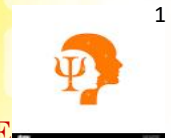




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The Impact of Incorporating Mindfulness into Nigerian Secondary Schools Curricula: Advantages and Disadvantages

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Abstract

The study explored the impact of incorporating mindfulness into Nigerian secondary schools curricula: advantages and disadvantages. Incorporating mindfulness into secondary schools curricula offers numerous benefits for students' mental health, academic performance, social skills and positive school culture. The study adopted the survey research method. The population for this study comprised all public secondary school principals, teachers and students in Delta State. The sample for this study was 50 principals, 100 teachers and 150 students in selected public secondary schools Delta State. A self-structured questionnaire titled Incorporation of Mindfulness into Secondary School Curricula Questionnaire (IMSSCQ) were used to collect data for the study. The reliability coefficients of the instruments ranged from 0.81 to 0.86 through Cronbach Alpha. Simple percentage, Mean, standard deviation, and Pearson "r" statistics were the statistical tools deployed for the analysis of data collected. The results of the study indicated that incorporating mindfulness into secondary school curricula has the potential to transform the educational landscape and also improve decision-making of students through thoughtfulness and self-awareness. In conclusion, the integration of mindfulness practices in schools offers significant potential benefits, including improved student focus, emotional regulation, and overall well-being. However, successful implementation requires careful consideration of the challenges, such as time, teacher training, cultural resistance, logistical constraints, and the need for age-appropriate interventions.

Keywords: *Incorporation, Mindfulness Curriculum, Nigeria*

Introduction

Education serves as the foundational element of a nation, acting as the central support for societal advancement, economic growth, and cultural heritage. It involves a comprehensive approach to acquiring knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that enable individuals to fulfill their potential, positively impact their communities, and actively engage in the democratic process, ultimately promoting an informed, innovative, and prosperous society (Kvamme, Sandberg & Silvanto, 2024).

Recently, there has been a significant focus on integrating mindfulness into secondary school curricula. Research has demonstrated that mindfulness practices positively influence students' cognitive health, academic performance, and social skills (Creswell, 2017). Mindfulness refers to the mental ability—often developed through meditation—to maintain heightened awareness of one's thoughts and feelings. Originating from the concept of "sati," mindfulness is an essential aspect of Hindu and Buddhist traditions and relies on various meditation techniques such as Chan, Guān, and Tibetan practices (Karumuni & Weerasekera, 2019).

Although definitions and methods of mindfulness can vary widely, Buddhist traditions clarify its essentials, explaining how perceptions of time—past, present, and future arise and disappear as fleeting experiences and mental activity. Since the 1970s, the fields of medical psychology and psychiatry have devised therapeutic approaches based on mindfulness to support individuals facing the consequences of mental health issues. Mindfulness practices have proven effective in alleviating depression, stress, anxiety, and in treating substance abuse. Mindfulness based programs have been implemented in schools, prisons, hospitals, veterans' facilities, and various other contexts, addressing additional goals such as promoting healthy aging, weight management,

athletic performance, assisting children with special needs, providing support during early pregnancy, and enhancing students' overall well-being (Kenyangi, 2024).

Similarly, there is a growing trend of incorporating mindfulness practices in educational settings, including elementary and secondary schools. This movement has been identified as part of a 'contemplative turn' in education that has surfaced since the early 2000s. Mindfulness programs in secondary schools are intended to help students relax and find calm, while also fostering compassion and empathy among both students and educators (Nisbet & Matthew, 2017). Another advantage of mindfulness in education is its capacity to reduce anxiety and stress among students. A comprehensive metaanalytic review indicated that the implementation of mindfulness practices aligns with the goals of 21st-century education, which includes adapting to a rapidly changing world and nurturing responsible citizenship. Within educational frameworks, mindfulness practices can enhance students' focus and attention, emotional regulation, creativity, problem-solving skills, and overall well-being.

