

"Mind Over Trauma" The Moderating Role of Mindfulness in Childhood Trauma and Attachment Anxiety

Amber Stubbs, Marissa Brimmer, Jasmine Afualo, & Linnea Stahl

INTRODUCTION

Background: Defined as intentionally attending to present-moment experiences with openness and nonjudgment, *trait mindfulness* has been linked to greater emotional awareness and regulation, lower psychological distress, and healthier interpersonal functioning (Ortiz & Sibinga, 2017). Individuals with higher levels of trait mindfulness also report fewer trauma-related symptoms following childhood adversity (Powers et al., 2021; Tubbs et al., 2019).

The present study examined whether mindfulness moderates the relationship between childhood trauma and attachment anxiety.

We hypothesize that mindfulness will buffer the relationship between childhood trauma and attachment anxiety, such that the positive association between childhood trauma and attachment anxiety will be weaker among individuals with higher levels of trait mindfulness.

Interaction Between Childhood Trauma and Mindfulness Predicting Attachment Anxiety

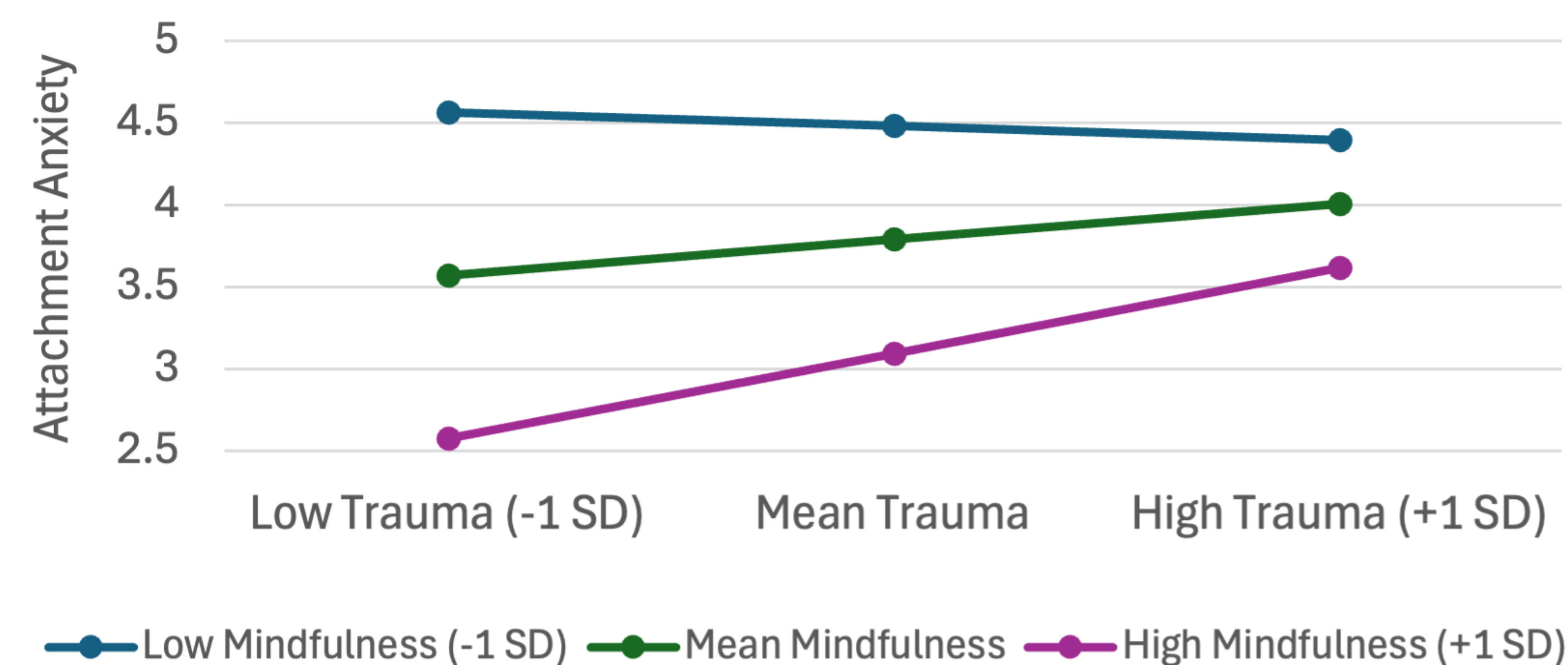


Figure 1. Predicted attachment anxiety at low (–1 SD), mean, and high (+1 SD) levels of mindfulness across levels of childhood trauma. Predicted values were estimated from PROCESS Model 1.

