

Original Article

The Efficacy of Mindfulness Technique on Concentration Problem of University Students

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of mindfulness practices in enhancing concentration and attention among university students. A quasi-experimental technique was employed to assess concentration and attention before and during the implementation of the mindfulness practice. A total of 130 university students from three distinct universities provided verbal consent to participate in the study. The Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) was used in the pre- and post-intervention phases of the study to find out the level of concentration in students. During the pre-intervention phase, we identified 42 students with low MAAS (15 score). Students were categorised into two groups: a control group and an experimental group. The experimental group administered the technique of mindfulness for two consecutive weeks. After applying the intervention, MAAS was again calculated for both groups. The results indicate a statistically significant difference in the mean MAAS between the pre- and post-intervention periods for the experimental group ($p < 0.001$). The results conclude that mindfulness techniques improve the level of concentration and attention in the students in the form of increasing MAAS. This technique should be applied by students who have concentration problems.

Keywords: *Academic performance, Cognitive processing, Concentration, Mindfulness, Psychological distress*

INTRODUCTION

Psychological distress in students leads to a decrease in academic performance. A high prevalence of distress among university students was reported previously (Stallman, 2008). This is evident from their low grades in academic fields (Stallman, 2010). Although students are more vulnerable to stress, this group is less likely to seek help for their problems because of the stigma attached to the counselling services (Bradley et al., 1995). Reasons for choosing mindfulness include its widespread use and proven effectiveness in improving psychological well-being (Van Gordon et al., 2014), reducing stress (Shapiro et al., 1998), and increasing the cognitive abilities necessary for academic success (Mrazek et al., 2013; Zeidan et al., 2010). Students who regularly practice mindfulness report better adaptive coping mechanisms, less negative mood, better emotional regulation, and fewer mood disturbances (Rosenzweig et al., 2003; Lynch et al., 2011).

Concentrating one's consciousness on the present moment while maintaining an open and nonjudgmental attitude toward one's internal and external experiences is the essence of mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Being fully present in the present moment, engaged, receptive, and accepting all experiences, good and bad, is the result. Mindfulness training involves paying attention to one's breathing and bodily sensations to keep oneself aware of distractions. Humans do a lot of things all the time without even realising it. Whenever thoughts wander, whether caused by internal or external factors, the goal of the practitioner is to gradually bring attention back to the breath or the body while maintaining an engaged and comfortable level of awareness. People were able to improve their attention and concentration on more challenging tasks by engaging in even the most basic behaviours, eating

and drinking, to do so.

The use of mindfulness practices improved critical thinking skills necessary for learning and studying, leading to higher grades. According to a study by Zeidan et al. (2010), students who practiced mindfulness had better ability in areas such as sustained attention, higher-order cognitive processing, and long-term memory retrieval. They also showed better focus. Mindfulness, on the other hand, trains people to pay attention in the here and now, which in turn increases their emotional intelligence, which in turn improves their overall health (Huppert & Johnson, 2010). A student's reading comprehension, working memory, and ability to shift gears from task-orientated to non-task-orientated activities are all improved after just two weeks of mindfulness training (Mrazek et al., 2013).

In this strategy, students are encouraged to engage in mindfulness practice to maintain their primary focus on a singular part of self, such as their breath, and subsequently apply this focus to a challenging task. This helps them achieve control over their task-irrelevant thoughts despite frequent internal or external disruptions and proves that mindfulness practice can bring immediate temporary benefits for students (Zeidan et al., 2010). In the previous year, mindfulness has been given importance, especially in academic settings, for the enhancement of attention and concentration of students during studies. The reason for the expansion of mindfulness techniques in academics is due to the stress that students are facing (Albrecht, 2019). Therefore, it is important to use mindfulness training in schools to enhance the social, emotional, and academic success of students by increasing their resilience.

