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Effects of an eight-week online mindfulness program on well-being among postgraduate students

Submission date
13/10/2022

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Registration date
11/11/2022

Overall study status
Completed

Last Edited
13/01/2025

Condition category
Mental and Behavioural Disorders

[ ] Prospectively registered
[ ] Protocol
[ ] Statistical analysis plan
[X] Results
[ ] Individual participant data

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
Pursuing a research postgraduate degree (RPg) is a major life event and could be stressful for most students. In the past two years, the COVID pandemic has adversely impacted the health and well-being of university students including RPg students. The experience of disrupted working routines and multiple stressors (e.g., distance learning, isolation, grief, closed borders, etc.) in life thus pose extra challenges to PRG students. There is thus an increasing need to investigate a feasible and effective intervention that can enhance the well-being and reduce the distress of the RPG students.

Mindfulness is defined as the awareness that arises through paying attention purposefully, in the present moment, and non-judgementally (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Mindfulness programs were proven to be effective in reducing stress and anxiety while enhancing compassing for self and others among adults. However, no study has investigated the effect of a mindfulness-based intervention RPG students in Hong Kong or Macau. The current pilot study could aim to investigate the effectiveness of an online eight-week mindfulness-based intervention in enhancing wellbeing and reducing emotional disturbances among RPg students using a randomized waitlist-controlled design.

Who can participate?
RPg students from Hong Kong or Macau aged 18 years or older.

What does the study involve?
The study aims to recruit 120 RPg students, who will be invited to join the mindfulness program and the research via mass email, posters on campus and other media platforms. Participants will be randomized (1:1) using Microsoft Excel's randomization formula to start the mindfulness course immediately (immediate intervention condition) or two months later (waitlist control condition).

The mindfulness program is adapted from Mindfulness: a Practical Guide to Finding Peace in a Frantic World (Williams & Penman, 2011). The course will be delivered online via Zoom

(http://zoom.us/). Each class will last for around 90 minutes, including mindfulness meditation practices, periods of inquiry and reflection, and interactive exercises based on cognitive behavioural therapy. Homework practices will be assigned after each session, including 20-30 daily mindfulness practices.

Two courses (20-25 participants in each course) will be delivered parallel by the two mindfulness teachers. A total of four courses will be offered (two for the immediate intervention group and the two for waitlist control group).
The mindfulness program will be held by one trained mindfulness teacher who has at least completed an Oxford Mindfulness Centre one-year Teacher Training Programme or an equivalent program. Both of the investigators of the current project will be mindfulness teachers for the training in this study.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
There is no known risk to the participants and they will potentially benefit from the mindfulness program in terms of improving well-being and reducing emotional distress.

Where is the study run from?
University of Hong Kong

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
July 2022 to February 2023

Who is funding the study?
Investigator initiated and funded

Who is the main contact?
Dr XU Jia-Qi, meloxu@hku.hk

Contact information

Type(s)
Public

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Additional identifiers

Study information

Scientific Title
Effects of an eight-week online mindfulness program on well-being in postgraduate students: A pilot randomized controlled trial

Study objectives
1. Participants' well-being will be enhanced after the 8-week mindfulness program, and the improvement will be sustained after two months;
2. Participants' distress will be reduced after the 8-week mindfulness program, and the effect will be sustained after two months
3. It is feasible and acceptable to carry out an online mindfulness program among RPG students.

Ethics approval required
Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)
Approved 04/07/2022, Human Research Ethics Committee (The University of Hong Kong, Pok Fu Lam Road, Hong Kong; +852-22415267; hrec_data@hku.hk), ref: EA220260

Primary study design
Interventional

Study design
Online interventional randomized wait-list controlled trial

Study type(s)
Other

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Enhance well-being and reduce emotional disturbances among postgraduate students

Interventions
Postgraduate students will be invited to join the mindfulness program and the research via mass email, posters on campus, and other media platforms. An information session will be held online in June 2022 to explain the mindfulness program and the research components so as to facilitate the recruitment process. After the information session, the potential participants will be invited to fill in an application online.
This will be a randomized control trial of an eight-session mindfulness program with one waitlist control group and one immediate intervention group. Participants will be randomized (1:1) using Microsoft Excel's randomization formula to start the mindfulness course immediately (immediate intervention condition) or two months later (waitlist control condition). The waitlist control group will be assessed at baseline, pre-intervention, post-intervention, and 8 weeks after the last session. The immediate treatment group will be assessed at pre-intervention, post-intervention, and 8 weeks after the last session.

The mindfulness program will be adapted from the book Mindfulness: a Practical Guide to Finding Peace in a Frantic World (Williams & Penman, 2011). The course will be delivered online

via Zoom (http://zoom.us/). Each class will last for around 90 minutes, including mindfulness meditation practices, periods of inquiry and reflection, and interactive exercises based on cognitive behavioural therapy. Homework practices will be assigned after each session, including 20-30 daily mindfulness practices.

Two courses (20-25 participants in each course) will be delivered parallel by the two mindfulness teachers. A total of four courses will be offered (two for the immediate intervention group and two for the waitlist control group).

The mindfulness program will be held by one trained mindfulness teacher who has at least completed an Oxford Mindfulness Centre one-year Teacher Training Programme or an equivalent program.

Intervention Type
Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)
1. Wellbeing measured using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) at baseline, pre-intervention, post-intervention and 8-week after the last session
2. Emotional disturbances measured using Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale 21 items (DASS-21) at baseline, pre-intervention, post-intervention and 8-week after the last session
3. Trait mindfulness measured using the short 15-item version of the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ-15) at baseline, pre-intervention, post-intervention and 8-week after the last session

Key secondary outcome(s)
1. Compassion to oneself and others measured using the Sussex-Oxford Compassion Scales at baseline, pre-intervention, post-intervention and 8-week after the last session
2. Wellbeing literacy measured using the Well-Lit 6 at baseline, pre-intervention, post-intervention and 8-week after the last session
3. Sleep quality measured using the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index at baseline, pre-intervention, post-intervention and 8-week after the last session
4. Resilience measured using the abbreviated version of the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC), the CD-RISC2 at baseline, pre-intervention, post-intervention and 8-week after the last session

Completion date
28/02/2023

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
1. Current RPg students at any Universities in Hong Kong or Macau
2. Above 18 years old

Participant type(s)
Healthy volunteer

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Adult

Lower age limit
18 Years

Sex
All

Total final enrolment
88

Key exclusion criteria
1. Participants who have a history of severe mental illness by self-report (e.g., psychosis, bipolar disorder, depression)
2. Participants who are currently with active psychotic symptoms, high suicidal risks, or experiencing a recent personal crisis (e.g., experiencing a severely traumatic event, or bereavement)

Date of first enrolment
20/07/2022

Date of final enrolment
06/08/2022

Locations

Countries of recruitment
China

Hong Kong

Study participating centre
The University of Hong Kong
Centennial Campus
Pok Fu Lam Road
Hong Kong
Hong Kong
-

Study participating centre
University of Macau
Avenida da Universidade
Taipa
Macau
China
-

Sponsor information

Organisation
The University of Hong Kong

Funder(s)

Funder type
Other

Funder Name
Investigator initiated and funded

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan
The data-sharing plans for the current study are unknown and will be made available at a later date.

IPD sharing plan summary
Data sharing statement to be made available at a later date

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Results article		10/01/2025	13/01/2025	Yes	No