

Benefits of a positive youth development program (Tin Ka Ping P.A.T.H.S. Project) for program implementers: A qualitative study

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Abstract

As a positive youth development (PYD) program, the Tin Ka Ping P.A.T.H.S. Project (TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project) has promoted the development of the program participants such as their psychosocial competencies. However, there are relatively fewer studies on the benefits of PYD programs on the program implementers. As teachers implement the PYD program, it is theoretically and practically important to understand the impact of the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project on the teachers. In the present study, we examined the impacts of the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project on the program implementers. By analysing the qualitative data derived from individual interviews, we found that the project promoted the program implementers in terms of their professional development (e.g., teaching skills), personal development (e.g., emotion regulation) and social relationship (e.g., relationships with students), as well as benefits for parents and benefits for schools. In line with the subjective outcome evaluation findings based on previous studies, the present findings suggest that the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project promotes the holistic development on both adolescents and teachers.

Keywords: Positive youth development, Tin Ka Ping P.A.T.H.S. Project, Chinese adolescents, qualitative evaluation, China

Introduction

Positive youth development (PYD) approach aims to promote holistic development in adolescents and unleash their potentials (1-3). In the Western contexts, there are studies showing that PYD programs are successful in reducing adolescent problem behavior, such as delinquency (4-6). Drawing upon the successful Western experience, a large-scale curricula-based PYD program entitled “Positive Adolescent Training through Holistic Social” programs (Project P.A.T.H.S.) was implemented in

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Hong Kong between 2005 and 2019 with the financial support of the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust. The Tier 1 Program is a curriculum-based universal program targeting junior secondary students, which was developed based on 15 constructs identified in the successful PYD programs, such as bonding and self-efficacy (7). The Tier 2 Program targeted at students with greater psychological needs. Systematic evaluations using quantitative (e.g., longitudinal survey) and qualitative methods (e.g., student focus groups and diaries) revealed the positive impacts of the program based on the perspectives of both students and program implementers, such as enhanced self-confidence, resilience and personal growth (8-12).

In view of the growing youth problems in mainland China due to the rapid economic development in the past few decades (13,14), the Tier 1 Program of Project P.A.T.H.S. was implemented in mainland China with the financial support of Tin Ka Ping Foundation which is entitled "Tin Ka Ping P.A.T.H.S. Project" (TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project). It began with a pilot implementation, which lasted for three years in four secondary schools in East China between 2011 and 2014. Because of the success of the pilot phase (15), Tin Ka Ping Foundation further supported the project for another three-year full implementation covering thirty secondary schools between 2015 and 2018. Then, the Foundation took over in 2018 to launch a new phase entitled "Building the 'Tin' Homeland Together".

Similar to the Project P.A.T.H.S. in Hong Kong, the evaluation findings of the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project are very encouraging. Our systematic evaluation studies showed that over 90% of the students were highly satisfied with the program content (e.g., classroom atmosphere), quality of program implementers (e.g., curriculum proficiency), and program effectiveness (e.g., promotion of resilience) (16-18). Moreover, Shek, Zhu and Leung (19) found that over 95% of the program implementers have rated their performances as positive such as having a good mastery of the curriculum and teaching skills, where they emphasized that the project implementation has promoted their professional growth.

As part of the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project, all program implementers normally attended a single

2.5-day training workshop to consolidate their understanding of PYD concepts and acquire relevant teaching skills for project implementation through activities (e.g., group discussions) (20). Systematic evaluation studies showed that the program implementers in general rated the training workshops as positive in terms of the program quality (e.g., strengthened understanding of PYD), program effectiveness (e.g., promoted teaching skills), self-performance (e.g., enhanced confidence in program implementation), quality of workshop instructors, and administrative arrangements (20-23).

Professional development (PD) programs for teachers attempt to enhance teacher knowledge and skills through training and certification (24). The impacts of PD are twofold. First, PD can promote teachers' job satisfaction once they acquired essential knowledge and skills to promote their teaching quality and communication with students (25, 26). Second, once their job satisfaction has been enhanced, their well-being will increase which will further promote the well-being of their students (27-29). Besides, these benefits will ultimately enhance students' performance (30).

