



A Study of Mindfulness and Stress among Adults

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Abstract

Extensive research shows that adolescents and young adults are experiencing rising levels of stress and depression. Findings from the American Psychological Association's *Stress in America Survey* indicate that teenagers report stress levels comparable to those of adults. Although many teens recognize that their stress is unhealthy, they often fail to fully understand its effects on their mental and physical well-being. Growing evidence suggests that mindfulness practices are effective in reducing anxiety and stress. The present study examined the impact of mindfulness on stress among young adults using the Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory (Walach, 2006) and the Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen, 1983). The results revealed a significant negative relationship between mindfulness and stress levels, indicating that higher mindfulness was associated with lower perceived stress. Overall, the findings suggest that mindfulness has a beneficial influence on stress reduction in young adults. Additionally, mindfulness was linked to decreased stress and increased work engagement in both cross-sectional and longitudinal analyses, highlighting its role as a protective and adaptable personal resource.

Keywords- Stress, young adults, mindfulness, and MBCT (mindfulness-based cognitive therapy)

Introduction:

Mindfulness, defined as purposeful attention to present-moment experiences with an open and nonjudgmental attitude, is understood as both a skill and a way of living (Bishop et al., 2004). As a skill, mindfulness can be developed through training attention and cultivating positive attitudes. Attention training occurs through formal practices such as meditation and informal practices that involve consciously focusing on everyday internal and external experiences. Consistent mindfulness practice has been shown to strengthen attentional regulation, enhance awareness, and reduce automatic emotional, physiological, and behavioral reactions (Chambers et al., 2009; Creswell & Lindsay, 2014; Garland et al., 2017a). In addition, mindfulness fosters qualities such as openness, acceptance, compassion, curiosity, and nonjudgment (Crane et al., 2016). Together, these abilities and attitudes support a mindful way of being characterized by purposeful awareness and acceptance (Bishop et al., 2004).

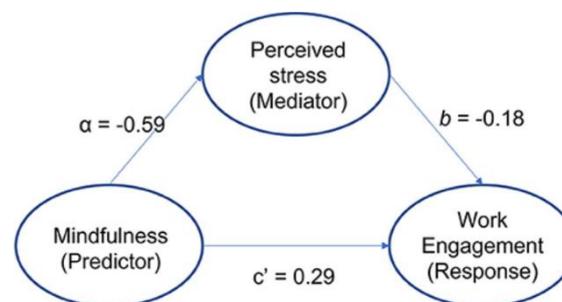
Mindfulness is an inherent human capacity rather than something that must be created; it simply needs to be accessed and nurtured. Although everyone possesses this ability, it can be strengthened through structured practices such as seated, walking, standing, and movement-based meditation, as well as through short mindful pauses in daily life and reflective activities such as relaxation techniques or physical exercise. While the primary focus should be on consistent practice rather than outcomes, mindfulness offers notable benefits that motivate continued engagement. Practicing mindfulness can reduce stress, improve performance, increase self-awareness, and promote greater concern for others' well-being.

The growing popularity of mindfulness meditation reflects its positive impact on quality of life. Individuals who regularly practice mindfulness often report greater life satisfaction, resilience, and emotional stability, along

with lower levels of stress, anger, and depression. It is also associated with improvements in compassion, focus, creativity, empathy, and overall happiness. Beginners may benefit from guided meditation sessions led by trained instructors or through mobile applications, as expert guidance can enhance learning and effectiveness. Despite the wide range of mindfulness approaches rooted in different traditions, most aim to cultivate calmness and mental clarity by sustaining attention and fostering natural awareness.

Mindfulness also emphasizes understanding and acceptance of thoughts and emotions without judgment or evaluation. Rather than dwelling on the past or worrying about the future, practitioners learn to anchor their awareness in present experiences. Although mindfulness originated in Buddhist traditions, it has become widely adopted in Western society, largely due to Jon Kabat-Zinn's Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program introduced in 1979. Since then, research has documented its benefits across physical and mental health domains, leading to the adaptation of MBSR programs in schools, healthcare settings, prisons, military facilities, and community organizations.

