

JIRSEA Issue: Vol. 22 No. 3

Sept/Oct 2024

ISSN 1675-6061

<http://www.seairweb.info/journal/index.aspx>

Submission Timeline

First submission: 1 May 2024

Revised submission: 9 July 2024

Final Submission: 14 October 2024

Acceptance: 29 October 2024

The Effectiveness of Peer Teaching Methods in Mindfulness Training to Enhance Student Mindfulness

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CITE ARTICLE: Suastika, I.M.D.H., Folamauk, C.L.H., Wijaya, R.P.C., and Handoyo, N.E. (2024). *Journal of Institutional Research South East Asia*, 22(3), 315-330

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Publisher: SEAIR Secretariat

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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PEER TEACHING METHODS IN MINDFULNESS TRAINING TO ENHANCE STUDENT MINDFULNESS

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ABSTRACT

The objective is to determine the effectiveness of peer teaching methods in mindfulness training to enhance student mindfulness. This study is quasi-experimental with a pre-test-post-test control group design followed by 92 students. They were divided into peer tutor, treatment, and control groups using a cluster sampling technique. The respondents' mindfulness level was measured using an online Mindfulness Awareness Scale (MAAS) questionnaire at three different measurement times. The data were analyzed using the Repeated Measure ANOVA test. The results indicated that the peer teaching method is effective and influential in increasing mindfulness in the peer tutor group (p -value $<.001$, $f = 5.0$). The effect size is moderate ($\eta^2p = 0.10$). The results showed that only the peer tutor group had significant results between observations one and 3 (p -value = 0.03). This paper concludes that peer teaching training can increase mindfulness in peer tutor groups. However, there was no significant difference between the peer and control groups. Suggestions for further research are to involve a larger sample, use a variety of training methods, longer duration of training, and pay attention to motivational factors.

Keywords: Mental Health, Peer Teaching, Mindfulness, University students

Introduction

Mental health problems among college students are a significant concern, particularly within the age group of 17 to 29 years, which includes the student demographic (Segal et al., 2002). A 2018 Basic Health Research report revealed that depressive disorders often emerge during adolescence (15-24 years), with a prevalence of 6.2%. Notably, the East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) province experienced a high prevalence of depression in individuals under 15 years old (9.7%), ranking third nationally, compared to the average national prevalence of 6.7% (KEMENKES RI, 2019). A survey conducted by the Universitas Nusa Cendana Health Promoting University (HPU) Team in Kupang found that 21.5% of respondents felt disappointed or tense, 20.4% felt gloomy and sad, and 32.4% felt deeply down (Ndun et al., 2021). These findings underscore the need for interventions to address students' mental health, and one promising approach is mindfulness.

Mindfulness is a valuable tool in mitigating mental health issues, offering techniques to reduce stress and depression. By training individuals to cultivate awareness and focus through daily activities or meditation (Kabat-Zinn, 2003), mindfulness aids in regulating emotions. It has been associated with reduced stress, anxiety, and depression, thereby preventing various health problems (Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2011). The American Psychological Association recognizes mindfulness as effective in alleviating anxiety and stress.

Previous research, such as Savitri and Listiyandini's study on "Mindfulness and Psychological Well-being in Adolescents," has demonstrated the positive impact of mindfulness on various dimensions of psychological well-being (Savitri, 2017). Given the high prevalence of mental health issues among students, teaching and training in mindfulness emerge as strategies to address this pressing concern.

Despite the recognized benefits of mindfulness, there is limited research on the effectiveness of peer teaching methods in enhancing student mindfulness, especially in resource-constrained settings. This gap is particularly significant in areas with high mental health needs, such as the NTT province. This study investigates the effectiveness of peer teaching in mindfulness training on enhancing university students' mindfulness levels in a resource-constrained setting. It explores the impact of peer teaching on the development of mindfulness skills in peer tutors. The research seeks to answer two key questions: (1) Is the peer teaching method effective in increasing students' mindfulness in a university setting? (2) How does this method impact the development of mindfulness skills in peer tutors?

