

THE EFFECTS OF MINDFULNESS-BASED THERAPY AND COUNSELING (MBTC) ON MINDFULNESS, STRESS AND DEPRESSION IN NURSING STUDENTS

Somdee Ananpawet^{[a]*}, Ruemonphan Mekhasilp^[a], Vanee Ponakhon^[a]

^[a] Faculty of Nursing Science, St Theresa International College, Thailand

* Author for correspondence; email: somdee@stic.ac.th

Abstract

This one group pretest-posttest quasi-experimental design aimed to compare mindfulness, stress and depression of nursing students, St Theresa International College on participating in Mindfulness-Based Therapy and Counseling (MBTC). The MBTC consisted of 8 worksheets for 12 sessions. Participants are consisted of 92 students of the second-year nursing students in the course of Ethics and Law in Nursing at the first semester of academic year 2016. Research instruments are included with: Philadelphia Mindfulness Scale (PHLMS-Thai)-Awareness; stress inventory; 9q depression questionnaires with Cronbach's alpha coefficient reliability at .86, .87, and .71, respectively. Data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics and paired-samples t-test.

The result revealed that the mean scores of mindfulness was statistically higher in significant than before participating the MBTC Program ($t = -3.37, p < .01$). However, the mean scores of stress and depression were not statistically significant. The results showed that the practice of MBTC can enhance mindfulness among nursing students. A recommendation for stakeholder of nursing education institutions should promote essential programs to enhance mindfulness for learning efficiency and to decrease negative mental health outcomes in nursing students.

Key words: Mindfulness-Based Therapy and Counseling (MBTC), Mindfulness, Stress, Depression, Nursing Students

Introduction

Nursing is a profession that aims to take care of people who have health problems and to promote them to have good health. Also, these clients are encouraged to have happiness in all dimensions including physically, mentally, and socially. Thus, nurses must apply for both science and arts in their works for vulnerable clients in both physically and mentally. To produce nursing students in order to be professional nurses who are ready for the mentioned services is challenging job especially nursing education institute that aims to produce nursing graduates to respond to the expectations of society. Nursing institutes need to give precedence to produce quality, knowledgeable and capable nursing students who have good attitude towards profession, including the continuation of desirable nursing characteristics in the profession and for the nation. Therefore, the development of teaching and learning process requires the process of cultivating preferred characteristic of nursing students in both theoretical and practical subjects in order to aim for students' readiness in complete learning outcomes and good at profession and to have good expression towards oneself and others. They can also handle their negative emotions effectively. The process of cultivating the attributes of the "Talent/Well/Happiness" that people mentioned must be started from students first by participating to learn everything consciously. Be aware of the tangible things and aware of inner feeling that is intangible or is called "Mindfulness Training".

As we knew that nursing students faced with many changes in life, such as changing in learning, development, and lifestyle. These changes are greatly effect to late adolescents who are entering into early adulthood. Thus, to enroll to study with Faculty of Nursing Science, St Theresa International College is not different from other nursing institutes that have to face with stress in several ways, including stress that caused by difficulty and profound subject contents, to adjust oneself with lecturers, unfriendly friends and so on. Based on previous studies, the 2nd year students have to face with stress, anxiety, and depression from several causes (Ross et al., 2005). In addition, there is the study that revealed Thai nursing students have severe depression level of 19.6 % (Ross et al., 2005). These negative mental health outcomes may effect to nursing professional practice, family, and society (Pumpuang, 2016; Sonpaveerawong et al., 2016; Ross et al., 2005).

The learning and teaching process of Faculty of Nursing Science of St Theresa International College continually emphasized on nursing knowledge and skills in both theoretical and practical parts and implanted students for preferred characteristics in many subjects. 503 201 Ethics and Law in Nursing is one of subject that aimed to develop those preferred characteristics for the 2nd year nursing students. Researchers utilized the participating of mindfulness that called “Mindfulness-Based Therapy and Counseling (MBTC)”. Thus, to practice before the beginning of class in each session about 15-30 minutes in order to increase mindfulness level, and decrease students’ stress and depression. When mind is at a peaceful stage, the students are able to learn effectively and can reduce stress and depression directly and indirectly (Suvarnarong et al., 2013; Wongpiromsan, 2016; Therathongkum and Thaweekul, 2010). According to the report of the Department of Mental Health 2015 that had studied from meta-analysis found that there are several ways to cure clients in depressive disorder without using medicine, such as CBT, IPT, Behavioural Activation, PST, MBTC, including psychodynamic psychotherapy. Besides, the Guided Self Helped based on CBT, and the exercising which can reduce depression in elders more than patients who have no participation in any interventions. (Department of Mental Health, 2015).

