

The integration of mindfulness programs in South African schools: A case study of the YES!

For Schools' programme.

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Abstract

South African youth are confronted with a variety of community, family and school stressors. Internationally, mindfulness-based interventions with the youth have been found to improve emotional regulation, psychological well-being, self-growth and aggressive behavior. However, there is a lack of mindfulness-based intervention research in the South African school context. This study explored how learners at two schools in low-income, high-violence communities in Cape Town have experienced the ‘YES! For Schools (Y4S)’ mindfulness programme. Focus group discussions were facilitated with 47 learners between the ages of 12 to 13 years old who completed the ‘YES! For Schools’ programme to explore their experiences of the programme. A thematic analysis was applied to the focus group transcripts. The themes included the implementation of breathing techniques into daily practice, improving the quality of relationships with family, peers and teachers, and self-development with regard to enhancing human values. Findings suggest that the ‘YES! For Schools’ programme provides learners with healthy devices to not only manage their emotions and stress but also to improve interpersonal relationships and facilitate self-development. The implications of the findings for school-based mindfulness interventions in South Africa is considered.

Keywords: mindfulness, South Africa, school, learners

Globally, today's youth are faced with numerous challenges from school, family and community stressors which, when left unmanaged, have the potential to lead to the development of psychological distress and subsequent mental disorders. Continuous exposure to stressors has been found to have adverse effects on developing brain structures, especially where cognition and mental health are concerned, and to have contributed towards a global surge of mental disorders amongst people under the age of 18 (Lupien, McEwen, Gunnar, & Heim, 2009, as cited in Zenner, Herrnleben-Kurz, & Walach, 2014). Statistics demonstrate that approximately 20% of South African children suffer from mental disorders caused by living in environments with high levels of violence and family adversity (Van Der Merwe, 2015a). In addition, suicide rates amongst South African adolescents aged between 10 and 14 years old have doubled in the past fifteen years (Van Der Merwe, 2015b). More recently, research has shown that 20% of South African children display symptoms of Post-traumatic stress disorder (Rossouw, 2017). Hence, there is a need to find solutions to assist the South African youth in overcoming these challenges. The meditation skill of mindfulness has increased in popularity in both clinical research and practice, along with Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) (Bankart, 2003; Wallace & Shapiro, 2006). Recent literature has considered the integration of MBIs in schools globally as a management tool to counteract adverse responses to the daily stressors of modern-day life, with promising outcomes for the youth (Baxter, n.d; Greenberg & Harris, 2012; Lau & Hue, 2011). Yet, there are no published South African studies of Mindfulness-Based interventions with either adults or children.

Mindfulness is an ancient practice originating in eastern philosophies which places importance on nurturing the individual's mind (Bankart, 2003; Greenberg & Harris, 2012; Wallace & Shapiro, 2006). A potential outcome of mindfulness practices is an enhanced ability to keep one's mind in the present moment (i.e. decreased 'mind-wondering' tendencies, increased focus, etc.) and, in doing so, improve one's ability to release negative thoughts and emotions (Baxter, n.d; Greenberg & Harris, 2012; Lau & Hue, 2011). Mindfulness training is conducted through a variety of techniques including sitting meditations with either breathing techniques, concentration exercises or physical movement (Flook et al., 2010; Parker, Kupersmidt, Mathis, Scull, & Sims, 2013, as cited in Baxter, n.d; Zenner et al., 2014). Since the 1970s, psychological research on mindfulness has been directed by two distinct schools of thought: one taking a Western scientific viewpoint and the other drawing from Buddhist religious practices (Hart, Ivtzan, & Hart, 2013).

Internationally, research supports the effectiveness of MBIs for alleviating a variety of stress-related and clinical problems among adults (Fjorback, Arendt, Ørnbøl, Fink, &

Walach, 2011; Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, & Walach, 2004; Piet & Hougaard, 2011). The effectiveness of MBIs extends to both preventative and health-promoting capacities in non-clinical populations too, demonstrating stress reduction, increased well-being, enhanced immune function and the fostering of personal growth through heightened self-compassion, empathy, perspective taking and attentional capacity (Chiesa & Serretti, 2009; Eberth & Sedlmeier, 2012). The valuable and beneficial findings for adult subjects in MBIs prompted clinicians and researchers to design adapted MBIs for children and adolescents, which have been systematically reviewed by Zenner and colleagues (2014). In addition to MBIs being facilitated world-wide, studies have encompassed students of all age groups and schooling levels, such as academically average pupils and academically low performing pupils (Zenner et al., 2014); those with learning difficulties (Leland, 2015); young boys with ADHD (Carboni, Roach, & Fredrick, 2013) and pupils with elevated mood symptoms (Bach & Guse, 2015). These studies have also included pupils of private, public and rural schools, same-sexed and co-educational schools (Zenner et al., 2014). Studies have included pupils from diverse backgrounds, ranging from low income Latino-Americans living in highly violent communities (Fung, Guo, Jin, Bear, & Lau, 2016) to white wealthy Caucasians (Bach & Guse, 2015).

A wide range of MBIs has been developed specifically for youth. These mindfulness programmes vary in length from 4 to 24 weeks, including at least one 30 – 45-minute session per week. Sessions have been conducted by trained mindfulness instructors or class teachers who have undergone a MSBR (Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction) programme and training beforehand (Zenner et al., 2014), school psychologists or professionals trained to work with children (Carboni et al., 2013).

In considering the literature, it is the “Learning to BREATHE” curriculum that is the most popular MBI for children and youth (Fung et al., 2016; Zenner et al., 2014). The curriculum aims to facilitate the development of emotional regulation for middle and high school students. The learners are helped to understand their thoughts and feelings and to utilize mindfulness-based skills to manage their emotions (Fung et al., 2016; Zenner et al., 2014). Another well-researched mindfulness intervention is Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) which involves meditation, movements and body scans (Carboni et al., 2013). Several studies found that youth who completed MBSR interventions reported reductions in anxiety and depression (Biegel, Brown, Shapiro, & Schubert, 2009). Contemplation and Meditation practice has been applied to study the improvements of an individual’s great compassion - a component of psychological well-being (Bach & Guse, 2015). Research has demonstrated that children and youth who completed CM practices

displayed an enhancement in their psychological well-being, compassion, environmental mastery, personal growth, life satisfaction, self-acceptance, autonomy and purpose in life (Bach & Guse, 2015). MBIs have found to be associated with increased emotional awareness and acceptance of emotional responses among adolescents (Broderick, & Metz, 2009).

