

The Relationship Between Mindfulness and the Quality of Teaching Performance among a Sample of members of Teaching Staff in Arab Universities in Social Work Departments

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ABSTRACT

While faculty social work teaching staffs in departments of the Arab environment engage in social work education, they also engage in several stressful learning activities, often at the same time. This can negatively affect their well-being, and social work practice. It requires them to practice adaptive mechanisms and tools that enhance the quality of their teaching performance, and one of these tools that have been widely used in psychological and social research is 'mindfulness'. Many studies have shown the benefits that mindfulness brings to social workers, clients, and social work staff, as it helps them to feel the meaning of life, explore this meaning, and improve their psychological strength. It positively reflects on the teaching performance of social work staff. From this point of view, this study attempts to determine the relationship between mindfulness and the quality of teaching performance among a sample of (97) faculty staff in social work departments in Arab universities. The results of this study showed the effect of mindfulness on the quality of the teaching performance of the study sample, as well as the existence of a statistically significant relationship between some demographic variables and the level of mindfulness among the study's faculty staff sample.

KEYWORDS: Mindfulness, Quality of Teaching Performance, Social Work Departments in Arab Universities.

INTRODUCTION

Recently, the concept of mindfulness has imposed itself strongly on the scientific research area in the psychological and social disciplines. It has been focused on as an educational strategy to provide teachers and learners who are more creative, more able to solve problems, and more able to transform skills and information into new knowledge which enriches the learning process. (Shalaby, Al-Maidh, 2021, 617)

Mindfulness is considered one of the important variables that have a direct link to the educational process. Mindfulness helps to increase awareness and directs students' attention to the educational process. It also enhances the mental flexibility of individuals and highlights their abilities and capabilities to cope with the difficult and stressful situations and circumstances that they face in university life. (Bulbul, 2019, 2466)

Mindfulness has become more popular in the Western world over the past decade. The origins of mindfulness are usually attributed to Gautama Siddhartha (the Buddha). Otherwise, they have been

adapted over the years for the purposes of increasing compassion, decreasing human suffering, and helping individuals to achieve enlightenment. Kabat-Zinn (2005) adapted traditional Buddhist practice in the 1970s to fit the Western world. He considered reducing stress in medical treatments. Accordingly, he noted the massive positive impact of mindfulness on individuals' emotional, physical and psychological well-being. (James et al., 2019, P308)

The one who follows the historic origins of mindfulness will find people have taught and used mindfulness for thousands of years in many religious practices. They have taught it in Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, and Islam. Despite its historical connection to religion, mindfulness is not a religious practice and only requires that participants try to be aware of thoughts, emotions, bodily sensations, and actions (be now). It prevents judgment or self-criticism. The greatest and universal aim of mindfulness is to learn more about oneself and others for positive change. The main aim of mindfulness meditation is to gain insight into the true nature of self and the world to end suffering, which results from the misunderstanding of reality. (Chiesa and Malinowski, 2011, p. 412)

LITERATURE REVIEW

It has observed that, in recent years that there has been an important increase in the interest in the application of mindfulness-based interventions in a variety of contexts. Many researchers dedicated their studies to understand the effects and the mechanisms by which mindfulness affects physical and psychological functioning. These studies focused on exploring the potential adaptations of mindfulness-based approaches to various professional disciplines, including social work practice. (Tan & Shian-Ling, 2019)

Mindfulness is a concept in positive psychology, which means a mental state of openness and curiosity that results from focusing attention on what is happening inside and outside the individual. It also focuses on accepting the individual as he/she is without trying to change him/her and looking at thoughts or feelings as fleeting experiences that will not continue or represent the self. Accordingly, mindfulness makes individuals less likely to avoid or suppress feelings and thoughts that seen as less threatening. Self-criticism decreases due to the intolerance of what the individual says in the emotional sense or the judgments that he/she previously issued. These feelings accepted as an integral part of his/her being. By the time, he/she starts to practice a human attitude towards him/her. With regular practice, this attitude become fully integrated into his/her

ongoing relationship with him/her. Perhaps this is what Mahmoud's study (2020, 99) indicated, which showed that increasing the state of mindfulness through repeated practice turns it into a feature over time (Baer, Carmody, & Hunsinger, 2012).

