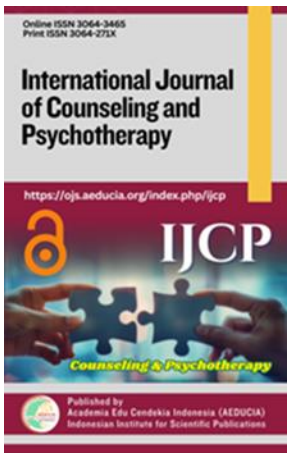
International Journal of Counseling and Psychotherapy
E-ISSN 3064-3465 | P-ISSN 3064-271X, Volume 2, Issue 1 (2025), DOI: 10.64420/ijcp
Journal homepage: https://ojs.aeducia.org/index.php/ijcp



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

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This article is available online via the following issue link:
https://doi.org/10.64420/ijcp.v2i1

How to Cite this Article:

Yusof, N. B., Mansor, M., & Hasyim, H. (2025). The Effect of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) Therapy on Reducing Stress and Fatigue among Career Women. *International Journal of Counseling and Psychotherapy, 2*(1), 1-10. https://doi.org/10.64420/ijcp.v2i1.185

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First Publication Right:
International Journal of Counseling and Psychotherapy

Article info:
DOI: https://doi.org/10.64420/ijcp.v2i1.185

Word Count: 6167

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Contents lists available at ojs.aeducia.org
International Journal of Counseling and Psychotherapy
Volume 2, Issue 1 (2025), DOI: 10.64420/ijcp.v2i1
Journal homepage: https://ojs.aeducia.org/index.php/ijcp

IJCP
E-ISSN 3064-3465
P-ISSN 3064-271X

Research Article
Read Online: https://doi.org/10.64420/ijcp.v2i1.185
Open Access

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

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: February 7, 2025
Revised: March 27, 2025
Accepted: April 24, 2025
Published: April 28, 2025

KEYWORDS

Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR); Reduce Stress;
Fatigue;
Carrier Woman

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 work-place 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. **Originality/Value:** This study offers a significant contribution to clinical psychology and occupational health psychology by revealing the qualitative dynamics of the hypo emotional tank, namely the emotional strain arising from unacknowledged domestic burdens, alongside the therapeutic efficacy of Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) in restoring self worth and emotional equilibrium. By examining stress and fatigue management among career women balancing professional and domestic roles, this research addresses a critical yet underexplored dimension of workplace well being. These findings enrich the evidence based psychological literature and serve as a strategic reference for mental health practitioners, organizational counselors, and human resource managers in designing and implementing workplace mindfulness interventions to support women 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 &

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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., 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 interprettation 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 mindfulness 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).

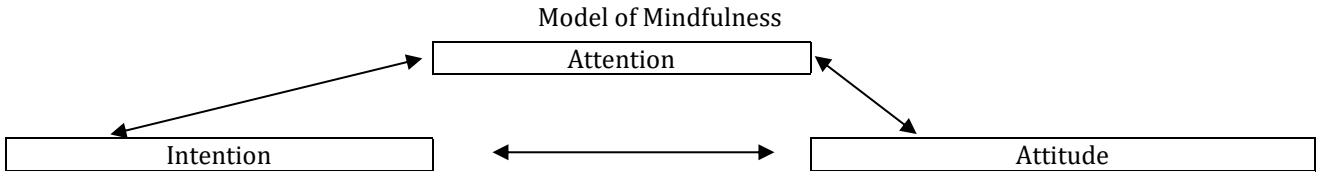


Figure 1. The Three Axioms of Intention, Attention, and Attitude (IAA)

The interaction between intention, attention, and attitude in the mindfulness model is complementary. Intention provides the direction or purpose of mindfulness practice; attention allows individuals to focus on present-moment experiences; and attitude shapes how those experiences are approached with openness and non-judgment.

