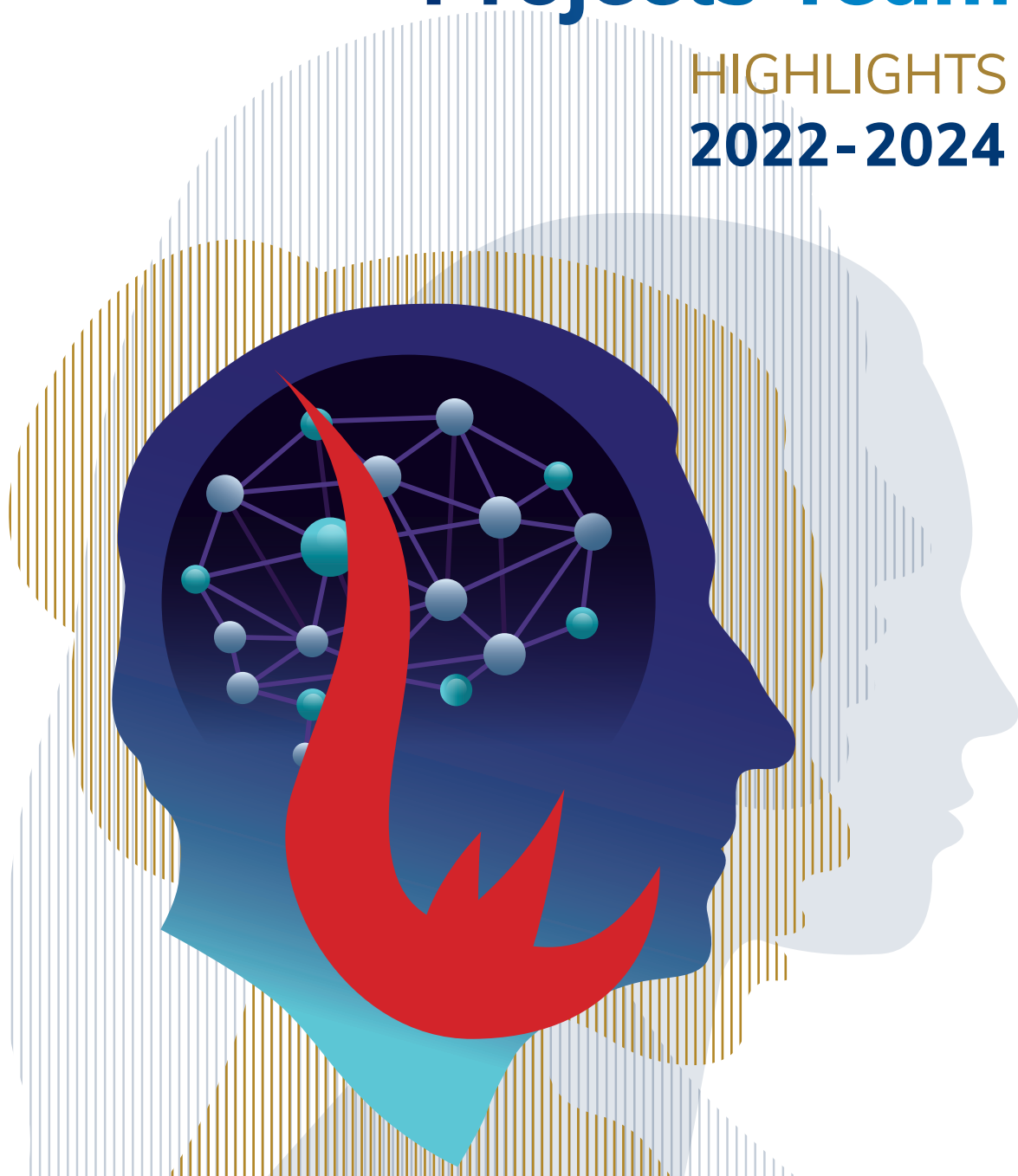


Mental Health Projects Team

HIGHLIGHTS
2022-2024



The contents containing in this booklet are dated up to 31 March 2024

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OVERVIEW



1.1. Message from the Project Lead

We invite you to glean through the pages of this booklet which chronicles the Division of Public Policy's mental health project team's research and community efforts and their impact.

