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The Influence of Yoga and Meditation on Intrinsic Motivation in Early Childhood Education

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Yoga and Meditation Influencing Intrinsic Motivation in Early Childhood Education

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in fulfillment of final requirements for the MAED degree

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Abstract

The objective of this action research was to see if daily voluntary yoga and meditation influence intrinsic motivation in a 3-6-year-old Montessori classroom. The time frame of this study was over six weeks in the beginning of the school year at an urban public Montessori school. The children who participated in the study were eighteen 3-6-year-old students. The experiment included using two apps, one for meditation and one for yoga, every morning for forty-five minutes. Children were welcomed to join when they were ready and leave when they felt refreshed. Some positive effects of our research were an increase in work productivity, emotions towards work and themselves, and an increase in children being focused on work. To expand this research in the future, we would track data for longer than a six-week period and track data prior to starting research to measure a baseline.

Keywords: Montessori, yoga, meditation, intrinsic motivation, productivity

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When thinking about daily tasks, people participate in mundane responsibilities completed just to get done. Some of these tasks we find little to no enjoyment in. These might include tidying up the bathroom, vacuuming, and combing our hair after a shower to even more critical responsibilities such as jobs and careers. People work and choose jobs for many reasons, such as location, work time, income, flexibility, and enjoyment. A common saying is that 'if you find a job you love, you will never work a day in your life'. However, some people cannot pursue careers they are genuinely passionate about due to income, location, flexibility, and lack of resources. Some people go to work to survive their economic responsibilities and make a living, possibly with no enjoyment at all. Now think if every person could enjoy completing duties, regardless of what they were, for the pleasure of completing tasks; how much happier would people be daily?

Just like adults, children have responsibilities they partake in, schedules, and routines they follow. Children attend school for sixteen years or more, some finding pure enjoyment and others going through the motions to graduate. Teaching children to enjoy obligations in life is a skill that educators should strive to do. Doing tasks or activities for the satisfaction of finishing them is intrinsic motivation (Ryan, 2000). Being intrinsically motivated can help students lead successful, happy lives in school and after graduation. However, some things hinder their natural intrinsic motivation and may even completely diminish it. Childhood is not always an untroubled time and has many of the same stresses as adults. There is pressure with tests, assignments, and homework (Fisher, 2006). Teachers need to be able to help students past their struggles and ease their minds enough for learning. One-way teachers can destress students is by implementing a time in the day designated to relieve that stress.

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Yoga and meditation have health benefits, such as reducing stress and anxiety. Not only do yoga and meditation relieve these health issues, but they also boost self-confidence, work performance, and satisfaction (Fisher, 2006). These practices can be used in the classroom to help students focus and find enjoyment in their school day. "The implications of yoga as a calming tool can be effective for both classroom management and culture and for influencing the children personally" (Thomas & Centeio, 2020, p. 253). Implementing yoga and meditation in the classroom can clear children's minds, making them more receptive to intrinsic motivation instead of seeking rewards for their work. However, little research suggests that yoga and meditation can genuinely affect intrinsic motivation in children. The research conducted in this study will help suggest if aerobic exercise will influence children's ability to complete work for the enjoyment of working. Eighteen children will be able to participate in voluntary yoga and meditation each morning for the next six weeks in a Montessori classroom. Over the six weeks, each child will be monitored daily and biweekly to track their work progress and emotions towards completing schoolwork. The end of the six weeks would provide evidence if students' intrinsic motivation can be influenced by using yoga and meditation in the classroom. Children who have the tools to achieve may soar to success.

Theoretical Framework

The theory analyzed for this study is the capability approach, reinforced by theorists Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen. It is an approach that centers on what people can do when given choice and freedom in their decisions (Nussbaum, 2011). This approach can also be the capabilities approach, making the theory plural because people have more than one element of their lives working on at a time. Some of these capabilities in a person's life may revolve around health, bodily integrity, and education. With all these capabilities' humans may have the freedom

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of choice to change these aspects of their lives if they so wish (Nussbaum, 2011). Nussbaum also explained that the capabilities a person has the freedom to act on have influenced their environment (Nussbaum, 2011).

The fundamental principles of the capability approach include functioning, capability, and agency. Functioning is an act that is considered valuable and affects a person's happiness. Capability is the ability to do these practical acts, and agency is a person's ability to realize what is valuable to them and to pursue it (Alkire & Deneulin, 2009). Conversion factors "determine the degree to which a person can transform a resource into a functioning" (Robeyns, 2017, p. 45). When given the resources to succeed, it is up to the person to utilize them properly to achieve the goal intended.

When thinking about the research, the capability approach theory supports the study of children participating in yoga and meditation to influence their intrinsic motivation. The active principle of this experiment would be the work and lessons children complete during the work cycle. This act is considered valuable for several reasons, including becoming more knowledgeable, feeling accomplished, or being able to move on to a more challenging lesson. Children pursuing the many beneficial pieces of work during the work cycle would be the capability principle. The agency of this research, or the children realizing what is valuable to them, would be the growth of their intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is the agency because through completing their work, they are learning that they are solely completing their lessons to benefit themselves as learners. Conversion factors of this experiment would include the support from the children's guides in the classroom and their classroom environment. The children's guide integrates yoga and meditation daily in the classroom environment. These conversion factors will help the children achieve their capabilities. One factor to consider is that

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caregivers, such as guides, are fundamental when children discover autonomy (Biggeri, et al., 2011). Connecting the capability approach to the literature that supports this research is "understanding children as subjects of human development. Researchers can consider children not simply as recipients of freedoms, but as active social actors and agents in their communities with their priorities, strategies, and aspirations" (Biggeri, et al., 2011, p. 22).

Gillard, Gillard, and Pratt (2015) explained that if a child has autonomy, they will have a higher drive to work hard. This desire will be due to their intrinsic motivation pushing them to master their work for personal growth. The more freedom a child has, the more they want to complete their capabilities because they realize the agent of conducting work is personal growth (Gillard, et al., 2015). Another piece of literature expresses that intrinsic motivation, the agent, is desirable because it is associated with focused learning and overall well-being (Kusurkar, et al., 2011). Neely and Genzon (2021) found that the functioning of yoga and meditation can help children understand, process, and learn with a more focused mind. Children become more capable of accessing their minds due to their calm, concentrated state (Neely & Genzon, 2021). "Seeing children as subjects of capabilities means that we consider them endowed with agency and autonomy, able to express their points of view, values, and priorities. Therefore, the capabilities, choices, and conditions experienced during childhood and adolescence crucially affect children's capabilities as adults" (Biggeri, et al., 2011, p. 22). Empowering children to value their autonomy and choices will significantly benefit their growth into adult learners. Children will be able to see the value of their choices, work, and efforts when completing tasks from challenging to their daily life, making each responsibility more valuable.

Literature Review

Introduction:

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Through academic research, evidence that focuses on the influence yoga and meditation have on intrinsic motivation in elementary children, concentrating on Montessori education, has been used and applied to the current study. Based on the support of these topics, readers will find the benefits of yoga and meditation, how it affects students' health and wellness when implemented in the classroom, how yoga and meditation have a positive relationship with intrinsic motivation, and why having growth in intrinsic motivation is beneficial to students.

Being highly intrinsically motivated benefits children long after school-age years, teaching them to see the value of their choices, work, and efforts when completing tasks. These scholarly articles will tie how yoga and meditation in the classroom can promote this empowerment in children, making them intrinsically motivated. This review will have the following headings: definition of meditation, the definition of yoga, the definition of intrinsic motivation, benefits of yoga and meditation on the body, benefits of yoga and meditation in the classroom, and how yoga and meditation in the classroom look, how yoga and meditation can boost children's intrinsic motivation, and research on intrinsic motivation.

Meditation and Yoga:

Before diving into research, defining key terms are imperative. “The word ‘meditation’ is derived from the Latin word 'meditatio,' meaning all types of physical or intellectual exercise. Later in history, it became redefined around Christianity, with a philosophical base thinking about 'the nature of reality’” (Fisher, 2006, p. 147). Meditation is an action that creates a healthier sense of self or consciousness. These actions are mindful, responsive, procreative, and reflective (Fisher, 2006). ”Mindfulness always plays a part in meditation, in the sense of becoming aware of one’s conscious state. The most common and basic object of ‘mindful’ meditation is to focus on the naturally calming physical process of breathing” (Fisher, 2006, p. 147). Meditation is

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responsive or receptive, helping focus someone's attention on stillness, and silence helps calm the mind, making it more receptive. A meditation that guides attention by visualizing is called procreative or generative meditation. Lastly, reflective meditation focuses on a stimulus and accepting the experience from the stimulus; this could be a prayer, poem, or walking (Fisher, 2006). No matter what type of meditation, it allows for a more conscious sense of well-being.

Another reflecting exercise in this research is yoga. “Historically Eastern wisdom tradition of yoga is a collection of varied practices and commitments reflecting a specific way of life that reaches nearly all aspects of daily functioning. This lifestyle system comprises of eight linked, yet distinctive practices: Ethical life choices, personal observances, posture practices, breathing exercises, sense withdrawal, concentration practices, meditation, and absorption,” (Brems, et al., 2016, p. 121). Yoga is a holistic experience known to be one of the oldest forms of exercise that encourages physical, social, and spiritual development (Brems, et al., 2016). This growth in many aspects of life also creates a harmonious mind-body flow through spiritual practice (Laxman, 2021). Yoga has moved from focusing on reflection and finding an awakening within to emphasizing physical health and fitness. Due to this shift in practice, yoga instructors try to teach the philosophical foundation of this aerobic exercise to help prevent any injuries, reduce confusion about the practice, and increase the benefits of the practice as a whole (Brems, et al., 2016).

Intrinsic Motivation:

Intrinsic motivation is the drive to complete an activity to receive satisfaction from internal growth. Intrinsically motivated people will do an act for fun or challenge instead of seeking an external reward. Extrinsically motivated people only participate for the action's gift, reward, or physical outcome (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Autonomy allows the person to feel they have

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ownership of their actions. By completing tasks out of enjoyment, a person will have more autonomy. A strong sense of autonomy helps build upon this intrinsic motivation inside people and vice versa (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The more autonomy a person has, the more their arrangements become intrinsically motivated because they have a sense of initiative and ownership of their actions. By mastering these intrinsically motivated activities, people create a sense that they can succeed and grow. This competence happens through conditions that bring challenges, positive feedback, and opportunities for growth (Ryan & Deci, 2000). When a person has a good balance of autonomy, their intrinsic motivation can grow instead of relying on external rewards to complete tasks.

