

Impact of Mindfulness Training on the Well-Being of Educators: A Qualitative Analysis

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Background

- Teacher attrition and turnover continues to rise in public education with one-third to one-half of teachers reportedly leaving the profession within the first five years.^{1,2}
- This results in substantial financial cost, estimated at \$2.2 billion per year nationwide, and negatively impacts student education including decreased motivation and achievement.³
- To combat teacher's stresses and burnout, mindfulness-based trainings have been used to enhance well-being among teachers.
- A non-profit organization working in South Florida aims to reach children with mindfulness through mindfulness-trained teachers which helps to combat teacher burnout.
- This organization offers an 8-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) Program, a 4-day Mindfulness Immersion (MI), an 8 or 12-week Mindful Teacher Training Program (MTTP) and/or a 14-week Mindfulness-Based Schools' Training which includes first phase (correlating to MBSR/MI) immediately followed by a second phase 2 (correlating to the MTTP).
- The MBSR trainings focus on the individual, whereas the MTTP trainings focus on implementation in the classroom.
- The current study aims to acquire feedback from educators who have participated in and/or completed a prior mindfulness training in order to improve and evaluate the effectiveness of existing trainings offered by this organization.

Methods

- Teachers that participated in mindfulness-based trainings through a non-profit community organization in South Florida were recruited to partake in four focus groups (n=21).
- Following transcription, transcripts were imported into NVivo software (version 12).
- Theme development, validation, and code use were utilized as the primary analytic strategies with focus on descriptive thematic coding.⁴

