

THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF MINDFULNESS PRACTITIONERS ON THE APPLICABILITY OF A MINDFULNESS-BASED INTERVENTION IN BASIC EDUCATION IN THE PHILIPPINES

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Abstract: In the Philippines, local studies in mindfulness are scarce; however, recent published works are slowly increasing. The purpose of the present study was to gain insight from the research participants' personal and professional lives whether mindfulness is applicable for children in basic education. Through semi-structured interviews, this study explored the lived experiences of twelve mindfulness practitioners across multiple fields of work: teachers in yoga and mindfulness, Buddhist devotee and nun, clinical and school psychologist, prefect of discipline, Jesuit priest and school administrator, and guidance counselors. Four themes were extracted through interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA): (a) venue for healing, (b) journey within the self, (c) developing character, and (d) cultivating humanism and harmony. Importantly, these themes were corroborated in the research literature. The results of the study suggest that participants believed mindfulness was beneficial and advantageous to manage difficult inner experiences like emotions, thoughts, or physical sensations; take skillful action; develop calmness, calm relationships, and compassion; be open and tolerant of difficulties; grow in self-understanding, and presence with others; however, several risks and disadvantages were acknowledged. Conclusions of the study indicated that all research participants agree on the feasibility of mindfulness to be taught with school youth. Students should be guided by a well-trained mindfulness practitioner. Mindfulness practice may be more suitable for certain individuals than others and may only be effective under certain circumstances. Application of mindfulness in schools must be used appropriately, effectively weighing its limitations, disadvantages and risks. Mindfulness-based interventions have great potential in the basic education setting since it is characteristically simple yet effective that may be appropriate for today's youth, who are faced with greater stress, pressure, and distraction.

Keywords: K-12, mindfulness interventions, mindfulness school program, qualitative methods, phenomenology

School-aged youth between the ages of 7 and 24 years old, labeled Generation Z or I-Generation, are constantly inundated with information at their fingertips. The ease with which information is received can turn from a blessing to noise, distraction, and stress in people's lives, and even become detrimental to one's mental health. Particularly, increasing amounts of social and digital media use is a challenge with Filipino youth being a frequent pastime. According to the Digital Intelligence Institute, Filipino youth have the second-highest problematic scores, spending more undisciplined hours of screen time compared to 29 other countries in the study; on average "4.85 hours per day in front of digital screens, they spent about two hours more than the global average" (Camus, 2018, para. 8). Apart from problems

associated with the increasingly irresponsible digital media use by youths worldwide, this demographic faces greater reported mental health issues than ever before.

According to Zenner et al. (2014), compared to the past more American children and teenagers were diagnosed with stress-related problems. Strikingly for Olfson et al. (2015), a data analysis from the years 1996 to 2012 of United States populations observed the youth to have greater use for mental health out-patient services use of mental health out-patient services for the youth sector. Similarly, rising rates of mental illness and suicide in Filipino youth have been observed by Philippine mental health experts (Tomacruz, 2018). The youth are often described as vulnerable to stress and challenges with developing skills for resilience, frustration tolerance and attention.

To the researcher's best knowledge, there are no locally written books on mindfulness that could explain the origin of the research interest in the country. A study of mindfulness practitioners themselves who may be able to report mindfulness interventions' emergence, has not been empirically reported in the country, despite its anecdotal practice. Tracing its local roots serves as a springboard for understanding its current practice by participants from a variety of professions from teaching yoga and mindfulness to professions or vocations in Buddhism and Catholicism, school discipline, psychology in the clinical and school setting, and guidance and counseling.

