



Research Article

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A Narrative Systematic Review of the Mental Toughness Programme Offered by the National Youth Development Agency

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Abstract

The rapid increase of poverty, crime, and unemployment in South Africa results in youth vulnerability. Youth not in employment, not in education, and not in training are most vulnerable to life setbacks, find it difficult dealing with criticism, rejection, and failure. Thus, youth workers responsible for the coordination of youth service programme need to design an autonomy-supportive programme that can prepare youth mentally before youth are placed in a youth development programme that seeks to enhance youth employability. The National Youth Development Agency in South Africa under the National Youth Service Programme has developed a mental toughness programme curriculum that NYS volunteers undergo before participating in youth skill development programme or community service programme for a minimum of five days. The aim of the study is to explore the impact of the Mental Toughness Programme on the positive development of youth through youth lived experience in the Western Cape Province, South Africa. This study made use of a qualitative research approach, non-probability sampling to sample eight youth who participated in the Mental Toughness Programme offered by the National Youth Development Agency. In this study, we recommend that the National Youth Development Agency knowledge and research division should conduct a longitudinal study that can evaluate the impact of the Mental Toughness Programme on positive youth development in South Africa. The National Youth Development Agency should revise the mental toughness programme curriculum in a way that the programme goes beyond five days and physical toughness should be cooperated in the curriculum to enhance social cohesion.

Keywords: *Mental toughness programme, youth, National Youth Development Agency, volunteers*

1. Introduction

According to NYDA (2020), the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) is a South African youth development organisation that is tasked with the coordination of youth development

programme across the country. The NYDA came into existence after the merge of both the Umsobomvu Youth Fund and the National Youth Commission. In addition, the agency derives its mandate from the legislative frameworks, including the National Youth Development Agency Act, 2008 (Act 54 of 2008) (NYDA Act), the National Youth Policy (NYP) (2009 – 2014), and the draft Integrated Youth Development Strategy (IYDS). One of the mandates of the National Youth Development Agency is to promote social cohesion through the National Youth Service Programme. The National Youth Service Division within the agency has a mental toughness programme that youth undergo before going to the NYS theoretical training, practical site, and community service. The involvement of youth in the National Youth Service Programme in South Africa has proven to contribute to the character-building of the NYS volunteers (Chauke, Malatji & Obadire, 2021).

Cowden, Crust, Tibbert, and Jackman, (2020) define mental toughness programme as a process of engaging people to instill a work ethic and ability to adapt to a difficult situation and deal with criticism. Cowden et al., (2020) further indicated that the mental toughness programme has been valuable in sporting activities that increase the performance of the athletes. Mental Toughness Programme is an intervention that seeks to instill a sense of personal responsibility, build resilience, skills to adapt to any challenges that people face in life (Mahoney, Ntoumanis, Mallett & Gucciardi, 2014). For Daniel, Gucciardi, Gordon, James, and Dimmock (2009) Mental Toughness Programme is a psychological skills training that prepared a young person mentally in confronting everyday life challenges. Coulter, Mallett, and Singer, 2018; Gucciardi, 2017 pinned down the mental toughness programme as a life skills intervention that regulates human behaviour and emotional wellbeing.

The National Youth Development Agency in South Africa as a coordinator of the youth development programme under the National Youth Service Programme designed a Mental Toughness Programme curriculum. Youth volunteers after recruitment attend a mental toughness programme orientation. Moreover, the aim of the mental toughness programme orientation offered by the NYDA is to build a culture among NYS volunteers that seek to promote teamwork, integrity, leadership, personal responsibility, work ethic, and high expectation throughout the programme. Connaughton, Hanton, Jones, Wadey (2008) says that mental toughness plays important role in the success of athletes in sports. Sharp, Woodcock, Holland, Cumming, and Duda (2013) says that mental toughness programme influences high performance among youth elite rugby athletes.

