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The Effectiveness of Adolescent-Centered Mindfulness Training on Academic Burnout and Symptoms of Social Anxiety in Students

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Extended Abstract

Aim

Social anxiety disorder is one of the significant concerns among students. It is characterized by persistent and pronounced fear, anxiety, and worry about being criticized or evaluated by others in various social situations (Pitcho-Perlorentzos et al., 2020). Research conducted by Mas et al. (2019) highlights that adolescents experiencing social anxiety are at a heightened risk of school dropout, along with negative impacts on their physical and mental health, employment opportunities, job performance, socio-economic status, and overall quality of life (Smith et al., 2020). Students with social anxiety often exhibit symptoms such as academic burnout, reluctance to participate in class and school activities, lack of engagement in classroom interactions, frequent absenteeism, feelings of emptiness, and diminished self-confidence in learning (Ghadampour et al., 2016). Academic burnout, a condition arising from prolonged exposure to stressful environmental factors, affects individuals across physical, mental, emotional, and cognitive dimensions (Nasri et al., 2013). In recent years, mindfulness-based interventions aimed at improving mental health outcomes for children and adolescents have gained increasing attention. These programs seek to cultivate a clear and open mindset with a non-judgmental awareness of one's surroundings. However, a review of research in credible domestic and international sources reveals a gap in studies focusing on the effects of adolescent-oriented mindfulness training on academic burnout and social anxiety among female students in secondary education. This study aims to address this gap by examining whether adolescent-oriented mindfulness training has an impact on academic burnout among students with symptoms of social anxiety in the second secondary level.

Methodology

This study employed a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test, post-test, control group, and a three-month follow-up. The statistical population consisted of all female high school students exhibiting symptoms of social anxiety during the 2019–2020 academic year. From this population, 30 students were selected using purposive sampling and randomly assigned to two groups: experimental (n = 15) and control (n = 15). Participants in the experimental group underwent adolescent-centered mindfulness training (Brodick, 2014; Poull, 2019) delivered in group sessions. The training comprised eight weekly sessions, each lasting two hours.

The study utilized the following instruments:

1. **Researcher-Developed Demographic Questionnaire:** To collect participant background information.
2. **Social Anxiety Questionnaire (SAQ):** Adapted by La Greca (1999), this questionnaire includes 18 items across three subscales: fear of negative evaluation by peers, social avoidance and distress in new situations, and general social avoidance and distress.
3. **Maslach Burnout Inventory - Student Survey (MBI-SS):** Developed by Schaufeli et al., (2002), this 15-item scale assesses academic burnout in three domains: academic fatigue, academic apathy, and academic inefficiency.

Data analysis involved descriptive statistics, such as means and standard deviations, along with repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) conducted using SPSS version 21.

Findings

The results of the multivariate analysis for academic burnout indicated that the effect of time and the interaction of time with the pre-test were not significant ($p > 0.05$). However, the interaction effect of time and group was significant ($p < 0.05$). Similarly, for social anxiety symptoms, the multivariate analysis showed that the effect of time and the interaction of time with the pre-test were not significant ($p > 0.05$). However, the interaction effect of time and group was significant ($p < 0.05$). The results showed that adolescent-centered mindfulness training had a significant effect on reducing academic fatigue and symptoms of social anxiety in female high school students ($p < 0.001$).

Conclusion

One notable impact of mindfulness training is its ability to foster positive sensitivity towards others by enhancing harmony and empathy. This process broadens the range of positive emotions individuals experience over time, such as a persistent sense of trust in life, deep compassion, and genuine feelings of love. Furthermore, mindfulness practice helps children and adolescents manage negative emotions by teaching them to recognize and address the automatic interpretations of their emotional experiences in various situations. Through these mindful practices, individuals who receive mindfulness training develop a positive outlook towards others, which facilitates adaptive interpersonal interactions and ultimately reduces academic burnout. This study had certain limitations. The research exclusively focused on adolescents diagnosed with social anxiety disorder, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other groups of adolescents. Future studies are encouraged to include other age groups as well as non-clinical adolescent populations to compare findings with the current research results.

Keywords: Academic Burnout, Social Anxiety, Teen-Centric Mindfulness.

Ethical Considerations

This article is derived from the doctoral thesis of a student in Educational Psychology at the Islamic Azad University, Khorasgan Branch, with the approval code IR.IAU.KHUISF.REC.1401.188.

To ensure adherence to ethical standards, written informed consent was obtained from the students' parents, and the confidentiality of all participants' information was assured and documented.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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