Mindful Eating and Mental Well-Being in Karachi, A Metropolitan City

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Introduction

MINDFULNESS: “an open-hearted, moment-to-moment, non-judgmental awareness”
(Kabat-Zinn, 2005)
MINDFUL EATING:
“...being aware in the present moment when one is eating; paying close attention to the senses, including physical and emotional sensations.” (Albers, 2008)
Mindful Eating
www.eatingmindfully.com

Aware
Tasting vs. mindless munching

Savor
Notice the texture, aroma, and flavor. Is it crunchy, sweet, salty, smooth, spicy?

Observe
Notice your body. (rumbling stomach, low energy, stressed out, satisfied, full, empty)

Nonjudgment
Speak mindfully and compassionately. Notice when "shoulds," rigid rules or guilt pop into your mind.

In-the-Moment
Be fully present. Turn off the TV. Sit down. When you eat, just eat.

(Moor, Scott, & McIntosh, 2012)
MENTAL WELL-BEING:
“A state which allows individuals to realise their abilities, cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and fruitfully, and make a contribution to their community”
(WHO, 2004)
Well-being in Karachi, Pakistan

Karachi’s unpredictability makes its people unhappy

Farhan Anwar

The measurement of national and micro-level growth, indicators and indices being implemented have undergone a paradigm shift. Previously, the trend was to focus mainly on fiscal indicators, such as Gross Domestic Product and Gross National Product. Focus thereafter shifted from mere statistics to the people, with the groundbreaking introduction of the Human Development Index (HDI), and the appearance of the first Human Development Report in 1990 with the mantra that the people are the wealth of a nation. The major cred is to the work of the late Dr. Fatima Jinnah, who brought the HDI as a concept to the rest of the country.

Now, as we go for more ‘indicators’ and ‘regressional’ forms of growth, we have another indicator that prioritises the ‘happiness index’ of people. In April 2014, the first ESI high-level meeting on happiness and well-being was held. At the same time, the first World Happiness Report was published. The report methodology aims to measure happiness at the micro level: social cohesion, economic well-being, social support, and freedom. The report methodology also measures happiness at the individual and community level, with the ‘happiness index’ of the city estimated to be 0.57, which is above the world average of 0.53.

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Karachi’s unpredictability makes its people unhappy

As the world tries to include happiness and well-being as indicators of growth, Pakistan and Karachi fall quite low in the listings. What makes us an unhappy country? Let us see what the trends associated with causes of unhappiness in Karachi are.

A clinical psychologist and social activist, Dr. Tariq Nisar, explained that much of the stress, anxiety and the associated rate of unhappiness at the community level is due to the ‘unsustainable’ nature of the city’s economy

What makes Karachi unhappy?

Karachi’s economic growth and progress in three basic capabilities: to live a long and healthy life, to be educated and knowledge, and to enjoy a decent standard of living. Now, as we go for more ‘indicators’ and ‘regressional’ forms of growth, we have another indicator that prioritises the ‘happiness index’ of people.

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As a result, there is an apparent feeling of unhappiness.

How to be happy?

Dr. Nisar also pointed out a disturbing trend that is coming out of the research conducted at the micro level — a growing lack of effective action on the side of the government, the absence of community-building and action. He felt that a lot of improvement can be brought about if people indulge individually and collectively in positive psychological exercises. They should focus on ‘positive’ rather than ‘negative’ and organisational and school clinicians can introduce such practices among their employees and students. Innovative techniques, such as art and music therapy, can have a double benefit of adding a skill dimension to add to conditioning to reflect on stress.

There is no denying that much is going on with the city. However, a collective effort needs to focus on the positive, strengthening a community spirit and engaging citizens such as the service providers can contribute to making a dent in the overwhelming negativity that has engulfed the city of Karachi.

The writer is an urban planner and runs a non-profit organisation based in Karachi.

Sohail & Chaudhry (2004)
Mobilising youth for community uplift as a sustainable investment

By Farhan Anwar / Photo: Farhan Anwar Published: June 23, 2014

There is now a growing global trend in increased volunteer youth mobilisation to help create inclusive and sustainable cities.

PHOTOS: FARHAN ANWAR
#SmilePakistanChallenge!

