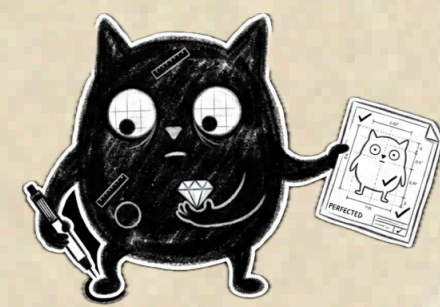


Exploring the Effects of Cultivating Non-Attachment To Self and Compassion Through Learning, Contemplation and Practice on Reducing Perfectionism

Introduction



In light of cultural factors, perfectionism has increased by 32% from 1989 to 2016, with younger generations imposing exceedingly high standards on their performance (Curran & Hill, 2019).

Existing interventions often fail to address the deep-rooted fixation on static self-concepts in perfectionism, where individuals conditionally accept themselves only when aligning with an idealized "success self."

The present study aims to propose a novel intervention grounded in Buddhist psychology: cultivating nonattachment to self and compassion through learning, contemplation and practice to reduce perfectionism.

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Research hypothesis

H1: Compared to the control condition, the induction would result in a lower level of perfectionism.

H2: The induction would result in a higher level of nonattachment to self.

H3: The induction could increase Buddhism-derived constructs (impermanence, interconnectedness and nonattachment).

H4: The induction could increase compassion towards others and self.

Methodology

Buddhist wisdom and compassion condition

Participants

- 190 participants (68.9% female) who showed at least typical levels of perfectionistic thinking were randomly assigned to a Buddhist wisdom and compassion condition or an active control condition.
- Outcomes were assessed at baseline (T1), immediately after the intervention (T2), and at two-week follow-up (T3)

- A 17-minute induction video was delivered in a non religious manner (Klein et al., 2023; Lyddy & Good, 2017; Shonin et al., 2016).
- Participants were asked to reflect on how to apply compassion and wisdom to themselves through post-induction exercises.
- They were encouraged to revise and practice their cultivated insights and compassion in their daily lives.



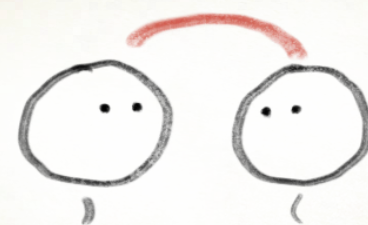
Compassion

Recognizing suffering and being motivated to alleviate it for others and oneself.



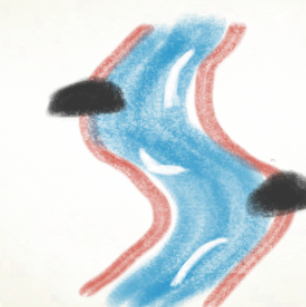
Impermanence

All phenomena are transient and ever-changing.



Interconnectedness

All phenomenon are the result of many causes and conditions



Nonattachment

Letting go of one's experience without clinging to.

