



# GRAEME DINGLE FOUNDATION

Empowering kids to overcome life's obstacles  
Whakamanawatia ngā tamariki kia eke panuku

## Research & Evaluation Summary 2024-2025

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**We want every child to know:  
What they have inside is greater than any obstacle**



## Introduction

Evaluation is a strategic pillar of the Graeme Dingle Foundation that ensures our programmes are evidence based, responsive and relevant for Aotearoa's tamariki and rangatahi. Alongside our university partners, two decades of evaluation have shown our programmes improve attitudes and behaviour, improve academic results, increase resilience and wellbeing, help young people set and achieve their goals, boost self-confidence, and support youth to feel more connected and positive about the future. This Research & Evaluation Summary provides a snapshot of our research and evaluation across all the Foundation's programmes. Further information can be found on our website or requested from the Research & Evaluation team.



**Section One: Kiwi Can**

# Kiwi Can Evaluation

Kiwi Can is a whole school programme that teaches primary school tamariki valuable life skills and values, in fun interactive lessons. Research has shown that Kiwi Can is guided by best practice youth development theory and aligns to Lerner's five C's (i.e., competence, confidence, connection, character and caring), five ideal outcomes that youth need to thrive and that youth development programmes want to achieve when working with young people. Evaluations have captured feedback from ākonga, teachers and principals and show the value for tamariki of having Kiwi Can in their school.

Tamariki look forward to Kiwi Can and say they make every effort to come to school on Kiwi Can days. Teachers report observing increased positive interactions among the tamariki, and that tamariki use strategies taught in Kiwi Can to resolve conflict independently. Schools have also reported that Kiwi Can has helped to increase attendance and reduce incidents of negative behaviour. University of Auckland research found that Kiwi Can was delivered to a high standard across all regions, and ākonga (regardless of age, gender, or ethnicity) report a similar high degree of learning and enjoyment. The research also indicated that sustained participation in the programme can mitigate the negative effects of transience for children who don't shift schools.

**Attenuating the  
negative effect of  
transience**

(Williams, 2021)

**Promoting positive  
development in  
school children**

(Ahmed, 2010)

**Kandoo Can: Make  
Friends Book  
Evaluation**

(Moore et al., 2021)

**Can it? Conducting an  
Outcome Evaluation of  
the Kiwi Can  
programme**

(Williams, 2014-2017)

## Research shows...

Kiwi Can helps students to problem solve, overcome challenges and develop resilience.



Kiwi Can supports tamariki to develop their teamwork skills, work with others, and to interact positively with their peers.



Experiential learning and positive reinforcement by the leaders make Kiwi Can lessons a safe place for ākonga to practice social skills and active participation in lessons.



Schools report that Kiwi Can encourages positive attitudes and behaviours and effective listening and questioning skills.



Principals say that Kiwi Can links closely with and complements the PB4L programme.



Kiwi Can is particularly effective at building positive relationships and helping to improve ākonga social skills.



Kiwi Can has been found to have consistent quality delivery around Aotearoa and to benefit all students regardless of age, gender, or ethnicity.



Students see their Kiwi Can Leaders as positive role models. Principals say Kiwi Can Leaders motivate and engage ākonga.



Sustained participation in Kiwi Can was found to mitigate the negative effects of transience for those children who didn't shift schools.



Kiwi Can incorporates many of the components of Lerner's 5 C's of Positive Youth Development (Confidence, Connection, Caring, Competence and Character).

## Current Kiwi Can Research

In 2023, interviews were conducted for a qualitative longitudinal project aimed at exploring the impact of Kiwi Can on Tamariki and how it evolves as tamariki progress through primary and into secondary school. Interviews will be held each year with the same participants over several years. Among the findings from the first interviews were observations of how tamariki use the opportunities provided by Kiwi Can to direct their own socio-emotional development needs, such as overcoming shyness and controlling emotions. These social and emotional gains are vital for young people of this age group and stage of development, enhancing their resilience and overall wellbeing.

