Sargam Zindagi Ki Program School Report

सरगम जिन्दगी की
SARGAM ZINDAGI KI

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About the Organization

Sargam Zindagi Ki is the first NGO in India to have devised a one-year program entirely on Emotional Intelligence. The organization aims to bring emotional wellness revolution in India through awareness creation. One of the programs of Sargam Zindagi Ki, by the same name, was developed to align with the organization's mission to lead a movement of emotional sensitivity; to create a society of acceptance and happiness through education, fitness and art that teaches all to be humane and understand the larger perspective of humanity.

About Sargam Zindagi Ki Program

Sargam Zindagi Ki Program (SZKP) is a one-year long program for children (who are enrolled in schools) and are students of founding years (middle school) classes 6-9. The program focuses on various aspects of emotions and how they play a crucial role in the overall growth and development of children. The program holds importance as with the growing pressure of academia on children and high expectation from schools to finish the syllabi in time, children are under intense emotional pressure. Also, given today's scenario where the world has come upside down, education of a child has come to a standstill, it becomes all the more important to equip children with emotional tools that will help them in any situation they confront. Schools lack time and resources to focus on the emotional wellness of their children. Thus, this program aims to create awareness and will equip children with necessary information to help them build their emotional health positively. Further, the program works towards bringing a paradigm shift in the attitude and perception of (i) schools to inculcate Emotional Intelligence (EI) as part of mainstream education; (ii) children by educating them on emotional health and (iii) being able to to produce clear, convincing narratives and powerful, human stories rooted solidly in the experience of children undertaking the program. SZKP is a conceptual and foundation learning model program with interactive sessions.

Significance of the Program

The UN World Happiness Report 2020 ranked India at 144 out of the 156 countries that were studied. The rankings were based on six variables: GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom, generosity, and absence of corruption. One in four Indian children aged 13 to 15 struggles with depression, according to the World Health Organization[1]. These statistics by themselves are alarming signs of the need to promote emotional wellness, at least and especially in children.

"The importance of psychological well-being for the healthy growth and development of children and teenagers cannot be underlined enough. Unaddressed mental morbidity or psychological disorders in children can impede their cognitive and emotional development, and render them

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[1] "Mental Health Status of Adolescents in South-East Asia: Evidence for Action" 2017 World Health Organisation

unfit to cope with social stress and pressures of a growing up world. Unfortunately, the mental health of children and adolescents remains an under addressed subject in India.

Among causes of the rising incidence of mental health problems in children include:

- performance pressure
- high parental expectations
- conflict-ridden families
- peer-to-peer relationships
- internet or digital device addiction or
- substance abuse

Unfortunately, children find it more difficult than adults to express themselves and reach out for help. It is important therefore to closely watch children and observe them for any anomalous behavior such as social withdrawal, recurrent physical distress or fatigue, phobias, sleep disorders etc. Increasingly, mental health experts are advocating the need to adopt a holistic approach to mental health management particularly when dealing with psychological duress among children and adolescents.

It is important to identify holistic management strategies in the Indian context that children and adolescents can use to improve and maintain mental health on an everyday basis. These strategies must not necessarily focus on children with existing mental health disorders but bring all children and adolescents under their ambit through their adoption in schools and residential communities.[2]"

To quote the renowned psychiatrist Dr. Anjali Chhabria "A good education must equip children with both academic and life skills which will help them face life's challenges and lead happy and fulfilling lives. Schools need to focus on developing children's socio-emotional intelligences by teaching them to cope with rejection, failure, management of time and resources, communication, empathy, and resilience…their focus should shift from academic achievement to ensuring the emotional and mental well-being of children. Only when a child is emotionally secure and content, can she give her best at school, college and the workplace[3]."

School Report 2019 - 2020

The 2019-2020 batch of Sargam Zindagi Ki Program was implemented for class 6th and class 8th students respectively from Deepalaya School and Chowguley Public School. Weekly classes were

[2] Dr. Poddar, Prakriti "Holistic approach to mental health management in children and teenagers" 2019 https://www.financialexpress.com/lifestyle/health/mental-health-in-teenagers-reasons-causes-treatment-and-therapy/1806171/ Date of Access: 17th June 2020

[3] Dr. Chhabria, Anjali in the interview "Focus on children's emotional and mental well-being" https://www.educationworld.in/focus-on-childrens-emotional-and-mental-well-being/ Date of Access: 17th June 2020

conducted starting from mid July 2019 and ending in February 2020. The program was integrated as part of the curriculum for the children.

The program which had been designed by the organization's experts Sheela Rao, Shaveta Nayyar Dham and Gopa Sood, included the following components:

Photograph 1: Sargam Zindagi Ki Program at Chowguley Public School

1. Introduction to emotions
2. Learning about self
3. Case Studies
4. Books and stories
5. Developing EM through drama
6. Social Behaviour
7. Emotional Intelligence
8. EMB
9. Understanding Self
10. Emotional Intelligence Positive Word Bag
11. Mind and heart
12. SZK- EQE (Emotional Quotient exam): Written 1-hour exam followed by discussion and analysis.

The syllabi of the program combined theory, interactive sessions and activities. The children from the batch were comfortable and showed enthusiasm for activities such as outdoor events, roleplays, musical activity etc. The learning objectives of the program were to provide a robust framework for putting emotional quotient into action, to make children aware about emotions, to make children aware on various situations and dealing with those situations (experiential learning) and emotional regulation and management through various activities.

Photograph 2: Sargam Zindagi Ki Activity at Deepalaya School

Different approaches were adopted for classes 6th and 8th to cater to their age-specific requirements. Educators and counsellors were present in each session. The unique element of the program was to connect with the child at their level, which was beyond a teacher-child level. The educators developed a level of comfort to understand the emotions of the child, making use of a participative approach. This approach was crucial as schools lacked counsellors and the child-teacher relationship was close-walled, as teachers were pre-occupied with completing academic targets, which showed a gap in the emotional well-being of children at school level. The classroom teaching was different from a conventional class as it began with "I am" and ended with "I am".

It involved music and dance movements to understand and recognise emotions. The idea of student-teacher hierarchy was eliminated and the children were able to have friendly interactions with the instructors. The key features of the classroom sessions included the following:

1. Interactive
2. Child friendly
3. Outdoor activities
4. Group discussions
5. Role plays

In many cases, the schools' teachers observed changes in the behaviour of the children. Some 'notorious' children had transformed into emotionally better capable children and in several cases, children were noticeably able to express themselves better and be effective in emotional problem resolution. The activity of role plays was particularly effective in producing the aforementioned results. For instance, the behaviour of using abusive language changed in children as they started opening up with the instructors and transformed their problem resolution to a civil, rational and emotionally mature fashion. Further, classroom interactions were also recorded in classroom notebooks. These recordings also showed the evolution of behavioural changes in the children through the course of the program.

The Emotional Intelligence Test

The Emotional Intelligence Test was devised as a general emotional depiction in verbal as well as visual manners. The children were able to identify and express their feelings. The focus was on overall awareness improvement in the children rather than identifying children and producing change, as the former was the more pragmatic approach given the timeframe of the program.

The Emotional Intelligence test was of the first basic level which was divided into three sections to test the subject knowledge, self-awareness and emotional drawing. The questions investigated various aspects of Emotional Intelligence in the following manner.