Mindfulness-Based Therapy and Counseling (MBTC) is another new helping model that has been widely interested to assist people who have mental health problems. It is another way to help people to love and be compassionate for themselves and others by participating their own consciousness. Thus, Mindfulness-Based Therapy and Counseling focuses on mind resting meditation, to practice to live consciously, have cognitive awareness and detachment especially automatic negative thinking, the better relationship revision and communication with others in life. It also emphasizes on the practice of compassionate training and the forgiveness to oneself and others. Therefore, the guidelines results of the MBTC that researchers have developed is the specific program for mindfulness practice for the 2nd year nursing students of the 1st semester in academic year 2016 that are registered to study Ethics and Law in Nursing so that students will acquire more mindfulness level have more compassion to self and others which will effect to better doing good deeds to oneself and others. Besides, when students have more consciousness and compassion, it will help better relationship and communication with others. Furthermore, with this behavioral expression, it should effect students’ negative emotion changed, such as to minimize stress and depression. Thus, when students

have better consciousness, it will help to develop morality and ethics that respond to the expected learning outcomes of the course of Ethics and Law in Nursing and negative emotion reduction, such as stress and depression among students. Consequently, the 2nd year students will continually to have readiness in both body and mind in learning and adjustment to learn in the higher education effectively.

Objectives

To study the effect of Mindfulness-Based Therapy and Counseling (MBTC) on mindfulness, stress and depression of nursing students of St Theresa International College.

Hypothesis

Mindfulness, stress, depression of the 2nd year nursing students before and after participating in the MBTC is different. Thus, after participating in the MBTC Program, students have higher mindfulness than before participating the program and the mean scores of stress and depression are reduced than before participating in the program.

Methodology of Research

This research is the Quasi-Experiment Research (A Pretest-Post-test Quasi Experimental Research)

Population and Sample

The whole total population was 116 nursing students, however, there were 92 persons who met the inclusion criteria that they had to participate in MBTC Program of not less than 80%.

Material and Procedure

After receiving permission from the IRB Committee of St Theresa International College, researcher explained the objective and process of MBTC Program to nursing students.

Preliminary test (try out) with the 30 first year nursing students that were not sampling group. Research instruments are included with: Philadelphia Mindfulness Scale (PHLMS-Thai)-Awareness; stress inventory; 9q depression questionnaires with Cronbach's alpha coefficient reliability at .86, .87, and .71, respectively.

The MBTC Program procedure: Researcher was trained in the first class of MBTC Program in year 2016 from the Department of Mental Health, Thailand (Wongpiromsarn, 2016). Therefore, researcher modified the MBTC Program for nursing students. The MBTC Program consisted of 12 sessions (8 worksheets) as follow:

Session 1 Anxiety and Peaceful Mind Management: Create motivation about benefits of meditation and mindfulness practice by meditation practice and sleepiness management.

Session 2 Live Consciously and Thoughts Management: Do daily activity with mindfulness practice by using Mind-bell program and Thought Management by stop thinking.

Session 3 Emotions Awareness and Detachment: Mindfulness practice in violent feeling notice and contemplation and release.

Session 4 Thoughts Awareness and Detachment: Mindfulness practice in noticing automatic negative thinking, the posting of thought sign and thought release.

Session 5-6 Peaceful Mind and Self-Compassion Practice: Mindfulness practice in emotional awareness, thoughts and release and consciously give love and compassion to oneself. (2 sessions)

Session 7-8 Peaceful Mind and Give Compassion to Self and Others Practices: Meditation practice, the awareness of emotion, thoughts and release, consciously giving love and compassion to self and others (2 weeks)

Session 9-10 Peaceful Mind and Develop Better Relationship Practices: Meditation practice, the emotion awareness, thoughts and release and consciously give love and compassion to self and others by reviewing better relationship with closer ones (2 weeks)

Session 11-12 To Calm the Mind and Better Communication Mindfulness: Meditation practice, emotional awareness, thoughts and release, consciously give love to self and other by reviewing better relationship with closer ones and adjust better communication with people around you. (2 weeks)

The results were analyzed using descriptive statistics and paired-samples t-test

Results and Discussion

The findings are discussed in three issues as according to objectives as follows:

Nursing students' mindfulness comparison before and after participating the MBCT Program, the study found that students' mean scores of mindfulness was statistically higher in significant than before participating the MBTC Program ($t = -3.37, p < .01$). There are many studies that support that students who obtained training of mindfulness continually, they can improve their mindfulness that will help them to stay in high emotional stress. According to the study of Sangthong Therathongkum et al. (2010) found that after the Mental Development Program at 1 week and at 4 months, nursing students showed significantly increase in meditation efficacy as compared to before the program. Besides, it also responds to the study of Patomporn Photawon et al. (2014) that studied the practice with breathing meditation program of nursing students to improve mindfulness and reduce stress level in labor room practicum. The results showed that the practicing of breathing meditation helped all samples (100%) to be more and more conscious. Nursing students perceived that they were able to control themselves, can increase their performances in practicum, and can increase attitudes toward practicing in maternal, child, and mid-wifery practicum.

