

## University Students' Perspectives on a Mindfulness-Based App for Weight, Weight Related Behaviors, and Stress: A Qualitative Focus Group Study

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**Abstract :** Introduction: A novel method of delivering mindfulness interventions for populations at risk of weight gain and stress-related eating, in particular, college students, is through mHealth. While there have been qualitative studies on mHealth for weight loss, there has not been a study on mHealth for weight loss using mindfulness that has explored student perspectives on a student centred mindfulness app and mindfulness-based text messages for eating and stress. Student perspective data will provide valuable information for creating a specific purpose weight management app and mindfulness-based text messages (for the Mindfulness App study). Methods: A qualitative focus group study was undertaken at St Lucia campus at the University of Queensland in March 2017. Students over the age of 18 were eligible to participate. Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. One week following the focus group, students were sent sample mindfulness-based text messages based on their responses. Students provided written feedback via email. Data were analysed using N Vivo software. Results: The key themes in a future mindfulness-based app are a simple design interface, a focus on education/practical tips, and real-life practical exercises. Social media should be avoided. Key themes surrounding barriers include the perceived difficulty of mindfulness and a lack of proper guidance or knowledge. The mindfulness-based text messages were received positively. Key themes were creating messages with practical tips about how to be mindful and how to integrate mindful reflection of both one's body and environment while on campus. Other themes including creating positive, inspirational messages. There was lack of agreement on the ideal timing for messages. Discussion: This is the first study that explored student perspectives on a mindfulness-app and mindfulness-based text messages for stress and weight management as a pre-trial study for the Mindfulness App trial for stress, lifestyle, and weight in students. It is important to consider maximizing the potential facilitators of use and minimize potential identified barriers when developing and designing a future mHealth mindfulness-based intervention tailored to the student consumer. Conclusion: Future mHealth studies may consider integrating mindfulness-based text messages in their interventions for weight and stress as this is a novel feature that appears to be acceptable for participants. The results of this focus group provide the basis to develop content for a specific purpose student app for weight management.

**Keywords :** mindfulness, college students, mHealth, weight loss

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