

## **Millennial Mindfulness Mindfulness among Undergraduate Students: A Cross Country Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

Present study aims to investigate the level of mindfulness among millennial students as they are the ones leading the professional landscape in the coming future. This study was carried out in the education sector of two countries (i.e. Pakistan & USA). Five Fact Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) scale is used to measuring level of mindfulness among millennial business graduates. Chi-square test is used for analyzing and comparing the mindfulness levels among students from two countries. Results of the test shows American students with higher degree of mindfulness compared to Pakistan students. Findings indicate that American students shows higher and lower degree of mindfulness in acting with awareness and non – reactivity to internal experience respectively. Where Pakistani students shows higher degree of mindfulness in Non – Judgemental to inner experience and lower degree of mindfulness to observing and non – reactivity to internal experience. Results of the study affirms that western and eastern countries observe individualist and collectivist cultures respectively. In collectivist culture children's decisions are influenced by their parents' will. Similarly, approval and disapproval from society has a significant impact on individual's choices and decisions making. Such social and parental influencers prevent individuals from becoming mindful and paying close attention to what is happening around them. In contrast to western cultures which are dominated by individualism, prospects are independent in their lives, making choices and taking decisions by themselves. Therefore, observing things with their own sight and without the lens of societal clichés helps the, achieve and maintain high levels of mindfulness.

**Key Words: Mindfulness, Youth, Pakistan and USA**

### **Introduction**

Mindfulness has become a defined concept in knowledge management. The diverse workplace settings including public and private organizations, health care industry and learning organizations contributed to the development of the concept (Coo & Salanova, 2018). Mindfulness is defined as bringing attention to the experiences and events that are occurring in the present moment (Baer, 2013; Creswell, 2017).

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Mindfulness based interventions have raised consensus on the positive effects in a wide range of psychological and physical treatments (Chiesa & Serretti, 2011). Research discusses the reduction of negative physical and psychological outcomes of incumbents in a workplace setting rather than highlighting the positive effects of mindfulness based interventions that brings positive healthy outcomes, stable cognitive state, interpersonal relations quality and optimal performance levels (Brown, Ryan, & Crewell, 2007; Glomb, Duff, Bonno, & Yang, 2012). However, there is a potential gap in existing scientific literature on the possible positive outcomes of mindfulness rather than its mere use in reduction on somatic illnesses.

Existing research on the concept of mindfulness illustrates the positive association of mindfulness with work engagement. An engaging fulfilling work related mindful state which is categorized by dedication, energy and absorption (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2011). Research also provides support in highlighting authentic employee functioning and its positive affect on work performance (Leovy, Anseel, Dimitnova, & Sels, 2013). These studies have reported the linkage between mindfulness and high performances, echoing happy and productive behaviour.

In retrospection of existing body of knowledge with strong potential of mindfulness, and its positive outcomes only three controlled trials explored the concept (Hülshager, Alberts, Feinholdt, & Lang, 2013); (Shonin, Dunn, Singh, & Griffiths, 2014); (Coo & Salanova, 2018). All these trials are conducted in a single industry with a single set of subjects. A comparative analysis of mindfulness levels its relationship with overall performance and main constructs of mindfulness in different sets of subjects is largely unexplored. Existing body of knowledge shows a thin literature on overall mindfulness-based research specifically focused in higher education context. Most of the researchers focusing on mindfulness catering to the education sector paid attention towards improvement of cognitive abilities within students and overall academic performance overlooking the main attributes constructing a mindful outcome. Furthermore, a comparative analysis on the levels of mindfulness in local and international students of higher educational institutes is mostly unexplored. The number decreased even more in context to higher education research in context to Pakistan. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the level of mindfulness and the main constructs of mindfulness contributing in scaling mindfulness levels in a comparative analysis of two subsets of local and international students of higher education institutes.

