

# The Relationship Between Mindfulness and Psychological Well-Being

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## Abstract

Psychological well-being is a crucial ingredient for good life navigation (Ryff et al., 2003). Its significance to health and well-being is well-established. Mindfulness is one of the techniques that has been related with improved psychological health. Unstudied, however, is which aspect of mindfulness is related to psychological wellness. The purpose of this research was to examine the relationship between psychological well-being and mindfulness. There are 127 participants ( $M_{\text{age}} = 22.87$ ,  $SD = 4.55$ ) voluntarily participated in this study and completed a series of self-reported questionnaires to assess six dimensions of psychological well-being (Ryff's Scales of Psychological Well-Being, PWB), and five aspect mindfulness (Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire, M). The outcomes. There are no significant relationships between mindfulness and psychological well-being aspects, as shown by this study. The consequences and specifics of the connections are examined. Future research should take into account all psychological wellness characteristics and the five facets of mindfulness in order to design therapies that increase psychological wellbeing.

**Keywords:** Mindfulness, Psychological Well-Being, Health and Wellness

## Introduction

Psychological well-being is defined as life-satisfaction and happiness (Ryff, 1989). Happiness is, in turn, defined in two separate concepts, the balance of positive and negative affect on its intensity and frequency, as well as components that complement life happiness, such as job satisfaction and social relationships (Bradburn, 1969). Ryff (1995) introduced the concept of a multidimensional model of psychological well-being. The dimensions are self-acceptance, personal growth (personal development), purpose in life, environmental mastery, positive relations with others and autonomy (ability to be independent).

Ryff and Keyes (1995) highlighted that psychological well-being encompasses two subfields of psychology. From the developmental psychology perspective, wellness is evaluated within the continuous growth of a life cycle, in aspects such as psychosocial stage, basic life tendencies, and personality changes. From the clinical psychology perspective, wellness means a positively healthy condition, such as self-actualization, maturity, and

account of individuation. In other words, an individual with a high level of psychological wellbeing has high levels of self-acceptance. He/She possesses a positive attitude towards oneself, including feeling positive towards one's past life and accepting all of one's good and bad qualities (Ryff, 1995) and performance (Ryff & Singer, 1996; Schmutte & Ryff, 1997).

High levels of personal growth and development are described as feelings of continued development, perceived self-growth and expenditure, openness to new experiences which leads to improvement and realisation of one's potential (Ryff, 1995). Individuals who score high on this dimension are continuously developing themselves through new experiences, realising their potential and believing that they are growing and improving over time. Purpose in life is another dimension of psychological well-being, described as having a goal and a life direction that holds life's purpose and objectives (Ryff, 1995). Individuals who score high on this dimension have a sense of life direction and life objective for themselves.

Environmental mastery is having the ability to choose and create opportunities and an environment which suits personal needs and values (Ryff, 1995). Individuals who score high on environmental mastery are able to advance the world and manage the environment through physical and mental activities. They are able to see opportunities and use it effectively. Positive relations with others is the individual capability to feel love, which is viewed as an important aspect of being mentally healthy. Individuals who score high on this factor are able to develop warm and trusty relationships, tolerate others and have a sense of welfare (Ryff, 1995). Finally, autonomy is the ability of being independent and capable of regulating social pressure in thought, action, behaviour and personal standard. An individual who scores high in autonomy is independent and able to resist social pressure and think/act for oneself (Ryff, 1995).

There is a growing body of literature that recognises the importance of understanding psychological well-being, as it is highly related to health and wellness. Scheier & Carver (1992) have intensively reviewed evidences that individual psychological well-being positively correlates with physical health. Brown et al (2007) added that awareness in individuals' psychological well-being is the ability to overcome life's challenges, which include having satisfying relationships, balancing between positive and negative effects and having the ability for self-realisation.

Previous research has established a strong positive relationship between psychological wellbeing and physical and mental health (Carmeli et al., 2009; Ryff et al., 2006). More recently, Husted (2017) observed the relationship between levels of psychological well-being and a successful transition to university in 235 college students. The results suggested that the students who rate themselves higher in psychological well-being are more likely to perceive themselves as more successful in transitioning to university with regards to all six psychological well-being dimensions (i.e., self-acceptance, purpose in life, environmental mastery, positive relations with others, and autonomy). While some research has been carried out on psychological well-being, a lot of uncertainty still remains about how to improve it which shows the necessity to further extend the research on psychological well-being.