 Attempt it and nominate a few people ahead! 😊

**Smile Pakistan Challenge**
Make people smile, film/photograph and post with #SmilePakistanChallenge!

The main aim is to remember how to smile, because we can!

Lolz Studios Mathira Hamza Ali Abbasi & Waqar Zaka Bring it on! — with Suleman Ashraf Habib and 2 others.
#SmilePakistanChallenge

Challenge Accepted MaanSal Studios! Here's our #SmilePakistanChallenge.

Do something good, make a video & challenge your friends to do the same!

Let's bring some hope back in Pakistan!

Let's do this!

Here are some creative ideas: https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?v=608466775838312&set=vb.174408115920507&type=3&theater — at IMCG F-10/2.
Rukh E Mah @Rukhma_Sajid · Aug 29
The main aim is to remember how to smile. I nominate everyone reading this to do the #SmilePakistan Challenge. pic.twitter.com/Ds7730Ch4W

MaanSal Studios.
August 27

Enormous response on #SmilePakistanChallenge!
Several schools doing it, trending on twitter, it's all over facebook!

Good work my fellow Pakistanis, you guys rock! ❤️

P.S: A message from Turkey to all our Pakistanis is coming soon!

Like · Comment · Share

632 people like this.
THE PAKISTANI CULTURE

- Food etiquette
- Sense of community
- Gratitude
- Positive psychology ingrained in the culture due to various reasons
• Very less work on non-clinical population
• Spill over-effect
• Greater quality of life
• Positive interventions
HYPOTHESIS

Higher levels of mindful eating will be significantly positively correlated with higher levels of mental well-being.
Participants

- 467 respondents
- 309 met exclusion criteria
- 93 Males 216 Females
- Ages: 18-54 years (M=27.7)
- Residents of Karachi, Pakistan
- Online Survey method
The Mindful Eating Questionnaire (Framson et al. 2009)
28 items – 5 sub domains disinhibition, awareness, external cues, emotional response, and distraction. A valid measure with adequate construct validity and reliability (Cronbach’s alpha value = 0.64). Subscale scores also had good internal consistency reliability: disinhibition (0.83), awareness (0.74), external cues (0.70), emotional response (0.71), and distraction (0.64).
Materials

• The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (Tennant et al., 2007)
  14 items - psychological functioning (psychological well-being), affective and
cognitive-evaluative elements- 5-point scales. Medium to high content and criterion validity,
and high test–retest (0.83) and internal consistency reliability with a Cronbach’s alpha
score of 0.91.
Procedure

- Permission to use MEQ and WEMWBS
- Online Survey tool- ‘SurveyMonkey’
- Informed consent
- Confidentiality
- Thank you note and contact details
Correlation between Mindful Eating and Mental Well-being

.291 (p<0.01)
The table shows the Pearson correlation value that exists between the sub domains of mindful eating and mental well-being ($N=309$). Correlations were significant for all sub domains except the ‘External Cues’ sub domain.
Discussion

Overall Mindful Eating Score

Mental Well-Being Score

$r = .291$
$p < .05$
Discussion

**Awareness Subscale**

\( r = .221, \ p < 0.05 \)

- Anchoring self to the present through mindful eating principles
- Non reactive attention resulting in acceptance
- Kirby (2012)
Disinhibition Subscale

\( r = 0.208, \ p < 0.05 \)

• Self-regulation and proactive coping (Aspinwall and Taylor, 1997)

• Mindfulness may predict self-regulated behavior and positive emotional states (Brown and Ryan, 2003)
Emotional Response Subscale

\( r = 0.189, \ p < 0.05 \)

- Mindfulness positively correlated with rational coping (Palmer & Rodger, 2009)
Distraction Subscale

\( r = 0.105, \quad p < 0.05 \)

- Paying attention to the present has shown to have a positive impact on well-being. (Kirby, 2012)

- Changing Culture
External Cues Subscale

\( r = -0.063, p < 0.136 \)

- Cultural Reasons?
- Over thinking and analysis leads to lower levels of mental well-being
Strength of Correlation

Mindfulness to escapism or rumination
(DelMonte, 2011)
Implications

- Betterment of quality of life

- Feedback after questionnaires

- Encourages further research

- Clinical settings
Limitations & Recommendations

• Cannot infer causality
• Difficult to generalize
• Lower response rate
• Cross-cultural validity of scales
Conclusion
THANK YOU