

## The Effect of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) Therapy on Reducing Stress and Fatigue among Career Women

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# The Effect of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) Therapy on Reducing Stress and Fatigue among Career Women

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Working women frequently encounter high stress levels due to the combined demands of professional duties and household responsibilities. Emotional fatigue, often underestimated, plays a critical role in reducing well-being and workplace productivity. **Objective:** This study investigates the effectiveness of mindfulness techniques in reducing fatigue and alleviating stress among working women. **Method:** A qualitative case study was conducted with five professional women who also manage domestic roles. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and observations during a series of mindfulness sessions. **Result:** Fatigue was found to stem not only from workplace demands but also from emotional strain at home. Participants who felt unappreciated, described as experiencing a hypo emotional tank, tended to carry negative emotions into their work, increasing stress and lowering performance. After mindfulness practice, most participants reported improved emotional balance, enhanced self-worth, and noticeable reductions in fatigue and stress. **Conclusion:** Mindfulness practices help working women manage stress and fatigue by fostering self-awareness and emotional resilience. **Contribution:** This study offers insights into the emotional burdens faced by working women and supports mindfulness as an effective intervention for improving psychological well-being and job performance.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Fatigue among working women is not something to be taken lightly, but fatigue is actually caused by various things (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2016). In addition, time constraints as a worker and a housewife, cause a working woman to not be able to manage time to do physical activity and worse, her own virtue is neglected. Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) has been used extensively in medicine and health (Chauhan, 2021). But MBSR is less used in social welfare settings.

However, MBSR is a therapy that is very good to practice because it uses a hundred percent of the resources of the human body (Kolahkaj et al., 2019). Different mechanisms that could show the effectiveness of this

intervention in these individuals have been identified by Grover & Furnham (2016). These include the lack of judgement, the separation of thinking and action, the loss of the ability of thought to influence behaviour, or from a moral perspective, the separation of the subject between them and their thoughts (Kelz, 2016). There hasn't been much research done on this subject, but (Betegón et al., 2022).

Additionally, many studies have methodological flaws or only include one case study (Riquelme-Marín et al., 2022). Stress and fatigue among carrier women impact physical, psychological, and physiological aspects. These stress and fatigue affect the regular activity and daily living and worsen for working women (Cash et al.,

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2015). Consistent with that, physical symptoms such as lack of focus, tired and less energy (Jaime-Lara et al., 2020). Furthermore, Stress and fatigue among carrier affecting psychological aspects, then in the long run, this causes a lack of daily living performance and significantly impacts the quality of life (El Keshky et al., 2020). Today, in community are exposed to several complementary alternative therapies. The following are complementary alternative therapies used in previous studies for Stress and fatigue among carrier women were acupuncture, exercise, electrotherapy, and yoga. Some complementary alternative treatment was not recognized in community practice. There is limited evidence on the effect of mindfulness to carrier women who stress and fatigue. Therefore, it is essential to provide mindfulness for carrier women who stress and fatigue. It is essential that mindfulness is introduced in the community as this could offer a more effective approach for those treated with carrier women who stress and fatigue.

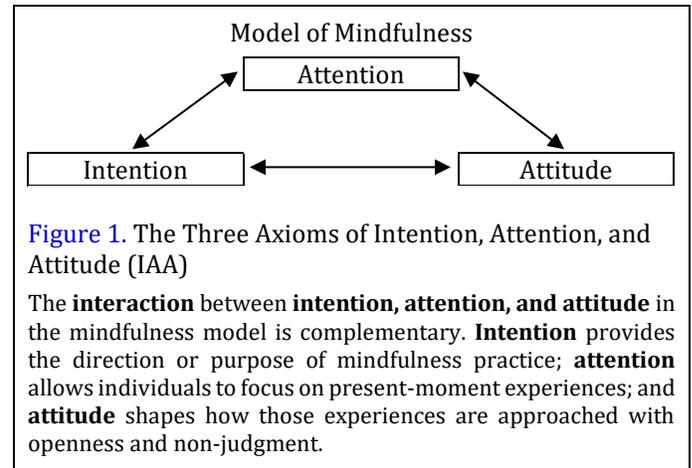
### 1.1 Mindfulness

The mindfulness model, which focuses on intention, attention, and attitude, provides a clear and structured foundation for developing an effective mindfulness practice. Intention refers to the motivation or reason behind engaging in mindfulness, guiding the direction of one's focus (Kuroda et al., 2022). Attention involves being fully present and consciously aware of what is happening in the moment, while attitude encompasses the qualities of kindness, patience, and openness brought to that awareness. By integrating these three components, individuals are better equipped to approach their experiences with clarity and compassion (Riches et al., 2022).

