

REPORT ON THE NGEEN ANN KONGSI-IPS CITIZENS' PANEL ON YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH



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Dr Carol Soon, Senior Research Fellow

Nandhini Bala Krishnan, Research Assistant

Beverly Tan, Research Assistant

15 July 2022

FOREWARD

On 19 March 2022, 55 students from Republic Polytechnic came together to form The Ngee Ann Kongsi-IPS Citizens' Panel on Youth Mental Health. The Panel was supported by the National Youth Council and funded by The Ngee Ann Kongsi. Minister of State for Social and Family Development and Education Ms Sun Xueling spoke during the launch of the panel where she highlighted key initiatives by the government in recent years to support youth mental health in Singapore. The key objectives of the Citizens' Panel are to:

1. Identify underlying factors that contribute to the rise in mental health issues among youths in Singapore.
2. Develop new ways to build greater mental resilience among youths to face adversities and uncertainties in the future.
3. Provide opportunities for youths to co-create and implement policy solutions regarding mental health and mental resilience.

Over the course of seven sessions, students from various courses and levels of study met online to learn more about Singapore's youth mental health challenges. They also conducted research, interacted with Expert Speakers, consulted Resource Persons (i.e., subject matter experts) and deliberated in groups to develop evidence-based solutions to respond to the following challenge statement.



AS A COMMUNITY, HOW CAN WE IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH AND MENTAL RESILIENCE AMONG YOUTHS IN SINGAPORE?

Before the first session, all participants received an Information Kit¹ designed to provide them with some background knowledge on Singapore's mental health landscape. Activities in the panel mainly comprised small and big group discussions, which took place over Google Jamboard. Given the deliberative nature of the panel, the seven sessions were designed to ensure that participants were the key drivers of decision-making. This included getting them to decide on the group norms for interacting with one another, mode of communication and delegation of roles among group members. Eight groups, each focusing on a specific aspect of

¹ The Information Kit is accessible at <https://lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/docs/default-source/ips/information-kit---the-ngee-ann-kongsi-ips-citizens-panel-on-youth-mental-health.pdf>.

mental health, were formed during the third session of the panel held on 24 March. The eight issue groups are:

1. Social Media/Media
2. Family
3. Support Systems 1
4. Support Systems 2
5. Internalisation 1
6. Internalisation 2
7. Schools & Teachers/Education System
8. Society & Culture

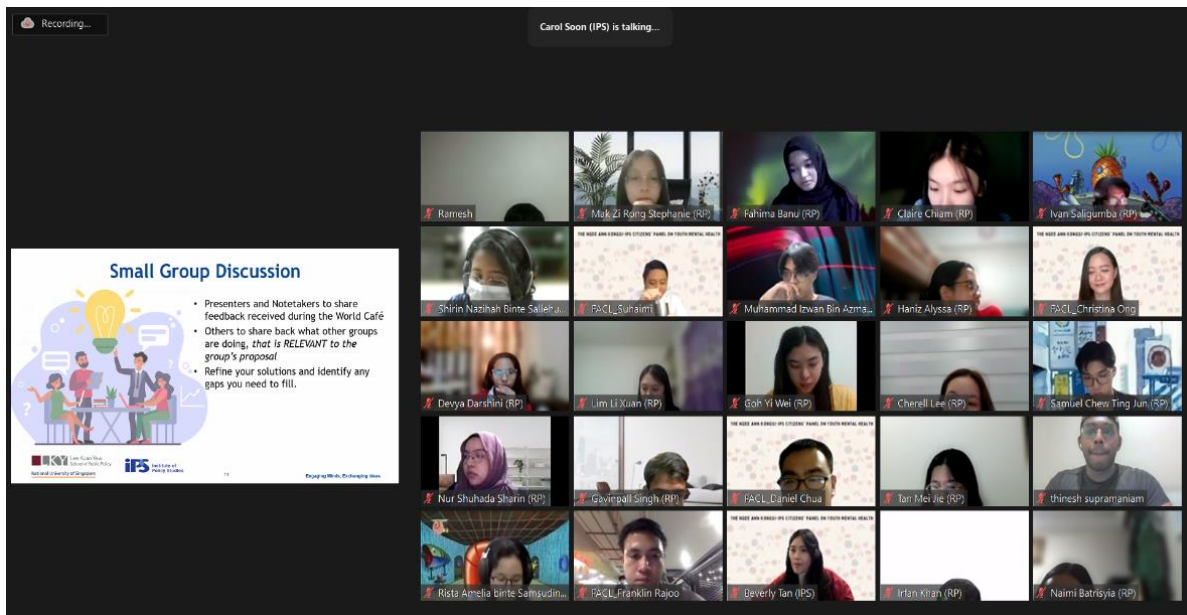
A facilitator was assigned to each group during the panel to help create a safe and equitable space to enable robust discussions among participants, one where they could have equal opportunities to contribute to the discussion and ideas development. The participants also met and interacted with various Expert Speakers and Resource Persons, ranging from mental health researchers, social workers and therapists, to entrepreneurs.² Resource Persons also volunteered their time to attend the fourth and fifth sessions held on 31 March and 7 April, respectively, where they provided feedback on the solutions proposed by the groups. An elevator pitch was made at the sixth session held on 12 April. During this, representatives from each group made a 90-second pitch on their proposed solutions to tackle a mental health challenge that they had identified. This was followed by a five-minute Question-and-Answer (Q&A) segment. The elevator pitch provided the groups with the opportunity to gather feedback from other participants and identify gaps in their proposed solutions. During the final session of the panel held on 16 April, the groups presented their proposals to the Republic Polytechnic management and other stakeholders.

This report presents the mental health problems that youth in Singapore face, as identified by the eight groups, and their proposed solutions to overcome them. Section One of the report will provide some background context on Singapore's mental health landscape, and Section Two will focus on the groups' proposed solutions to the various youth mental health challenges that they identified through their research and discussions.

These proposals have been reviewed by the Republic Polytechnic management and other relevant stakeholders. They have expressed interest in collaborating with five out of the eight

² Refer to Appendix A for more details on the Expert Speakers and Resource Persons involved in the Citizens' Panel.

groups to further develop and co-implement their ideas. Moving forward, IPS would be connecting the participants and stakeholders to explore the next steps.



Some snapshots of participants engaged in discussions during the panel.

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SECTION 1: MENTAL HEALTH AND YOUTHS IN SINGAPORE

Defining Mental Health and Mental Resilience

Mental health refers to “a state of well-being in which an individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community” (World Health Organization, 2018). Having a good state of mental health is important on an individual and collective level as it ensures that people can develop healthy relationships, contribute meaningfully to society, and experience a quality state of living. Mental resilience, sometimes also referred to as psychological resilience, refers to people’s ability to adapt to or “bounce back” from any adversities that they face in life (Mayo Clinic, 2020). It involves creating a change in people’s mindset towards stressful or challenging situations. This mindset change subsequently translates into behavioural changes where they turn to healthy coping mechanisms to manage any negative emotions that they experience (Mayo Clinic, 2020; Hurley, 2020).

How Has Singapore Fared So Far?

Although youth mental health in Singapore has been of a perennial concern among many parents, teachers, community organisations and the government for a long time, it was the onset of the pandemic in early 2020 that created a greater sense of urgency to devote more attention and resources to curb this growing crisis. From the physical strain of the virus to the psychological impact of social restrictions under the “new normal”, many youths found it difficult to grapple with the sudden disruptions to their everyday routines. Some found themselves turning to unhealthy distractions or coping mechanisms such as engaging excessively in online shopping, drinking and social media to deal with the difficult period (Meah, 2021). Consequently, these led to a rapid decline in the mental well-being of many. For example, according to the 2020 National Population Survey, which tracked the lifestyle practices of Singaporeans between July 2019 and March 2020, youths aged between 18 and 29 years old reported having the highest proportion of poor mental health, at 21.5 per cent, up from 16.5 per cent in 2017 (Ministry of Health, 2020). In July last year, the killing of a 13-year-old boy by his 16-year-old schoolmate from River Valley High School, who had previously sought treatment from the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) for having suicidal thoughts, gained immediate nationwide attention, leading to a quick slew of policy reforms by the Ministry of Education (MOE) to improve student mental health in Singapore (Ganapathy, 2021; Ministry of Education, 2021).

Grappling With Old and New Stressors in Life

Today, youths face a myriad of challenges that they find increasingly difficult to cope with. Some common forms of stressors include, but are not limited to, the presence of a highly competitive and rigorous education system, the presence of a toxic family, school or work environment,

difficulties in adapting to major life transitions (e.g., graduating from school), financial instability and the negative influence of social and popular media on identity and self-perception (Cheow, 2019; Criddle, 2021; Gan, 2021).

On top of these, there is also a strong culture of shame and stigma associated with mental health in Singapore, which deters many from openly talking about their struggles or seeking professional help when needed. For example, in a 2016 study on youth mental health attitudes led by the IMH involving over 900 respondents, 44.5 per cent used negative terms like “crazy”, “dangerous” and “stupid” to describe people with mental health conditions (Pang et al., 2017). In addition to this, 46.2 per cent of respondents aged between 14 and 18 years old also said that they would be “very embarrassed” if diagnosed with a mental illness, reflecting the deep impact of existing social stigma on people’s mindsets and attitudes (Pang et al., 2017).

Existing Measures to Improve Mental Health and Mental Resilience in Singapore

In recent years, various initiatives from the public, private and people’s sector have been launched to create a more positive attitude towards mental health and encourage more help-seeking behaviours among Singaporeans.

Adopting a “whole-of-government” approach

In October 2020, the COVID-19 Mental Wellness Taskforce (CoMWT) was formed to study the psychological impact of the pandemic on people (Institute of Mental Health & Ministry of Health, 2021). The CoMWT was later expanded into an inter-agency platform, named the Interagency Taskforce on Mental Health and Well-being, to facilitate more multi-agency collaboration to help people navigate their mental health challenges beyond just the pandemic. The interagency taskforce announced that it would focus on three key areas, which will be to develop: (1) a national strategy and align the works of various agencies; (2) a one-stop mental health portal; and (3) a national competency framework to establish a common set of training standards and competencies expected of those who support people with mental health conditions.

Improving mental health literacy through public campaigns and conversations

To help people cultivate a positive mindset when dealing with challenges, the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY) partnered with the Health Promotion Board (HPB) to launch the “Brave The New” campaign in 2020 (Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, 2021). This online campaign, which ran from August to December, educated people on various self-care tips and resources that they could use to improve their mental well-being (Goh, 2021). Similarly, in October 2021, the HPB launched the “It’s OKAY to Reach Out” campaign, which ran from

October 2021 to March 2022, to normalise conversations on mental health and encourage Singaporeans to reach out for support (Yong, 2021). In line with this, a one-stop online portal called MindSG was also launched in November in the same year to equip Singaporeans with the relevant skills for them to support their loved ones struggling with their mental health (Yong, 2021).

Building the capabilities of schools and teachers

As youths spend a lot of time in schools, the MOE has introduced various measures to create a more holistic curriculum that can improve their knowledge on mental health and strengthen their mental resilience. These include revising the Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) curriculum in primary and secondary schools to inculcate values such as empathy and care towards people with mental illness; and setting up a robust peer support system for students who prefer to confide in their friends rather than their teachers or counsellors (Teng, 2020). Similar to these, other institutes of higher learning like Republic Polytechnic and Temasek Polytechnic have introduced a mental well-being curriculum to support students as well as established safe spaces like sensory rooms for students to manage any negative emotions that they experience (Ang, 2020; Teng, 2021; Republic Polytechnic, n.d.). They have also organised regular thematic talks, seminars and outreach activities in collaboration with agencies like the HPB to engage more students in mental health advocacy (Ang, 2020; Teng, 2021; Republic Polytechnic, n.d.). Besides strengthening mental health literacy in curriculum, the MOE has announced its plans to provide more enhanced professional development training for teachers so that they can be equipped with the necessary skills to better support students who need assistance (Ministry of Education, 2021).