In terms of the connection and significant contribution that mindfulness interventions have in the guidance and counseling profession, several authors advocate for its further association. For one, in the American School Counselor Association (ASCA; 2019) position statement on corporal punishment, a school counselor's role is to teach and practice mindfulness techniques for both the students, parents and teachers alike. Mindfulness Based Interventions (MBI) address responsive services in guidance and counseling programs like exercises on breathing, attention, and body awareness that may allow for greater calm during times of difficulty, stress or crisis, and preventive services, particularly utilizing classroom guidance to teach mindfulness curriculums with different activities across K-12 levels (Cleveland, 2016). Mindfulness interventions encompass much of the work of school counselors and are intended to supplement current interventions (Cleveland, 2016). Mindfulness may be the answer to the diverse challenges and contexts that the youth face today and this intervention may help in the field of guidance and counseling, and in the basic education school setting.

The objective of the present study is to understand mindfulness from the lived experiences of different helping professionals in their personal and professional lives as mindfulness has been applied in multiple platforms such as wellness, religion, spirituality, and mental health. Moreover, the purpose of this study is to extract valuable insight from mindfulness practitioners and experts whether it is indeed applicable for children since most research shows that it is mostly utilized for adults. Overall, the participants are chosen because of their unique perspectives in their practice and interpretation of mindfulness in their own professions.

Table 1
Background of research participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Profession or Vocation	Age Range
Trina	F	Certified Yoga Teacher (Parent)	30s
Kate	F	Certified Yoga Teacher (Parent)	30s
Br. Bob	M	Buddhist Devotee	60s
John	M	Clinical Psychologist	20s
Isabel	F	Certified Mindfulness Facilitator & Certified Yoga Teacher (Parent)	40s
Chloe	F	Prefect of Discipline	30s
Fr. Andrew	M	Catholic Jesuit Priest & School Administrator	40s
Janine	F	Guidance Associate	20s
Richard	M	School Psychologist	20s
Emily	F	Guidance Coordinator (Registered Guidance Counselor)	50s
Nikka	F	Guidance Counselor (Registered Guidance Counselor)	30s
Ven. Marie	F	Buddhist Monastic Nun & School Administrator	40s

Table 1 shows each research participant’s pseudonym, gender, profession or vocation, and age range. The results have been extracted from twelve interviews of mindfulness practitioners meeting the inclusion criteria of having a background working with youth. Four of the participants work in the same parent institution as the researcher. Three of the participants with a background of yoga teaching also parent two children. A majority of them have[?] direct service involvement with youth while only one has[?] a solely administrative capacity. Importantly, at least three of the participants practice mindfulness with their children as parents. Lastly, the length of time using mindfulness with the youth ranged from 3 years to 20 years.