A comprehensive study conducted in Pakistan shows the effectiveness of mindfulness technique in Pakistan where a significant number of students across Pakistani

universities participated in the mindfulness training course (Sarfraz et al., 2023). The results show significant improvements in the psychological wellbeing of the students who attend the mindfulness training course. Despite the advantages of mindfulness techniques in enhancing students' mental well-being, their application and outcomes in the context of Pakistan still remain empirically underexplored. Specifically in the context of Peshawar where students from less developed areas come to study in the renowned universities in the city. These students faces different stressful situations varying from homesickness to study burden. Therefore, this study aims to assess the impact of mindfulness technique among university students by introducing the intervention of mindfulness in pre-test and post-test intervention phase.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies have demonstrated that mindfulness interventions can greatly enhance students' ability to concentrate and perform academically. One study found that students' concentration scores increased significantly (from 3.2 to 4.6 on a standardised test) after participating in an eight-session mindfulness program at Hafr Al-Batin University. Meditation and breathing exercises are two examples of the many mindfulness techniques covered in the survey and their positive effects on mental health. Especially in high-stress fields like academics, prior research has shown that these methods can greatly alleviate anxiety and enhance concentration (Hutasuhut & Yarshal, 2025). One of the reserches suggested that many college students struggle with mental health concerns, which can have a major influence on their health and academic performance. Many people in this group experience special kinds of stress, such as peer pressure, academic pressure, and major life changes (González-Martín et al., 2023).

Mindfulness training for three weeks improved focus and performance in school, according to a pilot study (Goretzki & Zysk, 2017). In 2017, Goretzki and Zysk published that in recent years, mindfulness training has been more popular as a means of stress reduction and general health improvement in many contexts, including classrooms. According to the results, students can benefit from mindfulness training by enhancing their study and life skills, which in turn improves their academic performance. The "Improving Focus and Concentration" study have shown that instructing mindfulness practices in a group context can be highly effective. Students can derive understanding from each other and express their challenges, fostering

a sense of companionship and support. The study indicated that participants experienced enhanced stress management, concentration, and sleep following their attendance at the sessions. Both academic success and psychological health are contingent upon these qualities (Goretzki & Zysk, 2017).

Students often get sidetracked by school stress, but mindfulness techniques may help with this issue. Studies have shown that practicing mindfulness can really help people feel less stressed. For example, one study found that the intervention group's stress levels dropped from an average of 4.5 to 3.1. In another study, students who did a six-week meditation training were less stressed and had better mindfulness skills. One of the key components of meditation, according to the study's authors, is the capacity to enhance one's consciousness via intentional practice. Being able to fully experience the current moment without judging it is a quality of mindfulness that is linked to better stress management (Carpena & Menezes, 2018).

Researchers have suggested that practicing mindfulness could be an intervention to help students deal with academic stress. Research has indicated that practicing mindfulness, which involves paying attention in the here and now, can improve mental health and alleviate anxiety (Hutasuhut & Yarshal, 2025). One potential intervention that the researcher mentioned as having great promise in tackling these mental health issues is mindfulness. Mindfulness practices have become more popular to improve mental health. These practices include paying attention in the here and now and accepting one's experiences as they are, without attaching any judgement to them (González-Martín et al., 2023).

A study conducted by Vilarino del Castillo and Lopez-Zafra (2022) found a positive correlation between mindfulness and emotional clarity, problem-focused coping, and psychological well-being. This suggests that cultivating a higher level of mindfulness can improve emotional understanding and coping mechanisms, ultimately leading to improved overall well-being. A recent study found that emotional clarity is a strong indicator of problem-focused coping and psychological well-being. This supports previous research that has shown that being aware of one's emotions is crucial for effective coping strategies. Dealing with the source of stress instead of trying to escape it is known as problem-focused coping. Psychological health is positively impacted by problem-focused coping, according to the study. This lends credence to earlier studies that found active coping mechanisms to be more beneficial to mental health than avoidance methods.