Benefits of Yoga and Meditation on the Body:

The aerobic movement associated with yoga and meditation has many positive effects on the body. Some beneficial effects on the body are an increase in balance and flexibility with a decrease in anxiety and stress (Neely & Genzon, 2021). Listening to music during aerobic movement helps the body feel more relaxed and connects the body to the mind (Neely & Genzon, 2021). The postures and breathing may also improve flexibility during this aerobic practice. Proper posture and breathing techniques also help boost circulation, acceptance of oxygen, and performance of hormones in the body (Santangelo White, 2009).

Yoga and meditation is also a form of cognitively engaging movement. A study conducted by Fisher (2006) showed that people who participated in meditation regularly reported that they felt highly relaxed yet energized simultaneously, claiming it calms the mind, increases the time they can concentrate, and makes them more creative. Meditation and yoga involve intentional concentration and can create "cogitato," a relaxed state of mind. This relaxation helps different strands of memory intertwine while making new connections in the brain (Fisher, 2006). "There

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are good philosophical, practical and pedagogical reasons to support the practice of meditation.

Philosophers have long argued that humans are by nature meditative beings. For them meditation was about serious and sustained reflection on matters of importance,” (Fisher, 2006, p. 148).

Benefits of Yoga and Meditation with Children in the Classroom:

The advantages of yoga and meditation in the classroom have been studied and practiced for some time. Teachers have been using yoga and meditation not only for health and wellness benefits but also supports transitions and ways to refocus children while learning. In 2006, Fisher's research pondered questions on the pressures of modern schooling and the possible effects of yoga and meditation on school-aged children:

“They find it difficult to articulate their problems. No wonder so many find concentrating in class difficult and are impulsive in their behaviour. Targets, tests and exams increases pressure, with many children reporting sleepless nights of worry as they prepare for SATs. Could meditation help answer these practical real-life problems?” (Fisher, 2006, p. 148).

Research supports that both aerobic movements can help children get over learning obstacles and get their minds in a creative mode (Fisher, 2006). Essential aspects of teaching yoga and meditation to children are the environment, atmosphere, type of yoga, and the length of instruction (Santangelo White, 2009). With a proper environment and resources, yoga and meditation can reduce stress in students' lives and nurture a positive mindset for learning (Rashedi, et al., 2019). Not only is stress reduction a benefit for students, but a decrease in anxiety and illnesses can be an outcome. Students showed increased self-confidence, interactions with others, work performance, and enjoyment of their work (Fisher, 2006).

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Neely & Genzon (2021) found that yoga and meditation helped children transition from busy lives and focus on their work. Students can come into the classroom with an academic mindset, ready to learn (2021). One student reported that yoga and meditation were a way of "mentally preparing myself for class. Utilizing that quiet time to help me focus and get comfortable in the class" (Neely & Genzon, 2021, p. 4). Researchers found that even the children who did not physically participate in the activity had positive responses about how they felt in their learning environment and health (Neely & Genzon, 2021). Another researcher, Laxman (2021), found that children felt relaxed, had a more significant internal serenity, and had higher energy levels to help accomplish their daily challenges when participating in yoga and meditation in the classroom. Children also seemed to engage more in playful exchanges and better relationships with their peers (Laxman, 2021).

Researchers have found ways to use yoga and meditation appropriately in the classroom. Posture and breathing awareness help calm the mind for relaxed concentration. Teachers can help children control their thoughts, keeping away negative or distracting ideas by getting children to be fully aware of their bodies and their beings in the classroom (Fisher, 2006). Mental "quieting" practices help children leave their worries behind. Children can envision their worries growing wings and physically flying away or having them throw their worries away. For tiny children, it may be more meaningful for students to write or draw their worries and physically throw them away or tear them up (Santangelo White, 2009). White suggested finishing with a relaxation or meditation exercise. These techniques may include lying down with their back on the floor, closing their eyes, slowly breathing in and out, and focusing on a sound or mantra (Santangelo White, 2009). How well children perform these exercises will vary daily, but the focus is on them embracing the aerobic movement at that moment. The issue around performing

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yoga and meditation in the classroom is the safety, space, and any contradictions to the practice.

The amount of time aerobic movement happens daily depends on the age and development of the children in the classroom. Yoga and meditation can be beneficial four to six times weekly (Santangelo White, 2009).

Yoga and meditation became a part of a Montessori classroom and can help stabilize children in their classroom environment. Aerobic movement should resemble other Montessori work, where children can choose to participate, have their own space on a rug or mat, and cards appropriately placed in front of the child to imitate. Teaching yoga or meditation in a large group should not be the only way instruction happens (Rosanova, 2004).

“One of the key insights in Montessori is to stimulate human development to provide children with opportunities for satisfying encounters with satisfying, engaging work- work which attracts children through points of interest rooted in critical developmental issues” (Rosanova, 2004, p. 42).

Rosanova reminded readers and researchers that children following yoga or meditation step-by-step are not the purpose of using this exercise in the classroom.

"Children should never be led to concern themselves with outer appearances in yoga, because this distracts them from an awareness of inner process. Children should never be forced to imitate whole poses in an initial yoga lesson" (Rosanova, 2004, p. 43). Montessori education allows children to choose when they participate in such work, like yoga or meditation. A child may not need yoga or meditation as another; giving children only one opportunity to participate in aerobic activities is not a part of the Montessori philosophy. With yoga and meditation extremely beneficial to students, Montessorians need to allow children to participate as if they were completing a piece of work on their terms.

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How Yoga and Meditation Can Be Used to Boost Children's Intrinsic Motivation:

Razza, Bergen-Cico, and Raymond found that mindfulness and yoga could increase self-regulation among the preschoolers studied (Razza, et al., 2013). Another researcher said yoga in the classroom would help students' behavior and personal factors begin to improve. Students reported they felt less stressed and calmer, allowing them to focus on work (Thomas & Centeio, 2020). These physical benefits lead to a more empowering feeling, allowing children to take on more challenging work and tasks in life in a calmer, more confident state of mind (Laxman, 2021). Yoga and meditation also help improve the emotional control functioning of the prefrontal cortex. The prefrontal cortex properly allows children to plan and execute complex ideas and actions, like completing hard work in the classroom and being motivated to do so (Santangelo White, 2009). Students who are less stressed, more focused, empowered, and eager to accomplish tasks can complete tasks using intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivation.

Intrinsic Motivation and School-age Children:

Empowering children to value their autonomy and choices will significantly benefit their growth into adult learners. By using yoga and meditation in the classroom, children will be encouraged to choose tasks based on intrinsic motivation in their learning environment. Gottfried found that children with higher academic intrinsic motivation achieve more in school, have higher academic performance, have more beneficial opinions of their academic abilities, and are highly motivated by their teachers. Teachers also noticed that higher intrinsic motivation lowered students' academic stress (Gottfried, 1990). Another experience tied children's autonomy to their intrinsic academic motivation; an experiment by Gillard (2015) explains that if a child has autonomy, they will have a higher drive to work hard because they want to master their work. This experiment was used in a graduate course with adult learners to see if learners would reach

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their goals and possibly do more (Gillard, 2015). Gottfried also gave light to the importance of growing intrinsic motivation in young children:

“Academic intrinsic motivation is a valid construct for young children. Cross-age correlations and predictions between early and later motivation showed that as young as age 7, children with higher academic intrinsic motivation were significantly more likely to have higher motivation as long as 2 years later. Academic intrinsic motivation at ages 7 and 8 predicted later motivation independently of intelligence, achievement, and socioeconomic status, and the stability of motivation increased over this period” (Gottfried, 1990, p. 535).

Stimulating and accessing children's intrinsic motivation helps promote the long-term growth of intrinsic motivation more frequently than extrinsic motivation. The development of internal motivation directly relates to long-term achievement, academic skill, and awareness of proficiency (Gottfried, 1990).

For teachers to achieve this tone in the classroom by promoting intrinsic motivation, there are specific techniques to help children find and utilize their intrinsic motivation in academics and life (Kusurkar, et al., 2011). They base teaching on what students’ interests keep learning captivating and promote intrinsic motivation (Kusurkar, et al., 2011). Teachers should structure lessons around interests and what their children need skill-wise to help promote autonomy among their students. These lessons encourage children to be active, and students participate in making feedback easier to give to create relatedness between teacher and students. Teachers making children more responsible for learning help promote autonomy and intrinsic motivation. However, making children responsible for their learning does not mean teachers step away from the process. Teachers guide and give structure and support to working students whenever they

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need it. Teachers are also responsible for providing challenging work that meets each child's individual needs, giving positive feedback, and creating an environment that supports children emotionally. For strong intrinsic motivation to flourish, teachers should be great listeners, be empathetic with their students, and be able to communicate the value of all lessons, exciting or not. Children should also have choices whenever possible to boost their autonomy. Teachers can also boost autonomy by communicating in an autonomous, supportive way, such as 'you can learn this' or 'it is your choice.' Supportive language helps change children's mindsets into a more intrinsically motivated view (Kusurkar, et al., 2011).

Montessori classroom settings encourage the development of autonomy and intrinsic motivation within their philosophy. "Previous research indicates that Montessori schools encourage intrinsic motivation by supporting students' interests and maintaining an appropriate level of challenge in student-centered classrooms" (Griffiths, 2016, p. ii). According to Lillard, children in a Montessori setting are more creative writers with sophisticated sentences, more constructive thinkers when problem-solving, and feel like they are a part of a community in their classrooms (Lillard, 2019). When fostering this inspiration among students', certain elements lead the child into the pathway of rooted intrinsic motivation. The teacher in the classroom guides the children in a learning environment of free choice and purposeful materials and removes all extrinsic motivations. Intrinsic motivation develops when the guide does not interfere with the children's work and can genuinely concentrate in "natural social environments" (Lillard, 2019, p. 941). When children are allowed free choice in their learning space, they are more independent, able to take control of their learning, and able to observe and absorb the others working with this intrinsic drive. Also, working in the Montessori environment is self-correcting, allowing the child to find their errors and boosting their confidence in their work.

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Lessons on how to grab work off the shelf and return it when work is complete give children a better sense of independence and structure, boosting their intrinsic motivation from organization skills and self-correcting (Lillard, 2019). According to Griffiths, "students reported more experiences of intrinsic motivation when they had a positive relationship with their teacher, had choice in assignments and working style, and when the students perceived their experiences as contributing to their sense of self-worth," (Griffiths, 2016, p. ii). In a Montessori classroom, children have the freedom of choice in their work and work schedule, boosting their sense of self-worth and intrinsic motivation. Teachers in a Montessori classroom also promote 'community,' developing a strong bond and connection within their classroom, making intrinsic motivation easily accessible to the students in the environment.

