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**Shailza Sharma**

Assistant Professor,  
Department of Education,  
Maharana Pratap Govt PG  
College, Hardoi, Uttar  
Pradesh, India

**Dr. Anshu Sareen**

Associate Professor, HOD,  
Department of Education,  
Gokuldaas Girls Hindu College,  
Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh,  
India

## Effectiveness of mindfulness based stress reduction program: An experimental study

Shailza Sharma and Dr. Anshu Sareen

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### Abstract

Teacher is an important pillar of education system. His well being is necessary for the well being of each and every component of education system. In today's world of accountability teachers are over burdened and their monotonous nature of work is making them victim of stress and Burnout. Hence development of stress and burnout coping strategies, their application and finding evidences of their effectiveness is the need of hour. The present study is dedicated to investigate the effectiveness of mindful based stress reduction program in reducing Stress and burnout among teachers of Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, Maharajganj. It was a pre survey-post survey experimental study followed by an intervention feedback to identify any behavioral and attitudinal changes in the participants.

**Keywords:** Stress and burnout, mindful meditation, mindfulness based stress reduction program

### Introduction

In today's world of accountability stress and burnout have become the part of many of the jobs which need continuous public dealing. Teachers are not untouched by this feeling of burnout as they have lots and lots of responsibilities to fulfill along with their main task of teaching, like maintaining attendance record, cumulative students' records, admission procedures, mid-day meal arrangements, in-door and outdoor activities etc. In addition of being over burdened monotonous nature of teaching profession develops feeling of emotional exhaustion, irritability and alienated attitude towards the teaching profession as well as towards students. This burnout situation not only affects the lives of teachers but also adversely affects cognitive and emotional development of students. Hence stress and Burnout of teachers should be given immediate attention and preventive as well as remedial programs should be included in pre service teacher training and in service teacher refresher programs. One such program is mindfulness based stress reduction program, effectiveness of which will be experimented in this study.

### Mindfulness based stress reduction program: An overview

**Mindful Meditation:** Is a practice of observing one's thought without judging or controlling them (Kabat-Zinn, 1994) [7]. The term mindfulness is borrowed from the Sanskrit word "Vipassana" that means to see/observe in a special way. Mindfulness meditation is not a new thing but is an ancient form of meditation practice by Gautama Buddha at the time of his enlightenment under 'Bodhi vraksha', (Ahir, 1990) [1]. As it is well known that Buddhist philosophy says that all psychological sufferings are the result of the judgmental mind, dividing expression into good and bad, which eventually leads to some level of frustration, anxiety and depression. Buddhists supports mindfulness as the heart of Buddhist meditation. Mindfulness is a skill developed through repeated daily practice that provide enhanced mental/emotional flexibility and clarity in facing life's challenges and depending on enjoyment of life. Mindfulness inculcates four basic abilities in the personality which is: non reactivity, observing, awareness and non judging. Person's inner world begins to change regardless of the external circumstances (Fries, 2009) [4]. It cultivates concentration, insight as well as physiological relaxation hence allowing reduction in stress (Hayer *et al.* 2006).

**Mindfulness based stress reduction program:** This program was developed by Kabat and Zinn in 2003 [8].

**Correspondence**

**Shailza Sharma**

Assistant Professor,  
Department of Education,  
Maharana Pratap Govt PG  
College, Hardoi, Uttar  
Pradesh, India

They integrated Buddhist mindfulness meditation with contemporary clinical and psychological practices to develop MBSRP. This program is a structured self regulation approach to stress reduction and management. The basic intention behind the formulation of MBSRP is -

1. To develop an effective vehicle for relief of sufferings.
2. To develop a model approach that could be adapted in a variety of health care concerns.

**Basic components of MBSRP:** MBSRP is a 8 week long program that meets 2.5 hours (approx.) a week and includes a 6 hour daylong retreat between the sixth and seventh week. In this the participants are asked to practice the mindful techniques with the help of a trainer or audio tapes or mobile applications etc. This is followed by group session that includes a combination of formal didactic instruction on topics such as communication skills, stress reactivity and self compassion to help participants to integrate these concepts.

