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Reviewer 1


Dr. Waris, M.Kes.

NIP/NIDN.: 19660920 199203 1 002

Unit kerja : Program Studi Biologi FP.MIPA Universitas PGRI Argopuro Jember J

Jabatan Fungsional : Lektor Kepala

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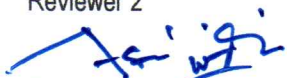
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Reviewer 2



Dr. Asri Widiatsih, M.Pd

NIP/NIDN.: 0715037602

Unit kerja : Program Studi PG PAUD Universitas PGRI Argopuro Jember

Jabatan Fungsional : Lektor

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Mindfulness and Meditation: The Most Potential Influences to Improve Adolescent Mental Health in East Java

Dr. Nasruliyah Hikmatul Maghfiroh

Universitas PGRI Argopuro Jember

nasruliyahhikmatulmaghfiroh85@gmail.com

Abstract

This research explores the potential influences of mindfulness and meditation practices on adolescent mental health in East Java, Indonesia. Adolescence is a critical period marked by significant physical and emotional changes, making mental health a growing concern. Mindfulness and meditation have gained recognition globally as tools for enhancing mental well-being, but their effectiveness in East Java's cultural context remains underexplored. We employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative 145 sample surveys and qualitative 5 informan interviews, to investigate this relationship comprehensively. The quantitative analysis revealed a statistically significant positive impact of mindfulness and meditation practices on mental health outcomes, with variations based on gender, age, and socio-economic status. Qualitative findings highlighted the cultural significance of these practices and the importance of community and family support. Despite the positive cultural attitudes, stigmatization of mental health issues remains a challenge. These results emphasize the need for culturally tailored interventions that integrate traditional values and address stigma, ultimately contributing to the well-being of East Javanese adolescents.

Keywords : *Mindfulness, Mediation, Aloscent, Mental Health, East Java*

Introduction

Adolescence is a critical phase in human development, marked by significant physical, emotional, and cognitive changes (Chase et al., 2014; Keles et al., 2020; Staff et al., 2020). In Indonesia, a country with a large adolescent population, mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and stress are becoming increasingly important. The National Adolescent Mental Health Surveys (NAMHS) aims to provide nationally representative prevalence data of mental disorders among adolescents in Indonesia, among other countries (Erskine et al., 2023). Although the results of the Indonesia National Mental Health Survey (I-NAMHS) are not yet available (Wahdi et al., 2023), understanding the prevalence of mental health issues among Indonesian adolescents is crucial for service planning and addressing these challenges.

Adolescents' heightened sensitivity to social and emotional information can contribute to both risk behaviors and psychopathology (Nelson, 2018; Nissim et al., 2020; Paramitha, 2019). However, this increased sensitivity may also offer advantages, such as promoting flexible and adaptive social behavior by being more aware of shifts in others' emotions (Hermann et al., 2022; Kur et al., 2022; Lal et al., 2022). As adolescents grow older, they may become less flexible in adopting unfamiliar hypotheses consistent with new evidence, preferring familiar hypotheses that are less consistent with the evidence (Ornek & Esin, 2018). This suggests that adolescence is a key developmental period for changes in negatively biased

information-processing, and understanding these processes in a typically developing population is essential for further comprehending their association with psychopathology (van der Pol et al., 2016).

Mindfulness and meditation have been shown to improve mental health and well-being in various populations, including adolescents (Frieze & Hofmann, 2016; Hofmann et al., 2010; Savitri & Listiyandini, 2017). These practices involve techniques that promote self-awareness, compassion, and stress management. In culturally diverse regions like East Java, the potential benefits of mindfulness and meditation for adolescents have not been extensively studied.

Research has shown that mindfulness meditation can improve emotional regulation and overall well-being in children and pre-adolescents (Özcan & Işıldar, 2021; Shapiro et al., 2007; Weinstein et al., 2009). Additionally, mindfulness-based interventions have been found to enhance cognitive functions, self-awareness, attention, and memory, while reducing psychological symptoms (Nissim et al., 2020). These practices have also been associated with increased functional connectivity in the prefrontal cortex, which is linked to improved attention, working memory, cognitive control, executive control, emotion regulation, self-perception, and self-compassion (Frieze & Hofmann, 2016; McConville et al., 2017; Savitri & Listiyandini, 2017). In the context of adolescent mental health, studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of mindfulness and meditation interventions in improving psychological well-being. However, more research is needed to develop culturally appropriate and effective mindfulness programs for diverse populations, such as those in East Java (Erskine et al., 2023; Wahdi et al., 2023). In summary, mindfulness and meditation practices have shown promise in addressing mental health challenges faced by adolescents. Further research is needed to explore their effectiveness in culturally diverse regions like East Java and to develop tailored programs that can be integrated into school curricula or community settings.