Conclusion:

Over the years, studies have suggested that yoga and meditation benefit children and their drive to complete work. Yoga and meditation can be seen as a boost to physical, mental, and spiritual health, as it is a barrier to the damaging effect of stress on children's development (Rashedi, et al., 2019). Other benefits include improving attention and emotional control and making the prefrontal cortex of the brain work more efficiently (Santangelo White, 2009). These benefits help them feel more empowered and confident to take on the challenges in their lives, home, and school (Laxman, 2021). When they feel empowered help build autonomy in children, growing their intrinsic motivation. Autonomy is feeling a sense of ownership and initiative in one's decisions. Intrinsic motivation is when actions happen for internal satisfaction of completing the task one chooses to complete (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Yoga and meditation suggest actions that boost the development of intrinsic motivation.

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The capability approach theory supports this research in the classroom and the past research in this literature review. The capability approach theory shows people what they are fully capable of if they are supported and given the tools to thrive (Nussbaum, 2011). The tools in this research to help the children thrive are yoga, meditation, a calm environment to participate in, and the space to conduct this exercise safely. When supplying children with these tools, there is a hope they reach their full potential in the classroom.

The gap in this research is that there is simply not enough research on the effect of yoga and meditation on intrinsic motivation in children.

“Second, little is known about the nature of young children's academic intrinsic motivation. Investigating this construct in young children would permit one to address developmental issues, including dimensionality, stability, and predictability of motivation" (Gottfried, 1990, p. 525).

After conducting this particular research, the hope is that more researchers are inspired to conduct more work in classrooms following intrinsic motivation associated with the benefits of yoga and meditation.

Methodology

The setting for this study is a public Montessori school with children ages twenty-one months up to the age of five. The classroom has seven new three-year-old students, eight four-year-old students with four students being new to the building, and four five-year-old students with one being new to the building. There are eleven new children in the building and Montessori setting this school year. All eighteen students live in an urban environment from different backgrounds. No children of Hispanic or Asian descent are in this classroom this school year. All nineteen students can participate in this study because participation is a piece of work

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in a Montessori setting. Children can choose to participate each day as they please. I will not force children to participate in daily yoga and meditation if they do not want to. Children are encouraged by observing me model and other student participation to join.

After sending out consent forms to all nineteen children and receiving confirmation that they could participate, students began yoga and meditation three weeks after the school year began. Gathering data did not start following the beginning of the school year due to all the students not having full days until the second full week of school. The school in this study has a slow enrollment for the younger students in the 3-6-year-old level. The first couple of days of school, the five-year-old students have full days by themselves, followed by half days for the four-year-old group, which then lead to full days. Once the four-year-old students have had their first couple full days, the three-year-old students begin with a more extended period of half days. The second whole week of school is the first week in the school year that all the students should attend full days together. That week is an adjustment period for all nineteen students. Also, all nineteen students could not receive the parent consent form on the first day of school. Each parent has the appropriate time to read and fill out the parent consent form if they choose to exclude their child from the study.

Daily observational data was collected (see Appendix A-C), noting how many children participated, what work each child completed, and the atmosphere of the environment. These data tools were collected daily to compare day-to-day changes. Yoga and meditation are optional exercises in the morning; therefore, participation and data will differ depending on the day. The participation data tool (see Appendix A) will track if more children join the morning session as the weeks continue and if the number of children participating affects the environmental mood (see Appendix B). Following daily work tracks if the continuance of yoga and meditation

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increases the amount of work each child completes as the days continue. These data tools (Appendix A-C) are simply through observation at daily set times. Data tool, Appendix C, are daily observations of the work each child is completing individually. Each piece of work will be documented per individual child (see Appendix C).

Another data tool is a post-assessment of children's emotions (see Appendix D). The post-assessment is administered after two-week intervals of yoga and meditation in the classroom. This post-assessment was administered every two weeks at the study's two-week, four weeks, and six weeks mark. This assessment monitors how students feel at that moment about themselves and about participating in work at school. Both data points help determine if yoga and meditation long-term help improve students' mood while in school and attitudes toward completing work. Students' mood about themselves and the workday ahead of them can influence their drive to complete work in the classroom. Appendix D ultimately collects three sets of data points.

I applied these data tools for six weeks beginning in September and ending at the start of November. These data tools verified if yoga and meditation influence students' intrinsic motivation in the classroom. Each morning, I will be in the middle of the room doing yoga and meditation for forty-five minutes in total. Children are welcome to come and go throughout the forty-five minutes. Yoga and meditation happen immediately at the start of the day when children arrive via cars and buses. All eighteen children do not show up simultaneously, as they are staggered throughout the first forty minutes of the morning. Having yoga and meditation for the first forty-five minutes of the morning ensures that all students can participate to some degree after arrival. Upon arrival, children must put away their belongings and possibly eat breakfast. The only way a child could participate in the entire forty-five minutes of optional yoga and

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meditation would be if the child already ate breakfast and arrived at school early. The lengthy time frame of forty-five minutes ensures each child can participate before completing work. The time of yoga and meditation are chosen also ensures each child has enough time to complete work in the morning after participating. The purpose of the study is to see how yoga and meditation influence children's intrinsic motivation when it comes to working and learning in the classroom. Yoga and meditation could not happen after their work was completed because there would be no direct influence. Yoga and meditation needed to be conducted before children were allowed to work each day.

Once the child feels fulfilled from yoga and meditation, they may begin completing their work. The amount of time each child remains solely depends on how engaged the child is that morning in doing yoga and meditation. I will then make daily notes of how many students participated (see Appendix A) and begin daily work observations (see Appendix C). At two designated times during the children's work period or their work cycle, the teacher will document the overall mood and what the children are currently doing using tally marks (see Appendix B). Once children have participated for two weeks, I will survey each child on how they feel after the morning yoga, and meditation session is complete. Then I will repeat the four- and six-week marks (see Appendix D).

Analysis of Data

This research aimed to see if yoga and meditation influenced children's intrinsic motivation. In this study, eighteen children were involved in a 3-6 Montessori public classroom in an urban setting. The children participated in this research for six weeks in the fall of 2022. The intervention was introduced in the classroom once each child was officially enrolled in the 2022-2023 school year. The public Montessori school used has a slow enrollment for younger

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children. All the younger children were not in the building on full days until three weeks after the official start of the school year.

At the beginning of the six-week study, children were greeted immediately in the morning with Down Dog Yoga followed by meditation from the Breathly App. I, the children's teacher, was directly under the smartboard, following along with each program. The program was playing above me on the smartboard as another guide. Children had the video from the apps and me as guidance when completing yoga. Children were welcomed with waves and a pat on the floor to join, as they were reminded in earlier weeks that we would be beginning yoga and meditation in our classroom. Children joined yoga and meditation at their leisure; they also could walk away from the yoga and meditation whenever they felt fulfilled.

Data was collected immediately following yoga and meditation, documenting the number of children participating daily (see Appendix A). The following two forms of data were collected daily, one writing each child's work performance. Each piece of work was recorded per child, showing the amount of work each child completed and what pieces of work they worked on. This data tracked if the children completed more work and more challenging work as the weeks went on. Each child was anonymously assigned a letter A-R (see Appendix C). The following data set documented what was happening in the classroom environment at two different times, 10 am and 11:15 am. Both times were chosen to look at the environment daily, 10 am because it was relatively close to when yoga and meditation would be over, and 11:15 am because the children's work cycle would end within fifteen minutes (see Appendix B). These were the only forms of daily data collection.

Three sets of data collection were gathered bi-weekly. At the end of week two, four and six children present that day were surveyed on their emotions. These emotions collected

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information on how they were currently feeling after yoga and meditation, how they felt about completing work the rest of the day, and how they felt about themselves (see Appendix D).

Children were guided with visuals of each emotion with the help of me reading the questions and labeling each picture for them. Children pointed to the image they felt was a reasonable response for themselves that day. When surveyed, children were pulled away from the rest of the working group, so their answers would not be persuaded by hearing other children answer the same questions.

Findings

The study aimed to see if yoga and meditation positively influenced intrinsic motivation in 3-6-year-old children in a Montessori setting. During this research, observational data was used along with surveying the children on their feelings about themselves and their work. These forms of data were collected to provide evidence of intrinsic motivation being influenced by yoga and meditation.

Appendix A Analysis of Student Participation

Appendix A tracked the number of children who participated daily in yoga and meditation. Each week I took the average number of children who participated that week. The number of children who participated remained consistent for the first four weeks, with an average of 11-12 children participating each morning. During the weeks five and six, the number of children who participated in morning yoga and meditation declined from 12 to 8 to 6. What was interesting about this change in data is that even though participation decreased, children came in eager to work and immediately wanted to get right to work in the morning, skipping yoga and meditation. As these children went to work, yoga and meditation still happened in the background. This data is highlighted in Figure 1 and Figure 2. Figure 1 and Figure 2 show the

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difference in the average of children present and the average of children participating when looking at the average amount of work completed.

