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Mindfulness and self-affirmation interventions for orphaned children: differential effects on psychological well-being

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effects of mindfulness practice and self-affirmation on the psychological well-being of orphaned children at the Buddhayana Vidyalaya Foundation in Bandar Lampung, Indonesia. A quasi-experimental design was employed with 62 participants. Due to dormitory-based institutional arrangements, female children (n = 32) were assigned to the experimental group receiving mindfulness and self-affirmation interventions, while male children (n = 30) served as the control group. This non-equivalent grouping should be interpreted cautiously because gender differences may confound the treatment effects. The intervention was delivered in six online sessions via Zoom. Simple regression analysis showed that mindfulness ($R^2 = 0.347$, $p < 0.001$) and self-affirmation ($R^2 = 0.405$, $p < 0.001$) were individually associated with psychological well-being. However, in the multiple regression model, only self-affirmation remained a significant predictor ($\beta = 0.587$, $p = 0.035$), whereas mindfulness was not significant ($p = 0.168$). Although the model explained 44.5% of the variance, the practical impact was minimal (Cohen's $d = 0.049$). The limited effect may be related to the short intervention duration, online delivery, and varying participant engagement.

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Introduction

Psychological well-being is a fundamental aspect of human development that enables individuals to function optimally and maintain a meaningful life. According to Ryff (1989), psychological well-being encompasses six key dimensions: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. Individuals who demonstrate high levels of psychological well-being tend to exhibit better emotional regulation, resilience, and life satisfaction. Previous studies have also shown that psychological well-being is associated with positive academic outcomes, social adjustment, and overall mental health (Davis & Hadwin, 2021; Mustary, 2021; Ramadhani et al., 2016).

Despite its importance, achieving psychological well-being can be particularly challenging for children living in institutional care settings. Orphaned children often experience separation from their primary caregivers, limited emotional support, and restricted opportunities for social interaction. These conditions may hinder the development of emotional security and identity formation during critical developmental stages. Empirical evidence suggests that adolescents living in orphanages generally report lower levels of psychological well-being compared with their peers who grow up in family environments (Hidayat et al., 2024; Saputra et al., 2023).

Limited access to stable social support systems may further exacerbate psychological vulnerability among institutionalized youth (Eva et al., 2020; Rossallina & Rifameutia, 2023). Consequently, identifying effective psychological interventions that can enhance well-being in this population remains an important research priority.

Among the psychological approaches that have received increasing empirical attention are mindfulness and self-affirmation interventions. Mindfulness refers to the capacity to maintain present-moment awareness with an attitude of openness and non-judgment (Creswell et al., 2019; Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Through the cultivation of attention and acceptance, mindfulness practices have been shown to improve emotional regulation, reduce stress and anxiety, and promote adaptive coping strategies. In relation to Ryff's framework, mindfulness may contribute particularly to the development of self-acceptance and environmental mastery, as individuals learn to observe internal experiences without excessive self-criticism while responding more adaptively to life challenges (Hanley & Garland, 2017; Remskar et al., 2024).

Another promising psychological approach is self-affirmation. Self-affirmation theory posits that individuals are motivated to maintain a sense of global self-integrity, defined as the perception of oneself as morally adequate and capable (Sherman & Cohen, 2006; Steele, 1988). When individuals encounter psychological threats or adversity, affirming personally important values can buffer defensive reactions and support adaptive psychological functioning. Research has shown that self-affirmation interventions can increase optimism, self-esteem, and overall psychological well-being (Cohen & Sherman, 2014; Jessop et al., 2023). Within the framework of psychological well-being, self-affirmation may particularly strengthen dimensions such as purpose in life, autonomy, and personal growth by reinforcing individuals' sense of meaning and personal value.

Although mindfulness and self-affirmation have been widely studied independently, research examining their combined application remains limited. Existing studies tend to investigate each intervention separately, often focusing on university students or adult populations rather than vulnerable youth groups. Furthermore, empirical research exploring these interventions among orphaned children or institutionalized youth is still relatively scarce, particularly in the Indonesian context. Considering that mindfulness primarily facilitates emotional awareness and regulation, while self-affirmation strengthens positive self-concept and meaning-making processes, integrating both approaches may provide complementary mechanisms for enhancing psychological well-being.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the effects of mindfulness practice and self-affirmation on the psychological well-being of orphaned children at the Buddhayana Vidyalaya Foundation in Bandar Lampung. Specifically, this research investigates the individual and combined contributions of mindfulness and self-affirmation to psychological well-being. By addressing the limited empirical evidence on psychological interventions for institutionalized youth, this study seeks to contribute both to the theoretical understanding of well-being interventions and to the development of practical psychosocial support programs for children living in residential care settings.

