

Research Report on Risk Assessment Tool of Mental Health and Drug Abuse Behaviors among Youth and Effectiveness of the Treatment Protocol of Strength-based Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Executive Summary

In recent years, adolescents' emotional and mental health problems have become more serious, and they have misunderstood that drug use can relieve their emotional distress. Falling into this vicious circle, they would only be aggravated the crisis of "Dual Diagnosis" of substance addiction and mental illness. In 2019 the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups Youth Crime Prevention Centre implemented a three-year project of "Healthy Transition – Preventive and Educational Program for Substance Abuser with Mental Health Issues" which was sponsored by the Beat Drugs Fund to collaborating with the team of Professor Daniel Fu Keung WONG, from the Department of Social Work and Social Administration at The University of Hong Kong to conduct this current study. Two objectives were 1) to develop a localized assessment tool for youth mental health problems and drug abuse risks and evaluate the reliability and validity of this assessment tool, and 2) to evaluate the effectiveness of Strength-based Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (SB-CBT) intervention model to help adolescents with a "dual diagnosis" of substance abuse and psychiatric disorders.

For developing the risk assessment tool of mental health and drug abuse behaviors among youth, data were collected from two groups of teenagers, Scale Development Group included 153 teenagers aged 12-24 with drug abuse history and mental health problems, and the Comparison Group included 304 teenagers aged 12-24 without these two problems. The assessment tools were validated and used to assess depression, anxiety, and beliefs and attitudes toward substance abuse. The assessment tool composed of Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), Back Anxiety Inventory (BAI), and Beliefs and Attitude of Substance Abuse Inventory (BASAI). When BDI is higher or equal to 10, or BAI is higher or equal to 8, the teenager is at risk in mental health problem, meanwhile, if the score of BASAI is lower than or equal to 3.45 which indicates high drug abuse tendency. If the scores fulfill both criteria, the teenager is at risk in mental health problem and drug abuse problem.

For studying the effectiveness of the treatment protocol of Strength-based Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, 91 participants aged 12-24 were recruited and randomly divided into the treatment group (n = 45) and treatment-as-usual control (n = 46) to administer a screening questionnaire. During the assessment period, each participant in the treatment group underwent eight sessions of SB-CBT. Meanwhile, each participant in the control group was provided eight sessions of supportive counselling and career/schooling advice, which did not include any SB-CBT. Our findings showed that

Strength-based Cognitive Behavioral Therapy can effectively reduce anxiety and depressive symptoms in young people with mental health problems and high risk of drug use. It also enhances their quality of life and satisfaction, allowing them to have a more active and fulfilling life. When these youth's mental health, quality of life, beliefs and attitudes are improved, their self-efficacy and resilience can also be improved, so that they have the strength to resist the temptation of drugs. SB-CBT would result in more favorable treatment outcomes in all these aspects as compared to treatment-as-usual.