

Participant reflections on the acceptability and perceived impact of a six-week equanimity-based compassionate action (EBCA) course: a thematic analysis

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to evaluate the equanimity based compassionate action (EBCA) course, a six-week intervention designed to support the development of equanimity as a foundation for compassionate action. The study explores how equanimity training may contribute to mental health and social inclusion by supporting emotional regulation, relational awareness, and prosocial engagement.

Design/methodology/approach – A mixed methods evaluation was conducted with 30 participants from Brazil, Italy, the USA, and the UK. The EBCA course was delivered to over 100 participants between 2022 and 2025 across these countries. Participants self-enrolled and paid a fee to attend. Participation in the post course evaluation was voluntary and not linked to course completion or any financial incentive. Quantitative data were collected through post course satisfaction ratings and qualitative data through open ended reflective questions administered via Google Forms. Descriptive statistics and reflexive thematic analysis were used to examine participant experiences and perceived impacts.

Findings – Quantitative findings indicated high levels of satisfaction across learning relevance and delivery. Qualitative analysis identified themes relating to enhanced emotional regulation, increased tolerance of neutral and challenging experiences, deeper integration of mindfulness, and greater capacity for compassionate engagement in personal, professional, and social contexts. Participants described equanimity as supporting both personal well-being and more inclusive relational responses particularly under stress or interpersonal challenge.

Research limitations/implications – Findings suggest that equanimity-based training may complement existing mindfulness approaches by explicitly supporting relational functioning and compassionate action. The course shows potential relevance for settings associated with emotional labour, exclusion and inequality, including education healthcare leadership and community contexts.

Practical implications – Findings indicate that equanimity based training can be practically integrated into mental health well-being and inclusion initiatives to support emotional regulation compassionate engagement and relational stability. The EBCA course may complement existing mindfulness programs by explicitly addressing barriers to compassionate action and interpersonal reactivity. Practitioners, educators and organisations may apply equanimity training within education, healthcare, leadership and community settings where emotional labour and inclusion challenges are prominent. Structured equanimity practice may support psychologically safer environments enhance ethical decision making and strengthen participation and belonging. These findings suggest value for training programs seeking sustainable well-being and inclusive relational cultures.

Social implications – These implications are particularly relevant for education, healthcare, leadership and community settings, where stress, inequality, emotional labour and exclusion are common, and where well-being, belonging and ethical participation are central global social priorities.

Originality/value – This study contributes to emerging literature on equanimity as a distinct construct with relevance to mental health and social inclusion. By evaluating an applied equanimity-based

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intervention the paper extends understanding of how contemplative practices may support inclusive and emotionally sustainable social participation.

Keywords *Mindfulness, Equanimity, Compassion, Contemplative pedagogy, Well-being, Qualitative evaluation, Mental health, Social inclusion*

Paper type *Research paper*

Introduction

Social inclusion is a multidimensional construct commonly defined as the extent to which individuals have opportunities, resources, voice, and recognition to participate meaningfully in social, community and organisational life (United Nations, 2016a, 2016b). In mental health research, inclusion is often operationalised through domains such as social participation, belonging, relational reciprocity, reduced stigma, and access to supportive networks. Conversely, social exclusion refers not only to material disadvantage, but also to relational marginalisation, diminished agency and subtle processes of “othering” that restrict participation in shared spaces. Importantly, inclusion is not solely an internal psychological state but a relational and structural process enacted through everyday interactions, norms, and institutional practices.

Within organisational and community contexts, inclusion has been conceptualised as the degree to which individuals experience belonging while also being valued for uniqueness (Shore *et al.*, 2011). This dual emphasis highlights that inclusion is sustained through relational behaviours such as perspective taking, equitable decision making, responsiveness to difference and reduced bias in everyday interactions. From this perspective, capacities associated with emotional regulation, reduced defensiveness and sustained other-oriented attention may contribute to inclusive climates by shaping how individuals respond to discomfort, disagreement or diversity.