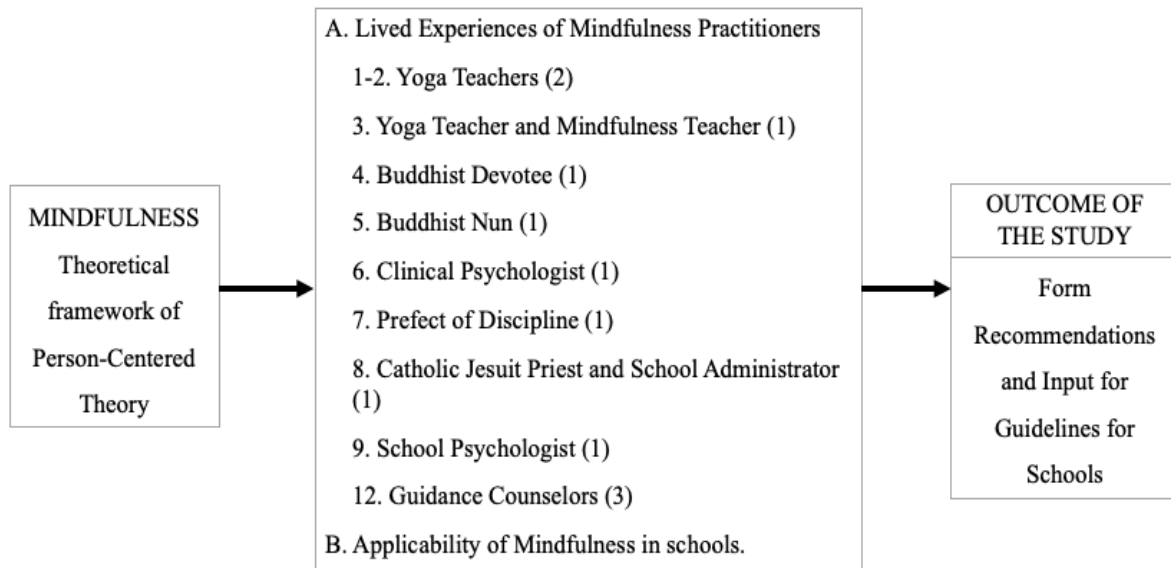


Figure 1. Research paradigm of the phenomenological study of mindfulness

Figure 1 shows that through the person-centered theoretical framework, this qualitative study tackled the lived experiences of mindfulness practitioners: yoga teacher, Buddhist devotee, clinical psychologist, mindfulness facilitator, prefect of discipline, Roman Catholic Jesuit priest, school psychologist, and guidance counselor. The study explored the participants' overall perspective of the application that mindfulness has in the school setting. Recommendations and input for guidelines may be formulated to assist in the integration of mindfulness into school programs.

The concept of mindfulness is an element and underpinning of Buddhism (Baer et al., 2019; Creswell, 2017; Ditrich, 2016). For Buddhist traditions, the goal of mindfulness is to be free from suffering by training the individual to make personal changes in thoughts and emotions, eventually leading to actions that alleviate the individual's suffering (Purser & Milillo, 2015). This is not just liberty from suffering within the individual, but it influences others' suffering as well. There are four foundations of mindfulness which consist of: being mindful in body, feelings, mind or thoughts, and in the phenomena of our mind in relation to the world.

Local studies in mindfulness remain in short supply. However, one published pilot study which corresponds to the current research in terms of population of study, comes from the work of Alampay et al. (2020), who conducted a randomized control study of a locally adapted MBCT program serving 186 Filipino public school elementary and high school children from ages nine to sixteen. Filipino teachers and guidance counselors were appointed as mindfulness program facilitators; also, authors ensured facilitators trained and acquired their own mindfulness self-practice over seven months. Alampay et al.'s research findings demonstrate that there was no difference in symptoms of anxiety, depression and emotion regulation among participants in the Kamalayan versus control group. Despite the results running contrary to the research goals and research limitations, issues and challenges, Alampay et al.'s research shows a significant milestone in the Philippine mindfulness research landscape to learn from and improve upon in contextualizing and adapting mindfulness interventions in the Philippine setting. To the author's knowledge, this is the first and only locally published study on mindfulness interventions conducted with children and adolescent populations in the school setting on a wide scale.

With western mindfulness literature, conceptual and methodological problems have been found to be typically underreported in the mindfulness literature such as a lack of consensus on the definition of mindfulness (Hanley et al., 2016), control group issues, heterogeneity of mindfulness research, lack of high quality mindfulness data tools, and small sample sizes (Zenner et al., 2014). Despite this, Davidson & Kaszniak (2015) remain optimistic that the methodological rigor of mindfulness research is improving with the production of higher quality research. Moreover, there are few significant and acknowledged minor risks and adverse effects of mindfulness reported since there is currently a lack of prioritization by most mindfulness research to report these. This is one of the considerable gaps in the literature being underreported. Overall, many researchers still implore greater research scrutiny to justify and guide mindfulness application, funding, and presence in kindergarten to grade 12 schools. To the researchers' knowledge, no study has explored the threads of similarities and differences between the varying application of mindfulness from the religious, spiritual, school based and therapeutic setting. As such, within the local research context, this study attempts to fill this research gap by exploring the processes, conditions, and lived experience of such mindfulness practitioners, rather than the overemphasized analysis on the effects of mindfulness.

Methods

The study used a qualitative, phenomenological research method. A purposive, snowball sampling was used to recruit participants to the study. To ensure saturation and richness of data extracted, instead of the intended five, twelve participants were found. Also, participants fit the inclusion criteria having worked in schools or with youth ages five to eighteen. Then their responses were compared to the research literature to assure validity of their responses. Overall, the research work involved twelve mindfulness practitioners who utilize mindfulness in their occupation, vocation, or both; they also have a certain amount of personal practice.

