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Mindfulness of Prospective Teachers - A Survey

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Abstract

Over the recent years, educationists and researchers have diverted to a new psychological construct known as mindfulness. Mindfulness is considered the heart of Buddhist meditation and it has been assumed that mindfulness practices employed in modern psychology originate from this tradition. The current study was conducted with the objective to find the level of Mindfulness among Prospective Teachers and to find the difference in Mindfulness that exists among prospective teachers based on Gender and Type of Institution. 520 students participated in the study. Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ), a scale developed and standardised by Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer, & Toney (2006) was used in this study. The findings of the study indicated that Prospective Teachers have a low level of Mindfulness and they differ significantly in the mean scores of Mindfulness and its dimensions based on Gender and Type of Institution.

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Keywords: Mindfulness, Prospective Teachers, Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire

1. Introduction

India is a country of yogis and gurus who have given importance to attention and awareness since times immemorial. Knowledge seeking had been a virtue of ancient Bharat. The focus has been shifted from attention and awareness to scoring marks. Only the memory aspect of individuals has attained utmost importance in schools of today. Over the recent years, educationists and researchers have diverted to a new psychological construct known as mindfulness. The Pali word; sati (in Sanskrit, smrti) (which connotes awareness, attention, and remembering) has been translated in English as Mindfulness. Mindfulness is considered the heart of Buddhist meditation and it has been assumed that mindfulness practices employed in modern psychology originate from this tradition. There are three stages in Mindfulness as spoken by Buddha (Thanissaro, 1996). These stages are:

- to focus in the present moment
- to notice the changes in objects and also the factors that led to the change
- observing the objects

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attentively, without holding on or grasping and with calmness. Many researchers eg. Langer, Bishop et al. have tried to define and study the constructs of Mindfulness but the milestone definition still accepted today was given by Kabat-Zinn. In Kabat-Zinn (2003) view, “An operational working definition of mindfulness is the awareness that emerges through paying attention to purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment”.

1.1. The rationale for the study

The education system has tried to incorporate changes and innovation in terms of technology and transacting the teaching-learning process. Blended learning had been the talk of the town for a long time. The pandemic and post-pandemic period has enabled the education system to put in use online and blended learning effectively. In all these developments there is a silent yet very important concern i.e the wellbeing of both the teachers and students. Germer, Siegel, & Fulton (2005) argue that mindfulness relates an individual's positive, neutral, and negative experiences through which one is able to lessen anguish and improve well-being. Education is imparted to students at schools by teachers who are trained by various organisations like DIET and B.Ed. Institutions. The prospective teachers in these institutions get trained for teaching the future generation. Considering the past legacy of knowledge seeking and the importance given to the aspects of attention and awareness, the researcher got interested to find the level of these aspects in the prospective teachers in various districts of Tamil Nadu with the focus on B.Ed. Institutions of Tamilnadu and tried to find answers to the following research questions

1.2. Research questions

The present study tried to find answers to the following research question.

1. What is the level of Mindfulness among Prospective Teachers?
2. Is there a significant difference in the mean scores of Mindfulness and its dimensions among Prospective Teachers based on Gender, and Type of Institution?

2. Literature review

Hue & Lau (2015) conducted a pilot study of a mindfulness-based program for pre-service teachers in Hong Kong and the findings of their study indicated that mindfulness was a significant predictor of well-being, stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms. The study also reflected that conducting mindfulness programs were favourable for pre-service teachers. The study recommended that Mindfulness could be implemented in teaching education to promote well-being and stress management while preventing burnout among teaching professionals. Kang et al. (2018) conducted a study titled Gender differences in response to a school-based mindfulness training intervention for early adolescents. Differences in gender were detected, female meditators reported a higher increase in positive affect compared to females in the control group, whereas equivalent gains were reported for male meditators and control males. Imtiaz & Vaughan(2018) highlighted the influence of Mindfulness on Cognitive Performance. The results indicated that mindfulness groups reflected higher engagement. It was also found that when the group was subjected to the adversity group of the task the individuals belonging to the Mindfulness group showed higher performance and persistence compared to the follow up group.

3. Method

Normative Survey Method was employed to describe and interpret the variables used in the study .