Moreover, mindfulness enhances self-awareness, character development, cognitive ability, reflective decision-making, and mental health (Thompson, 2020). Unfortunately, mindfulness is often wrongly perceived by practitioners as a purely spiritual practice with no relevance to education, overlooking the fact that education is fundamentally about shaping the mind and character. Mindfulness practice facilitates self-awareness and self-discovery, yielding insights that can aid in problem-solving. It is a purposeful and conscious effort to help young students cultivate a reflective and critical mindset regarding problem-solving and self-awareness (Jennings, 2023).

Statement of the Problem

Regardless of the growing recognition of mindfulness as a valuable tool for improving mental health, academic performance, and social skills, its integration into secondary school curricula remains limited, hindered by challenges such as lack of teacher training, inadequate resources, and competing academic priorities, thereby denying students the benefits of mindfulness in navigating the complexities of adolescence.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to:

1. Examine the benefits of incorporating mindfulness into the secondary school curricula in Delta State.
2. Find out the challenges of incorporating mindfulness into the secondary school curricula in Delta State.
3. Establish strategies to improve the integration of mindfulness into the secondary school curricula in Delta State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised in the study:

1. What are the benefits of incorporating mindfulness into the secondary school curricula in Delta State?
2. What are the challenges of incorporating mindfulness into the secondary school curricula in Delta State?
3. What are the strategies to improve the integration of mindfulness into the secondary school curricula in Delta State?

Review

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored theoretically on Social Cognitive Theory propounded by Albert Bandura (1977). The theory explains how people learn and adopt new behaviour by observing and imitating others. In the context of mindfulness, Social Cognitive Theory suggests that students will learn and adopt mindfulness practices by observing and imitating their teachers and peers. He assumed that human behaviour is, in general, a function of the person alongside the environment. By the term person here, Bandura essentially means cognitive factors, while with the term environment he means the social models around as well as the circumstantial contingencies

pressing upon the individual. According to Bandura, the entire three elements: the person, the behaviour and the environmental situations are highly interrelated variables, with each being capable of influencing the other.

Benefits of Incorporating Mindfulness

Kvamme, Sandberg, and Silvanto (2024) suggest that mindfulness practices are beneficial and can be easily integrated into school curricula. As the world becomes increasingly complex and fast-paced, the demand for these practices grows. A deeper understanding of the advantages of mindfulness in education has led to a continuous effort to incorporate it into school programs. Mindfulness programs serve as a proactive approach to manage the stressors present in today's society. While they often draw from meditative techniques, they uniquely focus on individual awareness and attention control, as well as fostering compassion and recognition of others. This emphasis on relationship-building and social justice sets mindfulness apart.

Additionally, engaging in physical activities that promote cognitive mastery through mindfulness can help alleviate academic-related emotions such as anxiety and depression. However, mindfulness effectiveness can vary depending on one's emotional state. Regular use of mindfulness techniques by students is linked to greater satisfaction with their academic performance, along with improved scores in standardized tests and coursework (Jennings, 2023). The benefits of mindfulness practices extend to enhanced focus, memory, stress reduction, and clarity of thought. Professional development for teachers is crucial in translating policy intentions into tangible curricular applications. By actively promoting mindfulness practices, educators can foster experiential awareness among students. Improved attentional focus is often regarded as a key benefit of mindfulness meditation and interventions.

Mindfulness is defined as an increased focus, awareness, and presence in the moment, with an emphasis on acceptance rather than judgment. In educational literature, it is described as awareness of thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and the surrounding environment, cultivated through activities like meditation, visualization, and relaxation techniques (Kenyangi, 2024). Such practices can be adapted from formal sessions to everyday life and are applicable in both secular and traditional contexts. Evaluating a mindfulness program showed its effectiveness in enhancing attention skills, particularly among secondary school students (Hudson, Lawton, & Hugh-Jones, 2020).

