

ENHANCING READINESS TO CHANGE AND WELL-BEING AMONG INDONESIAN MIGRANT WORKER IN MALAYSIA

Amy MARDHATILLA^{1*}, Laila Meiliyandrie Indah WARDANI², Agus Budi SETIAWAN³

^{1,2,3}Universitas Mercu Buana, Jakarta, INDONESIA

***amy.mardhatillah@mercubuana.ac.id**

ABSTRACT

Indonesian migrant workers in Penang face significant challenges, as many are trapped in low-skilled, low-paying jobs that limit their career advancement opportunities. This lack of readiness to change hinders their pursuit of further education and training, resulting in stagnant skills and reduced employability in better-paying positions. Consequently, this situation often leads to low social mobility and mental health issues due to the stress of being away from home. Improving readiness to change is crucial for these workers, as it facilitates adaptation to new cultural and social environments, enhancing their integration into the local community. It also motivates them to seek further education and training, thereby improving their skills and employability. The concept of readiness to change is derived from the Transtheoretical Model (TTM), which outlines the stages individuals experience when modifying behavior. Understanding an individual's current stage of readiness allows for tailored interventions that promote personal growth. To address these challenges, the proposed community service program aims to enhance the skills and well-being of Indonesian migrant workers, ultimately improving their job productivity. The program will conduct workshops, seminars, and learning sessions aligned with the stages of readiness to change, focusing on positive psychology principles such as fostering positive emotions, building emotional resilience, and enhancing interpersonal skills. Interventions will utilize motivational interviewing techniques to assess individual readiness and provide tailored support. Cognitive-behavioral strategies will encourage participants to reframe negative thoughts and adopt a positive outlook. Practical exercises will assist participants in setting achievable goals and developing action plans for personal and professional growth. In summary, this community service program is designed to enhance the readiness to change among Indonesian migrant workers in Penang, equipping them with the necessary skills and support to navigate their challenges and improve their overall quality of life.

Keywords: Readiness to Change, Motivational Interviewing, Well-being

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesian migrant workers in Penang, particularly those associated with LSM Permai Penang, face a range of socio-economic and psychological challenges that need to be addressed. Despite having settled in the area, these workers encounter issues such as economic instability, conflicts between work and family responsibilities, difficulties in adapting to a new culture, and limited access to emotional well-being programs. Many are employed in labor-intensive sectors like construction, manufacturing, and domestic work, where long hours and insufficient social support contribute to heightened stress and burnout.

A significant aspect of their situation is the financial struggles they experience, including fluctuating wages and job insecurity. Many migrant workers find themselves trapped in low-skilled jobs that offer little opportunity for career advancement. This lack of upward mobility makes it challenging for them to adapt to the evolving job market, preventing them from transitioning to better and more stable employment. Additionally, there is often a lack of awareness among these workers regarding the importance of skill development and its positive impact on their mental health.

The stigma surrounding the pursuit of personal development further complicates their circumstances, as many workers feel embarrassed or fearful about seeking the necessary training or support. Without structured training programs and adequate emotional support, these workers risk stagnation in their careers, leading to increased stress, anxiety, and other mental health issues.

To effectively analyze the situation of our partners, it is essential to consider both the upstream and downstream aspects of their businesses. This includes understanding their current economic conditions, the challenges they face in entrepreneurship, and the resources available to them. By providing a comprehensive overview of the partner profile, supported by informative data and images, we can better understand the existing conditions of the community we aim to empower.

Our approach will focus on integrating skill development, economic empowerment, and mental health support. By offering access to relevant training and emotional assistance, we can help migrant workers transition to better job opportunities and achieve a more balanced life. This holistic strategy will ultimately enhance their overall well-being and resilience in the face of ongoing challenges.

