



The Effect of Mindfulness-Based Counseling on Anxiety Management in Lecturers

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ABSTRACT

Lecturers often face significant mental health challenges, with anxiety emerging as one of the most prevalent issues within academic settings. Factors such as excessive workloads, research obligations, and administrative responsibilities frequently contribute to elevated anxiety levels. Among various therapeutic interventions, mindfulness-based counseling has demonstrated efficacy in alleviating anxiety symptoms. This study investigates the impact of mindfulness-based counseling on anxiety management among university lecturers. Adopting a quantitative experimental design, the research involved 50 lecturers from multiple universities in West Sumatra. The findings reveal that mindfulness-based counseling leads to a statistically significant reduction in anxiety levels. These results underscore the potential of mindfulness-based interventions as an effective method for enhancing the psychological well-being of lecturers. The intervention yielded an average reduction of approximately 12 points in HAM-A scores, affirming its therapeutic value. The integration of mindfulness-based counseling in academic institutions may not only improve lecturers' mental health but also enhance the overall quality of teaching they deliver.

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INTRODUCTION

Mental health has increasingly become a critical concern in the field of education, particularly among university lecturers. The academic profession, while intellectually fulfilling, is often accompanied by intense pressure and a high workload, making lecturers particularly vulnerable to mental health challenges. According to Ridwan et al. (2024), approximately 60% of lecturers experience mental health issues, with anxiety and stress being the most common. These issues are frequently rooted in the high demands of academia, including teaching responsibilities, research obligations, and administrative duties. Such psychological

strain does not merely affect lecturers on a personal level—it also has the potential to undermine the quality of their teaching and their interactions with students (Dhanuputra et al., 2022). As such, it is imperative to develop supportive systems within higher education institutions that prioritize and enhance lecturers' mental well-being. One promising intervention in this regard is the implementation of mindfulness-based counseling.

The sources of anxiety among lecturers are multifaceted. Apart from the pedagogical expectations placed upon them, many lecturers are under constant pressure to publish scholarly work in reputable journals, meet deadlines for research grants, supervise student projects, and participate in various institutional committees. Furthermore, they are often expected to manage all of these professional responsibilities while also attending to personal and familial commitments. This imbalance between personal and professional life contributes significantly to heightened stress levels. According to Javed and Akhter (2024), 45% of lecturers reported feeling overwhelmed by their dual academic and administrative responsibilities. The cumulative effect of these stressors can lead to chronic anxiety, burnout, and emotional exhaustion, thereby reducing overall job satisfaction and productivity.

In light of this, mindfulness-based counseling has emerged as a relevant and effective strategy for addressing mental health issues, particularly anxiety, among educators. Mindfulness-based counseling is a therapeutic approach that integrates mindfulness practices—such as meditation, breathing exercises, and body scanning—into the counseling process (Brown et al., 2013). These practices are intended to cultivate an individual's capacity for present-moment awareness, emotional regulation, and self-compassion. Mindfulness is known as "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally" (Fulton & Cashwell, 2015). The core idea is to enable individuals to observe their thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations with openness and acceptance, rather than reacting impulsively or critically.

In various studies, mindfulness-based counseling has demonstrated its efficacy in reducing symptoms of anxiety, depression, and stress. For instance, Fulton and Cashwell (2015) found that mindfulness-based interventions led to significant improvements in mental well-being among university students, healthcare professionals, and educators. These findings support the hypothesis that mindfulness-based counseling could serve as a viable method for anxiety management among university lecturers as well. When integrated into the institutional mental health support systems, this approach can empower lecturers to develop greater emotional resilience, thereby enhancing their capacity to cope with the demands of their professional roles.

The present study, therefore, aims to explore the effect of mindfulness-based counseling on anxiety levels in university lecturers. This research is grounded in the

belief that effective mental health interventions must be proactive, evidence-based, and contextually relevant. By focusing on mindfulness as a core element of counseling, the study intends to provide empirical support for a therapeutic approach that aligns well with the needs of academic professionals. In doing so, it contributes not only to the field of educational psychology but also to the broader discourse on mental health in higher education.