In fact, it is through the works of Hanh (1988) and Kabat-Zinn (2003), these practices were introduced gradually in the 1960s in the West a pioneer of mindfulness-based interventions in social work. In social work, mindfulness can be use as an important tool through three dimensions of self-care for practitioners and teachers of social work that aims at knowing the self and its internal dimension. It can also be used in interventions with individuals, families, and communities, as well as community and policy interventions. (Tu et al., 2022, p. 4)

The main concern of the social work profession has been the struggle to recruit and train enough qualified social workers to meet the growing need for social work. Up to 75% of social workers experience symptoms of tiredness, empathy, or secondary traumatic stress. Many social workers are frustrated and quit their jobs after only a few years of practice. In general, social work staff is concerned not only with how to train competent practitioners but also with how to prepare students for flexible and sustainable practice in the real world in very challenging environments. Mindfulness related to positive behavior, allow the development of cognitive, cultural, emotional, well-being, and psychological aspects by increasing the awareness and mental flexibility of the staff in a way that reflects positively on their teaching performance.

There are two disciplines in mindfulness studies and research: one is a therapeutic intervention through programs and interventions based on mindfulness, and the other is a measurable psychological concept related to mental health outcomes and quality of life in general. In many applications, mindfulness-based interventions used such as treating anxiety, depression, hallucinations, and addictive behaviors. Therapists also use it for treating self-harm, violence, attitude problems, empathy, and self-problems. In addition, the use of mindfulness helps many individuals to reconcile with themselves, especially those who suffer from stress and body image disorders. (Al Harthy, 2019)

Northcut (2013) noted that although practicing mindfulness is hard in clinical social work, it is very useful for clients, social workers, and social work educators. That is because mindfulness provides a forum to reunite the mind and the body in positive in a

unique ways that meet the personal and the professional needs. Examples of professional interventions with cases have shown that clients or practitioners have experienced significant relief by incorporating mindfulness into their treatment or practice in terms of improved symptom management and relief from relentless, racing thoughts and often-unstable feelings. (Northcut, 2013, p. 203)

Researchers also conducted many studies in social work, which confirmed the effectiveness of mindfulness for social workers and clients. The results of both Whitesman and Mash's studies (2015) showed that mindfulness increases self-compassion and the ability to direct one's attention to the present moment, as well as having a positive effect on reducing stress levels and promoting good health. Romero-Martín et al. (2022) indicated the role of mindfulness in alleviating feelings of tiredness among a sample of social workers in Spain. Tu et al. (2022) indicated the effectiveness of mindfulness in reducing occupational tiredness among Chinese social workers. James et al. (2019) indicated the effectiveness of mindfulness, meditation, and breathing exercises in reducing anxiety for clients and achieving self-care for trainees in social work. Thieleman & Cacciatore's study (2019) clarified the importance of mindfulness as one of the preventive factors for social workers, in addition to its role in improving the results of professional interventions with the clients, especially when dealing with clients with challenges related to grief and death. Regina et al. (2021) indicated how religiously oriented mindfulness affected social workers in terms of reducing heart rates, preventing self-burning, and improving mindfulness among social workers. McCusker (2022) noted that mindfulness practice encourages self-care for students of social work in three main ways: demonstrating the importance of self-care and developing awareness of internal oppression, supporting reflexive interaction with users of the service, and relieving work-related stress and professional role conflict.