Figure 1

Average Number of Children Present vs. Average Number of Work Completed Per Week

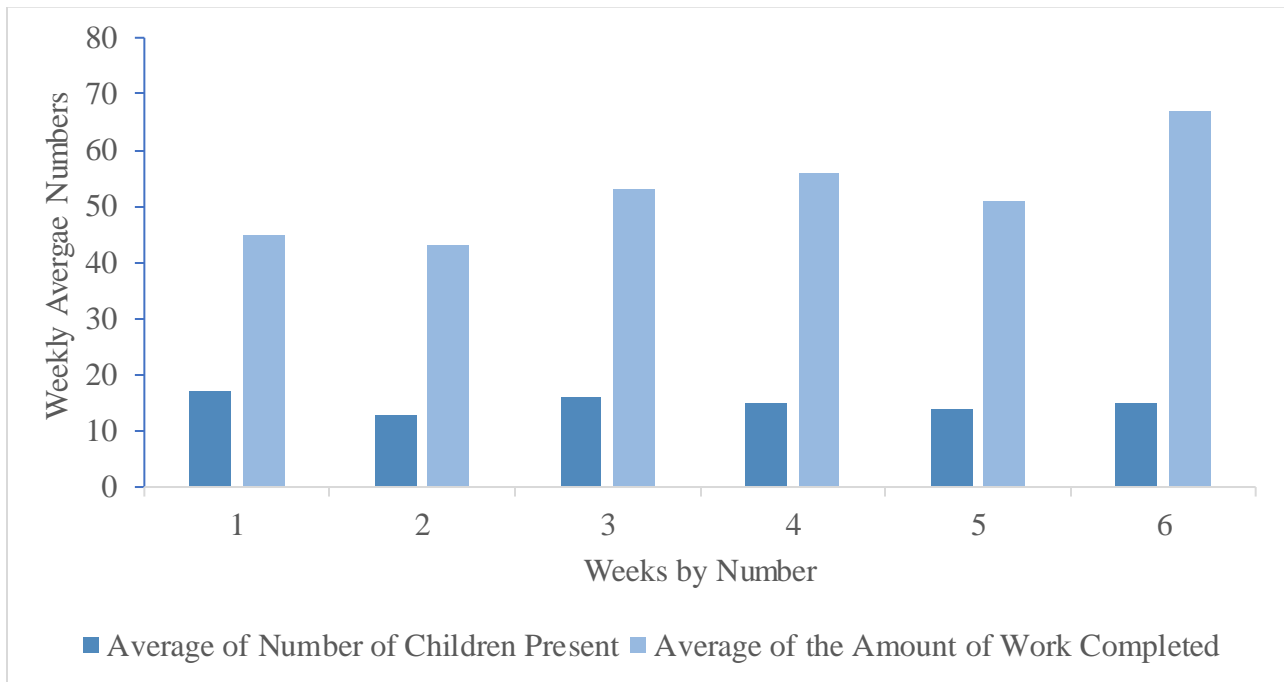
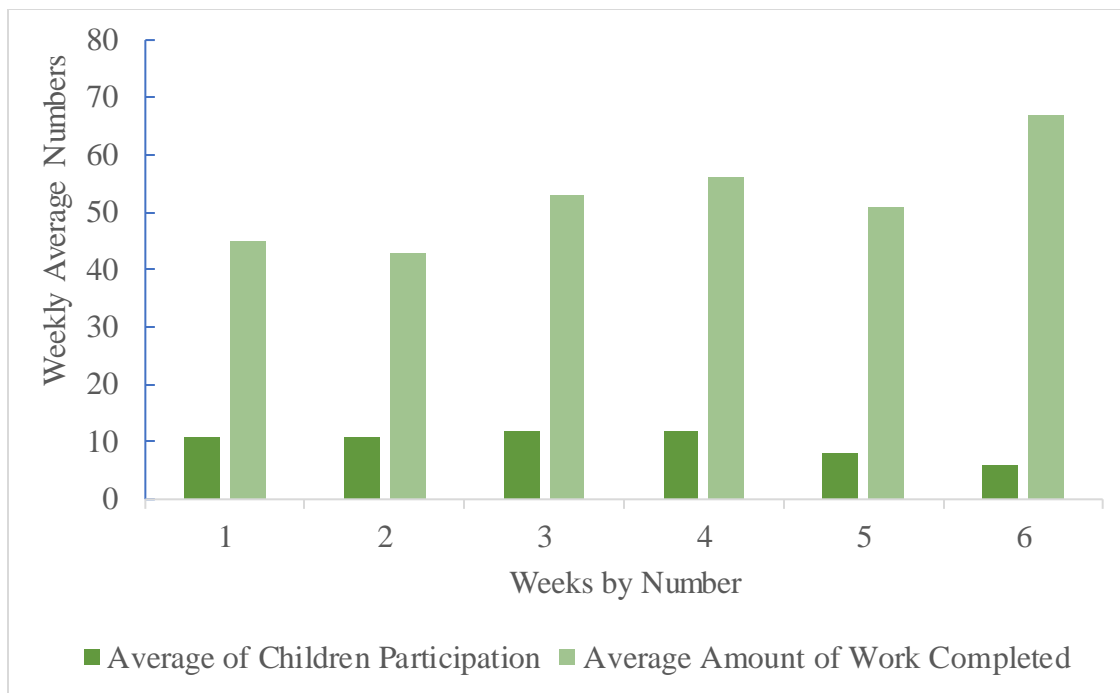


Figure 2

Average Number of Children Participation vs. Average Amount of Work Completed Per Week

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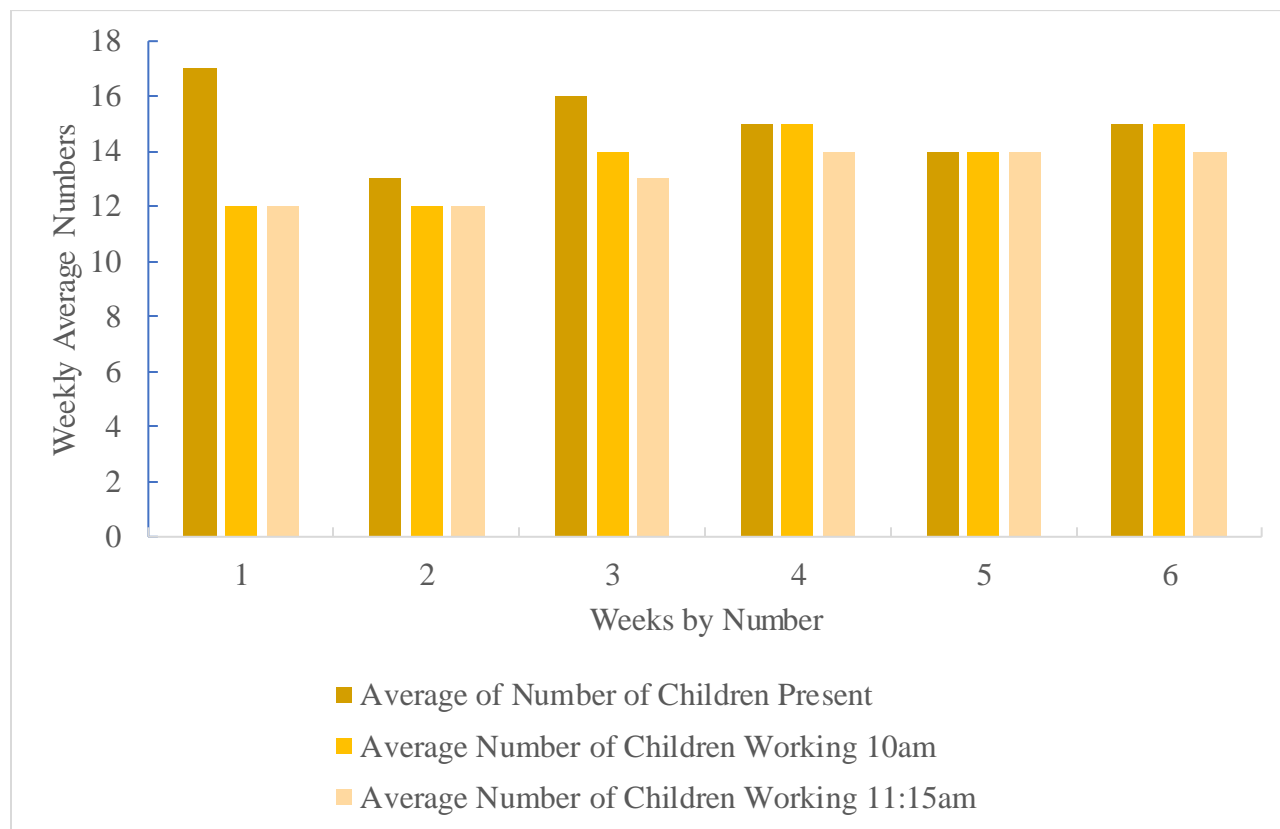
Appendix B Analysis of Students Focused and Unfocused

This data set tracked two working times daily, 10 am and 11:15 am. At each set time, the room was observed, and the total number of children working on work, getting a new lesson, looking for work, having work in front of them but are not engaged in work, or do not have work out at all. As the weeks went on, from the first week to the sixth week, more children were engaged in work at both times. By week 4, the average number of children present in the classroom was equivalent to the average number of children working at 10 am. In week 4, the average number of children working at 11:15 am stayed at fourteen, regardless of the number of children present, which is a slow increase from an average of twelve, thirteen, to fourteen. The average number of children working at 11:15 am also was lower than the average number of children working at 10 am for the majority of the weeks, showing children lose focus as the work cycle comes to an end. This data is exhibited in **Figure 3** and **Figure 4**.

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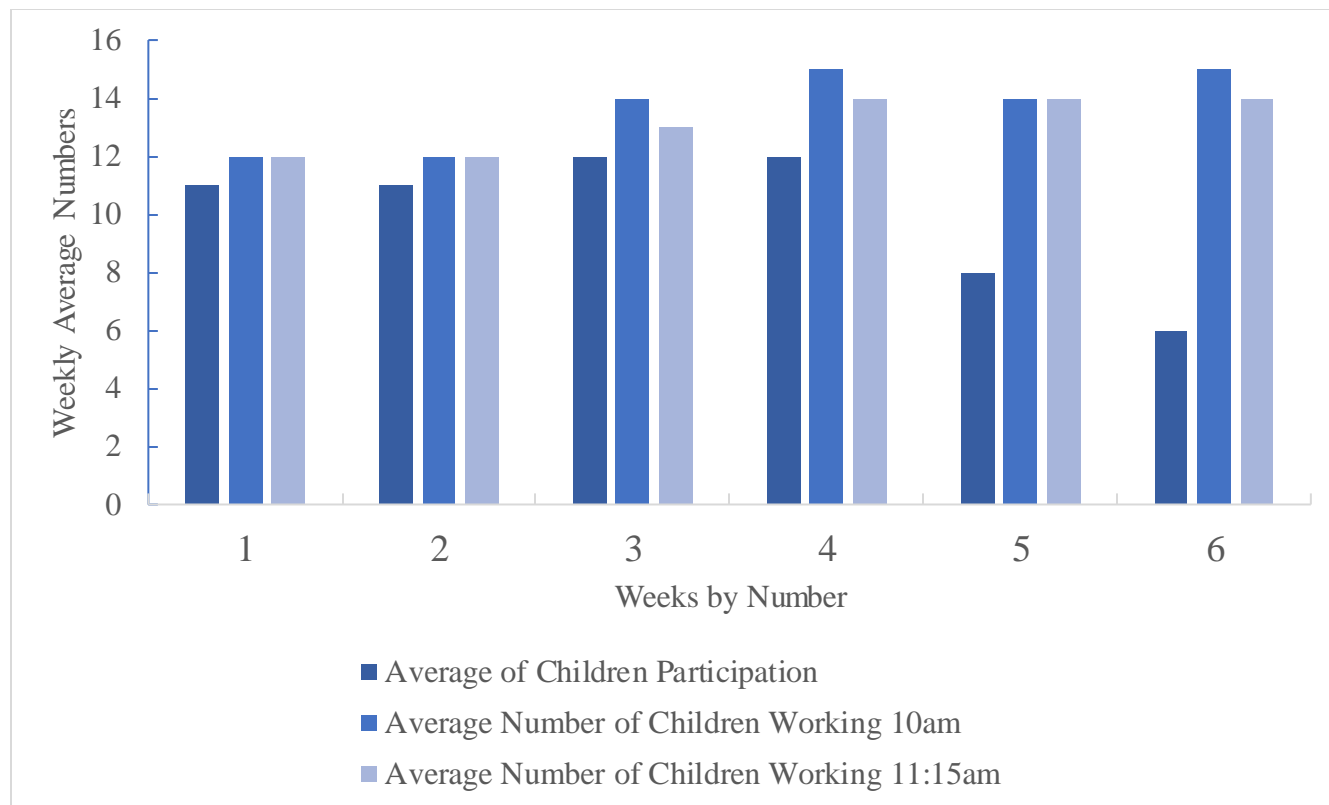
Figure 3