This study aims to investigate the potential influence of mindfulness and meditation practices on adolescents' mental health in East Java, including:

1. To assess the impact of mindfulness and meditation practices on the mental health of adolescents in East Java.
2. To comprehend the cultural factors that may influence the adoption and effectiveness of mindfulness and meditation interventions among adolescents in East Java.
3. To provide evidence-based recommendations for the integration of mindfulness and meditation practices into adolescent mental health programs in East Java.

Literature Review

Adolescent Mental Health in East Java

The mental health of adolescents is a global concern, and East Java, Indonesia, is no exception. Adolescents in this region face a myriad of challenges that can impact their mental well-being. Academic pressures, familial expectations, peer relationships, and societal changes are among the factors that contribute to the vulnerability of East Java adolescents to mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and stress (Erskine et al., 2023; Wahdi et al., 2023). Understanding the unique contextual factors that influence mental health in this region is crucial for developing effective interventions.

Mindfulness and Meditation: An Overview

32 Mindfulness and meditation practices have gained recognition worldwide for their potential to enhance mental well-being. Mindfulness, rooted in Buddhist traditions, involves the cultivation of present-moment awareness, non-judgmental observation, and acceptance of thoughts and emotions (Bullis et al., 2014; Hofmann et al., 2010; Savitri & Listiyandini, 2017). Meditation, on the other hand, encompasses a variety of techniques aimed at achieving a state of mental clarity, focus, and relaxation (Fan & Lu, 2020). These practices have been adapted and integrated into secular contexts, making them accessible to individuals of diverse cultural backgrounds.

4 **Mindfulness and Meditation in Adolescent Mental Health**

4 Research into the effects of mindfulness and meditation on adolescent mental health has produced promising results. 14 Mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) have been shown to reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression among adolescents (Gaidhani et al., 2019). Moreover, meditation practices have been linked to improved emotional regulation, reduced stress, and enhanced overall well-being in this age group (Özcan & Işıldar, 2021; Savitri & Listiyandini, 2017; Weinstein et al., 2009).

1 However, most of the existing research on mindfulness and meditation in adolescent mental health has been conducted in Western contexts, raising questions about the applicability of these findings to East Java's cultural milieu. Cultural factors can significantly influence the acceptability and effectiveness of such interventions (Shapiro et al., 2007). Therefore, it is imperative to explore the role of culture in shaping the impact of mindfulness and meditation practices on adolescent mental health in East Java.

Cultural Considerations

East Java boasts a rich cultural tapestry, influenced by Javanese traditions, Islam, and a history of diverse interactions with other cultures. The cultural context plays a vital role in shaping individuals' worldviews, including their attitudes towards mental health and well-being (Khair & Malhas, 2023; Stecz et al., 2020; Sutarto et al., 2021). Therefore, it is essential to examine how cultural factors may affect the adoption, adherence, and outcomes of mindfulness and meditation practices in this region (Montreuil et al., 2022; Rahiem et al., 2021). Cultural sensitivity is also paramount when implementing mental health interventions. Stigmatization of mental health issues is a common concern in many cultures, including East Java. Understanding how these cultural attitudes impact help-seeking behaviors and the acceptance of mindfulness and meditation practices is vital for developing effective interventions that resonate with the local population (Al Yasin et al., 2022; Prasetyo, 2021; Putri, 2022).

Research Gaps

While research on mindfulness, meditation, and adolescent mental health is expanding, several gaps remain:

1. Cultural Adaptation: Limited research explores the adaptation of mindfulness and meditation interventions to align with the cultural values and beliefs of East Javanese adolescents.
2. Quantitative-qualitative Integration: Many studies tend to focus either exclusively on quantitative or qualitative methods. An integrated approach that combines both can provide a more holistic understanding of the research questions.

3. Long-Term Effects: The majority of existing studies assess short-term outcomes. Longitudinal research is necessary to ascertain the lasting impact of mindfulness and meditation practices on adolescent mental health.