**Review of studies:** Many studies have been conducted in different parts of world to investigate the effectiveness of mindful meditation for reducing stress, burnout and mood of the professionals. Rogers and Amshi (2013), conducted a study on 113 teachers of elementary and secondary school teachers of Canada & US and shows 87% of the teachers experience greater mindfulness, focused attention, occupational self compassion and improved working memory. A pilot study of Lisa & Goldberg (2013) [3], also concluded that MBSR program reduces burnout and improves teaching efficiency. Study of Ireland & Bonnie (2017) [5], conducted on intern medical practitioner and medical teachers also reported that this training provide skills to effectively manage stress and burnout thereby reducing their experience of these symptoms. However a meta analysis of 12 articles performed by and Zahra & Hearn (2018) [2] found mix evidences about the functionality of mindful practice for reducing the stress and burnout in medical students.

**Design of the Study:** This was a pretest-posttest experimental study. Duration of this program was 8 weeks that included one assessment survey, six weekly surveys and one follow-up survey.

Sample of the study: From a population of 30 teachers (TGTs, PGTs, miscellaneous) of Jawahar Navodaya vidyalaya, Maharajganj, 22 teachers with moderate to high level of professional burnout were selected for this study. Two teachers could not attend this program due to time constraint in spite of their willingness as a result final sample size reduce 20 teachers. All were full time employees and 5 of them were female participants.

#### Tools of the study

1. Teachers' professional Burnout Inventory (TPBI)  
Developed by the investigator was used to measure the

existence of Burnout in four dimensions viz Emotional exhaustion, cynicism, low self efficacy, Anxiety related disorders.

Higher scores on TPBI indicate higher levels of perceived Burnout.

2. Mindfulness based stress reduction program (MBSRP): MBSRP, developed by Kabat and Zinn (2003) [8] was applied as stress reduction intervention.
3. Intervention Feedback: To evaluate the satisfaction levels of participants with the program. "Four Stage cyclic model" an adapted from the "Kirkpatrick's four level model (1959)" was used that included -1. Participants' reaction to program, 2. Change in attitude/skills/ knowledge, 3. Change in work behavior, 4. Change in organizational desirable outcomes.

#### Objectives of the study

1. To study the effect of mindfulness based stress reduction program on perceived stress and Burnout.
2. To study the effect of mindfulness based reduction program on four dimensions of Burnout separately.
3. To study the effectiveness of MBSR program in terms of satisfaction, attitudinal or behavioral changes.

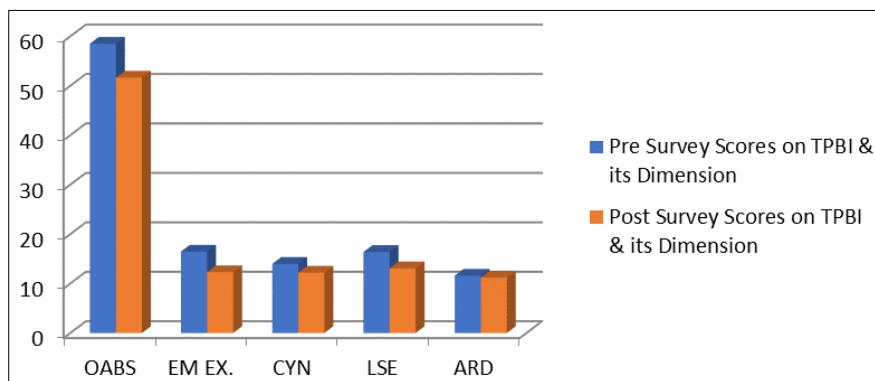
**Procedure:** A teacher's professional burnout inventory (TPBI) was administrator on all the teachers of Jawahar Navodaya vidyalaya, Maharajganj. Out of 30 teachers, 12 found to have high level of professional burnout while 10 teachers had moderate levels of burnout. The program was started with 20 teachers having moderate to high levels of perceived burnout.

