#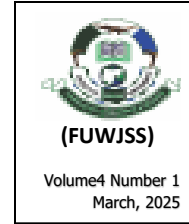 MINDFULNESS-BASED STRENGTHS PRACTICE (MBSP) AND ENHANCEMENT OF PERSONAL SECURITY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE AMONG FEMALE STUDENTS OF AL-QALAM UNIVERSITY, KATSINA, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The personal security and psychological well-being of female students in Nigerian universities are increasingly under threat, with issues such as sexual harassment, anxiety, and feelings of vulnerability becoming prevalent. At Al-Qalam University, Katsina, these challenges highlight the need for effective interventions to enhance students' resilience and emotional stability. Mindfulness-Based Strengths Practice (MBSP), a structured programme that integrates mindfulness techniques with the cultivation of individual character strengths, offers a holistic approach to addressing these concerns. This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to evaluate the effectiveness of MBSP in improving the psychological resilience and sense of security among female students. The quantitative component assesses changes in psychological well-being and perceived safety, while the qualitative component explores personal experiences and insights regarding MBSP's impact. Guided by Positive Psychology and the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping Theory, the study examines how mindfulness and strength-based practices influence behavioral, emotional, and cognitive responses to security concerns. Findings reveal that MBSP enhances self-awareness, emotional regulation, and confidence, empowering students to manage stressors effectively. The study concludes that MBSP is a promising intervention for fostering psychological well-being among female students in Nigeria universities. The study recommends the integration of MBSP into university support systems. By addressing both internal and external dimensions of personal security, MBSP offers a sustainable strategy for improving the overall quality of life for female students in Nigerian universities.

Keywords: MBSP, personal security, psychological well-being, female students, resilience

Introduction

Concerns about personal security and psychological well-being among female students in Nigerian universities have become increasingly prominent. At Al-Qalam University, Katsina, these challenges manifest through reports of harassment, anxiety about safety, and feelings of vulnerability among female undergraduate students. Many students experience fear while commuting within and outside the university premises, particularly in isolated areas. Incidents of verbal and physical harassment have been documented, leading to heightened stress levels and a diminished sense of security. Additionally, the pressure of academic demands, coupled with concerns about personal safety, contributes to increased psychological distress, negatively impacting students' concentration, social interactions, and overall well-being.

Personal security extends beyond physical safety; it also encompasses mental resilience and the ability to navigate stressful environments with confidence. Female students at Al-Qalam University often struggle with limited coping mechanisms to manage their anxieties and fears, making it essential to introduce interventions that enhance psychological resilience. A recurring phenomenon among female students is the sudden collapse, often attributed to Jinn attacks or Baazare episodes. These incidents commonly occur during examinations, in hostels, or during lecture hours, raising concerns about their psychological, environmental, or sociocultural triggers. The frequency and impact of these occurrences necessitate a systematic investigation to uncover their underlying causes and broader implications for students' well-being.

This study explores the effectiveness of Mindfulness-Based Strengths Practice (MBSP), an intervention that integrates mindfulness techniques with character strengths to enhance self-awareness, emotional regulation, and resilience. By equipping students with mindfulness strategies and strengths-based approaches, MBSP aims to empower female students to manage security-related anxieties and improve overall psychological well-being. The research seeks to evaluate the impact of MBSP on psychological resilience and perceived safety among female students at Al-Qalam University, contributing to evidence-based strategies for improving student welfare.

Mindfulness-Based Strengths Practice (MBSP) refers to a structured programme combining mindfulness techniques with the identification and enhancement of individual character strengths to improve mental health and well-being. Recent studies highlight its effectiveness in promoting positive mental health among female undergraduates (Niemiec, 2023; Zhang et al., 2021).

Personal security connotes the protection of individuals from physical harm, psychological threats, and emotional distress. It involves external safety measures as well as internal psychological resilience to cope with potential dangers. While research on personal security remains limited, it is a key component of human security and well-being (UNDP, 1994).

