



Original Article

Exploring the Relationship between Mindfulness and Stress in College Students

Dr. Jasvir Kaur¹, Dr. Kirandeep Kaur²

¹Assistant Professor, Sri Guru Granth Sahib World University, Fatehgarh Sahib

²Retired Professor, Department of Education and Community Service, Punjabi University, Patiala

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Correspondence Address:

Dr. Jasvir Kaur

Assistant Professor, Sri Guru

Granth Sahib World University,

Fatehgarh Sahib

Email:

kaurjasvir168@gmail.com

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Abstract

The study aims to find out the relationship of mindfulness and its facets with stress. The sample of present study comprised of 384 college students of Punjab. The data was collected using Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire by Bear et al. (2006) and Perceived Stress Scale by Cohen et al. (1983). The data has been analyzed by using correlation and regression analysis. The study results suggested that students had an average level of mindfulness and low level of stress. The total mindfulness and three of its facets—observe, describe, and act with awareness—were found to be negatively correlated with stress. However, non-judge and non-react facet had no relationship with perceived stress. Further, the results of regression analysis highlights that stress significantly predicts mindfulness. Stress also emerged as significant predictor of describe, act with awareness and observe facets of mindfulness whereas, non judge and non react facets did not exhibit significant predictive relationships with stress. These results emphasize the importance of specific mindfulness traits among students that are most effective in dealing with stress, particularly those related to present-moment awareness, emotional articulation, and focused attention. These findings suggest that incorporating mindfulness practices into higher education can support stress reduction and align with NEP 2020's goals of promoting student well-being and holistic development.

Keywords: Mindfulness, stress, college students

Introduction

Every individual face stressful situation in their daily life. The focus of the present study is college students because they experience certain amount of stress due to shift from adolescence period to adulthood as well from school to college. There are many challenges for students like adjustment to the new academic and social environment, build new relationships, manage their finance, and adapt to physical changes. All this creates immense pressure on them. The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has placed high importance on physical and mental health of students. According to the policy makers good mental health is crucial for happiness and well-being which in turn enhance productivity. Therefore, mindfulness is significant to reduce the level of stress among college students as well as to accelerate the personal and academic excellence. The use of mindfulness assists in shaping emotion regulation stability which minimizes the level of stress (Hoffman et al., 2010) and boost cognitive flexibility, working memory and concentration (Davis & Hayes, 2012).

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the awareness that comes through purposeful observation or paying attention to the present moment and non-judgmentally unfolding of the experience moment by moment (Zinn, 2003). It is comprehensive awareness of an individual's inner world (emotions, thoughts, feelings, and sensations) and outer world (surroundings or actions) at the present moment (Brown et al., 2007). It is process of paying clear attention for specific purpose with an attitude of openheartedness and compassion. This way of observing the experiences is characterized by clarity, openness, and curiosity (Kaur and Kaur, 2022).

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Stress

Stress is an individual’s broad evaluation of life as being uncontrollable, unpredictable and overloaded (Cohen et al., 1983). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) defined stress as a mental or physical condition which is formulated through individual’s cognitive appraisal of the stimulation and interaction with the environment. Stressors are challenges to one’s adaptability as well as threat to mental and physical health. It is an individual’s psychological or physiological condition which is created by his cognitive reactions and interaction with the environment (Kaur and Kaur, 2022).

Review of related Literature

Palmer & Rodger (2009), Gallagher (2012) and Bartlett et al. (2021) found that mindfulness was associated with lower perceived stress which means that stress level decreases with increase of mindfulness. Ramos & Goncalves (2016) revealed that with increasing level of mindfulness, the stress level among individuals decreases considerably. According to Brown et al. (2015) act with awareness, non-judge and non-react facet of mindfulness had significant relationship with lower stress level; whereas, it had no significant relationship with observe and describe facet.

The study of Vasudevan and Reddy (2019) reported that mindfulness and its facets such as observe, describe, act with awareness, non-judge and non-react had inverse relationship with perceived stress. The findings of the study conducted by Vonderheyde (2017); Meyer et al. (2019); Koppenborg et al. (2022) and Nguyen et al. (2022); McBride et al. (2022) indicated that all the facets of mindfulness except observe were significantly correlated with lower stress level. As per McBride et al. (2022) observe facet of mindfulness was associated with higher stress level. Veirrer & Day (2022) found that stress had negative and significant relationship with observe, describe, act with awareness and non-judge facets of mindfulness and total mindfulness. However, it had no relationship with non-react facet.