Schools have been identified as the most appropriate setting for delivering MBIs to children. Children spend most of their days at school and MBI programmes can target large groups of children at once, thereby providing preventative approaches to mental health at very little cost and time investment (Weare, & Nind, 2011). Furthermore, schools play an integral role in nurturing a child's positive development (Lawlor, 2014). Mindfulness is both a foundational and a fundamental premise to education, and it is the concurrent prevention and educational components that make MBIs a feasible instrument for assisting youth to overcome challenges faced in and out of school environments (Zenner et al., 2014). Children who have learnt mindfulness practices to increase focus and to synchronize their attention and emotions have been found to better manage negative emotions and to self-motivate (Zenner et al., 2014). Despite MBI research being in its early stages, the integration of programmes in schools has been favorable (Greenberg & Harris, 2012). There is little research about the logistics of integrating MBIs into the school routine as well as the acceptability of different MBI features in the school setting (Zenner et al., 2014). However, some challenges that have been identified include 'outsider' facilitators establishing and maintaining authority in the classroom and the limited available funds for the facilitation of these programmes.

In considering the above discussion, it is evident that the facilitation of MBIs in South African schools may be beneficial to assist youth in dealing more effectively with the challenges posed by multiple adversities. Yet the feasibility of adopting MBIs in South African school settings has currently not been researched. 'Y4S' (Y4S), an international mindfulness-based intervention, has recently been piloted across several South African schools, offering pupils healthy tools to manage their emotions and stress. The proposed research aims to conduct an exploratory qualitative investigation of how learners at two schools in low-income communities in Cape Town have experienced this pilot programme.

Aims and Objectives

The following research questions were investigated:

What were the learners' experiences of participating in the Y4S programme?

What did they learn from the programme?

What, impact did participating in the programme have on them, if any?

Method

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework drawn on in this research is Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, Jarman, & Osborn, 1999). The purpose of IPA is to investigate in detail how participants understand their own personal and social worlds, whilst also gaining insight into the meanings created following their life's experiences (Smith et al., 1999). IPA is concerned with trying to understand the participants' experiences from their points of view (Smith & Osborn, 2003). An IPA study is a dynamic process, whereby the researcher plays an active role in influencing the degree to which they gain contact into the participants' experiences and how the experiences are interpreted (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). The analytical dimension in IPA is often termed as a double hermeneutic or dual interpretation process because it involves two phases (Smith & Osborn, 2003 as cited in Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Firstly, the participants make significance of their own world, and thereafter the researcher attempts to interpret that significance to make sense of the participants meaning making (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). In IPA researchers attempt to understand the participants experience. At the same time, they try to formulate critical questions referring to the topic of focus (Shinebourne, 2011). The implementation of IPA as a theoretical framework is instrumental in dictating the formulation of research questions, sampling techniques, data collection process and the analysis of the qualitative data (Smith & Osborn, 2003; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). IPA is an appropriate theoretical framework for this study as it enables the researcher to engage with the participants to explore their lived experiences of the 'Y4S' programme. Hence, IPA principles have been applied to the implementation of this study.

Research Design

Within this qualitative framework, a pre-experimental one-shot case study was conducted (Campbell & Stanley, 1971). This design contains the comprehensive study of a single group at only one point in time: post-intervention - where observations are attributed to exposure to the intervention (Campbell, 1957). In this research, the case study does not speak to the variety of data collection and analysis methods, but emphasis is rather placed on a unit of analysis – the case (Willig, 2013). The case could range from an organization, a city, a patient or an intervention (Willig, 2013). In this study, it refers to the selected schools which were studied, case by case, within a short period to examine the experiences of the Y4S programme.

Case studies involve the in-depth, exhaustive and strongly directed exploration of a

specific phenomenon, such as people or programmes (Campbell & Stanley, 1971; Willig, 2013) – in this instance, the qualitative perspectives of Y4S held by the learners in the two schools piloting the programme. Case studies feature pooling data from multiple perspectives, which adds to the depth of understanding and the richness of findings (Patton, 2005).

Furthermore, case studies have demonstrated to be beneficial in learning about programmes that have been successful (Campbell & Stanley, 1971). The benefits of the one-shot case study design that make it suitable for this study include its exploratory nature in a new area of intervention research; its cost-effectiveness in determining if a possible explanation is valuable enough for further analysis and its simplicity and control features (Campbell & Stanley, 1971; Willig, 2013).

Participants

In Cape Town, thus far the Y4S programme has been piloted in two schools: Klipfontein Primary School in Bonteheuwel and Ntwashlobo Primary School in Khayletisha. The participants of this study included a sample of 47 learners between the ages of 12 to 13-year-olds from both schools who have completed the Y4S mindfulness programme. The learners were recruited with the assistance of the ‘Y4S teachers. To encourage a range of perspectives, the Grade 6 and 7 teachers at each school were requested to identify eight learners (four girls and four boys) who actively participated and engaged in the programme, and eight (four girls and four boys) who attended but did not actively participate in the programme. These sub-groups were mixed equally across the focus groups so that the focus groups were not too homogenous. The identified learners were then invited to participate in the study by the researcher, and consent and assent were requested from parents and learners respectively (see Appendix B and Appendix C).

Data Collection

The proposed study employed focus groups to obtain qualitative data. Focus groups are a valuable instrument to produce rich understandings of participants’ experiences and opinions (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008) which is suitable for the aims of this study. The focus groups were conducted using a semi-structured interview format (Di-Ciccio-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006) and organized around a pre-determined set of open-ended questions (see Appendix A) with other questions emerging from the conversations between the participants and the researcher. The focus groups were facilitated with the assistance of an

isiXhosa and Afrikaans translator at Ntwashlobo and Klipfontein Primary School respectively.

This study included seven focus groups: four groups from Klipfontein Primary School, and three groups from Ntwashlobo primary school. On the time of data collection a few of the pre-selected learners were sometimes absent, hence the number of learners per focus group varied between four, six and eight.

Procedure

The researcher and either an Afrikaans or isiXhosa first language speaker conducted the focus group discussions for 60 minutes with the participants at their respective schools. In liaison with the participants' educators and principals, suitable times and venues on the school premises were set aside to conduct the focus groups. In addition to interpreting, the translators acted as co-facilitators, in assisting in enabling the activities, as well as bringing discipline and control into the groups. The translators translated between English and Xhosa or English and Afrikaans during the focus groups. The focus group discussions were recorded with a dictaphone, and the researcher then transcribed the discussions.

