



Implementation of an Online Mindfulness-Based Intervention For Reducing Stress Amongst Undergraduate Nursing Students



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INTRODUCTION

Nurses and nursing students have notoriously high levels of stress, which can lead to burnout, depersonalization, deterioration of mental or physical health or exiting the profession.

A pilot educational mindfulness-based intervention was implemented online amongst undergraduate nursing students to decrease stress and increase mindfulness. Mindfulness is an evidence-based self-care skill that has proven effective in reducing stress in student populations and amongst nurses.

METHODS

Educational intervention based on principles of experiential learning. Students in an online nursing theory course engaged in the mindfulness-based intervention online over the course of five weeks, 5-10 minutes per day.

Stress and mindfulness were measured using validated measurement tools: The Perceived Stress Scale, and the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire. Measurements were assessed pre-, immediately post-, and 4 weeks post-intervention and were analyzed using linear regression. Students were also surveyed regarding feasibility and challenges with the program.

RESULTS

Sixty students participated in the 5-week training and completed pre- and post-test measurements. Students who participated were predominantly female (75%) and age 20-30 (73%). Adherence was high, with 72% of students completing at least 21 sessions over the 5 weeks. The pre-test stress scores were very high as compared with national norms, while mindfulness scores were typical at pre-test.

Students with the highest adherence to the program reported a decrease in stress with mild statistical significance in this sample ($M=-1.678$, $SE=.943$, $p=.075$), while an increase in mindfulness was observed across all adherence levels ($M=3$, $SE=.846$, $p\leq.001$).

Higher age was associated with a slightly greater decrease in stress at posttest as compared with pretest. Twenty-nine students participated at follow-up, and the results were sustained. After five weeks of exposure to mindfulness, a majority of students valued this new skill (58%) and would share it with a colleague (53%) or a future client (60%).

Common challenges/barriers:

- Time management
- Focusing while doing the meditations
- Lack of motivation

Common facilitators/motivators:

- Grades attached to participation
- Feeling like it is helping
- Reminders/time management strategies such as alarms/calendar alerts or notifications from the apps



CONCLUSIONS

Integration of an abbreviated, online mindfulness program is effective at decreasing students' stress and increasing mindfulness.

A slightly longer version of this intervention should be considered. Digital delivery addresses an important health equity concern for nursing students, who must be better equipped with self-care tools to effectively cope with stress.

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