

Effect of Mindfulness on Self-Concept amongst Adolescents in Delhi & NCR

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Abstract:

Background: Self-concept studied here is how an adolescent feels about himself or herself in their strengths and qualities and also how he/she feels what others think about them. An adolescent undergoes through major physical, emotional and social changes during this period and hence developing a positive self-concept is important for overall development of an adolescent. Mindfulness is a state of awareness of the present moment as it is. Mindfulness helps in emotional regulation and better coping skills amongst adolescents. This study explores how having more mindfulness can effect an adolescents' self-concept.

Materials and Methods: Correlational research design was used to collect data electronically from 100 adolescents aged 16 < 18 years from Delhi & NCR. Self-concept in adolescents was studied here based on six dimensions – Physical, Social, Intellectual, Moral, Educational and Temperamental Self-Concept. Self-Concept Questionnaire by R. K. Saraswat was administered to find score on each dimension of self-concept. The Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) was used to measure mindfulness amongst adolescents. Data was collected using google form and analysed using regression and correlation on SPSS version 25.

Results: Electronically collected data of 100 Adolescents of Delhi & NCR on Self-concept Questionnaire and MAAS was analysed. Correlation between Self-concept and mindfulness was $r(99) = .862$, $p < .001$ which showed high positive association between both variables. Analysis of Variance showed that the effect of Mindfulness on Self-concept was significant, $F(1, 97) = 281.719$, $p = .000$. The above statistical analysis predicted that Adolescents who have more score on mindfulness have higher self-concept.

Conclusion: Mindfulness has a positive effect on adolescent's Self-concept. Self-concept forms an important part of an adolescent's personality as it guides him/her in all areas and hence it is important to have positive self-concept. Mindfulness here would play a big role in increasing the self-concept since the adolescent will focus on the present and bringing all attention to present awareness about self in a non-judgemental way, thereby not depending on negative experiences of the past.

Keywords: Adolescents, Mindfulness, Self- Concept

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I. Introduction

Erikson (1950, 1956) [11, 12] has given special importance to adolescent between 13-18 of age in his Stages of Psychosocial development by naming the Stage of Fidelity: Identity vs. Role Confusion and used the term "Identity Crisis." As per Erikson each stage of the 8 stages has its own crisis but he gives special importance to this Stage of Fidelity because this is the stage of transition from childhood to adulthood. Also this is the time when one's self-concept starts to become more concrete as the adolescent is trying to reconcile as a person he has become and what the society expected him to become.

In the simplest term Self-concept can be described as how someone thinks, evaluates and perceives themselves. It is subjective in nature, meaning a person can have self-concept which may be different to what a person may actually be. A well-known and used definition of self-concept was given by Baumeister (1999) [4] who defines it in terms of an individual's belief and attributes about himself.

Coon and Mitterer (2013) [7] has defined self-concept as the ideas, perceptions and feelings about what a person thinks he is and how self-concept is acquired through daily experiences and keeps getting revised by acquiring new experiences.

Saul Mcleod (2008) [27] has defined self-concept as awareness of oneself. He studied self-concept from Rogerian view of self-concept which are self-image- how the person perceived himself to be in terms of

his characteristics, self-esteem - how much he regards himself on these characteristics and ideal self – what a person strives to become.

Study by Mishra, S (2016) [19] shows that how experiences of success and failure in life relate to the way person views himself in respect to relation with others. Hence as per him self-concept is learned, organised and is dynamic. Self-concept is learned through our interaction with the world and positive interactions can lead to having more positive views of them. The same way any negative interactions can lead to person perceiving themselves having lack on certain qualities and thus leading to low self-concept. When a person has a stable and organized view of themselves in almost all circumstances, their self-concept gives consistency to the personality. The positive quality of dynamism in self-concept is that it gives flexibility to a person to perceive things in particular situations as they are and not to generalise them. Also a person can always work on themselves and improve their self-concept.

Self-concept is important as it plays a significant role in character formation. It is the perceptions that an individual forms for himself and how he identifies self with these characteristics. Musitu, García, and Gutiérrez in 1994 [20] had explained self-concept from perspective of an individual in terms of what an individual thinks of themselves when they evaluate their behaviour based on the experiences they have with others.

