

Mindfulness, Conative Processes and Well-being.

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Abstract

Although the evidence suggesting a positive relationship between mindfulness and well-being is rapidly accumulating, the mechanisms by which this relationship operates remain unclear. This study explored the relationship between mindfulness, well-being and a self-regulatory process, namely personal goal setting. It was hypothesized that people reporting higher levels of mindfulness would strive for more autonomous goals, which would in turn have a beneficial impact on their well-being. University students ($n = 114$) completed questionnaires aimed at assessing their level of mindfulness and well-being. They were asked to identify five personal goals in which they were currently engaged and indicate the reasons why they were pursuing these goals (extrinsic, introjected, identified or intrinsic reasons). A bootstrapping analysis supports the mediating hypothesis and suggested that students who reported being more attentive and aware tended to be engaged in personal endeavours that were more autonomously motivated, which in turn appeared to foster their well-being.

Introduction

- ▶ Mindfulness refers to both the self-regulation of attention to one's current experience and a particular orientation towards this experience, characterized by curiosity, openness, and acceptance (Bishop, Lau, Shapiro, Carlson, Anderson, and Carmody, 2004).
- ▶ It involves intentionally paying sustained attention to one's ongoing sensory, cognitive, and emotional experience, without elaborating upon or judging any part of this experience (Kabat-Zinn, 2003).
- ▶ Despite the growing evidence of the beneficial impacts of mindfulness, from both correlational and field studies, there is a current debate over the nature of the relationship between mindfulness and well-being (Baer, 2010).
- ▶ It can be argued that the relationship between mindfulness and well-being may be partially mediated by goal setting processes.
- ▶ Personal goals are powerful self-regulatory processes: The types of goals a person strives for influence his/her well-being in several ways.
- ▶ The reasons people pursue goals also influence their well-being. Several longitudinal studies have shown that the pursuit of autonomous goals is positively related to various well-being indicators whereas the pursuit of controlled goals is negatively related to these indicators (see Sheldon & Kasser, 2001).

Research questions

1. Does mindfulness facilitate well-being indirectly through the enhancement of goal setting processes?
2. Are people who report high mindfulness more inclined to embark on personal endeavors for autonomous and self-determined reasons than people who report low mindfulness?

Objective and hypothesis

- ▶ **Objective:** Explore the relationship between mindfulness, well-being and personal goal setting;
- ▶ **Hypothesis:** People who reported higher mindfulness would be involved in more autonomous goals (those that rely on intrinsic or identified motives) and report higher well-being.
 1. Higher levels of mindfulness are significantly related to higher levels of wellbeing.
 2. Higher levels of mindfulness are significantly related to autonomous goals.
 3. The relationship between higher levels of mindfulness and higher levels of wellbeing are mediated by autonomous personal goal setting.

Method

- ▶ **Participants and procedure:**
 - ▶ 114 university French-speaking students;
 - ▶ The majority were women (90.4%) and at the undergraduate level (90.4%). Their ages ranged from 19 to 59 years (mean age = 26.82; $SD = 7.44$).
- ▶ **Measures:**
 - ▶ **Mindfulness:** *Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale* (MAAS) (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Jermann et al., 2009) ;
 - ▶ **Subjective Well-Being (SWB):**
 - ▶ *Positive and Negative Affect Schedule* (PANAS) (Gaudreau, Sanchez & Blondin, 2006; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988);
 - ▶ *Satisfaction With Life Scale* (SWLS)(Blais, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Brière, 1989; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985);
 - ▶ **Psychological Well-Being (PWB):** *Scales of Psychological Well-Being* (Lapierre & Desroches, 1997; Ryff & Keyes, 1995)
 - ▶ **Personal goals:** The goal appraisal matrices' (Little, 1983; Sheldon & Kasser, 1998)

Table 1. The methodology used to assess goals.

Goals	Types of motivation			
	External	Introjected	Identified	Intrinsic
Complete my bachelor degree	3	5	7	9
Learn spanish	6	9	4	3
Run three days per week	4	10	4	6
Paint	1	5	7	10
Help my boyfriend find a new job	2	5	8	6

- ▶ Example: *Intrinsic motivation*. "Sometimes, we pursue a goal because of the fun and enjoyment it will bring. A score of 10 indicates that you are engaged in this goal because of the fun and enjoyment it brings you. A score of 0 indicates that you are not at all engaged in this goal for this reason."

Results

Table 2. Internal consistency for all variables.

