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Research Article

A study to assess the Mindful Attention Awareness among undergraduate students studying at a selected college Chennai

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Abstract

Background: Mindfulness is a psychological process and coping ability to adjust maladaptive behaviour, improve awareness and reduce stress, anxiety, and depression in both patients and health populations. Objectives: The study to assess the mindful attention awareness among students studying in undergraduate program and associate between the mindful attention awareness among the college students and background variables. Methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted among 154 students studying in an undergraduate program at a selected college. The purposive sampling technique was adopted to select samples. The data were collected using a tool consisting of background variables and the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale, (MAAS) through Google Form. Analysis was done by using descriptive and inferential statistics. Results The study found that the mean value of mindful attention awareness among undergraduate students is 61.23 with an SD of 15.57, the minimum score is 20, and the maximum score is 90. The majority of students, 143 (93%), belonged to the age group of 18 years. Regarding gender, 101 (66%) are female and 53 (34%) are male students. Regarding 72 (47%) were residing in urban areas, rural was 42 (27%). Except for other variables, the residence of the students was found to be highly significant to mindful attention awareness with the p-value of 0.004 and F-value 5.774. Conclusions: The study concluded that the higher the mean value, the more it shows that the positive effects on students' academic performance enhance academic engagement and improve coping strategies among students that will maintain overall psychological well-being.

Keywords: Anxiety, Cross-sectional study, Depression, Maladaptive behaviour, Mindful Attention Awareness Scale MAAS, Stress and Undergraduate students

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Introduction

Mindfulness is a mental practice and state of being characterized by non-judgmental awareness and focused attention on the present moment. Intentionally paying attention to your thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment without getting caught up in judgment, analysis, or distraction.

Undergraduate students represent a dynamic and pivotal group. This stage of academia marks the initial steps of younger minds into the world of advanced learning, intellectual exploration, and personal development. Exploring the experiences, challenges, and potential of these students is not only a pursuit in understanding the present but also an investment in shaping the future. The undergraduate years are a time of significant transition and growth; for many students, this phase signifies a crucial step towards achieving their educational dreams.

With an equanimous and permissive attitude, mindfulness is defined as "present-centered awareness of and bare attention to body sensations, affective valence, cognitive and emotional phenomena, and the external environment." (1). Mindfulness, a state of conscious awareness and presence in the moment, has gained significant attention within psychology, education, and healthcare disciplines. Developed from ancient contemplative practice, mindfulness has evolved into a scientifically validated technique with potential applications in stress reduction, cognitive enhancement, and emotional regulation. (2).

Some key factors that frame mindfulness as a mental health trait are individual characteristics and behaviours, social and economic circumstances, and environmental factors. Some safeguards related to our study are physical health, parental social support, good parent-family interaction, social and gender equality, and

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physical safety and security. (3). Increased mindfulness provides an increase in one's self-compassion levels by nurturing the feelings of love, compassion, and forgiveness, and thus the individual becomes less impacted by negative affective states. (4).

There are several disciplines and practices that can cultivate mindfulness. A study was conducted to compare four weeks of open monitoring (OM) meditation with four weeks of focused attention (FA) meditation to evaluate the effects of an eight-week mindfulness program. In addition to having quicker reaction times on the Stroop task, participants in the meditation group demonstrated notable improvements in anxiety, depression, rumination, and mindfulness. While OM meditation further increased mindfulness and maintained a happy mood, FA meditation boosted mood. According to the research, mindfulness meditation can significantly improve people's emotional states and cognitive abilities. (5).

Using the Pubmed, Scopus, Web of Science, and CINAHL databases, a systematic review and meta-analysis were carried out to investigate the effects of a mindfulness program on the mental health of college students. The methodological quality of the gathered articles was evaluated using the PEDro scale. The review included 21 of the 321 studies. The duration of the mindfulness-based treatments varied from eight weeks to three months. The results demonstrated that a mindfulness intervention significantly improved the mental health of college students.(6). College students' mental health and well-being have garnered more attention in recent years due to a notable rise in mental health issues within this demographic.(7). The students forget to eat, drink water and they even lose out on sleep because of the stress that comes with existing in the current world scenario. (8).