This community service program integrates Industrial & Organizational Psychology with Desain Komunikasi Visual, utilizing visual branding as a tool to enhance awareness, engagement, and sustainability of emotional well-being initiatives. By incorporating visual storytelling, branding techniques, and digital media outreach, the program aims to make emotional well-being education more engaging and accessible. Through structured psychological training workshops and digital branding support, migrant workers will gain access to practical emotion regulation techniques, entrepreneurial coaching, and peer mentorship networks. These efforts will empower them with self-sustaining tools that improve both their mental resilience and economic productivity.

In conclusion, the well-being of Indonesian migrant workers in Penang is deeply influenced by economic hardships, cultural transitions, and the absence of adequate emotional support systems. By implementing a community-based intervention that combines psychological training, business education, and visual branding strategies, this program seeks to address these challenges holistically. Through structured emotional resilience training, entrepreneurship support, and digital branding assistance, migrant workers will be equipped with sustainable solutions to enhance their well-being, improve economic independence, and strengthen their sense of community within Malaysian society.

2. OBJECTIVE

Problems

Primary Issues Affecting the Target Group:

1. Emotional Distress: Migrant workers face significant stress and burnout due to inadequate mental health support, which affects their readiness to change and improve their emotional well-being.
2. Limited Career Advancement: Many workers lack essential skills in financial management and entrepreneurship, hindering their ability to pursue better job opportunities and career growth.

Weak Support Networks: The absence of peer support groups limits their access to emotional and practical assistance, reducing their motivation and readiness to embrace change in their personal and professional lives.

Solutions

Our approach will include:

1. Motivational Interviewing Workshops: Conducting interactive sessions that introduce migrant workers to the principles of MI, helping them articulate their own motivations for change and recognize the benefits of adopting a positive mindset.
2. Cognitive Restructuring Techniques: Teaching participants how to identify and challenge negative thought patterns through MI strategies, enabling them to replace these thoughts with more constructive and positive alternatives.
3. Creating a Supportive Environment: Establishing a safe and non-judgmental space where migrant workers can share their experiences, engage in open discussions, and support one another in their journeys toward positive change.
4. Ongoing Support and Feedback: Implementing a system for continuous monitoring and feedback, allowing participants to reflect on their progress and adjust their goals as needed, ensuring that the activities remain relevant and effective.

By focusing on these solutions through the lens of Motivational Interviewing, we aim to empower migrant workers to enhance their emotional well-being, develop essential life skills, and ultimately improve their quality of life. This approach will not only facilitate personal growth but also foster resilience in the face of ongoing challenges.

3. METHOD

The following is a general overview of the implementation procedure:

Needs Assessment:

Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment to comprehend the distinct challenges and requirements of migrant workers in the community. Identify areas where positive emotions and improved people skills could profoundly influence their well-being.

Community Engagement:

Engage with the migrant worker community to establish trust and collaboration. Gain an understanding of their cultural context, preferences, and willingness to participate in positive psychology activities.

Program Design:

Create a customized program that integrates positive psychology principles, emphasizing activities that foster positive emotions, interpersonal skills, and sustainable well-being. Consider cultural sensitivity and the distinctive challenges confronted by migrant workers.

Awareness Campaign:

Initiate an awareness campaign to inform the migrant worker community about the forthcoming program. Utilize various channels, including community centers, workplaces, and online platforms, to reach a broad audience.

Training and Resource Development:

Offer training for facilitators who will lead the program. Develop resources, such as materials and guidelines, to support the execution of positive psychology activities. Ensure that these resources are accessible in the languages spoken by the migrant workers.

Program Implementation:

Roll out the program incrementally, commencing with introductory sessions on positive emotions, interpersonal skills, and well-being. Introduce more advanced topics and activities gradually as the program progresses.

Collaboration with Stakeholders:

Collaborate with local businesses, educational institutions, and government bodies to establish opportunities for job training, support services, and additional resources that complement the positive psychology program.

Feedback and Adjustment:

Gather regular feedback from participants to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. Utilize this feedback to make necessary adjustments, ensuring that the activities remain pertinent and impactful.

Mentorship Programs:

Implement mentorship programs where experienced participants guide newcomers. This cultivates a sense of community and support among migrant workers.

