



## The Role of Mindfulness and its Dimensions in Predicting of Students' Psychological Well-being

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### Abstract

**Background:** Well-being is the biggest and most important goal of human being life that affects a person's health more than anything else does. This study aimed to investigate the role of mindfulness and its dimensions in students' psychological well-being.

**Methods:** The research method was correlation and the statistical population included all students of Kharazmi University. The sample consisted of 240 students (126 females and 114 males) who were selected by the convenience sampling method. The research instruments were the five facet mindfulness questionnaire (FFMQ) (Bauer et al. 2006) and Ryff's scale of the psychological well-being (Ryff, 1980). Data analysis was performed using independent groups of t-test, Pearson correlation coefficient, and stepwise regression.

**Results:** The obtained results showed that there is no significant difference between male and female students in the variables of mindfulness and psychological well-being. There is a positive and significant correlation between psychological well-being and the overall score of mindfulness as well as the dimensions of observing, describing, acting with awareness, and non-reactive.

**Conclusions:** The variables of acting with awareness and describing mindfulness dimensions were able to explain about 24% of the variance of psychological well-being in two steps.

**Keywords:** Mindfulness, Psychological well-being, Students.

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well-being have received considerable attention due to various trends of studying positive mental health in the behavioral sciences.<sup>5</sup>

Well-being is the biggest and most important goal of human being life that affects a person's health more than anything else.<sup>6</sup> Positive characteristics of humans and their psychological needs such as the feeling of well-being, positive feeling, and general satisfaction with themselves live and others are in different areas of family, job, and education. People with high well-being experience mostly positive emotions and have a positive assessment of events and happenings around themselves, while people with low well-being assess life events and situations as unfavorable.<sup>7</sup> Well-being is measured by indices of a positive psychology approach such as having positive emotions, not having negative emotions, purposefulness in life, personal growth, having independence, environmental mastery, resiliency, happiness, hope, optimism, life satisfaction, and personal progress. In recent years, the positive psychology approach, with the motto of paying attention to the talents and abilities of humans (instead of addressing abnormalities and disorders) has attracted the attention of researchers in various fields.<sup>8</sup> Since the end of the 21st century, with the emergence of a positive psychological approach, research has tended towards a positive human characteristic. Well-being structure is one of the structures proposed in the field of positive psychology, which is very important in terms of its role in explaining many emotional behavioral consequences.<sup>9</sup> Well-being structure is usually referred to as psychological well-being, mental well-being, occupational well-being, and career well-being have been examined. Psychological well-being can be defined as happiness, prosperity, and having a positive feeling in which a person strives to develop his/her innate abilities.<sup>10</sup> Psychological well-being is a multifaceted concept that includes self-acceptance, positive interaction with others, self-determination, environmental mastery, purposeful living, and personal growth.<sup>11</sup> Self-acceptance is considered as a person's attempt to gain a good sense of self even when he/she is aware of his/her limitations.<sup>12</sup> Positive interaction with others is sufficient capacity to establish quality relationships with others. Also, purposefulness in life has defined the belief in which life is purposeful and meaningful.<sup>13</sup> Self-determination is creating and developing a strong sense of individuality and personal

## Introduction

In recent years, the pathological approach to the study of human health has been criticized.<sup>1</sup> Many psychologists and mental health researchers have ignored the positive aspects of health.<sup>2</sup> Mental health research has often focused on mental illnesses, such as depression and anxiety; however, there is an increasing tendency to examine the positive aspects of mental health.<sup>3</sup>

New approaches to health emphasize being good instead of being bad or sick.<sup>1</sup> They know that the absence of illness is not enough to feel healthy and believed that having a sense of satisfaction with life, sufficient progress, a positive mood and proper communication with others are the characteristics of a healthy person.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, concepts such as psychological

freedom.<sup>14</sup> Environmental mastery is considered as the ability and capacity of the individual to the effective management of life. Finally, Personal growth is considered a sense of continuous growth and development as a person.<sup>15</sup>

One of the most discussed features of awareness about psychological well-being is mindfulness. Many philosophical, mystical, and psychological traditions have emphasized the importance of the quality of awareness in maintaining and enhancing well-being.<sup>16</sup> According to viewpoints, mindfulness is a variable that has recently become popular in the Western world<sup>17,18</sup> and has attracted the attention of many researchers and psychologists.<sup>19</sup> Mindfulness is a unique state of awareness<sup>20</sup> that provides the opportunity to interact with the present and to be in the moment without being involved by the past and the future. These variables indicate that many human pains originate from the thoughts and feelings of people in society towards themselves.<sup>18</sup> Also, a foregoing variable not only creates a context in which a person is aware of his activities but result in well-being and improving the quality of life.<sup>21</sup>