The research tool was a researcher-made instrument consisting of a semi-structured interview format with provision for possible observation.

1. What is your profession, and your roles and responsibilities?
2. What is your experience with mindfulness in your profession?
3. What is your experience with mindfulness in your personal life? Has mindfulness been advantageous or disadvantageous for you?
4. How do you experience mindfulness? Can it be applicable and consequential for children and the youth in the school setting?
5. In the school setting, what do you experience as potential risks of the practice of mindfulness for children and youth?

Research questions intended to robustly explore the idea of mindfulness in their unique disciplines interacting with youth. Data analysis from qualitative, phenomenological research design utilized interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to identify patterns and themes to interpret data and add a deeper understanding of the research topic. This was done through open coding and thematic analysis to acquire superordinate and subordinate thematic domains across interviews. Such richness of data necessitates that the participants are given abundant time to expound on their ideas and views.

Each interview transcript required sustained analysis to explore the meaning of the unique phenomenological worlds of the participants. Eventually, individual interview transcripts were divided into meaning units, patterns and themes – all to stay true to the essence of the research participants’ meaning. All twelve interview transcript codes were laid out to unearth the similarities, differences, idiosyncrasies, and what was emphasized or may have been understated in the twelve participants’ responses. In contemplation with inter-rater reliability, the interview transcripts and codes derived by the researcher were reviewed and validated by her research advisor. Lastly, multiple revisions in the coding process were required before a final summary of phenomenological themes was presented.

Results

This section reflects the data gathered with the goal of answering the study objectives.

Objective No. 1: What are the lived experiences of the research participants in mindfulness?

Table 2
Summary of themes

Superordinate	Subordinate
1. Venue of Healing	Managing Stress and Anxiety Self-Regulation Balance of Emotions Resilience
2. Journey Within the Self	Understanding the Self Connect to Inner Self Self-Acceptance
3. Developing Character	Peace Compassion Insightful Wisdom Kindness
4. Cultivating Humanism & Harmony	Being Present for Others Ripple Effect Towards Good Change

Table 2 demonstrates the summary of themes that answer the lived experiences of mindfulness practitioners. There were four superordinate themes that surfaced through thematic analysis and the accompanying thirteen subordinate themes.

Lived Experiences of Mindfulness Practitioners

Venue for Healing. The lived experiences of participants revealed that the practice of mindfulness became a venue for healing toward managing stress and anxiety. Specifically, mindfulness brought personal transformation in the lives of some participants by improving their mental health, particularly in dealing with feelings of sadness and anxiety. Other participants capitalize on mindfulness practice providing them with the ability to manage their emotions by pursuing calmness through taking a pause or break before responding, allowing them to separate themselves from the present moment’s emotions and experiences, to perceive certain affective states without acting upon this maladaptively or losing a sense of control. A few participants emphasized how the practice had allowed them to be tolerant with

experiencing the full range of emotions and be able to confidently respond to these difficult emotions in a deliberate and meaningful way, and ultimately, face challenges with a resilient attitude.

Journey Within the Self. Mindfulness provided a foundation with which practitioners could better understand themselves by discovering their ideals, expectations, fears, mistakes, desires, thoughts, emotions, experiences, and how they affect other people. This also includes an understanding of their self-concept as well as their skills and preferences. Much of this deeper understanding of the self requires a non-judgmental stance in the present moment, which is at the heart of mindfulness. Another lived experience among the study participants that experienced a journey within themselves realized greater connection to their inner selves. This experience of inner connection included practitioners' realization and application to live according to their purpose, values and beliefs. Specifically, practitioners made decisions and acted in accordance with what they believed in and with what was most true to themselves. This inner connection also led them to experience greater clarity from centering and grounding, which came from various mindfulness practices like formal meditation, having present moment awareness, activating deep breaths, and making space for pause, calm and quiet. Similarly, several research participants expounded on how their lived experience in mindfulness allowed them to grow in self-acceptance by accepting the parts of themselves from their strengths, weaknesses, to their mistakes and regrets, no matter how intentional or unintentional their actions and decisions had been. The practice had brought them to a level of relentless acceptance and forgiveness of these seemingly unacceptable sides. More than this acceptance, mindfulness allowed the practitioners to transcend from these mistakes and grow deeper in empowerment and personal growth as opposed to being limited because of such weak aspects of the self.

