



Short Communication

Dispositional mindfulness as a positive predictor of psychological well-being and the role of the private self-consciousness insight factor



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ABSTRACT

The current study explored relationships among dispositional mindfulness, the private self-consciousness (PrSC) insight factor, and psychological well-being. Several mindfulness studies indicate that dispositional mindfulness is a positive predictor of psychological well-being. In a distinctly different area of consciousness research, Grant, Franklin, and Langford's (2002) PrSC insight factor shows similar predictive results. Here it is hypothesized that these two seemingly independent dispositional consciousness constructs have overlapping variance and that insight can serve as a partial mediator for dispositional mindfulness when it predicts psychological well-being. Participants were 184 university students who were administered a self-report measure of dispositional mindfulness, insight, and psychological well-being. Correlational analyses revealed that mindfulness and insight were significantly and positively correlated with each other and with psychological well-being. Bootstrap regression analyses supported the model of insight as a partial mediator of the mindfulness–psychological well-being predictive relationship.

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1. Introduction

This study was designed to explore two dispositional consciousness variables' overlap and their predictive relationships to psychological well-being. The two seemingly independent dispositional consciousness constructs explored were Baer, Smith, and Allen's (2004) construct of dispositional mindfulness and Grant, Franklin, and Langford's (2002) formulation of the private self-consciousness insight factor. First, the study explored the overlap between dispositional mindfulness and insight. Next, it examined dispositional mindfulness and insight's relationship to psychological well-being. Last, the investigation tested the hypothesis that insight may serve as a partial mediator for the dispositional mindfulness–psychological well-being predictive relationship.

1.1. Dispositional mindfulness

Dispositional mindfulness is a tendency to engage a state of consciousness characterized by awareness and non-judgmental acceptance of present-moment experiences. This conscious attentive process uses meta-cognitions to consider one's thoughts, sensations, and emotions in an accepting, non-judgmental, and non-reactive way (Baer et al., 2004). The formal practice of mindfulness meditation, as in Buddhist traditions, is designed to

cultivate these attentive meta-cognitive skills, but particular individuals may naturally have higher skill levels or may develop these skills informally. Thus, investigators may study individual differences in mindfulness in meditating or non-meditating populations.

High levels of dispositional mindfulness are positively correlated with openness to experience, emotional intelligence, and self-compassion and negatively correlated with neuroticism and psychological symptoms (Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer, & Toney, 2006). With the scientific discovery of positive byproducts of mindfulness, psychological intervention programs were developed and successfully employed for a variety of populations including those with psychological disorders, medical conditions, and persons considered stressed but healthy (e.g., Kabat-Zinn, 1982). Outcome efficacy research on mindfulness-based interventions supports their beneficial effects in treating chronic pain, anxiety, and depression as well as enhancing coping skills for individuals with medical conditions such as cancer and heart disease (Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, & Walach, 2004; Hofmann, Sawyer, Witt, & Oh, 2010). Therefore, it appears that applying mindfulness self-regulatory skills has salutary effects.

1.2. Private self-consciousness insight factor

Private self-consciousness (PrSC) refers to a disposition to focus on one's inner thoughts and feelings (Fenigstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975). This tendency toward private self-focus is associated with both positive and negative characteristics. Positive qualities

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include greater self-understanding (Davril, Johnson, & Danko, 1992) and openness to experiences (Scandell, 1998) whereas negative characteristics include increased anxiety (Wells, 1985), depression (Ingram & Smith, 1994), and neuroticism (Trapnell & Campbell, 1999). This dual nature of private self-consciousness Trapnell and Campbell (1999, p. 286) referred to as the “self-absorption paradox.” This paradox is solved by the consistent finding that the private self-consciousness construct contains two subfactors, one subfactor linked to negative adjustment variables such as mild neuroticism, lower self-esteem, higher levels of anxiety, depression, and rumination, and the other subfactor inversely related to these variables (Anderson, Bohon, & Berrigan, 1996; Creed & Funder, 1998; Trapnell & Campbell, 1999; Watson, Morris, Ramsey, Hickman, & Waddell, 1996).

Grant et al. (2002) created an instrument designed to measure these subordinate constructs of private self-consciousness embodied in the self-absorption paradox. Their measure, the Self-Reflection and Insight Scale (SRIS) contains two subscales which measure respectively self-reflection and insight. Grant et al. (2002) determined that their *Self-Reflection* subscale positively correlated with negative adjustment variables such as anxiety and stress and their *Insight* subscale negatively correlated with these variables yet showed positive correlations with self-regulation and cognitive flexibility.

