

AI Meditation Apps: Role in Easing Stress & Enhancing Well-being of Final Year University Students

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ABSTRACT

This research delves into the persistent issue of Stress faced by Final-year university students studying B.Pharmacy, architecture, and design, disciplines known for their precise academic demands. The study aims to explore the effectiveness of AI meditation apps in reducing Stress among the students. The research utilizes a cross-sectional methodology involving 97 final-year students selected randomly from universities offering these courses out of which 38 of them were facing High Stress. Through the implementation of the Stress Scale (SS-LVNS) to gauge stress dimensions and the utilization of the Headspace app as an intervention tool for a subset of high-stress participants, the study seeks to analyze the relationship between AI meditation app usage and stress reduction. Initial findings emphasize the heightened stress levels experienced during this essential academic phase, and Meditation Apps were used in order to reduce the stress among those students. Statistical analyses aim to provide empirical evidence supporting the potential role of AI meditation apps in improving the mental well-being and academic performance of these students by reducing stress.

Keywords: *Stress, Artificial intelligence, Meditation Apps, Academic stress, Mental well-being*

Stress, as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), encompasses a broad spectrum of physical, emotional, and psychological strain triggered by any form of change demanding attention or action. It is a universal experience, varying in intensity from person to person. How individuals respond to stress significantly impacts their overall well-being.

In the course of their daily lives, people encounter a multitude of requests or stressors, an inherent aspect of routine activities. However, according to Lazarus and Folkman (1986), when these stressors exceed an individual's coping resources or jeopardize their well-being, the person often perceives stress. While moderate levels of stress can enhance performance, persistent or heightened levels of stress can detrimentally affect an individual's health (Varghese et al., 2015). It is important to note that individuals who recognize the adverse effects of elevated stress levels on their health are more likely to suffer from compromised

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mental and physical health outcomes, and in severe cases, even premature mortality (Keller et al., 2012).

Stress is an inevitable aspect of the human experience, and nearly everyone undergoes stressful situations at various points in their lives. Our bodies possess a natural capacity to perceive and react to stressors, eliciting both physical and mental responses. When faced with changes or challenges, often referred to as stressors, our bodies manifest anxiety as a response. This mechanism assists in adapting to new circumstances and environments. Essentially, stress responses can be viewed as the body's way of better aligning itself with novel situations.

Intriguingly, stress isn't always detrimental; in fact, a certain level of stress can be positive and beneficial. This form of stress, known as eustress, serves to keep us attentive, motivated, and adequately prepared to avoid potential dangers. For instance, it can propel heightened effort and sustained focus when preparing for a critical examination or presentation. However, the persistence of stressors without interludes of relief or relaxation can lead to a range of issues. The autonomic nervous system, a vital regulator of bodily functions such as heart rate, breathing, and vision, orchestrates the physiological responses during periods of stress. When stress becomes chronic and prolonged, the body's stress response, often termed the "fight or flight response," remains in a heightened state. This ongoing activation can result in wear and tear on the body, gradually causing detrimental effects on physical and mental well-being. Chronic stress, therefore, necessitates attention and appropriate coping strategies to mitigate its potential adverse impacts.

There are two types of stress:

Acute stress is a high-intensity reaction to a challenging event that unfolds within a short time frame, typically spanning from a few moments to a few hours. It's a brief and intense experience, lasting usually for less than a few weeks, triggered by an unexpected or distressing incident, such as a sudden loss, an assault, or a natural calamity.

On the other hand, chronic stress is enduring and persists over a prolonged period. It is often a consequence of sustained high levels of pressure, whether from consistent life challenges or demanding circumstances. Individuals facing ongoing difficulties, such as caregivers or those living in impoverished conditions, may undergo chronic stress, which manifests through a range of physical, mental, and behavioral symptoms.

Stress is a physiological and psychological response the body undergoes when facing demanding or challenging situations. It is a natural reaction designed to prepare an individual to cope with threats or pressure. During stress, the body releases hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline, triggering the "fight or flight" response. However, prolonged or excessive stress can have detrimental effects on both mental and physical health, impacting productivity, relationships, and overall well-being. Recognizing the signs of stress and implementing effective stress management techniques are crucial for maintaining a balanced and healthy lifestyle.

