

Impact of Mindfulness on the Enhancement of Student Engagement and Well-Being

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Over the last few decades, the idea of mindfulness and the implementation of mindfulness practices have begun to take firm roots across many fields, including psychology, healthcare, neuroscience, business, the military, and education (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). Mindfulness research in the West primarily began in the 1970s, but it was not until the early to mid-2000s that empirical research on mindfulness began to take off. However, mindfulness is not a new term or practice. For over 2,500 years, mindfulness has been a crucial part of Buddhist meditation practices (Compton & Hoffman, 2023). Yet, what exactly is mindfulness? Many sources tend to define mindfulness as "the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment (Haberlin & Bradshaw, 2025; Meiklejohn et al., 2021)." Mindfulness can be further understood broken into the following three sections: "(a) brief, periodic states of awareness, (b) more enduring, trait-like characteristics of awareness, or (c) a set of practices aimed at promoting the development of episodic states of mindfulness for a mindful and compassionate way of life (Wu & Zaho, 2023)."

A growing research interest, as of late, has been the connections between mindfulness and educational institutions. More specifically, the potential benefits of introducing and implementing mindfulness practices into educational settings. Observing the increasing number of studies, it is evident that mindfulness implementations in educational institutions are spreading. In 2002, there were only two peer-reviewed publications in this particular field. By 2017, this had grown to 101, with a total of 447 publications, with nearly half being published between the short span of 2014 and 2017. Furthermore, 66% of these studies included actual implementations of mindfulness practices (Ergas, 2019). Much of this research provides

significant evidence to show that the integration of mindfulness interventions and practices provides a strong foundation for fostering higher levels of well-being among students. Using mindfulness habits to increase general well-being can also effectively result in bolstered student engagement and success, thus creating a positive learning environment.

Mindfulness Within Education

Impact of Current Educational Institutions

The majority of an individual's first two decades on this earth are spent in an educational setting. From daycare to preschool, primary, secondary, and post-secondary schooling, children, teenagers, and young adults receive most of their cues about how the world works from educational settings. The future of society is fostered and cultivated within educational environments. Educational institutions can offer wonderful opportunities for learning and growth; however, they can also contribute significantly to decreased well-being by playing host to negative internal states such as anxiety, isolation, and depression. These emotions may further lead to violent delinquent behaviors such as bullying (Leland, 2015). A study conducted using 54,000 undergraduate students shows that approximately 77% of college students experience moderate to severe psychological distress (Haberlin & Bradshaw, 2025). Additionally, other studies report that 6 out of 10 college students experience stress that significantly hinders their ability to complete schoolwork (Haberlin & Bradshaw, 2025). Struggling with severe levels of stress and anxiety can become a significant hindrance to students; therefore, implementing methods to reduce this stress is crucial, and mindfulness practices could be the answer.

Benefits of Mindfulness

How Mindfulness Can Help

In addition to the definitions provided above, mindfulness can be further described as “the practice of cultivating attention to foster greater self-awareness and self-knowledge about thoughts, feelings, and sensations and how they can affect one’s actions (Browning, 2020).”

Learning about and tuning into one’s emotions is a crucial aspect of healthy social and emotional development. Understanding one’s emotions can additionally allow individuals a greater ability to know how to express themselves in various settings and with other individuals, including peers, families, and communities (Browning, 2020). Mindfulness interventions can be introduced in several ways. They can be implemented formally or informally, and methods can be further broken down into three basic approaches: indirect, direct, or a combination of both (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). Formal implementation of mindfulness encapsulates the process of intentionally observing and taking note of one’s thoughts, feelings, body sensations, and sensory experiences and honoring each of these feelings with acceptance. Informal implementation consists of weaving acts of mindfulness practices into the activities included in everyday life (Mieklejohn et al., 2012).