The sessions commenced with an ice-breaker so that the participants could become comfortable with each other, the researcher and the translator. The first question of the discussion encouraged the learners to articulate their experiences of the programme through a mind map, where they were given 10 minutes to think about: what they had learnt on Y4S, how they felt after the programme, and what they enjoyed about Y4S. Thereafter, the participants shared their experiences on Y4S, whilst referring to their mind maps. Throughout the discussion, if the participants struggled to express themselves, the researcher indicated that they should refer to their mind-maps.

The researcher also utilized pictures to better explain the questions. For example, when asking the participants how they felt after completing the Y4S programme, child-friendly pictures of being 'happy', 'anxious', 'angry' and 'sad' were presented to the participants. They chose a picture that best represented what they felt and then elaborated further on their choice.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data from the focus groups. Thematic analysis is favored for its theoretical freedom, which provides a flexible and viable research tool that can potentially produce a rich and detailed account of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Thematic analysis involves the process of identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006) using the following steps which were applied in this study:

- Phase 1 – familiarizing yourself with your data by repeatedly reading data in an active manner.
- Phase 2 – generating initial codes: in this step the codes recognize an element of the data that seems interesting for analysis.
- Phase 3 – searching for themes: this involves allocating the codes to themes.
- Phase 4 – reviewing themes: after identifying the contender set of themes, these themes are then further refined.
- Phase 5 – defining and naming themes: once satisfied with the thematic map of data, one identifies and defines the themes and, lastly
- Phase 6 - producing the report once the full-set of themes has been developed.

Intervention: ‘YES! For Schools’ (Y4S)

The ‘Yes! For Schools’ programme involves the teaching of breathing techniques and interactive awareness processes. It aims to combine cognitive social emotional learning (SEL) with physiological restorative practices. The programme aims for transformation at individual level by giving learners tools and techniques to deal with their stress and emotions in a healthy way; enabling learners to be present and open to what they are learning and increasing focus and concentration in class and when studying at home.

The duration of the programme is flexible and is structured around the requirements of each school. Typically, the duration of the programme is between 20 and 30 lessons of between 45 to 60 minutes per lesson. A minimum of 3 lessons per week, but ideally 4 to 5 lessons per week, is recommended for maximum impact. Each lesson involves some physical movement, breathing techniques and a process and/or game to communicate the knowledge in an engaging and interactive way while driving experiential learning. The daily sessions are supplemented with class-based practices of the techniques to help form new habits. Ideally, on completion of the programme, the techniques will become a daily practice for the students and integrated into the school routine.

The programme aims to create a culture of peace within schools, where learners encounter a safe, supportive and encouraging learning environment. The model of change begins with transformation at the individual learner level, then moves on to support full classrooms and schools for a sustained climate shift. Educator and Parent programmes are therefore also recommended.

Since 2004, ‘Yes! For Schools’ has been facilitated across the United States for thousands of students. However, there has been very little research published to evaluate the programme. The only published piece of work is “Effects of the Youth Empowerment

Seminar on impulsive behavior in adolescents” in *the Journal of Adolescent Health* (2013) but the remainder of the research conducted in this programme has remained unpublished. The Y4S programme has only been facilitate in South Africa since the beginning of 2017 and no formal evaluations have been conducted in the South African context.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics approval to conduct this study was received from the Western Cape Education Department, as well as the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Cape Town. The informed consent was obtained from parents (see Appendix B) and assent from learners (see Appendix C). The participants’ anonymity has been protected using pseudonyms.

Results and Discussion

Pre-focus Group Observations

I provide these observations as a means to contextualize the data gathered. As a researcher, I sat in on a few Y4S lessons to become familiar with the programme’s content, and to gain perspective on the lived experiences of the study’s sample. Furthermore, the Y4S teachers and the schools’ educators and principals outlined the learners’ socio-economic realities to me.

The learners in this sample are raised and schooled in low-socio-economic environments. From a very young age these learners are exposed to drug abuse, gangsters, violence and crime in their communities, and this highly stressful life becomes normalized to them. An educator informed me that it is common for learners as young as the 5th or 6th grade to develop an addiction to drugs.

In addition to these environmental stressors, at school the learners experience academic pressures as they are entering their final year of primary school, with high school fast approaching. School subjects become more challenging, while they simultaneously experience a decrease in support, with less attention from their teachers. In both schools, it was observed that in some grades one teacher was shared across multiple, very full classrooms of learners (for example, two classes of fifty learners were taught by only one teacher). Hence, learners are often left unattended. Their teacher’s attention is understandably spread thin and what limited attention teachers can provide (when not disciplining disruptive learners) is placed on trying to complete the syllabus. Socially in the schools’ environments there is a culture of bullying and violent behavior that has been modelled on the communities’ norms. Educators and principals ascribe this to a lack of emotional support and tools available to learners for controlling their emotions.

In their homes, learners are often left to their own devices as family members responsible for raising them are working or sometimes involved in substance abuse. Their main caregivers may even be grandparents who are too old to physically supervise them. The learners in these two schools are therefore exposed to multiple stressors, but their educators and families also carry multiple stressors and are often ill-equipped to support the learners and impart or teach healthy coping mechanisms.

The thematic analysis of the participants' experiences that were articulated in the focus groups reflects three core themes which each demonstrate the relationship between the everyday practice of the Y4S teachings and improvements in the participants' well-being. The three thematic areas included the implementation of breathing techniques into daily practice, self-development and a better quality of relationships. These themes are discussed below.

The Implementation of Breathing Techniques into Daily Practice

In the focus group discussions, the most valued and most often implemented part of the Y4S programme were the breathing techniques, which were mentioned 120 times across all seven groups. Teaching a variety of breathing techniques is an integral component of the Y4S programme. These breathing techniques aim to increase overall wellbeing, decrease stress, increase focus and improve emotional regulation and brain functioning. The breathing techniques, and the Bee process (a humming sound that is effective to combat feelings of anger and frustration) are compacted into a 20 - 30 minute daily routine. The aim is for this routine to become part of the learners' classroom timetables or daily practices at home.