The connection between mindfulness and psychological well-being is mediated by problem-focused coping and emotional clarity, a notion introduced in the research as sequential mediation. The importance of this sequential mediation lies in the fact that it shows how better mental health results from more problem-focused coping after emotional clarity has been achieved. This expands our knowledge of the mechanisms by which mindfulness impacts psychological well-being via these intermediaries. It was suggested by the researcher that there is a need for interventions to help college students improve their mental health by teaching them to be more present, more in control of their emotions, and more adept at solving problems through problem-focused coping strategies (Vilarino del Castillo & Lopez-Zafra, 2022).

Calderon et al., (2000) suggested that interviews and focus groups supplemented the quantitative data obtained to provide qualitative insights. This allowed for a more thorough understanding of the participants' experiences, which in turn revealed themes like less stress, more self-awareness, better sleep, and better attention (Vu, 2023). Stress is common among college students, according to the research by Goretzki and Zysk (2017), who also note that it can have a severe effect on students' mental health and their ability to do well in class. Compared to the general population, students report significantly higher levels of distress (84%). Students who are going through a lot of emotional turmoil do not always know where to turn for support, in fact, just 36% of those students seek out professional treatment. This is especially the case for overseas students, who have further challenges like prejudice and language limitations. The writers address the benefits of mindfulness techniques in lowering stress and promoting psychological well-being.

Mindfulness has been demonstrated to boost cognitive skills important for academic performance, such as focus and memory, while also helping to manage stress (Goretzki & Zysk, 2017). The study explores mindfulness programs, such as Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) and Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), which have proved effectiveness in lowering stress and enhancing quality of life. On the other hand, college students often have a lot on their plates and may not have the time to devote to these programs. The results of even a short mindfulness training session can be beneficial, according to the research. For instance, students who are short on time might benefit from brief meditation sessions because of the positive effects on attention, mood, and cognitive functioning.

Focus and reduced mind wandering are essential for academic success, and the authors stress that mindfulness activities can assist students with both. Methods like concentrating on breathing exercises, However, college students typically juggle multiple responsibilities and might not be able to commit enough time to these programs. The study's authors concluded that even a brief mindfulness training session had positive outcomes. For instance, because to the beneficial impacts on focus, disposition, and cognitive performance, students who are strapped for time may reap the benefits of brief meditation sessions. The authors emphasise that mindfulness exercises might help students concentrate and control their thoughts, which are crucial for academic achievement. Students' capacity to focus on their academics can be improved using touch or bodily sensations. According to Goretzki and Zysk, mindfulness-based therapies have the potential to greatly benefit students' health and academic performance, especially in a classroom setting where students' interactions with their peers can boost retention and comprehension (Goretzki & Zysk, 2017).

Priore Fraire and González Armario (2016) performed research on mindfulness, which has its origins in Buddhist philosophy and has gained popularity due to Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn's definition of it as nonjudgmental attention to the present moment. It is imperative to grasp this basic premise before delving into its applications in the fields of education and psychology. Practicing mindfulness can improve attention and emotional awareness. It encourages openness and acceptance by letting students feel and think without responding. Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) stands out among therapeutic models. Positive results in stress, anxiety, and mental health showed that it may help college students satisfy their psychological demands. The article suggests several studies showing that MBSR improves student mental health. Executive functions, cognitive processes that aid in planning, focussing, and emotion regulation were also covered in the study. The research highlighted the fact that students can improve their academic performance and emotional resilience through mindfulness practices, which in turn improve these functions. It was also explored in the research that backs up the benefits of mindfulness, including how it helps college students focus better, feel less burnt out, and have better emotional states overall.

Incorporating mindfulness practices into educational programs is crucial for promoting student well-being, highlighted by the researcher. It was explored that the mindfulness has the ability to facilitate students'

emotional and cognitive development. There is mounting evidence that mindfulness may be a powerful tool in the classroom (Priore Fraire & González Armario, 2016). The researcher investigated applied Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) technique on the college students. It was founded that it helped students focus and reduce stress by encouraging them to control their own attention and emotions (Priore Fraire & González Armario, 2016).