Method

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative approach using a quasi-experimental design with a non-equivalent control group. The design was selected due to institutional constraints within the residential care setting, which limited the possibility of random assignment. Participants were therefore assigned to groups based on existing dormitory arrangements. Female children (n = 32) were included in the experimental group that received the intervention, while male children (n = 30) served as the control group. Because the grouping followed gender-based dormitory separation, the results should be interpreted cautiously as gender differences may confound treatment effects. This limitation is acknowledged when interpreting the findings.

Participants

Participants consisted of 62 orphaned children residing at the Buddhayana Vidyalaya Foundation in Bandar Lampung, Indonesia. The participants ranged in age from adolescence to early adulthood and were selected using purposive sampling based on their availability and willingness to participate throughout the intervention period. All participants were residents of the foundation's dormitory-based educational program.

Intervention Procedure

The experimental group received a combined mindfulness and self-affirmation intervention delivered in six online sessions via Zoom over a three-week period. Each session lasted approximately 60 minutes and was conducted twice per week. The mindfulness component aimed to cultivate present-moment awareness and emotional regulation through guided exercises such as breathing awareness, body awareness, and reflective

attention to internal experiences. These practices were conceptually informed by mindfulness-based approaches in psychological research.

The self-affirmation component focused on strengthening participants' sense of personal value and meaning through structured reflective activities. Participants were encouraged to identify personal strengths, reflect on meaningful life experiences, and express positive self-statements related to their goals and personal values.

Each session followed a general structure consisting of (1) an introduction and reflection on previous experiences, (2) guided mindfulness practice, (3) self-affirmation exercises, and (4) group reflection and discussion. The sessions were facilitated by the researcher with prior training in mindfulness practice. However, due to the exploratory nature of the study, formal fidelity monitoring was not implemented, which may represent a limitation of the intervention design.

The control group did not receive any psychological intervention during the study period but continued their regular daily activities within the institution.

Instrument

Psychological well-being was measured using a scale developed by the researchers based on Ryff's (1989) six-dimensional model of psychological well-being, including self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. The instrument consisted of multiple items representing each dimension of the construct.

Content validity of the instrument was evaluated through expert judgment involving academic specialists in psychology and education. Reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha produced coefficients above 0.70, indicating acceptable internal consistency. Nevertheless, the use of a researcher-developed instrument without extensive psychometric validation (e.g., factor analysis) represents a methodological limitation that should be considered when interpreting the results.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using simple and multiple linear regression to examine the individual and combined effects of mindfulness and self-affirmation on psychological well-being. Prior to regression analysis, classical assumption tests were conducted, including tests for normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity, to ensure the suitability of the regression model. All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS version 27.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were carefully observed in this study. Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the administrators of the Buddhayana Vidyalaya Foundation. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the confidentiality of their responses. Because the participants were minors living in institutional care, consent was also obtained through the institution acting as guardian authority. Participation in the intervention and data collection was entirely voluntary, and participants were allowed to withdraw from the study at any stage without consequence.

Results and Discussions

Results

The regression analyses were conducted to examine the effects of mindfulness practice and self-affirmation on the psychological well-being of orphaned children at the Buddhayana Vidyalaya Foundation in Bandar Lampung.

The simple linear regression analysis indicated that mindfulness practice had a positive and statistically significant effect on psychological well-being. The correlation coefficient (R) was 0.589, with a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.347, indicating that approximately 34.7% of the variance in psychological well-being could be explained by mindfulness practice. The regression coefficient was 0.682 with a significance value of $p < 0.001$, demonstrating that higher levels of mindfulness practice were associated with higher levels of psychological well-being.

Table 1. Simple Linear Regression Test of Mindfulness Practice

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	0.589	0.347	0.324	21.90615	0.347	15.409	1	29	0.000

Source: Primary Data and Researchers' Calculations, 2025.

Similarly, the simple regression analysis revealed that self-affirmation significantly predicted psychological well-being. The correlation coefficient (R) was 0.636 and the coefficient of determination (R^2) was 0.405, suggesting that self-affirmation accounted for approximately 40.5% of the variance in psychological well-being. The regression coefficient was 0.850 with a significance level of $p < 0.001$, indicating that individuals with stronger self-affirmation tendencies tended to report higher psychological well-being.

