

Mindfulness and Test Anxiety among NEET Coaching Students

M. Sundarapandiyan

Research Scholar

Department of Education, Alagappa University

Karaikudi, Tamil Nadu, India

OPEN ACCESS

Volume: 13

Special Issue: 3

Month: March

Year: 2026

P-ISSN: 2321-788X

E-ISSN: 2582-0397

Citation:

Sundarapandiyan, M.,
and G. Kalaiyaran.

“Mindfulness and Test Anxiety among NEET Coaching Students.”
Shanlax Interantional Journal of Arts, Science and Humanities,
vol. 13, no. S3, 2016,
pp. 21–27.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.34293/sijash.v13iS3-Mar.10482>

Dr. G. Kalaiyaran

Dean-Faculty of Education

Senior Professor & Head, Department of Education

Alagappa University, Karaikudi, Tamil Nadu, India

Abstract

One of the most competitive entrance examinations in India is the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) which puts a lot of academic and psychological pressure on the aspirants. It is common that due to prolonged preparation, repetitive mock test, and high performance expectation among coaching students result in very high test anxiety. This study has explored how mindfulness and test anxiety are connected with NEET coaching students. Quantitative correlational research design was taken. A total of 300 students chosen in different NEET coaching centers were used in the sample with the help of the stratified random sampling. The Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire short form was used to measure mindfulness and Test Anxiety Inventory was used to measure test anxiety. Data analysis were done through descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and regression analysis. The results showed that the students had moderate mindfulness and moderate high anxiety levels on the test. Mindfulness had a negative relationship with test anxiety ($r = -0.57, p < 0.05$). Regression analysis showed that mindfulness is a significant predictor of test anxiety and it explains 32 percent of the variance. The findings indicate that an increased degree of present moment awareness and an enhanced emotional control is linked to the decreased examination anxiety. The authors note that introducing mindfulness-based interventions to the coaching context is crucial in the pursuit of emotional stability and anxiety reduction in NEET aspirants.

Keywords: Mindfulness, Test Anxiety, NEET Coaching Students, Examination Stress, Emotional Regulation, Academic Pressure.

Introduction

One of the most competitive entrance examinations in India is the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) which is the main entryway of getting into undergraduate medical and dental programs. Thousands of students are noted to be competing over a small number of seats every year, which poses a very tense academic atmosphere. Preparation starts several years or so ago, with rigorous coach training programs, extra hours of study, and repeated practice tests, performance checks, etc. Although this sort of preparation is supposed to make one academically prepared, it can cause a

lot of psychological pressure. One of the most frequently reported issues is the phenomenon of test anxiety, which is extremely worrying, emotionally tense, and preceded or accompanied by physiological arousal in the face of exams (Putwain and Daly, 2014).

The phenomenon of test anxiety is not an everyday nervousness, but it may reduce the attention, working memory, and thinking ability, thus, affecting academic performance adversely (von der Embse et al., 2018). Students that are characterized by high levels of anxiety might have a problem with concentration, they may develop racing thoughts, and develop avoidance behaviors concerning evaluative situations. Anxiety may be chronic and debilitating in a high stakes environment, like NEET, where results of the examination will greatly affect the future career paths. According to recent research evidence, the competitive examination environment is a contributor to increased stress, sleep problems, and emotional exhaustion in adolescents (Pascoe et al., 2020).

With the rising cases of psychological distress in students, scholars have shifted focus to the protective psychological factors which can alleviate the effects of academic stress. Mindfulness is one of such factors. Mindfulness can be defined as the ability to be aware of ones thoughts, feelings, physical sensations and the environment around him or her, without any judgment (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Instead of having to suppress anxiety, mindfulness teaches one to be aware of anxious thoughts without getting caught into them. Modern psychology defines mindfulness as a set of attention regulation, emotional awareness, and acceptance (Gu et al., 2015).

Based on the increasing body of empirical data, it is possible to suggest that mindfulness can be linked to a decrease in anxiety, an increase in emotional regulation, and better psychological well-being of adolescents and young adults (Zenner et al., 2014; Dunning et al., 2019). Focused breathing and body awareness, guided attention exercises, are the forms of mindfulness which have been proved to reduce physiological stress responses and enhance cognitive flexibility (Bamber & Schneider, 2016). At the academic level, more mindful students are more likely to record a reduction in the levels of test anxiety and improved concentration during examinations (Lin and Mai, 2018). These results suggest that mindfulness can be used as a psychological tool that promotes emotional stability during performance pressure.