DISCUSSION

Childhood trauma and mindfulness were significant predictors of attachment anxiety, and mindfulness significantly moderated the relationship between childhood trauma and attachment anxiety.

While we predicted that mindfulness would weaken the association between childhood trauma and attachment anxiety, the interaction emerged in the opposite direction. The positive relationship between childhood trauma and attachment anxiety became stronger at higher levels of mindfulness.

These findings suggest that mindfulness may influence the relationship between childhood trauma and attachment anxiety in more complex ways than originally expected. This highlights the importance of further investigating the role of mindfulness in trauma-related attachment processes and may inform future interventions aimed at improving relational functioning following childhood adversity.

METHOD

Design: A **moderation analysis** examining mindfulness as a buffer between trauma and interpersonal problems.

Participants: N = 84 adults (listwise complete cases taken from existing archival dataset)

Measures:

Childhood Trauma

- Early Trauma Inventory; ET2
(Higher scores indicate greater exposure to ACES)

Trait Mindfulness

- Five-Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire; FFMQ
(6-point Likert scale (1=not true to 6=very true))

Attachment Anxiety

- Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised; ECR-R
(7-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree))

RESULTS

A moderation analysis was conducted using PROCESS Model 1 (Hayes, 2022) to examine whether mindfulness moderated the relationship between childhood trauma and attachment anxiety.

The **overall moderation model was significant**, $F(3, 80) = 21.72, p < .001$, explaining **44.9%** of the variance in attachment anxiety ($R^2 = .449$).

Childhood trauma significantly predicted greater attachment anxiety, $b = 0.056, p = .049$, while mindfulness significantly predicted lower attachment anxiety, $b = -1.715, p < .001$.

The **interaction between childhood trauma and mindfulness was also significant**, $b = 0.191, p = .014$, indicating that mindfulness moderated the relationship between childhood trauma and attachment anxiety.

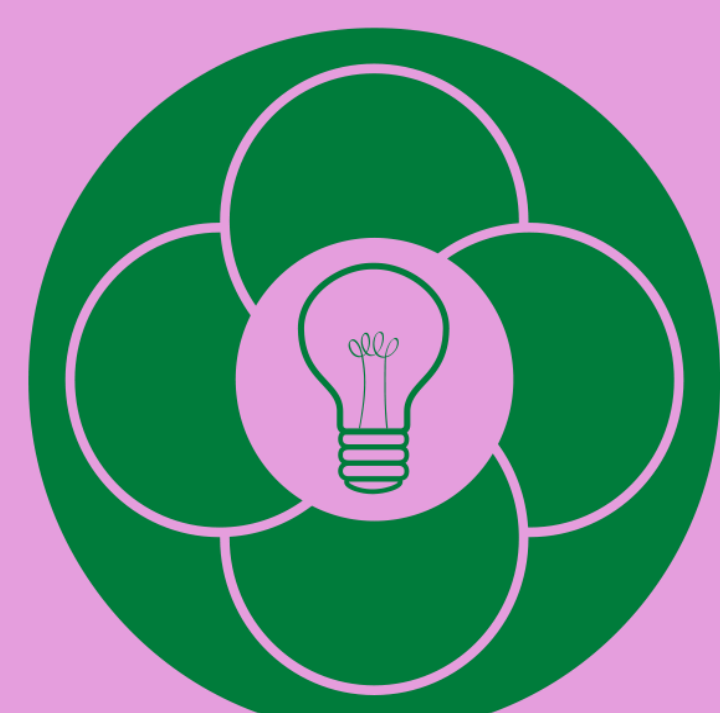
Contrary to our original hypothesis, the **positive association between childhood trauma and attachment anxiety became *stronger* at higher levels of mindfulness**.

Pearson correlations indicated that childhood trauma was positively associated with attachment anxiety, $r = .25, p = .012$, and negatively associated with mindfulness, $r = -.33, p = .002$. Mindfulness was strongly negatively associated with attachment anxiety, $r = -.63, p < .001$.

LIMITATIONS

This study is limited by its cross-sectional design, reliance on self-report measures, and relatively small sample size (N=84). Our study involved a secondary analysis of an open-access dataset, limiting the selection of variables and resulting in substantial missing data for some measures. These factors may limit causal inference and the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the unexpected direction of the moderation effect warrants replication in larger and more diverse samples.

REFERENCES



HCOP 
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Opportunity Program