The participants identified 6 different breathing techniques that they had learned in the programme: The participants identified 6 different breathing techniques that they had learned in the programme: **Power breath** – an energizing breathing technique, mentioned by 31 learners; **Focus breath** (occasionally referred to as **House breath**), mentioned by 19 learners which uses hand motions to direct energy flow to the pre-frontal cortex, which helps to increase concentration; **Straw breath**, mentioned by 8 learners, which is a deeply relaxing breathing technique, especially effective in combating feelings of anger; **Candle breath**, mentioned by 6 participants, which uses short sharp exhalations; **Belly breath**, mentioned by 4 learners, which entails coordination of belly movements with breath work; and **Victory breath**, mentioned by 4 learners, which is the stimulation of the vagus nerve by constricting the throat muscles whilst breathing, resulting in a drop in cortisol levels in the pre-frontal cortex. The victory breath was only taught to the Grade 7 learners.

It is evident that the learners appreciated the breathing techniques learnt and found

value in incorporating these into their daily routines either in times of need, such as to focus for study purposes; to relax before exams or even to bring their attention to the present moment.

Participant 46: I am especially grateful for the focus breath. It has helped me with my studies, [when] I get a bit stressed...I practise the focus breath.

Participant 44: ... the most important thing I've learnt [is] the breaths and exercise[s], [and to] do your breaths every day...

Participant 37: Every morning before coming to school and even before you study, you must do the power breath [and] straw breath.

Participant 25: I do my focus breath every day in the classroom.

Participant 6: I've loved all the breathing techniques we have done They help me to relax and to focus...

Participant 38: I like the breathing to not focus [on] what's going on [in] the future or [what] happened in the past.

As indicated by 13 learners in four different groups, the breathing practice was initially challenging for some of the learners to implement both at home and in the classroom.

Participant 25: Power breath – made me feel a little bit tired.

Participant 27: Power breath- hands get tired.

Participant 43: The most difficult [part] was for me the power breath, because it makes my arms tired (demonstrating the technique).

Participant 16: Power breath [was difficult for me], [I] didn't catch it fast enough.

Participant 37: Straw breath - in the beginning[it] made me feel uncomfortable.

Participant 11: To breathe in 40 times, that was difficult for me [advanced breathing counts].

Participant 6: You had to repeat that [40 counts], [the advanced] breathing three times. And that was very difficult for me.

The learners initially found that the **power breath** was tiring due to its more vigorous physical motions. In the beginning of the programme, the **straw breath** also made a few learners tired, but both were generally relaxing experiences. The **advanced breathing technique** – as the name suggests; a longer and more highly effective breathing form – was also initially difficult to follow for the children as serious concentration was required to follow the facilitator's instructions. In studying the **victory breath**, Kok et al. (2013) found that the vagal tone is increased the more the techniques are put into practice. Initially, like starting any new physical exercise, it takes a few attempts to get it right. From the above quotes, it is evident that the breathing techniques also initially require the development of muscle and breathing capacity, which can prove tiring, and it may be important to prepare learners for this and encourage them to persevere.

The learners identified two main areas of improvement in their daily functioning due to the breathing techniques: enhanced focus, both in the classroom and at home whilst attempting to complete their homework and improvements in emotion regulation. These are discussed below.

Enhanced Focus. The most salient impact of the breathing techniques that emerged from the focus groups was a perceived improvement in the learners' levels of focus. This was demonstrated in 73 comments across all seven groups.

Participant 19: My favorite breath, was [the] focus breathing as it helped me focus on my studies and not forget what has been taught.

Participant 43: To focus more, I do straw breath.

Participant 39: I didn't focus in class, then [I practised] focus breath, now I focus in class.

Participant 8: Helped me to focus on my studies and read my books and focus.

Participant 29: breathing helps [me] to focus when [I] study.

Participant 40: When my mind is not in class, I do the breathing and it brings me back into the classroom, [then I] focus and do my work.

A handful of learners expressed that they were fatigued at school prior to the Y4S programme, but the breathing techniques helped them to create better energy levels.

Participant 15: Before the [Y4S] programme, I was always tired and had extra time and didn't know what to do, [but] after the programme I am energetic and when I have time, I do breathing techniques.

Participant 47: The change [after the programme] was, whenever I am tired I do the breathing... after that I feel refreshed and have energy.

Participant 31: When I do belly breath I feel happy, relaxed and energized.

Prior to participating in Y4S, the learners' low levels of focus increased the likelihood of them being distracted by their classmates or seeking attention themselves. However, learners have shown that in practising the daily routine, this is no longer a disturbance in the classroom.

Participant 38: I like the power breath. You can concentrate and you don't need to worry about your friends and other stuff and [they] mustn't distract you if you do your breathes.

Participant 27: I don't get disturbed by my friends in the classroom anymore.

Several participants had been performing poorly academically and one learner noted that he had failed the tests and exams for a few subjects. In implementing the breathing techniques of the Y4S programme, learners indicated that there had been improvements in their focus and, as a result, they were more productive, improved their grades and passed previously failed subjects.

Participant 36: With straw breath, I am better focused and complete my work in rapid time.

Participant 25: [I now can] do my work without struggling after doing [my] breathing.

Participant 6: It [breathing techniques] has helped me to concentrate in school because my grades now are higher than it was before...now codes 6 and 7.

Participant 17: I'm improving my grades...

Participant 35: ...when Y4S came before the exam, the focus breath really helped, and [I] could do it before the exam... and [I] passed Math, English and Afrikaans.

Improvements in emotional regulation. Scholars have established that emotion regulation involves the management of emotions under stressful situations (Cummings, Pellegrini, Notarius, & Cummings, 1989). It is often through the implementation of an intervention that emotional regulation takes place (Thompson, Lewis, & Calkins, 2008). A total of 25 learners across the seven groups reported that the breathing techniques had been pivotal in calming them down when angry.

Participant 11: What I learnt from Y4S was – what I feel when I was breathing. I feel comfortable, I feel relaxed and I feel very happy. What I like [about] Y4S [is that] we [are] doing the power breath, [and it] make[s] me feel that way: [in] control [of] my emotions and [my] feelings when I [am] hurt.

Participant 44: I used to just snap when someone pushes my buttons, because now I'm button proof. Before you do something in school, you first have to do [the] breathing.

Participant 37: It gets better as you do it every day... helps me to remain calm and respect my parents, elders...My favorite part was power breath, it helped be more calm here at school and at home. Sometimes [the soccer] players [in my team] swear and fight, I [now] step away from that and do my breathing.

Participant 4: I learnt how to teach my friends, [so] when they have a temper [I] use the techniques [I] was taught, so [I help them so] they can lower their temper.

Participant 7: The breathing techniques helped me to monitor my temper.

Participant 45: I can apply it (breathing techniques) beyond the classroom. Whenever I get angry, I just breathe

Participant 8: You talk about the importance of doing the power breath.... And Y4S shows us how important [it] is to calm yourself when someone is teasing you.

