

Executive Summary



Doctor of Education: Leadership, Learning and Community

The Impact of Loving-Kindness on Interbeing in Middle School.

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Introduction: Love is integral to the human experience and in the learning process. The purpose of this study was to address the risk factors that youth experience associated with disconnection by exploring how the integration of loving-kindness meditation, otherwise referred to as metta meditation, cultivates a sense of love as *interbeing* among educators and youth in classroom environments in order to provide necessary protective factors in support of youth development.

Problem of Practice: Though research has suggested that a sense of connectedness is a protective factor among youth, and literature has also demonstrated that creating loving educational environments fosters a sense of connectedness, love remains an elusive and somewhat controversial topic in educational practice.

Research Method: This was a qualitative phenomenological study design that examined the lived experiences and perceptions of study participants through individual interviews.

Summary of Findings: Seven major findings emerged from this study, which confirmed positive impact of loving-kindness meditation and other mindful practices on educators and students as perceived by participants. An element of transformation both inward, outward among students, and among the classroom environment were indicated. Finally, these practices influence positive connections among educators and students, and ultimately result in a sense of *interbeing*.

Limitations of Study: Data collection took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, limiting the number of participants in the study. Those participating in the study were middle school educators with experience in facilitating loving-kindness mediation among students. This niche target population limits the scale and scope of the research, as well as generalizable findings.

Implications: Loving-kindness meditation and other mindful practices support social, emotional and behavioral development, as well as cognitive development among youth, as perceived by educators. These practices aid in fostering positive relationships with educators and among peers, which results in protective factors that have the potential to decrease risk factors among youth. Additionally, educators who facilitate loving-kindness meditation, and other mindful practices, experience positive impacts in terms of their connectedness to self and to their students. The implications of this study have direct application in the field of educational leadership.