Mindfulness is also defined as attention to the present moment, reduction of prejudice, reduction of judgment, and attachment to what is being considered.<sup>22</sup> Mindfulness activities have been existed for thousands of years and have been one of the most important aspects of religious and cultural traditions.<sup>23</sup> Over the past thirty years, there has been great attention to mindfulness for the psychological well-being of individuals including coping with stress, anxiety, and depression, improving compassion, promoting social relationships, strengthening attention, improving self-regulatory abilities, and physical health.<sup>24</sup>

Mindfulness rooted in Buddhism and other care rituals have been used empirically in the field of psychology as a way to reduce stress. Mindfulness is paying attention to the purpose in the present moment and obvious and non-judgmental attention to the moments of life.<sup>25</sup> Mindfulness is a quality of awareness in which paying more attention to a specific way, that is, purposeful, in the present and non-judgmental moment to the inner and outer psychological world. Mindfulness emphasizes neutrality and unbiasedness, which reduces the habitual response and reinforces and encourages the conscious response. Individuals are encouraged to deal with experiences with a neutral mind as if experiencing an accident for the first time<sup>26</sup> are considered mindfulness as a feature which requires self-regulation and paying attention to the present. They defined mindfulness as consisting of two components: 1) Self-regulation of attention, as it focuses on the experience of the present; 2) Orientation of the person towards the present experience, which includes curiosity, empiricism, and acceptance. The non-judgmental aspect of mindfulness does not mean accepting everything and its emphasis on greater flexibility in responding to the feelings of others and contact with the outside world.<sup>27</sup> In Mindfulness, attention with transparency in addition to willpower and effort, do not focus exclusively on the external stimulus, but on the internal. Every thought, feeling and, bodily sensation aroused by a stimulus is taken into attention and is not blocked or inhibited. Being in the moment, continuity and awareness flexibility, experience, awareness, incomprehensibility, and prejudice are components

of mindfulness.<sup>28</sup> Mindfulness is a state of paying attention and being aware of what is happening right now. Characteristics of mindfulness include pre-judgment awareness and acceptance of experiences, flexible attention, objective acceptance of experience, and orientation to the here and now (so the purpose of mindfulness is not to change the content of thoughts, but to develop a different attitude toward thoughts and feelings in the time of the event). In mindfulness, the thinking person observes the emergence and passage of his/her thoughts and feelings and accepts that they are only thoughts, and becomes aware of their instability.<sup>29</sup>

In a study that examined the role of mindfulness and psychological capital in well-being, the results of this study showed that mindfulness and psychological capital affect well-being.<sup>30</sup> Finkelstein<sup>23</sup> showed that mindfulness is related to psychological well-being. The results of studies by Brown & Ryan<sup>16,31</sup> showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between psychological well-being and mindfulness.

One of the important priorities of research in the field of the educational system is to identify and study the factors affecting the promotion of psychological well-being. In this regard, several studies have tried to discover the factors and variables affecting the promotion of psychological well-being to make scientific and principled decisions. Based on the theoretical foundations and reviewing the existing research, it was found that mindfulness and its dimensions are related to psychological well-being.<sup>32</sup> Although some studies have been conducted about the main variables of the research, the study that covers these two variables in a study in different dimensions of mindfulness on students was not found. On the other hand, addressing the issue of what factors improve the students' psychological well-being is very important, and considering this gap in previous findings, it seems necessary to conduct this research. Accordingly, this study aims to investigate the relationship between the dimensions of mindfulness and psychological well-being in students to finally determine the extent to which different dimensions of mindfulness can explain the variance of psychological well-being and determine the extent and direction of correlation between these two variables.

## Materials and Methods

The present study is applied in terms of purpose and field in terms of collection method and correlation in nature. All students of Kharazmi university formed the statistical population of the present study. The sample consisted of 240 students (126 females and 114 males) who were selected by the convenience sampling method. To analyze the data, researchers used a t-test of independent groups to examine the difference between the means of male and female students in the variables of psychological well-being and mindfulness, Pearson correlation coefficient test to examine the relationship between research variables, and stepwise regression to determine the amount of the criterion variable (psychological well-being), the predictor variable (dimensions of mindfulness).

Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire: This tool is a 39 items self-reported scale have been developed by Baer et al,<sup>33</sup> through a combination of items from the Freiberg mindfulness

questionnaire,<sup>34</sup> the Konchuk mindfulness scale,<sup>35</sup> the revised cognitive and emotional mindfulness scale,<sup>36</sup> and the Southampton mindfulness questionnaire<sup>37</sup> using the factor analysis approach<sup>33</sup> on a sample of university students. Obtained factors were named as follows: observing, acting with awareness, being non-judgment toward inner experience, describing, and being non-reactive. Observing involves attention to external and internal stimuli such as feelings, emotions, cognitions, sounds, and smells. Describing refers to the naming of external experiences with words. Acting with awareness involves acting with the presence of the full mind at all times, and is in contrast with the mechanical action that is elsewhere when one's mind occurs. Being non-judgment to inner experience includes being non-judgment towards thoughts and feelings, and being non-reactive to inner experience is allowed to pass to inner thoughts and feelings without getting stuck in them. Based on obtained the results, the internal consistency of the factors was appropriate and the alpha coefficient ranged from 0.75 (in the non-reactive factor) to 0.91 (in the describing factor). The correlation between the factors was average and significant in all cases and ranged from 0.15 to 0.34.<sup>38</sup>

Also, in a study conducted on the validation and reliability of this questionnaire in Iran, the test-retest correlation coefficients of the questionnaire in the Iranian sample were observed between 0.84 to 0.55.<sup>39</sup> In the present study, the test reliability was obtained using Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.72.

Psychological well-being scale: This scale was created by Ryff in 1980. The main form had 120 questions, but in later studies, shorter forms of 84 questions, 54 questions, and 18 questions were suggested. In this study, a scale of 84 questions was used, which includes 6 factors of independence, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive interaction with others, purposeful life and self-acceptance, and each factor has 14 questions. Ryff obtained Cronbach's alpha for each of the factors of independence, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive interaction with others, purposeful life, and self-acceptance, 0.83, 0.86, 0.85, 0.88, 0.88, and 0.91, respectively. This scale was translated by<sup>40</sup> in Iran and the alpha coefficient of the whole scale was 0.89 and the subscale of independence, environmental mastery, personal growth,

positive interaction with others, purposeful life, and self-acceptance were reported 0.66, 0.76, 0.75, 0.65, 0.57, and 0.59, respectively. In the study of<sup>41</sup> internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha method for each subscales mentioned above 0.61, 0.79, 0.77, 0.75, 0.72, and 0.79, respectively and the total alpha of the scale was set to 0.93. In the present study, the test reliability was obtained using Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.72.

## Results

Table 1 shows the statistical characteristics of the subjects in terms of psychological well-being and mindfulness scores separately for male and female students. Table 1 shows the statistical characteristics of the subjects in terms of psychological well-being and mindfulness scores separately for male and female students.

The t-test results of independent groups to compare the subjects in the scores of mindfulness and psychological well-being have been shown in table 1. As can be seen, there is no significant difference between male and female students in the variables of psychological well-being and mindfulness.

The results of the correlation test between the research variables have been shown in table 2. According to the data in this table, there is a positive and significant correlation between psychological well-being and the overall score of mindfulness, as well as the dimensions of observing, describing, acting with awareness, and being non-reactive. However, there is no significant relationship between the being non-judgment variable in the dimensions of mindfulness and psychological well-being.

The results of tables 3 and 4 show that the best predictor variables are psychological well-being, acting with awareness and describing the dimensions of mindfulness, and the variables of observing and being non-reactive have been eliminated from the regression equation. Based on these results, the observed F is significant and 24% of the variance related to psychological well-being is explained by acting with awareness and describing the dimensions of mindfulness. Regression coefficients of predictor variables show that acting with awareness ( $\beta=0.364$ ,  $t=6.03$ ) and describing ( $\beta=0.333$ ,  $t=5.80$ ) can explain variance of psychological well-being meaningfully.

**Table1. T-test results of independent groups to compare the subjects in the score of mindfulness and psychological well-being**

Variables	Male	Female	df	t	Pvalue
	Mean (Standard deviation)	Mean (Standard deviation)			
Mindfulness	119.74 (13.47)	119.53 (14.63)	238	1.13	0.910
Psychological well-being	339.744 (63.79)	329.99 (40.81)	238	1.38	0.169

**Table 2. Correlation coefficients between the scores of mindfulness and psychological well-being**

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Observing	1						
Describing	0.588**	1					
Acting with awareness	-0.039	-0.160*	1				
Being Non-judgment	0.468**	0.426**	-0.360**	1			
Being Non-reactive	0.440**	0.527**	-0.122	0.338**	1		
Overall score of mindfulness	0.824**	0.726**	0.146*	0.623**	0.694**	1	
Psychological well-being	0.216**	0.266**	0.364**	-0.010	0.166**	0.334**	1

N=240, \*Pvalue<0.05, \*\*Pvalue<0.01

**Table 3. Summary of stepwise regression model and variance analysis of variables of acting with awareness and describing in dimensions of mindfulness on psychological well-being**

