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Being in the present: Role of emotional regulation and self-control

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Abstract
Aim: The main objective of the study is to evaluate the interrelationship between mindfulness, emotional regulation, and self-control and to explore the impact of emotional regulation and self-control on mindfulness among youth.
Method: 150 youth aged 18-25 years were recruited for the research. Self-report measures including the 'Mindful Attention Awareness Scale', 'Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale', and 'Self-Control Scale' were used to collect the data from the sample. The obtained data was statistically analyzed with the help of descriptive statistics, bivariate correlation, and regression analysis in SPSS-26.
Results and Discussion: The results indicated a positive correlation of mindfulness with emotional regulation ($r=.409$, $p<.01$) and self-control ($r=.494$, $p<.01$). Further, the correlation between emotional regulation and self-control is .289 which is also significant at $p<.01$. Emotional regulation ($\beta=.410$, $F=47.767$) and self-control ($\beta=.494$, $F=34.819$) serve as predictors of mindfulness.
Conclusion: The outcomes depicted a positive significant role of mindfulness, emotional regulation, and self-control in youth. The increase in the level of mindfulness is linked to improved emotional regulation and self-control. Policymakers and educational institutions should prioritize implementing and incorporating mindfulness training and self-regulation techniques into curricula that can assist students in managing stress, improving concentration, and promoting mental health.

Keywords: Mindfulness, emotional regulation, self-control

Introduction
In an increasingly fast-paced and complex world, the ability to regulate one's emotions and maintain self-control has become critical to personal well-being and social harmony. The capacity to remain anchored in the present moment has become increasingly important for mental health and performance in a society characterized by continuous distractions, high expectations, and fast technological improvements. Emotional regulation and self-control are psychological mechanisms that allow humans to manage the intricacies of contemporary life while staying anchored in the present. The ability to control one's emotions in response to different stimuli, including their intensity, duration, and expression, is known as emotional regulation (Gross, 2002) [19]. It helps people control their emotional experiences and responses, which promotes adaptive behavior in trying circumstances. It supports adaptive behavior in challenging situations by assisting people in taking control of their emotional experiences and reactions. Being present in the modern world can be especially difficult because there are so many distractions all around us, from social and professional demands to digital notifications. Practicing mindfulness and cultivating emotional regulation and self-control which can assist individuals in maintaining stability. Emotional regulation enables individuals to control their emotional responses, preventing overpowering feelings from distracting them from the present moment. Likewise, self-control empowers individuals to avert distractions and sustain concentration in the present moment. Being present involves not only the removal of distractions but also the development of an attitude of acceptance and non-judgment. When individuals are fully present, they may engage more profoundly in their relationships, careers, and personal lives, resulting in enhanced fulfillment and well-being. Better mental clarity, emotional balance, and a more fulfilling existence can be attained via the practice of being present, which can be achieved by deep breathing exercises, mindfulness meditation, or even just raising awareness of everyday tasks.

The impacts of mindfulness on wellbeing have been explained in a number of ways, most of which have to do with how emotional experiences trigger the activation of cognitive appraisal and attentional management. Initially, when it comes to producing mental and emotional reactions to one's surroundings (Gross *et al*., 2011; Gross & Barrett, 2011) [11, 10], there is growing evidence that mindfulness is linked to a general assessment of one's external stressors as less upsetting and more manageable, which frequently results in improvements in emotional states (Chambers *et al*., 2009; Palmer & Rodger, 2009; Weinstein *et al*., 2009) [3, 15, 18]. The advantages of mindfulness encompass diminishing excessive focus on past or future events and enhancing concentration on the present moment; recent findings indicate that decreased rumination every day, a significant cognitive objective of mindfulness practices, may result in reduced anxiety and depression (Desrosiers *et al*., 2013; 2014) [5, 4] as well as lower assessments of current discomfort and a decreased dependence on unhealthy, maladaptive health behaviors for coping (Riley, 2015) [20]. Mindfulness has the potential to improve pupils' ability to flourish in their immediate environment by encouraging nonjudgmental involvement with present experiences. The attention and awareness inherent in mindfulness are considered crucial for identifying differences between present states or levels of functioning; the acknowledgment of these discrepancies subsequently motivates behavior aimed at mitigating them (Brown *et al*., 2007; Feltman *et al*., 2009) [2, 7]. According to Bishop *et al*. (2004) [1], self-control is necessary for both present-moment awareness and attention management in the mindfulness concept. Self-control constitutes the essence of cognitive activity; hence, it is significantly affected by emotional regulation (Nigg, 2017) [14]. We propose that by developing more attention and acceptance towards thoughts and sensations in the experiential field, mindfulness meditators are better able to identify the moment-to-moment effect that signals the need for self-control (Teper & Inzlicht, 2013; Teper *et al*., 2013) [17] [17]. Research suggests that mindfulness is linked to proficient emotional and behavioral regulation, which could enhance relationships, productivity, and well-being at work (Good *et al*., 2016) [9]. Better self-control is facilitated by effective emotional regulation, which reduces the emotional load that can cause rash decisions. Self-control also increases the likelihood that people may use adaptive emotional regulation techniques, which promotes a more conscious, present-focused way of thinking. Finally, we aim to provide insights into how these skills might be developed to promote mindfulness, personal growth, and well-being in the context of modern living, where emotional and cognitive demands are frequently overwhelming.

