

Muslim Students' Dispositional Mindfulness and Mental Well-Being: The Mediating Role of Core Self-Evaluation

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Abstract

This study analyses the mediating role of Core Self-evaluation (CSE) on the relationship between dispositional mindfulness and mental wellbeing. A sample of 184 Muslim students ($M_{age} = 22.08$) studying in the different universities completed the self-report measures of the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS), the Core Self-evaluations Scale (CSES), and the Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (SWEMWBS). The collected responses are subjected to multiple regression and mediation analyses. The results revealed that dispositional mindfulness and core self-evaluations significantly predicted mental well-being. It is found that core self-evaluation fully mediates the effect of dispositional mindfulness on mental well-being. Moreover, it is also observed that measures of dispositional mindfulness, core self-evaluation, and mental well-being are indifferent with respect to students' gender. Therefore, the study highlights the importance of core self-evaluation and explains a possible process by which dispositional mindfulness enhances Muslim students' mental well-being.

INTRODUCTION

Positive psychology research has grown incrementally over the last several decades, highlighting the necessity and relevance of studying the situations, variables, and processes that promote individual well-being, improve human functionality and lead to psychological flourishing (Pepping et al., 2013). Researchers have identified many factors that increase the level of well-being such as autonomy, purpose, self-acceptance, self-regulation, personal growth, and mindfulness (Huta & Ryan, 2010; Kashdan et al., 2008; Lopez & Snyder, 2012; Simon & Durand-Bush, 2015; Zhou & Xu, 2019). Among these mindfulness is one such factor that has been recognized as a well-established factor that promotes well-being (Baer et al., 2008; Brown & Ryan, 2003). Mindfulness not only improves one's capacity to recognize, manage, and resolve everyday difficulties, resulting in a healthy mind, but it also promotes peace of mind, mental harmony, resilience, and emotional stability by decreasing the level of emotional disturbance (Carlson & Brown, 2005), such as depression (Waszczuk et al., 2015) anxiety (Bajaj et al., 2016), and perceived stress (Bao et al., 2015) which promotes varied aspects of mental state and well-being.

The origin of mindfulness is rooted in Buddhism but has recently attracted growing interest among researchers due to its strong association with well-being. Mindfulness has been conceptualized and researched both as a state (i.e. a momentary condition) and as a trait

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(i.e. a stable characteristic). With the assistance of mindfulness-based therapies state mindfulness can be improved (Falkenström, 2010). Such interventions have been proven successful for people dealing with anxiety, stress, and irritability, thus helping in increasing levels of mindfulness (Khoury et al., 2013). While trait mindfulness has been defined as a dispositional trait or dispositional mindfulness that focuses on the ability to be aware in everyday life without being judgemental and accepting experiences as it is (Brown & Ryan, 2003).

Moreover, the basic principles of mindfulness appear to be very similar to Islamic rituals and values (Thomas et al., 2017). Prayer is an important Islamic ritual and practice in the lives of Muslims, as it fosters a sense of closeness and connection with Allah and also enhances spiritual experiences (Abdel-Khalek, 2014). Mindfulness, which allows a person to be attentive to their current experiences while remaining open and receptive to them, has been reported to improve many aspects of spiritual experiences (Cobb et al., 2015). Mindfulness allows an individual to maintain focus in the prayers, quieting the mind and directing the thoughts in an appropriate manner while ignoring the unwanted thoughts. It also improves spiritual experiences, which leads to a better sense of well-being (Saniotis, 2018).

Past research has consistently linked Mindfulness with higher levels of well-being and lower levels of psychological distress (Parto & Besharat, 2011). Mindfulness is the tendency to be present and aware of what is happening in the current moment. It's important to understand that awareness and attention are both associated with consciousness, with attention to specific stimuli occurring when we are fully aware of our surroundings as well as our own emotions, sensations, thought processes, and motives. Although, the mindfulness-based interventions (e.g. mindfulness-based stress reduction) have been found to extend the well-being and reduce psychological distress by increasing their ability to focus on the present and accept their thoughts as they are (Carmody & Baer, 2008). But for some people increased attention and awareness occur naturally, which is described as dispositional mindfulness. Dispositional mindfulness helps individuals to regulate their attention, focus on the current moment and decreases negative biases and overgeneralization (Roberts-Wolfe et al., 2012), and increase self-endorsed behavioral regulation by reducing the domination of automatic behavior that's related to voluntary and informed decision-making. These voluntary and independent actions are associated with increased well-being.

