

Mindfulness in Education for a Compassionate and Sustainable Future Role of Mindfulness in Enriching Education: From Stress to Strength

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Abstract

Mindfulness is the practice of being present and fully engaged in the moment, often cultivated through meditation and reflective practices. Mindfulness in education can create revolution by enhancing emotional intelligence, resilience, and empathy among students/learners. In this paper, we will discuss the importance of mindfulness in Education, how mindful practices can reduce stress, anxiety, and depression among students or learners, leading to an enriched learning environment, which will enhance the personality of the learners and the quality of education.

Keywords: Buddhism, Buddhist Meditation, Mindfulness, Stress and Education.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades, there has been a surge of interest in the concepts and applications of mindfulness in education, resulting in a diverse range of initiatives, programs, and delivery systems around the world. Mindfulness explorations, applications, integrations, and research projects in education are becoming common in schools, kindergartens, schools of education, teacher in-service trainings, and higher education. Mindfulness was brought into the educational field with the goal of improving wellness, mental health, social and emotional skills, resilience, pro social conducts, and academic success. Mindfulness in education is gaining popularity among peer-reviewed publications and international organizations like UNESCO, OECD, World Bank, and World Economic Forum.

Buddhism has over 2,500-year of history and it is a philosophical thought that includes significant teachings on human suffering, the essence of reality, and the search for inner peace and enlightenment¹. Its concepts have been practiced and passed down through nations and centuries, and they continue to impact millions of people throughout the world.

The COVID-19 epidemic has had a profound influence on students worldwide in a variety of ways. Many colleges and universities have closed or transitioned to online learning, upsetting traditional education. Students encountered barriers to accessing learning resources, potentially resulting in learning gaps, particularly among underprivileged populations. The uncertainty and habit changes resulted in increased worry and stress among students. Reduced face-to-face encounters have an impact on both social skills and emotional well-being. Students had to adjust to online learning platforms, which required technological knowledge and access to gadgets.

The pandemic accelerated discussions about the future of education, including hybrid models and the integration of technology. Educational policies may evolve to address the challenges faced during the pandemic and improve resilience in future crises. Increased availability of mental health resources and support services aimed at helping students cope with the aftermath of the pandemic.

Educational Institutions and communities have worked together to provide resources, tutoring, and support to students in need. The impact of COVID-19 on students will likely be studied for years to come, as educators and policymakers seek to understand and mitigate the long-term consequences. The shift underscored the importance of personalized educational approaches to address the requirements of various students. The pandemic has expedited talks about education's future, including hybrid methods and technological integration. Educational policies may adapt to address the issues faced during the epidemic and enhance resilience in future crises.

Due to an increasing number of stress, anxiety, and mental health issues among students and educators, there is an urgent need to investigate novel educational techniques that address individuals' emotional and psychological well-being. The students' health, emotional state, and academic performance can be devastated when they negatively interpret the stressful context or when the stress level intensifies (Ranjita Misra & Mckean, 2000).

Traditional educational systems have prioritized academic accomplishment and intellectual development, frequently overlooking the importance of emotional intelligence and the development of compassion and empathy. The Buddhist philosophy is based on teachings of wisdom, compassion, and mindfulness. The four noble truths are central to it, explaining that life contains pain, that every suffering has a cause, and that it may be overcome by following an eightfold Path.

What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is an English translation of the word *sati* (in Pali), which appears in Buddhist teachings and writings. Mindfulness in education refers to the cultivation of healthy, skillful, and sensible attention to four aspects of existence: body, feelings, cognition, and mental elements.

According to traditional Buddhist teachings, mindfulness enhances wisdom, insight, loving-kindness, and compassion while also promotes tranquil and mental equilibrium, according to traditional Buddhist teachings. Mindfulness (*samma + sati*) is the foundation of the eightfold path, which leads us from ignorance and suffering to mindfulness. Mindfulness not only promotes knowledge (*panna*), which acknowledges the transient nature of both mental and physical existences, but it also suppresses bad emotions like as anger, greed, jealousy, and arrogance.ⁱⁱ

"Ekāyano ayaṃ, bhikkhave, maggo sattānaṃ visuddhiyā, sokaparidevānaṃ samatikkamāya, dukkhadomanassānaṃ atthaṅgamāya, ñāyassa adhigamāya, nibbānassa sacchikiriyāya, yadidaṃ cattāro satipaṭṭhānā."