In sum, the practice of mindfulness is one great benefit to nursing students both from the results of previous studies and the results of this study. Therefore, nursing institutes should integrate MBTC Program in nursing curriculum or extracurricular activities.

Nursing students' stress comparison before and after participating in the MBTC Program, the study found that students' mean scores of stress was not statistically significantly ($t = -1.90, p > .05$). Students had more stresses after finishing the program. So, the result did not match with the established hypothesis. It might be resulted from the difficulties of subject: Basic Professional Clinical Nursing that students registered in the same semester. From the interviewing, this subject utilized the evaluation form of OSCE (Objective Structured Clinical Examinations). From students' interviewed information, most students were much tensed about failing the OSCE test. However, this subject is very important for nursing students to practice nursing procedures before practicing with clients in the real practical settings. Higher stress might effect to students' learning

and daily lives that resulted from stress over a long period of time in the first semester and in conjunction with other factors. This impact related with the study of Jiraporn Sonpaveerawong et al. (2016) indicated that about half of nursing students experienced stress at high level (50.7%) and most of them had stress due to learning activities. The study also suggested that nursing education institutions should understand student nurses' stress, causes of stress, methods of dealing with stress and their sources of support when undergoing stress in order to be prepared to assist and promote healthy mental health that would further enhance the quality of learning in the nursing program. The previous results were the consistent with the results of current study that found there were 42 students from all 92 subjects of the sampling group were sick with mental illness which was equal to 44.57%, for example, they had stress, anxiety, and sad mood. Furthermore, the duration of practicing MBTC might not sufficient to reduce students' negative mental health outcomes. Thus, mindfulness training that allows higher levels of consciousness among students might not be sufficiently effective in reducing in high-stress among nursing students who have to cope with stress from many causes, such as academic studies, clinical practices, and personal or social issues, adjustment to new social cultures of institutes (Pumpuang, 2016).

Some reports disagree with our findings. The study by Sangthong et al. (2010) indicated that Mental Development Program assists to reduce perceived stress and improve concentration of nursing students. In addition, the result of this study is not responded with the previous researches that found that mindfulness practice helps to reduce stress (Keawpimon et al., 2012; Photawon et al., 2014; Song, and Lindquist, 2015). However, several of the applications of MBT (such as MBTC) have been designed as relapse prevention strategies rather than to reduce acute symptoms (Hofmann et al., 2010).

Nursing students' depression comparison before and after participating the MBTC Program, the study found that students' mean scores of depression was not statistically significantly ($t = -1.14, p > .05$). Students had more depression after finishing the program. So, the result did not match with the established hypothesis. Reasons might likely to be in the same direction of students' stress that had increased. From the failing in examination of above the mentioned subject with psychological characteristics of the second year students who were feeling vulnerable in many problems in their lives, might affect students' emotion. In the study by Jiraporn Sonpaveerawong et al. (2016) indicated that about half of the nurs-

ing students experienced stress at a high level (50.7 %) and most of them had stress due to learning activities. Greater stress and anxiety of the second year students might enhance a greater risk of depression. So it might be more difficult to reduce depression by practicing mindfulness among nursing students who had high level of stress and depression like the target group. Results of this study corresponded to the study of Klinchaba Suvarnarong et al. (2013) that investigated the effects of yoga program on happiness, self-esteem and depressive symptoms in nursing students. The results revealed that the depression mean score of the experimental group was not significantly lower than that of the control group ($p > .05$). However, the results of this study is not corresponded to the past researches that found that mindfulness helps depression reduction (Hongjuice, 2014; Song and Lindquist, 2015)

Therefore, this research shows that the MBTC Program has efficacy in increasing mindfulness level but has not enough efficacy to reduce stress and depression among nursing students.

Due to limitations of our study, it should be noted that firstly, the shorter time for practicing MBTC might not be enough for reducing negative mental health outcomes among the 2nd year nursing students who have to confront with several difficulties in learning and life problems. Secondly, there are some crucial factors that impacted to students' mental health, such as uncontrolled nature of teaching-learning process.

Recommendations

The findings could help raise the awareness of nursing education institutions in understanding students' mindfulness, stress, and depression as follows:

1. Administrators of nursing education institutions should have obvious policy to organize the practice of mindfulness for nursing students in both curriculum and extracurricular activities, including promotion to practice mindfulness in everyday life.

2. Nursing students are at risk for emotional stress, anxiety, and depression by facing various problems from both problems in learning and personal problems. Thus, lecturers should care about students in both physical and mental conditions. Especially, realizing in learning management that will not stimulate excessive stress or anxiety to students.

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