MBSR is the therapy that uses to help women mange 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 these 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 exhausttion (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 nonprobability 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, na-

mely the client's background, the fatigue faced, the stress faced and the effects of MBSR therapy sessions.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Case Presentation

3.1.1 Investigations

To assess the participants' psychological condition and baseline characteristics, qualitative data were collected through unstructured in-depth interviews, participant observations, and document analysis of personal reflection diaries. The demographic and workload investigation revealed that all five participants were professional career women managing nuclear households with children under five years old. Their professional commitments averaged eight or more hours daily, complemented by an additional two to three hours of domestic responsibilities.

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

As illustrated in Table 1, the demographic and occupational matrix highlights a substantial dual-role burden across all five participants. Each respondent operates in a demanding professional capacity with formal working hours of at least eight hours daily with Respondents 3 and 4 regularly exceeding this duration. This heavy occupational commitment is compounded by an additional two to over three hours of daily domestic chores and family care within households comprising three to eight members. These baseline metrics substantiate that severe time constraints, coupled with the relentless accumulation of professional and domestic responsibilities, serve as primary structural drivers of chronic fatigue and psychological distress among working mothers.

3.1.2 Diagnosis

Based on the in-depth interviews and clinical observations, all participants demonstrated high levels of chronic fatigue directly triggering elevated psychological stress, irritability, and maternal guilt. The thematic analysis confirmed that physical and mental exhaustion significantly reduced their emotional tolerance and capacity to handle domestic and parental responsibilities.

The primary diagnostic themes and qualitative interview excerpts are detailed below:

a) Fatigue Directly Triggering Stress and Emotional Outbursts:

The participants revealed that severe fatigue eroded their emotional control, making them prone to anger and agitation. As articulated by Respondent 3:

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

Respondent 5 similarly highlighted how exhaustion after work triggered an overwhelming emotional overload at home:

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

b) Displaced Frustration and Nagging:

Due to accumulated exhaustion, several respondents reported resorting to nagging and venting frustration on family members. Respondent 4 expressed:

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

c) Inability to Focus on Domestic Roles and Maternal Guilt:

All participants stated that persistent fatigue hindered their ability to manage household duties effectively and restricted them from engaging in playtime with their children, leading to intense self-blame:

Respondent 1: *"... I don't think I'm a good mother... I can't spend time doing activities with the children..."*

Respondent 2: *"... 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..."*

3.1.3 Treatment

To address the severe fatigue, chronic stress, and emotional depletion (*hypo-emotional tank*), the participants underwent structured Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) therapy sessions. The number of mindfulness sessions was tailored according to individual participant needs and availability.

The distribution of the intervention sessions across participants is outlined in Table 2:

Table 2. Assessment and Intervention Matrix

Respondent	Clinical Fatigue	Elevated Stress	Mindfulness Training Sessions
Respondent 1	Present	Present	3 sessions
Respondent 2	Present	Present	3 sessions
Respondent 3	Present	Present	3 sessions
Respondent 4	Present	Present	4 sessions
Respondent 5	Present	Present	2 sessions

Table 2 outlines the clinical baseline and intervention engagement of the study cohort. All five participants (100\%) exhibited acute symptoms of psychological fatigue and elevated stress stemming from unaddressed emotional depletion (*hypo-emotional tank*). Despite high baseline exhaustion, all participants demonstrated high receptivity to the therapeutic process, completing between two and four structured Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) sessions tailored to their individual schedules and distress levels (Respondent 4: 4 sessions; Respondents 1–3: 3 sessions; Respondent 5: 2 sessions). This distribution indicates that MBSR functions as an accessible, high-compliance intervention capable of delivering targeted psychological relief within brief therapeutic windows for time-constrained professionals.