In 2024, a Canterbury University qualitative research project will examine the experiences of tamariki transitioning from a primary to intermediate school. The aim is to understand their expectations, challenges, coping mechanisms, and the role of Kiwi Can in facilitating a smooth transition. This project fills a gap in research by integrating students' perspectives with a specific emphasis on their experiences with youth development programmes like Kiwi Can. It will give valuable insights into how students can be helped during this life transition.



## Kiwi Can References

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## Section Two: Stars



# Stars Evaluation

Stars uses peer mentoring, consistent with the tuakana-teina (older sibling/younger sibling) structure within Te Ao Māori, to support Year 9 ākonga to make a successful transition to secondary school. The programme teaches life skills and creates opportunities for the senior ākonga to support and share their experiences with the junior ākonga, increasing connectedness. Star Teina is a Year 7 and Year 8 programme that promotes and reinforces the four Kiwi Can values of respect, resilience, integrity and positive relationships. Stars Teina Leaders guide ākonga using an inquiry-based learning approach that empowers them to take ownership of their learning. Year 8 ākonga are provided with an opportunity for leadership that can help to build problem-solving skills, confidence and resilience.

Stars peer mentors report a significant increase in their social competence and character. Six months and one year after Stars, they said that the programme continued to influence their lives because of the positive impact it had on their confidence, competence, levels of maturity and sense of responsibility. Gains for Year 9 ākonga include life skills such as: working with others, connecting to their communities, goal setting, and building positive relationships with their peers and senior ākonga. While Stars benefitted all Year 9 students, low decile schools and schools with greater proportions of Pasifika ākonga appeared to benefit the most.

**Impact of Stars on Peer Mentors**

(Deane et al., 2015; Deane et al., 2017)

**School-based mentoring: Examining the cultural and economic variations in engagement and effectiveness**

(Noonan et al., 2012)

**Mentee experiences as predictors of connectedness & attitudes**

(Henderson et al., 2013)

**Impact of Stars on youth self-efficacy and wellbeing**

(Naomi, 2012)

## Research shows...

Year 9 students rate Stars highly and those with positive programme experiences were more likely to have higher connectedness and future orientation at the end of the programme.



Mentoring Year 9 helps the Peer Mentors to build positive connections, develop confidence, and gain competence.



Stars contributes to the wellbeing of the students by helping them to gain valuable life skills.



Peer mentors report significant increases in self-confidence, task leadership, and intellectual flexibility after Stars.

Stars benefits all students, particularly so for Pasifika rangatahi. It is thought the inclusive group dynamics of Stars aligns well with collective cultures.



Adventure Camp outcomes include: the development of practical skills; learning to work with others; personal growth; and building new friendships and connections.



Stars benefits all Year 9 students, particularly those from low decile schools.



Peer mentors report significant increases in social competence and character; this is still apparent one year after the programme.





## Stars References

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## Section Three: Career Navigator



## Career Navigator Evaluation

Career Navigator is made up of three modules: career mentoring, experiential workshops and career pathway events. The school-based programme provides opportunities for the young participants to acquire skills relevant to work readiness and to gain authentic industry experiences that help to demystify the workplace. Two adaptations, Career Navigator Toroa and Career Navigator Ngā Ara Whetū have been designed in response to high youth unemployment and the additional stress created by changes in the labour market due to Covid-19. The Toroa programme is a community-based work readiness programme that works with 15–25-year-olds who are currently not in work or training. The programme builds work-ready skills and supports participants to seek meaningful employment. Ngā Ara Whetū is a school-based programme developed for Northland youth, many of whom live in remote and rural communities. The programme provides opportunities for participants to extend their social contacts and to develop life skills that will help them to successfully transition from secondary school to work or further education.

Exploratory evaluations, using a stakeholder-driven theory of change approach, have created a shared understanding of how the programmes produce positive participant outcomes and the conditions that influence programme success. Outcome evaluations show that Career Navigator supports young people to find meaningful employment, and increases participant social and career self-efficacy, employment hope, and work readiness.

**Theory of Change and  
Evaluability  
Assessment for the  
Career Navigator  
Programme**

*Wilder, K. & Deane, K. (2017)*

**Theory of Change  
Evaluation for Career  
Navigator Toroa**

*(Moore, 2021)*

**Theory of Change  
Evaluation for Ngā Ara  
Whetū**

*(Moore, 2022)*

## Research shows...

Industry mentors and experiential workshops address some of the major barriers for young people seeking employment.



