

## Impact of Mindfulness on Mental Health of Patients Diagnosed with Major Depressive Disorder

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### ABSTRACT

**OBJECTIVE:** To assess the impact of Mindfulness on Mental Health of Patients diagnosed with Major Depressive Disorder.

**STUDY DESIGN:** A Correlational study design.

**PLACE AND DURATION:** The study was completed in six months from 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2015 to 1<sup>st</sup> June, 2016 at Nishtar Hospital, Multan and Bahawal Victoria Hospital, Bahawalpur.

**METHODOLOGY:** Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) and Mental Health Inventory (MHI) were used to measure the degree of mindfulness and mental health.

**RESULTS:** The results indicated that mindfulness and psychological issues like depression, anxiety, loss of behavioral control, emotional ties and psychological distress are significantly correlated and mindfulness has significant impact on mental health in depressed patients. However, results also indicated that mindfulness is higher in educated clinical patients than uneducated clinical patients.

**CONCLUSION:** Mindfulness is negatively correlated with mental health.

**KEYWORDS:** Mindfulness, Mental Health, Depression, Patients, Anxiety, Psychological Distress, Emotional Ties, Loss of Behavioral Control

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### INTRODUCTION

Mindfulness is described as the awareness and concentration in the present moment and non-judgmentally to the developing of experience.<sup>1</sup> Mindfulness refers to the awareness of one's present moment. Three interrelated constituents of mindfulness were defined.<sup>2</sup> Mindfulness is defined as focusing on present external as well as internal experience without judging it.<sup>3</sup> In the first place, mindfulness bases on the feeling of awareness. Secondly, this awareness is coordinated to ongoing experiences of the person. Third, this awareness of ongoing experience does not include any evaluation. In the last few decades, mindfulness has drawn a vast amount of attention,

both empirically and clinically. Research on mindfulness has attended primarily to understanding how the internal processes of attention, whether to thoughts, emotions, or other internal experiences, are associated with various psychological traits.<sup>4</sup> Research on mindfulness suggested that mindfulness enables individuals to engage more, feel more self-confident, and be less avoidant of uncomfortable situations.<sup>5</sup> Mental health is a presence of psychological wellbeing, or an absence of mental ailment. It is the mental state of someone who is working at an optimum level of emotional and behavioral modification. Mental health includes our psychological, emotional, and social well-being. It affect our way of thinking and coping with life. The following components of mental health that are included in this study are Anxiety, Depression, Behavioral Control, Life satisfaction, General Positive Affect, Psychological well-being, Emotional Ties and Psychological Distress. Brown and Ryan explained that mindfulness has been associated with a variety of benefits for health and personal wellbeing including: anxiety, depression, stress-reactivity, self-esteem and self-awareness. While mindfulness has an influence on internal processes and their effects on psychological wellbeing, awareness and acceptance of internal processes is also hypothesized to influence the quality of relationships with others.<sup>6</sup> Psychological distress is defined as mental state which includes negative self-concept and negative thoughts about others and environment. Unpleasant subjective states such as feeling tense, worried, worthless and irritable are it major symptoms.<sup>7</sup> Mindfulness and psychological well-being are theoretically and empirically associated. Awareness and