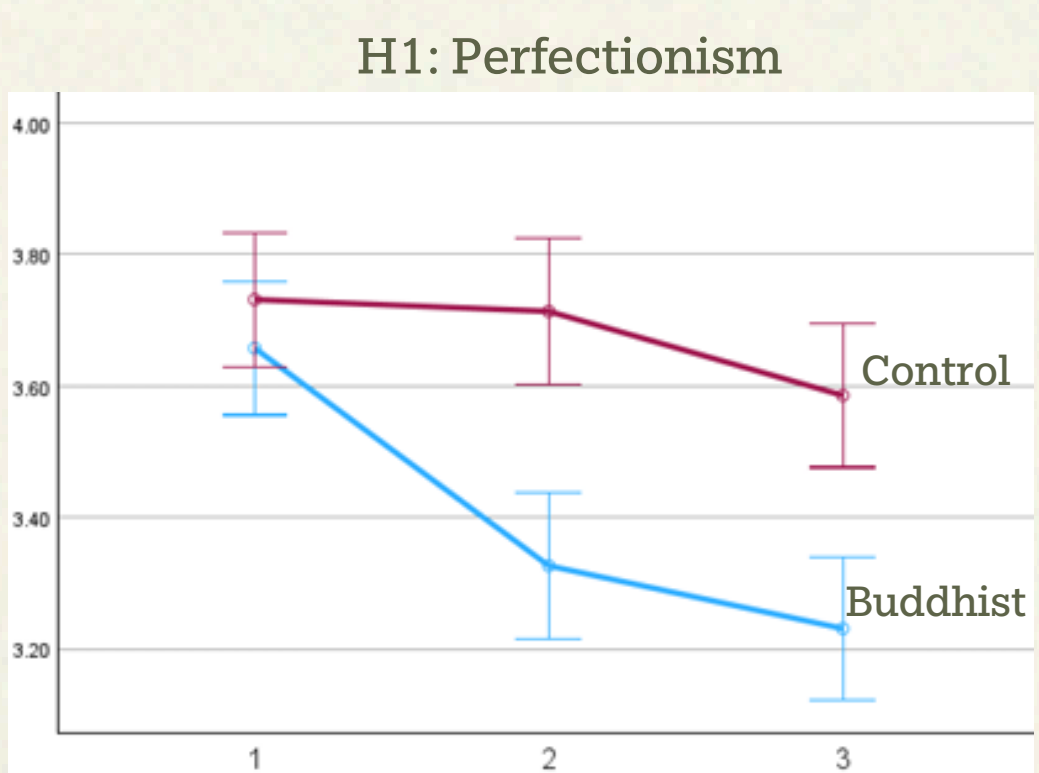
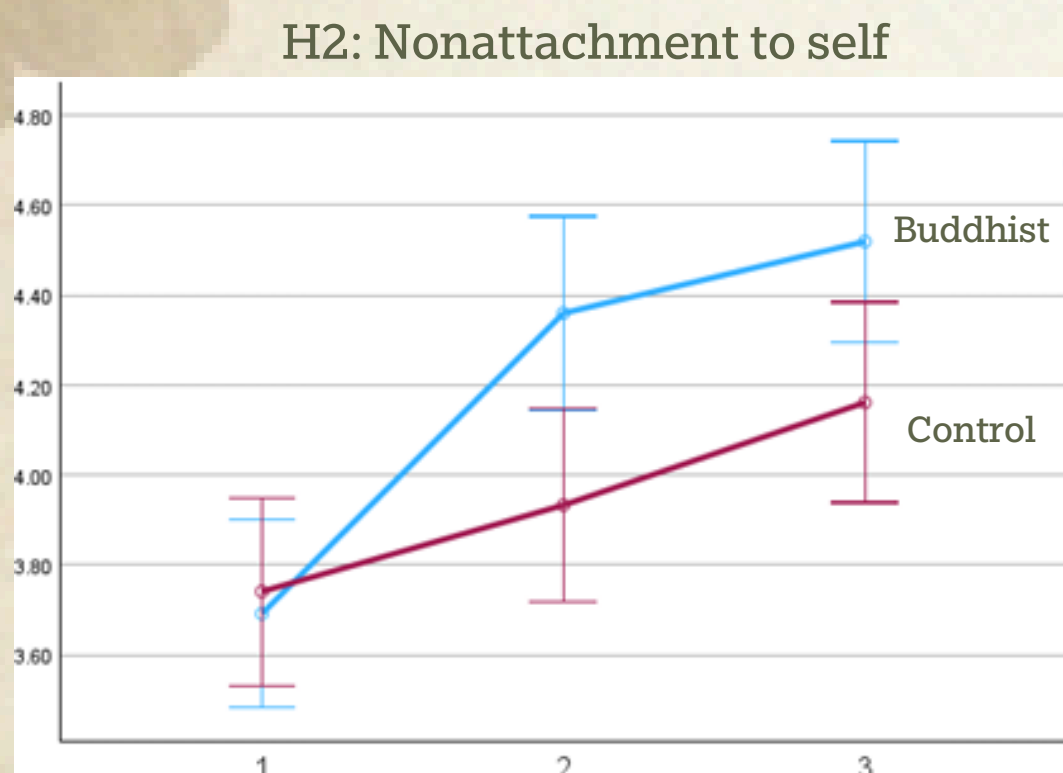


Being mode

The temporary experience and lasting habit of being present

Results

- The Condition x Time interaction was significant for perfectionism and nonattachment to self.
- Effects on nonattachment, impermanence, interconnectedness, compassion toward others, and compassion toward self were not significant.
- Mediation analyses showed that the intervention's effects on perfectionism were direct rather than mediated by the measured Buddhist constructs.



Discussion

- The findings demonstrated that the induction was effective in reducing perfectionism and fostered nonattachment to self.
- Yet, other Buddhist constructs were not successfully manipulated.
- The present induction successfully triggered emotional resonance, it was insufficient to foster lasting cognitive or behavioural shifts in compassion.
- Possible explanations:
 - Participants may have developed context-specific insights related to perfectionism without demonstrating broader changes in Buddhist constructs.
 - A fear of compassion may have emerged, resulting in disengagement with the content or the practice of compassion toward self.
- Limitation:
 - Limited demographic diversity of the sample
 - Limited to pedagogical approaches targeting the cognitive
 - Lack of a practice-monitoring mechanism
 - Lack of an assessment of skill development

Conclusion

- The findings suggest that brief psychoeducational interventions potentially help reduce perfectionism by loosening attachment to a fixed perfect self.
- In future studies, scaffolded reflection, experiential exercises and psychoeducation targeting the fear of compassion may be utilized to produce broader changes in compassion and insights.

Reference

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