In the present study, social inclusion is operationalised at the interpersonal and experiential level rather than the structural level. Specifically, the qualitative data allow examination of participants’ reported shifts in (1) relational awareness, (2) responsiveness to others’ needs, (3) tolerance of difference or discomfort in interaction and (4) perceived compassionate or prosocial orientation. The data set does not permit claims regarding structural inclusion, institutional equity or measurable participation outcomes. Accordingly, conclusions are limited to participants’ reflections on perceived relational and behavioural changes following course participation.

Positioning equanimity within inclusion scholarship requires careful distinction between internal regulation and systemic change. While structural inequities require policy and institutional reform, psychological processes such as threat reactivity and avoidance of discomfort shape how inclusion is enacted interpersonally. Equanimity, defined as reduced reactive attachment and aversion in relation to pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral experience, has been theorised as supporting emotional stability and sustained perspective taking in diverse settings (Desbordes *et al.*, 2015; Weber, 2017). The present study evaluates participants’ perceptions of relational impact rather than institutional transformation.

Mindfulness research has increasingly emphasised not only individual well-being, but also its relevance to social connection, belonging, and prosocial behaviour. Social mindfulness, attentiveness to others’ needs and perspectives, has been associated with cooperative and prosocial outcomes across cultures (Van Doesum *et al.*, 2021). However, while mindfulness is widely adopted for stress reduction and present-moment awareness, there is growing recognition that awareness alone may not consistently translate into compassionate engagement in socially complex contexts, particularly where inequality, discrimination or power differences shape lived experience (Weber, 2017).

Equanimity has been described as a complementary quality that may support the translation of mindful awareness into more stable ethical and compassionate responsiveness (Desbordes *et al.*, 2015; Weber, 2017). It has been conceptualised as involving balanced responsiveness

to pleasant, unpleasant and neutral stimuli (Grabovac *et al.*, 2011). From a mental health perspective, such qualities are theoretically relevant to emotional regulation and resilience. From a social inclusion perspective, reduced reactive attachment and aversion may influence how individuals engage with difference, discomfort and interpersonal complexity.

Conceptually, secular equanimity has been described as encompassing both internal and relational dimensions (Weber, 2017). Internally, it reflects reduced emotional volatility and greater attentional steadiness. Externally, it has been framed as manifesting in relational behaviour and decision making that are less driven by attachment or aversion (Desbordes *et al.*, 2015). These relational dimensions are theoretically relevant to inclusive practice insofar as they may shape responses to uncertainty, disagreement or perceived difference. However, such links remain conceptual rather than empirically demonstrated within the present study.

Some research has explored psychometric and neuroscientific correlates of equanimity, including the development of the Equanimity Scale-16 (Rogers *et al.*, 2021) and the Two-Factor Equanimity Scale (Juneau *et al.*, 2020), alongside neurocognitive investigations of equanimity-related processes (Desbordes *et al.*, 2015; Lord *et al.*, 2025). While these studies provide broader context for understanding how equanimity has been operationalised and examined, the current evaluation did not measure neural or physiological mechanisms. Accordingly, any reference to such mechanisms serves as theoretical background rather than evidence derived from this data set.

The equanimity based compassionate action (EBCA) course was developed in response to literature suggesting that mindful awareness alone may not consistently translate into prosocial or compassionate action, particularly where psychological or contextual barriers are present (Weber and Lowe, 2021). The course integrates equanimity training with explicit relational and prosocial exercises designed to encourage reflection on barriers to compassionate engagement. A preliminary university-based pilot (Weber, 2021) informed subsequent course refinement.

The present paper situates the course within this broader body of work and presents a mixed-methods evaluation of a six-week online programme delivered to over 100 participants across Brazil, Italy, the USA and the UK between 2022 and 2025. The study examines quantitative indicators alongside qualitative reflections to explore participants' perceptions of equanimity development and its relevance to well-being and relational engagement across diverse cultural and organisational contexts. Claims are limited to reported experience and perceived impact rather than demonstrated behavioural or structural outcomes.