Participant 46: [the] breathing helped resolve conflict[s] with other students. [Our] teacher said [that] when there was a conflict [we have] to keep our hands to ourselves, laugh and let go...

An increase in more positive feelings. In line with improvements in emotional regulation, the learners reported an increase in more positive emotions and a decrease in negative emotions through practising the breathing techniques. This was shared by 45 learners across five groups. The positive emotions included feeling happy, loved, stronger and relaxed.

Participant 24: When I do candle breath, I feel relaxed.

Participant 30: Belly breath makes me feel happy, relaxed and energized.

Participant 27: House breath [focus breath] makes me feel relaxed...

Participant 38: I like the breath, because you are calm and feel like you are sitting in front of the ocean You are conquering the world.

Participant 44: Ya, that's another thing I want to say is when you close your eyes, and sitting cross legged, and put your hands on your lap, close your eyes, breathe in and out, you feel like relaxing your mind about all the bad things and stuff comes to you and everything just goes away, and you [are] relaxing your mind like you [are] going to lay on the bed and sleep.

Participant 38: I feel happy, energized, and I don't feel sad anymore.

Participant 38: I feel happy and calm...I don't have anger anymore.

Participant 27: I feel stronger after breathing.

Participant 34: I feel very excited! After the Y4S programme I feel happy – more conscious and more aware of myself and comfortable in myself and happy-happy all around.

Participant 11: [I feel] happy. The programme helped me to find happiness, although sometimes at home that happiness can be shaken, [when my] parents are disciplining me.

Participant 6: After Y4S, I am happier than (before) the other time.

The Y4S programme aims to expose the learners to healthy ways of dealing with their stress and emotions, especially when in conflict with their peers. As several learners indicated, the breathing techniques helped them calm down when angry and manage their temper better. Learners who previously used to fight with peers who teased them, now implemented the breathing techniques in those situations to remain calm and not react. Moreover, the breathing made them feel more comfortable within themselves, maintaining a relaxed and happy state of mind. The learners identified that the power breath had become a means to control their emotions, as well as their responses to certain situations and people. Overall, learners demonstrated that they experienced more positive emotions since practising the breathing techniques taught in the programme.

Self-development

In the focus group discussions, across all seven groups 39 learners spoke of different elements of self-development that they had undergone in practising the tools of Y4S. They found that the programme had provided them with new skills to mature into more mindful children. Two core areas of self-development discussed by the learners were improved self-confidence and becoming ‘button-proof’.

Improved self-confidence. A prime factor that contributed to the initiation of self-development was the boost in confidence through participating in this mindfulness-based intervention.

Participant 28: [I have] more confidence in [my]self.

Participant 27: [I'm] not scared to read something for the whole class.

Participant 25: [I] believe in myself.

Participant 6: I was this shy person who was afraid to speak in front of a group of people, but after Y4S, now I can speak, without being shy - I can say anything. I was also [an] anti-social person - I didn't like making new friends but now I have learnt to be free and open.

Participant 10: I learn... about don't be shy...trust yourself.

Participant 44: Before Y4S, I was very furious... I wasn't very liked by the school. I felt isolated and didn't have much self-confidence... [or] self-esteem and was in Grade 6 at the time. Then I went into Grade 7 and started doing Y4S and while going through the breathing sessions, it changed me: inside and out... I became more clear and confident, had a lot of self-esteem and a lot more focus and concentration...better than I was before.

Participant 26: ...can become a better person in life, [my] fear to read in class is gone.

Participant 11: It's easy to do, it makes me feel better and no-one can say anything. It boosts your confidence and emotions.

Participant 19: Before the Y4S programme, I was not confident in myself After the programme I was much more confident.

The learners also articulated in the discussions that they were able to manage their emotional responses better. The learners believe the change is because they are now 'button proof': one of the fundamental human values taught in the Y4S programme.

Being button proof. This skill involves controlling one's emotions not letting peers, family and others trigger negative feelings such as anger by initiating conflict. The concept 'button proof' has two components. The first is the cognitive awareness that "oh my buttons are being pushed" or "I'm getting angry". The second involves using practical tools to manage the flood of emotion through techniques such as straw breath. Focusing on taking long slow breaths calms the heat of the emotion and enables children to have control over their emotions, and choose how they wish to respond rather than simply react. Using the

breath is a simple yet effective way to calm heated emotions and avoid the fight, flight or freeze response.

Participant 1: I learnt to be button proof on Y4S, don't let other people push your buttons...and the reaction and action.

Participant 44: ...I learnt that button proof is a very important thing to the people in our school and our children, and the people outside...

Participant 43: They taught us about not reacting when someone pushes your buttons. You just turn around away.

Participant 41: Before [Y4S, I felt] enraged and angry because kids would tease me and I would respond [with] react and fight and now I am button proof and i don't react and I am much calmer.

Participant 43: Before [the] Y4S programme, I just wanted to fight every day because people make me angry, angry enough I wanted to kill them. After Y4S, I changed: I am now button proof and I don't want to fight anymore.

Participant 43: I used to just snap when someone pushes my buttons, because now I'm button Proof. Before you do something in school, you first have to do one of those breathing exercises.

Participant 16: I learn how to control the emotions when button proof...

Participant 19: How to be button proof and not let anyone to press my buttons. And I learnt about self-control.

Participant 22: Y4S teach me how to become a better person...teach me when someone press your buttons, don't fight him.

Participant: ...Be button proof and not give that person the opportunity to press your buttons and make you angry.

Participant 5: My favorite part in Y4S was awareness and kindness and respect and button proof. I like them because they make [me] changed. They have made me a better person...button proof if someone teases me, I should ignore them. They are going to make a of fool themselves

The Button Proof tool taught on the Y4S programme appears to have been pivotal in helping learners manage their emotional responses. In the school environments, learners are often teased/ bullied or peer conflicts/arguments are easily initiated so being button proof is a valuable skill for becoming less emotionally reactive and more responsive. This tool will not only help the learners in their youth, but also potentially in their adult life.

A Better Quality of Relationships

In the focus group discussions, the learners explained that the quality of their relationships with peers, family members and teachers had improved significantly through their participation in the Y4S programme. This was expressed in 48 quotes across five groups of learners. The Y4S tools was seen to be applicable to the classroom, family and home environments by 18 learners across five groups. The areas in which the relationships improved included: respect for others, more mindful choices about peer relationships, reductions in bullying behavior and improved communication with others.

