



EFFECT OF MINDFULNESS ON HAPPINESS

Social Science

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ABSTRACT

People from all walks of life are searching for happiness. Mindfulness is a state of awareness, living in the present moment and having no judgments, is a noble search for happiness. Mindfulness and Happiness are important constructs in the field of Positive Psychology. Measuring an individual's mindfulness and happiness helps in predicting the effect of mindfulness in happiness which is used in psychological counseling for individuals' well-being. Principal objective of this research was to explore the influence of mindfulness on happiness among post-graduate students at Periyar University. The scales used for this research were Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) by Brown & Ryan (2003) and The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire by Hills & Argyle (2001), administered randomly to 114 post-graduate students (Male=41, Female=73). The results suggested that the increase in mindfulness is associated with an increase in happiness. Since a linear relationship has been established, mindfulness is a statistically significant predictor of happiness. Findings revealed that there is a significant influence of mindfulness on happiness. The directions for future research is that need a way to identify multiple determinants of happiness and to evaluate the independent effect of each, after controlling for confounding, by other determinants.

KEYWORDS

Mindfulness, Happiness, and Regression

INTRODUCTION

Happiness is widely searched by humans in different ways. Carlson says, "Happiness is a state of mind, not a set of circumstances, and you can never find happiness by "searching," because the moment you do, you imply it is found outside yourself. Happiness isn't outside you. It is a feeling—the natural feeling of your innate healthy psychological functioning. The chief goal of life is the pursuit of happiness and pleasure. Within psychology, this view of well-being is expressed in the study of subjective well-being (Diener, 1984; Diener et al., 1999). Subjective well-being is a term used among various researchers since they feel – 'all that is good' – it highlights the individual and his/her assessment – instead of the judgments or beliefs of experts (Diener, Napa Scollon and Lucas, 2003). Happiness is sought through family relationships, work, friends, wealth which ultimately result in the pursuit of sensual pleasures. From the perspective of the teachings of Buddhism, such pursuits of happiness sought through sensual pleasures do not result in developing a noble search for happiness but is an imaginary one. Real happiness can be sought without defilement or suffering in our lives... (Venerable Narada Mahathera, 1998). One way of attaining happiness through a noble search is practising mindfulness. The term "mindfulness" is a translation of the Pali – word 'Sati', which is a significant element of the Buddhist traditions. In 1881, Thomas William Rhys Davids, Pali- language scholar first translated 'Sati' into English as "mindfulness".

Mindfulness is defined as an open and receptive awareness and attention, or a quality of consciousness, characterized by a clear awareness of the present moment (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Mindfulness is the psychological process of bringing one's attention to the internal and external experiences occurring in the present moment, which can be developed through the practice of meditation and other training" (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). Mindfulness, described by Kabat-Zinn (2003), is 'paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally', which involves consciously attending to one's moment-to-moment experience (Brown & Ryan, 2003).

Purpose Of The Study

People often look back at their time at university or college as the best years of their life. And today students are under more pressure than ever before. No matter what they are studying, it's guaranteed that at some points during their course, whether undergraduate or postgraduate, like when attending online classes, writing papers, preparing for exams, will need high levels of cognitive control, emotional regulation, and self-awareness.

Practising mindfulness in students gives them tools to help them remain calm, sustain their attention, and be able to focus. It does this by helping them to pay attention to the present moment through simple

breathing and meditation practices which increase awareness of thoughts and feelings to reduce stress and anxiety and boost levels of attention and concentration. There's a growing body of empirical evidence showing that it is measurably effective. More and more universities in other countries are offering mindfulness training to their students as part of their well-being or counselling services.

The main use of a happiness measure is to identify the determinants of happiness rather than to compare levels of subjective well-being. This study investigates mindfulness and happiness among post-graduate students at *Periyar University, Salem, Tamil Nadu*. Technology, materialism, industrialization, and urbanization changed the perception of happiness among students.

Thus, the present study aimed to examine the influence of mindfulness on happiness. To do so, the objective of the study included –

To examine the effect of mindfulness on happiness by verifying the hypotheses, there would be a significant influence of mindfulness on happiness among university students.

METHOD

Participants

In this study, the post-graduate students of Periyar University were requested to complete the questionnaire. 114 students (Male=41, Female=73) were from the department of arts and science.

Criteria For Selection

Following inclusion and exclusion criteria were followed in the selection of the sample. In this study, participants were the students should be more than 20 years old, post-graduate was included in the survey. Students with a history of any physical or psychological disorders were excluded.

Measures

Mindfulness Questionnaire

The MAAS is a 15 –item scale designed to assess a core characteristic of mindfulness. Each item can be endorsed on a six-point Likert scale. Internal consistency levels (Cronbach's alphas) generally range from .80 to .90. The MAAS has demonstrated high test-retest reliability, discriminant and convergent validity, know-groups validity, and criterion validity.

The MAAS is a coherent self-report with a unifactorial view of the construct that stresses, as an essential aspect of mindfulness, the attention/awareness variable in the present moment. To score the scale, simply compute the mean (average) of the 15 items. Higher scores reflect higher levels of dispositional mindfulness.