Developing Character. In terms of another lived experience, several of the mindfulness practitioners resounded that mindfulness had provided them with a sense of calm and composure within oneself and in relation to others. Such equanimity had reverberated in their personal and professional lives. Notably, lengthy elucidations of the appeal of mindfulness in growing one's ability to be more compassionate may suggest the depth of its significance in the participants' personal lives. Several participants seemed to describe a transformative experience from this compassion for self and others; particularly, in the way they responded to situations, shortcomings or weaknesses of oneself and others, by ultimately expressing a deep feeling of empathy, understanding love, and even forgiveness. Mindfulness directed practitioners to experience greater compassion. Notably, lengthy elucidations of the appeal of mindfulness in growing one's ability to be more compassionate may suggest the depth of its significance in the participants' personal lives. A number of participants seemed to describe a transformative experience from this compassion for self and others; particularly, in the way they responded to situations, shortcomings or weaknesses of oneself and others, by ultimately expressing a deep feeling of empathy, understanding love, and even forgiveness. Several research participants agreed that the experience of mindfulness practice led them toward insightful wisdom or taking skillful, rational actions and decisions in response to life's challenges and stresses. Other research participants supposed that awareness was a prerequisite for responsible choices and states, and several practitioners working in a counseling profession revealed this same impact for their clients. A majority of the participants seemed to describe the basis of mindfulness of building greater self-awareness can trickle down to impacting one's relationships from greater acts of kindness.

Cultivating Humanism and Harmony. For the three yoga teachers parenting their children, all have stated that mindfulness made a positive impact in their parenting. All three emphasized the importance of mindfulness in building awareness and empowered them to realize the importance of taking deep breaths. There was a resounding similarity among the three yoga instructors that mindfulness instilled self-discipline and self-control in their children as a result of the child's greater self-awareness. For guidance counselors, their professional experience with mindfulness allowed them to create a safe space for students to unpack and unburden themselves. A substantial number of research participants also emphasized the higher, transcendental goals associated with mindfulness beyond awareness alone. Such transcendental understanding of mindfulness becomes value driven behaviors and decisions that have a positive impact on others' lives not just their own. The practice had been observed to influence a child's compassion for others.

Each mindfulness practitioner detailed their respective profession or vocation and experience in practicing mindfulness. Despite their unique practices and experience in mindfulness, essential messages were recognized. The lived experiences they had shared led to the discovery of the major and minor themes. Overall, their lived experience in mindfulness was a venue for healing toward managing stress and anxiety, self-regulation, balance of emotions, and resilience. Similarly, there was a resounding observation of a journey within the self toward greater understanding of oneself, greater connection to the inner self, and self-acceptance. Moreover, research participants experienced a development of character toward peace, compassion, insightful wisdom and kindness gained as a result of the practice. Lastly, they realized cultivating humanism and harmony through a greater presence for others and ripple effect toward good change for others.

Research participants described their experiences with the practice, and they observed an overall positive impact of mindfulness in their personal and professional life. In their professional life, they expressed the advantage of mindfulness on others by helping with stress management, emotion regulation, managing difficult inner and outer experiences, coping with life difficulties, and in building empathy and compassion for others.

Psychologist & Guidance Counselors

As revealed by the two psychologists and guidance counselors, mindfulness created a welcoming and safe atmosphere for clients, and being more receptive to begin the counseling process – especially if a client comes in at a heightened state of emotion. Resolvedly, these have positive implications to practice mindfulness in the guidance and counseling profession. In its entirety, mindfulness was helpful by aiding others in improvement of their wellbeing.