Mindfulness, when practiced consistently within this model, becomes more than just a relaxation technique; it is a holistic approach to living. It enhances self-awareness by encouraging individuals to observe their thoughts and emotions without judgment, fostering a deeper connection with themselves (Viskovich & De George-Walker, 2019). Moreover, mindfulness promotes emotional and mental balance, enabling individuals to respond to challenges with greater calm and resilience (Hussain et al., 2023). This practice not only improves one's ability to handle stress but also contributes significantly to overall well-being, making it a valuable tool for maintaining mental health in everyday life.

The mindfulness refer to seven key aspects. The first is being non-judgmental; second is the modern interpretation of mindfulness, third is the mind, i.e., the knowledge that gets in the way of our present thoughts and perceptions. The fourth is trust and fifth is non-striving. The sixth is acceptance and lastly, letting go (Hyland, 2011, pp. 43-44). This theory also refers to the model of mindfulness by Shapiro et al., (2006). The model of mind-

fulness is based on three axioms: intention, attention, and attitude (IAA) and describes in figure 1. The intention, i.e., related to a personal vision; second is attention, i.e., paying attention involves observing the operations of one's moment-to-moment, internal, and external experience. Then, attitude, i.e., bringing to the attention during practice (Shapiro et al., 2006).



MBSR is the therapy that uses to help women manage their fatigues and stress. Among the benefits of mindfulness is have outlined various mechanisms that might show whether this intervention was effective for these patients. These include the lack of judgement, the separation of thinking and action, the loss of the ability of thought to influence behaviour, or from a moral perspective, the separation of the subject between them and their thoughts (Riquelme-Marín et al., 2022). A previous study conducted tested the effect of mindfulness on the mental health and well-being of patients. For example, a study by Başkaya et al., (2021), test the effectiveness of the MBSR effect on OCD patients. In fact, this study also tested the difference between the effects of mindfulness and other psychotherapy techniques such as CBT. The results of the study found that this mindfulness technique is more effective and more directed in helping the client's self-change. In fact, the results of this study also found that this technique is able to calm the nerves and help rationalize the thinking of OCD patients.

The different research done by Widiawati & Hardika (2021), find women who are trying to infertility women. The effect of the daily pressure they face makes it difficult for them to control their mind to stay calm. Once the MBSR technique is used, they are able to achieve energy as well as enjoyment and pleasure in their sexual life, which in turn improves the quality of sexual relations. Studies from other medical settings include studies by (Munazilah & Hasanat, 2018) finding that MBSR techniques help reduce anxiety among heart patients, chronic headache Ur Rehman et al. (2022), Research by Ikeuchi et

al., (2020), study about fatigues and effect of mindfulness among breast cancer patients. And the result of this studies shoes that this techniques help women with breast cancer reduce their anxiety and fatigues by controlling their own mind.

From the perspective of a community setting, a study by [Hathaisaard et al. \(2022\)](#), found that MBSR helps reduce stress and burnout among medical students. Study by [Romadhani & Hadjam \(2019\)](#) MBSR help reduce anxiety also Alzheimer among gerontology.

### 1.2 Fatigue

Fatigue has a variety of root causes. Additionally, tiredness rarely manifests alone; the idea of a "symptom cluster" has been put up, in which exhaustion is linked to other symptoms like worry, sadness, pain, and sleep disruption ([Berger et al., 2015](#)). But recently it has also been discovered that loneliness, which is not part of the aforementioned symptom cluster, is connected to exhaustion ([Shapiro et al., 2015](#)). It is thought that "correlations among symptoms within a cluster should be stronger than relationships among symptoms across various clusters ([Gilbar, 2020](#)). A symptom cluster is defined as "two or more symptoms that are connected to each other and occur together ([Goekoop & Goekoop, 2014](#)). It's challenging to control fatigue. Other than physical therapy, there are presently no sufficiently proven treatments for fatigues ([Mustian et al., 2017](#)).

It's challenging to control fatigue. There are currently no adequately well-established treatments for efficiently reducing fatigue aside than exercise therapy. However, it has been suggested that mindfulness-based therapies may be successful as a novel type of treatment [17–20] ([Ikeuchi et al., 2020](#)).

