



## Mental Health in Practitioners through Mindfulness-Based Practices

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### Abstract

The objectives of this research article are 1) To study the circumstances and challenges faced by meditation practitioners, 2) To study the relationship between mental health and mindfulness-based practice, and 3) To provide recommendations for a mindfulness-based program to enhance mental health in meditation practitioners. The article is the qualitative research, used a qualitative research approach, and with in-depth interviews conducted among 10 key informants who are experienced meditation practitioners with over 5 years of practice. The research results show that 1) meditation practitioners experience various problems such as stress, being in the thinking loop, loss of temper, seeking acceptance, worry over uncontrollable external factors, inability to control their words, gaining weights, stress, anger, nervousness, and depression. 2) The cultivation of the four foundations of mindfulness can lead to significant improvements in mental health. 3) The key informants are found to develop their mental health through daily practice and participation in a one-day mindfulness-based program. Mindfulness-based activities include mindful sitting, walking, bowing, sleeping, speaking, listening, and eating.

Index Terms— Activities, Mental Health, Mindfulness, Practitioners.

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### 1. Introduction

In recent times, stress has become a regular occurrence in people's lives [1], resulting in physical and mental health issues for some individuals [2]. The situation is further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has added fear and anxiety to people's lives [3] (Suarez et al., 2021), making them more concerned about their well-being and that of their loved ones. The economic downturn worldwide has also caused additional worries for people, leading to an overall state of suffering. Suffering, which includes old age, death, body degeneration, and emotional distress like sorrow and grief, is a fundamental aspect of human existence [4] (Tapas, 2013). Many people have practiced meditation to help with their stress and anxiety management [5] (Goyal et al., 2014), as well as to find the inner happiness [6] (Baer et al., 2012). Numerous research investigations have demonstrated that meditation has the potential to positively influence both mental health. Several studies, including one by Harvard University, have demonstrated the effectiveness of mindfulness meditation in reducing negative emotions by lowering activity in the amygdala, the brain region responsible for processing negative emotions [7] (Walton, 2021).

## 2. Literature Review

As per the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health is “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community”. This conceptualization of mental health marks a significant advancement in shifting away from the notion of mental well-being solely defined by the absence of mental illness. However, it evokes certain apprehensions and is susceptible to misinterpretation due to its emphasis on positive emotions and functioning as crucial components of mental health [8].

Social isolation is a shared human encounter that can affect entire communities, serving as a poignant reminder of our inherent yearning for connection. This sense of isolation permeates various aspects of life, including intrapersonal, interpersonal, and existential dimensions, and is experienced by individuals to varying extents during different stages of their development. Extensive research has indicated that enduring social isolation is a significant predictor of cardiovascular issues, mental health disorders, and heightened mortality rates [9].

Scholars have delineated the concept of mindfulness through a range of explanations and interpretations, offering diverse perspectives on its nature and characteristics. As exemplified by Ritchie and Bryant [10], mindfulness has been subject to expansive definitions encompassing diverse domains such as Buddhist theory and practice, clinical interventions, educational research, meditation practices, and positive psychology, thereby highlighting its broad conceptual scope. In contrast, Brown and Ryan [11] elucidate a state of consciousness characterized by an all-encompassing awareness of the immediate experiential moment, encompassing internal and external phenomena such as thoughts, emotions, sensations, actions, and surroundings. To ensure lucidity, this article defines mindfulness as the state of consciously recognizing and attending to present circumstances, with the cultivation of mindfulness involving the integration of one's thoughts, emotions, sensations, and actions.

Lomas et al. [12] conducted a study to examine the association between mindfulness and well-being among medical professionals. The study implemented a Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) program, which focused on the concept of "re-perceiving" to shift participants' perception of distress and help them recognize thoughts and emotions as transient experiences rather than inherent aspects of their identity. The results indicated that the participants exhibited increased awareness to effectively cope with anxiety, depression, and stress following the mindfulness practice. These findings suggest that mindfulness interventions positively impact the well-being of healthcare professionals.

Additionally, Teut et al. [13] investigated the effects of an eight-week mindful walking program on a group of individuals reporting high levels of mental distress. The results indicated a significant decrease in physical stress symptoms and an improvement in their quality of life, demonstrating that mindfulness is effective in reducing negative mental symptoms and promoting overall well-being and tranquility.

