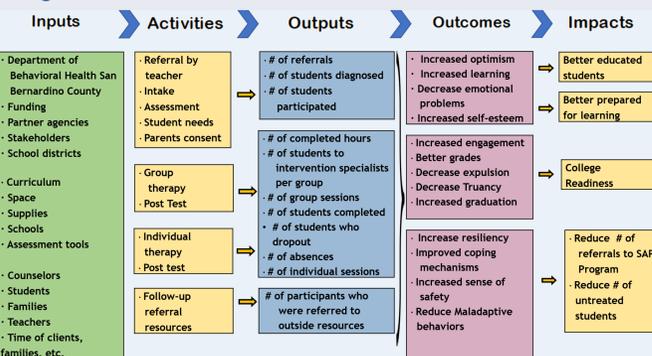


INTRODUCTION

Reach Out is a non-profit organization servicing Riverside and San Bernardino counties. Its mission is to break educational barriers, to expand economic growth, and create healthy, safe, and innovative communities. Reach Out first introduced a Student Assistance Program (SAP) to San Bernardino County K-12 schools in 2006. SAP focuses on decreasing barriers to students success by increasing school attendance, improving social and emotional growth, and decreasing suspension rates. Through individual and group counselling sessions, the students learn coping skills to manage anger, to improve interpersonal communication, to improve study habits, and to build health relationships. Over 300 students were served by SAP during the 2017-2018 academic year.

Logic Model



EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1. To what extent did individual sessions decrease emotional problems among SAP participants?
2. To what extent did individual sessions decrease emotional problems among Hispanic participants of the SAP program?
3. To what extent did individual sessions decrease emotional problems among LGBTQ participants of the SAP program?

LITERATURE REVIEW

- What we know is that K-12 students with emotional problems may experience academic problems, bullying and other forms of peer-rejections (Reddy & Richardson, 2006).
- Research suggest that behavioral problems often co-exist with emotion related disorders (Reddy & Richardson, 2006).
- SAP activities align with the Positive Youth Development theoretical framework (Zarrett & Lerner, 2008).
- SAP via group activities showed that students became confident, learned how to better express themselves, learned emotional coping skills, and learned how to trust teachers and other facilitating staff. This led to less behavioral issues and better emotional competence (Carnwell & Baker, 2007).
- Cultural competent staff and multi-lingual services were critical for the program to succeed (Garrison et al., 1999).
- There are gaps in research showing the effectiveness of individual counseling sessions among SAP program participants. This study attempts to reduce the gap of available information.

ABSTRACT

This study assesses the effectiveness of individual counseling sessions in reducing emotional problems among Reach Out's SAP participants, including Hispanics and LGBTQ participants. This study followed the one-group posttest-only research design, and students were assessed with the PEAR Institute's Holistic Student Assessment (HSA). The sample included 45 K-12 participants. The HSA defined emotional control as self-regulation of distress, including management of anger. Students self-reported on the 10th week of program. Results showed that individual counseling sessions did not significantly reduce emotional problems among participants and those who identified themselves as Hispanics. There was insufficient data to evaluate program effectiveness among LGBTQ participants. The study concluded that additional research must be performed to continue evaluating the effectiveness of SAP programs.

METHODOLOGY

Evaluation Design:

- Evaluates the effect of individual counseling to reduce emotional problems
- On the last day of session, students are assessed with the PEAR Institute's HSA tool
- This study follows the one-group posttest-only research design
- Reach Out provided data collected between 2016 and 2018

Sample:

- Convenience sampling used
- Participants completed 10-week program
- 45 students who participated in individual sessions and had complete data
- 28 students who attended group sessions were added for comparison
- Included both male and female
- Included Hispanic or LGBTQ students

Measures:

Dependent Variable

- The dependent variable (DV) is the reduction of emotional problems
- As per the PEAR Institute, DV is measured as emotion control in the HSA
- Emotional control is defined as self-regulation of distress & management of anger
- HSA assessment has questions that measure emotional control
- Students self-report their growth in their emotional skills on a 5-point scale based on "thinking about how they feel today"
- Construct relevant statements are labeled as "1" being "much less now", "2" being "less", "3" being "about the same", "4" being "more", and "5" being "much more now"