The conceptual framework of well-being stems from the notion of hedonism and eudemonism (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Hedonism is described as a person's cognitive and emotional evaluation of their own life. Where individuals frequently experience pleasant/unpleasant emotions and an overall evaluation that life is satisfactory, which has been referred to as subjective well-being, whereas eudemonia well-being is believed to be a by-product of six core dimensions of psychological well-being that promotes self-realization such as self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, life purpose, and personal growth (Ryff, 1989). Recently, a combination of these two approaches has risen in popularity (Disabato et al., 2016). In which mental well-being is defined as a psychological construct that includes both affect and psychological performance (Stewart-Brown et al., 2009). The current study suggests that a blend of both approaches is more appropriate because well-being is a multifaceted phenomenon that includes both eudemonic and hedonic characteristics (Fisher, 2014). Therefore current study operationalizes well-being as a mixture of both hedonic and eudemonic perspectives (Aked et al., 2008).

It is observed that increased mindfulness enables individuals to maintain continuous contact with their experiences while disengaging from emotionally distressing thoughts, which may result in a variety of factors associated with positive functioning (Grossman et al., 2004), psychosocial outcomes (Lavender et al., 2011), sense of autonomy (Brown & Ryan, 2003), and psychological functioning (Keng et al., 2011), all of which leads an individual to

experience higher levels of well-being. Therefore it reflects from the above discussion that dispositional mindfulness is a significant predictor of well-being.

The Mediating Role of Core Self-Evaluation

Although, the association between dispositional mindfulness and well-being is well established in the literature, the mechanisms by which mindfulness imparts its beneficial benefits on well-being are still unclear. We hypothesize that core self-evaluation (CSE) may mediate the mindfulness – well-being relationship. CSE is a higher-order personality construct that relates to the basic judgments that individual makes about one's worthiness, competence, and capacities (Judge et al., 1998). CSE consists of four specific personality traits that underlie individuals' cognitive assessment processes such as self-esteem, locus of control, generalized self-efficacy, and neuroticism (Judge et al., 1997). The first three factors refer to self-assessments of personal competence, while the fourth factor refers to self-assessments of emotional functioning and control. Recently, CSE has been acknowledged as an important element determining individual well-being. Studies have demonstrated that core self-evaluations are correlated with a different aspect of well-being, such as life satisfaction (Kong et al., 2014; Özer et al., 2016), happiness (Piccolo et al., 2005; Yan et al., 2013), psychological health (Abikoye & Sholarin, 2012), and emotional expression (Judge et al., 1999). Research suggests that individuals with better CSE are more likely to react favorably to their surroundings, maintain positive cognition and emotions. They present themselves as capable, worthy, and effective across different situations which leads them to experience higher levels of well-being (Judge et al., 1998; Song et al., 2012; Tsaousis et al., 2007). On the other hand, empirical evidence supports the relationships between dispositional mindfulness and CSE (Kong et al., 2014; Tan et al., 2016).

Thus, a higher level of mindfulness results in a higher level of CSE because mindfulness enables individuals to adopt a non-judgmental attitude and to be aware of their own experiences. It enables them to dissociate from emotionally stressful thoughts and to utilize their thoughts and emotions appropriately in daily activities, which results in greater positive self-evaluation. In contrast, people who experience a lower level of mindfulness share certain characteristics with persistent negative self-talk which leads them to engage in negative self-evaluation. Past research has suggested a well-established connection between mindfulness and CSE components (Barnhofer et al., 2011; Charles, 2010; Luberto et al., 2014; Michalak et al., 2011). For instance, the literature supports the association between mindfulness and self-esteem. A study conducted by Randal et al. (2015) discovered a positive association between mindfulness and self-esteem in their comprehensive evaluation of 15 cross-sectional studies. Additionally, Park & Dhandra (2017) discovered that people with increased mindfulness are better at managing their emotions due to their capacity to be present at the moment and adopt a non-judgmental attitude, which enables them to avoid self-critical and negative thoughts by guiding their attention toward productive activities, thereby boosting self-esteem.

