



# The Effectiveness of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Training on Educational Optimism, Burnout and Job Stress in Secondary School Teachers

Maryam Shokri<sup>\*1</sup>, Seyedah Kobra Hosseini<sup>2</sup>, Elahe Jebreil<sup>3</sup>, Fariba BagherZadeh<sup>4</sup>

1. Department of Clinical psychology, Qom Branch, Islamic Azad University, Qom, Iran.

2. Department of Family Counseling, Allameh Mohaddes Nouri University, Nour, Iran.

3. Department of Clinical psychology, Naein Branch, Islamic Azad University, Naein, Iran.

4. Department of Family Counseling, Khomeinishahr Branch, Islamic Azad University, Khomeinishahr, Iran.

## A B S T R A C T

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of mindfulness-based stress reduction training on educational optimism, burnout and job stress in secondary school teachers. The statistical population of the research was the teachers who were teaching in the first secondary level of the city of Tehran, districts 10 and 11 in the academic year 2021-2022, 30 people were selected by the available sampling method and randomly divided into two experimental and control groups (15 people in each group). were assigned. Then mindfulness training based on stress reduction was implemented on the experimental group in 8 sessions of 60 minutes. The tool used in this research was educational optimism, job burnout and job stress questionnaire. To analyze the data, the statistical test of multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was used. The results have shown that stress reduction training based on mindfulness is effective on educational optimism, burnout and job stress in secondary school teachers.

**Keywords:** Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Training, Job Stress, Educational Optimism, Job Burnout, Teachers.

## INTRODUCTION

The job of a teacher and the effective role it has in society shows the value and importance of love in guiding the evolution and training of human resources from the first years of life (Hashmi, 2017). No transformation or innovation can be achieved unless teachers are equipped with positive and effective attitudes and beliefs as real agents ([Ateş & Ünal, 2021](#); [Sabbaghi, Karimi,](#)

\* . Corresponding Author: [maryam.shokri.msh@gmail.com](mailto:maryam.shokri.msh@gmail.com)

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[Akbari, & Yarahmadi, 2020](#)). As a result of the intense work and the problems in the relationship between the teachers in the school with the principal and other colleagues, as well as the extra energy they spend to control the abnormal behavior of the students, they are constantly in tension unless they have rational methods and able to control environmental pressures ([Mehrabizadeh Honarmand, Atashafrouz, Shehni Yiylagh, & Rezaie, 2013](#)). Research shows that teachers' beliefs are one of the most important factors in achieving this goal. Among the factors that are affected by the working conditions of teachers is educational optimism and the possibility of increased burnout and occupational stress.

Educational optimism is based on positive psychology and Bandura's social cognitive theory and was proposed by Woolfolk Hoy and Davis (2006). Educational optimism is a positive belief in teachers that by combining teaching and learning with trust in the participation of parents and students and with faith in their own capacity to overcome problems and react to failure with perseverance, they will cause the academic progress of students ([A. W. Hoy, Hoy, & Kurz, 2008](#)). Educational optimism is an undeniable necessity for personal and organizational success, which requires compassionate teaching with clients and students. Job burnout is one of the occupational hazards that has been given special attention due to its negative impact on employees in recent years. One of the main sources of job burnout is excessive work pressure and not having enough time, but the amount of work pressure and, accordingly, the amount Job burnout varies from person to person. Job burnout is observed among all types of jobs such as helping jobs such as counselors, teachers, nurses, and similar cases, which is probably due to the type of duties and responsibilities of these jobs. On the other hand, it is one of the cases of job burnout and stress. This stress occurs in different jobs and is related to many factors. Factors such as high work pressure, conflict with students, professional responsibilities and issues related to the administrative system are considered occupational stressors ([Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2014](#)). Occupational stress leads to job burnout in the long term and a set of emotional, attitudinal, behavioral and organizational symptoms are identified. According to what has been mentioned, burnout is related to a decrease in morale, sense of sufficiency, commitment to work and productivity, and increase in absenteeism, employee change, and job change, and it is a predictor of low health problems and occupational stress. On the other hand, many approaches have been used to maintain mental health in different contexts, one of these basic approaches includes cognitive behavioral therapy and trait interventions based on relaxation techniques ([Santucci et al., 2014](#)). These interventions are usually designed for schools and students, and few studies have been conducted to reduce burnout and educational optimism among teachers. One of the recent approaches called mindfulness is based on stress reduction.