Respect for others. The development of the core human value of respect, mentioned 30 times across six groups, was recognized by the learners as integral in improving the quality of relationships they had with their parents, peers and teachers, as well as interactions with strangers.

Participant 37: Y4S' breathing techniques also changed the quality of my relationships with my teachers and my peers in class. I respect everyone.... Y4S has improved my life - in the way I see my mother, family, my parents and I respect them... at home [I] must respect parents, [and I] must respect people outside...

Participant 12: Before I come to Y4S, I did not respect others. After Y4S, I changed my mind- I respect people more.

Participant 6: What I have learnt from Y4S: I have learnt to care for each other. It helped me to calm myself and respect each other...

Participant 18: What I have learnt from the programme is to have respect... I have also learnt to forgive if someone has done something wrong to me.

Participant 5: What I have learnt from Y4S is to have respect [for]learners.... to care for others...

Participant 1: Before the Y4S programme, my friend and I used to fight a lot, [and] have so much conflict. After the programme, we are better together.

Participant 19: I am a very demanding person - I want to get whatever I want. Now I can accommodate my friends. It's more of team member like friendship – [we] co-operate with each other.

Participant 18: What I have loved about the programme - [it] has taught me to respect, not only my parents but everyone, equally...

Participant 9: Before the Y4S programme, I never respected anyone elder than me After the programme, I learnt to respect.

Participant 10: I learn about respecting others...

Participant 4: I have learnt how to respect my teachers and my parents...

Participant 27: I [learnt to] respect my parents...

Participant 14: Y4S helped me to... talk to elder person and how to show respect.

Participant 21: Y4S helped me to become kind, so I'm not rude to someone.

Participant 37: It (breathing).... helps me to remain calm and respect my parents and elders.

Participant 45: It (relationships) became better with teachers and parents at home.

Participant 11: The tools that I would take from Y4S is how to be with people, how to respect people, take care of people...

Participant 2: What I would take from the human values is to be kind [and] live in peace with everyone.

Participant 11: I learnt at home, when my mother is arguing with me... I have learned not to argue back and be the last one to speak.

Participant 8: I have learnt that if someone does not have lunch, I will share my lunch or buy them lunch.

Participant 42: Before Y4S, I was in Grade 6, I was very rude to my teacher, never listened. Then in Grade 7 after Y4S, I was very quiet in class: I focus and listen and respect my teachers...

Participant 4: I have learnt how to respect my teachers and my parents, [with] Y4S I have learnt co-operation, and how to handle others around me.

The concept of respect was new to most of the learners. Through the programme's teachings about human values, the learners have internalized a desire to treat others with respect, kindness and consideration.

More mindful about choices of friendships. The programme also made the learners aware of the difference between friends who are a bad or good influence, which is important in establishing healthy friendships.

Participant 16: I was in group of friends who were of bad influence – but when I got into Y4S, I got new friends that have respect...

Participant 13: You know us as boys, we do something that is out of line. So I was in that position not knowing what to do: must I follow my friends or not. So I sacrifice and do bad things because I want to join my friends. So, in Y4S, I have learnt that I must focus on my studies and not do bad things...

Overall, the learners have become more mindful of whom they form friendships with.

Reductions in bullying behavior. A total of 13 learners across five groups indicated that before Y4S they were bullies and fought with their peers and siblings, but after completing the programme this behavior stopped.

Participant 38: Before the Y4S programme, I used to like making fun of other people, laughing at them and bullying them, but after the Y4S programme, I was button proof and didn't want to bully anymore. I respected my friends and they respected me.

Participant 39: She was bullying kids and fighting with them, and this has all stopped after [the] Y4S programme.

Participant 7: Before the Y4S programme, I was a bully and now after the programme I have learnt to respect.

Participant 37: In the classroom, I used to be a bully and now I don't bully anymore. I realized what I did was wrong...

Participant 43: Before Y4S, I just wanted to fight every day because people make me angry, angry enough [that] I wanted to kill them. After Y4S, I changed. I am now button proof and I don't want to fight anymore.

Participant 18: Before Y4S, if I started a fight and beat up someone, I would never go back and say sorry. But now, I respect others, forgive and go back and say sorry if I wronged someone.

Participant 40: Before Y4S, I was bullying little kids... after Y4S I realized I should help them more.

Participant 39: I was bullying kids and fighting with them and this has all stopped after Y4S.

Participant 47: Power breathing helped resolve conflict with other students. [The] teacher said when there was a conflict to keep their hands to themselves, laugh and let go...

These youths live and learn in environments where violence is reinforced through gangsterism, and is often depicted as the only 'viable' way to deal with conflict. Through Y4S the learners realized that their behavior (bullying and fighting with their family and peers) was inappropriate. The imparting of human values such as respect and kindness

exposed them to healthy tools to better understand themselves, others and situations, while the daily breathing practice provided them with the tools to calm down in anger-inducing situations or interactions.

Improved communication skills. 10 learners across four groups highlighted that in practising the Y4S tools, their communication skills improved.

Participant 31: I'm better at communicating after the Y4S programme.

Participant 19: I learnt how to respect people, and how to talk to my friends and people...

Participant 7: What I have learnt from Y4S, I have learnt how to talk to other people: don't be rude, don't talk vulgar language, respect other people, kindness...

Participant 8: And we were also taught to be equal and considerate, so we should listen to others when they speak.

Participant 12: [I learnt] how to talk to each other, when each other is crying, how to talk to each other when someone is bullying somebody.

Participant 2: What I have learnt from Y4S is...to listen to others when they are talking, to respect others...

In addition to being exposed to human values such as respect and treating people with kindness, the learners were taught to develop their listening skills and be more sensitive and gentle when speaking to their peers, which led to the enhancement of their communication skills. Earlier research has shown that antagonistic behaviors, e.g. shouting and name calling tend to erode a relationship's quality over time (Saavedra, Chapman, & Rogge, 2010). This was often the case in these learners' lives and being exposed to better communication tools through Y4S was a first for many of the learners, and was well received – hence, the implementation across the groups.