During the past few decades, research on mindfulness has attracted the attention of both academics and practitioners due to several reasons. First, it impacts several aspects of life. Second, it serves as a critical component of a variety of therapies, including mindfulness-based stress reduction (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Kabat-Zinn, 1982) and dialectical behavior therapy, among others (Linehan, 1993), which are effective in managing a multitude of distinct psychological disorders including anxiety (Boettcher et al., 2014), depression (Williams, 2008), and post-traumatic stress disorder. Furthermore, given the vast range of psychological issues that can be treated through mindfulness, it's probable that it is addressing a common thread that runs through all of them. For example, growing research suggests that the self-regulation component of mindfulness promotes emotional stability by helping individuals to

manage their thoughts and behavior (Hanley, 2016). Past research has provided strong evidence for the association between mindfulness and emotional stability (Barnhofer et al., 2011; Feltman et al., 2009; Giluk, 2009; Wheeler et al., 2017). Similar results were found on the association between mindfulness and other factors of CSE, such as self-efficacy (Greason & Cashwell, 2009; Kord & Mehdi pour, 2018) and internal locus of control (Sulphey, 2016). In light of the foregoing discussion and the significant literature evidence for the positive effects of dispositional mindfulness on both CSE and well-being, it is possible that CSE may act as a mediator in the relationship between dispositional mindfulness and well-being. Thus, dispositional mindfulness would predict CSE, which in turn would predict increased levels of well-being.

Furthermore, past research studies have found significant differences in mindfulness with respect to gender (Ardenghi et al., 2022). Males have been found to score higher on dispositional mindfulness than females (Alispahic & Hasanbegovic-Anic, 2017). It is argued that these differences might be due to the fact that females tend to ruminate more on unpleasant experiences compared to male counterparts (Nolen-hoeksema et al., 1999; Tamres et al., 2002). Moreover, a study conducted by Slonim et al. (2015) proposes that women find it difficult to be mindful as the process of mindfulness requires paying attention to both positive as well as negative events. However, some studies have found that women score higher in dispositional mindfulness than men (Tamres et al., 2002). Similarly, gender differences in well-being have also been observed (Fisak & von Lehe, 2012). Women were found to report a lower level of well-being than men (Kingery et al., 2020). Past literature regarding gender differences for both dispositional mindfulness and well-being represents inconsistencies in the results which warrants further investigation to examine whether the effects of dispositional mindfulness on students' well-being differs with regards to gender.

Rationale for Current Study

Previous studies confer the relationship between core self-evaluation and well-being (Liu et al., 2016; Stein & Grant, 2014) and also support the critical role of mindfulness in self-evaluative processes (Kong et al., 2014; Tan et al., 2016). However, there is limited research on the combined effect of dispositional mindfulness and core self-evaluation on well-being. More specifically, there is a scarcity of research on Muslim students as most of the studies conducted in the field of mental well-being and mindfulness are directed on the Christian and other faith groups. Furthermore, past research has proposed that core self-evaluation has a significant influence on promoting well-being (Ni & Wang, 2015; Smedema, 2014). Nonetheless, it is unclear how dispositional mindfulness enhances well-being through promoting CSE, and if the probable process behind this association varies across males and females.

Study Aims and Hypotheses

The current study examines the mediating effect of core self-evaluation on the association between dispositional mindfulness and well-being among muslim students. This study is a novel attempt to elucidate the process through which mindfulness affects well-being. Based on the preceding discussion, we suggest the following hypothesis.

- H₁. There is a significant difference in dispositional mindfulness, Core self-evaluation, and mental well-being between males and female students.
- H₂. Dispositional mindfulness has a significant positive effect on core self-evaluation.
- H₃. Core self-evaluation has a significant positive effect on students' mental well-being.
- H₄. Core self-evaluation mediates the effect of dispositional mindfulness on students' mental well-being.

METHODS

Participants and procedure

The present study included only Muslim students from three major public universities of Kashmir valley (India). A total of 207 students (39 female, 144 male) were randomly recruited after obtaining informed consent. The questionnaire was self-administered in the classroom setting and it took approximately 10-15 minutes for students to complete the survey. Out of 207 students, only 184 valid responses were recorded and no monetary benefits were provided to the participants.