Although evaluation studies showed that the program implementers generally rated the training workshops and project implementation as effective in terms of their professional growth, there are three issues that remained unknown (19-23). First, we have to understand the types of professional growth that are involved. Second, it is important to ask whether professional growth can be extended to other areas such as personal and social development. Third, there is a need to understand whether the benefits can be extended to schools, since previous studies showed that effective teaching skills can promote students' attainments and school reputations (31, 32). With these questions in mind, the present study attempted to explore the impacts of the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project on the program implementers through individual interviews.

Methods

A qualitative approach was adopted in the present study to understand the perceptions of program implementers (e.g., teachers) on the TKP P.A.T.H.S.

Project. As part of the qualitative approach, individual rather than focus group interview was chosen for the following three reasons. First, collectivistic social structure of mainland China focuses on the importance of coherence and hierarchy within a group setting (33). Therefore, conducting individual rather than focus group interviews can reduce the impact of conformity on our implementers' willingness to express their true opinions (34, 35). Second, all program implementers normally received at least 2.5-day training program to gain an understanding of PYD and teaching skills before implementing the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project in their schools. Our previous studies (36) showed that the implementers rated the training program as very positive in terms of its content (e.g., curriculum design), instructor performance (e.g., good mastery of the curriculum), as well as perceived benefits for the implementers (e.g., professional developments). Therefore, conducting individual interviews with implementers does not only provide us with further details of what kinds of professional development were involved, but also benefits in other fields including the social and personal domains (37-40). Third, the teaching materials in the current program involved transplanting those used in the Project P.A.T.H.S. in Hong Kong to local use in mainland China. The adoption of individual interviews would help to explore the teaching styles of teachers within the specific cultural context of mainland China (41, 42). Such an understanding is important because a teacher-centered approach is commonly adopted in mainland China whereas the principle of the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project emphasized the importance of providing students with opportunities to learn from their firsthand experiences instead (i.e., student-centered approach) (43).

Data collection

The data were collected in the summer of 2021. We conducted semi-structured interviews to explore the subjective experience of the program implementers because we could use probes to follow-up the responses given by the interviewees (44). The semi-structured interviews focused on implementers' perceptions and evaluations of the project

implementation. These included the project progress (e.g., curriculum manual units), project impacts (e.g., teachers, students, parents, community and schools), difficulties encountered, as well as suggestions for additional training and further improvements. The present study focused on analyzing the implementers' sharing on the project in regard to the positive impacts/benefits on implementers and others (e.g., parents or schools).

Each interview was conducted by two researchers who are familiar with the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project. We conducted interviews on 9 implementers, with one interview for each interviewee. The interview lasted for approximately 1 to 2 hour(s). All implementers had substantial experience (at least five years) in teaching the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project. Five of the interviewees (55.6%) were either chief or senior implementers in the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project. Before each interview, ethical approval was obtained from the university and permission to record the interview was obtained from the interviewees.

Data analysis

We conducted the interviews in Mandarin. The interviews were audio-recorded and fully transcribed. Then the Chinese transcripts were translated into English. We employed thematic analysis which is a more flexible data analysis method in qualitative research (45). An experienced researcher first looked at texts related to "positive impacts/benefits to implementers or others" for several times. Then, we identified recurrent patterns and combined them into themes. Several themes emerged from the data analyses. These included benefits for implementers (such as professional, personal and social developments), benefits for parents (such as parenting), and benefits for schools (such as school reputations). Second, the code and themes were peer-checked by four trained research staff, where new themes were added as they emerged. Third, the initial researcher revised the codes and themes based on the feedback. Fourth, these codes and themes were finally checked by the project leader. Among the raw transcripts, 20 were randomly selected for calculating intra- and inter-rater reliability on the categorization. For intra-rater reliability, these randomly selected

transcripts were rerated by two colleagues who took part in the initial rating process. For inter-rater reliability, we invited two other research staff, who did not participate in the initial rating process, to rate these 20 randomly selected transcripts individually.