A study on the impact of the mental toughness programme offered by the National Youth Development Agency in the Western Cape Province, South Africa has never been attempted before that we are aware of. For that reason, this study seeks to contribute to the body of knowledge in youth development research in South Africa by looking at the impact of the mental toughness programme on the positive development of youth in the Western Province, South Africa. This study is unique in the sense that it cultivates youth voices about the youth development intervention offered by the South African government.

The paper is divided into sections that provide an introduction, literature review theoretical framework, the method and materials, the research findings, and discussion. as well as the study recommendations that are based on the findings.

2. Literature Review

Gucciardi, Gordon, and Dimmock (2008) argue that mental toughness programme is important to the development of young athletes because it helps in developing a personal value and amplifies sports intelligence. Stamatidis, Grandjean, Morgan, Padgett, Cowden, and Koutakis (2020) argues that the mental toughness programme is an effective intervention for people who are in the sport. We beg to differ with this finding even youth who are not in sport can benefit from the mental toughness programme. The current study fills this gap by indicating the impact of the mental toughness programme on youth who are not in sport. Miçooğullari and Ekmekçi (2017) in their study that sampled 26 youth between the age of 18-33 years old who are soccer players show that the mental toughness programme contributed to human flourishing among youth who participated in their

study. Furthermore, young athletes who were involved in a mental toughness programme became greater than normal athletes and develop quintessential performance. Regardless of this enlightening result the methods used in this study were confusing the results were analyzed using statistical analysis while their study sample 26 participants. A quantitative study cannot sample 26 participants; therefore, the study intends to fill this gap by using a rigorous qualitative approach to understand the youth lived experience.

Golby and Wood, (2016) say that the mental toughness programme does not only enhance athletes' psychological skills but, mental toughness programme also contributes to the healthy lifestyle and wellbeing of the athletes. In addition, the mental toughness programme helps the participants to relate well with other people (Mahoney, Gucciardi, Ntoumanis & Mallet, 2014). Sheard (2012) had to say that mental toughness programme is a mindset exercise to the athletes' achievement in sport. In addition to that, the programme helps the athletes to develop a positive attitude towards sport. Clough and Strycharczyk, (2012) argue that the mental toughness programme helps people to have hope, believe in themselves, learn to control their emotions, and have courage to try new things in life. This work indicates the importance of the mental toughness programme in a young person's state of mind.

Cook, Crust, Littlewood, Nesti, and Allen- Collinson (2014) study that looks at the effects of mental toughness programme on young players from Premier League (EPL) Soccer Academy shed a light by stating that mental toughness programme helps youth to develop the urge to compete amongst themselves and compete with the opponent. Bell, Hardy, and Beattie (2013) mental toughness training help elite young cricketers to work under pressure and achieve their desire goal. Cowden (2017) stressed that mental toughness programme improve young tennis players' self-awareness and self-reflection. Harmison (2011) had to say that mental toughness training gives young athletes mental toughness that results in technical skills to perform well in the sport. Slack, Maynard, Butt, and Olusaga (2014) alluded that mental toughness education positively contributes to cognitive development and behavioural change among youth who are in the sport. Mattie and Munroe-Chandler (2012) agree with the work of Slack, Maynard, Butt, and Olusaga (2014) by showing that mental toughness programmes influence young person imagery use. Cowden, Clough, Oppong, and Asante (2017) youth who are exposed to mental toughness programmes are more likely to be forgiving and resist risk behaviour.

There is no doubt that mental toughness programme plays an important role in the academic performance of university students (Stamp, Crust, Swann, Perry, Clough & Marchant, 2015). Crust, Earle, Perry, Earle, Clough, and Clough (2014) argues that mental toughness programme can be useful in institutions of higher learning in assisting to identify students who are struggling academically and help in reducing students' dropout. Cooper, Wilson & Jones, (2019) argues that the mental toughness programme helps youth to work too hard toward the attainment of their goals. In addition to that thriving for one to achieve goals in life among youth was found to be embedded in the mental toughness programme.