Methodology

Course design

The EBCA six-week course was developed to support participants in cultivating equanimity as a distinct skill, building on the conceptual framework outlined in Weber (2017) and the Equanimity Barriers Scale (Weber and Lowe, 2021; Weber and Carson, 2025). The course integrated theoretical insights, practical exercises, and reflective practices, with the aim of translating mindfulness awareness into applied compassionate action.

The curriculum used a parallel learning pedagogy, combining structured teaching, reflection and guided meditations. Each weekly session focused on different aspects of equanimity and addressing specific barriers to equanimity, informed by the Equanimity Barriers Scale and included guided meditations designed to consolidate learning. Participants were provided with supplementary resources, including suggested home practices, reflective exercises referred to as "Head and Heart Homework," which included reflective exercises and guided meditations to support ongoing engagement between

sessions. The course structure was designed to balance cognitive understanding with experiential practice, enabling participants to apply equanimity skills in both personal and interpersonal contexts.

Participants and setting

The course was delivered to a diverse cohort of over 100 participants, including professionals, students and individuals with an established mindfulness practice. Participation in the course was voluntary, and all participants provided informed consent to complete the post-intervention evaluation. A total of 30 participants submitted completed evaluation forms, providing both quantitative and qualitative data for analysis.

Ethics statement

The reflections analysed in this study were collected as part of an educational programme evaluation rather than a prospectively designed research study; therefore, formal institutional ethical approval was not required under institutional guidelines. Participants were informed that their anonymised responses could be used for research and publication purposes and provided explicit opt-in consent prior to submission.

Evaluation design

A mixed-methods approach was adopted to assess participant experiences, perceived impact and the potential future applicability of equanimity-focused practice. Evaluation data were collected via a post-intervention Google Form distributed to participants at the conclusion of the six-week course.

Quantitative items used Likert-style scales to assess participant responses across dimensions such as course content, delivery, and perceived benefit, with ratings ranging from Poor to Excellent. These measures provided an overall assessment of participant satisfaction and perceived learning outcomes.

Qualitative questions were included to allow for in-depth thematic exploration, focusing on areas such as course experiences, personal impact, perceived benefits, and potential applications of equanimity in participants' personal and professional lives. Open-ended prompts encouraged participants to reflect on their experiences with specific course components, including guided meditations, and reflective homework practices.

Data analysis

Quantitative responses were analysed descriptively to identify overall trends in satisfaction and perceived learning outcomes. Qualitative responses were subjected to thematic analysis following [Braun and Clarke's \(2019\)](#) six-stage framework, including familiarisation with the data set, generation of initial codes, theme development, review, definition and synthesis. Codes were cross-referenced to identify recurring patterns and distinct insights, providing a nuanced understanding of the impact of the EBCA course on participants' understanding and application of equanimity. This mixed-methods approach enabled a comprehensive evaluation of the course, capturing both measurable outcomes and rich experiential data, thereby supporting an evidence-based assessment of the EBCA program's effectiveness in cultivating equanimity and fostering compassionate action.

Data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis as outlined by [Braun and Clarke \(2019\)](#). This approach was selected because it supports interpretive analysis and acknowledges the active role of the researcher in theme development.

The author designed and delivered the EBCA course, distributed the reflection forms and conducted the analysis. As both insider and interpreter, the analytic process was

undertaken with explicit reflexive awareness of how prior knowledge of the course and participants may have shaped interpretation.

All responses were read multiple times for familiarisation. Initial codes were generated inductively across the data set, focusing on participants' accounts of acceptability and perceived impact. Codes were then grouped into candidate themes, which were iteratively reviewed against the full data set to ensure coherence and distinctiveness. Theme names and definitions were refined through repeated engagement with the data. Analytic decisions, coding revisions and theme development were documented throughout to provide an audit trail. Particular attention was given to responses that did not fit emerging patterns; these were used to refine theme boundaries and ensure the analysis reflected both convergence and divergence in participant experience. To enhance analytic rigour given the dual role of course facilitator and analyst, generative AI tools were used to interrogate theme structure, identify potential blind spots and test coherence between codes and themes. Final interpretive decisions remained the responsibility of the author.

