

Mindfulness, Psychological Flexibility and Psychological Well-Being

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ABSTRACT

The importance of positive traits, such as mindfulness and psychological flexibility, in fostering psychological well-being has gained interest especially in early adulthood, a period of time when the individuals face tremendous developmental and societal restrictions. The aim of the present study was to investigate the predictive role of dispositional mindfulness and psychological flexibility on psychological well-being in early adulthood (18-25 years). The study was conducted on a sample of 300 subjects (150 males and 150 females) participating in undergraduate and post-graduate studies. Psychological Well-Being Scale, Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) and Acceptance and Action Questionnaire-II (AAQ-II) were updated in Hindi. The predictive contribution of the two variables was determined via stepwise multiple regression analysis. Psychological inflexibility was a strong negative predictor of psychological well-being ($\beta = -.341, p < .001$). Dispositional mindfulness was a significant positive predictor ($\beta = .193, p < .001$). Together, the variables explained 19.9% of the variance in psychological well-being (adjusted $R^2 = .194$), with psychological inflexibility being the better predictor. The findings indicate that higher levels of mindfulness and psychological flexibility in early adulthood are associated with better levels of psychological well-being, whereas higher levels of rigidity in thought and emotional processing are associated with higher levels of psychological distress.

Keywords: *Mindfulness, Psychological Flexibility, Psychological Well-Being*

With the growing pressure and challenges across the lifespan the contribution of positive traits in well-being is crucial. After a decade the focus shifted from abnormal psychology to the positive aspects of personality of an individual and how they can act as a catalyst in promotion of well-being of an individual. Being mindful and flexible while processing thoughts promotes better emotion regulation and overall satisfaction of an individual.

Mindfulness is characterised as a person's adaptable state of awareness that encompasses focused attention and non-judgmental recognition of both internal and external occurrences as they unfold (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Brown et al., 2007).

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The concept of mindfulness (Brown et al., 2007; Kabat-Zinn, 2003) posits that it is an intrinsic human trait that exists along a continuum of varying intensities, known as dispositional mindfulness, and also a skill that can be cultivated through diverse meditation practices, referred to as state mindfulness.

As a consequence of this, it is necessary to differentiate between the state of awareness and the disposition which is associated with mindfulness. State mindfulness is defined as a mode of awareness characterised by present-centered attention to one's current experience that is free of preoccupation, whereas dispositional mindfulness reflects the natural tendency to exhibit such nonjudgmental awareness (Garland, 2007; Quaglia et al., 2015).

It may also be characterised as the practice, mindset, or persistent tendency to remain aware in everyday existence (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Dispositional mindfulness refers to these attitudes and abilities as generally enduring personal characteristics.

Model of Mindfulness

Baer et al. (2006) proposed the Dispositional Mindfulness model, which consists of five components: (a) observing (being cognisant of one's inner and outer sensations, emotions, and thoughts), (b) describing (being able to mentally or verbally label sensations, emotions, and thoughts), (c) acting with awareness (being focused on one's current activity rather than acting automatically), (d) non-judging of inner experiences (recognising but not evaluating one's feelings and thoughts), and (e) non-reactivity to inner experiences.

Numerous research have demonstrated that mindfulness contributes to improved cognitive performance and enhances psychological health. Brown and Ryan (2003) discovered a significant correlation between depression, anxiety, and mental health and mindfulness and its components. Numerous clinical psychology investigations have employed mindfulness to explore an array of psychological issues. Investigations into mindfulness have demonstrated a correlation with improved self-worth, effective self-control, and emotional equilibrium, which encompasses a reduced response to emotional triggers (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Giluk, 2009; Masicampo & Baumeister, 2007; Rasmussen & Pidgeon, 2011).

Psychological flexibility is a process that allows an individual's actions to persist or adapt in alignment with their enduring goals and convictions. It relies on the interplay between cognitive processes and immediate environmental factors. A natural tendency to maintain alignment with one's ideas and goals is believed to be the motivating factor behind this (McCracken & Yang, 2006).

In this context, psychological flexibility is essential for good mental performance (Hayes et al., 2006). Psychological flexibility is essential for mental well-being, but psychological inflexibility is pivotal to mental susceptibility (Kashdan & Rottenberg, 2010).

According to the Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) model, flexibility is all about being mindful of feelings and ideas that originate in the current moment without unnecessary resistance and maintaining or adjusting action to pursue key values and objectives (Hayes et al., 2012; Lloyd et al., 2013). This is the definition of flexibility.

According to the Psychological Flexibility and Inflexibility model, which serves as the foundation for acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT), psychological flexibility is defined as the ability to be open to one's thoughts and feelings in the present moment, as well

as the ability to change one's behaviour in response to shifting demands imposed by the environment, while also remaining in accordance with one's own personal values (Hayes et al., 2006).