Sustainability Planning:

Devise a sustainability plan to guarantee the longevity of the program. Train selected community members to become facilitators and leaders, enabling the program to persist beyond the initial implementation phase.

Evaluation:

Conduct a comprehensive evaluation at the conclusion of the program to assess its impact on participants' well-being and people skills. Collect quantitative and qualitative data to gauge success and identify areas for improvement.

Documentation and Dissemination:

Record success stories, challenges, and lessons learned during implementation. Disseminate this information through reports, articles, or presentations to contribute to the broader understanding of positive community interventions for migrant workers.

Throughout the entire process, maintaining cultural sensitivity, flexibility, and responsiveness to the specific needs of the migrant worker community is essential for the success of the positive psychology program.

In each step there will be involvement from the psychology lecture to provide training material and do the teaching. Two students also involve in this program, they will help to provide the pre and post-test, collect the data and analyse the result which later on can be used by the researcher to disseminate the information via a article or published a journal.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This Community Service program was carried out in Penang Island Malaysia. This psychoeducation was attended by approximately 50 Indonesian migrant workers in Penang Island. Pre and post assessment were carried out in this program.

This program is a collaboration between the Faculty of Psychology, Mercu Buana University, Jakarta with the faculty of psychology and education, University of Sabah Malaysia and PERMAI Penang Island. This activity was filled by several speakers, namely Dr. Laila Meilinadri Wardani, Dr. Setiawati Intan Savitri, Dr. Dana Riksa Buana and Dr. Amy Mardhatillah.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention on mental health awareness and readiness to change, participants were asked five key questions before and after the program. The questions assessed their motivation, confidence, reasons for change, perceived importance, and commitment. The results showed that participants generally had high motivation and perceived importance of change even before the intervention. After the program, there was a slight decrease in motivation and confidence, but an increase in clarity of reasons for change. Overall, the scores remained high, indicating that participants retained a strong intention to improve their mental well-being. The table below presents the average scores for each question before and after the intervention.

Table 1. Average scores for each question before and after the intervention.

No.	Question	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean
1	How strong is your desire to make changes for better mental health?	3.71	3.60
2	How confident are you in your ability to make changes for better mental health?	3.38	3.15
3	What is your main reason for wanting to make changes for better mental health?	1.76	2.25
4	How important is this change for your mental health?	3.86	3.50
5	How committed are you to making changes for better mental health?	3.33	3.20

Here is a detailed discussion and elaboration for each question using the DARN-C model (Desire, Ability, Reason, Need, Commitment), which is commonly used in motivational interviewing to assess and support behavior change:

1. How strong is your desire to make changes for better mental health? Insight (Desire):

Participants initially showed a very strong desire to improve their mental health, as reflected in the high pre-test score. This desire slightly decreased after the intervention, possibly due to increased awareness of the effort required to make meaningful changes. However, the score remained high, indicating that the intervention-maintained participants' intrinsic motivation to pursue better mental well-being.

2. How confident are you in your ability to make changes for better mental health? DARN-C Insight (Ability):

Confidence in one's ability to change is crucial for initiating and sustaining behavior change. The slight drop in the post-test score suggests that while participants were initially optimistic, the intervention may have introduced realistic challenges that made them reassess their capabilities. This is not necessarily negative-it may reflect a more grounded understanding of the change process.

3. What is your main reason for wanting to make changes for better mental health? DARN-C Insight (Reason):

This item saw the most notable increase, indicating that participants gained clearer and more focused reasons for change after the intervention. Initially, responses were scattered across multiple reasons. Post-intervention, participants were more likely to identify specific motivations (e.g., reducing stress, improving sleep), showing that the program helped them connect emotionally and cognitively with their goals.

4. How important is this change for your mental health? DARN-C Insight (Need):

Participants began with a very high sense of urgency and importance regarding mental health change. The slight decline post-intervention may reflect a more nuanced understanding of priorities or a shift in perceived immediacy. Still, the score remains high, indicating that the need for change is well recognized and internalized.

