

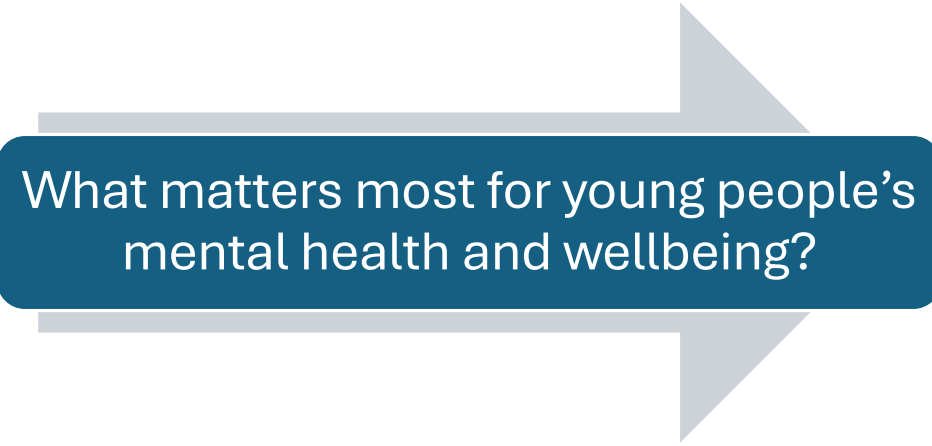
Assessing the Effectiveness of tMHFA training on Year 9 in Maltese State Secondary
Schools

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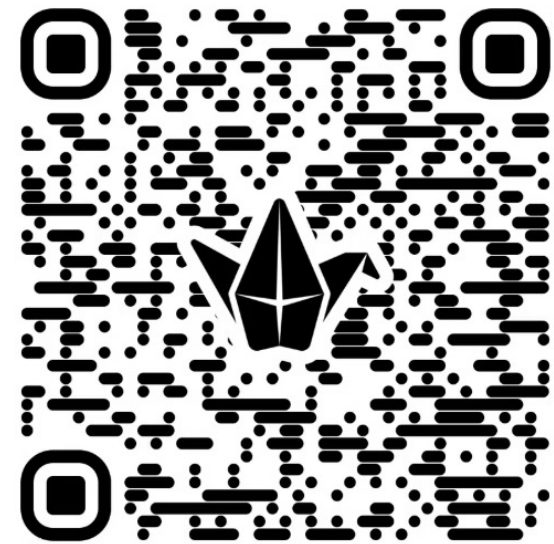
Research Held in School
Year:
2023 – 2024
4 Maltese State Secondary
Schools

Partners:
MEYR, Richmond
Foundation, Mental Health
Commissioner

Paper by Pace & Vassallo
[2025]



What matters most for young people's
mental health and wellbeing?



Why Adolescent MH is a priority?

1

40% of 5- to 16-year-olds in Malta report symptoms of poor mental health but only 10% seek support [Sacco et al, 2022]

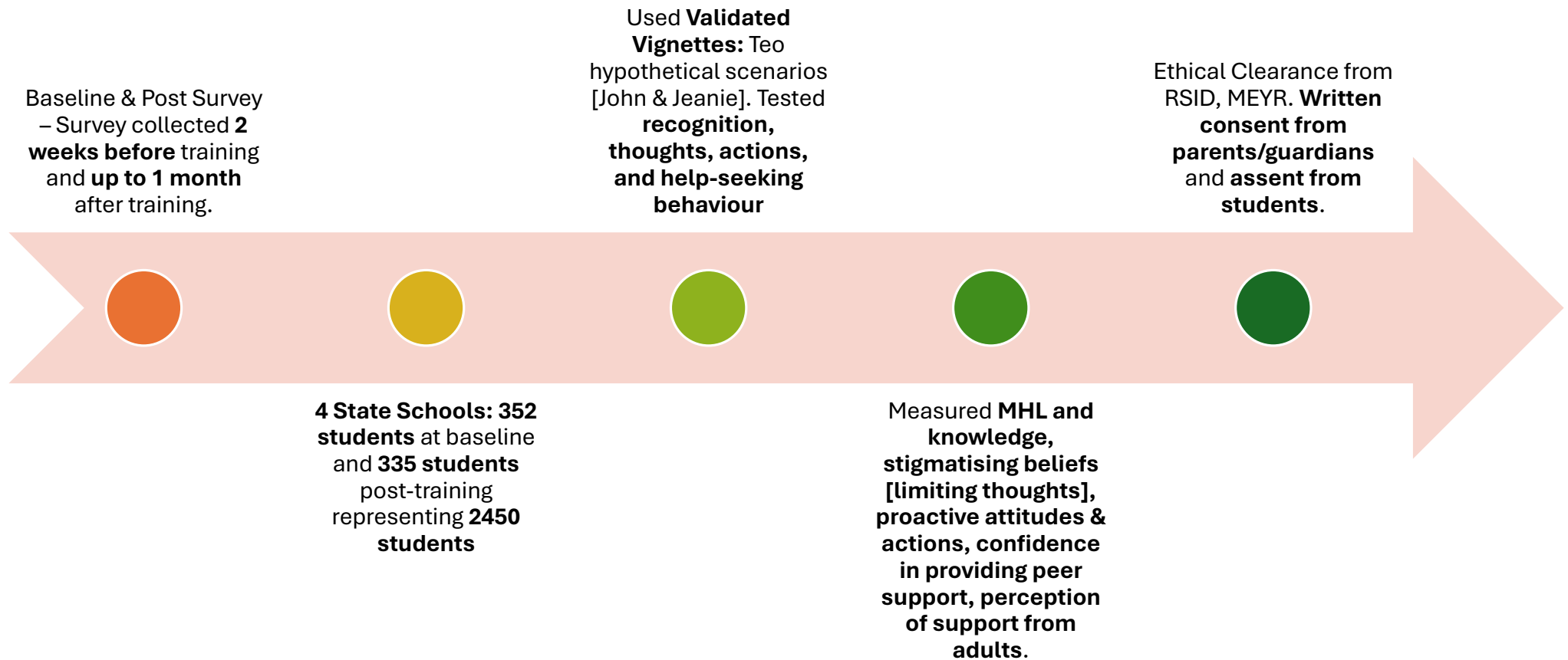
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13% of adolescents aged 10-19 live with a diagnosed mental disorder [UNICEF, 2021]

