

Study of Relationship between Mindfulness and Study Engagement among University Students

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigates the relationship between mindfulness and study engagement among university students. A purposive sample of 51 students (males=18, females=33) aged from 21-28 years was taken. Trait Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) (Brown & Ryan, 2003) and Utrecht Student Engagement Scale (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker, 2002) were used to measure mindfulness and study engagement respectively. Results revealed significant positive correlation between mindfulness and study engagement. Further, participants showed no difference in the above mentioned variables with respect to the different demographic variables.

Keywords: Mindfulness, Study engagement, Students

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Study engagement

The term study engagement describes student motivation. It can be defined as a positive, fulfilling state of mind characterised by study related vigour, dedication and absorption. The same factors are identified and discussed in the theory of work engagement, which the term 'study engagement' can be seen to correspond [1]. Vigour is characterized by high levels of energy, the willingness to invest effort in one's work, and persistence. Dedication stands for experiencing a sense of, for example, significance and enthusiasm. Absorption means concentration in and fulfilment from being engrossed in one's work. Striving to fulfil these experiences is important for strengthening the study engagement of students and the academic community [2]. Study engagement affects learning results, study progress and student well-being. According to Salmela-Aro [3], it will prove very challenging to increase that motivation, as only every third university student experiences so called study engagement. Study engagement can be used to strengthen the strong sides and resources of students and academic communities, paving communities the way to success and well-being.

The study of study engagement is important in progressing societies, as Axelson and Flick [4] suggested that level of student engagement at an institution of higher education is increasingly seen as a valid indicator of institutional excellence that is more meaningful than traditional education and has more easily measured characteristics. Kuh [5] indicated, hundreds of studies demonstrated that students learn more when they direct their efforts to a variety of educationally purposeful activities.

1.2 Mindfulness

Mindfulness has its roots in Eastern traditions and is most often associated with the formal practice of mindfulness meditation. It is, however, more than meditation. It is “inherently a state of consciousness” that involves consciously attending to one’s moment-to-moment experience [6]. Meditation practice is simply a platform used to develop the state or skill of mindfulness [7]. Kabat-Zinn defines mindfulness as “a means of paying attention in a particular way, on purpose, in the present moment, and in a non-judgmental way”. This definition suggests that being mindful is an active state, an intentional state, “paying attention on purpose.” The essence of mindfulness is attending to intention, which embodies the sense of presence. The subjective feel of mindfulness is being aware of awareness, which embodies the sense of being present [8]. Other characteristics of mindfulness that have been described by researchers include being open minded, curious, compassionate, a reflective thinker, and not holding onto preconceptions. When opportunities arise, being open allows one to put oneself out in the world in a way of being drawn into being there. The three building blocks of mindfulness—intention, attention, and attitude—are not separate stages but are seen as interwoven aspects of a cyclic process and occur simultaneously [9].

It is proposed that a mindful approach to experience may enhance an individual’s capacity to fulfil their intentions by strengthening self-regulation abilities, that is, the ability to stay focused on the fulfilment of plans and to control the influence of counter intentional cues that can distract people from acting on their intentions [10]. Within research the word mindfulness has been used to describe a universal human capacity [11], a stable trait or disposition [12], a state of mind that can be induced, and as the culmination of mindfulness meditation practice [13].

In addition, mindfulness is frequently associated with mindfulness-based interventions that are aimed at cultivating the state of mindfulness through repeated practice [14]. Individuals who engage in regular practice and those who have a disposition to be more mindful, are aware of and attend to the here and now more frequently, for longer periods of time, and with greater intensity. However, even these individuals experience moments of mindlessness [15]. Such a present-moment awareness is believed to enhance affective balance and psychological well-being, by preventing habitual reacting and encouraging a more adaptive deliberate response to experiences [16]. Indeed, higher levels of mindfulness have been related to more positive affect, life satisfaction, self-esteem, and optimism and less negative affect and rumination [17].

1.3 Purpose of the study

As the term study engagement comes from work engagement and mindfulness enhances work engagement in two ways- directly by making people more attentive and focused and indirectly by enhancing people’s internal

awareness [18]. Therefore, the role of mindfulness can be studied in study engagement. Moreover, the Broaden and Build theory of positive emotions [19] suggests the experience of positive emotions broaden attention and focus, which leads to increased engagement with the environment resulting in building of psychological, cognitive, physical and relational resources. These resources over time lead to long-term success and well-being. Mindfulness being a cognitive resource may lead to academic wellbeing or study engagement in case of students. So here we can also test the build hypothesis of the Broaden and Build theory, but in an academic setting.

II. OBJECTIVES

1. To assess mindfulness and study engagement among university students.
2. To study relationship between mindfulness and study engagement among university students.
3. To study the difference between mindfulness and study engagement among university students with respect to different demographic variables.

III.METHOD

3.1 Sample

For the present study a purposive sample 51 students was selected from Kashmir University, Srinagar. The sample consisted of 18 male and 33 female students, with age range of 21-28 years. 20 students were hostellers and 31 were non-hostellers; 25 were from rural and 26 from urban areas.

3.2 Tools used

1. Utrecht Student Engagement Scale [20]. It is a 17-item scale measuring Vigour, Dedication and Absorption. The respondents report on 6-point scale ranging from 0 (never) to 5 (few times a week). Cronbach alpha for Vigour, Dedication and Absorption on the present sample was .69, .73 and .88 respectively and for the whole scale was .89.

2. Trait Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) [21]. It is a 15-item scale designed to assess a core characteristic of Mindfulness, namely, a receptive state of mind in which attention, informed by a sensitive awareness of what is occurring in the present, simply observes what is taking place. Participants report their agreement on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (almost always) to 6 (almost never). Cronbach alpha of the scale on the present sample was .79.

IV.RESULTS**Table 4.1 Showing frequency distribution of participants on different levels of mindfulness and study engagement (N=51)**

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Range</i>		
	Low	Medium	High
Mindfulness	23	2	26
Study engagement	7	35	9

Table 4.2 Showing correlation value between mindfulness and study engagement

	Study engagement
Mindfulness	.21*

*p≤0.05

Table 4.3 Comparison of mean scores of mindfulness and study engagement with respect to gender (N=51)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t-value</i>
Mindfulness	Male	18	4.21	.72	.05
	Female	33	4.22	.83	
Study Engagement	Male	18	120.11	33.91	.71
	Female	33	113.18	32.61	

It is evident that male and female students do not differ significantly in mindfulness and study engagement as the t- value is insignificant.

Table 4.4 Comparison of mean scores of mindfulness and study engagement with respect to residential status (N=51)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Residential status</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t-value</i>
Mindfulness	Rural	25	4.08	.92	1.16
	Urban	26	4.34	.62	
Study Engagement	Rural	25	110.8	40.30	1.02
	Urban	26	120.2	23.68	

It is evident that rural and urban students do not differ significantly in mindfulness and study engagement as the t- value is insignificant.

Table 4.5 Comparison of mean scores of mindfulness and study engagement of hostellers and non-hostellers (N=51)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Hostel</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t-value</i>
Mindfulness	Hostellers	20	4.25	.71	.26
	Non Hostellers	31	4.19	.84	
Study Engagement	Hostellers	20	121.1	30.31	.95
	Non Hostellers	31	112.09	34.49	

It is evident that hostellers and non-hostellers do not differ significantly in mindfulness and study engagement as the t- value is insignificant.

V. CONCLUSION

The experience of mindfulness is relevant to the experience of study engagement. Understanding mindfulness may help therapists improve the study engagement process with their clients through enhancing depth and meaning of educational experiences, as well as health and well-being of students.

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