### 1.3 Stress and Anxiety among Working Woman

Individual experiencing stress easily experiencing anxiety situations, frustration, difficult to calm down, easily frustrated, easily angry, easily offended even on small issues. Women who suffer from stress need a long time to calm down and get a prosperous life. Therefore, a faster technique to help increase energy is needed to help women who suffer from stress and fatigue. Behaviorally, the influence of high stress hormones also makes it difficult for individuals to sleep. Anxiety is an unpleasant emotional state accompanied by the characteristics of being afraid of something, trembling, pressing and causing a complaining reaction in women ([Munazilah & Hasanat, 2018](#)).

## 2. METHOD

### 2.1 Research Design

This study uses a qualitative approach. The research design used is a case study. A case study is a series of scientific activities carried out intensively, in detail and in depth about a program, event, and activity, whether at the level of an individual, group of people, institution, or organization to gain in-depth knowledge about the event ([Ebneyamini & Moghadam, 2018](#)). Usually, the events selected, hereinafter referred to as cases, are ongoing, real-life events, not something that has passed ([Alías & Socoró, 2017](#)).

### 2.2 Research Object

The research participants involved are a total of 5 working women who have nuclear families. The non-probability study sample selection was chosen among working women who have children under 5 years of age.

This study was conducted at a university in Pahang. The location of the study was chosen because it facilitated the data collection process. In fact, the location of this study was chosen because it was able to answer the research questions and fulfill the criteria set in this study.

### 2.3 Research Instruments

Research techniques are conducted through unstructured interviews, observation and document analysis. Each study participant underwent several interview sessions conducted face-to-face and online. In order to ensure that the data used is valid, the researcher did triangulation methods which used interviews, observations and document analysis.

### 2.4 Data Analysis

The data obtained were analyzed using qualitative techniques and several themes formed in this study, namely the client's background, the fatigue faced, the stress faced and the effects of MBSR therapy sessions.

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Result

This study was conducted using the qualitative method of unstructured interviews, observation and document analysis (diaries). The findings of the study are classified into several parts, namely the background of the study participants, experiences of fatigue, experiences of stress and the effect of mindfulness training on the stress and fatigue faced.

From the perspective of the study participants' backgrounds, all of them have professional careers, work eight hours a day and sometimes bring home tasks, the number of households is three to eight people, and the daily allo-

cation of home management work is approximately two to three hours a day. Attached below is a summary of the background matrix of the study participants.

**Table 1.** Background Matrix of the Study Participants

Background	Respondent 1	Respondent 2	Respondent 3	Respondent 4	Respondent 5
Carrier field	professional	professional	professional	professional	professional
Working time	8 Jam	8 Jam	8 hour and more	8 hour and more	8 hour
No of house hold	5 person	7 person	3 person	3 person	8 person
House chores time	2 hour	More than three hour	Two hour	Two hour	Three hour

The findings of this study indicate that all five participants experienced extreme fatigue, which affected their physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Various factors, such as workload, prolonged stress, and lack of effective coping mechanisms, may have contributed to their high levels of fatigue. This condition not only impacted their daily productivity but also had potential implications for their overall health and quality of life. Recognizing the need for intervention, all participants expressed a strong interest in undergoing mindfulness sessions as a potential strategy to manage their fatigue and stress. Mindfulness, which focuses on present-moment awareness

and stress reduction techniques, has been widely recognized for its benefits in enhancing mental resilience and emotional stability. To further analyze the extent of fatigue and stress faced by the participants, a comprehensive assessment matrix was developed. This matrix provides a structured summary of the levels of fatigue experienced, key stressors identified, and the participants' responses to their current challenges. Additionally, it highlights their openness to mindfulness as a coping strategy, emphasizing the potential effectiveness of such an approach in mitigating the adverse effects of fatigue.

**Table 2.** Background Matrix of the Study Participants

Respondent	Fatigue	Stress	Mindfulness training session
1	/	/	3 x
2	/	/	3 x
3	/	/	3 x
4	/	/	4x
5	/	/	2x

In fact, the results of the interviews conducted found that fatigue affects stress. Among them according to the 3rd respondent

"... I feel so tired....because I'm tired I feel like I'm going to be angry."

Even the fifth respondent also admitted that he experienced fatigue which caused him to be stress.

....We're back to work tired of watching the house cluttered, kids noisy, feeling like a rampage...'