Results

A total of 59 meaningful units were derived from the responses concerning the benefits of taking part in the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project on the program implementers and others, which can be divided into five categories including benefits for implementers in terms of a) professional development (n = 14), b) personal development (n = 17), c) and social development (n = 6), as well as d) benefits for parents (n = 8) and e) benefits for schools (n = 14). The intra-rater and inter-rater reliability of coding on the categorization reached 90% and 85%, respectively.

Theme 1: Benefits for implementers' professional development

The implementers emphasized that their professional development had been promoted through the experiences of preparing and delivering the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project. These included improvement of their teaching skills, increase in their opportunities of rewards/promotions, and enhancement of their professional networking.

“Improvement of teaching skills”

Through delivering the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project, the implementers learnt the importance of shifting their focus from solely on students' academic performance to their mental well-being. Once a new perspective was taken, it promoted the implementers' capability to manage their students and assist them to solve problems effectively. Some sharing can be seen below.

- “Learnt new teaching skills.” (Chief P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 4)
- “The course provided us with the framework, but then we need to use our own thoughts to consolidate our class by including the idea of

your own about what concept and method to convey to students. For example, setting a teaching target like teaching students with emotional comfort or academic guidance on specific lessons.” (Teacher 6)

- “Through teaching the moral education course, it is helpful for teachers to learn how to manage and lead students in classes.” (P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 5)
- “It allowed teachers to view their students from different perspectives (e.g., psychological aspect), so that you can truly and effectively help them to solve problems.” (Chief P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 1)
- “Through the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project, it is found that the relationship between teachers and students has been eased, as teachers can understand students from a new perspective, so some class teachers are passionate to participate in the project.” (Chief P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 1)

“Enhancement of opportunities to receive rewards or promotion”

The implementers disclosed that teaching the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project was beneficial for their career path, where they had not only been promoted but also gained various rewards by publishing journals discussing the effectiveness of the course (e.g., the benefits of taking the course among students). Some sharing can be seen below.

- “Yes, I gained two first prizes because of the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project. One of my essays discussed the project in terms of the friendship between teacher and students, and another essay focused on the theme of empathy. All these involved case studies...” (Teacher 6)
- “Through the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project, we have gained a lot of awards by conducting case studies and writing thesis in regard to the benefits of taking the moral education.” (Chief P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 9)
- “One of the teachers, whose teaching content adopted the concepts from the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project, has won the advanced class prize in Zhoushan City which is the

highest honor in the province. His thesis on the moral education has also won the first prize of the city.” (P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 5)

- “One of the teachers has gained and grown a lot via taking the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project. She is now a director of the office.” (P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 7)

“Expansion of professional network”

During the interviews, the majority of the implementers expressed that their professional networks with other teachers have expanded through the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project, where teachers from other subjects were interested in attending the training or even invited the implementers to teach in their class.

- “Other than the teachers from the Moral Education Department, teachers from other subjects have also attended the classes together.” (P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 5)”
- “I knew some of the class teachers wanted to be part of our TKP P.A.T.H.S. team... Although some of the core tutor (in the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project) are no longer working in the team, they asked if I could also bring them to the training workshop if possible...” (Teacher 8)
- “Even teachers from the junior department also came and observed our class. They also came for discussion and sharing. For the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project, it is not only popular among students, but also teachers too.” (Chief P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 9)
- “One Physics teacher showed concerns about delivering Psychology lesson to his class... Thus, he kept inviting me to deliver the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project as part of his Psychology lesson. Throughout the course, he has not only participated in the lesson but also informed me in regard to what happened in his class and I would follow up on the targeted problems. In general, the response from that class was very good.” (P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 7)

- “In my school, we got a sharing lesson among teachers once a year. For those teachers who are in the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project, our school would choose one of them to share his/her teaching experiences with other teachers within the moral education meeting.” (Chief P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 9)

Theme 2: Benefits for implementers’ personal development

Three aspects of personal developments were identified from the individual interviews with implementers after participating in the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project. These included emotional regulation (e.g., managing anger), self-growth (e.g., self-reflection), and improved parenting (e.g., relationships with one’s own children).

“Learning emotional regulation”

The implementers opined that they became more capable in regulating their emotions after joining the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project because it did not only strengthen their skills to manage their negative emotion (e.g., anger), but also enhanced the development of being empathic to others. Some examples can be seen below.

