

## Mindfulness and Student Engagement: The Mediation Effect of Self Esteem

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### Abstract

Student engagement in learning is essential in creating active, creative, and fun learning. Unfortunately, not all students are engaged cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally in learning. This study intends to prove that self-esteem can mediate the relationship between mindfulness and student engagement. This correlational study involved 469 students from four Senior/Vocational High schools in East Lampung Regency. The result of this study revealed that mindfulness predicts higher self-esteem. Mindfulness predicts student engagement. Self-esteem predicts student engagement. Mindfulness also increases student engagement through increased self-esteem. The implications of this study suggest the importance of appreciating student's mental state and performance in the learning process.

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## INTRODUCTION

Student engagement is crucial in academic activities since students are required to be actively involved in the learning process (Dwistia, Purwanto, & Sunawan, 2016). Student engagement is defined as a multi-aspect, often assessed regarding what students do, think, and feel that have direct relevance to academic tasks (Fredricks, Reschly, & Christenson, 2019).

Student engagement alludes to active participation shown by students. Specifically, student engagement encompasses three important dimensions of cognitive, affective, and behavioral engagement (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). Student engagement in school activities has contributed to improved student's learning abilities as well as learning new things, be it in teaching and learning activities or activities outside the classroom (Dharmayana, Kumara, & Wirawan, 2012). Student engagement can be seen through student's concentration, attractiveness, and comfort in receiving learning (Widyaswara, Wardono & Asih, 2019). On the other hand, students with low engagement are seen from their passiveness, reluctance, looking bored, giving up easily, and showing negative emotions such as anger, blame, and rejection (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). It can also be seen through their truant behavior, chatting while the teacher is teaching, doing things that have nothing to do with learning activities, and not dressing according to school rules (Frederick, Blumenfeld & Paris, 2004). In fact, students who enjoy the learning process tend to have a good perception of their academic performance (Medlin & Faulk, 2011). Lester (2013) also asserts that student engagement can improve learning and promote better academic outcomes.

The learning process must consider student's learning experience and student's need to be directly involved in learning (Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012) since the learning process in the classroom basically will not work well if there is no engagement from students (Kurnaedi, Sugiharto & Sunawan, 2020).

Self-esteem predicts student engagement (Virtanen et al., 2016). Explicitly, Rosenberg (in Puspita, Mugiarto, & Mulawarman, 2019) states that self-esteem refers to an individual's evaluation made by paying attention to oneself. Self-esteem is considered as individual behavior that affects a person's efforts to perform. Putri, Ahied, and Rosidi (2019) also argue that learning will be more effective if students not only develop their cognitive but also their affective, especially their student self-esteem. Students with high self-esteem will be able to respect themselves and see positive things that students can do for their future learning success. Self-esteem gives student's ability to see themselves that can be transferred to the way they see school relationships and school relevance (Virtanen et al., 2016). This research is expected to complement previous findings that Zhang, Feng, and Li (2021) suggest to further elaborate on the internal mechanisms of self-esteem as a mediator to maintain and increase student engagement in the learning process.

Referring to early description, mindfulness is believed to predict self-esteem (Rasmussen & Pidgeon, 2011) and student engagement (Minkos, Chafouleas, Bray & LaSella, 2018). Kabat-Zinn (in Walach et al., 2006) defines mindfulness as the process of paying attention in certain ways such as being aware, focusing on the present moment, and being non-judgmental. Mindfulness has five aspects of observing, describing, doing with awareness, receiving without judging, and not being reactive (Baer, Smith, & Allen, 2004). Therefore, mindfulness acts as individual awareness that helps individuals to get rid of automatic thoughts and unhealthy behaviors, and the ability to regulate their behavior (Bajaj, Gupta & Pande, 2016).

Mindfulness skills offer assistance for individuals to accept themselves and to extend their perceptions of who they are, how valuable they are, and strengthen their self-esteem (Jang & Jeon, 2015). The findings of a study conducted by Thompson and Waltz (2008) reveal that mindfulness offers a way to

foster unconditional self-acceptance and shift emphasis to self-esteem as a valuable measure.