1. INTRAPERSONAL (self-awareness and self-expression): • Self-Regard (being aware of, understanding and accepting ourselves). • Emotional Self-Awareness (being aware of and understanding our emotions) • Assertiveness (expressing our feelings and ourselves non-destructively) • Independence (being self-reliant and free of emotional dependency on others) • Self-Actualization (setting and achieving goals to actualize our potential)
2. INTERPERSONAL (social awareness and interaction): • Empathy (being aware of and understanding how others feel) • Social Responsibility (identifying with and feeling part of our social groups) • Interpersonal Relationship (establishing mutually satisfying relationships)
3. STRESS MANAGEMENT (emotional management): • Stress Tolerance (effectively and constructively managing our emotions) • Impulse Control (effectively and constructively controlling our emotions) ADAPTABILITY (change management): • Reality Testing (validating our feelings and thinking with external reality) • Flexibility (coping with and adapting to change in our daily life) • Problem Solving (generating effective solutions to problems of an intrapersonal and interpersonal nature)

4. GENERAL MOOD (self-motivation): • Optimism (having a positive outlook and looking at the brighter side of life) • Happiness (feeling content with ourselves, others and life in general)

The above parameters were used to indicate the outcomes of the program which were used to develop emotional health of children, to make children self-aware of emotions, feelings etc., relate EI to life situations and enable them to communicate with others with emotional awareness. The purpose of working with EI was not aimed at bringing immediate change, rather the creation of awareness of their own emotions in a manner such that the children were emotionally better aware, intelligent and adept at the know-how of emotional management.

Learning Outcomes

Some key points of the expected learning outcomes were -

A. Creating awareness on emotions and their impact
B. Understanding the meaning of Emotional Intelligence and how it impacts children's growth
C. Understanding emotional behaviour in various situations
D. Handling emotions in a better manner after recognizing emotions
E. Emotional Intelligence merged with Emotional Wellness being a key to a happy life

Summary of Learning Outcomes & Evaluation of Output

Self Evaluation of Emotions and Emotional Responses
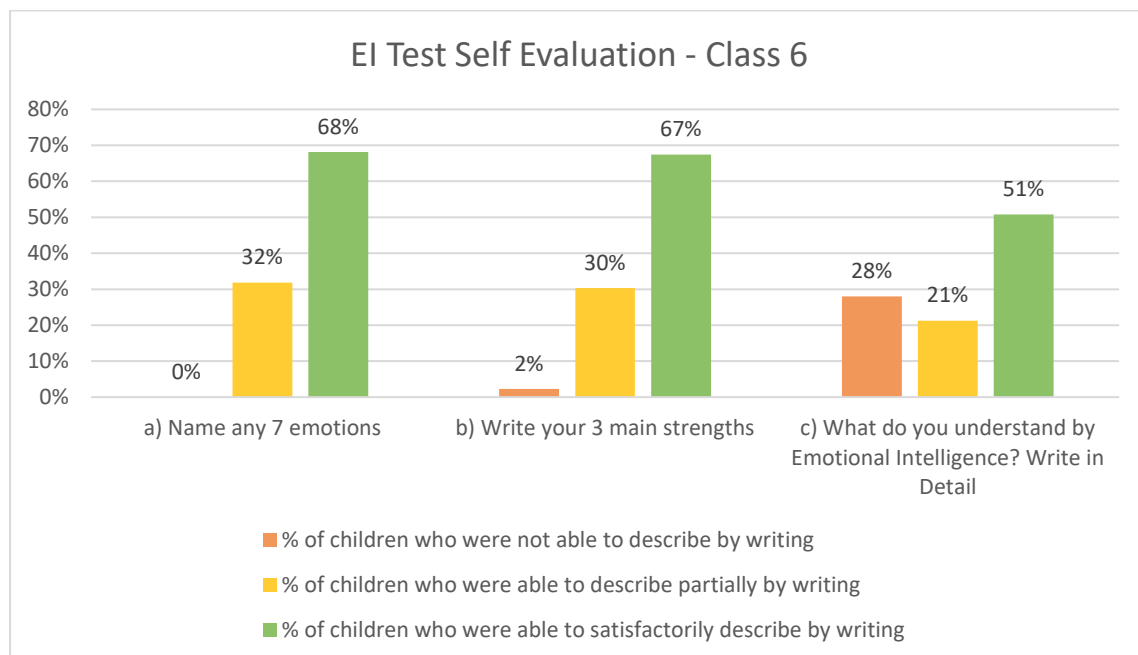
Figure 1: EI Test Self Evaluation - Class 6

The children of class 6 were able to name emotions either partially (32%) or to a satisfactory level (68%). While 2% of the children were unable to identify their main strengths, 30% children were able to partially identify and 67% children were able to identify their main strengths. To the question "What do you mean by Emotional Intelligence? Write in detail.", 51% children were able satisfactorily answer the question, 21% children answered the question partially and 28% were unable to answer the question.
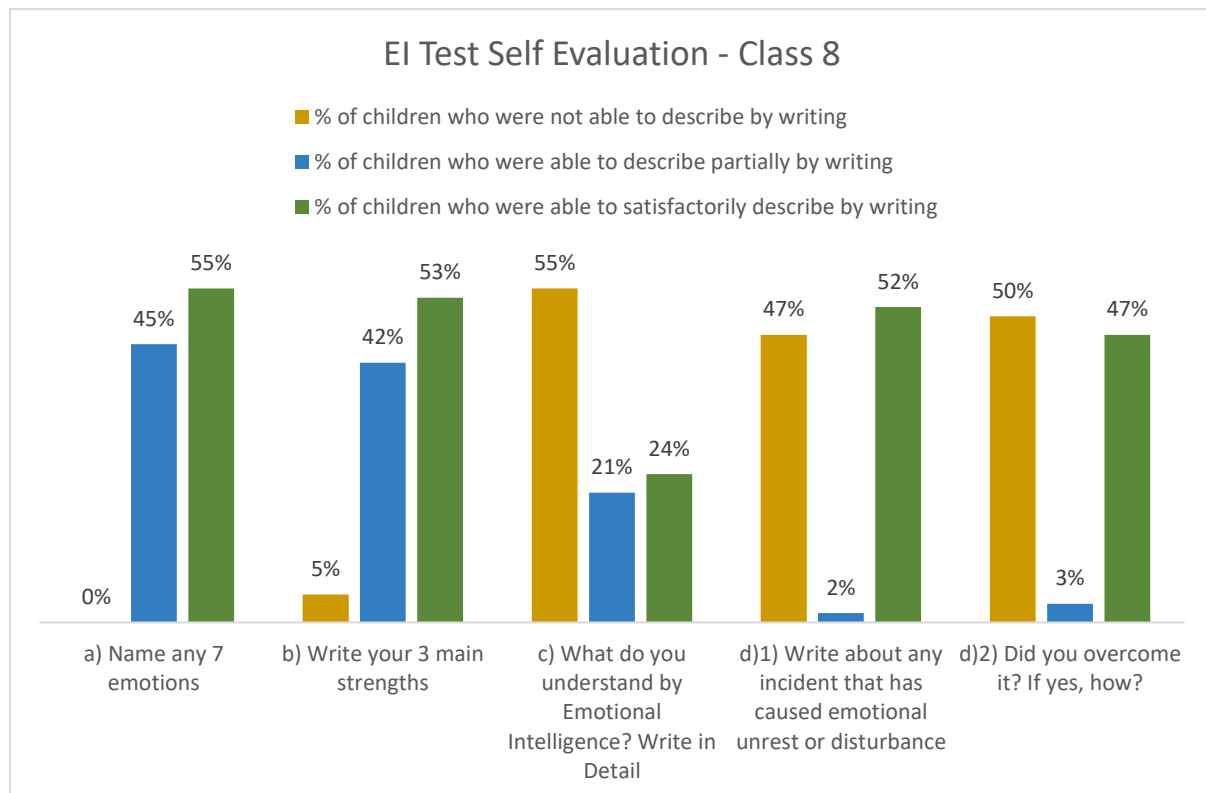
Figure 2: EI Test Self Evaluation - Class 8