## **Review of Literature**

### **Greek Philosophy, Positive Psychology and Mindfulness**

Concept of mindfulness has its roots deep embedded in Greek philosophy however with respect to social sciences research mindfulness is relatively a new notion. Current research on mindfulness are reflected upon the Buddhist mind-set and practices. On the other hand, positive psychology is reflected from perspectives of Greek philosophy of individual wellbeing. It is the observation and analysis of positively derived individual behaviours with unit of analysis at individual, organizational and societal level (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzales-Roma, & Bakker, 2002). Positive psychology overlaps common features with mindfulness on the elevating human well-being and efficient functioning. Mindfulness is a moment to moment presence in the present world with an accepting and non – judgmental manner. It has both the qualities of nature and nurture, where mindfulness is an inherited human attribute so it has the capacity to be developed. Resultantly bringing quality in emotional as well as in behavioural approach (Mellor, Ingram, Van Huizen, Arnold, & Harding, 2016).

### **Mindfulness and its Structural Facets**

Structural facets and psychometric properties of mindfulness are explored by Baer et.al, (2006) in relation to existing mindfulness measuring questionnaires. Self-reporting assessment questionnaires for mindfulness are observed and the main constructs that are common to all in the inventory of mindfulness measurement are extracted. One single scale is created out of five mindfulness already developed scales named: The Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) by (Brown & Ryan, 2006), The Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory (FMI) by (Buchheld, Grossman, & Walach, 2001), The Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills (KIMS) by (Baer, Smith, & Allen, 2004), The Cognitive and Affective Mindfulness Scale (CAMS) by (Feldman, Hayes, Kumar, & Greeson, 2004), The Mindfulness Questionnaire (MQ) by (Chadwick, Hember, Mead, & Dagnan, 2005). Self – assessment mindfulness questionnaire is developed fulfilling necessary criteria of factor analysis new scale development. Baer et.al, (2006) questionnaire is widely known as Five Facet mindfulness questionnaire (FFMQ) consisting of 5 dimensions to measure mindfulness within incumbents constituting the dimensions of observing, describing, acting with awareness, non – judging and non – reactivity. FFMQ is a self – assessment mindfulness questionnaire where the respondents measure their respective mindfulness levels by themselves rather than anyone else doing the same for them. Findings on the basis of FFMQ reports good psychometric properties and supports the exploration of these mindfulness dimensions in understanding the nature of mindfulness constructs and its relationship with other variables (Baer R. A., Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer, & Toney, 2006).

### **Mindfulness and Educational Sector**

Studies conducted on different controlled trials on mindfulness both in clinical populations and organizational levels suggests that higher levels of mindfulness centres focused attention development harnessing enhanced working memory and executive performance (Zeidan, Johnson, Diamond, David, & Goolkasian, 2010). Such improvements in an individual's cognitive abilities are prerequisites for focused attention. These individuals adapt the tendency to handle challenges in advance for improved decision making and performance levels (Goleman, 2013). Most of the research focusing on mindfulness catering to the education sector paid attention towards improvement of cognitive abilities within students overlooking the main constructs of mindfulness having the maximum influence on mindfulness levels is largely unexplored.

### **Rationale:**

Pakistan has faced many difficulties since 1947, but our youth is a hope of progressive Pakistan. Our youth is the future leadership which will create a culture of meaningful discussion on social and cultural aspects of Pakistan. Unfortunately, we have a culture, underestimate the youth capabilities due to generation gap. Hoodbhoy (2009) has emphasized that if we need to progress, condemnation of Pakistani students as fundamentally incapable, needs to be changed. If a student in neighboring countries can study and excel, so do surely' Pakistani students can do as well. The Pakistani youth is reflecting a positive attitude as expressed by Cromell (2019) as transformative and optimistic, ready to make change in the planet where they live. Keeping this aspect, this research is going to analyze and compare the mindfulness level of US and Pakistani students. This will help to understand mindfulness of our youth and may be a morale booster. The aim of research is novel, for understanding the mindfulness level of undergraduate students of US and Pakistan, therefore only mindfulness is studied independently. Moreover, this approach of comparing and contrasting the outcomes of mindfulness is adopted by many researchers (Ahmadi.et al,2014)

### **Methodology:**

This study aims to investigate levels of mindfulness among students within cross cultures. For these objective characteristics of population are kept constant. That is, undergraduates' students both from American and Pakistani universities are selected which are enrolled in their final year of degree completion and are registered in a Business and Management discipline degree.