Research indicates that even short-term mindfulness practice can produce significant physical, emotional, and social benefits. Physically, mindfulness has been linked to improved immune functioning and better sleep quality. Psychologically, it has been shown to enhance positive emotions while reducing stress and negative mood states, with some studies suggesting effects comparable to antidepressant treatments in preventing depression relapse. Neurologically, mindfulness practice has been associated with increased gray matter density in brain regions responsible for learning, memory, emotional regulation, and empathy.



Indirect effect (mediated $\alpha*b$) = 0.11

Direct effect (c') = 0.29

Total effect ($\alpha*b+c'$) = 0.40

General Impact of Mindfulness

Many traditions and practices encourage mindfulness, including yoga, tai chi, and qigong. However, most scientific research has focused on mindfulness developed through meditation. Numerous studies have identified several important benefits of mindfulness practice.

1. Reduced Rumination

Research shows that mindfulness helps decrease repetitive negative thinking. For example, Chambers et al. (2008) studied 20 beginner meditators who participated in a ten-day intensive mindfulness retreat. After the program, participants reported significantly higher mindfulness levels and lower negative emotions compared to a control group. They also experienced fewer depressive symptoms and reduced rumination. Additionally, the meditation group demonstrated improved working memory capacity and better sustained attention during task performance.



2. Stress Reduction

Many studies indicate that mindfulness practice effectively reduces stress. A meta-analysis by Hofmann et al. (2010), which examined 39 studies on mindfulness-based stress reduction and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, found that these approaches help modify emotional and cognitive processes related to various psychological conditions. These findings align with evidence showing that mindfulness increases positive emotions while reducing anxiety and negative mood. Similarly, Farb et al. (2010) found that participants who completed an eight-week mindfulness-based stress reduction program reported lower levels of depression, anxiety, and psychological distress. Brain imaging results also showed decreased emotional reactivity when participants viewed emotionally distressing content.

3. Improved Working Memory

Mindfulness has also been linked to enhanced working memory. Jha et al. (2010) examined military personnel who completed an eight-week mindfulness training program, a non-meditating military group, and a civilian control group. During a highly stressful pre-deployment period, the non-meditating military group showed a decline in working memory performance, while civilian participants remained stable. In contrast, the meditating military group demonstrated improvements in working memory. Furthermore, greater meditation practice was associated with higher positive emotions and lower negative emotional states.

Young Adulthood

Young adulthood is a life stage characterized by exploration, transition, and self-discovery. During this period, individuals often experience major changes related to education, employment, housing, relationships, and personal identity. Compared to previous generations, the transition into adulthood has become more gradual and complex. Many young adults take longer to achieve financial independence and emotional maturity, and experiences vary widely based on gender, culture, ethnicity, and socioeconomic background.

Typically spanning from the early twenties to the mid-thirties, young adulthood includes significant milestones such as graduating from college, moving out of the family home, establishing careers, getting married, or starting families. While these changes are exciting, they can also be overwhelming. Understanding this developmental stage and preparing for its challenges can support better mental and physical well-being.

Stress and Young Adulthood

Young adulthood often involves high levels of stress due to rapid life changes and increasing responsibilities. However, stress is not always harmful. Psychiatrist Michael Genovese explains that certain forms of stress can be beneficial by motivating individuals and promoting personal growth. Positive stress can help people stay engaged and productive.

Despite this, young adults remain one of the most stressed populations in the United States, according to reports from *TIME Magazine*. Limited coping skills and poor lifestyle habits can worsen stress levels. When left unmanaged, chronic stress may contribute to health problems such as sleep disturbances, muscle tension, fatigue, and weakened immune function. Fortunately, with effective coping strategies and proper support, approximately 69 percent of young adults are able to manage stress successfully.