Participants are supported with job seeking tasks such as writing a CV and cover letter, building a personal brand, job applications and interviews, and how to research and get information on jobs.



Worksite visits and conversations with industry mentors around the 'real world' of work, expands student awareness of the choices and options available to them and reduces anxiety around what is expected of them in the workplace.

Exposure to different perspectives and hearing other people's stories of how they changed course and had several jobs across a lifetime can relieve the pressure to find the 'right job'.



Career Navigator increases career self-efficacy, social self-efficacy, and employment hope and decreases social interaction anxiety.



Career Navigator Community challenges a young person's negative perceptions of themselves and helps them to explore their personal attributes, skills, and competencies.

Experiential workshops and industry mentors enables an individual to explore their skills, attributes and what matters to them regarding career choices, increasing their career decision-making, confidence, competence and facilitating a strength-based perspective of themselves and others.



## Current Career Navigator Research

Continuing in 2024, a mixed-method evaluation project will assess the effectiveness of Toroa Career Navigator in Marlborough. The programme includes an intensive delivery phase, a supported transition phase and then at least 6 months of ongoing support that will be tailored to each rangatahi's specific needs while still maintaining a positive group dynamic and peer support. Evaluation methods include case studies, surveys and monitoring of student goals. The findings will be used to examine outcomes and validate the Theory of Change programme model.



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## Section Four: Project K



## Project K Evaluation

Project K’s three core components, Wilderness Adventure, Community Challenge, and mentoring, promotes positive growth in Year 10 ākonga with low self-efficacy. On Project K, participants are supported to become more confident, resilient and connected, and to set and achieve life goals. The recent addition of a community-based programme has extended the reach of Project K to disengaged youth within a community.

Research has shown that Project K has a consistent positive effect on all efficacy outcomes. A randomised control trial found that Project K improved academic and social self-efficacy from pre to post programme, and that this improvement was sustained one year later. Parents’ perceptions of changes in their child’s interpersonal skills supported these findings. One year after completing Project K, more Project K students than controls reported attending school, full-time education, being employed full-time and looking for educational opportunities. When it comes to influencing academic achievement, Project K seemed to work more effectively for students in low decile settings, a finding that implies Project K can close the achievement gap between students from low and high decile schools. Other Project K research has found that Project K can improve participant resilience, connectedness, sense of community and healthy eating, and that Project K participants were more likely to reduce illegal drug use over time.

An evaluation of the community-based Project K programme has examined youth ‘silent’ disengagement and how youth development programmes can build participant confidence, competence, connection and a sense of belonging, and in so doing can progressively move disengaged young people towards re-engagement and greater independence.





**Silence to Strength:  
The Impact of  
Project K Community  
on Silently  
Disengaged Youth**  
(Moore, 2024)

**Program theory-  
driven evaluation  
science in a youth  
development  
context**  
(Deane & Harré, 2014)

**Reintegration of  
students after  
Wilderness  
Adventure**  
(Kanakkappaly, 2019)

**Randomised  
Controlled Trial  
Evaluation of Project  
K**  
(Leeson et al., 2013)

**Effectiveness of  
Project K on health  
and lifestyle  
behaviours**  
(Zhang, 2011; Moore et al.,  
2007)

**Shining a light:  
Support for the  
silently disengaged**  
(Moore, 2022)

**An innovative  
exploration of  
engagement**  
(Burnett, 2017)

**The youth  
adventure  
programming  
model**  
(Deane, 2014)

**Engagement  
and mentor  
support**  
(Chapman et al., 2017)

# Research shows...

## Self-efficacy



Project K students report higher levels of academic, social and help-seeking self-efficacy\*.



Project K is particularly effective in boosting academic self-efficacy in participants from low decile schools



Improvements in self-efficacy, were sustained one year post programme.



Project K students report higher career decision self-efficacy one year post programme\*.

## Education and Academic Achievement



One-year post programme Project K students were less likely to truant.



One year after the programme, more Project K students than controls reported attending school, full-time education, being employed full-time and looking for educational

opportunities.

