

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: University of Exeter		
Unit of Assessment: UoA 17 Business and Management Studies		
Title of case study: Mindful Leadership: Reducing prison violence and drug use through a transformative rehabilitation programme informed by mindfulness and social identity		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2005-2019		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Inma Adarves-Yorno	Senior Lecturer	2005-present
Michelle Mahdon	Senior researcher	2016- present
Allan Lee	Senior lecturer	2017 to present
Alex Haslam	Professor	2001 to present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2015-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>Dr Adarves-Yorno's research on social identity and mindfulness underpins the <i>Mindful Leaders Programme</i>, a highly effective Programme of rehabilitation in eighteen maximum security prisons in Kenya. This "<i>Mindfulness Revolution</i>" has had a transformative impact on policy and practice in the Kenyan Prison Services resulting in reduced incidences of violence, alcohol and drug use (85%) as well as improving prisoners' relationships with families (64%), colleagues and authorities (86%). In addition, it has progressed plans to work towards zero rates of recidivism and has developed inmates' self-awareness, and positive attitudes (90%), with many having redirected their energy towards educational activities. More than 2100 prisoners have directly benefited, with positive impacts also experienced by prison officers. The Programme has since been adopted by the Nafisika Trust, a Kenyan charity working in prisons, further extending the reach, and enabling the Programme to become sustainable. A re-integration programme is also benefitting the wider community.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>Adarves-Yorno's research focuses on an integration between two research themes: mindfulness and social identity. Mindfulness refers to the quality of being present and fully engaged with whatever we're doing in the moment — free from distraction or judgment, and aware of our thoughts and feelings without getting caught up in them. Academic and practitioner interest in mindfulness has witnessed a boom in recent years with much research suggesting that being more mindful has many benefits for individuals. For example, many studies show that training individuals to be more mindful can benefit their mental and physical health as well as workplace outcomes. This training involves techniques that encourage individuals to focus on what is happening in the moment. Adarves-Yorno's work has demonstrated a positive relationship between mindfulness and psychological outcomes such as mental wellbeing, resilience [3.1] and dealing with uncertainty and ambivalence [3.2]. However, work conducted by Adarves-Yorno and colleagues concludes that mindfulness training is not always beneficial and does not work for everyone. Adarves-Yorno's approach improves the effectiveness of mindfulness training through an integration with social identity principles. She argues that to engage participants undertaking mindfulness training, it is important for them to see mindfulness as part of who they are. Without this level of identification, mindfulness training is less likely to be effective or long lasting [3.1].</p> <p>Social identity theory is a major framework within social psychology. The basic premise is that a person's sense of who they are is based on their group membership(s). When we define ourselves, we tend to think about group memberships, for example our occupation, nationality, gender etc. [3.3]. A huge amount of academic research has demonstrated that the social groups with which we identify have a considerable influence on our attitudes,</p>		

behaviour and wellbeing. For example, groups are a force that shape the psychology and biology of their members [3.4]. Adarves-Yorno's work on social identity shows that group identification impacts on creativity and engagement with creative ideas – demonstrating bias perceptions based on in-group membership [3.5].

Building on these two streams of research, Adarves-Yorno's work suggests that the principles of social identity theory can be applied to mindfulness training in order to improve the effectiveness of the training, making the chances of positive impact more likely. To achieve this, Adarves-Yorno combined mindfulness training with techniques aimed at building social identification to create acceptance [3.3]. In two studies Adarves-Yorno and colleagues suggest that the more people identify with mindfulness, the more they are willing to practice the mindfulness techniques. Adarves-Yorno conducted studies within a prison environment, funded by two ESRC-IAA grants (2015, 2016) where she trained inmates in mindfulness techniques, and explored the effect of mindfulness and identification with a mindful group on wellbeing outcomes. Results show that both individual mindfulness and social identity were positively associated with psychological well-being indicators, such as mental well-being, resilience and negatively associated with self-reported substance abuse [3.1].

3. References to the research

3.1 Adarves-Yorno, I. & Mahdon, M. M, Schuelcke L, Koschate-Reis M, Tarrant M (2020). Mindfulness and social identity combined: Exploring their impact on mental wellbeing, resilience and reduction of substance use in a Kenyan prisons context. *Applied Journal of Social Psychology* DOI: [10.1111/jasp.12708](https://doi.org/10.1111/jasp.12708)

3.2 Haddock, G., Foad, C., Windsor-Shellard, B., Dummel, S., & Adarves-Yorno, I. (2018). On the attitudinal consequences of being mindful: Links between mindfulness and attitudinal ambivalence. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 43(4), 439-452. DOI: [10.1177/0146167216688204](https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167216688204)