Self-concept can be explored in an individual by exploring adolescent's view of his physical, social, temperamental, educational, moral and intellectual sphere and can be defined operationally as below:

1. Physical – how an individual view his/her physical appearance, body's health and strength.
2. Social – how an individual values himself/herself when interacting in society.
3. Temperamental – how an individual views his/her consistent emotional reactions to situations.
4. Educational – how an individual views self in terms of school, teachers and activities related to school.
5. Moral- how an individual estimates his/her moral value and its worth when doing things.
6. Intellectual- how much an individual is aware of his/her intelligence and ability in solving problems and his/her judgements.

In today's time of COVID-19 people from all age groups are going through emotional challenges like never before. The current situation can make adolescents self-doubt themselves and lower their self-concept. Parents are also going through lot of issues due fear of job, income and uncertain future. This is leading to adolescents spending more and more time on online platform which is making adolescents move away from reality, living more in fantasy world and escaping from self-awareness, problem-solving. There is low level of tolerance amongst adolescents and poor impulse control, not experiencing real happiness and optimism in life.

Mindfulness aims on the present and goal is to bring in greater peace mentally and relationally. When the focus is on the present be it on the positive emotions or the negative emotions the aim is to accept it and go with the flow on discovering more about self in a relaxed state. This helps understanding ourselves better and hence having a positive concept of self. According to Piaget's theory of cognitive development (1952) [22], Adolescents are now transiting from concrete operational to Formal operational stage and hence practicing mindfulness can help them have a realistic view about themselves and be content and acceptable on same.

Mindfulness helps us to bring in self-regulation of our awareness and helps us observe things as they are happening and being more open, accepting and curious of what we are observing Eberth & Sedlmeir (2012) [10]. Mindfulness helps us in experiencing the present moment in all ways – thoughts, feelings and sensations rather than wandering into the past or imagining the future.

Mindfulness has been defined by Killingsworth & Gilbert (2010) [15] to attend to our present moment experiences openly in full awareness. In our day to day lives we are running on an auto-pilot mode and mind wanders even without our efforts, whereas mindfulness brings in our awareness of here and now experiences, Bargh & Chartrand (1999) [3].

Baer (2003) [1] has defined mindfulness as being a non-judgemental observer of the continuous stimuli both external and internal as it keeps arising. As per Marlatt GA, Kristeller JL (1999) [17] mindfulness is bringing an individual's full attention with moment to moment basis to the present experience.

Brown KW, Ryan RM (2003) [5], have explained mindfulness in terms of attention and awareness. Mindfulness by them means being consciously aware of what a person is experiencing at present moment and showing enhanced attention to this awareness on specific experiences. Hence mindfulness is being fully aware without judgment in one's moment-to-moment experience.

Hayas & Feldman (2004) [13] and Kabat-Zinn (1990) [14] did a similar study and identified on how mindful is potentially effective when dealing against psychological issues such as anxiety, depression, stress, anger and so on. Here mindfulness helps in overcoming the maladaptive ways like avoidance, suppression and over engaging in one's distressing thoughts and emotions.

Mindfulness existed from the Buddhism and has now found its importance in today's life by health practitioners with use of mindfulness based to handle stress, anxiety and other mental health issues.

Mindfulness can be achieved both with formal and informal exercises. The formal meditation exercises include attention and awareness about body and its surroundings like being able to count steps while walking, able to

relish eat sip of tea or coffee, etc. The informal exercises which is by paying full attention to our actions and by experiencing at a certain moment.

Mindfulness in this study is based on adolescent's everyday experiences and how much they are aware about same and on what part of this awareness the attention is.

This study aims to find the effect of mindfulness on self-concept amongst adolescents and how being more mindful can help adolescent in improving self-concept. Self-concept here is explored on adolescent's own physical, social, temperamental, educational, moral and intellectual sphere. This also helps in understanding about adolescent's perceptions and characteristics and helping adolescents in growing up as healthy and productive adults.

II. Material And Methods

Study design and procedure: Correlational research design was used to collect data electronically from 100 adolescents aged 16 < 18 years from Delhi & NCR. Google form with questionnaire for this study was circulated in school groups of students of grade 10, 11 and 12 through WhatsApp explaining the purpose of this study. Responses collected were analysed using regression and correlation on SPSS version 25.

Ethical aspects: Aim of the study, privacy and confidentiality was explained to the participants and Consent of participation was taken after which only student could proceed to questionnaire section of the google form.

Study participants and sampling: This study was carried out amongst private school students of grade 10, 11 and 12th of Delhi & NCR (National Capital Region) between age group of 16 < 18 years. Google form was used by researchers for sending the questionnaire to WhatsApp groups having teachers as members and requesting them to forward in their school group for students of these above grades to fill the form. None of the participants received any compensation or grade credits for participation in this study.