Independent Variable

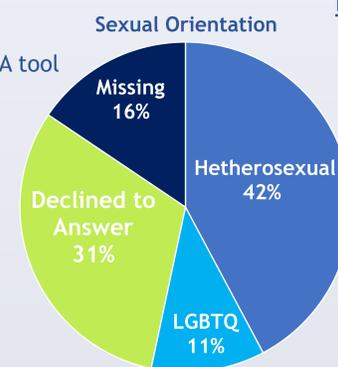
- The independent variable (IV) is the effect of individual sessions

Data Collection:

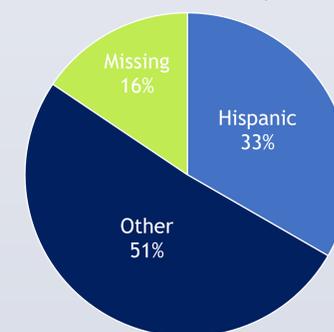
- Demographic collection during initial screening
- Participant data collected in database as program progressed
- Assessment administered on last day of session (10th week)

Demographics

45 Participants



Race / Ethnicity



DISCUSSION

Implications for Social Work

- Literature evaluating the effectiveness of SAP was limited
- Gaps in research asks for social workers to continue assessing individual interventions for K-12 students with behavioral and emotional program
- Research suggests that SAP could have a positive impact on improving the behavior and academic performance of K-12 Students
- Additional funding should be allocated to fine-tune program interventions
- Additional funding may be obtained from the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA)

Recommendations

- Cost effectiveness of group counselling sessions vs. individual counselling sessions to decrease emotional problems
- Standardize individual session interventions and toolsets
- Standardize recording processes across various schools
- Increase sample size over longer periods of time
- Additional funding for program evaluation

Limitations

- Small sample of participants (45) who attended individual counselling sessions and that had complete data
- The sample size of the LGBTQ participants was only 5, making it unfeasible to apply statistical tests
- Sample was not randomly selected
- Sample was obtained through convenience sampling
- Subjective measurements
- Lack of fidelity and consistency with counselling attributes

CONCLUSION

This study did not support the program's intended outcome stating that individual counseling sessions will decrease emotional problems among program participants, and among participants who identified themselves as Hispanics, or as members of the LGBTQ community. Further research is suggested to determine the effectiveness of SAP programs.

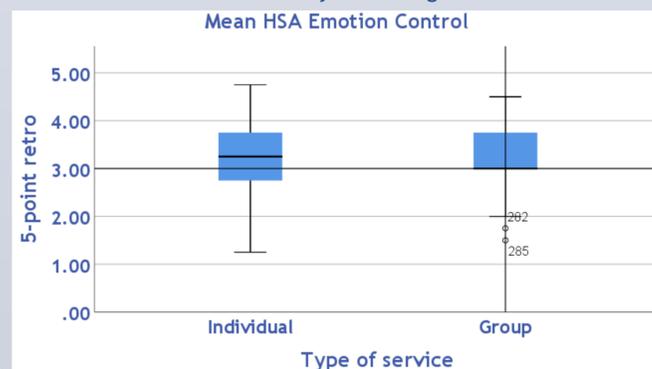
REFERENCES

- Carnwell, R., & Baker, S.A. (2007). A qualitative evaluation of a project to enhance pupils' emotional literacy through a student assistance programme. *Pastoral Care in Education, 25*(1), 33-41.
- Garrison, E., Roy, I., & Azar, V. (1999). Responding to the mental health needs of Latino children and families through school-based services. *Clinical Psychology Review, 19*(2), 199-219.
- Zarrett, N., & Lerner, R.M. (2008). Ways to Promote the Positive Development of Children and Youth (Brief Publication No. 2008-11). Retrieved from <https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/01/Youth-Positive-Development.pdf>.

RESULTS

Descriptive Analysis:

- Data revealed that the mean of number of sessions attended for individual sessions was 9.80 sessions (SD = 5.09).
- Results showed that the mean for HSA emotion control was "about the same" or 3.22 by attending individual sessions



Inferential Analysis:

- A one-sample t test that compared the mean for HSA emotion control of the sample to a value of 3
- The sample mean of 3.22 was not significantly different than 3
- An independent-samples t test was calculated comparing the mean HSA emotion control score of participants who received individual counselling sessions to those who received group therapy sessions
- Results show that the scores of participants who received individual counselling sessions was not significantly different from the mean of those who received group counselling sessions
- An independent-samples t test was calculated comparing the mean HSA emotion control score of participants who identified themselves as Hispanic to those who identified as non-Hispanic who received counselling
- Results show the scores did not differ significantly between Hispanic/Latino participants and non-Hispanic/Latino participants