Organiser: 香港心理衞生會 The Mental Health Association of Hong Kong Support organization: ZURICH 蘇黎世 | ZURICH Foundation Z蘇黎世基金會

CHILL LAB 超正常研究室

Empowering Youth Through Innovation: The Effectiveness and Sustainability of the Chill Lab Youth Mental Health Program

Mr. Benson Chan, Chief Officer (Service), The Mental Health Association of Hong Kong (MHAHK)

Mr. Tyson Poon, Project Supervisor, The Mental Health Association of Hong Kong (MHAHK)

1 Introduction

The **Chill Lab** is a pioneering initiative that addresses the pressing mental health challenges faced by adolescents in Hong Kong—challenges intensified by academic pressure, family expectations, and the prolonged psychosocial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recent findings from a population-based survey conducted by **The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK, 2023)** revealed that **24.4% of children and adolescents had experienced at least one mental health issue in the past year,** and nearly half of these cases involved two or more co-occurring conditions. Among secondary school students, the rates of **suicidal ideation, plan, and attempt** were reported at **8.4%**, **3.8%**, and **2.3%**, respectively—figures substantially higher than the population average. These data underscore an urgent need for innovative, evidence-based interventions that are accessible, engaging, and culturally relevant to young people.

In response, the **Chill Lab initiative**, funded by the **Z Zurich Foundation** and supported by **Zurich Insurance (Hong Kong)**, was established to promote mental well-being among adolescents through an innovative **"3Ds Approach"**—integrating **Centre-based**, **School-based**, and **Community-based** programs to build a holistic mental wellness ecosystem across Hong Kong.

Targeting 58% of Hong Kong's secondary schools, this initiative aims to serve youth across local, international, and ethnic minority schools. Ultimately, the project aspires to positively impact 180,000 individuals and transform the lives of 11,000 young people, creating a lasting and measurable improvement in youth mental health and well-being.

At its core, the **Youth Hub Experience Centre**—the first of its kind in Hong Kong—**leverages Virtual Reality (VR)** and **Augmented Reality (AR)** technologies to deliver **interactive and emotionally engaging mental health education**.

- **Emotion Odyssey (VR):** Immersive simulations replicating the lived experiences of mental health conditions to enhance empathy and understanding.
- **Emotion Scope (AR):** Interactive emotion-recognition and regulation games fostering self-awareness and resilience.
- **Human Library:** Facilitated dialogues with individuals in recovery, normalizing mental health discussions and promoting social inclusion.

By integrating innovative technologies familiar to young people, Chill Lab transforms mental health education into an **experiential, relatable, and empowering journey**, fostering **mental health literacy**, **emotional resilience**, and **help-seeking behavior** within the next generation.

2 Methods

The Chill Lab adopts a **3D Transformative Framework**, combining education, empathy, and innovation to empower youth.

Centre-Based + School-Based + Community-Based

Program Components:

- Centre-Based: Youth Hub Experience Centre — *Emotion Odyssey (VR), Emotion Scope (AR), Human Library sessions.*
- School-Based: *Helping Adolescents Thrive workshops, Lunchtime Mental Health Stations, and Expressive Arts sessions.*
- Community-Based: *Roadshows, exhibitions, and social media campaigns promoting public engagement and awareness.*

Evaluation Framework:

- **Mixed-method approach:** Quantitative (n=42,500) and qualitative feedback.
- **Validated tools:** Inventory of Adolescent Emotion Regulation, WHO-5 Well-being Index, Social Emotional Abilities Survey, Reported and Intended Behavior Scale
- **Research partners:** Z Zurich Foundation, Hong Kong Polytechnic University APSS
- **Participants:** Students, school personnel, parents from over 190 secondary schools and general public

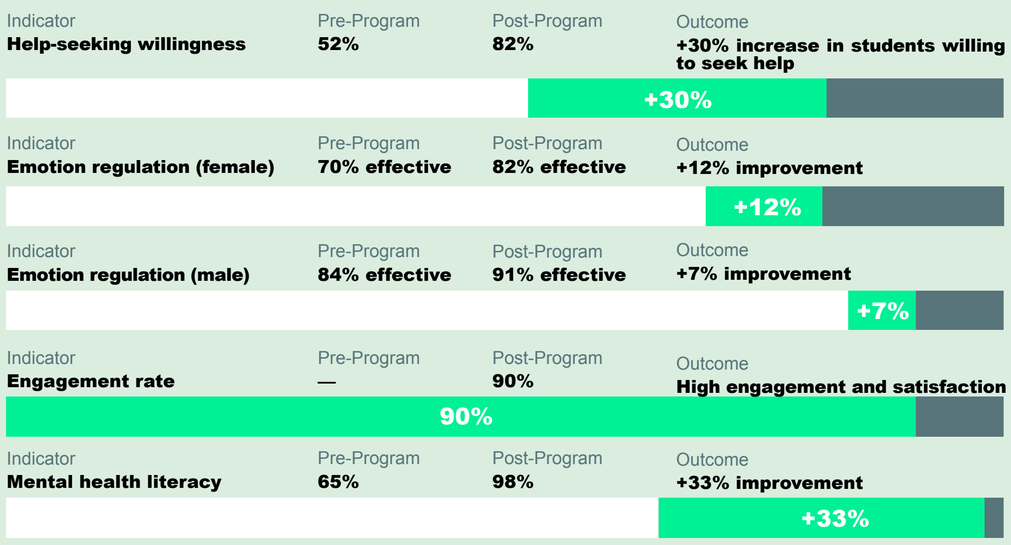
3 Results

Quantitative Outputs

- **150,000+ individuals** impacted.
- **230+ Youth Mental Health Ambassadors** trained.
- **190+ secondary schools** participated across Hong Kong.

Outcomes

Indicator	Pre-Program	Post-Program	Outcome
Help-seeking willingness	**52%**	**82%**	**+30% increase in students willing to seek help**
Emotion regulation (female)	**70% effective**	**82% effective**	**+12% improvement**
Emotion regulation (male)	**84% effective**	**91% effective**	**+7% improvement**
Engagement rate	—	**90%**	**High engagement and satisfaction**
Mental health literacy	**65%**	**98%**	**+33% improvement**



Key Observations:

- **98%** of participants reported greater understanding of mental health and emotions.
- Teachers observed **enhanced empathy and stronger peer support in** classrooms.
- Parents reported **improved emotional communication** at home.
- Students demonstrated **increased initiative** in promoting well-being activities.

"After Chill Lab, our students began initiating mental health discussions with classmates—it changed our school culture."
— *A teacher from one of the participating schools*

4 Conclusions

The Chill Lab demonstrates how **immersive technology** and **experiential learning** can transform youth mental health education. By integrating empathy-focused **VR/AR activities and lived-experience sharing**, the program empowers students to manage emotions, build compassion, and engage confidently with mental health topics. The program's cross-sectoral collaboration model—linking schools, parents, and professionals—ensures sustainable, community-based impact.

Its **3D framework**—spanning centre, school, and community—offers a **sustainable and replicable model** for promoting emotional literacy and reducing stigma across Hong Kong's education system.

5 References

The Chinese University of Hong Kong. (2023, October 10). CUHK announces survey results on the mental health of local child, adolescent and elderly populations [Press release]. Communications and Public Relations Office, CUHK. https://www.cpr.cuhk.edu.hk/en/press/cuhk-announces-survey-results-on-the-mental-health-of-local-child-adolescent-and-elderly-populations/.