The children of class 8 were able to name emotions either partially (45%) or to a satisfactory level (55%). While 5% of the children were unable to identify their main strengths, 42% children were able to partially identify and 53% children were able to identify their main strengths. To the question "What do you mean by Emotional Intelligence? Write in detail.", only 24% children were able to satisfactorily answer the question, 21% children answered the question partially and 55% were unable to answer the question. 47% children were unable to write about emotional unrest or disturbance and 52% children were able to answer the question satisfactorily, while 2% of the children were able to answer the question partially. To the question if they were able to overcome the incident which caused emotional disturbance and how, 50% of the children were unable to answer it, 3% children attempted to answer and 47% children were able to satisfactorily answer the question.

Self Awareness on Basic Behavioural Situations

The following charts show the Self Awareness of the children of classes 6 and 8 in basic behavioural situations.

EI Test Self Awareness - Class 6

■ % OF UNANSWERED	■ % OF YES	■ % OF NO	■ % OF NOT SURE

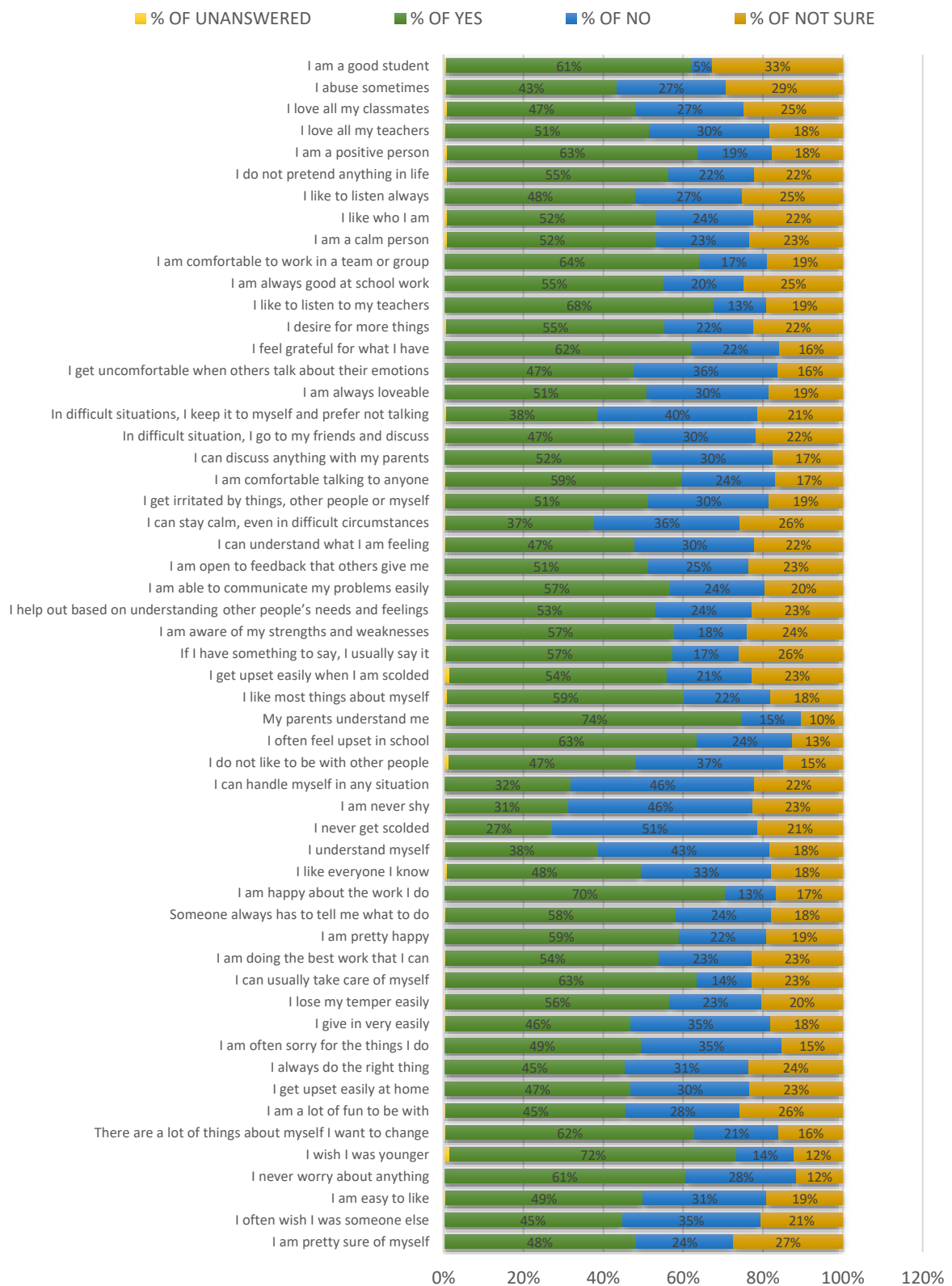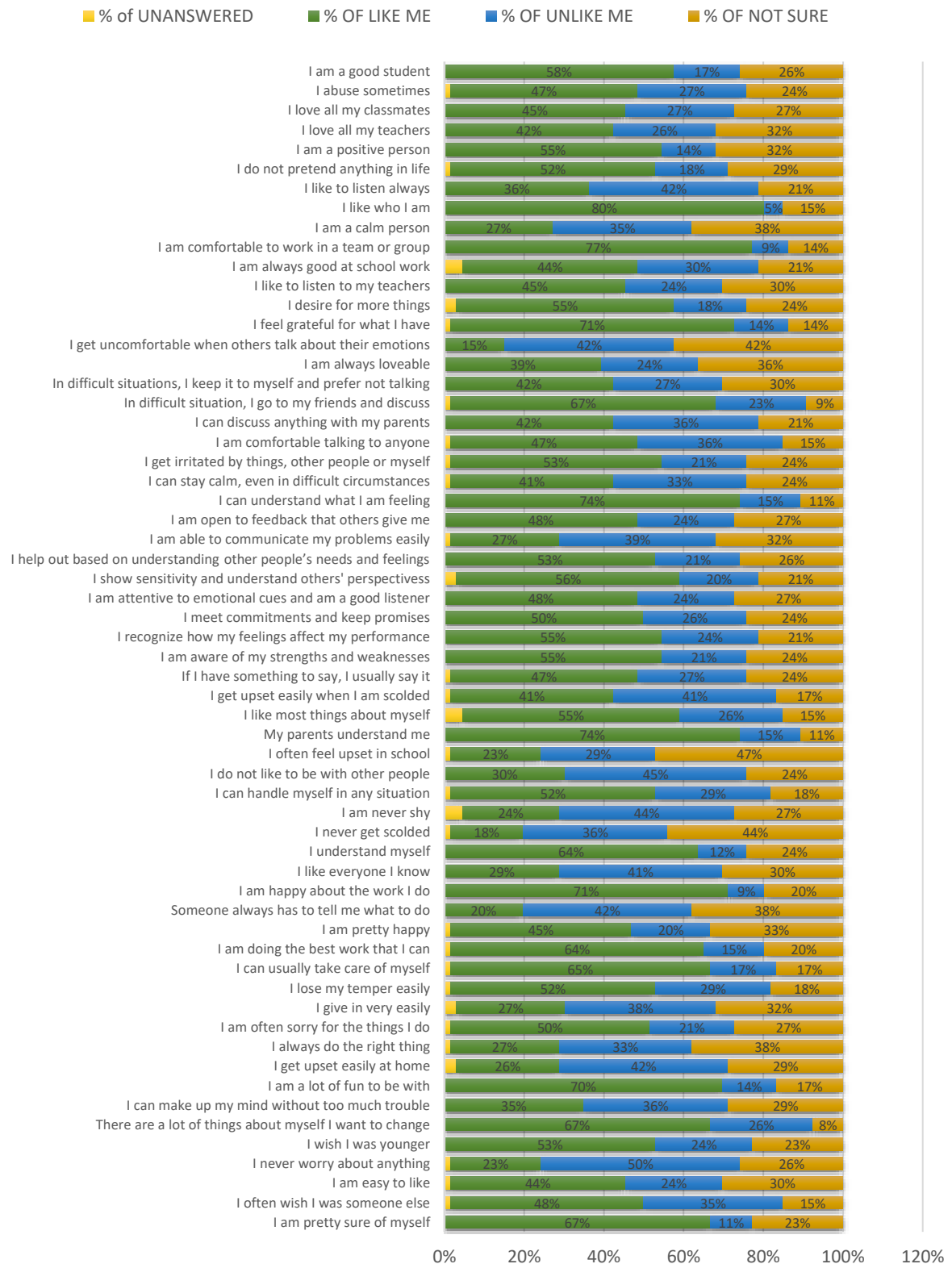| Statement	% YES	% NO	% NOT SURE
I am a good student	61%	5%	33%
I abuse sometimes	43%	27%	29%
I love all my classmates	47%	27%	25%
I love all my teachers	51%	30%	18%
I am a positive person	63%	19%	18%
I do not pretend anything in life	55%	22%	22%
I like to listen always	48%	27%	25%
I like who I am	52%	24%	22%
I am a calm person	52%	23%	23%
I am comfortable to work in a team or group	64%	17%	19%
I am always good at school work	55%	20%	25%
I like to listen to my teachers	68%	13%	19%
I desire for more things	55%	22%	22%
I feel grateful for what I have	62%	22%	16%
I get uncomfortable when others talk about their emotions	47%	36%	16%
I am always loveable	51%	30%	19%
In difficult situations, I keep it to myself and prefer not talking	38%	40%	21%
In difficult situation, I go to my friends and discuss	47%	30%	22%
I can discuss anything with my parents	52%	30%	17%
I am comfortable talking to anyone	59%	24%	17%
I get irritated by things, other people or myself	51%	30%	19%
I can stay calm, even in difficult circumstances	37%	36%	26%
I can understand what I am feeling	47%	30%	22%
I am open to feedback that others give me	51%	25%	23%
I am able to communicate my problems easily	57%	24%	20%
I help out based on understanding other people's needs and feelings	53%	24%	23%
I am aware of my strengths and weaknesses	57%	18%	24%
If I have something to say, I usually say it	57%	17%	26%
I get upset easily when I am scolded	54%	21%	23%
I like most things about myself	59%	22%	18%
My parents understand me	74%	15%	10%
I often feel upset in school	63%	24%	13%
I do not like to be with other people	47%	37%	15%
I can handle myself in any situation	32%	46%	22%
I am never shy	31%	46%	23%
I never get scolded	27%	51%	21%
I understand myself	38%	43%	18%
I like everyone I know	48%	33%	18%
I am happy about the work I do	70%	13%	17%
Someone always has to tell me what to do	58%	24%	18%
I am pretty happy	59%	22%	19%
I am doing the best work that I can	54%	23%	23%
I can usually take care of myself	63%	14%	23%
I lose my temper easily	56%	23%	20%
I give in very easily	46%	35%	18%
I am often sorry for the things I do	49%	35%	15%
I always do the right thing	45%	31%	24%
I get upset easily at home	47%	30%	23%
I am a lot of fun to be with	45%	28%	26%
There are a lot of things about myself I want to change	62%	21%	16%
I wish I was younger	72%	14%	12%
I never worry about anything	61%	28%	12%
I am easy to like	49%	31%	19%
I often wish I was someone else	45%	35%	21%
I am pretty sure of myself	48%	24%	27%