The intervention group not only reduced stress, but their mean focus scores also increased significantly, going from 3.2 to 4.6. The results showed that students' capacity to focus on their schoolwork is improved and their stress levels are reduced when they practice mindfulness. The results were found to be statistically significant, suggesting that the mindfulness intervention was successful ($p < 0.01$ for stress and $p < 0.05$ for focus). The findings can be more confidently regarded with this statistical support. It was founded that those who took part in the mindfulness intervention program felt better about themselves and were able to concentrate better afterward. This provides evidence that students benefited from and were able to incorporate the mindfulness practices into their academic lives.

Researcher concluded in the reserch that students who experience high level of stress tended to be less successful in school and are less satisfied with their educational experience. One possible strategy to lessen the impact of these stresses is to practice mindfulness (Hutasuhut & Yarshal, 2025). This survey showed practicing mindfulness might helped to focus and learn more effectively. It suggested that students can benefit from practicing mindfulness in order to improve cognitive functions, essential for effective learning, and attention maintenance. For a better grasp to incorporate mindfulness into classrooms, this connection is fundamental. The srudy stressed the importance of conducting studies with a student sample. It was explored that mindfulness has many positive effects on health, but studies specifically explroed the students' ability to focus and cope with stress in the classroom are few and far between. (Hutasuhut & Yarshal, 2025).

A study examined several mindfulness programs implemented in educational settings, emphasising mindfulness treatments. Meditation, deep breathing, and mindful awareness are prevalent elements of these regimens, aimed at stress alleviation and enhanced emotional regulation (González-Martín et al., 2023). Researchers also explored the mindfulness practices have been integrated into various academic and extracurricular activities in universities. It was

suggested that these programs are crucial for academic performance, aiming to improve concentration and self-awareness (Tillott et al., 2015). Hutasuhut and Yarshal (2025) asserted that the integration of mindfulness into the educational curriculum can enhance students' academic well-being and attentiveness.

Researchers have also founded that mindfulness classes worked and are liked by college students in pilot programs. These tasks have helped students focus better, feel less stressed, and be able to deal with problems better (Dionne, 2016). Although studies have demonstrated that mindfulness interventions can effectively increased focus and lower stress levels in students, and students respond differently to the techniques. There are several factors that could influence the success of these treatments, including cultural norms, individual motivation, and the mindfulness techniques that are selected. To locate the most effective mindfulness programs for students from a wide range of backgrounds, we need to do additional research on these aspects. To get the most out of mindfulness as a method for concentration, it is essential to use it in conjunction with other academic methods that can assist in concentrating (Dionne, 2016).

The students in different universities of Pakistan are facing problems of attention and concentration due to many factors they are encountering, like family, political, and social problems in Pakistan. There is a dire need to perform studies related to adolescents' optimal development and career success. This study will open a new avenue to help students work on their attention span and self-consciousness by applying mindfulness practice. Furthermore, mindfulness as a technique is gaining popularity in different institutes and universities to improve students' mental health (Galante et al., 2018).

Therefore, this study hypothesizes that:

H₁: There is a significant difference between the concentration levels of the students when mindfulnessness technique is applied.

METHODOLOGY

Data were taken from students of three universities in Peshawar, Pakistan, such as the University of Peshawar, Islamia College University, and Qurtaba University. These students were from different departments. A quasi-experimental study design (pre- and post-interventional study) was used. Students were evaluated for focus issues using the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS). MAAS is a 15-item measure intended to evaluate fundamental attributes

of mindfulness, such as the attentional state of mind, which encompasses sensory awareness of current movements through the observation of present happenings. The reliability coefficient of the MAAS scale for this investigation is 0.786.