3.1. Sample / Participants

The population of this research consists of 1st and 2nd year BEd Student Teachers of 2017-2018 academic years. Since it is impossible to collect data from the whole population, a random sampling method was used and the sample was taken from the 1st and 2nd year B.Ed. student teachers studying in various B.Ed. institutions in Chennai and Thiruvallur district of TamilNadu, India. A total of 1180 Prospective Teachers participated in this survey.

3.2. Instrument(s)

The researcher used the Five Facet Mindful Questionnaire (FFMQ) (Baer et al, 2006) for the collection of data. The tool is graded as a five-point Likert type scale (1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-neutral, 4-agree, 5-strongly agree). Information regarding gender and type of institution was also gathered. FFMQ is a 39 item scale with five dimensions namely Observe, Describe, Act with Awareness, Nonjudge, and Nonreact. Since the tool wasn't standardised for the sample selected. Reliability analysis was conducted to establish its reliability for the sample selected. The Cronbach alpha coefficient was found to be .776 for the whole scale.

3.3. Data collection procedures

The data was collected using an online questionnaire which was shared with the prospective teachers studying in B.Ed. Institutions across Chennai and Thiruvallur district of TamilNadu via emails.

3.4. Data analysis

The data gathered as a result of measurements during research was analysed using SPSS software. For parametric datum, independent samples t-tests and ANOVA were applied to determine significant differences between the Prospective Teachers based on their Gender, and Type of Institution.

Hypothesis 1: The level of Mindfulness among Prospective Teachers is moderate.

Table 1 Frequency and Mean Percentage of Mindfulness among Prospective Teachers with respect to Entire sample.

Variable	Range	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Mindfulness	105 - 124	Low	220	37.3
	125 - 132	Medium	350	29.7
	132 - 194	High	390	33.1

The level of Mindfulness among Prospective Teachers can be interpreted from Table 1. Table 1 shows that in the sample under study 37.3% of the Prospective Teachers have a low level of Mindfulness, 29.7% have a medium level of Mindfulness and 33.1% have a high level of Mindfulness. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected as the level of Mindfulness among Prospective Teachers are found to be comparatively low.

Hypothesis 2a: There is no significant difference in Mindfulness and its dimensions among Prospective Teachers based on their Gender.

Table 2. Mean, Standard Deviation, and *t* value for Significant Difference in Mindfulness and its dimensions among Prospective Teachers based on Gender

Dimension of Mindfulness		Gender				t value	P value
		Male		Female			
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Observe	M	25.44	4.642	24.73	3.704	-2.635**	.000
	SD						
Describe	M	26.02	5.982	25.61	4.423	-1.222	0.22
	SD						
Act with Awareness	M	26.61	5.462	25.57	3.743	-3.593**	.000
	SD						
NonJudge Items	M	26.98	4.944	25.47	3.564	-5.572**	.000
	SD						
NonReact Items	M	24.07	4.862	23.29	4.256	-2.584*	.000
	SD						
Total Mindfulness	M	135.39	22.723	130.73	13.471	-4.185**	.000
	SD						

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** represents $p < 0.001$

Table 2 shows the independent-samples t-test conducted to compare Male and Female Prospective Teachers based on the scores of Total Mindfulness and its dimensions Observe, Describe, Act with Awareness, Non Judge Items and Non React Items.

For Total Mindfulness [$t(1178)=-4.185$, $p < 0.001$] and the dimension Observe [$t(1178)=-2.635$, $p = 0.01$], Act with Awareness [$t(1178)=-3.593$, $p < 0.001$], NonJudge Items [$t(1178)=-5.572$, $p < 0.001$] and NonReact Items [$t(1178)=-2.584$, $p = 0.01$] there exists a significant difference among Male Prospective Teachers and Female Prospective Teachers at .01 level. Whereas, for the dimension Describe [$t(1178)=-1.222$, $p = 0.22$], there exists no significant difference in the mean scores of Male Prospective Teachers and Female Prospective Teachers. Male Prospective Teachers have higher mean scores of Mindfulness and its dimensions Observe, Describe, Act with Awareness, Non Judge Items and Non React Items as compared to Female Prospective Teachers.