- “In terms of emotional management, we learnt ways to identify and express our emotion, which is applicable to our workplace and daily life.” (P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 5)
- “...learnt empathy, leadership and controlling negative emotions through delivering the course, in which I applied them to my children and students. This is a boost for myself.” (Teacher 6)

“Providing opportunities for personal growth”

Through preparing and delivering the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project, the implementers gained opportunities to engage in self-development in different domains (such as performing on stage, self-reflections and so on) which were all important for them to improve

their emotional regulation, career planning and social relationships. The teachers shared the following experiences.

- “Through the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project, my students and I grew a lot together...what I learnt can be applied to various fields in my life.” (Teacher 6)
- “I personally have grown a lot through taking the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project. Without the project, our teachers would not be growing that fast.” (P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 7)
- “Shall I say in this way? I felt good for being “advanced” in delivering moral education by being one of the core tutors in the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project. I hope that the principles of the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project will always be with me as it helps me to grow.” (Teacher 8)
- “As part of the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project, I have performed on the stage for the first time...for me, it was my first time that I have ever been on stage, it is a new experience and very challenging.” (Chief P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 3)
- “... Through the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project, I have the opportunity to engage “me-time” for self-reflection, which involved emotion, career planning or social relationships with others...” (Chief P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 1)
- “I think teachers who deliver the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project are no different than teachers from other fields, as we all gain self-growth via teaching the courses.” (P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 5)
- “For emotional management, it is an essential lifelong topic regardless whether you are a child or adult. Through the process of preparing and delivering the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project, we (as teachers) achieved self-growth, self-clarification and self-adjustment in energy towards life...” (Chief P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 1)
- “In terms of co-creation and growth, it means that teachers and students grow together and make progress together. Therefore, not only teachers influence students, students also influence teachers in return.” (Teacher 6)
- “... We are very grateful for the opportunities given by Tin Ka Ping Foundation that we can participate in the project where both students and teachers benefited from it.” (P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 5)

“Improvement of parenting skills in program implementers”

Interestingly, most of the implementers also expressed that the knowledge and skills they learnt from the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project actually improved their parenting skills, which greatly improved their relationship with their children. Some examples are shown below.

- “The principles from the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project do not only influence my work, but also my life included parenting.” (P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 7)
- “Since the project also played an important role in my parenting skills in how to educate my own children, I am very passionate in delivering the course and will definitely continue to do it.” (Teacher 6)
- “Since attending the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project, I learnt a lot of useful parenting skills.” (Chief P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 9)
- “It is good for me to use those concepts, which are learnt through delivering the project, to educate my children. For example, I think my relationship with my children is still very good. My child's teacher has also invited me to share parenting experience in the parent-teacher meeting...” (Chief P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 9)
- “In fact, we (as parents) have also learnt a lot of parenting concepts from teaching the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project.” (P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 5)
- “One of our teachers said that the parenting method learnt from the project can be adopted in his own way of parenting.” (P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 5)

Theme 3: Benefits for implementers' interpersonal relationships

In terms of social development, the implementers expressed that their relationships with students and colleagues have improved through delivering the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project.

“Improved relationship with students”

Through delivering the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project, the implementers have not only gained more opportunities to interact with their students, but also learnt the skills to communicate with their students effectively through attending the training workshops. Therefore, their relationships with their students have been improved a lot by being able to understand their students thoroughly. Some sharing can be seen below.

- “The content covered in the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project are multi-dimensional. These include teaching skills, relationship between teachers and students, communication, student’s psychological problems, how should teachers guide our students, and how to communicate with them and so on... I think these are beneficial for us.” (Teacher 6)
- “Since I started teaching the project, I spent more time with my students and ensured that I have at least a few conversations with each of them every day, so that they would not feel being left out or ignored.” (Teacher 6)
- “For new teachers, the course is important for them as it involved learning how to communicate with students effectively. I think it is quite helpful to them.” (Chief P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 4)
- “Social interactions are interesting, as everyone has their own thoughts and ideas. How do you make students accepting your ideas by not feeling annoyed? This is a big question, and it will take us lifetime to contemplate about it.” (Teacher 6)