Measures

All the measures pertaining to 3 constructs (CSE, dispositional mindfulness, and mental well-being) were adapted from previously validated scales (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Judge et al., 2003; Stewart-Brown et al., 2009) and administered in the English language. Moreover, the reliability and the validity of the measures used in this study are estimated by calculating Cronbach's alpha, inter-construct correlations as recommended by (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

The Core Self-evaluations

The 12-item Core Self-evaluations Scale (Judge et al., 2003) designed to quantify the underlying self-evaluative elements present across the four more specific traits (viz; self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, neuroticism, and locus of control) was used. Participants were asked to rate all the items using a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Higher scores represent more positive CSEs. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha of CSE was found to be 0.74

Mindfulness

Mindfulness was measured using the 15 item Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (Brown & Ryan, 2003). The participants responded to items such as "I could be experiencing some emotion and not be conscious of it until sometime later" using 6 point Likert scale ranging from (1 = almost always, to 6 = almost never). The internal consistency of MASS has been established (Bajaj et al., 2016). MASS's Cronbach's alpha was found to be 0.74 in this study.

Mental well-being

The short version of the Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (Stewart-Brown et al., 2009) was used to measure mental well-being. This scale contains seven items comprised of positive words that address various aspects of mental health and well-being. Participants rated how strongly they felt about each experience, such as "I've been feeling relaxed" and "I've been coping with issues nicely" using 5 point Likert scales ranging from (1 = none of the time to 5 = all of the time). In the present study, the Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale's Cronbach's alpha was found to be 0.75.

Data analysis

A multistep approach was conducted to analyze the data using SPSS version 24.0, and PROCESS macro designed by Hayes (2012). Firstly, to test the reliability and validity, we calculated Cronbach's alpha values and inter-construct correlation to establish validity and reliability. Second, a descriptive analysis (means and standard deviations) of dispositional mindfulness, core self-evaluation, and mental well-being was conducted. Third, independent t-tests were conducted to examine differences in dispositional mindfulness, CSE, and mental well-being with respect to gender. Fourth, we utilized multiple linear regression analysis to investigate the impact of dispositional mindfulness and CSE on mental well-being. Finally, a

Table 1. Descriptive statistics, alphas, and correlations for all measures (N=184)

	M	SD	α	1	2	3
1) Dispositional mindfulness	3.83	.73	.736	1.00		
2) Core self-evaluation	3.22	.47	.743	.42**	1.00	
3) Mental well-being	3.48	.63	.756	.46**	.66**	1.00

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2. Mean differences in dispositional mindfulness, core self-evaluation, and mental well-being with respect to gender

Variables	Gender	N	M	SD	df	t	p
Dispositional mindfulness	Male	39	3.887	.790	181	.597	.551
	Female	144	3.809	.710			
Core self-evaluation	Male	39	3.254	.451	181	.432	.666
	Female	144	3.217	.479			
Mental well-being	Male	39	3.619	.636	181	1.502	.135
	Female	144	3.448	.627			

*p ≤ .05

Table 3. Summary of multiple regressions for dispositional mindfulness, core self-evaluation, and mental well-being

Hypothesis	Causal Path	β	SE	t	p	Hypothesis validation
H2	DM → MW	.229	.051	3.857	< .001**	Supported
H3	CSE → MW	.563	.079	9.497	< .001**	Supported

Note: SE= standard error, p< .01; **, DM: Dispositional mindfulness, CSE: Core self-evaluation, MW: Mental well-being Adjusted R², .472, F, 82.875; R², .478.

Table 4. indirect effects and 95% confidence intervals for the mediational model

Model pathways	Direct effect	Indirect effect	95% CI	
			LL	UL
Dispositional mindfulness → core self-evaluation	.270	-	.185	.355
Dispositional mindfulness → mental well-being	.195	-	.095	.295
core self-evaluation → mental well-being	.753	-	.597	.910
Dispositional mindfulness → core self-evaluation → mental well-being	-	.203	.133	.285

mediation analysis was performed to determine the indirect effect of dispositional mindfulness on mental well-being through CSE.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of descriptive statistics, including Pearson's correlations between dispositional mindfulness, CSE, and mental well-being are presented in Table 1. The table shows dispositional mindfulness ($r = .46$, $p < .01$) and CSE ($r = .66$, $p < .01$) both have a significantly positive correlation with mental well-being. Since inter-construct correlation are less than 0.8 which reflects discriminant validity and absence of multicollinearity.