Model	Variable	Index	SS	DF	MS	F	Pvalue	R	R <sup>2</sup>	SE
1	Acting with awareness	Regression	89379.65	1	89379.65	36.42	0.000	0.364	0.133	49.53
		Residual	584024.28	238	2453.88					
2	Acting with awareness+	Regression	162096.33	2	81048.16	37.56	0.000	0.491	0.241	46.44
	describing	Residual	511307.60	237	2157.41					

**Table 4. Summary of statistical characteristics of stepwise regression of variables of acting with consciousness and describing in dimensions of mindfulness on psychological well-being**

Variable	B	SE	$\beta$	t	Pvalue
Acting with awareness	3.72	0.617	0.364	6.03	0.000
Describing	5.10	0.879	0.333	5.80	0.000

## Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between the dimensions of mindfulness and psychological well-being in students. The research findings showed that there is no significant difference between male and female students in the variables of mindfulness and psychological well-being. Also, there is a significant positive relationship between psychological well-being and the overall score of mindfulness. This finding is according to other researches.<sup>42-47</sup> There is also a positive and significant correlation between the dimensions of observing, describing, acting with awareness, and being non-reactivity of mindfulness with psychological well-being. The describing factor showed the highest correlation with the total psychological well-being score, which is consistent with the results of.<sup>35</sup> Among the 5 factors of mindfulness, the only factor of being non-judgment has not significantly correlated with the total score of psychological well-being. Also, the variables of acting with awareness and describing the dimensions of mindfulness were able to explain about 24% of the variance of psychological well-being in two steps.

Keng, Smoski & Robins<sup>42</sup> concluded in their study that mindfulness has positive psychological effects, including increased psychological well-being.

According to Brown & Ryan<sup>16</sup> study, mindfulness is both theoretically and empirically one of the concepts affecting psychological well-being that brings prosperity, happiness, health, positive interaction with others, enjoyment of living, and psychological well-being to individuals and result in more satisfaction with life, as well as being resistant to stressful situations and showing more adaptability.

According to Kabat-Zinn<sup>17</sup> study, mindfulness is a means of reducing mental suffering and psychological pain within a person and it is considered as behavior that opposes distractions and deviations and suppresses the internal stimuli of the body. Mindfulness is considered as an innate human capacity or ability, although it can be enhanced through a range of exercises such as mindfulness meditation and interventions (such as stress reduction-based mindfulness).<sup>48,49</sup> According to Baer, Smith, & Allen<sup>35</sup> study, mindfulness can be described as a way of perception that requires understanding personal feelings. Mindfulness is a way to better communicate with life,

which can relieve physical pains, enrich and make life meaningful.

Mindfulness does this by adapting to moment-by-moment experience and providing direct insight into the role of the mind in creating unnecessary anxieties.<sup>50</sup> Increased mindfulness is associated with a decrease in negative psychological symptoms and an increase in optimism and psychological well-being, so that higher levels of mindfulness are associated with fewer difficulties in regulating emotions and lower depression.<sup>51</sup> Mindfulness helps a person to communicate better with life and to consider rich life and meaningful. In explaining the findings, it can be said that mindfulness creates a balance of awareness in humans and it forces people to face problems and challenge them and make high psychological well-being by efficient and positive interaction with the world. Carmody & Bear<sup>52</sup> believe that doing mindfulness exercises result in developing various factors of mindfulness such as observing, being non-judgment, being non-reactive, and acting with awareness.

The growth of these factors also leads to the growth of psychological well-being, stress reduction, and psychological symptoms. In fact, as mindfulness increases, our ability to stand back and increases observing of different states such as anxiety, so we can free ourselves from automatic behavioral patterns and no longer be controlled by states such as anxiety and fear through perception and retrieval. We can use the information arising from these states and accompany with emotions, and as a result, increase our psychological well-being.<sup>53</sup>

The concentration of the mind in the moment with the abilities that it brings to the students results in them walk in the path of well-being and have high psychological well-being. Considering the obtained results and concerning the role of mindfulness in explaining psychological well-being, it is possible to help students to have psychological well-being by holding educational workshops. On the other hand, conducting extensive researches in the field of psychological well-being of students and identifying the variables affecting it, is one of the underlying factors in promoting the mental health of this part of society. Therefore, it is suggested that this research be conducted in other universities and considering the lifestyle of students in terms of ethnicity, culture, economics, and society

to obtain more reliable results. Other researchers are also suggested to conduct experimental research on psychological well-being to achieve cause-and-effect relationships. This research, like other studies in the field of human issues, has been associated with limitations, including the fact that students had different cultural, ethnic, and economic characteristics, and considering that these factors can have a different effect, so you should be careful in generalizing the results, and also the research method made it impossible to establish a cause-and-effect relationship between the studied variables.

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## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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