

More Than Just Diet - The Effects of Mindfulness Meditation on Weight Loss Intervention Outcomes: A Literature Review

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Research Question

What effects does mindfulness meditation have on weight loss interventions and behaviours of overweight and obese adults in North America?

Abstract

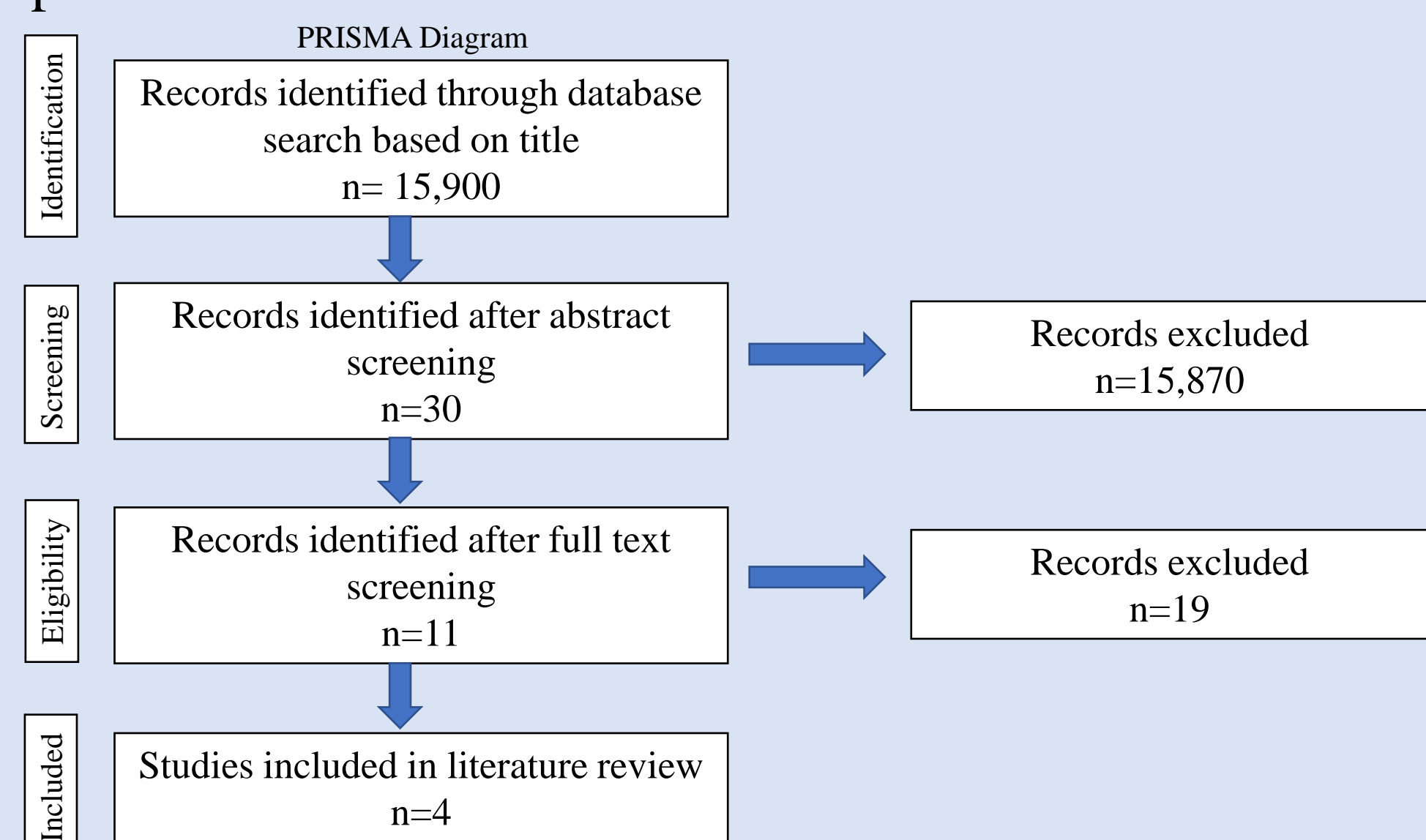
Mindfulness meditation (MM) that teaches individuals how to cultivate higher levels of mindfulness through systematic trainings have shown promise at increasing awareness and control of eating behaviours (O'Reilly et al., 2014). This paper aims to explore current literature on mindfulness in relation to obesity to answer: What effects does MM have on weight loss interventions and behaviours of overweight and obese adults in North America? A literature review investigating MM and obesity intervention programs was conducted with a focus on psychological health, weight loss management and eating behaviours. Results suggest that MM has positive effects on weight loss and behaviours in overweight and obese adults. Participant who scored highest on mindfulness scales lost 5lbs or more within the first 3 months of treatment. Mindfulness and weight presented an inverse relationship and results showed promise in the implementation of MM in obesity intervention programs (Lillis et al., 2009). Future research suggestions include analysis of the extent to which mindfulness impacts weight loss stress patterns as well as better understandings of how mindfulness delivery methods impact results such as the effects mindfulness instructors have on participant outcomes.

Background

- Obesity is an ever-growing epidemic that contributes immensely to the world global health burden (Camilleri et al., 2015).
- In 2017 more than 64% of adults were overweight or obese in Canada (Government of Canada, 2018).
- Existing weight loss programs that use techniques such as physical activity and diet have shown significant short-term results with many participants gaining back their unwanted weight within 3 to 5 years (O'Reilly et al., 2014).
- Psychological and cognitive factors to weight gain such as emotional eating are not addressed in these programs.
- MM that teaches individuals how to cultivate higher levels of mindfulness through systematic trainings have shown promise at increasing awareness and control of eating behaviours (O'Reilly et al., 2014).