Conclusion

Despite findings that mindfulness-based interventions can enhance the coping skills and well-being of learners in high income countries, the applicability of these interventions in South African school settings has rarely been explored. The results of this exploratory qualitative study suggest that the mindfulness-based intervention 'YES! For Schools' was

experienced by the participants as having a positive impact on their well-being. The participants expressed that they had undergone many changes in completing the Y4S programme. The learners believed that the breathing practices were integral to this transformation, as through daily practice of the breathing techniques they felt their focus levels improved, that they were better equipped to regulate their emotions and felt an increase of positive emotions. Previous studies have found that the integration of mindfulness practices into physical education was a positive means to provide students with life skills to deal with stress and increase their concentration in class (Napoli, Krech, & Holley, 2005). Further literature has shown that mindfulness-based interventions are influential in improving learners' attention and executive performances (Napoli et al., 2005; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015, as cited in Waldemar et al, 2016). These studies support the notion that mindfulness-based interventions, such as 'YES! For Schools' enhance the youths' focus.

The learners also indicated that the breathing practices contributed to improving their emotional regulation. Studies have shown that emotions and respiration are closely associated in a multifaceted feedback loop (Jerath, Crawford, Barnes, & Harden, 2015). Emotions are understood to affect respiration and respiration is also seen to influence emotions (Jerath, et al., 2015). The simple, easy and cost-effective implementation of meditation and breathing techniques has proven to be beneficial in reducing stress, anxiety, depression and other negative emotional states (Jerath, et al., 2015). Biologically, Hölzel et al. (2011, as cited in Liu, 2013) proposed that mindfulness meditations are connected to transformations in the grey matter region of the brain, that is involved in emotional regulation. In a study conducted by Hill and Updegraff (2012), findings supported the association between mindfulness and improved emotional regulation. The findings of this study also support these previous studies.

In this study, the learners believed that their better quality of relationships with others is due to implementing the human value of respect; having more awareness about friends who are of bad and good influence; reducing bullying behavior and improved communication skills. Previous research supports the finding that mindfulness programs are linked to an improvement in relationships with others (Carmody, Reed, Kristeller, & Merriam, 2008, Carson, Carson, Gil, & Baucom, 2004, as cited in Greeson, 2008; Waldemar et al, 2016).

Most studies investigating the impact mindfulness has on bullying in schools are based on the American schooling systems. In Leland's (2015) study in a middle school in New York, character-building programme that applied the teaching of mindfulness resulted in a decline in bullying by enhancing the learners' self-regulation and reducing peer-to-peer conflict (Leland's, 2015). However, this exploratory study of learners' experiences of the Y4S programme in Cape Town schools has yielded some novel findings not previously

reported in the literature on mindfulness interventions in schools, regarding participant experiences of enhanced self-development through improved self-confidence and ‘being button proof’; a better quality of relationships in terms of respecting others; being more mindful about friendship choices and improved communication skills.

Limitations

Overall, the findings of this exploratory study suggest that ‘Y4S’ has promising benefits for the personal and social well-being of learners in the South African context. However, there were a number of limitations to this study. Only 47 learners from the two schools were included in the study. The inclusion of more focus groups would have improved the richness of the data. However, due to the scope of the Honours project (limited time line and size of research report) this was not possible. Furthermore, this study draws from the IPA theoretical framework, whereby findings emerged through the researcher’s interpretation of the participants reported experiences. The study’s design does not allow for the objective demonstration of a cause-effect relationship beyond the subjective interpretation of the participants. It is possible that the participants tailored their responses to what they thought the researcher wanted to hear about the Y4S programme, though the enthusiasm and animation with which they spoke does not seem to reflect purely socially desirable responses.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is an integral component of qualitative research. It involves researchers recognizing the roles they play in research; influencing and molding the research process through personal reflexivity (as a person) and epistemological reflexivity (as a theorist) (Willig, 2013). It is imperative that researchers account for the subjective factors that they bring to the study and recognize the unavoidable power balance between the researcher and participants. The researcher’s age as a young adult enabled her to hold the position of authority but also to create a child-friendly environment. Furthermore, the researcher’s practice and facilitation of mindfulness enabled the researcher to have a better experiential understanding of the ‘Y4S’ teachings and practices, which may have impacted positively on understanding the phenomenon in question (Wilson & Maclean, 2011). At the same time, this background may have created subjectivity or bias that influenced how the researcher conducted the focus groups and analyzed the data. The researcher remained mindful of how her positioning may have influenced the research process. As an Indian, middle-class female from the University of Cape Town, the researcher appeared to be an outsider to both schools located in the communities of Bonteheuwel and Khayelitsha. Hence, the unfamiliarity of the researcher for the participants may have prevented them from engaging completely and honestly in the discussions. In one focus group conducted at Ntwashlobo Primary School in

Khayletisha, the learners appeared to resist the efforts of the researcher by speaking extremely softly to the point of inaudibility and were not actively participating in the discussion, due to her inability to speak isiXhosa. Although both Afrikaans and isiXhosa translators were utilized in the specified schools, the richness of the experiences spoken by the learners in their home languages may have been lost through translation. Bearing in mind the researcher's positionality, it is important to note that the researcher has been a practitioner of mindfulness for many years, and has experienced a variety of the prescribed benefits (e.g. increased concentration, improved emotional regulation) herself over time. Also, through the International Association of Human Values, the researcher herself has been involved in nation-wide peace campaigns where meditation has been started at schools, and has also taught basic mindfulness programmes to the under privileged. Hence, practising mindfulness and teaching it to the greater society may have influenced the researcher's standpoint on the study's findings.

Recommendations for Future Research

The capacity of this Honours research project has allowed for only a small sample. The findings of this exploratory study support the ongoing implementation of the Y4S programme in Cape Town schools, however they are not adequate to warrant further scaling up of this school-based intervention. In addition to expanding the number of participants in future studies, a country-wide study should be conducted of learners who have completed the Y4S programme from various schooling environments (private, public, rural, same-sexed and both-sexed) across South Africa to improve the richness of the data. A study of this magnitude, using a randomized controlled trial design, is highly recommended to further explore the effectiveness of mindfulness-based interventions for enhancing coping skills and the well-being of learners in the South African context.

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Appendix A

Interview schedule for focus group with learners

1. What were the learners' experiences of participating in the Y4S program, in terms of content and processes?
 - a. What did you learn about at the Y4S program?
 - Demonstrate through a mind map
 - b. What was your favorite part of the program? Why was it your favorite part?
 - c. What was the most difficult part of the Y4S program for you? Can you tell me what was difficult about it?
 - d. What do you think the Y4S teachers could have done better? How could they improve the teaching?

2. From the qualitative perspective of the learners', did taking part in the 'YES! For schools' programme help them with:

Has taking part in Y4S changed anything in your life or helped you with anything?

Probes:

- a. Focus and concentration in class or for homework?

Do you feel it is easier to concentrate in classroom or when you do your homework?
- b. Emotional regulation

Do you feel like you can manage your emotions better after completing the Y4S program?