The Pāli canon emphasizes the importance of mindfulness in the Buddhist soteriological framework. Several canonical works define and teach mindfulness within the context of the four foundations of mindfulness (*cattāro satipaṭṭhāna*), with the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta providing the most detailed explanation. These lines from *Mahāsatiṭṭhāna Sutta*, which comes from the *Majjhim Nikāya*, is a key text for discussions on Buddhist mindfulness. The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta explains mindfulness in four categories: body (*kāya*), feeling (*vedanā*), mind (*citta*), and phenomena (*dhamma*). These four bases of mindfulness are divided into thirteen contemplations or practices, the majority of which focus on bodily observations (six practices) and dharma observations (five practices).

It explains that "*the one and only way, to purify beings, overcome sorrow and lamentation, eliminate pain and sadness, walking on the path of truth, for the realisation of nibbāna: that is to say, the fourfold establishing of awareness*"ⁱⁱⁱ.

Mindfulness is very important now a days in educational Institutions and day-to-day life as a rising number of students and educators experiencing stress, anxiety, and mental health difficulties and it can be reduced only when students and educators practice mindfulness.

Mindfulness encourages people to retain a high level of awareness throughout their daily lives. This practice can help students, professors, and administrators in educational institutions to analyze their thoughts, feelings, and actions without judgment, promoting clarity and self-understanding. Mindfulness encourages not to react, which is a significant benefit for any teacher or student since they can learn to respond wisely rather than impulsively. Individuals who practice mindfulness learn to pause and reflect before acting, which can help them avoid negative behavioral patterns. Non-reactivity can help individuals to develop positive relationships, make better decisions, and have a healthy and enriching learning environment^{iv}.

Sati (mindfulness), dhamma vicaya (analysis), viriya (perseverance), and pīti (rapture) are the seven components of enlightenment including Passaddhi (serenity) leads to samadhi (concentration), which leads to upekkhā (equanimity). Lastly, the Buddha taught that as these factors were developed in this succession, practicing anapanasati would result in the realization of nibbana, which is the release (Pali: vimutti; Sanskrit mokṣa) from dukkha (struggle).

The meditation techniques in Buddhism are: *Anapanasati* (Mindful Breathing) 2. Mindfulness: Mindfulness of the Body, Mindfulness of Feelings, Mindfulness of the Mind, Mindfulness of Phenomena (*Dhammas*) 3. Walking Meditation 4. *Vipassana* (Insight Meditation) 5. Loving-Kindness Meditation (*Metta*) 6. Mindful Walking and Forest Bathing (*Shinrin Yoku*).

Meditation techniques are also intended to lessen greed, aversion, and ignorance, which Buddhist psychology thinks are at the root of human suffering. The benefits of these Buddhist meditation include reduced stress and anxiety, improved concentration and focus, enhanced emotional health through compassion and mindfulness. Meditation helps the mind become less reactive to thoughts and emotions, resulting in more tranquility and less pain^v.

In this study we investigated

Methodology

The present study is descriptive research in which quantitative data were collected using an online survey method to understand the relation between stress caused by education or academia in day-to-day life. In this ongoing study, so far, 80 participants have taken part, and 68.8% of them were female, and 30% were male. The collected data were from India and Cambodia. The age ranged from 17 years for the youngest participant to 70 years for the oldest participant, while the majority were young adults and adults. Further, except for a few, > 95% of participants have their education from a university and above 55% are full-time students or scholars and the other category falls in either full-time or part-time teaching, etc.

Study Tool:

The study used a self-administered online questionnaire and was conducted over 3 months. The questionnaire included the consent of the participants. The process of data collection was done by an

online standard questionnaire designed to collect anthropometric measurements, general health status, academic involvement, practice of any yoga or meditation/mindful meditation, and stress level. As the level of education was considered mostly from higher education, the language for the statements used was English.

Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS-21):

The DASS-21 is composed of three subscales: anxiety, stress, and depression. Each subscale includes seven questions [Lovibond PF, Lovibond SH. The structure of negative emotional states: Comparison of the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS) with the Beck Depression and Anxiety Inventories. Behav Res Ther 1995; 33:335-43]. Seven statements about the test subject's feelings during the previous week make up each subscale, and there are four possible answers: 0 means "did not apply to me at all," 1 means "applied to me some of the time," 2 means "applied to me for a considerable amount of time," and 3 means "applied to me very much/most of the time." The Likert-type scoring system is used, and each subscale's total score, which ranges from 0 to 21, indicates how severe the particular symptom is. The DASS is not and is not intended to be a diagnostic tool for mental health conditions. Nevertheless, we aggregated the different severities and divided them into symptomatic and asymptomatic categories.