Psychological well-being is a state of mental health characterized by positive emotions, life satisfaction, and effective daily functioning. It includes aspects such as self-acceptance, personal growth, and purpose in life. Mindfulness-based interventions have been found to significantly enhance mental health in non-clinical settings (Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Zhang et al., 2021).

Female students are individuals who identify as women and are enrolled in educational institutions. They often face unique challenges, including gender-based discrimination and safety concerns, which can impact their academic experiences and well-being (Odejide, 2003).

Resilience is the ability to adapt to adversity, maintain psychological stability, and recover from stress. It involves utilising personal strengths and coping strategies to navigate challenges effectively. Research indicates that mindfulness-based interventions can enhance resilience, particularly among students (Masten, 2001).

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The integration of mindfulness and strengths-based practices has been grounded in positive psychology and mindfulness theories. Positive psychology emphasizes fostering human strengths and well-being rather than merely addressing deficits (Seligman, & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Mindfulness-Based Strengths Practice (MBSP), as conceptualized by Niemiec (2014), integrates mindfulness—the non-judgmental awareness of the present moment—with the identification and application of character strengths, offering a holistic approach to personal development.

Mindfulness, derived from Buddhist traditions and adapted into modern psychology, focuses on enhancing present-moment awareness and reducing reactivity to external threats (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). It supports personal security by enabling individuals to remain calm, make rational decisions in stressful situations, and mitigate feelings of vulnerability. Character strengths, defined as positive traits reflected in thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, are central to psychological resilience(Peterson, & Seligman, 2004). The MBSP framework posits that identifying and leveraging these strengths can enhance coping mechanisms, foster self-efficacy, and build a foundation for psychological resilience.

The role of MBSP in enhancing personal security and resilience is particularly relevant for female students, who often face unique challenges

such as harassment and safety concerns (Odejide, 2003). Feminist theories underline the importance of empowering women to develop intrinsic strengths and resilience to navigate patriarchal societal structures (Gilligan, 1982).

Empirical studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of mindfulness-based interventions in improving psychological well-being. For instance, a meta-analysis by (Khoury., Lecomte, Fortin, Masse, Therien, Bouchard, Chapleau, Paquin, & Hofmann, (2013) revealed that mindfulness practices significantly reduce stress, anxiety, and depression across diverse populations. Specifically, in academic settings, mindfulness has been shown to enhance emotional regulation and mental clarity (Phan, Renshaw, Caramanico, Greeson, MacKenzie, Atkinson-Diaz, Doppelt, Tai, Mandell, 2022). Research on MBSP is growing, with studies indicating its potential to enhance resilience. Niemiec (2019) reported that participants in MBSP programs showed improved self-awareness and an increased ability to manage stressors by applying character strengths. Similarly, a study by Allan, McKenna, & Dominey, (2021) highlighted that MBSP interventions improved resilience and coping mechanisms among university students. Studies focusing on female students' experiences with safety and psychological well-being emphasize the intersection of external threats and internal coping mechanisms. For example, Shields, Ryan, & Lynch, (2018) found that mindfulness-based programs tailored to women's needs significantly improved their confidence in navigating unsafe environments. Moreover, Goyal, Singh & Sibinga, (2020) highlighted the value of mindfulness in promoting a sense of control and security in vulnerable populations.

Theoretical Framework: Positive Psychology and the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping

This study employs two well-suited theories—the Positive Psychology Theory and the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping—to assess the role of Mindfulness-Based Strengths Practice (MBSP) in enhancing personal security and psychological resilience among female students.

The **Positive Psychology Theory,** propounded by Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi (2000), emphasises building strengths and nurturing well-being rather than merely addressing deficits or disorders. It closely aligns with MBSP, which integrates mindfulness and character strengths to promote psychological resilience, self-awareness, and personal security. The theory supports the notion that leveraging character strengths and mindfulness fosters greater well-being and resilience, particularly in stressful environments. It also highlights the importance of cultivating optimism, self-efficacy, and a sense of purpose among female students,

equipping them to navigate challenges with confidence. Within this context, the theory explains how MBSP nurtures positive emotional states and mental resilience, thereby enhancing personal security and reducing feelings of vulnerability.

