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Well-being indices: A role of mindfulness and social support

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Abstract:

BACKGROUND: Well-being is a desired and optimal state of functioning of individuals, which may be modified through various psychological factors. Mindfulness is a cultivable state of mind, which enhances experiential processing of stimuli. It is hypothesized that apart from mindfulness, the social environment of the individual vis-à-vis social support may help predict well-being. This study was done to examine mindfulness, social support, and well-being, their relationship and role in the Indian population.

METHODS: Through purposive sampling, 375 men and women (mean age = 35.05 years; standard deviation = 12.82) were recruited into the study and were administered the cognitive and affective mindfulness scale-revised, interpersonal support evaluation list, and the brief inventory of thriving. The obtained quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient (Pearson's r), and multiple hierarchical regression analysis.

RESULTS: The results showed a positive correlation among mindfulness, social support and its dimensions (tangible, appraisal, and belonging), and well-being. Regression analyses revealed that mindfulness and social support in combination contributed to well-being, where belonging support was seen to be a unique significant predictor.

CONCLUSION: It can be concluded that both mindfulness and social support are significant indices of well-being, and this is especially useful in developing psychosocial interventions that would enhance well-being. Implications and limitations of the study have also been discussed.

Keywords:

Indian population, mindfulness, social support, well-being

Introduction

In the last decade, the construct of mindfulness has been gaining popular acceptance among health-care stakeholders, researchers, and clinicians, while being seamed into wellness and stress reduction interventions because of its practical and instant benefits.^[1,2] Kabat-Zinn^[3] has comprehensively described mindfulness as "the awareness that arises through paying attention in a particular way: On purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally." Concisely, it suggests wakeful consciousness toward the moment and acknowledgment of the experience.^[4] On the one hand, while

well-being may be anticipated along with high mindfulness,^[5] it is also imperative to analyze the role of the social environment that may protect or impede the optimal functioning of the individual and also known to predict well-being.^[6,7] Basing ground for cumulatively analyzing the variables, this study proposes to investigate the relationship between mindfulness, social support, and well-being, as well as understand the role of the former variables on well-being of Indian individuals. This study gains particular cultural relevance as social support is perceived differently in different cultures.^[8]

Mindfulness has its obvious positive effects, with evidence stemming from a study by Lykins and Baer,^[9] which compared

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meditators and nonmeditators on several aspects of psychological well-being. The results showed that meditators reported significantly higher levels of mindfulness, self-compassion, and overall better sense of well-being vis-a-vis nonmeditators. Typically, mindfulness can be cultivated by deliberately tuning focus to experiences that are occurring in the current moment. The process can be comprehended as a temporary experience (state) or dispositional (trait) in nature which is subject to increase with long-term practice.^[10] The meditational process allows self-observation and deactivation of automatic pilot reactions such as panic, anger, and stress reactivity and activates several strategies that required to fulfill basic psychological needs.^[4,11,12]

To substantiate further, various studies have demonstrated that mindfulness is linked to promoting positive relationships, regulating emotions, and boosting satisfaction and well-being.^[13,14] Mindfulness may facilitate interpersonal relationships through emotional clarity, unbiased outlook, and better observations of others' behavior.^[15] Having quality relationships will strengthen the social network of the individual and simply recognizing this support, received or perceived, may affect well-being.^[16,17] Social support plays a major role for healthy life. It makes people feel like they belong to a community of people who care for them, love them, and support them, while also conferring resilience to stress.^[18] The importance of social support may be emphasized by evidence that adolescents with highly supportive parents reported to have better well-being in terms of lower negative emotions, higher positive emotions, and higher self-esteem.^[19] Further evidence found in study by Malkoc and Yalcin,^[20] showed that perceived social support from family, friends, and significant others contributed to psychological wellbeing. Conversely, it of essence to note that mindfulness practice steps in to shield the well-being status in individuals who report low social support.^[21]

People high in dispositional mindfulness traits and experienced mindfulness meditators are often described as "warm" and are intimately in touch with the joys and sufferings of their fellow humans.^[22] The connection between mindfulness traits and relationship satisfaction was also examined where it was found that higher levels of trait mindfulness predicted higher relationship satisfaction, along with an increased ability to respond constructively and flexibly to friction in relationships.^[13] They proposed that the practice of mindfulness might improve interpersonal attunement, which might increase satisfaction with one's relationships.^[14]

Rationale of study

Each person is subjected to life stresses that affect their health and overall well-being in today's date.

Remarkable research work has been done in the field of well-being in the recent years and several factors have been found to be correlated with well-being. A number of studies have been conducted on relationship between mindfulness and well-being as well as social support and well-being. However, taking all the three variables into consideration, studies conducted on the Indian population are scarce. This study was done to examine mindfulness, social support, and well-being, their relationship and role in the Indian population. Any insight on these dimensions can be used to get a better understanding of the processes and help in planning of effective interventions that enhance well-being.

