

Mindfulness as a Predictor of Decreased Trait and State Anxiety Levels in Adults

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INTRODUCTION

- While mindfulness practice has been shown to be effective in managing state anxiety, the relationship to trait anxiety has been less explored.
- *State anxiety* can be defined as a temporary reaction to adverse events, while *trait anxiety* is defined as a stable personality feature related to responses associated with concerns, troubles, and worries (Saviola et al., 2020).
- This study seeks to identify the specific impact of mindfulness-based therapies on trait, as well as state anxiety. Trait anxiety being an important component of GAD.

METHODS

- To explore this relationship, adult participants (N=64) with a diagnosis of Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) were recruited from an intensive outpatient program.
- All participants were treated using a mindfulness-based therapy (ACT, DBT, or MBCT).
- The average length of treatment was 91.13 (SD = 135.04) days.
- Participants completed the Five-Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) and the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) during their first and last visit.

Table 1

| Demographics | N = 64 | Mean | % |
|-------------------------------|--------|---------------|--------|
| Gender | | | |
| Female | 44 | | 68.75 |
| Male | 20 | | 31.25 |
| Age | 64 | 32.52 (14.15) | 100.00 |
| Education | | | |
| Less than HS | 3 | | 4.69 |
| HS Diploma or Equivalent | 15 | | 23.44 |
| Some College/Technical School | 14 | | 21.88 |
| Bachelors Degree or Higher | 31 | | 48.44 |
| Unknown | 1 | | 1.56 |
| Race | | | |
| African American | 2 | | 3.10 |
| Asian | 1 | | 1.60 |
| Hispanic | 10 | | 15.60 |
| White | 49 | | 76.56 |
| Other/Mixed Race | 3 | | 4.69 |

Mindfulness reduces both state AND trait anxiety in patients with GAD.