Peer teaching is a collaborative learning method where students, often those with greater

expertise, act as instructors to their peers. This approach aims to enhance comprehension, concentration, and meaningful learning by providing guidance, assistance, instructions, directions, and motivation using a more relatable language (Yulianto, 2019). Peer teaching reinforces what has been learned as students take on the role of educators. Moreover, peers receiving instruction tend to grasp the material better because it is presented from a perspective more aligned with their own. Peer teaching, therefore, holds the potential for imparting mindfulness skills to university students.

However, previous research presents mixed evidence regarding the effectiveness of peer teaching in mindfulness training. While some studies have shown positive outcomes, others have not demonstrated statistically significant effects (Moir et al., 2016). This study aims to assess the efficacy of the peer teaching method in teaching mindfulness to university students in a resource-constrained rural setting.

Methods

A research framework was developed based on the identified constructs from the literature review. The framework hypothesizes that the peer teaching method (independent variable) will positively influence student mindfulness (dependent variable), with possible mediating variables such as confidence in teaching mindfulness skills, self-efficacy, and perceived helpfulness of peer teaching.

The study was conducted at Universitas Nusa Cendana, involving 92 participants selected from a population of 2,973 students. The sampling method was purposive, focusing on three faculties: the Faculty of Public Health (FKM), the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP), and the Faculty of Cultural Knowledge (FKKH). The rationale for selecting these faculties includes:

1. Representation of Diverse Student Populations: These faculties encompass a range of disciplines, providing a diverse sample reflective of the university's student body.
2. Feasibility of Data Collection: These faculties were chosen for logistical reasons, ensuring that data collection was manageable within the research timeframe and resources.
3. Sample Size Justification: A sample size of 92 was determined based on feasibility and power analysis considerations, ensuring sufficient statistical power to detect significant effects in the study.

The study employed a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test and post-test control group.

Participants were randomly assigned to either the intervention group, which received peer-taught mindfulness training, or the control group, which received no intervention during the study period. In the intervention group, participants received mindfulness training delivered by extensively trained peer tutors. The peer tutors were trained in mindfulness techniques through a two-day intensive session. This training included breathing exercises, meditation, and techniques to maintain full awareness during daily activities. The tutors were then asked to convey these skills to their peers through interactive and reflective approaches, aiming to create a learning environment that fosters mindfulness development. The training program spanned six weeks, consisting of weekly sessions that focused on various aspects of mindfulness practice, including meditation techniques and strategies for cultivating awareness.

Measures for this study included the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) to assess mindfulness levels before and after the intervention. The MAAS is a validated tool widely used in mindfulness research. Additionally, potential mediating variables were evaluated: (a) confidence in teaching mindfulness skills, which was assessed using a self-efficacy questionnaire specific to teaching mindfulness, and (b) perceived helpfulness of peer teaching, measured through a survey administered post-intervention to gauge participants' perceptions of the peer teaching method.

Data were analyzed using SPSS software, employing the following statistical methods: Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the sample's demographic characteristics and the distribution of key variables. For inferential statistics, the methods included (a) paired t-tests to compare pre-and post-test scores within each group, (b) independent t-tests to compare changes in mindfulness scores between the intervention and control groups, and (c) regression analysis to examine the influence of mediating variables on the relationship between the peer teaching method and student mindfulness.

Procedure

The study's procedures were meticulously organized and executed to ensure clarity and reliability throughout the research process. The initial step involved disseminating the Google Form link, which was achieved through online platforms, primarily using WhatsApp. This approach effectively engaged student bodies across all three faculties: the Faculty of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine (FKKH), the Faculty of Public Health (FKM), and the Teaching and Education Faculty (FKIP). Enthusiastic student participation commenced once they met the specified inclusion criteria and formally registered their involvement by signing the informed consent forms.

Following this, a careful and systematic participant selection process was undertaken. The inclusion criteria and faculty-specific quotas were rigorously adhered to, guaranteeing a well-rounded and representative sample from each academic unit. To minimize potential bias, students were randomly allocated to either the peer tutee or control group, with an unwavering commitment to blinding during this allocation process.

Subsequently, a comprehensive data collection phase unfolded, involving the administration of an electronic questionnaire for Observation 1. This initial assessment served as the pre-test evaluation and encompassed all study groups, providing an essential baseline for subsequent analyses.