There were even respondents who stated that because they were tired, they would resort to nagging at the household. This was stated by the fourth respondent

"...I was squeamish and angry at my son....."

All respondents stated that the fatigue they felt caused them to not be able to focus on household management properly, and they were also unable to meet the demands of the children playing together, so that some of the study participants blamed themselves. This was stated by the participants of the first and second study

R1: ".....I don't think I'm a good mother....I can't spend time doing activities with the children..."

R2: "...I miss my son...when I get back from work I feel very tired and I don't want to be disturbed....I will finish work as soon as possible and try to rest. but I feel sorry for my son.."

In fact, all five study participants said that after going through a mindfulness therapy session, they felt very calm and valued themselves. This was stated by all respondents.

R1: '...owh...I feel empty"

R3: ....I feel very calm....and I feel all my tiredness disappear..."

R4:"...actually I just realized, I forgot to cover myself first.....

And this response is the same as the response of the fifth participant

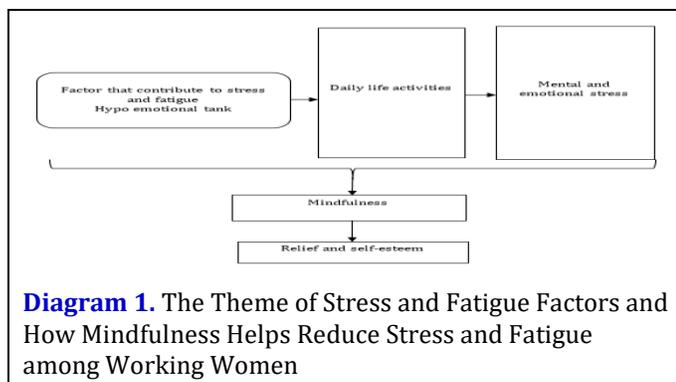
R5'..... I always expect appreciation from others, but I forget to appreciate myself.

### 3.2. Discussion

The results of the study found that working women are more likely to experience higher life pressure. Stress occurs because of stress experienced in daily life whether it originates from home or work. The results of this study also found that the pressure faced by women can be reduced with several methods including mindfulness. After the mindfulness session is done, the woman tries to take the initiative to create a situation that builds her emotional framework again.

The results of this study led to the development of a model that identifies the factors of stress and extreme fatigue impacting daily quality of life, which ultimately affects mental and emotional well-being. The model revealed that fatigue in women often stems from unmet emotional expectations, such as the desire for appreciation and support from a partner. When these expectations are not fulfilled, the sense of joy in completing daily tasks diminishes, making those tasks feel burdensome and contributing to increased stress levels. However, the study also found that practicing mindfulness techniques provides significant relief, fostering a sense of calm and supporting emotional, mental, and spiritual growth among working women. Mindfulness was shown to improve mental focus and clarity, and all participants reported a greater sense of self-worth and the importance of prioritizing their own well-being. By cultivating self-awareness and self-appreciation, these women experienced reduced fatigue and regained enjoyment in their everyday responsibilities.

In fact, this technique also found that there is acceptance of rational thoughts such as self-respect, teaching children to be independent, and improving spiritual quality. The effect of this technique also helps working women organize their priorities and improve the quality of life. Based on the results of the study, a model related to fatigue faced by working women was formed. The model is like the model diagram below.



Based on the diagram above, the stress and fatigue faced by working women is caused by their own thinking

factors, which are very high expectations for their partners to meet their emotional tank. The extreme stress and fatigue factor faced by working women begins with the lack of filling the emotional tank, which in turn causes the entire daily activity to be carried out only thinking about responsibility. They lose the fun in doing daily tasks until they feel too tired to carry out daily tasks. And by using mindfulness therapy, it is able to treat and provide relief and self-esteem for them. However, this research need to be done in quantitative way to get the holistic data and the result can be generalized about fatigue and stress.

### 4. IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

#### 4.1 Research Implication

This research has meaningful implications for mental health practices, workplace wellness, and psychological support systems. The findings show that Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) is a practical and effective approach for helping career women manage stress and fatigue, which are often the result of balancing demanding professional and personal roles. These results support the idea of incorporating mindfulness programs into employee wellness initiatives, especially in high-pressure work environments. It also emphasizes the potential for mental health professionals to adopt MBSR as a personalized therapeutic tool for working women.

