

Experience of Mindfulness Meditations Based on Stress Reduction among Undergraduate Nursing Students, Chitwan, Nepal

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ABSTRACT

Background: Undergraduate nursing students are frequently vulnerable to stress during their education with a high rate of attrition. Mindfulness Mediations based on Stress Reductions have been found to promote psychological well-being and mental health among nursing students. Therefore, the objective of the study was to explore the experiences of Mindfulness among undergraduate nursing students.

Methods: Qualitative Hermeneutic Phenomenology research design was adopted. Data were collected from undergraduate nursing students from Chitwan Medical College, Institute of Medicine who had been practicing Mindfulness Meditation for 6 weeks. The duration of data collection was January to June 2022. Data were collected after obtaining ethical approval from Nepal Health Research Council. Focused Group Discussions were conducted to collect data by the researcher using the Focused Group Discussion guide in Nepali language. A total of three Focused Group Discussions was carried out among 12 participants in each Focused Group Discussion with a total of 36 participants. Data were analyzed by thematic analysis technique based on Giorgi's qualitative data analysis technique.

Results: Five developed themes were stress managed well in daily life and during examination time, present moment awareness and positivity, self-realization of inner peace and more self-acceptance, and feeling of developed future role for advocating mindfulness meditations.

Conclusions: Mindfulness-based mediations have been found effective strategies among undergraduate nursing for the management of stress during daily living and during examinations, development of self-realization, increase inner peace, self-acceptance and developed skills for future role for advocating mindfulness meditations.

Keywords: Mindfulness meditations; nursing students; stress.

INTRODUCTION

Mindfulness meditation is a form of meditation that is defined as a process of focusing one's mind in the present moment, identifying sensations, emotions, and thoughts, maintaining a non-judgmental attitude, and detaching from destructive thoughts and feelings.^{1,2} Healthcare professionals including nursing students are prone to frequent stress related to clinical placements and challenging emotional job demands.^{3,4} It has been identified that practicing mindfulness reduces professionals' emotional overload and burnout, reduces emotional exhaustion, increases their commitment to

their work and their performance when facing challenges in their workplace also enhances positive cognitive functions.^{5,6} Practicing mindfulness interventions increases well-being among nursing students by reducing their emotional adverse symptoms such as anxiety and stress.^{7,8} Different qualitative research studies suggested that mindfulness intervention had a positive impact on handling anxiety and increase in general well-being among students.^{9,10} Thus, this study has explored the experience of mindfulness meditations among undergraduate nursing students in Nepalese context.

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METHODS

A qualitative hermeneutic phenomenology research design was adopted. Before initiating research activities ethical approval was obtained from Nepal Health Research Council (NHRC, ref no.1311). Prior to data collection, administrative approval was obtained from CMC (CMC-IRC/ 078/079-048). Data were collected among undergraduate students studying BSc nursing program at CMC, IoM, Tribhuvan University, Nepal. The duration of data collection was January to June 2022. From the 65 students who participated in 6 weeks of online mindfulness meditation and practiced it virtually under the researcher's guidance total 36 students who showed willingness were included purposively as a nested sample equally 12 in each group from ; B.Sc. first year, second and third year.

Data were collected through FGDs using the FGDs guide in the Nepali language. Principal Investigator herself collected data and performed the role of moderator during FGDs. Each FGDs was conducted separately into three different sessions during lunch break and after the clinical duties in leisure time. A note keeper who had previous experience with FGD kept field notes. On average, each one of the FGDs took about 45 minutes to one hour. FGDs were initially started by asking general questions such as " Could you describe your general experience when you meditate?" And the general questions were followed by intermediate questions such as "what is your experience in the initial phase during meditation sessions while self-practicing and after practicing meditations?" Further, these specific questions were added eg: "Could you tell me what are the most important aspects that you have learned in the sessions and future application of skills and lessons learned?" During data collection, all the principles of FGDs were considered such as maintaining anonymity by coding the name of the participants, maintaining interaction and respect for each participant during FGD, and keeping all the audio records safely in password-protected laptop of the researcher. Data were analyzed immediately after collection within two weeks by the principal investigator based on Giorgi's qualitative data analysis technique consisting of these five steps i. Reading the transcripts several times ii. Findings meaning units. iii. *Transforming meaning units* iv. *Identifying structures of the phenomena.* v. *Integrating structures of the phenomena.* Trustworthiness was ensured by maintaining the reflexive journal, to ensure peer debriefing identified meaning units were clarified among three research team members. Dependability was ensured by comparing the findings with field notes. Further, conformability was assured by checking the

initial version of the developed theme by 4 participants.

Participants were allowed to perform mindfulness meditations based on Stress Reduction on these aspects: Mindful table exercise, breathing exercise based on Sudarshankriya ujjayi pranayama, Bhastrika pranayama and Shhohom pranayama, sound meditation (Om chanting), Body scan practice, Loving-kindness meditations. Each mediation session was guided through a virtual online video-assisted device under the guidance of researchers who had received one-week training on mindfulness meditation from the members of the art of living.