Ensuring affordable and accessible mental health services

In terms of accessibility, the government also ensures that mental health treatment remains affordable for all Singaporeans. For example, under the Community Mental Health (CMH) Masterplan, there are currently over 220 general practitioners trained to assist mental health referrals and 14 polyclinics in Singapore that provide mental health treatment to those who need it (Yeoh, 2021). In terms of paying for treatment, up to 80 per cent of inpatient mental health treatment at most public healthcare institutions can be subsidised using MediShield Life and MediSave (Ministry of Health, 2021). Patients can also enjoy subsidies of up to \$500 yearly at participating private general practitioner clinics via the Community Health Assist Scheme (CHAS), for the management of mental health conditions (Ministry of Health, 2021). In addition to these, the government also regularly reviews its existing supporting schemes to ensure that it keeps up with the changing needs of people. For example, the MediSave annual withdrawal

limit for patients with complex chronic conditions was increased from \$500 to \$700 in January 2021 to make treatment affordable for more groups of people in Singapore (Ministry of Health, 2021). More of such mental health subsidies are to be expected in the next few years as well.

SECTION 2: PROPOSALS BY THE CITIZENS' PANEL

Through their interactions with the Expert Speakers and Resource Persons, the eight groups identified specific mental health issues and developed possible solutions to tackle them. This section details the proposed solutions and anticipated challenges highlighted by each of the eight Citizens' Panel groups.

Group 1: Social Media/Media

Project name: More Than Meets the Eye — Uncovering the Hidden Meanings Behind the Media

Problems Identified:

Harmful content on social media

Research in the field of media and communications has pointed out that social media can trigger feelings of anxiety and depression especially among youths because it perpetuates harmful content stigmatising mental health conditions (Sieff, 2003; Karim et al., 2020). This problem is worsened by the echo chamber effect where youths may be repeatedly exposed to certain portrayals of mental health because of social media's algorithms (Cinelli et al., 2021). Such portrayals may be exaggerated or inaccurate, which reinforce existing myths and stereotypes surrounding mental disorders. Another danger of social media is that it causes youths to engage in social comparison whereby they compete aggressively with their peers online to portray their lives as being more exciting and glamorous than that of others (Jiang & Ngien, 2020). Consequently, this can cause some youths to suffer from low self-esteem and insecurity.

(Mis)Representation of mental health in traditional media

Similar to social media, content from traditional media such as in the form of television dramas and films can also trigger harmful behaviours among youths. For example, according to the "Werther effect", people often have an urge to mimic suicidal acts after they witness a similar act being publicised in a drama or film (Philips, 1974). Hence, it is important to take into account of the triggering impact of such sensitive content on youth behaviours. In addition to this, negative portrayals of people with mental illnesses as being weak, dangerous or even possessed, often end up intensifying feelings such as fear, mistrust, suspicion and anger towards them (Sieff, 2003; Gottipati et al., 2021). This causes people with mental illnesses to experience discrimination at a personal, professional and even institutional level.

Existing Solutions and Gaps:

Media literacy education

In Singapore, media literacy is taught to all primary, secondary and tertiary level students (Ministry of Education, n.d.). The term “media literacy” is defined as the ability to decode, analyse, evaluate, and produce communication in a variety of forms (Baylen & D’Alba, 2015). Current media literacy lessons in schools primarily focus on imparting students with the hard skills (e.g., knowing how to operate digital devices like desktops and iPads) and soft skills (e.g., identifying misinformation) needed to navigate the online space safely. Since the start of 2022, the Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) curriculum for students in the upper secondary level was revised to focus more on cybersecurity and cyber-wellness (Ang, 2022). This includes educating students on managing online disagreements, cyberbullying, and the effects of cancel culture. The revised CCE curriculum also focuses on inculcating values like empathy, care and concern for one another (Ang, 2022). Empathy is an important value as it helps youths to foster a greater sense of understanding and be more sensitive when engaging with one another online.

Gaps in media literacy education

While existing media literacy efforts in schools are useful in creating a safe online space for youths, they are limited when it comes to mitigating the harmful effects of sensitive content on youth mental health. In addition, they tend to focus heavily on social media content, but not on content from traditional media that youths consume as well. Currently, little or no classes teach students on how to view and interpret content from traditional and social media. The term “interpret” refers to being able to understand the possible biases or misrepresentations embedded in certain portrayals (e.g., associating mental illnesses with crimes).

Parenting courses to develop empathy within children

Parenting is important in fostering values and traits like care, concern and empathy within youths from an early age. Good parenting can help to nurture children who grow up to be kind, sensitive and mindful of one another. To help parents understand how they can help their children develop such values, various stakeholders like the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) regularly organise various parenting courses, workshops and seminars every year (Ministry of Social and Family Development, 2022). These courses are typically conducted by trained counsellors, social workers and parenting experts in schools and workplaces.

Gaps in parenting courses

Many of these parenting courses are not well publicised. Moreover, they are often directed at parents who are already actively participating in such courses. Hence, those who are either unaware of such courses or feel that they may not benefit from such courses tend to be excluded. Therefore, more effort needs to be directed towards publicising such courses and providing incentives for new participants to join them.

Proposed Solutions and Implementation Strategy:

Introducing a film interpretation curriculum in schools

Stakeholders to be involved: Lecturers from Republic Polytechnic who have expertise in interpreting media, and mental health professionals

Target audience: Students in primary and secondary schools, and polytechnics

To strengthen the existing media literacy curriculum in schools, the group proposes to introduce a film interpretation curriculum in all primary and secondary schools as well as polytechnics. Some studies have shown that films can be an effective tool in promoting mental health literacy among people (Goodwin et al., 2021). In line with this, the key objective of introducing film interpretation lessons in schools is to create a safe and conducive environment for students to address existing stereotypes and misunderstandings surrounding mental health. Moreover, by critically analysing the ways in which characters with mental illnesses are portrayed, the lessons aim to help students develop a deeper sense of empathy and understanding for people with similar conditions in their real life.

The film interpretation curriculum would be implemented differently for primary, secondary and polytechnic students, taking into consideration of their age and emotional maturity. For primary and secondary schools, the group proposes for this film interpretation curriculum to run as an elective programme for two to three weeks. As these students now no longer have mid-year examinations,³ schools can devote more time and resources towards organising these film interpretation lessons (Ang, 2022). The types of films shown will range from positive and negative mental health portrayals. A typical lesson would involve movie watching, a self-reflection exercise with some guiding questions prepared by trained facilitators. They will have some time to reflect on the content shown before coming together again in the subsequent sessions to share their thoughts. All lessons will be designed and conducted by trained mental health professionals.

³ Also, part of the MOE's ongoing efforts is to create a learning environment that focuses less on academic grades and more on student well-being.

For polytechnics, specifically Republic Polytechnic, this curriculum can be included as a module for students in their second or third year to read. These lessons would similarly be conducted by trained mental health professionals and lecturers who have experience in interpreting media content as well. As these students are older, they may be shown films with more mature or sensitive content (e.g., scenes depicting suicide). In addition to this, lessons designed for polytechnic students will focus more on analysing the reasons underpinning certain portrayals (e.g., why are people with mental illness often portrayed as criminals?) to uncover the ways in which social stigma and prejudice influence our perceptions and (mis)understandings of mental health. Students who enrol for the module need to seek their parents' approval given its sensitive nature. To complement this film interpretation module, Republic Polytechnic and other institutions can also consider organising weekly mental health talks and webinars involving the school counsellors and other mental health experts during the academic term.

Promotion of parenting courses in workplaces

Stakeholders to be involved: Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF), employers and workplaces

Target audience: Parents

Another way to build more empathy and understanding among youths would be to help create a supportive family environment for them. The group proposes to have more collaboration between workplaces and agencies like the MSF to promote more parenting courses, seminars, and workshops to employees with young children to achieve this. To encourage more sign-up rates, it is important to ensure that these courses and workshops are affordable (i.e., either run for free or with a small registration cost) and conducive for working parents to attend (i.e., split into two-hour sessions).

As of 28 June, two Resource Persons have expressed interest in working with the group to develop both of its ideas.

Group 2: Family

Project name: Minds Together, Hearts Forever

Problem Identified:

Lack of mental health literacy among older family members

In recent years, the number of children suffering from Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) has increased rapidly, especially during the pandemic when families were forced to stay together for an extended period, giving rise to conflicts at home (Integrus Health, 2021). Studies have shown that children with bad family dynamics and children from single parent families are at a higher risk of developing mental health conditions like depression and anxiety (Mental Health Center, 2021). Moreover, there is a disconnect between the older and younger generations concerning mental health, leading to a breakdown in communication and interpersonal relations (Cigna, 2020). For example, some older family members may subscribe to traditional ideas where they consider mental health issues to be a sign of weakness, thereby neglecting the concerns of their children (Khoo, 2018). This eventually creates long-term strain in family dynamics and relations.

Existing Solutions and Gaps:

Mental wellness programmes

The HPB has designed many interactive mental wellness programmes for students in primary and secondary schools and tertiary institutions. These include assembly skits and musical theatres on the topic of mental wellness, training for students and parents to learn about self-care tips and coping strategies and initiatives like the Youth Peer Support Programme run under the Colours of the Mind Initiative to build greater emotional resilience among youths (W. K. Ng 2021; Health Promotion Board, 2022).

Providing more support through schools

On 11 December 2021, Education Minister Chan Chun Sing announced that mental health lessons would be progressively introduced in all primary, secondary and tertiary institutions over the next two years (Wong, 2021). These lessons aim to build mental resilience among students and promote more help-seeking behaviours in schools. Currently, these lessons have already been included in the revised Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) curriculum (Wong, 2021). Additionally, early this year, the MOE also launched a mental well-being resource guide to help Parent Support Groups (PSGs) plan their outreach activities, which typically involve parents and students (Menon, 2022). Other non-profit groups like the Singapore Counselling Centre also regularly organise parenting workshops, family therapy sessions and other events

in both school and workplace settings to build more trust, understanding and empathy among family members (Singapore Counselling Centre, n.d.).

Gaps in existing mental wellness programmes by schools and external organisations

A key issue with many of these existing talks, workshops and seminars on mental health is that the content delivered tends to be quite generalised. Each family has its own set of dynamics, which raises a unique set of challenges that needs to be addressed. Therefore, the lack of a personalised approach in this current set of measures greatly undermines their effectiveness. Another important thing to note is that many of these talks and workshops are only available to students in schools. Hence, these may be beneficial for many of them only in the short term; once these students graduate, some may forget what they had learnt from the workshops or talks that they had attended. They may not have the opportunity to apply what they have learnt to their personal lives. Moreover, as the workshops and talks do not focus much on mental health from the family angle, they may not be very helpful for youths who wish to improve their family dynamics.

Proposed Solution and Implementation Strategy:

“Minds Together, Hearts Forever” family panel

Stakeholders to be involved: Republic Polytechnic, Ministry of Education (MOE), Ministry for Social and Family Development (MSF), Institute of Mental Health (IMH), school counsellors, social workers and healthcare workers

Target audience: Youths and families who may be going through or have had Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) or other mental health struggles

To guide families in managing their mental health struggles collectively, the group proposes to organise a family panel named “Minds Together, Hearts Forever” in Republic Polytechnic. This family panel also seeks to normalise mental health conversations, address existing stigma, and create stronger bonds between youths and their family members. The “Minds Together, Hearts Forever” family panel would consist of different activities — each with its own set of objectives and goals.

