Does Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) Actually Measure Mindfulness?

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Aims

In this study, we investigated whether the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ; Baer et al., 2006) represents a unique underlying construct or a combination of constructs related to mindfulness: emotion expression, emotion regulation, attention regulation, and body awareness.

Background

Hundreds of research papers on mindfulness and its outcomes are published every year. However, the validity of the instruments commonly used to measure mindfulness is repeatedly questioned. Some scholars suggest that those instruments measure mindfulness-related constructs, rather than mindfulness itself, and mindfulness measurement needs to be reconsidered (Grossman & Van Dam, 2011).

Sample & Procedure

Sample: Virginia Commonwealth University undergraduate students (N = 423), age 18-51 (M = 21.29, SD = 10.53); 31.44% female, 55.56% male, 13% did not report gender; 44.21% White or Caucasian, 24.11% Black or African American.

Data analysis: Psychometric network analysis with graphical Least Absolute Shrinkage and Selection Operator (glasso) for model selection and Extended Bayesian Information Criterion (EBIC) for penalty terms tuning; community structure analysis with Exploratory Graph Analysis (EGA; Golino et al., 2020) to evaluate whether mindfulness facets (FFMQ subscales) cluster together or scatter across groups of other variables.

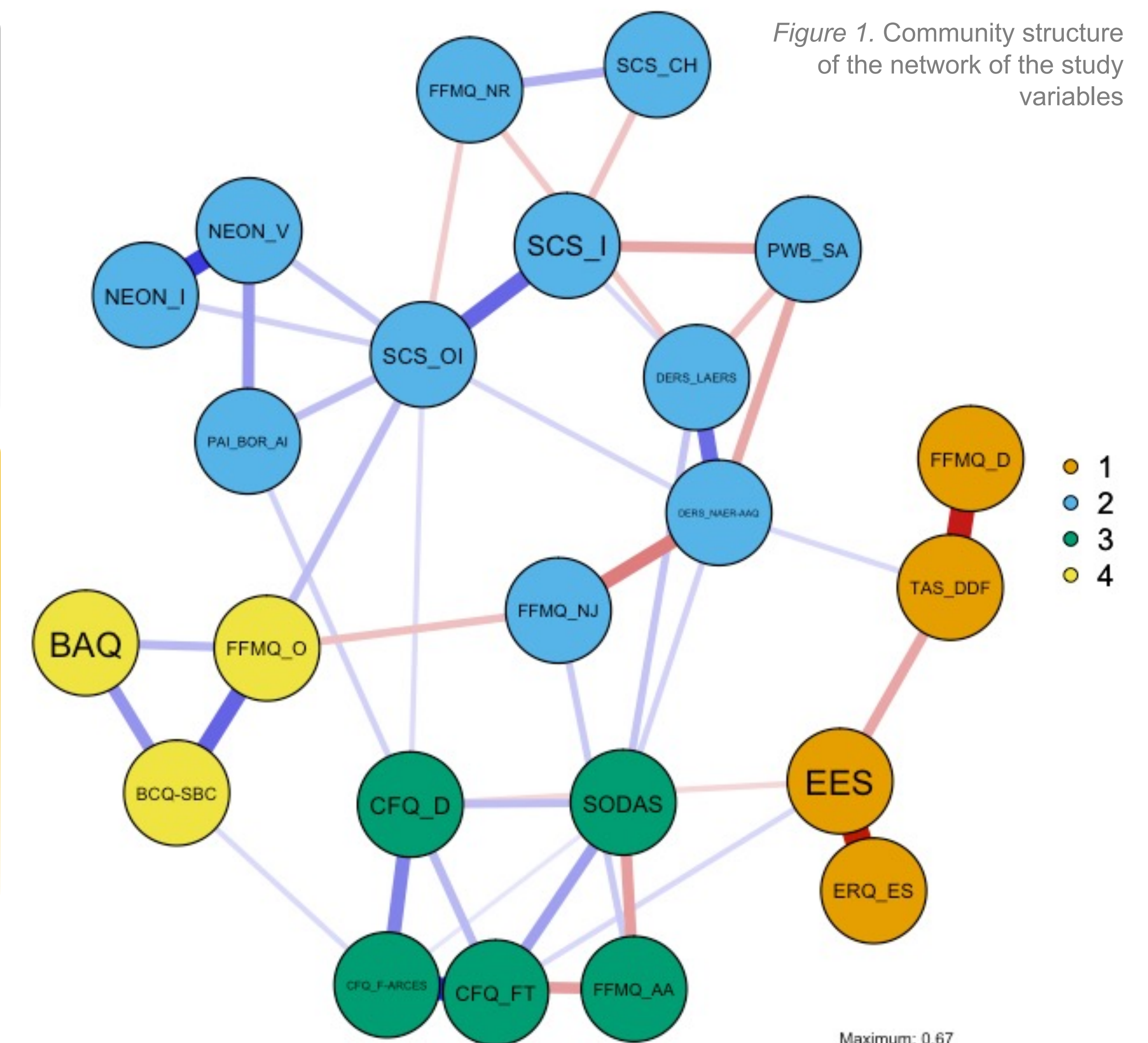## Results & Conclusions

Results:

FFMQ subscales poorly connected to one another. Instead of forming their own groups, they landed in different groups of variables (see Figure 1) that corresponded to mindfulness-related features: (1) emotion expression, (2) emotion regulation and self-acceptance, (3) attention regulation, and (4) body awareness

Conclusion: FFMQ subscales were more closely connected with other constructs than among themselves, meaning that this instrument measures mindfulness-related constructs rather than a unique construct. Those observations further reinforce the critique of self-report measures of mindfulness and their utility for the explanation of the positive effects of mindfulness practice on mental and physical health and overall well-being.

