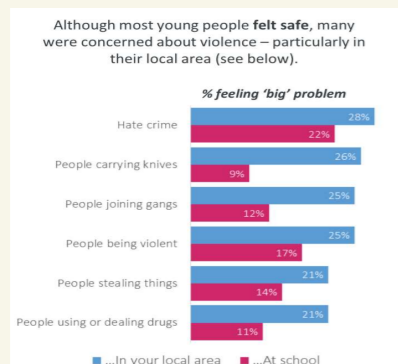


THE EFFECT OF MINDFULNESS-BASED INTERVENTION WITHIN SEMH SCHOOLS ON VIOLENT BEHAVIOUR IN CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

INTRODUCTION

Violence is an important area to research within psychology as it remains a concerning topic within society. For example, it has economic impacts on the UK - £3 billion was spent dealing with violent crimes in London alone in 2019. (Anthony France, 2020). It also has emotional impacts on victims. A survey has shown that 63% of women 16 and above who have experienced sexual violence suffer mentally or emotionally, 50% struggle with trust and 29% go out less (Census, 2021). Additionally, a survey has shown that young people in London are worried about aggressive crimes happening at school. (Metropolitan police, 2022)



Currently the most common psychological therapy used to manage aggression is cognitive behavioural therapy- however, the effectiveness of this therapy will vary depending on the individual and can be less accessible to many people. Mindfulness however, is a more accessible technique and can be practiced constantly, therefore making it a valuable technique to research to tackle the epidemic of violence in the UK. Previous research has shown that mindfulness can be effective in decreasing aggressive and violent behaviour. One study has shown that physical aggression, verbal aggression, and anger all decreased in youth aged 18-25 with difficulty controlling anger after a 4 week mindfulness program. (Sharma and Marimuthu, 2016).

HYPOTHESIS

As previous research has shown mindfulness to be effective in reducing violent behaviour in young people, it would be expected that students who participate in daily mindfulness will experience less incidences of violent behaviour than students who do not participate in daily mindfulness.

METHODOLOGY

An opportunity sample of students from a specialist social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) school of both sexes aged 11-18 will be used. I have chosen students who struggle with behaviour as a sample as it will show how mindfulness could be used to prevent violent behaviour before a more serious act of violence might occur. A covert observation will be carried out to gather data on the students' natural behaviour throughout the study. This will take place over a period of 10 weeks as well as a follow up observation taken in order to gain insight on the short and longer term effects of mindfulness intervention on each of the students.

PROCEDURES

Students will be randomly allocated to two groups of 25 - participants in mindfulness and non-participants.

Students participating in mindfulness will take part in an 8 week intervention of daily 30 minute group sessions of mindfulness, run by a qualified mindfulness coach.

All students will have their behaviour recorded in notes daily by their teachers for 2 weeks prior to, during, and for 2 weeks after the mindfulness intervention, as well as at a 6 week follow up.

ETHICS

Names will not be recorded to uphold confidentiality, only the group they are in will be noted.

Participants will be debriefed on the aims and procedures of the observation after the follow up observation is complete.

After debriefing at the end of the observation, participants will have the right to withdraw their data from the study.

Parents will also be debriefed and have the right to withdraw their child's data if they are under 18.

IMPORTANCE

Mindfulness is a newer technique within psychology, which is still being researched to decide its effectiveness for different groups of individuals. Mindfulness-based intervention is important to continue to research as it is non-medical, therefore avoiding biological side effects and addiction, and can also be practiced without a practitioner, making it more accessible than some other interventions such as CBT. Rehabilitation for violent behaviour in children and adolescents is also an important area to research as in 2020, 1 in 14 arrests for violent crimes were committed by young offenders (Liz Ryan, 2022)

The study I have proposed could provide a starting point for further research into the use of mindfulness to tackle violent behaviour in children and adolescents.

For example, if the results of this research do show that implementing mindfulness does lead to improved behaviour, further research could be carried out in other areas such as its usefulness in youth offenders institutions or in psychiatric patients. More research could also be carried out within the area of schools such as the effectiveness of group sessions compared to individual sessions or frequency of the sessions to create the most ideal intervention.