



## Mindfulness and Self-Rediscovery: Strategies for Reclaiming Happiness in a Materially Rich but Emotionally Challenged Society

Awais Ur Rahman<sup>1</sup>, Awais Yaseen<sup>2</sup>, Arfa Akram<sup>3</sup>, Hafsa Khanam<sup>4</sup>, Muhammad Asif<sup>5</sup> & Rubia Batool<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Pakistan. Email: [sultanawais4344@gmail.com](mailto:sultanawais4344@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Psychology Lecturer at Federal Urdu University of Arts, Sciences & Technology, Karachi Campus, Pakistan. Email: [Awaisyaseen512776@gmail.com](mailto:Awaisyaseen512776@gmail.com)

<sup>3</sup>Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan, Pakistan. Email: [arfaakram75@gmail.com](mailto:arfaakram75@gmail.com)

<sup>4</sup>Bahria University Karachi Campus, Pakistan. Email: [hafsakhanam11feb@gmail.com](mailto:hafsakhanam11feb@gmail.com)

<sup>5</sup>PhD Scholar, Federal Urdu University of Arts, Sciences & Technology, Karachi Campus, Pakistan.

Email: [m.asifpsy2@gmail.com](mailto:m.asifpsy2@gmail.com)

<sup>6</sup>Psychology Lecturer at Capital University of Science and Technology, Pakistan.

Email: [rubiabatoolrubia@gmail.com](mailto:rubiabatoolrubia@gmail.com)

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#### Corresponding Author:

Awais Ur Rahman

#### Email:

[sultanawais4344@gmail.com](mailto:sultanawais4344@gmail.com)



### ABSTRACT

Psychologically wealthy but emotionally deprived societies were the focus of our study with mindfulness and self-discovery regarding happiness. Moreover, to the purpose of the use of these practices for emotional well-being, interviews based on a qualitative approach were carried out with 20 participants. The quantitative analysis revealed how mindfulness, that included meditation and breath awareness supported stress, emotion regulation and focused attention in the present. Self-rediscovery which involved orientation to one's fundamental self, changed participants' goal from the external or tangible to internal or lofty, enhancing their overall Levels of life satisfaction. The findings will also underscore the significance of mindfulness and self-search for the upkeep of the emotional health of individuals in today's' conspicuous world of consumption. They bring useful tips for improving the state of happiness and mental health into focus.

## Introduction

Over the last few decades, the global economy has observed remarkable growing and, consequently, global standards of living have raised materially. But, the emerging literatures suggest that this materialism indicates enhanced economic circumstances are not significantly

associated with happiness or subjective well-being. This can be also explained by the fact that beyond some point, the answers to the question “How satisfied are you with your life overall?” do not depend on money (Easterlin, 1974). When people gather things in their lives, there is no end and instead, only leads to a pattern of the insatiability that is created by social comparison and consumerism. This emotional crisis of the self raises the question of searching for other ways to improve one’s quality of life or to find meaning for existence in performing acts of mindfulness or work on the self. Hailed as the act of engaging a process of attention to the present experience without labeling it as good or bad, mindfulness has shown numerous other facets of positive impact on mental health (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Brown, Ryan, & Creswell, 2007). Similarly, self-creation also entails regain of the principal values and true identity necessary for happiness (Ryan & Deci, 2001). But, still, there is a lack of studies on how these two factors can co-exist and promote the process of regaining happiness in individuals in emotionally stressful situation.

However, in today’s society the message is somewhat different: people are ‘materially rich’ but emotionally starved of happiness. Modern people tend to work hard to attain financial success, but money is believed to cause greater stress, depression, and unhappiness (Kahneman & Deaton, 2010). Some of the major causes of this emotional breakdown include; loneliness, stress, and busy schedules that make most individuals work more than they need to (Twenge, 2019). Such problems have get worse with the help of developed social networks that deepen the slimming ideals and create the conditions for comparison between people, thus, destroying their self-esteem and emotional stability (Twenge, 2019). Self-regulation can no longer solve these emotional issues and thus, mindfulness has become a popular intervention strategy. Mindfulness can be traced to early forms of meditation and aims at ‘paying attention on purpose, in the present, and without a selfcritical outlook’ (Kabat-Zinn, 1990 p. 156). The research work explain its effectiveness in the improvement of emotional quality of life, stress level reduction and emotional self-regulation (Keng, Smoski & Robins, 2011). People should focus on being mindful so that they gently break psychological tendencies which consumer culture tends to foster (Brown et al., 2007). At the same time, the process of personal transformation that has aroused interest as a kind of search for one’s own identity in the context of cultural expectations. This process facilitates the need for people to discover what matters to them and what causes they are willing to devote time and effort to, or as called the self-determination theory puts it, to integrate each personal’s behaviour by synthesizing values (Ryan & Deci, 2001). When most consumer culture tends to focus on people’s outward appearance, self-rediscovery fills in the gaps and helps people seek happiness from the inside.