Boekhorst & Duijndam (2023) revealed that mindfulness facets, especially act with awareness and non-judging, were significantly linked with lower distress levels during the post-pandemic transition period. Kaur (2025) found that in college students, mindfulness acts as a stress buffer. The study by Alvarado-García et al. (2025) demonstrates the significant positive impact of a mindfulness program on stress, anxiety, depression, sleep quality, social support, and life satisfaction among college students.

Objectives

- To study mindfulness and stress among college students.
- To study mindfulness and its five facets in relation to stress.
- To study stress as predictor of mindfulness and its five facets.

Hypotheses

- There will be significant relationship of mindfulness and its five facets with stress.
- Stress will be significant predictor of mindfulness and its five facets.

Methodology

The study has been conducted by using the descriptive method of research. The measures of central tendency and variability which are mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis were calculated. The Pearson product moment correlation was employed to study the relationship of total mindfulness and its five facets with stress among college students. The regression was used to study the contribution of stress in predicting mindfulness and its facets.

Sample

The study population consists of first year college students of three state universities of Punjab viz. Punjabi University, Patiala; Panjab University, Chandigarh and Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. For the collection of data, 6 colleges were selected. The study used random sampling method to collect data from 334 college students.

The Instruments

- **Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire:** The five-facet mindfulness questionnaire by Baer et al. (2006) was used to collect the data. This questionnaire has 39 statements which are divided into five facets namely observe, describe, act with awareness, non judge and non react.
- **Perceived Stress Scale:** The data was collected by using Perceived stress Scale (Cohen et al., 1983). This scale contains 14 question statements.

Descriptive Statistics

The mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis of the data was calculated and presented in the table 1.

Table: 1 Descriptive statistic of mindfulness and stress scores (N=334)

Variable	Mean	SD	skewness	Kurtosis
Total mindfulness	127.56	12.65	0.24	0.67
Observe	28.25	5.46	-0.30	0.01
Describe	26.85	5.38	-0.09	-0.14
Act with awareness	27.45	5.72	-0.33	-0.08
Non judge	21.98	5.55	-0.13	-0.44
Non react	21.54	4.87	0.04	0.01
Stress	26.52	6.03	-0.06	0.20

It is evident from the above table that the college students have average level of total mindfulness and low level of stress. The calculated value of mean and standard deviations is used as measures of central tendency and variability respectively. All calculated skewness and kurtosis values are within the range of -2 to +2, which indicates that score distributions met normality (Meyers et al., 2017).

Table 2: Correlation matrix of mindfulness, its five facets and stress (N=334)

Variables	Total FFMQ	Observe	Describe	Act with awareness	Non-judge	Non-react	Stress
Total FFMQ	1	0.48**	0.65**	0.58**	0.24**	0.38**	-0.31**
Observe		1	0.26**	-0.08	-0.39**	-0.36**	-0.14**
Describe			1	0.23**	-0.11	0.16*	-0.24**
Act with Awareness				1	0.29**	-0.19**	-0.21**
Non-judge					1	-0.29**	-0.09
Non react						1	-0.08
Stress							1

Table 2 shows coefficient correlation of mindfulness and its facets with stress. The total mindfulness is negatively and significantly correlated with stress as the calculated value is -0.14 which is significant at 0.01 level. Similarly, observe, describe and act with awareness facets of mindfulness are negatively and significantly correlated with stress as the calculated values -0.14, -0.24 and -0.21 are

Table 3: Regression analysis for mindfulness and its five facets (N=334)

Variable	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	B (SE)	Beta	F-value
Observe	0.137	0.019	0.016	-0.124 (5.42)	-0.137	6.39*
Describe	0.245	0.060	0.057	-0.218 (5.23)	-0.245	21.15**
Act with Awareness	0.209	0.044	0.041	-0.198 (5.61)	-0.209	15.10**
Non-judge	0.063	0.004	0.001	-0.058 (5.56)	-0.063	1.20
Non-react	0.076	0.006	.003	-0.062 (4.87)	0.076	1.94
Total	0.314	0.099	0.096	-0.660 (12.04)	-0.314	36.44**

The findings reveal that stress is a significant negative predictor of total mindfulness ($R = 0.314$, $R^2 = 0.099$, $p < .01$), indicating that approximately 9.9% of the variance in total mindfulness scores is explained by stress levels. Among the five facets, Describe ($R^2 = 0.060$, $p < .01$), Act with Awareness ($R^2 = 0.044$, $p < .01$), and Observe ($R^2 = 0.019$, $p < .05$) showed significant negative regression coefficients, suggesting that higher stress levels are associated with lower levels of these mindfulness components. In contrast, the Non-Judge ($R^2 = 0.004$, $p > .05$) and Non-React ($R^2 = 0.006$, $p > .05$) facets did not exhibit significant predictive relationships with stress, indicating that these dimensions are relatively unaffected by variations in stress levels.