The meditation course was associated with an increase in mindfulness attention awareness scores. This implies that students who participated in meditation become more attuned to their present experiences, potentially leading to better focus, attention, and awareness in their daily lives. (9). The undergraduate journey often presents challenges that lead to increased stress levels. Academic pressures, combined with social and personal adjustments, can contribute to elevated stress and reduced emotional well-being. Mindful attention awareness has been associated with stress reduction, as it equips individuals with the tools to navigate stressors with greater equanimity and emotional resilience. (10).

The digital age has brought both opportunities and challenges to higher education. While technology has enhanced learning possibilities, it has also introduced distractions that can hinder mindful attention. The integration of mindfulness practices could offer students strategies to manage digital distractions and cultivate a focused approach to their studies; understanding how mindful attention awareness interacts with students' engagement with technology is crucial in promoting balanced and effective learning habits. (11).

As researchers, the drive to investigate mindful attention awareness among undergraduate students stems from the recognition of the transformative potential that mindfulness practices hold for their holistic development, well-being, and academic success. The college years mark a pivotal phase of personal, intellectual exploration and the forging of lifelong habits. We aspire to examine how mindful attention awareness can facilitate introspection and self-awareness, guiding students towards a deeper understanding of their values, strength, and aspiration.

Objectives of the study

· To assess the mindful attention awareness among students studying in undergraduate programs.

· To evaluate the association between the mindful attention awareness among the college students and background variables

Materials and Methods

The study's research design is a non-experimental cross-sectional study, and its research methodology is qualitative in nature.

Settings of the study: The study was conducted in Sri Ramachandra Faculty of Nursing and Sri Ramachandra Faculty of Pharmacy, Sri Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education and Research (DU), Porur, Chennai.

Population: undergraduate first-year students studying at Sri Ramachandra Faculty of Nursing and Sri Ramachandra Faculty of Pharmacy, Sri Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education and Research (DU), Porur, Chennai.

Sample: 154 undergraduate first-year students, both male and female, in the 17–18 age range were chosen using the non-probability purposive sampling technique.

Duration of study: July 2023, one week

Sampling criteria

Inclusion criteria

The study will involve male and female students between the ages of 17 and 18 who are available during the data collection period

Exclusion criteria

Students who are unwilling to participate and those who are not first-year undergraduate students will be excluded from the study

Description of the tools (The instrument consists of two parts)

Part I- Background variables of students

The tool was developed by the researchers to collect the data from the undergraduate students in English; versions of background variables were used in the study. It consists of age, gender, residence, family monthly income, medium of basic education, hobbies, nature of stay, father's education, mother's education, interpersonal relationships, and coping with the collegiate environment.

Part II: Mindful Attention Awareness Scale MAAS

The tool was developed by Kirk Warren Brown & Richard M. Ryan 2003. The MAAS is a 15-item scale designed to assess a core characteristic of dispositional mindfulness, namely, open or receptive awareness of and attention to what is taking place in the present.

Score interpretation

The higher scores reflect higher levels of dispositional mindfulness.

At the end of questionnaires, add up all of the answer scores and divide the total score by 15; the minimum score is 15 and the maximum score is 90. Higher scores reflect higher levels of dispositional mindfulness. With these higher scores also come lower reported negative emotional states.

Data collection procedure

Permission was obtained from the chairman of the Institutional Ethical Committee for students, and written permission was obtained to conduct the study from the principal of the Sri Ramachandra Faculty of Nursing & Sri Ramachandra Faculty of Pharmacy, Sri Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education and Research (DU). The written consent was obtained from the study participants; the students were assessed with background variables and the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) through Google Form. The participation was completely voluntary, and respondents were not paid for their participation. Participants were assured that no harm will occur during the study. Further doubts were clarified. Participants information was kept confidential. Privacy was ensured throughout the data collection.

Statistical analysis

Descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (one-way ANOVA) were used in the statistical analyses of the data.

Ethical consideration

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki. Approval was obtained from the Institutional Ethics Committee (REF: CSP/23/ MAY/129/483). Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection, and confidentiality was maintained throughout the study.

