

**EFFECT OF MINDFULNESS THERAPY ON SOCIAL ANXIETY AMONG SENIOR
SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN DUTSIN-MA ZONAL EDUCATION
QUALITY ASSURANCE, KATSINA STATE, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This study examined the effect of mindfulness therapy on social anxiety among senior secondary school students in Dutsin-ma zonal education quality assurance, Katsina state, Nigeria. The study aimed to find out the effect of mindfulness therapy on social avoidance, shyness and performance anxiety among senior secondary school students in Dutsin-ma zonal education quality assurance, Katsina state. These objectives were transformed into research questions and hypotheses, respectively. A quasi-experimental research design (Pre-test, Post-test without a control group) was adopted. The population of the study consisted of one hundred and twelve (112) students, among which 54 were males and 58 were females. Fifteen (15) students were purposively identified with the symptoms of social anxiety and were used as sample of the study using the Liebowitz social anxiety scale (LSAS). The intervention involved a six-week mindfulness therapy program aimed at enhancing present-moment, awareness and emotional regulation. After the treatment, a post-test was administered to determine whether there is a significant reduction in students' social avoidance, shyness, and performance anxiety. The data collected was analyzed using inferential statistics of paired t-test for related sample using SPSS package. The findings revealed that, significant effect of mindfulness therapy on social avoidance, shyness and performance anxiety existed among senior secondary school students in Dutsin-ma zonal education quality assurance, Kastina state ($t = 6.86, p= 0.05$; $t = 2.98, p= 0.05$; $t = 5.28, p= 0.05$, accordingly). The study concluded that, mindfulness therapy demonstrates significant effects in managing social anxiety. The study recommended that, awareness and educational programs on the signs, causes, and coping mechanisms of social anxiety should be organized for students, teachers, and parents. Teachers should also incorporate mindfulness therapy strategies into classroom practices to help reduce students' anxiety and encourage active participation and interaction.

Key words: Mindfulness Therapy, Social Anxiety, Students.

Introduction

Social anxiety (SA) is one of the most common mental health issues affecting students. It is characterized by intense fear and discomfort in social situations that can hinder academic, social, and personal development. Secondary school students, especially those with pre-existing emotional disorders, are particularly vulnerable to experiencing social anxiety due to academic pressures, social expectations, and the transition to a new environment. Students with social anxiety face significant challenges in participating in classroom discussions, group projects, and other social or academic engagements, which can lead to academic underachievement, isolation, and further emotional distress.

Mindfulness therapy is a type of psychotherapy that focuses on cultivating present-moment awareness and acceptance. It involves paying attention to thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations without judgment or attachment. Mindfulness therapy, also known as mindfulness-based therapy, is a type of psychotherapy that incorporates mindfulness techniques to help individuals manage stress, anxiety, depression, and other mental health conditions. Mindfulness therapy is based on the concept of mindfulness, which involves paying attention to the present moment in a non-judgmental way. This approach encourages individuals to focus on their thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations without trying to change or react to them (Farrell et al., 2019).

According to American psychological association (2020), mindfulness therapy is a type of psychotherapy that involves paying attention to the present moment in a non-judgmental way, with the goal of increasing self-awareness, reducing stress and anxiety, and improving emotional regulation. Mindfulness therapy combines elements of cognitive-behavioral therapy, meditation, and yoga to help individuals develop greater awareness of their thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations. These meditations could be: mindfulness and calming activities and resources which suggests looking outside a window and noticing the colors, patterns, textures, and movement of the grass or leaves. It also suggests avoiding naming what you see, and instead trying to see the world as if you've never seen it before. In addition, mindfulness based stress reduction handbook and resources which suggests focusing on your breathing, and noticing how each breath is different. It also suggests gently guiding your attention back to your breath if it wanders off.