3.3 Haslam, S.A, Adarves-Yorno, I., Postmes, T., & Jans, L. (2013). The collective origins of valued originality: A social identity approach to creativity. *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 17, 384-401. DOI: [10.1177/1088868313498001](https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868313498001)

3.4 Haslam SA, Haslam C, Jetten J, Cruwys T, Bentley S (2019). Group life shapes the psychology and biology of health: the case for a sociopsychobio model. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 13(8) DOI: [10.1111/spc3.12490](https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12490) (Pages to come)

3.5 Adarves-Yorno, I., Postmes, T., & Haslam, S.A. (2007). Creative innovation or crazy irrelevance? The contribution of group norms and level of identity to innovative behaviour and perception of creativity. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 43, 410-416. DOI: [10.1016/j.jesp.2006.02.013](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2006.02.013)

4. Details of the impact (750 words)

Adarves-Yorno's and colleagues research into mindfulness and social identity underpins the Mindful Leaders Programme - a major prisoner rehabilitation programme, now embedded in 18 high-security prisons across Kenya. Since its start in 2015, the Programme has positively impacted prisoners, prison staff, and the wider community.

In 2015, the Director of African Prisons Project invited Adarves-Yorno to deliver mindfulness training to the Director of Rehabilitation of Kenya and five Prison Governors, in London and Devon on a Commonwealth Scholarship. Adarves-Yorno was then invited to Kenya and she worked in several prisons including Navaisha, the largest maximum-security prison in Kenya, where inmates and staff were trained. From there, the programme expanded across prisons in two ways: through the training of welfare officers who became mindful trainers

themselves, and through inmates who, after becoming mindful leaders, shared mindfulness techniques and helped their fellow prisoners to improve their lives. As prisoners were transferred to other institutions, they shared the Programme further [5.1]. Two Welfare Officers trained by Adarves-Yorno have gone on to implement the Mindful Leaders Programme in 17 other Kenyan prisons, inspiring and supporting peers and prisoners [5.2]. Over a three-year period Adarves-Yorno trained a further 18 Prison Governors and 25 Welfare Officers in Nairobi. To date, a total of 2,100 prisoners across Kenya have participated in the Mindful Leaders Programme [5.3].

Core to the success of the Programme is the research finding that for change to happen, new norms need to be established. This requires a social identity shift that will allow for novel and creative thinking [3.4, 3.6]. In some settings, mindfulness training will only lead to long term transformation if it is tied with a strong sense of common identity. Thus, inmates from Naivasha prison, who were part of the Programme, exchanged their prisoner identity for one of a “Mindful Leader”. Though still incarcerated in a maximum-security prison, prisoners claim to be “internally free” [5.2] and have a purpose. The training provides them with the tools to build a cohesive and harmonious community within Naivasha prison.

Impacts on Policy and Practice in the Kenyan Prison Service

The Mindful Leaders Programme has directly benefited the prison governance and staff by significantly reducing the incidences of violence and drug use [5.2]. Prison staff attribute this change directly to Adarves-Yorno’s Programme. As a result of the Programme, prison governors report that the prisons have become more settled institutions, *“inmates have developed self-awareness, hence self-acceptance”* [5.4]. *“There have been less violent incidents which has made work easier for prison officers...those in the Programme have reduced their consumption of drugs abuse and trafficking.”* [5.1] In addition, a BBC World Service article reports the relationships between inmates and guards have improved drastically, with *“fewer riots and attempted escapes”* [5.2]. At the institutional level, new initiatives are being developed and working groups within the prison have been established. Project Co-ordinator at Kitengala Prison testifies to the beginnings of working to zero recidivism *“since we started the mindfulness Programme, no prisoner released within the last three years has ever come back to prison.”* [5.5]. Furthermore, the Director of Rehabilitation across Kenya would like the programme to reach *“our 100 prisons, where we currently have more than 55,000 prisoners”*. [5.6]

Impact on the Prisoners:

An independent evaluation report [5.7] of the Programme evidenced benefits at the individual level (e.g., inmates reduced drug use, reflect before acting, have become more resilient, and mentor and support others). At the intragroup level there was less conflict and more encouragement and collaboration among inmates. Prisoners in Naivasha adjusted and developed their own mindfulness materials, including translating key teaching resources from English into Kiswahili and finding ways to reach those who are not literate. A further ESRC-IAA evaluation report conducted in Naivasha 2017 [5.8], showed 84% of participants declared that were better able to manage their emotions; 84% of participants reported a reduced number of aggressive incidents with others; and 85% of participants had reduced the amount of drugs they were consuming compared with before their participation in the Programme. 90% of participants “can forgive themselves more” and 91% of participants “forgive others more” [5.8]. In addition, 86% of participants reported that the programme has also improved the relationship between participants and the Prison Officers and 64% of participants have improved communication with families [5.8]. Since the Programme in Navaisha started in 2015, there have been no suicide attempts.