Through our efforts, we aim to address the unique mental health challenges faced by ethnic minority (EM) communities in Hong Kong from different perspectives, including our focus on EM elderly, EM youth and EM families. Our dedication stems from a recognition of the diverse culture barriers that often hinder equitable mental health support, leading to disparities that we are committed to addressing. With our recently awarded project, we are now extending our empirical scope to include the Greater Bay Area (GBA).

Our team's approach is rooted in meticulous research and deep collaboration with community partners. As we collect and analyze data, conduct interviews, and engage with community members, we aim to shed light on the nuanced needs and inherent resilience of ethnic minorities populations.

We are driven by the goal of fostering heightened well-being through increased mental health awareness, stigma reduction and advocacy for fair access to mental health services.

Your presence and support contribute to building a more inclusive and supportive environment for mental health Hong Kong.



Prof. Naubahar SHARIF

Acting Head and Professor

Division of Public Policy

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

1.2. Our Mission



Academic Research for Community Solutions

The project team is dedicated to conducting academic research, encompassing rigorous theoretical and policy studies alongside empirical evidence gathering. This multifaceted approach is crucial for the development of outreach programs that are informed by data-driven insights. Through collecting first-hand data, the team collects the narratives and empirical insights of ethnic minority participants in Hong Kong, enhancing our understanding of their mental health challenges and shaping more impactful interventions.



Culturally-Sensitive and Language-Adaptive Mental Health Awareness

Empowering ethnic communities in Hong Kong by enhancing culturally-sensitive and language-adaptive mental health awareness. This initiative is grounded in the recognition of the unique challenges these communities face, and it underpins the team's resolve to create an environment where tailored mental health resources are not just available, but are also accessible in a manner that resonates with the cultural and linguistic contexts of those served.

Cultivating Community Support Networks

Building strong community networks that promote the use of local resources and encourage proactive help-seeking, enhancing mental health support and early intervention through culturally-sensitive, evidence-based practices.



Fostering Lasting Change

We strive to effect lasting, positive change in the lives of ethnic minority individuals and families in Hong Kong. The team works to ensure that these communities are equipped with the necessary tools and resources for maintaining mental health and happiness, championing a future where mental well-being is accessible to everyone.