To equip the peer tutor group with the essential skills and knowledge required, a dedicated two-day Training of Trainers (TOT) program was organized. This rigorous training, expertly conducted by a panel of three distinguished psychology and medical education specialists, centered on the crucial topic of Psychological First Aid (PFA). This training was designed to incorporate online and offline components, ensuring maximum accessibility and effectiveness.

The heart of the research journey lies in implementing peer teaching. The adeptly trained peer tutors assumed the role of instructors, transferring their acquired PFA knowledge to the peer tutee group. This transformative process unfolded over two days, characterized by engaging offline interactions that fostered a highly conducive learning environment.

Following the intensive training received by the peer tutor group, participants' mindfulness levels were evaluated. This evaluation was facilitated through the administration of a meticulously crafted e-questionnaire, intentionally designed to include 30% distractor statements. This inclusion enhanced the robustness of the assessment tool, enabling a comprehensive examination of mindfulness levels.

In summary, this study meticulously navigated various phases, beginning with participant enrollment and randomization and followed by comprehensive training and evaluation. Each step was carefully designed to uncover the impact of peer teaching on mindfulness, ensuring precision and integrity throughout the research process.

In this study, data analysis was conducted using repeated measures of the ANOVA test in the JASP application to determine the effectiveness of peer teaching methods in mindfulness training in improving students' mindfulness.

