

CULTURAL ADAPTATIONS TO THERAPY IN SINGAPORE: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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Introduction

Clinical Psychology training in Singapore has had clear colonial influences since its inception (Lange et al., 2015), yet little research has focused on cultural adaptations to therapy in Singapore.

Western therapy should not be assumed to be equally helpful for non-Western cultures, and cultural adoptions to Western therapy have been shown to increase its efficacy in many non-Western contexts. It has also been argued that effective interventions should also consider indigenous therapies and spiritual healing (IT/SH) practices (e.g., Lee & Foo, 2019; Lee & Kirmayer, 2020).

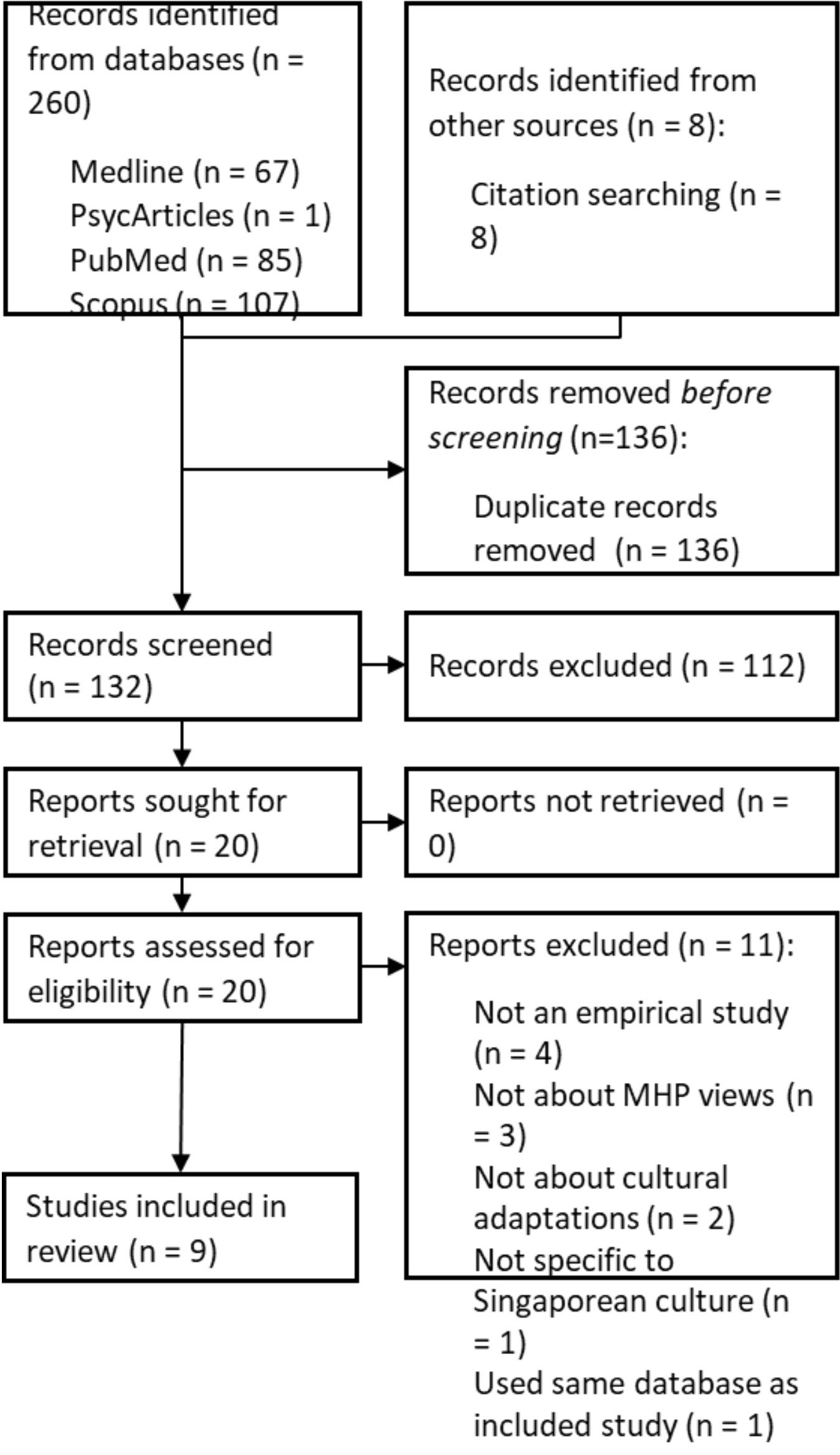
Objectives

To synthesize existing research on Singapore mental health professionals’ (MHPs’) experiences and views of cultural adaptations to therapy and IT/SH practices.

Methods

Databases: Medline, PsyArticles, PubMed, Scopus
Other sources: Citation was also searching used
Inclusion: English articles up until 25 March 2022.
Evaluation: Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (version 2018); Most were good quality

Category	Keywords
Setting	(Singapore)
	AND
Perspectiv e	(Decolon* OR Local* OR Indigen* OR Cultur* OR Adapt* OR Race* OR Racial* OR Ethn* OR Minor* OR Religio* OR Spirit*)
	AND
Interventi on	Psycholog* OR Mental health OR Psychotherap* OR Counsel* OR Well?being OR Psychiatr* Or Therap*
	AND
Comparis on	(Profession* OR Worker* OR Nurse* OR Therapist* OR Psychotherapist* OR Psychiatrist* OR Psychologist* OR Practitioner* OR Counselor* OR Psychoanal*)
	AND
Evaluation	(Experience* OR View* OR Belief* OR Philosophy OR Opinion*)



* An opinion article was included to allow representation of views from IT/SH practitioners

9 Studies were eventually included for analysis, which included diverse:

- Professions (e.g., counsellors, nurses, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers)
- Settings (e.g., public hospitals, community health settings, private clinics)
- Treatment models (e.g., CBT, systemic therapy, Traditional Chinese Medicine)

Results

Synthesis