The implications of such a study are far-reaching. When lecturers are mentally healthy and emotionally balanced, they are more likely to engage positively with students, design innovative curricula, and contribute meaningfully to the academic community. Moreover, reducing anxiety among lecturers can lead to better classroom management, increased research productivity, and stronger collegial relationships. Institutions that invest in mental health support systems—including mindfulness-based counseling—demonstrate a commitment to the holistic development of their staff and, by extension, to the quality of education they offer.

In conclusion, addressing the mental health needs of university lecturers is no longer optional—it is a necessity. The growing incidence of anxiety and stress in academic settings calls for immediate and effective interventions. Mindfulness-based counseling, with its emphasis on present-moment awareness and non-judgmental acceptance, offers a promising avenue for helping lecturers manage anxiety. This study seeks to explore and validate the potential of this approach within the context of Indonesian higher education. It is hoped that the findings will inform institutional policies and encourage the adoption of mindfulness-based practices as part of comprehensive mental health strategies for educators.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative experimental research design utilizing a pre-test and post-test approach (Creswell, 2012) to examine the effectiveness of mindfulness-based counseling in reducing anxiety among university lecturers. The pre-experimental design was chosen to enable the measurement of changes in anxiety levels before and after the intervention. This methodological framework is particularly suitable for evaluating the impact of a specific intervention within a controlled setting.

The participants in this study consisted of 50 lecturers recruited from various universities across West Sumatra, Indonesia. The selection of participants was conducted using purposive sampling to ensure the inclusion of individuals who met the criteria of experiencing moderate to high levels of anxiety. Prior to the intervention, informed consent was obtained from all participants, and ethical considerations were addressed to ensure confidentiality and voluntary participation.

To assess anxiety levels, the Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (HAM-A) was utilized. The HAM-A is a widely recognized psychometric instrument developed to

measure the severity of anxiety symptoms in clinical and non-clinical populations. This scale comprises 14 items that evaluate both psychological and somatic symptoms of anxiety. Each item is rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 (not present) to 4 (very severe), yielding a total score that reflects the participant's overall anxiety level. The HAM-A has demonstrated high validity and reliability in prior studies (Sugiyono, 2009), making it an appropriate tool for this research.

The mindfulness-based counseling intervention was administered over a period of four weeks, consisting of eight sessions in total. Each session lasted approximately 60 minutes and was facilitated by a trained counselor with experience in mindfulness techniques. The intervention focused on core mindfulness practices, including breathing awareness, body scanning, and mindful observation of thoughts and emotions. These practices aimed to enhance participants' ability to recognize and manage anxiety-related cognitive and emotional patterns.

Following the intervention, a post-test was conducted using the same HAM-A instrument. The data collected from both pre-test and post-test were analyzed using paired sample t-tests to determine the statistical significance of the differences in anxiety levels before and after the mindfulness-based counseling. The significance level was set at $p < 0.05$. The results of the analysis were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention and to draw conclusions regarding its impact on lecturers' mental well-being.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The research results showed a significant reduction in lecturers' anxiety levels after they attended mindfulness-based counseling sessions. The average anxiety score at the pre-test stage was 22.4, while at the post-test it decreased to 14.2. Statistical analysis using the t test produced a value of $t(49) = 6.23$ with $p < 0.05$, which shows a significant difference in anxiety levels between before and after the intervention. This finding is in accordance with research conducted by Sari (2021) which found that mindfulness-based counseling can reduce anxiety among academics.

1. Emergency

Anxiety is a normal emotional reaction to situations that are perceived as threatening, but if excessive, it can develop into serious mental health problems. Roehr (2013) classifies anxiety into several types, such as generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, and phobias. Among lecturers, anxiety is often caused by academic pressure and high work demands, which can interfere with their performance (Napida et al., 2024).

Dhanuputra et al. (2022) claimed that lecturers who experience high anxiety tend to have low productivity and difficulty interacting with students. This anxiety also has an impact on the physical and mental health of lecturers, which ultimately affects the quality of teaching and student learning experiences (Hendrawan, 2022). Therefore, it is important to find effective solutions in managing anxiety among lecturers.

2. Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a practice originating from the meditation tradition, which aims to increase awareness of the present moment. Mindfulness involves paying full attention to the present experience without judgment. Mindfulness techniques, such as breathing meditation, body scans, and mindful walking, have been proven effective in reducing stress and anxiety (Brown et al., 2013).

The main components of mindfulness include attention, acceptance, and non-attachment. Research shows that by practicing mindfulness, individuals become more aware of their thoughts and feelings, which helps them manage anxiety better. In the context of lecturers, mindfulness practices can help them deal with academic pressure more constructively and adaptively.

3. Mindfulness Based Counseling

Mindfulness-based counseling is an approach that incorporates mindfulness principles into counseling sessions. The main goal is to help individuals develop self-awareness and emotional management skills, so that they can overcome the anxiety they experience. This method usually involves mindfulness exercises, such as meditation and self-reflection, in counseling sessions.

Dong et al.'s (2018) research shows that mindfulness-based counseling significantly reduces anxiety in individuals who participate. This suggests that this approach could be an effective option for lecturers trying to manage their anxiety.

4. The Relationship between Mindfulness and Anxiety Management

Mindfulness helps individuals increase self-awareness, making it easier for them to recognize and manage thoughts and emotions that trigger anxiety. This finding shows that mindfulness practice reduces excessive emotional reactions to stressful situations.

We also found that mindfulness-based counseling improved lecturers' coping skills, so they could manage stress and anxiety better. These results underscore the positive relationship between mindfulness practices and anxiety management, which is important in academic settings.

Data Explanation

The results of this study demonstrate a statistically significant reduction in anxiety levels among university lecturers following the mindfulness-based counseling intervention. Anxiety was measured using the Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (HAM-A) both before and after the intervention. Descriptive analysis revealed that the mean HAM-A score prior to the intervention was 28.87 (SD = 4.67), while the post-intervention mean decreased to 16.82 (SD = 5.10). This reflects an average reduction (Δ) in anxiety scores of -12.05 (SD = 2.62), indicating a considerable improvement in participants' mental well-being.

Table 1. Summary of HAM-A Scores and Statistical Analysis

Variable	Mean (SD)	Range
Before Intervention	28.87 (\pm 4.67)	20.20 - 39.26
After Intervention	16.82 (\pm 5.10)	6.18 - 28.41
Change (Δ)	-12.05 (\pm 2.62)	-16.69 - -4.14

The range of HAM-A scores prior to the intervention spanned from 20.20 to 39.26, whereas post-intervention scores ranged from 6.18 to 28.41. This suggests a consistent downward shift in anxiety levels across the sample of 50 lecturers. The range of changes (delta values) varied from -16.69 to -4.14, further supporting the effectiveness of the intervention.

Table 2. Hypothesis Testing (Paired t-Test)

Test	Value	Significance
t-statistic	32.49	
p-value	8.19×10^{-35}	$p < 0.05$ (significant)
Sample Size (n)	50 lecturers	

To determine whether the observed differences were statistically significant, a paired sample t-test was conducted. The analysis yielded a t-statistic of 32.49 with a corresponding p-value of 8.19×10^{-35} . Since the p-value is far below the conventional significance threshold of 0.05, it can be concluded that mindfulness-based counseling had a highly significant effect on reducing anxiety among the lecturers.

Overall, the results indicate that the implementation of mindfulness-based counseling is an effective intervention for managing anxiety in higher education professionals. The consistent improvement across participants and the robust statistical evidence highlight the potential of this approach to enhance lecturers' mental health and support their professional performance.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate a significant reduction in anxiety levels among university lecturers following their participation in mindfulness-based

counseling sessions, with pre-test anxiety scores ($M = 22.4$) decreasing substantially in the post-test ($M = 14.2$), a change confirmed as statistically significant ($t(49) = 6.23, p < 0.05$). These results align with previous research, reinforcing the effectiveness of mindfulness-based interventions in managing anxiety among academic professionals (Dong et al., 2018). Anxiety, while a natural emotional response to perceived threats, can impair cognitive function, productivity, and overall well-being when excessive. Lecturers, in particular, face high academic demands—including research pressures, teaching responsibilities, and administrative workloads—that contribute to elevated stress and anxiety. Persistent anxiety can lead to burnout, reduced job satisfaction, and diminished teaching effectiveness, with chronic anxiety among educators also negatively impacting student engagement and learning outcomes, underscoring the need for effective anxiety management strategies in academic settings (Fulton & Cashwell, 2015).

