



**A Study on Impact of Psychological Distress on Mindfulness and Meaning in
Life among Young Adults**

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Submitted By:

Lipsy Garg

62875

Supervisor:

Ms. Purva Singh

DECLARATION

I declare that the Project Work entitled “Impact of Psychological Distress on Mindfulness and Meaning in Life among Young Adults” has been prepared by me under the guidance of Ms. Purva Singh, Assistant Professor of Department of Psychology, D.A.V. College, Sector 10, Chandigarh, India. No part of this report has formed the basis for the award of any degree or fellowship previously.

Lipsy Garg

62875

MA 4th Semester

Department of Psychology

D.A.V. College, Sector 10

Chandigarh, India

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Sincerely

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ABSTRACT

One of the most common questions posed by humans throughout contemporary history is to reflect on the meaning of life. We all are in search of purpose, meaning and the conviction that our lives are greater than the sum of our parts. Fortunately, since we are resourceful beings, there are countless possible ways for us to find purpose. Every circumstance, occasion, event, and setting can have significance. In life, individuals can discover significance in the magnificent or even in the dull and miserable moments as well. Moreover, another aspect that is valued by humans is mindfulness. It is the ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we are doing, not unduly reactive or overwhelmed by what is happening around us. Although mindfulness is a quality we all have, we can all access it more easily when we practice regularly. The practice of mindfulness is focusing entirely on the present moment, without passing judgment on it or without making any projections for the future or the past. It typically entails to be “in the now.” But nowadays due to high pacing, people are struggling to achieve these gems in their life as there is so much hustle and bustle today, making people lose touch with the essence of life, especially young adults. Young adulthood is a special developmental stage during which the young adults engage in important developmental activities that allow for self-discovery and identity construction. It is a transitional stage of life when they are usually expected to become financially independent, form romantic attachments and take on responsibilities as active and engaged members of the community. Sometimes these expectations lead to mental burden known as psychological distress. These are symptoms and experiences of a person’s inner life that are typically seen as unpleasant or confusing. This kind of distress may modify an individual’s behavior as well as have a negative impact on their emotions and thoughts. The present study aims to investigate the impact of psychological distress on

mindfulness and meaning in life among young adults. For this purpose, a sample of 100 young adults (50 Males and 50 Females) was collected in the age range of 18-25 years. In addition to this, standardized tools were used to measure psychological distress, mindfulness and meaning in life among young adults. The results found out that there was a significant negative correlation between psychological distress and mindfulness and presence of meaning in life. Moreover, mindfulness and presence of meaning in life were positively correlated to each other. Psychological distress was higher in females as compared to males. It was also observed that psychological distress is a predictor of mindfulness and presence of meaning in life. To overcome the emerging problem of distress among adults there are various therapies and techniques through improving one's mindfulness which helps to acknowledge emotions and their root cause and helps to examine the sensations in the very present moment. Individuals who do not have any meaning attached to their life are more prone to develop psychological distress and other psychological problems. It is important to develop meaning in life as it provides individuals a motive to go through their life.

Keywords: Psychological Distress, Mindfulness, Meaning in Life, Males, Females, Young Adults

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Young adulthood is a critical period of development that spans from ages 18 to 25. During this time, young adults undergo significant changes in their personal and professional lives, as they move from adolescence to adulthood. This stage is marked by several milestones, including leaving home, completing education, starting a career, and forming intimate and long-lasting relationships. One of the most significant changes that young adults experience is the transition to independence. This may involve leaving home and assuming responsibilities of their own. However, this period is also marked with uncertainty and anxiety. Moreover, this stage is marked by significant changes in the personal relationships. Though this stage of adulthood is known for its great excitement and curiosity, it is full of challenges and conflicts as individuals adjust to the demands of their present lives which lead to great anxiety and stress. There are many factors that can contribute to psychological distress in young adults. Some of the most common causes include stress related to academic or work-related demands, relationship problems, financial difficulties, and family issues. Additionally, it may also be a result of traumatic experiences, such as abuse or neglect. It is vital for young adults who are suffering from psychological distress to seek help through resources available such as counseling services, support groups, lifestyle changes and mindfulness-based interventions. Mindful techniques, like meditation, breathing exercises, and yoga can help adults to become more aware of their thoughts, feelings, and sensations, and to greater resilience and emotional regulation. There are many benefits of mindfulness for young adults. For example, research suggests it can help reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety, improve attention and cognitive functioning, and enhance overall well-

being. Additionally, mindfulness can be a helpful tool for managing stress related to academic or

work-related demands, as well as for improving communication and interpersonal relationships and even helps in enhancing one's deep sense of meaning towards life.

Meaning in life is attributed to the feeling that one's life is significant, worthwhile, and connected to something larger than oneself. Finding meaning in life is an important goal for many young adults, as it can provide a great sense of purpose, direction, and fulfillment. There are enormous elements that can devote to a sense of meaning in life among young adults like, having a sense of purpose or direction in life, feeling connected to others and to a community, and engaging in activities that are aligned with one's values and interests trying new things, taking on new challenges can all contribute to a sense of meaning and fulfillment. Investigation advocates that cherishing an impression of meaning in life can have great positive effects on mental health and well-being of individuals' especially young adults. However, finding meaning in life can be a complex and ongoing process, and may involve periods of questioning, exploration, and growth.

Psychological Distress refers to a state of emotional, mental, or physical suffering experienced by an individual. It is a complicated and manifold concern that can have significant consequences for individuals. It can develop in a variety of ways which can include anxiety, depression, trauma, phobias, and substance abuse, among others. Psychological distress can be caused by a range of factors, including genetics, environmental factors, life events, and social circumstances. The causes of psychological distress can be complex and multifactorial. Numerous life events for instance the death of a loved one, getting divorced, financial constraints, or abuse can cause psychological distress. Environmental stressors such as work stress, noise pollution, or overcrowding can also contribute to this condition. Furthermore,

medical conditions such as chronic pain, chronic illness, or disabilities can lead to psychological distress. The symptoms of psychological distress can vary, depending on the individual and the cause. Common symptoms include anxiety, depression, irritability, feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness, insomnia or hypersomnia, appetite changes, and fatigue. In most cases, a human may acknowledge physical problems, such as headaches, stomach aches, or muscle tension. The consequences of psychological distress can be severe and long lasting. Individuals experiencing psychological distress may have difficulty functioning in their daily lives leading to disruption in overall quality of life. Luckily, there are a number of medication choices present for psychological distress such as psychotherapy, cognitive-behavioral therapy as well as medications and changing lifestyle, which help individuals manage their physical symptoms and enhance their whole quality of life.

Mindfulness is a capacity of consciousness that includes being fully available in the moment, concentrating on thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations without judgment. It is a process that has been around for thousands of years and has been internalized into many cultures and religions. Mindfulness has gained increasing popularity in recent years due to its effectiveness in promoting mental and physical well-being. The system of mindfulness is deep rooted in the philosophy of Buddhism, where it is referred to as sati. Mindfulness involves bringing one's attention to the present moments and observing one's thoughts and feelings. The higher goal of mindfulness is to achieve greater sense of awareness and understanding of oneself, as well as around the world. In the past era, mindfulness has become highly known in Western Culture, especially in the field of Psychology. Studies have proven that mindfulness can be helpful in reducing stress, anxiety, and depression. It has also been observed that it advances cognitive

functions, improves emotional regulation, and boosts overall well-being. One of the important elements of mindfulness is the practice of meditation. Meditation includes concentrating on one's attention on a particular object or sensation, such as the breath or a particular sound. This helps to train the mind to remain focused and present in the moment. Another key component of mindfulness is the practice of mindful breathing. It involves paying attention to one's breath, noticing the impression of the breath as we inhale and exhale from our body. This strategy is used to calm the mind and lessen stress. One can practice mindfulness while engaging in everyday activities by paying attention to the physical sensations and movements involved in different tasks. By incorporating mindfulness into our daily lives, individuals can develop a greater sense of awareness and understanding of themselves and the world around them.

The search for meaning in life is an essential human pursuit. People have been trying to find out the meaning of life for centuries, and the answer varies widely depending upon different cultural, philosophical, and religious beliefs. However, at its core, the search for meaning is a deeply personal journey that requires introspection, self-awareness, and a willingness to examine one's belief and values. At the most primary level, the meaning of life can be seen as the purpose or significance that individuals attach to their existence. For some people, the meaning of life can be found in religious or spiritual beliefs, such as belief in higher power or a particular set of values and ethics. For others, it may be rooted in their relationship with other humans, like family, friends, or community. There are different approaches towards the question of the meaning of life. One medium is to concentrate on personal growth and development. This may include cherishing hobbies or interests that give a sense of fulfillment, developing new skills or talents, or engaging in activities that contribute to a greater self and sense of purpose of meaning.

Another approach to finding meaning in life is to pay attention to the present moment, instead of the past or future. This may involve cultivating mindfulness, meditation, or other practices that promote self-awareness and an appreciation for the present moment. By paying attention to the here and now, individuals can manifest a higher sense of gratitude and appreciation for life as it is. Finally, the quest for meaning in life is a deeply personal and individual journey. While there are no one “correct” answer to this question. The pursuit of meaning can be a rewarding and fulfilling journey that can lead to a high sense of purpose, fulfillment, and happiness. By exploring one’s belief and values, one can discover their own unique path to meaning in life.

A recent survey conducted by Elfein (2022) found that there are around 20.8 million college or university undergraduates in the USA. Most of the students are living by themselves for the first time in their life taking the whole responsibility on their own. These sudden new changes expose students to the verge of developing many health risks, ultimately creating mental health checks. Academic pressure, staying away from parents, adjusting to new circumstances or by using drugs and alcohol can lead to high risks of psychological problems. According to the survey, as per the 2021, 39 percent students consider themselves as having good health, while 13 percent termed themselves as having poor health. Nowadays, universities and colleges are highly concerned regarding the health of the students and try to create awareness among students regarding various health issues.

In the United States in 2021, students who were surveyed, 54 percent pupils strongly agreed that they prioritize their health and well-being at college or university campus. In 2021, in the United States another survey was conducted on young adults. The results showed that around 21 percent adults who were suffering from psychological distress had serious thoughts regarding the suicide

in the last year. The results are regarding the thoughts, plans and attempts of suicide due to psychological distress. Similarly, in Europe 2018, a survey was done by Stewart (2022) to find the prevalence of psychological distress symptoms. Around 23 percent of citizens of Portugal had symptoms of psychological distress; surprisingly this was the highest proportion in Europe. Further, 19 percent of the population suffered from psychological distress in Croatia. In addition, for the whole of Europe it was an average of 11 percent.

To find the frequency of practicing mindfulness in Vietnam, a survey was conducted in 2018, the results of the survey revealed Vietnam citizens who indulge in mindfulness practices sometimes were 77 percent whereas, who do it occasionally were only 11 percent. This survey was published by Minh-Ngoc Nguyen (2020). Ceci (2022) conducted a survey in The United States during the third quarter of 2022 on awareness of mindfulness and meditation apps. The results show that, during this period there were the highest number of users leading to 63 percent. Further, the users continued to grow from the starting of 2019 to the third quarter of 2022. However, the users remained intact during the last measured quarter which accounted for 20 percent only.

