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Conceptions of happiness in relation to mindfulness

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Abstract---The preponderance of happiness research has centred on happiness's levels, predictors, and repercussions. Students' everyday perceptions of happiness, on the other hand, have received a lot less attention. The study was conducted to investigate mindfulness in relation with various conceptions of happiness in academic setting. The sample of the study comprised 150 university students. The measures of the study included Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale (Brown & Ryan, 2003), Hedonic and Eudaimonic Motives for Activities (Huta & Ryan, 2010), Fear of happiness Scale (Joshnloo & Weijers, 2014), Fragility of happiness scale (Joshnloo, Weijers, 2015), Externality of happiness scale (Joshnloo, 2017), Transformative Suffering scale (Joshnloo, 2014), Valuing Happiness Scale (Mauss, Tamir, Anderson & Savino, 2011), Inflexibility of Happiness Scale (Joshnloo, 2019), & Inclusive Happiness Scale (Joshnloo, 2019). The results of the study revealed that mindfulness was significantly and positively correlated with eudaimonism ($r=0.351$), transformative suffering ($r=0.299$), inclusive happiness ($r=0.368$) at $p<0.01$ and with valuing happiness ($r=0.186$) at $p<0.05$. It was seen that mindfulness was significantly and negatively correlated with externality of happiness ($r= -0.491$), fear of happiness ($r= -0.408$), fragility of happiness ($r= -0.437$), and inflexibility of happiness ($r= -0.446$) at $p<0.01$. Regression analyses indicated that mindfulness significantly predicted all the conceptions of happiness accounting for highest variance in externality of happiness (24.2%) and lowest in valuing happiness (3.5%). The study concluded that mindfulness broadens awareness and builds eudaimonic meaning with greater internal locus of control and flexibility. It is widely recognized that being in the present moment can increase student's cognitive processes which will be reflected in their academic performance. Reflective processes that are enabled by mindfulness can increase the subjective advantages of positive reappraisal and build positive perceptions of happiness and

reduced misconceptions which can efficiently contribute to student's well-being which is of paramount importance in India's education policy.

Keywords---mindfulness, academic settings, eudaimonia, externality of happiness, fear of happiness, fragility of happiness.

Introduction

Mindfulness is intrinsically a state of consciousness requiring conscious and purposeful responding to each and every moment experienced by an individual (Brown & Ryan, 2003). It is a way of relating to our whole (positive, negative or neutral) experience that dispenses us with a way of mitigating our overall intensity of misery and increasing our degree of happiness (Germer, Siegel, & Fulton, 2005). Mindfulness causes us to widen our vision of self and others, focus on our wellbeing and recuperating, and urges us to live with better presence in life, and amazement in our own bodies, hearts, and minds. Mindfulness has been considered as a remarkably straightforward way of relating to all experiences that can help us suffer less and improve for the better. It's a key psychological process that can modify how we respond to life's unavoidable difficulties - not just minor setbacks, but also major psychological problems like suicidal ideation (Linehan, 1993), and chronic depression (Segal, Williams, & Teasdale 2002), and psychotic illnesses (Bach & Hayes, 2002).

Conceptions of happiness are assumptions about happiness's existence, meaning, origins, and consequences. Happiness research has mainly focused on the degrees, determinants, and implications of happiness, with little attention paid to happiness conceptions. Eudaimonia, according to Waterman, is characterised by self-realization and personal expressiveness. Ryff and colleagues describe eudaimonia in a broad, trait-like sense, meaning that it is to be fully functional and effective amidst life's existential challenges. Clear awareness is essential for satisfying our basic psychological needs and living according to eudaimonic principles, according to self-determination theory, a contemporary meta-motivational account of human behaviour (Hollis-Walker & Colosimo, 2011).

Individuals confine themselves from experiencing genuine positive emotions, and alter their perceptions of any pleasurable situation, simultaneously avoiding engaging themselves in any achievement-related behaviour, or exultation; keeping in mind that it may lead to unfavourable consequences for them (Belen & Barmanpek, 2020; Joshanloo, 2013; Joshanloo & Weijers, 2014). This belief has emerged to be known as fear of happiness. Happiness is fragile, can be best understood as the notion that pleasurable emotions are transient and can readily evolve into unpleasant moods and emotions. Externality vs. internality of happiness is another theoretically important area of belief surrounding the essence of happiness (Joshanloo, 2017). The views of individuals on the antecedents of happiness will differ from stressing on internal factors, such as personal will and effort; to external variables such as situation, or fate, along a continuum. Suffering is considered to be a predominant catalyst contributing towards growth of an individual. Suffering often creates substantive moral goods,

enough to nullify any sense of loss or remorse that results from one's suffering. Teasdale and Chaskalson (2011) investigated how mindfulness can alleviate suffering. It has been proposed that mindfulness alleviates pain by altering what the mind is processing, how the mind is processing it, and how the mind views what is being processed.