“Improved relationships with colleagues”

Through the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project, implementers had opportunities to collaborate with their colleagues, where the teamwork fostered their bonding to develop friendship. Some sharing is as follows:

- “Before implementing the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project, we just had ordinary colleague relationships. However, after taking the course, it has brought us so close and now we feel like relatives or friends.” (P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 7)
- “Just read the information and also sent a picture to Director Huang. Both of us were in tears when reading the information, as the information recorded what we have gone through in all these years.” (P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 7)

Theme 4: Benefits for parents

Although the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project is a curricula-based program targeting students, the benefits have also been extended to their parents. Some activities in the program aimed to enhance parents’ skills to communicate with their children by encouraging them to be involved in school activities. Three major benefits for parents were identified. These are improved parenting skills (e.g., effective communications with children), improved parent participation (e.g., engagement of school activities), and improved communication with children with implementers serving as mediators (e.g., reduced conflicts with children).

“Improved parenting skills among parents”

As part of the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project, there are classes designed specifically for parents to cultivate positive parenting skills. These included how to initiate effective communication with their children, give autonomy to their children to make decision and so on. The implementers pointed out that since most of the parents may not understand the concept of puberty where mood swing and tantrum tend to occur due to physical changes in their children (e.g., hormones), teaching parents with the skills of launching effective communications with their children is essential. Some benefits for parenting skills can be seen below.

- “Since parents may not understand the concept of puberty, we shared some parenting concepts with them in the meetings from

time to time. Also, at the same time we share some scientific family education articles and reports with them through WeChat and QQ platforms. It will be beneficial for them to learn how to be a competent parent...” (P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 5)

- “Children at this age (adolescents) are not willing to communicate with their parents. As a teacher, we must teach parents how to communicate with their children and encourage them to take the initiative to share some of their own things with us.” (Chief P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 4)
- “After participating in the project, the parents then started to realize that effective parenting involves guiding and cooperating with rather than commanding their children.” (Chief P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 4)
- “When having meetings with parents, we tend to also share tips with the parents based on the moral education perspective. These included how to care for children, how to create a more harmonious family atmosphere and so on. We are doing everything possible to guide our parents.” (P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 5)

“Enhanced parent participation in school activities”

The implementation of the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project has boosted the collaborations between implementers and parents, where parents were provided with opportunities to participate in school activities so that they can understand their children on a deeper level. More importantly, the collaboration between implementers and parents has also created a strong supporting network to enhance the positive development of children. Some examples are described below.

- “How do parents cooperate? Parent’s education. Parents also need education. That is, teachers and parents work together to improve and grow...” (Teacher 6)
- “We invited parents to participate in each of our moral education activities, for example, the coming-of-age ceremony, graduation ceremonies or singing competitions. Through

these participations, parents can gain a deeper understanding of their child in schools...” (P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 5)

- “We also invited parent representatives to participate in the course. They felt deeply touched every time when we invited them to speak...” (P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 5)

“Improved relationships with children through the mediation of implementers”

One of the typical phenomena observed in puberty is that children are reluctant to communicate with their parents directly. Therefore, by having the implementers act as mediators, this can help to resolve conflicts between parents and their children. An interviewee shared that “when the children first started participating in the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project, they may not communicate with their parents that much in issues they were concerned about. Then, we (as teachers) acted as mediators between children and their parents for communication because children were willing to talk to us. ...This kind of communication has helped to resolve conflicts between them.” (Chief P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 4)

Theme 5: Benefits for schools

The implementation of the project has also brought various benefits to schools. These included inspiring implementers to become passionate in their teaching, enhancing the chances of mutual communications among implementers for improvements, and improving school reputations.

“Inspiring passion in their teaching”

The implementers stated that they were being influenced by the great empathy and selfless concern for others shown by Dr. Tin (who is a philanthropist and founder of Tin Ka Ping Foundation sponsoring the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project financially) and the professionalism shown by the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project research team. These influential figures have inspired them to become passionate in their teaching where they aimed to deliver the course with a wholehearted attitude. Some examples are as follows.