Another survey conducted by Ipsos (2021) (published by Kanwal) in India, on the state of happiness and meaning in life. 49 percent of the total participants accepted that living a meaningful life helps them to achieve great happiness. Around 85 percent respondents acknowledged this as a means of happiness for them. Correspondingly in Australia in 2019, respondents who believed that feeling of meaningfulness in life could give them happiness were 46 percent. However, at global level 30 percent adults reckon this belief during the time of survey. The particular survey was conducted by Ipsos (2019) and was published by Statista Research Department in 2023.

Psychological Distress

According to Cuijpers (2009) psychological distress refers to “non- specific symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression. High levels of psychological distress are indicative of impaired of mental health and may reflect common mental disorders, like depressive and anxiety disorders.”

Tenants of the stress-distress model posits that the defining features of psychological distress are the exposure to stressful events that threatens the physical or mental health, the inability to cope effectively with this stressor and the emotional turmoil that results from this ineffective coping (Horwitz, 2007; Ridner, 2004). Further, Dohrenwend and Dohrenwend (1982) refer to psychological distress as “a non-specific mental health problem.”

According to Mirowsky and Ross (2002) psychological distress is largely defined as “a state of emotional suffering characterized by symptoms of depression (e.g. lost interest; sadness; hopelessness) and anxiety (e.g., restlessness; feeling tense).” Wheaton (2007) defined psychological distress as “an emotional disturbance that may impact an individual in the areas of social functioning and day-to-day living.”

According to Kirmayer et al. (1989) defined psychological distress as a normal emotional reaction to a stressor raises the issues of delineating “normality” in different populations and different situations. Indeed, it is widely agreed that the individual and collective experience of diseases is partly bounded by cultural norms and that although negative states of mind such as feeling sad, depressed or anxious tend to be universal, the expression of these states of mind may vary in intensity and in form across and within societies.

When an individual experiences distress, they are out of balance, body and mind cry out for some kind of help, taking any forms such as moodiness, irritability, depression, anxiety,

insomnia, or physical symptoms such as stomach upset or headache (Shaheen, Jahan & Shaheen, 2014).

Psychological distress can also include lack of enthusiasm, problems with sleep (trouble falling asleep or staying asleep), feeling downhearted or blue, feeling hopeless about the future, feeling emotionally bored (for example, crying easily or feeling like crying) or losing interest in things (Decker, 1997; Brunette & Mui 1997).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There are various models of psychological distress. Some of the models are:

Biopsychosocial Model

The biopsychosocial model suggests that psychological distress arises from the interaction of biological, psychological, and social factors. The model emphasizes that the biological, psychological, and social aspects of an individual's life are interconnected and influence each other. Further, it proposes that genetic and biological vulnerabilities, along with the environmental stressors and social factors such as social support and socioeconomic status can contribute to the development of psychological distress. Psychological components of the biopsychosocial model refer to factors such as thoughts, emotions, and behavior. For example, negative thought patterns, maladaptive coping strategies, and learned behaviors can all contribute to the development of psychological distress. Social components refer to factors such as social support, cultural norms, and environmental stressors. The biopsychosocial model suggests that psychological distress is not solely caused by any one of these factors, but rather by the complex interplay between them. The model has important implications for the assessment and treatment

of psychological distress, as it emphasizes the need for a comprehensive and holistic approach that addresses biological, psychological, and social factors. This approach may involve a combination of medications, therapy, and lifestyle modifications that target all aspects of the individual's well-being.

Cognitive-Behavioral Model

The Cognitive-Behavioral Model suggests that psychological distress arises from dysfunctional patterns of thinking and behavior. It proposes that negative thoughts and beliefs, attitude, maladaptive coping strategies, and learned behaviors can contribute to the development and maintenance of psychological distress. According to the cognitive model, psychological distress arises from a cycle of negative thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. This cycle begins with the individual's interpretation of a situation, which leads to automatic thoughts or beliefs about the situation. These automatic thoughts can be negative emotions such as anxiety, sadness, or anger. These negative emotions, in turn can lead to maladaptive behaviors, such as avoidance or rumination, which can reinforce the negative thoughts and emotions and perpetuate the cycle. These negative thinking patterns can be identified and challenged through cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT). In CBT, the therapist works with the individual to identify negative thoughts and beliefs, challenges them, and replaces them with more accurate, adaptive thoughts and beliefs. The cognitive model has important implications for understanding and treating psychological distress, as it emphasizes the importance of addressing negative thoughts and beliefs as a key component of effective treatment. It also highlights the role of the individual's interpretation of a situation in shaping their emotional response, which can help individuals to develop greater self-awareness and control over their emotions.

Psychodynamic Model

This model is based on the theories of Sigmund Freud and his followers. The model posits that the human mind is divided into three parts; the conscious mind, the subconscious mind, and the unconscious mind. The conscious mind is the part of the mind that is aware of the individual's thoughts and feelings at any given moment; the subconscious mind contains thoughts and feelings that are not currently in the individual's awareness but can be easily accessed. The unconscious mind contains thoughts, feelings, and memories that are repressed or otherwise hidden from the individual's mind. According to this model, psychological distress arises from the interaction between three components of the mind; the id, ego, and superego. The id represents our basic drives and desires, while the superego represents our moral and ethical standards. The ego is the mediator between the id and superego, trying to balance their conflicting demands. When conflict arises between these three components, the result is anxiety and psychological distress.

Moreover, the theoretical framework also suggests that psychological distress arises from unconscious conflicts and unresolved emotional experiences that originate in early childhood are psychodynamic models. This model proposes that unresolved conflicts and emotions can manifest as symptoms of psychological distress, such as anxiety or depression. The psychodynamic model suggests that these conflicts and emotions can be identified and addressed through psychoanalytic therapy. Treatment in the psychodynamic model often involves exploring these unconscious conflicts and bringing them to conscious awareness. This can be done through talk therapy, dream analysis or other techniques that help the patients gain insight into their underlying emotional and psychological conflicts. The goal is to resolve these conflicts and promote psychological healing and growth.

Stress Vulnerability Model

The Stress Vulnerability Model proposes that psychological distress arises from an interaction between stressors and an individual's vulnerability to stress. According to the stress vulnerability model, there are three main components that contribute to the development of mental health problems; stressors, biological vulnerabilities, and protective factors. Stressors refer to any events or experience that cause stress, such as a major life change, trauma, or ongoing daily stressors. The more stressors a person experiences, the more likely they are to develop psychological distress. Biological vulnerabilities refer to a person's genetic makeup, brain chemistry, and other physical factors that may make them more susceptible to mental health problems. For example, a person with a family history of depression may have a biological vulnerability to the condition. In addition to this, protective factors refer to the factors that help people cope with stress and prevent the development of mental health problems. Examples of protective factors are social support, resilience, and coping skills. This model highlights the importance of both environmental and internal factors in shaping an individual's mental health. The model also suggests that individuals with higher levels of vulnerability, such as those with a genetic predisposition or a history of trauma, may be more susceptible to the negative effects of stressors and more likely to develop psychological distress. Further, it emphasizes the importance of prevention and early intervention in the treatment of mental health disorders. This approach recognizes the complex interplay between biological and environmental factors in the development of mental health problems and aims to address both aspects in a comprehensive way.

Medical Model

The medical model of psychological distress views mental health disorders as primarily biological in nature and can be treated with medication or other medical interventions. The model is based on the idea that psychological distress is caused by imbalances or dysfunction in the brain's neurochemical or structural processes. According to the model, psychological distress is treated as a disease, and the primary goal is to alleviate symptoms through medical treatment. The model basically focuses on diagnostic mental health disorders using criteria from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) and identifying a specific diagnosis for the patient. Treatment usually involves medications, such as antidepressants or antipsychotics as well as therapy or other supportive interventions. Proponents of the medical model argue that it provides a clear framework for understanding mental health problems and for developing effective treatments. They argue that identifying specific symptoms and diagnosing mental health disorders can help ensure that people receive the appropriate treatment and support they need to manage their symptoms and improve their quality of life.

Interpersonal Model

This is an approach that suggests that psychological distress arises from problems in interpersonal relationships. The model emphasizes the role of social support, communication, and relational patterns in shaping an individual's emotional experiences. According to the interpersonal model, individuals who experience psychological distress often have difficulties in their interpersonal relationships. For example, they may have trouble communicating their needs and emotions to others, or they may struggle to form close and supportive relationships. These difficulties can lead to feelings of isolation, loneliness, and emotional pain. It highlights the

importance of social support and healthy relationships in promoting emotional well-being. The model suggests that improving interpersonal skills and building supportive relationships can help individuals experience relief from psychological distress and improve their overall quality of life.

Mindfulness

“Waking up to the full spectrum of our experience in the present moment, which, as we engage in mindfulness practice, we rapidly discover is severely edited and often distorted through the routinized, habitual, and unexamined activity of our thoughts and emotions, often involving significant alienation from direct experience of the sensory world and the body”

~ Kabat Zinn ~

The term mindfulness has been used to refer to “a psychological state of awareness, a practice that promotes this awareness, a mode of processing information, and a characterological trait” (Brown et al., 2007). According to Bodhi (2000) the word mindfulness originally comes from the *Pali* word ‘*sati*’, which means “having awareness, attention, and remembering.” Mindfulness is “wellness-oriented” and is described as “a natural capacity which involves observing, participating and accepting each of life’s moments from a state of equilibrium or loving kindness” (Albercht et al., 2012). According to Analayo (2018) the term ‘*sati*’ refers to memory; development of mindfulness requires a “deliberate paying attention similar to how we would be attentive when something takes place that we have to remember later.”

Mindfulness is “remembering to pay attention to our present moment experience” (Shapiro & Carlson, 2009; Black, 2011). Rock (2009) asserts that “mindfulness is a habit, it’s something the more one does, the more likely one is to be in that mode with less and less effort; it’s a skill that can be learned. It’s accessing something we already have. Mindfulness isn’t difficult. What’s difficult is to remember to be mindful.” According to Kabat-Zinn (1990) mindfulness is described as “intentionally focusing one’s attention on the experience occurring now in a non-judgmental or accepting way.” According to Brown and Ryan (2003) mindfulness has been contrasted with the states of mind in which attention is focused elsewhere, such as preoccupation with memories, fantasies, plans, or worries, and with behaving automatically without awareness of one’s actions. “Mindfulness is reconnecting with our bodies and the sensations they experience which means waking up to the sights, sounds, smells, and tastes of the present moment” (Lepkowska, 2019). According to Germer et al. (2005) mindfulness can simply be defined as “moment-by-moment awareness.”

“A state of psychological freedom that occurs when attention remains quiet and limber, without attachment to a particular point of view” (Martin et al., 1997). Moment to moment awareness that is intentionally non-reactive and non-judgmental. The practitioner attends to the full range of whatever is present in the field of his or her experience in a non-judgmental way (Reibel et al., 2001). Miller et al. (1995) mindfulness is synonymous with awareness. Mindfulness meditation can be defined as “the effort to intentionally pay attention, non-judgmentally, to present -moment experience and sustain this attention over time. This aim is to cultivate stable and nonreactive present moment awareness.”

According to Napoli et al., (2005) mindfulness can be applied to all types of awareness, auditory, gustatory, tactile, and visual, as well as one's thoughts and emotions. A kind of non-elaborative, non-judgmental, present-centered awareness in which each thought, feeling or sensation that arises in the field of attention is acknowledged and accepted as it is (Bishop et al., 2004).

