A person is shown in silhouette, sitting cross-legged on a beach. Their hands are pressed together in a prayer position above their head. The background features a bright sunset over the ocean, with a clear blue sky above and a dark horizon line. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

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

Zaynah Khan &  
Zainab F. Zadeh

# Introduction

## MINDFULNESS:

*“an open-hearted, moment-to-moment, non-judgmental awareness”*

(Kabat-Zinn, 2005)



# Introduction

## 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)



(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



**ELASTI**CITIES  
FARHAN ANWAR

## Karachi's unpredictability makes its people unhappy

In the measurement of national and micro-level growth, indicators and indices being implemented have undergone a paradigm shift.

Previously, the trend was to focus merely on fiscal indicators, such as Gross Domestic Product and Gross National Product. Focus then shifted from mere 'statistics' to the 'people' with the ground-breaking introduction of the Human Development Index (HDI), and the appearance of the first Human Development Report in 1990 with the motto that 'the people are the wealth of a nation'.

The major credit for the visioning of HDI goes to our very own, the late Dr Mahboobul Haq, a former finance minister of Pakistan and an economist of global standing. HDI captures progress in three basic capabilities: to live a long and healthy life, to be educated and knowledgeable and to enjoy a decent standard of living. Now, as we go for more 'inclusive' and 'equitable' forms of growth, we have another indicator that prioritises the 'happiness level' of people.

In April 2012, the first UN high-level meeting on happiness and well-being was held. At the same time, the first World Happiness Report was published. The report's methodology aims to measure happiness at two distinct levels: as an emotion (Were you happy yesterday?) and as an evaluation (Are you happy with your life as a whole?). This is a significant indicator, as happiness is an aspiration of every human being, and

is increasingly being considered as a critical measure of social progress. The most recent World Happiness Report 2013 placed Pakistan at number 81 out of a total of 156 countries in its ranking of happiness globally.

### What makes Karachi 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? And what are the trends associated with causes of 'unhappiness' in Karachi?

A clinical psychologist and social activist, Dr Nirmal Niazi, explained that much of the stress, anxiety and the associated state of unhappiness at the individual and community level have to do with the 'unpredictable' nature of the city - the continuing uncertainty in, for example, the law and order situation. This coupled with the 'trust deficit' that exists between the citizens and the service providers compounds the sense of insecurity and anxiety.

For example, if you are 'mugged' chances are that, instead of approaching the police for help, you will tell yourself that this was your 'destiny', feel a sense of relief that your life was spared and will eventually end up giving it a humorous twist. Whereas, the fact that something that belonged to you was forcibly taken away from you and you were helpless to do anything about it, leaves its scars that have long lasting impacts.



**THINK POSITIVE:** Experts believe that much of the unhappiness felt by Karachi's citizens can be attributed to the negative news items in the media. The need is to take a more positive approach in everyday life. PHOTO: FARHAN ANWAR

Another significant contributor to the raising of stress levels, she feels, is the constant bombardment of 'negative' news items in the media, particularly the electronic media. The fact that a local company is making footballs for the coming world cup in record time is not a major news item while any other news with even a slightly negative angle makes for banner headlines. This constant and aggressively communicated flow of negativity, she felt, is entering into the psyche of the people of the city, making them more insecure, anxious and pessimistic about the future of their city.

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

### How to be happy?

Dr Niazi also pointed out a disturbing trend that is coming out of research conducted at the academic level — a growing lack of collective efficacy or the absence of community bonding and action. She felt that a lot of improvement can be brought about if people indulge individually and collectively in positive psychological exercises. They should focus on 'positives' rather than 'negatives', and organisations and schools can introduce such practices among their

employees and students. Innovative techniques, such as art and music therapy, can have the double benefit of adding a skill dimension in addition to reducing stress.

There is no denying that much is wrong with the city. However, a collective effort to focus on the positives, strengthening a community spirit and engaging constructively with 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 city focusing on urban sustainability issues.

**Sohail & Chaudhry (2004)**

## Mobilising youth for community uplift as a sustainable investment

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



# THE ACTIVE CITIZENS PROJECT



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

# #SMILEPAKISTANCHALLENGE



MaanSal Studios. shared a video.  
August 25 🌐

#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.







Lolz Studios  
August 24



## #SmilePakistanChallenge

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

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

Lets bring some hope back in Pakistan!

