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The effectiveness and cultural compatibility of a
guided self-help cognitive-behaviour programme for
Asian students in New Zealand

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New Zealand

Kai-Chi Katie Lee
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Abstract

With more Asian migrants and students coming to New Zealand, there is a need to provide psychological interventions that is both effective and culturally compatible. Even though Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) has been shown to be an effective intervention in the treatment of depression and anxiety, few researches have examined the effectiveness of CBT with Asian populations outside the United States. Furthermore, no research has been identified that looked at the effectiveness of low intensity CBT with Asians in New Zealand. From an emic perspective, the cultural values and principles in which interventions were developed in, warranted that it be tested with other cultures to determine if its effectiveness was cross-cultural.

The purpose of the study was to fill the gap by examining the effectiveness and cultural compatibility of a guided self-help, low intensity CBT programme, Living Life to the Full (Williams, 2007), for students of Asian descent in New Zealand. A sample of 11 East Asian and Southeast Asian participants was recruited from universities and language school around the Auckland area. Quantitative measures were administered throughout the 8 weeks of the programme, and qualitative feedback was obtained at the end of the programme. Results supported the effectiveness of the programme, in the reduction of depression and anxiety, and the improvement of quality of life, adjustment and participants’ understanding of stress and low mood. In addition, participants found the programme culturally compatible and beneficial. The findings supported the suitability of the low intensity CBT programme for use with the Asian population.

Asian immigrants and students experience unique stressors and problems associated with adjusting to a new culture. Low intensity CBT helps to remove the barriers of stigma and reluctance to seek help, by providing a more accessible form of psychological interventions that is effective and culturally compatible with the Asian population.
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