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# **MINDFULNESS MEDITATION INTERVENTION FOR THE REDUCTION OF EXAMINATION STRESS OF ADOLESCENTS**

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**Dr. Sasmita Kar**

Assistant Professor, School of Education, Lovely Professional University, Punjab

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## **Abstract**

*Stress of student has become a common feature of the multi-tasking modern world. Stress may be defined as an internal state, which can be caused by physical demands on the body or by environmental and social situations which is evaluated as potentially harmful, uncontrollable and exceeding our resources for coping. Mindfulness meditation is the ability to be totally aware of what one is doing. It helps us change the habit pattern of our mind. It also helps us know the changing nature of different sensations that keep on constantly taking place and so helps us not to react to them. This non-reaction helps one considerably to reduce his stress.*

**Keywords:** *Mindfulness Meditation, Examination Stress, Higher Secondary Students.*

Teaching is a very broad and complex activity that is best assessed and evaluated using multiple techniques. It is necessary to do evaluation at the end of the course to find out whether the efforts done in the teaching-learning process have brought the desired results. The term evaluation is associated with examination, stress, fear and anxiety. Examination fear and stress are very common among adolescents. Today, adolescents are living in a world where nothing is guaranteed to them but where everyone expects from him to achieve excellence in every field, the main being the academics associated with examination. Studies related to meditation reveal that it is an important factor to reduce stress of adolescents to a considerable extent.

Mindfulness meditation is a universal scientific method towards purifying the mind. It is a rational method for purifying the mind or mental factors that causes distress and pain. It is the essence of Vipassana Meditation propounded by Gautam Buddha 2600 years ago. Buddhism begins with the premise that the mind is the primary source of human joy and misery, and is central to the understanding of the natural world as a whole. Thus, the mind and consciousness itself are primary subjects of introspective investigation (Kar, 2010).

Buddhist contemplatives have formulated sophisticated theories of the origins and nature of consciousness and its active role in nature, though their enquiries never produce anything akin to an empirical study of theory of the brain. They did, however, develop rigorous techniques for examining and probing the mind first hand. The initial problem in this endeavour was to train the attention so that it could be a more reliable and precise thing of observation. The most important type of attentional training Buddhists have devised is known as Samatha, a serene attentional state in which the hindrances of excitation and laxity have been thoroughly calmed (Wallace, 1999).

Mindfulness Meditation program primarily includes an introduction to the practices of breathing meditation & mindful yoga. Its primary goal is to identify and reduce the mediators suffering, both physical and emotional pain, developing detached observation, and awareness of the contents of consciousness. It also has the ways in which we respond to life events (Goldein, 2001). It requires becoming aware of all of one's senses and acknowledging any negative feelings, pain, or blockages in order to achieve equanimity. Equanimity is defined as not interfering with the flow of the senses at any level, including the level of preconscious processing (Young, 1994).

Mindfulness interventions within adult populations are becoming increasingly popular. Research suggests that mindfulness can deliver lasting improvements in self awareness and emotional stability to adults with severe and chronic conditions (Thompson, 2008). It also helps in lessening stress and anxiety and improving academic performance of adolescents (Beauchemin, 2008; Benson, 2000). This article aims to provide an overview of examination stress of class X students and the impact of mindfulness meditation program on it.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To assess the extent of examination stress of higher secondary school students.
2. To find out the effect of mindfulness meditation on the stress level of students.

### **Hypothesis**

1. Higher secondary level students experience examination stress.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean scores of examination stress of students, i.e. experimental and control group at pre-test level.
3. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of examination stress of students at post test level.
4. There is no significant difference in the mean scores of students' (experimental group) examination stress due to the intervention of mindfulness meditation program.

### **Design of the Study**

It was an experimental study based on a pre-test, post-test study design. Mindfulness meditation was the independent variable and examination stress was the dependent variable or Mindfulness meditation program was given to a particular group, i.e. experimental group for a period of 3 weeks for one hour in the morning regularly. No intervention was given to the control group.

## Sample

A sample of 120 students from a CBSE school of Sambalpur district in Odisha was taken as sample of the study. The sample was further categorized into control group and experimental group with 60 students each.

## Tools

A self-made questionnaire consisting of 30 questions and comprising 6 different dimensions of examination stress constituted the tools of the study. The dimensions are as follows:

1. Fear of failure in the examination
2. Excess academic load
3. Parental pressure
4. Peer-group competition
5. Difficulty in understanding subjects
6. Difficulty in time-management

## Statistical Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using statistical techniques which include percentage analysis and t-test.

## Results and Discussion

### 1. Examination stress of Higher Secondary students

The data obtained from the questionnaire were categorized into three levels. It indicates that 22 per cent of students studying at higher secondary level experienced low level of examination stress where as 29.35 suffer from moderate and 48.7 per cent students suffer from high level of examination stress. Hence the hypothesis, i.e. higher secondary level students experience examination stress is accepted.

### 2. Comparison of examination stress of experimental and control group at pre-test level

**Table 1**

<i>Groups</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>Significance</i>
Experimental	60	124.9	12.35	0.211	NS
Control	60	124.23	12.15		

The data obtained from the above table indicates that there is no significant difference in between the experimental and control group with regard to the existence of examination stress because the calculated *t* is smaller than table value at 0.05 level.

Thus the hypothesis H1, viz., “There is no significant difference in the mean scores of examination stress of students, i.e. experimental and control group” was accepted because at the pre-test level, no meditation intervention was employed on the students.

### 3. Examination stress of experimental and control group at post-test level

**Table 2**

Groups	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Significance
Experimental	60	115.8	11.22	2.792	
Control	60	124.23	12.15	5	S

From the mean value of the above table, it is evident that the experimental group has successfully controlled their examination stress to a considerable extent. The obtained t-value is significant at 0.05 level. Thus, the null hypothesis “there is no significant difference between the examination stress of students, i.e. experimental and control group at the post test level”, has been rejected. Intervention of Mindfulness meditation may help in reducing the examination stress and fear of the experimental group as compared to the control group.

### 4. Comparison of examination stress of experimental group at pre- and post-test

**Table 3**

Groups	N	Mean	SD	t-vale	Significance
Pre-test	60	124.9	12.35	2.154	S
Post-test	60	115.8	11.25		

The above table shows that the experimental group at the pre-test and post-test level differ significantly with respect to examination stress scores at 0.05 level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis framed in this relation that “there is no significant difference in the examination stress of the experimental group at pre-test and post-test level”, has been rejected. Mindfulness meditation has the potential for transforming the ways in which we respond to life events. It enhances self-regulatory capacity leading to the reduction of anxiety and stress.

The results of the present study corresponds to the findings of Gopal (2011), Flinton (1995), Kornfield (1983), Roth (1997), Kalpan (1993) which states that yoga and mindfulness meditation practice helps in reducing examination stress and life stress as well.

## Conclusion

Analysis of the collected data leads to the following conclusions:

1. Higher secondary level students suffer from high examination stress. This may be due to the faulty examination system.

2. The level of examination stress of the control group and experimental group at pre-test is not significant.
3. There is significant difference between the experimental and control group in their examination stress at post-test level.
4. The study reveals that Mindfulness Meditation Intervention Program has positive influence on the examination stress of adolescents.

Since the high school students are experiencing high examination stress yoga and meditation program should form an integral part of the school curriculum.

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