Naivasha Officer in Charge says: *“The impact that Mindful Leadership is having in Naivasha is a force to be reckoned with. Most prisoners are now directing their energies towards positive activities like educational activities, and they have positive attitude(s) towards rehabilitation programmes within the prison.”* [5.2] For example, a BBC video article covering the Programme, featured a prisoner, serving a life sentence, who now leads mindfulness

sessions for other inmates, who has shown such a change that prison authorities believe he may qualify for parole soon. Not only has he become the Chairman of the Mindful Leader Programme, he has completed his Bachelor of Law from the University of Law in London through the African Prison Project [5.2].

Impacts on the wider community

Reported gains from the Programme ripple beyond the prison, benefiting prisoners' families and their home villages [5.3] as mindful leaders took their teachings home with them and shared with their families and community. One example of this is The Mindfulness Programme is now being delivered by a former Mindful Leader inmate in collaboration with a community-based organisation in Nairobi/Kisumu, working with schools, youth groups, women's groups, teachers and engaging children with mindfulness through storytelling. [5.9] Another example is a Welfare Officer who has founded a charity, Ladhayamtaa, using mindfulness to reintegrate inmates back into the community after they have left prison, and whose work has been commended by regional authorities. Ladhayamtaa is working alongside Open Minds a non-profit located in the USA, who state they *"have been bringing the work of Dr Adarves-Yorno into all teachings online and in person during the last year. Even with the challenges of COVID, mindfulness is one of the most needed practices during these unprecedented times"*. [5.3]

Thus all levels of the Kenyan Prison Service became part of the Programme which has been referred to as a "mindfulness revolution" [5.8]. In a BBC news video, a Welfare Officer states that *"Adarves-Yorno's Mindfulness Programme has impacted deeply into all of those who took part in it... the Programme has spread far within prisons and beyond. Its reach has gone beyond our wildest dreams"* [5.2]. The long-term sustainability of this project is ensured, as Adarves-Yorno worked with Nafisika Trust, a Kenyan charity working in prisons, who have now embedded it as part of their programmes [5.10]. Open Minds charity are taking over running the second phase of the Programme, as Open Minds Director, declares that *"2100 people have directly benefited from the programme and the indirect reach in the families and communities is much larger and continues to grow"* [5.3].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[5.1] Testimony from Social Welfare Officer, Naivasha Main Prison - Naivasha Prison is the largest maximum-security prison in Kenya. This letter testifies to the impact of this programme which trained welfare officers to become mindful trainers and trained inmates to become mindful leaders.

[5.2] BBC Coverage of Mindfulness Programme - Media coverage of the Programme in 2018 and 2019 which explains the positive impact this has had in prisons, including interviews from prison officers and inmates.

[5.3] Testimony from Open Minds, US-based Non-Profit – Letter testifying that Adarves-Yorno trained 18 prison governors and 25 welfare officers in Nairobi over a three year period. With a total of 2,100 prisoners across Kenya participating in the Mindful Leaders Programme to date.

[5.4] Testimony from Officer in Charge, Naivasha Main Prison - Letter testifying to the results of the programme, stating that "inmates have developed self-awareness, hence self-acceptance".

[5.5] Screenshot of WhatsApp message from Project Co-ordinator, Kitengala Prison - Correspondence testifying to the positive impact of the programme on prisoners, including many examples of success stories and stating that since Kitengala Prison was involved in the Mindfulness Programme no prisoner released within the last three years returned to prison.

[5.6] Testimony from Director Offender Correction and Rehabilitation Kenyan Prison Services - Letter explaining that the Director of Rehabilitation across Kenya would like the Programme to reach all 100 prisons and 55,000 prisoners.

[5.7] Report of the Mindful Leader evaluation visit to Naivasha Prison, Kenya, September 2016 - An independent evaluation report testifying to the benefits of the Programme to individuals, institutions and in wider society. The report states that *“those who have experienced the training and practise the techniques report transformative changes in their lives [...] with potential to increasingly influence wider society”*.

[5.8] Impact Evaluation Report Mindful Leader Programme Naivasha - An evaluation report focusing on the results of a survey of prisoners from Naivasha maximum security prison who have had mindfulness training. The report testifies to the positive impact the programme has had on prisoners, stating that following the training prisoners have reported they can lead their lives more mindfully and have found purpose and meaning to their lives.

[5.9] Mindfulness Outside of the Restricted wall, (in the community), Mindful Community Leader Nairobi – Testimony from a former inmate who is now delivering the Mindfulness Programme, working with schools, youth groups, women’s groups, teachers and engaging children with mindfulness through storytelling.

[5.10] Testimony from Executive Director, Nafisika Trust - Letter evidencing the long-term sustainability of the project, explaining that a Kenyan charity working in prisons have now embedded the programme as part of their own.