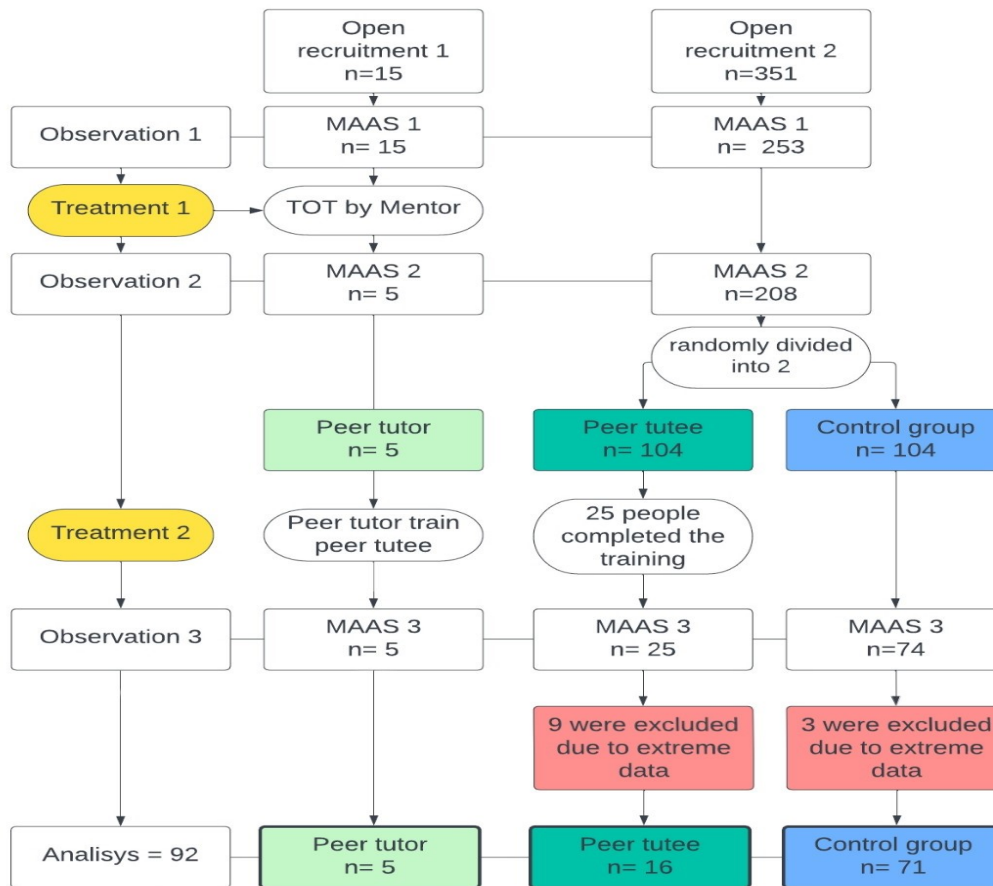


Figure 1: Research Flow

Data analysis was conducted using a repeated measure ANOVA test in the JASP application to determine the effectiveness of the peer teaching method in mindfulness training in improving students' mindfulness. The participant count in the peer tutee group amounted to 25 individuals who actively engaged in the training and diligently completed the comprehensive questionnaires. Conversely, the control group boasted a larger contingent, totaling 74 respondents who conscientiously filled out the entire set of questionnaires. A meticulous data screening process was undertaken utilizing both Excel and the JASP application. This rigorous scrutiny excluded nine outliers (extreme values) from the peer tutee group and three from the control group, ensuring the statistical analysis maintained its integrity.

The measurement of participants' mindfulness levels relied upon the Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS), a renowned instrument developed by Brown and Ryan in 2003. Comprising 15 statement items, the MAAS utilizes a scoring scale from 1 to 6, capturing responses ranging from "very often" to "rarely." This scale is adept at assessing the degree of attention and awareness related to various everyday life conditions. The cumulative score of

these 15 MAAS statement items yielded the mindfulness trait score, wherein higher scores indicated a more pronounced mindfulness trait in the participant. Notably, the MAAS underwent a meticulous translation process into Indonesian by the Placebo Research Club, hailing from the Psychology Department of Brawijaya University in Malang, Indonesia. This research group, known for conducting behavioral studies employing experimental designs and large-scale data surveys, played a pivotal role in ensuring the linguistic and cultural validity of the MAAS (Brown & Ryan, 2009).

A systematic scoring categorization process was meticulously executed to discern the participants' mindfulness categories, encompassing high, medium, and low classifications. This categorization was premised on the fundamental assumption of a normal distribution within the population's scores (Brown & Ryan, 2009). A rigorous assessment of the MAAS measuring instrument's validity and reliability was conducted using the JASP and IBM SPSS 25 applications. The comprehensive evaluation confirmed the MAAS's robustness, with the reliability test revealing a Cronbach Alpha coefficient (α) of 0.885, indicative of its high internal consistency. Furthermore, the MAAS instrument item validity test, underpinned by the Corrected-Item-Total Correlation analysis, demonstrated item correlation coefficients spanning from 0.280 to 0.721. These findings unequivocally validated the instrument's utility and reliability, bolstering its suitability for deployment in this study.

The pivotal training sessions commenced with an initial mentoring session, during which participants were introduced to a mindfulness exercise known as the "3-Minute Breathing Space" (3-MBS). This exercise was thoughtfully incorporated into the training regimen, with participants engaging in it twice a week. The peer teaching methodology came to the forefront in the subsequent training phase. Peer tutors, who had themselves undergone comprehensive training in the 3-MBS exercise, assumed the role of instructors, imparting their newfound knowledge to a designated group of peers. This intervention group was strategically divided into ten smaller groups, each comprising three to four individuals. Within these cohorts, participants actively engaged in the mindfulness intervention, putting theory into practice under the guidance of their peer tutors.

Conversely, the control group continued their regular educational activities without any intervention during this period. This clear demarcation ensured the intervention group received the requisite training and mindfulness practices. In contrast, the control group served as a valuable benchmark for comparison, undergoing no alterations to their usual routines.

Results

Table 1: Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristic	Peer tutor Group (n= 5)	Peer tutee Group (n = 16)	Control Group (n = 71)
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
Gender			
Man	3 (60)	0 (4.0)	5 (7)
Woman	2 (40)	16 (100)	66 (93)
Age		19	19
Mean	20	0.7	1.0
Standard Deviation	0.7	19	18
Minimum	19	21	22
Maximum	21		
Faculty			
FKIP	0 (0)	5 (18.8)	26 (36.6)
FKKH	3 (60)	2 (12.5)	8 (11.3)
FKM	2 (40)	11 (68.8)	37 (52.1)
Academic Year			
2021	0 (0)	2 (12.5)	16 (22.5)
2020	5 (100)	10 (62.5)	31 (43.7)
2019	0 (0)	4 (25.0)	24 (33.8)

As shown in Table 1, this study involved 25 participants who underwent mindfulness training as the peer tutee group and 74 participants who did not undergo training as the control group. After screening, only 16 participants from the peer tutee group and 71 participants from the control group were included in the statistical analysis. The study considered participant characteristics such as age, gender, faculty of origin, program of study, and semester. The results indicated that most participants were female (91.3%), with an average age of 20. The most common faculty of origin was FKM (50%), followed by FKIP (29%) and FKKH (15%), while the most common program of study was IKM (34.7%), followed by Counseling (27.1%) and Psychology (19.5%). Most of the participants were in semester 4 (50%), while the lowest was in semester 2 (19.5%).

