

Mindfulness and its relationship with State -Trait Anxiety among College Students

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Abstract: Anxiety is one of the commonly reported mental health issues among college students. For student's optimal mental health and career development, it is crucial to find ways to relieve anxiety while embracing upon a career. Mindfulness practices have recently been proved beneficial to address anxiety and other mental health issues of students. The aim of the present study was to assess the relation of mindfulness with state-trait anxiety and to see gender difference with respect to mindfulness and anxiety. A sample of 100 students (50 male and 50 female) was randomly selected from different departments of Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh. Cognitive Affective Mindfulness Scale-Revised (CAMS-R) developed by Feldman, Hayes, Kumar, Greenson, and Laurenceau (2007) and State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) of Spielberger, Gorsuch, Lushene, Vagg & Jacobs, (1983) were applied. Pearson product moment correlation, descriptive statistics and t-test were used. The results revealed the negative significant relationship between mindfulness and state-trait anxiety. Findings underline the need to cultivate mindfulness awareness through practices that could promote efficacy in reducing anxiety, foster attention, and concentration of college going students.

Key Word: mindfulness, state-trait anxiety, academic performance.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Anxiety is one of the commonly reported mental health issues among college students. College students' levels of stress have been on the rise with about one-third reporting to have difficulties functioning and almost half experiencing feelings of overwhelming anxiety (Novotney, 2014). The tremendous societal pressure to stand out from our competitors makes us incredibly critical of our thoughts and actions (Goldin et. al, 2009).

Mindfulness has not been the subject of empirical research in India, although it is applied as a technique in psychotherapy practice all over the world. Mindfulness can be defined as the degree of awareness that is achieved by purposefully paying attention to the present moment without judging it (Kabat-Zinn, 1994).

Mindfulness
Scientific research has focused on two conceptualizations of mindfulness originating from different perspectives: (1) the original and traditional conceptualization advanced by Kabat-Zinn (2006), which derives from Eastern philosophy, grounded in Buddhism, and (2) the Western conceptualization of mindfulness developed by Langer (1989). According to Kabat-Zinn (1994), mindfulness may be defined as "paying attention on purpose, to the present moment, and non-judgmentally." Langer (1989), on the other hand, has defined mindfulness as "a state in which one is open to novelty, alert to distinctions, sensitive to context, aware of multiple perspectives, and oriented in the present" (Bodner and Langer, 2001). Mindfulness is not merely a good idea that once one hears about it he or she can immediately decide to live in the present moment with the promise of reduced anxiety, greater performance, and heightened life satisfaction and then instantly realize that state of being. Mindfulness is more related to an art form that is developed over time and greatly enhanced through regular practice both formally and informally on a daily basis (Kabat-Zinn, 2003).

Practicing mindfulness takes a variety of forms including a formal practice that is exercised for a period of time on a regular basis. Another form is informal practice intended to cultivate a continuity of awareness in all activities of daily living (Kabat-Zinn, 2003).

State & Trait Mindfulness

Mindfulness can be categorized into state and trait mindfulness (Black, Sussman, Johnson, & Milam, 2012; K. W. Ryan, & Creswell, 2007). State mindfulness is considered to be the facilitation of mindfulness during a specific time period, for a specific intervention or intention (K. W. Ryan & Brown, 2003). Trait mindfulness is considered to be an overall encompassing trait one demonstrates throughout different events and time points, or one's disposition (K. W. Ryan & Brown, 2003). The most common way of assessing mindfulness ability is through measures aimed at trait mindfulness. Trait mindfulness is the most appropriate measurement for mindfulness to assess general mindfulness ability not related to a specific event or experience.

State-Trait Anxiety

Anxiety can be defined as euphoric and/or apprehensive feelings that are related to the anticipation of future activities (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). Individuals may have to contend with trait anxiety, state anxiety or both (Huberty & Dick, 2006). Trait anxiety is when an individual has high levels of anxiety that occurs during different situations and for long period of times. State anxiety is when the individual has anxiety during specific situations; for example, while they are taking a test.