THEROTICAL FRAMEWORK

There are several models of mindfulness that have been proposed by researchers and practitioners in the field. Here are some of the most commonly cited models:

IAA Model of Mindfulness

The IAA Model was developed by Shapiro et al. (2006). To break down the mindfulness into simple, understandable, and practical. The model could be explained through three axioms (i.e. the basic unit from which other things emerge) of mindfulness.

“On purpose” or Intention: Intentions can be defined as dynamic and unfolding, which allows people to regulate and evolve with deepening practice, awareness, and insight. It is one the vital components of mindfulness and is essential to understand the process as whole. It basically refers to a clear sense of purpose for practicing mindfulness. This process may involve identifying a particular area of one’s life which they wish to change such as reducing stress or improving personal relationships.

“Paying attention” or attention: Second fundamental unit is attention; it involves paying attention to one’s experiences that may be – internal or external. This includes attending to the contents of consciousness such as our thoughts and ideas, moment to moment. Moreover, it includes paying attention to one object for a long time.

“In a particular way” or attitude (mindfulness qualities): The third axiom is attitude which is generally how we attend to internal or external experience. These are the qualities that an individual brings to the attention that is referred to as the attitudinal foundation of mindfulness. Mindfulness is associated with being aware, but the quality of the awareness is not perfectly prescribed. Though the quality of paying attention is a crucial element in mindfulness. This involves cultivating qualities such as compassion, curiosity, and openness. Instead of that one judging oneself or one’s experience, one learns to approach them with kindness and acceptance.

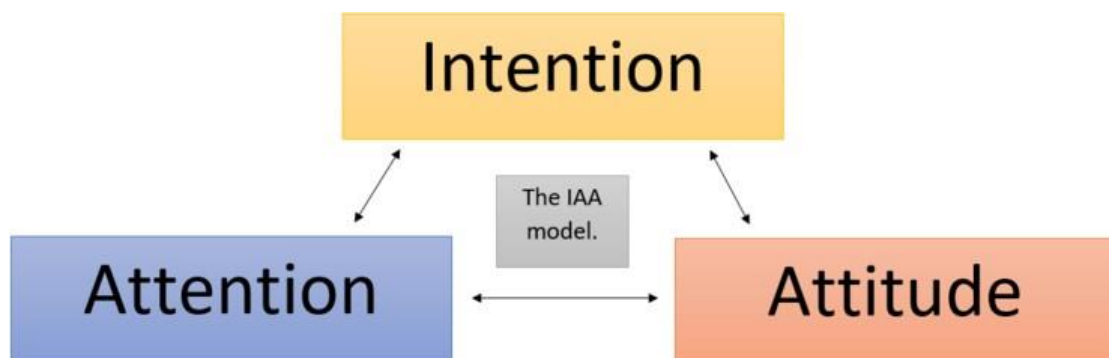


Figure 1.

The IAA model Shapiro (2006)

Note: The three axioms of mindfulness are intention, attention, and attitude. They are not separate stages. There are interwoven aspects of a single cyclic process and occur simultaneously. Mindfulness is this moment-to-moment process.

Two Component Model of Mindfulness

Brown et al. (2004) proposed two component model of mindfulness. The first component is self-regulation of attention, and the second component involves adopting a particular orientation towards one's experience in the present moment.

Self-Regulation of Attention

Mindfulness means being alive in the moment, experiencing, attending and observing the thoughts, sensations and feelings through changing the focus of attention. It refers to the ability to have a state of attentiveness for a long period of time. Sustained attention to breath helps to keep attention in current experience so that thoughts and sensations could be detected when they emerge in consciousness. This is called attention switching.

Self-regulation of attention enhances non-elaborative awareness of sensations, thoughts, and emotions. Rather than getting held up in a meditative, detailed thought stream related to one's experience and its emergence, results and links, mindfulness typically involves a direct experience of events in the mind. Mindfulness is not about suppressing thoughts, emotions, and sensations. However, it is about acknowledging them, and directing them towards the breath, which is called inhibit secondary elaborative processing of thoughts, sensations and emotions that evolve from a flowing stream of consciousness. Self-regulation of attention includes sustained attention, attention switching and inhibition elaborative processing.

Orientation of Experience

According to the model, further mindfulness is defined by an orientation to experience that is used in mindfulness meditation practices. Accordingly, a commitment is made to sustain a curiosity related to where thoughts wander whenever a distraction is made from the breath as

well as curiosity about objects which are available in the present moment. All the feelings, emotions and thoughts are considered as not relevant but further they are observed. Thus, no changes are made to what a person is feeling or going through, thus a person is advised to make an effort to acknowledge every feeling, thought or sensation that occurs during consciousness. In this way, a state of acceptance is generated in each moment of one's experience. According to Roemer and Orsillo (2002) acceptance is defined as being experientially open to the reality of the present moment. It requires firm consciousness to neglect one's motive to have a different experience and active process of "allowing" flowing thoughts, feelings, and sensations. It is a dynamic process that allows a person to have what is offered with an attitude of openness and receptivity to what is happening in the present moment.

Four foundations of Buddhism

'*Satipatthana*' is an important teaching of Buddha which means "the establishment of mindfulness" or "presence of mindfulness" or "foundations of mindfulness" helps in the development of the whole state of mindfulness. It implies mindful attention towards body, feelings, the mind and the key principles or categories. This offers different ways of practicing four foundations that can lead to liberating insight. These are the four foundations of mindfulness according to Buddhist literature.

Mindfulness of the body (Kaya-sati): This involves paying attention to the physical sensations of the body, such as the breath, posture, and sensations of movement. It includes in-and-out breathing (*anapanasati*), the four postures (like sitting, standing, walking, lying down), bodily

activities, the four elements (earth, water, fire, air) and the nine cemetery contemplations (corpses in decay).

Mindfulness of the Feeling (Vedana): This involves being aware of the different feelings and emotions that arise in the body such as pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral sensation. It does not mean emotions, but a primary tone related to all mental and physical experience. According to Buddhist literature, mindfulness of feelings involves three steps:

- a) ***Recognition:*** The first step is to recognize the presence of a feeling as it arises. This involves being aware of mental states associated with the feeling, such as changes in the breath, bodily sensations, or thoughts.
- b) ***Non-attachment:*** The second step is to cultivate a sense of non-attachment to the feeling. This means observing the feelings without judgment or clinging to it, recognizing that it is impermanent and subject to change.
- c) ***Investigation:*** The third step is to investigate the feeling with curiosity and inquiry. This involves exploring the causes and conditions that give rise to the feelings, as well as the thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes that may be associated with it. Through this process of investigation, we can gain a deeper understanding of our emotional experiences and develop greater self-awareness.

Mindfulness of the mind (Citta-sati): This involves observing the mental states and activities of the mind, such as thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes and observing them with clarity and equanimity. The term “*citta*” encompasses not only our conscious thoughts and mental processes but also the underlying, unconscious mind and its various states.

In Buddhist psychology, the mind is seen as a complex and dynamic system that is constantly changing and evolving. According to this view, our thoughts and emotions arise due to causes and conditions that are both internal and external, and these mental states are constantly in flux. The practice of mindfulness of mind, or “*cittanupassana*” in *Pali* language, involves developing awareness and understanding of the nature of the mind. This includes becoming aware of the different mental states that arise within us, observing them with clarity and recognizing their impermanence and non-self-nature. Through mindfulness of mind, one can gain insight into the working of our own mind and develop greater skill in managing our thoughts, emotions, and mental states. This can help us to cultivate greater inner peace, happiness, and well-being.

Mindfulness of Dhamma: In Buddhist literature, the term “*dhamma*” refers to the teachings of the Buddha, as well as the underlying principles of the universe that the Buddha’s teachings are said to elucidate. In the context of mindfulness practice, mindfulness of “*dhamma*” or “*dhammanupassana*” in *Pali* language refers to developing mindfulness of Buddhist teachings and principles. The practice of mindfulness of “*dhamma*” involves developing of awareness and understanding of the nature of reality as described in the Buddhist teachings. This includes becoming familiar with the four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, and other core teachings of the Buddha. Through mindfulness of *dhamma*, one can deepen the understanding of the causes and conditions that give rise to suffering and develop greater insight into the nature of reality. This can help to cultivate a more skillful and compassionate relationship with oneself and the world.

Five Facets of Mindfulness

Baer (2006) is a mindfulness researcher and teacher who has developed a model of the Five Facets of Mindfulness that is widely used in contemporary mindfulness research and practice.

Baer's Five Facets of Mindfulness are:

- a) **Observing:** This refers to the ability to observe and attend to one's internal and external experiences, including thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and the environment, with a non-judgmental and curious attitude.
- b) **Describing:** This refers to the ability to put one's observation into words, and to label and describe one's experience in a clear and accurate manner.
- c) **Acting with Awareness:** This refers to the ability to bring mindful awareness to one's actions, including daily activities and interactions with others, and to engage in these activities with full attention and intentionally.
- d) **Non-judging of Inner Experience:** This is the ability to observe one's thoughts, feelings, and sensations without getting caught up in judgments, evaluation, or reactions to them.
- e) **Non-reactivity to Inner Experiences:** This refers to the ability to allow one's internal experiences to come and go without getting caught up in them or reacting to them in unhelpful ways.

Meaning in Life

“Ultimately, man should not ask what the meaning of his life is, but rather must recognize that it is he who is asked. In a word, each man is questioned by life; and he can only answer to life by answering for his own life; to life he can only respond by being responsible.”

~Frankl~

“Meaning in life involves being able to make connections between the events and experiences in life, as well as being able to understand one’s place in the grand scheme of things (Antonovsky, 1988; Baumeister & Vohs, 2002). According to Kobau et al. (2010) meaning in life is widely considered to be a critical ingredient in human well-being and flourishing.

The definition of meaning has centered on two dimensions; coherence, one’s comprehension and sense made of life, and purpose, or one’s core aims and aspirations for life (Steger et al., 2006).

The meaning in life has three facets; one’s life having value and significance, having a broader purpose in life, and one’s life being coherent and making sense (Heintzelman & King, 2014b; Steger et al., 2012a). Steger and Frazier (2005) referred to meaning in life, “as an individual’s ability to understand life, such as understanding oneself and the outside world and adapting to it.” Meaning in Life refers to “the idea that individuals are strongly motivated to find meaning in their lives, that is, to be able to understand the nature of their personal existence, and feel it is significant and purposeful” (Ratni & Rastogi, 2007). According to Wong (2010, 2011) a comprehensive definition of meaning in life can be conceived in terms of ‘PURE’; Purpose, Understanding, Responsible actions and Enjoyment/evaluation. The extent to which individuals find purpose in their life or establish a set of goals or meaningful perspectives (Battista &

Almond, 1973). Seligman (2011), a meaningful life involves feelings of belongingness and serving something bigger than you. We are all born with a deeply rooted need to find meaning.

Theoretical Framework

The search for meaning in life has been a central concern for human beings for centuries, and various theoretical frameworks have been proposed to understand the concept. Here are some theoretical frameworks.