The **Transactional Model of Stress and Coping,** introduced by Lazarus & Folkman (1984), views stress as the result of an interaction between an individual and their environment, emphasising the processes of appraisal and coping. MBSP aligns with this model by providing mindfulness and character strengths as tools to assess and manage stress effectively. Female students often encounter stressors related to personal security and academic demands, making adaptive coping strategies essential. The model explains how MBSP fosters stress reduction by promoting mindfulness and strength-based coping mechanisms. It underscores the significance of internal resources, such as resilience and mindfulness, in shaping how individuals perceive and respond to stressful situations. This theory underpins how MBSP helps students reframe threats, enhance emotional regulation, and develop proactive coping strategies, ultimately fostering both security and resilience.

Together, these theories offer a strong foundation for understanding the mechanisms through which MBSP enhances personal security and psychological resilience, providing insights into both individual growth and adaptive strategies.

The Intersection of Personal Security and Mindfulness-Based Strengths Practice (MBSP)

The intersection of personal security and Mindfulness-Based Strengths Practice (MBSP) lies in their shared focus on fostering safety, resilience, and empowerment. Personal security encompasses both physical safety and psychological well-being, ensuring individuals feel protected and confident in managing challenges. MBSP integrates mindfulness practices with character strengths, addressing these dimensions holistically. By enhancing psychological resilience, MBSP helps individuals regulate emotions and manage stress. For female students, who may experience insecurity and harassment, mindfulness fosters emotional stability and a sense of control. The practice also enhances situational awareness, enabling individuals to recognise and respond effectively to potential threats, thereby reducing risks and improving vigilance.

Anxiety and vulnerability linked to personal security concerns are alleviated through MBSP. By cultivating self-awareness and emphasising strengths such as courage and perseverance, participants develop confidence and reduce fear. The practice also reinforces social connectedness, encouraging the use of interpersonal strengths like kindness and teamwork

to build supportive networks. MBSP promotes adaptive coping strategies, equipping individuals with effective ways to manage insecurity-related stressors. Mindfulness aids in controlling fear, while strengths such as prudence and bravery guide appropriate responses to challenges. Ultimately, MBSP empowers individuals to feel secure by fostering psychological resilience and practical preparedness, enabling female students to navigate their environments with confidence and agency.

The proportional distribution of the adjusted populations for the department's sample size

Department	Population	Sample Size
Sociology	400	92
Political Science	450	103
Economics	200	46
Business Administration	150	34
Accounting	150	34

Total Population: 1,350
Total Sample Size: 309
The frequency and percentage distribution to each department

Department	Sample Size (Frequency)	Percentage (%)
Sociology	92	29.77%
Political Science	103	33.33%
Economics	46	14.88%
Business Administration	34	11.00%
Accounting	34	11.00%

The total percentage is **100%**, ensuring the proportional distribution aligns with the sample size.

Percentages Across the Departments

Department	Very Safe	Safe	Neutral	Unsafe	Very Unsafe	Total
Sociology	**37 (40%)**	**28 (30%)**	**14 (15%)**	**9 (10%)**	**5 (5%)**	**92**
Political Science	**41 (40%)**	**31 (30%)**	**15 (15%)**	**10 (10%)**	**6 (5%)**	**103**
Economics	**18 (40%)**	**14 (30%)**	**7 (15%)**	**5 (10%)**	**2 (5%)**	**46**
Business Admin	**14 (40%)**	**10 (30%)**	**5 (15%)**	**3 (10%)**	**2 (5%)**	**34**
Accounting	**14 (40%)**	**10 (30%)**	**5 (15%)**	**3 (10%)**	**2 (5%)**	**34**

Interpretation and Discussion of Findings Using Positive Psychology and the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping

The findings reveal that the majority of respondents (70%) across all departments perceive their campus environment as safe, with 40% selecting "Very Safe" and 30% choosing "Safe." This positive perception can be interpreted through the lens of Positive Psychology, which emphasises well-being, optimism, and resilience. The majority's perception of safety contributes to a positive campus experience, enhancing their academic engagement, mental well-being, and overall satisfaction. Positive emotions, such as feeling safe, are linked to improved cognitive functioning and social interactions, reinforcing a healthy learning environment.