RESULTS

Five major themes emerged: Theme 1: Stress management in daily living and during examination time. Theme 2: Present moment awareness and Positivity. Theme3: Development of inner peace. Theme 4: New Purpose in life and self-acceptance Theme 5: Future role for advocating Mindfulness interventions.

The first four themes pertain to what participants have learned, realized, and experienced while practicing meditation. The fifth theme pertains to their expectations for future roles and how they can promote mindfulness meditations.

Theme 1. Stress management in daily living and during examination time

Participants from the first year reported managing their stress during examinations, hostel adjustment, during academic presentations. This was often expressed in terms of feeling less anxious, well handling stressful situations. Deep breathing exercise specifically Shhohom practice helps to reduce their stress level.

I live at the hostel, and I come to study at this college very far from home for the first-time new place, with no friends, and a new environment so I have pity feelings about small things and difficulty coping with the environment changes.

I used to get very stressed and feeling of sadness, and if anyone says anything, I became bored, still, now I missed my home but after meditation practices, I can easily cope with my feeling of being sad and stressed than before. After taking this course I feel that my stress level has lessened (1st year, P1).

Deep breathing exercise helps to reduce exam anxiety

(IInd year, P 4). It helps to manage stress during examination time.

Now after this course during examination time I feel more relaxed and peaceful than before, I have well coped and feel calmer during internal examinations and while doing presentations (iind year, P11).

During sessions, I feel fresher and more relaxed (P6) and now I feel that I can overcome external stressors and be more focused on clinical and case assignment presentations (Ist year, P9)

I feel that Deep breathing exercises by Ucchai Saans help to get positive energy within my body that helps to lessen the examination anxiety (IInd year, P 4).

Before I feel nervous and more concerned about forgetting what I learn after practicing this meditation now, I used to be more focused on positive feelings like I give my best which helped in positive change. I used to give my best at exams less concentrating on fear of forgetting (IInd year, P4).

Some of the participants mentioned that during the breathing exercise they feel more relaxed.

I used to do Shhohom during sathi Sanga maan namilda, expectations namilda, kunai pani Kurabigradda, afnoo kura arusanga bnanna namilda and it gives to control my mind, (2nd year, P3). Pahilee bandha aatinee calm feel hunccha, teacher lee bhanekoo kura nabhujdaa pani it gives control over my emotions (IInd year, P11).

Pahilee stress huda give up garthee, Pahilee jee jasto chha thikaichha bhanthee. Ahilee mero sochh ma paribartaan ayyeekoochha; I try it do my best even in a stress fulltime and in challenging work and focused saying that jeesakchhu ahilee garchhu, jasaree garchu ramari garchhu.

I am focusing on giving up 100% to my work. I have very lesser or no negative thoughts as before (iind year, P 12).

I used to do Shhohom during stressful times and it relieved my level of stress (iind year, P 5).

A few of them mentioned that it was difficult to perform the breathing session but gradually it becomes easier and became useful. Besides this, Sudarshankriya helps a lot in getting inner peace and calm. Also, they mentioned that meditation is also a type of alternative medicine.

I am practicing the breathing technique, initially, it was difficult but I have been doing it two to three times a week. I realize that doing Shhohom and Sudarsankriya during stressful time gives relaxation and increase positive energy.

I feel very relaxed during Sabaasanmudra without any active thinking process by concentrating oneself as a peaceful being, it makes my mind very peaceful and helps to focus on my soul in a peaceful state (2nd year, P3).

I use to have more mood swings. After doing this course, I can now positively handle my emotions I can have control over my mood swings and control the events and situations. After doing this course I become more flexible and learnt new meaning of life. Life keehoo ali Katee bhayee pani thahabhyoo. Meditation bhanekoo pani medicine nai rahechha positiveness ko lagi.

Theme 2. Present moment awareness and positivity

Participants reported a growth in 'present moment awareness' as a result of undertaking MBSR. This was often expressed in terms of feeling happiness due to being aware of the present-day context.

A first-year student expressed that:

I have tried for MBBS entrance twice and my family has very much expectations at that time but I couldn't succeed for this I used to have pity feeling and got easily frustrated but after practicing meditations I feel happier, I learned to cope with my fate and this change is the result of meditation. Now I used to give more focus on the present moment and nursing assignments. I am very happy than before with what I have (Ist year, P 9).

I feel frustrated and irritated while going back home from the hostel but now I do not feel so. After this course I respond to family members politely I got less irritation. I feel me nicely, I should respond nicely. When a friend miss treats me, I do not feel bored and take it easy (IIIrd year, P2).

Theme3. Development of Inner peace

Participants have expressed that though it was difficult to practice it at initial time, later on, it became a habit and helped to increase concentration, increase a peaceful state of mind, and a feeling of relaxation.

