C1556744

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Assignment Cover Sheet

CARDIFF UNIVERSITY

PRIFYSGOL CAERDYⱰ

Student Number:	C1556744		
Module Code:	CPT898	Date:	11/11/15
Essay Title:	Assessment 1 Pro-Forma		
Required Word Count:	1000	Actual Word Count:	924

APA referencing style was used in agreement with module leader.

Feedback

1 Research Question (100 words) -59 words

- What are the effects of a short term mindfulness-based stress reduction intervention on the self-reported well-being of Cardiff University undergraduate students?

This question will explore the effectiveness of short term mindfulness[1] meditation training such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)[2] to reduce psychological disorders in a target population of students where the prevalence of depression, anxiety and stress is high (Song & Lindquist, 2015, p. 86).

2 Research Field (150 words) -142 words

The study of MBSR interventions on student samples is located in the Behavioural Medicine tradition of Psychology; whose concern according with Matarazzo (1980) is understanding "health, illness and related dysfunction" (p. 807) such as stress-related disorders (Baer 2009) which are common in contemporary student populations (Gallagher et al., 2014; Nightline Association, 2014).

The Behavioural Medicine programs focus on modifying "maladaptative health behaviours" (Kabat-Zinn & Chapman-Waldrop, 1988, p. 333-334) using techniques like MBSR to gain a reduction in psychological disorders like anxiety and depression as symptoms of stress. Research on MBSR-interventions is well established starting four decades ago with John Kabat-Zinn (Cullen, 2011). Research findings show that MBSR-interventions have a positive effect in reducing depression (Jain et al., 2007; Kabat-Zinn, 1990), anxiety (Baer, 2003), and stress in a variety of populations including students (Praissman, 2008).

The research question proposed is central to the current debates within the Behavioural Medicine tradition because the study of the effects of MBSR in educational settings has raised dialogues between the fields of Clinical Psychology and Health Psychology (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p. 144).

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[1] Mindfulness is a meditation practice defined by Kabat-Zinn (2003) as "the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment" (p. 145).

[2] Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) encompasses a structured psychoeducation program of 8-week class with an all-day retreat in which people practise formal Mindfulness and yoga once a week for a 2.5-h session (Differences – MBCT and MBSR, 2014).

3   Epistemological perspective 1 (150 words) -138 words

Positivism assumes that reality exists independently of the researcher's perspective, which means that the researcher "may suspend a sense of belonging" (May, 2011, p. 9) while she/ he studies reality. These features allow researchers to approach objectivity and without value biases to it (Bryman, 2012, p. 28).

Reality or the object of inquiry, must be observable and measurable in order to be studied (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Hernández, Fernández, & Baptista, 2010) and explained by means of cause and effect relationships between the variables that are under study (May, 2011, p.10) using the scientific method.

The logic of scientific research encompasses creating an experimental study using a random allocation of participants to experimental and control groups which will guarantee that the outcome or dependent variable came from the manipulation of the independent variable. Moreover, depending on the size of the sample, the results should be representative and further generalisable to the target population assuming a suitable effect size (Field, 2013; Hernández, Fernández & Baptista, 2010).

4   Epistemological perspective 2 (150 words) – 140 words

Constructivism claims that reality does not exist *per se* and is not pre-configured, and that, unlike Positivism, the sense of belonging is a central issue while researching the reality (May, 2011, p. 9; McWilliams, 2010, p.81). Since the representation of the world is framed through mental states which are internal to the researcher (Fodor, 1981 as cited in Jonassen, 1991, p. 6), constructivism considers subjectivity essential in its approach to reality. McWilliams (2010) points out that the constructivist tradition approaches psychological problems considering "the system of meaning" that the individual builds while understanding and describing its own reality (p.81) in consequence, the personal experience is fundamental to comprehend psychological phenomena like stress and related disorders and its relationship with well-being.

Even though there is contention between the distinct Constructivist traditions [3] (Raskin, 2002, p.1) to accomplish the aim of this work, the Buddhist perspective, specifically the

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[3] The Constructivist traditions mentioned by Efran, McName, Warren and Raskin (2014) are: Personal Constructivism, Radical Constructivism and Social Constructivism (p.2).

Middle Way School as a soft compromise approach is use as an example of Constructivist epistemology (Wallace, 2007, p. 319).

5   How has the perspective identified in box 3, above been used in your field of research? (150 words) – 149 words

Positivism underpins the research question as illustrated in the following examples of scientific research:

- A randomized-controlled trial study sought the effectiveness of MBSR on depression, anxiety, stress and mindfulness in a Korean nursing student's sample (Song & Lindquist, 2015).

- Shapiro, Oman, Thoresen, Plante and Flinders (2008) compared the practice of MBSR with other practice[4] and a control group. The authors used MASS[5] before, after and 8-week-follow-up, to assess mediation of mindfulness in stress and rumination as elements of well-being in undergraduate students. Findings suggest that MAAS is a self-report measure which psychometric properties allow to measure Mindfulness as an attribute that promote well-being (Brown & Ryan, 2003).