Results

The data presented in Table 1 and Fig. 1 shows that the vast majority of students, 143, or 93%, were in the 18-year-old age range. Fig. 2 shows that, of the students, 101 (66%) are female and 53 (34%) are male. Fig. 3 shows that 42 people (27%) lived in rural areas, while 72 people (47%) lived in urban areas. The parents of 67 (43%) of the students made RS ≤25,000 a month. The majority of the students' basic education-129, or 84%-was in English. Sports accounted for 30 percent of the students' hobbies, followed by art at 40 percent, recreation at 51 percent, and others at 33 percent. Of the students that stayed, 88 (57%) were hostellers, and 66 (43%) were day scholars. The mother had a primary education of 54 (35%), and the father had a higher education level of 52 (34%). 72% of respondents to IPR 111 on interpersonal relationships said they could uphold IPR with others. About the collegiate environment, 136 people (88%) were able to handle it.

Figure 1: Percentage distribution of age of undergraduate students (n= 154)

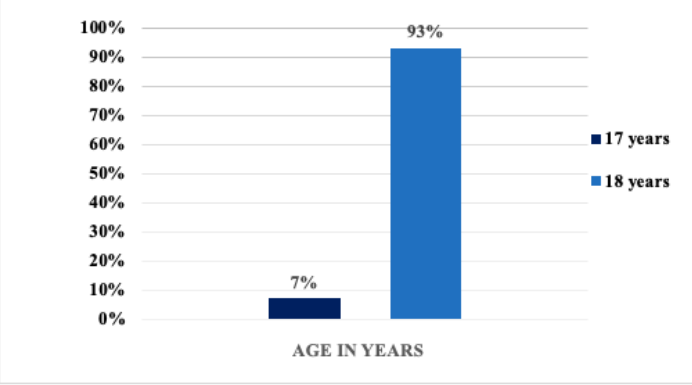

Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of background variables of students studying in undergraduate program (N=154)

S. No	Background variables	(n= 154)	%
1	**Age in years**		
	a) 17	11	7
	b) 18	143	93
2	**Gender**		
	a) Male	53	34
	b) Female	101	66
3	**Residence**		
	a) Rural	42	27
	b) Semi Urban	40	26
	c) Urban	72	47
4	**Family monthly income (in Rs)**		
	a) ≤25000	67	43
	b) 25001-50000	46	30
	c) 50001-75000	20	13
	d) ≥ 75000	21	14
5	**Medium of basic Education**		
	a) Tamil	25	16
	b) English	129	84
	c) Others	0	0
6	**Hobbies**		
	a) Sports	30	19
	b) Art	40	26
	c) Recreation	51	33
	d) Others	33	22
7	**Nature of Stay**		
	a) Hosteller	88	57
	b) Day scholar	66	43
8	**Father's Education**		
	a) Primary Education	47	31
	b) Higher Education	52	34
	c) Graduate	39	25
	d) Post Graduate	16	10
9	**Mother's Education**		
	a) Primary Education	54	35
	b) Higher Education	42	27
	c) Graduate	38	25
	d) Post Graduate	20	13
10	**Are you maintaining Interpersonal Relationship (IPR) with others?**		
	a) Yes	111	72
	b) No	43	28
11	**Are you able to cope up with the collegiate environment?**		
	a) Yes	136	88
	b) No	18	12

Figure 2: Percentage distribution of the gender of undergraduate students

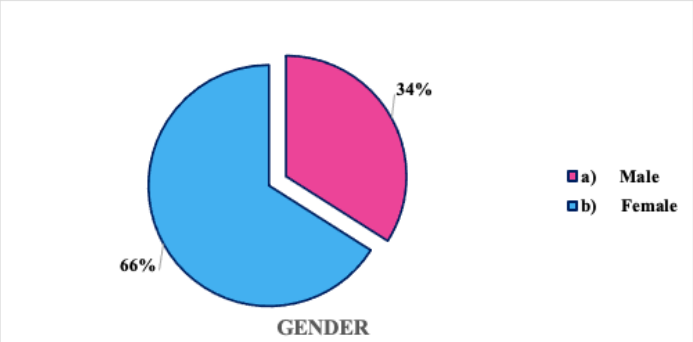

Figure 3: Percentage distribution of residence of undergraduate students (n=154)