Although the literature on mindfulness in school has been growing, there is little research that specifically determines mindfulness and test anxiety in students on the verge of taking a highly competitive entrance test like the NEET. The students of NEET coaching are a distinct group based on the years of academic rigor, performance comparison, parental expectations and being subjected to multiple times practicing evaluative testing situations. It is both socially and academically important to understand how mindfulness can reduce test anxiety in this case.

The current research thus aims at investigating the correlation between the state of mindfulness and the state of test anxiety among NEET coaching students. This research will help advance the existing evidence-based psychological interventions in coaching institutions by exploring the question of whether mindfulness is a protective variable against examination-related anxiety. Improving mindfulness abilities can not only decrease anxiety but also improve concentration, emotional stability, and overall academic performance of aspirants who are taking high-stakes exams.

Literature Review

The intense academic and emotional stresses among students are caused by high stakes entrance exams. Test anxiety is a condition of over worry, nervousness, and physiological tension, that occurs before or during an exam. The studies constantly indicate that the high level of test anxiety disrupts the concentration, working memory, and academic performance (von der Embse et al., 2018). Students are exposed to repeated mock exams, comparison of performance, and expectations imposed by parents,

which might increase the level of anxiety in situations of competition e.g. NEET preparation. According to recent Indian research, NEET aspirants are under more stress and are experiencing emotional strain because of the length of preparation and not knowing the results (Kar, 2020).

Mindfulness has become a significant psychological determinant that could alleviate anxiety and enhance emotional control. Mindfulness can be expressed as awareness today without judgment and acceptance (Kabat Zinn, 2003). It entails listening to thoughts and emotions in a moderate form as opposed to acting on the spur of the moment. According to theoretical models, mindfulness lowers anxiety by means of lowering rumination and enhancing attention control (Gu et al., 2015).

The empirical evidence confirms that mindfulness can alleviate anxiety in adolescents and young adults. Dunning et al. (2019) reviewed studies and discovered that mindfulness-based interventions had a significant positive effect on emotional regulation and anxiety symptoms in schools. In the same vein, von der Embse et al. (2018) also found that test anxiety reduces with cognitive and emotional regulation psychological interventions in high pressure academic settings. Recent articles also show that students having a high trait mindfulness record lower levels of worry about exam and emotional distress (Yilmazer, 2024).

Focused breathing, body awareness and guided attention exercises are mindfulness activities that allow students to overcome physiological arousal during exams. With the help of these practices self regulation is enhanced and negative thought patterns are diminished. Mindfulness in the academic context has been linked to the enhancement of coping mechanisms and psychological wellbeing (Dundas et al., 2024). Nevertheless, there is a paucity of research studies that specifically analyze the connection between mindfulness and test anxiety in NEET coaching students that can be considered a distinctive population that undergoes persistent competition stress.

Though there are indications that mindfulness is capable of lessening anxiety, the degree of the connection can fluctuate based on contextual elements that include the degree of preparation, support networks and personal resilience. Thus, it is of importance and timely to investigate this correlation amongst the NEET coaching students. The research problem of the current study is whether there is a significant relationship between mindfulness and reduced test anxiety among this group of people.

Objectives

1. To establish the degree of mindfulness among NEET coaching students.
2. To establish the amount of test anxiety in NEET coaching students.
3. To study the connection between mindfulness and test anxiety among NEET coaching students.
4. To ascertain the extent to which mindfulness can be used as a predictor of test anxiety in NEET coaching students.

Hypotheses

H1: Mindfulness and test anxiety have a significant negative relationship among NEET coaching students.

H2: Mindfulness is a strong predictor of test anxiety in NEET coaching students.

Methodology

The current research has chosen quantitative research method to investigate the correlation between mindfulness and test anxiety among NEET coaching students. The research design was descriptive correlational because the aim of the study was to establish the levels of mindfulness and test anxiety in addition to assessing the relationship between the two variables without controlling any variable.

Population and Sample

Students studying in NEET coaching centers formed the population of the study. Stratified random sampling was applied on a population of 300 NEET coaching students between the ages of 16 and 19 years to obtain a sample of both male and female students. The study encompassed both the first time aspirants and repeat candidates.