Average Number of Children Present vs. Average of Children Working Per Week

**Figure 4**

Average Number of Children Participation vs. Average Number of Children Working Per Week

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Appendix C Analysis of Children and Their Daily Work

Observation of students work choice documented each child's work every day and who was present. Each child was assigned an anonymous letter A-R and tracked daily for six weeks. At the beginning of the study, in weeks 1 and 2, children were averaging between 43-45 pieces of work, not including coloring, a week. Between weeks 3 and 5 children were averaging between 51-56 pieces of work a week, with a dip of 51 pieces of work at week 5. During week 5, my four-year-old students completed work that specifically challenged them and took longer to complete. My four-year-old students are the most significant number of children out of the eighteen that I have, being 8/18 students. At week 5, the four-year-old students seemed interested in working with numbers, counting, and placing them in order; some even tried simple addition. This work took them longer to complete; therefore, they completed less than usual that week; however, on average, they completed 23 pieces of work as a group during week 5. This data is

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displayed in Figure 5. At week six, on average, children completed 67 pieces of work, which was a massive jump, with some days being in the seventies. At week one, seventeen children were present, with a participation level of eleven, and on average, only 45 pieces of work were completed. By week six, on average, there were fifteen children present, a participation level of six, and on average, completed 67 pieces of work. The average data was represented in **Figure 1** and **Figure 2**.

Figure 1

Average Number of Children Present vs. Average Number of Work Completed Per Week

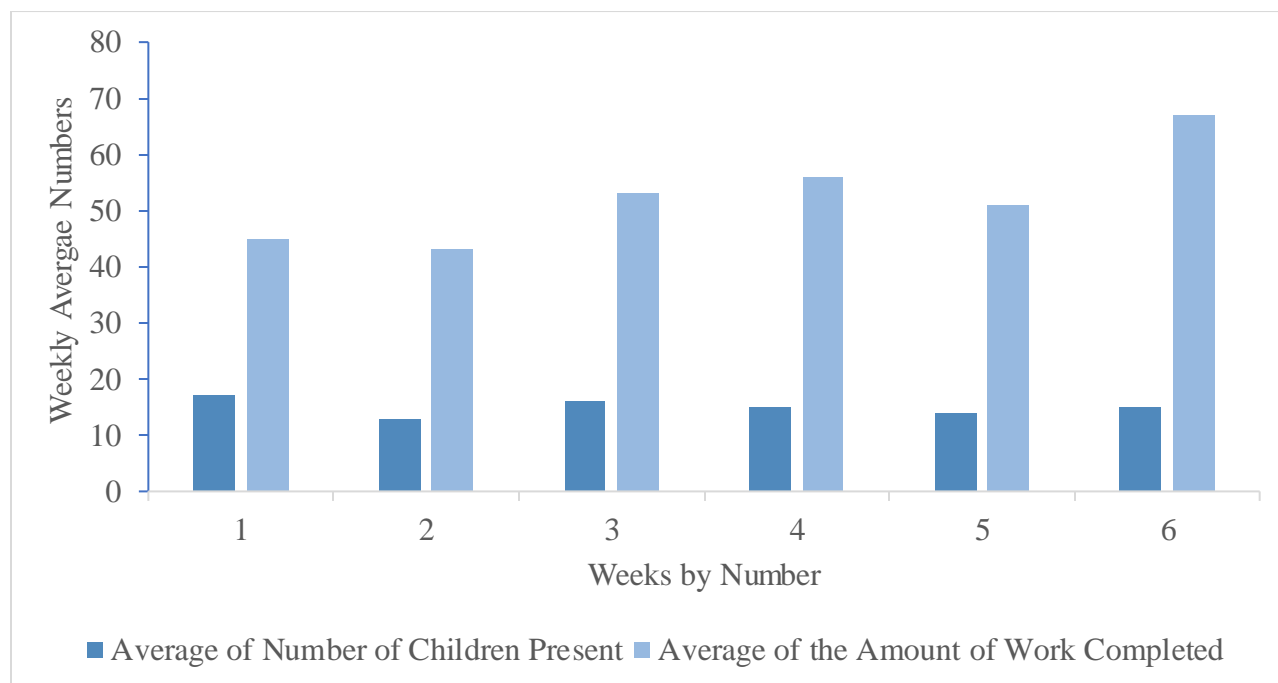
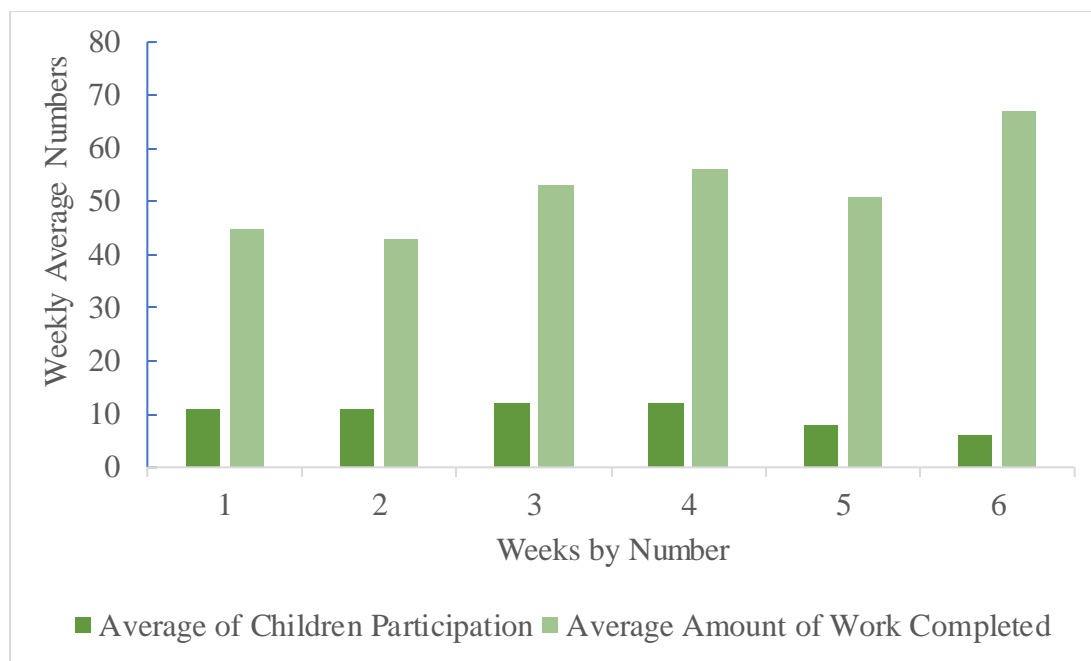


Figure 2

Average Number of Children Participation vs. Average Amount of Work Completed Per Week

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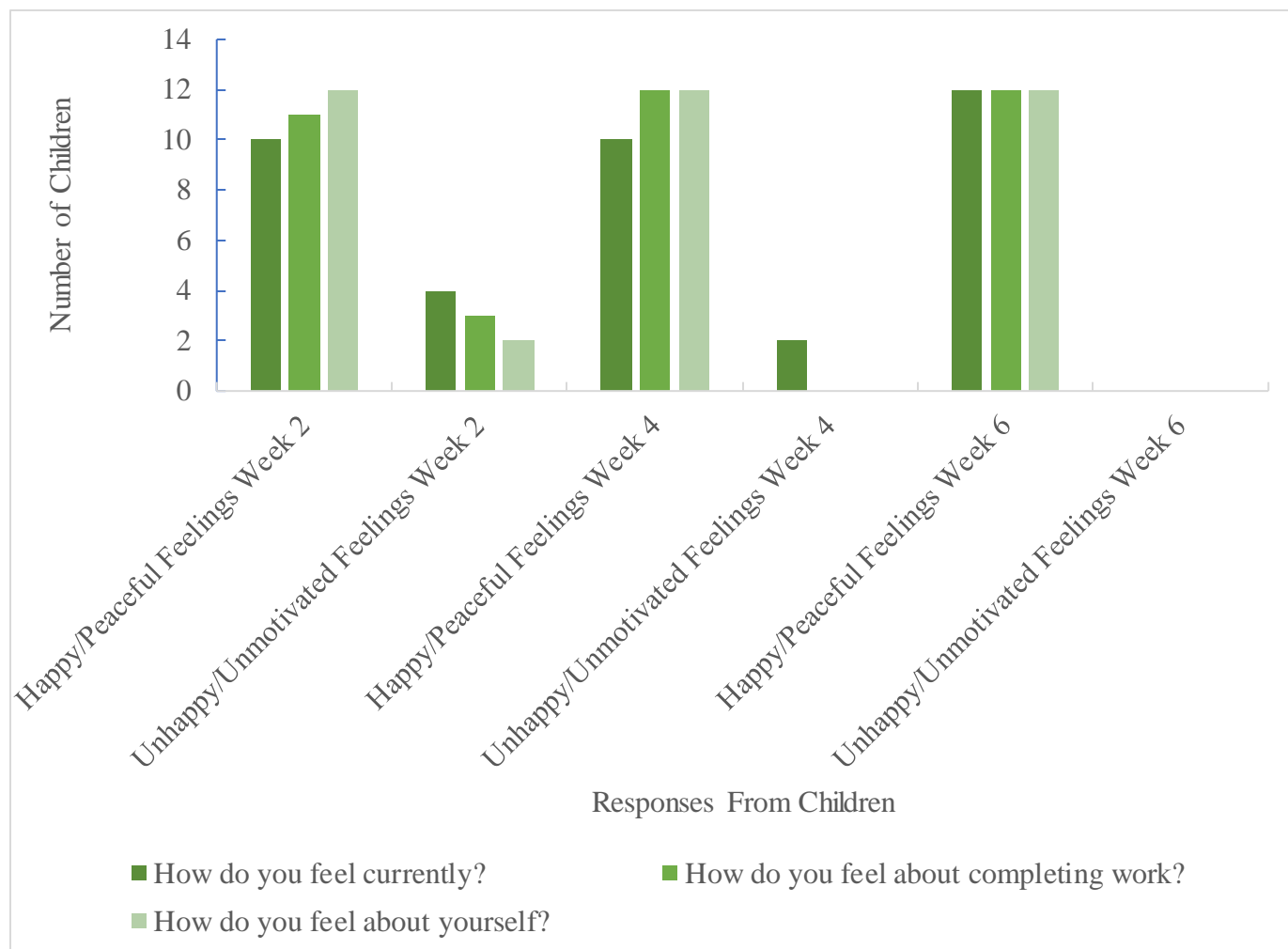
Appendix D Analysis of Students Emotional Wellbeing