Existentialism

Existentialism is a philosophical and psychological approach that focuses on the subjective experience of human existence and the search for meaning in life. The framework emphasizes that idea that meaning in life is not inherent, but rather created by the individual through their choices and actions. Existentialists believe that people are responsible for defining their own purpose in life and that this can be achieved through self-reflection, personal growth, and taking responsibility for one's own life. To find meaning in life, existentialists suggest that individuals must embrace their freedom and take an active role in shaping their own destiny. This involves confronting the difficult questions of life, such as the meaning of suffering and death, and making choices that reflect our deepest values and beliefs. They also emphasize the importance of authenticity, or being true to oneself, as a key aspect of finding meaning in life. This involves rejecting societal norms and expectations that may conflict with our own sense of purpose and authenticity. Overall, the existentialist approach towards meaning in life encourages individuals to embrace their freedom, take responsibility for their lives, and create their own meaning through their choices and actions.

Positive Psychology Approach

Positive Psychology is a scientific framework that focuses on studying the positive aspects of human experience, such as well-being, happiness, and meaning in life. The positive psychology approach towards meaning in life emphasizes the importance of pursuing personal goals that are personally meaningful and contribute to a greater sense of purpose and fulfillment. According to approach, meaning in life is not just a matter of finding a sense of purpose, but also involves experiencing a sense of coherence and significance in life. This involves identifying and pursuing personal goals that are aligned with our core values and beliefs, which helps in providing a sense of direction and motivation. It also signifies the importance of social connections and relationships in fostering a sense of meaning in life. Another vital aspect of this approach is the concept of flow. Flow refers to a state of complete absorption and focus in an activity, where the individual loses track of time and experiences a sense of mastery and promotes flow can be a powerful source of meaning and purpose in life. This approach is basically based on personal goals, fostering social relationships, and engaging in activities that promote flow and a sense of mastery.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

This framework proposes that humans have three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. According to SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2000) these needs must be fulfilled in order for individuals to experience a sense of well-being and motivation, including a sense of meaning in life. Autonomy refers to the sense of effectiveness and mastery that individuals have in achieving their goals. When individuals feel competent, they have a sense of

confidence in their abilities and are motivated to continue pursuing their goals. Relatedness refers to the sense of connection and belongingness that individuals feel relatedness, they feel that they are part of a larger social network and that they have meaningful relationships with others. According to SDT, when these three basic psychological needs are fulfilled, individuals experience a sense of well-being and motivation, including a sense of meaning in life. This means that individuals are more likely to pursue activities and goals that are personally meaningful and aligned with their values and are less likely to feel a sense of emptiness or lack of purpose in their lives. To conclude, the SDT approach towards meaning in life emphasizes the importance of fulfilling basic psychological needs to experience a sense of well-being and motivation, including a sense of meaning in life.

Modernism

Modernism is a philosophical and cultural movement that emerged in the late 19th century and continued into the 20th century. The modernist approach towards meaning in life emphasizes the individual's search for meaning in a world that is perceived as chaotic and uncertain. According to modernism, meaning in life is not something that can be given by external sources such as religion or tradition, but is rather something that must be created by the individual through their own experiences and choices. This involves rejecting the idea of a fixed or predetermined meaning in life, and embracing the idea that meaning is something that must be constantly redefined and recreated. It also emphasizes the importance of individualism and self-expression in finding meaning in life. This involves the pursuit of personal goals and desires, and the rejection of societal norms and expectations that may conflict with one's own sense of purpose

and authenticity. At the same time, modernism acknowledges the challenges and difficulties that come with the search for meaning in a chaotic and uncertain world. It recognizes that individuals may struggle with feelings of alienation, isolation, and disconnection from others as they pursue their individual paths. Overall, the modernist approach towards meaning in life encourages individuals to embrace the uncertainty and chaos of the world, and to find meaning and purpose through their own experiences and choices. This involves rejecting traditional sources of meaning and embracing individualism and self-expression, while also acknowledging the challenges and difficulties that come with the search for meaning in a complex and unpredictable world.

Postmodernism

Post modernism is a philosophical and cultural movement that emerged in the late 20th century, and it is a reaction against modernism. The postmodern approach towards meaning in life emphasizes the rejection of fixed meanings and recognition of the complexity and ambiguity of human experience. In postmodernism theory, meaning in life is not something that can be found or created through individual effort, but rather something that is constantly changing and evolving through social and cultural contexts. This means that meaning is not fixed or absolute, but rather something that is constructed and negotiated through the interactions between individuals and their environments. It lays importance to diversity and differences in shaping individual experiences and perceptions of meaning in life. This involves recognizing and embracing the unique perspectives and identities of individuals, and rejecting the idea of a single, universal meaning that applies to all people. At the same time, postmodernism acknowledges the

challenges and complexities that come with the rejection of fixed meanings and the acceptance of diversity and differences. It recognizes that individuals may struggle with the feelings of disorientation and uncertainty as they navigate the complex and ever-changing landscape of meaning in life

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Psychological Distress

A research study was conducted by Jackson and Finney (2002) among young adults from three different universities. The study was done to examine the relationship between college career stage, negative life events, and psychological distress. Life events inventory and various psychological distress scales (depression, anxiety, and anger/hostility) were used. The study concluded that unpleasant experiences in peer relationships were most predictive of distress; moreover, younger students were more prone to negative life events and were angrier/hostile about negative life events. It was assumed that there were less psychological resources of maturity and experience in young adults, and they adopt such coping strategies which are ineffective in stressful situations.

Sellers et al. (2003) did a study to evaluate the direct and indirect relationship among racial identity, racial discrimination, perceived stress, and psychological distress. The sample in this research was of 555 African American young adults and two dimensions of racial identity attitudes (centrality and public regard) were examined on other variables to find correlation between racial identity attitudes and psychological distress. The results showed that there was a significant relationship between racial centrality and psychological distress, as well as a negative correlation in both centrality and public regard due to the effect of racial discrimination and perceived stress. In addition, racial centrality was found out to be a risk factor for facing

discrimination as well as a protective factor in the negative impact of discrimination on psychological distress.

A research on short sleep duration in prevalent and persistent psychological distress was conducted in Australia by Glozier et al. (2010). Twenty thousand young adults whose ages lie between 17 to 24 years were evaluated. Standardized tool to measure psychological distress was used in the research. The outcomes of research concluded that short sleep duration was positively related with the existence of psychological distress. Very short sleepers had an increased risk for onset of psychological distress. It was found in the study that each less hour for sleep enhances the risk of psychological distress. Moreover, adults who sleep for long hours showed no risk of distress at any point in their life.

Kaplan and Marks (1990) examined the correlation between acculturation and psychological distress. They conducted the research on 3084 Mexican American who were young (20-30), middle aged (31-50) and older adults (51- 74). They measured acculturation items on spoken and written language and ethnic identification. To measure psychological distress, the Centre for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D) was used in the research. It was observed that there was a positive correlation in acculturation and distress in young adults but a negative correlation was discovered in older adults. Males and females showed the same results to some extent for CES-D total and scores were high in psychological distress for both the genders. Moreover, two interdependent events, alienation and discrimination may produce psychological distress in highly acculturated young adults.

Marino et al. (2018) examined the association between problematic Facebook use, psychological distress (i.e., depression, anxiety, etc.) and well-being (life satisfaction, positive mental health).

The study was conducted on adolescents and young adults. A total sample of 13,929 was collected and later studied. Outcomes of random effects meta-analysis evidently showed a positive correlation between problematic Facebook use and psychological distress. To contrast, problematic Facebook use showed a negative correlation with well-being. Correspondingly, another study conducted on social networking sites addiction and their association with psychological problems in Indian context from North India.

A cross-sectional study was carried out including 200 medical students at Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College, Ajmer. The standardized tools that researchers used to analyze participant's psychological status were Anxiety Stress scale – 21 (DASS-21) and General Health Questionnaire-12 (GHQ-21). The results concluded that out of 200 participants, 108 were moderately affected, 83 students were mildly affected and 6 participants were highly addicted to social networking sites. Students who were highly affected showed high rates of depression, anxiety and stress scores. Though it is evident that high use of social networking sites leads to rising psychological problems among young adults (Meena et al., 2015).

Furthermore, Verger et al. (2009) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between psychological distress and various stressors among first-year university students. The data was collected from a large sample of university students in France, and examined the impact of socioeconomic factors, academic stressors, mastery, and social support on psychological distress in both males and females. The results showed that socioeconomic factors, such as family income and parental education, had a significant impact on psychological distress, with students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds reporting higher levels of distress. Academic stressors, such as workload and difficulty of courses, were also found to be important predictors of distress. In addition, the study found that mastery, or the degree to which students felt in control

of their lives, was negatively associated with psychological distress. Social support, particularly from friends, was also found to be a protective factor against distress. Interestingly, the study found gender differences in the relationship between stressors and distress. Females reported higher levels of distress than males, and were more affected by academic stressors. Males, on the other hand, were more affected by socioeconomic factors. The authors suggested that these findings have important implications for the development of interventions to promote mental health and well-being among university students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. They also highlight the need for further research to better understand the gender differences in the experience of psychological distress among university students.

Mindfulness

Karl et al. (2021) conducted a study to understand the relationship of personality, reinforcement sensitivity (including behavioral inhibition system and behavioral approach system) and mindfulness. A sample of 227 undergraduate students was collected and they were studied for 8 months using a random-intercept cross-lagged panel. The results showed that mindfulness showed stronger longitudinal effects on personality; moreover, a negative relationship was observed between reinforced sensitivity and mindfulness facts. The study also resulted in a positive relationship among non-judging mindfulness facets and in conscientiousness. Similarly, higher levels of describing mindfulness lead to rise in neuroticism. Another study was conducted to understand the relationship of mindfulness and emotional regulation in older and younger adults. Research used self-report methods to collect data from 50 older and 50 young adults. The investigation aimed to study the role of cognitive reappraisal, experiential suppression, and thought avoidance use in mediating the relationship between mindfulness and emotion

deregulation. The results showed that thought avoidance, unlike reappraisal and suppression strategies, played an important role in mediating the relationship between mindfulness and emotion deregulation. In younger adults, low mindfulness was observed with use of thought avoidance and high risk of emotion dysregulation as they had hardships in indulging in goal directed behavior in regards to strong emotions. The study suggested that reduction in avoidance of thoughts may result in the correlation among mindfulness and increased emotion regulation (Prakash et al., 2017). There is much research that is done on the influence of social media on mindfulness. One such research is done by Jones et al. (2022), the research aimed to study the role of mindfulness in mediating the relationship between social media engagement and depression in young adults. The research evaluated five facets of mindfulness as an association between behavioral, effective, and cognitive social media engagement and depression. The study was done on 371 young adults found at university and through various social media sites. Both males and females were included in the study whose age lies between 17 to 24 years. Five Factor Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ), the Social Media Engagement Scale for Adolescents (SMES-A), and Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-8) were the scales that were used in the research. The result concluded that awareness of mindfulness significantly mediated the correlation among all three social media engagement subscales (behavioral, affective and cognitive) and depression. An active mediation was observed between affective engagement subscale and depression by no judge, no react and describe facets of mindfulness. The study recommended that mindfulness is a vital means of linkage between social media engagement and depression. Various mindfulness-interventions should be used to make them understand how to use social media positively and mindfully.

