

# **Assessing the Impact of Mindfulness Training on Well-being in the Workplace**

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This project aimed to investigate the impact of mindfulness training on well-being, perceived stress, and quality of life in a small group of North Wales Housing employees. Previous research, mostly with clinical populations, has indicated that mindfulness practice is associated with various positive outcomes related to well-being (e.g., Hofmann et al., 2010). It was hypothesised that similar beneficial effects would be observable in the workplace setting.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Participants were employees of the North Wales Housing organisation and were invited to take part in the study prior to undertaking a course in Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). Informed consent was obtained from each participant before the start of the study. Ten participants (9 of whom were women) opted to participate. Participants were aged between 30 and 59 years ( $M = 44.33$ ,  $SD = 11.67$ ). The study was reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee in the School of Psychology, Bangor University prior to start of the participant recruitment.

## **Measures**

Participants completed four Likert-type scale questionnaires before and after the MBSR course: the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS), a 14 item scale assessing positive aspects of mental health experienced in the previous two weeks (Tennant et al., 2007); the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ), a 39 item scale assessing skills associated with mindfulness: observing, describing, acting with awareness, non-judging of inner experience, and non-reactivity to inner experience (Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer, & Toney, 2006); the brief version of the World Health Organisation Quality of Life questionnaire (WHOQOL-BREF), comprising of 26 items assessing the four domains of physical health, psychological well-being, social relationships, and environment, as well as general quality of life and health as experienced in the last month (The WHOQOL Group, 1998); and the ten item version of the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) assessing the prevalence of thoughts and feelings associated with stress in the previous month (Cohen & Williamson, 1988).

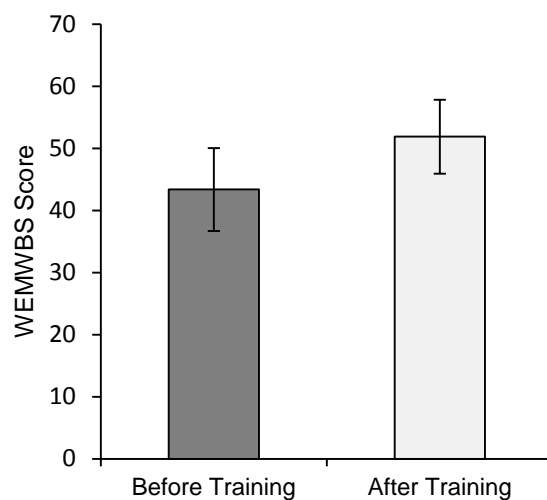
## **Procedure**

Participants attended the standard 8-week MBSR course, funded by their employer. The course was taught by a qualified mindfulness trainer with over 15 years of experience in MBSR teaching. At the beginning of the first session of the course participants completed the four questionnaires assessing variables related to well-being. At the end of the last session of the course participants completed the same four questionnaires.

## Results

Paired-samples t-tests assessed the differences in participants' ratings of variables relating to well-being before and after completing mindfulness training.

There was a significant difference in participants' ratings of well-being before ( $M = 43.4$ ,  $SD = 6.67$ ) and after ( $M = 51.9$ ,  $SD = 5.94$ ) completing the course, as measured by the WEMWBS (Tennant et al., 2007),  $t(9) = -3.98$ ,  $p = .003$ .



*Figure 1.* Mean WEMWBS scores before and after mindfulness training. Error bars denote the standard deviation.

Using the mean of the facet scores measured by the FFMQ (Baer et al., 2006), a paired-samples t-test indicated a significant difference in participants' overall mindfulness before ( $M = 23.76$ ,  $SD = 3.33$ ) and after ( $M = 28.22$ ,  $SD = 2.93$ ) completing the course,  $t(9) = -5.25$ ,  $p = .001$ . More specifically, there were significant differences in observing,  $t(9) = -6.03$ ,  $p < .001$ , acting with awareness,  $t(9) = -4.69$ ,  $p = .001$ , and non-judging of inner experience,  $t(9) = -2.37$ ,  $p = .042$ .