Thern, Munter, Hemmingsson, and Rasmussen, 2017; Strandh, Winefield, Nilsson, and Hammastrom (2014) youth not in employment, not in education, and not in training are more likely to suffer from the mental illness. Zeng (2012) shows that unemployment contributes to lower mental toughness and led to self-isolation. By highlighting these problems, it is evident that before unemployed youth are recruited to any youth development intervention, they need to attend mental toughness programme first so they can develop a drive to succeed in life regardless of any social illness.

The gap identified in the literature review is that most of the studies conducted in a Mental Toughness Programme focus on sport and neglected the most marginalized youth group that are not in employment, not in employment, not in training. This neglected group does need Mental Toughness intervention so they can resist any wrongdoing as a result of having nothing to do in their community. In addition, the literature review used a quantitative research approach, an approach that hardly empowers youth to express themselves. More so, it failed to indicate which gender

benefited the most in this programme. Therefore, the current study seeks to add to a body of knowledge by adopting a qualitative research approach where youth not in employment, not in employment, not in training are allowed to express themselves in an open-ended interview by sharing their lived experience on how the mental toughness programme positively contributed to their development.

3. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to explore the impact of the mental toughness programme on the positive development of young people through youth lived experience in the Western Cape Province, South Africa.

Main question: This study was guided by this main question; to what extent, does the mental toughness programme contributes to the positive development of young people in the Western Cape province, South Africa.

4. Theoretical Framework

The mental toughness programme offered by the National Youth Development seeks to empower NEET youth so they can be the agent of change to their respective community. Against this backdrop in this study, we have decided to employed theory of change. We used the theory of change to explain what young people who participated in the mental toughness programme can do to bring change to their communities. Theory of change is known as a theory that is more concerned with the end results rather than the causes of a certain action (Green, 2013) looking at this explanation tells us that a youth project should produce a positive outcome that will bring change to the community.

In the context of this study, the theory of change helps youth who participated in the mental toughness programme to understand the change that they want to make to their community. Thus, take a proper step to realize this change. More so, the theory of change is essential in youth development because it helps youth to identify societal needs and design mechanisms in addressing society's needs. Against this backdrop, young people after participating in the mental toughness programme can make use of the theory of change and go back to their communities, identify challenges that need to be solved. For example, young people can realize to there is a problem of illiteracy in their community. Therefore, the use of the theory of change can help them to design adopt a school project where a young person as a volunteer can assist children to read for meaning.

Mental toughness programme challenge youth to think differently and be the agent of change. Against this backdrop, youth can make use of the theory of change to discover their full potential, change their want to bring not only to their respective communities but, to their entire world. In addition, by doing so a young person will first discover the role he or she should play in his or her country.

Theory of change helps in developing a conceptual pathway, at this stage young persons after identifying a societal need should think of who the relevant stakeholders are to be invited in achieving this short- and long-term vision. This is a critical element of a positive outcome for youth projects because youth understand the importance of teamwork and bring relevant stakeholders to assist them in solving societal issues. James (2011) says that the theory of change helps in bringing common understanding among different role players to what the design programme aims to achieve. In the context of this study, youth as important role players or stakeholders in youth development intervention will understand what the mental toughness programme aims to achieve. In addition, using the theory of change youth as the beneficiaries of the mental toughness programme will understand their personal responsibilities in nation-building and promoting social cohesion.

5. Research Approach

This study employed a qualitative approach, according to Rahman (2017), the qualitative approach is a method of inquiry that collects data in a natural setting in a non-numerical way. Denzil and Lincon (2011) denote that qualitative approach focus it on understanding social phenomenon through the personal feelings, emotional, lived experience of the participants. We choose the qualitative approach in this study because we seek to understand the impact of the mental toughness programme offered by the National Youth Development Agency in South Africa through the personal views of young people who directed participated in this programme. A qualitative approach is essential in social science because it helps researchers to build rapport and interact with the participants in the face to face setting (Chauke, & Malatji, 2018; Chauke, Malatji, & Mudau, 2019a; Chauke, & Mudau, 2019b; Chauke & Mudau, 2019c). This approach helped us to get depth understanding of the investigated phenomenon through the participant's point of view. The quality of the subject or data collected is at the center of the qualitative approach (Aspers & Corte, 2019).

