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THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN MINDFULNESS PRACTICES, EMOTIONAL REGULATION AND LIFE SATISFACTION AMONG YOUNG ADULT

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Abstract

This study examined the association between mindfulness practices, emotional regulation, and life satisfaction among 302 young adults aged 15-24 years from Rawalpindi. Sample was selected using rao soft sample size calculator. Cross-sectional research design was used and participants completed the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire, Emotion Regulation Questionnaire, and Satisfaction with Life Scale. Results showed mindfulness positively correlated with life satisfaction ($r = .399$, $p < .05$), supporting its role in enhancing well-being. However, a positive correlation with emotional regulation ($r = .040$, $p < .05$). Regression analyses revealed mindfulness explained 40% of variance in emotional regulation ($R^2 = .40$) and 20% in life satisfaction ($R^2 = .20$). Gender differences emerged, with females scoring higher on mindfulness ($M = 121.9$) and life satisfaction ($M = 18.77$) than males ($M = 17.04$ and $M = 18.66$), while males reported better emotional regulation ($M = 38.5$). Graduates demonstrated greater mindfulness ($M = 129.0$) and life satisfaction ($M = 19.5$) than undergraduates ($M = 118.7$ and $M = 18.65$). The findings highlight the need for culturally adapted mindfulness interventions in Pakistan, considering familial and religious contexts. This study contributes to understanding mindfulness's psychological benefits in non-Western settings and informs mental health strategies for Pakistani youth.

INTRODUCTION

Mindfulness, defined as a non-judgmental awareness of the present moment, is widely studied in psychology for its positive effects on emotional and psychological well-being (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Mindfulness practices, including interventions like Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), are shown to reduce stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms while enhancing emotional regulation and flexibility (Eberth & Sedlmeier, 2012; Baer et al., 2006). Studies indicate that mindfulness fosters emotional regulation by promoting awareness and acceptance of negative emotions, leading to improved well-being and stress management (Hofmann et al., 2010; Tang et al., 2015). The Mindfulness-to-Meaning theory suggests mindfulness enhances life satisfaction through self-evaluation and emotional regulation (Garland et al., 2015).

Emotional regulation, the ability to manage and adapt emotional responses, is essential for mental well-being (Gross & Thompson, 2007). Young adults especially benefit as they navigate stressors like academic and career challenges (Thompson, 1994). Mindfulness practices increase emotional awareness

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and help individuals regulate emotions more effectively, contributing to better psychological outcomes (Hofmann et al., 2010; Zeng et al., 2015). Studies indicate that mindfulness reduces emotional reactivity and rumination, offering practical tools for maintaining emotional balance (Bluth & Blanton, 2014; Nolen-Hoeksema, 2000).

Life satisfaction, an individual's cognitive assessment of their well-being, is linked to effective emotional regulation (Diener et al., 1985). Research shows that mindfulness practices improve life satisfaction by fostering positive emotions and reducing negative experiences (Hofmann et al., 2010). This practice also enhances self-compassion, resilience, and cognitive flexibility, leading to a more balanced life perspective (Germer, 2009).

Globally, mindfulness practices are increasingly adopted, with evidence showing their positive impact on emotional regulation and life satisfaction (Frontiers in Psychology, 2021). While mindfulness is well-established in Western contexts, it is gaining traction in Pakistan, especially among young adults coping with academic pressures. Research in Pakistani universities highlights mindfulness as a promising tool for emotional regulation and stress management, with workshops and counseling programs showing positive outcomes (Zubair et al., 2022; Nawaz et al., 2023).

Mindfulness supports emotional regulation by enhancing attentional deployment and cognitive change, as outlined in Gross's Process Model of Emotion Regulation (1998). Additionally, Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) posits that mindfulness promotes well-being by fulfilling basic psychological needs like autonomy and competence. The integration of mindfulness into daily routines can foster resilience and long-term emotional stability (Schutte & Malouff, 2011).

This study aims to investigate the impact of mindfulness on emotional regulation and life satisfaction among young adults in Pakistan, addressing a gap in existing research. Understanding the cultural factors influencing mindfulness effectiveness can guide educators and policymakers in designing targeted interventions to support mental well-being based approaches.

Methods

Objectives

- To examine the association between mindfulness practice, emotional regulation and life satisfaction among young adults.
- To examine the gender paradox of mindfulness practice, emotional regulation and life satisfaction.