Some key activities under “Minds Together, Hearts Forever”

1. Providing background talks about mental health
2. Facilitating self-reflection/self-realisation exercises for families
 - Role playing/Conducting mini exercises to engage everyone in the family

3. Providing resources and guides to help families form their own unique solutions to the problems that they are facing
- Imparting practical skills that children and parents can use whenever they face mental health related issues
 - Helping parents understand the different types of challenges that their children go through and how they can provide a strong support system for them in the family

The family panel will be made up of five stages, each involving a different set of target audience and stakeholders based on the activities that have been planned. See Table 1 for more details on the specific activities designed under each stage.

Table 1: Stages of the “Minds Together, Hearts Forever” family panel

Name	Activities and events under each stage	Stakeholders
Stage 1: Aurora	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrolment of youths into the programme. • An online registration form will be set up for interested participants. • Youths can also be referred to join this programme by any healthcare outlets. • The first session will not require their family members to be present. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MOE • School counsellors • Healthcare counsellors
Stage 2: Meridies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trained facilitators will get to know the youth participants and the types of challenges that they are facing (i.e., conduct a needs assessment). • Organisers will connect these youths with social workers who will work with them and their family members to address the issues identified. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MSF • Social workers

<p>Stage 3: Occasus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisers will interact with both youths and their families during this stage. Organisers will introduce participants and their family members to the various activities and programmes that have been planned. Each programme is unique and catered specifically to each individual. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students from Republic Polytechnic to be logistic volunteers; managing crowd, giving out food MSF Social workers IMH
<p>Stage 4: Nocturnis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will take place weeks/months after some level of progress has been made in tackling the problems identified. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MOE school counsellors Healthcare counsellors
<p>Stage 5: Iterum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should a participant require more counselling or support, organisers will conduct a revised version of the programme again (may change certain aspects of the programme accordingly). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MOE school counsellors Healthcare counsellors

Anticipated Challenges From Proposed Solution:

Ensuring sufficient funding, manpower and resources to sustain the programme

As this is a long-term programme consisting of five stages, organisers need to ensure that they have sufficient funding, manpower and resources to ensure the smooth delivery of the different activities. Moreover, it would also require them to spend an extensive amount of time planning, coordinating and collaborating with various stakeholders to run this large-scale programme.

Group 3: Support Systems 1

Project name: Project Rebound

Problem Identified:

Limited resources and high cost of mental health treatment

According to the 2016 Singapore Mental Health Survey involving over 6,000 respondents, almost 14 per cent said they had experienced a mental health disorder some time in their life. In addition to this, about 78 per cent of them said that they did not seek any medical treatment because of the high treatment costs of doing so (Institute of Mental Health, 2018). While some eventually ended up seeking treatment, they only did so after an average of 11 years from the time they first experienced a mental health symptom (Institute of Mental Health, 2018). This shows that despite the availability of current healthcare subsidies such as the Chronic Disease Management Programme (CDMP) where patients can use up to \$700 from their MediSave per year, it is still relatively expensive for many to afford long-term mental health treatment (Ministry of Health, 2021).

Existing Solutions and Gaps:

Peer support groups

Currently, many educational institutions like Republic Polytechnic have a peer support system that enables students to get emotional and social support from their friends. For example, in Republic Polytechnic, all students in their first year of study are assigned to a peer support leader who will function as a “buddy” to help them ease into a new school environment (Republic Polytechnic, n.d.).

Gaps within the school's peer support group

While the current peer support programme has been useful in helping reduce stress among students, more improvements can be made to the selection process of choosing peer support leaders. Currently, peer support leaders clock in the number of hours that they volunteer. These hours can help to enhance their student testimonials and portfolios. The group recognises that some peer support leaders might choose to volunteer their time simply just to boost their profiles, instead of wanting to genuinely help their peers. Hence, they may not take their role seriously and students who are paired with them may not get the necessary support that they need.

Proposed Solution and Implementation Strategy:***Enhancing Republic Polytechnic's peer support programme***

Stakeholders to be involved: Republic Polytechnic

Target audience: Youths who need mental health support; peer support leaders

The group aims to create a robust peer support network in Republic Polytechnic under "Project Rebound" by providing peer support leaders with more psychological first aid training so that they have the skills to support their peers in distress. It also aims to modify the existing peer support system by introducing features such as a buddy system and a more rigorous selection process to ensure the right fit of peer support leaders. Similar initiatives that focus on strengthening peer support programmes in schools have found to be beneficial as well. For example, in an interview, Mr Cho Ming Xiu, Founder and Executive Director of Campus PSY, shared that youths often prefer to share their problems with their peers rather than authoritative figures like teachers or counsellors (Singapore University of Social Sciences, n.d.). Hence, it is necessary to train youths as mental health ambassadors so that they can offer relevant support as they would most often be the first point of contact among their peers.

Ways to strengthen Republic Polytechnic's peer support system:***Monthly peer support meetings***

The group proposes to organise more monthly meetings (online or physical) for peer support leaders and their buddies so that they can get to know each other better. It also proposes that students be given the option to choose who they want their peer support leaders to be, through a Google Form. This form would have a short description of each peer support leader to help students make their choice.

Establishing a buddy system and "check-ins" with peer support leaders

Peer support leaders may also experience various mental health challenges. They may also suffer from burnout especially since they need to balance their schoolwork with their co-curricular activities. Hence, the group proposes implementing a buddy system for peer support leaders whereby if peer support leaders feel like they need a break, their buddy can step in to provide the necessary emotional support. Additionally, mentors (e.g., lecturers, school administrators) can also step in to check on peer support leaders who may need additional assistance.

Promoting support programmes, resources and well-being talks by mental health practitioners and organisers for students and peer support leaders

The group also proposes to have more collaborations with mental health agencies to organise more talks, workshops and programmes that focus on mental health and well-being for all students and peer support leaders in the school. To ensure that these programmes reach a wide audience, they will be recorded and uploaded on the school website or social media pages. The group also proposes experimenting with the creation of a school podcast that would feature mental health experts and advocates on various topics and themes pertaining to mental health and resilience.

Having a rigorous process to select the right students to be peer support leaders

The group believes that it is important to choose the right fit of peer support leaders who will be passionate and committed in wanting to help their peers. As such, it proposes to modify the existing recruitment and nomination process of peer support leaders in Republic Polytechnic. This new recruitment process will focus less on students' academic or extra-curricular achievements. Instead, it will give more consideration to their backgrounds (e.g., experience with mental health), knowledge and skills to provide emotional support to their peers. The following highlights the modified selection process that peer support leaders should undergo:

a) Nomination stage

- The student indicates his or her interest to be a peer support leader through a registration form.
- The lecturer or staff-in-charge of the selection process will assess if a student has the necessary skills and attitude to be a peer support leader before reaching out to him or her. It will ultimately be up to the student's decision on whether he or she wants to take up the role.
- Other students will also be allowed to nominate their friends or classmates who they think will be suitable for the role.

b) Interview stage

- The interview should preferably be conducted in a group setting so that it is easy to select suitable candidates based on their interactions with one another.
- The interviewers would consist of a Republic Polytechnic counsellor, lecturer (preferably someone who has not taught the student before) and an external member from a mental health organisation (e.g., Singapore Red Cross Society).

c) Background check stage

- The interviewers would discuss among themselves if they need to have a one-to-one interview with potential peer support leaders to get to know them further.
- They can also use the branching model to better understand the popularity or likeability of a potential peer support leader.
- Feedback from lecturers who taught the nominated peer support leader and the latter's classmates will be taken into consideration when making the final decision.

d) Confirmation stage

- A final decision is made by the selection team to confirm the peer support leader. Other factors like active participation in school activities, personal conduct and attitude of the student will play a role in whether the student can retain his or her certified peer support leader role.
- The mentor of the student (e.g., a lecturer) would have weekly meet-ups with the other mentors to monitor the needs and progress of the peer support leaders' programme.
- All selected peer support leaders will undergo relevant training such as Psychological First Aid (organised by Singapore Red Cross Society).

Anticipated Challenges From Proposed Solution:***Inadequate resources to support the programme***

This includes resources such as funds to send students for psychological training and other mental health workshops and courses available. It may also be difficult to form partnerships with key stakeholders such as the IMH as these organisations may already be running their own projects and events.

Difficulties in estimating the take-up rate

It might be hard to get people to join the peer support programme due to existing stigma in openly discussing mental health issues and seeking resources. Hence, it might be difficult to plan the funding and allocation of resources to support and sustain the programme.

Unwillingness of students to share their mental health struggles

Some students may not feel comfortable in sharing their experiences with their peer support leaders. In addition to this, they may also not consent to staff or administrators from the school management discussing their problems with relevant experts like the school counsellors. This

may be a problem especially if a student is found to be displaying worrying behaviours (e.g., having suicidal thoughts or engaging in self-harm).

As of 28 June, a Resource Person whose organisation which has already been working towards developing a first responders' programme within the community and school setting has expressed interest in wanting to collaborate with the group.

Group 4: Support Systems 2

Project name: Vibesity

Problem Identified:

Lack of trust and social stigma as deterrents in seeking treatment

A growing body of research shows that people are often reluctant or hesitant to get help from mental health professionals. For example, in a study by the National Council of Social Service (NCSS) involving over 400 respondents that looked at the quality of life of adults with mental health issues, only less than a third of respondents with mental illnesses were willing to get help for their conditions (National Council of Social Service, 2017). In order to better understand the reasons behind this reluctance to seek help when needed, the group conducted an online survey involving 65 respondents. The survey results showed that respondents felt more comfortable relying on their friends or family members in times of distress, rather than mental health professionals. The results also showed that more than half of the respondents (53.8 per cent) were either barely familiar or completely unfamiliar with existing mental health services like helplines and online resources. Others had also heard bad reviews on such services and hence, preferred not to engage them. As a result, people's mental health issues often tend to be neglected for a long time before reaching a breaking point.

Existing Solutions and Gaps:

Public programmes to increase people's mental health literacy

There is a network of mental health services — ranging from helplines managed by Voluntary Welfare Organisations (VWOs) like Silver Ribbon (Singapore), Samaritans of Singapore (SOS) and Tinkle Friend, to clinics at government and private hospitals that offer help to those in need. Other organisations like Calm Collective Asia, Limitless, Resilience Collective, CHAT, The Lion Mind, and the National Youth Council also provide mental health talks and training for volunteers as well. In addition to these, there are also mental health apps such as Wysa, Reflectly, Joyable, Safe Space and Intellect that offer more personalised and tailor-made mental health support at affordable rates.

Gaps within existing public campaigns and programmes

Current mental health programmes, campaigns and events run by the government and other public and private organisations share the common objective of encouraging and supporting individuals to reach out for help. However, such campaigns are not always effective in overcoming the stigma that revolves around mental health. While there is an increasing number

of youths being open about their mental health on social media, there is still a lot of stigma and misconceptions surrounding mental health conditions, especially lesser-known ones.

There is also a lack of trust and confidence among youths in school and public counselling services. In an article by the Channel NewsAsia that interviewed some students who had undergone counselling in their schools, some of them shared that their counsellors either belittled their problems or “snitched” on them to their parents (Tong & Yip, 2021). Such negative experiences end up creating a skewed impression of mental health professionals.

Other than confiding in a school counsellor or therapist, some youths may choose to seek mental health resources online as they afford more privacy. However, there is also a lack of promotion and awareness of such online mental health resources that can be found. There are currently very little existing “one-stop” mental health platforms that are easily accessible.