What is tMHFA?



How was the Study conducted?



Key Finding 1: Students responded enthusiastically to tMHFA

7.62/10 mean rating of the training programme overall



In their own words...

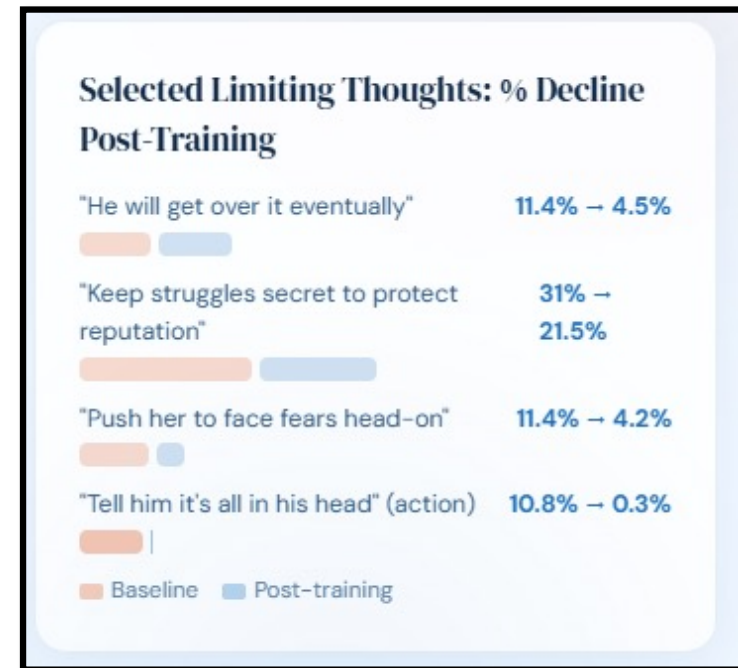
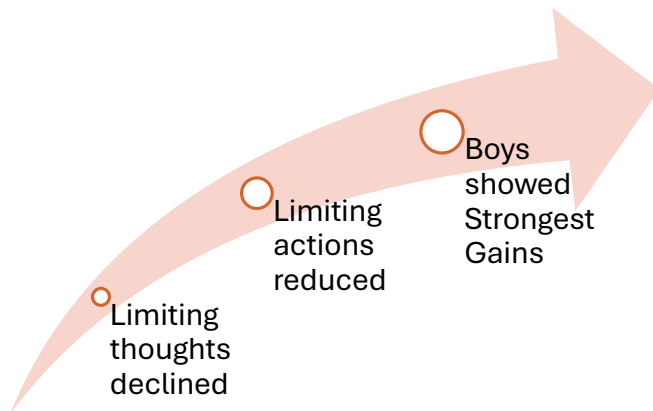
"I had fun during these talks and the trainer was very helpful. I want to thank her because she helped me with what I was going through."

— 14-year-old girl

"I suggest that we have more training of this sort as they provide good practice advice and life skills."

— 13-year-old boy

Key Finding 2: Stigma was Meaningfully Reduced



Key Finding 3: Confidence in Peer Support Grew Significantly

Strong Baseline — Even Stronger After Training

Even before training, students showed predominantly proactive responses — suggesting Malta's existing school wellbeing initiatives had already built a solid foundation. The tMHFA then **built meaningfully on this foundation**.

- ✓ 92.3% chose "Listen to him" at baseline — already excellent
- ✓ 73–75% selected proactive helping actions at baseline
- ✓ Crisis helpline perceived as more helpful **post-training** (both scenarios, $p < .05$)

Confidence in Helping John [who is suffering from depression and suicidal thoughts]: Unconfident responses dropped from 8.5% to just 2.1% ($p < .001$)

Confidence in Helping Jeanie [who is experiencing social anxiety]: Unconfident responses dropped from 7.1% to just 0.9% ($p < .001$)

"This course helped me realise how to identify a crisis and what to do when a person close to me is showing some of the symptoms. This was a very good way to remove all the stigma around mental health and learn what mental illnesses are, without making it overwhelming."