In his book, *Teaching Mindfulness: A Practical Guide for Clinical and Educators*, Donald McCown outlines the importance of employing mindfulness in helping social work students. It also helps social workers to reduce stress and promote self-care as well as well-being. In addition to its role in increasing awareness of thoughts, feelings and behaviors, and bringing about a change in the sense of self and a broader appreciation of life, in addition to its role in managing emotions and enhancing thinking skills and dealing with others. Since the clinical social workers are the closest and has the

best ability to use this type of professional intervention because it is one of the therapeutic interventions. According to what McCown indicated, social workers applied this study to the clinical faculty members only. (McCown. D et al., 2011)

Through reviewing the research literatures on mindfulness that have been presented, this study attempts to determine the relationship between mindfulness and the quality of teaching performance among a sample of faculty staff in social work departments in Arab universities.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This descriptive-analytical study attempts to determine the relationship between mindfulness and the quality of teaching performance among a sample of faculty staff in social work departments in Arab universities. It also investigates the relationship between some demographic characteristics of faculty staff and the level of teaching performance among a sample of faculty staff in Arab social work departments.

STUDY HYPOTHESES

This study attempts to test the following hypotheses

1. The first hypothesis of this study is to identify a direct, statistically significant relationship between mindfulness and teaching performance among faculty staff.
2. The second hypothesis of this study is to discern a statistically significant relationship between some demographic variables (age, gender, and years of experience) and the average degrees of mindfulness for the study samples of faculty staff.
3. The third hypothesis of this study is to examine a statistically significant relationship between some demographic variables (age, gender, and years of experience) and the average teaching performance scores for the study samples of faculty staff.

METHOD

Study Design:

The current study is a part of a cross-sectional study aimed at evaluating the relationship between two variables: mindfulness and its relationship to the teaching performance of clinical social work among a sample of faculty staff in Arab countries.

Study Sample:

This study includes a sample of 73 faculty staff in faculties and institutes of social work in Egypt and 24 faculty staff of clinical social work in Arab universities. The researcher directed the research tool at faculty staff using paper and electronic questionnaires. He used a simple random sampling.

Data Collection Procedure and Ethical Considerations:

This study uses two scales to collect data for the study subject analysis. The researcher conducted a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study, potential confidentiality issues, and the informed consent of the respondents. All faculty staff approved and accepted participation. They have received a letters facilitating a scientific assignment before the data-collection tools. The data collection process lasted for 30 days.

MEASUREMENT INSTRUMENT:

The researcher relied on two measures to collect data for analyzing the subject of the study:

(1): THE MINDFULNESS SCALE is a scale prepared by **Baer, R.A et al. (2006)**. The researcher has translated this scale and restored validity and reliability to suit the Arab environment. According to the scientific conditions, the scale consists of (37) items divided into five main dimensions. They are observation, description, behaving consciously in the present moments, not judging internal experiences, and the lack of interaction. The scale was rated on a Likert scale on five responses: 5= fully applicable, 4= highly applicable, 3= moderately applicable, 2= slightly applicable, and 1= not fully applicable. Five professors with experience in social work reviewed the final instrument for correctness. The total score of the scale represents the sum of the scores of its partial measures. The partial scales represent the sum of the scores of their components. The higher the overall score is, the higher the mindfulness index of faculty staff becomes.

The total score is for the scale in the sum of its partial scores. It is also for the partial measures that are in the sum of its item points. The faculty staff's level of mindfulness increases as the total score rises. Scoring 185 is the maximum score, which one can obtain on the scale. The minimum score is 37.

Reliability of the Scale

1-Alpha Cronbach: when the researcher applied the scale to a sample with the same socio-metric properties to ensure the stability of the scale, a score of 0.85 obtained. This indicates that most variables have a high degree of reliability.

2-Split-Half: the researcher used the Spearman-Brown Prophecy Formula for the semantic fraction. When the statements of each variable were divided into two halves, the first section includes the values obtained from the responses in the individual paragraphs. The second one includes the values expressed in the double paragraphs. A score of 0.921 obtained, which indicates that most

of the reliability coefficients for the variables have a degree of high stability and therefore reliable results.

(2): THE TEACHING PERFORMANCE SCALE: (prepared by Mohamed Khalaf, 2022) : consists of 41 items to measure the teaching performance of faculty staff. He divided into four dimensions: lecture planning, lecture execution, lecture management, and evaluation of learning outcomes. Response options were presented on a three-point Likert Scale rating agreement with the stem: 1= somewhat, 2= no, 3= yes. Five experienced social work professors reviewed the final content validation tool to ensure that the questionnaire content was appropriate. The total score of an existing scale represents the sum of its partial scores, and for existing partial scales, it is the sum of its item scores. If the overall score is higher, it is an indication of the teaching performance of the faculty staff. The maximum score obtained on the scale is 123, and the minimum score is 41.