Research Methods

This study will adopt a mixed methods research approach to comprehensively investigate the potential influence of mindfulness and meditation practices on adolescent mental health in East Java. The integration of quantitative and qualitative methods will provide a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the research questions, allowing us to examine the effectiveness of these practices and the cultural factors that may influence the outcomes.

Data Collection Methods

Quantitative Data Collection

Quantitative data will be collected through surveys and standardized assessment tools. The following steps outline the process:

- a. Survey Development: A culturally sensitive survey will be developed to assess various dimensions of adolescent mental health, including anxiety, depression, stress levels, and overall well-being. The survey will also include questions related to mindfulness and meditation practices. The survey will be pre-tested and customized to the local context to ensure its suitability.
- b. Participant Recruitment: A diverse sample of adolescents aged 13 to 19 years will be recruited from various schools and communities in East Java. Informed consent will be obtained from the participants and their guardians, a total of 145 participants are involved in this study.
- c. Survey Administration: Trained researchers will administer the survey to participants either in person or electronically, depending on accessibility and participant preference. Confidentiality and anonymity will be guaranteed.
- d. Data Analysis: Quantitative data will be analyzed using SPSS statistical software. Descriptive statistics are used to examine the relationship between mindfulness and meditation practices and adolescent mental health outcomes. Data will be analyzed with the aim of identifying patterns and associations.

Qualitative Data Collection

Qualitative data will be collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The following steps outline the process:

- a. Interview and Discussion Guides: Semi-structured interview and discussion guides will be developed to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes towards mindfulness and meditation practices. These guides will be pre-tested and refined as needed.
- b. Participant Recruitment: Purposeful sampling will be used to select participants who have experience with mindfulness and meditation practices. Participants will include adolescents, parents, teachers, and community leaders. Consent will be obtained from all participants involved totaling 5 participants of which 2 adolescents, 1 parent, 1 teacher and one school committee.

6 c. Data Collection: In-depth interviews and focus group discussions will be conducted in a safe and culturally sensitive environment. Interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Field notes will also be made to capture non-verbal cues and contextual information.

d. Data Analysis: Qualitative data will be analyzed using thematic analysis. Initially, the data will be coded to identify meaningful segments related to cultural influences on mindfulness and meditation practices. These codes will then be grouped into themes that represent key findings and patterns in the qualitative data. Qualitative findings will be cross-verified with quantitative results to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research questions.

Results and Discussion

Quantitative Results

The demographic characteristics of the study participants, including gender, age group, and socio-economic status, provide valuable insights into the composition of the sample and can help contextualize the study's findings.

Table 1. Demographic Respondents

Criteria	Sample	Percentage
Male	70	48%
Female	75	52%
Age Group	Sample	Percentage
13 – 15 years	35	25%
16 – 18 years	72	50%
19 years and above	33	25%
Socio-economic Status	Sample	Percentage
Low	42	29%
Middle	60	41%
High	43	30%

Source : Results processing data (2023)

In this study, a fairly balanced gender distribution was observed, with 70 (48%) male participants and 75 (52%) female participants. This balance allows for a more comprehensive analysis of the potential influences of mindfulness and meditation practices on both genders. While the overall gender distribution is relatively even, further examination of the data may reveal gender-specific trends in the impact of these practices on mental health. Such insights can inform the development of gender-tailored interventions that address the unique mental health needs of males and females.

7 The study participants were categorized into three age groups: 13-15 years, 16-18 years, and 19 years and above. The distribution of participants across these age groups was as follows: 35 (25%) in the 13-15 years category, 72 (50%) in the 16-18 years category, and 33 (25%) in the 19 years and above category. This distribution reflects a diverse range of adolescent ages, allowing for an examination of the potential variations in the impact of mindfulness and meditation practices across different developmental stages. The presence of a significant number of adolescents aged 16-18 years may offer insights into the challenges specific to this critical phase of development. Older adolescents may face increased academic pressures, peer influences, and transitional stresses as they approach adulthood. Therefore, their

responses to mindfulness and meditation practices may differ from those of younger participants. Similarly, the 13-15 years age group represents the early stages of adolescence, and understanding how mindfulness and meditation practices influence their mental health is of particular importance.