Another research is done by Khaddouma and Gordon (2018), to study the mediating effect of forgiveness and mindfulness on psychological maltreatment and internet addiction. There were a total 392 participants both males and females, in the age of 20 to 29 years. The results showed that adults who were at risk for internet addiction had higher levels of psychological maltreatment whereas; forgiveness and mindfulness had lower levels as compared to the typical sample for internet addiction. Later, a structural equation model was carried out to observe the impact of mediator variables upon addition of the internet. Consequently, the results stated the full mediating role of mindfulness and forgiveness in regard to the impact of psychological maltreatment upon internet addiction. Hence, the study suggested that mental health services should be applied in order to lessen the detrimental effects of psychological maltreatment on internet addiction among young adults. A study was done to compare effects of regular mindfulness meditations, biofeedback exercises, and daily physical exercise on attention control, executive functioning, mindful awareness, self-compassion, and worrying among stressed young adults. A sample of 75 young adults who had high stress levels was taken who lie in the age range of 18 to 40. They were randomly assigned to mindful meditations, biofeedback exercises, and daily physical exercise and were measured pre-test, post-test and follow up. All the interventions were self-guided and were done for 5 weeks. It was concluded that all three techniques did not differ from each other and even the practice intensity was the same in all three techniques. Though, all these three interventions are equally effective in enhancing attention control, executive functioning, mindful awareness, self-compassion, and worrying (de Bruin et al., 2016).

Mettler et al. (2019) did an investigation to find the role of dispositional mindfulness in domains of adjustment (academic, emotional, social and personal) in university students. The study also

aimed to examine the contribution of gender, social support from peers and self-efficacy. 101 students were evaluated through the medium of online survey. The results disclosed that, dispositional mindfulness predicted adjustment even after controlling self-efficacy and perceived social support.

Meaning in Life

Guse and Shaw (2018) aimed to study the correlation among hope, meaning in life, and well-being. The study was done on 252 university going young adults. The goal was to counter the effect of meaning in life in the relationship between hope and well-being in both dispositional and perceived. The standardized tools that were used in the research were Mental Health Continuum – Short Form, the Adult Hope Scale, the Perceived Hope Scale, and the Meaning in Life Questionnaire. Findings revealed that meaning in life mediates the relationship in dispositional and perceived hope and well-being. Hence, hope plays the role of key element in meaningful goals and spirituality well-being, that overall leads to high meaning in life and well-being.

A correlational study on meaning in life and death anxiety was done by Lyke (2013) in young adults. The study covered two aspects of meaning in life: presence of meaning in life and search for meaning in life. 168 adults were studied and filled the questionnaires regarding the variables that were being measured. Presence of meaning and search for meaning in life were taken as independent variables and fear of death and dying as their dependent variables to apply multivariate analysis of variance. Findings concluded that search for meaning in life was significantly related to fear of dying. Steger et al. (2009) did research to study meaning in life across the life span. Two dimensions of meaning in life are presence of meaning in life and

search for meaning in life were correlated to different age spans such as emerging adulthood, young adulthood, middle-aged adulthood, and older adulthood. A large sample of 8756 was examined. The results concluded a structural invariance of meaning in different stages of life. The presence of meaning in life was highly present in the older stages of life, whereas, in younger stages search for meaning in life was highly prevalent. In addition, correlation exposed that presence of meaning in life was significantly associated with well-being across all the stages of life. To contrast, in later stages, search for meaning in life was significantly correlated to well-being.

Isik and Uzbe (2015) did an investigation on 335 adults (190 females and 145 males) to examine the impact of positive and negative effects and personality on meaning in life. Various standardized tools were used such as, Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ), Positive and Negative Schedule (PANAS), and Adjective-Based Personality Scale (ABPT). The research used various statistical analysis tools like one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), Pearson product moment correlation and hierarchical multiple regression analysis. Finding revealed that search for meaning in life was higher in young adults as compared to the middle aged adults and older adults. Further, openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and positive affect were significantly correlated to presence and search for meaning in life. However, a negative correlation was observed between presence of meaning and negative affect and neuroticism. In addition, results of multiple regression analysis suggested that search for meaning in life was predicted by extraversion and negative affect whereas, presence of meaning in life was significantly predicted by positive affect, openness to experiences and neuroticism. Zika and Chamberlain (1992) examined the correlation between meaning in life and

psychological well-being (both positive and negative dimensions of well-being). In the research it was concluded that there is a strong correlation among meaning in life and well-being. Moreover, meaning in life was highly correlated with positive well-being as compared to negative well-being. Though meaning in life is influenced by other factors such as family or home environment. One such classic study was done by Kealy et al. (2020) to examine the effect of appraisals of childhood parental support on current meaning in life, by mediation effects of identity commitment and dispositional optimism. Different assessments of early parental support, meaning in life, optimism, and identity commitment were completed by 120 young adults who lie in the age range of 18-25. Neuroticism was controlled through parallel mediation. It was concluded that early parental support and meaning in life is mediated by optimism and identity commitment.

A study on Meaning in life and sense of coherence and coping among young adults was done by Hutchinson (2005). A sample of 258 young adults including both males and females whose ages were ranging between 17 to 21 years was collected. Different self-report measures such as Purpose in Life Test, the Orientation to Life Questionnaire and the Adolescent Coping Scale were used. Various statistical analyses were applied like analysis of variance, Pearson product moment correlation, multiple regression and logistic regression. A significant positive correlation was seen in meaning in life and the ability to cope. In addition, a relationship was found between a sense of coherence (in individual aspects of coherence also which are comprehensibility, manageability) and meaningfulness, and in coping. The results suggested that the range of coherence is developed by selecting the effective coping techniques. Overall, a significant relationship was found between meaning in life, coherence and copying abilities.

CHAPTER 3

OVERVIEW, AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESIS

OVERVIEW

- Young adulthood is a critical period of development that spans from ages 18 to 25. During this time, young adults undergo significant changes in their personal and professional lives, as they move from adolescence to adulthood. This may involve leaving home and assuming responsibilities. However, this period is also marked with uncertainty and anxiety. There are many factors that can contribute to psychological distress in young adults. Some of the most common causes include stress related to academic or work-related demands, relationship problems, financial difficulties, and family issues.
- Psychological Distress refers to a state of emotional, mental, or physical suffering experienced by an individual. The causes of psychological distress can be complex and multifactorial. Furthermore, medical conditions such as chronic pain, chronic illness, or disabilities can lead to psychological distress. The symptoms of psychological distress can vary, depending on the individual and the cause. In some cases, individuals may experience physical symptoms, such as headaches, stomach aches, or muscle tension. Individuals experiencing psychological distress may have difficulty functioning in their daily lives leading to disruption in overall quality of life.
- According to Cuijpers (2009) psychological distress refers to “non- specific symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression.” High levels of psychological distress are indicative of

impaired mental health and may reflect common mental disorders, like depressive and anxiety disorders. Tenants of the stress-distress model posits that the defining features of psychological distress are the exposure to stressful events that threatens the physical or mental health, the inability to cope effectively with this stressor and the emotional turmoil that results from this ineffective coping (Horwitz, 2007; Ridner, 2004). Further, Dohrenwend and Dohrenwend (1982) refer to psychological distress as “a non-specific mental health problem.” “Psychological distress is lack of enthusiasm, problems with sleep (trouble falling asleep or staying asleep), feeling downhearted or blue, feeling hopeless about the future, feeling emotionally bored (for example, crying easily or feeling like crying) or losing interest in things” (Decker, 1997; Brunette & Mui 1997).

- The biopsychosocial model emphasizes that the biological, psychological, and social aspects of an individual’s life are interconnected and influence each other however; cognitive-behavioral model suggests that psychological distress arises from dysfunctional patterns of thinking and behavior. It proposes that negative thoughts and beliefs, attitude, maladaptive coping strategies, and learned behaviors can contribute to the development and maintenance of psychological distress. It can be identified and challenged through cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT). Psychodynamic model suggest that psychological distress arises from the interaction between three components of the mind: the id, ego, and superego. In addition, the stress vulnerability model proposes that psychological distress arises from an interaction between stressors and an individual's vulnerability to stress. The medical model of psychological distress views mental health disorders as primarily biological in nature and can be treated with medication or other medical interventions.

- Mindfulness is a state of consciousness that involves being fully present in the moment, paying attention to thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations without judgment. In recent years, mindfulness has become increasingly popular in Western culture, particularly in the field of Psychology. It has also been observed that it advances cognitive functions, improves emotional regulation, and boosts overall well-being. This helps to train the mind to remain focused and present in the moment. Another key component of mindfulness is the practice of mindful breathing.
- The term “mindfulness” has been used to refer to “a psychological state of awareness, a practice that promotes this awareness, a mode of processing information, and a character logical trait” (Brown et al., 2007). Rock (2009) asserts that “mindfulness is a habit, it’s something the more one does, the more likely one is to be in that mode with less and less effort, and it’s a skill that can be learned.” According to Brown and Ryan (2003) mindfulness has been contrasted with the states of mind in which attention is focused elsewhere, such as preoccupation with memories, fantasies, plans, or worries, and with behaving automatically without awareness of one’s actions. Mindfulness can simply be defined as “moment-by-moment awareness” (Germer et al., 2005).
- As per IAA model (Shapiro et al., 2006) there are three axioms which are the basic unit from which other things emerge. Intentions can be defined as dynamic and unfolding, which allows people to regulate and evolve with deepening practice, awareness, and insight. Second fundamental unit is attention, it involves paying attention to one’s experiences that may be, internal or external. And the third core unit is attitude. *Satipatthana* is an important teaching of Buddha which means “the establishment of mindfulness” or “presence of mindfulness” or, “foundations of mindfulness” helps in the

development of the whole state of mindfulness. These are the four foundations of mindfulness according to Buddhist literature. Mindfulness of the i) body ii) feeling iii) mind iv) *Dhamma*. Baer (2006) Five Facets of Mindfulness are: observing, describing, acting with awareness, non-judging inner experience and non-reactivity to inner experiences.

- The search for meaning in life is a fundamental human pursuit. However, at its core, the search for meaning is a deeply personal journey that requires introspection, self-awareness, and a willingness to examine one's belief and values. For some, the meaning of life can be found in religious or spiritual beliefs, such as belief in higher power or a particular set of values and ethics. There are different approaches towards the question of the meaning of life. Finally, the quest for meaning in life is a deeply personal and individual journey. While there may be no one "right" answer to this question.
- According to Antonovsky (1988); Baumeister & Vohs (2002), meaning in life involves "being able to make connections between the events and experiences in life, as well as being able to understand one's place in the grand scheme of things." Kabau et al. (2010) meaning in life is widely considered to be a critical ingredient in human well-being and flourishing. The definition of meaning has centered on two dimensions; coherence, one's comprehension and sense made of life, and purpose, or one's core aims and aspirations for life (Steger et al., 2006). Meaning in Life refers to "the idea that individuals are strongly motivated to find meaning in their lives, that is, to be able to understand the nature of their personal existence, and feel it is significant and purposeful" (Ratni & Rastogi, 2007). "The extent to which individuals find purpose in their life or establish a set of goals or meaningful perspectives" (Battista & Almond, 1973).