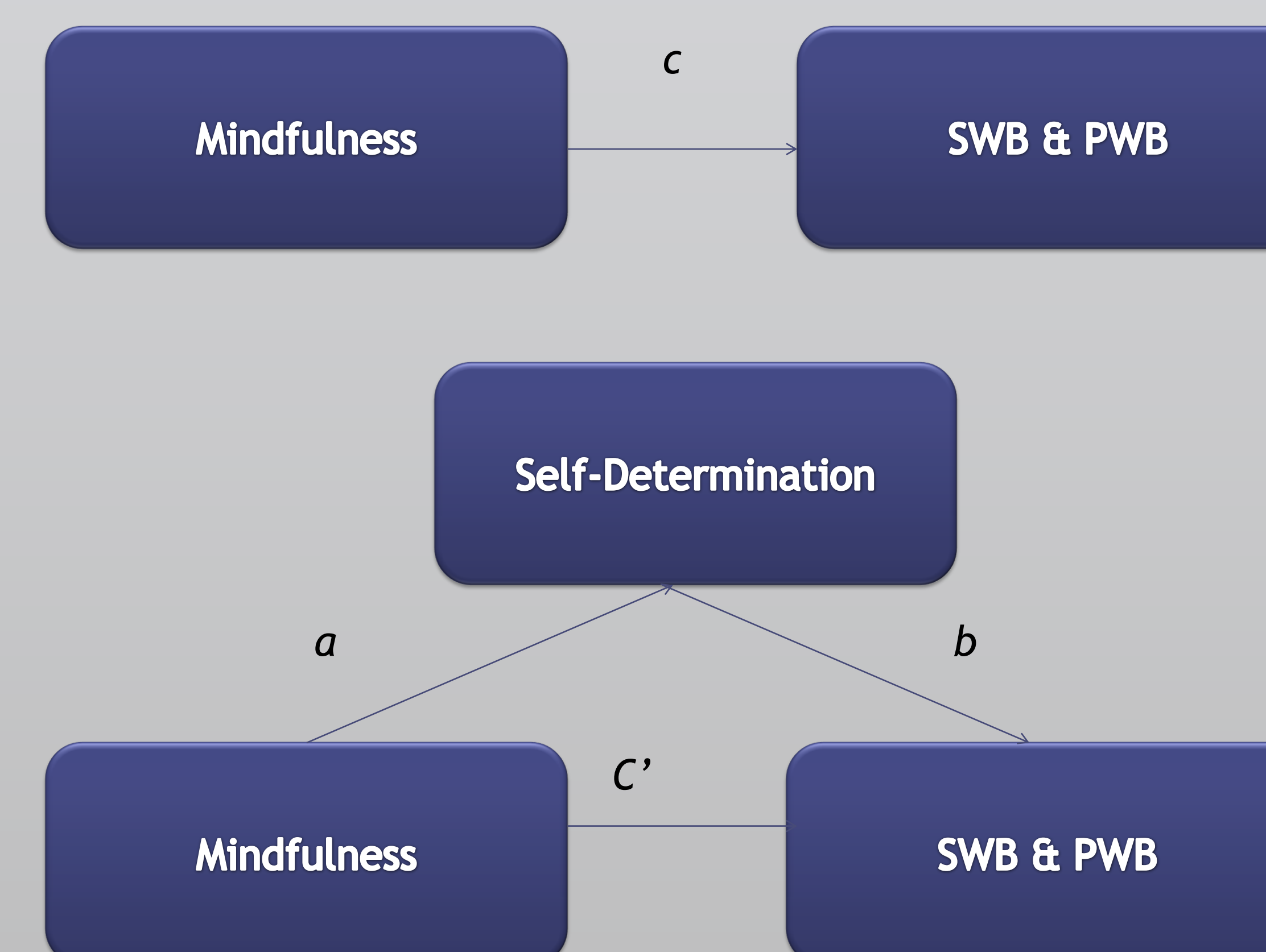
Variables	α
Mindfulness	.72
Life Satisfaction	.85
Positive affects	.88
Negative affects	.84
Purpose in life	.81
Self-acceptance	.93
Self-determination	.70

Table 3. Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficients between mindfulness, well-Being and self-determination.

Variables	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Mindfulness				
2. Subjective Well-Being	.38**			
3. Psychological Well-Being	.44**	.77***		
4. Self-determination	.44***	.36***	.44***	

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Figure 1. Causal steps mediation test.



Results

Table 4. Mediation of the effect of mindfulness on subjective and psychological well-being through self-determination.

Variables	SWB		PWB	
	Point estimate	BCa 95% CI	Point estimate	BCa 95% CI
		Lower Upper		Lower Upper
Self-Determination	.18	.04 .39	.35	.15 .70

Note: The MAAS was used as the predictor variable, the self-determination score was used as the mediator variable, SWB and PWB scores were used as criteria variables. CI = confidence interval; BCa = bias corrected and accelerated; 5,000 bootstrap samples.

Discussion

- ▶ **Main results:**
- ▶ **Mindfulness was significantly correlated with both subjective and psychological well-being (H1).**
- ▶ **Mindfulness was also related to the motives underpinning personal goals (H2).** Participants with higher mindfulness scores reported more autonomous personal goals than those with lower mindfulness scores.
- ▶ This result suggests that mindfulness brings clarity to actions. It may help people choose personal goals that better serve their need for autonomy and self-determination.
- ▶ **Finally, our findings indicate that the motives underpinning personal goals act as a mediator in the relationship between mindfulness and wellbeing (H3).** Individuals who report being more attentive and aware tend to be engaged in personal endeavours that are more autonomously motivated, which in turn fosters their wellbeing.
- ▶ This suggests that in addition to emotion and cognition processes, goal setting processes may also help explain the mechanisms by which mindfulness impacts on wellbeing.
- ▶ **Limitations:**
- ▶ The sample was small and rather homogenous.
- ▶ A large proportion of the goals identified by students were either academic (e.g., complete my bachelor's degree) or recreational (e.g., learn to play the guitar).
- ▶ This study was based on a correlation design.

Implications for practice:

- ▶ The results provide evidence that may support the integration of mindfulness interventions as a component of psychotherapy and counselling sessions. They suggest that it may be especially beneficial to bring mindfulness into settings in which defining and clarifying personal life goals is important.

For further information

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