The results of the t-test reported in table 2, indicates that the calculated t-value of dispositional mindfulness ($t = .597$), CSE ($t = .432$), and mental well-being ($t = 1.502$) is insignificant at .05 level, suggesting that males and females do not perceive dispositional mindfulness, CSE, and mental well-being differently. Hence H1 is not supported.

The results of the multiple regression analysis presented in Table 3, indicate that dispositional mindfulness and CSE significantly predict mental well-being and the regression model is to be significant (Adjusted R Square = .472, $R^2 = .478$, $F = 82.875$, $p < .01$). As shown in the table dispositional mindfulness ($\beta = .229$, $p < .01$), and CSE ($\beta = .563$, $p < .01$) significantly predicted mental well-being, but CSE plays a more significant role in shaping mental well-being. As can be seen in Table 3, dispositional mindfulness and CSE together explain 47 % of the total variance in mental well-being. Therefore hypotheses H2 and H3 are accepted.

The results of mediation analysis presented in table 4, show that the path (direct effect) from dispositional mindfulness to core self-evaluation is positive and significant ($b = .2706$, $SE = .0429$, $p < .01$), suggesting that increased dispositional mindfulness are associated with higher levels of core self-evaluation. The direct effect of dispositional mindfulness on mental well-being is positive and significant ($\beta = .1956$, $SE = .0507$, $p < .01$). The direct effect of core self-evaluation on mental well-being is positive and significant ($\beta = .7535$, $SE = .0793$, $p < .01$), suggesting that people with higher core self-evaluation are more likely to report higher levels of mental well-being than the person who score low on core self-evaluation. The indirect effect is tested using non-parametric bootstrapping. Therefore, it reflects that core self-evaluation mediates the effect of dispositional mindfulness on mental well-being. Thus, confirming H4.

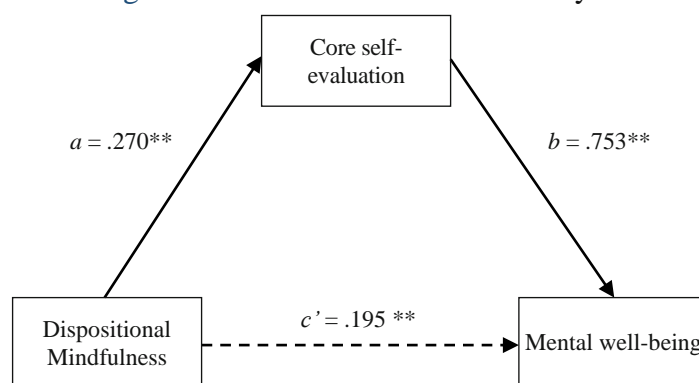
Discussion

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the mediating influence of CSE on the relationship between dispositional mindfulness and mental well-being, as well as to determine if males and females differ in their dispositional mindfulness, CSE, and mental wellbeing in Muslim students. As predicted, correlation analyses revealed a significant positive correlations between dispositional mindfulness, CSE, and mental well-being. These results correspond to earlier research on the association between dispositional mindfulness and mental well-being (Schutte & Malouff, 2011; Short et al., 2016; Wenzel et al., 2015) as well as with CSE (Kong et al., 2014).

Although research has investigated several mediators between dispositional mindfulness and mental well-being, the mediating role of core self-evaluation has not previously been explored. As expected, CSE fully mediated the relationship between Muslim students' dispositional mindfulness and mental well-being. This finding supports previous research that has reported a mediating role of CSE, for example, Kong et al. (2014) reported the mediating role of CSE on the relationship between dispositional mindfulness and life satisfaction. Therefore, it appears that the students who demonstrated increased mindfulness tend to have greater levels of CSE resulting in overall improvement of their mental well-being.