Study instruments and measures: Mindfulness was Independent variable and dependent variable was Self – concept.

Self-Concept Questionnaire (SCQ)

The Self - Concept Questionnaire (SCQ) by Dr. Rajkumar Saraswat (1984) [25, 26] was administered. The Questionnaire measures self-concept in six different dimensions such as physical, social, temperamental, educational, moral and intellectual. The scale has 48 items and the six dimensions have eight items. To find the score of a particular dimension of self-concept all eight items of that dimension are added. Five alternatives are provided for each item which ranges from most acceptable to least acceptable description of his self-concept. The reliability of the inventory was found by test-retest method, and it was found to be .91 for the total self-concept measure. Reliability coefficients of its various dimensions vary from .67 to .88.

Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS)

The Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) by Brown, Ryan (2003) [5] was used to assess Mindfulness. MASS is a 15-item self-report survey which measures one's tendency to be fully aware of one's experience in the present moment in day to day experiences. Scoring is on a 6 point Likert scale with which indicate whether they frequently or infrequently experience each item: 1 (Almost Always), 2 (Very Frequently), 3 (Somewhat Frequently), 4 (Somewhat Infrequently), 5 (Very Infrequently), and 6 (Almost Never). The scale is based on the understanding that humans have awareness about internal and external experience and how focussing on this awareness leads to attention. Scoring is done by computing a mean of the 15 items with higher scores reflecting higher levels of dispositional mindfulness. Scores on MAAS strongly correlate with self –consciousness, rumination and self-reflection and wellbeing.

Statistical analysis

The data received in google form was exported as excel file. The responses on SCQ were manually segregated based on items belonging to each of the 6 dimension. Each dimension had eight items and scores were added to find the final score on that dimension. Same process was done to find the score on each dimension. The final self-concept score was calculated by adding the score on the 6 dimensions for each participant. Mindfulness was found by adding the score of 15 items. The final score on self – concept and mindfulness was then exported to SPSS version 25 and data analysis was done with help of correlational analysis and regression to study relationship and effect of mindfulness on self-concept amongst adolescents. The level of significance was set at 0.01 and 0.05.

III. Result and Discussion

Sample obtained through google forms was 113 out of which 13 responses were discarded due incomplete form being submitted. Data analysis was done on 100 samples. The results in Table 1 shows Mean score on Self-concept was 158.6 which comes in Above Average self-concept bracket (145-192) as per the SCQ

norms. The mean score on Mindfulness was 4.03. Research during Standardization showed average score for undergraduate students as 3.85 and for Zen meditators an average of 4.38.

H1- There will be significant correlation between self-concept and mindfulness amongst adolescents.

Table 1: Mean, Std. Deviation and Pearson Correlation between Self-concept and mindfulness amongst adolescents

N	100
Mean score of Self-Concept	158.6
Mean score of Mindfulness	4.02
Std. Deviation of Self-Concept	21.374
Std. Deviation of Mindfulness	.856
r	.863**

**Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The result of table 1 shows that Correlation here is $r(99) = .862, p < .001$ which shows strong relation between Self-concept and Mindfulness. This shows high positive association between both variables and increase in one variable increases the other and proves the hypothesis. The result is in congruence with researchers like Christopher, A et.al (2013) [8], Brown & Ryan (2003) [5]; Rasmussen & Pidgeon (2011) [23]; Thompson & Waltz, (2008) [29] who studied the association of mindfulness and higher self-esteem. As per them self-esteem is a part of self-concept and hence hold true in enhancing the self-concept of an individual. The studies also explored how learning mindfulness skills could help in cultivating unconditional self-acceptance amongst students leading to overall feeling of self-worth.

Crescentini et al. (2014) [9] found in their study that giving mindfulness-based intervention for 8 weeks to naïve individuals increased their self-concept both implicitly and explicitly, where implicit changes were assessed through self-transcendence and implicit through spirituality and religiousness.

As per Baer (2006) [2], an individual is able to though mindfulness have a non-judgemental and open view to one’s own thoughts, emotions, and experiences and hence mindfulness can help an individual to have a realistic and non-judgmental view about self and also there would not be a big gap between Real self-concept (what you think you are), Ideal Self-concept (what you want to be) and Social self –concept (what you perceive others think about you).

The findings of the current study correspond to one of the studies done by Killingsworth and Gilbert (2010) [15] where they studied that the mind wanders 47% approximately and because it goes into unpleasant past or has anxiety of future it leads to unhappiness. Hence if mindfulness decreases the self-concept also decreases as person is not able to have non-judgemental and realistic view about self.