In Pakistan there are a total number of 206 public and private universities and degree awarding institutes recognized by Higher education Council of Pakistan. Among 206 universities, 82 universities are in the private sector whereas 124 are public sector universities all over Pakistan. The Federal Capital city Islamabad has 22 Universities, among which 7 universities are in the private sector and 15 universities are in the public sector. These all universities come under the general category of discipline chartered by the Government of Pakistan.

In case of business education 6 public sector universities namely Bahria University, COMSATS University, National University of Modern Languages, International Islamic University, National University of Sciences & Technology (NUST), and Air University located in Islamabad are accredited from the National business accreditation council. Among private sector only 2 universities in Islamabad are accredited from the National business accreditation council namely Foundation University and National University of Computer & Emerging Sciences (nu-FAST).

Data from the United States is collected from George Washington University, School of Business, Washington DC, where data from Pakistan is collected from Bahria, Air, Islamic, National Defence, IQRA, COMSATS, Quaid - e Azam and Allama Iqbal universities. Keeping characteristics of population constant.

### **Data Analysis**

Based on cross-sectional & non contrived study setting, the data was collected from final year business graduate students from George Washington University, USA students from Dec 2018 to April 2019, and from Pakistani students of same level from June to July 2019. Total 120 questionnaires were distributed (60 each to Pakistani and American Students). After screening and discarding unfilled questionnaires, total 105 questionnaires were selected for final study, making the response rate to 87.5%.

Since study main objective is to understand, evaluate and examine the mindfulness based on Nationality, therefore only two demographic variables are used i.e. Country and Gender.

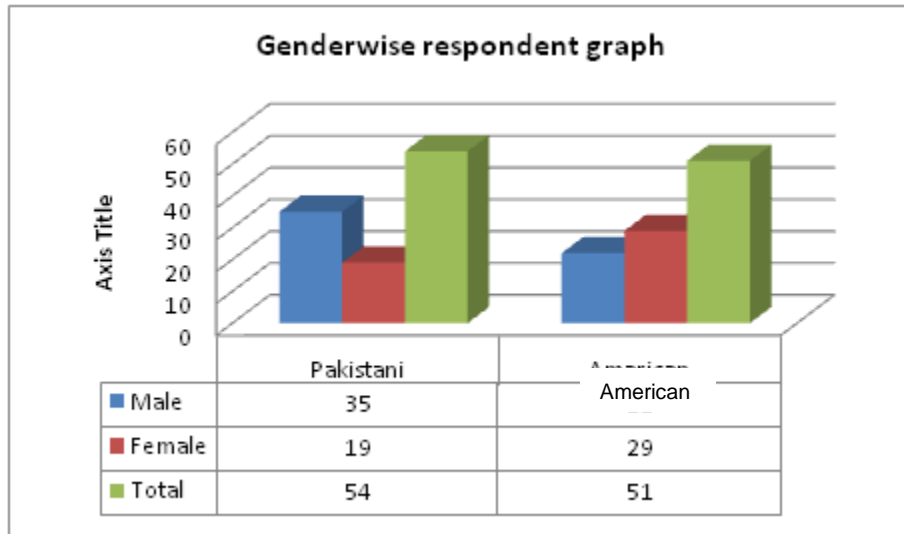
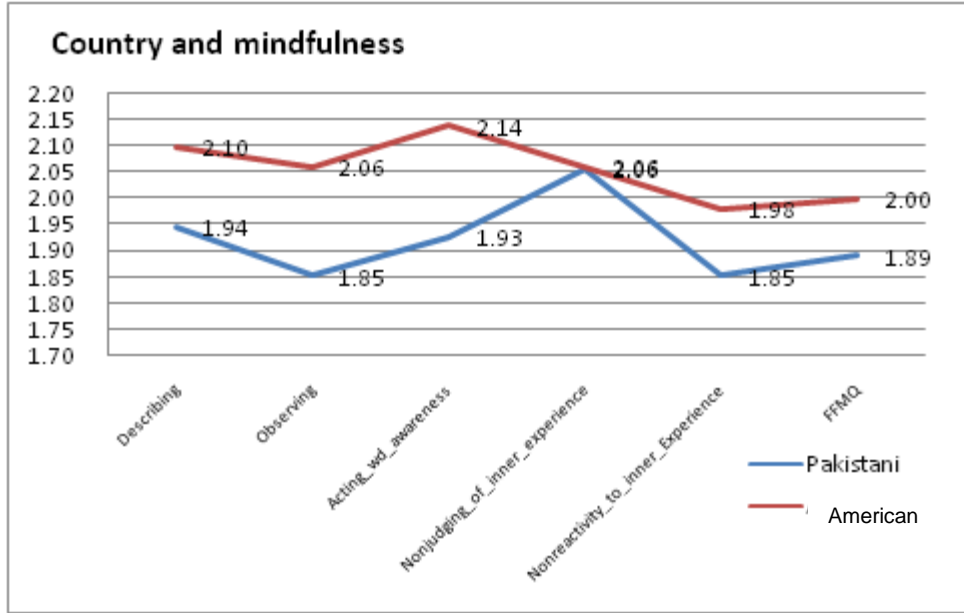