Figure 1
Change in STAI State Anxiety Vs Change in FFMQ Score

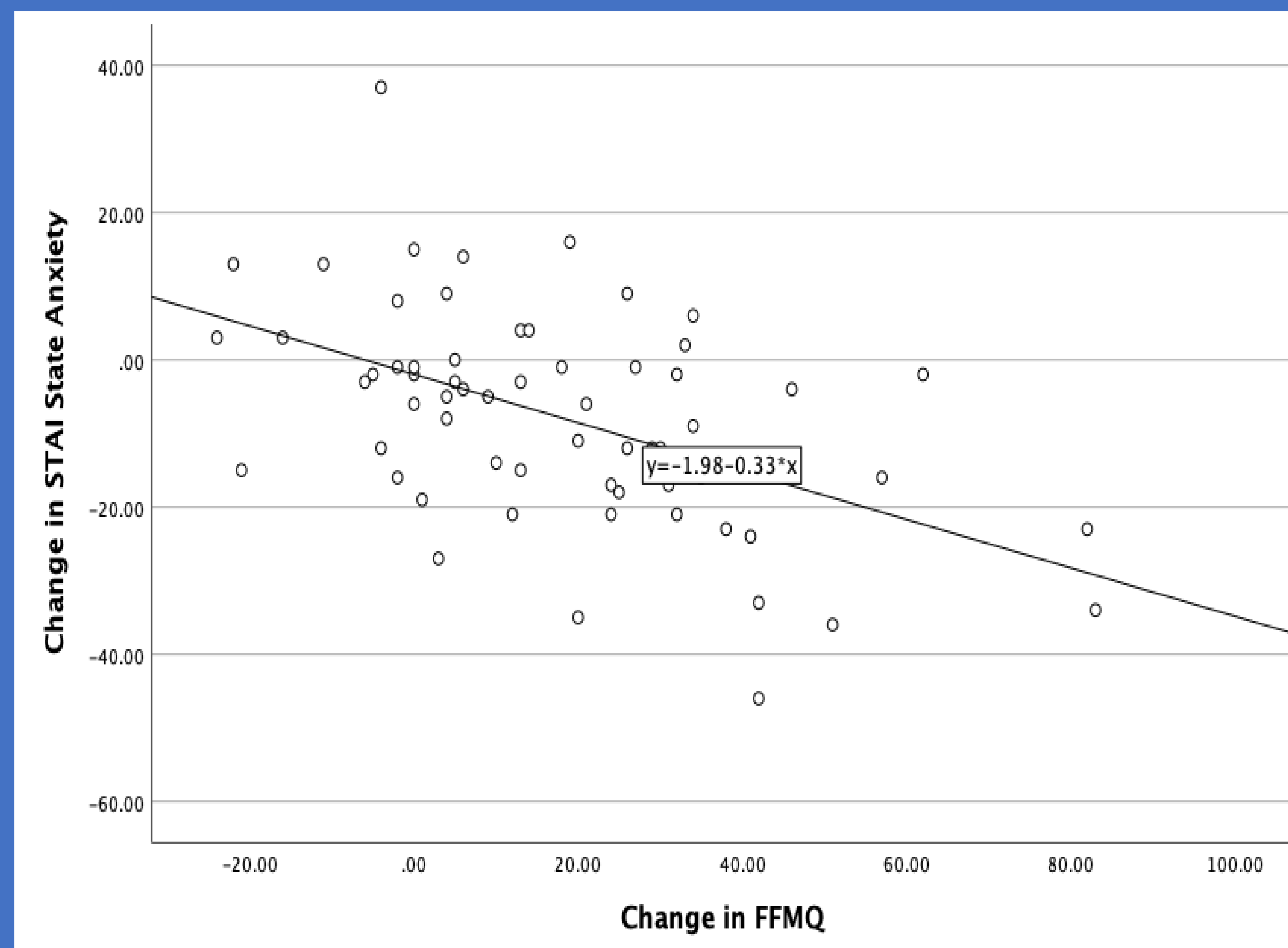
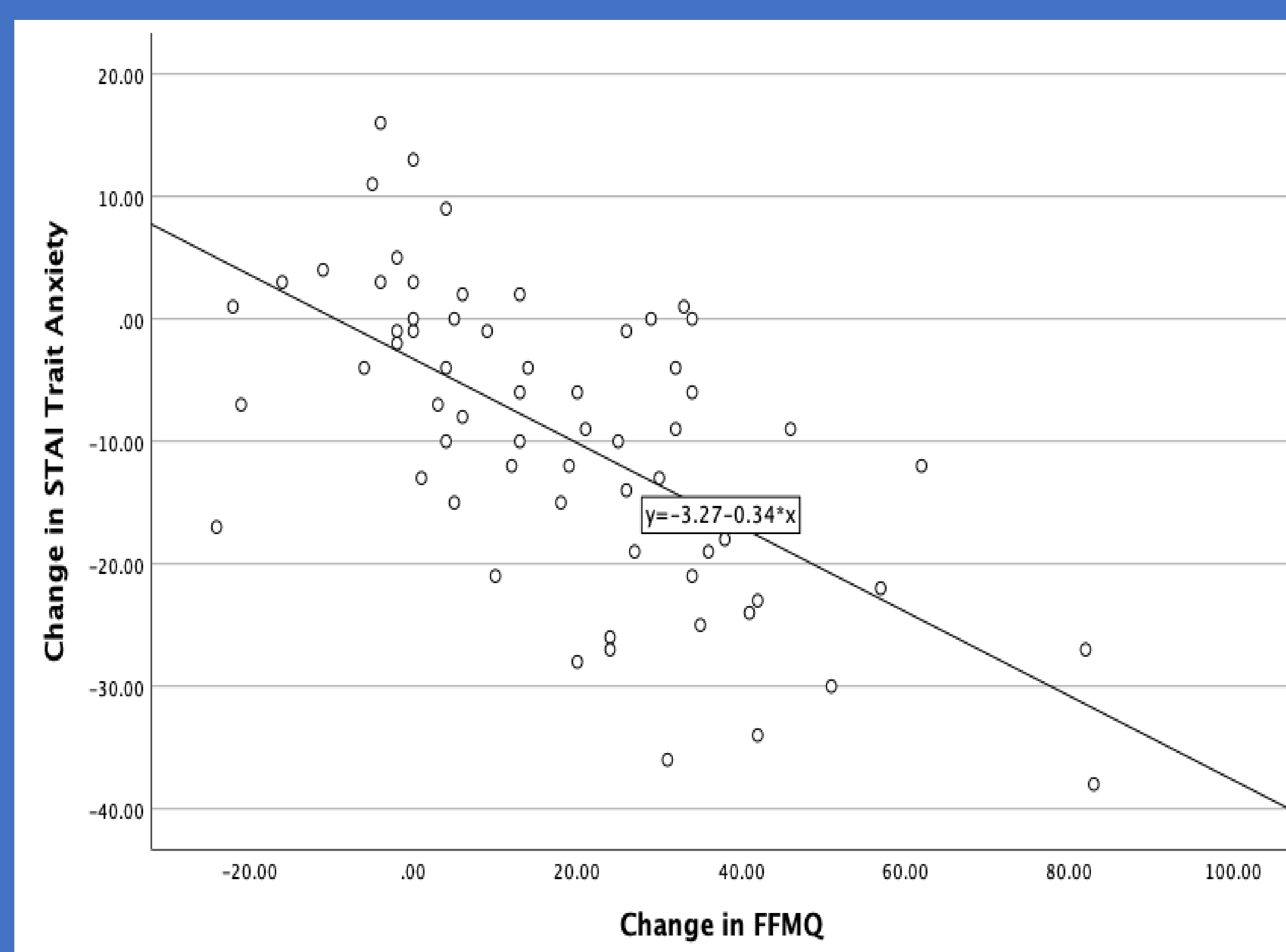


Figure 2
Change in STAI Trait Anxiety Vs Change in FFMQ Score



RESULTS

- A simple regression analysis was conducted to assess the relationship between mindfulness and state and trait anxiety symptoms.
- The results indicated that the change in FFMQ total score was associated with a significant change in state anxiety scores, $t(63) = -4.64, p < .001$, and trait anxiety scores, $t(63) = -6.46, p < .001$.
- Approximately 26% of the change in *state anxiety* was explained by the change in mindfulness and approximately 40% of the variation in *trait anxiety* was explained by the change in mindfulness. This indicates that there was a large effect size for both relationships.
- For every unit increase in mindfulness, state anxiety decreases by 0.33 and trait anxiety decreases by 0.34.

DISCUSSION

- It appears that higher mindfulness levels were associated with not only lower state anxiety, but also lower trait anxiety, which supports the use of mindfulness practice to alleviate anxiety, especially in patients diagnosed with GAD.
- Clinicians should consider these findings when designing treatment plans for patients with GAD by incorporating mindfulness-based psychoeducation and practice to achieve better outcomes.
- Psychoeducation at the beginning of treatment regarding the expected change in anxiety with improvements in mindfulness may also increase patient motivation to practice mindfulness.
- Future research should explore these effects over a longer follow up period to better understand the longevity of the effects of mindfulness on both state and trait anxiety.



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