Results

Quantitative data

Participants rated the course highly on all three evaluation domains. Means for course learning and participation ($M=4.67$, $SD=0.48$), relevance and usefulness of materials ($M=4.83$, $SD=0.46$) and course delivery ($M=4.69$, $SD=0.47$) indicated consistently positive perceptions (see Table 1). Most ratings clustered at the top of the scale, with the majority of participants giving (excellent) across items (see Table 2) with very high satisfaction and no reported rating of dissatisfaction (Table 3). There were balanced time preferences reported across the course with the majority of participants reporting “just right amount of time” across activities (see Table 4).

Overall training satisfaction was high, with 80% of participants reporting they were “Very Satisfied.” Time-allocation preferences were largely positive: the majority rated explanations and guided meditation as “just right” (77% and 80%, respectively). Large group discussions and small breakout rooms showed more variability, with many participants indicating they would have liked somewhat more time. Only a small minority of participants indicated less time than allotted. These results suggest the course met participant

Table 1 Descriptive statistics for course evaluation items

| Variable | <i>n</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>Min.</i> | <i>Max.</i> |
|-----------------------------------|----------|----------|-----------|-------------|-------------|
| Course learning and participation | 30 | 4.67 | 0.48 | 4 | 5 |
| Relevance and usefulness | 30 | 4.83 | 0.46 | 3 | 5 |
| Course delivery | 29 | 4.69 | 0.47 | 4 | 5 |

Note(s): Ratings on a 0 (poor) to 5 (excellent) scale

Table 2 Frequency of course evaluation ratings

| Rating | Learning and participation | Relevance and usefulness | Course delivery |
|-------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| 5 Excellent | 21 (70%) | 25 (83%) | 20 (69%) |
| 4 | 9 (30%) | 4 (13%) | 9 (31%) |
| 3 | 0 | 1 (3%) | 0 |
| 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 0 Poor | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Source(s): Authors' own work

Table 3 Training satisfaction

| Category | n | % |
|----------------|----|----|
| Very satisfied | 24 | 80 |
| Satisfied | 6 | 20 |

Source(s): Authors' own work

Table 4 Time preference by activity

| Activity | Just right (n/%) | Somewhat more (n/%) | Somewhat less (n/%) | Much more (n/%) | Less (n/%) | Total n |
|------------------------|------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------|------------|---------|
| Explanations | 23/77 | 3/10 | 4/13 | 0/0 | 0/0 | 30 |
| Large group discussion | 17/57 | 10/33 | 0/0 | 1/3 | 1/3 | 30 |
| Small breakout rooms | 12/40 | 12/40 | 4/13 | 1/3 | 0/0 | 30 |
| Guided meditation | 24/80 | 2/7 | 1/3 | 2/7 | 0/0 | 30 |

Source(s): Authors' own work

expectations while highlighting areas where minor adjustments to session timing could further enhance engagement.

Qualitative results

Thematic analysis of 30 participant reflections identified five interrelated themes describing how individuals experienced the EBCA course and how they perceived equanimity to relate to well-being, relational functioning and participation across personal and professional contexts. The findings reflect participants' reported experiences and interpretations rather than objective behavioural change.

1. Understanding and application of equanimity

Participants described movement from conceptual understanding to perceived practical application. Equanimity was framed not simply as an abstract idea but as a skill participants felt able to apply in emotional and interpersonal situations.

One participant noted: "Making equanimity practical and real was the highlight of this course for me. Applying my mindfulness skills to the practice of compassionate equanimity has helped me crack through multiple areas in my life." This shift towards applied practice was frequently linked to increased awareness of judgement and discernment. "Noticing the judgment was the beginning. Moving into discernment is where my personal wisdom comes in."

Participants also described equanimity as facilitating a transition from intrapersonal awareness to interpersonal engagement, "It seems to me that EBCA is the next logical extension to mindfulness practices, and helps to bring the practice from the predominantly personal domain to the interpersonal domain"

A prominent feature of this theme was the recognition of neutral experiences as psychologically and socially significant. Several participants described this as a novel and impactful insight:

"Another big epiphany for me was the idea of having equanimity for neutral experiences. Without equanimity towards these, we are just spending our life in a waiting room, waiting for the next pleasant experience."