Well-being, a fundamental concept in psychology, encompasses a multifaceted state of optimal functioning and contentment across various domains of human life. It encapsulates an individual's mental, emotional, and physical health, emphasizing not only the absence of distress but also the presence of positive elements such as happiness, fulfillment, and flourishing. Within the realm of psychology, the understanding and pursuit of well-being

AI Meditation Apps: Role in Easing Stress & Enhancing Well-being of Final Year University Students

have been approached through diverse frameworks, theories, and empirical research, aiming to decipher its complexities and significance in human existence.

One prominent perspective of well-being, introduced by Carol Ryff, presents a multidimensional framework encompassing six key dimensions: self-acceptance, personal growth, purpose in life, positive relations with others, environmental mastery, and autonomy. Ryff's model underscores the interplay between these dimensions, highlighting their collective contribution to an individual's overall well-being. Numerous factors influence an individual's well-being, spanning biological, psychological, social, and environmental domains. Biological factors such as genetics, brain chemistry, and physical health contribute to one's predisposition to experience well-being. Psychological aspects, including resilience, coping strategies, and mindset, play a pivotal role in navigating life's challenges and maintaining a positive outlook.

The final year of university education stands as a critical juncture for students, marked by a blend of academic pressures, looming deadlines, and anticipatory stress about the future. Within the realm of psychology, understanding and fostering well-being become essential in mitigating the stress experienced by these final year students. Well-being, a multidimensional construct encompassing mental, emotional, and physical health, plays a crucial role in shaping how individuals cope with stress and navigate the challenges of this pivotal academic phase.

In the contemporary academic environment, final-year students pursuing various disciplines, including pharmacy, architecture, Design etc. Often experience heightened levels of stress due to the confluence of academic demands, future career expectations, and personal life challenges which hamper their overall well-being. This period represents a critical moment in time where the culmination of years of hard work and the anticipation of entering the professional world converge. The mental and emotional strain associated with final-year studies can significantly impact the overall well-being and performance of these students.

Meditation apps are digital tools designed to facilitate meditation practices and promote mental well-being. They offer a range of features, including guided meditations, mindfulness exercises, breathing techniques, and relaxation programs. These apps aim to reduce stress, improve focus, enhance emotional regulation, promote better sleep, and contribute to overall mental wellness. They are easily accessible, allowing users to practice meditation at their convenience.

Meditation practices via these apps often involve techniques like mindfulness, deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, or visualization. Users can select specific programs tailored to their needs, durations, or preferences (such as focusing on stress relief, sleep improvement, or boosting productivity). Many apps also track progress, provide reminders, and offer user-friendly interfaces to make meditation accessible to beginners and experienced practitioners alike.

Headspace is a popular meditation app known for its user-friendly approach to mindfulness and meditation practices. Founded by Andy Puddicombe and Richard Pierson in 2010, Headspace aims to make meditation accessible to everyone, regardless of their experience level.

Key Features of Headspace:

- 1. Guided Meditations:** The app offers a variety of guided meditation sessions led by Andy Puddicombe, a former Buddhist monk. These sessions cater to different needs, such as stress relief, improved focus, better sleep, or managing anxiety.
- 2. Mindfulness Exercises:** Headspace provides mindfulness exercises that promote awareness and presence in everyday activities, including mindful walking, eating, and commuting.
- 3. Sleep Sounds and Stories:** For improving sleep quality, the app offers a collection of relaxing sounds and bedtime stories to help users wind down and fall asleep more easily.
- 4. Personalized Programs:** Users can access curated meditation programs designed to address specific concerns like stress, anxiety, productivity, or relationships. These programs offer a structured approach to meditation practice.
- 5. SOS Sessions:** Headspace includes quick SOS sessions for moments of acute stress or panic, providing immediate support and guidance.
- 6. Progress Tracking:** The app tracks users' progress, allowing them to see their meditation streaks, milestones, and time spent meditating.