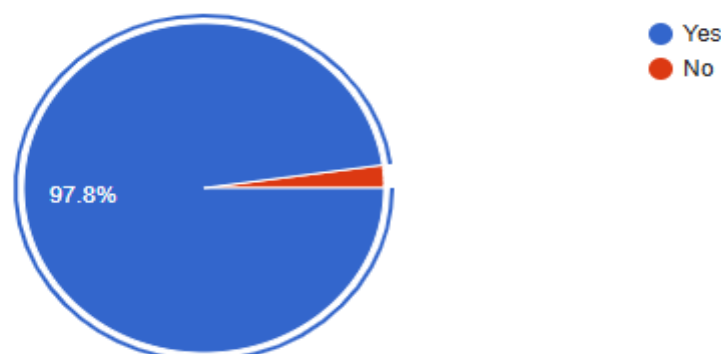
Data analysis and Statistical analysis

For the descriptive data analysis, mean with Standard deviation and frequency distribution were used for the continuous and discrete variables, respectively. The chi-square test and the t-test were utilized for the discrete and continuous variables, respectively, in the inferential statistics.

All data collected was logged and keyed in Microsoft Excel (2010) and was analyzed using IBM Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) version 21.0. Descriptive statistics of mean, median, range, and standard deviation were analyzed First, data were inputted into 21 SPSS version. Then, descriptive statistics such as frequency of distributions, mean, and standard deviation were used to summarize and analyze the data. Finally, to test whether students' level of stress significantly differed across their gender and cumulative grade point average, chi-square test for independence was determined

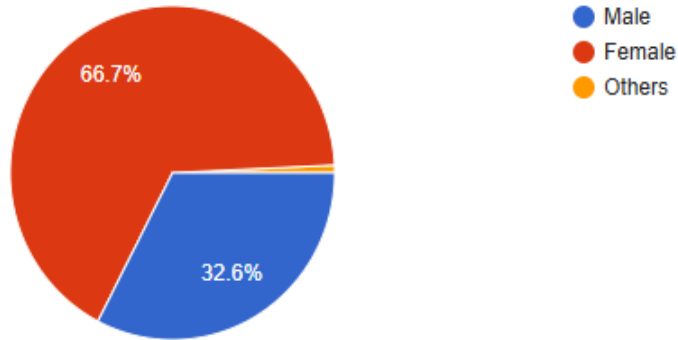
University of Jammu is conducting a study to understand the relation between education or academia and stress in day-to-day life. Your participation involves answering a few questions that will take approximately 4-5 minutes. Your responses will remain confidential and purely be used for research purpose only. Your participation is extremely valuable and will contribute to advancing our understanding of this research topic.