"That if would only learn to appreciate being in neutral, 80-90% of my life would become more pleasant and stress free. That I, myself, am turning neutral to negative by trying to discard it, zone out, change it all the time."

“I look at bringing attention to ‘neutral’ in a different way.”

Participants interpreted this shift as relevant to reduced dissatisfaction and greater steadiness in everyday experience. Some linked this to relational engagement, suggesting that greater tolerance of neutrality and ambiguity might influence how they respond to interpersonal complexity. These interpretations reflect participants’ perceptions rather than measured behavioural change.

2. Integration with mindfulness practice

A recurrent theme concerned the relationship between equanimity and mindfulness. Participants consistently framed equanimity as a deepening or completion of existing mindfulness practice rather than a replacement. Several reflections indicated that equanimity clarified distinctions between awareness and emotional balance:

“It seems to me that EBCA is the next logical extension to mindfulness practices, and helps to bring the practice from the predominantly personal domain to the interpersonal domain.”

“This has to be the final part of the mindfulness jigsaw.”

“I have a better understanding of what equanimity is. This lets me embody it more, and I can act more in a non-judgmental way.”

Participants with experience of mindfulness-based stress reduction highlighted perceived complementarity. “It fits in right after MBSR. It takes mindfulness to the next level.”

Participants reported that equanimity helped them sustain non-judgemental attitudes during relational strain. These accounts suggest that participants perceived equanimity as strengthening the application of mindfulness in interpersonal contexts. The data reflect subjective appraisal of integration rather than comparative evaluation of approaches.

3. Personal transformation and well-being

Participants described significant perceived changes in emotional regulation resilience and overall well-being. Several reflections indicated that equanimity altered long standing patterns even among those with extensive contemplative experience:

“I have been studying, practicing, and teaching Buddhism for many decades, but this course gave me an understanding and appreciation of equanimity that I had never had before. I realized that I had not valued the power of equanimity to support the qualities of loving-kindness and compassion, even though I had known this intellectually for years. There was a way that [...] led us through an experiential process, and also skilfully explained the barriers to equanimity that made this relationship clear to me in a brand new way, for which I am so grateful.”

Others emphasised shifts in coping and outlook:

“It can be life changing and empowering. Learning and balancing one’s journey.”

“Huge impact. I hit the ground running the day after I got home but with a completely different and peaceful sense of mind.”

“After many years of mindfulness meditation practice, I really felt it was beginning to make a tangible difference. However, in a matter of days this course has completely transformed my outlook!! This course has given me access to a much more powerful and skilful way to navigate myself through the challenges of everyday life in a way that I could not otherwise have, just through my mindfulness practice alone”.

Participants also described increased capacity to pause rather than react:

“Taking a second before I react, then visiting the path to equanimity and applying them to any given situation.”

These reflections indicate perceived benefits relevant to mental health including emotional stability adaptive coping and reduced reactivity. They also suggest potential downstream effects for relational inclusion where reactivity can undermine safety trust and belonging. Across accounts, participants reported increased capacity to pause before reacting, greater emotional steadiness and shifts in long-standing contemplative practice. These reflections suggest perceived benefits relevant to emotional regulation and coping. Any implications for broader mental health outcomes remain speculative and were not directly measured.

4. Applicability in broader contexts

Participants frequently identified relevance beyond personal well-being extending to professional social and community contexts:

"Yes, well-being, education, care, management, leadership sectors."

"EBCA seems to have the potential to be very beneficial for anyone interested in social change and compassion, especially for young people seeking to improve their own well-being."

Several participants highlighted relational and institutional applications:

"Meditation practice can help cultivate emotion regulation, especially toward the relational 'dislikes' that weigh heavy on the heart and body."

"It's given me a lot to think about. For some reason I never thought about us all having different barriers to reach equanimity, though it seems obvious now."

