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## Effectiveness of mindfulness meditation on psychological well-being among undergraduate nursing students in selected nursing campuses, Nepal

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### Abstract

**Introduction:** Mindfulness meditations have been effective to reduce stress and improve psychological well-being among students. Thus, this study aimed to measure the effectiveness of mindfulness meditation interventions on psychological well-being among undergraduate nursing students.

**Method:** An experimental research design was adopted. A total of 130 students studying at two nursing campuses were randomly assigned into two groups, 65 in each: (i) Mindfulness meditation group and (ii) Waiting list control group. Ethical approval was obtained from the Nepal Health Research Council. Data were collected from Jan to Apr 2022 by using Ryff's scales of psychological well-being. Before the intervention, pre-test was obtained from both groups. The intervention group received mindfulness meditation intervention for one week and was virtually guided for practicing for six weeks. After the intervention, post-tests were obtained from both groups. Data were analysed by using descriptive and inferential statistics such as paired t-test and independent samples t-test to measure the significant differences in subscales of psychological well-being before and after the intervention within and between groups.

**Result:** In four subscales higher scores were observed among the experimental group than the control group, with statistically significant differences on the personal growth scale ( $p < 0.001$ ), purpose in life scale ( $p < 0.001$ ), self-acceptance scale ( $p < 0.001$ ), positive relations with others ( $p < 0.003$ ), and environmental mastery ( $p < 0.080$ ) with effect sizes ranging from 0.54 to 0.80. No statistical association was observed on the autonomy scale ( $p = 0.361$ ).

**Conclusion:** A six-week mindfulness meditation intervention has positive effects on increasing most aspects of psychological well-being among undergraduate nursing students.

### How to cite

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## Introduction

Stress related to academic demands, adjustment to a new learning environment, and clinical placement challenges are more prevalent among nursing students resulting in ill psychological states, mental illnesses, and poor academic outcomes. Poor psychological well-being leads to various mental health disorders.<sup>1-4</sup> In the present day, there is an increasing trend of practicing mindfulness meditations among students.<sup>5</sup> Mindfulness is the psychological process of bringing one's attention, in a non-judgemental state with awareness of the present moment focusing on crucial meditation techniques.<sup>6-8</sup>

Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) is an evidence-based psycho-educational program for increasing psychological well-being and mental health.<sup>9</sup> Regular mindfulness practices reduce stress levels and regulate self-competencies, positive emotions, and well-being.<sup>10-12</sup> When students practice mindfulness, they become more positive and emotion-focused,<sup>13</sup> which positively impacts their academic achievements.<sup>14-15</sup> Institutions are nowadays considering mental health-promoting interventions for their students.<sup>16-17</sup>

Few studies demonstrated that mindfulness interventions have been useful for stress reduction among nursing students.<sup>18-19</sup> During the COVID-19 pandemic, stress and anxiety among nursing professionals and nursing students are prevalent.<sup>20-24</sup> Thus, this study aimed to examine the effectiveness of mindfulness meditation on psychological well-being among nursing students.

## Method

Initially, permission was obtained from Maharajgunj Nursing Campus and the University Grants Commission (UGC), Nepal. Ethical approval was obtained from NHRC/IRC (Ref no.1311). The study was conducted from 01 Jan to 22 Apr 2022. The experimental research design included 65 students from Chitwan Medical College assigned randomly to the intervention group and an equal number of 65 students from the Pokhara nursing campus

assigned to the control group as a waiting list control with a ratio of 1:1.<sup>25</sup>

Data was collected after obtaining written permission from the concerned authorities of the respective nursing campuses. Before data collection, informed consent was obtained from each participant. Data was collected using the standard tool i.e., the Scale of Psychological Wellbeing (SPWB) of Ryff's six-dimension model consisting of autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose of life, and self-acceptance.<sup>26</sup>

Students studying at the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> year generic bachelor level aged between 18-30 years, who had no self-disclosed diagnosed psychiatric illness such as anxiety, or depression and who were interested in participating in mindfulness meditation interventions for six weeks and willing to fill out the weekly practice adherence form were included.

Participants' information sheets were explained to the participants included in the study and written informed consent was obtained from each participant. Baseline information was obtained from each of the participants. One group was assigned to the mindfulness meditation intervention and another was assigned to the Waiting List Control groups (WLC).

The participants in the experimental group received a six-day daily formal mindfulness-based intervention program by the experts, and the sessions were further virtually guided by research team members for another six weeks.

The intervention included structured sessions on the following aspects based on Stress Reduction Mindfulness Meditation which includes: i. Mindful table exercise, ii. Meditation centered on breathing, iii. Body scan practice, iv. Sound meditation (Om chanting) v. Meditation centered on positive thoughts, vi. Loving-kindness meditation.<sup>26</sup>

To ensure the participants' adherence to self-practice, adherence forms were distributed and they were requested to provide their feedback weekly through emails. After the 6-week

intervention, post-test data were obtained from both groups.