Individuals who show high levels of state anxiety do not necessarily have high levels of trait anxiety, but those with high levels of trait anxiety are more likely to view different situations as stressful and become anxious (Huberty & Dick, 2006). The individual with trait anxiety is predisposed to feel anxiety in different situations. With state anxiety, the individual's anxiety is likely to be triggered by a situation that is seen as a threat.

Researchers generally agree that academic anxiety is not always bad. An average level of anxiety is useful in keeping people motivated and responsible and also helpful for people in having a more sustainable and prosperous life (Kahan, 2008 in DordiNejad, Hakimi, Ashouri, Dehghani, Zeinali, Daghighi, & Bahrami, 2011; Donnelly, 2009). Without any anxiety, most of the people would lack the motivation to do anything in life. Therefore, a moderate level of academic anxiety is essential to motivate students to study for exams and may incline them for better academic and career achievements. It has been observed that a high level of anxiety interferes with concentration power and also affects memory. In this way, high academic anxiety may be one of the obstacles to academic achievement and career attainment. If it is not properly addressed it can have serious and long-lasting consequences such as causing a student to procrastinate, perform poorly in school work, and withdraw from socializing with peers or from other situations (Mattoo, & Nabi, 2012).

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To examine the relationship of mindfulness with state-trait anxiety among college students.
2. To examine gender differences among students with respect to mindfulness and state-trait anxiety.

2.1 Hypotheses of the study

- H1: There will be significant relationship between mindfulness & state-trait Anxiety among college students.
H2: There will be significant mean difference between male and female students on mindfulness, state & trait anxiety.

3. METHOD:

Sample: A sample of 100 students (50 male; 50 female) was randomly drawn from different departments of Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh (U.P).

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

Undergraduate and postgraduate students of both the genders belonged to different socio-economic status were included. Age of the respondents ranged 19-22 years. Students suffering from any serious illness were excluded.

Measure

In the present study two protocols were used:

1. Cognitive and Affective Mindfulness Scale-Revised (CAMS-R)
 2. The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI)
- 1. Cognitive and Affective Mindfulness Scale-Revised (CAMS-R):** Mindfulness was measured by revised Cognitive and Affective Mindfulness Scale of Feldman, Hayes, Kumar, Greeson, and Laurenceau (2007), designed to measure mindfulness in a brief, jargon-free, and conceptually comprehensive way, with the intention that it would be a generic measure appropriate regardless of meditation experience. . It is unidimensional scale consists of 10 items with four response categories, ranging from 'not at all' (1) to 'almost always' (4). Scores ranged from 1-40, high scores indicating a high level of mindful awareness. The CAMS-R had moderate correlations with other measures of mindfulness, including MAAS, FMI, KIMS, and SQM (r 's = 0.51 to 0.67). There was evidence of the internal consistency of CAMS-R (Cronbach alphas ranging from 0.61 to 0.81. Cronbach's alpha of the present sample was 0.63.
- 2. The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI):** The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) is a commonly used measure of trait and state anxiety (Spielberger, Gorsuch, Lushene, Vagg, & Jacobs, 1983). The scale has 40 items with two subscales. The S-Anxiety scale (STAI form Y-1) which focuses on state anxiety, has twenty statements about how the participant feels at the current moment. It is a 4-point Likert type scale, responses ranged from "Not at All", (1) to "Very Much So"(4). The T-Anxiety scale (STAI form Y-2), that focuses on trait anxiety, has twenty statements about how participants feel generally. The participants will answer based

on a scale of “Almost Never” to “Almost Always”. Internal consistency coefficients for the scale have ranged from .86 to .95; test-retest reliability coefficients have ranged from .65 to .75 over a 2-month interval (Spielberger et al., 1983). Cronbach’s alpha of state and trait anxiety was found 0.715 & 0.62 respectively for the present sample.

- 3. Personal Data Sheet:** It was developed by the investigators to obtain information about the respondent’s name, age, gender, and year in college.