Review Of Literature

Stress can be described as a form of psychological discomfort that, in moderate amounts, may be beneficial by serving as a motivating factor, particularly in academic settings. However, excessive stress can lead to physical harm and negatively affect adjustment, academic performance, and overall well-being. Numerous studies have explored the relationship between stress and its impact on university students' coping and adjustment abilities.

Choo Ken Yoong et al. (1999) examined stress prevalence among medical students and reported that 87% experienced stress-related difficulties. Adjustment problems often arise when individuals struggle to manage stressful life events, resulting in symptoms such as anxiety, depression, sleep disturbances, low self-esteem, and poor concentration. These issues are especially common among students transitioning to hostel life, where adaptation challenges are frequent and influenced by multiple factors.

Sharma and Kaur (2011) investigated stress-related factors among nursing students using a sample of 37 participants. Their findings indicated that environmental factors contributed most significantly to stress. Nearly all students reported "change in living environment" as a major stressor. Additional stressors included concerns regarding safety and security (95%), inadequate mess and canteen facilities (89%), limited recreational activities and poor laundry services (84%), and homesickness associated with hostel living (90%).

Kumar et al. (2008) conducted a study on 275 undergraduate dental students and found high levels of stress within this population. Examinations and academic grading emerged as the primary stressors, followed by long working hours, criticism from supervisors, institutional rules and regulations, unethical practices, and concerns regarding future employment.

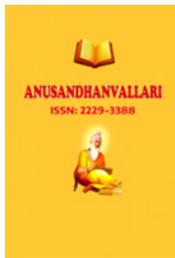
Stress is an inevitable component of college life and can significantly impact students' physical and mental health. Several studies have attempted to identify major stressors among college students to improve academic environments and support systems.

Salami (2011) explored the influence of psychological and social factors on students' transition to college. The study involved 250 first-year students from colleges of education in Kwara State, Nigeria. Measures of self-esteem, emotional intelligence, stress, social support, and adjustment were administered. Regression analysis revealed that all independent variables significantly predicted adjustment, with social support moderating the relationship between stress and transition outcomes. The study emphasized the importance of involvement from counselors, parents, and institutional authorities in facilitating smoother student transitions and promoting participation in co-curricular activities.

Patil, Patkar, and Patkar (2016) examined stress levels among 338 undergraduate medical students and observed a progressive increase in stress across academic years. The prevalence of stress rose from 46.15% in second-year students to 85.93% in final-year students, with many participants reporting mild to moderate stress.

Borjalilu et al. (2013) studied perceived stress among 341 Iranian medical doctoral students. The most commonly reported stressors included frequent examinations (68%), exam performance pressure (64%), academic workload (63%), lack of institutional recreational facilities (65%), social isolation (59%), inadequate learning resources (55%), and insufficient faculty guidance. The study also found that female students experienced significantly higher perceived stress levels than males, indicating gender as an important influencing factor.

Gupta et al. (2015) assessed stress factors among medical students in Kolkata using the Medical Students' Stressor Questionnaire (MSSQ-40). Results showed that 91.1% of participants experienced significant stress,



with 94.9% attributing it primarily to academic demands. Higher stress levels were observed among hostel residents and students facing language barriers.

Methodology

The present study aimed to examine the role of mindfulness in reducing stress levels among young adults. A total of 103 participants aged between 18 and 35 years were selected. Data were collected using standardized scales along with basic demographic information.

Objectives

- ❖ To examine the effect of mindfulness on stress and coping among young adults aged 18–35 years.
- ❖ To determine whether individuals with high mindfulness levels may also experience high stress.
- ❖ To assess the relationship between psychological factors (stress) and behavioral factors (mindfulness).

The study sample consisted exclusively of Indian nationals within the specified age range. A correlational research design was employed to analyze the association between mindfulness, stress, and coping. Purposive sampling was used based on defined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The final sample comprised 103 male and female participants.