Social anxiety is a common and functionally impairing psychiatric disorder marked by fear of one or more social or performance situations and that follows a chronic and generally unremitting course throughout the lifespan if left untreated (Albano and Hayward, 2004; Knappe et al., 2015). Despite considerable progress in prevention and intervention efforts, social anxiety remains among the most common anxiety disorders in both adolescents and adults, with an estimated lifetime prevalence rate of approximately 12% in the (Kessler et al., 2005; Beesdo et al., 2007; Knappe et al., 2015). Moreover, social anxiety is associated with a significantly diminished quality of life (Saarni et al., 2007; Aderka et al., 2012) and substantial functional impairment across a variety of contexts including interpersonal, educational, and

occupational domains (Acarturk et al., 2008). Social anxiety typically emerges in early adolescence, around roughly 13–14 years of age (Ollendick and Hirshfeld-Becker, 2002; Kessler et al., 2005; Farrell et al., 2019). Among adolescents, prevalence rates for social anxiety are between 10 and 15% (Essau et al., 2019; Heimberg et al., 2000; Merikangas et al., 2010), ranking it among the most common anxiety disorders during this developmental period (Merikangas et al., 2010). Cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) for social anxiety is currently considered the “gold-standard” treatment for both adults and adolescents (Gordon et al., 2014). To the contrary however, social anxiety remains among the least treatment-responsive disorders to CBT in adolescent samples (Hudson et al., 2015), and is effective in only 40–65% of cases (Ginsburg et al., 2011). These relatively modest rates of success suggest that current approaches in the CBT-family of interventions may not comprehensively target precipitating or maintaining factors, thus highlighting a critical need to consider new treatment modalities that may hold promise for affected individuals.

The components of social anxiety includes: social avoidance, shyness, and performance anxiety. Social avoidance refers to a pattern of behavior where individuals intentionally withdraw from social interactions due to anxiety, fear of judgment, or discomfort (Clark and Wells, 2005). This avoidance is commonly linked to social anxiety disorder, but it can also occur independently due to personal preference, past negative experiences, or low self-confidence (Hofmann, 2007). Individuals who engage in social avoidance may refrain from participating in social events, avoid conversations, or limit their engagement with peers and colleagues. The tendency to avoid social interactions is often reinforced by fear of embarrassment, criticism, or rejection (Gilbert, 2011). Research has shown that social avoidance can develop in childhood and persist into adulthood if not addressed (Rubin et al., 2019).

Shyness is a psychological trait that manifests as feelings of nervousness, uneasiness, or discomfort in social situations (Zimbardo, 2017). It is not necessarily a disorder but can range from mild hesitation to severe social inhibition. Shy individuals often experience self-consciousness and fear of being judged, which affects their ability to interact socially (Henderson and Zimbardo, 2001). The origins of shyness can be traced to both genetic and environmental influences. Studies suggest that temperament plays a role, with some children naturally exhibiting more inhibited behaviors from infancy (Kagan, 2014). Additionally, cultural norms influence the perception of shyness; societies view it as a virtue, while other uses it as a social disadvantage (Cheek & Melchior, 2010). Understanding shyness is essential in distinguishing it from social anxiety disorder, which is a clinically recognized mental health condition with more severe implications (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Performance anxiety, commonly known as stage fright, is the fear or nervousness associated with performing tasks in front of an audience (Clark and Wells, 2005). It is a psychological condition that can affect individuals in various fields, including academics, sports, music, and public speaking. Performance anxiety is often linked to fear of negative evaluation, where individuals worry excessively about making mistakes and being judged harshly (Leary, 2001).

Symptoms of performance anxiety include increased heart rate, sweating, trembling, and cognitive distress, which can significantly impair performance (Spielberger, 2013). While mild anxiety can enhance focus and motivation, excessive anxiety can lead to avoidance behaviors and reduced confidence (Eysenck and Calvo, 2012). Understanding performance anxiety is crucial for developing strategies to manage it and improve overall performance.

Statement of the problem

Social anxiety is one of the major concerns within the school system in every academic setting. Students with social anxiety often experience academic and social difficulties that significantly interfering with their well-being and limit their educational success (Kessler, 2005). Despite the prevalence of social anxiety among senior secondary school students in zonal education quality assurance there are limited accessible and effective interventions tailored to address these challenges in the context of Nigerian senior secondary schools in general and Dutsin-ma in particular. Traditional approaches, such as counseling or pharmacotherapy, may not always address the specific needs of students who experience ongoing anxiety in social and academic settings (Leary, 2001). Given the emerging evidence supporting mindfulness therapy for treating social anxiety, it is important to investigate its effectiveness within the senior secondary school setting to determine its viability as a solution for students with social anxiety disorders.