1.3. Psychological well-being

Two predominant frameworks of well-being are subjective well-being and *eudaimonia*. Subjective well-being (Diener, 1984) refers to the subjective appraisal of one's positive feelings and life satisfaction. For *eudaimonia* well-being is a byproduct of following a specific set of prescriptive elements that facilitate self-realization. Ryff (1989) proposed a construct of psychological well-being that aligns with this *eudaimonist* perspective. She identified six dimensions of positive mental health from classic theories of psychological health (e.g., Erikson, Maslow, and Rogers), and psychological research findings to formulate a six-part model of psychological well-being. According to Ryff (1989, 1995) and Ryff and Singer (1996), psychological well-being (PWB) consists of *self-acceptance*, *positive relations with others*, *autonomy*, *environmental mastery*, *purpose in life*, and *personal growth*. According to this view, one can attain high levels of PWB through potentiating these dimensions of personality. Global PWB can be measured by summing the six dimension scores of Ryff's (1989) PWB self-report instrument. The current study focused on the relationships of dispositional mindfulness and insight with psychological well-being.

1.4. Mindfulness and insight predict psychological well-being

Although a newer area of research, investigators have found that dispositional mindfulness predicts Ryff's construct of PWB. For example, Baer et al. (2008) used a measure of their five facet model of mindfulness to predict aggregate PWB. Their regression analysis determined that mindfulness accounted for 39% of the variance of PWB. Using a similar regression analysis approach, Hollis-Walker and Colosimo (2011) examined Baer et al.'s (2008) five-facet model of mindfulness and found that it accounted for 57% of the predictive variance of global PWB in their non-meditating sample.

Examining a distinctly different area of study for dispositional consciousness, Harrington and Loffredo (2011) used a multivariate regression analysis to determine that Grant et al.'s (2002) insight factor was a significant positive predictor of the six dimensions of PWB. Lyke (2009) also found a similar relationship for the insight factor with subjective happiness.

Looking at both emerging areas of research, it seems dispositional mindfulness and insight, both important constructs

of consciousness from disparate areas of psychology positively predict PWB. Given their shared focus on self-observation and self-realization, these constructs would appear to have overlapping variance. Yet, prior to the current investigation, these two constructs had not been studied together as predictors of psychological well-being.

Hollis-Walker and Colosimo (2011) theorize that insight, like self-compassion, may be a partial mediator for mindfulness in the mindfulness–psychological well-being relationship because maintaining open awareness gives a person direct experience with the way the mind functions. Likewise, Baer et al. (2006) note that mindfulness is linked to insight, wisdom, and other positive characteristics. Although these authors present theoretical cases for linkage between mindfulness, insight, and well-being, empirical evidence supporting the linkage has been lacking. The current investigation sought to explore the hypothesis that insight may overlap with mindfulness and play an important role in the mindfulness–psychological well-being relationship.

1.5. Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1. Significant moderate positive correlations are expected between dispositional mindfulness, including its facets, and the private self-consciousness insight factor.

Hypothesis 2. Dispositional mindfulness and the private self-consciousness insight factor will each positively correlate with psychological well-being. Further, insight will serve as partial mediator for dispositional mindfulness in predicting psychological well-being.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Participants consisted of 184 (112 female, 72 male) university students, mean age 19.7. Their ethnic breakdown was as follows: 84 Hispanic, 56 Non-Hispanic White, 33 African American, 2 Asian American, and 9 non-classified.

2.2. Procedure

Students were recruited from a variety of face-to-face undergraduate classes. The investigators obtained permission from instructors and asked students for consent. Students completed the questionnaires in class. All were treated in accordance with APA ethical standards.

2.3. Measures

The instruments used in this study were self-report Likert-type questionnaires. All scales met or exceeded acceptable standards of psychometric quality. Higher scores for each scale indicate higher levels of the characteristic measured.

2.4. Dispositional mindfulness

Dispositional mindfulness was assessed using Baer et al.'s (2004) Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills (KIMS) which measures “a general tendency to be mindful in everyday life” (p. 193). This 39-item scale includes four subscales measuring established core facets of mindfulness: *observing* (attending to present stimuli), *describing* (attaching cognitive meta-labels to observed phenomena), *acting with awareness* (disengaging “automatic pilot”), and *nonjudging of inner experience* (accepting even unwanted experiences). Total score and subscale scores were used

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