Therefore, an easy way to describe acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) is as a behavioural and cognitive intervention that increases psychological flexibility through the processes of acceptance and mindfulness, as well as through the processes of commitment and behaviour change. The goal of treatment is to develop the processes of acceptance and mindfulness, which reduce excessive literalness and generate a more conscious, present, and flexible reaction to psychological events. Additionally, the treatment tries to increase the processes of commitment and behaviour change, which promote values-based action.

Acceptance, defusion, touch with the present moment, self as context, values, and committed action are the six primary processes that are involved in psychological flexibility, according to Hayes et al. (2006).

Through psychological inflexibility (P-I) processes, pain, which is a natural response to conditions that are undesirable or unpleasant, can evolve into psychopathology or suffering (McCracken & Vowles, 2007; Tanhan, 2019). This is when viewed from the perspective of acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT). Experiential avoidance, inflexible attention, disrupted values, inaction or impulsivity, conceptualised self, and cognitive fusion are the six primary processes that make up psychological inflexibility (Hayes et al., 2006; Hayes et al., 2012; Levin et al., 2014). It is important to note that these processes are all interconnected.

One of the most important aspects that plays a role in defining our psychological well-being is the extent to which we are able to operate and adapt effectively. According to Huppert (2009), psychological well-being is primarily concerned with the success of one's life. A combination of feeling good and performing well in one's activities is what it is. Both the cognitive and emotional evaluation of one's life, which together constitute an individual's psychological well-being, are crucial components of human psychological health. Bradburn provides an explanation of the concept of psychological well-being by situating it within the framework of both positive and negative affect. According to him, the degree to which positive affect is more prevalent than negative affect in an individual's experience is directly proportional to the degree to which that individual's level of psychological well-being is increased. According to an alternative point of view, the most essential aspect in defining an individual's level of psychological well-being is the degree to which an individual is content with their existence (Bryant & Veroff, 1982).

It is a broad term that incorporates optimal performance, self-actualization, and thriving, and it refers to both the ideal state of our existence and the objective of our search (Ivtzan et al., 2013; Wong, 2011). Wellbeing is a phrase that encompasses all of these things.

Psychological well-being (PWB) was described by Carr (2004) as the process of realising one's full psychological potential by an individual.

Objective

To study the predicting role of dispositional mindfulness and psychological flexibility in psychological well-being among early adults.

Hypothesis

- Dispositional mindfulness and psychological flexibility will be significant predictors of psychological well-being among early adults.

METHOD

Sample

Following data screening, 300 early adults (150 males and 150 females) between the ages of 18 and 25 enrolled in various UG and PG courses were finally included.

Inclusion criteria:

Early adults aged 18 to 25 years old, engaged in undergraduate and graduate programs, and fluent in Hindi were included.

Exclusion criteria:

People who had serious mental or physical diseases were excluded. Married students were not included in the study.

Measuring Tools

The following measures were used in the current investigation, along with the demographic data schedule.

- **Demographic Schedule:** A demographic questionnaire was created. Gender, age, education, marital status, and current physical or mental health status were all provided by respondents.
- **The psychological well-being scale:** A Hindi adaptation of Ryff's Psychological Well-Being scale by Rai and Gupta (2004) was used to collect data. It is a 54-item scale that covers dimensions like autonomy, environmental.
- **Dispositional mindfulness scale:** The original questionnaire of the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) was developed by Brown and Ryan (2003) to assess the dispositional mindfulness of an individual. It has 15 items rated on a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from "1" (i.e., almost always) to "6" (i.e., almost never). The tool had a Cronbach's alpha of .84. The Hindi-adapted MAAS was used in the present study.
- **Psychological flexibility scale:** Hindi adaptation of Acceptance and Action Questionnaire-II (AAQ-II) by Tyagi & Agarwal (2021) was used in the present study.

Analysis

SPSS 21.0 was the software used to carry out the analysis included in this investigation. To determine the factors that significantly predict psychological well-being in adults, stepwise regression was applied as a method of analysis. Both dispositional mindfulness and psychological flexibility have been investigated as potential predictor variables in the current research.

RESULT

Table-1 Descriptive statistics

	Mean	SD	Variance	Skewness	Kurtosis
Dispositional Mindfulness	51.89	8.21	67.407	-.118	-.438
Psychological flexibility	26.43	5.35	28.667	-.008	-.408
Psychological Well-being	206.20	16.06	257.784	.067	-.299

The above Table shows that the mean and standard deviation (SD) score for dispositional mindfulness (M = 51.89, SD = 8.21), psychological inflexibility/flexibility (M = 26.43, SD = 5.35), and psychological well-being (M = 206.20, SD = 16.06).