In line of the above, this study seeks to address the gap by evaluating the effect of mindfulness therapy on reducing social anxiety symptoms among students among senior secondary school students in Dutsin-ma with diagnosed or suspected disorder. By assessing the effectiveness of mindfulness therapy, the research aims to contribute to the development of accessible and effective mental health interventions for students, ultimately promoting their academic success and well-being.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

1. To find out the effect of mindfulness therapy on social avoidance among senior secondary school students in Dutsin-ma zonal education quality assurance, Katsina state, Nigeria.
2. To ascertain the effect of mindfulness therapy on shyness among senior secondary school students in Dutsin-ma zonal education quality assurance, Katsina state, Nigeria.
3. To examine the effect of mindfulness therapy on performance anxiety among the senior secondary school students in Dutsin-ma zonal education quality assurance, Katsina state, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study

1. What is the effect of mindfulness therapy on social avoidance among senior secondary school students in Dutsin-ma zonal education quality assurance, Katsina state, Nigeria?

2. What is the effect of mindfulness therapy on shyness among senior secondary school students in Dutsin-ma zonal education quality assurance, Katsina state, Nigeria?
3. What is the effect of mindfulness therapy on performance anxiety among the senior secondary school students in Dutsin-ma zonal education quality assurance, Katsina state, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H₀₁. There is no significant effect of mindfulness therapy on social avoidance among senior secondary school students in Dutsin-ma zonal education quality assurance, Katsina state, Nigeria.

H₀₂. There is no significant effect of mindfulness therapy on shyness among senior secondary school students in Dutsin-ma zonal education quality assurance, Katsina state, Nigeria.

H₀₃. There is no significant effect of mindfulness therapy on performance anxiety among senior secondary school students in Dutsin-ma zonal education quality assurance, Katsina state, Nigeria.

Methodology

The study employed a quasi-experimental research design, with a pre-test, post-test without control group design. The pre-test, post-test no control group design allows for the measurement of the dependent variable (Social Anxiety) before and after the intervention. The Population of this study comprised a total of 112 students, among which 54 were males and 58 were females. For this study, 15 Students were purposively identified with social anxiety and were selected as the sample using purposive sampling technique. Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale (LSAS) was used as an instrument to collect data in this research. Lastly, the data collected was analyzed using inferential statistics paired t-tests for related sample using SPSS package.

Results

Research Question One: What is the effect of mindfulness therapy on social avoidance among senior secondary school students in Dutsin-ma zonal education quality assurance, Katsina state, Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation on effect of mindfulness therapy on social avoidance

Groups	N	Mean (\bar{x})	SD	Mean Difference
Pre-test	15	3.53	0.91	1.8
Post-test	15	1.73	0.45	

Table 4 reveals that, there is a notable decrease in social avoidance after mindfulness therapy. The mean score dropped by 1.8 points, suggesting that the therapy was effective in reducing social avoidance among the students.

Research Questions Two: What is the effect of mindfulness therapy on shyness among senior secondary school students in Dutsin-ma zonal education quality assurance, Katsina state, Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation on effect of mindfulness therapy on shyness

Groups	N	Mean (\bar{x})	SD	Mean Difference
Pre-test	15	2.47	0.85	0.74
Post-test	15	1.73	0.45	

Table 5 reveals that, shyness also decreased after the therapy. The 0.74 point reduction shows a moderate improvement, indicating that mindfulness therapy helped students become less shy, though the effect was smaller than with social avoidance.

Research Questions Three: What is the effect of mindfulness therapy on performance anxiety among the senior secondary school students in Dutsin-Ma zonal education quality assurance, Katsina state, Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation effect of mindfulness therapy on performance anxiety

Groups	N	Mean (\bar{x})	SD	Mean Difference
Pre-test	15	3.13	0.89	1.46
Post-test	15	1.67	0.47	

Table 3 indicates that, performance anxiety significantly decreased following the mindfulness therapy, with a 1.46 point drop. This suggests that mindfulness was quite effective in helping students feel less anxious during performance-related situations.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis One: There is no significant effect of mindfulness therapy on social avoidance among senior secondary school students in Dutsin-ma zonal education quality assurance, Katsina state, Nigeria.

Table 4: Paired t-test of effect of mindfulness therapy on social avoidance.