Data were entered into SPSS version 20 and analyzed by using descriptive and inferential statistics for which paired t-test and independent samples t-test were used to measure the significant differences in subscales of psychological well-being before and after the intervention within and between groups after checking normality through Shapiro-Wilk test ( $p>0.05$ ). The value of the test was above 0.05 indicating that the data significantly follows a normal distribution.

## Result

Among the experimental group ( $n=65$ ), the mean age was  $20.94\pm 0.97$  years and 46(70.8%) were from Brahmin/Chhetri ethnicity. In terms of religion, 59(90.8%) followed Hinduism, 53(81.5%) belonged to the nuclear family.

In the control group ( $n=65$ ), the mean age was  $21.15\pm 1.15$  years, and 34(52.3%) were from Brahmin/Chhetri ethnicity. Almost all, 60(92.3%) of the respondents, followed Hinduism and 49(75.4%) belonged to nuclear families, Table 1.

**Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of undergraduate nursing students undergoing mindfulness meditation interventions on psychological well-being,  $n=130$**

Characteristics	Experimental group, $n=65$		Control group, $n=65$	
	n	%	n	%
<b>Age year, mean<math>\pm</math>SD</b>	20.94 $\pm$ 0.97		21.15 $\pm$ 1.15	
<b>Ethnicity</b>				
Brahmin/Chhetri	46	70.8	34	52.3
Janajati	16	24.6	22	33.8
Madhesi	3	4.6	3	4.6
Dalit	-	-	6	9.2
<b>Religion</b>				
Hinduism	59	90.8	60	92.3
Buddhism	3	4.6	2	3.1
Kirant	2	3.1		
Christianity	1	1.5	3	4.6
<b>Type of family</b>				
Nuclear	53	81.5	49	75.4
Joint	12	18.5	14	21.5
Extended	-	-	2	3.1
<b>Family income</b>				
Sufficient for less than 6 months	12	18.5	15	23.1
Sufficient for 1 year	39	60.0	36	55.4
Surplus	14	21.5	14	21.5

Regarding significant differences in different subscales of psychological well-being within the experimental group before and after the intervention, there were significant differences in all aspects of psychological well-being; autonomy ( $p < 0.001$ ), personal growth ( $p < 0.001$ ), positive relation with others ( $p < 0.001$ ), purpose in life ( $p < 0.001$ ), self-acceptance ( $p < 0.001$ ). However, a weaker difference in environmental mastery ( $p < 0.005$ ) was identified, Table 2.

There were no significant differences in all subscales of psychological well-being within the

control group before and after the intervention, Table 3.

There was a statistically significant difference between the control group and the experimental group before and after the intervention on most of the aspects of psychological well-being. The aspects of improved well-being were personal growth ( $p < 0.001$ ), purpose in life ( $p < 0.001$ ), self-acceptance ( $p < 0.001$ ), positive relation with others ( $p < 0.003$ ), on environmental mastery ( $p < 0.080$ ), Table 4.

**Table 2. Psychological well-being before and after mindfulness meditation interventions within experimental group, n=65**

Psychological well-being (Subscales)	Total possible score	Experimental group (mean±SD)		p-value	Effect size
		Pre-test	Post-test		
Autonomy	7-42	28.66 ± 3.85	32.43±3.70	<0.001	1.98
Environmental Mastery	7-42	31.42±4.07	33.14±3.49	<0.010	0.73
Personal growth	7-42	29.78±2.93	31.74±2.61	<0.001	1.10
Positive relations with others	7-42	32.28±3.98	35.35±3.78	<0.001	1.45
The purpose of Life	7-42	30.95±3.13	33.95±2.62	<0.001	1.70
Self-acceptance	7-42	31.35±3.74	34.54±3.35	<0.001	1.65
Overall	42-294	184.45± 11.21	201.15±12.04	<0.001	2.88

**Table 3. Mean differences between pre and post tests on psychological well-being within control group, n=65**

Psychological well-being (subscales)	Total possible score	Control group (mean±SD)		p-value	Effect size
		Pre-test	Post-test		
Autonomy	7-42	31.69±4.94	31.74±4.81	0.958	0.01
Environmental mastery	7-42	30.58±5.47	31.63±5.95	0.396	0.21
Personal growth	7-42	27.25±4.88	29.15±3.83	0.025	0.58
Positive relations with others	7-42	28.02± 4.17	30.95±4.52	0.950	0.02
The purpose of life	7-42	32.88±5.15	32.82±5.52	0.001	0.92
Self-acceptance	7-42	31.31±4.42	31.58±4.18	0.700	0.10
Overall	42- 294	181.72±17.31	187.88±17.99	0.085	0.44