Proposed Solution and Implementation Strategy:

Vibesity — an “all-in-one” mental health application

Stakeholders to be involved: Ministry of Education (MOE), Health Promotion Board (HPB), Telamus,⁴ Codigo Singapore,⁵ Swag Soft,⁶ Republic Polytechnic’s School of Infocomm, and the School of Technology for the Arts

Target audience: Students in secondary schools and tertiary institutions

In the current digital age, youths turn to their smartphones and other digital devices to feel connected with one another. Recognising the appeal and potential of such digital tools, the group proposes to design and market an “all-in-one” digital application called “Vibesity” for this particular demographic.

The app aims to achieve the following:

- Help youths overcome mental health stigma by creating a private, safe and non-judgemental space to confide in others and seek help when needed.
- Create more mental health awareness among people in a fun and interactive manner.
- Create a mental health service platform in Singapore at a low cost.

While there are existing AI-powered mental health apps in the market like Wysa and Reflectly, which have users from all over the world, Vibesity would have a unique gamification element to

⁴ Telamus is an organisation established in 2021 that supports mental health technology projects and events in Singapore.

⁵ Codigo is a mobile app developer in Singapore.

⁶ Swag Soft is a mobile app developer in Singapore.

enhance user experience. Research in the area of applied gaming has shown that quality games and digital interfaces can facilitate deep learning, and enhance people's concentration and memory (Bakker et al., 2016; Fleming et al., 2017; Browne; 2020). In addition, they also have the potential to create positive psychological and behavioural changes, or bring about symptom relief, when designed effectively (Bakker et al., 2016; Fleming et al., 2017; Browne; 2020).

Vibesity's features, design and interface

Vibesity will have similar features as existing applications in the market like Wysa, Reflectly and Joyable. For example, Wysa is a chatbot that responds accordingly to the emotions expressed by users. The chatbot is available 24 hours a day and retains the user's anonymity. Reflectly is a journaling app that allows the user to note their thoughts and reflections on the day with help from prompts by the app. Joyable is another mental health app that pairs users to a real-life coach. However, the coach is not a licensed healthcare professional. See Images 1, 2 and 3 for a comparison of their layouts and interfaces.

Image 1: Wysa's interface

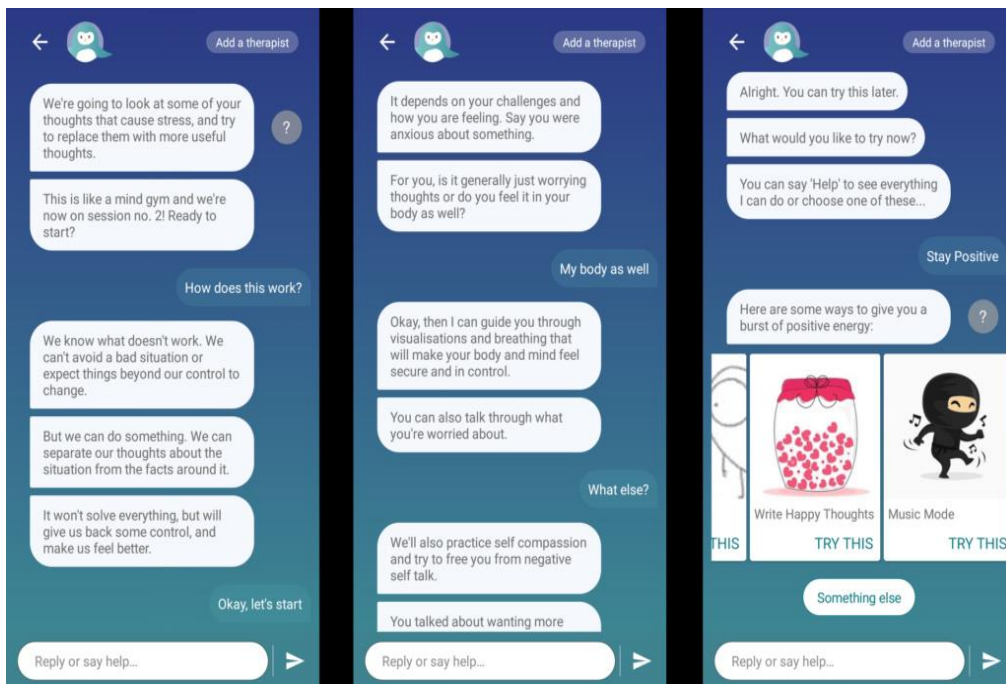


Image 2: Reflectly's interface

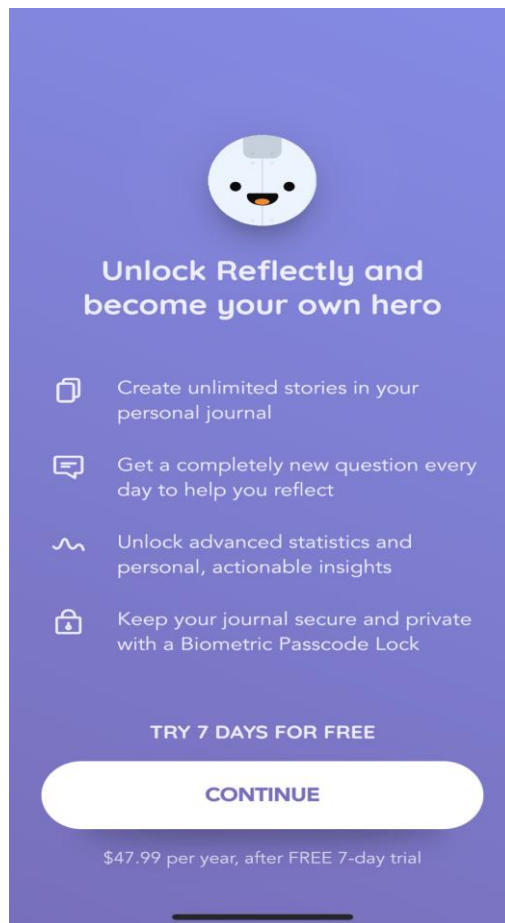
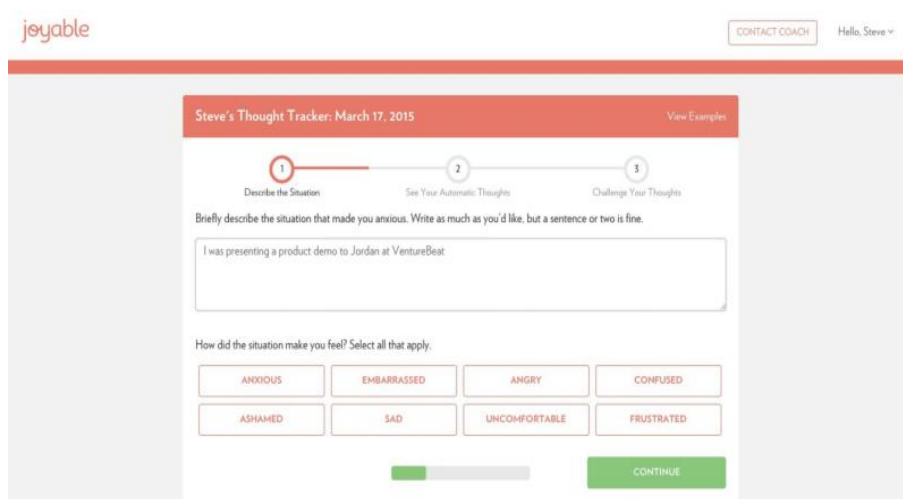


Image 3: Joyable's interface

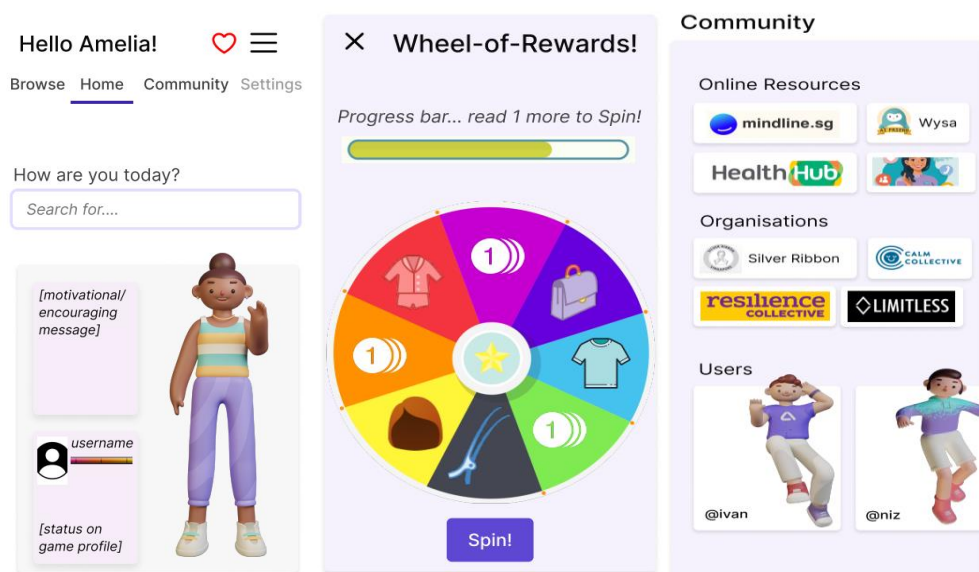


However, for these applications, some of their features (e.g., access to toolkits, advice columns, chatbot features, password protection services) are locked behind a paywall, making them

inaccessible to a large number of users. For example, Joyable only offers a seven-day free trial for users to test its services. Those who wish to continue accessing it beyond the seven days need to pay US\$99, or S\$134.38, per month. This may not be affordable for some users who may wish to continue using the app longer. In addition, as these apps are mostly powered by artificial intelligence, some of their features such as the chatbot may lack a sense of the human touch. The conversations between the chatbot and users are often scripted and repetitive. This may not be conducive for users who are coming forward to seek emotional support.

Taking this into consideration, the group wants to ensure that Vibesity will not have any bots or automated scripts. Instead, youths who use the app can talk to actual counsellors, volunteers or peer support leaders. In addition to this, Vibesity will also have interactive quizzes, games and relevant articles on mental health and well-being for students to explore and learn from. See Image 4 for Vibesity's layout and interface.

Image 4: Gamification element in Vibesity



The group proposes to include Vibesity as part of Republic Polytechnic's "Life Skills" programme, which aims to increase students' psychological resilience and competency in dealing with challenges. The use of the different articles and quizzes available on the app can better engage students and facilitators on the topic of mental health and well-being. These features can also help to break the ice when discussing difficult or sensitive topics as well. The group aims to launch a trial or pilot programme in the school to test its features, gather feedback from users, identify any technical or design related problems and rectify them before hopefully making the app available to the larger student population beyond just Republic Polytechnic.

Anticipated Challenges From Proposed Solution:

Funding limitations

Creating an app can be very expensive and tedious. The group estimates that the budget to develop such a sophisticated and highly interactive app like Vibesity to be between \$100,000 and \$300,000. Hence, it would be a challenge for the app designers to find the necessary funding for the research, development and marketing of Vibesity.

The group has identified that one way to raise the required investment for the app would be to charge some groups of users (e.g., those who are not youths) if they wished to access certain features of the app. Even if the revenue gained may not help to cover the entire cost, it could still help developers to upgrade the app features regularly or address any technical problems that may arise.

Speed of implementation

The group estimates that developers would need about three to nine months to develop, market and implement the app based on its research (Jain, n.d.).