Instruments Used

Data Collection was Carried out using Two Standardized Tools

Mindfulness Scale: Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire short form was used to measure mindfulness. The scale measures observing, describing, doing consciously, non judging and non reactivity. It includes 24 items that are rated over a five-point Likert scale about strongly disagree to strongly agree. The reliability coefficient of the current study was 0.87 which is good internal consistency.

Test Anxiety Inventory: Test anxiety was determined by means of the Test Anxiety Inventory that was created to evaluate the worries and emotionality aspects of examination anxiety. The scale has 20 points that are measured using a four-point Likert scale. The present study had a coefficient of reliability of 0.89.

Data Collection Procedure

The administrators of the chosen coaching centers were also contacted in advance. Participation in the study was explained to the students and they were assured that their responses would not be disclosed to any third party and that the purpose of the study would only serve academic purpose. The questionnaires were distributed in the classrooms and gathered at the end of the questionnaires. The students were given time to answer the questions in a reflective manner.

Statistical Techniques Used

The data gathered were coded and analyzed with the help of statistical software. The following statistical methods were used:

The levels of mindfulness and test anxiety will be determined by the use of Mean and Standard Deviation.

- Pearson Product Moment Correlation to test the correlation between mindfulness and test anxiety.
- Simple Linear Regression to find out whether mindfulness is a predictor of test anxiety.

A significance level of 0.05 was set in all the statistical tests.

Findings and Conclusions

Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and regression analysis were used to analyze the data obtained on 300 NEET coaching students. The significance level was determined to be 0.05.

Level of Mindfulness

Table 1: Level of Mindfulness among NEET Coaching Students

Level of Mindfulness	Frequency	Percentage
Low	58	19.3%
Moderate	172	57.3%
High	70	23.4%
Total	300	100%

According to Table 1, most NEET coaching students (57.3) have an intermediate level of mindfulness. The high mindfulness percentage is 23.4, but only 19.3% of them are low. This shows that the level of presence moment awareness and emotional control is on average in the majority of students.

Level of Test Anxiety

Table 2: Level of Test Anxiety among NEET Coaching Students

Level of Test Anxiety	Frequency	Percentage
Low	52	17.3%
Moderate	165	55.0%
High	83	27.7%
Total	300	100%

Table 2 has shown that moderate test anxiety is felt by 55% of students. Almost 27.7 percent note high levels of anxiety and 17.3 percent have low anxiety. This implies that stress associated with examinations is an important issue among NEET aspirants.

Relationship between Mindfulness and Test Anxiety

Table 3: Correlation between Mindfulness and Test Anxiety

Variables	r	p value
Mindfulness and Test Anxiety	-0.57	0.000

Mindfulness and test anxiety have the correlation of $r = -0.57$. This shows that there is a moderate negative relationship. The value of p is below the value of 0.05 and this indicates that the value is statistically significant. Thus, greater degrees of mindfulness correlate with the reduced degree of test anxiety amongst NEET coaching students. The hypothesis about the significant negative relationship between mindfulness and test anxiety is accepted.

Prediction of Test Anxiety by Mindfulness

Table 4: Regression Analysis Predicting Test Anxiety (N = 300)

Model Summary

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std Error
0.57	0.32	0.31	6.84

ANOVA

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p value
Regression	7425.63	1	7425.63	139.72	0.000
Residual	15845.27	298	53.17		
Total	23270.90	299			

Coefficients

Predictor	B	Std Error	Beta	t	p value
Constant	86.24	4.12	-	20.93	0.000
Mindfulness	-0.68	0.06	-0.57	-11.82	0.000

The outcomes of the regression analysis indicate that mindfulness is a strong predictor of test anxiety. The value of R^2 at 0.32 suggests that mindfulness experiences 32 percent of the test anxiety variation among NEET coaching students. The negative regression ($B = -0.68$) indicates that when mindfulness increases by a unit, the test anxiety goes down by 0.68 units. The outcome is statistically significant since the p value is less than 0.05. In this way, the hypothesis that mindfulness is a significant predictor of test anxiety is accepted.

Major Findings

1. Most of the NEET coaching students reflected an intermediate state of mindfulness that showed average awareness of emotional and control of attention.
2. There was a significant percentage of students who had a moderate to high degree of test anxiety; which is indicative of the intense academic pressure attached with NEET preparation.
3. There was a strong negative correlation between mindfulness and test anxiety. Students who are more mindful indicated that they have lower examination.
4. Mindfulness was also a big predictor of test anxiety with 32 percent variance explained. This means that mindfulness has a significant contribution in alleviating anxiety in NEET aspirants.
5. The less mindful the students were, the more susceptible they were to worry, emotional tension, and physiological stress during exams.