The presence of the mind, as Kabat-Zinn (1982), says; It means paying attention in a specific way, aimed at the goal, in the present tense and without judgment. In the presence of a person's mind, he learns to be self-aware of his mental state at every moment and to focus his attention on different ways of his mind. Presence of mind was first used at the University of Massachusetts by Kabat-Zinn (1982). In his stress reduction clinic, he gave the participants mental relaxation exercises along with presence of mind. These efforts led to the formation of the presence of mind model based on stress reduction ([Kazemian, 2014](#)). In general, mindfulness skills increase awareness, openness, clarity and acceptance of reality in the present. By being in the present, a person learns to examine the mind and realizes the fact that thoughts are just thoughts. At this stage, instead of clinging to his thoughts like in the past, he can let go of them and act consciously and can understand his situation and make timely decisions when faced with various issues ([Ajilchi & Nejati, 2017](#); [Kumari & Jain, 2014](#)). Results have shown that mindfulness training is effective on educational optimism, job burnout, and job stress ([Dixon et al., 2019](#); [Flook, Goldberg,](#)

[Pinger, Bonus, & Davidson, 2013](#); [Kemeny et al., 2012](#); [Napoli, 2004](#); [Roeser, Skinner, Beers, & Jennings, 2012](#)).

Considering the effectiveness of mindfulness training on psychological variables in previous researches, this research seeks to answer the question, "Is mindfulness-based stress reduction training effective on educational optimism, burnout, and job stress in secondary school teachers"?

## METHODOLOGY

The current research design is a semi-experimental type with control and experimental groups. The statistical population of the research was the teachers who were teaching in the first secondary level of Tehran, districts 10 and 11 in the academic year 2021-2022, 30 people were selected by the available sampling method and randomly divided into two experimental and control groups (15 people in each group), were assigned. Then mindfulness training based on stress reduction was implemented in 8 60-minute sessions on the experimental group and the control group did not receive any intervention.

Research tool;

*Teacher educational optimism questionnaire*: This is the question Ame was designed by Beard, Hoy, and Hoy (2010). The teacher's scientific optimism questionnaire has 11 questions and 3 subscales including: trust in students and parents (4 questions), scientific emphasis (4 questions) and teacher self-efficacy (3 questions), based on a range of 6 options from completely disagree to I strongly agree, adapted by W. K. Hoy, Tarter, and Hoy (2006). This questionnaire was translated by SepahMansour, Barati, and Behzadi (2016), and its validity and reliability have been confirmed. The scoring method of this questionnaire is a five-point Likert scale from very low to very high. In Beard et al. (2010), the reliability of this questionnaire was reported using Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.90. The reliability of this questionnaire was also reported using Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.90.

*Job burnout questionnaire*: This questionnaire was designed by Maslach and Jackson (1981), and has 22 items, and the scoring method of this questionnaire is a five-point Likert scale. Questions (20, 16, 14, 13, 8, 6, 3, 2, 1) are related to the emotional exhaustion subscale. Questions (22, 15, 11, 10, 5) are also related to the subscale of depersonalization and also questions (21, 19, 18, 17, 12, 9, 7, 4) are related to the lack of personal success subscale. Of course, questions (22, 20, 16, 15, 14, 13, 11, 10, 8, 6, 5, 3, 2, 1) (this questionnaire is for reverse grading and questions (21, 19, 18, 17, 12, 9, 7, 4) are calculated directly. The minimum score in this test is 22 and the maximum score is 110. Question number 23 measures job burnout in general. In the research of Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter (1997), they reported the internal validity for the items of mental fatigue, depersonalization and reduction of personal success as 0.90, 0.79 and 0.71, respectively.