Procedure

For the present study, concerned authorities were consulted for permission to administer mindfulness techniques and MAAS to university students. At phase 1, after taking consent, students were approached for data collection. Adult volunteers were recruited for the research by telling them the importance and significance of the study. A total of 130 students verbally consented to participate in the study. MAAS was calculated for all these students. This was the pre-intervention phase. We identified 42 students with low MAAS (15 score). These students were divided into two groups, such as a control group and an experimental

group. Each group has an equal number of students ($n = 21$). The mindfulness technique was applied to the experimental group. This was the start of the post-interventional phase. After explaining the purpose of the research, students were briefed about the administration of the scale and the number of sessions for which mindfulness was applied to the experimental group. The experimental group engaged in mindfulness meditation, particularly the grounding technique, for consecutive two weeks. They were also told to work on the method at home while they waited. For this reason, we provided participants with handouts that outline the steps of the mindfulness practice. Due to time constraints, students' ability to focus and pay attention was tested after a two-week period. After two weeks, students were assessed for concentration and attention, and MAAS was again calculated for both groups. The layout for the methodology was shown in Figure 1.

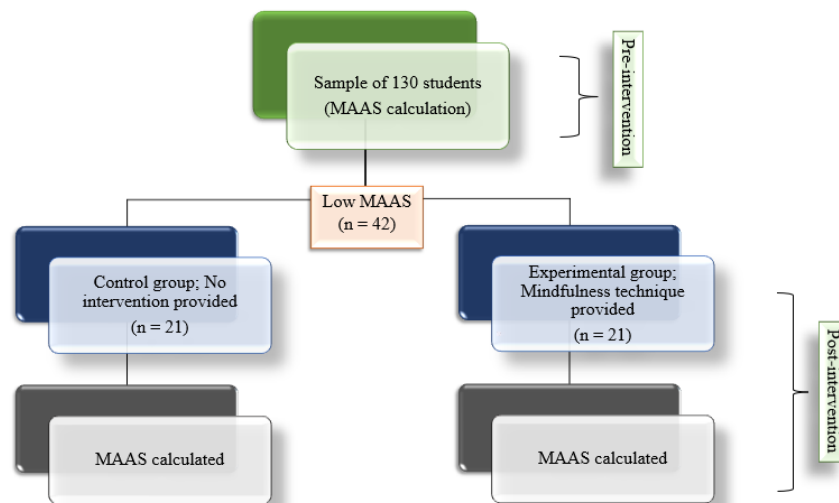


Fig. 1. Layout for Study Methodology

RESULTS & FINDINGS

Table 1 displays the mean difference in concentration problems of students before and after intervention in the control group. The mean (\pm SD) MAAS for pre-

Table 1

Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale for control group (N=21)

Variables	Mean (\pm SD)	p-value***
Pre-MAAS*	43.62 (6.160)	> 0.05
Post-MAAS**	45.8 (11.435)	

- *Pre-MAAS = pre-intervention mindfulness of control group

- **Post-MAAS** = post-intervention mindfulness of the control group.

- ***Pt-test was applied

Table 2 showed the mean difference in concentration problems of students before and after intervention in the experimental group. The mean (\pm SD) MAAS for pre-intervention was 41.05 (9.458), while the mean (\pm SD) MAAS for the post-intervention phase was 61.76

intervention was 43.62 (6.160), while the mean (\pm SD) MAAS for post-intervention was 45.8 (11.435). No significant difference was observed in the control group for the mean scores of MAAS between the pre- and post-intervention phases ($p > 0.05$).

(10.821). No statistically significant difference was seen in the experimental group regarding MAAS scores between the pre- and post-intervention periods ($p < 0.001$).

Table 2

Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale for experimental group (N=21)

Variables	Mean (±SD)	p-value***
Pre-MAAS*	41.05 (9.458)	< 0.001
Post-MAAS**	61.76 (10.821)	

- *Pre-MAAS = pre-intervention mindfulness of experimental group

- **Post-MAAS**: post-intervention mindfulness of the experimental group.