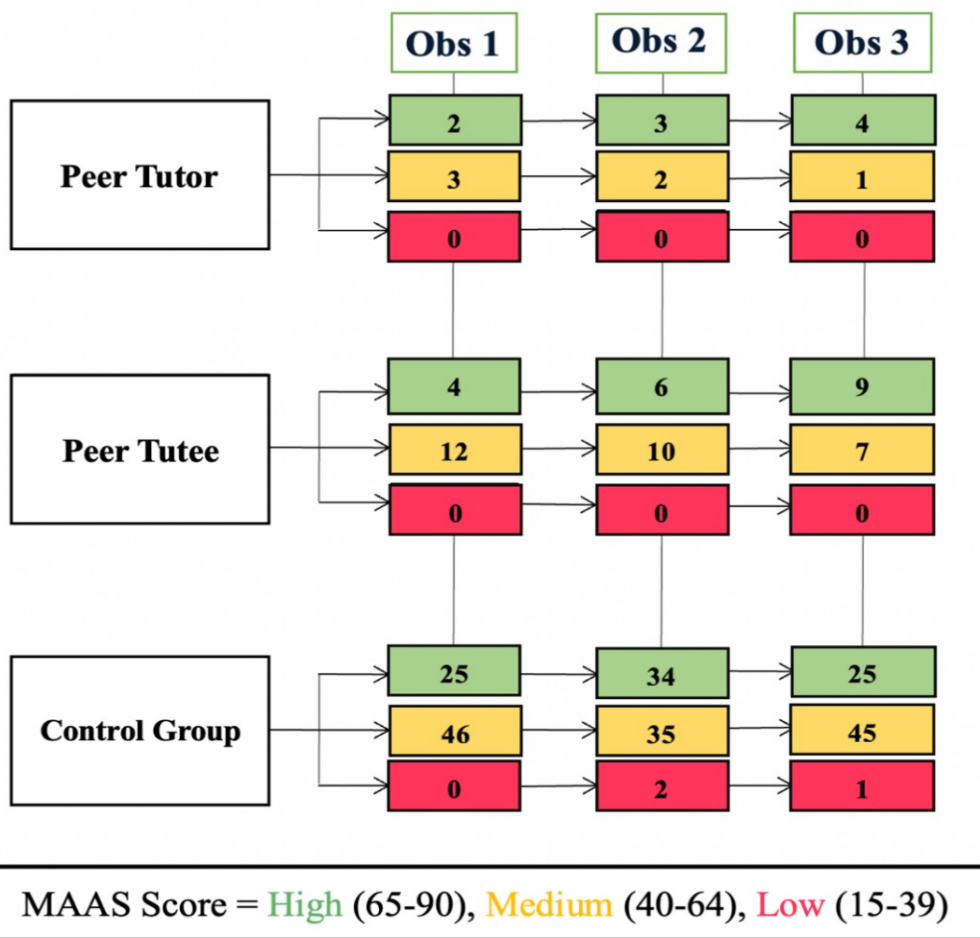


Figure 2: Overview of MASS Before and After Treatment and Categorization of the Scores

In Figure 2, data was obtained to categorize MAAS scores before and after treatment. In observation 1, the majority of respondents in the peer tutor and peer tutee groups had high mindfulness, while the majority of respondents in the control group had moderate mindfulness. No respondents with low mindfulness were found in observation 1. After training the peer tutors, observation 2 showed an increase in the number of respondents with high mindfulness levels in the peer tutor and peer tutee groups. However, the control group showed a decrease in the number of respondents with high mindfulness levels. Overall, it can be concluded that the treatment (training) positively affects mindfulness levels in the peer tutor and peer tutee groups but not in the control group.