Objectives

- To study the intercorrelation among emotional regulation, self-control, and mindfulness.
- To study the relationship between emotional regulation and mindfulness.
- To study the relationship between self-control and mindfulness.
- To study the relationship between emotional regulation and self-control.
- To study the impact of emotional regulation on mindfulness.
- To study the impact of self-control on mindfulness.

Hypotheses

- There shall be significant intercorrelation among emotional regulation, self-control, and mindfulness.
- There shall be a significant correlation between emotional regulation and mindfulness.
- There shall be a significant correlation between self-control and mindfulness.
- There shall be a significant correlation between emotional regulation and self-control.
- Emotional regulation will be a significant predictor of mindfulness.
- Self-control will be a significant predictor of mindfulness.

Method Tools

Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (Brown & Ryan, 2003)

MAAS is a self-reported scale with 15 items which assess dispositional mindfulness. A 6-point Likert scale makes up the scale response format i.e., 'Almost always, Very frequently, Somewhat frequently, Somewhat infrequently, Very infrequently, and Almost never'. High scores on the scale indicate higher dispositional mindfulness. The internal consistency of the scale is .82 and the test-retest reliability of the scale is .81.

Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS-18) (Victor & Klonsky, 2016)

The Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS-18) shorter version consists of 18 item self-report questionnaire that measures difficulties in areas of behavioral emotion regulation by Victor & Klonsky (2016). Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS) original version consists of 36 items developed by Gratz & Roemer (2004). There is a 5-point Likert scale on the scale response format from 'almost never' to 'almost always'. The scale has six subscales namely 'Awareness, Clarity, Goals, Impulse, Nonacceptance, Strategies' and each subscale contains 3 items. Some items are reverse-scored. Higher scores indicate high difficulties in emotion regulation. The Cronbach's alpha (internal consistency reliability) of the test is .91. Content validity for this scale is also Satisfactory.

Self-Control (Tangney *et al*., 2004) [16]

Tangney *et al*. developed the 13-item Brief Self-Control Scale (BSCS) in 2004. The 36-item Self Control Scale, created by the same authors, is condensed into the 13-item BSCS. A 5-point Likert scale, with 1 denoting "not at all like me" and 5 denoting "very much like me," makes up the scale. objects with positive wording are denoted by (+), whereas objects with negative wording are denoted by (−). Items with negative wording were recoded such that higher scores correlated with greater self-control. The coefficient alpha of the test is .83.

Sample

The sample for the present study includes 150 between the ages of 18-25 years. The participants for the study were selected from various government and private universities and colleges in Haryana (India) who were willing to participate in the study. The sample was chosen based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria listed below:

Inclusion Criteria
- Voluntary participation
- Age group 18-25 years
- Can read/write Hindi/English

Exclusion Criteria
- Involuntary participation
- Participants having any severe psychiatric ailment.
- Cannot read/write Hindi/English.

Procedure
The present study includes a sample of 150 undergraduate and postgraduate students. Only students who were willing to participate in the study and whose ages ranged from 18 to 25 were permitted to do so. Data was collected from the sample with the help of Self-report measures including 'Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (Brown & Ryan, 2009) [2], Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS-18) (Victor & Klonsky, 2016) [16], Self-Control (Tangney *et al*., 2004) [16]'. After the data collection, the data was analyzed and the results were prepared using SPSS-26.

Results
Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics including N (total sample), mean, standard deviation (SD), and standard error mean (SEM) for mindfulness, emotional regulation, and self-control. Table 1 depicted that the mean score of the participants on mindfulness is 44.3400 (SD=13, SEM=1.13728). The mean score of the sample on emotional regulation is 48.1467 (SD=6.27703, SEM=.51252), and self-control is 35.0267 (SD=6.57323, SEM=.53670).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	SD	SE	Skewness	Kurtosis
Mindfulness	150	44.3400	13.92879	1.13728	.339	-.123
Emotional Regulation	150	48.1467	6.27703	.51252	.416	-.311
Self-Control	150	35.0267	6.57323	.53670	.134	.779

Table 2 shows the inter-correlation matrix for mindfulness, emotional regulation, and self-control. The Pearson product-moment correlation between the above-stated variables. Mindfulness and emotional regulation are positively correlated (r=.409, p<.001) indicating that a better emotional regulation is linked to a higher degree of mindfulness. The association between mindfulness and self-control was statistically significant (r=.494, p<.001) suggesting that individuals who practice mindfulness tend to exhibit greater self-control. Additionally, the relationship between emotional regulation and self-control is also positive (r=.289, p<.001) suggesting that those who have stronger emotional regulation also typically exhibit more self-control.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix for Mindfulness, Emotional Regulation and Self-control

Variable	Mindfulness	Emotional Regulation	Self-Control
Mindfulness	1		
Emotional Regulation	.409**	1	
Self-Control	.494**	.289**	1

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

The stepwise regression analysis is shown the Table 3. Findings show how the predictors (self-control and emotional regulation) affect the dependent variable (mindfulness). In Model 1, self-control accounts for 24.4% of the variation in the dependent variable with a coefficient value of .494 (F=34.819) which is significant at p<.001. The adjusted R^2, which accounts for potential biases from the number of predictors, is 0.239, demonstrating that the model is statistically significant and indicating that self-control is a significant predictor.