- Existentialism is a philosophical and psychological approach that focuses on the subjective experience of human existence and the search for meaning in life. To find meaning in life, existentialists suggest that individuals must embrace their freedom, authenticity, and involve rejecting societal norms and expectations that may conflict with our own sense of purpose and authenticity. The positive psychology approach towards meaning in life emphasizes the importance of pursuing personal goals that are personally meaningful and contribute to a greater sense of purpose and fulfillment. This involves identifying and pursuing personal goals that are aligned with our core values and beliefs, which helps in providing a sense of direction and motivation. Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) this framework proposes that humans have three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness.
- A research study was conducted by Jackson and Finney (2002) among young adults from three different universities. Life events inventory and various psychological distress scales (depression, anxiety, and anger/hostility) were used. The study concluded that unpleasant experiences in peer relationships were most predictive of distress; moreover, younger students were more prone to negative life events and were angrier/hostile about negative life events. Sellers et al. (2003) did a study to evaluate the direct and indirect relationship among racial identity, racial discrimination, perceived stress, and psychological distress. In addition, racial was found to be a risk factor for facing discrimination as well as a protective factor in the negative impact of discrimination on psychological distress.
- Karl et al. (2021) conducted a study to understand the relationship of personality, reinforcement sensitivity (including behavioral inhibition system and behavioral

approach system) and mindfulness. A sample of 227 undergraduate students was collected and they were studied for 8 months using a random-intercept cross-lagged panel. The results showed that mindfulness showed stronger longitudinal effects on personality; moreover, a negative relationship was observed between reinforced sensitivity and mindfulness facets. The study also resulted in a positive relationship among non-judging mindfulness facets and in conscientiousness. Another study was conducted to understand the relationship of mindfulness and emotional regulation in older and younger adults by Prakash et al. (2017). Research used self-report methods to collect data from 50 older and 50 young adults. In younger adults, low mindfulness was observed with use of thought avoidance and high risk of emotion dysregulation as they had hardships in indulging in goal directed behavior in regards to strong emotions.

- Guse and Shaw (2018) aimed to study the correlation among hope, meaning in life, and well-being. The goal was to counter the effect of meaning in life in the relationship between hope and well-being in both dispositional and perceived. Hence, hope plays the role of key element in meaningful goals and spirituality well-being, that overall leads to high meaning in life and well-being. A correlational study on meaning in life and death anxiety was done by Lyke (2013) in young adults. The study covered two aspects of meaning in life: presence of meaning in life and search for meaning in life. Findings concluded that search for meaning in life was significantly related to fear of dying. A research to study meaning in life across the life span by Steger et al. (2009). The results concluded a structural invariance of meaning in different stages of life. The presence of meaning in life was highly present in the older stages of life, whereas, in younger stages search for meaning in life was highly prevalent. In addition, correlation exposed that

presence of meaning in life was significantly associated with well-being across all the stages of life.

Research Gap

Research gaps in this area are highlighted by the review of literature. The variables psychological distress, mindfulness and meaning in life have been less explored in the Indian context as well as in the West in reference to young adults. In addition to this, very few studies have been done to examine the gender differences among young adults with respect to psychological distress, mindfulness and meaning in life.

Keeping the above in mind, the primary goal of the investigation is to study psychological distress, mindfulness and meaning in life among young adults. An attempt to address this gap will be made through this investigation.

Aim

The present study aims to study the correlates of Psychological Distress, Mindfulness and Meaning in Life among male and female young adults.

Need of the study

The results of this research will provide reasons to study young adults because adulthood is a significant period of transition in one's life. One undergoes remarkable changes in terms of identity, relationships and life goals. It is also a time of significant social and cultural change, with individuals transitioning from dependence on parents to independence and forming their own social networks. In addition to this there is also a crucial reason as sometimes young adults indulge themselves in risky behavior such as substance abuse, sexual behavior, and eating behaviors which can have long-lasting impact on one's health and life. By studying young adults, researchers can better understand the factors that influence these changes and behavior, and how

they impact individuals and society as a whole. It is also vital to examine the reasons for studying psychological distress because nowadays, psychological distress including conditions like anxiety, depression and stress is highly prevalent. This also impacts on functioning of an individual in areas of work and school as it may lead to decreased motivation, impaired concentration, and decreased productivity. There is also an adverse effect of psychological distress on social relationships as leading to social isolation, decreased quality of relationships, and decreased satisfaction which is very common in today's world. To overcome such problems of anxiety, stress and depression is to engage in mindfulness related exercises like yoga, meditation and breathing exercise. By researching mindfulness, researchers can better understand benefits and develop interventions to promote health and well-being. Other reasons could be improvement in cognitive functioning such as memory and attention, and having neurobiological effects in changing brain structure and function. One of the major reasons for studying mindfulness could be its clinical application as mindfulness based interventions have been used to treat a variety of mental health conditions, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Meaning in life is also an emerging area for researchers to study as it has an impact on well-being, greater life satisfaction; it lowers the depression and anxiety levels and overall helps to improve physical health. It is also related to existential concerns such as the search for purpose of meaning in life and the need for a sense of significance. It has been linked to greater resilience as well in the face of adversity such as illness or loss. Mindfulness plays a great role in cultural and social factors like religion and spirituality. Clinical applications of meaning centered interventions have been developed to address mental health concerns that are prevailing among humans. Thus the proposed research will highlight the impact of psychological distress on mindfulness and meaning in life among young adults.

Research Objectives

- The current research aims to assess the relationship between Psychological Distress and Mindfulness.
- The current research aims to study the relationship between Psychological Distress and Meaning in Life.
- The study seeks to examine the extent to which genders differ in psychological distress, mindfulness & meaning in Life.
- The study aims to explore the impact of psychological distress on mindfulness and meaning in life.

Research Question

- Is there a relationship between Psychological Distress and Mindfulness?
- Is there a relationship between Psychological Distress and Meaning in Life?
- Are there any gender differences in Psychological Distress, Mindfulness and Meaning in Life?
- Is there an impact of Psychological Distress on Mindfulness?
- Is there an impact of Psychological Distress on Presence of Meaning in Life?
- Is there an impact of Psychological Distress on Search of Meaning in Life?

Hypothesis

- There will be a significant negative correlation between Psychological Distress and Mindfulness.

- There will be a significant negative correlation between Psychological Distress and Presence of Meaning in Life.
- There will be a positive significant relationship between Psychological Distress and Search for Meaning in Life.
- There will be significant positive correlation between mindfulness and presence of meaning in Life.
- There will be significant positive correlation between mindfulness and search for meaning in Life.
- There will be no gender differences in Psychological Distress, Mindfulness and Meaning in Life.
- There will be a significant impact of Psychological Distress on Mindfulness.
- There will be a significant impact of Psychological Distress on Meaning in Life.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

This chapter clarifies the research methodology to answer the hypotheses in order to acquire systematic information. The aim of the present study is to identify the correlates of psychological distress, mindfulness and meaning in life. The study also explored gender differences in psychological distress, mindfulness and meaning in life. Further, the research also explored the impact of psychological distress on mindfulness and meaning in life. For this purpose 100 young adults (50 Males and 50 Females) between the age ranges of 18-25 were selected for the study.

Research Design

For the present research quantitative approach was used. Researchers use the quantitative research method when the purpose of research is to obtain primary data, that is, data gathered and assembled particularly for the study, in contrast to secondary data. The present study follows the quantitative research design intended to examine the correlation among the variables used in the study.

Sample

The sample consisted of 100 young adults (50 Males and 50 Females) in the age 18 -25 years. The sample was collected from Tri-city (Chandigarh, Panchkula, and Mohali).

Inclusion Criteria

- The respondents whose age range lies between 18 to 25 years were included.
- Respondents who belong to urban areas were considered.
- Participants who gave their informed consent were included.
- Young adults of both genders were included.
- Only literate young adults were chosen.

Exclusion Criteria

- Those suffering from any psychopathology or undergoing treatment for psychological problems were excluded from the sample.

- Those suffering from any other chronic illness were excluded.
- Those exhibiting any physical deformity were excluded.
- Illiterates or those having studied less than 10th standard were not included in the sample.
- The respondents who refused to give informed consent were excluded.
- Those who belong to rural areas were also excluded.
- Participants who were below 18 and above 30 were excluded as well.

Ethical Considerations

The following ethical guidelines were put into place for the research period.

- Confidentiality of the response and identity was assured.
- Participants were brief about the purpose of the study.
- Informed consent was obtained.
- The dignity and well-being of the respondent was protected all the time.

Tests and Tools

The following standardized tests and tools were used:

- Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10) (Kessler & Mroczek, 1992)
- The Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) (Brown & Ryan, 2003)
- Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ) (Steger et al., 2006)

All the tests used were standardized and had established reliability and validity. The scales administered were available in English. A semi structured interview schedule was also

administered to the participants to seek detailed information about their critical social and demographic aspects such as age, gender, and city and education qualification.

Brief Description of the Tests & Tool Used

The following standardized test and tools were used:

Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10): The questionnaire was developed by Kessler and Mroczek (1992). The scale has 10 questions in which each question concerns an emotional state. The response choices are based on a 5-point Likert Scale ranging from All of the time (5) to None of the time (1), which makes 50 as the highest score indicating severe distress and 10 as the minimum score reflecting no distress. The questionnaire includes questions such as “About how often did you feel tired out for no good reason”, “About how often did you feel nervous?”, “About how often did you feel so nervous that nothing could calm you down?”

The total internal consistency of the Psychological Distress Scale was ($\alpha = 0.844$). Concurrent validity between this instrument and the Self Reporting Questionnaire was ($p = 0.722, p = < 0.001$).

Following instructions were given for Kessler Psychological Distress Scale:

“Please read the statements given below carefully and try to answer the questions with utmost honesty about what you are feeling from the last 4 weeks. There are no right or wrong questions as we just want to know your opinion. Your results will be kept confidential and will be used only for the research purpose. One should answer each question item asked in the questionnaire.”

The Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS): The questionnaire was developed by Brown and Ryan (2003). The scale has 15 items designed to assess a core characteristic of

mindfulness. The scale uses 1-6 Likert Scale which indicates how frequently or infrequently a person currently has such experiences ranging from Almost Always (1) to Almost Never (6).

The scale consists of some of the questions such as “I could be experiencing some emotions and not be conscious of it until sometime later” or “I break or spill things because of carelessness, not paying attention, or thinking of something else.” The scoring is done by calculating the total scores of an individual and then simply computing a mean (average) of the 15 items. The minimum and maximum scores of an individual lie in the range of 15 to 90. There was a convergent validity (positive relationship) between MAAS and Cognitive emotion ($r = 0.23$, $p = <0.05$). The reliability coefficient, Cronbach’s alpha and test-retest reliability of MAAS was respectively 0.76 and 0.69.

The following instructions were given for The Mindful Awareness Attention Scale (MAAS):

“Please read the statements carefully and try to answer the questions with honesty. There is a collection of statements about how you feel every day. Please answer according to what really reflects your experience rather than what you think your experience should be. There are no right or wrong questions; we just want to know your opinion. Your results will be kept confidential and will be used only for the research purpose. One should answer each question in the questionnaire.”

Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ): The questionnaire was developed by Steger et al. (2006). The scale examines three facets of meaning in life dimensions that are: coherence, purpose and significance. The scale has a total of 10 items which covers two dimensions: Presence of meaning in life (how much respondents feel their lives have meaning) and Search of meaning in life (how much respondents strive to find meaning and understanding in their lives).