**Table 4. Differences in mean score between experimental and control group, n=130**

Psychological well-being (subscales)		Experimental (n=65)		Control group (n=65)		T-test	p-value	Effect size
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
<b>Autonomy</b>	Pre-test	28.66	3.85	31.69	4.94	3.900	<0.001	0.695
	Post-test	32.43	3.70	31.74	4.81	0.917	0.361	0.163
<b>Environmental mastery</b>	Pre-test	31.42	4.07	30.58	5.47	0.993	0.840	0.177
	Post-test	33.14	3.49	31.63	5.95	1.765	<0.080	0.314
<b>Personal growth</b>	Pre-test	29.78	2.93	27.25	4.88	3.584	0.001	0.638
	Post-test	31.74	2.61	29.15	3.83	4.505	<0.001	0.803
<b>Positive relation</b>	Pre-test	32.28	3.98	32.88	5.15	0.743	0.459	0.132
	Post-test	35.35	3.78	32.82	5.52	3.049	<0.003	0.543
<b>Purpose in life</b>	Pre-test	30.95	3.13	28.02	4.17	4.531	<0.001	0.807
	Post-test	33.95	2.62	30.95	4.52	4.630	<0.001	0.825
<b>Self - acceptance</b>	Pre-test	31.35	3.74	31.31	4.42	0.056	0.956	0.010
	Post-test	34.54	3.35	31.58	4.18	4.455	<0.001	0.794
<b>Overall</b>	Pre-test	184.45	11.21	181.72	17.31	1.067	0.288	0.190
	Post-test	201.15	12.04	187.88	17.92	4.956	<0.001	0.883

## Discussion

In our study, when comparing the differences in different sub-scales between the experimental group and control group before and after interventions, we found a higher mean score among the experimental group after the intervention than the control group with statistical differences in the personal growth scale ( $p < 0.001$ ), purpose in life scale ( $p < 0.001$ ), self-acceptance scale ( $p < 0.001$ ) and positive relationship scale ( $p < 0.003$ ) with effect sizes ranging from 0.54 to 0.80. This study inferences that 6 weeks of mindfulness meditation interventions significantly increased these four aspects of psychological well-being, personal growth, purpose in life self-acceptance, and positive relationships.

The findings are supported by other experimental design studies conducted by previous researchers. A quasi-experimental, longitudinal, pretest, and post-test study conducted in the Midwestern US in 2019 among

61 nurses in the experimental group and 61 in the control group showed that within the group of mindfulness positive statistically significant differences in self-compassion, and serenity after the MBSR intervention. The findings from this study demonstrated a reduction in job burnout and improvement in specific psychological factors such as mindfulness, self-compassion, and serenity.<sup>15</sup>

Likewise, a quasi-experimental longitudinal pre-test and post-test study conducted among registered nurses in the Midwestern US found statistically significant increases in mindfulness and elements of self-compassion after the MBSR intervention.<sup>19</sup>

Similarly, a study among 155 participants with or without formal online meditation practice for 2 weeks found that the Mindfulness-Based Intervention (MBI) was associated with significant improvements in perceived stress and anxiety with effect sizes in the small to medium range (0.25 to 0.37, 95 % CI 0.11 to 0.56).<sup>18</sup>

These findings are consistent with a previous mindfulness-based interventional study conducted in France in 2018 among 91 participants, which revealed significant improvements in the variables among the mindfulness group compared to the control group, with effect sizes ranging between 0.53 and 0.88. Low baseline levels of mindfulness predicted more significant improvement in mindfulness ( $r=-0.55$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) than high baseline levels.

Another interventional study conducted in a public nursing college in Thailand among 89 nursing students aimed to investigate the efficacy of two brief intervention programs—biofeedback and mindfulness meditation on levels of state anxiety and perceived stress indicated that mindfulness meditations and biofeedback significantly reduced anxiety and stress level in nursing students after intervention.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, a randomized controlled trial among 44 students found a statistically significant decrease in perceived stress among the experimental group who participated in yoga and mindfulness training compared with the control group who received no intervention.<sup>26</sup>

Another randomized controlled trial in public mental health care in the US among 93 adults with mild to moderate psychological distress found that compared to the waiting list participants; participants in the Mindfulness intervention had greater emotional and psychological well-being after the intervention and greater psychological flexibility at follow-up.<sup>27</sup> Likewise, the findings are consistent with the study findings done by the Institute of Nursing in Bengaluru, Karnataka, with 50 students as Yoga receiving and 50 students as Wait List Control (WLC) trial found that Yoga receiving group had significantly improvement in self-compassion than compared to WLC group.<sup>1</sup> Another true experimental design study with 25 adult volunteers in an experimental group and 25 healthy adults as a control group showed a significant improvement in the intervention group on all four domains of the WHO-QOL scale such as physical health, psychological health

social relationships, and environmental domains compared to the control group.<sup>28</sup>