Hypotheses

- Mindfulness practice had a significant relationship with emotional regulation and life satisfaction among young adults.
- Sustained mindfulness practice had a significant impact on emotional regulation among young adults.
- Mindfulness practice had an impact on life satisfaction among young adults.
- Mindfulness practices, emotional regulation, and life satisfaction were higher among men as compared to women.
- Mindfulness practices, emotional regulation, and life satisfaction were higher among educated as compared to uneducated.

Research Design

A quantitative research design was used. A cross-sectional plan involved gathering information at a single point in time from a sample of young adults to examine the relationships between mindfulness practices, emotional regulation, and life satisfaction. The approach allowed for quantifiable analysis of the current state of these variables in the population without requiring long-term follow-up (Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D., 2017).

Sample

The population for this study included young adults aged 15 - 24 years. A sample size of 302 participants was selected using simple random sampling from different educational institutes of Rawalpindi, Pakistan. The model size was planned using the Rao soft sample size calculator.

Inclusion Criteria

- University students aged 15–24 years.
- Individuals actively involved in academic, professional, or other structured activities.
- Participants who were familiar with or willing to learn mindfulness practices.

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• Young adults who could read and respond to surveys in English or Urdu.

Exclusion Criteria

• Individuals with clinically diagnosed severe mental health circumstances that required medical intervention.
• Participants currently undergoing other psychological interventions or therapies involving mindfulness.
• Young adults over and under the 15–24-year age range.
• Individuals who declined to provide informed consent.

Instruments

Demographic information, including age, gender, education, employment status, and marital status, was collected.

Mindfulness Practice Scale

The Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ), developed by Ruth A. Baer and colleagues in 2006, was used to measure mindfulness across five dimensions: noting (noticing internal and external experiences), describing (labeling experiences with words), acting with awareness (fully attending to activities), non-judging (avoiding self-critical thoughts), and non-reactivity (allowing thoughts and feelings to pass without getting caught up in them). It used a Likert scale ranging from 1 (never true) to 5 (always true) and demonstrated excellent internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values between 0.75 and 0.91 (Baer et al., 2006).

Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ)

The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ), developed by James J. Gross and Oliver P. John in 2003, was used to assess dual key strategies of emotion regulation: cognitive reassessment (reframing a situation to change its emotional impact) and expressive suppression (inhibiting outward emotional expressions). It used a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) and demonstrated moral reliability, with alpha coefficients ranging from 0.75 to 0.88 (Gross & John, 2003).

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), developed by Ed Diener, Robert A. Emmons, Randy J. Larsen, and Sharon Griffin in 1985, was used to measure subjective life satisfaction using five simple statements that assessed an person's overall evaluation of their life. Responses were rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The scale demonstrated high reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87 (Diener et al., 1985).

Procedure

Participants were approached from different educational institutions in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. They were prepared for the study and its purpose. Applicants were given a permission form. Once signing the consent form, they were given a questionnaire followed by demographic questions such as age, gender, etc. Mindfulness was assessed using the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ). Emotional regulation was measured using the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ). Life satisfaction was evaluated using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). In the end, participants were recognized for their partaking and cooperation in the study.

Data analysis

Statistics were evaluated via **IBM SPSS 27.** Descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, frequency, correlation analysis, regression analysis, and t-tests were conducted to examine the relationship between mindfulness practices, emotional regulation, and life satisfaction among young adults.

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations for this study prioritized informed consent, which was acquired from all applicants before participation, ensuring they were aware of the study's purpose, measures, possible threats, and assistances. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty, and consent was documented in writing. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing data, securely storing it, and limiting access to authorized researchers. Participation was entirely voluntary, with no pressure, and participants had the right to

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withdraw at any time without consequence. The study minimized any psychological harm, with resources like counseling made available if needed. All data were anonymized and used solely for academic purposes.

Results

This study investigated the connection between mindfulness practices, emotional regulation, and life satisfaction in young adults. The findings are organized in two parts. First, we present the basic characteristics and reliability of our measurement tools. Second, we report the results of our hypothesis tests using different statistical methods.

Section I – Descriptive Statistics and Psychometric Properties

This section provides a detailed descriptive analysis of the three instruments used in the study. The Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire, the Emotional Regulation Questionnaire, and the Satisfaction with life Scale. It also presents demographic information of the members involved in the current research.

Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation, Range, and Cronbach's Alpha Reliability of the. The Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire, the Emotional Regulation Questionnaire, and the Satisfaction with life Scale (N=302)

Variables	N	M	SD	Range	α
FMQ	302	119.44	13.12	71	.64
ERQ	302	38.01	8.12	46	.70
SLS	302	18.71	5.78	24	.83

Note: FMQ= Five Facet Mindfulness questionnaire;

ERQ= Emotional Regulation Questionnaire scale; SLS= Satisfaction with life Scale; N = Total Number of Participants; M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; α = Cronbach alpha.

Table 1, shows the mean, standard deviation and normality result of the data. This result shows mild to moderate deviation from the mean. Range has also been checked which is 71,46 and 24 respectively. The alpha reliability of Five Facet Mindfulness questionnaire is .64 which indicate mildly moderate reliability. The alpha reliability of Emotional Regulation Questionnaire .70 which indicates moderate reliability. The alpha reliability of Satisfaction with life scale is .83 which also indicates moderate reliability.

Table 2: Socio-demographic variables of study participants (N = 320)

Variables	**N**	%
Age		
18-24	282	93.4
24-34	20	6.6
Gender		
Male	154	51
Female	148	49
Education		
Undergraduate	281	93
Graduate	21	7
Working status		
Un-employed	234	77.5
Employed	68	22.5
Marital status		
Un-married	224	74.2
Committed	72	23.8

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Married	6	2
Socio-economic status		
Lower class	39	12.9
Middle class	188	62.3

Note: % = percentage.

Table 2, shows the frequency and percentages of demographic characteristics. Frequency and percentages performed across each of the demographic variables. There were 148 females and 154 males. In age range 283 participants were lying between 18-24 whereas 20 participants were lying between 25-34. Education was split into two categories where 281 participants were undergraduate and 21 participants were graduated. Out of total 302 participants, 287 were un-employed and 84 were employed. Marital status was split into three groups, where 224 participants were un-married, 72 were committed and 6 were married. Participants belong to different socio-economic class, 39 belong to lower class, 188 belong to middle class while remaining 75 belong to upper class.

Section II - Hypothesis Testing

Correlation, regression and t-test was used to analyze the results of mindfulness practices, emotional regulation and life satisfaction.

Table 3: Inter correlation of mindfulness practices, emotional regulation and life satisfaction.

Variables	N	M	SD	1	2	3
1. FMQ	302	119.4	13.1	-		
2. EQR	302	38	8.1	.26**	-	
3. SLS	302	18.7	5.7	.39**	.23*	-

Note: FMQ= Five Facet Mindfulness questionnaire; ERQ= Emotional Regulation Questionnaire scale; SLS= Satisfaction with life Scale; N = Total Number of Participants; M = mean; SD = standard deviation (Significance level; p = < .05).

Table 3, shows the Pearson correlation among mindfulness practice, emotional regulation and life satisfaction. The result indicates that there is a positive relation between mindfulness practices on emotional regulation. It is also evident that mindfulness practices have positive relation with satisfaction with life. Emotional regulation with life satisfaction have positive relation. Hence it is proved that there is a important connection in among mindfulness practice, emotional regulation and satisfaction with life.

Table 4: Regression coefficient of mindfulness practices on emotional regulation.

Variables	B	S.E	t	p
Constant	42.75	.428	9.98	.000
EQR	-.040	.036	-.064	.000

Note: EQR=emotional regulation questionnaire; B = unstandardized beta; S.E = standard error; p = Significance level; $R^{2=}$= 40%.

Table 4 shows the linear regression between mindfulness practice and emotional regulation. The results in this table show that mindfulness practice is impacting the emotional regulation and is highly significant (p = .000) through this value. The mindfulness practices are impacting 40% on emotional regulation. The overall finding suggest that mindfulness practice has an impact on emotional regulation.

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Table 5: Regression coefficient of mindfulness practice on satisfaction with life

Variables	B	S.E	t	p
Constant	16.15	3.05	5.29	.000
SLS	.021	.25	.84	.000

Note: B = unstandardized beta; S.E = standard error; p = Significance level; $R^{2=}$= 20%

Table 5 shows the linear regression among mindfulness practice and life satisfaction. The outcomes in this table show that mindfulness practice is impacting the emotional regulation and is highly significant (p = .000) through this value. The mindfulness practices are impacting 20% on life satisfaction. The overall finding suggest that mindfulness practice has an impact on emotional regulation.