- ***Pt-test was applied

Discussion

This study investigated the impact of two-week mindfulness classes on students' capacity to concentrate and boost their focus in academic pursuits. Participants' feedback indicated that following two consecutive weeks of sessions, they felt empowered to regulate their thoughts and mitigate distractions, resulting in increased attentiveness and engagement in the current work. The self-reported enhancements about the usefulness of mindfulness align with other research indicating that brief mindfulness exercises facilitate sustained attention and aid in maintaining focus on tasks (Zeidan et al., 2010). The present study found significant differences in the pre- and post-test conditions of the experimental group. The experimental and control groups exhibited significant differences in their mean and standard deviation in this study. In the pre-intervention stage, the results for the experimental group mean (±SD) were 41.05 (9.458), and for post-intervention, the results were (mean (±SD) 61.76 (10.821)), respectively.

These results align with previous research conducted on adult populations and indicate that mindfulness training can enhance cognitive ability in both adults and fifth graders (Chan & Woollacott, 2007; Moore & Malinowski, 2009; Zanesco et al., 2013). Several studies were done on the effectiveness of mindfulness on different problems like sleeping quality and life quality of people with post-injury mental stress. The results were significant for sleep problems but not for quality of life in this study (Nakamura et al., 2011). The results of a previous study showed mindfulness treatment leads to control of emotions and decreased anxiety in people suffering from social anxiety disorders significantly (Goldin & Gross, 2010). A study examined the impact of a mindfulness program in obligatory secondary education on first-year students from three distinct public schools. The research involved a total of 61 students. The findings indicated statistically substantial improvement in academic performance, alongside an enhancement in all dimensions of self-concept and a notable reduction in exam anxiety among students. The current study's findings align with previous research indicating the efficacy of mindfulness programs within the educational system (Franco et al., 2011).

Erismann and Roemer (2010) conducted a study comparing participants in an experimental group, who received a brief mindfulness intervention, to a control group. In comparison to the control group, the experimental group exhibited an increase in happy feelings and a decrease in negative emotions following the film clip, maintaining positive or mixed emotional states. It is assumed from the findings of these studies that mindfulness can alter the emotional state by helping people get more focused and lessen wandering thoughts. Mindfulness meditation can even alter the affectivity of the individual by changing activity of the brain after eight weeks of intervention (Williams, 2010).

In addition, in another study, it assesses the responses of people using mindfulness as a regular exercise in response to distracting stimuli. Findings discovered that in the state of meditation, regular practitioners showed minimal emotional and cognitive reactivity to distracting stimuli (Cahn & Polich 2009). These findings support the notion that mindfulness meditation contributes to decreased reactivity in emotional state. The strength of the present study is to identify the importance of mindfulness for the students. The current study is limited in giving less time to mindfulness to be used with participants. Future researchers should keep in mind the above limitations of time and administration procedure of mindfulness for better outcomes. Two weeks of training may not be sufficient to demonstrate lasting effects of mindfulness on concentration. Again, future research should use some other measure to find out the utmost effectiveness of the mindfulness technique (Chan & Woollacott, 2007; Moore & Malinowski, 2009). Similarly, in the future, expanding research into other schools, colleges, and institutes will help to increase the generalisability of the study.

CONCLUSION

This study found an improvement in MAAS after providing mindfulness techniques. Thus, proving the assumption that mindfulness as a technique is a powerful tool to enhance mental health in clinical and non-clinical populations. Students who practiced mindfulness techniques as a routine became more

attentive to themselves, had a positive mindset, and were self-disciplined. This study was noteworthy in demonstrating the efficacy of MAAS as a tool for assessing students' current movement alertness and attentiveness to their self-experiences. The students' reported mindfulness helps them not only gain focus on their present movement but also learn how to maintain that focus when they are studying material on their own. Apart from students, the technique presented in this paper can also be applied to academic staff, given the amount of stress they face, which impacts their psychological well-being.

Competing Interest

The authors had no competing interests.

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