

## A Study of Mindfulness Practice in Management of Anxiety Among Adolescent Students

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### ABSTRACT

Mindfulness is the psychological process of bringing one's attention to experiences occurring in the present moment, which can be developed through the practice of meditation and other training. The term mindfulness correlates with the Pali term *sati*, which is a significant element of Buddhist traditions. In the present study an attempt has been made to evaluate the effects of mindfulness practice in management of anxiety among adolescent students. A total of 100 adolescent students were initially selected for the study. The anxiety was assessed using Institute of Personality and Ability Testing Anxiety Scale (IPAT) (Krug, Scheier & Cattell). Out of them 30 adolescent students (15 males and 15 females) were selected randomly who were in the age group of 13-15 years. Pre and post research design was applied. These adolescents were provided mindfulness training in a group and a total of 18 sessions were conducted in a period of three weeks. Results suggests a significant change in the level of anxiety.

**Keywords:** *Mindfulness, Anxiety, Adolescents*

Mindfulness is the psychological process of bringing one's attention to experiences occurring in the present moment, which can be developed through the practice of meditation and other training. The term mindfulness correlates with the Pali term *sati*, which is a significant element of Buddhist traditions. In Buddhist teachings, mindfulness is utilized to develop self-knowledge and wisdom that gradually lead to what is described as enlightenment or the complete freedom from suffering. The mindfulness can be seen as a strategy that stands in contrast to a strategy of avoidance of emotion on the one hand and to the strategy of emotional over engagement on the other hand. Mindfulness can also be viewed as a means to develop self-knowledge and wisdom (Haynes and Feldman, 2004). The definitions of mindfulness are typically selectively interpreted based on who is studying it and how it is applied. Some have viewed mindfulness as a mental state, while others have viewed it as a set of skills and techniques. A distinction can also be made between the state of mindfulness and the trait of mindfulness (Brown et al., 2007).

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Beauchemin et al. (2008) conducted a study to see whether mindfulness meditation lessens anxiety, promote social skills and improve academic performance among adolescents with learning disabilities. Results suggested significant improvement, with participants who completed the program demonstrating decreased state and trait anxiety, enhanced social skills, and improved academic performance. Although not directly assessed, the outcomes are consistent with a cognitive-interference model of learning disability and suggest that mindfulness meditation decreases anxiety and detrimental self-focus of attention, which, in turn, promotes social skills and academic outcomes. Crowley et al. (2007) conducted a study to see the effect of group mindfulness for adolescent anxiety. Results suggested significant improvements in anxiety, internalizing, stress, and attention, with effect sizes ranging from .88 to 1.34.

Studies have shown that rumination and worry contribute to mental illnesses such as depression and anxiety, and that mindfulness-based interventions are effective in the reduction of both rumination and worry.

Wisner (2013) conducted this study to examine the perceived benefits of mindfulness meditation (MM) for compensatory alternative high school students. This process yielded eight clusters representing the perceived benefits of meditation for students: improved stress management, enhanced self-awareness, enhanced emotional coping, enhanced ability to pay attention, improved state of mind, more time spent being calm, improved school climate, and enhanced student engagement. These clusters encompass three broad domains of perceived benefits for students including intrapersonal, psychosocial, and systemic benefits. The results showed significant reduction of stress in students.

There are also some Indian studies which give evidence of efficacy of mindfulness in the management of anxiety. A study was conducted by Kumar et al. (2020) on application of mindfulness on stress, anxiety, and well-being in an adolescent student. Total of 24 mindfulness sessions were given to the student and after completion of mindfulness sessions the student reported reduction in anxiety levels. A study was conducted by Pundeer et al. (2013) on Application of yoga nidra and vedic mantras on psychological well-being among school going adolescents. Initially 35 (later 32) samples were taken in this study. The intervention of yoga nidra and vedic mantras were given to them. The result showed significant improvement in the reduction of anxiety.

In the present study, an attempt has been made to see the effect of mindfulness practice in management of anxiety among adolescent students.

### *Objective*

In view of the above, the present study was undertaken with following objective:

To assess the effect of performing mindfulness practice in alleviating the anxiety levels of school going adolescents including both boys and girls.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### *Sample*

In this study, initially 100 adolescent students were selected randomly from 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> standard, aged between 14-16 years from a school in New Delhi. Out of these 100 students, 30 students were taken to the study after screening. Out of 30, 15 each were male and female students. Simple random sampling is used in this research. No participants were on pharmacotherapy and no participants were having any comorbid illness.

**Measures:**

**Institute of Personality and Ability Testing Anxiety Scale (IPAT): Krug, Scheier & Cattell (1976):** A brief screening questionnaire, Institute of Personality and Ability Testing Scale (IPAT) was used in this study. It is a 40-item instrument. The scale is a valid and reliable tool for assessment of anxiety.