Figure 1. Community structure of the network of the study variables

AAQ = Acceptance and Action Questionnaire; ARCES = Attention-Related Cognitive Errors Scale; BAQ = Body Awareness Questionnaire; BCQ = Body Consciousness Questionnaire; CFQ-D = Cognitive Failures Questionnaire–Distractibility; CFQ-F = Cognitive Failures Questionnaire–Forgetfulness; CFQ-FT = Cognitive Failures Questionnaire–False Triggering; DERS-LAERS = Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale–Limited Access to Emotion Regulation Strategies; DERS-NAER = Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale–Nonacceptance of Emotional Responses; EES = Emotional Expressivity Scale; ERQ-ES = Emotion Regulation Questionnaire–Expressive Suppression; FFMQ-AA = Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire–Acting with Awareness; FFMQ-D = Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire–Describing; FFMQ-NJ = Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire–Non-judging; FFMQ-NR = Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire–Non-reacting; FFMQ-O = Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire–Observing; NEON-I = NEO–Neuroticism–Impulsiveness; NEPN-V = NEO–Neuroticism–Vulnerability; PAI-BOR-AI = Personality Assessment Inventory–Borderline–Affective Instability

PWB-SA = Personal Well-being–Self-acceptance; SBC = Scale of Body Connection; SCS-CH = Self-compassion Scale–Common Humanity; SCS-I = Self-compassion Scale–Isolation; SCS-M = Self-compassion Scale–Mindfulness; SCS-OI = Self-compassion Scale–Over-identification; SODAS = Scale of Dissociative Activities; TAS-DDF = Toronto Alexithymia Scale–Difficulty Describing Feelings.

References

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Golino, H. et al. (2020). Investigating the performance of exploratory graph analysis and traditional techniques to identify the number of latent factors: A simulation and tutorial. Psychological Methods, 25(3), 292–320.
Grossman, P., & Van Dam, N. T. (2011). Mindfulness, by any other name… Trials and tribulations of sati in western psychology and science. Contemporary Buddhism, 12(1), 219-239.
References to scales used in network analysis can be found in an online supplement at https://osf.io/vadh5/