#### 4.2 Research Contribution

The study contributes to the academic and professional understanding of mindfulness-based interventions by providing evidence of MBSR's benefits specifically for career women a group often underrepresented in related research. It offers a fresh perspective and serves as a reference point for future studies aiming to develop or refine stress-reduction strategies. Additionally, the study opens up new possibilities for applying MBSR in broader contexts, encouraging further exploration of its impact on emotional well-being, productivity, and quality of life among professionals.

### 5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

#### 5.1 Research Limitations

The limitations of this study are that researchers only focus on case studies so that data collection only uses interviews, observation and document analysis.

#### 5.2 Recommendations for Future Research Directions

Future research on Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and its impact on stress and fatigue among career women is encouraged to adopt experimental or quasi-experimental methods to strengthen the validity of the findings. Researchers are also recommended to explo-

re long-term effects of MBSR through longitudinal studies, assess its effectiveness across different age groups, career fields, and cultural backgrounds, and compare MBSR with other stress-reduction techniques.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The result of this study leads to the development of a model that identifies the key factors contributing to stress and extreme fatigue, which ultimately compromise the quality of daily life and profoundly impact mental and emotional well-being. The model highlights how these factors accumulate and contribute to emotional exhaustion, where individuals feel disconnected from their needs and desires. The study suggests that stress and fatigue are not merely external pressures but are often deeply intertwined with internal factors, such as personal expectations and unaddressed emotional needs. Furthermore, the mindfulness technique employed in the study was found to help participants direct their mental focus more purposefully and constructively, enabling them to manage stress and fatigue better.

The findings reveal that internal cognitive factors primarily cause the stress and fatigue experienced by working women. One of the key challenges they face is the high expectations they place on their partners to fulfill their emotional needs. This expectation often leads to an imbalance in their emotional "tank," where they feel emotionally depleted and unsupported. Without adequate emotional replenishment, the women's daily activities become increasingly burdensome, driven more by a sense of obligation than joy or fulfillment. Their emotional strain affects their ability to engage fully in their personal and professional lives, leading to increased stress and diminished quality of life.

Additionally, the study highlights that the lack of emotional nourishment directly impacts the participant's ability to find satisfaction and joy in their daily routines. The emotional tank metaphor illustrates how unmet emotional needs can drain an individual's energy and enthusiasm, leaving them exhausted and disengaged. This sense of depletion prevents them from enjoying the simple pleasures of life, and instead, they approach tasks with a sense of duty rather than pleasure. The continuous cycle of emotional neglect, stress, and fatigue creates a negative feedback loop, where the more drained they feel, the harder it becomes to perform daily tasks, and their mental and emotional state worsens.

Mindfulness therapy emerged as an effective intervention to break this cycle. By encouraging participants to focus on the present moment, mindfulness helped them reconnect with their emotional needs and reduce the overwhelming sense of responsibility. The therapy alleviated stress and fatigue and provided participants with a renewed sense of self-esteem. Through mindful-

ness, the women learned to prioritize their well-being, recognize their emotional needs, and approach their lives with greater balance and emotional resilience. The therapeutic effects of mindfulness ultimately restored a sense of self-worth and empowerment, helping them regain control over their mental and emotional health. This process led to a noticeable improvement in their overall well-being, providing them with the tools to navigate the challenges of their personal and professional lives more easily.

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## CRedit Authorship Contribution Statement

All authors contributed to the discussion of the results, participated in drafting and revising the manuscript, and approved the final version for publication. Norizan Binti Yusof: Conceptualization, Writing - Original Draft. Mardiana Mansor: Conceptualization & review. Haslinda Hasyim: Conceptualization.

## Declaration of GenAI in Scientific Writing

The authors declare that Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) tools were employed in the drafting and revision of this manuscript to check spelling and grammar, identify typos, grammatical errors, suggest paraphrases, reduce passive voice, and eliminate repeated words, sentences, and unnecessary adverbs. The suggestions provided by GenAI were critically evaluated and modified to ensure that the final draft remains representative of the authors' own work. All instances of Generative AI usage in this article were conducted by the authors in accordance with the [IJCP Generative AI \(GenAI\) Policy](#), with the authors assuming full responsibility for the originality, accuracy, and integrity of the work."

## Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

## Ethical Approval Statement

The author declares that this study was conducted in accordance with research ethics principles and has received ethical approval from the author's institution, including respect for participants' autonomy, confidentiality of data, and ensuring their safety and well-being, as outlined in the applicable research ethics guidelines.

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