From the perspective of the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, individuals continuously evaluate their environment through primary and secondary appraisals. The high percentage of students who feel safe suggests that they appraise campus safety as a manageable, non-threatening aspect of their daily experience. As a result, their coping strategies may involve maintaining routine behaviors without significant stress responses. Their belief in the effectiveness of campus security measures might also contribute to this positive appraisal.

However, 15% of respondents indicated a "Neutral" stance, suggesting uncertainty about their safety. This could be due to situational factors, such as occasional security lapses or indirect exposure to safety concerns. According to the Transactional Model, these individuals may be in a state of secondary appraisal, where they are evaluating whether available coping resources (such as campus security presence or peer support) are sufficient to ensure their safety. Their perception might shift positively or negatively depending on further experiences or security-related information.

A smaller proportion (15%) expressed concerns about safety, with 10% selecting "Unsafe" and 5% choosing "Very Unsafe." These students likely experience heightened stress responses due to perceived threats or past negative experiences. The Transactional Model suggests that such individuals may engage in problem-focused coping strategies, such as reporting safety concerns or altering their routines to avoid risky areas. Others might adopt emotion-focused coping, which could include seeking reassurance from peers or developing resilience strategies to manage stress. Persistent feelings of insecurity could negatively affect their academic performance, social engagement, and mental health.

The uniform distribution of responses across departments indicates a broadly shared perception of safety on campus, suggesting that security measures and student experiences are relatively consistent. However, departments with larger sample sizes, such as Sociology and Political Science, show slightly higher absolute numbers of respondents who feel unsafe. This could be attributed to increased awareness of security issues, greater exposure to diverse opinions, or specific departmental locations on campus that may be perceived as more vulnerable.

Applying Positive Psychology, interventions should aim to strengthen students' sense of security by reinforcing existing safety measures and promoting awareness of campus resources. Encouraging a positive safety culture through peer-led initiatives, safety campaigns, and increased visibility of security personnel can enhance feelings of well-being. Meanwhile, from the Transactional Model perspective, ensuring access to appropriate coping mechanisms, such as safety escorts, emergency communication channels, and counseling services, can help students manage stress related to safety concerns. While the overall perception of safety on campus is positive, addressing the concerns of the minority who feel unsafe is essential. A combination of positive reinforcement strategies and targeted coping interventions can enhance students' sense of security and well-being, contributing to a more supportive academic environment.

Thematic Analysis of Interview Responses: FGD/SMS Student/Al-Qalam and IDI/SMS Student/Al-Qalam

Theme	FGD Response	IDI Response	Interpretation
Perception of Campus Safety	Participants feel safe during the day due to visible security but express concerns about poorly lit, isolated areas in the evening.	The respondent feels safe during the day but avoids certain areas after lectures due to poor lighting and isolation.	A sense of daytime safety is consistent, but infrastructural gaps like inadequate lighting contribute to evening insecurity.
Self-Protection Strategies	Students walk in groups and avoid secluded areas to enhance safety.	The respondent uses prayer and heightened alertness as personal coping mechanisms for managing safety-related anxiety.	Adaptive behaviors show a proactive approach to personal security, reflecting a need for individual strategies in the absence of external measures.
Awareness and Application of Mindfulness Practices	Participants see the potential benefits of mindfulness but report limited exposure to such practices, expressing interest in learning them.	The respondent recalls previous exposure to mindfulness techniques, like breathing exercises, and finds them effective for stress management.	There is a shared recognition of mindfulness as a valuable tool for managing anxiety and enhancing resilience, though exposure varies.
Need for Combined Interventions	Participants emphasize the need for both mindfulness training and physical security measures, such as improved lighting and increased patrols.	The respondent advocates for integrating mindfulness programs with infrastructural upgrades to address safety concerns comprehensively.	Both responses advocate for a dual approach, integrating psychological and physical safety measures to address security challenges effectively.