The effect of the peer teaching method on mindfulness training was analyzed by comparing the mindfulness level between groups of the peer tutors, the peer tutee, and the control groups, as well as between pre- and post-interventions within groups. Before conducting data analysis, the data were checked for their normal distribution using the Shapiro-Wilk normality test. In addition to the increase in mindfulness among students who received instruction, the results

also showed that peer tutors experienced a significant improvement in their own mindfulness skills ($p = 0.03$). This improvement may be attributed to the 'learning by teaching' process, in which tutors apply the skills they have learned and reinforce their understanding by teaching them. Since the results showed normal distribution, the data were analyzed using repeated measure ANOVA (Table 2).

Table 2: Repeated Measure Anova test results.

Group	N	Training * Group			<i>Within-subject</i>			<i>Between subject</i>		
		F	<i>p</i>	η^2_p	F	<i>p</i>	η^2_p	F	<i>p</i>	η^2_p
all groups	92	5.0	<.001	0.10	3.4	0.03	0.04	0.9	0.39	0.02

The results of the data analysis showed that the peer teaching method effectively increased students' mindfulness, with an F value of 5.0 and $p = <.001$, and a moderate effect size $\eta^2_p = 0.10$. It is significant between observations in the same group (F value = 3.4, and $p = 0.03$ with a small effect size of $\eta^2_p = 0.04$. However, the difference between groups was insignificant, with an F value of 0.9 and $p = 0.4$, and a small effect size $\eta^2_p = 0.02$. To find out which group had a significant difference, a post-hoc analysis was performed using the Tukey test.

The posthoc results showed that only the peer tutor group had significant results (Table 3), namely between observation 1 and observation 3, with a value of $p = 0.03$, an effect size (Cohen's *d*) = -1.18, and a mean difference (MD) of -12.0. The other groups showed no significant differences. The results indicate that only the peer tutor group got a significant benefit from the peer teaching method.

Table 3: Peer Tutor Group Post Hoc Test Results

Group	Post Hoc Comparisons		
	p-Tukey	Cohen's <i>d</i>	Mean Difference
Obs 1 vs. Obs 2	0.95	-0.43	-4.40
Obs 1 vs. Obs 3	0.03*	-1.18	-12.0
Obs 2 vs. Obs 3	0.48	-0.75	-7.60

Discussion

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the impact of peer teaching in mindfulness training on enhancing student mindfulness. The research findings indicate several key observations.

Firstly, it is noteworthy that the peer tutor group experienced a substantial increase in their Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) scores throughout the study. Specifically, their scores progressed from 61.8 in Observation 1 to 66.2 in Observation 2, eventually reaching 73.8 in Observation 3. This increase was statistically significant (p -value = 0.03) between Observation 1 and Observation 3. A plausible explanation for this significant improvement lies in the dual treatment they received. Initially, they were trained by mentors, and subsequently, they had the opportunity to train their peers. This pattern aligns with previous research that suggests peer leaders, when equipped to provide mindfulness-based mental health support programs, experience heightened resilience and self-efficacy.

It is worth noting that the concept of "learning by teaching," as illustrated by Edgar Dale's "The Cone of Experience," supports these findings. This educational framework posits that individuals gain a deeper understanding of material when explaining it to others. Such an approach enhances comprehension and memory retention, which aligns with the observed improvements in the peer tutor group's mindfulness scores (Susilowati, 2016).

Furthermore, studies on peer-assisted learning have demonstrated that peer tutors often consolidate their knowledge, gain confidence in teaching and presentation skills, and develop a better understanding of teamwork and roles within a team. These findings underscore the positive impact of peer teaching (Jawhari et al., 2021).

The peer tutor group experienced a substantial increase in their Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) scores throughout the study. Specifically, their scores progressed from 61.8 in Observation 1 to 66.2 in Observation 2, eventually reaching 73.8 in Observation 3. This increase was statistically significant (p -value = 0.03) between Observation 1 and Observation 3. This improvement may be due to the 'learning by teaching' process, in which tutors apply the skills they have learned and reinforce their understanding by teaching them. This pattern aligns with previous research that suggests peer leaders when equipped to provide mindfulness-based mental health support programs, experience heightened resilience and self-efficacy. Although this increase was not statistically significant, it is worth highlighting that all respondents transitioned from a moderate level of mindfulness to a high MAAS score category following the intervention. These results suggest that the peer teaching method

positively affected the peer tutee group, albeit not reaching statistical significance.

