

Sixth Annual Meeting of the Minds Symposium Poster Winners

Sailesh Maharjan

Best Graduate Poster Presentation Award

Program: Clinical Psychology

College: College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

Type: Poster

Title: Is the Relationship between Trait Mindfulness and Psychological Outcomes Indirect?

Abstract: Mindfulness meditation and related practices are increasingly popular with a large number of people and have been incorporated into many western psychotherapies (e.g., Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy). There is considerable debate over whether mindfulness is best studied as a state, trait or procedure. Although many studies have found that trait and state mindfulness is related to healthy physical and mental health outcomes, less is known about the mechanism(s) through which mindfulness (purposeful attention with acceptance or nonjudgment) enhances health outcomes. The current study explored the role of potential mediators of the relationship between trait mindfulness and the psychological outcomes of psychological distress. Specifically, we examined whether the relationship between trait mindfulness and psychological outcomes was indirect, with mediators such as emotion regulation, experiential avoidance, cognitive flexibility, and acceptance accounting for the relationship. We measured mindfulness, psychological distress, emotion regulation, cognitive flexibility, experiential avoidance and acceptance in a large sample of undergraduate students. The analyses suggested that enhanced psychological flexibility intervened the relationship between trait mindfulness and psychological outcomes. Results have implications for enhancing treatment packages that include mindfulness practices. Limitations of the use of trait mindfulness versus the state of mindfulness were discussed.

Is the Relationship between Trait Mindfulness and Psychological Outcomes Indirect?

Sailesh Maharjan & Michael R. Lewin

Introduction

- **Mindfulness:** The awareness of one's experience with acceptance (Kabat-Zinn, 1990)
- **Trait Mindfulness:** A dispositional tendency to be mindful in everyday life, (Baer, 2006).
- Trait mindfulness negatively correlated with psychological symptoms, experiential avoidance, emotion dysregulation and neuroticism (Bear et al., 2006).

Hypotheses

- The relationship between trait mindfulness and psychological distress is indirect.
- Specifically, the mechanisms of psychological inflexibility, experiential avoidance, emotion regulation, and cognitive flexibility, will mediate the relationship between trait mindfulness and psychological symptoms.

Method

Participants:

- $n = 392$ (277 female and 115 male) college students.
- Age: Mean = 23.02; SD = 5.81 Range: 18-68

Measures:

- **FFMQ - Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire** (Baer et al., 2006) assesses **facets of mindfulness** using **five-point Likert scale**.
- **BSI-18 - Brief Symptom Index-18** (Derogatis, 2001) measures anxiety, depression and somatization. Total score = Psychological Distress.

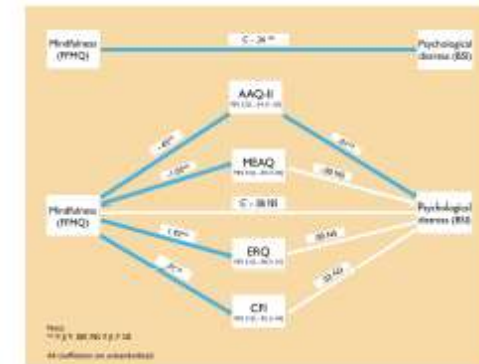
Method

- **AAQ-II - Acceptance and Action Questionnaire-II** (Bond et al., 2011) is a ten item, seven-point Likert scale measuring **psychological flexibility and acceptance of experience**. Higher scores = Psychological Inflexibility.
- **MEAQ – Multidimensional Experiential Avoidance Questionnaire** (Gamez et al., 2011), six-point Likert scale, assesses experiential avoidance.
- **ERQ - Emotion Regulation Questionnaire** (Gross & John, 2003), seven- point Likert scale, assesses two aspects of emotion regulation: suppression and cognitive reappraisal.
- **CFI - Cognitive Flexibility Inventory** (Dennis & Vander Wal, 2010) is a 20 item, seven-point Likert scale measuring cognitive flexibility.

Results

- Utilized **SPSS statistical Macro program** for testing **multiple mediation models**, called **PROCESS** (Hayes, 2013).
- Supported partial hypothesis,
- In multiple mediation analysis, only psychological inflexibility (AAQ-II) fully mediated the relationship between trait mindfulness and psychological symptoms. See Figure 1.

Figure 1. Multiple Mediation Model



Discussion

- The **acceptance** of unpleasant experience, emotions, and memories (**adversity in life**) and the **commitment** (acceptance versus avoidance) to **value ends** accounts for the relationship between trait mindfulness and psychological well being.
- Consistent with the principles of mindfulness based cognitive behavioral therapies, e.g., Acceptance and commitment therapy, (ACT; Hayes et al., 1999).

Limitations

- Based on college student, unclear about the experience with mindfulness practice
- Cross-sectional design
- Future research should address potential mediators and moderators of the relationship between mindfulness practice and psychological well-being.

Corresponding Authors

Sailesh Maharjan (maharjas@coyote.csusb.edu)
Michael R. Lewin (mlewin@csusb.edu)