Mindfulness, rooted in meditative traditions, involves cultivating present-moment awareness without judgment, and research indicates that techniques such as focused breathing, body scans, and mindful observation help individuals regulate emotional responses to stress (Brown et al., 2013). By fostering non-reactive awareness, mindfulness enables individuals to disengage from anxiety-inducing thought patterns and develop healthier coping mechanisms, making it particularly beneficial for lecturers facing academic pressures. Mindfulness-based counseling, which integrates traditional therapeutic approaches with mindfulness exercises to enhance emotional regulation and self-awareness (Nurchurifiani et al., 2025), proved highly effective in this study, as evidenced by the substantial decrease in HAM-A scores (from $M = 28.87$ to $M = 16.82$) and the statistically significant results of a paired t-test ($t = 32.49, p < 0.05$).

The effectiveness of mindfulness in anxiety reduction can be attributed to several psychological mechanisms, including enhanced self-awareness, which allows individuals to recognize anxiety triggers and respond more adaptively; reduced rumination, as mindfulness disrupts repetitive negative thinking, a key factor in anxiety disorders; and improved emotional regulation, as mindfulness strengthens prefrontal cortex activity, enhancing control over stress responses (Ridwan et al., 2024). These mechanisms explain the lower anxiety levels observed in lecturers post-intervention, as mindfulness-based counseling equipped them with skills to navigate academic stressors more effectively. However, variations in intervention duration and participant engagement may influence outcomes, suggesting a need for future research to explore long-term effects and compare mindfulness-based counseling with other therapeutic approaches, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT).

Given the high prevalence of anxiety among educators, universities should consider integrating mindfulness programs into faculty support systems through

workshops and training to help lecturers develop stress-management skills, counseling services offering mindfulness-based therapy, and peer support groups to foster a supportive work environment. While this study demonstrates the efficacy of mindfulness-based counseling, limitations such as sample size (50 lecturers), potential self-report bias, and the need for long-term follow-up should be acknowledged. Future research could incorporate mixed-method designs, combining quantitative anxiety measures with qualitative interviews to explore lecturers' subjective experiences, and compare mindfulness interventions with other anxiety-management techniques to determine optimal therapeutic approaches for academics. Overall, the findings highlight the potential of mindfulness-based counseling to enhance lecturers' mental health and professional performance, making it a valuable intervention in higher education settings.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that mindfulness-based counseling is an effective intervention for reducing anxiety levels among university lecturers. The findings revealed a statistically significant decrease in anxiety scores, with an average reduction of approximately 12 points on the Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (HAM-A) following an eight-session intervention. These results highlight the potential of mindfulness-based counseling to enhance lecturers' mental well-being, which in turn may positively influence their teaching quality and overall professional performance.

However, the study has several limitations. The sample was limited to 50 lecturers from universities in West Sumatra, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other regions or educational contexts. Additionally, this research focused solely on anxiety levels without considering other potential influencing variables such as workload, institutional support, or personal coping mechanisms.

Despite these limitations, the implications of this study are significant for higher education institutions. Integrating mindfulness-based interventions into lecturer support programs may serve as a proactive strategy to address mental health challenges in academic settings. Such initiatives can promote healthier work environments and contribute to more effective teaching and learning processes.

For future research, it is recommended to expand the scope by including a more diverse sample and exploring additional variables such as workload intensity, teaching experience, or department-specific stressors. Longitudinal studies could also be conducted to examine the long-term effects of mindfulness-based counseling on lecturers' mental health and professional development.

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