Consequently, it can be derived that CSE is a significant factor in promoting mental well-being and reducing negative effects. Clinicians and researchers may be able to develop approaches that specifically target and address underlying mechanisms. One potential explanation for these findings is that the increased mindfulness causes people to be more accepting of their mental, emotional, and bodily-sensory experiences and as a result people with increased mindfulness embrace their thoughts, emotions, and circumstances, rather than

Figure1. Model of the mediation analysis.



** $p < .01$ Unstandardized; Standardized path
Coefficients: $a = .270$, $b = .753$, $c' = .195$

being engrossed in negative feelings and thoughts (Shapiro et al., 2006). Mindfulness encourages self-regulated behavior by involving people in behaviors that are aligned with their beliefs, desires, and interests thus improving their well-being. Furthermore, dispositional mindfulness encourages people to become less critical of their emotions, feelings, and stimuli which help to improve core self-evaluation. The mindfulness-based intervention may have a direct impact on core self-evaluation and as a result improve well-being.

Moreover, our results regarding mean differences in dispositional mindfulness, core self-evaluation, and mental well-being with respect to gender were insignificant. These results are in line with the previous studies (Goodall et al., 2012; Kong et al., 2014). This might indicate that the mechanism of mindfulness, CSE, and mental well-being is the same in both men and women.

Implications

The present study added to our understanding of the complex relationship between dispositional mindfulness, core self-evaluation, and the mental well-being of Muslim students. The outcomes of the study provide compelling evidence for the external validity of mindfulness and core self-evaluation as predictors of mental well-being. Our findings have practical implications for the promotion of well-being among Muslim students as study found that well-being can be acquired through promoting an individual's basic self-evaluative processes. Mindfulness helps individuals to be more resilient and enables them to make an objective evaluation of themselves and the problems they face. It allows individuals to become aware of their innermost thoughts feeling and actions which helps them to maintain focus and attain increased spiritual experiences. Furthermore, an individual with an increased level of mindfulness maintain focus in prayers and develop a strong connection with Allah and became aware that all the problems and hardships that an individual face come from him only. As a result positive thought processes takes place which contributes to the increased levels of well-being.

Therefore, the finding of the present study emphasizes the importance of conducting interventions that facilitate people to improve their self-evaluation and become more conscious of their worth by increasing their mindfulness levels. Educators can help their students to evaluate themselves positively by enhancing their levels of mindfulness and they might create strategies and approaches to help them do so. Psychotherapists and counselors may be interested in enhancing self-evaluative processes to improve levels of well-being. They need to focus on effective strategies to increase well-being and positive self-evaluation through workshops, counseling, etc. Mindful activities, emotional retraining, and changing one's thinking and habits should all be prioritized. These strategies have the potential to increase self-evaluation and promote higher levels of well-being among Muslim students when employed more systematically.

Limitation and Future Research Direction

Like any other research, this study is no exception to the limitations that warrant further consideration. First, this study used cross-sectional data. In future longitudinal or experimental studies can be conducted to validate the mediation process. Second, the data was solely based on self-report measures which are susceptible to social desirability. Future research can employ a variety of assessment methods to increase the validity of the findings. Third, since the current research used a non-clinical sample it's unclear to what extent these findings generalize to a more diverse or clinical population.

Despite these limitations, the present study is a unique attempt to study CSE as a mediator that explains the underlying mechanism of the relationship between dispositional

mindfulness and mental well-being among Muslim students. The findings of this study revealed a previously unknown mechanism to explain the association between dispositional mindfulness and mental well-being. These findings can be used to create successful therapeutic approaches that can improve Muslim students' well-being by improving mindfulness and core self-evaluation.

CONCLUSION

The present study highlighted the positive impact of core self-evaluation and dispositional mindfulness on mental well-being among Muslim students. It is found that CSE fully mediates the effect of dispositional mindfulness on mental well-being. Moreover, no significant differences were found with respect to the gender on measures of dispositional mindfulness, CSE, and mental well-being. This study highlights the importance of CSE and explains a possible process by which dispositional mindfulness enhances well-being which may aid psychotherapists and counselors to design effective interventions to enhance the self-evaluative process among Muslim students for the promotion of well-being.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Mohammad Saleem has prepared research designs, collected data at the study site and analysed data. Irfan Bashir has prepared and interpreted research results. Touseef Rizvi and Irfan Bashir have provided suggestions, comments, and section improvements along with editing and proofreading.

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