User preferences

Users will have different aspects of a product they like and dislike. According to research that was done to access user preference for an app, the results showed that, before actual use, user preference was affected more by the differences in aesthetics, compared with differences in usability (Lee & Koubek, 2010). On the other hand, after actual use, user preference was significantly influenced by the differences in both usability and aesthetics (Lee & Koubek, 2010).

Compatibility problems with certain operating systems

Many early apps face major drawbacks due to poor compatibility. Hence, the app should be compatible with both android and IOS.

Marketing and advertisement issues

Without the right marketing, the group foresees that it might have difficulties ensuring that the app gets the attention of its target audience. With the availability of many other mental health apps in the market, it is important to devise a strong marketing strategy to ensure that Vibesity stands out.

Need for constant updates

The app will also need constant maintenance and care from a technical team. Without proper maintenance, the app will have issues with its performance and there will be an increasing number of complaints and negative reviews.

As of 28 June, three Resource Persons and the Republic Polytechnic management have expressed interest in wanting to work with the group to develop and design Vibesity.

Group 5: Internalisation 1

Project name: Externalising

Problem Identified:

Fear of Expressing Vulnerability

People are often hesitant when it comes to expressing emotions such as fear, shame, disappointment and grief — because they feel it makes them appear vulnerable in the eyes of others (Fritscher, 2021). Many from young are taught to project themselves as being strong, independent and resilient so that others look up to them. Asking for help from others, especially when it comes to managing emotions, is seen as a sign of weakness. As a result, people often learn to isolate themselves from any negative emotions that they experience. Over time, this act of suppressing negative emotions may create pent-up frustration and exhaustion, leading to mental health illnesses like depression and anxiety (Fritscher, 2021). Moreover, this fear of expressing vulnerability also discourages some from seeking the necessary professional help that people may need, thereby worsening their conditions.

Existing Solutions and Gaps:

Normalising conversations on mental health through social media

In recent years, many people, especially youths, have been using social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok to share more about their personal journey in mental health. By using hashtags like #MentalHealth on these platforms, they can easily connect with other mental health advocates or youths with similar experiences. This helps them to build a strong network of support system online (Fergie et al., 2016). In addition, there are also many local and international celebrities and personalities who have come forward to openly share their struggles with conditions like depression and anxiety with their followers (Harris, 2021). Through this, they help to destigmatise and normalise such conditions, making people feel more comfortable about seeking help.

Gaps in social media awareness

Social media can be a double-edged sword. While it helps to create more awareness on mental health and well-being, it can also be a toxic or dangerous place for some people. As mental health is currently a trending topic online, some content creators may simply take advantage of this to spread false information or share unverified information, e.g., claims of certain medications causing addiction (Sung, 2021). Such information may perpetuate existing stigma and stereotypes associated with mental health conditions, adding on to the confusion, frustration

and anxiety of some youths. In addition, social media can cause them to suffer from low self-esteem and confidence as they may associate their self-worth and value to the number of likes and positive comments that they receive on their content (McLean Hospital, n.d.).

Proposed Solution and Implementation Strategy:

Creating a strong online support system

Stakeholders to be involved: Secondary schools, junior colleges, polytechnics, institutes of technical education, private education institutions, peer support leaders from Republic Polytechnic, students from its School of Infocomm, CCA leaders, content creators who discuss mental health issues on social media (e.g., Calm Collective Asia) and gaming platforms like Plato

Target audience: 13- to 19-year-old students

The group aims to tackle the following questions:

1. How can we encourage youths to openly express negative emotions (e.g., fear, anger) without the fear of judgement or criticisms from those around them?
2. How can we normalise the expression of vulnerability in society?

To achieve this, the group proposes to create an interactive Discord channel that would serve as a listening space for teenagers between the ages of 13 and 19. This age group was specifically chosen as the target audience as the group believes that they undergo major life transitions during this period (e.g., changing schools, graduating). Hence, they may feel extremely overwhelmed and pressured without having anyone to talk to. In this Discord channel, the group plans to get administrators (consisting mainly of Republic Polytechnic students) to regularly upload podcasts that discuss different aspects of mental health (e.g., self-care practices, anger management practices, benefits of therapy), host social events (e.g., movie nights) and design multiplayer games in collaboration with gaming platform Plato to suit the different interests and needs of users.⁷

Together with the Discord group, the group also proposes to create a supplementary Telegram group chat for invited users. This Telegram group will help youths to interact with one another on more platforms besides just the Discord group.

The group plans to promote these platforms during the orientation programmes of secondary schools and tertiary institutions. For students in Republic Polytechnic, it plans to share more

⁷ Plato has over 45 multiplayer games, which includes mini golf, chess, monopoly, darts, bowling and many more.

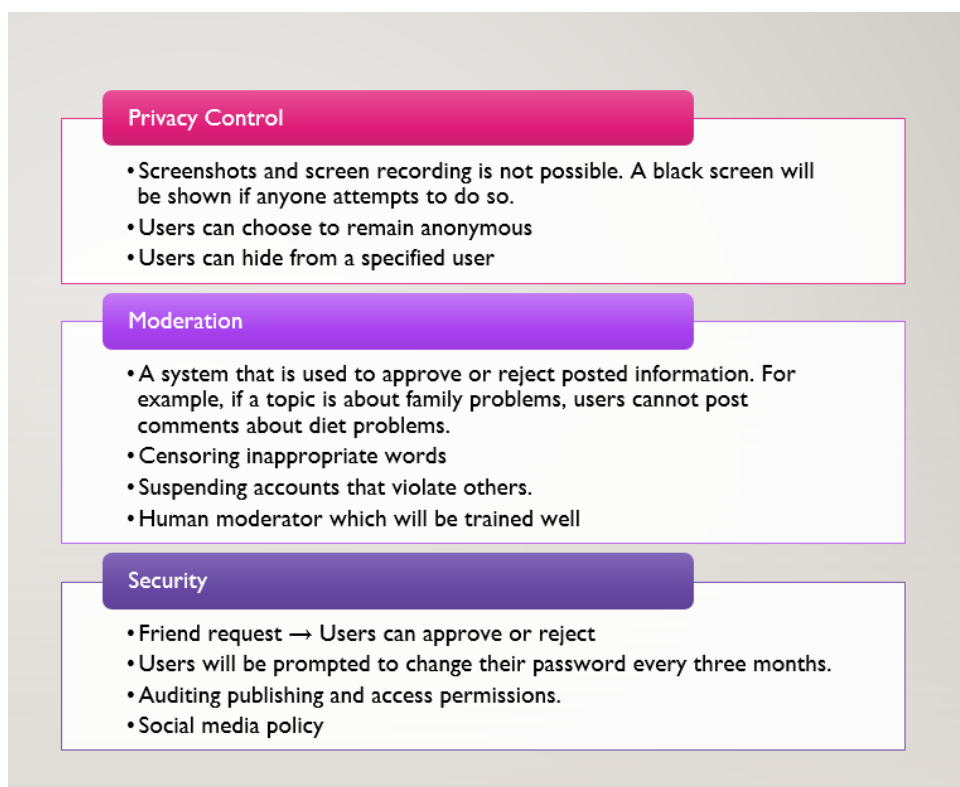
about the platforms through email and social media blasts as well as by reaching out to school leaders, lecturers and counsellors. Additionally, it also plans to collaborate with squeak.rp (Republic Polytechnic's confessions page for students) to create content promoting the platforms as the page has a large number of student following.

Anticipated Challenges From Proposed Solution:

Privacy and safety issues

One potential problem with the creation and management of the Discord and Telegram channel would be concerns over privacy and safety. These include the challenges of safeguarding users' personal information, hacking and leaking of sensitive content and display of inappropriate behaviours and language. To overcome these, the group intends to introduce special settings for privacy control, content moderation and security. See Image 5 for more information on each of these.

Image 5: Details on privacy controls and safety features



As of 28 June, one Resource Person and the Republic Polytechnic management have expressed interest in collaborating with the group to develop the online platforms and mental health podcasts for youths.

Group 6: Internalisation 2

Project name: Kidzone Bootcamp

Problem Identified:

Overthinking Among Youths

Overthinking is detrimental to one's mental and physical health. It causes people to become hyper fixated and obsessed over a problem that they face and this makes them overly critical and pessimistic about their situation, leading to extreme mental distress (Javier, 2021). The group identified three key factors that cause youths to suffer from overthinking. These include being over-reliant on external authoritative figures (e.g., parent, teachers), being unable to identify solutions independently (i.e., lack of problem-solving skills) and having a lack of resilience to overcome problems.

Existing Solutions and Gaps:

Provision of counselling services and psychological aid

In Singapore, mental health organisations like Silver Ribbon, Singapore Counselling Centre and the Singapore Association for Mental Health (SAMH) offer a wide range of services to help people gain more self-awareness and address their problems in a positive light. For example, SCC offers counselling and psychological services to individuals as well as corporates (Singapore Counselling Centre, n.d.). Similarly, SAMH has various outreach efforts and initiatives such as outdoor activities, rehabilitation exercises, skills training and creative services to suit the changing needs and convenience of people (Singapore Association for Mental Health, n.d.). The government is also taking more steps to create and promote more platforms to help people who wish to seek support or confide in others in an anonymous setting (Meah, 2020). An example of this would be the setting up of the National Care Hotline in April 2020 to provide emotional support for those affected by the circuit breaker measures (Meah, 2020). Together with this, it has been providing various medical grants and subsidies to make mental health services more affordable for Singaporeans (Goh, 2022).

Gaps in existing counselling programmes in schools

Very often, schools only actively promote their mental health resources and services that are available to students after a catastrophic event happens. For example, in the aftermath of the River Valley High School incident, many schools organised various assembly talks and classroom discussions on where they can seek help to improve their mental health. Such talks and discussions should be held on a regular basis instead of just during certain periods like the

examination season where school authorities know that more students will be experiencing symptoms of anxiety and depression. In addition to this, school counsellors should also take on a more active role in organising and joining students during these discussions. Moreover, in some schools, the offices of counsellors are often hidden in a corner or located in an inaccessible part of the school, which makes it difficult for students to reach out to them. While some schools deliberately ensure that the counselling rooms are “hidden” to help protect the privacy of students, they should also take into consideration of the downsides of designing the spaces this way.

Gaps in maintaining the quality of services provided

Some people who have sought mental health treatments from private or public organisations have shared their negative experiences with their counsellors and psychologists online. As seen in Images 6 and 7, common complaints often centre around the lack of sensitivity and empathy displayed by their counsellors. While this may be a problem faced by only a small group of people, it is important for mental health service providers to constantly monitor the feedback of unsatisfied clients and look for ways to improve their services when possible.

In addition, given the increased awareness of mental health resources available, there has been an increase in the demand for such resources and services in the recent years. As such, it is understandable that local mental health organisations and community groups may experience a manpower shortage. Manpower is an extremely important resource especially for organisations that run emergency hotlines round the clock. The increased number of calls or casework can also take a heavy toll on mental health professionals and staff. It is important to ensure that their well-being is protected as well. Therefore, organisations need to regularly ensure that they have the adequate resources and bandwidth to serve both their clients and staff.