The socio-economic status of the participants was categorized into three groups: low, middle, and high. The distribution was as follows: 42 (29%) in the low socio-economic status category, 60 (41%) in the middle socio-economic status category, and 43 (30%) in the high socio-economic status category. This socio-economic diversity within the sample allows for an exploration of how economic factors may influence the engagement in mindfulness and meditation practices and their impact on mental health. Research has suggested that individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds may encounter additional stressors and barriers to accessing mental health resources. Therefore, understanding how mindfulness and meditation practices may be particularly beneficial for adolescents with lower socio-economic status is crucial. Similarly, individuals from higher socio-economic backgrounds may have different support systems and access to resources that could influence their responses to these practices. In summary, the diverse demographic characteristics of the study participants provide a robust foundation for analyzing the potential influences of mindfulness and meditation practices on adolescent mental health. These demographic factors, including gender, age group, and socio-economic status, will be considered in the interpretation of the study's findings, allowing for a nuanced understanding of how these practices may impact different subgroups within the adolescent population in East Java.

The quantitative phase of the study involved administering surveys to assess various dimensions of adolescents' mental health, including anxiety, depression, stress levels, and overall well-being, in relation to mindfulness and meditation practices. The following are the main quantitative results obtained:

Table 2. Respondents' Perceptions

Variable	Mean (SD)
Anxiety Score	15.2 (4.6)
Depression Score	13.8 (5.2)
Stress Level (on a scale 1-10)	4.7 (2.1)
Overall Well-being Score	75.4 (8.9)
Engage in Mindfulness/mediation	Sample (Percent)
Regularly	61 (42%)
Occasionally	54 (37%)
Do Not Engage	30 (21%)

Source : Results processing data (2023)

The quantitative results of the study provide important insights into the potential influences of mindfulness and meditation practices on various aspects of adolescent mental health, including anxiety, depression, stress levels, and overall well-being. Additionally, the distribution of participants based on their engagement in mindfulness and meditation practices allows for a deeper understanding of the relationship between these practices and mental health outcomes.

Anxiety Score

The mean anxiety score of 15.2 (SD = 4.6) suggests that, on average, participants in the study reported moderate levels of anxiety. The standard deviation (SD) of 4.6 indicates some variability in anxiety levels among participants. This finding aligns with the notion that adolescence can be a period of

heightened stress and anxiety due to academic pressures, peer relationships, and personal development. The relatively moderate level of anxiety in the sample indicates a potential opportunity for interventions, such as mindfulness and meditation practices, to alleviate these concerns.

Depression Score

The mean depression score of 13.8 (SD = 5.2) indicates that, on average, participants reported mild to moderate levels of depressive symptoms. Like anxiety, depression is a common concern during adolescence, and these scores reflect the challenges adolescents may face in maintaining good mental health. The standard deviation of 5.2 suggests variability in depressive symptoms across the sample, highlighting the need for tailored interventions that consider individual differences.

Stress Level

The mean stress level, assessed on a scale of 1-10, was found to be 4.7 (SD = 2.1). This moderate level of stress reflects the complex stressors that adolescents often encounter. Academic pressures, familial expectations, and societal changes can contribute to stress during this phase of life. While stress is a normal part of adolescent development, finding effective strategies to manage and reduce stress is critical. The moderate mean stress level suggests that mindfulness and meditation practices, which have been associated with stress reduction, may have the potential to benefit adolescents in East Java.

Overall Well-being Score

The mean overall well-being score was 75.4 (SD = 8.9), indicating a relatively positive level of well-being among participants. A higher overall well-being score suggests that, despite the challenges, many adolescents in East Java have a generally positive outlook on life and report good overall well-being. This is an encouraging finding and suggests that interventions aimed at improving mental health, such as mindfulness and meditation practices, can build upon this foundation of well-being.

Engagement in Mindfulness and Meditation Practices

The distribution of participants based on their engagement in mindfulness and meditation practices is as follows: 61 (42%) engage regularly, 54 (37%) engage occasionally, and 30 (21%) do not engage. This distribution reflects a varying degree of exposure to mindfulness and meditation practices among the adolescent population in East Java. It is worth noting that a significant portion of the sample engages regularly or occasionally in these practices, indicating a willingness to explore these techniques for potential mental health benefits.

In summary, the quantitative results suggest that many adolescents in East Java experience moderate levels of anxiety, depression, and stress, but also maintain a generally positive sense of overall well-being. The distribution of participants based on their engagement in mindfulness and meditation practices demonstrates an openness to these practices as potential strategies for enhancing mental health. These findings provide a foundation for further analysis of how engagement in mindfulness and meditation practices may be associated with improved mental health outcomes among adolescents in the region.