This research delves into the realm of stress experienced by students pursuing diverse fields of study, specifically in B.Pharmacy, architecture, and design, all of which share a commonality in their four-year duration. Recognizing stress as a pervasive factor in academic settings, our focus extends to the final-year students within these disciplines. The final year represents a critical juncture, where the culmination of academic rigor, impending career expectations, and personal challenges converge, contributing to heightened stress levels among these students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nneka Vera's study in 2023 focused on N=97 Industrial Technical Education students, implementing Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy (REBT) using IBM SPSS. The research showcased the sustained efficacy of REBT in reducing irrational beliefs, academic stress, and maladjustment among students in Enugu State, Nigeria. This highlights the significance of therapeutic interventions like REBT in alleviating stress within specific student populations.

Hasan Ali et al.'s 2023 study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) in treating social anxiety in teenagers. They utilized deep learning algorithms (CNNs and LSTMs) to predict the relationship between CBT and social anxiety in teens, showcasing the potential fusion of CBT with Emotion AI for mental health disorder treatment.

Dupps et al. (2023) explored the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in academic and clinical medicine, emphasizing its benefits in improving the quality of life. Their research highlighted AI's indispensable role in enhancing academic publishing and its broader applications in clinical medicine for societal well-being.

Nguyen et al. (2023) explored ethical principles for Artificial Intelligence in Education (AIED), highlighting potential risks and concerns associated with AI adoption in educational settings. Their paper aimed to address the need for ethical frameworks governing AI's integration in education.

AI Meditation Apps: Role in Easing Stress & Enhancing Well-being of Final Year University Students

Mittal et al. (2022) conducted a systematic literature review exploring the applications of machine learning in stress management across diverse occupational backgrounds. Their study aimed to raise awareness of stress management's importance and provide insights into factors contributing to stress, anxiety, and depression among individuals in workplaces and educational settings.

Vrontis et al. (2021) conducted a systematic review encompassing N=45 articles to synthesize academic insights on intelligent automation's impacts on human resource management (HRM). The study aimed to organize academic inputs, highlighting the implications of intelligent technologies on HRM at both organizational and individual levels.

De Alwis et al. (2021) proposed a system utilizing Emotional Artificial Intelligence (AI) to detect and manage academic stress among N=300 university students. Employing text input, audio, and video analysis, this system aimed to identify emotions and stress levels in students. The research's innovative use of AI for stress detection and management highlights its potential in assisting students with stress reduction techniques, offering a pioneering method in addressing emotional distress within university settings.

Sturgill et al. (2021) developed the Ajivar app, focusing on emotional intelligence (EI) and mindfulness training for college students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their study utilized quantitative questionnaires, demonstrating improvements in anxiety, depression, and EI among college students through scalable EI and mindfulness training via the app.

Simran Kaur (2021) Kaur's paper focused on the integration of emotional intelligence (EI) with artificial intelligence (AI) in the digital workplace. It aimed to elucidate how AI serves as a supportive system for emotional intelligence, exploring the emerging concept of Emotion AI within workplace environments.

Miltiadis et al. (2021) conducted a comprehensive study on artificial intelligence (AI) and cognitive computing, covering various methods, technologies, systems, applications, and policy implications. Their research aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of AI's multifaceted landscape.

Lau et al. (2020) conducted a systematic review aiming to examine the breadth of therapeutic content and features available in psychosocial wellness and stress management apps. Their study sought to identify apps supporting self-help seekers for public download and determine which of these apps had original research support.

Al Khudhairiy et al. (2020) conducted a cross-sectional survey assessing the correlation between well-being and stress among dental students. Their research focused on utilizing tools like the Perceived Stress Scale and mindfulness scale within Saudi Arabia's dental student population.

Liang et al. (2020) developed the NokoriMe mobile health application, aiming to measure and track stress levels and physiological responses among university students. Utilizing the ASP.NET MVC framework, the app allowed visualization of stress trends and correlations with physiological reactions, offering potential insights for stress management.

Lin et al. (2020) explored the integration of advanced artificial intelligence (AI) in heart rate and blood pressure monitoring to understand systemic challenges and implications. The research involved N=29 stakeholders and semi-structured interviews to gauge the potential benefits within a leading Canadian academic hospital.

Rental's 2019 study involved N=230 Indian adolescent girls and emphasized a holistic stress management program. Conducted as a randomized controlled trial in selected colleges of Dharwad city, Karnataka, India, the research focused on psychology education strategies, acupressure exercises, and meditation. This approach aimed to establish a balance among mind, body, and spirit, showing potential benefits in reducing academic stress and enhancing overall well-being among adolescent girls.