1. I understand and agree



3. Gender

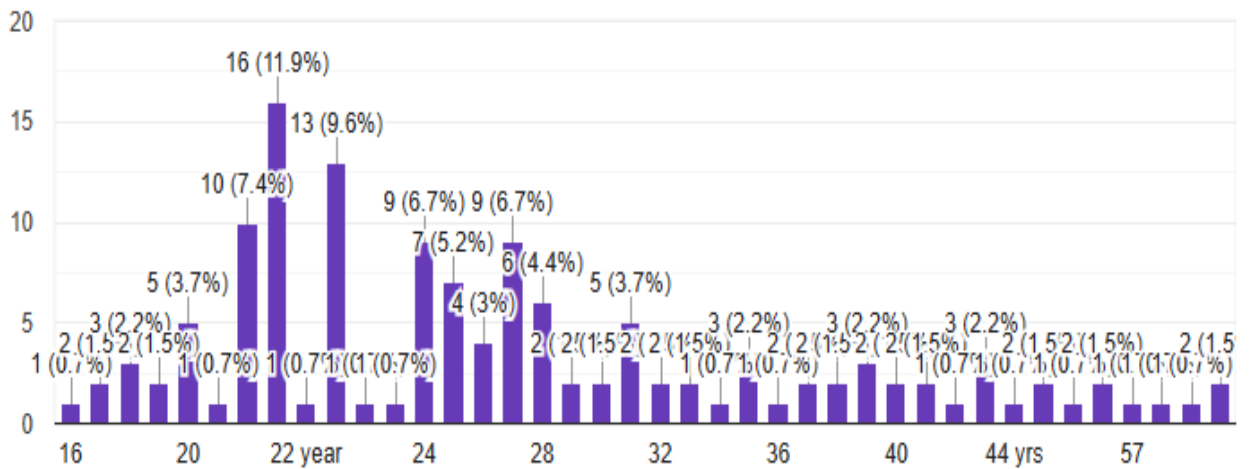
135 responses



4. Age

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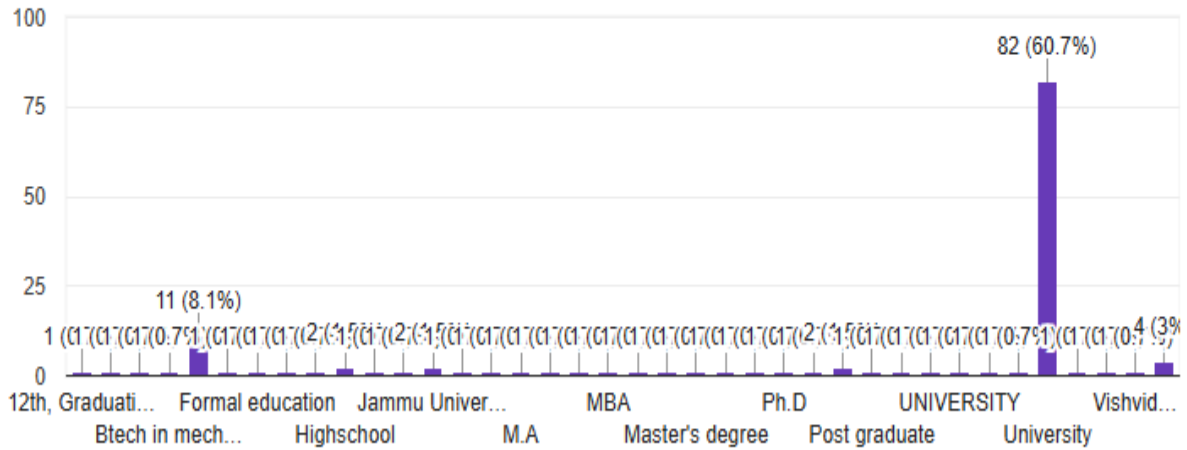
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5. Education (Home schooling, Highschool, College, University, no formal education etc.)

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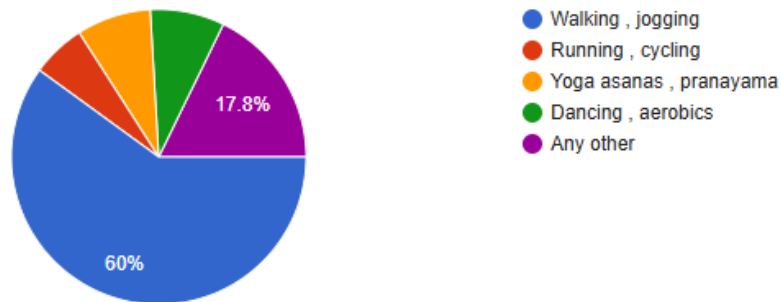
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10. What type of physical activity do you engage in.

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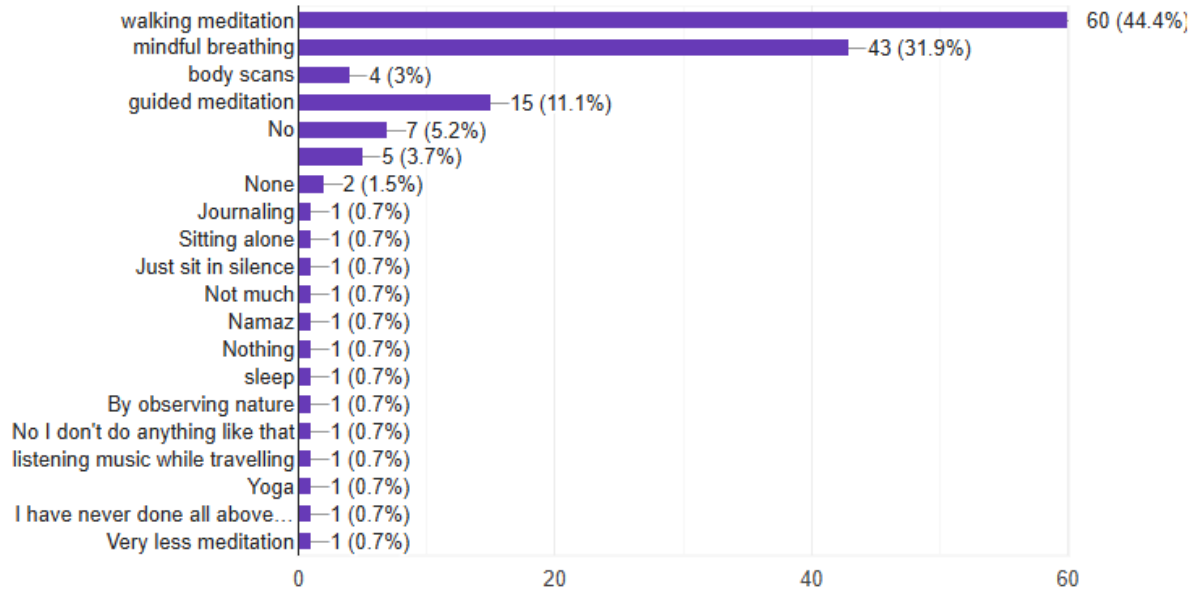
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11. Do you follow mindful meditation