Figure 3: EI Test Self Awareness - Class 6

Figure 4: EI Test Self Awareness - Class 8

Emotional Drawing

Emotional Drawing was part of the Emotional Intelligence test which used the technique of visual representation of emotional and behavioural health levels of the children.

Drawing as a Communicative Tool (Masoumeh and Hashemi, 2011)[4]

While drawing is a kind of individual expression, it can also be a communicative tool. Drawing tends to recount far more things to the reader than language. Children do not yet have sufficient capabilities for abstract linguistic expression, but they have symbolic communication methods such as drawing. Through pictures, children make communication with familiar people, they develop skills for living, and build a sense of trust. Children's drawings have an order of development, and that accompanies the development of motor skills, emotional development, psychosocial development and the development of perception. Children draw "what they know" in their own style. In other words, the perception functions, sensibility/emotions and motor functions interact, and there, the factor of social experience is added and the picture is drawn onto paper.

The children were given the option to visually depict their emotional status by way of either making a mind map or the family drawing.

A Mind Map is a diagram used to represent words and ideas linked to and arranged radially around a central key word or idea. It is used to generate, visualize, structure and classify ideas, and as an aid in study, organisation, problem solving and decision making. The mind map technique was used in the test as a way to recognise and understand emotions and self.

The Family Drawing Test is a very popular test, especially with children. It allows you to find out about the relationships that the individual has with the other members of their family. It considers:

- *(Who the person draws first)*
- *The size and proportions of the drawing*
- *The person in the centre of the drawing*

The distance between the figures is a scale that refers to the degree of emotional distance the individual has with the rest of the people represented in the drawing; the further away, the greater the emotional distance (exploringyoumind.com, 2019)[5].

The Family Drawing Test technique question was designed as "Draw a drawing describing the relationship between yourself and the most important person in your life" for children of class 6 and "Draw a drawing describing the relationship between yourself and your father" for children of class 8. The mind map technique question was designed as "Draw a mind map describing

[4] Farokhi, Masoumeh and Hashemi, Masoud, "The Analysis of Children's Drawings: Social, Emotional, Physical, and Psychological aspects", Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 30 (2011) Pages 2219 – 2224 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.10.433 Date of Access: 17th June 2020

[5] "Expressive Therapies: The Psychology of Drawing" 2019 https://exploringyourmind.com/expressive-therapies-the-psychology-of-drawing/ Date of Access: 17th June 2020

yourself as a person" for both the classes. The choice was left up to the child to make a relationship drawing or a mind map to express themselves in the visual format.