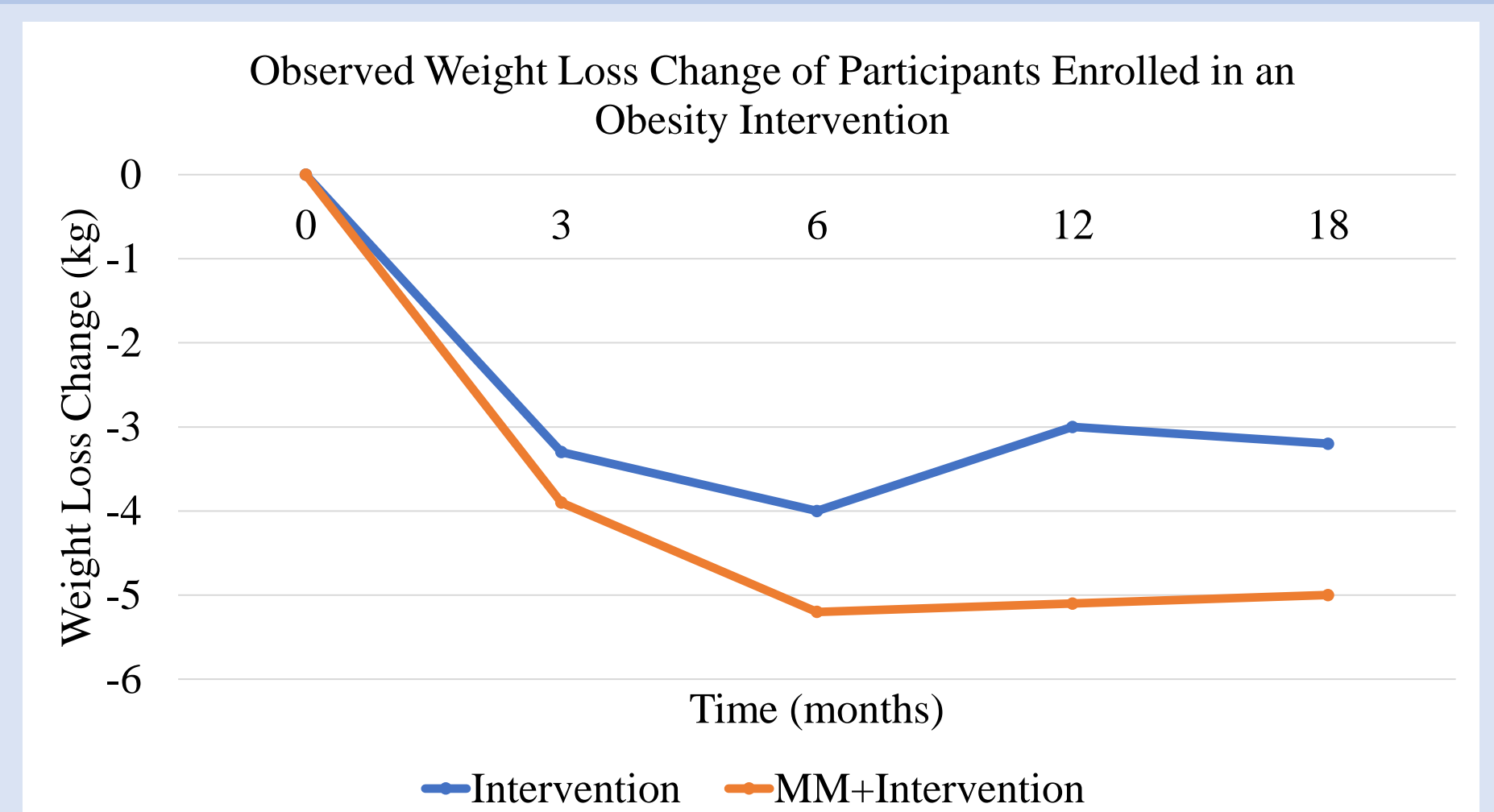
Methodology

- Literature review of 4 primary papers was conducted.
- All papers located through Google Scholar.
- Focus on obesity intervention program outcomes.
- Attention paid to psychological health, weight loss management and eating behaviours outcomes.
- Paper investigated results, strengths and weaknesses and overall implications of research articles.



Results

- MM has positive effects on weight loss interventions and behaviours in overweight and obese adults in North America.
- Leads to better psychological health such as a reduction in stress and better self-image and facilitates behaviours that result in statistically significant weight loss.
- Mindfulness and weight have an inverse relationship. Those who scored higher on mindfulness scales lost between 3.75 to 5lbs in a time period of maximum 18 months (Lillis et al., 2009).
- MM practices may strengthen the outcome of intervention programs by delivering better weight loss results and health effects.



(Daubenmier et al., 2016)

Discussion

- Implications include possible use of MM in health programs to further improve individual's physical health through weight loss and eating behaviour management with meditation laying the foundation for behavioural change (Lillis et al., 2009).
- Low-cost and effective nature of MM with the teaching of techniques such as eating awareness has implications in all aspects of life and may assist individuals in not only weight management, but the attainment of other goals (Spadaro et al., 2017).
- MM delivery methods versatility as in online mindfulness workshops limits cost expenditures without sacrificing benefits such as weight loss.
- Limitations of sources included issues with external validity, generalizability and small sample sizes.
- Suggestions for future research include analysis of the extent to which mindfulness impacts stress and individual level behaviour that lead to weight loss as well as better understanding of how mindfulness delivery methods impact results.