Scales validity: In the current study, the researcher indicated the study's validity as follows.

(1): Validity: the researcher relied on two types of validity:

1.1 Content validity: includes the percentages of the arbitrators' agreement on the items of the scale, where the teaching performance measure for faculty staff was present for a number of professors of social work and psychology and field practitioners who will judge it. Their judge will base on the following scales:

1. The extent to the phrase related to each axis of the study.
2. In terms of wording of the phrase.
3. In terms of content.

Accordingly, the general dimensions of the scale, which modified. Some phrases changed, and sentences containing less than 85% of the convention omitted. The calculation of percentage of agreement was according to the Guttman equation.

(2): Internal Consistency Validity (factor): The researcher calculated the internal consistency of the scale items on a sample size of 21 items:

Reliability of the Scale

1- Alpha Cronbach: the researcher applied the scale to a sample with the same socio-metric properties to ensure the stability of the scale and a score of 0.831 obtained which indicates that most variables have a high degree of reliability.

2. Split-half: the researcher used the Spearman-Brown Prophecy Formula for the semantic fraction, which the statements of each variable divided into two halves. The first section includes the values obtained from the responses in the individual paragraphs, and the second section includes the values expressed in the double paragraphs. Moreover, a score of 0.94 obtained, which indicates that most of the reliability coefficients for the variables have a degree of high stability and consequently reliable results.

STATISTICAL METHODS: After the process of data collection and reviews, the researcher encoded data and discharged by using the Statistical Analysis Program (SPSS V 26.0) and applied the following few statistics.

1. Duplicates and percentages:

To describe the characteristics of the study community.

2. Arithmetic level:

Table (1) Levels of arithmetic mean of the Triple -point scale

If the average value of the phrase or dimension ranged between 1 – 1.66	low level
If the average value of the phrase or dimension has varied between more than 1.67 - 2.33	Middle level
If the average value of the phrase or dimension has varied between more than 2.34 – 3	High level

Table (2) Levels of arithmetic mean of the Triple -point scale

If the average value of the phrase or dimension ranged between 1 – 2.33	low level
If the average value of the phrase or dimension has varied between more than 2.34 - 3.66	Middle level
If the average value of the phrase or dimension has varied between more than 3.67 - 5	High level

1. Standard deviation, 2. Ronbach’s Alpha, 3. Pearson Correlation Coefficient, 4. Spearman Brown Coefficient and 5. Chi-Square

STUDY RESULTS:

Table (3) Demographic characteristics of the participants (n = 97)

Age		No	%
1	30 - 35	32	33.0
2	35 - 40	28	28.9
3	40 – 45	14	14.4
4	45 – 50	12	12.4
5	50 – 55	8	8.2
6	55 - 60	3	3.1
Mean		39.35	

Gender		No	%
1	Male	40	41.2
2	Female	57	58.8
Job grade		No	%
1	Assistant Professor	66	68.0
2	Associate Professor	24	24.7
3	Professor	7	7.2
Years of experience		ك	%
1	- 10	43	44.3
2	10 - 20	38	39.2
3	20 - 30	13	13.4
4	30 -	3	3.1
Mean		11.49	

Table No. (3) Which related to the variables of the characteristics of the study population show that.

(1): Regarding the age variable: it turned out that the average age of the study community of faculty staff was (39.35), and the largest percentage of faculty members was concentrated in the age group (30-35), with a percentage of (33%).

(2): Regarding the gender variable:

The percentage of female faculty staff increased by (58.8%), compared to males by (41.2%).

(3): Regarding the job rank variable:

The percentage of those working as a lecturers increased by (68%), then assistant professor by (24.7%), while the professor by (7.2%).

