

MASTER'S THESIS

Effects of play on children's psychological adjustment from the perspectives of primary school children, class teachers and student guidance teachers

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**Effects of Play on Children's Psychological Adjustment from the Perspectives of
Primary School Children, Class Teachers and Student Guidance Teachers**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Philosophy**

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Abstract

The increase in the number and severity of children's behavioral and emotional problems has aroused public concern in Hong Kong. To tackle these problems and to enhance children's overall well-being, empathetic understanding rather than punishing children's "deviant behaviours" has been shown to be more effective. Although empathetic understanding is frequently practiced in person-centered counselling, its effects in children's play during their counselling sessions for young children have not been extensively studied in Hong Kong. As such, the purpose of the present study was to explore empathetic child-centered play on children's overall well-being. Specifically, children's psychological adjustment (i.e., self-concept, social and emotional aspects) before and after child-centered counselling through play was examined from the perspectives of children, their class teachers and student guidance teachers. A sample of 364 participants (191 boys and 173 girls), attending five Hong Kong primary schools, was involved in this study. The measures used in this study included Piers-Harris Self-concept Scale (Piers, 1996), Children Loneliness Scale (Asher, Hymel & Renshaw, 1984), Children Depression Inventory (Kovacs, 1992) and School Life Adjustment Scale (Lo, 1993). With respect to children's psychological adjustment, analyses of the data have shown that both class teachers and student guidance teachers perceived a significant increase of children's self-concept after child-centered play counselling. Student guidance teachers, in particular, have also perceived a significant increase in children's social adaptation and emotional adjustment. As perceived by children and student guidance teachers, lower scores of children's depression were associated with higher scores of student guidance teachers' evaluation of their emotional adjustment. However, children's perception of their self-concept was not correlated with their class teachers' and student guidance teachers' perception of children's self-concept. Between

the class teachers and student guidance teachers, their perception of children's psychological adjustment (i.e., self-concept, social adaptation and emotional adjustment) are positively related. In sum, children's psychological adjustment, as perceived by their class teachers and student guidance teachers, has increased significantly after the child-centered play counselling. While the results in this study do not significantly show such increases from the children's standpoint, suggestions to further examine this issue in subsequent research are considered.

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