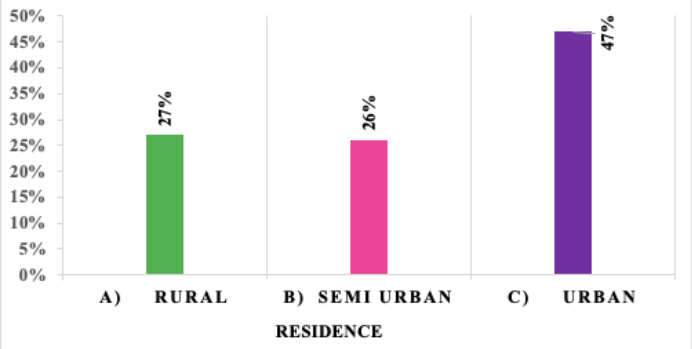

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation scores of mindful attention awareness among students studying in undergraduate program (N=154)

Variable	Minimum Score	Maximum Score	Mean	Standard deviation
Mindful attention awareness	20	90	61.23	15.57

Table 2 shows that the mean value of mindful attention awareness among undergraduate students is 61.23 with the SD of 15.57 and the minimum score is 20 and maximum score is 90.

Table 3: Association between mindful attention awareness and Background variable (N=154)

S. No	Demographic variables	n=154	Mean	SD	One way ANOVA F-value p-value
1	**Age in years**				
	a) 17	11	56.45	10.54	F=1.114 p=0.293 NS
	b) 18	143	61.59	15.86	
2	**Gender**				
	a) Male	53	63.75	16.39	F=2.146 p=0.145 NS
	b) Female	101	59.90	15.03	
3	**Residence**				
	a) Rural	42	54.48	14.08	F=5.774 p=0.004 S***
	b) Semi Urban	40	63.95	15.16	
	c) Urban	72	63.65	15.64	
4	**Family monthly income (in Rs)**				
	a) ≤25000	67	62.79	16.27	F=1.724 p=0.165 NS
	b) 25001-50000	46	61.26	14.11	
	c) 50001-75000	20	63.15	16.45	
	d) ≥ 75000	21	54.33	14.63	
5	**Medium of basic Education**				
	a) Tamil	25	56.80	17.22	F=2.436 p=0.121 NS
	b) English	129	62.09	15.15	
	c) Others				
6	**Sports as hobby**				
	a) Yes	30	63.23	18.03	F=0.617 p=0.433 NS
	b) No	124	60.74	14.95	
7	**Art as hobby**				
	a) Yes	40	60.33	12.51	F=0.181 p=0.672 NS
	b) No	114	61.54	16.54	

8	**Recreation as hobby**				
	a) Yes	51	60.31	17.40	F=0.261 p=0.610 NS
	b) No	103	61.68	14.64	
9	**Other hobbies**				
	a) Yes	33	61.91	13.91	F=0.080 p=0.778 NS
	b) No	121	61.04	16.04	
10	**Nature of Stay**				
	a) Hosteller	88	62.94	16.22	F=2.519 p=0.115 NS
	b) Day scholar	66	58.94	14.45	
11	**Father's Education**				
	a) Primary Education	47	59.60	15.92	F=0.640 p=0.591 NS
	b) Higher Education	52	60.67	13.96	
	c) Graduate	39	62.18	17.34	
	d) Post Graduate	16	65.50	15.47	
12	**Mother's Education**				
	a) Primary Education	54	58.19	15.67	F=2.087 p=0.104
	b) Higher Education	42	61.64	14.43	
	c) Graduate	38	66.11	16.10	
	d) Post Graduate	20	59.30	15.30	
13	**Are you maintaining Interpersonal Relationship (IPR) with others?**				
	a) Yes	111	61.93	16.33	F=0.804 p=0.371
	b) No	43	59.42	13.40	
14	**Are you able to cope up with the collegiate environment?**				
	a) Yes	136	62.05	15.53	F=3.311 p=0.071
	b) No	18	55.00	14.83	

NS- Non Significant / p<0.001 significant***

Table 3 shows the association between mindful attention awareness and background variables of students studying in the undergraduate program. There was a highly significant difference found between mindful attention awareness and residence of the students (p<0.001), and the value of the F value was 5.774.