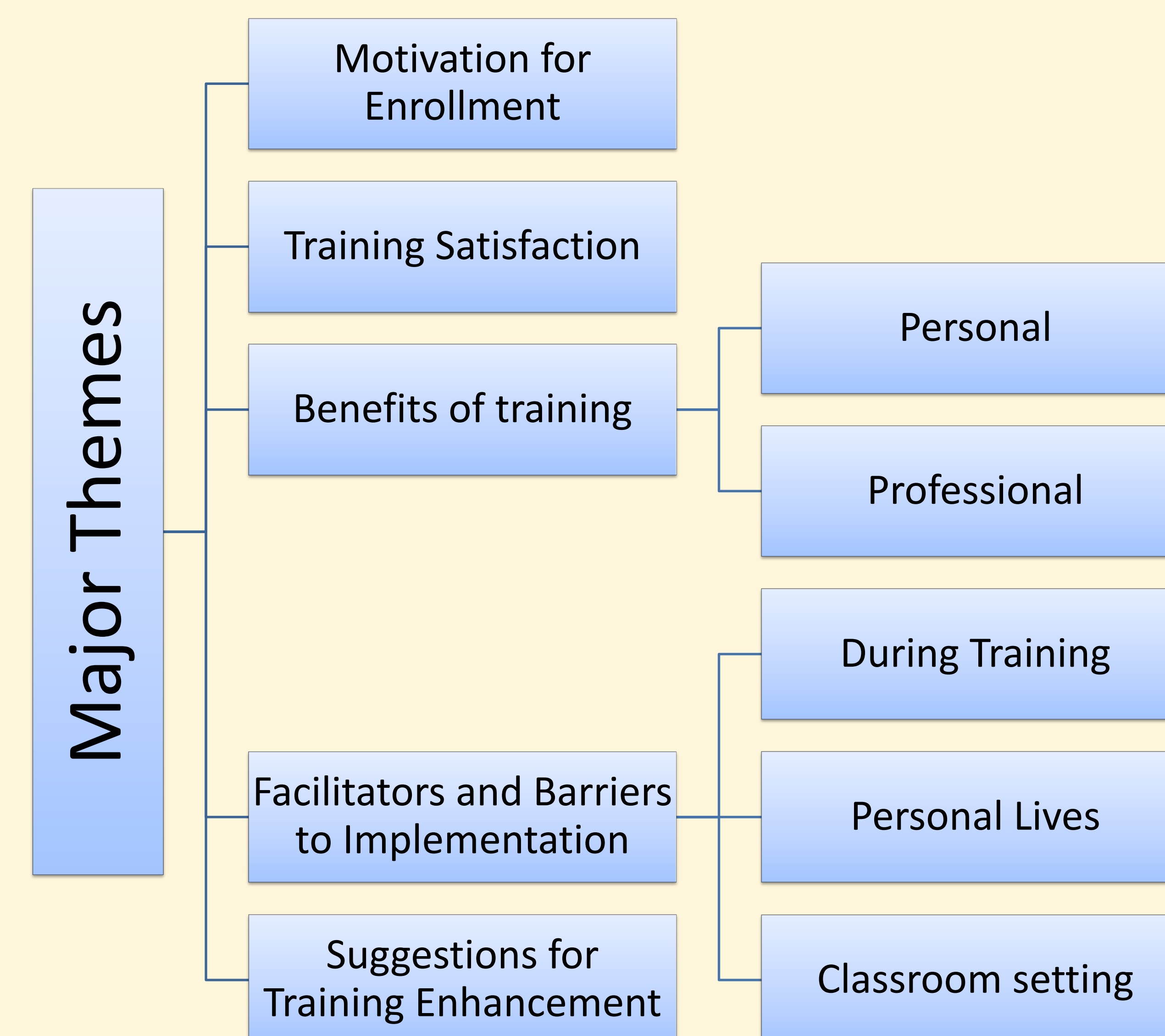


Figure 1. Five major themes identified from focus groups to evaluate mindfulness training among educators

Results

- Motivators for enrolling included:
 - Perceived physical and mental benefits
 - A difficult time in life (i.e. loss of loved one, struggling from depression, lack of enjoyment with teaching)
 - Influenced by school board, administration, or a friend (i.e. free training coverage, incentives via raises and receipt of masterplan points)
 - To have a toolset to help students with anxiety, depression, and problem solving
- Feedback on the trainings was overwhelmingly positive:
 - Improved stress management
 - Enhancement of interpersonal relationships
 - Heightened situational awareness
 - Increased capacity to respond and not react
- Program satisfaction and some form of continued mindfulness practice following training was endorsed by all (n=21)
- Teachers noted positive benefits in their students when mindfulness activities were brought to the classroom:
 - Helped to curb student anxiety
 - Aided in self-regulation of emotions
 - Taught students that “*they are the drivers of what goes on in their heads*”.

Conclusion:

- Mindfulness-based trainings can provide educators with beneficial tools that result in personal and professional development.
- Feedback methodologies are useful to strengthen program delivery and improve teachers' ability to incorporate these practices within their classrooms.
- Reform of teacher education curriculum with earlier incorporation of mindfulness training may help to mitigate early teacher fatigue and positively affect student education.

Table 1. Facilitators and Barriers to the Implementation of Mindfulness in Three Settings

| | Facilitators | Barriers | |
|------------------------|--|---|--|
| During Training | Enrollment with an individual of a higher position from the same school | Enrollment with an individual of a higher position from the same school | |
| | Colleagues from same school viewed as support system | Colleagues from same school inhibited individuals from openly sharing | |
| | Strangers allowed individuals to openly share | Disliked the recorded material share | |
| | Strict structuring | Strict structuring | |
| | Personalization of mindfulness practices • Lay on floor instead of sit | | |
| Personal | Personalization of mindfulness practices • Lung condition - focuses on sound or other environmental sensory stimuli other than breathing • Dislikes guided meditations – does silent meditation • Falls asleep during meditation – does movement meditation (yoga, walking) • Time constraint – shorter duration | Physical limitations (i.e. pain with sitting) | |
| | Daily routine • Designated time & space (i.e. morning coffee, bedtime routine) • Write allotted time into schedule | Time constraint • Length of meditations (45 minutes) | |
| | Time of day | Time of day | |
| | Fasted State | Full stomach | |
| | Supportive environment (i.e. partner) | Lack of accountability | |
| | Desire for natural birth during pregnancy | Low priority | |
| | Access to and utilization of resources • Guides & instructions • MKM offering free weekly mindfulness meet-ups during COVID-19 • Kabat-Zinn CD • Mindfulness apps (i.e. Headspace, Calm, 10% Happier) | Prior routine leads to reverting back to old habits Lack of resources • No longer has access to guided meditations from program | |
| | Classroom | <u>Teachers</u> Teachers comfortability with mindfulness and having the necessary toolset (i.e. script) | <u>Teachers</u> Teachers feelings • lack of confidence for teaching mindfulness • fear of how students will react |
| | | Administrative & colleague support | Lack of administrative support |
| | | Outside resources • Video about mindfulness • Guest speaker | Did not complete the MTTP specific training |

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