— 14-year-old girl

tMHFA bridged Gender Differences in MHL

1

At Baseline, a Gender Gap
Existed

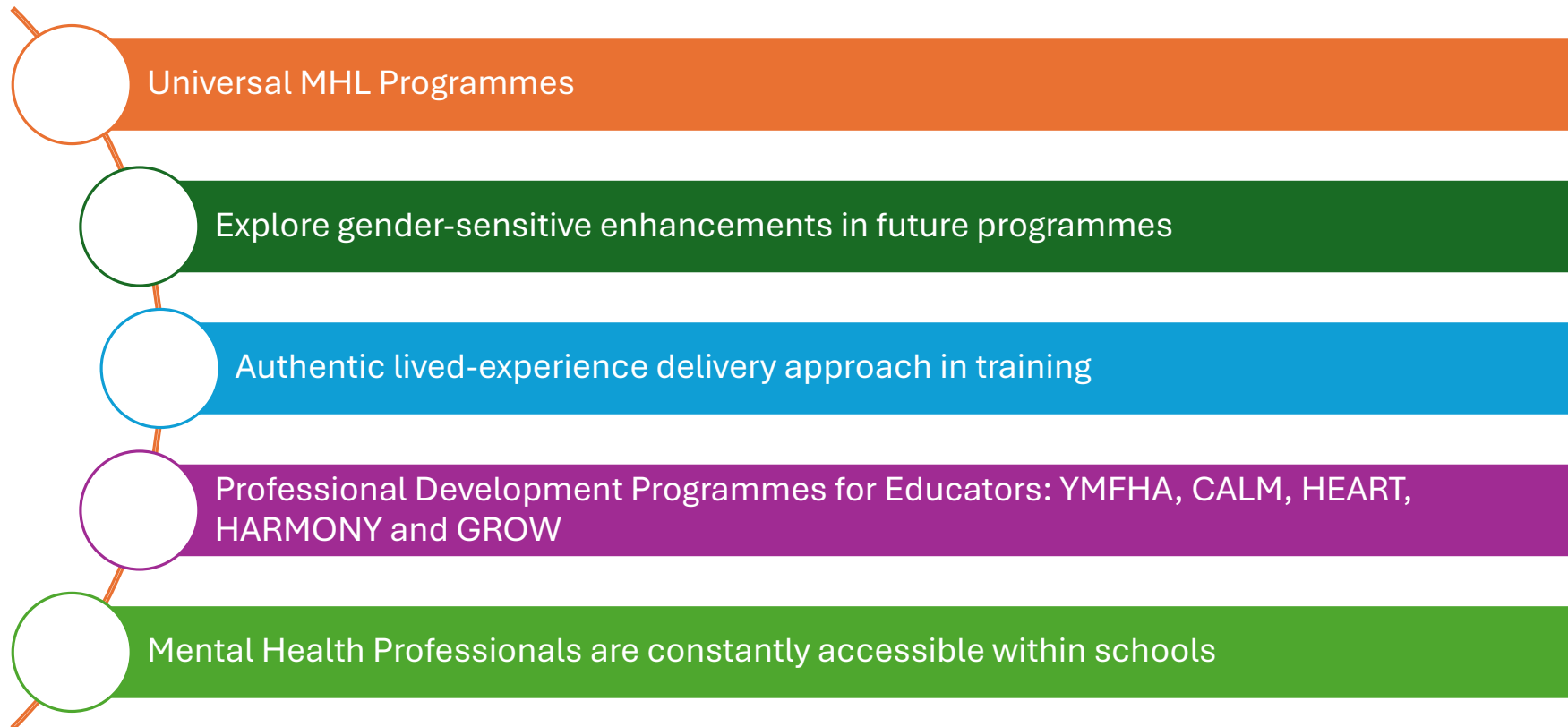
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Post-Training, the Gender
Gap was narrowed
Significantly

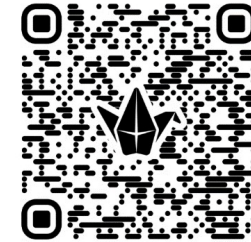
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Boys showed significant
improvements in 8 of 10
limiting thoughts
statements and experienced
more a positive change

What does this all mean for Policy and Practice?



What matters most for young people's mental health and wellbeing?



"I had fun during these talks and the trainer was very helpful. I want to thank her because she helped me with what I was going through."

14-year-old girl

"One of the trainers shared his experiences of a mental health condition. Knowing he's speaking from experience... We had our class going from barely paying attention to asking many questions. Amazing."

14-year-old boy

"This course helped me realise how to identify a crisis and what to do when a person close to me is showing some of the symptoms. This was a very good way to remove all the stigma around mental health and learn what mental illnesses are, without making it overwhelming."

14-year-old girl

"I suggest that we have more training of this sort as they provide good practice advice and life skills."

13-year-old boy

References:

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