## **Objectives**

- 1) Explore how mindfulness practices contribute to emotional well-being and resilience in individuals living in materially affluent societies.
- 2) Analyze the process of self-rediscovery and its impact on personal happiness and life satisfaction.
- 3) Identify strategies that integrate mindfulness and self-rediscovery as a holistic approach to reclaiming happiness.
- 4) Provide actionable recommendations for individuals seeking to enhance their well-being through mindfulness and self-reflection practices.

## **Research Questions**

- 1) How does the practice of mindfulness influence emotional well-being in individuals facing the challenges of a materially rich society?
- 2) What role does self-rediscovery play in the pursuit of happiness and fulfillment?
- 3) In what ways can mindfulness and self-rediscovery be integrated to create effective strategies for enhancing personal happiness?
- 4) How can individuals implement these strategies in their daily lives to foster a deeper sense of well-being and satisfaction?

## **Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

### **Understanding Mindfulness and its Psychological Benefits**

Mindfulness, defined as the practice of nonjudgmental awareness in the present moment, has gained widespread popularity in Western psychology due to its impact on emotional well-being (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Rooted in Buddhist traditions, mindfulness was introduced to modern clinical practice through programs like Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), which have demonstrated efficacy in reducing stress, anxiety, and depression (Grossman et al., 2004; Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2002). Empirical studies have shown that mindfulness training can improve emotional regulation and decrease symptoms of mental health disorders. For example, Baer et al. (2006) found that mindfulness-based interventions reduced anxiety and depressive symptoms by promoting cognitive flexibility and reducing rumination. Chambers, Gullone, and Allen (2009) further demonstrated that mindfulness enhances self-regulation by decreasing emotional reactivity, allowing individuals to respond to stress more adaptively. Mindfulness has also been linked with higher rating of the quality of life and wellbeing. According to Carmody and Baer (2008), a longitudinal study they carried out, indicated that MBSR programs helped participants attain higher quality of life, and decreased measures of psychological distress. In the same way, Keng, Smoski, and Robins (2011) provided a compare and contrast study on mindfulness and it also revealed that practice of Mindfulness has a positive correlation with mental health at individual level and it works for self-compassion, acceptance and emotional strength.

### **Self-Rediscovery and Intrinsic Well-being**

Finding one's self, or a way to rebuild a connection with ones' self is crucial for happiness and living in accordance with ones' principles. As it is found in a culture that is very competitive about the material well-being of an individual, self- rediscovery encourages people to work towards achieving intrapersonal goals. Ryan and Deci (2000) maintain that well-being increases where goals are autonomous or self-concordent as well as where they meet the basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness reduced psychological distress. Similarly, Keng, Smoski, and Robins (2011) conducted a comprehensive review of mindfulness research, finding

consistent evidence that mindfulness practices support mental health by fostering self-compassion, acceptance, and emotional resilience.

### **Self-Rediscovery and Intrinsic Well-being**

Self-rediscovery, or reconnecting with one's core values and identity, is essential for attaining authentic happiness. In a society that often emphasizes material success, self-rediscovery allows individuals to pursue intrinsic goals, which are more aligned with personal fulfillment. Ryan and Deci's (2000) Self-Determination Theory (SDT) highlights that well-being is enhanced when individuals pursue self-concordant goals that satisfy basic psychological needs, autonomy, competence, and relatedness. This opinion was confirmed by Sheldon and Lyubomirsky (2006) who established deeper life satisfaction and decreased level of anxiety in people who concentrated on intrinsic goals, which inform what people try to achieve in life, like self-acceptance or personal development. This is in accordance with Frankl's (1985) postulations regarding the logotherapeutic proposition that people driven by values and meaning. In opposition to will therapy, Logotherapy incorporates the belief that material success can only partially fulfill human's psychological need for meaning. According to Wong (2010), meaning centered approaches assist people to rise above dependency on external accomplishments and live in accordance with valued principles and goals, to achieve happiness that is stable and not easily threatened by externality.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Mindfulness theory and self-determination theory are the main theoretical framework for this study and are augmented by Logotherapy. Both offer different views as to how mindfulness and self-paths to happiness in the spirited sphere of interference.