Table 2. Simple Linear Regression Test of Self-Affirmation

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	0.636	0.405	0.385	20.91001	0.405	19.741	1	29	0.000

Source: Primary Data and Researchers' Calculations, 2025.

Furthermore, the multiple regression analysis examined the combined contribution of mindfulness and self-affirmation to psychological well-being. The results showed that the overall model was statistically significant ($R^2 = 0.445$, $F = 11.211$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that both variables together explained 44.5% of the variance in psychological well-being. However, the partial regression coefficients revealed that only self-affirmation remained a significant predictor ($p = 0.035$), while mindfulness was no longer statistically significant ($p = 0.168$). These results indicate that although mindfulness demonstrated a significant association with psychological well-being when examined independently, its predictive power diminished when self-affirmation was included in the model.

Table 3. Multiple Linear Regression Test

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
1	0.667	0.445	0.405	20.55851	0.445	11.211	2	28	0.000	1.226

Source: Primary Data and Researchers' Calculations, 2025.

To assess the practical magnitude of the intervention, the effect size was calculated using Cohen's d. The result showed an effect size of 0.049, which is categorized as very small. This indicates that although statistical differences were detected, the practical impact of the intervention on participants' psychological well-being was minimal.

Discussions

This study aimed to examine the effects of mindfulness practice and self-affirmation on the psychological well-being of children living in institutional care. The regression analysis revealed an interesting pattern of findings. When analyzed separately using simple regression, both mindfulness and self-affirmation showed significant relationships with psychological well-being. However, when both variables were entered simultaneously into the multiple regression model, only self-affirmation remained a significant predictor. This difference between the results of simple and multiple regression suggests that the relationship between mindfulness and psychological well-being may not be entirely direct, but may instead be influenced by other psychological mechanisms related to self-evaluation and meaning-making.

One possible explanation is that mindfulness and self-affirmation operate through partially overlapping psychological mechanisms. Mindfulness focuses on enhancing awareness of present-moment experiences and cultivating a non-judgmental acceptance of thoughts and emotions. This process is known to contribute to improved emotional regulation and reduced negative rumination associated with psychological stress. Several studies have shown that mindfulness interventions can enhance dimensions of eudaimonic well-being, such as personal growth and purpose in life among adolescents (Scafuto et al., 2024). In addition, mindfulness-based interventions have been found to increase resilience and self-compassion among children facing vulnerable family conditions (Guo et al., 2023). In contrast, self-affirmation operates through a different mechanism, namely by strengthening self-integrity through reflection on personally important values. Self-affirmation interventions have been shown to improve life satisfaction, self-esteem, and mental health among adolescents across various social and cultural contexts (Yan et al., 2024). Therefore, when both variables are included simultaneously in the regression model, self-affirmation may account for part of the variance in psychological well-being that initially appeared to be associated with mindfulness.

Another explanation relates to the temporal dynamics involved in psychological change processes. Mindfulness interventions typically require sustained and repeated practice before producing measurable psychological improvements. Mindfulness programs for adolescents that extend over longer training periods

tend to demonstrate more consistent improvements in psychological well-being compared to shorter interventions (Kennes et al., 2023). Moreover, previous research suggests that psychological changes resulting from mindfulness interventions are often mediated by reductions in negative emotions and increases in emotional awareness (Kennes et al., 2024). In contrast, self-affirmation activities may produce psychological benefits more rapidly because they directly reinforce positive self-concepts and personal meaning. Recent meta-analytic findings indicate that self-affirmation interventions consistently produce positive effects on several indicators of psychological well-being, including self-perception and social well-being (Zhang et al., 2025). Therefore, within the context of the present study, the relatively short intervention duration may have been sufficient to activate the psychological processes associated with self-affirmation but insufficient to generate substantial changes in participants' mindfulness capacity.

Although the regression model demonstrated statistical significance, the practical significance of the findings should be interpreted with caution. The calculated effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.049$) indicates that the practical impact of the intervention was extremely small. In applied psychological research, an effect size of this magnitude suggests that the observable changes in participants' psychological well-being are minimal. Consequently, the findings of this study should not be interpreted as strong evidence that the intervention produced meaningful practical improvements in psychological well-being. Rather, the results are better understood as indicating statistical associations among the variables rather than demonstrating the effectiveness of the intervention in producing substantial psychological change.