3.1.4 Follow-up and Outcomes

Following the completion of the MBSR therapy sessions, all five participants reported experiencing a profound sense of inner calm, physical relief, and a restored sense of self-worth. The post-treatment interview findings demonstrated significant psychological shifts from external dependency to self-care and emotional acceptance:

a) Release of Tension and Deep Calmness:

The participants reported experiencing emotional release and the dissipation of physical and psychological fatigue:

Respondent 1: *"... owh... I feel empty [in a state of release/peace]..."*

Respondent 3: *"... I feel very calm... and I feel all my tiredness disappear..."*

b) Enhanced Self-Awareness and Prioritization of Self-Care:

The mindfulness practice led participants to realize the importance of nurturing their own emotional tank before attending to external duties:

Respondent 4: *"... Actually I just realized, I forgot to cover myself first..."*

Respondent 5: *"... I always expect appreciation from others, but I forget to appreciate myself."*

Overall, the follow-up evaluation confirms that MBSR therapy effectively alleviated fatigue and stress, restructured irrational guilt, and empowered career women to cultivate self-compassion and emotional resilience.

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.

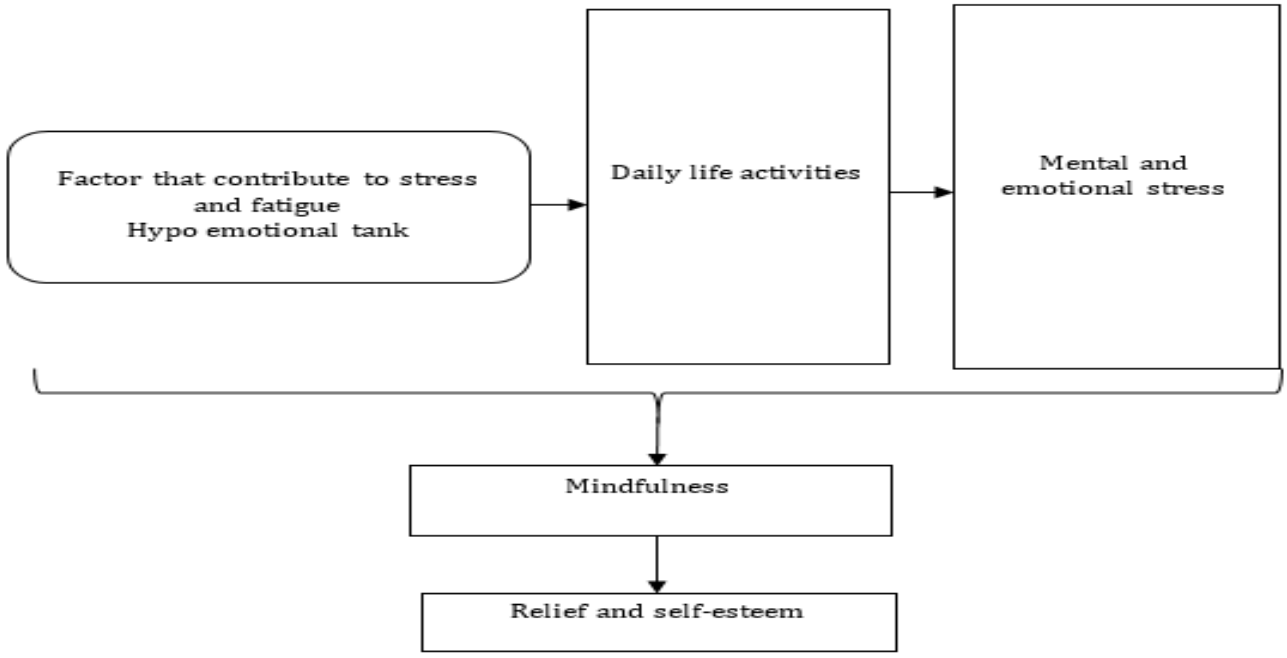


Fig. 1. The Theme of Stress and Fatigue Factors and How Mindfulness Helps Reduce Stress and Fatigue among Working Women

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 reseach need to be done in quantitative way to get the holistic data and the result can be generalized about fatigue and stress.