Overall, the regression results suggest that while stress significantly impairs certain facets of mindfulness—particularly the ability to describe experiences, act with awareness, and observe—it does not significantly influence

Analysis and interpretation of data

The research findings based on collected data are presented in the form of tables. To study the relationship of mindfulness and its five facets with stress, Pearson's product moment correlation was used. The results are presented below:

significant at 0.01 level respectively. Whereas non judge and non react facets have no relationship with stress because the calculated values which are -0.06 and -0.08 respectively are insignificant. This indicated that with the increase in total mindfulness, observe, describe and act with awareness facets the level of stress decreases. However, the other two facets non judge and non react have no impact on stress.

individuals' capacity to remain non-judgmental or non-reactive toward their internal experiences.

Discussion

The present study aimed to find out impact of stress on the mindfulness among college students. Palmer & Rodger (2009), Gallagher (2012), Vonderheyde (2017), Bartlett et al. (2021), Alvarado-García et al. (2025) and Kaur (2025) supported the results of present study that mindfulness was inversely correlated with stress which signified that with the increase of mindfulness, stress decreases.

There is negligible and significant negative correlation exist between observe facet of mindfulness and stress. This showed that an individual is capable to observe his surroundings but it might not assist him to decrease his stress. These findings are in line with the studies of Ramos & Goncalves (2016), Vasudevan & Reddy (2019), Veirrer & Day (2022).

Describe facet of mindfulness was found to have moderately significant relationship with stress. Thereby, signifies the ability to identify one's feelings and emotions can make a person more confident to deal with the stressful situations. The studies of Ramos & Goncalves (2016), Vonderheyde (2017), Mayer et al. (2019), Vasudevan & Reddy (2019), Koppenborg et al. (2022), McBride et al. (2022) and Nguyen et al. (2022), Veirrer & Day (2022) supported the findings of present study.

A significant relationship of moderate strength was found to exist between act with awareness and perceived stress. The act with awareness facet depicts the capability of an individual to stay in present moment without getting distracted and in turn help him to stay focused and overcome obstacles without any stress. These findings are in consonance with Brown et al. (2015); Ramos & Goncalves (2016), Anchorena et al. (2017), Vonderheyde (2017), Mayer et al. (2019), Vasudevan & Reddy (2019), Koppenborg et al. (2022), Nguyen et al. (2022). McBride et al. (2022), Veirrer & Day (2022), Boekhorst & Duijndam (2023).

Non-judge and non-react facets of mindfulness has negative relationship with stress but this relationship is insignificant. Non-judge refers to reactions to inner experience i.e. one's ability to desist oneself from taking either positive or negative stance and non-react facet deals with perceiving one's inner experiences without reacting to them. These findings are supported by Vonderheyde (2017) and Veirrer & Day (2022).

Conclusion

The present study aimed to examine the relationship between mindfulness and stress among college students, with a focus on the predictive role of stress on the five facets of mindfulness. The findings indicated that students exhibited an average level of mindfulness and relatively low levels of perceived stress. A significant negative correlation was observed between total mindfulness and stress, suggesting that higher mindfulness is associated with lower stress levels. Among the five facets, observe, describe, and act with awareness were significantly and negatively related to stress, while non-judge and non-react facets did not show significant associations. Regression analysis further confirmed that stress significantly predicted total mindfulness and its facets—describe, act with awareness, and observe—but had no predictive value for non-judge and non-react. These results underscore the importance of cultivating specific mindfulness traits that are most effective in mitigating stress, particularly those related to present-moment awareness, emotional articulation, and focused attention.

Educational Implications

The present study has revealed that the students with higher levels of mindfulness experience lower levels of stress. Therefore, to maintain good physical and mental health, practice of mindfulness is essential. Especially due to the COVID-19 pandemic more than 80% students experience lot of stress and mental health issues. During and after this pandemic mindfulness has emerged as powerful tool to deal with stress (Kim, 2022). The centre for

happiness is established in IIM Jammu & Kashmir and in various other higher education institutes to achieve the aim of NEP 2020 which is for the development of holistic wellbeing of the students. This is a new venture to associate the happiness and mindful meditation in the academic curriculum. This is most powerful step to deal with stress and lead the students towards academic success. The policy mainly focusses on enabling the young generation to find the inner joy and balanced life through yoga and meditation to tackle with the challenges of modern days (Ministry of Education, Government of India, 2021).

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

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