



MINDFULNESS AND WELLBEING

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Abstract

In the present literature review are highlighted the main relations between mindfulness and variables, such as psychological and physical wellbeing, emotional wellbeing, stress, depression, anxiety, sleep quality, and positive affect. There were presented studies regarding mindfulness and wellbeing (Howell et al., 2011; Bränström et al., 2010; Caldwell et al., 2011; Brown & Ryan, 2003; Howell et al., 2008; Bluth & Blanton, 2013; Ziaian et al., 2015; Weare, 2014; Josefsson, 2013; Englund-Helmeke, 2014) where the authors underlined the positive relationship between variables. Also, authors investigated a number of 19 studies (Lomas et al., 2017) showing the effect of mindfulness on variables, such as compassion, anxiety, depression, sleep quality, and self-efficacy. Another study investigated the relation between wellbeing and the history of meditation. The authors showed that there is a positive strong correlation between mindfulness history, level of mindfulness and emotional functioning. For a better life at work and for a high level of wellbeing, meditation related with mindfulness helps improve performance, human relations and communication in all parts of social life.

Keywords: *mindfulness, psychological wellbeing, physical wellbeing, distress, meditation.*

1. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WELL-BEING AND HEALTH

Howell et al. (2011) investigated the relationship between mindfulness and wellbeing. In this way they conducted two studies. The first study they were interested in finding out possible correlations between a connection to nature and the emotional, psychological and the social scales of wellbeing (Keyes, 2005). In this study participated a number of 452 students and the results confirmed statistically significant correlations between psychological wellbeing and a connectedness to nature ($r=.15$; $p<0.05$). Also, there are statistically significant correlations between social wellbeing and a connectedness to nature ($r=.20$; $p<0.05$) and statistically significant correlations between mindfulness and

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emotional wellbeing ($r=.36$; $p<0.01$), between mindfulness and psychological wellbeing ($r=.42$; $p<0.05$), and between mindfulness and social wellbeing ($r=.37$; $p<0.01$).

In this way, the authors underline the importance of mindfulness and social wellbeing, psychological wellbeing, and emotional wellbeing, for the group of students who were participating in the study.

In the second study, Howell et al. (2011) were interested in highlighting possible correlations between a connection to nature, mindfulness, social wellbeing and psychological wellbeing. They used a confirmatory analysis on all of these variables in this way to underline strong correlations between them. Hence, the results highlighted that three factors were significantly interrelated: a connectedness to nature was associated with wellbeing and mindfulness.

Weare (2014) investigated the impact on wellbeing and performance regarding the school staff. The author presents the results of Hölzel et al. (2011a, and b) regarding the impact of mindfulness meditation in the way of increasing the density and complexity of neural connexions with the cognitive abilities and emotional states. Also, the author underlines that mindfulness meditation decreases the activity in the areas involving negative emotions, such as anxiety, worry, hostility, and also impulsivity. Weare (2014) discusses the results of Segal et al. (2013), Kabat-Zinn (1996), that underlines the fact that mindfulness training develops teachers' preparations. Also, the same author presents the results of Poulin et al. (2007) about the teachers' improvements in physical health after participating in an 8 week mindfulness training course.

2. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MINDFULNESS AND WELL-BEING

Bränström et al. (2010) conducted a study in which focused on highlighting that mindfulness is a mediator of psychological wellbeing in stress reduction intervention for cancer patients. The author specified that mindfulness based intervention was used for the following health conditions: chronic pain, anxiety, depression, and sleep disturbance. The participants were trained in class or at home, for two hours/week over a period of eight weeks. The training constituted of body scan meditation, sitting and walking meditation, and hatha yoga (Bränström, et al. 2010). The author used multivariate analysis in the way to evidence the group interaction effect. Hence, the intervention group reported reduction of psychological distress and increased positive states of mindfulness (Bränström, 2009). The final conclusion of the study evidenced that patients improved their psychological functioning; they had reduction of stress symptoms and increased their level of wellbeing.

Caldwell et al. (2011) were interested in highlighting possible increases in mindfulness, wellbeing and sleep quality for the college student participants in taijiquan courses. The participants were a number of 76 college students aged

between 18-48 years old taking part in 15 week courses of taijiquan. The authors used multivariate analysis and hierarchical linear models of longitudinal data. They used linear equations to highlight the effects of the variables. The authors examined possible changes in mindfulness that are related to changes in each of the wellbeing measures. The results underlined that the student group attending taijiquan classes recorded differences in comparison to the control group. Furthermore, they found out that increasing mindfulness is statistically significant when associated with the increase in wellbeing of the participants. Also, increasing mindfulness scores were followed by decreasing perceived stress, tiredness, negative energy, and sleep disturbance.