This study provides substantial theoretical and practical contributions to the fields of occupational psychology, counseling, and female mental health by establishing an empirical link between internal emotional dynamics and the manifestation of extreme fatigue among working women. Theoretically, it enriches existing literature by demonstrating how unfulfilled emotional expectations and the depletion of the emotional tank transform routine occupational and domestic duties into chronic psychological burdens, while expanding the scope of mindfulness from basic stress reduction to a comprehensive framework for emotional regulation, cognitive restructuring, and spiritual growth. Practically, these insights serve as a valuable guide for clinical psychologists, counselors, and workplace well being consultants in formulating targeted mindfulness based interventions that empower dual role women to strengthen self compassion, reassert personal boundaries, cultivate children independence, and achieve balanced quality of life.

This study offers a unique conceptual contribution through the formulation of a thematic model that distinctly connects working women extreme fatigue and burnout to relational cognitive factors, particularly the unfulfilled expectation of partner appreciation, rather than focusing solely on conventional workload and time management pressures. Furthermore, this research uncovers an integrated transformative mechanism in which mindfulness therapy functions beyond relaxation, operating as a catalyst for cognitive reframing, domestic task delegation, self respect enhancement, and spiritual enrichment that restores intrinsic joy and purpose to everyday responsibilities.

4. IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

4.1 Reseach Implication

[7]

The findings of this study provide practical and managerial implications for the literature on stress and fatigue management among career women by illustrating that Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) therapy effectively addresses the "hypo-emotional tank" condition, cultivates non-judgmental self-acceptance, and mitigates emotional exhaustion resulting from dual-role conflicts. Furthermore, these findings address a practical and theoretical gap concerning the internal cognitive mechanisms through which mindfulness interventions decouple psychological fatigue from external relationship dynamics and workplace stressors.

4.2 Reseach Contribution

The findings of this study contribute as a novel source of knowledge in the field of Counseling Psychology and Occupational Health by providing a new case-based analysis of the hypo-emotional tank dynamic and MBSR-driven self-worth restoration. This framework can be utilized to explain the psychological adaptation processes and emotional resilience trajectories among working women managing professional careers alongside childcare and domestic responsibilities.

5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

5.1 Reseach Limitations

Several limitations should be noted regarding the methodology and scope of this study:

a) Methodological Scope: The study exclusively employed a qualitative case study design, restricting data collection to unstructured interviews, behavioral observations, and document analysis (personal reflection diaries).
b) Generalizability: Because the investigation focused solely on an in-depth case study of five working women within a specific university setting in Pahang, the findings cannot be statistically generalized to broader populations of career women.
c) Methodological Exclusivity: The research lacked a quantitative component to provide holistic and generalizable statistical data regarding the prevalence and reduction of fatigue and stress.

5.2 Recommendations for Future Research

To build upon the findings of this research and expand evidence on Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), subsequent studies should address the following directions:

a) Experimental and Quantitative Designs: Future research is encouraged to implement experimental or quasi-experimental methods to obtain holistic data, strengthen empirical validity, and allow for statistical generalization.
b) Longitudinal Studies: Researchers should conduct longitudinal studies to examine the sustained, long-term effects of MBSR therapy on stress and fatigue reduction over time.
c) Demographic and Cross-Cultural Diversity: Further investigations should evaluate the effectiveness of MBSR ac-ross diverse participant cohorts, encompassing different age groups, career sectors, and cultural backgrounds.
d) Comparative Intervention Analyses: Subsequent investigations are recommended to benchmark and compare MBSR against alternative stress-reduction and complementary therapies to determine relative therapeutic efficacy.

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 exhausttion, 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 mindfulness, the women learned to prioritize their well-being, recognize their emotional needs, and approach their lives with greater ba-

lance 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 wellbeing, providing them with the tools to navigate the challenges of their personal and professional lives more easily.

Acknowledgments

The author (NBY) would like to express sincere gratitude to the co-authors (MM and HH) for their meaningful contribution in conceptualizing and reviewing this collaborative research. Their thoughtful input, critical insights, and constructive feedback were instrumental in shaping the direction and enhancing the quality of the study, reflecting a strong spirit of academic collaboration and shared commitment to excellence.

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.

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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.

Funding Statement

The authors received no external funding or financial support for this study.

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, confidentiallity of data, and ensuring their safety and well-being, as outlined in the applicable research ethics guidelines.

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