**Procedure**

Pre and Post intervention design was used for the study. Initially 100 students were selected randomly. After administering IPAT scale, out of those 100, sample of 30 participants (15 each of boys and girls) having high level of anxiety on IPAT scale were selected. Thereafter, 18 sessions of mindfulness-based meditation was given to them in three weeks. After giving 18 sessions of mindfulness meditation again IPAT was administered on them to measure the level of anxiety. All participants attended all the mindfulness sessions.

**RESULTS**

The findings of the study are presented below:

**Table 1. Relationship of mindfulness practice with anxiety levels of school going boys**

|                 | N  | MEAN  | SD   | SE <sub>M</sub> | SE <sub>D</sub> | Df | t- value | Level of significance |
|-----------------|----|-------|------|-----------------|-----------------|----|----------|-----------------------|
| Boys' pre data  | 15 | 49.53 | 2.91 | 0.75            | 1.42            | 28 | 9.88     | P<0.00001             |
| Boys' post data | 15 | 35.46 | 4.68 | 1.20            |                 |    |          |                       |

Table 1. showing relationship of mindfulness practice with anxiety levels of school going boys. 15 samples of boys were taken and the result shows that their pre-data's average is 49.53 and post data's average is 35.46 respectively which is extremely significant.

**Table 2. Relationship of mindfulness practice with anxiety levels of school going girls**

|                  | N  | MEAN  | SD   | SE <sub>M</sub> | SE <sub>D</sub> | Df | t- value | Level of significance |
|------------------|----|-------|------|-----------------|-----------------|----|----------|-----------------------|
| Girls' pre data  | 15 | 46.86 | 1.92 | 0.49            | 1.12            | 28 | 9.69     | P<0.00001             |
| Girls' post data | 15 | 35.93 | 3.92 | 1.01            |                 |    |          |                       |

Table 2. showing relationship of mindfulness practice with anxiety levels of school going girls. 15 samples of girls are taken and the result shows that their pre-data's average is 46.86 and post data's average is 35.93 respectively which is extremely significant.

**Table 3. Relationship of mindfulness practice with anxiety levels of school going boys and girls**

|                  | N  | MEAN | SD   | SE <sub>M</sub> | SE <sub>D</sub> | Df | t- value | Level of significance |
|------------------|----|------|------|-----------------|-----------------|----|----------|-----------------------|
| Girls' pre data  | 30 | 48.2 | 2.80 | 0.49            | 0.94            | 58 | 13.26    | P<0.00001             |
| Girls' post data | 30 | 35.7 | 3.92 | 4.32            |                 |    |          |                       |

Table 3. showing relationship of mindfulness practice with anxiety levels of both school going boys and girls. All 30 samples are taken and the result shows that their pre-data's average is 48.2 and post data's average is 35.7 respectively which is extremely significant.

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Result indicates that the immediate effect of mindfulness is very positive and due to regular practice of mindfulness for three weeks the anxiety level is significantly reduced at  $P < .01$ .

### DISCUSSION

After practicing mindfulness practice for 3 weeks on adolescents with high anxiety levels, we conclude that the level of anxiety among adolescents reduced significantly. So, we can say that mindfulness practice is beneficial for both boys and girls but only if practiced in apt conditions under the guidance of an experienced instructor in the beginning. Earlier studies on effect of mindfulness practice in management of anxiety also proves that mindfulness is very effective in reduction of anxiety. A study conducted by Beauchemin et al. (2008) to see whether mindfulness meditation lessens anxiety, promote social skills and improve academic performance among adolescents with learning disabilities also suggests significant improvement in participants who completed the mindfulness program which resulted in decreased state and trait anxiety, enhanced social skills, and improved academic performance. A study conducted by Burke (2009) suggests that mindfulness is efficacious in promoting psychological health and well-being in adolescents. lot of young adults suffer from anxiety related to family relationship, academic performance etc. which gets unnoticed by their parents and guardians. Therefore, they need psychological assistance in order to calm their mind and increase self-confidence and concentration which will help them to achieve the desired results with less amount of worry and anxiety. Liehr and Diaz (2010) conducted a pilot study to examine the effect of mindfulness on depression and anxiety for minority children. The results suggested decreased anxiety symptoms over time. An Indian study by Kumar et al. (2020) on application of mindfulness on stress, anxiety, and well-being in an adolescent student. After 24 mindfulness sessions student reported reduction in anxiety levels. A study conducted by Pundeer et al. (2013) on application of yoga nidra and vedic mantras on psychological well-being among school going adolescents also indicates towards significant improvement in anxiety.

Study should be replicated on a larger population on people of different age groups. Since it is time and cost-effective technique, evidence-based randomized controlled trails should be conducted to establish it as a treatment technique.

### CONCLUSION

We conclude that mindfulness practice is beneficial for both boys and girls in management of anxiety but only if practiced in apt conditions under the guidance of an experienced instructor.

#### *Limitations*

The sample size was small. Long term follow up was required.

#### *Future Directions*

As this study only comprises of 100 subjects, sample size can be increased in future studies. For betterment of results, the duration of mindfulness practice can be increased in further studies. Only one tool (IPAT scale) is used in this research, so tools can be increased for more accurate results. The age limit of samples can also be increased in further studies.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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