The following charts show the statistics on how many children were unable to, partially able to and satisfactorily able to express themselves through an emotional drawing.
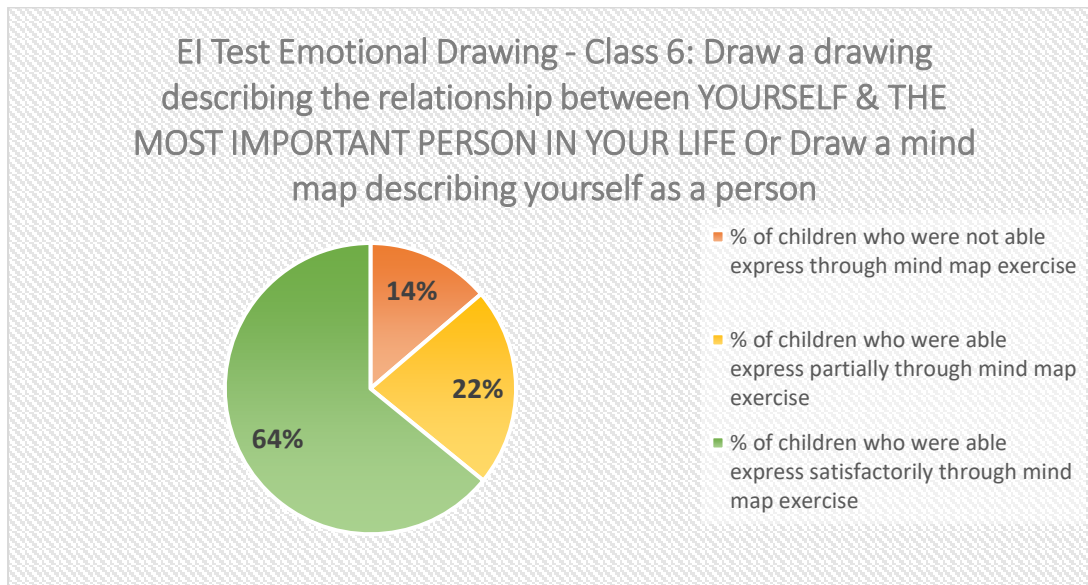
EI Test Emotional Drawing - Class 6: Draw a drawing describing the relationship between YOURSELF & THE MOST IMPORTANT PERSON IN YOUR LIFE Or Draw a mind map describing yourself as a person

- % of children who were not able express through mind map exercise
- % of children who were able express partially through mind map exercise
- % of children who were able express satisfactorily through mind map exercise

14%
22%
64%

Figure 5: EI Test Emotional Drawing - Class 6

EI Test Emotional Drawing - Class 8: Draw a drawing describing the relationship between YOURSELF & YOUR FATHER Or Draw a mind map describing yourself as a person

- % of children who were not able express through mind map exercise
- % of children who were able express partially through mind map exercise
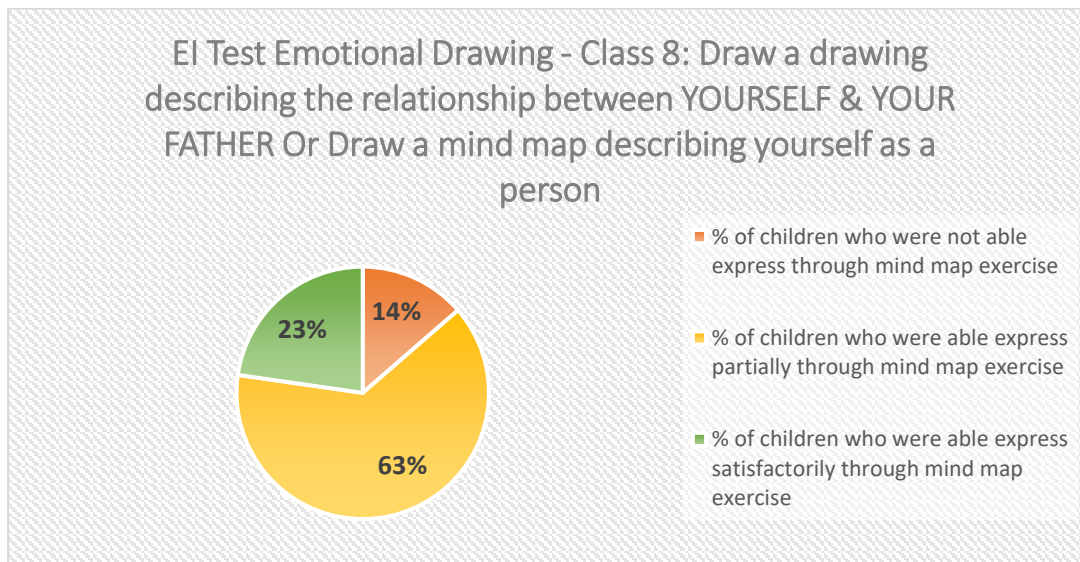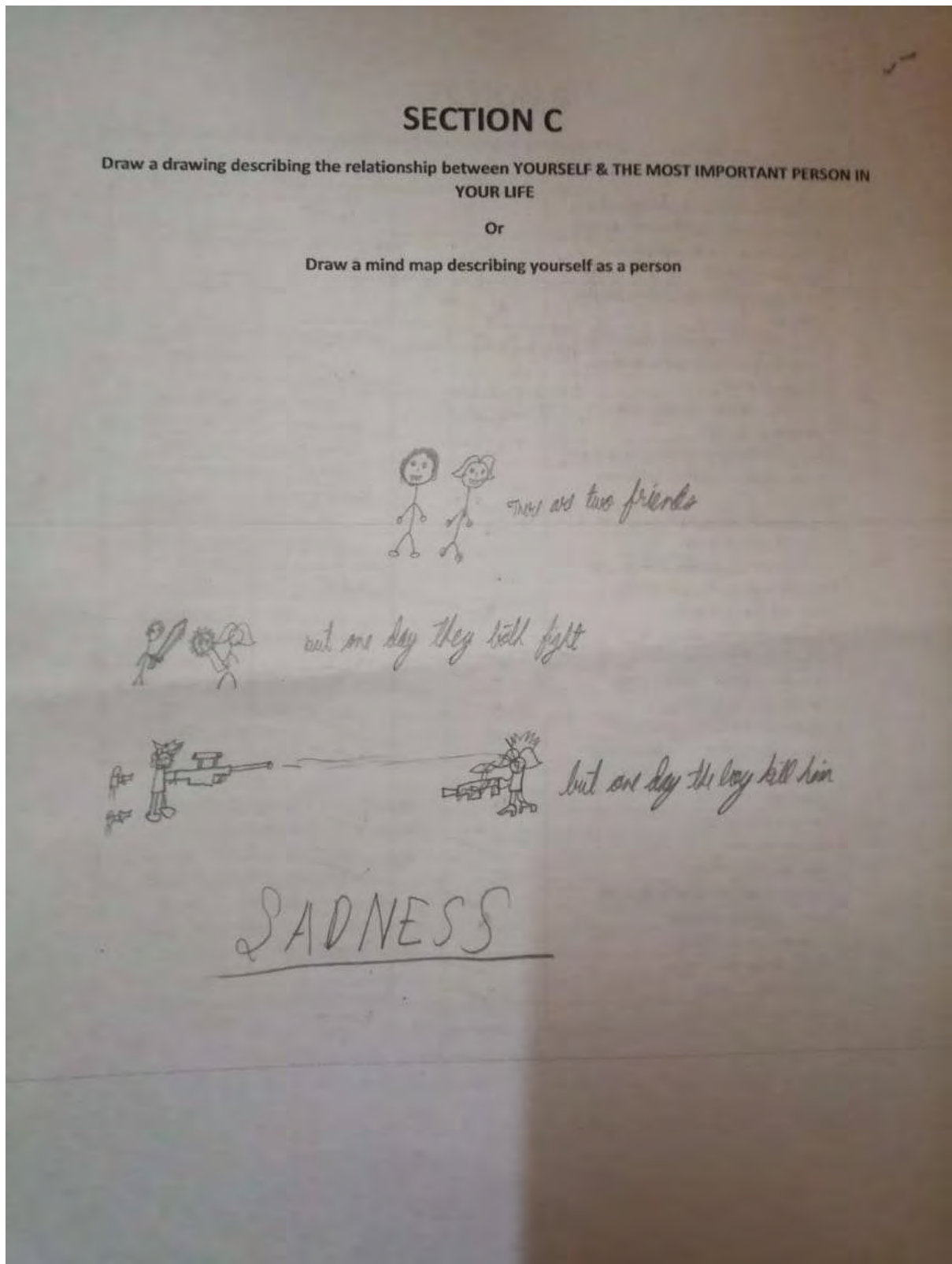- % of children who were able express satisfactorily through mind map exercise

