Psychological Achievements
Fall & Winter, 2025, *32* (2)
Serial Number 34, 91-114
Rcceived: 08 Dec 2023
Accepted: 11 Mar 2024
DOI: 10.22055/psy.2024.45508.3169
(Psychol Achiev)
Orginal Article

The Effectiveness of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) Training on Academic Hardiness of Female Students: During the Coronavirus Pandemic

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of mindfulness-based stress reduction training on the academic persistence of female students during the coronavirus pandemic. This research was a semi-experimental type with a pre-test-post-test design and a control group. The statistical population of the research included all female students of the 2nd high school of the 11th year of Marvdasht city in the academic year of 2019-2020. From this population, a sample of 30 people (15 people for each group) was selected by available sampling method and considering the study entry criteria, and randomly replaced in two experimental and control groups. The participants of two groups completed the Academic Hardiness Questionnaire (RAHS) in the pre-test and post-test stages, and meanwhile the experimental group was trained in mindfulness-based stress reduction during 8 sessions of 120 minutes. Inclusion criteria: Low level of academic rigor, 11th grade education, female gender, age range 16 to 19 years, willingness and satisfaction to participate in the project, and desirable physical and mental condition to participate in the research. Exclusion criteria were: receiving psychological treatments before entering the study, being married, the student's unwillingness to continue cooperation in any of the stages of the study, having a history of specific mental illness, having a history of significant physical illness, having missed even one session, and not wanting to continue participating for any reason. After obtaining permission to conduct the research from the Marvdasht City Education Department, the necessary arrangements were made to conduct the research. Data analysis was done using covariance analysis in SPSS-25 software. Data analysis showed that mindfulness-

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based stress reduction training led to an increase in the average scores of experimental group participants in academic tenacity and its components, including personal commitment, challenge, and emotion control compared to the control group ($p<0.01$). Therefore, it can be suggested that stress reduction training based on mindfulness is effective on the level of academic persistence and its components, including personal commitment, challenge, and emotion control in female students. According to the findings, stress reduction training based on mindfulness is an effective intervention to improve students' academic persistence.

Keywords: Covid-19 pandemic, Academic persistence, Mindfulness-based stress reduction

Extended Abstract

Introduction

Due to the situation of the corona virus epidemic, almost all the important economic, political, social and even military aspects of all the countries of the world have been affected. Researches show that students who contracted covid-19 disease have low psychological tolerance and due to the condition of the disease, these people are highly exposed to psychological disorders such as anxiety, fear, depression and also negative thoughts. Accordingly, in the present study, academic hardness, which is one of the variables related to academic progress and psychological well-being of students, has been considered. Academic persistence is a set of personality traits that serve as a source of resistance in facing stressful life events, including education. Kobasa's tenacity theory (1979) and Kamtsios & Karagiannopoulou's theory of academic motivation (2016) have been proposed with a cognitive orientation in order to understand why some students show more persistence in the face of academic problems than other learners. Kubasa's theory proposes three cognitive evaluation processes of control, commitment, and challenges, which are related to persistence in facing problems. Students with stubbornness usually feel more in control of their lives, have a greater sense of belonging to what they do, and are receptive to new ideas and changes. In the meantime, different techniques have been presented regarding the improvement of academic tenacity, including mindfulness training. Self-motivated students feel capable of achieving academic goals through effort and emotional self-regulation, they want to excel academically through personal sacrifice, and they pursue challenging goals to achieve long-term personal growth. The research results showed that, in general, mindfulness

training has been effective on positive things, including stubbornness. Therefore, considering that the middle school period is the stage of transition from school to university and is accompanied by stress, teenagers will need academic tenacity in this stage of transition. Therefore, the current research seeks to answer the question of whether stress reduction training based on mindfulness is effective on the level of academic persistence of girls.

Method

The current research was a semi-experimental study with a pre-test-post-test design and a control group. The statistical population of the research included all female students of the 2nd high school of the 11th year of Marodasht city in the academic year of 2019-2020. From this population, a sample of 30 people (15 people for each group) was randomly selected in two experimental and control groups. The method of selecting the statistical sample was as follows: first, the academic persistence questionnaire was administered in the above statistical community, and 30 people were selected based on the lowest score in the academic persistence scale (score below 65) and then they were randomly replaced in two experimental and control groups.

Results

The findings of the research showed that the use of mindfulness-based stress reduction training led to an increase in the average scores of experimental group participants in academic tenacity and its components including personal commitment, challengingness, and emotion control compared to the control group. Therefore, it can be suggested that stress reduction training based on mindfulness is effective on the level of academic persistence and its components, including personal commitment, challenge, and emotion control in female students. Students who receive a mindfulness-based stress reduction training intervention typically feel more in control of their lives, feel more connected to what they are doing, and are more receptive to new ideas and changes.

Discussion

In sum, it is concluded that mindfulness educational intervention (MBSR) is a suitable method to increase students' academic persistence. By using this method, students will be able to have the necessary tenacity in the matter of education when problems arise, and most importantly, they will have sufficient awareness and alertness when facing some common issues in daily life, they will be able to have awareness and calmness. To protect themselves while accepting and bearing problems and finally, to be able to be successful not only in education, but in all aspects of life. Considering that the results of the current research emphasize the direct effect of mindfulness on academic persistence, from a practical point of view, it is suggested to launch workshops

and to measure the positive states of mindfulness in various educational and educational fields for students and families, and to measure their effectiveness experimentally.

Author Contributions: Authors' Contribution: In the present study, the second author was responsible for supervising and guiding the overall research process and compiling and finalizing the article revisions. The first author was responsible for formulating the research plan, collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the findings, and the third author was responsible for writing the text and editing the article. Overall, the conclusions from the findings, expansion, and interpretation were made jointly, with discussion and exchange of opinions among all colleagues, and with the assistance of the fourth author.

Acknowledgments: The authors thank all dear teachers who have helped us in this research.

Conflicts of interest: The authors declare there is no conflict of interest in this article.

Funding: This research is not sponsored by any institution and all costs have been borne by the authors