

**Title: Assessing the role of mindfulness in protecting against maladaptive COVID-19 fears and behaviors**

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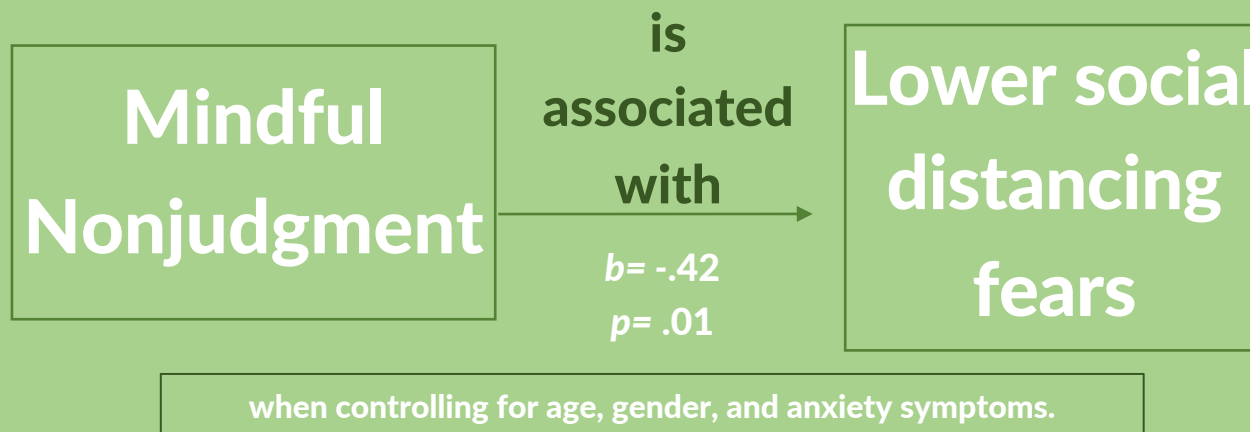
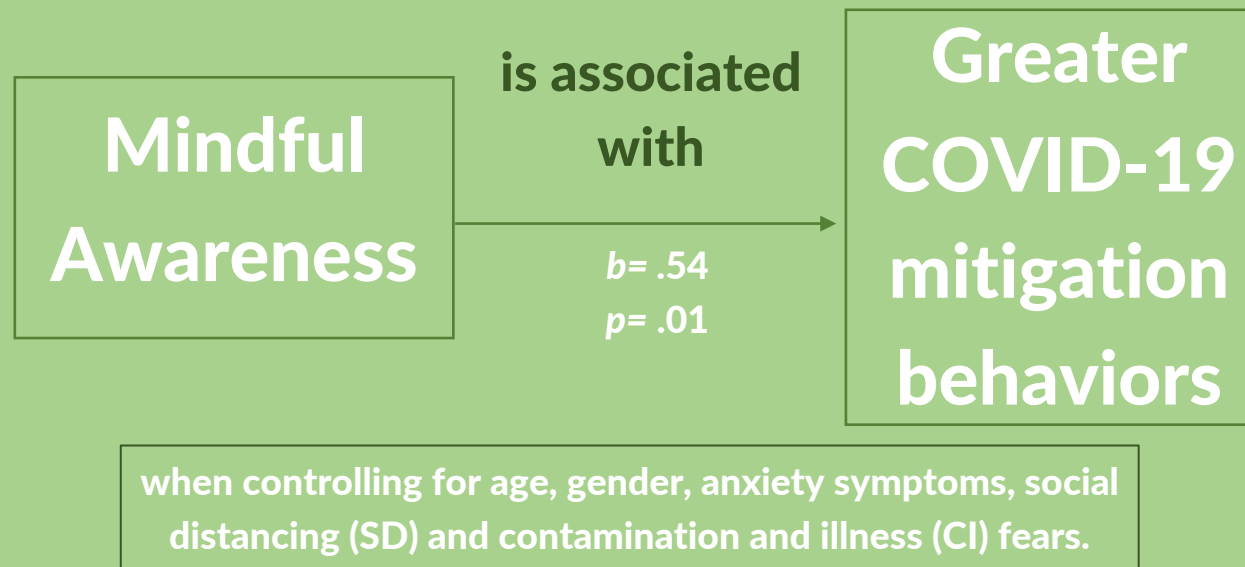
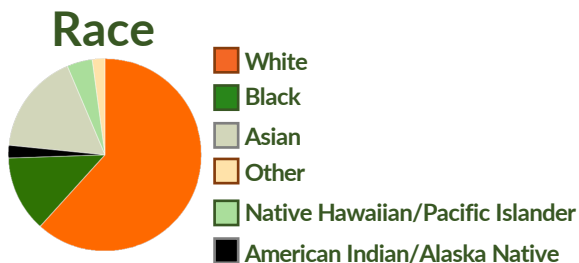
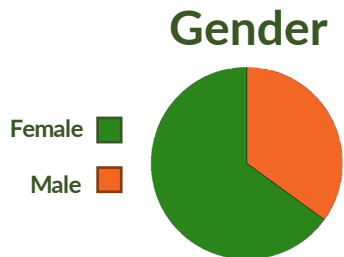
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**BACKGROUND**

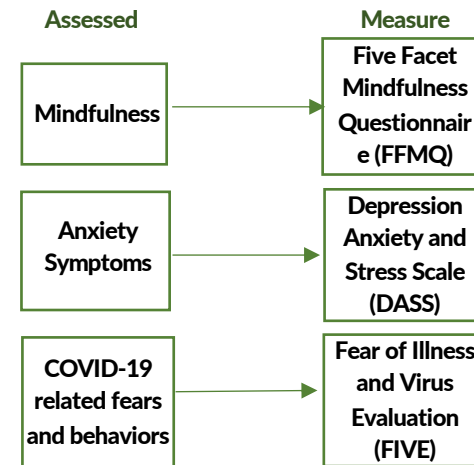
- Greater COVID-19 fears are associated with greater reported psychopathology (Belen, 2020).
- Greater mindfulness is related to fewer symptoms of anxiety and depression (Pearson, 2015).
- Mindfulness skills have been the target of brief interventions for increased anxiety and distress during COVID-19 (Ehrenreich-May, et. al., under review).
- We investigate the role of mindfulness in mitigating COVID-19 fears at study baseline amongst individuals with pre-existent risk factors for psychopathology (i.e., poor distress tolerance).

**METHODS**

41 undergraduate students ( $M=18.8$  years,  $SD= 1.10$ ) at risk for psychopathology were recruited for a larger study between August and October 2020.



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Hierarchical linear regressions used to examine the relationship between FFMQ and FIVE scales controlling for age, gender and DASS ratings of this sample at baseline time point.

**Hypotheses**

Greater mindfulness skill use will be associated with the COVID-19 fears and behaviors on the FIVE, specifically:

- Fewer contamination and illness (CI) fears
- Fewer social distancing (SD) fears
- Greater mitigation or adaptive behaviors
- Fewer avoidance or maladaptive behaviors

When controlling for anxiety symptoms.

**RESULTS**

- Results support the finding that greater mindfulness skills are associated with more adaptive responses to COVID-19 above and beyond anxiety, gender and age.
- Contrary to our hypotheses, mindfulness was not associated with contamination and illness (CI) fears or avoidance behaviors.
- Results reinforce the use of mindfulness strategies in supporting SD measures and other adaptive COVID-19 behaviors.

**DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION**

- Limitations include a small sample size, as well as a cross-sectional design.
- Future research should investigate the longitudinal association between mindfulness and COVID-19 related fears to better understand the potential benefits of mindfulness interventions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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