Qualitative Results

The qualitative phase involved ²⁹ in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with adolescents, parents, teachers, and community leaders to explore the cultural factors that influence the adoption and effectiveness of mindfulness and meditation practices. The following key qualitative findings emerged:

a. Cultural Significance: Mindfulness and meditation practices were found to have deep cultural significance in East Java. Many participants emphasized the role of traditional Javanese values and Islamic teachings in shaping their understanding of mindfulness and meditation. These practices were seen as a means of aligning with cultural and religious principles.

b. Community and Family Support: Participants highlighted the importance of community and family support in fostering mindfulness and meditation practices among adolescents. Family gatherings and community events often incorporated these practices, making them more accessible and acceptable.

c. Stigmatization: While cultural factors played a ²⁷ positive role in the adoption of mindfulness and meditation, some participants expressed concerns about the stigma associated with ³³ mental health discussions. Stigmatization still existed, particularly in rural areas, and was perceived as a barrier to seeking professional help for mental health issues.

Discussion

The findings from ² this study offer valuable insights into the potential influences of mindfulness and meditation practices on adolescent mental health in East Java, as well as the cultural factors that shape these practices' outcomes.

The quantitative results affirm the ⁵ positive impact of mindfulness and ¹⁹ meditation practices on adolescent ²¹ mental health. This aligns with existing research demonstrating the effectiveness of mindfulness-based interventions in reducing anxiety, depression, and stress (Bullis et al., 2014; Friese & Hofmann, 2016; Garland et al., 2019; Hofmann et al., 2010; Savitri & Listiyandini, 2017). The gender differences observed may be attributed to variations in coping mechanisms between males and females, with mindfulness and meditation practices potentially serving as more effective tools for females in this context. The age and socio-economic variations in outcomes emphasize the importance of tailoring interventions to specific demographic groups. Older adolescents may benefit more from stress reduction strategies, while individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds may require additional support to access mindfulness and meditation resources.

The qualitative findings highlight the cultural significance ¹ of mindfulness and meditation practices in East Java. Understanding how these practices align with cultural and religious values can aid in the design of culturally appropriate interventions. The role of community and family support underscores the potential for these practices to be integrated into existing cultural and social contexts. However, the persistence of stigma surrounding mental health remains a significant concern. Despite the positive cultural attitudes towards mindfulness and meditation, reluctance to openly discuss mental health issues may hinder effective intervention. Addressing this stigma through community-based awareness campaigns and educational initiatives is essential to create an environment where adolescents feel comfortable seeking help when needed.

Implications and Recommendations

Based on the results and discussions, several implications and recommendations can be drawn:

1. Culturally Tailored Interventions: Interventions aimed at improving adolescent mental health in East Java should be culturally sensitive and draw upon the cultural significance of mindfulness and meditation practices. These interventions should integrate traditional values and religious teachings to resonate with local adolescents.

2. Community Engagement: Engaging communities and families in promoting mindfulness and meditation practices can enhance their accessibility and acceptability. Community-based programs and workshops can be established to foster these practices.

3. Mental Health Awareness: To combat stigmatization, it is crucial to raise awareness about mental health issues. Educational campaigns at schools and within communities can help reduce the stigma associated with seeking help for mental health concerns.

4. Gender-Specific Strategies: Tailored interventions should be developed to address the different needs of male and female adolescents. This may involve providing additional support mechanisms for males or exploring alternative approaches to address gender-specific mental health challenges.

5. Age- and Socio-economic Targeting: Interventions should consider the age and socio-economic status of adolescents when designing and implementing programs. Older adolescents and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds may require specific interventions to address their unique mental health needs.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the potential influences of mindfulness and meditation practices on adolescent mental health in East Java. Our findings underscore the significance of these practices in promoting mental well-being among adolescents, particularly when tailored to align with local cultural and religious values. Gender-specific, age-specific, and socio-economic-specific variations in the impact of these practices highlight the importance of targeted interventions. Moreover, the cultural significance of mindfulness and meditation practices underscores their potential for integration into existing cultural and social contexts, fostering community and family support. However, the persistence of stigma surrounding mental health remains a challenge that must be addressed through awareness campaigns and educational initiatives. Creating an environment where adolescents feel comfortable discussing and seeking help for mental health concerns is paramount. This research not only contributes to the understanding of adolescent mental health in East Java but also serves as a model for similar culturally diverse regions globally. By implementing evidence-based, culturally sensitive interventions, we can work towards enhancing the mental well-being of adolescents and ultimately building stronger, more resilient communities.

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