In their personal life, mindfulness influenced three participants in parenting their children by allowing them to be more present for them, supportive, teach coping skills, and learn how to better relate with others. Moreover, all the participants expressed their mindfulness practice as advantageous by teaching them to practice having a healthier relationship with their inner and outer experiences. The ways it was applied to their clients is much the same as how they apply it to themselves – during times of stress, when feeling overwhelmed, anxious, or sad, when facing difficult decisions, and dealing with relationship problems. Moreover, several participants pointed to the two-fold impact that mindfulness practice brings the practitioner, which spreads to others around them. This is what was referred to in the theme as a ripple effect of mindfulness. According to three out of twelve of the participants, such

effects become ubiquitous since mindfulness causes a person who practices it to exude adaptive traits, values, and ways of coping that will naturally positively impact others' lives because of these changes in their inner and outer experiences from their thoughts, emotions and actions. Lastly, mindfulness had been found by several study participants to be universal because its similarities go beyond Buddhism, seeping into their childhood activities like calming strategies, body-based training, and also in counseling techniques and Christian contemplative prayer.

Importantly, participants lived experiences could not be easily categorized by their background or profession. The results of this study point to a similar core understanding of mindfulness across professions; this despite the unique way they incorporated mindfulness in their own lives may be centered in yoga, prayer, in mindful thoughts and feelings, in parenting, mental well-being, self care, student formation, and many more. Specifically, all participants found the advantages of mindfulness practice for their clients and saw its applicability with the youth and particularly in the school setting. They even shared their reassuring observations of the youth receiving mindfulness practice which bolster the significance on its application. Also, the study participants revealed that mindfulness may be a valid intervention for the youths' troubles given their experienced societal values and context, the parenting strategies commonly used, and from the observed troubles that the youth face today. Several of them described multiple scientific evidence of the powerful application of mindfulness. These include reducing anxiety, stress relief, mental proliferation, rumination, cognitive distortions, and default mode network, and reducing aggression, since they are observed to struggle with greater amounts of stress, worry and mental illness. Importantly, the researcher validated statements given by participants who cited promising research findings of the practice from current research. Hence, their experience of the applicability of mindfulness with the youth in schools in education, discipline, and guidance and counseling was founded in current research.

Notably, there were a few notable risks, disadvantages and limitations described by research participants which should be addressed given the vulnerability of the youth population. Risks included an incorrect practice when not guided by a seasoned teacher, certain risks with vulnerable clients with mental health concerns; however, as long as the activities are simple and basic mindfulness activities, there seems to be no glaring risks in the practice. Disadvantages noted were that overemphasis may result in greater resistance and openness to try the practice. Also, another disadvantage is a lack of clear understanding of the use of the practice. Another misimpression may be a lack of understanding of the roots of the practice as well as its relationship with other universal practices. Lastly, limitations found include the belief that the practice is a panacea for every issue and by having this belief one may overlook more appropriate solutions to the problem or need. These risks, disadvantages and limitations may be integrated and addressed in future research.

Overall, the propositions gleaned from the results of the qualitative data have to do with how to approach teaching mindfulness specific to each age bracket within the youth population. For instance, there is a difference in teaching approaches with children versus older teenagers such that the goals and methods may vary. This is emphasized to best capture the youth and reduce the possibility of resistance to the concept. Also, there are general suggestions to help with program implementation for different types of mindfulness activities that will introduce the topic by adding variety and novelty in teaching. Other propositions discovered from the lived experiences of the mindfulness practitioners were

propositions for the youth, and to guide teachers and guidance counselors, once they are adequately trained, these propositions would guide them how best to use the practice.

Discussion

All provided an insightful understanding regarding how mindfulness had been useful and impactful in their own personal and professional lives. Significantly, the array of lived experiences from participants of the study were all supported by related literature.