(4): Regarding the variable years of experience:

The data revealed that the average years of experience for faculty staff in the study sample amounted to (11.49), and the largest percentage was concentrated in the category (less than 10 years) with a percentage of (44.3%).

Table (4) Dimensions of mindfulness among faculty members (n = 97)					
Dimensions		Mean	SD	level	Rank
1	The observation	3.10	1.274	Middle	4
2	The description	3.26	1.363	Middle	2
3	The conscious act at the present moments	3.32	1.205	Middle	1
4	The non-judgement on internal experiences	3.20	1.259	Middle	3
5	The non-interaction with internal experiences	3.04	1.359	Middle	5
Dimensions of mindfulness as a whole		3.18	1.202	Middle	

Table No. (4) Shows that the level of dimensions of mindfulness for faculty staff as a whole is in the average level as determined by the faculty staff of the study sample, where the arithmetic mean was (3.18) and the standard deviation (1.202). All dimensions came at the average level. According to indicators, the order of the average Arithmetic were; In the first order, the conscious act came at the present moments with an arithmetic average of (3.32). The second order came; the description with an arithmetic average of (3.26). The non-judgment on internal experiences came in the third rank with an arithmetic average of (3.20). The observation came in the fourth order with an arithmetic average of (3.10).). The non-interaction with internal experiences was in the fifth and last rank with an arithmetic average of (3.04).

Dimensions		Mean	SD	level	Rank
1	The planning of the lecture	2.33	0.597	Middle	1
2	The implementation of the lecture	2.31	0.657	Middle	2
3	the lecture management	2.29	0.699	Middle	3
4	the evaluation of learning outcomes	2.27	0.690	Middle	4
Dimensions of teaching performance as a whole		2.30	0.557	Middle	

Table No. (5) Shows that the level of the dimensions of the teaching performance of the faculty staff as a whole is located at the average level as determined by the faculty staff of the study sample, where the arithmetic average was (2.48) and the standard deviation was (0.502). All dimensions were also at the intermediate level and their indicators were according to the arithmetic average arrangement. The planning of the lecture came in the first rank with an arithmetic average of (2.33). The implementation of the lecture came in the second place with an average of (2.31). The lecture management came in the third place with an average of (2.29). The fourth place was the evaluation of learning outcomes with an average of (2.27).

TESTING THE STUDY HYPOTHESES:

VALIDATION OF THE FIRST HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY, which is that there is a direct and statistically significant relationship between mindfulness and teaching performance among faculty staff

Table (6) The relationship between mindfulness and teaching performance among faculty members (n = 97)

No	mindfulness / teaching performance	The observation	The description	The conscious act at the present moments	The non-judgment on internal experiences	The non-interaction with internal experiences	Dimensions of mindfulness as a whole
2	The implementation of the lecture	0.477**	0.372**	0.588**	0.586**	0.508**	0.539**
3	the lecture management	0.302**	0.203*	0.463**	0.409**	0.383**	0.373**
4	the evaluation of learning outcomes	0.429**	0.313**	0.540**	0.506**	0.499**	0.487**
	Dimensions of teaching performance as a whole	0.491**	0.375**	0.599**	0.554**	0.536**	0.544**

Table No. (6); Shows that there is a direct and statistically significant positive relationship at the significance level of (0.01) between mindfulness and teaching performance among faculty staff in the study sample. This makes us accept the first hypothesis of the study, which is that 'there is a direct and statistically significant positive relationship between mindfulness and teaching performance among faculty staff.'

VALIDATION OF THE SECOND HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY, which states: "There is a statistically significant relationship between some demographic variables (age, gender, and years of experience) and the average degrees of mindfulness of faculty members regarding the study sample".

Table (7) The relationship between mindfulness and some demographic variables (n = 97)

No	Demographic Variables	Mindfulness levels		
		Coefficient	Sig	DF
1	Age	Pearson	0.478**	
2	Gender	Chi-Square	92.873**	(DF=53)
3	Years of experience	Pearson	0.466**	

It is clear from the previous table NO. (7): That there is a statistically significant relationship between some demographic variables and the level of mindfulness of the faculty staff “the study sample”. These variables are age, gender, and years of experience. This means that mindfulness varies according to some demographic variables of faculty staff “the study sample”. Thus, we accept the second hypothesis of the study, “There is a statistically significant relationship between some demographic variables (age, gender, and years of experience) and the average degrees of mindfulness of faculty staff “the study sample”.

