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**MINDFULNESS INTERVENTION: A MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM FOR TEACHERS**

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Mindfulness interventions aim to foster greater awareness of present-moment experiences (Creswell, 2017). Due to prolonged social isolation during the pandemic, mental health crises resulted in loneliness, anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorders and these have been affecting teachers who were isolated from the workplace (Hechanova et al., 2022; Talidong & Toquero, 2020). This also corroborates with the initial study titled Project TRIDENT (Triangular Reinforcement and Intervention for Divergence and Emotional Normality) conducted in the previous school year. The present study aims to help inform the design of mental health programs for teachers by examining (a) the effects of mindfulness intervention on their depression and anxiety scores; and (b) their experiences during the program. The results of the study reveal that mindfulness intervention reduced the depression and anxiety scores of the participants. The discussion focuses on the experiences, opportunities, and challenges for mindfulness intervention implementation in the school context.

Keywords: *Mindfulness Intervention, anxiety, depression, mental health*

**INTRODUCTION**

Over the past several years, there has been an explosion of interest in “mindfulness”-related practices and interventions which are showing up online, in the gym or yoga studio, at home, and, increasingly, in the workplace. Such interventions promise to decrease workplace stress by increasing individuals’ “mindfulness” and improving focus, concentration, and mental resiliency. While leading information technology, computer, and other “progressive” corporations such as Google, Apple, and Nike may have been among the first to offer some forms of mindfulness meditation to their employees, several other Fortune 500 corporations have followed, including some that might be considered more conservative, such as Goldman Sachs and General Mills, (King, 2019).

Mindfulness is a process of openly attending, with awareness, to one’s experience in the present moment. Formal mindfulness training exercises, such as learning how to mindfully attend to breathing, form the backbone of many mindfulness interventions. Collectively, mindfulness interventions aim to foster greater awareness of present moment experience (Creswell, 2017).

In March 2020, the Philippine government implemented the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ), a measure to contain the spread of COVID-19 through a total lockdown affecting millions of Filipinos. During the ECQ, everyone is mandated to always stay at home. However, due to the continuous increase of COVID-19 cases in the Philippines, the ECQ was extended further until May 2020 (NEDA, 2021). This health problem created public health emergencies including mental health problems due to prolonged social isolation that resulted in loneliness, anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorders (Hechanova et al., 2022; Leite et al., 2020 cited American Psychological Society, 2020).

The way of life in the Philippines has changed its course, although Filipinos are not the only ones whose lives have changed, considering that COVID-19 is already a global

problem, everybody’s lifestyle changed including all sectors (Pan, 2020).

No one was spared from the impacts of isolation even those who are expected to provide services such as education. Due to the anxiety or psychological stress brought by COVID-19, 92.7% of Filipino teachers are not confident about going to crowded places, 91.3% do not feel secure with using public transportation, 89.9% are conscious about touching any surfaces in public areas, 79.3% are conscious to touch their faces without washing their hands, 81.7% have doubts in eating in a restaurant, 91.7% of Filipino teachers’ lifestyle change because of the COVID19, and 92.7% are afraid that their family members might be infected with COVID-19 (Talidong & Toquero, 2020).

The initial investigation conducted on Project TRIDENT (Triangular Reinforcement and Intervention for Divergence and Emotional Normality) reflected the issues in mental health among teachers. In the previous study conducted, it has been found that the need for a mental health program is of paramount importance in the context of the school (Hernandez et al., 2022). Due to this, the researchers facilitated a mindfulness training program intended for teachers to learn new ways to manage anxiety and depression at their workplace.

The conduct of this study addressed the mental health issues of teachers that were raised in Project TRIDENT. As suggested by the study, the BCSTHS teachers need training focusing on mental health. To a greater extent, this study provided Mindfulness Training to teachers of BCSTHS. This study aimed to establish a school-based mental health program for the teachers of Binan City Science and Technology High School. Since teachers play a major role in the teaching-learning process, it is fitting to equip them with programs that would also help them manage their mental health.

Mental health is an important aspect of any person’s life because this creates repercussions for their environment. Hence, providing such programs to the teaching personnel may further improve their performance at work (Hoffman et al., 2022;

Salinas-Falquez et al., 2022). Thus, this will help ensure a supportive and safe learning environment for the learners. This specifically addressed Enabling Mechanism #2: Governance and Management in the Basic Education Development Plan 2023. Under EM no. 2, which aims to equip all personnel to be resilient, competent, and continuously improving, the development of a school-based mental health program has responded to the efforts in creating a resilient environment for school personnel in the context of this study.

Additionally, the results of this study helped inform the development of established and systematic mental health services for teaching and non-teaching personnel in the future. Consequently, the development of a school-based mental health program for teachers shall help build psychosocial resilience and well-being among teachers.

