

Mindfulness-based intervention: A potential regimen for mental health disorders in Pakistan

Areeba Shoaib, Maryam Khan

Dear Editor, the trajectory of mental health disorders in Pakistan continues to reach the summit as it affects 24 million people across the country, with a greater preponderance in females.¹

Despite that, Pakistan displays below par paucity of mental healthcare resources, with only 0.19 psychiatrists per 100,000 people, under-resourced hospitals, and a fractured budget.² Moreover, the country's predominantly orthodox society couples mental health-related etiologies with superstitious religious beliefs. Moreover, such issues are stigmatized and juxtaposed with socio-cultural facets. S. Barber and colleagues revealed that victims are vulnerable to familial micro aggression that cultivates personal shame, yielding poor help-seeking behaviours.

In Pakistan, where mental health disorders are stigmatized despite accounting for more than 4% of the total disease burden, addressing the problem on a psychological level via mindfulness-based intervention (MBI) seems to be the only prospective cornerstone. Mindfulness-based intervention (MBI) instills cognitive cognition in individuals and focuses on channelizing their attention toward the acknowledgement of their thoughts nonjudgmentally. A meta-analysis was conducted to assess the relationship between MBIs and mental health in healthcare professionals. The results established a significant efficacy of MBIs in improving mental health disorders like anxiety, stress, and depression.³ MBI has also emerged as an optimal treatment for suicide ideation.⁴ Studies have equated it to antidepressants in the incidence of depression relapse to expand the perspective further.⁵

A thorough literature search on PubMed and PakMediNet found no research assessing the effectiveness of MBI in managing mental health disorders in Pakistan. This scenario highlights the lack of indigenous research and application of this potential regime in the country.

First Year MBBS Student, Dow University of Health Sciences, Karachi, Pakistan.

Correspondence: Maryam Khan. e-mail: maryam.ak501@gmail.com

ORCID ID. 0000-0002-2861-5125

Therefore, health policy planners must promote awareness of MBI in mentally disturbed individuals. Awareness campaigns via television, workshops and social media ads can be carried out, specifically in rural areas, which are at a dual meltdown of literacy and medical attention. To further popularise MBI the government shall develop mobile-based applications allowing people to self-learn the course in Urdu. Moreover, trained Pakistani psychiatrists in the West must consider disseminating the MBI education to medical students and psychiatry residents in Pakistan.

It is high time Pakistan scales up research and awareness regarding MBI to manage mental health disorders and associated multi-morbidities, thereby lessening the burden on health facilities.

Disclaimer: None.

Conflict of interest: None.

Funding disclosure: None.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47391/JPMA.7766>

Submission completion date: 23-08-2022

Acceptance date: 09-11-2022

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