One of the technique that have close related with psychological well-being is mindfulness. Mindfulness has been used as an intervention for mental, psychological and physical well-being (Roche et al., 2014; Baer et al., 2008). The concept of mindfulness is rooted on Buddha's belief and is defined as the state of being focused and conscious of what is happening in the present (Kabat- Zinn, 1990). It is often defined as "as the awareness that

arises through intentionally attending to one's moment-to-moment experience in a non-judgmental and accepting way" (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p.145).

Mindfulness is being conscious with awareness and attention. For example, while eating one can be highly attentive to the mouth movements, be aware of the taste, the food texture and feelings of having a full stomach. Similarly, while speaking one can be conscious of the topic that people are discussing about and be attentive to emotional feelings that may be present during the time. Brown and Ryan (2003) relate the nature of mindfulness to mental processing as it involves cognition, motives and emotions. It has become a psychological technique and has been receiving massive research attention for skills enhancement, intervention development and effectiveness (Brown & Ryan, 2003). An empirical study was conducted on 97 youths to investigate the effectiveness of 12 weeks of mindfulness intervention on stress responses. The results reveal that mindfulness impacts positively on contemplation, disturbing thoughts and emotional arousal (Mendelson et al., 2010). In another study, Cleirigh and Greaney (2015) compared task performance between a 10-minute mindfulness intervention group and a control group. The 10-minute mindfulness intervention group received an audio tape recording with a brief introduction to mindfulness and two mindfulness exercises. The 10-minute intervention group showed a significant higher task performance compared to the control group.

Mindfulness focused on psychological well-being and daily life can be explained in five dimensions (Baer et al., 2008). The first dimension, observe, means noticing or attending to internal and external experiences (i.e., cognitive stimuli, emotions, sights, and sensations). The second, describe, refers to identifying internal experiences with words. The third dimension is act with awareness, mean paying attention to only one event at each moment of time. Fourth, non-judge of inner experiences, refers to having no pre-determined evaluative standpoint towards thoughts and feelings. Finally, non-react to inner experiences, or allowing thoughts and feelings to be carried away, without getting caught up.

Studies on mindfulness are extensive and the literature provides varying assessment tools to measure mindfulness, in particular tools that relate it to psychological well-being and daily life. Most of the mindfulness measure tools are scored as a single factor rather than in subscales due to the lack of consensus on the content and structure of mindfulness (Baer et al., 2008). Thus, it is suggested that the concept of mindfulness is multifaceted and should be treated as composed of different constructs in various dimensions rather than as a single factor.

This study takes into consideration all the mindfulness facets. It is shown in this review that the current body of literature has been very effective in exploring the relationship between all the mindfulness facets and all six dimensions of psychological well-being. However, even though many groups of researchers have shown an increased interest on the relationship between these variables, in most cases the relationship was not investigated in much detail. This study aims to contribute to this growing area of research by :

1: Further exploring the relationship between these variables and further establish the relationship between mindfulness and psychological well-being.

## **Materials and Methods**

Once the ethics panel approval was obtained, respondents were recruited randomly by word of mouth, personal contact and emails. The prepared questionnaire pack was distributed online and offline. It consisted of an information sheet explaining the nature of the study, a consent form, the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (M) and Ryff's Scales of

Psychological Well-Being (PWB). The participants were informed that the participation was voluntary, and they were free to withdraw at any time, without providing an explanation. The information provided by the participants was kept confidential. Participants who agreed to participate signed the informed consent form and completed the questionnaire pack, which takes approximately 10 minutes to complete.

### Results and Discussion

Preliminary analyses were conducted to inspect errors, missing data, and outliers. And Little's test. Skewness and kurtosis scores were obtained to ensure no violation of the assumption of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity.

