



PILOT ANALYSIS – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The HIPPOCAMPUS Programme was developed in a 26 month project funded by the EU Erasmus + programme, involving 5 countries (Norway, Belgium, Italy, Spain and the UK). It introduces yoga-based practices in youth contexts such as schools and youth associations. The programme focuses on improving the well-being of young people, especially disadvantaged young people, through the practice of yoga-based techniques.

It consists of:

- A 5 day training course for yoga teachers to learn to deliver the programme
- A comprehensive manual with resources for teachers and students
- A programme focused on school teachers or youth workers
- A programme focused on young people

This programme was implemented in pilots across the five participating countries in a variety of contexts reaching over more than 750 young people and staff and evaluated to assess its success.

EVALUATION APPROACH

The approach was mixed methods with a quantitative approach using a questionnaire based on the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well Being Scale (WEMWBS), the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) and sleep items from the PROMIS scale. The qualitative dimension used semi-structured interviews with a shared protocol which were then analysed using thematic coding.

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

The numbers of respondents to the questionnaires were 72 staff and 260 young people. Thought there was substantial attrition, these numbers are still well above previous sample sizes in most Europe/US yoga research. For both staff and young people there was a statistically significant

- improvement in wellbeing
- reduction in perceived stress
- reduction in sleep related problems





Effect sizes were moderate. As regards salient items, clarity of thinking, optimism confidence, calmness and energy all increased, while nervousness and stress, anger and a sense of overload due to lack of control were all reduced. There was improvement in sleep quality and reduced sleep related problems.

SOCIAL IMPACT

Using recent work by Fujiwara et al. (not peer-reviewed) the value of the yoga intervention was calculated to be £476 (staff) and £899 (young person) per annum respectively. This means that a conservative estimate of total social impact would be £34k for staff and £234k for young people which is higher than the total funding for the project.

QUALITATIVE RESULTS

The shared themes that emerged in the interviews were that participants felt more calm and relaxed due to the yoga, had increased focus and concentration, increased awareness of body breath and self, they also felt more flexible and noted other physical benefits. There were indications of better emotional self-regulation and a general sense of positivity about the programme and a desire to integrate the benefits more into their lives.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of this research show the benefits of this yoga-based programme for young people and staff in youth contexts such as schools. These solid results achieved in diverse contexts point to the relevance of yoga as a tool for mental wellbeing. This work provides evidence that can be taken into consideration by teachers, school managers, policy makers and the research community to justify further work and wider adoption of yoga.

<https://www.hippocampusproject.eu/>