Some reflections explicitly linked equanimity to social structures and power:

"From general public of the communities, schools, police, politicians to corporate. There might be societal forces that oppose EBCA because it changes the status quo, causing bottom up changes faster. EBCA connects people beyond separations forced on them by those that need to control masses to continue to generate their profit. I hope you will continue to teach this program as this is powerful."

"I think there is space for this in the elite athlete world, schools, through community based organisations and corporate."

Where participants linked equanimity to inclusion, this was typically framed in relational terms, for example, increased responsiveness, reduced reactivity or greater tolerance of difference. The data set does not provide evidence of structural or organisational change, but does indicate that participants perceived relational relevance across diverse contexts.

5. Suggestions for course improvement

Participants offered constructive suggestions aimed at deepening engagement and application:

"More opportunities to work in small groups."

"Perhaps more exploration of how conditioning drives reactivity in the face of suffering and how that can be mistaken for compassion."

"It might have been nice to go into a bit more detail about equanimity in the context of the Four Immeasurables."

"Possibly exploring links to Effective Altruism in terms of social activism"

"Maybe research and talk a little more specifically about equanimity and relationships? Dating and such? I feel personal relationships are the biggest 'cause' (relatively) of joy and suffering for people, that sounds like a theme that could interest everyone and help us all to bring our personal experience with relationships to the table".

These suggestions align with inclusion-oriented pedagogies that emphasise dialogue relational learning and contextual application.

Discussion

This study examined participants' reflections on a six-week equanimity-based course, with attention to its perceived relevance for well-being and relational engagement. Participants described experiencing equanimity as both an intrapersonal capacity, associated with emotional steadiness and a relational orientation, influencing how they engaged with others. This dual framing is consistent with conceptual distinctions in the literature positioning equanimity as complementary to mindfulness and potentially relevant to sustaining compassionate action under emotional or social challenge (Desbordes *et al.*, 2015; Weber, 2017). While these parallels are conceptually aligned, the present study does not empirically test those theoretical models; rather, it documents how participants themselves understood and articulated their experiences.

Prior work has described equanimity as involving balanced responsiveness to pleasant, unpleasant and neutral stimuli, and has suggested that neglect of neutral experience may reinforce dissatisfaction and emotional volatility (Grabovac *et al.*, 2011; Rogers *et al.*, 2021). Participants' reflections on heightened awareness of neutrality resonate with this conceptualisation. From a mental health perspective, participants interpreted this shift as potentially relevant to reduced rumination or dissatisfaction, particularly given associations in the broader literature between intolerance of ambiguity or neutrality and stress. From a social inclusion perspective, participants suggested that greater tolerance of neutrality and uncertainty might support steadier engagement with interpersonal difference and everyday relational complexity. These interpretations remain participant-reported perceptions rather than measured psychological or behavioural outcomes.

Participants frequently described movement from awareness towards what they perceived as more stable and responsive engagement. Although previous research links social mindfulness with prosocial behaviour (Van Doesum *et al.*, 2021), the present findings are limited to self-reported reflections rather than observed behavioural change. Participants characterised their experience as a shift from predominantly intrapersonal awareness towards greater relational responsiveness. In their accounts, mindfulness supported noticing internal experience, whereas equanimity was described as supporting steadiness in the face of judgement, discomfort and neutrality, allowing continued engagement rather than reactivity or withdrawal. This distinction mirrors theoretical arguments that mindfulness alone may not consistently translate into compassionate action because subtle affective conditioning continues to influence judgement and behaviour (Weber, 2017). However, in this study such distinctions are experiential descriptions rather than confirmatory evidence.

Participants consistently framed equanimity as extending rather than replacing mindfulness practice. This perception aligns with conceptual models distinguishing awareness from emotional balance and resilience (Weber, 2017; Juneau *et al.*, 2020). Several participants described equanimity as supporting compassionate responsiveness under relational strain where mindfulness alone had felt insufficient. These accounts are consistent with theoretical claims that equanimity may function as a stabilising process through which awareness becomes more relationally sustainable in complex organisational and social contexts. The present study, however, documents perceived relevance rather than demonstrating such mechanisms empirically.