Table 6: Mean Differences, Standard Deviation, and t-value among gender (N = 302) mindfulness practice, emotional regulation and life satisfaction

Male (n = 154)			Female (n = 148)				95% CI	
Variables	M	SD	M	SD	p	t	UL	LL
FMQ	17.04	13.89	121.9	11.8	.000	-3.92	-1.9	-7.8
ERQ	38.5	7.92	37.4	8.31	.000	1.148	2.9	7.6
SLS	18.66	5.44	18.77	6.13	.000	-.152	1.2	-1.4

Note: n = Total Number of Participants; M = Mean; SD = Standard deviation; p = Significance level i.e. <0.05; CI = Confidence interval; UL = Upper limit; LL = Lower limit; FMQ= Five Facet Mindfulness questionnaire; ERQ= Emotional Regulation Questionnaire scale; SLS= Satisfaction with life Scale.

In Table 6 statistical analysis shows that there are not much gender differences exist in this data. On Brief mindfulness practice and satisfaction with life have slightly higher score ratio in females as compare to males (FMQ; M = 17.04, SD = 13.89 & SLS: M = 18.68, SD = 5.44) as compared to those female participants (FMQ: M = 121.9, SD = 11.8 & SLS: M = 18.77, SD = 6.13). On emotional regulation the male participants have slightly higher score ratio (M = 38.5, SD = 7.92) as compared to those female participants (M = 37.4, SD = 8.31)

Table 7: Mean Differences, Standard Deviation, and t-value among education (N = 302) mindfulness practice, emotional regulation and life satisfaction.

Undergraduate (n = 281)			Graduate (n = 21)				95% CI	
Variables	M	SD	M	SD	p	t	UL	LL
FMQ	118.7	13.13	129.0	8.6	.000	-3.54	-4.58	-16
ERQ	38.5	7.7	30.2	8.7	.000	4.64	11.8	4.8
SLS	18.65	5.87	19.5	4.34	.000	-7.0	1.66	-3.4

Note: n = Total Number of Participants; M = Mean; SD = Standard deviation; p = Significance level i.e. <0.05; CI = Confidence interval; UL = Upper limit; LL = Lower limit; FMQ= Five Facet Mindfulness questionnaire; ERQ= Emotional Regulation Questionnaire scale; SLS= Satisfaction with life Scale.

In Table 7 statistical analysis shows that there are not many education differences exist in this data. On Brief mindfulness practice and satisfaction with life have slightly higher score ratio in graduate as compare to undergraduate (FMQ; M = 118.7, SD = 13.13 & SLS: M = 38.5, SD = 7.7) as compared to those female participants (FMQ: M = 129, SD = 8.6& SLS: M = 30.2, SD = 8.7). On emotional regulation, the male participants have a slightly higher score ratio (M = 38.5, SD = 7.7) as compared to the female participants (M = 19.5, SD = 4.34)

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Discussion

This study used a cross-sectional design to investigate the connection between mindfulness practices, emotional regulation, and life satisfaction among young adults in Pakistan (N = 302). The study aimed to address gaps in non-Western contexts by examining how cultural and demographic factors influence these relationships. It focused on a collectivist, Islamic cultural setting to explore the cultural relevance of mindfulness practices. Understanding how mindfulness interacts with emotional regulation and life satisfaction in Pakistani youth can provide valuable insights into mental health strategies tailored for collectivist societies.

Three validated questionnaires were employed in the study. The Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) was used to assess mindfulness characteristics, including noting, describing, acting with awareness, non-judging, and non-reactivity (Baer et al., 2006). These facets capture the multifaceted nature of mindfulness, allowing for a nuanced analysis. The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) measured cognitive reappraisal and suppression strategies, offering insight into how individuals manage their emotions (Gross & John, 2003). Lastly, the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) assessed participants' personal well-being, providing a quantitative measure of life satisfaction (Diener et al., 1985). Using these standardized tools ensured consistency and reliability in data collection.

The study found a significant positive relationship between mindfulness and life satisfaction ($r = .399$, $p < .05$), suggesting that higher levels of mindfulness are associated with greater well-being. This finding supports the hypothesis that practicing mindfulness can lead to improved quality of life by fostering self-awareness, acceptance, and reduced stress. Previous research by Kabat-Zinn (2003) and Brown & Ryan (2003) similarly noted that mindfulness contributes to stress reduction and enhanced psychological well-being. This aligns with global studies that emphasize mindfulness as a universal tool for mental health promotion.