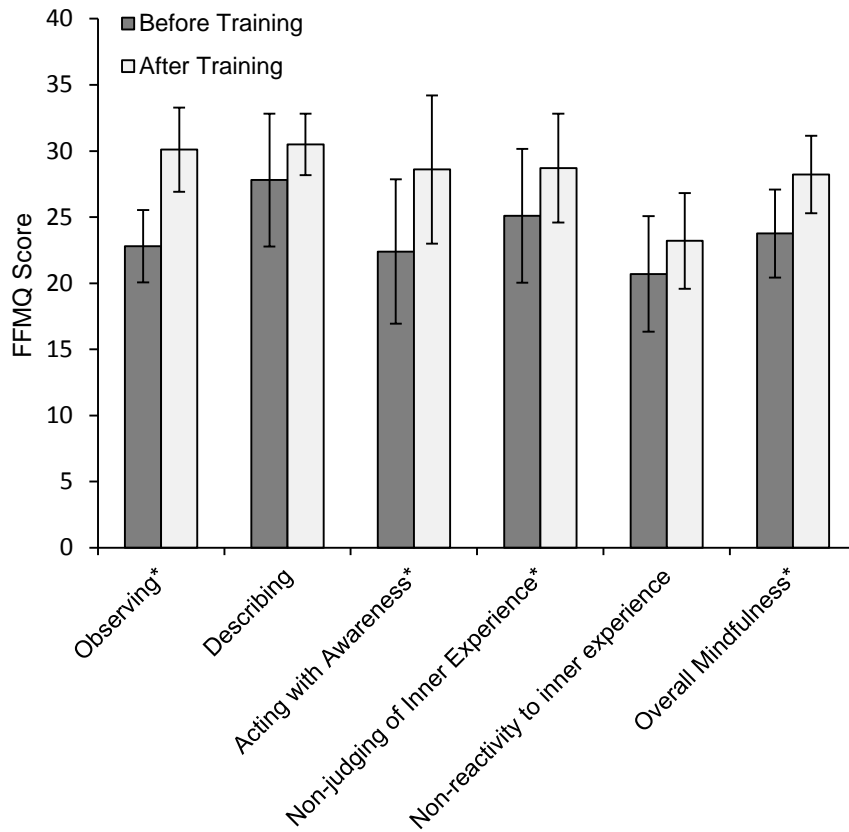


Figure 2. Mean FFMQ scores before and after mindfulness training. Asterisks denote significant difference. Error bars denote the standard deviation.

Upon completing the course in MBSR, participants’ overall mindfulness according to the FFMQ (Baer et al., 2006), strongly correlated with their well-being as reported by the WEMWBS (Tennant et al., 2007),  $r = .78, p = .007$ .

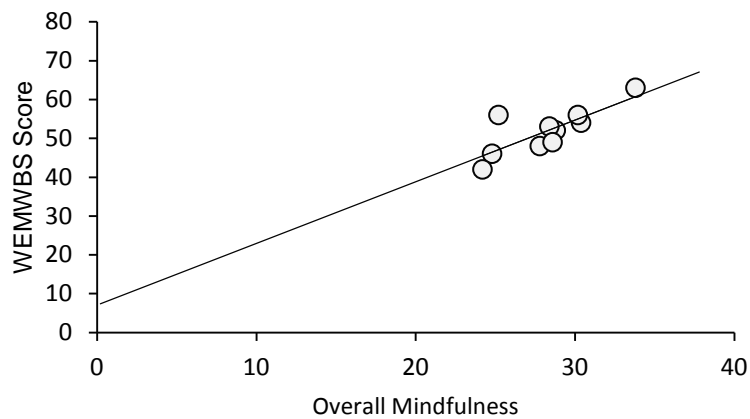
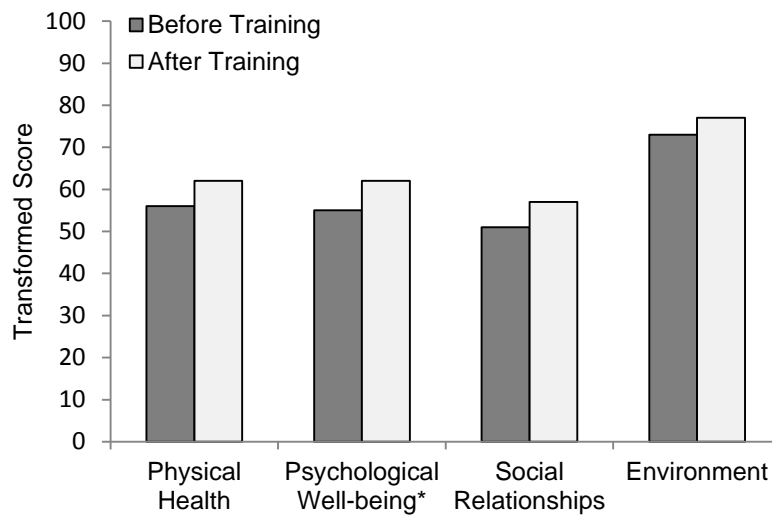


Figure 3. Positive correlation between mean facet scores on FFMQ, compared to mean WEMWBS scores after mindfulness training.