Project K appears to be particularly effective for students in low decile settings.

## Resilience, Connectedness, Community and Health



Project K students show improved relatedness and sense of community.



Project K students finish the programme with higher resilience scores\*.



Project K students finished the programme with higher connectedness than students that did not participate in Project K\*.



Project K has a positive impact on healthy eating. The few Project K students who reported drug use were more likely to reduce this habit over time\*.

\* When compared to a group of young people who did not participate in Project K.

## What Project K Alumni have to say..

...They can recognise **good opportunities** and are more **confident** to try new activities and **motivated** to set goals. They also improved their communication and interpersonal skills



... The programme is beneficial for young people who feel they do not fit in, are struggling in school, or are dealing with difficult life situations. They would recommend Project K to other young people because of the positive impact it had on themselves and the opportunities it offers



## Engagement, Disengagement and Reintegration



Factors that influence engagement: the nature of the environments and activities; peer support; and facilitator skills

The key processes that lead to positive engagement outcomes are novelty, accomplishment, and reflection



Factors that influence disengagement are levels of physical challenge, negative social influence and limited facilitator attunement

The Wilderness Adventure promotes mastery experiences, responsibility, and interpersonal skills, as well as the five C's of positive youth development



Outdoor Adventure based programmes need to consider reintegration strategies to support a smooth transition back to normal life

Factors that promote positive reintegration..



# Current Project K Research



## Project K Community Scholarship

In 2021, a growing need to extend the reach of Project K led to the development of a Graeme Dingle Foundation Project K Community Scholarship programme. A theory of change evaluation project has revealed how social anxiety can contribute to youth socially withdrawing and becoming silently disengaged.

Silently disengaged youth increasingly reduce social interactions, spend more time in the home and substitute online interactions for in-person relationships. Disengaged from learning, young people are more likely to leave school early, unlikely to study later in life and less likely to be fully engaged in employment, education or training. The evaluation findings to date have revealed some of the factors that contribute to silent disengagement and the essential strategies of youth development programmes when working with disengaged youth. Short-term programme outcomes include increases in participant confidence, competence, connection, and sense of belonging.

Commencing in 2022 and finishing in 2024, a case study approach is being used to generate a more in-depth understanding of programme outcomes in a real-life context. The case studies combine individual quantitative and qualitative data to explore why an individual was referred to the programme, to describe key programme events and activities, and to determine the impact of the programme on the individual after they completed the programme and returned to their everyday life.

## Project K

In 2024, the Project K programme delivered in schools will be reviewed to assess outcomes associated with different lengths of mentoring partnerships and the selection process to enter the programme. Results from this evaluation will inform future programme development as Project K is refined to meet the needs of today's rangatahi.