Results

The primary objective of the study was to explore the association between mindfulness and stress levels among young adults aged 18–35 years. Pearson’s correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between mindfulness and perceived stress. A two-tailed test was applied to assess statistical significance between the mean scores of the Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory and the Perceived Stress Scale. Additionally, gender-based differences between male and female participants were analyzed.

Table.1 : Correlation between Mindfulness and Stress levels in combines groups :

Variables	Standard Deviation	Mean	Pearson’s Correlation (P-Value)
Mindfulness	5.96639	41.7327	-0.304 (0.002**)
Stress	5.13231	20.8614	—

Difference by Gender: Table 4.1 shows a statistically significant negative relationship between mindfulness and stress levels in the combined sample. The mean mindfulness score was 41.73 (SD = 5.97), while the mean stress score was 20.86 (SD = 5.13). The correlation between the two variables was significant at the 0.01 level,

with a p-value of 0.002, indicating a strong inverse association. This suggests that higher levels of mindfulness are associated with lower levels of stress among participants.

Table .4.2:

Variable	Standard Deviation	Mean	Pearson's Correlation	P-Value
Mindfulness – Females	5.88756	41.1628	-0.323	0.035*
Stress – Females	5.12026	21.2093	—	—

Table 2 shows a significant inverse relationship between mindfulness and stress levels among female participants. The mean mindfulness score was 41.16 (SD = 5.88), while the mean stress score was 21.21 (SD = 5.12). The correlation was statistically significant at the 0.05 level, with a p-value of .035, indicating that higher mindfulness is associated with lower perceived stress among females.

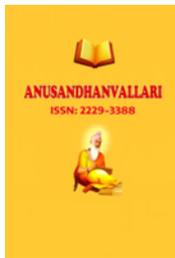
Discussion

The study sample consisted of 101 young adults of Indian nationality aged between 18 and 35 years. Among the participants, 43 (42.6%) were females and 58 (57.4%) were males. Overall, 9.9% of the participants reported low stress levels, 19.8% reported high stress levels, and the majority (70.3%) reported moderate stress levels. Specifically, among females, 7% had low stress, 20.9% had high stress, and 72% experienced moderate stress. Among males, 12.1% reported low stress, 19% high stress, and 69% moderate stress. These findings suggest that female participants experienced comparatively higher stress levels than males.

Regarding mindfulness, 3% of the total sample demonstrated low mindfulness, 63.4% high mindfulness, and 33.4% moderate mindfulness. Among females, 2.3% exhibited low mindfulness, 58% high mindfulness, and 39.5% moderate mindfulness. In contrast, male participants showed slightly higher mindfulness levels, with 3.4% reporting low mindfulness, 67.2% high mindfulness, and 29.3% moderate mindfulness.

Correlation analysis was used to examine the relationship between mindfulness and stress, based on hypotheses derived from previous literature. The findings revealed a significant inverse relationship between mindfulness and stress among young adults. Although females reported higher stress levels, they demonstrated a comparatively weaker association between mindfulness and stress. The overall results highlight the high prevalence of stress among young adults, with nearly 20% experiencing high stress and more than 70% reporting moderate stress levels.

These findings are consistent with previous research. For instance, a study by Choo Ken Yoong et al. (1999) reported that 87% of medical students experienced notable stress levels, and 85% indicated that stress adversely



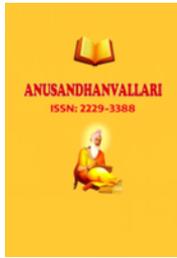
affected their academic performance. This supports the present study's findings that stress is prevalent among young adults and significantly influences their daily functioning.

Conclusion

The present study examined the relationship between mindfulness and stress levels among young adults and found a significant inverse association between the two variables in both male and female participants. Based on the results, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. The findings also indicated that females experienced higher stress levels compared to males, whereas males demonstrated higher mindfulness levels. Overall, the study concludes that mindfulness plays an important role in reducing stress levels across both groups.

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