- Bennett and Dorjee (2015) reported a medium effect size[6] of a MBSR-course compared to a control group on depression and anxiety scores in students. Furthermore, a meta-analysis suggested that MBSR have health benefits in students and clinical samples since there was a relatively strong level of effect size across different methodology designs (Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt & Walach, 2004, p. 39).

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[4] A meditation-based intervention based on Easwaran´s Eight Point Program which is not explicitly focus in practising mindfulness (Shapiro et al., 2008, p. 857) and is not as well studied as MBSR.

[5] Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) is a reliable standardized questionnaire validated by Brown and Ryan (2003) in different populations to assess the level on Mindfulness.

[6] The results of the analysis were: lower depression scores in the group of students who took a MBSR-course T2 (d=0.57, p=0.09, one-tailed) compared with a control group T3 (d=0.57, p=0.08, one-tailed), and lower anxiety scores but only for the training group T3 (d=0.74, p=0.07, two-tailed). The authors used a measures design as follows: T2 (post-training) and T3 (follow-up) using one-tailed non-equivalent group's t-tests for predicted differences (Bennett & Dorjee, 2015, p. 5).

6   How has the perspective identified in box 4, above been used in your field of research? (150 words) – 146 words

The Middle Way School of Buddhism constitutes an example of Constructivist perspective since (McWilliams, 2010, p.83): Excellent

- The purpose of the practice of Mindfulness is to "gain insight" (Olendzki, 2006, p. 243); of three characteristics that constitute the nature of reality: dependent origination, impermanence and emptiness (Wallace, 2007, p. 319) which imply that reality does not exist outside but is constructed within the mind of the individual. The insight of this way of knowing could be developed through the practice of MBSR.

- Since the interest of Buddhism within Behavioural Medicine is to alleviate suffering Excellent and reduce stress, the practice of MBSR encompasses the possibility of experimentally exploring stress as something that can fluctuate depending on distinct stimuli; and could be reduce by the regular practice of it (Wallace, 2007, p. 319).

- Within this perspective we cannot know reality unless we recognise "our own roles as a knower" (Flax, 1990, as cited in Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011, p. 104). Hence in Buddhism, the process of the first-person experience is essential to account for reality Excellent

7   Choice and justification of epistemological framework selected for research question in box 1, above. (150 words) - 150 words

Even though Positivism is the perspective most widely used to study the effects of MBSR-interventions and it has contributed to understanding its effectiveness in psychological disorders, it has been criticised on the simplistic application of the practice. Good
This critique has been called "McMindfulness" (Hyland, 2015) since some research in the field have diluted the essence of the practice making interventions in any kind of setting by reducing the amount of practice without conserving its integrity (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). In this regards, considering the subjective experience of the practitioner could give a clear-cut indication of the mental processes implicated in MBSR-practices (Houshmound, Harrington, Saron, & Davidson, 2002 as cited in Kabat-Zinn, 2003 p. 147).
Since the Buddhism is more interested in knowing how the individual is building reality through his or her experience and puts emphasis on practising Mindfulness, doing research

from The Middle Way School of Buddhism perspective could test the effect of MBSR-interventions on the well-being operationalised as lower levels of stress, anxiety and depression in students.

Excellent

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Converge*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Excellent

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FINAL GRADE

78/100

GENERAL COMMENTS

Instructor

This is an excellent answer. You write with clarity, confidence and maturity and demonstrate that you have met the learning outcomes for the module.

In discussing your field of study you helpfully locate your own research and explain where it fit alongside extant debates.

Your final observations and your commentary on how the two epistemological foundations have been used is very good.

To improve your mark you should note my comments in the text and the following comments:

You need to clearly express that you are discussing social constructivism here and not social constructionism. There is a difference and it was discussed at length in lecture 3. In your field of research social constructivism is well established. However, elsewhere in the social sciences it is seldom used. It is your responsibility to ensure that the reader is aware that you understand the differences and that you are not, as many others erroneously do, using the two terms synonymously or interchangeably.

A note on referencing. When completing bibliographical details you do not have to include the doi details unless it is a forthcoming paper.

PAGE 1

QM **Feedback**
See "General Comments" at end of the print-ready version of this paper for general feedback on your assessment - note that I am using a grading form which is visible if you click on the far right icon at the bottom of the window (it looks like a tiny office block)

PAGE 2

💬 **Comment 1**

Very clearly stated

QM **Good**
Good

QM **Excellent**
Excellent

💬 **Comment 2**
no comment

QM **Good**
Good

QM **Excellent**
Excellent

QM **Excellent**
Excellent

QM **Good**
Good

PAGE 3

QM **Excellent**
Excellent

QM **Excellent**
Excellent

QM **Excellent**
Excellent

💬 **Comment 3**
This is constructionism not constructivism

QM **Excellent**
Excellent

💬 **Comment 4**
You should take this opportunity to explain the difference between constructionism and constructivism.

PAGE 4

QM	**Excellent**
	Excellent

QM	**Excellent**
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PAGE 5

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