Image 6: A negative review on bad counselling services provided

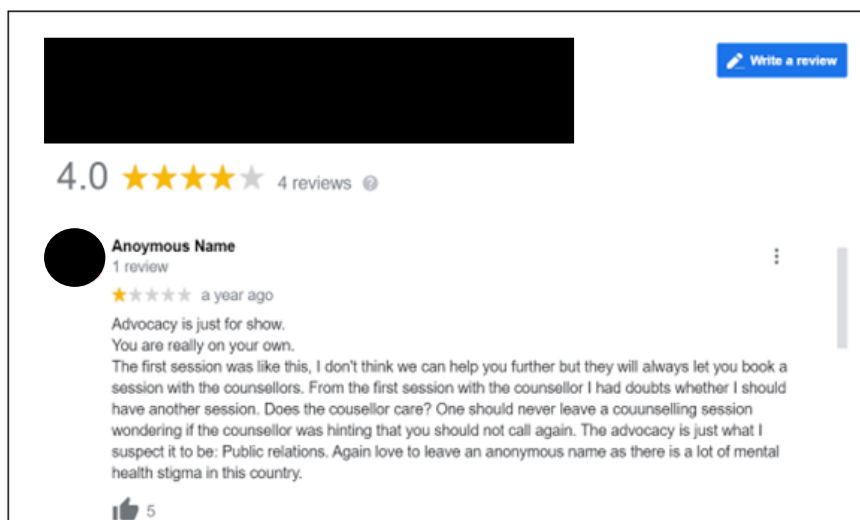


Image 7: A negative review on bad counselling services provided



Organising outdoor activities and camps to build resilience

Apart from these, some mental health organisations also conduct regular “resilience camps” to develop a sense of adventure and build values like empathy, compassion, team work and perseverance among people of various age groups (Camp Stomping Ground, 2021). These camps are usually conducted outdoors and involve participants having to overcome various obstacle courses. Through these physical challenges, the camps help to instil more confidence, self-awareness and resilience among participants.

Proposed Solution and Implementation Strategy:

Kidzone Bootcamp

Stakeholders to be involved: Parents of children aged between nine to 13 years old, Singapore Children Society, Children Cancer Foundation, Silver Ribbon (Singapore), primary schools, Republic Polytechnic (organisers and facilitators), Edible Garden City,⁸ Code.art,⁹ and Tree Art¹⁰
Target audience: Children aged between nine to 13

The group proposes to organise a “Kidzone Bootcamp” (see Image 8 for logo) — similar to existing resilience and adventure camps that are conducted in Singapore for people across various age groups. The bootcamp aims to specifically focus on young children between nine to 13 years old as it believes that by training them to develop their mental resilience from a young age, they would less likely suffer from overthinking or engage in other forms of unhealthy coping behaviours in their adulthood. Even if they do so, they would have the relevant knowledge and skills to be able to manage them. Moreover, with the bootcamp, the group also hopes to provide young children with a safe space to express themselves and forge new friendships with other like-minded participants.

Image 8: Kidzone Bootcamp logo



The bootcamp will consist of four sessions held once every week during the school holidays. During the first day (i.e., orientation session), participants will be split into groups based on one

⁸ Edible Garden City is an agricultural organisation in Singapore that aims to promote gardening.

⁹ Code.art is a non-profit organisation based in the United States that aims to promote interest and expertise in coding among young female children.

¹⁰ Tree Art is an enterprise based in Singapore that aims to develop international art courses.

of the three broad activities — art jamming,¹¹ gardening workshops,¹² and basic coding programmes,¹³ which they can choose from. The subsequent sessions will feature personalised games and challenges relating to these three main activities (e.g., using colours to express emotions, planting new seeds). Each of these activities would be designed in collaboration with mental health and children's organisations like the Singapore Children's Society, Silver Ribbon (Singapore) and Children's Cancer Foundation, all of which already have extensive experience organising safe and inclusive programmes for children.

The bootcamp will be facilitated by students from Republic Polytechnic. The group hopes that through this, the students would not only be able to gain leadership skills but also acquire experience working with young children and talking to them about mental health issues. This will be extremely useful especially for students with younger siblings as they can learn how to talk to them on such issues. Training will be provided for all facilitators so that they will know how to interact with the participants (e.g., know how to deal with tantrums) and how to cater to children with disabilities. Table 2 provides an overview of the structure of the bootcamp.

Table 2: Overview of Kidzone Bootcamp

Category	Details
Schedule	One-month programme: To be conducted once a week during the weekend (i.e., four times a month) ideally during the school holiday period. Each session will last about three hours.
Ideal venue	Republic Polytechnic (no rental cost)
Activities planned ¹⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jam with Creativity! • Let's Get Gardening! • Kids Level Programming <p>All activities will be broken down into four sessions with a maximum of 20 participants in each activity.</p>
Orientation	For Day One, participants will take part in an ice-breaker session to get to know one another before

¹¹ Art jamming can be an avenue for children to express themselves. This creates opportunities for them to share their problems through creativity and discuss how to overcome adversity.

¹² Gardening workshops can be beneficial to children's psychological health as well as mental and physical well-being. Gardening increases serotonin levels in the brain and is considered therapeutic. This activity enables children to cultivate a feeling of connection.

¹³ Coding can improve children's' creativity, problem-solving and logical thinking skills.

¹⁴ For more details on each of the three activities (art jamming, gardening and kids level programming) see Appendix B.

	splitting into their respective activity groups. Those who are unsure of which activities they would like to do will be given a simple personality quiz ¹⁵ or participate in a lottery system that will help them to make a decision. ¹⁶
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Anticipated Challenges From Proposed Solution:

Difficulties in recruiting volunteers

As students tend to often already be busy with their school and personal commitments, it might be difficult to reach out to some of them to volunteer as facilitators, especially for a long-term project like Kidzone Bootcamp, which will require them to commit at least for a month.

Resources, funding and sustainability issues

The group estimates that it would need about \$2,500 to organise the bootcamp. This sum would be used to purchase logistics, settle any administrative requirements as well as to advertise the bootcamp. The group proposes to seek sponsorships from corporations like Tree Art and Edible Garden City to offset some of these costs. In addition to this, it also plans to conduct a fundraising event in collaboration with Silver Ribbon (Singapore) to get donations from the public to fund part of the bootcamp.

Low sign-up rates

Another possible challenge that the group anticipates is the low sign-up rates for the bootcamp. This could be due to social stigma, which may discourage people from participating in such mental health related events. Moreover, some parents might not be familiar with the organisers and might feel unsure of sending their children to attend the bootcamp. Hence, it is important to come up with a strong promotion strategy to market the bootcamp to parents, teachers and caregivers.

¹⁵ See Appendix C for more details on the personality quiz.

¹⁶ See Appendix C for more details on the lottery system.

Group 7: Schools & Teachers/Education System

Project name: BreakTrue

Problem Identified:

Lack of Informal Bonds Between Students and Teachers

In Singapore, there is an intensive culture of peer comparison among students in schools. This is primarily because of a results-centred education system where the capabilities of students are predominantly determined by their academic achievements than any other factors (Goh, 2020; Poh, 2021). As such, students mostly turn to their teachers or lecturers only when they need help in their studies; and not confide in them about personal problems or struggles with mental health. This creates a lack of informal bonds between teachers and students in many schools, which serves as an important mental health buffer.

On some occasions, this lack of strong ties or communication between students and teachers may also lead to misunderstandings and conflicts. For example, teachers may be quick to dismiss a quiet or unresponsive student as being lazy or disengaged when in reality they may be suffering from problems like social anxiety, selective mutism and even a learning difficulty (Tucker, 2018). Similarly, some students who display “problematic” behaviour like being rude or defiant may be seen as being “naughty” by teachers. In some cases, they may be undergoing certain mental health problems that cause them to act this way. When they continue to face such negativity and backlash from their teachers, it could make them feel further isolated from their peers, teachers and the wider school community (Tucker, 2018).

Existing Solutions and Gaps:

Introducing more mental health programmes into the school curriculum

Since the River Valley High school tragedy in 2021, the MOE has stepped up efforts focusing on improving mental health literacy in primary and secondary schools as well as tertiary institutions (Ang, 2021). This includes regular wellness talks, workshops and courses conducted by counsellors and teachers.

Gaps in mental wellness programmes in schools

These programmes are useful in increasing students' awareness on the different types of mental help support that they can get in their schools as well as by other external organisations. However, a major problem is that the content covered in these talks and workshops can be very generalised. As students may face different set of challenges, the lack of personalised attention in the content makes it less engaging for some of them.

Moreover, there are also few opportunities or platforms for teachers and students to interact and get to know one another. Having a strong student-teacher relationship is important as it builds a strong support system for students and makes them feel that they have someone in whom they can trust and talk to when needed (Kai, 2021). On the other hand, teachers can also have a better understanding on the issues that their students are undergoing and work together with them to overcome them. Hence, there should be more bonding activities and exercises as part of the existing wellness programmes in schools.

Establishing strong peer support networks in schools

Recognising that some students prefer to confide in their peers rather than in authoritative figures like their school counsellors, the MOE has announced plans to develop peer support networks in all schools by this year (Teng, 2021). Currently, each class in Republic Polytechnic is assigned a group of peer support leaders that members can turn to for support. These peer support leaders would typically consist of senior students studying the same course. The peer support leaders would create a WhatsApp group for easy contact where any member is allowed to get in touch with them. In addition, each student in the school is also assigned to a mentor who will help to address any school or internship-related concerns, or if they simply want to get advice on a difficult situation.

Gaps within peer support systems

However, as peer support leaders are students themselves, some of them might not be able to offer optimal support to their friends even if they are trained. They also may not have the emotional maturity to handle or provide support for certain issues that their friends share with them. Moreover, some students may hesitate to trust their peer support leaders for fear of the latter sharing certain confidential information with others, even when well-intentioned (e.g., informing a counsellor after learning that a classmate has suicidal thoughts).

Using an artificial intelligence system in classrooms

The government has also experimented with the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) system to enhance students' overall classroom experience; and it plans to expand this further in the future (Ministry of Education, 2019; Nolan, 2021). This enhanced AI system will have three unique aims, which will be to: (1) personalise each student's learning through their responses in class; (2) let teachers become more aware of each student's learning pace; and (3) allow teachers to design interventions to help each student. The AI system would also help to lessen the workload of teachers by assisting them with administrative tasks. Through this, it helps them to save time, and engage in more class-bonding activities.

Proposed Solutions and Implementation Strategy:

Onboarding programme in schools

Stakeholders to be involved: Ministry of Education (MOE), Republic Polytechnic, and school counsellors from secondary schools and tertiary institutions

Target audience: Students and teachers

The group conducted a short survey involving a small sample of eight youths involved in the panel. Through this survey, it found that while almost 90 per cent of the respondents felt that it was important to have a close relationship with their teachers, only 50 per cent felt comfortable seeking help from them in times of crisis. This indicated that more efforts should focus on strengthening the student-teacher relationship in schools. To achieve this, the group proposes to conduct a series of onboarding programmes under “Project BreakTrue” that can help to forge a closer student-teacher relationship in schools. See Image 9 for its logo.

Image 9: Logo of Project BreakTrue



The onboarding programmes and activities are largely inspired by current campus events such as the Freshmen Orientation camps, service-learning trips and Discovery Trails. However, the programmes designed under Project BreakTrue will have a mental health angle to them. These programmes will take place over 13 weeks (i.e., throughout the academic semester). They will involve various activities comprising of excursions, day camps and physical activities. Tables 3 to 8 provide more detailed information on these activities and their proposed timelines.

Table 3: Project BreakTrue's plans for the start of the new semester

Stage: Start of new semester	
Activity (What?)	A day camp will be organised. The camp will include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ice-breaker games • An introduction session • A "get-to-know" session
Timeline/stages (When?)	Freshmen orientation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the start of every semester when new classes begin. • Teachers and students will be unfamiliar with one another so this session will help to break the ice.
Venue (Where?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom • Conference hall • Indoor sports hall
People involved (Who?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers • Students • School management
Structure of programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The programme will be designed to help students get to know one another through games, chat sessions and face-to-face activities and interactions.