There are 5 items in each subscale. There is a reverse scoring as well in the subscale of Presence of Meaning in Life. The scale uses a 7-point Likert Scale ranging from Absolutely Untrue (1) to Absolutely True (7). Maximum scores in both the dimensions are 35 which lead to a maximum score of 70 for the total score of Meaning in Life Questionnaire. The tool consists of questions such as “I understand my life’s meaning”, “I am looking for something that makes my life feel meaningful” and so on.

The MLQ has been shown to have a good internal consistency (0.81 for Meaning in Life Presence of Meaning and 0.84 for Meaning in Life Search for Meaning). Temporal stability (one month test-retest coefficient of 0.70 for Meaning in Life Questionnaire - Presence of Meaning and 0.73 for Meaning in Life Search for Meaning). Convergent (correlation of Meaning in Life Questionnaire - Presence of Meaning and other measures ranging from 0.58 to 0.74) and discriminant validity.

In addition, internal consistency was good for both the Presence (0.86) and Search (0.87) subscales. Significant correlations between final MLQ subscales and other variables demonstrate the convergent validity of this scale. The MLQ also showed significant discriminant validity.

The following instructions were given for the Meaning in Life Questionnaire:

“Please take a moment to think about what makes your life and existence feel important and significant to you. Please respond to the following statements in the questionnaire as truthfully and accurately as you can, and please remember that these are very subjective questions and that there are no right or wrong answers. Your answers are just used for the research purpose and shall be kept confidential.”

Procedure

Keeping in view the objectives and ethical considerations, the following procedure were executed by the researcher:

Informed consent was taken from the subjects before they were enrolled in the study. All the interested subjects were administered self-reports measures. The participants were kindly asked to answer the questions with utmost honesty according to given instructions. They were assured that results and the information regarding them and their responses would be kept confidential and used for only research purposes. Proper standardized instructions were delivered to the subjects as per specified by the manuals of scales. Once the subjects completed the questionnaire they were wholeheartedly thanked for their active participation in the study. Scoring for all the given tests was done as per the scoring instructions given in the manual. The raw scores were tabulated and subjected to various statistical analyses by using the Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS) package. The research was conducted to study the impact of Psychological Distress, Mindfulness and Meaning in Life among Young Adults. The research was initiated. After commencing the research, literature review was collected, and the studies of various researchers were evaluated to gain an insight into variables and their relationship with other variables that were being studied. The statistical tools for data collection for all the variables were taken into consideration. After that, the hypothesis was formulated, and the expected outcomes were identified. The sample of young adults whose ages ranges from 18 - 25 was identified and approached for data collection. A brief description regarding the purpose of the study was provided to the sample as well as their doubts were also cleared regarding the variables and the questionnaire used in the study. The participants were both males and females as a comparative study was done to understand the gender differences among various variables that were used in the study. Further after giving instructions to the participants, data was

collected. Prior to the response given to the questionnaires, Participants were informed regarding the choice to participate or not to participate voluntarily. During the data collection, an informed consent was taken from all the participants who were willing to participate voluntarily. Some of the participants were not so keen to be part of the study, they did not give their consent and later they were thanked and their choice was respected. The data was collected through an online medium by Google Forms. The elements that were part of the data collection process were a) Informed Consent b) Demographic Profile c) Kessler Psychological Distress Scale d) The Mindful Attention Awareness Scale e) Meaning in Life Questionnaire. Participants were asked to read and give their consent before further proceeding to the survey questionnaire. The informed consent described the study, including the purpose of the study, voluntary nature of the participation, confidentiality and anonymity and the right to participants to opt-out of the survey at any time without penalty. The demographic information includes participant's name, age, gender, educational qualification, city where they live and their contact number or their email address. The survey questionnaire makes up the remaining elements of the data. Once the desired responses were collected, participants were appreciated for their valuable response and time. Later, the raw scores were compiled in excel sheets for each variable that was studied and for each participant. For the analysis of raw scores, SPSS was taken into the account. Before scoring and calculation, data was checked for any error that may occur using frequency analysis and ensured that all the discrepancies were checked. The Mean, SD for Psychological Distress, Mindfulness and Meaning in Life was calculated. In addition to this, Pearson R, T Ratio along with linear regression was computed by using SPSS to understand the relationship among predictor and criterion variables. Once the results were tabulated, the interpretation and the

analysis of the results was done. Further, the limitations of the study, implications of the study and recommendations for the upcoming future in the field were written and evaluated.

Scoring and Statistical Analysis

Scoring for all the given tests was done as per the scoring instructions given in the manuals. The raw scores were tabulated and subjected to various statistical analyses by using Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS) Package. Keeping in view the objectives of the study, statistical analysis Mean, Standard Deviation, Correlation Analysis, T-Ratio and Linear Regression was conducted. Correlation analysis was carried out to test the relationship between the variables.

T-Ratio was taken out to see the significant differences between the groups. Linear Regression Analysis was carried out to delineate the significant predictors for the criterion variables. Before carrying out statistical tests, the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance were checked. The responses that emerged through the semi-structured interview schedule were analyzed qualitatively and the results are presented in the form of tables, bar graphs and pie-charts

CHAPTER 5

RESULT

Table 1

Mean and standard Deviation scores of 100 young adults with variables psychological distress, mindfulness, presence of meaning, search of meaning and total scores of meaning in life.

	Gender	Distress	Mean of Mindfulness	Presence of Meaning	Search of Meaning	Total of Meaning in Life
N	Male	50	50	50	50	50
	Female	50	50	50	50	50
Mean	Male	23.5	3.86	23.2	24.1	47.4

Table 1

Mean and standard Deviation scores of 100 young adults with variables psychological distress, mindfulness, presence of meaning, search of meaning and total scores of meaning in life.

	Gender	Distress	Mean of Mindfulness	Presence of Meaning	Search of Meaning	Total of Meaning in Life
Standard Deviation	Female	27.1	3.79	23.0	25.0	48.2
	Male	6.87	0.899	7.26	6.91	11.0
	Female	7.07	1.08	6.28	6.89	9.44

Table 2

Correlation Matrix of Psychological Distress, Mindfulness, Presence of Meaning, Search of Meaning, and Total of Meaning in Life

Distress	Mean of Mindfulness	Presence of Meaning	Search of Meaning	Total of Meaning in Life
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	Distress	Mean of Mindfulness	Presence of Meaning	Search of Meaning	Total of Meaning in Life
Distress	—				
Mean of Mindfulness	-0.641***	—			
Presence of Meaning	-0.223*	0.311**	—		
Search of Meaning	0.033	-0.016	0.084	—	
Total of Meaning in Life	-0.113	0.190	0.719***	0.746***	—

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

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Table 3

Independent Samples T Ratio

		Statistic	Df	P	Mean difference	SE difference
Psychological Distress	Student's t	-2.6495	99.0	0.009	-3.6573	1.380
Mean of Mindfulness	Student's t	0.3176	99.0	0.751	0.0627	0.197
Presence of Meaning	Student's t	0.0609	99.0	0.952	0.0824	1.353
Search of Meaning	Student's t	-0.7537	99.0	0.453	-1.0369	1.376
Total of Meaning in Life	Student's t	-0.5420	99.0	0.589	-1.1106	2.049

Note. $H_1: \mu_{\text{Male}} \neq \mu_{\text{Female}}$

Table 4

Group Descriptive for T Ratio

	Group	N	Mean	Median	SD	SE
Psychological Distress	Male	50	23.48	22.00	6.870	0.972
	Female	51	27.14	27.00	7.00	0.980

Table 4*Group Descriptive for T Ratio*

	Group	N	Mean	Median	SD	SE
Mean of Mindfulness	Male	50	3.86	3.75	0.899	0.127
	Female	51	3.80	4.00	1.08	0.151
Presence of Meaning	Male	50	23.20	24.00	7.259	1.027
	Female	51	23.12	23.00	6.32	0.885
Search of Meaning	Male	50	24.12	25.00	6.909	0.977
	Female	51	25.16	26.00	6.91	0.968
Total of Meaning in Life	Male	50	47.36	47.50	10.956	1.549
	Female	51	48.47	48.00	9.60	1.345

Psychological Distress

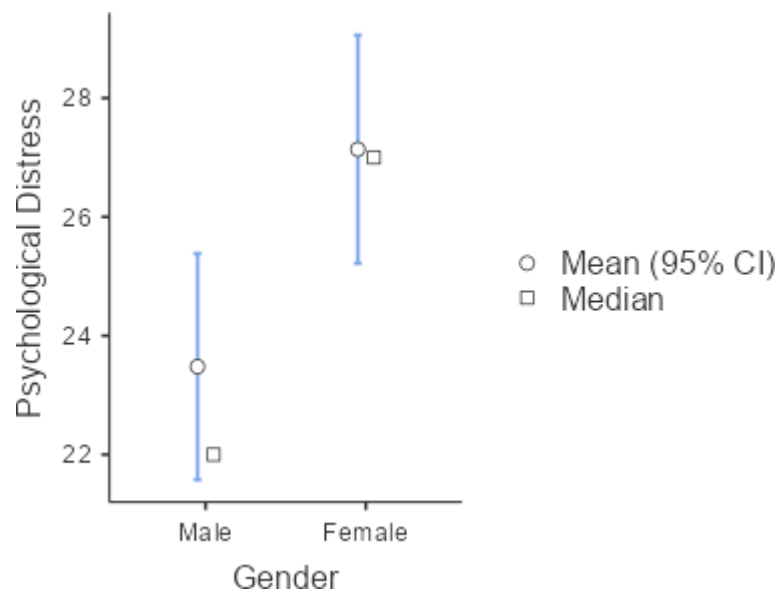


Figure 2. Depicting mean differences of psychological distress in genders.

Table 5

Linear Regression of Psychological Distress and Mindfulness

Predictor	B	T	P	r ²	F	P
Psychological Distress	-0.641	-8.27	<0.001	0.411	68.4	<0.001

Dependent Variable – Mindfulness

Q-Q Plot

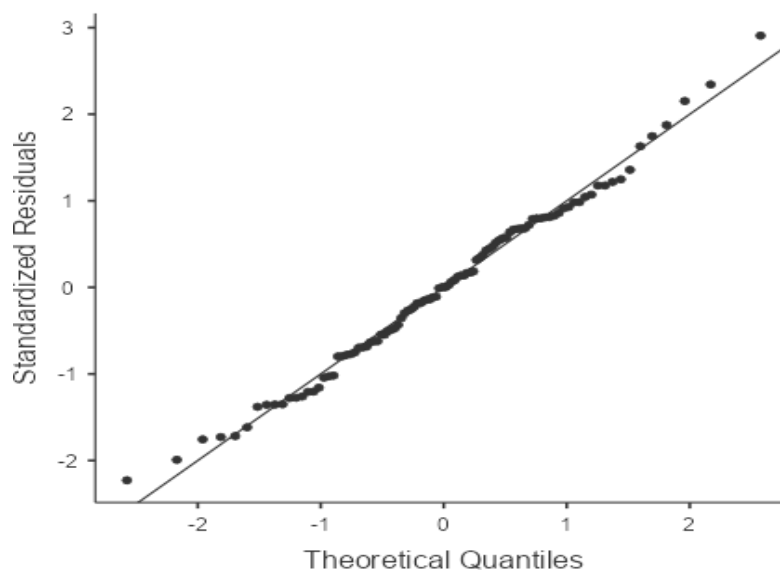


Figure 3. Q-Q Plot shows that the points lie approximately along the regression line with few errors.