6. Study Setting

This study was conducted in the Western Cape province, the fourth largest province in South Africa. According to WESGRO (2014), Western Cape province is a vast urban setting province composed of different ethnic groups namely (50.2%), Black (30.1%), White (18.4%), Indian/Asian (1.3%). The most spoken language is Afrikaans (55.3%), IsiXhosa (23.7%), and English (19.3%). Mainline Christian (41.6%), Pentecostal Christian (7.6%), African Independent Churches (20.4%), Islam (6.5%). Western Cape province like the Northern Cape is two provinces that are predominately colored in South Africa. Many African youths migrate from the better part of the Eastern Cape to the Western Cape for a better life. Western Cape province is still considered as the top source of tourist arrival. People across the globe in holidays come to the Western Cape to spend time with their families.

7. Population and Sampling

Majid (2018) population is demographic characteristics of an individual based on gender, age, and demography who are selected to participate in the study. In the context of this study population were group of young people from the Western Cape coming from six districts namely Cape; City of Cape Town Metropolitan, Cape Winelands District, Central Karoo District, Eden District, Overberg District, and West Coast District. Eight young people between the age of 18-35 were selected to participate in this study. This study employed purposive sampling as a type of non-probability sampling to sample the study participants. Kabir (2016) opines that purposive sampling is a set of sampling that is used by the researcher to sample participants who share the same knowledge about what the study seeks to achieve. In addition, the researchers rely on his or her judgment when it comes to the selection of the participants making sure that these participants share the same characterized, same knowledge about the investigated study topic. The participants were purposively selected based on the following criteria.

- Be a young person between the age of 18-35 years old and residing in the Western Cape Province.
- Be a young person who is part of the National Youth Service Programme (TYPP) and attended the Mental Toughness Programme offered by the National Youth Development Agency.
- Be a young South African.

Sampling these young people was not a difficult process because one of the researchers works with these participants.

This study was comprised of youth from different races, gender, and age residing in the Western Cape province. The table below illustrates the participant's background.

Table 1: Demographics of the participants

	No.	Percentage
Marital Status		
Single	08	100%
Educational level		
Secondary high school	07	87.5%
Tertiary level	01	12.5%
Age		
18-30	06	75%
30-25	02	25%
Race		
Coloured	05	62.5%
African	03	37.5%
Home language		
Afrikaans	05	62.5%
IsiXhosa	03	37.5%

From the table, 62.5 % (5) of the participants were colored, Afrikaans speaking youth while 37.5% (3) were African, Xhosa speaking youth. All participants 100% (8) were single. 75% (6) were between the age of 18-30 years old while 25% (2) were between the age of 30-25 years old. In terms of Educational level, 87.5% (7) had secondary education. Only 12.5(1) of the participants had a Tertiary level.

8. Research Design

This study employed a phenomenological research design, the phenomenological research design is a research design where the researcher gets involved in the everyday lives of the participants to understand social issues through the participant's lived experience (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delpont, 2011). In this study one of the researchers work directly with young people who form part of the Mental Toughness Programme, therefore, this allowed him to get to know the participants lived experiences. In addition, through one of the participant's direct interactions with the participants the lived experience of the participants was explored to achieve the study objective.