14%
23%
63%

Figure 6: EI Test Emotional Drawing - Class 8

Below are sample emotional drawings made by children, from which their emotional status can be recognised.

Photograph 3: Emotional Drawing of a Child Depicting her Relationship with her Father. The child has depicted her father to be a consoling presence in times of any sadness.
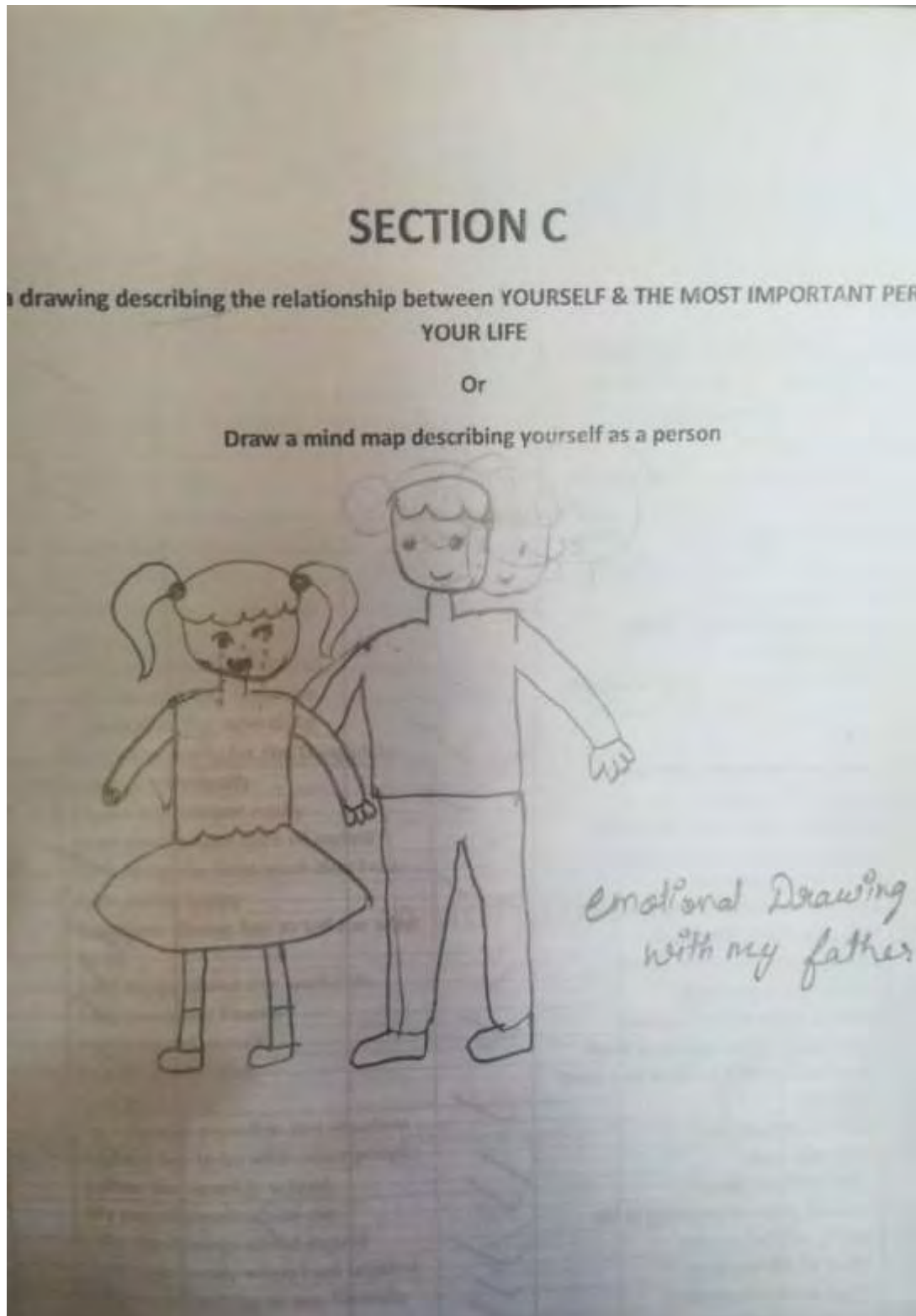
Photograph 4: Emotional Drawing of a Child which might be Indicative of Deep Emotional Unrest or Trauma.

SECTION C

Draw a drawing describing the relationship between YOURSELF & THE MOST IMPORTANT PERSON IN YOUR LIFE

Or

Draw a mind map describing yourself as a person

They are two friends

but one day they will fight

but one day the boy kill him

SADNESS

Effectiveness of the Program and Feedback

75% of the children of both the classes were able to better express themselves, especially in areas such as parent-child relationship, peer relationship, stress of classwork, homework and exams, routine of the child, sibling relationship, daily situations and problem resolution.
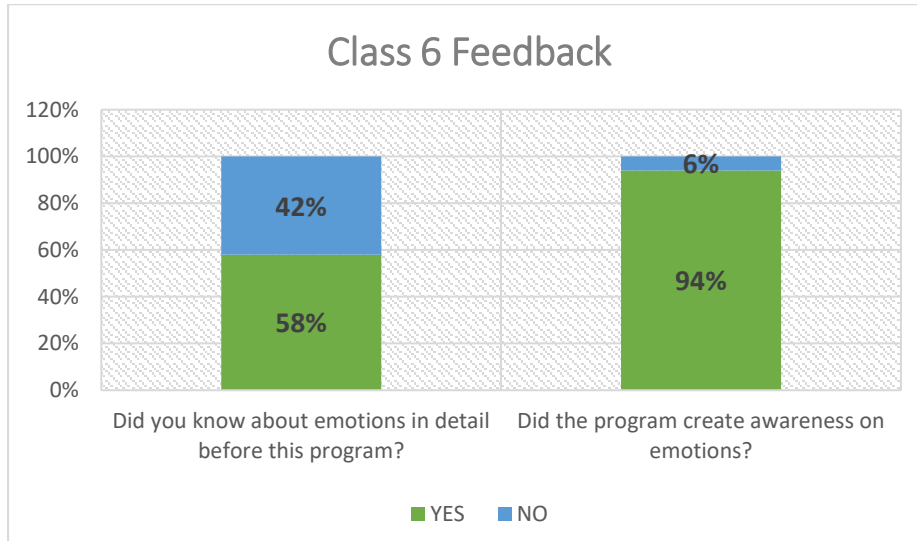
Figure 7: Class 6 Feedback on the Structure and Effectiveness of the Program