Lived Experiences of Mindfulness Practitioners

Venue for Healing

In particular, the discovered theme of managing anxiety and stress were corroborated by Zenner et al. (2014), Dunning et al. (2019), Goyal et al. (2014), and Semple et al. (2017). Similarly, the link between mindfulness and self-regulation were supported by Bender et. al. (2018), Maynard et al. (2017), and Zenner et al. (2014). Also, Zenner et al. (2014) found the significance of mindfulness in influencing emotional balance as well as resilience.

Journey Within the Self

Bender et al. (2018) found that greater self-awareness and self-acceptance seem to be improved with mindfulness. This self-acceptance resulted in a positive link to wellbeing (Britton, 2019). Similarly, Klussman et al., (2020) observed that mindfulness brought improved self-connection.

Developing Character

Semple et al. (2017) and Jones et al. (2018) found that students became more peaceful with mindfulness interventions; while Centeno and Fernandez (2020) realized that MBCT impacted Filipino college students' empathy and self-compassion. Other connections between mindfulness, peaceful relationships, and compassion were found in Harrington and Dunne (2015) and Zenner et al. (2014). In terms of mindfulness interventions capacity to provide insightful wisdom, Semple et al., (2017) and Zenner et al. (2014) discovered mindfulness involved in such improvement. On the other hand, Creswell (2017) and Semple et al. (2017) noted the relationship of kindness and mindfulness. Haydicky et al. (2015) realized that mindfulness was connected to parental stress and improvement in parent child relations (Turpyn & Chaplin, 2016).

Cultivating Humanism & Harmony

In terms of the themes of presence for others, evidence also supported this mindfulness experience in the counseling relationship as found by Lin and Seiden (2015). Lastly, when it comes to the rippling effect of mindfulness toward good change, researchers confirmed in improving a child's social skills (Zoogman et al., 2015), and empathy skills and helping behavior (Berry & Brown, 2017; Donald et al., 2019).

Implications of the Study

Given the lived experiences of the twelve participants, some supported an early introduction of mindfulness as early as 6 years old. Based on their personal experience, at kindergarten age, children are highly receptive and open to new experiences, and some participants personally observed its advantages in helping young children find focus and calm. These particular points have implications on future policy and practice of mindfulness with the youth. One of the most significant recommendations center on the importance of a mindfulness teacher to have adequate training, personal practice and experience in mindfulness before one can be fit to teach others, particularly the youth. In other words, these require skilled practitioners who personally practiced mindfulness and are well experienced, since unresolved issues may only impede one's ability to adequately teach this to others; this is befitting for mindfulness teachers and counselors tasked to guide students in the school setting.

Given the nature of the phenomenological data, it would be difficult to ascertain to what extent mindfulness may best be taught, as curriculum design implications would require further evaluation of quantitative data. Overall, participants advocate for regular, brief and simple practice of mindfulness. Tentative conclusions of this study may be made based on the experience of one private Catholic basic education school's use of mindfulness activities but may not be readily transferable to other Catholic institutions. Particularly for this Catholic Jesuit institution, particularly Ignatian Spirituality, and Buddhist Mindfulness, do not juxtapose each other but rather share similarities. Without careful understanding of the essence of mindfulness, other Catholic religious orders may find such teachings in contrast with their Catholic faith. The participants of the study did not describe any conflict with other faith and in fact saw the potential for universality. However, most of them advocate for simple and brief mindfulness techniques employed for students, which when applied appropriately need not necessarily encroach on religious practice. Despite this, other Catholic schools may still need further understanding and training in mindfulness before one can adopt mindfulness practice within their institutions. Qualitative findings taken from the lived experiences of twelve mindfulness practitioners are not exhaustive but provide a certain level of understanding. Overall, the study appears to support mindfulness activities with the youth, but the way mindfulness may be implemented cannot be solely taken from the qualitative data alone since these are lived experiences; thus, generalization of the data would require additional research to support it. Hence, the implications on future research will be discussed in the recommendations section below.