9. Data Collection

Semi-structured interview in open-ended questionnaires was used to conduct data. Dudovskiy (2018) semi-structured interview is interviews types in a qualitative research approach where the researcher does not strictly follow the draft questionnaire when interacting with the participants. We choose a semi-structured interview in this study because of its ability in building a rapport between the researcher and the participants. This interview instrument was helpful in this study because it provided the researchers with the opportunity of having a great conversation with the participants. The individual interview was followed in this study. A semi-structured interview was deemed ideal in this study because the researchers were able to make follow-up questions and provide clarity to the participants where the participants didn't understand the asked questions. Data were collected in the context of the global pandemic therefore, we had to adapt to a new reality and change how we conduct semi-structured interviews. What we did in this study is to make sure that everyone is protected against covid-19. We then sent interviews questionnaire to some participants to complete

on their own via WhatsApp's, some of the participants used WhatsApp's audio to send their answers. The second method we used was to have a telephonic interview with the participants which was very costly but, it helped the study to achieve its objective.

10. Data Analysis

This study employed thematic analysis to analyse data collected, thematic analysis steps were followed in this study. The first step researchers go through the sent audio via WhatsApp, complete questions, and record a clip that was recorded in a telephonic interview. The purpose of this was to make sure that the researchers familiarise themselves with the data collected. Researchers also called some of the participants to get some clarity especially those who submitted their questionnaires via WhatsApp. Then we started to generate some code that we considered as important in data collection. In addition, we paid attention to the generated code and identify the themes. Thereafter, we spent time reviewing themes just to find out if these themes will help us to achieve the study's desired results. More so after identifying themes that had the similarities with the review literature and we name them. Lastly, we wrote a report based on the data collected in a semi-structured interview.

11. Ethical Consideration

Ethical consideration is important in a research process, Žukauskas, Vveinhardt, and Andriukaitienė, (2018) stated that ethical consideration gives people a free choice to participate in the study or not. The researcher paid attention to the ethical consideration. The researchers firstly practice informed consent by informing the participants of what this study is all about, what it seeks to achieve, then participants were told to their can withdraw whenever they feeling like doing so because participation in this study is purely voluntary. Confidentiality and privacy are practices in this study. The real identity of the participants is protected in this study. The information shared by the participants will remain confidential.

12. Findings

12.1 *Developed a sense of civic responsibility*

The mental toughness programme had played a major role in developing the participants' sense of civic responsibility. The majority of the participants claimed that after participating in the mental toughness programme began to develop a mentality of serving humankind and positively contributes to the development of their communities. One of the participants claimed that her passion for improving other people's lives was further increase after she participated in the mental toughness programme offered by the National Youth Development Agency. In addition, this passion saw her establishing a adopt school project, where the participants assist school-going age children with arts and how to read for meaning. Most participants indicated that were not that much interested in politics or any community engagement that happens to their respective communities. However, after being exposed to the mental toughness programme began to develop a mentality of participating in community engagements not only for the sake of participation but, to make inputs that can contribute to the development of their communities.

Before attending the mental toughness programme, the participants claimed that were not aware of their civil responsibility, they were concern about receiving a monthly stipend that could help them to sustain their livelihood. However, the participants stressed that the mental toughness programme helped them to have a strong desire of changing not only their lives but the lives of the vulnerable group i.e., children, elders, and disabled group.

“The mental toughness programme helped me to develop ideas that I can use to help those who are around me in time of need”

Reflecting on the above quotation it is clear that the participant claim that the mental toughness programme has played a significant role in helping the participant to develop some good ideas that can not only help the participant as the beneficiary of the mental toughness programme but, to help even those who are in need.

“Living in this world of ours isn’t a child play. It needs bravery, carriage, and mental strength to survive, so everything has a responsibility that should be taken care of. Having Ubuntu start from self-love, respect, being someone who is always there for others in a good way to carriage them and share love and this was the lesson learned from the mental toughness programme”

Considering the statement above one of the participants claimed that regardless of the tough challenges that youth face those not in education, not in employment, and not in training the mental toughness programme builds a young person's courage and having responsibility. More so, the responsibility also involves helping, taking care of people who cannot take care of themselves.

12.2 Multicultural competence

Majority of the participants highlighted that mental toughness programme helped them to develop a teamwork skill and their can now work with a diverse group of people with the common objective in mind of making South Africa a great country. Some participants attributed their ability to understand other people's culture because of the mental toughness programme offered by the National Youth Development Agency.