*Occupational stress questionnaire of the Health and Safety Institute of England*: This questionnaire has 35 items with seven components designed by the Health and Safety Institute of England (1990). The scoring method of this questionnaire is in the form of a 5-point Likert scale (never = 1 to often = 5). A lower score indicates a higher stress level. The reliability of this questionnaire has been reported using Cronbach's alpha coefficient between 0.63 and 0.83. Azad Marzabadi and Gholami Shaharaki (2010), also reported the correlation coefficient of this questionnaire with the general health questionnaire - 0.48.

In the current study, the mindfulness training program was implemented in such a way that the subjects had a 2-hour training session every week, before the main training sessions, a session to explain the research, establish a good relationship, and conduct a pre-test. conducting tests) and collecting information about the problems that caused confusion, explaining the educational model of reducing stress based on mindfulness and creating hope in the clients.

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Table 1. Eight-week training program for mindfulness training taken from the book "Troublesome Life" ([Kabat-Zinn, 2001](#))

1st week	Justification and physical relaxation
2nd week	Breathing exercises (10 minutes a day).
3rd week	Appropriate body exercise and yoga (once in a while and even if possible 45 minutes)
Fourth week	Practice meditation with breathing in a seated position for 15 to 20 minutes a day.
Fifth week	Sitting and focusing on breathing, sitting for 30 to 45 minutes a day alternating with yoga, using breathing as a practice to control attention.
Sixth week	Paying attention to physical sensations, sounds, thoughts and feelings and more, start walking meditation
Seventh week	45 minutes of training per day (using a combination of sitting techniques, yoga and body scanning), if you used tapes, try not to use them this week.
Eighth week	Go back and use the bars. Do body relaxation at least 2 times this week. Continue to sit and do yoga.

## RESULTS

Table 2. Mean and standard deviation of the research variables in the experimental and control groups in the pre-test and post-test.

Group	-	Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
experiment	Pre - test	Educational optimism	31.21	7.25
		Burnout	75.45	12.67
		Job stress	36.45	9.47
	Post - test	Educational optimism	36.45	10.74
		Burnout	45.38	10.85
		Job stress	68.75	14.47
Control	Pre - test	Educational optimism	32.29	6.28
		Burnout	74.47	12.85
		Job stress	37.47	9.48
	Post - test	Educational optimism	29.33	6.29
		Burnout	74.85	12.68
		Job stress	73.48	12.48

The results of Table 2 show the mean and standard deviation of educational optimism, burnout and job stress in the two experimental and control groups in the pre-test and post-test stages. The results have shown that educational optimism increased in the post-test of the experimental group compared to the pre-test, and burnout and stress decreased, and these variables did not show significant differences in the control group in the pre-test and post-test stages.

To check the effectiveness of mindfulness training based on stress reduction on optimism, burnout and job stress in teachers, multivariate covariance analysis test was used. It means that  $p$  is greater than 0.05. Also, to check the homogeneity of the variances, the box test was used, the results show that  $p$  is greater than 0.05 and the condition of the homogeneity of the variances is met. Also, the results have shown that the assumption of homogeneity of the regression slopes was not violated because the interaction between the groups, the pre-test, was above the alpha level of 0.05. And you can use multivariate analysis of covariance test.

Table3. The results of covariance analysis to investigate the effect of mindfulness training based on stress reduction on educational optimism, burnout and job stress in the control and experimental groups by removing the pre-test effect

Source	Variable	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	P
group	After the educational optimism test	2754.968	1	2754.968	322.50	0.001
	After the burnout test	2214.6	1	2214.6	299.120	0.001
	Job stress test	220.892	1	220.892	161.93	0.001

error	After the educational optimism test	1094.937	20	54.747		
	After the burnout test	368.182	20	18.409		
	Job stress test	47.422	20	2.371		
Total	After the educational optimism test	200170	30			
	After the burnout test	124169	30	2754.986		
	Job stress test	10073	30	2214.6		

According to Table 3, considering that the significance level obtained in the group is less than 0.05 ( $p < 0.05$ ), it can be said that mindfulness based on reducing stress is effective on teachers' educational optimism, burnout and job stress.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of the current research was to "investigate the effectiveness of mindfulness-based stress reduction training on educational optimism, burnout and job stress in secondary school teachers." The results have shown that mindfulness training based on stress reduction is effective in increasing educational optimism and reducing job burnout and stress. The results of the present study are in agreement with the research findings of Napoli (2004), Kemeny et al. (2012), Flook et al. (2013), Roeser et al. (2012), Ryan and Brown (2003).

