

Abstract

Introduction: This study examines a potential moderator affecting the effectiveness of Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) for patients with current major depressive disorder (MDD) or dysthymia disorder (DD). The research question of this study examines whether the number of previous depressive episode(s) experienced by depressive patients can moderate the effectiveness of MBCT in alleviating their depressive symptoms during an episode. **Methods:** Participants for statistical analysis include 107 Hong Kong adult patients with MDD or DD. Patients were measured at 10 times points, including before MBCT, during the 8 weeks of MBCT, and 3 months post treatment. Levels of mindfulness were measured using the Five-Factor Mindfulness Questionnaire – Short Form (Chinese Version); and levels of depressive symptoms were measured using the Chinese version of Beck Depression Inventory (2nd ed.) (C – BDI – II). Statistical analysis was performed on SPSS statistical software, using a repeated-measures, mixed-design ANOVA method. For statistical analysis, patients were categorized into either (a) the group with previous episode, or (b) the group without previous episode. **Results:** Results showed significant reduction in mean BDI scores across time, for both groups of patients. When examined separately, BDI scores fell more drastically for patients with previous depressive episode(s) compared to the patients who were experiencing depression for the first time. There is also a significant interaction effect between weeks of treatment and number of previous episode(s) in alleviating depressive symptoms during the first four weeks of treatment. Simple main effects analysis showed that mean BDI scores begin to differ significant between the groups of patients after two weeks of treatment. **Conclusion:** MBCT is a helpful treatment option for depressive patients, and particularly helpful for patients with previous depressive episode(s).

Keywords: mindfulness, mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT), number of episodes