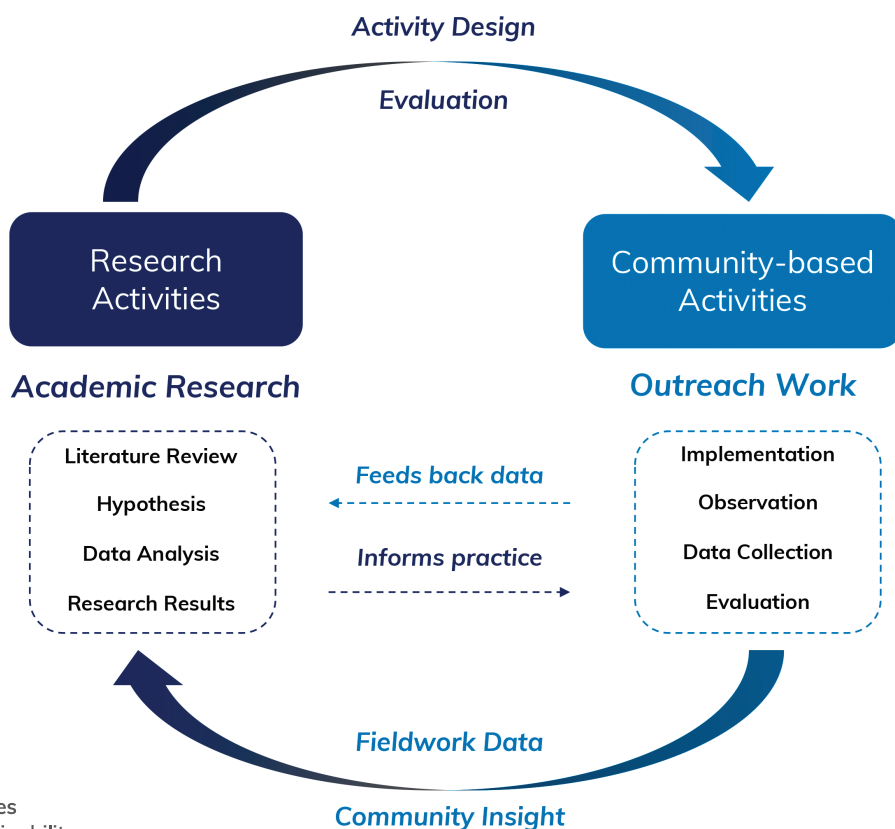
1.3. Current Projects

Project Title	Funding Agency	Approved Project Amount	Project Period	Primary Nature	Target Group
Towards a More Inclusive Hong Kong: An Academic Study on Mental Health Policy for Ethnic Minority Elderly	Centre for Aging Studies, the HKUST	HK\$2.7 million	Feb 2023 – Jan 2026	Research-oriented	Indian, Pakistani, Nepalese and Chinese elderly (65+)
Supporting Ethnic Minority Elderly with Mental Health Needs	Health Bureau, HKSARG	HK\$2 million	May 2023 – May 2025	Community-oriented	Indian, Pakistani and Nepalese elderly (65+)
Preparing and Deploying Ethnic Minority Lay Leaders to Promote Mental Well-Being Among Hong Kong's Major Ethnic Minority Communities	Health Bureau, HKSARG	HK\$2 million	Apr 2022 – Mar 2024	Community-oriented	Indians, Pakistanis, Nepalese and Filipinos
Enhancing the Mental Health of Hong Kong's Non-Chinese Youth Aged 15-24	Chief Executive's Community List 2023, The Charities Trust The Hong Kong Jockey Club	HK\$13.7 million	Mar 2024 – Feb 2027	Research- and community-oriented	Hong Kong's non-Chinese youth aged 15-24
Mental Well-Being in the Greater Bay Area (GBA): An Interdisciplinary Approach to Awareness, Assessment, and Intervention (粵港澳大灣區的心理康復：一種跨學科的認知、評估和介入方法)	HKUST – HKUST(GZ) 20 for 20 Cross-campus Collaborative Research Scheme	HK\$1 million	Apr 2024 – Mar 2025	Research-oriented	GBA area residents
Strengthening Family Relationships for Hong Kong's Ethnic Minority Communities in the Aftermath of the COVID-19 Pandemic	Health Bureau, HKSARG	HK\$2 million	May 2023 – May 2025	Community-oriented	Indian, Pakistani and Nepalese families
Learning from the Past and Acting for the Future of Hong Kong's Ethnic Minorities: A Comprehensive Analysis of BDF Research Projects and Culturally Sensitive Anti-drug Studies Among South Asians in Hong Kong Beat Drugs Fund (BDF)	HKSARGHK	HK\$3 million	Sept 2024 – Aug 2027	Research- and community-oriented	Ethnic Minority Youth in Hong Kong

1.4. Unified Efforts: Blending Research and Community Initiatives Together

In our approach, academic research and community projects are not isolated efforts; they are deeply interconnected. The academic research projects serve as a crucible for generating evidence-based and scientifically informed insights that inform and enhance the practical approaches employed in community projects. These insights are particularly focused on understanding the local needs of ethnic minority communities, optimizing resource allocation, and integrating cutting-edge practical solutions and policy suggestions for societal benefit.

Conversely, the community projects act as a real-world testing ground for interventions that emerge from research. The outreach services from community projects provide empirical data and users' experiences that feed back into the research, refining academic inquiry and grounding it in tangible outcomes. This symbiotic and synergistic relationship not only maximizes the impact of both domains but also fosters a holistic approach to problem-solving that is deeply rooted in both evidence and empathy.



Principles

- Sustainability
- Evidence for public policy
- Comprehensive approach across life course

RESEARCH PROJECTS



2.1. Research Papers

The team has been working to contribute valuable insights to the academic community. Below, you will find an overview of our working papers, their current status, and a glimpse into the findings each contains.

