
Effect of Mindfulness Interventions on loneliness among Elderly

Professor, Sindhu C Philip & Dr. Pratiksha Patric

**PhD Scholar,*

***Professor, PhD Guide S.S Institute of Nursing Sciences Bhopal.(M.P)*

Loneliness is a leading cause of poor physical and mental health among the elderly leading to early death.. People who are lonely are twice as likely to experience a decline in daily activities. Senior citizens who have been placed in a nursing or assisted living facility experience disorientation and loneliness as well. Health deterioration in the elderly who live alone and have few visitors is less likely to be noticed and followed up with medical attention.

Loneliness is linked to lower quality of life, cognitive impairment, reduced well-being and loss of independence. Risk Factors for Loneliness among elderly are living alone, poor economic situation, poor outlook on health, infrequent contact with relatives and friends, adult children not living in close proximity and not able to use modern communication.

The concept of Mindfulness has spread rapidly in western psychology research and practice, in large part because of the success of standardized mindfulness-based interventions. These interventions namely mindfulness was first explored in broad philosophical terms by Buddhist tradition. Mindfulness based stress reduction (MBSR) and mindfulness based cognitive therapy (MCT) incorporate the essence of eastern mindfulness practices into western cognitive behavioural practice. Mindfulness interventions have demonstrated efficacy in reducing anxiety, loneliness and depression symptoms severity in a broad range of individuals. There are lot of supportive literature that highlights the importance of mindfulness based interventions. This can be practiced effectively, so that the quality of life of elderly can be improved.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Effect of Mindfulness Interventions on loneliness among elderly people residing in selected old age homes of Kerala

OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the pretest level of loneliness among elderly people residing in old age homes
2. To assess the effect of mindfulness interventions by comparing the post-test loneliness scores of experimental and control group

HYPOTHESIS

H₁ : There will be significant difference in the mean post-test loneliness score of experimental group and control group

METHODOLOGY

This study involved quantitative research approach and quasi experimental design with pre-test post-test control group. Total participants were 300 in number, selected by convenience sampling from four old age homes. They were categorized into experimental and control group by simple random sampling (experimental -150, control-150). Tool used were structured questionnaire to identify selected baseline variables and UCLA scale for assessing the loneliness.

Before starting the study, ethical clearance was obtained, and permission was obtained from the authorities of the setting. Informed consent was obtained from each subject

Pre-test level of loneliness of all samples was assessed and mindfulness interventions (8 sessions) were administered only to experimental group for 8 weeks. Post-test loneliness level was assessed after 8 weeks.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table-1:Frequency and percentage distribution of subjects based on loneliness score before and after mindfulness interventions

Level of loneliness	n= 150 +150							
	Experimental group				Control group			
	Pre-test score		Post test score		Pre-test score		Post test score	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Low	21	14	134	89.3	0	0	0	0
Moderate	94	62.7	16	10.7	113	75.3	116	77.3
Moderately high	35	23.3	0	0	37	24.7	34	22.7

Data presented in table 1 depicts the level of loneliness of elderly people. In pre-test, among the experimental group 14% had low loneliness,62.7%had moderate loneliness and 23.3% had moderately high loneliness .Where as in post-test none of them had moderately high loneliness, only 10.7% had moderate loneliness and majority (89.3%) had low loneliness. In control group there was only slight decrease in loneliness score.

From the above findings it is evident that the Mindfulness interventions had reduced the loneliness of experimental group in post test

Table 2 : Mean , standard deviation and t value of post loneliness score in experimental group and control group

n=150+150					
Test	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean Difference	t value	p value
Experimental Post test	30.06	5.056	17.68	37.693	0.000
Control Post-test	47.74	2.728			

Table 2 shows that the mean post-test loneliness score of the experimental group was 30.06 and the mean post test score of control group was 47.74 with a mean difference of 17.68 which was found to be statistically significant as evidenced by t value of 37.693 (pvalue.000<.001). Hence the research hypothesis H_1 is accepted.

This finding is supported by a randomized controlled trial on effect of mindfulness training on loneliness. This study demonstrates the efficacy of a two week mindfulness training for reducing loneliness and improving social contact in daily life. Moreover, this study shows that developing an orientation of acceptance towards present moment experiences is a critical mechanism for mitigating these social risk factors.

Implications for Nursing practice

As age advances people face lot of physical and psychological changes. It is necessary to make the people recognize the importance of adapting to old age and understand the need of practicing mindfulness Interventions. Appropriate nurse counselling can reframe the perception of old age, help them to reassess life goals and plan new practices.

Nurses can help people by providing emotional support and facilitating ventilation of feelings and helping them to cope with the changes. They can help elderly people to get adjusted to changes by giving information and proper explanation of different steps of mindfulness practices. Constantly motivating people to practice mindfulness can definitely improve the quality of life.

CONCLUSION

Loneliness and social isolation are a growing public health concern, yet there are few evidenced based interventions for mitigating these social risk factors. Accumulating evidence suggests that Mindfulness Interventions can improve social relationship processes. However, the Mindfulness Interventions , which train skills in monitoring present moment experiences with an orientation of acceptance , have shown promise for improving social relationship processes.

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