“I have learned to work with other people of other races because the mental toughness programme taught me the importance of Ubuntu and the importance of teamwork to foster a rainbow nation”

“Mental toughness programme helped me to value other people culture and the national symbol that all of us as a country should embrace and protect”

Some of the participants in this study claimed that the mental toughness programme has helped them to understand and values other people's cultures. More importantly to learn about the meaning, the importance of the national symbols that all South African regardless of their race, gender, and location should value. Since the mental toughness programme was composed of youth from different backgrounds. Some of the participants claimed that this programme helped them to develop a positive bond with people from different backgrounds through a different group discussion that the participants attended.

“Mental toughness programme helped me to learn about the coast of arms of the different provinces and understand the importance of symbols and how all of us should respect symbols because it has a meaning to other people culture”

In the mental toughness programme, the participants were taken through the different coast of arms of all South African provinces. The participants claimed that this exercise in the mental toughness programme helped them to understand the meaning of the emblem contain in the coast of arms and understand the certain symbols and to these symbols mean a lot to other cultures. Therefore, symbols should also be respected.

12.3 Mental flexibility

Given that some of the participants were not in any sort of employment, education, and training

before joining the NYDA/Department of Arts, Sport and Culture some had lower self-esteem before joining the mental toughness programme. This saw some of the participants having little understanding of building social networking. However, the participants in this current study claimed that the mental toughness programme helped them develop a flexible mindset, can collaborate with others, and learn from others. One of the participants further claimed that because of the mental toughness programme offered by the National Youth Development Agency the participant has developed a skill on solving any conflict that one may face in life. Furthermore, the participant claimed that the mental toughness programme helped in changing her thinking capacity about life. In addition to that believing that people around one of the participants can be afraid of her reasoning skills, skills of turning life challenges into a lesson to succeed in life. One of the participants had to say the following.

“Mental toughness made me realize that am an individual that is full of ideas and I can make individual around me feel the pressure of my effort”

Looking at the above response one could say that the mental toughness programme helped the one of the participants to have confidence and believe in her selves that her ideas can shape the world and put pressure on people around them in the society.

“I think now because of the mental toughness programme I can be able to face life change and overcome them”

Reflecting on the above statement it indicates that some of the participants claimed that the mental toughness programme played a vital role in helping the participants to develop a positive mind about life and believing that the participants can overcome life challenges. Regardless of so many challenges that South African youth are confronted with it essentially for them to develop a positive mindset that can help them in adopting to changes when it arises.

Almost all the participants in this study claimed that the mental toughness programme offered by the National Youth Development Agency has helped them to develop positive self-worth and self-efficacy. For that reason, the participants further claimed that they can be innovative and creative in their everyday lives.

13. Discussion

The purpose of the study was to explore the impact of the mental toughness programme on the positive development of young people through youth lived experience in the Western Cape Province, South Africa. Overall, the mental toughness programme offered by the National Youth Development Agency to NEET youth contributes to the positive development of youth in areas such as developing a sense of civic responsibility, multicultural competence, mental flexibility. Zalewska, Krzywosz-Rynkiewicz, Clough, and Dagnall (2019) had to say that the mental toughness programme is great in mobilizing youth to take action in their communities Furthermore, young people who participated in this study because of the mental toughness programme develop sympathy and empathy for others embedded in the civil responsibility. In addition, the study further revealed that young people learned how to get involved in a community development initiative and help people who are in need. Similar to the study conducted in the mental toughness programme, mental toughness programme training can foster a sense of responsibility among youth (Mahoney, Ntoumanis, Mallett & Gucciardi, 2014). The finding reflects that because of the mental toughness programme young people have started to understand that the most important thing about life is not a personal achievement but, serving humankind and helping others. The study further revealed that the mental toughness programme has helped youth to care about the vulnerable groups and begin to have a desire to initiate community projects that address socio-economic challenges faced by the vulnerable group in

