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Development of an online program to improve self-efficacy of students on applying cognitive behavioral therapy for people with emotional problems

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Abstract:

Background. Mental health problems are alarming across all age groups, genders, classes and ethnicities in Hong Kong. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is a well-known evidence-based practice that has been shown to be effective in treating anxiety and depressive symptoms, including in Chinese people. Many social workers and counsellors in this field offer CBT to help their clients with mental health problems. The SS4227 Cognitive Behavioral Intervention course of the B.Sc. Social Work (BSW) program aims to equip students with knowledge and skills of CBT to help people with emotional problems. In particular, BSW students may apply CBT to help their clients with emotional problems during their fieldwork practicum.

Project Aim. This project aims to develop a self-learning online CBT program to improve the self-efficacy of BSW students taking the SS4227 course to apply CBT for people with emotional problems, including assessment and intervention skills. The online CBT program is designed to provide students with additional learning experiences to the CBT skills taught and delivered in the S4227 course.

Development of a new online CBT program to enhance learning. The online CBT program and related self-learning online modules are based on the theoretical approach of CBT (Beck, 2020) and have the following characteristics. Firstly, the online modules are structured to demonstrate the assessment and intervention skills used in the different stages of the counselling process. Secondly, it provides video files of case studies and demonstrations of skills, audio-visual material on relaxation exercises, worksheets and reflection exercises to enhance student learning. Thirdly, it has the following additional features: promoting research-teaching nexus, originality, facilitating virtual teaching and learning, and enhancing students' academic self-efficacy. In particular, various strategies are used to improve students' academic self-efficacy.

Methodology. A panel, consisting of BSW students, social workers, researchers and teaching staff, will be set upon to co-design the online CBT program. This approach effectively motivates students and participants to take ownership of their learning and problem solving. In addition, through the co-design approach, the online program will include the useful features preferred by BSW students such as music, pictures, text messages, and encouragement. As part of this project, a research assistant and student helpers will be hired to support the creation of the online modules and platform. The online modules will be hosted on our SS department's online platform, with restricted access to protect data security and confidentiality.



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Outcomes evaluation. The results of the project are to be evaluated in several ways. Firstly, student self-rated satisfaction and self-rated learning outcomes are to be assessed in a survey. Second, student learning outcomes will also be assessed through the evaluation of submitted assignments, including worksheets and a video file, by the course instructor and the SS4227 tutorial group leader. Third, the improvement of students' self-efficacy in applying CBT skills will be evaluated through a research study. The positive results of the online CBT program in terms of improving students' self-efficacy in applying CBT skills will be presented at internal conferences and submitted for journal publication.