It is expected for people to value and pursue happiness, because happier people enjoy other benefits such as good health and success with relationships and work, even beyond their pleasant feelings (Wong, Gong & Fung, 2019). Putting an undue emphasis on happiness can be seen as leading toward lower well-being in individuals. The concept of inflexibility of happiness has been introduced as a construct that has a potential to adversely affect one's mental health and well-being. Individuals who conclude that happiness cannot be altered and that it is stable are marked by low levels of control over their happiness and apparently feel more negative emotions, less optimistic feelings, and less happy with their lives (Joshani, 2019; Belen & Yildirim, 2020). Mohsen Joshani (2019), described inclusive happiness as "That our happiness depends on the happiness and well-being of other people, animals, and the natural elements".

Method

Objectives

- To explore the relationship between mindfulness and various conceptions of happiness in academic setting.
- To investigate the effect of mindfulness on various conceptions of happiness in academic setting.

Hypotheses

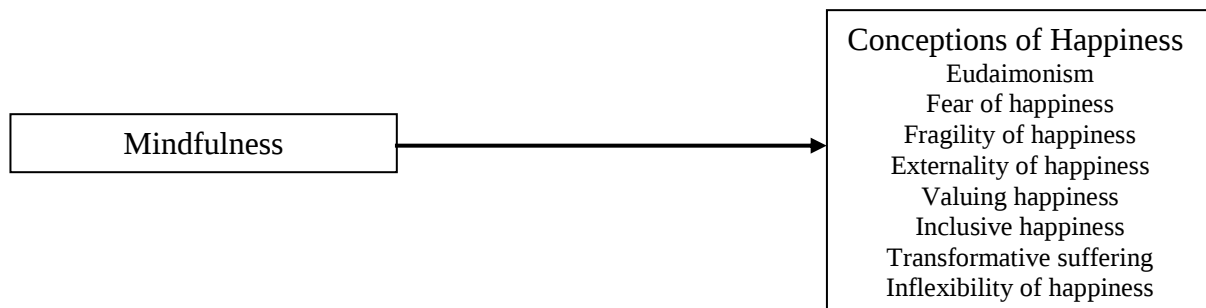
- There will be a significant correlation of mindfulness with
 - Eudaimonism
 - Fear of Happiness
 - Fragility of Happiness
 - Externality of Happiness
 - Valuing Happiness
 - Transformative suffering
 - Inflexibility of happiness
 - Inclusive Happiness
- Mindfulness will significantly predict
 - Eudaimonism
 - Fear of Happiness
 - Fragility of Happiness
 - Externality of Happiness
 - Valuing Happiness
 - Transformative suffering
 - Inflexibility of happiness
 - Inclusive Happiness

Sample

The sample of the study consisted of 150 university students living with their families and belonging to an urban domicile. Individuals with any kind of physical or psychological disability were excluded from the sample. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample.

Research Design

The study used a causal research design



Measures

- Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale (Brown & Ryan, 2003)
- Conceptions of Happiness
 - Eudaimonic scale from Hedonic and Eudaimonic Motives for Activities (Huta & Ryan, 2010)
 - Fear of happiness Scale (Joshaniloo & Weijers, 2014)
 - Fragility of happiness scale (Joshaniloo, Weijers, et.al., 2015)
 - Externality of happiness scale (Joshaniloo, 2017)
 - Transformative Suffering scale (Joshaniloo, 2014)
 - Valuing Happiness Scale (Mauss, Tamir, Anderson & Savino, 2011)
 - Inflexibility of Happiness Scale (Joshaniloo, 2019)
 - Inclusive Happiness Scale (Joshaniloo, 2019)

Procedure

At the commencement of the study, based on the criteria of inclusion and exclusion, the sample was selected. In the next phase, tests were administered to them through google forms. Thereafter, results were compiled, and trends were analysed.