Methods

Study sample and procedure

A total of 375 participants participated in the study. Of them, 46% ($n_1 = 174$) were male and 54% ($n_2 = 201$) were female. The mean age of the samples was 35.05 years (standard deviation [SD] =12.82), with sample's age ranging between 18 and 60 years. In relation to occupation, 53% were employed and 47% were students.

Cognitive and Affective Mindfulness Scale - Revised (CAMS-R).^[23,24] CAMS-R has 12 items based on a 4-point rating scale from not at all^[1] to almost always.^[4] It assesses the general daily experience of the capacity and willingness to be mindful. The scale purports to measure attention, present-focus, awareness, and acceptance/nonjudgment of thoughts and feelings. For example, "It is easy for me to concentrate on what I am doing." Higher score indicates higher level of mindfulness. The internal consistency score is 0.76 (Feldman *et al.*, 2007). For the present sample in this study, Cronbach's alpha value was 0.50.

Interpersonal Support Evaluation List (ISEL).^[25] ISEL-15 is derived from the long form of the ISEL and contains 15 items which assess the perceived availability of tangible, appraisal, and belonging social support on a two-point scale of "True" and "False." Some of the items measuring each dimension of social support are "if I need help moving, I would be able to find someone to help me" (tangible support); "there is at least one person I know whose advice I really trust" (appraisal support); and "when I feel lonely, there are several people I could talk to" (belonging). The internal reliability of the total scale of ISEL, as given by the developers, ranges from 0.88 to 0.90. Similarly, for subscales it ranges from 0.70 to 0.82. For the present sample in this study, Cronbach's alpha value was 0.72, and for the dimensions of tangible support, appraisal support, and belonging support, it was found to be 0.45, 0.60, and 0.59, respectively.

Brief Inventory of Thinking (BIT).^[26] BIT was used to measure psychological well-being of the participants. The BIT has 10 items, measuring 6 of the 7 core psychological well-being dimensions (positive relationships, engagement, mastery, meaning, optimism, and subjective well-being). An example of the items in the scale, "I feel good most of the time." The responses for each item were in the form of a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). The tool has high internal consistency with reliability coefficients above 0.90, and test-retest reliability of 0.83. The Cronbach's alpha for this subscale was 0.85 in the current study.

Procedure

The purpose, methods, risks, and benefits of the study were explained to the participants before they decided to participate. The participants were assured that their participation would be completely voluntary and that they would have the right to quit their participations at any stage if they did not feel comfortable in continuing the process. The participants were initially given a statement of informed consent, followed by a demographic questionnaire. After being presented with the statement of informed consent and the demographic questionnaire, the participants completed a battery of measures comprised of the previously mentioned scales. Upon completing the battery of measures, the participants were debriefed and thanked for their participation in the study.

Results

The obtained quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient (Pearson's *r*), and multiple hierarchical regression analysis using IBM Corp. Released 2012. IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 21.0. Armonk, NY: IBM Corp. In the analysis, the predictors were mindfulness and dimensions of social support (tangible, appraisal, and belonging). The criterion was well-being. Prior to the hierarchical regression, Pearson's *r* was computed to find a linear relationship between the predictors and criterion, and to identify the suitable predictors to be entered into the model.

Relationship among the measures

The values of Pearson's "*r*" along with descriptive statistics (*M* and *SD*) are presented in Table 1. From Table 1, it was found that all predictors had significant positive correlations with well-being. Mindfulness was positively related to all the dimensions of social support except appraisal support. The significant correlation coefficient between predictors and criterion varied between 0.23 and 0.48. Therefore, mindfulness

Table 1: Correlation between mindfulness, dimensions of social support and well-being

	1	2	3	4	5	6	M	SD
1. Mindfulness	1	0.15**	0.06	0.17**	0.16**	0.40**	41.70	2.95
2. Tangible		1	0.40**	0.38**	0.76**	0.25**	3.51	1.26
3. Appraisal			1	0.36**	0.78**	0.23**	3.51	1.39
4. Belonging				1	0.78**	0.48**	3.63	1.33
5. SS total					1	0.41**	10.65	3.05
6. Well-being						1	37.04	7.08

P*<0.05, *P*<0.01. Men=1, Women=2, SS=Social support, SD=Standard deviation

and dimensions of social support were included in the hierarchical regression model as predictors.

Predictors of well-being

Basing on the findings of the above analysis, hierarchical regression analysis was performed. As the linearity assumption was tested, other essential assumptions such as normality, homoscedasticity, and absence of multicollinearity were also verified. The results of the model are presented in Table 2.