Some participants reported perceived improvements in emotional regulation and reduced reactivity. These accounts are conceptually consistent with neuroscientific and psychometric research exploring associations between equanimity and emotional regulation processes (Desbordes *et al.*, 2015; Lord *et al.*, 2025). Nevertheless, no neural, behavioural or physiological measures were collected in this evaluation. Any links to underlying mechanisms

therefore remain theoretical and should not be interpreted as direct evidence arising from this data set. Participants' descriptions of pausing before reacting reflect subjective experiences that align with theorised processes related to reduced self-referential reactivity and increased outward attention, but these interpretations remain inferential.

Participants also identified applicability across education, healthcare, leadership and community contexts, particularly in settings characterised by emotional labour, moral distress or inequality. These reflections align with broader recognition that mental health and inclusion are shaped by everyday relational processes rather than individuals coping alone. In this study, social inclusion is understood at the interpersonal level, encompassing relational responsiveness, participation and engagement within diverse contexts. The findings do not demonstrate structural or institutional change. Rather, they indicate that participants perceived equanimity as potentially relevant to inclusive interpersonal practice. This framing is consistent with critiques of instrumental mindfulness approaches that prioritise stress reduction without addressing relational or ethical dimensions of engagement (Purser and Milillo, 2015). Participants experienced the explicit linking of awareness, barriers and compassionate action as meaningful; however, claims regarding broader social transformation would exceed the scope of the present data.

Suggestions for further development, including increased dialogical learning and relational case examples, indicate that participants valued collective reflection and contextual application. These suggestions are consistent with inclusion-oriented pedagogies emphasising shared meaning-making and relational learning. They also resonate with arguments that equanimity is shaped not only by individual practice but by social and contextual conditions that can either support or constrain compassionate action (Weber and Lowe, 2021).

Taken together, the findings suggest that participants perceived equanimity-based training as meaningful and relevant to emotional stability, relational responsiveness and, ethical engagement. The study does not establish causal outcomes or measured behavioural change. Rather, it provides qualitative insight into how participants interpret equanimity as a potential bridge between mindfulness awareness and compassionate social action. Future research incorporating validated measures, comparison groups and longitudinal designs would be required to examine sustained impact, behavioural outcomes and broader implications for inclusion within organisational and community contexts.

Reflexive author positioning

The author occupies a dual role as both the developer of the EBCA course and the evaluator of its outcomes. This practitioner researcher positionality informed the design of the intervention and the interpretation of participant data enabling depth of contextual understanding and responsiveness to participant experience. At the same time this dual role introduces potential sources of bias including confirmation bias and social desirability effects. To mitigate these risks the evaluation used transparent reporting reflexive thematic analysis and the integration of both quantitative and qualitative data. This positionality is therefore acknowledged as both a strength and a limitation when interpreting the findings.

Limitations and future directions

Consistent with the author's practitioner researcher positionality several potential sources of bias must be acknowledged. The sample was self-selected and relatively small limiting generalisability. Future research could use larger and more diverse samples longitudinal designs and validated psychometric measures to assess change over time. Further work could also explore how equanimity-based approaches interact with organisational culture power dynamics and structural inclusion efforts.

Conclusion

This evaluation suggests that equanimity can be cultivated through structured practice and that equanimity-based training may support both personal well-being and compassionate social engagement. By addressing psychological and contextual barriers to equanimity the EBCA course offers a promising complement to existing mindfulness approaches with particular relevance for mental health and social inclusion. These findings contribute to emerging evidence that contemplative skills when explicitly oriented towards relational and social application may support more inclusive emotionally sustainable and compassionate environments.

AI ethics statement

Generative AI tools were used for formatting and to support reflection on the coherence of developing themes. All coding, analysis, interpretation, and final analytic decisions were undertaken by the author. AI did not generate empirical data or determine thematic outcomes. Responsibility for the integrity and interpretation of the data rests solely with the author.

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