Paired-samples t-tests were used to assess the differences in the domains associated with quality of life, as measured by the WHOQOL-BREF (The WHOQOL Group, 1998). Mindfulness training was associated with increased quality of life, with a significant difference participants' psychological quality of life,  $t(9) = -2.39, p = .041$ .



*Figure 4.* Mean transformed scores for each of the four domains measured by the WHOQOL-BREF before and after mindfulness training. Asterisk denotes significant difference.

Significant improvements in participants' general rating of quality of life,  $t(9) = -4.58, p = .001$ , and health  $t(9) = -2.71, p = .024$ , as measured by the WHOQOL-BREF (The WHOQOL Group, 1998) were also observed.

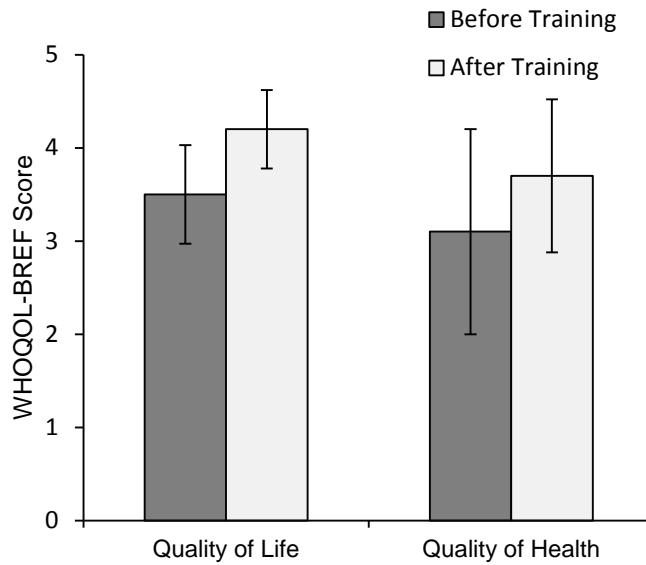


Figure 5. Mean ratings on items 1 and 2 of the WHOQOL-BREF. Error bars denote the standard deviation.

A paired-samples t-test indicated a significant decrease in participants' ratings of stress before ( $M = 21.80, SD = 5.75$ ) and after ( $M = 13.70, SD = 5.56$ ) completing the course, as measured by the PSS (Cohen & Williamson, 1988),  $t(9) = 4.16, p = .002$ .

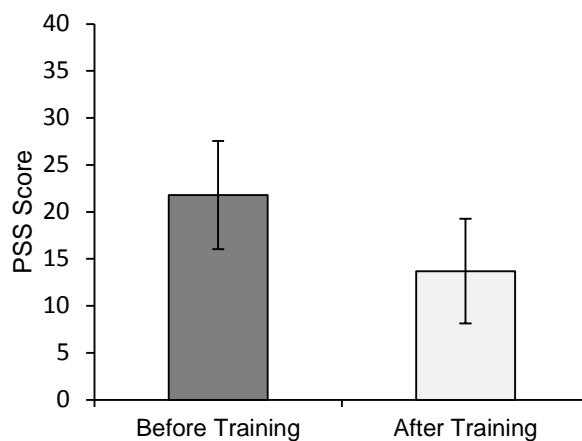


Figure 6. Mean PSS Scores before and after mindfulness training. Error bars denote the standard deviation.

In summary, the mindfulness training resulted in positive changes in self-reports on all four measures.

## Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that mindfulness training can have a positive impact on well-being in the workplace context. After completing the MBSR course, the employees reported increased well-being, higher levels of mindfulness, better quality of life, and less perceived stress. These positive outcomes are not only personally beneficial, but could be beneficial to employers, with employees taking less time off due to sickness (to be assessed in future studies) , and to clients, for whom effective support is vital.

## References

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