#### **Mindfulness Theory**

Mindfulness theory is the theoretical model developed according to the principles of Buddhist practice and its main concept is present-focused awareness with no negative attitude towards the experienced phenomena. The concept of MBSR was introduced to the clinical practice by Kabat-Zinn (1990), and showed its efficiency in stress. In their work Baer et al. ,2008 stated that mindfulness enables people to minimize cognitive reactivity and assume a healthy view of life events. Besides, the same authors comparing study by Shapiro, Carlson, Astin, and Freedman (2006) also indicates that mindfulness also increase positive affect that contributes to positive psychological buffering.

#### **Self-Determination Theory (SDT)**

SDT which was developed by Ryan and Deci (2000) avails that people's intrinsic and optimal functioning together with well-being comes out of the satisfaction of the fundamental psychological requirements. SDT's tenets stipulate that people's wellbeing is achieved when they can do what they want, ability is worn and people are connected to others. Ryan and Deci (2007) as well as Niemiec, Ryan and Deci (2009) argued that people with self-concordant goals experience higher level of happiness . SDT is therefore closely related to the theme of self-renewal since it insists on the on the primary focus of the individual engaging in behaviors that reflects his/her values.

## **Logotherapy and the Search for Meaning**

Frankl (1985) established Logotherapy that insists on the need to search for meaning in order to gain mental health. Frankl pointed out that the psyches of sheer logotherapists endorse that those in search of meanings are equipped to cope with pressures in the world than those who do not. Wong further enhances this view by establishing the position that people who give a priority of purpose make better than those that provide for material possessions (Wong 2010). This theoretical perspective is useful to explain the function of self-rediscovery in the process of happiness as the need satisfaction theory focuses on meaning as a function of emotion fulfilment.

## **Materialism, Consumer Culture, and Happiness**

In the cultures commonly referred to as the consumer cultures, possession of material possessions is associated with high level of happiness but studies have found out that materialism is detrimental to the health of the consumer's emotional state. In the study made by Kasser and Ryan (19996), the subjects whose materialistic approach to goals was high were rated themselves as less happy and had low self-esteem. Similarly, Richins and Dawson (1992) developed the Material Values Scale, showing that high materialism is associated with decreased life satisfaction. Diener, Oishi, and Lucas (2003) observed that while income can increase well-being up to a certain point, it does not necessarily lead to lasting happiness. This "Easterlin Paradox," named after Richard Easterlin's (1974) study, highlights that economic growth does not always correlate with increased life satisfaction. Kahneman and Deaton (2010) expanded on this by showing that while higher income increases life evaluation, it has limited effects on day-to-day emotional experiences, suggesting that emotional fulfillment is largely independent of financial status.

## **Mindfulness and the Reduction of Materialistic Pursuits**

Mindfulness has been shown to reduce materialistic tendencies by fostering acceptance and present-moment awareness. Brown, Kasser, Ryan, and colleagues (2009) found that mindfulness practices help individuals focus on intrinsic goals, reducing the desire for material possessions. Research by Fisher, Luchak, and Cui (2022) demonstrated that individuals with high mindfulness tend to engage in less impulsive spending and report greater financial well-being, suggesting that mindfulness can be an antidote to the pressures of consumer culture. Mindfulness can also foster gratitude, a psychological trait associated with higher well-being and lower materialistic tendencies. Emmons and McCullough (2003) found that gratitude interventions led to increased life satisfaction and decreased feelings of envy. Mindfulness practice is used alongside different gratitude practices to assist in helping people focus not only on non-material things in life but also to improve on their emotional coping strategies.

## **Integration of Mindfulness and Self-Rediscovery in Promoting Happiness**

Mindfulness when paired with self-searching creates the cornerstone of happiness. Mindfulness helps people distance themselves from external stimuli, which are accepted and attended to (Shapiro et al., 2006). Thus, self-rediscovery enables the given people concentrate on intrinsic objectives, meaning that they perform tasks that meet their personal norms instead of external norms. In combination, these practices contribute to the environmentally pro-happy sort of happiness not tied to the outcomes typical of upward concavity, as the Brown & Ryan (2003) have

shown. Using the available literature, Garland et al. (2015) proved that mindfulness and self-identity help decrease stress and enhance resourcefulness and well-being. This has been proven to create a type of happiness that is sustainable, sustainable and resistant to pressure. Therefore, mindfulness and processes of self-rediscovery could be named as the effective ways to regain happiness in the emotionally destructive societies.

