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Gamification of Social Emotional Learning

The aim of the project “Gamification of Social Emotional Learning,” is to gamify social-emotional learning for middle primary school students. In collaboration with the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups, Hong Kong Shue Yan University has launched this project to promote social and emotional learning among primary school students. Co-led by Professor Catherine Tang and Dr. Jason Chow, the project has received HKD 27.36 million in funding from the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust. It aims to benefit 5,000 primary school students, their parents, and teachers, addressing systemic challenges in youth mental health.

The project team strives to create an integrative emotional education program that includes both online and in-person elements, based on the evidence-based social and emotional learning framework proposed by CASEL. The online platform Emotion World will feature multimedia tutorials, games, online counselling support, and an emotional resource hub. In-person components will include workshops for students, teachers, and parents and preliminary consultation sessions. The program will also include a daily emotional journal and systematic evaluation to measure its effectiveness.

The project team plans to develop and evaluate a comprehensive digital mental health program integrating gaming technologies,



social-emotional education, and online counselling support for middle primary school students (Primary 3 and 4), their parents, and teachers. This initiative seeks to equip students with the skills to understand, label, and manage both positive and negative emotions, express and manage their feelings, and use positive emotions to adapt to challenging life circumstances. The program enhances students' interest and engagement in social-emotional education by utilizing engaging game mechanics such as avatars, storylines, and social features. It provides a safe environment for practicing emotional competence skills and offers instant feedback in diverse social situations. An online counselling support platform

will be established to assist students, parents, and teachers, detect potential emotional difficulties, and facilitate early referrals to mental health services. It also includes an online resource hub for educational materials, games, and multimedia resources and provides offline workshops to enhance the emotional capacity of students, parents, and teachers. Additionally, a mobile application will be developed to enable access to educational materials and exercises on emotional awareness and expression. By addressing young students' emotional and mental health needs, the aim of this project is to make a significant social impact, contributing to the development of a generation of emotionally competent and resilient individuals.

In October 2024, a Game Concept Character Design Competition was held, inviting secondary school students to use AI tools to design game characters for emotional learning. Ninety-five teams from 31 schools participated, using AI tools to create engaging designs. The winning team from Kam Tim Pak Yu Secondary School will have their designs featured in the project's digital games and multimedia platforms. The aim of the competition was to enhance students' understanding of emotional cognition and promote social and emotional education.

An online emotional consultation and psychological support service for primary school students, parents, and teachers was also launched. The service is now available through the Playful Mind Consultation Room.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE KNOWLEDGE

The Emotion World project makes significant contributions to our understanding of digital mental health interventions and social-emotional learning (SEL) in primary education. By developing an evidence-based, gamified platform based on the CASEL framework, the project advances knowledge about how technology can effectively deliver emotional education to young students. The integration of gaming elements with psychological principles provides useful information about engaging teaching methodologies for emotional competency development. The project's evaluation component, including daily emotional journaling and validated measurements, will generate important data about the effectiveness of digital interventions in children's emotional learning.

Furthermore, combining online and offline elements, the results will contribute to our understanding of blended learning strategies in emotional education. The involvement of secondary school students in character design through AI tools also provides insights into peer-to-peer learning and the role of artificial intelligence in educational design. This research helps bridge the gap in understanding how digital platforms can effectively support emotional development in primary school students, while simultaneously advancing knowledge about the intersection of technology, gaming, and psychological well-being in educational contexts.





CONTRIBUTION TO THE PRACTICE

The project delivers substantial practical benefits to Hong Kong's educational environment through its comprehensive practical strategy. The development of the Emotion World platform provides schools with a much-needed resource for emotional education, addressing the current shortage of teaching materials in this area. The project's practical impact extends to 5,000 primary school students, their parents, and teachers through readily accessible tools, including multimedia tutorials, digital games, and a mobile application. The establishment of an online counselling support platform offers immediate, practical assistance for emotional challenges, while the integration of early detection systems enables timely interventions. The project's offline workshops provide hands-on training and support, enhancing the emotional capacity of the entire school community. The creation of an online resource hub ensures sustainable access to educational materials, while the mobile application facilitates practical daily implementation of emotional awareness exercises.

Emotion World is an initiative that leverages the power of gamification and digital technology to enhance emotional competency among middle primary school students. By integrating online and in-person elements, this project offers a holistic approach to social-emotional learning, equipping young learners with the skills to navigate their emotions effectively.



Understanding Resilience Dynamics

An interdisciplinary team lead by Professor Catherine Tang aims to identify resilience factors at various levels, including individual, family, organizational, community, social, and cultural. The team studies how individuals, families, organizations, communities, and cultures help us adapt to life's challenges. By examining these resilience factors, the study team aims to understand how these factors interact during critical life transitions and how they can mitigate the effects of adverse childhood experiences and current life adversities. The ultimate goal is to create comprehensive resilience evaluations that can guide future research and policy-making.

The research is divided into three tiers. The first tier is a two-wave longitudinal panel study that tracks resilience across lifespans. Over 8,000 participants have participated in the first wave and the second wave data collection is ongoing. The second tier includes studies at the individual, family, organizational, and community levels. For instance, the individual-level study looks at biophysiological markers of resilience, while the family and organizational studies focus on factors that contribute to resilience and health outcomes. The community-level study uses a mixed-method approach to identify social indicators of resilience. The third tier involves analyzing public datasets to understand national and community-level resilience trajectories following major adversities.

So far, the research team has completed the first wave of data collection for family, organizational, and community-level studies. Preliminary findings from the community-level study have led to new research questions that will be explored through focus group interviews. The team has also compiled and organized country-level datasets for further analysis, focusing on resilience before and after significant events like natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic. These datasets will help identify the macro-level factors that influence resilience.

By identifying resilience factors at multiple levels, the research offers valuable insights into how people and communities can better cope with life's challenges. These findings can shape policies and interventions aimed at enhancing resilience and well-being throughout adulthood. The project also underscores the importance of family and organizational support in developing resilience, which can lead to better health outcomes and work-life balance. The community-level study's mixed-method approach provides a deep understanding of social indicators of resilience, guiding community-based interventions.