In a broader context, these findings resonate with previous studies that have indicated the need for interventions to enhance students' mental health and resilience. While not all interventions result in statistically significant improvements, they nonetheless contribute to students' overall well-being (Moir et al., 2016).

The findings of this study have important implications for mindfulness training and peer teaching in an educational context. Firstly, it is evident that mindfulness skills require time to develop and teach effectively. Therefore, researchers and educators employing mindfulness with peer tutors should consider longer training programs to support mindfulness-based interventions, particularly given that peer leaders/tutors may not be sufficiently trained. Additionally, future studies should explore the effectiveness of mindfulness interventions on specific subpopulations, such as those with poorer mental health, and consider using more intensive interventions or larger sample sizes to strengthen their findings.

Incorporating mindfulness-based interventions into university settings, including awareness and peer support components, seems promising. This approach can potentially enhance student well-being and resilience, offering a valuable addition to medical education curricula or student services (Jawhari et al., 2021).

To further advance our understanding of the relationship between peer teaching and mindfulness training, it is recommended that future research should explore the following areas:

1. **Longer Training Programs:** Investigate the impact of extended training programs for peer tutors to maximize the effectiveness of mindfulness interventions.
2. **Targeted Interventions:** Explore the effectiveness of mindfulness interventions on specific student populations with varying levels of mental health.
3. **Sample Size and Study Design:** To reduce the risk of cross-contamination between intervention and control groups, consider conducting studies with larger sample sizes and randomized cluster designs.
4. **Incorporating Mindfulness:** Evaluate the integration of mindfulness-based interventions into university settings, focusing on their impact on student well-being.

Conclusion

In summary, this study investigated the effectiveness of peer teaching in mindfulness training in enhancing student mindfulness levels. The findings revealed significant improvements in mindfulness scores among peer-led training participants. Specifically, the peer tutor group demonstrated a notable increase in their Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) scores, indicating a positive impact of the peer teaching method. This study has several limitations, including the small sample size and relatively short training duration. Future research is recommended to use larger samples and explore the impact of longer training durations on the effectiveness of peer teaching. Additionally, the tutors' motivational factors and personal characteristics should be considered to understand the impact of this method fully. This aligns with the concept of "learning by teaching," suggesting that individuals gain a deeper understanding and mastery of material when they teach it to others.

Furthermore, although the increase in mindfulness scores among the peer tutee group was not statistically significant, all participants transitioned to a higher MAAS score category following the intervention. This suggests a positive trend in mindfulness levels among peer tutees, emphasizing the potential benefits of mindfulness training facilitated by peer teaching methods.

These findings underscore the importance of incorporating mindfulness-based interventions into educational settings, particularly through peer-led initiatives. However, to maximize the effectiveness of mindfulness interventions, it is essential to recognize the need for longer training programs for peer tutors. Additionally, future research should explore the impact of mindfulness interventions on specific student populations with varying mental health levels and consider larger sample sizes and randomized cluster designs to strengthen the evidence base.

In conclusion, integrating mindfulness training facilitated by peer teaching holds promise for enhancing student well-being and resilience. By further exploring and refining these interventions, educational institutions can better support the mental health needs of their students, ultimately fostering a healthier and more resilient learning environment.

Acknowledgments

The authors extend their heartfelt appreciation to all the participants whose involvement and cooperation were crucial for the successful completion of this study, enriching their research endeavors. The authors sincerely thank the faculty members and administrators for their

valuable guidance and support throughout the research process. They are immensely grateful to the dedicated team of researchers and assistants for their hard work and commitment, from data collection to manuscript preparation. Additionally, the authors acknowledge the reviewers and editors for their insightful feedback, which enhanced the quality of this manuscript. Finally, they thank the academic community for fostering an environment conducive to scholarly inquiry and collaboration, allowing them to pursue their research interests and make meaningful contributions to the field.

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