Table 3: Stepwise Regression Analysis for Self-Control and Emotional Regulation

Model No.	Variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Beta	F	p-value
1	Self-Control	.244	.239	.494	34.819	.000[a]
2	Self-Control	.321	.312	.410	47.767	.000[b]
	Emotional Regulation			.291		

a) Predictors: (Constant), Self-Control
b) Predictors: (Constant), Self-Control, Emotional Regulation

Model 2, emotional regulation for 32.1% of the variation in the dependent variable with a coefficient value of .410 (F=47.767) which is significant at p<.001. With both predictors in this model, the self-control's coefficient value is .410, while emotional regulation's coefficient value is .291, indicating that both factors contribute positively, while self-control remains the stronger predictor. This shows that self-control and emotional regulation are both relevant predictors, with self-control having a stronger influence on mindfulness.

Discussions
The correlation analysis demonstrated a significant intercorrelation among mindfulness, emotional regulation, and self-control. So, our first hypothesis 'there shall be significant intercorrelation among emotional regulation, self-control, and mindfulness' is fully accepted. It is indicated that increasing the level of mindfulness is linked to improved emotional regulation and self-control. Our findings are in line with the previous literature such as Masicampo and Baumeister (2007) [13] also stated that enhanced self-control strength may serve as a primary causal mechanism connecting mindfulness therapies to their advantages. A longitudinal study conducted by Eisenlohr-Moul *et al*. (2016) [6] emphasized the reciprocal relationship among mindfulness, emotional regulation, and self-control.
The stepwise regression has determined that emotional regulation and self-control has a positive effect on

mindfulness. So, our second hypothesis 'emotional regulation will have a significant predictor of mindfulness' has been accepted. Teper *et al*. (2013) [17] elucidate the interconnection of mindfulness, executive control, and emotion regulation, asserting that mindfulness enhances executive control, thus facilitating improvements in attention and awareness. Another study by Keng *et al*. (2011) [21] investigated mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) in detail and discovered that mindfulness improves emotional regulation and decreases emotional reactivity. According to their meta-analysis, practicing mindfulness helps people manage their emotions better, which in turn helps them have reduced levels of anxiety and despair. The analysis also determined that self-control is a positive predictor of mindfulness. So, our last hypothesis 'Self-control will be a significant predictor of mindfulness' is also accepted'. A study by Friese, Messner, and Schaffner (2012) [12] indicated that participants practicing mindfulness meditation displayed enhanced self-control in activities necessitating impulse inhibition, relative to a control group. In addition, Hofmann *et al*. (2012) [12] investigated the relationship between emotional regulation and self-control under the framework of ego depletion, which posits that resources for self-control are finite and subject to exhaustion. Their findings indicate that proficient emotional regulation can alleviate the exhaustion of self-control resources, enabling individuals to sustain self-regulation despite extended self-control effort. This research are indicating that by enhancing emotional and self-control the level of awareness among youth can also be promoted which further will help in their mental health.

Conclusion

The present aim of this study is to investigate the connection between mindfulness, emotional regulation, and self-control. Our findings underscore the significant role of mindfulness, emotional regulation, and self-control in youth. Mindfulness promotes emotional regulation by enhancing awareness, acceptance, and adaptive reactions to emotions. Additionally, these findings suggest that mindfulness-based interventions may be able to address typical problems among young people, like emotional instability and impulsive conduct, which are important for social connections, academic achievement, and personal development. This subsequently improves self-regulation, enabling individuals to more effectively govern their urges and attain long-term objectives.

Implications

Being able to stay in the present moment can be helpful for a young person's mental health, especially as they deal with more stress from academic areas, social media, and societal standards. The ability to identify and manage your emotions in a healthy manner is known as emotional control. Youth who practice mindfulness find it easier to do this. Focusing on the present moment helps them notice their feelings without getting caught up in them. This lets them deal with problems in a cool and collected way. Moreover, mindfulness training programs are being integrated into educational institutions to enhance students' emotional regulation, self-control, and academic achievement.

Limitations and directions for future research

- The sample size used in the study is small, which restricts the research for generalization.
- Gender differences are also not measured in the study.
- A greater sample size may be employed in future studies to boost the study's efficacy.
- Similar research can be done with more variables and on different social strata.

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