Brown & Ryan (2003) carried out five studies on the benefits of mindfulness and its role in psychological wellbeing. The authors assessed that using Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) a unique quality of consciousness can be measured in relation to enhanced wellbeing and self-awareness and that mindfulness is associated with greater wellbeing. They also concluded that neuroticism (including worry and self-consciousness) can preclude mindfulness, so is considered to be a variable of wellbeing to which mindfulness is meaningfully related (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Also, studying mindfulness as a predictor of day-to-day wellbeing the authors' results were that mindfulness was associated with positive experiences, like higher levels of autonomy, more intense and frequent pleasant affect.

Howell et al. (2008) studied the relation between wellbeing, mindfulness and sleep quality. The subjects of this study were 305 Canadian psychology students. The authors measured emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing, mindfulness, sleep quality, and concluded that the study revealed positive correlations between these variables.

Evaluating adolescents' life necessities, Bluth & Blanton (2013) published a study on mindfulness and self-compassion and their role as mediators in the pathway to emotional wellbeing. Describing this important stage of development in one's life, the authors highlighted that the adolescents face cognitive, physiological, and emotional changes, but also stressful activities. In day-to-day activities, at school, or at home, they are exposed to stressors and high-pressure tasks. Improving emotional wellbeing definitely needs to be focused on developing a self-compassion program adjusted for adolescents (Bluth & Blanton, 2013). The participants in this study were 9-12 grade high school students, more females, than male. The authors measured the variables using Children and Adolescent Mindfulness Measure (CAMM; Greco et al. 2011), Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS; Watson et al. 1988), Self-Compassion Scale (SCS; Neff 2003), Student's Life Satisfaction Scale (SLSS; Huebner 1991), Perceived Stress Scale (PSS; Cohen et al. 1983). The authors concluded that both mindfulness and self-compassion may function as mediators with emotional wellbeing.

Ziaian et al. (2015) conducted a study on the impact of mindfulness meditation on academic wellbeing. Participants completed a program that included five minutes meditation practice twice a day over a nine month period, and also participated in several workshops focusing on principles and techniques of mindfulness meditation, finishing with telephone interviews in order to assess their experience. The study proved to be effective especially for the participants receptive to this approach, and positive changes of values were to be observed combining mindfulness techniques with effective learning strategies.

Virgili (2013) cited by Weare (2014) completed a meta-analysis based on the effects of mindfulness on reducing distress, specifically anxiety and depression for employees. The results highlighted medium to large mean effect size for studies in almost all 19 studies.

Josefsson (2013) conducted 3 studies regarding the relationship between mindfulness, attention and psychological wellbeing. In the first study, the author was interested in highlighting the relation between mindfulness and sustained and executive attention, comparing 2 groups: Buddhist (meditators) and western (non-meditators). The results highlighted no significant differences between Buddhist groups with experience in meditation on the attention tasks. Using regression model, there were few significant relations Five Facet Mind Questionnaire (FFMQ) (Baer et al., 2006), Stroop (Stroop, 1935) and Sustained Attention to Response Task – SART (Robertson et al., 1997). In the second study the author compared the persons who are used to meditating and the ones from western countries that are not used to meditating on a self-reported mindfulness questionnaire. The results highlight that experienced meditators obtained higher scores on two mindfulness facets: non-reactive and observing. Using correlational analysis, the author underlines that three mindfulness facets, acting with awareness, non-judging and observing were statistically significant correlated with meditation experience. The same author, in the third study was interested in investigating the effects of mindfulness practice on decentering, psychological wellbeing, anxiety, depression, and coping style. Regarding the third study, the results underline that decentering was positively correlated with total score of Five Facet Mind Questionnaire (FFMQ) and all mindfulness facets separately. Hence, the direct effects of mindfulness on decentering were significant and positive.

Lomas et al. (2017) completed an empirical literature review regarding the mindfulness impact on educators' performance and wellbeing. The authors analysed a number of 19 studies in which had 1028 participants. The results underline MBI had a strong positive impact on: stress, tolerance, positive affect, anxiety, sleep quality, self-compassion, burnout, and depression (Lomas et al., 2017, p. 136).

Englund-Helmeke (2014) conducted a study regarding the relationship between mindfulness and wellbeing, on a number of 25 adult participants that were practising Buddhist meditation in the Midwestern metropolitan area. The author

informed the participants that the study was focused on measuring the association between mindfulness practicing, mindfulness levels and physical and psychological wellbeing levels. All the ethical conditions were respected when completing the research. The authors found out that there is not statistically significant correlation between mindfulness frequency and level of mindfulness. Also, there is not statistically significant correlation between mindfulness history and level of mindfulness. The authors found positive statistically significant correlation between mindfulness history and emotional functioning ($r=.405$; $p<.044$).

3. CONCLUSIONS

The studied literature underlines several views on the relationship between mindfulness and wellbeing, mindfulness and emotional wellbeing, mindfulness and psychological wellbeing, and between mindfulness and social wellbeing; all of the variables studied showing statistically significant correlations between them, as investigated by Howell et al. (2011). Also, practising mindfulness meditation techniques helps decrease stress symptoms and increase the level of wellbeing (Bränström et al., 2010), and it can improve academic performance (Weare, 2014).

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