the community. Boyd and Bee (2012) similar to the current study empathized youth who participated in the mental toughness programme were able to develop a strong bond with vulnerable groups and offer a helping hand. In this study, it was found that the mental toughness programme helped youth to develop courage rather than carriage of taking responsibility in life and address community issues. Multicultural competence among young people is an essential skill needed in the 21st century to interact with others. In this study, it was transpired that the mental toughness programme facilitated by the South African government youth agency helped youth to understand the importance of nation-building. In addition to that young people could interact and learn from people of different gender, race, and background. Gucciardi, Gordon, and Dimmock (2008) mental toughness programme has an influence on a young person's value that contributes to promoting social cohesion and embrace everyone. The study findings further reflect that young people benefited in this programme by learning the South African coast of arms and what it means, how South African province takes pride in their emblems. It was also found in this study that the mental toughness programme has helped young people to develop a flexible positive mindset. This finding relates with the work of Zalewska, Krzywosz-Rynkiewicz, Clough, and Dagnall (2019) that shows that mental toughness programmes helps youth to not give up easy in life, to try again after failing. In addition to that youth have developed higher self-esteem which saw young people embracing the spirit of teamwork and work with people from a diverse group without being judgemental. The study further revealed that the mental toughness programme has challenge young people to believe in themselves, be willing to take risks in life, solve any conflict that life may put before them. Body and Bee (2012) show that mental toughness programme helps in developing youth confidence. Importantly youth develop self-confidence that can make people around them feel threatened by their positive attitude towards life. A study conducted by Cooper, Wilson, and Jones (2019) shows that the mental toughness programme helps in building youth confidence that makes youth to work hard towards their goals.

To our knowledge, this was the first study that explored the impact of the mental toughness programme offered by the National Youth Development Agency on youth who were considered as NEET youth before the agency recruit them to the National Youth Service Programme. The study findings are unique compare to the previous study because the previous study conducted in the mental toughness programme impacts on youth development focused on youth who are in the sport. Therefore, our study shows that even youth who are not in sports benefit from the mental toughness programme. Importantly this study has involved former NEET youth who had lost hope, this programme gave them hope. The study was only conducted in the Western Cape province, sampled few participants. Therefore, the study finding cannot be generalised to the entire youth population in other provinces who participated in the mental toughness programme offered by the National Youth Development Agency. This study provides important insight into the area of youth development that is positively impacted by the mental toughness programme. Due to covid-19, lack of internet connection to some other youth who participated in this study, the resistance of some of the participants to participate for free make it hard to reach the participants again. Transcripts were not returned to the participants for comments.

14. Conclusion and Recommendations

While many studies conducted in the mental toughness programme focused on youth sports work, this study has focused on the mental toughness programme offered to NEET youth. It was found in this study that the mental toughness programme has a positive impact on the development of NEET youth who was recruited as a volunteer to programme initiated by the NYDA South African government youth agency and the Department of Cultural Affairs. Thus, youth because of the mental toughness programme offered by the National Youth Development Agency has developed a sense of civic responsibility which plays important role in nation-building and youth patriotism. The findings of this study have important implications for positive youth development in South Africa. Attempts

should be made to register all youth who participants in the mental toughness programme and trace them after exiting the programme and check if some find employment or some have started, they own businesses, or some venture to social entrepreneurship. In this study, we recommend that the National Youth Development Agency knowledge and research division should conduct a longitudinal study that can evaluate the impact of the mental toughness programme on positive youth development in South Africa. The National Youth Development Agency should revise the mental toughness programme curriculum in a way that the programme goes beyond five days and physical toughness should be cooperated in the curriculum to enhance social cohesion. Western Cape province unlike other provinces in South Africa is a province with diverse groups of different races. Against, this backdrop programme that can foster culturally sensitive or multicultural competence among NEET youth should be designed and be financially supported by the government. In addition, such programme will help in addressing the injustice of the past that still today fuels racial segregation in the Western Cape, South Africa.

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