As seen in Table 2, the significantly correlated predictors were entered hierarchically in two blocks: Block 1 (mindfulness), Block 2 (dimensions of social support)-in respect of well-being. In Model 1, mindfulness was found to be significant, *F* (1, 373) =69.26, *P* < 0.001, which explained 16% significant proportion of variance (Adjusted *R*² = 0.16) of well-being. From the analysis, it was found to be significant predictor for well-being (*β* =0.40, *P* < 0.001) in the model. In addition to mindfulness, when dimensions of social support were entered, Model 2 was found to be significant, *F* (4, 370) =46.17, *P* < 0.001, and the model explained 17% more significant proportion of variance ($\Delta R^2 = 0.17$, *P* < 0.001) amounting to total 33% significant proportion of variance of well-being (Adjusted *R*² = 0.33). The results revealed that in Model 2, belonging support was found to be a significant predictor (*β* =0.39, *P* < 0.001) for well-being in addition to mindfulness.

Discussion

The first objective of this study was to examine the relationship between mindfulness, social support, and well-being. The second objective of the study was to assess the role of mindfulness and social support on well-being.

The first objective was confirmed. The findings of this study strongly resonate with research evidence that have established that mindfulness is positively associated with different positive constructs like emotion regulation, compassion and empathy which play a significant role in good and intimate relationships.^[13,14] Further, social support and its positive association as found in

Table 2: Summary table of hierarchical regression analysis for mindfulness and dimensions of social support predicting well-being (n=375)

Model	B	SE	β	t	Adjusted R ²	R ²	ΔR^2
Model 1 (C=2.63, F=69.62***)					0.15	0.16	
Mindfulness	0.95	0.11	0.40	8.32***			
Model 2 (C=-4.43, F=46.17***)					0.33	0.33	0.17***
Mindfulness	0.78	0.10	0.32	7.45***			
Tangible	0.16	0.27	0.03	0.58			
Appraisal	0.29	0.24	0.06	1.18			
Belonging	2.09	0.25	0.39	8.21***			

*P<0.05, **P<0.01, ***P<0.001. C=Constant, B=Unstandardized beta coefficient, SE=Standard error, β =Standardized beta coefficient, t=t values of beta, $\Delta R^2=R^2$ change

this study have been demonstrated by Gallagher and Vella-Brodrick,^[17] which showed significant contribution of social support in well-being. The significant relationship between social support and well-being is well rooted in basic motivational theories which illustrate the need for affiliation and belongingness in human beings. Such strong derivations of well-being from positive relationships might be based on the value human beings put in relationships.^[27] As social beings, individuals derive pleasure and satisfaction from closeness and inclusivity with other people and groups.^[28] Our relationships with people give meaning to life and more the healthy relationships one has, happier one feels, which is also corroborated in the study by Siedlecki *et al.*,^[6] in which components of social support and components of subjective well-being were found to be related with each other. This study also propounds a relationship between mindfulness and well-being. The quality of mindfulness helps to provide clarity and vividness to any situation, and moreover disengages a person from unhealthy behavior patterns.^[29] Detailed processing of experiences will naturally lower discontent in experiences and boost emotional regulation which would subsequently improve relationship quality and well-being.^[30] Keng *et al.*,^[2] too, have concluded that mindfulness brings about several positive psychological effects, including increased subjective well-being, reduced psychological symptoms, reduced emotional reactivity, and improved behavioral regulation. Imminent evidence from Creswell *et al.*^[31] Highlighted that mindfulness practice helped reduce loneliness and concomitant health risks which consolidates the finding of the positive relationship between mindfulness and social support.

Second, the regression analyses clearly states the role of mindfulness and social support. This is reinforced by the study by Wilson *et al.*,^[32] study of 1024 adults showed that higher perceived social support was indirectly related to poor psychological well-being indices such as depression, anxiety, dysfunctional attitudes, and it was routed through mindfulness. An extension of the same study again accounted that perceived social support was related to mindfulness and psychological well-being outcomes.

This result illustrates that mindfulness and social support are interlinked in terms that characteristics of mindfulness allow non judgment and acceptance, while social support signals self-kindness, acceptance, and being accepted, jointly affecting well-being. Belongingness in the form of social support has special relevance in the social support structure as it may elucidates a basic motivational need of individuals to integrate their self into an interpersonal system. A study by Hagerty and Williams^[33] highlighted that compared to social support in general had an indirect effect on depression; whereas sense of belonging directly affected depression state. In fact, Hagerty *et al.*,^[34] had stressed upon the sense of belonging to be related to both psychological and social functioning, with a higher sense of belonging promoting better functioning.

Conclusion

The results are consistent with the proposed hypothesis that mindfulness and social support play a role in well-being, with belongingness form of social support having significance variance among other predictors of social support.

Implications

The findings of this study provide strong evidence relevant for the Indian context, as mindfulness and social support are expected to be highly prevalent in a country affiliation orientation in families is high. This study also encourages the implementation of group-based mindfulness activities that would naturally nurture belongingness along with the practice effectively improving well-being. Cues may also be taken to enhance further research that would understand the different pathways and processes contributing to well-being.

Limitations

As an exploratory study, this study utilized only self-report measures. These limitations may be overcome by integrating objective measures, such as interview, with subjective measures in future experimental studies. Cross-sectional studies would definitely build better

understanding of social support needs which may be age-specific.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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