Based on the findings of Jiwattanasuk [14], mindfulness-based practices encompass a variety of activities aimed at cultivating mindfulness, which entail deliberate engagement in mindful sitting, walking, bowing, sleeping, speaking, listening, and eating. Mindfulness-based courses encompass both formal and informal components, incorporating structured program activities as well as the integration of mindfulness practices into daily life routines.

### 3. Research Methodology

The present article employs a qualitative research design, specifically employing in-depth interviews, to investigate the experiences and perspectives of 10 key informants who possess extensive meditation practice experience exceeding a duration of 5 years. Individual in-depth interviews were carried out in a one-on-one format, facilitating a focused and comprehensive exploration of each participant's perspectives and experiences. The participants designated as key informants provide their informed consent by signing the consent form, thereby indicating their voluntary agreement to participate in the study.

### 4. Research Results

The research findings are categorized into three distinct outcomes based on the predefined research objectives. These categories are as follows:

#### A. To study the circumstances and challenges faced by meditation practitioners

Based on the research findings, individuals who engage in meditation may face various challenges in their daily lives, including but not limited to stress, cognitive rumination, outbursts of anger, a need for external validation, preoccupation with uncontrollable external factors, impulsive verbal behavior, as well as emotional disturbances such as anxiety and depression. One of the key informants experienced a high level of stress, which led to contemplation of self-harm or suicide. While several key informants exhibit a tendency towards excessive rumination, persistent worrying, and an inability to disengage from their incessant thinking processes. One informant experienced the loss of their parents, which resulted in feelings of depression and distress. Many key informants experience work-related stress, and when faced with unmanageable factors in their lives, they struggle to cope and become overwhelmed.

#### B. To study the relationship between mental health and mindfulness-based practice.

The research outcomes demonstrate a significant positive association between engaging in mindfulness practice and enhancing mental health. The study findings demonstrate that engaging in mindfulness meditation can lead to enhancements in mental well-being among practitioners. Specifically, the study observed notable changes in the behavior of certain key informants who frequently expressed dissatisfaction with their subordinates due to their strong focus on achieving results. Upon incorporating meditation into their routine, these individuals exhibited a heightened sense of self-awareness. As a result, they demonstrated increased mindfulness in their communication, speaking with greater politeness and consideration for the impact of their words on others. Furthermore, they displayed a newfound ability to empathize with those around them.

Through the incorporation of mindfulness practices, a notable reduction in worry and an increased ability to be present in the moment were observed among several key informants. Prior to engaging in mindfulness exercises, numerous practitioners experienced persistent frustration and excessive rumination. However, following the implementation of mindfulness techniques, these individuals reported a significant decrease in overthinking tendencies.

Furthermore, the study highlighted a specific case wherein a practitioner was grappling with the loss of a mother. Nevertheless, after integrating mindfulness into their daily routine, this individual exhibited remarkable progress in the healing process, demonstrating an enhanced capacity to move forward from the bereavement. Another key informant encountered challenges related to seeking acceptance from others. However, upon engaging in

mindfulness practices, this individual experienced a reduction in ego-centric tendencies and a decreased need for external validation, ultimately leading to a greater sense of personal happiness.

Additionally, a significant number of key informants initially reported feelings of depression. However, following their participation in mindfulness exercises, these individuals demonstrated notable improvements in mental resilience, enabling them to strengthen their own psychological well-being and subsequently extend support to others in need. The incorporation of mindful bowing practice has had a profound influence on the individual's mindset. Engaging in a deliberate and unhurried bow as a gesture of reverence towards the Triple Gems has elicited a transformative effect. This mindful act has heightened the person's awareness of their bodily movements during the act of paying respect. Consequently, their mind has become more receptive, gentle, and attuned to others, fostering a sense of softness and kindness in their interactions with fellow individuals. The implementation of a mindfulness program has been found to positively impact the mental well-being of practitioners. Following participation in the program, individuals experienced improvements in their overall emotional state, leading to an increased sense of happiness and contentment. Furthermore, these individuals were observed to engage more harmoniously in their daily interactions with others, fostering a greater sense of happiness and well-being in their interpersonal relationships.