Table 4: Project BreakTrue's plans during the school semester

Stage: During the semester	
Activity (What?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly meet-up/gathering of the class for an activity.
Timeline/stages (When?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every month
Venue (Where?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoors
People involved (Who?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students and school management
Structure of programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will get the chance to bond together and create memories during the activity. • Activity will promote values such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Patience ○ Honesty ○ Responsibility ○ Respect

Table 5: Project BreakTrue's plans during the school semester

Stage: During the semester	
Activity (What?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers conduct regular check-ins with students (individually and in groups).
Timeline/stages (When?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not fixed (as and when)
Venue (Where?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools
People involved (Who?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students Teachers
Structure of programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students and teachers will have a casual chat on various topics (other than school and academic related topics).

Table 6: Project BreakTrue's plans during the school semester

Stage: During the semester	
Activity (What?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Café session where students and teachers can catch up over a breakfast meal or lunch.
Timeline/stages (When?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not fixed (as and when)
Venue (Where?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canteen Classroom
People involved (Who?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students Teachers
Structure of programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foster bonding through meals together.

Table 7: Project BreakTrue's plans during the school semester

Stage: During the semester	
Activity (What?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Counsellors will meet up with students individually. Frequency of meet-ups will depend on the students' needs and convenience. Through this, the organisers hope to normalise the idea of meeting regularly with counsellors or other mental health staff among students.
Timeline/stages (When?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not fixed (as and when depending on the schedules of students, teachers and counsellors).
Venue (Where?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Other memorable places for students

People involved (Who?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students • Teachers • School management • Counsellors
Structure of programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counsellors will reach out to students to check in with them and through this, a comfortable relationship will be built between them over time. • A counsellor will be assigned to each student so that the student can confide in them for the long term.

Table 8: Project BreakTrue's plans for the end of the semester

Stage: End of semester	
Activity (What?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A farewell party/event will be organised. • Students and teachers will exchange small gifts/letters and their contact details to keep in touch with one another.
Timeline/stages (When?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not fixed
Venue (Where?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School • Classroom • Other memorable places for students
People involved (Who?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students • Teachers • School management
Structure of programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students or teachers can organise the farewell activity or gathering. • The school can allocate some budget for this event. • Examples of activities: badminton game, lunch

The group also plans to assess the effectiveness of the onboarding programme by getting feedback from students, teachers and counsellors involved in the programme. It would also assess how close students and teachers who participate in the programme feel with one another. Additionally, it also plans to see if there is any decrease in the number of counselling referrals made before and after the introduction of the programme, which may give an indication of the programme's effectiveness.

If the feedback gathered for Project BreakTrue is positive, the group plans to pitch the programme to primary and secondary schools as well as ITEs and junior colleges. The programmes planned for these educational institutions will vary based on the students' age and

emotional maturity. See Table 9 for an example of how these institutions can implement Project BreakTrue in their curriculum.

Table 9: Project BreakTrue's plans for other institutions

A typical Project BreakTrue session to be conducted once every three months (60 minutes)	
First 5 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students in the classroom will use a paper provided to write some words that describe their current emotions and why they are feeling such emotions. They will not record their names. • They will submit their papers to their teachers
Next 45 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only one activity will be planned for the day. • Could be an art, sport, music or entertainment related activity (e.g., movie watching).
Next 5 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A calming activity will be organised • Example: breathing exercises, mindfulness activities (to reduce stress)
Last 5 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussing ways to use the calming activity in everyday situations. • Telling students to approach their teachers or counsellors to seek assistance. • Introducing a motivating "quote of the day" for students.
<p>*Every lesson will have a different "fun activity", different "calming activity" and a different quote of the day to relate to.</p>	

Anticipated Challenges From Proposed Solution:

Lack of comfort between students and teachers

As students and teachers may have different personalities, it might take some time for them to be comfortable with one another before they can benefit from the programme. One way to combat this issue is to involve multiple figures such as peer support leaders, mentors and other teachers or lecturers for students to connect with.

In addition, some older teachers may find it difficult to relate to issues that youths currently face because of the wide age gap. Similarly, some youths may find it hard to interact with their teachers, especially on certain sensitive issues or topics like mental health — and hence, prefer not to connect with them at all. One way to overcome this issue is to help familiarise teachers with the different types of challenges that students face through more seminars and workshops.

Overworked teachers

In recent years, the issue of teachers facing an increasing level of workload has also raised concerns among many. Teachers today have to take on multiple responsibilities ranging from administrative work, keeping parents updated on their children's academic performances, to ensuring that students' physical and mental well-being are taken care of in school (J.S. Ng, 2021). Hence, participating in Project BreakTrue might increase their existing workload and stress. One way to overcome this problem would be to assign a co-teacher or lecturer to attend the programme together with the main teacher. This way, they can take turns to attend the different sessions, which can prevent them from experiencing burnout.

Group 8: Society & Culture

Project name: M.E Time

Problem Identified:***Social stigma deterring people from seeking help***

Many Singaporeans refuse to openly talk about mental health or come forward to seek help. This is because of the existing social stigma found in many Asian cultures where mental illnesses are seen as a form of personal weakness. Hence, they become embarrassed and prefer to remain silent about their struggles in order to “save face”. This was reflected in a 2016 IMH study involving over 900 people, where 44.5 per cent used words like “stupid”, “weird”, “dangerous”, and “crazy” to describe people with mental health illnesses (Pang et al., 2017).

Existing Solutions and Gaps:***Mental wellness programmes for the public***

In Singapore, there are various community and non-profit organisations like the Silver Ribbon (Singapore) that organise many mental wellness workshops and talks to improve mental health literacy among staff and students. These programmes teach them about common mental health disorders and their symptoms, places to seek help and also address common myths on seeking mental health treatment.

Gaps in current mental wellness programmes

Although such programmes have been timely and are pertinent in addressing social stigma around mental health, more has to be done to promote them to a wider range of people. At times, these organisations also lack the necessary support to run more programmes that go beyond just talks and seminars.

Proposed Solutions and Implementation Strategy:***Annual mental health event in Republic Polytechnic***

Stakeholders to be involved: Republic Polytechnic Student Care Department, mental health organisations like Calm Collective Asia, mental health experts and advocates like Mr Nicholas Gabriel Lim from the Singapore University of Social Sciences; Ms Jacqueline Toh from Republic Polytechnic; Ms Buvenasvari Pragasam from Solace Art Psychotherapy; and Ms Jasmine Chew

from Beyond Social Services,¹⁷ Institute of Mental Health (IMH), Health Promotion Board (HPB), National Youth Council (NYC), and the Singapore Association for Mental Health (SAMH)

Target audience: Republic Polytechnic students and members of the public

The group aims to normalise conversations on mental health, encourage people to reach out for support, and reduce existing stigma through two activities. The first is to organise an annual mental health event in Republic Polytechnic. This mental health event could be held in partnership with organisations such as the IMH and HPB.

This proposed mental health event could take place over five days, during the last few weeks of October, in conjunction with World Mental Health Day. It could be held at the Republic Polytechnic campus at South and North Agora from 9.30am to 5.30am. During this event, various mental health organisations could be invited to set up small booths where they will share information on various aspects of mental health (e.g., self-care tips, breathing techniques, therapy tools). Different activities will be conducted in these booths so that there would be a “surprise element” to keep visitors engaged. Some suggested ideas include a photo booth, an arts and crafts booth as well as an interactive Q&A booth.

To promote the event to a wide range of audience, the group plans to leverage social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok to post snapshots and videos of what people can expect at the event. It also plans to rope in mental health influencers like Juffri Mok as guest speakers so that there is wider publicity and interest among youths to join the event. Other promotional tactics also include organising a lucky draw session where participants in the event stand a chance to win attractive prizes. Where possible, the group also hopes to collaborate with media outlets like *The Straits Times* and Mothership.sg to feature write-ups on the event.

As the group intends to conduct this mental health event annually, it also plans to gather feedback from visitors through a short survey. Links and QR codes to this survey will be included in various posters and standees that can be easily found in the different booths.

Anticipated Challenges From Proposed Solution:

Manpower, funding and resource constraints

As this is a five-day event, a lot of manpower, funds and resources (e.g., craft materials, equipment, technical support) will be needed to ensure that it runs smoothly. This may require

¹⁷ These mental health experts and advocates were Resource Persons for the Citizens Panel as well. For the full list of Resource Persons, see Appendix A.

organisers to ensure that they allocate enough time for the planning and management of the event in advance.

Lack of interest among visitors

In recent years, more and more mental health events have been carried out by various organisations. For example, as mentioned earlier, Silver Ribbon (Singapore) regularly conducts wellness workshops and programmes in schools that are fun and interactive in nature. Hence, people might be bored or uninterested in attending similar events that focus on mental health awareness. Therefore, the group feels that it is important to design a strong publicity campaign for this event.

Difficulties in getting relevant guests and speakers to commit

Another challenge in organising this event is that some guests or potential speakers may not be able to commit an entire day for the event. Many of them might have other engagements especially since the event will be held in the month of World Mental Health Day.

Mental health podcasts

Stakeholders to be involved: Institute of Mental Health (IMH), Health Promotion Board (HPB), National Youth Council (NYC), Singapore Association of Mental Health (SAMH), Republic Polytechnic, and local YouTube and podcast channels

Target audience: Republic Polytechnic students and members of the public

The group's second proposed solution to normalise mental health conversations among youths is to create a mental health podcast featuring speakers from organisations such as the IMH, HPB, NYC and SAMH to discuss the different spectrum of mental health topics. The podcast will feature personal stories from guest speakers with mental health issues as well.

The group plans to record 10 episodes, each ranging from 30 to 60 minutes long. These episodes will be recorded and edited over a period of four to six months by Republic Polytechnic students. The episodes will later be uploaded on various streaming platforms like Spotify and YouTube to capture a wide range of audience, other than just students.

To boost publicity, it also plans to collaborate with other local podcast channels such as *The Daily Ketchup* podcast.¹⁸ In addition to this, it also plans to promote every new episode of the

¹⁸ A news commentary podcast that focuses on the latest events and news relating to Singapore.

mental health podcast series on the school's Instagram and TikTok accounts by using the hashtag #RPMHAC, which stands for "Republic Polytechnic Mental Health Awareness Campaign". More information on the podcast will also be shared with the school leaders, lecturers and management so that they can share it with people in their social circles.

As the popularity and appeal of such media content is highly dependent on the taste and preferences of people, the group would have a dedicated team to closely monitor podcast statistics. Additionally, the group also plans to create and share feedback forms to listeners through the podcast's and school's social media pages. Doing this will allow the group to better plan the types of topics and discussions to carry out for future episodes. Through this, the group can increase its number of followers and achieve its objective of opening up more safe spaces for mental health discussions in society.

Anticipated Challenges From Proposed Solution:

Time and resource constraints

Filming and editing a single episode of the podcast can take a considerable amount of time. This may create additional stress for students who would already be struggling to manage their school work and personal commitments. Additionally, it may also be a challenge to reach out to potential speakers and schedule a time that is convenient for both the podcast hosts and the speakers.

Overall, the Republic Polytechnic management has expressed interest in partnering with the group to develop mental health podcasts for the school community.