The main analysis involved 127 respondents. Preliminary analysis was conducted and found no mistakes or missing values, and normality, linearity and homoscedasticity of residuals were confirmed. The detailed significant values and correlation coefficients are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1

*Details of Relationship Between Mindfulness and Psychological Well-Being*

Variables	M-observes		M- describe		M-Act with awareness		M-non-judge		M-non react	
	r	p	r	p	r	p	r	p	r	p
PWB-Autonomy	.04	.650	.06	.523	.10	.244	.06	.536	.09	.338
PWB-Environmental mastery	.14	.129	.24**	.006	.03	.727	.02	.981	.25**	.005
PWB-personal growth	.06	.522	.21**	.019	.15	.085	.12	.193	.03	.746
PWB-Positive relations	.18	.045	.16	.065	.20**	.025	.12	.185	.13	.133
PWB-Purpose in life	.13	.153	.23**	.010	.02	.811	.05	.580	.03	.755
PWB-self confidence	.28**	.001	.17	.063	.02	.813	.27**	.002	.06	.519

Notes, \*\* = highly correlated; M = Mindfulness, PWB = Psychological well-being.

Standard multiple regression was used to determine the five facets of mindfulness (i.e., M- Observe, M- Describe, M- Act with awareness, M- Non-judge, M- Non-react), to predict if they have a significant relationship with six independent variables defined as psychological well-being dimensions. The standard multiple regression analysis was conducted in relation to the independent variable autonomy, one of the dimensions of psychological well-being. Regression analysis indicated that the set of six predictors did not predict the psychological well-being dimension autonomy ( $F_{(6, 120)} = 0.528$ ,  $p = .786$ ).

With regards to the independent variable environmental mastery, another dimension from psychological well-being, a regression analysis has also shown no significant relationship with all predictors ( $F_{(6, 120)} = 2.84$ ,  $p = .330$ ) although mindfulness facet, describe and non-react shown high correlation with this dimensions. The next standard multiple regression was

conducted to the independent variable personal growth, a third dimension of psychological well-being. There was also no significant relationship with mindfulness facet except for the describe ( $F_{(6, 120)} = 2.04, p = .065$ ).

A standard multiple regression was performed between the independent variable positive relations with others, the fourth psychological well-being dimension, and found a significant relation ( $F_{(6, 120)} = 2.22, p = .05$ ). The adjusted  $R^2$  value of .055 indicates that only approximately 6% of the variance contribute to the psychological well-being dimension positive relations with others. The correlation between all six predictors and the independent variables, positive relations with others has shown a significant relationship with only two facets, observe and describe. The next standard multiple regression was for the independent variable purpose of life, the fifth dimension of psychological well-being. There was no significant relationship shown between the mindfulness and the psychological well-being ( $F_{(6, 120)} = 2.07, p = .062$ ).

A standard multiple regression was conducted on the sixth dimension of psychological well-being, self-acceptance. R for regression was significantly different from zero ( $F_{(6, 120)} = 4.06, p = .001$ ). An  $R^2 = .17$  indicates that at least 17% of the variability in the individual psychological well-being dimension self-acceptance was predicted by mindfulness. The details of the correlations are displayed in Table 1 and shows that the facets observe and describe from mindfulness are the highest contributors. The facet non-judge from mindfulness significantly contributed to the psychological well-being dimension self-acceptance.

## Conclusions

The aim of the present study was to examine the relationship between mindfulness and psychological well-being dimensions. Initial investigation was on the role of mindfulness (subdivided into its five facets, observe, describe, act with awareness, non-judge of inner experience, non-react to inner experience) and six psychological well-being dimensions (i.e., autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance). It was hypothesised that mindfulness significantly associated with psychological well-being. Contrary with previous research, (Roche et al., 2014; Schutte & Malouff, 2010; Jain & Fonagy, 2018) the findings did not support the notion that increased in mindfulness may result in decrease in psychological symptoms such as somatic complaint and depression (Baer et al., 2008), which would eventually lead to a more meaningful life and healthier well-being.

There are a number of general implications that can be drawn from this study. The first implication is the need for awareness to recognise the importance of psychological techniques (i.e., mindfulness) in improving individuals' psychological well-being. The second implication from the findings of this study is based on the concept of mindfulness. There is a considerable amount of evidence that shows that mindfulness is reliable and beneficial in improving psychological well-being (Schutte & Malouff, 2010). The findings of this study provide some insight into the relationship between all five mindfulness facets and emotional intelligence and all psychological well-being dimensions which may tap into more investigation how actually mindfulness may help to improve psychological well-being. Hence, it shows clearly and in detail which mindfulness facets relate to which psychological well-being dimensions. In consequence, it is noted that individuals that practice mindfulness may not really function better than individuals who have a certain level of psychological well-

being. Taken together, the results suggest that it is very important to acknowledge that not all individuals' psychological well-being can be improved based on how much mindfulness is practiced in life.