Groups	N	Mean (\bar{x})	SD	Tcal.	Df	P
Pre-test	15	3.53	0.91	6.86	28	0.05
Post-test	15	1.73	0.45			

Table 4 reveals that, there is significant effect of mindfulness therapy on social avoidance among students in Dutsin-ma zonal quality assurance education. The $t_{cal}=6.86$ at degree of freedom of 28 and $p\text{-value}=0.05$ is equal to 0.05 alpha value. Thus, the hypothesis which states that there is no significant effect of mindfulness therapy on social avoidance among senior secondary school students in Dutsin-ma zonal education quality assurance is rejected. This implies that, there is a significant effect of mindfulness therapy on social avoidance among senior secondary school students in Dutsin-ma zonal education quality assurance, Katsina state.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant effect of mindfulness therapy on shyness among senior secondary school students in Dutsin-ma zonal education quality assurance, Katsina state, Nigeria.

Table 5: Paired t-test of effect of mindfulness therapy on shyness.

Groups	N	Mean (\bar{x})	SD	Tcal.	Df	P
Pre-test	15	2.47	0.85	2.98	28	0.05
Post-test	15	1.73	0.45			

Table 5 reveals that, there is significant effect of mindfulness therapy on shyness among students in Dutsin-ma zonal quality assurance education. The $t_{cal}= 2.98$ at degree of freedom of 28 and $p\text{-value} = 0.05$ is equal to 0.05 alpha value. Thus, the hypothesis which states that there is no significant effect of mindfulness therapy on shyness among senior secondary school students in Dutsin-ma zonal education quality assurance is rejected. This implies that, there is a significant effect of mindfulness therapy on shyness among senior secondary school students in Dutsin-ma zonal education quality assurance, Katsina state.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant effect of mindfulness therapy on performance anxiety among senior secondary school students in Dutsin-ma zonal education quality assurance, Katsina state, Nigeria.

Table 6: Paired t-test of effect of mindfulness therapy on performance anxiety.

Groups	N	Mean (\bar{x})	SD	Tcal.	Df	P
Pre-test	15	3.13	0.89	5.62	28	0.05
Post-test	15	1.67	0.47			

Table 6 reveals that, there is significant effect of mindfulness therapy on performance anxiety among students in Dutsin-ma zonal quality assurance education. The $t_{cal}= 5.62$ at degree of freedom of 28 and $p\text{-value} = 0.05$ is equal to 0.05 alpha value. Thus, the hypothesis which states that there is no significant effect of mindfulness therapy on performance anxiety among senior secondary school students in Dutsin-ma zonal education quality assurance is rejected.

This implies that, there is a significant effect of mindfulness therapy on performance anxiety among senior secondary school students in Dutsin-ma zonal education quality assurance, Katsina state.

Discussion of Findings

Analysis concerning the first finding revealed that, there is significant effect of mindfulness therapy on social avoidance among senior secondary school students in Dutsin-ma zonal education quality assurance, Katsina state. This finding is in line with the finding of Hofmann, (2007) which revealed that mindfulness therapy improved students' academic achievement and boost their self-esteem. The second finding of this study indicated that, there is significant effect of mindfulness therapy on shyness among senior secondary school students in Dutsin-ma zonal education quality assurance, Katsina state. This finding is in concurrence with the finding of Henderson and Zimbardo (2001) which discovered that, mindfulness therapy was effective in improving shyness of the sampled students. Moreover, the study finding number three which revealed that, there is significant effect of mindfulness therapy on performance anxiety among senior secondary school students in Dutsin-ma, zonal education quality assurance, Katsina state. This finding agrees with the finding of Leary (2001) that mindfulness therapy was found to be very effective in managing patients with performance anxiety.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be stated that, mindfulness therapy increases awareness and acceptance of the present moment, helping individuals manage anxiety and stress.

Recommendations

The following are the recommendations based on the findings and conclusion of the study:

1. There should be increased awareness and education programmes for students, teachers, and parents on the signs, causes, and coping mechanisms for social anxiety. Early detection and support can significantly reduce long-term psychological impacts.
2. Schools and mental health practitioners should consider integrating counselling sessions, peer support groups, and social skills training to help students manage social anxiety more effectively.
3. Teachers should always use mindful therapy to reduce student's anxiety in order to enable them participate actively in the lessons, interact with instructional materials and colleagues.

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