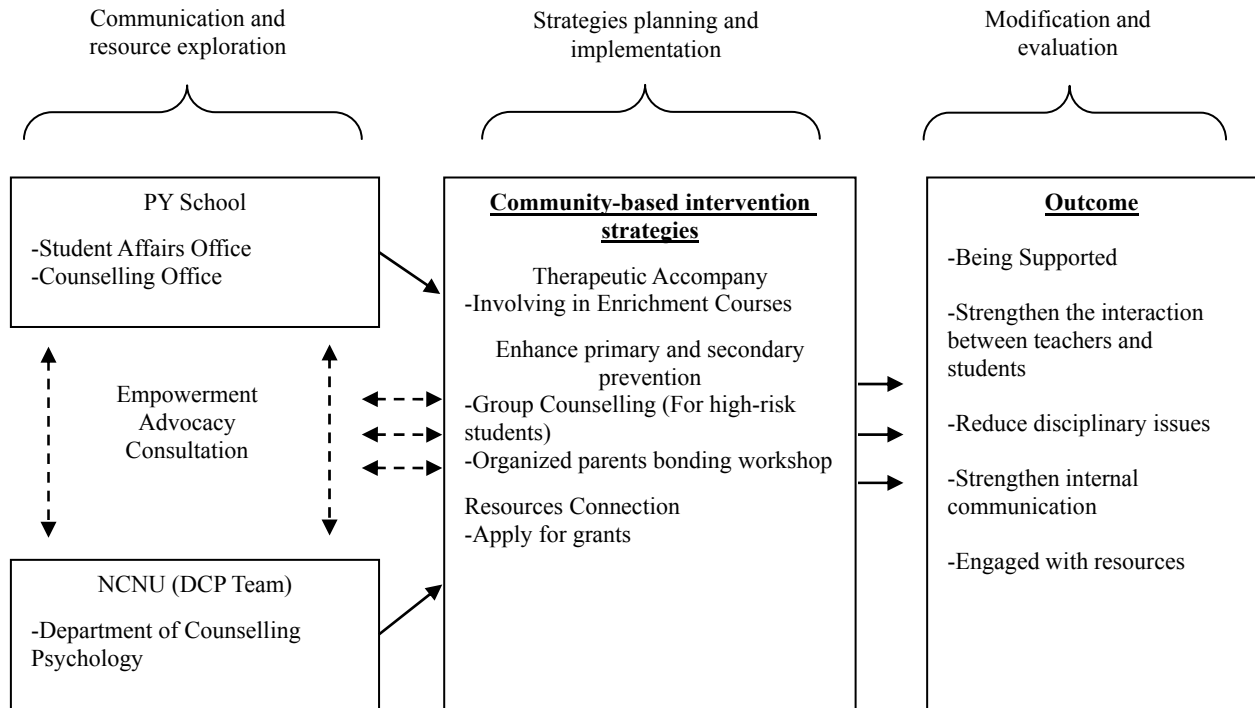


Figure 3. Flow of enhancing PY School mental health.

At strategies planning and implementation phrase, fact findings of the field is the priority work to do in order to find out the real need of students. PY School then arranged DCP Team to involve in enrichment course together with the students. DCP Team took part on enrichment classes (both cooking class and nursery class) for three months. After three months of observation and relationships building, DCP Team has shared what they have observed and discussed with PY School in order to plan the strategy to enhance the mental health of PY School students. After the three months enrichment course with students, DCP Team has a deep understanding of the student background and culture. PY School is located at a remote mountainous area. The majority of the students’ parents are working in the city and the students are being taken care of by their grandparents. Although the grandparents are able to provide the daily basic living needs to them, they are unable to fulfil their psychological needs.

Through the discussion, intervention programs were planned for the following semester (4 months). DCP Team has decided to continuously involve three students who are currently studying BA degree in psychology field in the enrichment course to provide therapeutic accompany for students. Besides, primary and secondary prevention programs were conducted for parents and students. For primary prevention, parenting program was conducted and it involved most of the parents who work outside their home. For secondary prevention, two counselling sessions were designed for high-risk students, both deviant behaviour and “need to care” students.

One of the sessions aims to prevent students from deviant behaviour while another one is helping students to plan their career path in the future. In order to organize more prevention programs, DCP Team and PY School try to get more resources by applying grants and connecting to more professions.

To be note that “empowerment” and “advocacy” alternate in the process of enhancing school mental health and these two elements play important roles in facilitating all the prevention programs. At the modification and evaluation phase, each prevention program was designed; however, it was continuously being modified to fit the conditions of participants after the evaluation of activities. The collaboration with PY School will be continued, up to now, the outcome of prevention programs had brought some positive impact on PY School students. Firstly, it has strengthened the interaction between teachers and students, they felt themselves were being supported, when they faced problems they will seek for teachers’ assistance. Secondly, the disciplinary issues have been reduced. Thirdly, the process of collaboration and empowerment has strengthened the internal communication of the management of PY School.

### **Conclusion**

Community counselling intervention is multifaceted and comprehensive. It stands on ecological perspectives for seeing clients’ issues, which emphasized on clients’ context and the awareness of their culture. Besides, community counsellor plays an important role in the process of community-based intervention to have strong collaboration with others, facilitate changes by using empowering and advocacy.

Basically, this study has shown the collaboration between DCP and PY Secondary School for promoting campus mental health. There are both similar and unique parts while comparing three phrases intervention process of this study with the Interactive Systems Framework for Dissemination and Implementation (Wandersman et al., 2008). The first system which is Prevention Synthesis and Translating System of ISF is similar to the first phrase of this study which is Communication and Resource Exploration, it focuses on communicating the professional knowledge with others and exploring the potential resources within the organization. However, ISF focus on distilling synthesis information into useful tool for practitioners, and the first phrase of this study focuses on communicating with partner, building relationships, and transferring professional knowledge through empowering, advocacy, and consultation.

The second system of ISF (which named as Prevention Support System) is supporting the work of first phrase. The function of this system is to focus on general capacity building and innovation-specific capacity building in order to support the first system while the strategies planning and implementation phrase in this study focus on utilizing the potential resource which explored in first phrase. The third system (which named as Prevention Delivery System) of ISF is conducting any necessary activities in order to implement programs while the third phrase of this study focus on continuously modifying and evaluating the activities outcome in order to take extra action to enhance the prevention program. However, “empowerment” and “advocacy” are persisted in the action of community counsellor while conducting prevention programs.

In conclusion, community counsellor should know the real needs of clients before planning any community-based intervention. After that, community counsellor should know how to transfer and translate their professional knowledge and scientific research into valuable practical tool. Besides, community counsellor must have the ability to explore the potential resources within the organization. In the process of implementing, community counsellor utilized the resources found to facilitate the programs which bring changes.

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