Singapore Mental Wellbeing Scales for Children & Youth

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WHO’s Definition

• The positive dimension of mental health is stressed in WHO's definition of health as contained in its constitution:
  – "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."
What is Mental Wellbeing?

• Mental Wellbeing is the continuous process of growing and thriving in an individual. (Ryff, 2001)

• This would include being able to manage in their environment (e.g. school, home). (Keyes, 1995)
• Historically, illness-centric measures such as the SDQ, have been used to assess the impact of positive mental health programs.

• Need for a more relevant set of indicators to measure positive mental wellbeing.
Objectives of the Study

- To develop a psychometrically valid instrument that measures mental wellbeing in children and youth.
- Understand what is mental wellbeing in children and youths.
Qualitative (Phase 1) “Understanding Mental Wellbeing”

• Interviewed *parents, teachers, counselors*, children and adolescents (n=98) on what is good mental wellbeing.

• Leading to prototypes of scale items.

• Main themes reported:
  – *Relationships* among family, friends and teachers.
  – *Managing task*-based expectations at home and in school.
  – *Managing emotions* at home and in school.
# Mental Wellbeing Scales* for Children & Youth

## Domains & Sample Items

### Children 6-12 yrs (25 items)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Functioning</th>
<th>Emotional Intelligence</th>
<th>Social Intelligence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• I pay attention in class</td>
<td>• I feel relaxed</td>
<td>• I talk to my family about my feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I listen to my parents</td>
<td>• I feel happy with myself</td>
<td>• I talk to my friends about my feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I remember my daily lessons</td>
<td>• I think my parents love me</td>
<td>• I enjoy being with family and friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I listen to others when they are talking</td>
<td>• When I feel sad, I am able to make myself feel better</td>
<td>• I talk to friends when stressed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I do not stay angry or sad for long</td>
<td>• I am comfortable with myself</td>
<td>• I can coordinate with others when I am doing group projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I like going to school</td>
<td>• I am able to ask my parents for help</td>
<td>• I consult with my parents and teachers when making major decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• When talking and in group activities, I take turns to participate</td>
<td>• When I am bullied, I am able to get help.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• When I fail, I try to do better</td>
<td>• I talk to my parents when I am happy or sad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• When I fall, I cry out</td>
<td>• I talk to my friends when I am happy or sad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I can follow a timetable</td>
<td>• I am able to ask my friends for help</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I can do my schoolwork</td>
<td>• I am able to help my friends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I like to learn</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Youth 13-17 yrs (30 items)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Functioning</th>
<th>Emotional Intelligence</th>
<th>Social Intelligence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• I finish my homework and assignments on time</td>
<td>• I am happy most of the time</td>
<td>• I learn to make myself a better person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I make good decisions</td>
<td>• When I fall, I pick myself up</td>
<td>• I have many interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I follow school rules and regulations without difficulty</td>
<td>• I can get help when I need it</td>
<td>• I enjoy learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I am respectful to my elders</td>
<td>• I do not bottle up when I feel sad or angry</td>
<td>• If I put in effort, I can be the person I want to be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I do not play too much computer and other games</td>
<td>• I have a spiritual life</td>
<td>• I feel comfortable about myself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I think with reasons</td>
<td>• I do not feel big ups and downs</td>
<td>• I accept myself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I can cope with stress</td>
<td>• I can face reality</td>
<td>• I enjoy helping others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I am of good physical health generally</td>
<td>• I do not dwell on negative emotions</td>
<td>• I strive to fulfil my potential</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Both scales measured on a frequency Likert of 1(Very Rarely) ---- 5(Very Frequently); self reported over the past 4 weeks.
Quantitative (Phase 2) – Scores “Interpreting Mental Wellbeing”

- n=2019 among Primary and Secondary School students and n=600 parents for validating self and parental reports with other scales.

- A mean MWB score is derived from the average of all the items in the scale out of a possible score of 1.00 and 5.00.

- On a scale from 1 to 5, scores between 3.00 and 5.00 are considered good. A cluster of positive scorers is typical of wellbeing measures.

- An individual with good mental wellbeing is able to:
  - manage his emotions,
  - function positively,
  - have good relationships, and
  - have good self-esteem
3-Factors of MWB in Children

- Social Intelligence
- Emotional Intelligence
- Positive Functioning

Mental Wellbeing
4-Factors of MWB in Youths
## Mental Wellbeing Domains of Children, Youth, and Adults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asian Mental Wellbeing Domains / Developmental stages</th>
<th>Emotional Intelligence</th>
<th>Social Intelligence</th>
<th>Self Esteem</th>
<th>Resilience</th>
<th>Cognitive Efficacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Childhood</strong></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adolescence</strong></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>Positive Functioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adult</strong></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Psychosocial Development of Child to Adolescent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asian Mental Wellbeing Domains / Developmental Stages</th>
<th>Asian self-esteem</th>
<th>Social Intelligence</th>
<th>Emotion Intelligence</th>
<th>Resilience</th>
<th>Cognitive Efficacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Adolescence**                                     | • Sense of self becomes stronger  
• More independent | • Relationships guide emotions  
• Learns to work with others | • Managing different kinds of emotions  
• Different strategies | • Multiple coping styles  
• Accepting situations | • More realistic expectations  
• Enhanced working memory |
| **Childhood**                                       | • Separation from parents  
• Awareness of emotions. | • Aware of others’ emotions  
• Impact of one’s emotion on others. | • Managing different kinds of emotions  
• Different strategies | • Multiple coping styles  
• Aware of how situations affect | • Good working memory  
• Sense of self |

**Executive Functioning (Decision-Making)**
Increasing Mental Wellbeing in Children & Youths

- Transferring mental wellbeing skills to parents, counsellors through:
  - Awareness
  - Literacy
  - Self-Efficacy
Helping with counselling work

- An understanding of the presenting ‘strengths’.
- Concrete domains and specific behaviours
- Can be a common ground for communication with parents.
Implications for Counselling

• A useful pre-post instrument for assessing effectiveness of strengths-based intervention.
• An understanding of what mental wellbeing means locally.
Conclusion

• The tool and developmental study has yielded concrete behaviours and dimensions of mental wellbeing.

• HPB is now developing guides and programs to incorporate the findings and tool.
Thank you 😊