5. How committed are you to making changes for better mental health? DARN-C Insight (Commitment):

Commitment is the strongest predictor of actual behavior change. The small decrease in this score suggests that while participants still feel committed, some may have encountered barriers or doubts during the intervention. This highlights the importance of follow-up support to sustain and strengthen commitment over time.

Table 2. Summary Table

No.	Question	DARN-C Focus	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean
1	How strong is your desire to make changes for better mental health?	Desire	3.71	3.60
2	How confident are you in your ability to make changes for better mental health?	Ability	3.38	3.15
3	What is your main reason for wanting to make changes for better mental health?	Reason	1.76	2.25
4	How important is this change for your mental health?	Need	3.86	3.50
5	How committed are you to making changes for better mental health?	Commitment	3.33	

This community service program consisted of three key activities:

- Providing education about enhancing readiness to change and well-being among Indonesian Migrant worker in Malaysia.
- Deepening participants' understanding of how to implement Darn-C change model in promoting behavior change for a better mental health.
- Evaluating participants' understanding and internalization of the material through pre- and post-assessments.

Based on the pre- and post-test results, participants demonstrated a strong initial desire and perceived importance to improve their mental health. However, after the session, there was a slight decrease in both motivation (desire) and confidence (ability). This shift can be interpreted as a sign of increased awareness. During the session, participants were introduced to new concepts and skills-such as emotional regulation and reframing negative experience-which made them realize that meaningful change requires more than just intention. They began to understand that improving mental well-being involves consistent practice, emotional resilience, and often, external support systems. This deeper understanding may have led to a more realistic self-assessment, slightly lowering their confidence and motivation scores.

Despite this, the intervention was successful in helping participants clarify their reasons for change. The increase in the mean score for "reason" suggests that participants became more aware of specific motivations, such as reducing stress or improving sleep quality. This clarity is a crucial step in behavior change, as it strengthens internal motivation.

Participants also maintained a high sense of the importance of change (need), although the score slightly declined. This may reflect a more balanced view of priorities or a recognition that change is a long-term process. Similarly, commitment levels remained high but slightly decreased, indicating that while participants are still willing to change, they may need more structured support or follow-up to sustain their efforts.

Overall, the program helped participants move from abstract intentions to a more grounded understanding of what change entails. The interactive activities, role-playing, and real-life scenarios were effective in building awareness and initiating internal reflection. However, the findings also highlight the importance of ongoing support, skill-building, and community reinforcement to maintain and strengthen the initial gains.

5. CONCLUSION

The “Enhancing Readiness to Change and Well-Being among Indonesian Migrant Workers in Malaysia” community service program successfully introduced participants to the foundational concepts of positive psychology and behavior change. Through structured psychoeducation, interactive learning, and reflective assessments, the program helped participants better understand their own motivations, confidence levels, and personal reasons for improving mental health.

Although the post-test results showed a slight decrease in motivation and confidence, this shift reflects a deeper and more realistic understanding of the challenges involved in personal change. Participants became more aware of the skills and support systems needed to sustain long-term improvements. Importantly, the program significantly enhanced participants’ clarity of purpose and internal motivation, as seen in the increased mean score for “reason to change.”

Overall, the program empowered migrant workers with practical tools and psychological insights to begin their journey toward improved well-being. The findings highlight the importance of continued support and follow-up interventions to maintain momentum and strengthen commitment. This initiative demonstrates the value of culturally sensitive, evidence-based community programs in promoting sustainable mental health and personal growth among vulnerable populations.

6. REFERENCES

Chen, L. H., & Choi, H. (2020). "Mental Health and Well-Being of Migrant Workers: A Systematic Review." *BMC Public Health*, 20(1), 1-12.

International Organization for Migration (IOM). (2020). "Migrant Workers and the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Global Perspective."

Kaur, A., & Singh, S. (2021). "Cultural Adaptation and Mental Health of Migrant Workers: A Review." *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 67(5), 471-479.

World Bank. (2019). "The World Bank Annual Report 2019: Migrant Workers and Their Contributions to Development."