Figure 1: Graph of Gender and Nationality

As presented in Figure 1, out of 54 Pakistani students (65% were males, 35% were females), whereas, out of 51 American students (43% were male and 57% were females).

Figure 2: Graph of Country and Facet of Mindfulness

The sampling technique is based on convenience sampling technique. The 39 items validated mindfulness scale was administered. All information obtained in this study was kept strictly confidential. Data was analyzed through SPSS version 21. Descriptive statistics were calculated to find out the overall percentage and frequency of mindfulness among Pakistani and American students. The Figure 2 highlights the score on various facets of mindfulness of Pakistani and American students.



The American students showed higher scores on all facets of mindfulness apart from one facet. Students of both nations show equal score on *Non Judging of Inner Experience*. Overall, American student having highest score (i.e. 2.14) on *Acting with Awareness* and 2.06 is the highest score of Pakistani students on *Non- Judgmental on Inner Experience* facet of mindfulness scale.

The Chi-square was used to see the mean differences as per gender and Country in showing mindfulness in final year business graduates. The mindfulness was categorized as low, moderate and high based on the standardized scores of scale. The table 1 to 3 presented the chi-square values. The cross tabulation of

Facets of Mindfulness Scale	No of Items	Cronbach's Alpha Reliability
Observing	8	.687
Describing	8	.699
Acting with Awareness	7	.559
Non Judging of inner experience	8	.430
Non Reactivity to Inner experience	8	.493

FFMQ	39	.794
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Table 1: Chi-square test results (Gender \* Country)(n=105)

Variables	Pearson Chi-Square	df	Phi Cramer's V	Sig.	Hypothesis
Gender *Nationality	4.967 <sup>a</sup>		.217	.026	Supported

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 23.31.

Table 2: Chi-square test results (Gender \* Facet of Mindfulness) (n=105)

Variables	Pearson Chi-Square	Df	Phi Cramer's V	Sig.
Gender *Observing	1.121 <sup>a</sup>		.103	.571
Gender *Describing	0.693 <sup>b</sup>		.081	.707
Gender *Acting_with_Awareness	2.194 <sup>c</sup>		.145	.334
Gender * Nonjudging_of_inner_exper	4.532 <sup>d</sup>		.208	.104
Gender * Non_reactivity_to_Inner_experience	10.092 <sup>e</sup>	41		.51

**ender \* FFMQ** **082<sup>f</sup>** **41** **48**

- a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 10.97
- b. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 11.89
- c. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 10.06
- d. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 10.51
- e. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.41
- f. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 9.14

Table 3: Chi-square test results (Country\* Facet of Mindfulness) (n=105)

	<b>Pearson Chi-Square</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Phi Cramer's V</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
<b>Country* Observing</b>	<b>8.576<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>2</b>	<b>.286</b>	<b>.014</b>
Country* Describing	2.137 <sup>b</sup>	2	.149	.314
Country* Acting_with_Awareness	2.622 <sup>c</sup>	2	.158	.270
Country* Nonjudging_of_inner_experience	2.146 <sup>d</sup>	2	.143	.342
Country* Non_reactivity_to_Inner_experience	5.116 <sup>e</sup>	2	.221	.077
Country* FFMQ	0.747 <sup>f</sup>	2	.084	.688



- a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 11.66
- b. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 12.63
- c. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 10.69
- d. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 11.17
- e. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.31
- f. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 9.71

### **Discussion:**

The instant study sought to gauge mindfulness levels within graduating business students in Pakistan and in the USA.