## **Methods**

Mindfulness and self-discovery: a qualitative study of how mindfulness contributes to emotional flourishing in materially rich, but emotionally deprived, societies this study used a qualitative approach to uncover the way in which mindfulness and self-rediscovery help facilitate emotional well-being in societies that may be wealthy but emotionally starved. Twenty participants were recruited purposively for this study, and the participants were selected based on age, gender or socioeconomic status since it was expected that the participants' views would vary. Semi-structured interviews were used since they offer the subject an opportunity to give detailed descriptions on mindfulness practice, self-searching activities and their effects on the given degree of happiness. The collected data were subjected to thematic analysis so as to get a cyclic, repetitive analysis of the samples in regards to the designed themes in satisfied to provide a solid stock of profound understanding into the phenomena under study. This method offered meaningful data to complement the subjective emotions of individuals in responding to emotional demands in consumer culture.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Theme 1: Mindfulness Training**

These activities included the practices in meditation and focused breathing, most of which (90%) of the participants reported that the practices helped in strongly reducing stress, improving on the management of their emotions and increasing concentration. People discussed that other types of mindfulness activities provided a way to self-soothe, particularly as the reception of negative feelings.

**Table 1:**

<b>Sub-themes Identified</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Stress and Anxiety Reduction	18	90%
Improved Emotional Regulation	17	85%
Enhanced Attention and Focus	16	80%

I one individual stated, "Mindfulness can reduce the escalation of emotions through creation of time to reflect". That is one area that I have learnt to react instead of responding to them and it has made a lot of difference on how I tackle issues.

## **Theme 2**

Personal development was found to be a change process for 85% of participants who wrote about the self and learned to focus on their internal wants and needs rather than societal standards and norms. What participants have observed is that this journey has helped them become more addicted to meaning and positive feelings.

**Table 2:**

<b>Sub-themes Identified</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Identification of Core Values	17	85%
Shift Toward Intrinsic Goals	15	75%
Heightened Sense of Life Satisfaction	18	90%

A sexual violence participant pointed out, “Now without this process I was adrift in terms of how I was supposed to behave in order to conform to society.” Realizing my values has restored my confidence to be able to genuinely do what I should do.

## **Theme 3**

Sustainable items based identified by 70 participants, mindfulness of oneself and changes in daily habits that led to enhanced emotional wellness. It also helped in building the kind of character that is strong and capable of the building long term solutions to self-happiness.

**Table 3:**

<b>Sub-themes Identified</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Strengthened Emotional Resilience	14	70%
Sustainable Happiness Practices	16	80%
Decreased Reliance on External Validation	13	65%

As one of the participants said: ‘This is the best thing that has ever happened in my life; merging mindfulness and Identity’. It is like having my mind in the right place and being prepared for anything life will throw at me.”

## **Discussion**

The insights express the life-enhancing role of third-gear variables of mindfulness as well as self-actualization in enhancing an individual’s emotional health. All participants asserted that practicing mindfulness activities helped to decrease stress instantly and made them have better moods. In addition to these material gains, self-rediscovery became probed as a far more significant form of personal search predicated on an ongoing effort to find meaning in life that is guided by authentic values.

However, the implementation of these two strategies posed a complementary relationship that made the patients to render the settlement a long-lasting protective and happy environment. This proved most successful in helping participants move away from this very societal oppression and

gain more meaning to life. The themes suggest that doing well emotionally is not simply doing without stress but instead is discovering, claiming, and living the good life, guided by self-acceptance principles. The participants' lessons are also an example of hope and transformation with regard to modern challenges affecting emotions. Therefore the emphasis on the aspect of mind as well as finding a self-identity makes one become in tune with one's self hence making one find happiness.

## **Conclusion and Preventions**

### **Conclusion**

The present study investigated the effect of mindfulness and self-salience on emotional health with 20 participants using a qualitative design. The study identified that the practices of mindfulness help improve the emotional management and reduce stress and increase attention, self-actualization enabled participants to reorient themselves in life according to their personal values and secondary goals. Altogether, such practice was quite harmonized and produced a reinforcing desirable state of being, including resilience, sustainable happiness, or meaning and purpose in life. Through the incorporation of these two approaches in everyday practice, the participants were able to realize a fundamental change in emotional regulation and well-being thus pointing to possibility of managing contemporary emotional issues . This work successfully reveals the need for self-salutary activity and follows a plan for achieving self-fulfillment and work-life harmony, which will be of great interest to people actively engaged in personal development.

### **Preventions**

**Practice Mindfulness:** Meditate in the morning and evening, practice breathing exercise before going to bed, and perform body scan before walking to work.

**Encourage Self-Rediscovery:** Create a list of actions such as diary and self-introspection in order to revive visions and missions.

**Create Supportive Environments:** Design situations in everyday practice that can teach people how to develop their emotional competencies and build up resilience.

**Prioritize Intrinsic Goals:** They should strive to embrace core relatively abstract values such as personal development and appreciation in a rather than quest material and external veneer.

**Prevent Emotional Burnout:** Create some personal strength and employ an approach that is focused on the inner wellbeing not to be drained and unhappy.

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