This data was gathered three times throughout the study, at weeks 2, 4, and 6. Appendix D surveyed the children present during each bi-weekly cycle after completing yoga and meditation that morning. Children were asked how they felt about completing work that morning and how they felt about themselves. In week 2, there were a small amount of unhappy and unmotivated responses in each category of questions. By week 4, there were only two unhappy responses to how they were feeling this morning, compared to the prior survey two weeks prior with unhappy/unmotivated responses in all three categories. At week 6, there were no unhappy or unmotivated responses. Every child present felt content, peaceful, happy, or excited that morning to complete work. Each child also had positive feelings about themselves saying they felt content or like superheroes about themselves that morning of the last week of my research study. As children answered the survey bi-weekly they became more positive and motivated to complete work at each survey mark. This data is shown in **Figure 6**.

Figure 6

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Children Answering Questions After Yoga Biweekly

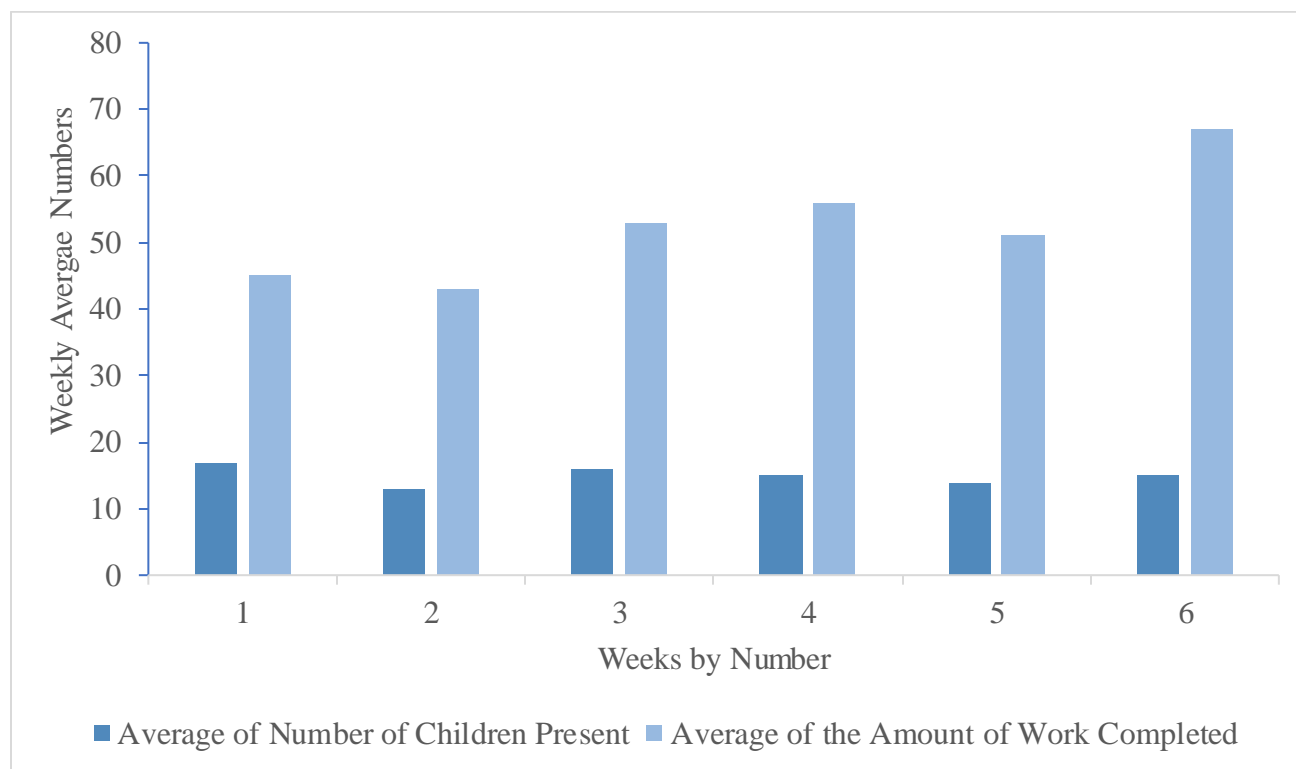


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Figures of Data Collected

Figure 1

Average Number of Children Present vs. Average Number of Work Completed Per Week

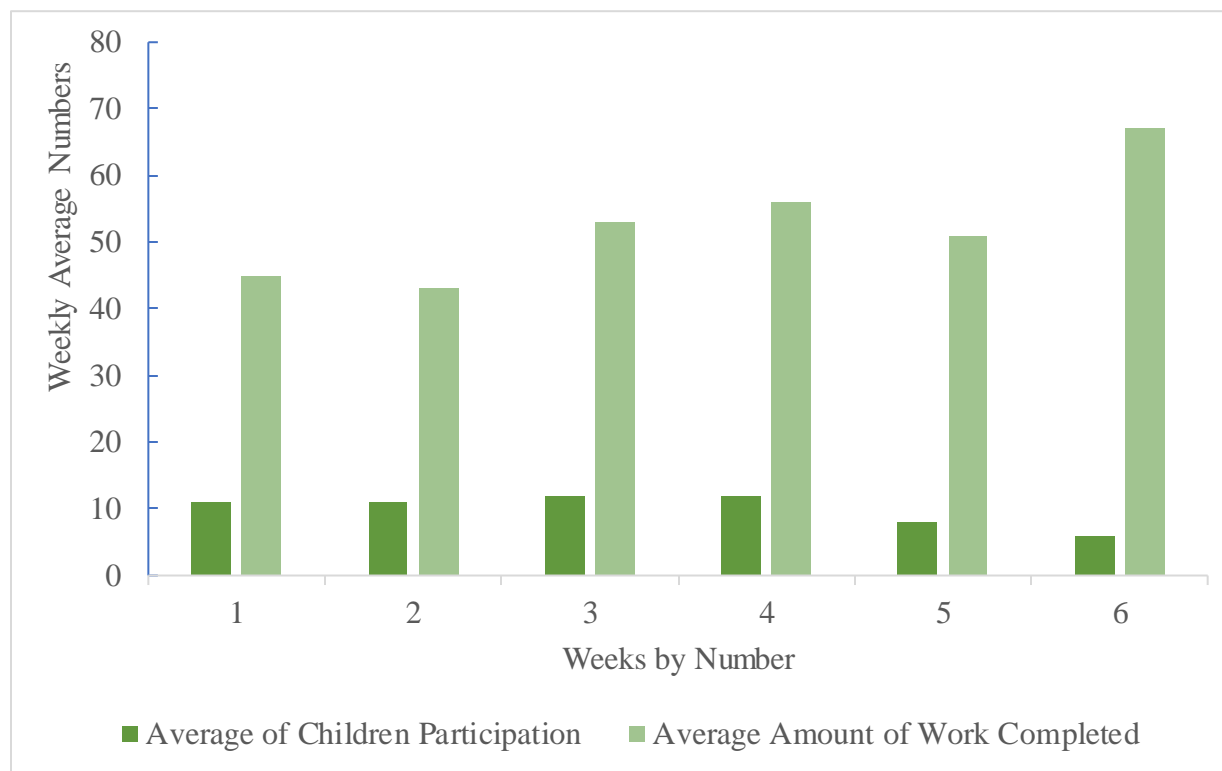


Note. Each day the number of work completed was counted, totaled, then averaged for the end of each week. The average of children present was compared to the average amount of work completed each week.

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Figure 2

Average Number of Children Participation vs. Average Amount of Work Completed Per Week