This study further extends the findings from previous literature by revealing a greater contribution of mindfulness in psychological well-being. Therefore, it is worth taking into account which facet of mindfulness can be applied or practiced to expect which psychological well-being aspect to be improved. Consequently, mindfulness interventions should be developed based on the idea of these relationships, the psychological well-being dimensions.

The key strength of this study is the strong theoretical background that underpin the correlations found by the analysed variables. This study integrated multiple theories, and the results corroborate the findings of a great deal of previous work. The first theory is an integrative awareness theory that underpin the correlations of mindfulness as a predictor of psychological wellbeing in which it explains the explorative attention and awareness in gathering information developing insight thus facilitating adaptation (Brown et al., 2007). The second strength of this study is the focus on the various aspects of the correlation between the five facet of mindfulness and all six psychological dimensions. To our knowledge, this is the first study that looked into these correlations and analysed the details of it.

A potential limitation of this study is the fact that participants are all relatively similar in age and cultural background. A previous study (Husted, 2017) suggested that age and culture contribute to individual psychological wellbeing. It would be interesting to re-examine some of the present study's research questions with individuals who vary more in age, cultural background and socio-economic status. Within a young adult population with university level of education, mindfulness are positively related to some of the psychological well-being dimensions, which means, the more an individual uses mindfulness technique, the better is one's psychological well-being. It would be interesting to see whether individuals from a diverse range of age, cultural background, socio-economic status and living style respond differently to the use of mindfulness. Nevertheless, this would be an interesting avenue for future research.

Another limitation to point out in this study is the use of self-report measures to assess imagery ability. Self-report measures are prone to response bias, as could be based on individuals' confidence rather than on the actual emotional intelligence and psychological well-being levels (Finke, 1980). However, to address this, the respondents were given clear instructions on how to perceive their psychological well-being. Nevertheless, applying other objective measures (i.e., physiological responses to stimuli that elicit an emotional reaction) would be an interesting approach for future research.

The findings of this study can open avenues for future research to extend the work in this area. A potential venture for future research is to continue examining the impact of mindfulness in improving psychological well-being. A great deal of attention has been brought on to psychological well-being and the impact of mindfulness interventions, but there is still limited research on how they all relate with each other. It would also be worth extending this area of investigation to further clarify what aspects of psychological well-being impact what aspects of mindfulness. These results could be of benefit not only to researchers, but also to psychologists.

Another potential future direction is to re-examine the research questions proposed in this dissertation and consider participants' age, cultural background, and socio-economic status. It would be interesting to see whether findings are similar when mindfulness are compared between different age groups (i.e., adults versus teenagers) to expand the idea of

mindfulness interventions and supplement evidence that these psychological techniques are effective in improving psychological well-being. Consequently, it can potentially reinforce the relationship between them.

It would also be interesting to conduct an experimental research to compare the effectiveness of mindfulness interventions in improving and psychological well-being. The nature of cross-sectional studies limits the results to a simple verification of the relationship between variables. The advantage of an experimental research is that it can provide information about the impact of one variable over another.

We also suggest the use of qualitative and mixed methods research design approaches, as these research methods can support and clarify findings from quantitative research. Implementing a qualitative or mixed methods design would give new insights about the topic, possibly showing how mindfulness may or may not influence psychological well-being and in aspects that are not covered by the questionnaires used in this study.

Finally, future research should test the proposed relationships found by this study as a whole. Specifically, there is still a need to examine the extent to which factors identified in the present study improve psychological well-being can have subsequent outcomes associated with mindfulness. In summary, the findings from this study lay out a number of exciting opportunities for future research.

### Theoretical and Contextual Contribution

This study gives some insights into the understanding of which aspects of mindfulness predict the six dimensions of psychological well-being. The overall findings that contribute to the literature were constructed through the aims which investigated the relationship mindfulness and psychological well-being. It is suggested that mindfulness should be considered as techniques to improve psychological well-being.

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