Hasan et al. (2019) investigated the numerous benefits of artificial intelligence (AI) in academic and clinical medicine. Their study underscored AI's pivotal role in improving the quality of life for individuals within academic and clinical medical settings, emphasizing its potential positive impact.

Turner et al. (2019) delved into the antecedents and impacts of academic stress among twenty undergraduate building and construction students. Through semi-structured interviews, the study aimed to identify resources for managing stress and building resilience among this specific student cohort.

Collen et al. (2013) conducted research involving N=51 college students, utilizing an experimental design. Their study indicated promising avenues for promoting psychosocial adjustment and stress management in first-year college students. The engagement in a psychosocial wellness seminar showcased potential benefits during this critical developmental phase.

Miltiadis et al. (2021) conducted a comprehensive study on artificial intelligence (AI) and cognitive computing, covering various methods, technologies, systems, applications, and policy implications. Their research aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of AI's multifaceted landscape.

Manning et al. (2012) highlighted the importance of addressing exam stress among students and the potential negative health implications it can have. The study focused on the significance of an eCounsellor, an avatar-based system, as a potential tool for managing exam stress among students.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

The aim of this research is to investigate the role of AI meditation apps in easing the stress & enhance well-being experienced by final-year university students, with a specific focus on students pursuing B.Pharmacy, Architecture, and Design.

Objective

- To assess the current stress levels of final-year university students in BPharmacy, Architecture, and Design.
- To examine the perceived effectiveness of AI meditation apps in reducing stress among final-year students.

AI Meditation Apps: Role in Easing Stress & Enhancing Well-being of Final Year University Students

- To examine the affect of AI meditation apps for enhancing Well-being of the final year students.

Research Problem

The research aims to explore the effectiveness of AI meditation apps in reducing stress among & enhancing the well-being of final-year university students in B.Pharmacy, Architecture, and Design disciplines and its influence on overall well-being and academic performance.

HYPOTHESIS

- **H1:** The AI meditation app will significantly reduce Stress among final year students.
- **H2:** The AI meditation app will help enhance well-being of final year students.
- **H3:** The effectiveness of AI meditation apps in reducing stress levels will vary among different academic disciplines, showing more pronounced effects in B.Pharmacy compared to Architecture and Design.

Sample

Sample size

The research will adopt a Cross-sectional approach involving final-year students from the B.Pharmacy, architecture, and design disciplines across multiple universities within a specific geographic area. The sample size encompasses strength of N=200 participants in total, randomly selected from universities offering these courses out of which N=97 participants experienced high stress.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria:

- Consists of final-year students enrolled in the B.Pharmacy, Architecture, and Design programs.
- Students suffering with High Stress.
- Students between the age group 18-23 years
- Courses with the duration of only 4 Year

Exclusion criteria

Include students enrolled in courses with the duration more than or less than 4 years
Students with low to average stress levels

Tools used

- **Stress Scale (SS-LVNS):** It is a Stress Scale that helps measure stress among 4 dimensions i.e. Pressure, Physical Stress, Anxiety & Frustration with a total of 40 items.
- **Headspace App:** It is Meditation app that consists of different techniques that help reducing stress
- **Ryff's well-being scale:** The Ryff's Well-Being Scale measures psychological well-being across six dimensions, assessing aspects such as Self-acceptance, Positive relations, Personal growth, Purpose in life, Environmental mastery, and Autonomy. Its comprehensive nature provides insights into an individual's holistic mental health and fulfillment.

Procedure

- **Participant Recruitment:** Universities offering B.Pharmacy, Architecture, and Design programs were contacted to seek approval for participation. Consent forms were be distributed to eligible final-year students interested in participating in the study.
- **Data Collection:** The Stress Scale SSLV, AI Meditation app (Headspace) and Ryff’s Well-being scale usage survey was administered digitally with the consenting participants.
- **AI Meditation App Intervention:** A subset of participants (With high stress levels) were selected and provided access to AI meditation apps for a predetermined period (i.e. 30 days) to assess the impact on stress reduction.