Sheinman and Russo-Netzer (2021) highlight several advantages of mindfulness, noting that it can reduce stress, anxiety, and depression in students. Regular mindfulness practice enhances attention and academic performance while helping students regulate their emotions, resulting in improved relationships and social skills. Additionally, mindfulness fosters self-reflection, self-acceptance, and self-compassion, contributing to a more supportive, inclusive, and respectful school environment.

Challenges of Incorporating Mindfulness

There is a growing interest among educators in implementing mindfulness practices in schools due to their potential benefits. However, incorporating these practices into school curricula can be challenging due to conflicting beliefs, cultural norms, and various logistical constraints. With increased awareness of mental health issues among students, such as rising levels of stress and depression, some school communities are exploring “trauma-informed” teaching methods alongside mindfulness approaches (Ibrahim, 2024).

Cultural relevance is crucial, as programs must respect and incorporate the cultural perspectives of important stakeholders, like schools in Nigeria. Additionally, external factors such as political leadership, cultural authorities, and educational stakeholders can influence the development or selection of mindfulness curricula (Kenyangi, 2024). Moreover, in various culturally specific settings, there is variability in commitment to and investment in mindfulness initiatives. Jennings (2023) noted several challenges in integrating mindfulness into secondary school curricula, such as the difficulty of fitting it into an already full schedule. Educators may require training and resources to teach mindfulness in a manner that avoids religious connotations. Some students might be resistant to these practices, necessitating innovative engagement techniques. Finally,

mindfulness practices may need to be tailored to reflect diverse cultural backgrounds and individual needs, and evaluating the effectiveness of such programs can be complex, demanding creative assessment strategies.

Strategies to improve the Integration of Mindfulness

Ibrahim (2024) outlines various recommendations to enhance the effective integration of mindfulness practices in educational settings. To foster mindfulness within schools and their communities, Howard and Burr (2020) proposed an ecological framework that identifies intervention areas such as teacher training in mindfulness, the introduction of mindfulness curricula, and the development of a supportive school culture. Mindfulness practices should be introduced in brief, easily digestible sessions, including activities like guided meditations, yoga, or mindful movement. It is essential to motivate educators to engage in mindfulness themselves to cultivate a positive school environment.

Additionally, utilizing mindfulness apps, videos, and online tools can aid in teaching and learning. Regular evaluation and improvement of mindfulness programs are crucial to maintain their effectiveness and encourage student participation. As mindfulness is an ongoing practice, it is important to educate parents about its benefits and encourage them to help their children experience moments of quiet at home, which may involve reducing their screen time.

Methodology

The study adopted the survey research method. The population for this study comprised all public secondary school principals, teachers and students in Delta State. The sample for this study was 50 principals, 100 teachers and 150 students in selected public secondary schools Delta State. A self-structured questionnaire titled Incorporation of Mindfulness into Secondary School Curricula Questionnaire (IMSSCQ) were used to collect data for the study. The reliability coefficients of the instruments ranged from 0.81 to 0.86 through Cronbach Alpha. Simple percentage, Mean, standard deviation, and Pearson “r” statistics were the statistical tools deployed for the analysis of data collected.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship on the benefits of incorporating mindfulness into secondary school curricula in Delta State

Table 1: Pearson “r” on benefits of incorporating mindfulness into secondary school curricula

Variables	N	X	SD	r-Cal.	r-Crit.	Level of Sign	Decision
Incorporating mindfulness	300	1.82	0.92	0.82	0.75	0.05	Significant
Benefits		1.78	0.86				

Data in table 1 revealed Pearson product moment correlation coefficient analysis on benefits of incorporating mindfulness into secondary school curricula. The mean was 1.82 and 1.78. The calculated r - value was 0.82 while the critical r-table value was 0.75 at 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated r - value was greater than the critical r-table value, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship on the challenges of incorporating mindfulness into secondary school curricula in Delta State