However, the relationship between mindfulness and emotional regulation was more complex. The study revealed a weak negative association between mindfulness and emotional regulation ($r = -.040$, $p < .05$). This unexpected finding contrasts with Western literature, where mindfulness often correlates positively with adaptive emotional regulation (Chambers et al., 2009). In Pakistani society, where social harmony and emotional restraint are valued, expressing emotions openly can be seen as socially inappropriate. Thus, mindfulness practices promoting emotional awareness may conflict with cultural norms, leading to the observed inverse relationship. Trommsdorff (2012) emphasized that cultural contexts significantly shape how individuals regulate emotions, which may explain this divergence.

Demographic analysis showed significant differences based on gender and education. Female participants reported higher mindfulness (M = 121.9) and life satisfaction (M = 18.77) than males (mindfulness: M = 117.04; life satisfaction: M = 18.66). Women's greater emotional awareness and openness to introspective practices might explain their more positive responses to mindfulness interventions (Lengacher et al., 2016). Conversely, men showed slightly higher scores in emotional regulation (M = 38.5 vs. 37.4), reflecting societal expectations for men to demonstrate emotional control (Addis, 2008).

Educational attainment also influenced the results. Graduates scored higher on mindfulness (M = 129.0) and life satisfaction (M = 19.5) compared to undergraduates (mindfulness: M = 118.7; life satisfaction: M = 18.65). This difference may arise from greater cognitive flexibility and life experience among graduates. Interestingly, undergraduates reported stronger emotional regulation (M = 38.5) than graduates (M = 30.2), possibly due to the structured environment of academic life, which promotes routine and stability.

Socioeconomic background was another critical factor. The majority of participants were middle-class (62.3%), suggesting that mindfulness may be more accessible to those with educational and economic stability. Given that traditional mental health services are often limited in Pakistan, integrating low-cost mindfulness practices could be a practical alternative for promoting well-being. Practices like breath awareness and body scanning, which do not require extensive training, could be particularly beneficial.

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The study's urban focus may not represent rural populations, where traditional coping mechanisms and religious practices are more prevalent. Self-reporting could introduce bias, as participants might underreport emotional difficulties due to cultural stigmas around mental health. The cross-sectional design also limits the ability to infer causality. Additionally, the absence of religious and spiritual integration in mindfulness approaches may reduce their cultural relevance in a predominantly Islamic society.

Expanding research to rural areas and including older populations could improve generalizability. Integrating Islamic contemplative practices, such as dhikr and salah, within mindfulness frameworks could enhance acceptance and efficacy. Further, longitudinal studies could investigate whether consistent mindfulness practice leads to long-term improvements in emotional regulation and well-being.

The study demonstrates that culturally sensitive mindfulness interventions could positively impact mental well-being in Pakistan. Incorporating Islamic spiritual practices and focusing on community-based approaches may foster greater acceptance and practical application. Addressing cultural resistance to emotional expression through relational mindfulness models may also improve outcomes. Given the increasing mental health challenges faced by young Pakistanis, such as academic pressure and economic uncertainty, mindfulness-based programs could serve as accessible, culturally adapted mental health interventions.

Conclusion

This study provides valuable insight into the psychological benefits of mindfulness practices among Pakistani young adults, particularly their associations with emotional regulation and life satisfaction. The findings affirm that mindfulness is positively linked to life satisfaction, suggesting that cultivating present-moment awareness may enhance overall well-being in this population. While the relationship between mindfulness and emotional regulation was statistically significant, the inverse direction challenges conventional findings and points to the potential influence of cultural norms regarding emotional expression and restraint in collectivist societies. Furthermore, demographic variables such as gender and educational level were found to influence these psychological constructs. Women reported higher mindfulness and life satisfaction scores, while men demonstrated greater emotional regulation, highlighting the role of gendered social expectations. Graduates outperformed undergraduates in mindfulness and life satisfaction, underscoring the role of maturity and educational exposure in shaping psychological resilience. The results underscore the potential for culturally adapted mindfulness interventions in Pakistani settings, particularly those that integrate spiritual or religious practices like dhikr or salah. Such culturally congruent adaptations may enhance acceptance and effectiveness. Given the increasing mental health burden among youth, especially in academic and urban settings, mindfulness-based approaches offer a promising avenue for low-cost, scalable, and preventive mental health strategies. Future research should employ longitudinal designs to explore causal relationships and examine the long-term impact of mindfulness on emotional and psychological outcomes. Additionally, expanding this work to rural populations and incorporating indigenous conceptualizations of mindfulness and well-being will offer a more comprehensive understanding. Ultimately, this study contributes to the growing body of cross-cultural mindfulness literature and lays the groundwork for policy and practice innovations in mental health promotion among young adults in Pakistan.

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