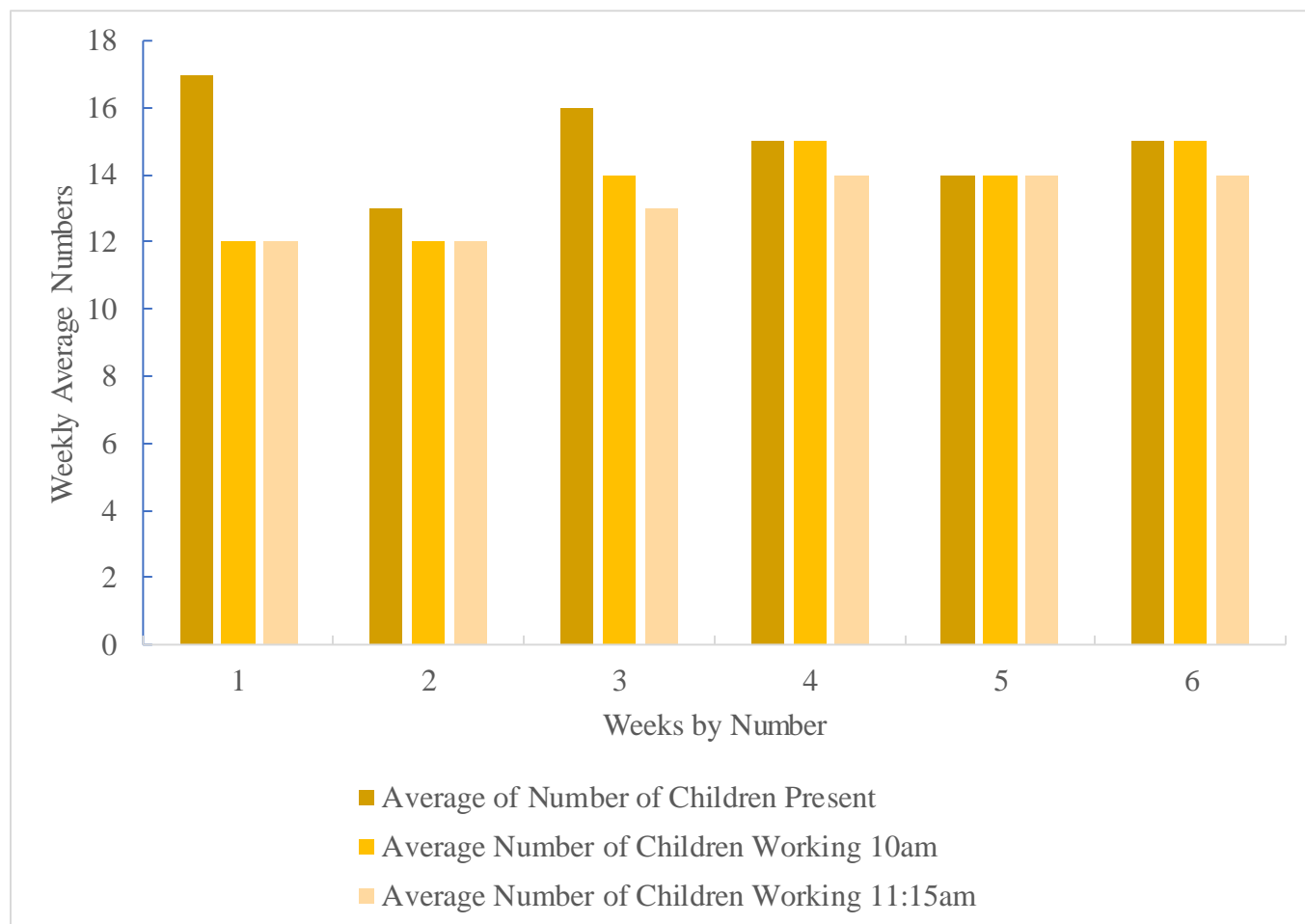


Note. Each day the number of work completed was counted, totaled, then averaged for the end of each week. The average of children participating was compared to the average amount of work completed each week.

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Figure 3

Average Number of Children Present vs. Average of Children Working Per Week

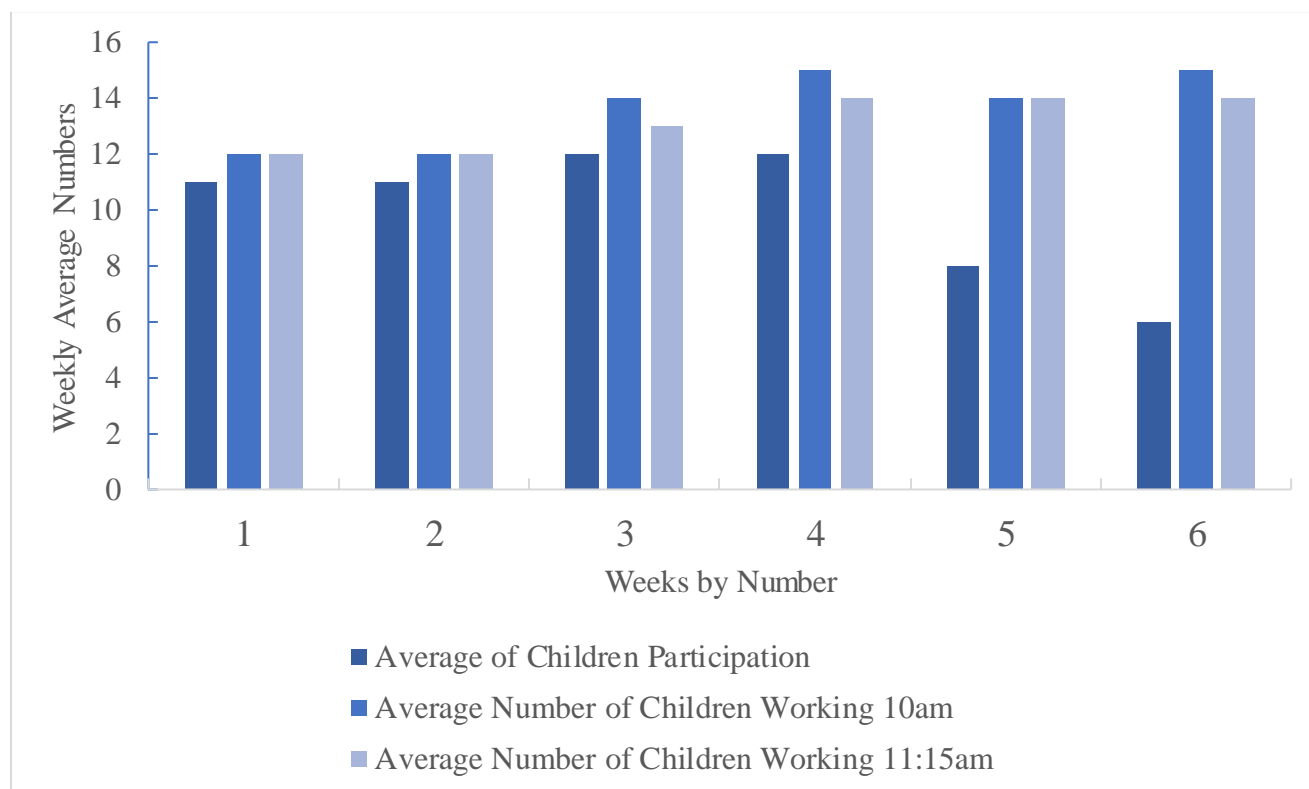


Note. Each day the number of children working, looking for work, and getting a new lesson was counted, totaled, then averaged as one number for the end of each week. The average of children present was compared to the average number of children working at both set times.

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Figure 4

Average Number of Children Participation vs. Average Number of Children Working Per Week

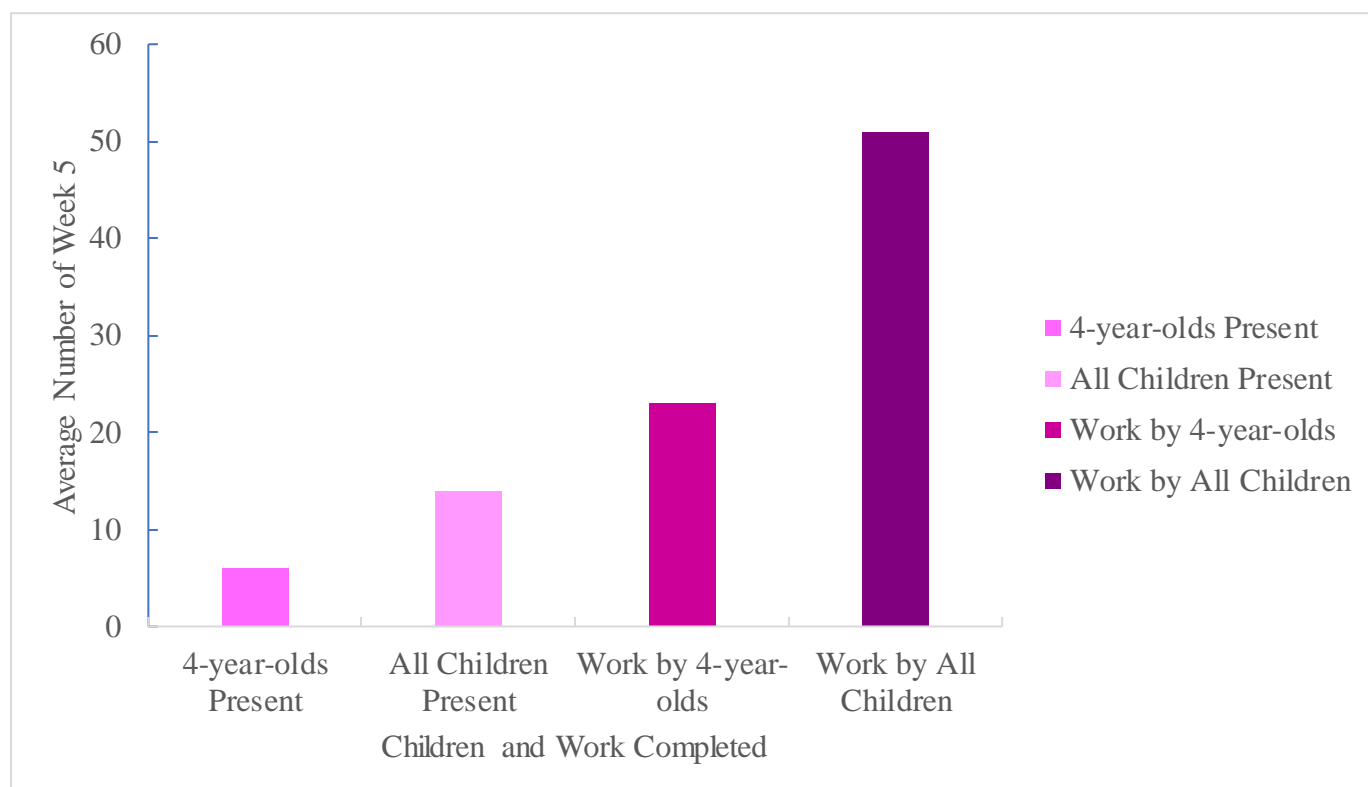


Note. Each day the number of children working, looking for work, and getting a new lesson was counted, totaled, then averaged as one number for the end of each week. The average of children present was compared to the average number of children working at both set times.