Table 6

Linear Regression of Psychological Distress and Presence of Meaning in Life

Predictor	B	t	P	r ²	F	P
Psychological Distress	0.210	-2.27	0.026	0.0499	5.14	0.026
Dependent Variable – Presence of Meaning in life						

Q-Q Plot

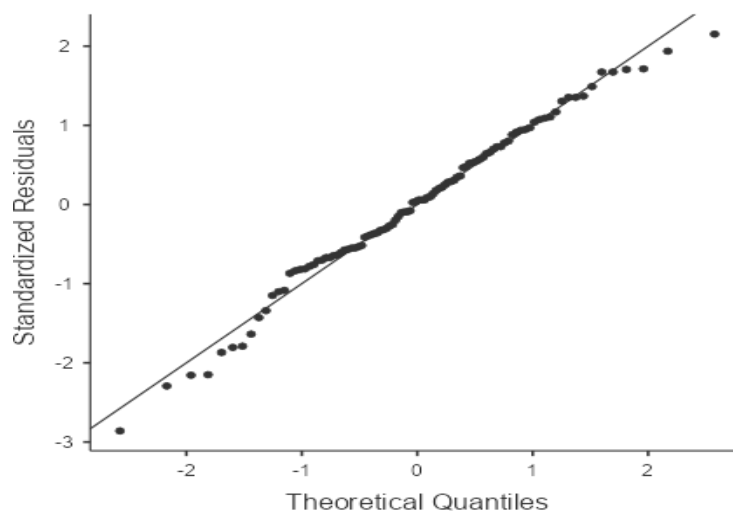


Figure 4. Q-Q Plot shows that the points lie approximately along the regression line with few errors.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

On the basis of correlation statistical analysis, the results found that there is a significant negative correlation between psychological distress and mindfulness($r = 0.641$, $p < 0.001$). The results of present study support the hypothesis that there will be a significant negative correlation in psychological distress and mindfulness. The pattern of results is consistent with the previous literature of Coffey and Hartman (2008) conducted a study on two independent, nonclinical samples of undergraduates. The study depicted that dispositional mindfulness and mindfulness-based interventions were associated with each other.

Results confirmed that there was a negative relationship between mindfulness and psychological distress. Furthermore, it was seen that emotion regulation, nonattachment, and rumination enhanced this relationship. Correspondingly, a research was done on anxiety sensitivity, experiential avoidance, and mindfulness among younger and older adults by Mahoney et al. (2015). The study investigated age differences between young adult students and in community living older adults in terms of anxiety sensitivity (AS), experiential avoidance (EA), and mindfulness. Different standardized tools were used such as Anxiety Sensitivity Index-3, Acceptance and Action questionnaire-II, Mindful Attention Awareness Scale, Kentucky inventory of Mindfulness Skills, Beck Anxiety Inventory, Geriatric Anxiety Scale, and State-Trait Anxiety Inventory. The researcher used T-test and correlation statistical analysis. The results showed that there was a difference in the levels of AS and EA, and in mindfulness. Young adults were high on AS and EA whereas, older adults were high on mindfulness traits. In addition, significant positive correlation was found between anxiety related symptoms and in AS and in EA. In contrast to this, mindfulness had an inverse relationship with AS and EA. Though AS, EA and low mindfulness tend to have a positive relationship with anxiety related symptoms in both young and old adults.

Similarly there is significant negative correlation between psychological distress & presence of meaning in life ($r = -0.223$, $p < 0.05$). However, no significant correlation between psychological distress and search for meaning in life, and total scores of meaning in life is observed. As the results our second hypothesis is accepted that there will be significant negative relationship between psychological distress and presence of meaning in life however, findings negate our third hypothesis that there will be significant positive relationship between psychological distress and search for meaning in life and thus the hypothesis is rejected. The pattern of results is consistent with the previous literature by Szymanski and Mikorski (2016) who conducted a study on Chinese (270) and Italian (279) adolescents. Findings concluded that presence of meaning in life is inversely correlated to psychological distress. In contrast to that, search for meaning in life is positively correlated to psychological distress but this finding is not consistent with our finding as no significant correlation results were observed.

Moreover, a significant positive relationship was found between mindfulness and presence of meaning in Life ($r = 0.311$, $p < 0.01$). Though our hypothesis is accepted that there will be significant positive correlation between mindfulness and presence of meaning in life. Our present study is supported by the previous literature that was done by Srikumaran et al. (2022). The study was done on 112 college going students (61 males and 51 females) in the district of Villupuram through random sampling method. Findings concluded that mindfulness is positively correlated with the presence of meaning in life.

In contrast to that, search for meaning in life and total scores of meaning in life have no significant correlation with mindfulness. Further it was seen that presence ($r = 0.719$, $p < 0.001$) and search for meaning in life ($r = 0.746$, $p < 0.001$) have significant positive relationships with total scores of meaning in life.

Alternatively, T-Ratio was also used to study the differences among males and females in the variables that are being studied. The results came out that females are higher on psychological distress as compared to males ($t = 0.009$) thus resulting in rejecting our hypothesis that there will be no gender differences in psychological distress. There is evidence of previous literature by Matud et al. (2015) who conducted a study to find gender differences in psychological distress. 1337 men and 1251 females from the general Spanish population whose age lie in 18 to 65 years were examined. Results came out to be that women have more psychological distress than males. In other variables no significant gender differences were found. Though, our hypothesis that there will be no gender differences in mindfulness and meaning in life was accepted.

Correspondingly, regression analysis indicated that psychological distress is a significant predictor ($\beta = -0.64$, $p < 0.05$) of mindfulness. Coefficients of determinants ($r^2 = 0.411$) showed that variation of psychological distress can explain 4.1% variation in mindfulness. This model is adequately fit ($F = 68.4$, $p < 0.05$). Though the hypothesis is accepted that there will be an impact of psychological distress on mindfulness.

Likewise, another regression analysis indicated that psychological distress is a significant predictor ($\beta = 0.210$, $p < 0.05$) of presence of meaning in life. Coefficient of determinants ($r^2 = 0.0499$) showed that variation of psychological distress can explain 49.9% variation in presence of meaning in life. This model adequately fits ($F = 5.14$, $p < 0.05$). Thus, resulting in acceptance of our hypothesis that there will be an impact of psychological distress on presence of meaning in life.

SUMMARY

One of the most common questions posed by humans throughout contemporary history is to reflect on the meaning of life. We all are in search of purpose, meaning and the conviction that our lives were greater than the sum of our parts. Fortunately, since we are resourceful beings, there were countless possible ways for us to find purpose. Every circumstance, occasion, event, and setting could have significance. In life, individuals could discover significance in the magnificent or even in the dull and miserable moments as well. Moreover, another aspect that is valued by humans is mindfulness. It is the ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we are doing, not unduly reactive or overwhelmed by what is happening around us. Although mindfulness is a quality we all have, we could all access it more easily when we practice regularly. The practice of mindfulness is focusing entirely on the present moment, without passing judgment on it or without making any projections for the future or the past. It typically entails to be “in the now.” But nowadays due to high pacing, people are struggling to achieve these gems in their life as there is so much hustle and bustle today, making people lose touch with the essence of life, especially young adults. Young adulthood is a special developmental stage during which the young adults engage in important developmental activities that allow for self-discovery and identity construction. It is a transitional stage of life when they are usually expected to become financially independent, form romantic attachments and take on responsibilities as active and engaged members of the community. Sometimes these expectations lead to mental burden known as psychological distress. These are symptoms and experiences of a person’s inner life that are typically seen as unpleasant or confusing. This kind of distress may modify an individual’s behavior as well as have a negative impact on their emotions and thoughts. The present study aimed to investigate the impact of psychological distress on mindfulness and meaning in life among young adults. For this purpose, a sample of 100 young

adults (50 Males and 50 Females) was collected in the age range of 18-25 years. In addition to this, standardized tools were used to measure psychological distress, mindfulness and meaning in life among young adults. The results found out that there was a significant negative correlation between psychological distress and mindfulness and presence of meaning in life. Moreover, mindfulness and presence of meaning in life were positively correlated to each other. Psychological distress was higher in females as compared to males. It was also observed that psychological distress is a predictor of mindfulness and presence of meaning in life. To overcome the emerging problem of distress among adults there are various therapies and techniques through improving one's mindfulness which helps to acknowledge emotions and their root cause and helps to examine the sensations in the very present moment. People who do not have any meaning attached to their life are more prone to develop psychological distress or to other psychological problems. It is important to develop meaning in life as it provides individuals a motive to go through their life.

SUGGESTIONS

Psychological distress can affect individuals in various ways, including anxiety, depression, and other mental health disorders. Here are some practical and effective ways to reduce psychological distress:

- Practice mindfulness: Mindfulness refers to the practice of being present and fully engaged in the current moment, without judging. Practicing mindfulness regularly can help to reduce stress and improve mental well-being. One can start by sitting quietly and focusing on your breath or any other object.
- Engage in physical activity – Engaging in regular physical activity can help reduce stress, anxiety and depression. Exercise releases endorphins, which are natural mood boosting chemicals in the brain. Even small amounts of physical activity can make a big difference.
- Connect with others – Social support is crucial for mental health. Connecting with family, friends or colleagues can help reduce stress and improve mood. Consider joining a social group or attending events that interest you.
- Get enough sleep – Sleep is essential for mental and physical health. Aim to get between 7-9 hours of sleep per night. If someone is struggling with falling asleep or staying asleep, try to create a relaxing bedtime routine such as, taking a warm bath or reading a book before bed.

Mindfulness is the practice of bringing one's attention to the present moment, with openness, curiosity, and non-judgment. It can help to reduce stress, increase focus, and improve overall well-being. Here are some detailed ways to improve mindfulness:

- Breathing exercise – focusing on one’s breath, inhale and exhale deeply, and notice the sensation of the air moving in and out of your body. Count your breath if it helps you stay focused.
- Body scans meditation – close your eyes and focus your attention on different parts of the body, starting from your toes and working your way up to the top of the head. Notice any sensations or feelings without judging them.
- Practice gratitude – take time each day to reflect on the things that you are grateful for, no matter how small they may be. Write them down in a journal or share them down with someone you care about.
- Take breaks from technology – disconnect from your phone and other devices for a set period each day. Use this time to practice mindfulness, meditate, or simply be present in the moment.
- Set intentions for your day – start each day with a clear intention, such as being kind to yourself and others, or focusing on your goals. This can help you stay mindful throughout the day.

Improving meaning is a personal and subjective journey that varies from individual to individual.

Here are some detailed ways to improve meaning in life:

- Identify your values – your values are the fundamental beliefs that guide your behavior and decisions. Identifying your values can help you clarify what’s most important to you and create a sense of direction in life.
- Set meaningful goals – setting goals that align with your values can give you a sense of purpose and motivation. Make sure your goals are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART).

- Cultivate relationships – human connection is essential for a fulfilling life. Invest in nurturing your relationships with family, friends, and your community.
- Find your passion- pursue activities that you enjoy and find fulfilling; it could be anything from a hobby to a career.
- Learn new things – learning new things can help you grow as a person and provide a sense of achievement.

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