Near Completion

Paper 1

A Systematic Review of Studies Evaluating Ethnic Minority Mental Health: Policy Implications for Hong Kong's Ethnic Minorities in the Post-Pandemic Era

Authors: Mengyuan NIU, Naubahar SHARIF, Wenjin CHEN

This systematic literature review aims to investigate the potential impact of risk factors on the mental health of ethnic minorities and explore strategies to promote mental health in the post-pandemic era. Using an ecological framework, this study synthesizes the relationship between risks, strategies, and mental health status of ethnic minorities across individual, micro, meso, exo, and macro systems. Five key risks are identified: racism, negative personal attitudes and

behaviours, adverse experiences and challenges related to COVID-19, social isolation, and information overload. Strategies for enhancing mental health encompass individual efforts, strong social support, and faith and beliefs. Adaptations of these strategies for the Hong Kong context are considered, providing tailored policy implications and recommendations. These findings serve as valuable references for future ethnic minority mental health research.

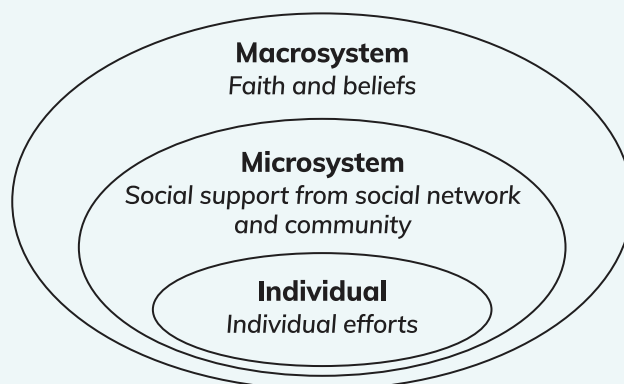


Figure: Categories of positive strategies from different levels
Reprinted and adapted from: Bronfenbrenner, U. (1994). Ecological models of human development. *International encyclopedia of education*, 3(2), 37-43.

Paper 2

Informal Care, Social Relationships and Life Satisfaction among Ethnic Minority Elderly

Authors: Mengyuan NIU, Naubahar SHARIF, Wenjin CHEN, Xinyi WANG

As ethnic minority individuals have their preference for caregiving arrangements, this study explores their social network typologies in Hong Kong and how these relationships impact their life satisfaction when transitioning to dependence in later life. Preliminary results from interviews and the convoy model reveal South Asian traditional norms in informal caregiving arrangements, despite these elderlies having migrated to Hong Kong decades ago. Kinship remains the primary source of informal care, while friends have a lesser role. This study also provides valuable social policy insights for finding effective instruments to enhance elderly care and the life quality of ethnic minorities.

Paper 3

Mental Health Literacy of Ethnic Minority Elders in A Chinese Society: A Mixed-Method Study among South Asians in Hong Kong

Authors: Naubahar SHARIF, Wenjin CHEN, Menyuan NIU

This study presents the findings of a mixed-method study on mental health literacy of South Asian ethnic minority elders in Hong Kong. The study aimed to understand their knowledge and awareness of mental health issues and their access to appropriate services. Quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews were conducted with a sample of South Asian elders and their caregivers. The findings underscore the need for culturally sensitive mental health literacy programs for ethnic minority elders in Hong Kong. These programs should enhance knowledge about mental health, address misconceptions, and improve access to services. Language accessibility and cultural competence within the public health system should also be improved. This research contributes to the development of interventions that promote mental well-being and ensure equitable access to mental health care in multicultural societies.



Intermediate Development Phase



Paper 4

Unveiling the Occupational Barrier: Exploring Understaffing Challenges and Occupational Attainment Disadvantage among Ethnic Minority Social Workers in Hong Kong

Authors: Haoming ZHANG, Naubahar SHARIF, Asha SUJITH, Wenjin CHEN

This research aims to address the issue of understaffing of social workers with an ethnic minority background in Hong Kong by exploring the occupational barriers they face and providing policy recommendations based on findings.