- “Why should I be insistent on participating in the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project until now by working so hard for it? The major reason is the influence from Dr. Tin (founder of Tin Ka Ping Foundation, which financially sponsored the P.A.T.H.S. Project in mainland China) who inspired us a lot...” (Chief P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 3)
- “Other than Dr. Tin, we (as teachers) are also influenced by the passion and professionalism shown by Dr. Zhu and her research team. They cared for us a lot and I think it is very humanistic...” (Chief P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 3)
- “The TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project provided teachers with more chances to interact with students, therefore it can encourage more young teachers who are more enthusiastic in their work to join our teaching team.” (P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 5)
- “I feel meaningful of teaching the project, as it enriches me when doing it.” (Teacher 6)
- “I asked my students to write down their learning experience about taking the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project at the end of each semester. Although our students may not have an advanced level of written capabilities, reading their works has motivated me to keep working hard as I was impressed with what they have learnt through the lessons.” (P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 7)
- “I love challenges...I think I can apply what I have learnt from the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project to other China provinces...” (Chief P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 3)

“Promotion of communications among implementers for program improvement”

Since the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project focused on a “student-centered” rather than a “teacher-centered” approach, it provided students with chances to provide feedback in regard to the quality of lessons. The feedback has been used by implementers for improvements via mutual communications, where conflicts can be resolved and thus it created a positive learning environment for students. A teacher shared that “when asking students for feedback, one student

stated that some teaching assistants have merely played on their smartphones in classes especially when the teachers are not around. Therefore, I immediately hold a meeting with these teaching assistants to solve this issue.” (Chief P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 3)

“Program implementation improved the school reputation”

The school’s reputation has been improved after the implementation of the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project, which enhanced the admission rate even though the tuition fee is relatively higher than in other schools. Most importantly, it also attracted other schools to visit and took the course as a blueprint for developing their moral education lessons.

- “One of the marking schemes used in our school was developed on the basis of those being used in the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project, and we won the Second prize in the Zhoushan province.” (Teacher 5)
- “Many parents preferred to choose our school even though the tuition fee is relatively higher. I think it is because our school has the moral education being implemented and thus the admission rate, our school ethos and parents' satisfaction have all been improved a lot since then.” (P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 5)
- “After implementing the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project in our school, other schools are now learning from us by changing the teaching mode from teacher-centered to student-centered.” (Teacher 6)
- “So now schools in Zhoushan City also took reference of our TKP P.A.T.H.S. course, which emphasized learning from firsthand experiences as the blueprint to develop their moral education curriculum...” (P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 5)
- “Other schools also learnt from us including the No. 1 Middle School and Zhongshan Middle School, in which their teachers often come to us to learn by attending our course and replicated our courses in their schools.” (Teacher 6)

- “After joining the training workshop of the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project, our teachers adjusted their teaching from teacher-centered approach to student-centered approach. Teachers from other schools found it amazing and have also taken it as a reference to improve their teaching skills.” (Chief P.A.T.H.S. Implementer, teacher 9)

Discussion

The present study aimed to explore the perceptions of the impacts of the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project based on individual interviews with the program implementers. Our findings served four purposes. First, we can further understand the effects of the training workshops and related school support work. Second, we can gain insights if the program implementers have applied the knowledge and skills acquired from the training workshops to classroom settings. Third, we can further understand what and how the programs benefit the teachers in terms of their professional, personal and social development. Fourth, since the provision of training workshops is commonly found to promote teachers’ job satisfaction and well-being, therefore we can see if such benefits would further extend to parents and schools (46-49).

In line with findings from Shek, Zhu and Leung (19), the program implementers reported their professional networking has been expanded since the project implementations. Having the same goals as other teachers, such as delivering the project effectively, enhanced their sense of coherence and work as a team to share relevant teaching skills and strategies (50, 51). The program implementers also reported their relationships with students have improved because they learnt to focus on students’ well-being rather than academic performances. Importantly, Chinese teachers tend to take their students’ academic performances personally, as they believed that good teachers are those who are able to assist their students to perform well in examinations (52). However, care shown by teachers such as being supportive to their students’ needs instead plays an even more important role to promote their relationships with students (53, 54).