Analysis of results inferred that Pakistani and American students endorsed different levels of overall mindfulness within them. Both Pakistani and American students showed a close contest by giving overall mindfulness values of 1.89 and 2 respectively, still American students' results showed a higher degree of mindfulness. As identified in figure – 2 American students exhibited higher levels of mindfulness compared to Pakistani students not only in the overall calculations rather at individual facet levels as well.

Similarly investigation at facets level revealed various differences. It is identified that American students showed highest levels in acting with awareness facet and lowest levels in non – reactivity to inner experience. Where Pakistani students exhibited highest levels in non- judging in inner experience and lowest levels in observing and non – reactivity to inner experience simultaneously.

This present finding of higher mindfulness levels in American students compared to Pakistani students is consistent with previous studies of (Özyeşil, 2012) and (Raphiphathana, Jose, & Chobthamkit, 2019). The results are supportive of the cultural orientation within the west and in the east. Eastern cultures are dominated by collectivism. In such collectivist culture children's decisions are influenced by their parents' will. Similarly approval and disapproval from society has a significant impact on individual's choices and decisions making. Such social and parental influences prevent individuals from becoming mindful and paying close attention to what is happening around them without even reacting to it and accepting the things as it is. In contrast to western cultures which are dominated by individualism. In such cultures individuals are independent in their lives, making choices and taking decisions themselves therefore observing things with their own sight and without the lens of societal clichés and sustaining high levels of mindfulness is achieved.

Higher level of acting with awareness in American Students is supportive with (Glick & White, 2004), (Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010) and (Raphiphathana, Jose, & Chobthamkit, 2019) findings of American students scoring high on mindfulness and awareness compared to Asian country students. Asian parents mark higher expectations from their children compared to western parents. American students have the liberty to celebrate their freedom where Asian students are more driven towards meeting their parent's expectations. They pay more attention in achieving long – terms goals rather than paying attention to events

in the present moment. Also, (Christopher & Charoensuk, 2009) and (Sugiura, Sato, Ito, & Murakami, 2012) studies reported adaptive nature of self – criticism within Asian cultures. This tendency motivates individuals to alter their behaviour in order to sustain concord relations with others. Therefore Pakistani students are found to be scoring highest in non-judging to inner experience in this study given their thoughts and behaviours are not supportive of a collectivist society and they are adaptive in their moods and becoming non-judgemental to inner feelings.

### **Limitations, Implications and Future Directions:**

The important limitation of this study is that American students have completed the questionnaire by hand on paper, self-administered by the primary author where students from Pakistan have completed the same questionnaire online. This difference in mode of data collection was adopted for researcher's convenience. This difference in measure completion may have caused biased responses from respondents belonging to the two countries.

Furthermore, the instant study's sample size is reasonably fair from both countries but due to regulatory limitations, American student's data is collected from only one university. It is recommended to future researchers to collect data from graduating business students from multiple other universities of the same country. Moreover, it is suggested for future researchers to associate mindfulness with outcome variables. More relevant to this would be to explore the role of mindfulness levels and academic performance in graduating business students from different countries and cultures.

This study has practical implications for researchers, psychologists and academics in identifying facets that are most strongly contributing in achieving mindfulness with individuals and also in identifying facets that are causing hindrance in achieving high scores of mindfulness in individuals. Furthermore this research provides practical implications for practitioners involved in Mindfulness based – stress reduction therapies in tabbing into critical factors contributing in achieving high and low levels of mindfulness from different countries and cultures.

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Taking this notion into consideration the author collaborated with the co-authors to fulfil the objective of measuring the role of mindfulness at individual and at a group level. The author, co-authored with her

Pakistani Colleagues who played their parts in collecting data from undergraduate students from Pakistani universities and further in formulating analysis, inferring results and drawing conclusions.

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