Paper 5

Causes, Impacts and Recommendations of the Shortage of Ethnic Minority Mental Health Professionals in Hong Kong

Authors: Asha SUJITH, Naubahar SHARIF, Wenjin CHEN

The study tries to understand why there are so few mental health professionals in Hong Kong through examination of barriers they face and their impacts, and potential strategies for improvement.

Initial Research Stage



Paper 6

The Impact of Elderly Employment on Mental Well-being of Ethnic Minority in Hong Kong

Paper 7

The Impact of Natural Outdoor Environment on Mental Health: Comparing Different Ethnic Groups in Hong Kong

2.2. Comprehensive Initiative: Hong Kong Elderly Well-being Survey (HKEWS)

The Hong Kong Elderly Well-being Survey (HKEWS) is a comprehensive territory-wide survey conducted among elderly individuals (aged 65+) in Hong Kong. The primary objective of the survey is to explore four key dimensions pertaining to the elderly population in Hong Kong: diversity, well-being, the impact of COVID-19, and elderly care. Our goal is to invite 400 participants from Pakistani, Indian, Nepalese, and Chinese backgrounds to participate in the survey. The data collected through this survey hold significant value in providing scientific insights into the mental health well-being of ethnic minorities residing in Hong Kong, while also serving as a foundation for formulating innovative and culturally sensitive social policies aimed at bolstering support for ethnic minority communities.



Conducted a pilot survey in November 2023 and officially launched the project in January 2024.



Completed over

150

surveys with elderly participants by the end of March 2024.



2.3. Research Projects Underway

Project 1

Towards a More Inclusive Hong Kong: An Academic Study on Mental Health Policy for Ethnic Minority Elderly

Duration: February 2023 – January 2026

The three-year project focuses on examining the psychological impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, inter-ethnic disparities, and factors contributing to emotional resilience among Hong Kong's elderly population. The study specifically targets four ethnic origins: mainstream local Hong Kong Chinese, Indians, Pakistanis, and Nepalese. The project aims to provide policy recommendations to the HKSAR Government based on its findings.

One core component of this project is the Hong Kong Elderly Well-being Survey (HKEWS). The survey was officially launched in January 2024 and has successfully gathered responses from over 150 elderly participants representing diverse ethnic backgrounds.

Project 2

Enhancing the Mental Health of Hong Kong's Non-Chinese Youth Aged 15-24 (Research-stream)

Duration: March 2024 – February 2027

This three-year youth-based project aims to enhance the mental health of ethnic minority youth (aged 15-24) and foster their integration into mainstream Hong Kong society. The project will employ a range of tailored activities, initiatives, and programs to achieve these objectives.

Meanwhile, our team will establish comparison groups with varying levels of intervention to evaluate the impact of these activities. The project findings will provide valuable insight to service providers and government officials, enabling them to design effective measures and policies to enhance the mental well-being of ethnic minority youths and facilitate their integration into society.

Project 3

Mental Well-Being in the Greater Bay Area (GBA): An Interdisciplinary Approach to Awareness, Assessment, and Intervention

Duration: April 2024 – March 2025

Funded and supported by the HKUST – HKUST (GZ) 20 for 20 Cross-campus Collaborative Research Scheme, our focus on mental health will extend beyond Hong Kong to the Greater Bay Area through the collaborative efforts of researchers from two campuses through this project. Utilizing various data sources, this project aims to identify and analyze early signs of mental disorders as well as predict the level of mental health risk in the GBA.

In addition to establishing a theoretical framework for cross-region analysis, a notable aspect of this collaboration is the development of an Early Warning System to cope with the risk continuously and promote the mental health in the GBA area. Findings from this project will contribute to enhancing mental health literacy and informing evidence-based interventions in the GBA.

COMMUNITY PROJECTS



3.1. Outreach Team Key Activities

Culturally Attuned Senior Engagement: Implementing culturally sensitive activities such as life story sharing and Tai Chi designed for ethnic minority elderly, to reduce isolation, improve mental health, facilitate community engagement and encourage inter-generational and cross-cultural exchange.