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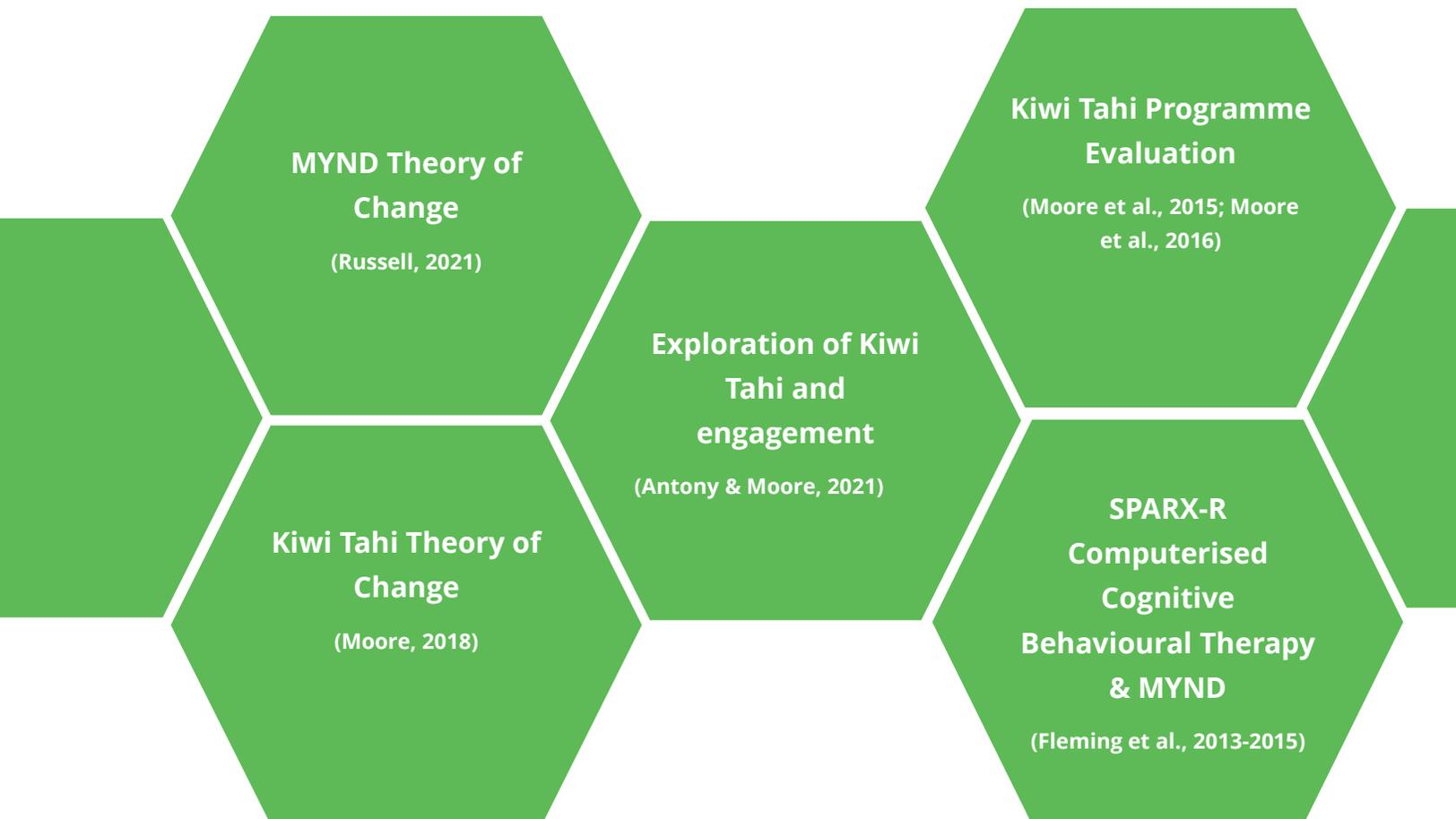
## Section Five: MYND & Kiwi Tahī



## MYND & Kiwi Tahī Evaluation

MYND is no longer active, but the data provides some valuable insights into its impact and effectiveness during its period of operation. A University of Auckland research project developed an extensive MYND Theory of Change model that shows the programme was thought to affect change within participants. Previous research has found a statistically significant reduction in MYND participants' depressive symptoms and anger, and a downward trend in antisocial cognitions.

Kiwi Tahī (currently in redevelopment) was designed as an early intervention programme for vulnerable youth who are at risk of becoming involved in the youth justice system. The programme uses mentoring, experiential activities and life skill lessons to engage and connect with participants. Kiwi Tahī research shows that the programme is a protective factor in the lives of the young participants and that it provides them with the skills and strategies that help them to walk away from negative peers. Also, despite the many risk factors in their lives, it found significant positive changes in participants' interpersonal skills and behaviour, and positive behavioural changes at home and school.



# Research shows...

## MYND



Participants reported a statistically significant reduction in depressive symptoms and anger.



Although not statistically significant, there was a downward trend in participant reports of antisocial cognitions.

There was a beneficial change in participants help-seeking intentions and conduct behaviours.



## Kiwi Tahī



Participants developed positive relationships, social skills, and increase school engagement. Improvements in their behaviour, attitude and general mood improved their relationships, both at home and at school.

Kiwi Tahī increased participants' prosocial behaviour, emotional regulation, positive thinking, interpersonal skills, and school attendance.



Participants' improved their interpersonal skills.



Increased programme attendance was linked to improved engagement with school.