Initially, when I join the course, I think that the structured course of meditating for about an hour can ruin the time for getting assignments done but later on realize that it helps to increase concentration for doing assignments and manage our time more effectively for being healthy physically and mentally (iiird year, P4).

I feel that from this course, we learn to manage time for ourselves for getting good health outcomes like increased concentration. After these meditation sessions, I became able to manage stress during problem time (1st year, P4). When I got an unexpected response from friends, I used to be repeating the events and getting stressed nowadays I give less focus to the unwanted events and can hold those factors that come into my mind making me un happy. This course has helped me to hold other people's emotions which helps me to remain at peace from inside my heart.

Theme 4. New purpose in life and self-acceptance

Some of the participants had expressed that meditation has changed the purpose of their life and self-acceptance.

I feel spiritual clarity and lightness. I found a tract for getting time for myself by doing meditation, I can take decisions easier way and with confidence (IIIrd year, p5) and Positively handlings of events and situations.

When I return from the hostel and meet my family members and friends Hostle batta Ghama jaadda bhai bahini sanga bhethuda pahelle koobhanda khusi lagcchaa, Amma pani ekdamai thuloo manchee hunu hudooo raheechha bhane lagchhee.

I feel very happy when I see other people being happy. I used to be happier than before (1st year, P 4).

Sometimes if I had disagreements or fights with others before I used to get emotional hurt and feeling of self-guilt nowadays no feelings of hurt and no feelings of self-blame. Used to get more peace at night (IInd year ,P3,P4,P5).

Before, when I felt that someone is dominating me or treating me not nicely. I gave more focus on that but after this course, I gave less concentration on those feelings and more focus on my study on how to study well (IInd year, P6).

I feel that mediation has given Life a positive direction to life. Added energy to my life, I can be more focused

on my personal interest like singing and dancing I realize my potentialities. It has resulted in balance in my life (iind year. p11)

Theme 5. Future role for advocating mindfulness meditations interventions

Some of them expressed that on future days they can be a good advocate for increasing mindfulness meditation by collaborating and coordinating with each other.

It gives inner peace (1st year, P 8). We should continue this at least for half an hour daily as it relaxes our mind-body (P III, 6). I feel that I can guide others to perform meditation.

I feel lucky that we good these opportunities. We can be role models, helping others who are under stress by doing this course. We should continue this meditation practice among other students (iiird year P3, P7)

DISCUSSION

We have found the theme of stress management in daily living and during examination time. Consistent with this finding, a qualitative study of students learning and Skills use in a school-Based Mindfulness and Yoga Program explored the theme of New Skills, Calm, and Reduced Stress among Youths. They noted the positive psychological benefits of the program, such as assisting with memory, stress, depression, and anger. When describing breathing techniques, students almost always mentioned the stress reduction, calming, and self-regulation benefits of each pose or breathing technique. When asked to describe the program, a student reported that the program helped relieve pain, both physical and psychological, by reducing stress: "Releasing stress, umm, maybe releasing pains mentally and physically". Youth have realized the improvement in emotional regulation skills.¹¹

We also identified the theme of awareness of the present moment, positivity, and self-acceptance. Similar to this, another qualitative study among nurses found that nurses have observed positive changes in their relationships with their friends and family members. They were more fully present with others. Another author reported that nurse participants expressed paying more attention to their patients, rather than thinking about the next assignment or where they were going next. In addition, they noted becoming less reactive and defensive in work and family relationships.¹²

Similarly, another mixed-method study described those students who reported an increased sense of calm, and a decreased feeling of anxiety. Loving kindness meditation was mostly perceived as a positive way to close the class.¹³

The consistent theme suggests that Mindfulness Attention Training led to an improved acceptance and awareness of the consequences of actions and choices. Participants also reported a greater acceptance of any negative emotions as well as a broader acceptance of self in general. Students stated that mindfulness-based interventions were overall beneficial and described them as a coping mechanism that attenuated their stress, anxiety, and emotions, improved learning, build relationships, and provided tools for future careers.^{14,15}

Theme's future role as an advocate for mindfulness interventions

Also, we found the theme as promoting their role for the future as an advocate for mindfulness. This theme is consistent with the findings among undergraduate nursing students who perceived that a mindfulness programme has the potential to enhance well-being and future clinical practice. This student cohort is familiar with mindfulness and wants more integration within their undergraduate curriculum.⁸

The study was conducted in only one setting i.e. Chitwan medical college. Mindfulness practice was intervened virtually on the researcher's guidance but was not observed directly.

CONCLUSIONS

Mindfulness-based mediations interventions have been found effective strategies among undergraduate nursing for the management of stress of daily living and reducing stress during examinations with better coping and also promotion of emotional health such as development of self-realization and of inner peace, self-acceptance and development of skills for intervening mindfulness mediation interventions in future.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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