In explaining these findings, it can be said that since teacher burnout is a very important issue because it affects the quality of teaching and leads to job dissatisfaction, alienation from work, problems in the field of physical and emotional health, and again from Since teachers work under chronic work stress conditions for long periods of time, they may be more vulnerable to burnout. During the exercises related to mindfulness and body inspection, the teachers' mental fatigue and exhaustion are directly worked on, and with each exercise, they experience a feeling of lightness and release from tension. Another reason for the effectiveness of mindfulness in this study is that this process leads to a cognitive change in the patient's way of thinking and acting. It benefits from the principles of reinforcement. In this way, seeing the affected person at a higher level, this desire continuously improves and calms the mind of the employees ([Roeser et al., 2012](#)).

The use of these types of emotional regulation strategies is probably the basic mechanism to explain the effectiveness of mindfulness in reducing job burnout and work stress. In particular, the important aspects of mindfulness-based therapy in the group of teachers are that this group learns to rely on their perceptions and emotions to guide their thoughts to be and stay in the present and to reject thoughts of irrational beliefs and negative emotions and to deal with them. experience the mind in a positive way and improve their general and psychological health in addition to creating career and organizational growth. When participants learn to be aware of their mental processes, for example, their emotions, behaviors, and cognitive tendencies, they are able to avoid negative self-evaluation. When our awareness of the workings of our mind increases, our ability to stand back and observe states such as anxiety increases. , fear and fatigue can be controlled, but we can use the information arising from these states and be with the emotions and thus increase the personal and organizational performance ([Ryan & Brown, 2003](#)).

On the other hand, considering that there are very limited researches regarding the effectiveness of mindfulness on educational optimism, the findings of this research show that mindfulness training based on stress reduction can have a positive effect on teachers' educational optimism. In explaining the results obtained, it can be said that mindfulness training gives a person the opportunity to be more accepting of students and accept them without prejudicial and negative judgments. It also encourages people to become kinder and more sensitive to the needs of others. In fact, by increasing the capacity of people in self-awareness of empathic concerns and emotional regulation, it can provide a foundation for increasing the communication capacity of

teachers. Teachers' educational optimism as a variable of positive beliefs can have a significant impact on educational planning and interaction with students and their learning process through strengthening the teacher's sense of agency. According to the findings of this hypothesis, it can be said that teachers who have enough skills to analyze the results and believe that all learners can learn and have a good belief about the scientific work done by the school staff. In such a situation, teachers who have a correct judgment about their abilities to achieve the desired results are likely to be more proficient in the field of work and show more effort in the field of student success. They also trust students and parents and establish a relationship with them based on friendship, respect and trust, which makes them feel satisfied. Therefore, considering the important and vital role of the teacher in the classroom as the leader of the class in consolidating students' learning and improving their emotional and social status, paying attention to teachers' stress and reducing it is always one of the important and fundamental issues in education. As it was observed, one of the strategies to increase optimism in teachers is to use mindfulness exercises.

On the other hand, since the teaching profession has many situations of fatigue and burnout, job stress and negative spontaneous thoughts. Through mindfulness exercises and careful observation of inner reality, a person realizes that optimism is a quality that is dependent on external elements and changes in the outside world, and it happens when teachers are dependent on negative thoughts, taking positions and pre-determined mental programs. Let go as a result of their behaviors, they will abandon what they do to reach pleasurable situations or escape from painful situations and reach liberation. Based on these predictions, these are the people who imagine. They pay attention to their inner world, they are beautiful and they pay attention and curiosity to arts and beauty. Based on this, mindfulness can be effective in appointing and promoting personal and educational optimism through providing a framework to blame and describe the experiences of life and being here and now and providing a sense of coherence and interconnectedness of their existence. In other words, the mind creates a coherent belief that makes teachers aware of their own plan of existence and, while communicating with parents and trusting students, creates personal motivation and organizational growth, life expectancy, and increases individual performance. This structure makes people benefit from this resource provided as a support base that can be relied on and as a result, their effectiveness increases.

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