Table 2: Pearson “r” on challenges of incorporating mindfulness into secondary school curricula

Variables	N	X	SD	r-Cal.	r-Crit.	Level of Sign	Decision
Incorporating mindfulness	300	2.86	0.77	0.15	0.06	0.05	Significant
Challenges		2.80	0.86				

Data in Table 2 revealed Pearson product moment correlation coefficient analysis on the challenges of incorporating mindfulness into secondary school curricula. The mean was 2.86 and 2.80. The calculated r - value was 0.15 while the critical r -table value was 0.06 at 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated r - value was greater than the critical r -table value, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship on strategies to improve the integration of mindfulness into secondary school curricula in Delta State

Table 3: Pearson “ r ” on strategies of incorporating mindfulness into secondary school curricula

Variables	N	X	SD	r-Cal.	r-Crit.	Level of Sign	Decision
Incorporating mindfulness	300	2.96	0.91	0.77	0.072	0.05	Significant
Strategies		2.84	0.88				

Data in Table 3 revealed Pearson product moment correlation coefficient analysis on strategies of incorporating mindfulness into secondary school curricula. The mean was 2.96 and 2.84. The calculated r - value was 0.77 while the critical r -table value was 0.72 at 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated r - value was greater than the critical r -table value, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The findings revealed the benefits of incorporating mindfulness into secondary school curricula in Delta State. The hypothesis is significant, this is in line with Kvamme, Sandberg & Silvano (2024) who asserted that mindfulness practices are useful and can be easily included into school curricula. The need for such practices can most effectively develop as the world turns into more complex and busier. However, because of an extra understanding of why mindfulness practices may be beneficial in education, there was a continual upward push for the inclusion of mindfulness practices in school curricula. Mindfulness programs are recognized to be a proactive response aimed at coping with the stressors in present day society.

It also showed the challenges of incorporating mindfulness into secondary school curricula in Delta State. The hypothesis is significant, this is in line Jennings (2023) who pointed out a number of the challenges of integrating mindfulness in secondary school curricula such as incorporating mindfulness into an already packed curriculum can be difficult. Educators may need training and resources to effectively teach mindfulness practices. Some students might resist or struggle with mindfulness practices, requiring creative engagement strategies. Mindfulness practices may need to be adapted to accommodate diverse cultural backgrounds and individual needs. Measuring the effectiveness of mindfulness programs can be complex, requiring innovative assessment methods.

The findings also revealed strategies to improve the integration of mindfulness into secondary school curricula in Delta State. The hypothesis is significant, as it is in line with Howard and Burr (2020); Ibrahim (2024) who noted that several recommendations have emerged to help facilitate the successful implementation of mindfulness practices in schools. To enable the cultivation of mindfulness in schools and school communities, an ecological framework that suggests contexts may be targeted for intervention, including teacher mindfulness, mindfulness curricula, and the school culture. Furthermore, introduce mindfulness practices to students and parents, manageable sessions, incorporate engaging activities, such as guided meditations, yoga, or mindful movement.

Conclusion

The study explored the impact of incorporating mindfulness into secondary school curricula: advantages and disadvantages. In conclusion, the integration of mindfulness practices in schools offers significant potential benefits, including improved student focus, emotional regulation, and overall well-being. Mindfulness also

improves self-awareness, personality traits, cognition, reflective decisions and psychological behaviour. However, successful implementation requires careful consideration of the challenges, such as time, teacher training, cultural resistance, logistical constraints, and the need for age-appropriate interventions.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion, it is therefore recommended that teachers should be well trained so that the mindfulness practice does not have religious colouration. Since mindfulness is not a once-off practice, parents are to be taught the value of mindfulness and help their children to observe quiet moments at home by reducing screen time. More so, students should not be punished or scolded for delayed responses to critical questions, as mindfulness practice takes time and may require them to make more critical and conscious responses.

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