Empowerment through Mental Health First Aid Training: Providing Mental Health First Aid training to ethnic minority community lay leaders, enhancing their ability to support and educate their peers, thereby encouraging early intervention and reducing mental health stigma.

Strengthening Family Relationships: Designing and delivering evidence-based psychoeducational workshops and engaging family bonding programs to enrich family relationships, cultivate resilience, and promote open dialogue about mental health within the home environment.

Holistic Youth Empowerment Services: Crafting a comprehensive approach for ethnic minority youth encompassing educational support, skill-building, and mental health awareness initiatives to foster inclusivity, bolster self-esteem, and provide tools for successful societal integration.

3.2. Projects Description and Impact

Each project serves as a cornerstone in the mission to create a more inclusive, understanding, and mentally resilient society. Please find further details on the specific goals, activities, and preliminary impacts of these projects below.

Project 1

Preparing and Deploying Ethnic Minority Lay Leaders

Duration: April 2022 - March 2023

This two-year initiative is dedicated to training ethnic minority lay leaders in Mental Health First Aid, equipping them to disseminate mental health knowledge within their communities, fostering awareness, and encouraging help-seeking behavior in a language-adaptive and culturally congruent manner.

Impact Statistics



28

Indian, Pakistani, Nepali, and Filipino lay leaders completed Mental Health First Aid Training



15,780+

Indian, Pakistani, Nepali, and Filipino reached and trained in mental health first aid knowledge



Over 80

talks and community outreach completed



67

mental health videos

have been produced in various languages, including Hindi, Urdu, Nepali, Tagalog, and English.

Transformative Actions

TRAINING PROGRAMS

- Performed foundational work in building a network of lay leaders, laying the groundwork for the project’s long-term sustainability and impact.
- Provided Mental Health First Aid Training for lay leaders, enhancing their ability to support and respond to mental health needs within their communities.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

- Elevated community empowerment through targeted outreach activities and educational workshops.
- Customized programs to meet the unique needs and statuses of participants from diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- Delivered programs in both online and offline modes to ensure accessibility and convenience for all participants.

RESOURCES DEVELOPMENTS

- Crafted a suite of mental health resources, attentively addressing cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic nuances.
- Distributed multilingual mental health materials throughout diverse community centers and religious sites to enhance accessibility.

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Project 2

Supporting Ethnic Minority Elderly with Mental Health Needs

Duration: May 2023 - May 2025

This project is committed to promoting the mental well-being of ethnic minority seniors (65+) through culturally sensitive activities, such as life story sharing and Tai Chi sessions. These initiatives not only aim to combat social isolation and elevate overall well-being but also strive to identify and address hidden needs within this vulnerable population.

Interim Impact

Engaged with **117** ethnic minority seniors through both individual and group-based life story sharing, creating a sense of connection and community.

Initiated dialogue and support networks, revealing previously unidentified mental health needs within the elderly population.

Recruited and trained **30** volunteers from diverse ethnic backgrounds to serve as **'buddies'** for ethnic minority seniors, fostering intergenerational and cross-cultural exchanges.

Project 3

Strengthening Family Relationships Post-COVID-19

Duration: May 2023 - May 2025

This project provides a range of services designed to support ethnic minority families in the aftermath of the pandemic. By delivering evidence-based psychoeducation and mindfulness-based activities, the objective is to create safe spaces for training to strengthen family bonds and relationships, thereby enhancing overall well-being.

Interim Impact

Reached **127** Indian, Pakistani, and Nepali families, who completed a family relationships survey to understand their needs.

Developed and delivered an evidence-based training module on the foundations of mental health, family relationships, communications and parenting.

Executed **24 in-depth and intensive training sessions** for families across 18 districts in Hong Kong.

Project 4

Enhancing the Mental Health of Hong Kong's Non-Chinese Youth Aged 15-24 (Community-stream)

Launch: March 2024 - February 2027

Spanning three years, this initiative aims to better the mental health of ethnic minority youth (15-24) by promoting belonging and inclusivity. It includes tailored activities to aid integration into society and ascend the social ladder, alongside scholarly research to fill the service and academic gaps in this field.



OUR TEAM

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Project Lead

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