Lets 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.



1:06

#SMILEPAKISTANCHALLENGE

Like · Comment · Share

1,131 Shares

# #SMILEPAKISTANCHALLENGE



**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/D9z730Cn4W](https://pic.twitter.com/D9z730Cn4W)



Expand

Reply Retweet Favourite More



**MaanSal Studios.**

August 27

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

Goodwork my fellow Pakistanis, you guys rock! ❤️

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

Like · Comment · Share

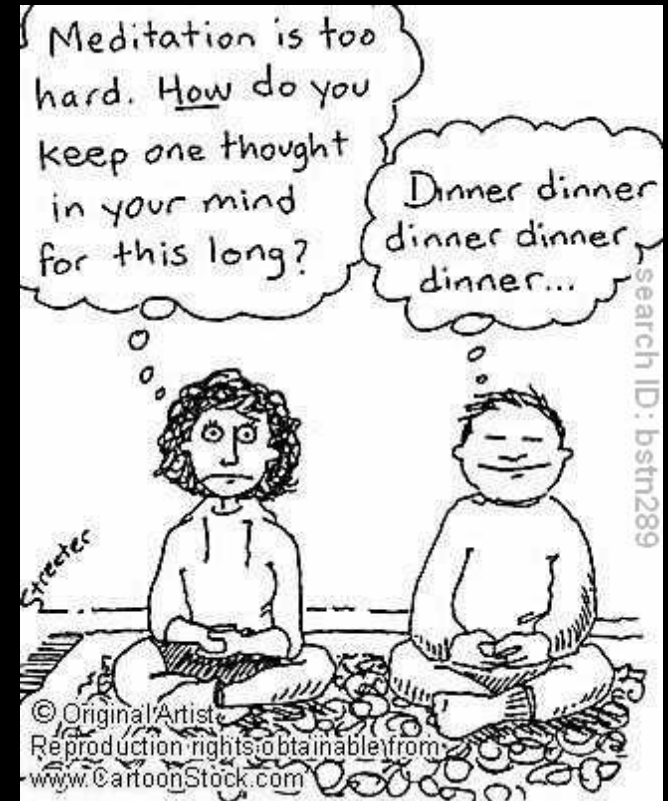
632 people like this.

Top Comments

# 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

# Materials

Consent  
Form

Demographic  
Form

## The Mindful Eating Questionnaire (Framson et al. 2009)

28 items – 5 sub domains disinhibition, awareness, external cues, emotional response , and distraction. 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

# Results

***Correlation between Mindful Eating and Mental Well-being***

**.291 ( $p < 0.01$ )**

# Results

## Table

### *Correlations between Mindful Eating Sub-domains and Mental Well-being*

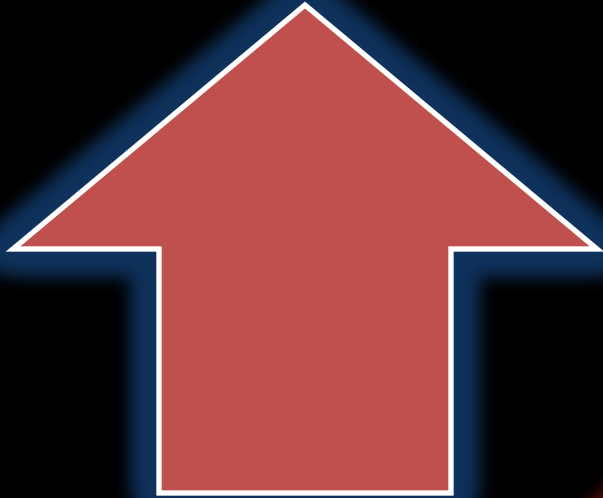
| Sub Domains             | Awareness | Distraction | <u>Disinhibition</u> | Emotional | External |
|-------------------------|-----------|-------------|----------------------|-----------|----------|
| Mental Well-being total | .221**    | .105*       | .208**               | .189**    | -.063    |

\*\* $p < 0.01$  level

\* $p < 0.05$  level

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

*( $r=.208, p<0.05$ )*

- 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

( $r=.189, p<0.05$ )

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



I was  
trying  
to fill  
up that  
hole in  
my  
heart  
with  
food!



# Distraction Subscale

( $r=.105, p<0.05$ )

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







## External Cues Subscale

$(r = -.063, p < 0.136)$

- 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