Recommendations

Future research may focus on comparing the mindfulness programs of other schools, other than where the researcher and three other participants are employed. As these may serve as a benchmarking tool for other schools desiring to employ such practices and activities in their own contexts. Future research may employ a mixed methods approach to evaluate mindfulness practice with the youth by including empirically validated mindfulness scales or questionnaires. More future research attention be given with the manner in which mindfulness is applied in the school and clinical setting for youth clients. Further study may be focused to explore student experiences when mindfulness activities or strategies are employed. This may serve to broadly understand the efficacy and evaluation of mindfulness techniques.

The strength of this study is that it attempted to address two major research gaps: the (1) scarcity of local studies in the Philippines on the subject matter, and (2) exploring mindfulness through the

experiences of research participants coming from distinct professions and backgrounds. Moreover, saturation of data was attempted by involving at least two participants in the field of yoga, clinical psychology, and guidance and counseling. With participants in other fields, recruitment for more was not necessary. In addition to these, importantly, this study gathered insight from one basic education school mindfulness program to get a clearer picture how the activities and practices are done on a daily or weekly basis. This is important because it places in concrete terms how the mindfulness program concretely applies, its concrete outcomes, and actual reception from students and teachers. Evaluative data is necessary for the pursuance or continuance of any school activities or programs.

Study Limitations

Lastly, in relation to the closeness of the data to the researcher and three participants of the study who are employed in the same mother institution, all attempts were made throughout the research process to objectively report the evaluation of the mindfulness program in the mother school of the researcher. Granted, the perspective of participants employed in the same institution come from the context of their students and their training as a private Catholic institution in metro Manila. Thereby, other schools or researchers who may use the data may need to adapt the recommendations to the unique contexts, problems and parenting styles of their own students suitable to their own localities. These all are among the anticipated criticisms and limitations of the research.

Conclusions

Each mindfulness practitioner detailed their respective profession or vocation and experience in practicing mindfulness. Despite their unique practices and experience in mindfulness, essential messages were recognized. Overall, their lived experience in mindfulness was a venue for healing toward managing stress and anxiety, self-regulation, balance of emotions, and resilience. Similarly, there was a resounding observation of a journey within the self toward greater understanding of oneself, greater connection to the inner self, and self-acceptance. Moreover, participants experienced a development of character toward peace, compassion, insightful wisdom and kindness gained as a result of the practice. Lastly, they realized cultivating humanism and harmony through a greater presence for others and ripple effect toward good change for others. The findings resounded to a preference for mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs).

All participants of the study agreed on the feasibility for mindfulness to be taught with school youth. Findings resulted in input for guidelines and recommendations for integrating mindfulness in schools. Mindfulness practice requires that students be taught by a well-trained practitioner. An understanding of the limitations, disadvantages and risks of mindfulness practice would help the youth who may be vulnerable to the undesirable effects as a result of improper understanding and implementation of mindfulness. It is important to recognize that mindfulness practice may be suitable for certain individuals than others and realize when mindfulness interventions may be replaced with more appropriate interventions. Mindfulness practice is advantageous under certain conditions such as in times of stress and anxiety, making decisions, building better relationships, managing tasks, and dealing with difficult emotions, thoughts or experiences. Mindfulness practice may be used by guidance counselors within a small group setting of clients with similar needs. The practice is valuable in creating a safe counseling space of non-judgment for clients, and a means to calm and manage difficult emotions and experiences, and guide clients in making rational decisions. However, unless one were trained in

mindfulness based cognitive therapy (MBCT) then this complex approach may be employed; if one is not trained in MBCT, then mindfulness may be used as an initial and assistive technique in the counseling process, where other more appropriate counseling techniques should be employed. Basic mindfulness techniques like breathing and calming exercises, and helping the client focus and become aware were described to be useful. Mindfulness-based interventions have great potential in the basic education setting since these characteristically simple yet effective practices may be appropriate for the youth of today who are faced with greater pressures, stress, and distractions.

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