Implementing mindfulness habits and interventions in educational settings has been proven to be a significantly positive endeavor. Mindfulness education has been shown to help minimize the occurrence of bullying, assist students with learning disabilities, and prepare students who are training in careers with high emotions and stress (Leland, 2015). Furthermore, regular implementation of mindfulness habits has been shown to assist in enhancing students' focus, engagement, and curiosity, encouraging constructive reactions to anxiety, and lowering

self-harming tendencies. Additionally, mindfulness can aid in building awareness, resilience, and emotional control (Wu & Zhao, 2023).

Engagement

As one of the five aspects of PERMA, engagement is a crucial aspect in all areas of life. In education, one's level of engagement can be a crucial deciding factor in success and well-being. An absence of engagement within education can bring about a rise in levels of exhaustion, disruptive behaviors, lack of motivation, and increased levels of boredom, anxiety, and stress within the classroom (Wu & Zhao, 2023). Many of these emotions and behaviors lead to burnout, which is widely observed as an issue that hinders learners from reaching their educational objectives. Burnout has been proven to cause a multitude of issues, including chronic anxiety, emotional and physical fatigue, short temper, headaches, and cognitive deficiencies such as memory and meditation problems (Wu & Zhao, 2023).

Based on current research, mindfulness has proven to be an excellent psychological resource in increasing levels of engagement and reducing and preventing burnout and boredom (Wu & Zhao, 2023). Students who participate in mindfulness practices have shown significant improvement in reduced levels of anxiety and stress and increased levels of focus, awareness, resilience, and emotional control. Furthermore, mindfulness habits have been linked to increased memory capacity and higher test scores, effectively enhancing students' coping mechanisms and academic achievement (Wu & Zhao, 2023). Students' engagement is a critically important aspect, and it serves as a significant determinant in the overall academic achievement and success of students. It therefore stands to reason that implementing mindfulness habits in the classroom is a crucial aspect in maintaining high levels of student success. Furthermore, maintaining high levels

of success can help students develop increased levels of positive emotions, meaning, and accomplishment, ultimately building an increased sense of well-being.

Conclusion

Long-Term Effects of Mindfulness Practices

Mindfulness practices assist individuals in "cultivating attention to foster greater self-awareness and self-knowledge about thoughts, feelings, and sensations, and how they can affect one's actions (Browning, 2020)." This practice of actively being aware of one's emotions can significantly aid in promoting success throughout adulthood (Browning, 2020). Moreover, as discussed above, mindfulness practices can have a crucial positive impact on student engagement. An increase in engagement within the classroom can further aid in promoting a positive self-image, job opportunities, increased satisfaction with one's life, and an increase in overall well-being (Wu & Zhao, 2023). Regarding neuroplasticity, practicing mindfulness can potentially have a lasting effect on the active rewiring of an individual's brain, providing long-term benefits. According to Peters and Saucer (2025), "research shows that meditation increases gray matter concentration in areas of the brain involved in learning processes, memory processes, and emotion regulation. It reduces stress and anxiety and enhances executive function."

Mindfulness Education and Society

Healthy, thriving societies depend on healthy, thriving individuals. Introducing and implementing mindfulness practices into educational environments, from daycare to post-secondary systems, is a crucial step in ensuring the development of these individuals. As stated previously, educational institutions can provide excellent opportunities for learning and

growth to occur (Leland, 2015). Practicing mindfulness can increase students' engagement in these learning and growth opportunities by encouraging focused attention and improved involvement, gratitude, and self-efficacy (Wu & Zhao, 2023). "The mindful learner, characterized by heightened awareness, consciousness, and acceptance of the challenges of their tasks, can exhibit increased energy, dedication, and engagement in their academic pursuits (Wu & Zhao, 2023)." Ultimately, research shows that when educators focus on students' mindfulness in their daily lives, it empowers students to evaluate what they need to enhance their learning potential. This approach can lead to greater engagement and achievement, improved educational performance, and reduced levels of burnout. (Wu & Zhao, 2023).

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