Empowerment and Community Well-Being	Participants stress the importance of resilience-building programs and collaboration with authorities to improve campus safety.	The respondent highlights empowerment through mindfulness and infrastructure improvements, envisioning a secure and supportive campus environment.	Both responses underscore the importance of empowerment and shared responsibility in creating a secure and supportive campus community.

Discussion of Findings

Applying the Positive Psychology Theory and the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping

The thematic analysis of the interview responses from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) at Al-Qalam University, Katsina, highlights key concerns regarding campus safety, coping strategies, and the role of mindfulness in stress management. These findings can be interpreted through the lens of **Positive Psychology Theory** and the **Transactional Model of Stress and Coping,** both of which provide insight into students' resilience and adaptive strategies in response to security-related stressors.

Perception of Campus Safety: The findings reveal that students feel relatively safe during the day due to visible security presence but express concerns about poorly lit and isolated areas in the evening. This aligns with the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping**,** which posits that individuals assess potential threats (primary appraisal) and determine available coping mechanisms (secondary appraisal). In this case, students recognize the lack of adequate lighting as a threat, leading to heightened stress levels and the need for avoidance behaviors. Addressing these concerns through infrastructural improvements, such as increased lighting and security patrols, would reduce perceived threats and promote a greater sense of safety.

Self-Protection Strategies: Students employ various self-protection strategies, such as walking in groups and using prayer to manage security-related anxiety. These behaviors reflect **problem-focused coping** (e.g., walking in groups) and **emotion-focused coping** (e.g., prayer and heightened alertness), both key concepts in the **Transactional Model of Stress and Coping**. Additionally, **Positive Psychology Theory** emphasizes the role of strengths such as optimism, resilience, and emotional regulation in fostering well-being. The reliance on faith-based coping and proactive

safety measures demonstrates students' capacity to adapt, reinforcing the need for structured interventions that further develop these strengths.

Awareness and Application of Mindfulness Practices: The responses suggest that while students recognize the potential benefits of mindfulness for stress management, many have limited exposure to such practices. Some students who had prior experience with mindfulness techniques, such as breathing exercises, found them useful in reducing anxiety. This finding supports **Positive Psychology Theory**, which advocates for cultivating personal strengths, including mindfulness, to enhance emotional well-being. By integrating mindfulness into students' daily routines, they can develop greater self-awareness and resilience, equipping them with adaptive coping mechanisms for managing security-related stressors.

Need for Combined Interventions: Both FGD and IDI participants stress the need for a dual approach, integrating mindfulness training with tangible security improvements, such as better lighting and increased security patrols. This aligns with the **Transactional Model of Stress and Coping**, which highlights the importance of **both problem-focused (structural safety measures) and emotion-focused (psychological resilience) coping strategies**. Similarly, **Positive Psychology Theory** supports interventions that not only address external threats but also build internal strengths, promoting a holistic approach to well-being.

Empowerment and Community Well-Being: Students emphasize the need for resilience-building programs and collaboration with authorities to enhance campus safety. This finding resonates with **Positive Psychology Theory**, which highlights the role of empowerment in fostering well-being and community cohesion. By creating a supportive campus environment that integrates student participation, security reforms, and psychological interventions, students can experience a greater sense of control over their well-being. Additionally, the **Transactional Model of Stress and Coping** underscores the importance of collective coping mechanisms, such as community engagement, in mitigating shared stressors. The findings demonstrate that students' responses to campus security challenges are shaped by their cognitive appraisal of threats and their coping strategies, as explained by the **Transactional Model of Stress and Coping**. At the same time, **Positive Psychology Theory** highlights the potential for resilience, empowerment, and strengths-based interventions to enhance psychological well-being. By integrating mindfulness-based programs with structural security improvements, universities can foster both psychological resilience

and a safer campus environment, ensuring that students feel secure and empowered in their academic and social lives.