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nonjudgmental acceptance of one's current experience are the major factors of mindfulness, which are efficiently used against common types of psychological distress such as anxiety, worry, fear, anger etc.<sup>8,9</sup> Depression causes feelings of sadness and/or a loss of interest in activities once enjoyed. State of apprehension refers to depression. Depression is a major public health issue due to its prevalence, high mortality rates, suicide risk, and economic impact on the society. It is considered to be the major cause of years lived with disability and by 2020 is expected to be among the two main causes of disability adjusted years together with ischemic heart disease. The functional limitations caused by depression are equal to or even sometimes greater than the ones engendered by many other chronic medical conditions.<sup>10</sup> Research supported Beck's theory and found that student's negative views about their future are associated with depressed mood.<sup>11</sup> Major depressive disorder describes the typical condition in this group of disorders. It is characterized by distinct episodes of at least two weeks' duration involving obvious changes in affect, cognition, and neuro vegetative functions and inter-episode remissions. Major depressive episode is characterized by a period of at least two weeks during which there is either depressed mood or the loss of interest or pleasure in nearly all activities. Depression is the most common mental and persistent illness. Almost 80 percent individuals who suffer from depression are not able to recover from this disorder. Drugs lose their effect on depression with the passage of time. But literature is pointing to an intervention that help in dealing with depression: mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, or MBCT.<sup>12</sup> A study showed that depression is negatively related to dispositional mindfulness.<sup>13</sup> Previous researches showed that mindfulness-based interventions can be helpful in reducing depression in clinical and nonclinical populations.<sup>3,14</sup> The present study was aimed to determine relational aspects of mindfulness and psychological issues among clinical patients. Mindfulness and mental health are important concepts in understanding the abnormal behavior. Most of the previous researches on the impact of mindfulness on mental health had been conducted in western culture. The present research will be helpful in determining the relational aspects of mindfulness and psychological issues among clinical patients in Pakistan especially in Multan and Bahawalpur. The findings of present study will be helpful in order to treat the clinical patients. The objective of this study was to assess the impact of Mindfulness on Mental Health of Patients diagnosed with Major Depressive Disorder.

## METHODOLOGY

This Correlational study was conducted in which participants were taken through purposive sampling. The study was completed in six months from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2015 to 1<sup>st</sup> June 2016 with participants taken at Nishtar Hospital, Multan and Bahawal Victoria Hospital, Bahawalpur. A questionnaire was designed including a brief bio-data including gender, marital Status, age and education, and scales of Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale and mental health inventory. Inclusion criteria was set as the patients suffering from depression for more than 5 months will be included in the study and the patients within age range

of 25-44 years of age will be included in the study. Literature suggests that depression is most common for both genders who are 25-44 years of age, and least common for those over the age of 65. 12 After applying the inclusion criteria the patients who were suffering from depression for less than 5 months were excluded from the study and the patients who were younger than 25 and older than 44 were not included in the study. The final sample consisted of 40 patients diagnosed with major depressive disorder. The present study was aimed to determine relational aspects of mindfulness and depression among clinical patients. Data was collected by giving questionnaires to patients. The patients were educated about the purpose of research and have been guided how to fill the questionnaires. Descriptive and inferential statistical analysis has been carried out with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences for the data collected from patients diagnosed with major depressive disorder. The MAAS is a 15-item scale designed to assess mindfulness, which means what a person is perceiving at the present moment. Mindful Attention Awareness Scale, or MAAS, to measure individual differences in mindfulness was developed by Brown and Ryan. The Mental Health Inventory (MHI) is a well-known measure developed by Veit and Ware. It covers a wide range of negative and positive emotions, not just psychopathology. It has 38 items, most items are self-explanatory. All 38 items of MHI are scored on six Likert scale except two. Items scored on a five-point scale includes Item 9 and 28. The MHI has 6 subscales (Depression, Anxiety, Life Satisfaction, Behavioral Control, Emotional Ties and General Positive Affect) and two global scales - Psychological Well-being and Psychological Distress; and A global Mental Health Index score. The subscales work in two steps: (1) item scoring; and (2) the subscales themselves. 35 from 38 items are utilized to measure six subscales of mental health (items precluded from the subscales are 2, 22 and 38). Every item shows up in just a single subscale. **Data Analysis:** Data Analysis is done with the help of SPSS in which correlation, regression analysis and t-test were conducted.

## RESULTS

Mindfulness has significant negative correlation with mental health components such as mindfulness has significant negative correlation with anxiety ( $r = -.41, p < .01$ ), it also has significant negative correlation with depression ( $r = -.38, p < .01$ ), it also has significant negative correlation with Loss of behavioral control ( $r = -.24, p < .05$ ), and also has negative significant correlation with psychological distress ( $r = -.39, p < .01$ ). (Table-I) Results of linear regression for assessing the impact of mindfulness on mental health. Table further shows that the value of p is .000 which shows that mindfulness has significant impact on mental health. (Table-II) Results of independent sample t-test indicate that there is significant difference between educated and uneducated patients on mindfulness. Mindfulness will be high among educated clinical patients ( $M = 55.04, SD = 12.11$ ) than that of uneducated clinical patients ( $M = 42.71, SD = 12.07$ ),  $t(38) = 3.07, p = .05$ . (Table-III)