Statistical analysis

Statistical analyses will be conducted using software such as SPSS provided an overview of stress levels among the final-year students in the three disciplines. Spearman’s correlation was used be used to determine the relationship between app usage patterns and Stress reduction, comparing Stress levels before and after the AI meditation app intervention while correlating with the Well-being of the individuals.

Discription

The present study's sample consisted of adults between the ages of 18 and 25. These adults live in Delhi, India undergraduate students. They did not engage in risky lifestyle behaviors like smoking, drinking, or drug abuse, and they did not have any significant physical ailment.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Spearman's rank-order correlations were conducted to investigate the relationships between stress levels before and after using meditation apps. The analysis revealed a positive and significant correlation between stress levels before and after meditation, with a correlation coefficient (ρ) of approximately 0.3604, ($p < 0.05$).

Table 1 Showing Spearman’s Correlation for Stress Levels before and after using Meditation App

Spearman Correlation Analysis		
Variable	Correlation Coefficient	p-value
Stress Levels Before vs. Stress Levels After	0.3604	<0.005

Spearman's rank-order correlations were conducted to investigate the relationships between well-being scores before and after using meditation apps. The analysis revealed a strong positive correlation between well-being scores before and after meditation, with a correlation coefficient (ρ) of approximately 0.8947, ($p < 0.05$)

Table 2 Showing Spearman’s Correlation for Well-being Levels before and after using Meditation App

Spearman Correlation Analysis		
Variable	Correlation coefficient	p-value
Well-being Levels After vs. Well-being After	0.8947	< 0.05

AI Meditation Apps: Role in Easing Stress & Enhancing Well-being of Final Year University Students

The outcomes investigated the relationship between stress levels, well-being status, and the effectiveness of meditation apps in reducing stress and improving overall well-being. The findings revealed insights into the impact of meditation apps on individuals' stress levels and well-being.

Firstly, the Spearman correlation analysis indicated a significant positive correlation ($\rho = 0.3604$, $p < 0.05$) between stress levels before and after using meditation apps. This suggests that individuals who reported higher stress levels before using the meditation apps tended to experience a reduction in stress after engaging with the apps. This finding underscores the potential efficacy of meditation apps in mitigating stress levels among users, aligning with previous research highlighting the stress-reducing benefits of mindfulness-based interventions.

The analysis also revealed a significant positive correlation ($\rho = 0.8947$, $p < 0.05$) between well-being scores before and after using meditation apps. This suggests that individuals who reported higher well-being scores before engaging with the apps tended to experience further improvement in well-being after using them. This finding underscores the potential of meditation apps as effective tools for promoting well-being and psychological health among users. The observed increase in well-being scores after using meditation apps aligns with previous research highlighting the positive effects of mindfulness-based interventions on various aspects of well-being, including mood, stress reduction, and overall life satisfaction.

It was noted that among the three domains examined in the study B.Pharmacy, Architecture, and Design students in the field of Architecture exhibited the highest levels of stress compared to their counterparts in the other disciplines.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research delves into the efficacy of AI Meditation apps in reducing Stress and enhancing the Well-Being of final-year university students. Through a Cross-sectional study involving participants from B.Pharmacy, Architecture, and Design disciplines, the research explores the significant role of these apps in stress reduction and Well-being improvement.

The findings show a positive correlation between Stress levels before and after using Meditation apps, indicating a potential reduction in stress among individuals engaging with these tools. Moreover, a strong positive correlation was observed between Well-being scores before and after using meditation apps, suggesting a further enhancement of Well-being following app utilization.

These results emphasize the effectiveness of meditation apps in promoting mental wellness among final-year university students, particularly during critical academic phases characterized by heightened stress levels. By offering accessible and user-friendly platforms for mindfulness practices, these apps contribute to enhancing coping mechanisms and fostering resilience in the face of academic and personal challenges, it is also notable that Architecture students exhibited the highest levels of Stress among the disciplines studied. This highlights the importance of targeted interventions and support systems tailored to the specific needs of students in demanding academic fields.

In order to enhance holistic well-being and academic success, this research highlights the importance of incorporating technology-driven interventions, like AI Meditation apps, into

student support services. Through the management of stress and the improvement of psychological well-being, these interventions help to establish a supportive learning environment that supports students' overall development.

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AI Meditation Apps: Role in Easing Stress & Enhancing Well-being of Final Year University Students

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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