Table 2 R Square, Adjusted R square, and F Change for study variable

Model Summary				Change statistics		
Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	R ² change	F Change	Sig.
1.	.408 ^a	.166	.164	.166	59.489	.000
2.	.446 ^b	.199	.194	.033	12.120	.001

a. Predictors (constant), Psychological inflexibility

b. Predictors (constant), Psychological inflexibility Dispositional Mindfulness

Note: Dependent variable: Psychological well-being

Table 3 Regression coefficient of Psychological Inflexibility and Dispositional Mindfulness on Psychological Well-Being of adults

Variable	B	SE B	Beta(β)	t	sig.
Psychological inflexibility	-1.02	.166	-.341	-6.16	.000
Dispositional Mindfulness	.377	.108	.193	3.48	.001

****Significant at $p < .001$ level**

Note: Dependent variable: Psychological well-being, **B**= Unstandardized regression coefficient, **SE B**= Standard Error Beta, **β**=Standardised regression coefficient

The stepwise multiple regression analysis is shown in above Tables. A two-variable model revealed psychological inflexibility has a beta weight of -0.341 ($t = 6.162$, $p = .000$), whereas dispositional mindfulness has a derived beta weight of -0.3193 ($t = 3.481$, $p = .001$). Negative beta weight suggests that psychological inflexibility negatively predicts psychological well-being. The 16.6% of the variance (adjusted $R^2 = 0.164$, $F(1,298) = 59.489$, $p = .000$) in the criterion/dependent variable i.e. psychological well-being is explained by, the first predictor i.e. psychological inflexibility (see Table 2). In the second model, dispositional mindfulness is added as the predictor. At this stage, the model is able to predict 19.9% of the sample outcome variance (adjusted $R^2 = 0.194$, $F(2,297) = 12.120$, $p = .001$); an additional 3.3% of the variance is explained (R^2 change = .033).

DISCUSSION

The objective was to study the predicting role of dispositional mindfulness and psychological flexibility in psychological well-being among adults. In this case, the hypothesis that was generated was "Psychological flexibility and Dispositional Mindfulness will be significant predictors of psychological well-being among adults."

The findings obtained in the present study reveal that psychological flexibility and dispositional mindfulness account for reasonable variance in psychological well-being among adults.

Evidence suggests that a person's mental well-being and behaviour are more closely linked to how they deal with their thoughts and emotions. People who have a rigidity that prevents them from adapting their thoughts suffer from various psychological problems, whereas people who are more adaptable in their thinking have less distress.

Psychological flexibility is defined as the ability to accept one's current situation without trying to avoid or control unpleasant situations (McCracken & Vowles, 2007; Hayes et al., 2006).

Psychological inflexibility results in several psychological issues, as it makes it hard for an individual to adapt and adjust to a situation. Psychological inflexibility leads to rigidity in thought processes, which results in mental loops, as an individual finds it hard to cope and adjust. In accordance with the demands of the situation, psychologically inflexible early adults tend to be engrossed in past events and emotions associated with them and find it hard to come out of the mental loops, which results in several mental health issues like depression, anxiety, etc.

The stepwise multiple regression helped in finding the significant contribution of the predictor variables to the criterion variables or dependent variables. The Beta (β) weight of psychological inflexibility is negative, which reveals that psychological inflexibility and psychological well-being are negatively correlated and have an inverse relationship, which signifies that adults who will have greater inflexibility will have less psychological well-being while adults who will have less psychological inflexibility (which means more psychological flexibility) will have high psychological well-being. The β weight of dispositional mindfulness was positive, which means that adults who will be more mindful will have high psychological well-being.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study showed that psychological flexibility and dispositional mindfulness in early adults were significant predictors of their psychological wellbeing, with psychological inflexibility/flexibility making relatively major contributions.

It has been suggested that mindfulness is a key mechanism for helping people let go of automatic thinking patterns and unhealthy behaviours while also encouraging self-advocated behaviour control that is linked to better health and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Adults who are psychologically more flexible and high on dispositional mindfulness will have greater well-being in comparison to those who are psychologically inflexible and dispositionally mindless. Thus, all the components of psychological flexibility, i.e., acceptance, contact with the present moment, values, committed action, transcendent sense of self, and diffusion, which combine all together to define flexibility, will ensure psychological well-being among early adults. In the same way, all the components of dispositional mindfulness, i.e., observing, describing, acting with awareness, non-reactivity to inner experience, and non-judging of inner experience, which combine all together to define dispositional mindfulness, are present in early adults and may have enhanced psychological well-being.

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Conflict of Interest

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