Do you feel more calmer and happier after completing the program?

When you get angry now, what do you do?
- c. Relationships with other people

Have there been any changes in how you get on with family and friends?
- d. Any other areas?

What part of your life has the Y4S program made the biggest difference in?

The tools that you have learnt on the Y4S program, where could you use them?

Appendix B



Department of Psychology

Information Sheet and Consent Form

Consent for your child to participate in research study:

The integration of mindfulness programs in South African schools: A case study of the YES!
For Schools programme.

Dear Parents/Legal Guardians,

My name is Sandrika Chetty. I am a Psychology honours student from the University of Cape Town. Your child is invited to join a research study being conducted by myself, to see what they think about the 'YES! For Schools' programme which has been used in your child's school this year.

I have received permission from the Western Cape Education Department to conduct this study in your child's school. The research will be administered during the school day. I need your permission for your child to participate in the study.

Research Procedure

If you agree to your child joining this study, he/she will be asked to participate in a focus group with some other learners who have also completed the 'Yes! For Schools' programme. In this focus group, they will discuss their experiences of the programme. If your child does participate, it should take about an hour of their time and will take place at the school during the school day. The focus group will be audio-recorded in order to help the researcher remember the information. After the researcher, has had time to listen to and write down the things said in the focus group, the recording will be destroyed.

Confidentiality

Any information that your child shares during the focus group will be kept confidential by the researcher. All names or identifying information about your child will not appear in the research report or be shared with anyone else involved in the project. The researcher will request that all participants keep the discussion confidential, but cannot guarantee that they will do so.

Voluntary Participation

Participation for the interview is completely voluntary. Although you may grant your child permission to participate, his or her participation is entirely up to them. If at any point your child no longer wishes to participate, he or she may withdraw from the focus group.

Possible Risks and benefits

We do not expect that there will be any risks for your child by taking part in this study. Once the research has been completed, the information will be used to help to develop the Y4S program to make sure it is meeting the needs of learners and educators. Your child's input will be helpful in deciding whether it will work in other South African schools.

Contact details

If you have further questions or concerns about the study, please feel free to contact

Sandrika Chetty - 0785611427

Associate Professor Debbie Kaminer (supervisor) – (021) 650 3900

If you have any issues or problems regarding this research or your rights as a research participant and would like to speak to the Chair of the Ethics committee, please contact Mrs Rosalind Adams at the Department of Psychology, University of Cape Town (UCT), 021 650 3417.

If you understand all the procedures and the risks and benefits of the study and you would like to participate in the project, please sign below:

Child's Name : _____

Parent's Name : _____

Parent's Signature : _____

Date : _____

Please also sign below if you consent to the focus group being recorded.

Participant's Name : _____

Parent 's Signature : _____

Date : _____



Information Sheet and Assent Form

Consent to participate in research study:

The integration of mindfulness programs in South African schools: A case study of the YES!
For Schools programme.

Dear learner,

You are being invited to take part in a research study being conducted by myself, a Psychology student from the University of Cape Town. The purpose of this study is to hear what you think about the 'YES! For Schools' programme that has been running in your school this year.

What will I have to do?

You do not have to take part in this research, it is completely your choice. If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to join some other learners in your grade for a group discussion with the researchers. The discussion will take about one hour and will take place at your school during the school day at a time suggested by your teachers.

The group discussion will be audio-recorded in order to help the researcher remember the information. After the researcher has had time to listen to and write down the recorded discussion, the recording will be destroyed.

Will what I say on the group be private?

Any information that you may share with us during the interview will be kept private by the researchers. Your name will not be used when we write up our research. The researcher will tell all the learners in the group to keep the discussion private, but we can't promise that they will do this, so you should not say anything in the group that you don't want other people to know.

Can anything bad happen to me if I take part?

This will just be a group discussion in which you can choose what you want to share. If you decide that you want to stop taking part at any time, you can leave the discussion and nothing

will happen to you. If anything about the group discussion worries you afterwards, you should tell your parent or teacher.

How can this research help me?

Taking part in this research will give you a chance to talk about your experiences in the ‘YES! For School’ programme. This will help us to know how to make the programme better and decide if it should be used with kids at other school.

Contact details

If you have any questions or worries about the study, you or your parent or caregiver can contact us:

Sandrika Chetty – 078 5611427

Associate Professor Debbie Kaminer (supervisor) – (021) 650 3900

If you would like to take part in the study, please sign your name below

Participant’s Name : _____

Participant’s Signature : _____

Date : _____

If you agree that the group discussion can be recorded just to help the researcher to remember everything, please sign below:

Participant’s Name : _____

Participant’s Signature : _____

Date : _____

Appendix D



Department of Psychology

Debriefing form for parents of learners participating in the research study: The integration of mindfulness programs in South African schools: A case study of the YES! For Schools programme.

Dear Parents/Legal Guardians,

Your child has just participated in a research study conducted by Sandrika Chetty, contactable on 0785611427. Thank you for allowing your child to participate in this study! Their contribution is greatly appreciated. We hope they enjoyed the experience. This form provides background about our research to help you learn more about why we are doing this study.

The 'YES! For Schools' (Y4S) programme is an overseas programme that has recently been tried out across several South African schools, offering pupils healthy tools to manage their emotions and stress. The purpose of this study was to investigate the learners' experiences of participating in the YES! For Schools programme that has been piloted in their school. This will help us to know if the program's objectives were met. Specifically, we were interested in whether the programme assisted the learners the following areas: focus and concentration in class or in homework, managing their feelings, relationships with family and friends; as well as any other areas they feel have improved.

We aimed to make the group discussion fun and easy for the learners. But, if your child experienced any worry or distress after taking part in this study, please contact these free help-lines:

SADAG Mental Health Line: 011234 4837

PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

PLAGIARISM

This means that you present substantial portions or elements of another's work, ideas or data as your own, even if the original author is cited occasionally. A signed photocopy or other copy of the Declaration below must accompany every piece of work that you hand in.

DECLARATION

1. I know that Plagiarism is wrong. Plagiarism is to use another's work and pretend that it is one's own.
2. I have used the American Psychological Association formatting for citation and referencing. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this essay/report/project from the work or works, of other people has been attributed, cited and referenced.
3. This essay/report/project is my own work.
4. I have not allowed, and will not allow anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as his or her own work.

NAME: Sandrika Chetty

SIGNATURE: S.C

STUDENT NUMBER: CHTSAN005