A Glimpse into Physical Security and Psychological Resilience Through a Dual Approach

Students generally feel safe on campus during the day due to the presence of visible security personnel; however, concerns arise over poorly lit and isolated areas at night, underscoring the need for improved infrastructure. To enhance their safety, they adopt various self-protection strategies, such as walking in groups or relying on personal coping mechanisms like prayer and heightened alertness, demonstrating proactive responses to perceived risks.

While mindfulness is recognised as beneficial for stress management, there is a gap in awareness and training, with participants expressing a keen interest in learning these techniques. Both groups advocate for a dual approach to safety, integrating mindfulness programmes with physical security measures such as improved lighting and increased patrols. Empowerment through resilience-building initiatives and collaboration with authorities is seen as essential in fostering a secure campus environment. Overall, the responses highlight the importance of shared responsibility, emphasising the need to address both psychological and physical safety concerns to create a supportive and cohesive community

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study underscores the significant role of **Mindfulness-Based Strengths Practice (MBSP)** in enhancing personal security and psychological resilience among female students. Grounded in **Positive Psychology Theory** and the **Transactional Model of Stress and Coping**, MBSP adopts positive safety appraisals, equips students with mindfulness-based coping mechanisms, and controls their individual strengths. This approach contributes to a safer and more supportive campus environment by reducing the psychological burden of security concerns and empowering students to navigate stressors proactively. These findings call for integrating MBSP into broader campus safety initiatives, ensuring not only visible security measures but also programs that build psychological resilience and promotes a sense of support among students. By combining environmental security improvements with strengths-based practices, campuses can create a holistic safety framework that promotes both physical well-being and mental health, empowering students to succeed in their academic and personal lives.

To Enhanced Security Measures by increasing the visibility of security personnel's presence, particularly in areas identified as hotspots by students,

to alleviate concerns among those feeling "Unsafe" or "Very Unsafe." Install or improve lighting, surveillance cameras, and emergency response systems to reinforce a sense of safety across campus. To integrate Mindfulness-Based Strengths Practice (MBSP) by organizing MBSP workshops for students, focusing on mindfulness, emotional regulation, and proactive behaviors to enhance their resilience and personal security. Incorporate MBSP activities into orientation programs to equip new students with coping strategies for safety-related stress. To Launch safety awareness campaigns emphasizing the importance of mindfulness, personal security strategies, and community vigilance. Create platforms for students to report safety concerns or suggest improvements, ensuring their voices are heard and acted upon.

To develop targeted programs for students feeling "Neutral," "Unsafe," or "Very Unsafe," addressing their specific concerns through counseling, peer support groups, or personalized safety plans. Provide specialized support to female students, integrating mindfulness practices that promote emotional regulation, optimism, and confidence in navigating campus spaces. To encourage collective MBSP activities, such as group mindfulness sessions, to build a shared sense of security and mutual support among students. Promote gratitude and optimism practices to reinforce positive perceptions of safety and enhance community cohesion.

To regularly evaluate students' perceptions of campus safety and the effectiveness of implemented measures through surveys and focus groups. Adapt interventions based on findings, ensuring that campus security initiatives remain responsive to students' needs. Focusing on both environmental and psychological factors influencing campus safety perceptions, these recommendations aim to create a safer and more resilient campus environment where students can thrive academically and personally.

Declaration of competing interest

The author declares that they have no known financial or non-financial competing interests in any material discussed in this paper.

Funding information

No funding was received from any financial organization to conduct this research.

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