Happiness Questionnaire

An improved instrument, the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ), has been derived from the Oxford Happiness Inventory, (OHI). The OHQ comprises 29 items each presented as a single statement that can be endorsed on a uniform six-point Likert scale. The validity of the OHQ was satisfactory and associated with well-being. It can be answered on a six-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. The OHQ demonstrated high scale reliability with a value $\alpha(168)=0.91$. The inter-item correlations for the OHQ were -0.04 to 0.65 , mean of 0.28 . The observation that the maximum inter-item correlations within the scale, $r=0.58$, suggests that no two items are so alike that they are measuring the same facet of happiness; in other words, no items are semantically redundant. The overall relationships with the personality variables suggest that the construct validity exhibited by the OHQ is stronger and maybe the preferred instrument for measuring happiness.

Procedure

The investigator paid a visit to the different departments and established rapport with the participants. The investigator distributed the questionnaires. They were requested to answer all the items as per the instruction given at the beginning of each questionnaire. A consent form – related to voluntary participation and confidentiality of the respondents were included.

- Section 1 consisted of a consent form.
- Section 2 consisted of the General- information Schedule.
- Section 3 is comprised of the Mindfulness Questionnaire.
- Section 4 is comprised of the Happiness Questionnaire.

The collected data were scored as per the respective scoring keys.

Statistical Analysis

To understand the extent of the linear relationship between mindfulness and happiness, their total was calculated. Linear regression was calculated to predict the influence of mindfulness on happiness. The data were analyzed using R Studio – version 3.6.1717. Diagnostic plots were drawn using R-script to visualise the assumptions of linear regression viz., Linearity of data, Homogeneity of residuals variance, and Independence of residuals error terms.

RESULTS

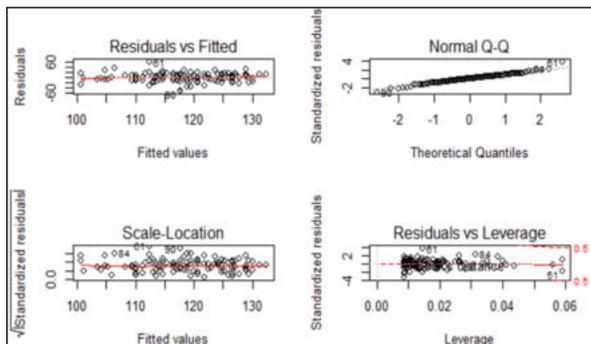


Figure 1: Checking Assumptions For Linear Regression

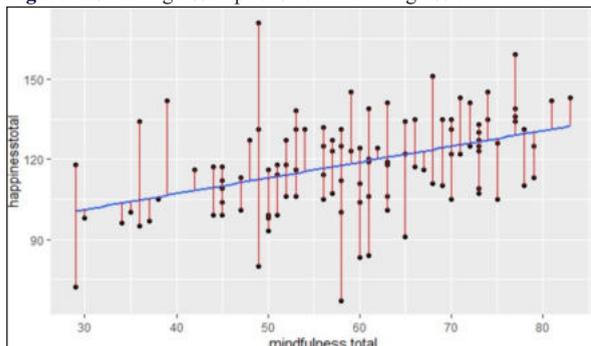


Figure 2: Checking Linearity of data

Table – 1 Regression Summary Table

	Estimate (B)	Std.Error (SE B)	β	t	p
(Intercept)	83.4402	7.1910		11.603	2e-16 ***

Mindfulness	0.5902	0.1188	0.425	4.967	2.46e-06 ***
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Signif. Codes: 0 '***' 0.001

Residual standard error: 15.98 on 112 degrees of freedom Multiple R –Squared: 0.1805, Adjusted R –Squared: 0.1732 F –Statistic: 24.67 on 1 and 112 DF, p –value: 2.455e-06

To investigate the influence of mindfulness (independent variable) on happiness (dependent variable) a simple linear regression was conducted.

The slope for mindfulness is 0.5902 and its standard error is 0.1188, so we can calculate the 99% confidence limit for the slope as follows: 99% Confidence Interval=Estimate \pm t_{crit} SE(df=n-2).

For 112 degrees of freedom, $t_{crit} = 3.3795$. Therefore, for mindfulness the 99% Confidence interval = $0.5 \pm 3.3795 * 0.1188 = (0.1887, 0.9917)$. The estimated slope is 0.5902 with a margin of error of 0.4015, we are 99% confident that the true slope is between 0.1887 and 0.9917.

DISCUSSION

The slope suggests that an increase in mindfulness is associated with an increase in happiness. The confidence interval does not include the null value of 0, so the slope is a statistically significant predictor of happiness at $\alpha=0.001$. The predictor variable mindfulness was found to be statistically significant, [$B=0.5902$, 99% C.I. (0.1887, 0.9917), $p<0.001$], indicating that for every one unit increase in mindfulness, the happiness changed by (+/-) 0.5902 units.

The model explained approximately (R –Squared = $0.1805 * 100\%$) of the variability [R –Squared = 0.1732]. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted.

Implications And Directions For Future Research

Even though the predictor mindfulness (independent variable) is significant and the outcome was happiness (dependent variable), there are other determinants of happiness, such as relationship with family, wealth, friends, health, etc. that are other predictors and also potential confounders, meaning that the slope that we obtained for mindfulness and happiness may be correct. We need a way to identify multiple determinants of happiness and to evaluate the independent effect of each, after controlling for confounding by other determinants.

CONCLUSION

In our study, the basic linear regression's purpose is to predict the value of a dependent variable (happiness) based on the value of an independent variable (mindfulness). The more accurate the forecast, the larger the linear relationship between the independent and dependent variables. To sum up, it was found in the present study that, mindfulness is an important predictor of happiness.

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