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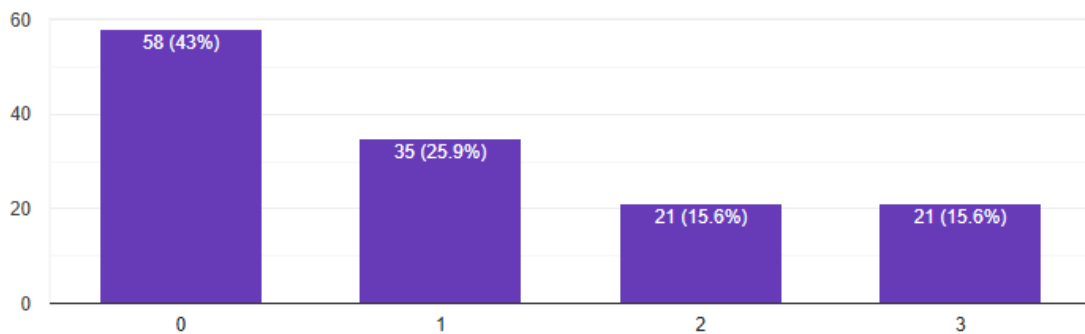
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19. I experienced trembling (e.g. shaking of hands)

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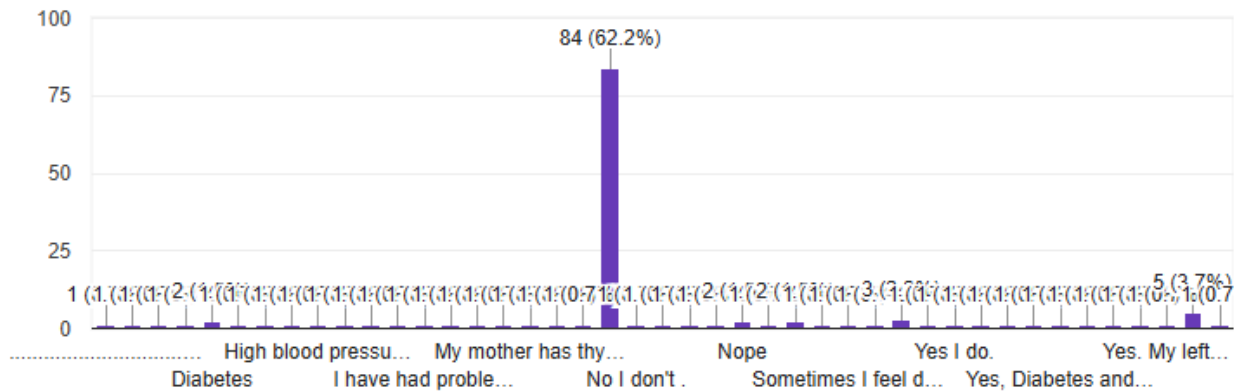
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35. Do you have history of any diseases or in your family? If Yes, specify.

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135 responses



Conclusions:

Due to an increasing number of stress, anxiety, and mental health issues among students and educators, there is an urgent need to investigate novel educational techniques that address individuals' emotional and psychological well-being. In the present study, we investigated the correlation between stress in the academic life of educators and students and meditative practices among participants from institutes and universities across Asia and Cambodia.

Mindfulness is a skill that can help students and the teachers in any institution to face the stresses of day-to-day life and improve both psychological and physical health because mindfulness requires no equipment, it can be practiced at any time.

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