Living in the Moment: The Effect of Mindfulness on Aggression and Well-Being

M. Faulhaber, K. McKnight, M. Frederick, A. Amundson
Iowa State University - Psychology Department

Introduction

- Mindfulness refers to the ability of a person to be aware of one’s self and interact with others in a conscious, non-judgmental way
- Previous research has shown that those displaying high levels of mindfulness in their day to day lives experience a wide array of positive effects
- Mindfulness may be linked to lower levels of hostility and aggressive behavior (Brown & Ryan, 2003) as well as decreased emotional exhaustion and higher workplace satisfaction (Hülsheger et al., 2012)
- We investigated the relationships between mindfulness, aggression and well-being, such as exercise and musicality in order to determine if mindfulness was associated with decreased aggression or if a lack there of was associated with increased aggression in the day to day life of college students.

Methods

Participants: The sample consisted of 307 college students from a large Midwestern University (mean age = 19.66, SD = 3.51)

Procedure: A cross-sectional design was employed

Participants completed the
- Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale (Brown & Ryan, 2003)
- Buss Perry Aggression Questionnaire (Buss & Perry, 1992)
- Brief Self-Control Scale (Tangney et al, 2004)
- Rumination-Reflection Questionnaire (Trapnell & Campbell, 1999)

Participants also took a Demographic and Activity Questionnaire

Results

Table 1
Correlation Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mindfulness</th>
<th>Verbal Aggression</th>
<th>Minutes Spent Meditating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hostility</td>
<td>-.41***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindness and compassion</td>
<td>-.25***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minutes exercising</td>
<td>.30***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minutes playing an instrument</td>
<td>.31***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** p < .001

We found that mindfulness is negatively correlated with hostility (r = -.41, p < .001). Also, verbal aggression is negatively correlated with kindness and compassion (r = -.25, p < .001).

On the other hand, minutes of meditation per day are positively correlated with time spent exercising (r = .39, p < .001) and playing an instrument (r = .34, p < .001).

Discussion

- Our results are consistent with other studies showing that mindfulness and meditation are an indicator to decrease hostility (Heppner et al, 2008)
- The negative correlation is confirmed, and we suspect that since mindfulness alters an individual’s cognitive processes than it might alters emotional reactions
- The individuals’ state of mind during meditation should be explored further to provide generalizability to our results

Conclusion

- We can conclude that minutes of meditation per day are significantly correlated with the time spent exercising and playing an instrument
- It can be concluded that mindfulness can be an aid in leading a healthy and musical life which additionally might assist in reducing hostility and aggressive tendencies

Future Work

- Findings suggest that mindfulness may have other positive effects on well-being that should be further investigated
- Furthermore, the effects of mindfulness and meditation in a longitudinal study over the life course

References


For questions or comments, please contact Manuela Faulhaber (manufa@iastate.edu)