Papers were coded individually, and codes were then collated and themed.

Themes and Subthemes	No. of studies
The ‘Core’ of Therapy is Universal <i>Western interventions can still be helpful for Singaporeans</i>	9
Western Models Should Be Adapted <i>Theories, tools, and techniques are ‘Western’ and need to be adapted</i>	8
Language	4
Comfort with Self-Expression	5
Respect for Authority / Expertise	3
Family Values	4
Kampung mindset (preferring informal consultations)	1
Multiculturalism	4
Differing Health Beliefs	4
MHPs Worked Flexibly with Western Models <i>Flexibility to work with multiple models simultaneously was encouraged over focusing on one model</i>	4
MHPs had Mixed Views About IT/SH <i>Some felt IT/SHs could supplement Western therapy, others felt that it was unhelpful</i>	4

Examples of adaptations discussed (scan QR code)



Discussion

- Some unique adaptations were identified compared to previous literature (e.g., Chowdhary et al., 2014)
 - Using more personal self-disclosure
 - Respecting family hierarchies
 - Adopting a cultural relativist stance
 - Using multiple models simultaneously
- MHPs and clients may hold cultural explanatory models which may contradict psychological ones and influence adherence to therapy

Conclusion

- Western interventions can be effective for Singapore, but should be adapted to fit local cultural practices and explanatory models
- In multicultural societies, MHPs should constantly remain reflective and curious to notice the differences within similarities
- Singapore MHPs should be familiar with multiple models of therapy to work with multiple explanatory models simultaneously
- MHPs should also be cognizant of the differences between local values and the values underpinning various Western therapies, and consider the impact of socializing clients to such models of mental health

References

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Lange, G., Davison, J., & Goh, D. A. (2015). Introduction: Clinical Psychology in Singapore. In G. Lange, & J. Davison (Eds.), *Clinical Psychology in Singapore: An Asian Casebook* (pp. xiii-xxiv). Singapore: NUS Press.

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