

Mindfulness and psychological well-being in a sample of African participants

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Background

The construct of mindfulness, which has its roots in Eastern contemplative traditions, has become a significant focus of scholarly attention in recent years. Whilst much research has focused on examining the relationships between mindfulness and various facets of psychological distress, few studies examined the associations between mindfulness and psychological well-being, and virtually none did so in the context of an African sample, as was the intention of this study.



Research Questions

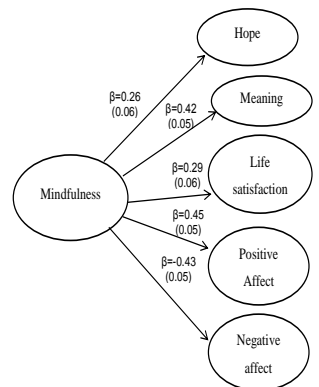
- What relationships exist between mindfulness, life satisfaction, and positive and negative affect as indicators of hedonic well-being in a sample of African participants?
- What relationships exist between mindfulness and hope and the presence of life meaning as components of eudaimonic well-being?
- How psychometrically valid and reliable is the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) developed by Brown and Ryan (2003) in the context of an all-African sample?

Methodology

- **Design:** A quantitative, cross sectional survey design.
- **Sample:** 407 African participants (66.1% female), comprised of students (n=203) and their parents (n=204) residing in the Vaal-Triangle region of South Africa.
- **Data collection:** the Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale (Brown & Ryan, 2003), the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Steger et al. 2006), the Adult Trait-Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991), the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985), and the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988).
- **Data analysis:** Data were analysed by means of latent variable modelling in Mplus version 7.1. First, a measurement model was specified and tested (and compared against two competing models). To assess model fit, the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI; > 0.90), the comparative fit index (CFI; > 0.90), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA; < 0.80) were used as evidence of acceptable fit. The best fitting model was re-specified as a structural regression model which enabled the hypothesized relationships between the variables to be assessed.

Results and contribution of the study

This study was one of the first to investigate the psychometric properties of the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale and the relationships between mindfulness and various aspects of hedonic and eudaimonic well-being in an all-African sample. Findings showed that the MAAS is a psychometrically valid and reliable measure of mindfulness in African samples such as those used in the present study, and that mindfulness is significantly and robustly associated with life meaning, positive affect and low levels of negative affect, and moderately related to elevated levels of hope and life satisfaction in this context. The findings imply that mindfulness likely plays an important role in relation to the psychological well-being of at least some African populations. On a practical level, the findings have implications for the development and implementation of therapeutic and counselling interventions, and tentatively suggest that strategies aimed at enhancing mindfulness among at least some African individuals may possibly result in a significant and positive increases in both eudaimonic and hedonic well-being.



Final structural model

References

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