Validation of the third hypothesis of the study, which states: “There is a statistically significant relationship between some demographic variables (age, gender, and years of experience) and the average teaching performance scores for faculty staff “the study sample”.

Table (8) The relationship between teaching performance and some demographic variables (n = 97)				
No	Demographic Variables	Teaching Performance levels		
		Coefficient	Sig	DF
1	Age	Pearson	0.300**	
2	Gender	Chi-Square	76.481**	(DF=49)
3	Years of experience	Pearson	0.289**	

It is clear from the previous table NO. (8) that there is a statistically significant relationship between some demographic variables and the level of teaching performance of faculty staff “the study sample” which is the variable of (age, gender, years of experience), which means that teaching performance varies according to the demographic variables of faculty staff “study sample”. Thus, we accept the third hypothesis of the study, “There is a statistically significant relationship between some demographic variables (age, gender, and years of experience) and the average teaching performance scores for faculty members “the study sample”.

Discussion

Mindfulness is a way of facing life that includes realization and openness to cognitive tasks and creativity. It is a form of attention and an essential process in psychotherapy. It is also a state of awareness, which makes the individuals open to what is new and sensitive to both context and perspective. In addition, it leads people to make the right decisions. Accordingly, this study attempts to determine the relationship between mindfulness and the teaching performance of clinical social work among a sample of faculty staff in Arab countries.

The results of this study show that the study sample scores on both the scales of mindfulness and teaching performance are at an average level, reflected in the average quality of teaching performance among the study sample.

The results of this study show that there is a direct, statistically significant relationship at the level of significance (0.01) between mindfulness and teaching performance among the faculty staff of the study sample. This may be due to the existence of a direct relationship between these variables and the aim of this study.

The results of this study also indicate that there is a relationship between some demographic variables and the level of mindfulness among the faculty staff of the study sample. These variables are age, gender and years of experience. This means that mindfulness differs according to some demographic variables of “the study sample” among the faculty staff.

The results of this study also show that there is a statistically significant relationship between some demographic variables and the level of teaching performance of “the study sample” among the faculty staff: age, gender and years of experience. Accordingly, teaching performance varies according to the demographic variables.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

There are clear limits to this study, as it is limited to a sample of (73) faculty staff in faculties of social work in Egypt and (24) faculty staff in clinical social work in Arab universities. The teaching performance of faculty staff and their relationship to mindfulness may vary from one study sample to another, so we cannot the results of this study cannot be generalized to all staff members of the faculties of social work in the Arab world. Perhaps a larger sample may provide more and different results from the results of this study. Accordingly, this study recommends the necessity of conducting more studies that test the effectiveness of using mindfulness from a therapeutic point of view in dealing with many behavioral problems of clients in the Arab environment.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

1. Inclusion of mindfulness skills in education and in training programs for students of social work in the Arab environment.
2. Training social work teachers in Arab social work departments on the skills of mindfulness because of the benefits associated with improving their teaching performance. They can transfer

these benefits to their students, which improves their level of mindfulness.

3. Interest in conducting research related to professional interventions based on mindfulness in dealing with clients' problems in Arab society
4. Arab universities' attention to providing the social work academic staff with an opportunity to develop their abilities and skills by participating in conferences and scientific meetings in the fields related to mindfulness

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study demonstrated that the level of mindfulness of faculty staff members in social work departments in the Arab world has a statistically significant relationship to the quality of their teaching performance. It also indicated a statistically significant relationship between some demographic variables and the level of mindfulness among the faculty staff members of the study sample: age, gender, and years of experience. The current study confirms that there is a need for more studies related to the effect of mindfulness on students' social work skills as well as its use in alleviating some social, psychological, and mental problems in social work.

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