We found less significant differences in environmental mastery ( $p=0.080$ ) after the intervention and on the autonomy scale ( $p=0.361$ ). Our findings are similar to those conducted in the Nepalese context among adolescent students at a general college, which showed that the respondents scored highest level in the purpose of life (mean=38.3; SD= 6.7) and lowest level in the autonomy scale ( $p=0.361$ , mean=31.7; SD= 5.4).<sup>29</sup>

Data were collected at one point time (pre- test and post-test) rather than longitudinal follow-up to observe the long-term effects of Mindfulness Meditation. Mindfulness practice was intervened virtually on the researcher's guidance but was not observed directly. Above all, the comparison groups were drawn from two different nursing campus – Chitwan medical college and Pokhara nursing campus.

## Conclusion

There is a significant increase in four aspects of psychological well-being such as personal growth, purpose in life, positive relations with others, and self-acceptance after intervention among the experimental group. These findings support the hypothesis that mindfulness meditation positively influences psychological well-being. Thus, mindfulness meditations are recommended to be promoted among nursing students to enhance their psychological well-being and mental health in the Nepalese context.

## Author contribution

Concept design: APB, DS, NT, BKS; Literature search: JA, AP; Data collection: DS, NT, BKS; Data analysis: APB, JA, AP; Draft manuscript: All; Final manuscript: All; Accountability: All

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## Conflict of interest

None

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## Supplementary material

The data and supplementary material that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request

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## Questionnaire/tools

### Title: Effectiveness of mindfulness meditation on psychological well-being among undergraduate nursing students in selected nursing campuses, Nepal

Directions: Put response (V) for one number on how you feel your emotional condition at Present for each response. Check that you have 42 (V) responses before returning.

Strongly Disagree (SD), Somewhat Disagree (SWD), A Little Disagree (ALD), Neither Agree nor Disagree (NAND), A little Agree (ALA), Some What Agree (SWA), Strongly Agree (SA)

Q.N.	Item Wise Questions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Responses	SD	SWD	ALD	NAND	ALA	SWA	SA
1.	I am not afraid to voice my opinions, even when they are in opposition to the opinions of most people.							
2.	For me, life has been a continuous process of learning, changing, and growth.							
3.	In general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live. <i>I can manage my situation.</i>							
4.	People would describe me as a giving person, willing to share my time with others.							
5.	I am not interested in activities that will expand my horizons/ capacities.							
6.	I enjoy making plans for the future and working to make them a reality.							
7.	Most people see me as loving and affectionate.							
8.	In many ways I feel disappointed about my achievements in life.							
9.	I live life one day at a time and don't really think about the future.							
10.	I tend to worry about what other people think of me.							
11.	When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out.							
12.	I have difficulty arranging my life in a way that is satisfying to me.							

13.	My decisions are not usually influenced by what everyone else is doing.								
14.	I gave up trying to make big improvements or changes in my life a long time ago.								
15.	The demands of everyday life often get me down.								
16.	I have not experienced many warm and trusting relationships with others								
17.	I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how you think about yourself and the world.								
18.	Maintaining close relationships has been difficult and frustrating for me.								
19.	My attitude about myself is probably not as positive as most people feel about themselves.								
20.	I have a sense of direction and purpose in life.								
21.	I judge myself by what I think is important, not by the values of what others think is important.								
22.	In general, I feel confident and positive about myself.								
23.	I have been able to build a living environment and a lifestyle for myself that is much to my liking/likes.								
24.	I tend to be influenced by people with strong opinions.								
25.	I do not enjoy being in new situations that require me to change my old familiar ways of doing things.								
26.	I do not fit very well with the people and the community around me.								
27.	I know that I can trust my friends, and they know they can trust me.								
28.	When I think about it, I haven't really improved much as a person over the years.								
29.	Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them.								
30.	I often feel lonely because I have few close friends with whom to share my concerns.								
31.	When I compare myself to friends and acquaintances, <i>known persons</i> , it makes me feel good about who I am.								
32.	I don't have a good sense of what it is I'm trying to accomplish in life.								
33.	I sometimes feel as if I've done all there is to do in life.								
34.	I feel like many of the people I know have gotten more out of life than I have.								
35.	I have confidence in my opinions, even if they are contrary to the general consensus.								
36.	I am quite good at managing the many responsibilities of my daily life.								
37.	I have the sense that I have developed a lot as a person over time.								
38.	I enjoy personal and mutual conversations with family members and friends.								
39.	My daily activities often seem trivial <i>not important</i> and unimportant to me.								
40.	I like most parts of my personality.								
41.	It's difficult for me to voice my own opinions on controversial matters.								
42.	I often feel overwhelmed/overburden by my responsibilities.								

THANKS