Educational Implications

The conclusions of the current research have significant implications on the NEET coaching facilities, teachers, parents, and mental health workers.

To begin with, mindfulness training programs should be included in the academic curriculum of the coaching centers. Anxiety can be managed in students through short guided breathing sessions, body awareness sessions, and focused attention sessions that should be done regularly.

Second, an emotional control training and stress management workshops ought to be arranged to prepare the students with coping mechanisms on how to manage stress during examinations. Before taking the mock tests and assessment of the major tests, mindfulness based techniques can be incorporated so that performance related stress can be mitigated.

Third, educators and mentors are supposed to provide constructive learning conditions that foster the use of emotions and free communication. Early detection of symptoms of extreme anxiety can be used to avoid psychological distress in the long run.

Fourth, parents ought to be sensitized on the psychological effects of too much academic pressure. Home expectations and emotional encouragement can be used together with mindfulness exercises proposed in the coaching facilities.

Lastly, policy makers, as well as educational planners, ought to appreciate the value of mental well being in competitive examination systems. By incorporating knowledge on psychological skills development in a coaching program, emotional health and academic performance can be improved.

Conclusion

The current research investigated the correlation between mindfulness and test anxiety of NEET coaching students. The results showed that the majority of students show moderate results in mindfulness, and a considerable amount of students have high levels of test anxiety. Significant negative correlation was revealed between mindfulness and test anxiety, which derives that elevated degree of present moment awareness and control of emotions correlate with reduced anxiety.

The regression analysis also confirmed that mindfulness is a strong predictor of test anxiety and it has a substantial amount of its variance. These findings indicate that mindfulness is a significant preventive psychological mechanism in the high pressure examination situations.

Finally, the skill of mindfulness can be enhanced among NEET aspirants to represent a viable approach towards decreasing the level of anxiety during examinations and enhancing the level of emotional stability. Mindfulness based practices can be integrated in the coaching setting and could have the potential of improving confidence, concentration and general psychological well being of the students during exam preparation in competitions.

References

1. Bamber, M. D., & Schneider, J. K. (2016). Mindfulness based meditation to decrease stress and anxiety in college students: A narrative synthesis of the research. *Educational Research Review*, 18, 1–32. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2015.12.004>
2. Dunning, D. L., Griffiths, K., Kuyken, W., Crane, C., Foulkes, L., Parker, J., & Dalgleish, T. (2019). The effects of mindfulness based interventions on cognition and mental health in children and adolescents: A meta analysis of randomized controlled trials. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 60(3), 244–258. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.12980>
3. Dundas, I., Thorsheim, T., Hjeltnes, A., & Binder, P. E. (2024). Mindfulness training and reduction of test anxiety in adolescents: A randomized study. *Current Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-024-06557-6>
4. Gu, J., Strauss, C., Bond, R., & Cavanagh, K. (2015). How do mindfulness based cognitive therapy and mindfulness based stress reduction improve mental health and well being? A systematic review and meta analysis of mediation studies. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 37, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2015.01.006>
5. Kabat Zinn, J. (2003). Mindfulness based interventions in context: Past, present, and future. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 10(2), 144–156.
6. Kar, S. K. (2020). Student suicide linked to competitive entrance examinations in India: A public health concern. *Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine*, 42(6), 589–590. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0253717620962999>
7. Lin, J. W., & Mai, L. J. (2018). Impact of mindfulness on test anxiety and academic performance. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 63, 185–192. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2018.03.005>
8. Putwain, D. W., & Daly, A. L. (2014). Test anxiety prevalence and gender differences in a sample of secondary school students. *Educational Studies*, 40(5), 554–570. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2014.953914>
9. von der Embse, N., Jester, D., Roy, D., & Post, J. (2018). Test anxiety effects, predictors, and correlates: A 30-year meta-analytic review. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 227, 483–493. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2017.11.048>
10. Yilmazer, E. (2024). The effects of mindfulness on test anxiety: A meta-analytic study. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15, 1401467. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1401467>
11. Zenner, C., Herrnleben Kurz, S., & Walach, H. (2014). Mindfulness based interventions in schools: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 5, 603. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00603>