After evening snacks distribution, these teachers used to gather at Central hall for half an hour, 5 days a week. During first week, pre survey was conducted. In this discussion about the institutional environment, work condition, way of thinking, attitude, and aspirations were discussed. During next 6 weeks the participants are motivated to meditate using different techniques of Mindfulness based reduction program. With some initial disinterest and difficulties in meditating, participants begin to understand the correct way of meditation. Some apps like 'Smiling Mind' as well as some YouTube meditation videos helped them to concentrate and in doing other techniques of Pranayama. Within 10 days almost all the participants become self motivated to gather at the Central hall and to participate in mindfulness sessions. After 6 weeks, 8th week was dedicated to post survey. In this week TPBI is again administered to collect the post-survey scores. Discussion was also made with the participants to identify the change in their attitude and perceptions as well their experiences during this journey.

**Analysis and interpretation of Data:** To investigate the fulfillment of objective 1 and 2 free test and post test scores of TPBI were analyzed to identify whether difference in the two scores was significant as shown in the table:

**Table 1:** T-test results of Teachers of JNV 's on TPBI and its four dimensions

| Burnout/Dimensions       | Pre Survey Scores on TPBI & its Dimension |     | Post Survey Scores on TPBI & its Dimension |     | t' Value |
|--------------------------|---|-----|--|-----|----------|
|                          | Mean                                      | SD  | Mean                                       | SD  |          |
| Over All Burnout Scores  | 58.5                                      | 14  | 51.65                                      | 12  | 3.73     |
| Emotional Exhaustion     | 16.47                                     | 4   | 12.31                                      | 3.7 | 3.58     |
| Cynicism                 | 14  | 4   | 12.2                                       | 3.8 | 3.04     |
| Low Self Efficacy        | 16.39                                     | 3.2 | 13.08                                      | 3.4 | 3.71     |
| Anxiety Related Disorder | 11.6                                      | 2.2 | 11.2                                       | 2.5 | 1.62     |



**Fig 1:** Bar diagram showing Mean of Pre survey-Post survey scores on overall burnout and its four dimensions

Mean scores on TPBI before and after the mindfulness based reduction program are 58.5 & 51.65 with standard deviations of 14 & 12. The difference between the means was found to be significant at 0.05 levels as our calculated 't' value' is 3.73.

As we investigated through the four dimensions of Burnout, we found that in case of first three dimensions *viz.* emotional exhaustion, cynicism & low self efficacy, difference between pre-survey and post-survey scores on TPBI was statistically significant (t values are 3.58, 3.04 & 3.71 respectively, At 0.05 level) but the difference was insignificant in case of fourth dimension 'anxiety related disorders' (t value=1.62).

These results clearly show that mindfulness meditation reduces overall Professional Burnout of teachers. In case of four dimensions, scores on three dimensions *viz.* emotional exhaustion, cynicism and low self efficacy, showed significant reduction while in case of Anxiety related disorders, the difference was insignificant. The reason behind this can be short duration of the program. As stress and Burnout takes a long time to show physiological disorders, their cure may also need longer duration. This needs further investigation which was beyond the scope of this study.

To investigate third objective, responses of participants on "Intervention feedback" were analyzed, almost every teacher was satisfied with the program and showed positive attitude towards mindful meditation. Following major themes have been identified after collecting and analyzing their feedbacks:-

- Most of the teachers reported increase awareness of the present moment.
- They feel more capable of regulating their thoughts and feelings even during the stressful situation
- Their working memory capacity, focus and attention perceive to be improved.
- They felt calm, relaxed and happy with their job responsibilities.
- They observe that their sleep quality is improved.
- Some participants reported that their family relations have become more healthy and harmonious.

### Conclusion

This study was aimed at investigating the impact of mindfulness based stress reduction program on various dimensions of professional Burnout of teachers of Jawaharlal Navodaya Vidyalaya Maharajganj as it is already discussed the long lasting adverse effect of teachers Burnout on their mental physical and performance professional life as well as the life of students finding effective methods of producing professional Burnout and to revitalize the employees should be third area for educational and

psychologist in this context my fullness meditation offers and promising intervention at improving the psycho physical state of employees the current action research has important implication for people who are involved in continuous public dealing such as teaching and became victim of Burnout at some point of their profession this study also provides an affordable solution of the problem in terms of time and money as most of the teachers at Navodaya vidyalaya are over they don't have time to participate in traditional intervention practices this program can be run with the help of mobile app and physical education teachers of JNVs once in a year with minimal investment of time. This research adds significantly to the literature supporting the use of mindful meditation to decrease Burnout in some high stressed jobs.

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