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Figure 5

Average of 4-year-olds vs. Average of all Children for Week #5

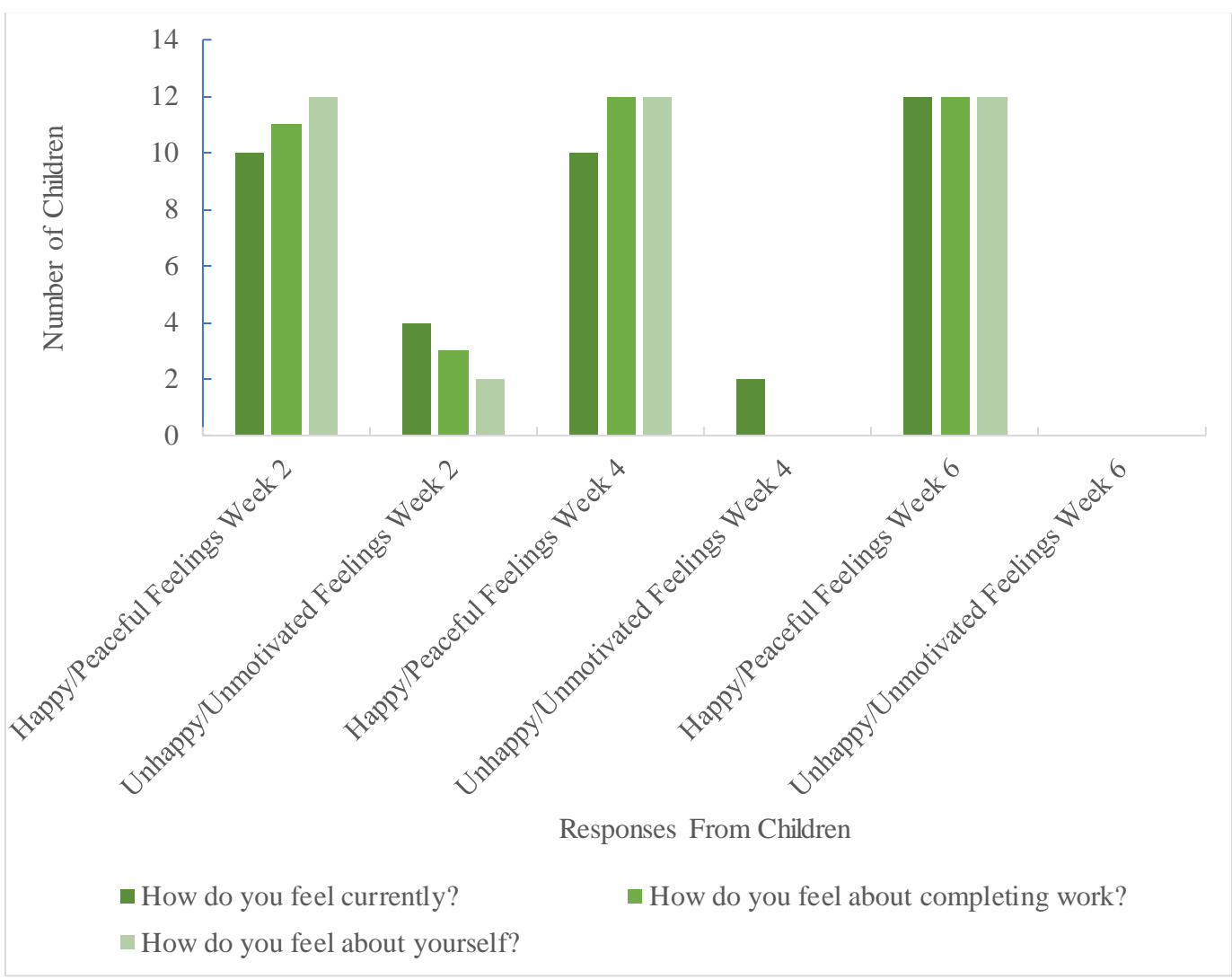


Note. This graph showed that the four-year-old children almost completed half the amount of the average work completed even though they completed less than usual pieces of work on average.

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Figure 6

Children Answering Questions After Yoga Biweekly



Notes. Children present at the end of each bi-week, weeks 2, 4, and 6, were surveyed on their feelings after completing yoga and meditation, how they felt about completing work after doing yoga and meditation, and how they felt about themselves after completing yoga and meditation.

Overall, the data collected shows that yoga and meditation positively influenced intrinsic motivation. By the end of the six-week study, children were more focused on work. They completed more pieces of work regardless of the number of children present or the number of

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children that participated in yoga & meditation. Yoga and meditation were completed each day over the six weeks. Regardless of the same, children participated, meaning children still had the same calming mood each morning, listening to the instructor give simple directions in a soothing voice while listening to peaceful music and deep breathing exercises. Children who actively participated in yoga and meditation and those who were just influenced by the classroom atmosphere in the morning were all positively influenced by the calming mindfulness of yoga and meditation, just as research suggested early in this study's literature review.

Conclusion & Recommendations

This action research aimed to determine if yoga and meditation could influence intrinsic motivation within a 3-6 Montessori classroom. Data was collected in numerous observational methods and a survey method as well. The data gathered documented the number of children participating each morning in voluntary yoga and meditation over the six weeks. More observational data determined the number of children busy at work, looking for work, having work out but not engaged, and children who were not completing work at all at two distinct time frames during the children's work period. Children's work was also recorded daily to track the type of work and the amount of work each child completed another form of data. Lastly, children were surveyed bi-weekly at weeks 2, 4, and 6 about their feelings. The questions were about how children felt in the moment, how they felt about completing work, and how they felt about themselves after completing a morning of yoga and meditation. Three points of data were collected from this bi-weekly survey. This study pursued to discover if including yoga and meditation as a part of the daily morning routine would influence the children's intrinsic motivation during their work cycle.

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With support from the literature review, this action research revealed the importance of including yoga and meditation in the normal morning routine in a Montessori classroom setting. I found that even children who did not participate physically in voluntary yoga and meditation were influenced by the atmosphere and calmness of the surrounding children when completing work; literature review findings supported this conclusion. As the weeks progressed, more children in the environment began focusing on work, and more work on average as a class was produced at the end of each week. Children also seemed to work more peacefully, quieter, happier, and more motivated during the work cycle. Children also felt better in general when considering their mental and emotional health and felt better about themselves by the end of the study. Although the number of children busy at work declined each week between 10 am and 11:15 am, the average number of children working per week at 11:15 am consistently increased or remained constant compared to the previous weeks. This evidence shows that children's focus decreased as the work cycle ended compared to when the work cycle first started each week; however, more children were busy doing work each week at both set times.

Not only were children completing more work by the end of the six weeks, but children were also choosing more challenging work as the weeks progressed. This was documented in the daily data collection of children's work throughout the entire work cycle. There was a slight dip in the average number of works completed during week 5 because the four-year-old students were all mainly working on math lessons they have yet to engage in that were also challenging to that particular student. Children were also more eager to begin their work in the morning. As the weeks passed from week 1 to week 4, the average number of children participating in yoga slowly increased. However, when it came to week 5 and week 6, the number of children participating in yoga and meditation decreased because children were immediately coming into

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the classroom and beginning to complete work. Children were busy doing work earlier than ever before, completing more work than compared to the first two weeks of yoga and meditation.

Even though fewer children were not physical participants in yoga and meditation, they were still quiet, peaceful, respectful of other children working or participating around them, and focused.

Another aspect of this research that was a phenomenal find was when children chose to participate in yoga and meditation. Once children joined me on the ground, participating in yoga and meditation, whether immediately after arrival, after breakfast, or after grabbing their first piece of work, the children participated until the session was over. If children joined immediately after taking their belongings off, they received about 35 minutes of yoga and meditation and continued to bust out numerous pieces of work after. The initial thought was since yoga and meditation were voluntary, children could come and go as they pleased each morning. However, it turned out that once children joined, they were motivated to stick out the aerobic exercise until the end of each session every morning.

Data from this study helps support that yoga and meditation in the classroom positively influence intrinsic motivation in 3-6-year-old children in a Montessori classroom setting.

Therefore, educators can include yoga and meditation into their daily routine to help children's intrinsic motivation grow to assist children in completing work in the classroom. Not only will educators know that yoga and meditation are beneficial to student's mental health, classroom management, and refocusing children after transitions, but now yoga and meditation can be a factor used to boost students' intrinsic motivation. This study also confirms that the capability approach is valid in a Montessori classroom setting, which concludes that when given the freedom to choose their tasks and resources, children can accomplish any task.

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Recommendations for future researchers and educators trying to duplicate these results would first be to collect data on the function of the classroom before initiating yoga and meditation in the school. I regret not documenting data on the children completing work before yoga and meditation. At the beginning of the study, after already completing a week of yoga, the average amount of work completed was 45 pieces of work for that week. I wish I had documented at least two weeks' worth of work completed, how many children were focused on work, and surveyed the children on their feelings before the study began for a better understanding of how the classroom functioned without yoga and meditation.

Another recommendation would be that this action research is conducted more extended. When looking at my data around week 4, I was sad closing my data with such a tremendous jump in results at week 6. Ideally, this research would be conducted over three months. This would not include collecting data before implementing yoga and meditation in the classroom, therefore longer than three months would be needed to collect preliminary data as well. Another interesting component would be documenting data weeks after stopping the yoga and meditation to see if their intrinsic motivation was built up enough to continue to work hard, be focused, and be interested in the work they are completing.

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Appendix A

Student Participation

Week of: _____

Day of the Week	Number of Students Who Participated
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	

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Appendix B

Teacher Observation of Environment

Week of: _____

Day	Time	Tally of each child					Notes:
		Completing work	Getting a new lesson	Looking for a piece of work	Has work out but not engaged	Not engaged in work	
Monday	10:00am						
	11:15am						
Tuesday	10:00am						
	11:15am						
Wednesday	10:00am						

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	11:15am						
Thursday	10:00am						
	11:15am						
Friday	10:00am						
	11:15am						

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Appendix C

Observation of Students Work Choice

Date: _____

Student	Math	Language	Sensorial	Practical Life	Reading	Writing	Cultural	Notes
A	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.	
	2.	2.	2.	2.	2.	2.	2.	
	3.	3.	3.	3.	3.	3.	3.	
B	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.	
	2.	2.	2.	2.	2.	2.	2.	
	3.	3.	3.	3.	3.	3.	3.	
C	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.	
	2.	2.	2.	2.	2.	2.	2.	
	3.	3.	3.	3.	3.	3.	3.	

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	3.	3.	3.	3.	3.	3.	3.	
L	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.	
	2.	2.	2.	2.	2.	2.	2.	
	3.	3.	3.	3.	3.	3.	3.	
M	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.	
	2.	2.	2.	2.	2.	2.	2.	
	3.	3.	3.	3.	3.	3.	3.	
N	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.	
	2.	2.	2.	2.	2.	2.	2.	
	3.	3.	3.	3.	3.	3.	3.	
O	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.	
	2.	2.	2.	2.	2.	2.	2.	

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Appendix D

Bi-weekly Student Motivation Survey

Week of: _____

Questions	Emotions/Moods			
How do you feel currently?	 <p>Full of happy energy</p>	 <p>Peaceful</p>	 <p>Tired</p>	 <p>Upset</p>
How do you feel about completing work this morning?	 <p>Excited/Eager</p>	 <p>Content</p>	 <p>Tired</p>	 <p>Upset</p>
How do you feel about yourself?	 <p>Super</p>	 <p>Content</p>	 <p>Upset/Disappointed</p>	 <p>Angry</p>