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Summary

Mindfulness refers to the awareness that emerges through paying attention to the present moment in a non-judgmental manner. Mindfulness has been shown to be multifaceted in nature consisting of five facets: observing, acting with awareness, describing, non-judgment, and non-reactivity. This thesis aimed to investigate how dispositional mindfulness relates to (a) prepotent response inhibition, the suppression of dominant and automatic responses, and (b) behaviour regulation and academic achievement amongst adolescents. This study also assessed the dimensionality of mindfulness among adolescents in Singapore as measured by the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ).

A pilot study was conducted to examine the relations between the inhibitory measures and obtain a purer measure of inhibition using a latent variable approach. The relationship between mindfulness facets and inhibition were also examined. A sample of 49 adults completed four versions of the Stroop tasks and the FFMQ. Contrary to expectations, only measures from two Stroop tasks were significantly correlated and response time measures from these tasks did not load significantly onto a common factor. Results from confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) showed that the unique contributions of inhibition to each measure was small, which resulted in the failure to establish an inhibition factor. Focusing on prepotent response inhibition, as indexed by response time difference scores from each task, was not significantly correlated with the mindfulness facets.

The main study was conducted with adolescents, who because of their age and a relatively less developed inhibitory system, could be expected to exhibit greater individual differences. A sample of 221 students (mean age = 12.75) were recruited from three Secondary Schools in Singapore. CFA results showed that the FFMQ
captured the same five facets found in adults. SEM was then used to investigate how facets of mindfulness were related to prepotent response inhibition, behaviour regulation, and academic achievement. The data showed acting with awareness was associated with inhibition as indexed by intrusion errors. One facet of mindfulness—acting with awareness—was more strongly associated with two components of behaviour regulation—emotion regulation and the monitoring of one’s action—among adolescents with low compared to high levels of non-judgment. This trend was also observed for behaviour regulation. None of the mindfulness facets were related to academic achievement. Findings provide some insight as to how the facets might interact in facilitating better behaviour regulation.