**Table – I: Matrix of Correlational Coefficient on the scores of Mindfulness and Subscales of Mental Health Inventory (Anxiety, Depression, Loss of Behavioral Control, Psychological Distress and Emotional Ties). (N=40)**

	Mindfulness	Anxiety	Depression	Loss of Behavioral Control	Emotional Ties
Anxiety	-.41**				
Depression	-.38**	.71**			
Loss of Behavioral Control	-.24*	.72**	.71**		
Emotional Ties	-.12	-.36**	-.44**	-.47**	
Psychological Distress	-.39**	.92**	.82**	.85**	-.48**

Note. n = 40. \*p < 0.05. \*\*p < 0.01

**Table-II: Regression Analysis Showing Impact of Mindfulness on Psychological Issues. (N=40)**

Predictors	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>
(Constant)	87.278	9.726		8.974	.000
Mindfulness	.765	.185	.386	4.137	.000

Note.  $R^2 = 0.149$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.140$ , ( $F = 17.116$ ,  $p < 0.01$ )

**Table-III: Education based difference on mindfulness.(N=40)**

	Uneducated	Educated	<i>t</i> (38)	CI		<i>d</i>
	<i>n</i> =14	<i>n</i> =26		<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>	
	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )				
Achievement	42.71(12.07)	55.04(12.11)	3.07*	20.44	4.21	1.1
* <i>p</i> <.05						

## DISCUSSION

The current research was undertaken to investigate the impact of Mindfulness on Mental Health of Patients diagnosed with Major Depressive Disorder. It also explored the correlation between mindfulness and psychological issues (Depression, Anxiety, Loss of Behavioral Control, Psychological Distress and Emotional Ties). This research was conducted to find whether mindfulness has any relationship with depression among clinical patients. Results yield following inferences. Results of first table is based on hypothesis that mindfulness is negatively correlated with mental health. So this study supports the result that mindfulness and mental health are negatively correlated. Thus consistent with previous research done in 2003 that mindfulness is negatively associated with psychological issues like anxiety, depression, and psychological distress. These results are also consistent with a research conducted in 2008 by Williams, that mindfulness is negatively correlated with depression.<sup>3</sup> Results of the second table show that there is a significant impact of mindfulness on psychological issues as indicated by previous researches in which they studied the relationship of psychological wellbeing and psychological distress with mindfulness.<sup>13</sup> The results of studies show that mindfulness is directly or indirectly reduce the level of depression and aggression.<sup>14</sup> It was predicted that mindfulness will vary according to the education status of clinical patients and mindfulness will be high among educated clinical patients. Results depicted in this study elaborate that mindfulness is higher among educated clinical patients because education broadens the thinking of a man, it helps the man to explore the

word in a more positive way which makes him more mindful. As the results of previous study on mindfulness suggests that mindfulness enables individuals to engage more, feel more self-confident, and be less avoidant of uncomfortable situations which is done by educating him.<sup>15</sup> This moment of reflective space gives individuals time to understand their thoughts on a deeper level and; therefore, a deeper understanding of how external experiences influence internal experiences.

## CONCLUSION

The statistical data confirms that mindfulness and mental health are significantly negatively correlated.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

One of the major limitation of this study was that it was conducted on small sample representing south Punjab. This sample is not enough for generalizing the results to large population so a larger sample should be used for further replication.

## IMPLICATIONS

Despite of the limitations, our study has supported previous results, by showing that mindfulness has negative impact on depression. Mindfulness can help to decrease depression in patients. Future research should investigate that how mindfulness base cognitive therapy can help to decrease depression. If special techniques of mindfulness can be discovered, they will help in decreasing and treating depression, such as meditation, may be implemented in depressed patients

to help them in leading meaningful lives. Our study provides important evidence of the relationship between depression and mindfulness. The underlying mechanisms and relationship of mindfulness and depression can be explored by using other methods such as physiological measures and neuroimaging.

### CONTRIBUTION OF AUTHORS

Makki A: Conceived idea, Data collection, Literature review and Data analysis

Ajmal A: Designed Methodology, Manuscript Writing.

Bajwa RS: Proof reading.

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