

THE EVALUATION OF A MENTAL TOUGHNESS PROGRAM FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AND THE IMPACT ON WELLBEING AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

GILDA SCARFE

Positive Ed

INTRODUCTION

Often talked about in relation to sport, mental toughness is characterised by an ability to consistently perform well under pressure and stress. Mental Toughness in Education has emerged as a highly significant factor in the development of young people and has been linked to a number of key factors such as academic engagement, valuing learning, coping effectively, thriving on pressure, attainment, wellbeing, classroom behavior, attendance.

AIM:

To establish if designing and implementing a Mental Toughness program based on our own framework (Scarfe Model – self efficacy, commitment, attitude, resilience, focus and emotional regulation) one hour per week for 21 weeks will increase wellbeing and academic engagement in students age 12 to 13yo.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

This study involved working with two groups, one experimental and one control. The first group was part of a sample of Year 8 students in a super selective grammar school and consisted of 60 students aged 12-13 years (mean age = 12.08 years) and the control group consisted of 62 students aged 12-13 years, (mean age = 12.04) years in the same school. The experimental group was the group that took the mental toughness program. The control group was a group that we did not intervene in any way. Similar to the clinical programs, all participants knew that there was an ongoing program, but were told that due to limitations of space (classroom) and time will be able to benefit from that program in the near future. We used the MTQ48, the Ryff's Scales of Psychological Well-being (SPWB) and our own measure (MTS18)

RESULTS:

The study sample participants in the experimental group significantly reported in the post test evaluation an increase in their mental toughness increased from pre-test at 4.61 to post-test at 4.81, $t[152] = 5.16, p < 0.001$. The control group participants who did not receive the program demonstrated no significant increase in their reported MT scores (pre-test = 4.63 and post-test = 4.65, $t = 0.54, p = 0.59$). This study was an investigation of the mental toughness level of the participants and the correlation with academic achievement where we investigated the cognitive level. Research hypothesis postulated that the application of a mental toughness program based on the mental toughness framework will have a noticeable impact on (a) psychological wellbeing skills development to students in the experimental group, namely the (b) their academic performance.

CONCLUSIONS:

A mental toughness program implemented for a period of 21 weeks one hour per week benefit the students academic achievement and

KEYWORDS:

1. Mental Toughness 2. Academic achievement 3. Self-efficacy

BIOGRAPHY:

Gilda Scarfe is the CEO and Founder of Positive Ed, a research educational consultancy based in the UK. Gilda is trained as a teacher, lawyer and positive psychology practitioner with a Master in Education and Doctorate in the conceptualization and application of mental toughness in education. Her research interests focus on building mental toughness and executive functioning in students and building a reliable measure to evaluate it. Gilda is currently working with Chicago School of Psychology to design and implement a Mental Toughness micro credential.