Discussion

The first objective of the study is to assess the mindful attention awareness among students studying in an undergraduate program

Table 2 shows that the mean value of mindful attention awareness among undergraduate students is 61.23 with the SD of 15.57 and the minimum score is 20 and maximum score is 90.

A cross-sectional research design with 110 (n=110) college students who have completed a minimum of 17-18 years of schooling to investigate the relationship between mindfulness, attention, awareness, and psychological well-being among students and the potential significant relationship between attachment styles and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). The study collected data from students in various colleges located in Bangalore, Delhi, and Kerala; a purposive sampling technique was used to select the participants. The instruments were used to assess the variables, namely, the mindfulness attention awareness scale (MAAS) and psychological well-being (SWB). Pearson's product moment correlation analysis was used. The mean and SD towards psychological well-being were 175.88 and 22.827, and the mean and SD of mindfulness attention awareness were 58.8 and 1.424, respectively. Psychological well-being has a higher mean and standard deviation than mindfulness attention awareness. The Pearson's correlation results showed the significant value was (0.518, p>0.05 level). The result revealed that an increase in mindfulness attention awareness is associated with an increase in psychological well-being. (8)

The second objective of the study was to associate the mindful attention awareness of undergraduate students studying at selected colleges.

Table 3 shows the association between mindful attention awareness and background variables of students studying in the undergraduate program. There was a highly significant difference found between mindful attention awareness and the residence of the students (p<0.001), and the value of the F value was 5.774.

Conclusion

The present study concluded that the mindful attention awareness among undergraduate students studying at a selected college showed that the higher the mean value had proved that the positive effects on students' academic performance, enhanced academic engagement, and improved coping strategies among students that will maintain overall psychological well-being.

Acknowledgement

I extend my gratitude to all participants who took part in my study and dedicated their time and effort to complete this survey. I also appreciate my institute and faculty members for their support on this topic, and I would like to give special thanks to my guide for their encouragement and guidance throughout my research.

Source of funding: None

Conflicts of interest: There are no conflicts of interest.

Mindful Attention Awareness Scale MAAS (Brown.K.W.&Ryan, R.M. 2003)

INSTRUCTIONS: Below is a collection of statements about your everyday experience. Using the 1-6 scale below, please indicate how frequently you currently have each experience. Please answer according to what really reflects your experience rather than what you think your experience should be. Please treat each item separately from every other item.

1 Almost always	2 Very Frequently	3 Somewhat Frequently	4 Somewhat infrequently	5 Very infrequently	6 Almost never

S. NO	QUESTIONS	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	I could be experiencing some emotion and not be conscious of it until						
2	I break or spill things because of carelessness, not paying attention, or thinking of something else						
3	I find it difficult to stay focused on what's happening in the present.						
4	I tend to walk quickly to get where I'm going without paying attention to what I experience along the way.						
5	I tend not to notice feelings of physical tension or discomfort until they really grab my attention.						
6	I forget a person's name almost as soon as I've been told it for the first						
7	It seems I am "running on automatic," without much awareness of what						
8	I rush through activities without being really attentive to them.						
9	I get so focused on the goal I want to achieve that I lose touch with what I'm doing right now to get there.						
10	I do jobs or tasks automatically, without being aware of What I'm doing.						
11	I find myself listening to someone with one ear, doing something else at the same time.						
12	I drive places on 'automatic pilot' and then wonder why I went there.						
13	I find myself preoccupied with the future or the past.						
14	I find myself doing things without paying attention.						
15	I snack without being aware that I'm eating						

Score interpretation

The higher scores reflect higher levels of dispositional mindfulness.

At the end of questionnaires, add up all of the answer scores and divide the total score by 15; the minimum score is 15 and the maximum score is 90. Higher scores reflect higher levels of dispositional mindfulness. With these higher scores also come lower reported negative emotional states.

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