This study is designed to help inform the future school improvement processes and planning to better serve its stakeholders. Furthermore, the results of the study will help inform the development and design of future School Learning Action Cells (SLACs) for the continuous development and professional growth of teachers.

## METHODOLOGY

This study utilized purposive and mixed-methods approach through the use of quantitative and qualitative data that were collected through the course of the study. A mixed-methods approach was used to ensure the validity and triangulation of the interpretation of the results of the study. To answer the first and second research questions, the researchers utilized a self-rating *GAD-7 Anxiety Questionnaire* and *Patient Health Depression Questionnaire* adopted from Pfizer Inc. (1999) to identify the scores of the participants before and after the implementation of the program. This also informed the researchers whether the program had a significant effect on the participants' Anxiety and Depression Scores. To answer the third research question, the researcher conducted a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) to collect the experiences of the participants during the

intervention. This was done to ensure that the change in the participants' pre-test and post-test scores was based on the participants' experiences in the program. The instruments of this study were validated by experts in the field of psychology and educational management.

This study utilized mixed methods using qualitative and quantitative inquiry in collecting data. The pre-assessment was facilitated prior to the beginning of the *Mindfulness Training: A Mental Health Program*. This provided the initial data based on the pre-test scores. After the implementation of the four-day Mindfulness Training, the participants answered a post-assessment to check whether there was a change in their Anxiety and Depression test scores. The comparison of the pre-test and post-test scores provided information on whether there was a significant effect on the participants' Anxiety and Depression scores before and after the Mindfulness Training. Lastly, the participants participated in a Focus Group Discussion to narrate their experiences during the conduct of the Mindfulness Training program and their perceived effects of the program.

To answer the first research question, the results of the pre-test and post-test were analyzed. The researchers used a table to organize and present the quantitative information gathered from this phase of the study.

To answer the second research question, the data obtained from the pre-test and post-test of participants were analyzed using paired samples t-test. A paired samples t-test was utilized to test whether the change in score between the pre-test and post-test was significant within the group (O'Dwyer & Bernauer, 2013).

To answer the third research question, the experimental group's responses in the post-treatment evaluation were analyzed qualitatively. The qualitative responses were analyzed and grouped according to the recurring theme. The researchers meticulously organized, tabulated, color-coded, analyzed, and interpreted the participants' responses. Thematic analysis, specifically descriptive coding, was applied to discern patterns and insights within the

responses. Through these processes, conclusions and generalizations were formulated, providing valuable insights into the homeschooling experience.

## RESULTS

This study examined the effects of Mindfulness Training on teachers.

**Research Question No. 1.** What are the scores of the teachers before and after the Mindfulness Training: A Mental Health Program in terms of:

- Anxiety Score?
- Depression Score

Participant	Depression Score		Anxiety Score	
	Pre-assessment	Post-Assessment	Pre-Assessment	Post-Assessment
A	7	9	7	6
B	3	1	2	0
C	12	0	10	2
D	1	0	4	1
E	10	10	13	7
F	12	12	10	7
Mean	7.50	5.33	7.67	3.83

Table 2 Participants' Depression and Anxiety Pre-Assessment and Post-Assessment Scores

The table shows the participants' depression and anxiety scores before and after the mindfulness intervention. Participants C and F obtained the highest score of 12 in the pre-assessment. Overall, the participants obtained a mean score of 7.50 during the pre-assessment. Meanwhile, in the post-assessment, participant F obtained the highest score of 12. The participants obtained a mean score of 5.33 in the post-assessment.

In terms of the Anxiety score, Participant E obtained the highest score of 13 while Participants E and F obtained the highest score of 7 in the post-assessment. Generally, the participants obtained a mean score of 7.67 in their Anxiety Scores during the pre-assessment and 3.83 in the post-assessment.

**Research Question No. 2.** Is there a significant difference between the scores of the teachers before and after the *Mindfulness Training: A Mental Health Program* in terms of:

- Anxiety Score?
- Depression Score?

### Depression Scores:

The decrease in the mean depression score from the pre-test to the post-test

suggests an improvement in the participants' depression levels after the intervention. However, the increase in standard deviation and standard error in the post-test scores indicates greater variability among participants.

### Anxiety Scores:

Similarly, there is a decrease in the mean anxiety score from the pre-test to the post-test, indicating a potential reduction in anxiety levels after the intervention. The decrease in standard deviation suggests reduced variability among participants in the post-test scores.

### Depression Scores:

The mean difference between pre-test and post-test depression scores was 2.167, suggesting a slight increase in depression scores on average after the intervention. However, the standard deviation of the differences was relatively high at 4.997, indicating considerable variability in individual changes. The paired samples t-test revealed a t-statistic of 1.062 with 5 degrees of freedom, resulting in a p-value of 0.337 (two-tailed). The lack of statistical significance ( $p > 0.05$ ) suggests that the observed increase in depression scores is not statistically meaningful.