Hence the above findings give us enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of Mindfulness and its dimensions Observe, Act with Awareness, Non Judge Items and Non React Item among Prospective Teachers based on Gender. The hypothesis can be accepted for the dimension Describe.

Hypothesis 2b: There is no significant difference in Mindfulness and its dimensions among Prospective Teachers based on their Type of Institution.

Table 3. ANOVA for Significant Difference in Mindfulness and its dimensions among Prospective Teachers based on their Type of Institution

Factors of Mindfulness		Type of Institution			F-value	P-value
		Aided	Government	Self Financed		
Observe	M	23.88	25.00	25.23	11.880*	.000
	SD	3.137	3.407	4.237	*	1&2 1&3
Describe	M	24.90	24.93	26.14	8.811**	.000
	SD	3.801	4.894	5.078		1&3 2&3
Act with Awareness	M	25.68	24.47	26.11	9.813**	.000
	SD	3.654	2.905	4.560		1&2 2&3
NonJudge Items	M	25.17	25.80	26.04	4.826*	.008
	SD	3.015	3.527	4.316		1&3
NonReact Items	M	23.13	22.90	23.70	3.033*	.040
	SD	4.084	4.445	4.505		1&3
Total Mindfulness	M	128.93	129.27	133.31	9.508**	.000
	SD	11.817	12.932	17.812		1&3 2&3

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.001$

The findings in table 3 indicate that for Total Mindfulness [$F(3,517)=9.508$; $p<.001$] and its dimension Observe [$F(3,517)=11.880$; $p<.001$], Describe [$F(3,517)=8.811$; $p<.001$] and Act with Awareness [$F(3,517)=9.813$; $p<.001$], Prospective Teachers studying in Aided, Government and Self Financed shows significant difference at 1% level of significance. For the dimension NonJudge Items [$F(3,517)=4.826$; $p=.008$] and NonReact Items [$F(3,517)=3.033$; $p=.04$] Prospective Teachers studying in Aided, Government and Self Financed institutions show significant difference at 5% level of significance as the p value lies between the values of 0.001 to .05.

Further Tukey HSD results indicate that Prospective Teachers studying in Aided and Self Financed Institutions differ significantly at 1% level with respect to Total Mindfulness and its dimensions Observe, Describe, and at 5% level with respect to Non Judge Items and Non react items. Similarly, Prospective Teachers studying in Aided and Government Institutions differ significantly at 1% level with respect to dimensions Observe and Act with Awareness. Correspondingly, Prospective Teachers studying in Government and Self Financed Institutions differ significantly for Total Mindfulness and its dimensions Describe and Act with Awareness at 1% level of significance. Hence, there is significant evidence to reject the null hypothesis as the findings in Table 3 show that there is a significant difference in Mindfulness and its dimensions Observe, Describe, Act with Awareness, NonJudge Items and NonReact Items.

4. Findings and Discussion

Prospective Teachers were found to have a low level of Mindfulness. With respect to gender, the Prospective Teachers differed significantly in their mean scores of Mindfulness and its dimensions Observe, Act with Awareness, Non Judge Items and Non React Item except for the dimension Describe. Based on the Type of Institution as well Prospective Teachers showed significant differences in their mean scores of Mindfulness and all its dimensions. These results can be different from the results obtained in the study conducted by Abujaradeh et al (2020) where no significant differences were observed among male and female adolescents. Whereas no study could be retrieved from literature review to compare the results based on the Type of Institution.

5. Conclusions

Mindfulness happens when individuals simply pay attention to their day to day experiences of life. Especially for prospective teachers, attention and awareness are necessary characteristics. Mindfulness helps to train the attention to the present moment without burying themselves in their past or brooding over their future. Though the findings of the study indicate that Prospective teachers differ in their mindfulness based on Gender and type of Institution, research has shown that mindfulness can be taught effectively to individuals by trained professionals. Incorporating Mindfulness or any other ancient techniques in the B.Ed. Teacher education curriculum would make the teachers more efficient and at ease within themselves. Students under these teachers will experience a dimension of life which is beyond books and the four walls of the classroom.

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