Statistical Analysis: Keeping in view the nature of the present study. Pearson’s correlation coefficient was applied by using SPSS to obtain the relationship between mindfulness and anxiety (state & trait). Independent sample t-test was applied to investigate the difference between the mean scores of two groups (male and female).

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION:

Data were analyzed by appropriate statistical techniques (independent t-test and Pearson’s correlation) in order to give answers to research questions satisfactorily. The results obtained are given below.

Results:-

By using SPSS 20.0, the following results were obtained among male and female college students:-

Table 1. Showing the correlation of Mindfulness with State and Trait Anxiety:

Variables	State anxiety	Trait anxiety	Mindfulness
State anxiety	1		
Trait anxiety	.598**	1	
Mindfulness	-.241*	-.572**	1

** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

Table 1 depicts that there was a significant negative correlation between mindfulness and state anxiety ($r = -.241, p < .01$), indicating that higher the mindfulness lower will be the state anxiety and vice-versa. Trait anxiety was also found to be negatively correlated with mindfulness ($r = -.572, p < .05$), depicting that student who had a high level of mindful awareness would have a low level of Trait Anxiety. Moreover, the significant positive correlation was found between trait and state anxiety, depicting that higher the trait anxiety, more will be the state anxiety.

Table 2. Showing the Mean, SD, and t-value of mindfulness, state & trait anxiety among male and female students:

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	p
State anxiety	Male	50	43.40	7.11	-.25	.80
	Female	50	43.76	7.19		
Trait anxiety	Male	50	46.04	7.43	.67	.50
	Female	50	45.04	7.38		
Mindfulness	Male	50	27.64	3.81	-.81	.42
	Female	50	28.36	5.03		

Table 2, reveals that mean and SD scores of state anxiety, trait anxiety, and mindfulness among male students were 43.40(7.11), 46.04(7.43) and 27.64(3.81) respectively. Whereas, the mean and SD scores of state anxiety, trait anxiety, and mindfulness among female students were 43.76(7.19), 45.04(7.38) and 28.36(5.03). But none of the t-value was found significant. It implies that male and female students did not significantly differ with respect to the level of Mindfulness and State-Trait Anxiety.

5. DISCUSSION:

In this study, we mainly focus on the relationship between mindfulness and anxiety among college students. Findings indicate that Mindfulness was negatively correlated with state anxiety, which is consistent with the study conducted by Brannon (2010), who found a direct relationship between test anxiety (state anxiety) and mindfulness in college students.

Results also revealed a significant negative correlation between mindfulness and trait anxiety, which is parallel with the study conducted by McManus and colleagues (2012) implemented mindfulness-based cognitive therapy in order to reduce symptoms for patients with health anxiety, also known as hypochondriasis. They found that their patients had reduced levels of rumination, which is a common component of trait anxiety. Participants were able to use the intervention of mindfulness in order to change their tendencies of anxious cognitions.

In this study, we also wanted to examine gender differences in mindfulness and state-trait anxiety. Results of t-test showed no significant difference between male and female students on mindfulness which is consistent with the existing studies on gender differences in mindfulness. (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Catak, 2012; De Petrillo, Kaufman, Glass, & Arnkoff, 2009; Feldman, Hayes, Kumar, Greeson, & Laurenceau, 2007; Mackillop & Anderson, 2007; Macoun, 2008). Results of t-test also indicated no significant difference between male and female students on state-trait anxiety, which

is parallel with a study conducted by AKSOY Cemil, SARITAŞ Nazmi, COŞKUN Betül, observed that gender has no statistically significant difference on state and trait anxiety levels in amateur sports.

6. CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY:

1. There is a significant negative relationship between Mindfulness & State-Trait Anxiety among college students.
2. There is no significant mean difference between male and female students on mindfulness and state & trait anxiety.

7. IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS:

The study was carried out on a small sample of undergraduate and postgraduate students taken from a single college, therefore, results limit the generalizability. Future research may take into consideration some other variables such as academic performance, career indecision, procrastination etc. which could have influenced the study.

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