Statistical analysis

- Descriptive statistics including mean and standard deviation
- Pearson's correlation
- Regression analysis

Results and Discussion

Table 1
Means and Standard Deviation

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Mindfulness	4.09	0.92
Eudaimonism	23.64	4.85
Externality of Happiness	11.71	5.22
Fear of Happiness	14.51	7.46
Fragility of Happiness	16.86	6.45
Valuing Happiness	34.86	7.79
Transformative Suffering	24.88	6.68
Inflexibility of Happiness	13.11	5.44
Inclusive Happiness	34.20	9.38

Table 2
Bivariate Correlation Analysis

Variables	Mindfulness
Mindfulness	1
Eudaimonism	.351**
Externality of Happiness	-.491**
Fear of Happiness	-.408**
Fragility of Happiness	-.437**
Valuing Happiness	.186*
Transformative Suffering	.299**
Inflexibility of Happiness	-.446**
Inclusive Happiness	.368**

Table 3
Regression Analysis: Mindfulness predicting Conceptions of Happiness

	Standardized Regression coefficients (Beta value)	R ² Value
Eudaimonism	0.351**	12.3%
Externality of Happiness	-0.491**	24.2%
Fear of Happiness	-0.408**	16.6%
Fragility of Happiness	-0.437**	19.1%
Valuing Happiness	0.186*	3.5%
Transformative Suffering	0.299**	9%
Inflexibility of Happiness	-0.446**	19.9%
Inclusive Happiness	0.368**	13.5%

The first hypothesis explored the relationship between mindfulness and different conceptions of happiness. As evident from the results, mindfulness had a positive correlation with eudaimonism ($r=0.351$), transformative suffering ($r=0.299$) and inclusive happiness ($r=0.368$) significant at $p<0.01$ and with valuing happiness

($r=0.186$) significant at $p<0.05$. Mindfulness had a negative relationship with externality of happiness ($r= -0.491$), fear of happiness ($r= -0.408$), fragility of happiness ($r= -0.437$) and inflexibility of happiness ($r= -0.446$) significant at $p<0.05$.

The second hypothesis investigated the effect of mindfulness on various conceptions of happiness. Regression analysis indicated that the variance accounted for by mindfulness was 12.3% in eudaimonism, 24.2% in externality of happiness, 16.6% in fear of happiness, 19.1% in fragility of happiness, 3.5% in valuing happiness, 9% in transformative suffering, 19.9% in inflexibility of happiness and 13.5% in inclusive happiness. All the results were significant at $p<0.01$, except for valuing happiness which was significant at $p<0.05$. The findings are consistent with the existing literature which relate mindfulness to happiness. According to a study conducted by Garland, Farb, Goldin, & Fredrickson (2015), through a process of encouraging positive reappraisal in challenging situations, mindfulness training may help people adjust and nurture eudaimonia. Buddhism unequivocally endorses “the cultivation of happiness, the genuine inner transformation by deliberately selecting and focusing on positive mental states”.

Mindfulness centres an individual so that one can deal with reality. It broadens awareness of people and allows them to not get distracted by what they are afraid the moment can transform into or what they want the moment to transform into. Mindfulness makes an individual understand that one might not be able to control the moment, but can control the reaction to it, thereby having internal locus of control and happiness. Mindfulness promotes flexibility in thought-action repertoire of an individual, thereby being negatively related with externality and inflexibility of happiness. Mindfulness is just one component of Buddhism's larger Eightfold Path, which aims to alter destructive thoughts and behaviours into virtuous ones while also encouraging joy and tranquilly (Rahula, 1959). Thus, mindfulness training can engage an individual to view suffering as a means of harbouring happiness.

According to Buddha, the practice of mindfulness cultivates meta-awareness which is fundamentally significant in deracinating the misconception in which we take ephemeral for permanent. This explains the negative relationship of mindfulness with fear of happiness and fragility of happiness as well (Teasdale & Chaskalson, 2011). There is a lack of literature associating mindfulness with valuing happiness and inclusive happiness. Mindfulness practitioners may be able to identify ideals around which to organise their lives and become more aware of the things that truly matter in life, i.e., uncover their objectives and find purpose in life. Decentring, acceptance, openness, and not judging are examples of mindfulness-related processes and attitudes that may mitigate the amplitude to which individuals are subjected to self-punishment, blame, shame, and other self-directed negative emotions, resulting in a greater appreciation of life and savouring of what matters, i.e., increasing meaningfulness. (Crego, Yela, Gómez-Martínez, Riesco-Matías, & Petisco-Rodríguez, 2021).

Conclusion

The present study was conducted to explore the effects of mindfulness on different conceptions of happiness in academic settings. It was concluded that mindfulness broadens the state of awareness leading people to be healthier, have positive cognitive appraisals, and more creative. The study is of paramount importance in understanding the different perceptions a layman has regarding happiness and how developing mindfulness-based intervention can bring a significant change in these conceptions and thereby contribute towards increase in happiness at individual and community level. Reduced negative conceptions by inculcating mindfulness in students leads to greater engagement in the process of education. India has been ranked 136 from 146 countries on Happiness Index as per UN World Happiness Report 2022 which further depicts how crucial it is to comprehend the way in which the community views happiness.

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