### Anxiety Scores:

In contrast, the mean difference between pre-test and post-test anxiety scores was 3.833, indicating a substantial decrease in anxiety scores on average after the intervention. The standard deviation of the differences was 2.639, suggesting moderate variability in individual changes. The paired samples t-test for anxiety scores yielded a t-statistic of 3.557 with 5 degrees of freedom, resulting in a statistically significant p-value of 0.016 (two-tailed). This suggests that the observed decrease in anxiety scores is statistically meaningful.

**Research Question No. 3.** What are the experiences of the teachers in the *Mindfulness Training: A Mental Health Program*?

The participants' responses were categorized according to the themes below:

#### I. Experiences

- a) Participants apply the mindfulness exercises in their daily activities.
- b) Participants find the mindfulness exercise helpful in coping with stress in daily life.
- c) Mindfulness exercise made the participant relaxed and learned more about being mindful.

II. Perceived Effects

- a) The mindfulness training helped reduce the stress experienced by the participants.
- b) The mindfulness training helped the participants to tone down and to avoid thinking negatively at work.
- c) The mindfulness training helped reduce the anxiety felt by the participants.

III. Suggestions and general comments

- a) The participants find the Mindfulness Intervention generally useful and recommendable.
- b) The Mindfulness Intervention can be more beneficial if conducted through in-person sessions rather than virtually.
- c) The mindfulness training should also involve the sharing of experiences among the participants.

## DISCUSSION

The result of the study showed a decrease in participants' depression and anxiety scores after the mindfulness intervention. The participants obtained a mean score of 7.50 in their Depression score during the pre-assessment, while they obtained a mean score of 5.33 in the post-assessment. The decrease in the mean depression score from the pre-test to the post-test suggests an improvement in the participants' depression scores after the intervention. However, the increase in standard deviation and standard error in the post-test scores indicates greater variability among participants.

Similarly, there is a decrease in the mean anxiety score from the pre-test to the post-test, indicating a potential reduction in anxiety levels after the intervention. The participants obtained a mean score of 7.67 in

their Anxiety Scores during the pre-assessment and 3.83 in the post-assessment. The decrease in standard deviation suggests reduced variability among participants in the post-test scores.

The mean difference between pre-test and post-test depression scores was 2.167, suggesting a slight increase in depression scores on average after the intervention. However, the standard deviation of the differences was relatively high at 4.997, indicating considerable variability in individual changes. The paired samples t-test revealed a t-statistic of 1.062 with 5 degrees of freedom, resulting in a *p*-value of 0.337 (two-tailed). The lack of statistical significance (*p* > 0.05) suggests that the observed increase in depression scores is **not statistically meaningful**.

On the other hand, the mean difference between pre-test and post-test anxiety scores was 3.833, indicating a substantial decrease in anxiety scores on average after the intervention. The standard deviation of the differences was 2.639, suggesting moderate variability in individual changes. The paired samples t-test for anxiety scores yielded a *t*-statistic of 3.557 with 5 degrees of freedom, resulting in a statistically significant *p*-value of 0.016 (two-tailed). This suggests that the observed decrease in anxiety scores is **statistically meaningful**.

The results also corroborated the participants' experiences during their mindfulness intervention training. Most of them shared that they struggle in their daily personal lives but the training helped address their personal struggles.

By cultivating the habit of being flexibly attentive, teachers may be better able to respond to students' needs proactively, a key contributor to effective classroom management (Yee Tsang et al., 2021). The participants narrated some of the perceived impact of their participation in the mindfulness intervention in terms of their professional and personal lives.

Additionally, the mindfulness training helped the participants to tone down and avoid thinking negatively at work. It also

helped reduce the anxiety felt by the participants.

Overall, participants' experience in the mindfulness intervention changed their way of thinking towards work. They realized that it is a healthy habit for the mind to have at least 10-15 minutes of mindfulness exercise to be able to start the day being mindful of oneself and others. It's a way of self-checking and self-assessment to determine one's mental state of mind. School teachers report high levels of stress which impact their engagement with pupils and effectiveness as a teacher. Early intervention or prevention approaches may support teachers to develop positive coping and reduce the experience and impact of stress (Emerson, 2017).

The results of the study suggest that there is a need in terms of mental health services designed for teachers. One of the best mental health services that the school could establish is a mindfulness intervention program for teachers. Usually, schools would establish one for students to cope with their everyday lives in performing at school. It is also important to have a mental health program for teachers. Mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) such as MBSR have been recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence for the prevention and management of stress. Mindfulness has been increasingly utilized in programs designed to improve workplace stress and well-being (King, 2019).

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