CONCLUSION

As shown in the earlier section, students from the eight Citizens' Panel groups explored various aspects of mental health challenges among youths in Singapore and came up with diverse approaches ranging from organising physical events to creating digital platforms to tackle them. The discussions and proposals generated from the youth citizens' panel have shown that there is a need to focus on two key aspects of mental health: first, to increase more awareness on existing stigma and false narratives on mental health in Singapore; and second, to start taking more actions to build and create safer and more inclusive spaces for youths to confide in. The Republic Polytechnic management and Resource Persons who reviewed the proposals found them to be constructive and valuable in improving youth mental health in Singapore. Some of them have expressed interest to collaborate with five out of the eight groups, to further develop their ideas.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Expert Speakers and Resource Persons List

No.	Name and designation	Role in Citizens' Panel
1.	Bernard Mackenzie Clinic Manager Psychology and Child & Human Development National Institute of Education Nanyang Technology University	Expert Speaker
2.	Dr Jacqueline Tilley Assistant Professor Psychology and Child & Human Development National Institute of Education Nanyang Technology University	Expert Speaker
3.	Jacqueline Toh Senior Manager Counselling & Care Services Republic Polytechnic	Expert Speaker
4.	Juffri Mok Mental Health Advocate Republic Polytechnic Alumnus and Content Creator TikTok (#EmoKidsAnthem)	Expert Speaker
5.	Sabrina Ooi Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer Calm Collective Asia	Expert Speaker
6.	Buvenasvari Pragasam Managing Director Registered Art Therapist Solace Art Psychotherapy	Resource Person
7.	Dr Chew Han Ei Senior Research Fellow Social Lab Institute of Policy Studies	Resource Person
8.	Chirag Agarwal Co-Founder Talk Your Heart Out	Resource Person
9.	Jasmine Chew Community Worker Beyond Social Services	Resource Person
10.	Jonathan Kuek Co-Founder Total Wellness Initiative Singapore	Resource Person

11.	Dr Justin Lee Senior Research Fellow Policy Lab Institute of Policy Studies	Resource Person
12.	Meridyn Tan CHAT Case Manager Institute of Mental Health	Resource Person
13.	Nicholas Gabriel Lim Head, Graduate Diploma in Youth Work, Graduate Diploma in Professional Life Coaching & Graduate Diploma in Expressive Arts Therapy Programmes S R Nathan School of Human Development Singapore University of Social Sciences	Resource Person
14.	Phua Chun Yat Chief Operating Officer Samaritans of Singapore	Resource Person
15.	Porsche Poh Founder Silver Ribbon (Singapore)	Resource Person
16.	Timothy Liau Founder Telamus	Resource Person
17.	Wendy Tan Assistant Director (Media Literacy & Digital Wellness) Infocomm Media Development Authority	Resource Person

Appendix B: Details on Kidzone Bootcamp Activities

Activity 1	Details
<p>Jam with Creativity!</p>	<p>Session 1: I Am: Me!</p> <p>In this session, participants (i.e., young children) will get to paint and sketch while following the instructions given by their facilitators.</p> <p>The activity in this section will consist of drawing and sketching images. Participants will be asked to draw a portrait of themselves and in the portrait, participants will be encouraged to draw their strengths and weaknesses. This will allow them to better understand and explore their traits through creative and visual learning.</p> <p>Strengths and weaknesses can revolve around their hobbies, phobias, likes and dislikes. Facilitators will guide participants by asking questions such as “what are you good at?” to get them to put on their thinking caps. Facilitators and professional instructors will also show an example on how they can draw their strengths and weaknesses to help those who may be lost.</p> <p>Session 2: Pop it with Sprinkles!</p> <p>In this session, participants will start to add colours onto their portrait canvas. The first part of the session will include sketching the background scenery. Facilitators in the session will also present participants with four emoji cards and ask them to select one card.</p> <p>The emoji cards will contain different emotions and participants will select a card to share how they have felt over the week (e.g., happy, sad, excited or anxious). From there, participants will add given colours to their background base of the emoji card they selected. Participants will then add in bright colours to their strengths that they drew and darker colours to their weaknesses that they had drawn in Session One.</p> <p>Based on their artwork, if they have a bright scenery combined with bright strengths and dark weaknesses, facilitators will explain to the participants that when people focus too much on negative situations, they may forget the things that make them happy and are good at. If they have dull backgrounds, facilitators will explain to the participants that when things get unpleasant, they can remind themselves that there is more in life than just the unpleasant things and that they should also be aware of the things that make them happy.</p> <p>In this session, facilitators will teach participants how to adopt a positive mentality by getting them to express their emotions through their art. Those who face difficulties in expressing</p>

themselves will be guided by the facilitators.

Session 3: The Versus Embracing!

This will be a watercolour painting session. Participants will be given a new canvas during this session. Facilitators will focus on teaching the children on ways to cope when they feel down. They will also impart them with the knowledge and skills on bouncing back from adversities and keeping a positive attitude and mindset during difficult times.

To kickstart the programme, facilitators will be asking the children to choose a popsicle stick and group them into smaller teams. They will then paint a line that will split the canvas base of their popsicle stick. On each half of the canvas, they will be painting the things they are good at and things they are not good at (or want to try but are afraid of). Then, facilitators will ask the children to share about what they have painted in their teams.

After this smaller team sharing session is over, a big sharing will be done so that participants can also learn about the perceived strengths and weaknesses of their peers. Through this, they can offer support, encouragement and even advice on how they can improve on their strengths. Mental health professionals will also join this sharing to teach participants on how they can adopt a resilient mindset and work towards achieving their goals by a learning about a reward system.

Session 4: All Out, Colour Bomb!

This final session will be designed to let participants feel more relaxed through fun physical activities and games.

A big white canvas wall will be placed at the front of the room with seven assorted colours of paint tins — seven colours representing seven statements. If the participants agree to the statement, they will grab a “balloon” that contains the paint colour assigned to the statement and throw it against the wall. Participants will be standing a certain distance from each other and the wall so they can run towards it to throw it. For those with physical disabilities, e.g., if they use a wheelchair, facilitators from Republic Polytechnic will assist them by pushing them at a safe and comfortable speed so that they can be involved in the activity too.

This session will be a fun way of summarising what the participants had been taught so far. After each statement, participants will share their knowledge, opinions and experiences by raising their hands and shouting out their responses, to create an adrenaline rush.

Statement 1: If you're feeling good today, throw Yellow!

Statement 2: If you're feeling not so good today, Blue!

Statement 3: When we are feeling unhappy, do we keep it to ourselves? If yes, throw Pink! If no, throw Grey!

Statement 4: When we do not have a successful try, we

	<p>bounce back up to try again when we are ready! If you agree, throw Purple!</p> <p>Statement 5: If you can name me 3 coping strategies or advice/tips on how to cope with something that makes us unhappy, throw Red and share! (a prize will be given)</p> <p>Statements 6 & 7: We are kids! Let's love ourselves, embrace our flaws, reward ourselves for trying and go all out! Throw Orange if you agree! If you need some tips, throw Teal!</p> <p>Again, this session is for the participants to bond and relax to end their bootcamp. Organisers of the camp will also be giving some small tokens of appreciation and a resource booklet for all participants as well.</p>
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Activity 2	Details
<p>Let's get gardening!</p>	<p>Session 1: Flowers like me!</p> <p>During the first session, participants will be taught on the different meanings associated with different types of flowers as an introduction to gardening. Facilitators will be prepared to print out the various flowers for visual learning and participants will be provided with necessary stationery and sketchbooks as this activity is all about relating themselves to the meaning of the different flowers. After a short session of sharing the meaning of flowers, participants are to sketch or draw which flowers best suit their personality and mood. This allows participants to better understand their personality traits while expanding knowledge and creativity.</p> <p>Examples: jasmine → monetary wealth; purple lilac → first love; chrysanthemums → harmony, etc.</p> <p>Session 2: Draw from imagination!</p> <p>During this session, participants will be provided with stationery such as colour pencils and sketchbooks.</p> <p>Under facilitator's supervision, participants are to sketch what their vision of a perfectly grown plant looks like or how they want the plant they are going to grow to look like. This allows participants to set a goal. Setting a goal is a purposeful and explicit process that requires participants to identify new objectives, and skills that they need to achieve that will give them the drive to keep them moving.</p> <p>Session 3: Gardening adventure! (Indoor activity)</p> <p>In this session, participants will start the physical activity.</p>

	<p>They will first be provided with various materials: Vegetable seeds, seed-starter soil, popsicle sticks, containers to plant seeds, and fine mist spray bottles of water.</p> <p><u>How this activity gets carried out:</u></p> <p>Participants will first place their given seed starter soil into respective containers and moisten them with the mist spray before planting two or three seeds per container. (If they water the soil after planting the seeds, the water can shift the seeds around.) To keep track of which vegetable seeds are planted, participants are allowed to design their very own popsicle sticks, exploring their own creativity and then place them in the soil. This entire session will be supervised by both collaborators and facilitators as well. Therefore, participants will be fully guided throughout to ensure that the session will be carried out smoothly.</p> <p>Gardening activities are regarded as being therapeutic by many. For example, a survey held by Edible Garden City showed that the mental resilience of those who were involved in gardening was statistically significantly higher than those in the online community (Edible Garden City, n.d.). Therefore, throughout the entire activity, mental resilience will be instilled in them. Through this activity, participants will also cultivate a sense of responsibility as they are in charge of taking care of their own personal plants, as well as cultivating a sense of connection with nature and nurture skills like patience, caring and affection for nature.</p> <p>Overall, gardening is proven to be significantly beneficial to people's psychological health as well as mental and physical well-being. Working productively in the garden can increase serotonin levels in the brain, improving overall mood.</p> <p>Session 4: Hello growing seedlings!</p> <p>Besides checking on the progress of newly planted seeds and ensuring that they are being taken care of daily, there will also be a recap section of Session One, where participants will do a mini self-reflection as they are asked the same question, i.e., which flowers best represent their current mood and personality. This comparison is to evaluate their behavioural and emotional reactions throughout the past four weeks, which is essential to ensure their good mental health and well-being.</p> <p>During this session, there will be a short but informative session on how to care for seedlings via visual learning (seedling aftercare). The participants will be reminded of Session Two whereby they draw the outcome that they wanted and will keep in mind to cultivate a sense of responsibility and ownership as well as training their soft skills and values. A token of appreciation and resource booklet will be given to the participants.</p>
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Activity 3	Details
Programming	<p>Session 1:</p> <p>Participants will choose a course on Code.org¹⁹ according to their age and interest. The courses available on Code.org already have a detailed outline on what participants can expect to learn.</p> <p>Session 2:</p> <p>Participants will continue with the course that they had chosen in Session 1.</p> <p>Session 3:</p> <p>Participants will continue with the course that they had chosen in Session 1.</p> <p>Session 4:</p> <p>Participants will continue with the course that they had chosen in Session 1. At the end of every session, all participants and facilitators will come together to discuss the difficulties that they faced and how they managed to overcome them.</p>

¹⁹ Code.org is a non-profit organisation which aims to promote interest in Computer Sciences among young children.

Appendix C: Details on Personality Quiz and Lottery System Under Kidzone Bootcamp

What is the personality quiz and lottery system?

The personality quiz is for those who may be unsure of what activities interest them. This simple quiz (see below) will allow participants to join an activity that best appeals to them. The lottery system is for those who want extra fun or for those who are unable to decide on a particular activity to join.

No.	Questions	Results Slotting
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you like to ... a) Relax and chill? b) Get your hands dirty? c) Get your brain juice pumping? 	If participants have: Three A's/More A's: Take part in art jamming Three B's/More B's: Take part in gardening
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you like to mix around? a) Sit around in a group circle! b) Gather around but walking is a must! c) Debate and share your thoughts! 	Three C's/More C's: Take part Programming/Coding
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose one phrase that describes you best. a) Calm and easy going! b) Adventurous and playful! c) Curious and full of energy for quests! 	Lottery system: Three plush toys will be given to the participants. A tag will be attached to the plush toys that will indicate their chosen activity through this lucky draw system.

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