Several methodological and contextual factors may explain the limited practical impact observed in this study. First, the intervention duration was relatively short, consisting of six sessions conducted over a three-week period, which may not have been sufficient to produce significant psychological changes. Many mindfulness programs that report stronger outcomes typically involve training periods of eight to twelve weeks with more intensive practice (Rochmawati & Susanto, 2025). Second, the intervention was delivered online via the Zoom platform, which may have limited participant engagement and reduced the depth of experiential learning during the sessions. Online psychological interventions for adolescent populations often face challenges such as limited attention spans, reduced interaction quality, and varying levels of participant motivation. Third, observational notes during the intervention sessions indicated that participant engagement was not consistently maintained, which may have influenced the overall effectiveness of the activities.

When compared with previous research, the findings of this study provide partial support for existing literature on psychological interventions for adolescents and children in vulnerable circumstances. Several studies have shown that interventions based on self-reflection, positive affirmation, and identity development can improve self-esteem and psychological well-being among adolescents living in institutional care settings(Baroroh et al., 2024). Other research has found that positive affirmation practices can enhance self-confidence and promote more positive self-evaluations among adolescent girls (Marauleng, 2025). Additionally, reflective interventions such as positive journaling have been shown to improve psychological well-being among adolescents experiencing high levels of stress (Yosep et al., 2025). Within this context, the finding that self-affirmation demonstrated a stronger role than mindfulness may suggest that interventions directly strengthening personal identity and meaning are particularly relevant for children living in institutional care environments.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings can also be interpreted within the framework of the Psychological Well-Being model developed by Carol D. Ryff, which conceptualizes well-being as consisting of six core dimensions: self-acceptance, purpose in life, personal growth, positive relations with others, autonomy, and environmental mastery. Within this framework, self-affirmation may have a more direct relationship with the dimensions of self-acceptance and purpose in life because affirmation processes encourage individuals to reflect on personal values that are central to their identity. In contrast, mindfulness primarily focuses on present-moment awareness and emotional regulation, which may function more as supporting psychological processes rather than directly influencing the core dimensions of psychological well-being. Consequently, in the multiple regression model, self-affirmation may emerge as a stronger predictor because it is more closely aligned with the fundamental components of psychological well-being as described in Ryff's theoretical model.

Finally, the interpretation of these findings should consider several methodological limitations. The quasi-experimental design with group assignment based on gender limits the ability to draw strong causal conclusions. Another important limitation is the absence of qualitative data or process evaluation. Considering that the intervention was conducted online and involved a vulnerable population, understanding how participants experienced and interpreted the intervention activities could have provided valuable contextual insights for interpreting the quantitative findings. Therefore, future studies are encouraged to adopt mixed-method approaches that combine quantitative measurements with qualitative data such as interviews, reflective journals, or participant observation. Such approaches would allow researchers to gain a more comprehensive

understanding of how mindfulness and self-affirmation interventions function in supporting the psychological well-being of children living in institutional care.

Conclusions

This study examined the relationship between mindfulness practice and self-affirmation with the psychological well-being of orphaned children living in residential care. The findings indicate that both mindfulness and self-affirmation were positively associated with psychological well-being when examined independently. However, when both variables were included simultaneously in the regression model, only self-affirmation remained a statistically significant predictor.

These findings should be interpreted cautiously in light of several methodological limitations. The quasi-experimental design with gender-based group assignment, the relatively short duration of the intervention, the online delivery format, and the use of a researcher-developed instrument may have influenced the observed results. Therefore, the findings do not necessarily indicate that mindfulness lacks relevance for improving psychological well-being, but rather that its unique contribution was not statistically significant within the specific conditions of this study.

Despite these limitations, the study provides preliminary evidence suggesting that self-affirmation interventions may play a meaningful role in supporting psychological well-being among children living in institutional care environments. At the same time, the limited effect size observed in this study highlights the need for caution in interpreting the practical impact of the intervention.

Future research should employ more rigorous experimental designs, including random assignment of participants, and longer intervention periods. Additionally, incorporating follow-up assessments and mixed-method approaches could provide a deeper understanding of how mindfulness and self-affirmation interventions influence psychological well-being over time in vulnerable youth populations.

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In conclusion, the author acknowledges that this article still has its limitations. However, it is hoped that the findings of this research will make a positive contribution to the advancement of scientific knowledge, particularly in the field of educational psychology and mindfulness- and self-affirmation-based interventions.

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