Class 6 Feedback on the Structure and Effectiveness of the Program
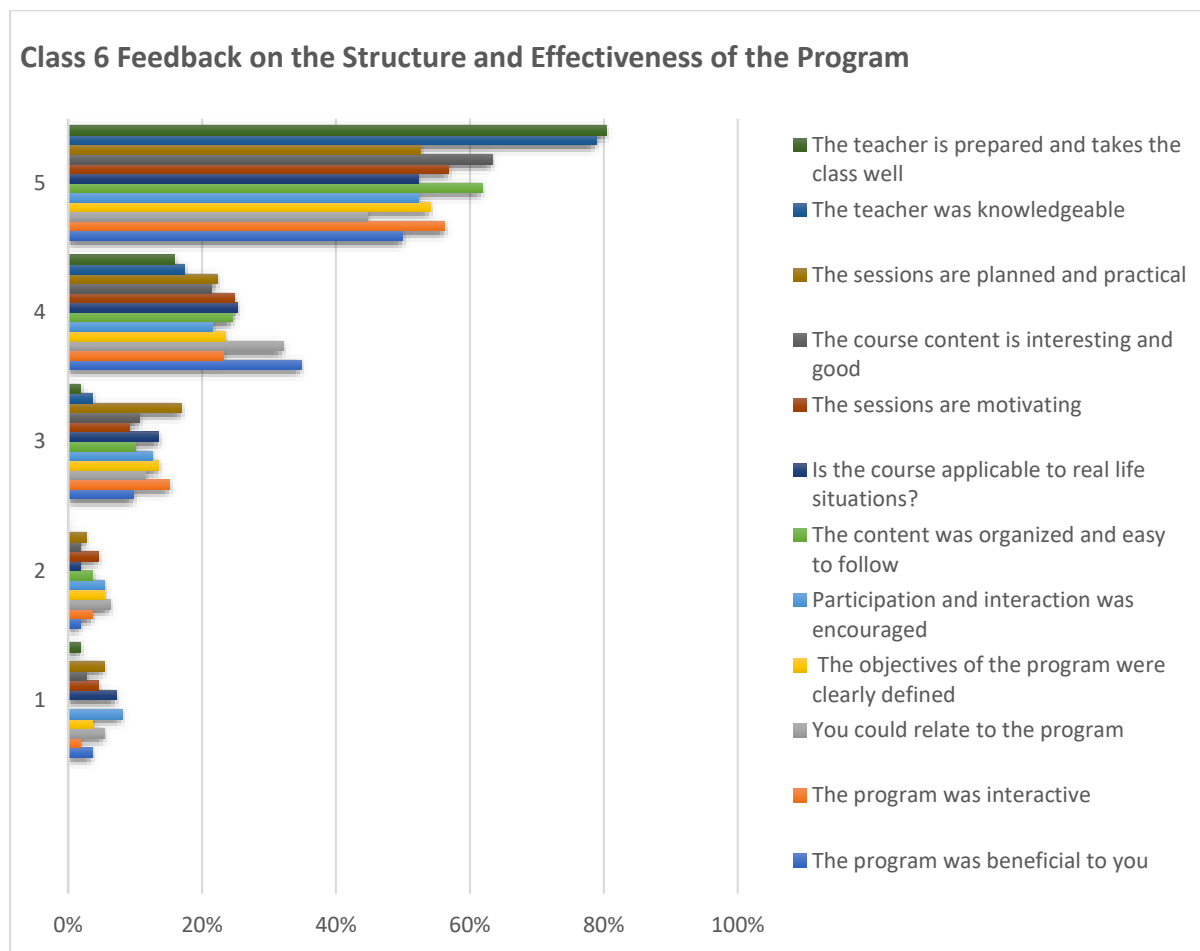
The children also took feedback tests to express their views on the effectiveness of the program. The children from class 6 of Deepalaya School marked on a scale of 1-5 (one being the lowest) on various aspects on the structure and effectiveness of the program, as shown in Figure 7. The following percentages of children scored '5' for the questions mentioned, as given below, indicating how well the children appreciated the program:
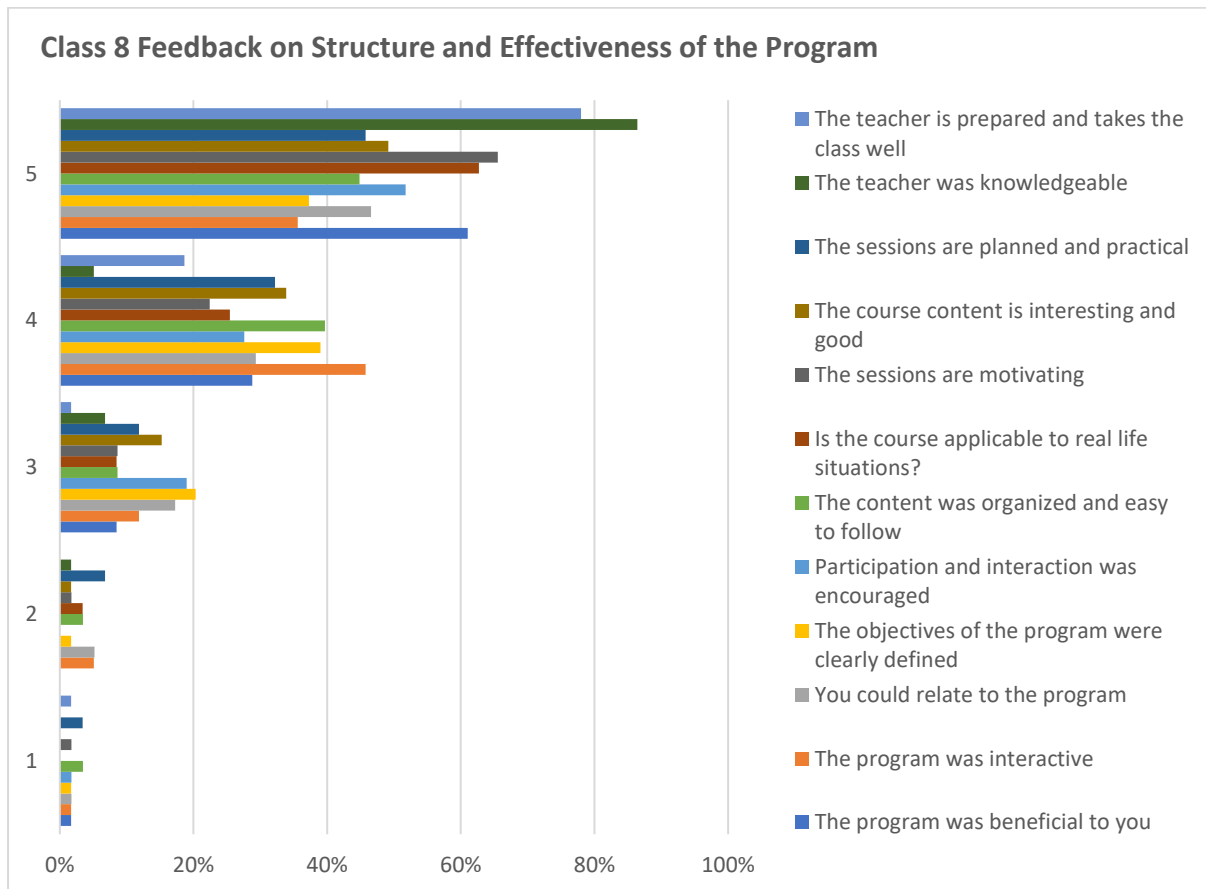
- The teacher is prepared and takes the class well – 80%
- The teacher was knowledgeable – 79%
- The sessions are planned and practical – 53%
- The course content is interesting and good – 63%
- The sessions are motivating – 57%
- Is the course applicable to real life situations? – 52%
- The content was organised and easy to follow – 62%
- Participation and interaction was encouraged – 52%
- The objectives of the program were clearly defined – 54%
- You could relate to the program – 45%
- The program was interactive – 56%
- The program was beneficial to you – 50%

