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### **#343 - Early Childhood Holistic Outcomes: Facilitators and Barriers in Scaling Up Implementation across Early Intervention Centres**

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#### **Objectives/aims**

The Early Childhood Holistic Outcomes (ECHO) Framework is a functional outcome measurement system, adapted from the U.S. National Child Outcomes Measurement System. ECHO was successfully piloted in 4 Early Intervention (EI) centres in Singapore from 2014 to 2017, leading to a phased national implementation across 17 other EI centres from 2019 to 2024. Guided by implementation science principles, this national implementation is led by a Technical Assistance (TA) team to train and coach identified senior professionals in EI centres, henceforth referred to as coaches, to use the ECHO Framework.

In 2021, the TA team presented on contextualising training and coaching resources to build the competency of the aforementioned professionals and increase their adherence to the Framework during initial implementation. With the ECHO Framework now at the end of full implementation and moving towards the next phase of sustainability planning, this presentation aims to outline the facilitators and barriers in scaling up and key factors needed to support sustainment.

#### **Methods**

Towards the end of full implementation, nine semi-structured focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted virtually with a group of coaches (n=40) from EI centres to identify the facilitators and barriers to implementation. The FGDs were led by two external moderators and the discussions centred around the three implementation science drivers and their core components. A deductive thematic analysis was undertaken to identify codes and themes of the transcripts. A team of eight coders were involved in this coding process.

A self-developed online survey was also administered to all professionals who were trained and involved in implementing the Framework (n=551). The objective of the survey is threefold: 1) elicit perceived attitudes and beliefs about different components of the Framework through questions on implementation confidence, usefulness, and manageability of the Framework, 2) identify training and coaching needs, and 3) gather feedback on benefits of the Framework, implementation challenges,



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and resources needed to support sustainment. The questions were analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis.

### Main findings

The FGD findings have been encouraging as the 40 coaches generally felt that the ECHO Framework was implemented well in their EI centres despite certain challenges. Key facilitators include having protected time for training, a culture of coaching and learning together, open communication as well as transparency and assurance from a supportive leadership. Barriers include competency gaps of the professionals, staff turnover and time constraints. The coaches also highlighted the usefulness of having a platform to share good practices and address implementation challenges with fellow professionals from other EI centres.

For this presentation, only relevant survey findings pertaining to sustainability of the Framework will be shared. Of the 283 professionals who completed the survey, 74.6% agreed that the ECHO Framework is worth the time spent as it gives them a holistic understanding of a child's functional profile to help them set appropriate goals. For those who disagreed, they highlighted challenges aligned with the barriers mentioned in the FGDs above. Key recommendations provided for self-sustainment include conducting regular cycles of training and strengthening the coaching support.

The integration of the FGD and survey findings has been helpful in identifying critical factors needed to sustain ECHO implementation. These factors include having a stable and competent core group of coaches, building the capability of professionals through regular training and coaching support, as well as effective collaboration with and among stakeholders. This has enabled the TA team to make informed plans to overcome the barriers and enhance the facilitators to support sustainment of the ECHO Framework. These plans will be further discussed in the other presentation titled *'Implementation Strategies to Sustain a Functional Outcomes Framework in Early Intervention Centres in Singapore'*.