Based on the self-determination theory, it is important to fulfil three psychological needs (e.g., autonomy, competence and relatedness). As such, care shown by teachers will create a supporting environment for students to promote their feelings of being in control of their own behavior (autonomy), capabilities to deal with challenges (competence), and connections with others (relatedness) (55). More importantly, strong motivation allows students to take initiative in academic work and thus promote their engagement in academic studies (56). This is consistent with our findings in another paper (18), which revealed that students’ competencies and performance have been improved after joining the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project. This observation provides evidence for the relationship between teachers’ teaching performances and students’ well-being (57-60).

Moreover, the implementers reported acquiring strategies of emotion regulation via preparing and delivering the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project in their schools. In fact, teachers may sometimes need to regulate or even suppress their true emotions to maintain their professionalism, where a maladaptive regulation would harm both their professional and daily life (61). Therefore, the implementers practiced the skills such as being empathic to others through preparing and delivering the project, which promoted their relationship with students and broaden their creative thinking for professional and personal development by cultivating positive emotion (62, 63).

Interestingly, the implementers reported that their parenting skills have also improved after delivering the project such as focusing on their children’s well-being and regulating their own emotions. In fact, teachers tend to have heavy workloads leading to problems in maintaining work-life balance (62, 64, 65). As building a good relationship with their children via effective communication can prevent family conflicts and therefore promote their mental well-being, joining the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project helps to strengthen this family foundation (66).

In addition, school’s reputation was also promoted after including the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project as part of the extra-curriculum activities. Once the school’s reputation has been promoted, so would the admissions or opportunities to receive funding from governments. This will create positive school climates

such as recruiting passionate teachers to join the teaching teams, and providing students with better learning environments via purchasing extra devices or building extra facilities (67). Importantly, such positive school climates will promote teachers' sense of meaning and job satisfaction, which are the key factors determining if a teacher would leave their position and have a direct impact on students' academic performances (26, 46, 68).

In line with our findings from another paper (18), the benefits of the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project also extended to parents, such as having a better relationship with children through parental activities. Since the average working hours in mainland China are much longer than in other countries, time devoted to work will adversely affect parents' effort spent on their family and result in work-family conflicts (69-74). Therefore, parental activities provided parents and children with opportunities for family interactions (75). Moreover, the parents learnt to let go of their children by allowing them to make decisions independently. This is specifically important to Chinese parents, since their parenting style is hugely influenced by the concept of "Guan" which emphasized "to guide" and "to govern" to maintain family honors and harmony (76-79). However, intensive parental control over children may hinder their potential from achieving hostile development (80-82). Therefore, Chinese parents should instead provide their children with a supportive environment to promote their well-being, such as assisting them to make decisions with care and support (83). Obviously, the positive impact of the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project on parenting is an interesting lead for future development to involve the parents.

Our findings have practical value to future teacher professional development (PD). First, training workshops are essential for teachers to acquire relevant knowledge and skills for project implementation, where our findings showed that training workshops can promote professional, personal and social development in teachers. These findings are consistent with the contemporary findings that teachers tend to have better problem-solving and critical-thinking skills after participating in PD (84-86). Second, training workshops should be offered before the implementation stage because the impacts of PD only work in a sequential manner (87-

89). In other words, once teachers' well-being is promoted through gaining success in their workplaces, it will then enhance their teaching quality and further promote their students' well-being as well as their schools' reputations (27-29, 90).

Despite its innovative nature, the present study has several limitations. First, the program implementers may have exaggerated the benefits. However, this should not be the case, as the rewards and promotions are unrelated to their evaluation. Therefore, there is no incentive to motivate exaggeration. Second, the researchers may intentionally choose those transcripts in favor of the benefits of the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project. However, our positive findings are consistent with the previous studies using the subjective outcome evaluation (e.g., Form B) which has been proven to be reliable and valid (19, 91-93). Third, intra-rater and inter-rater reliability analyses showed that the coding and thematic analyses are reliable.

In conclusion, the benefits of implementing the TKP P.A.T.H.S. Project did not only benefit the teachers in their professional, personal and social development. It also benefited parents and promoted school's reputation. Besides qualitative data, it would be helpful to collect quantitative data in the future.

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