Class 6 Feedback

- YES
- NO

Further, 58% children responded that they had not known about emotions in detail before the program, showing the necessity of such an intervention on emotional health of children. 94% of the children answered 'yes' to the question "Did the program create awareness on emotions?".

Class 8 Feedback on Structure and Effectiveness of the Program

- The teacher is prepared and takes the class well
- The teacher was knowledgeable
- The sessions are planned and practical
- The course content is interesting and good
- The sessions are motivating
- Is the course applicable to real life situations?
- The content was organized and easy to follow
- Participation and interaction was encouraged
- The objectives of the program were clearly defined
- You could relate to the program
- The program was interactive
- The program was beneficial to you

The children from class 8 of Chowguley Public School marked on a scale of 1-5 (one being the lowest) on various aspects on the structure and effectiveness of the program, as shown in Figure 9. Over approximately 60% responses scored '4' or '5' for each question, showing how well the children appreciated the program. The following percentages of children scored '5' for the questions mentioned, as given below:

- The teacher is prepared and takes the class well – 78%
- The teacher was knowledgeable – 86%
- The sessions are planned and practical – 46%
- The course content is interesting and good – 49%
- The sessions are motivating – 66%
- Is the course applicable to real life situations? – 63%

- The content was organised and easy to follow – 45%
- Participation and interaction was encouraged – 52%
- The objectives of the program were clearly defined – 37%
- You could relate to the program – 75%
- The program was interactive – 36%
- The program was beneficial to you – 61%

Figure 10: Class 8 Feedback
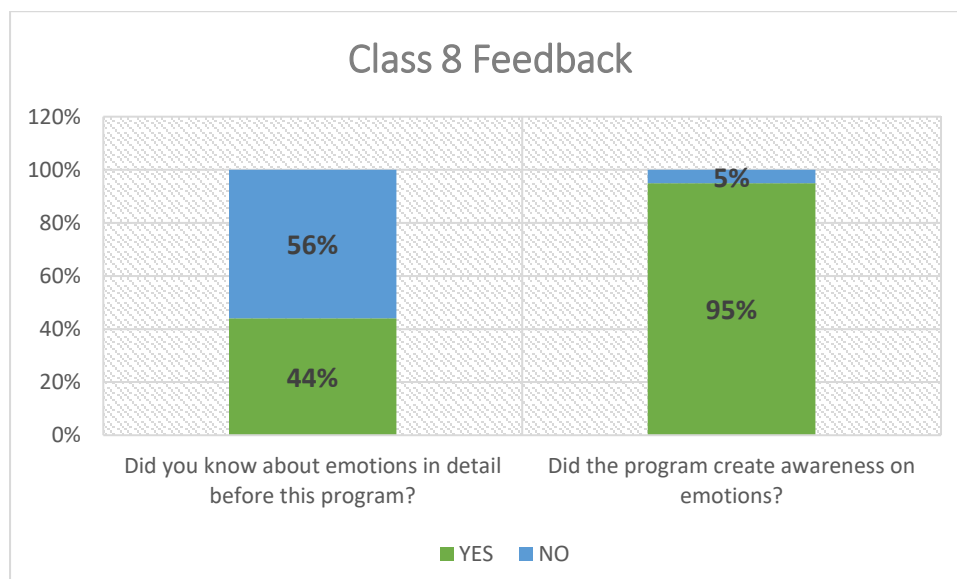
The above depictions illustrate the responses received from the children showing the need and effectiveness of such a program. 44% children responded that they had not known about emotions in detail before the program. 95% of the children answered 'yes' to the question "Did the program create awareness on emotions?", showing the effectiveness of the program.

Remarks on the Significance of the Program in Testing Times like COVID.

Like in all countries around the world, the government responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by introducing measures such as social-distancing, quarantine and isolation. While necessary, these measures can have a significant effect on our emotional wellbeing. Fear, anxiety, anger, sadness

and grief are compounded by being away from schools, work, peers, adjusting to new ways of learning etc.[6].

"Research on natural disasters makes it clear that, compared to adults, children are more vulnerable to the emotional impact of traumatic events that disrupt their daily lives. Amidst the COVID-19 outbreak, everyday life has changed and will continue to change for most people, often with little notice. Children may struggle with significant adjustments to their routines (e.g., schools and child care closures, social distancing, home confinement), which may interfere with their sense of structure, predictability, and security. Young people—even infants and toddlers—are keen observers of people and environments, and they notice and react to stress in their parents and other caregivers, peers, and community members. They may ask direct questions about what is happening now or what will happen in the future and may behave differently in reaction to strong feelings (e.g., fear, worry, sadness, anger) about the pandemic and related conditions. Children also may worry about their own safety and the safety of their loved ones, how they will get their basic needs met (e.g., food, shelter, clothing), and uncertainties for the future.

While most children eventually return to their typical functioning when they receive consistent support from sensitive and responsive caregivers, others are at risk of developing significant mental health problems, including trauma-related stress, anxiety, and depression. Children with prior trauma or pre-existing mental, physical, or developmental problems—and those whose parents struggle with mental health disorders, substance misuse, or economic instability—are at especially high risk for emotional disturbances.[7]".

The fear of losing loved ones to the coronavirus (COVID-19) infection is most apparent among children who are immersed in immense anxiety and emotional stress brought by the ongoing pandemic and lockdown. But, the toll on the mental health of the young ones may be way more than the physical symptoms of COVID-19.

This brings us as a society to one important question "Have we equipped our young ones with the tools to cope with the stress brought on by a pandemic, let alone daily life without one?"

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[6] UNICEF

[7] Bartlett, Jessica et. al. "Resources for Supporting Children's Emotional Well-being during the COVID-19 Pandemic" 2020, Child Trends https://www.childtrends.org/publications/resources-for-supporting-childrens-emotional-well-being-during-the-covid-19-pandemic Date of Access: 18th June 2020