Participants' cultural identity and connectedness was enhanced during the programme and was strengthened further by cultural and second language programmes at school.



Experiential activities increased life skills and pro-social behaviours.

Kiwi Tahī is a protective factor in the lives of the vulnerable young participants.



Since taking part in the programme the young people are more motivated to join prosocial organised activities.

At the end of the programme Kiwi Tahī participants described positive life goals and envisioned a positive future.



The programme builds resilience, increases social competence and helps participants engage with school.



## MYND & Kiwi Tahī References

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## **Section Six: Youth Research**

## Youth Research

Graeme Dingle Foundation aims to help New Zealand be the best place in the world to be young. Our programmes empower tamariki and rangatahi to build resilience, overcome life's obstacles and thrive. In addition to evaluating our programmes, the team have sought to understand other factors impacting the lives of young people in Aotearoa. These reports have looked at the impact of social media on youth mental health, youth experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, youth disengagement, and a literature review of societal trends and Generation Z.

The term neurodiversity refers to the idea that some individuals are born with brains that think, learn and process information differently from neurotypical individuals. Although neurodiversity can refer to the differences between all individuals, a broad range of conditions that are often referred to in the context of neurodiversity, such as Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, dyslexia, social anxiety and autism spectrum disorder. The Graeme Dingle Foundation believes that all young people need access to environments rich in resources to succeed. In 2024, a research project aims to learn more about neurodiverse young people and the challenges they face, and how youth development activities can be designed to be inclusive of all learners neurodiverse and neurotypical. The project design combines theory-driven and inclusive evaluation methods.

**Social Media and  
Mental Health &  
Wellbeing**  
(Nielsen Company, 2019)

**Societal Trends &  
Generation Z  
Literature Review**  
(Inostroza Solis, 2022)

**Shining a light:  
Support for the  
silently disengaged**  
(Moore, 2022)

**Stories of our Young  
People**  
(Moore, 2021)

# Research shows...

## Social Media and Youth Mental Health and Wellbeing

Young people experience both positive and negative impacts on their mental health and well-being.

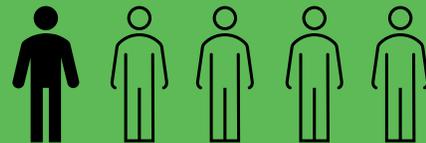


A quarter of young people have regularly seen or read something that made them



worry about the safety of someone else.

One in five young people have sought support from someone for issues and concerns they might have had about something they experienced on social media.



Two-thirds indicated that they would trust a close friend to help them if they needed help, half would trust a parent, and just over a third a sibling.

## COVID-19 and the Parallel Pandemic

Moving away from home for the first time can be exciting and daunting. For some, COVID-19 interrupted the process of adapting psychologically and emotionally to their new independence.

Studying online and losing motivation was a major challenge for the young people,



along with feelings of disappointment when they felt they didn't rise to the challenge.



There was a sense of guilt for some students at not reaching academic goals and and disappointment that they missing out on end of school social events.

## Societal Trends and Generation Z Literature Review

Research has shown Generation Z are more open-minded, connected, ethnically diverse, globally minded, entrepreneurial and generally better educated than any generation before.



Living in a world of fast-paced technology, centring their lives around devices and the online space has likely contributed to their social withdrawal, reduce interpersonal skills, cyberbullying, and privacy issues.



Gen Z are often advocates for current issues and affairs that will impact their future, often utilising the power of an online platform to bring awareness to an issue online.



Existing poor mental health issues, in New Zealand and beyond, have been exacerbated by the recent Covid-19 pandemic and other factors such as the digital world, environmental issues, rising living costs, and other current affairs.

## Akonga and Disengagement

In mid adolescence a negative stressful event (such as peer rejection, learning difficulties, death of a close family member, or a move to a new city) contributed to a negative appraisal of school and their sense of belonging.



We found that young people who have 'silently' disengaged have decreased confidence and motivation and increased anxiety.



Disengaged young people spend less time with their peers, become disengaged from school and learning, and from activities they usually enjoy.



The COVID-19 pandemic appears to have exacerbated this situation, as for some young people increased social isolation had a negatively impact on their psychological and emotional wellbeing.



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