Studies on mindfulness based techniques like mindful meditation, relaxation, doing everyday task mindfully have found that these techniques help in increasing concentration, lesser the distractions, helps reducing anxiety and make us aware and be in the present so that we fully allow ourselves to experience things as they are (Lavilla, Molina, and López, 2008) [16]. This helps an individual to building positive self-concept.

H2 - Mindfulness will have a positive effect on Self-concept amongst adolescents

Table 2: F – test to show the effect of Mindfulness on Self-Concept amongst adolescents

ANOVAa					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig
Regression	33307.412	1	33307.412	281.813	.000b
Residual	11464.426	97	118.190		
Total	44771.838	98			

Dependent Variable : Self-concept
Predictors (Constant) : Mindfulness

An Analysis of Variance in Table 2 showed that the effect of Mindfulness on Self-concept was significant, $F(1, 97) = 281.719, p = .000$. The statistical result prove our hypothesis that Mindfulness has a positive effect on adolescent’s Self-concept. Ryan, Brown, and Creswell’s (2007) [24] have also studies about

how individual's having lower self-esteem tend to have cognitive biases which stems from past experiences and they form certain belief about themselves based on these negative experiences. Mindfulness allows an individual to have a non-judgemental view about themselves and be aware of present rather than bringing attention to the past negative experiences. Hence mindfulness makes a person not store these negative experiences and explore themselves and accept as they are, thereby improving their self-esteem which also impacts self-concept positively.

Several studies have found that practicing mindfulness and integrating it in school curriculum has given good results. There has been positive changes seen in children like increased concentration and awareness leading to improved academic performance, self-regulation in terms of unreasonable and impulsive behaviour, increased self-efficacy, creativity and reduction in anxiety (Parra, Montañés, Montañés, & Bartolomé, 2012) [21]. This shows that children's self-concept is improved with mindfulness as the child is able to view and evaluate himself positively.

Practicing mindfulness helps us being aware and attend to the present experiences and hence helps us in maintaining and conserving our energy thus making a positive impact on our physical and mental health. As per Siegel, 2021[28] mindfulness hence helps us in regulation of our emotional balance, being not anxious when confronted with difficult situations of life and trying to handle situations in a relaxed and calm manner. Positive self-concept has been linked to positive social and emotional development.

Furthermore, mindfulness promotes emotional well-being, an individual's capacity and potential for learning, and the physical and mental health of those who practice it (Burnett, 2011) [6].

The study shows how adolescents who are practicing Mindfulness do not engage in self-critical thoughts by comparing the situation with earlier experienced negative emotions about it, rather they let the event and thoughts related to it enter and pass without adopting a judgmental approach towards same. This approach towards present awareness lets adolescents experience it and release it and hence bridges the gap between Ideal and Real Self thereby improving the self-concept of an adolescent.

Self-concept forms an important part of a person's personality as it guides a person in all areas and hence it is important to have positive self-concept. Mindfulness here would play a big role in increasing the self-concept since the person will focus on the present and bringing all attention to present awareness about self in a non-judgemental way, thereby not depending on negative experiences of the past.

The great thing about Mindfulness is an individual can start practicing it from the moment he/she become aware. Mindfulness interventions on young adults have shown to increase their wellbeing and reduce anxiety, stress and impulsiveness and instil self-regulation, better sleep, self-esteem and relaxation. Study by Miners, 2008 [18] have shown how adolescents practicing mindfulness either through temperament or training, are able to experience greater well-being since it is found that mindfulness correlates positively with positive emotion, popularity and friendship- extensiveness and negatively with negative emotion and anxiety.

The above results shows that how mindfulness is an efficient tool in increasing psychological well-being on individuals. Higher self-concept also leads to better psychological well-being and hence with today's scenario the adolescents needs to be trained into practice for mindfulness, thereby making them positive adults.

IV. Conclusion

The present study and earlier studies done on benefits and positive effects of mindfulness, it should now be made a part of each child's life by means of teaching and making them practice at school level. Since mindfulness can be started to be practiced from the day we know about it, hence there should be more focus on how to imbibe same in children at the earliest. With adolescents practicing mindfulness at the stage of journey from concrete operational to formal operational cognitive development, mindfulness will immensely help these adolescents in viewing them in non-judgmental way and accepting them as they are and thereby increasing their self-concept.

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