### **C. To provide recommendations for a mindfulness-based program to enhance mental health in meditation practitioners.**

Based on the research findings, it is evident that the key informants observed improvements in their mental health by engaging in daily mindfulness practice and participating in a one-day mindfulness-based program. To summarize, the activities included in the course are:

One-Day Mindfulness Course:

08:00 - 08:30 Registration

08:30 - 08:50 Welcome everyone / Orientation

09:00 - 09:50 A Request for the Five Precepts and the Verse to Dedicate the Practice of Meditation to the Triple Gems

10:00 - 10:50 Mindful Walking and Sitting

10:50 - 11:00 Mindful Discussion (law of karma)/Mindful Speaking

12:00 - 13:15 Mindful Eating

13:15 - 13:30 Mindful Hand Movements Exercise

13:40 - 13:50 Mindful Bowing

14:00 - 15:00 Mindful Discussion (appreciation to families and related workgroup)

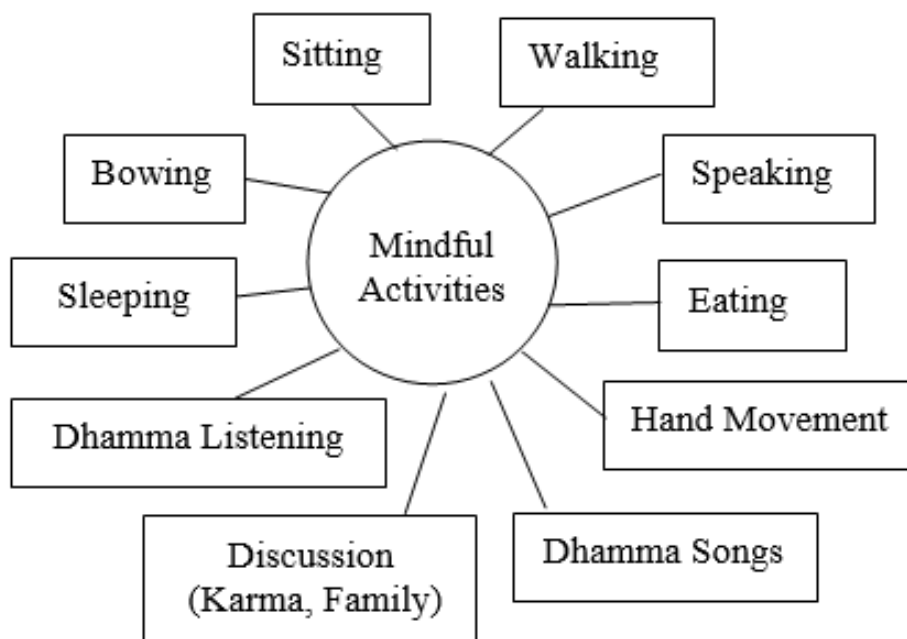
15:00 - 16:00 Mindful Bowing

Mindful Walking with Dhamma songs

16:00 - 17:20 Mindful Listening: Dhamma Talk

17:20 - 17:30 Questionnaire

The manifestation of mindful activities can be visually represented in the diagram presented below.



**Fig. 1:** Activities during Mindfulness Course

### 5. Conclusion and Recommendation

The research findings indicate that individuals who engage in meditation may encounter a range of challenges encompassing stress, rumination, anger outbursts, seeking acceptance, preoccupation with uncontrollable external factors, verbal impulsivity, weight gain, and emotional disturbances such as anxiety and depression. Additionally, the cultivation of mindfulness practice is associated with noteworthy enhancements in mental well-being. This study extends the understanding of the relationship between mental health and mindfulness-based interventions, highlighting their substantial capacity to improve psychological health. The key informants demonstrated improvements in their mental health through regular practice and participation in a one-day mindfulness-based program. The program involved various mindfulness activities including mindful sitting, walking, bowing, speaking, listening, and eating.

Based on the research findings, several areas warrant further investigation in the future. Future developments of the course could be tailored to meet the needs of corporate settings, facilitating organizational strengthening. Additionally, adapting the course for general practitioners may contribute to national and international efforts in enhancing mental health. Additionally, in-depth interviews revealed that mindful bowing assisted executives in reducing their ego and cultivating the ability to let go of attachments. This newfound ability resulted in reduced suffering and increased happiness. Therefore, conducting additional research on the role of appreciation in reducing ego and promoting happiness is recommended. Apart from this, the mindfulness-based activity involving dhamma songs demonstrated potential for stress reduction, particularly when combined with walking meditation. Further research investigating the relationship between dhamma songs and the promotion of mental health would be of interest.

Nevertheless, the research findings presented in this paper offer opportunities for future extensions in multiple directions. For instance, the scope of investigation could be broadened to explore additional mindful activities in everyday life, such as mindful speaking. Moreover,

it would be intriguing to explore whether the combined practice of mindfulness and loving-kindness yields beneficial outcomes for mental health.

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