

Nurturing bridges: Embracing Growth and Connecting Life Program for Residential Children—An Evaluation of Therapeutic Outcomes and Implications for Child Development

Chi Hung Leung

Department of Special Education and Counselling, The Education University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Hin Sum Tsang

Department of Special Education and Counselling, The Education University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Abstract

This longitudinal mixed-methods study evaluates the Nurturing Bridges: Embracing Growth and Connecting Life program, a comprehensive, multi-modal therapeutic intervention designed to promote social-emotional development among vulnerable children in residential care settings. Implemented over two years at a residential facilities for children in Hong Kong, the intervention incorporated four therapeutic modalities: play therapy, Montessori-based education, music therapy, and narrative drawing intervention (NDI). Employing biological, behavioral, and observational assessment methods, the study tracked changes across five timepoints, examining neurobiological markers (salivary oxytocin), behavioral outcomes via the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL), and adult-child interaction quality using AI-assisted observational analysis (MEACI framework). Findings demonstrated significant increases in salivary oxytocin, reductions in internalizing and externalizing problems, and enhanced relational quality. Staff feedback highlighted the program's impact on caregiver-child bonds and professional growth. This research advances understanding of integrated, biologically-informed interventions in residential care, emphasizing the importance of multi-dimensional assessment and sustainable implementation strategies.

Index Terms

Residential Care, Longitudinal Study, Multi-Modal Therapy