Mindfulness also provides benefits for increasing student engagement in learning. According to Minkos et al. (2018), mindfulness has the potential to be an effective way to increase student's academic engagement. Mindfulness acts as a method that helps students become more aware of learning situations making them more engaged in learning (Lin, 2020). Empirical evidence regarding research in mindfulness and student engagement is still limited. Nonetheless, this study has contributed to the growing literature on mindfulness in academic settings. Bellinger, DeCaro, and Ralston (2015) provided initial support for the importance of mindfulness in academic settings. However, the study has not confirmed whether mindfulness is useful for the academic performance of cognitive and affective functions from student engagement. To address this gap, this study seeks to clarify the mediating role of self-esteem in the relationship between mindfulness and student engagement.

## METHOD

There were 469 students involved as respondents in this study. They consisted of 163 male students and 306 female students with an age range of 15-18 years. They came from Senior/ vocational High Schools in East Lampung Regency. Participants were selected using cluster random sampling.

There were three scales used in the study. They are the student engagement scale, self-esteem scale, and mindfulness scale. The scales used in this study were adapted from published instruments. Therefore, a back-translation procedure was applied to adapt all the scales for the purpose of this study.

Student engagement in the study was measured using the University Student Engagement Inventory (USEI) developed by Fredricks et al. (Fredricks et al., 2004; Maroco, Maroco, Campos, & Fredricks, 2016). The USEI aims to measure three components of student engagement of emotional engagement, cognitive

engagement, and behavioral engagement. Each component consists of 5 items. There were 15-items. There were 5 options, namely (1) never, (2) rarely, (3) sometimes, (4) often, (5) always. The results of the validity test on the USEI showed that the 15 statement items used in this study met the criteria and were declared valid (KMO = 0.872, Sig. 2-tailed <0.05). While the reliability test on each indicator showed the Cronbach's Alpha values (emotional engagement = 0.656, cognitive engagement = 0.763, and behavioral engagement = 0.769) that were declared reliable. Hence, this scale can be used in research.

Self-esteem was measured using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) developed by Rosenberg (1965). RSES aims to measure aspects of self-esteem, including self-acceptance and self-respect. The RSES consists of 10 items with a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) agree, and (4) strongly agree. The results of the validity test on the RSES showed that the 10 items used in this study met the criteria and were declared valid (KMO = 0.733, Sig. 2-tailed <0.05). While the reliability test on each indicator obtained Cronbach's Alpha value (self-acceptance = 0.562, self-respect = 0.609) that were declared reliable. Thus, this scale can be used in research.

Mindfulness was measured using The Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) developed by Baer et al., (2006). This scale aims to measure the five sides of mindfulness such as observing, describing, acting with awareness, accepting without judgment, and non-reactivity. Each side of mindfulness consists of 4 items. Thus, there were 20 items. They were given 5 options, namely; (1) never, (2) seldom, (3) sometimes, (4) often, and (5) very often. The results of the validity test on the FFMQ show that 20 items used in this study met the criteria and were declared valid (KMO = 0.870, Sig. 2-tailed <0.05). While the reliability test on each indicator obtained Cronbach's Alpha values (observing = 0.691, describing = 0.793, acting with awareness = 0.702, accepting without judgment = 0.744, non-reactivity = 0.655) that

were declared reliable. Therefore, this scale can be used in research.

In analyzing the data, this study used a mediator analysis using the PROCESS application developed by Andrew F. Hayes (2013). The data analysis technique in this study used a regression-based path-analytic framework.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The description of the data in this study showed the mean and standard deviation of mindfulness (M = 61.92; SD = 6.65), student engagement (M = 53.00; SD = 8.77), and student self-esteem (M = 28.83; SD = 3.83). A larger mean value implies a good representation for the data distribution. In detail, the data is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Data Description

Variable	N	M	SD
Mindfulness	469	61.92	6.65
Student Engagement	469	53.00	8.77
Self-esteem	469	28.83	3.83

Hypothesis testing was carried out using mediator analysis using the PROCESS application developed by Andrew F. Hayes

(2013). Mediation analysis using bias-corrected bootstrap, N=5000 with 95% confidential interval. The results are shown in Table 2.

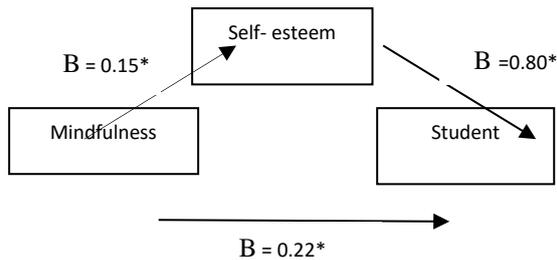
**Table 2.** The Effect of Self-Esteem as a Mediator Variable.

Predictors	B	T	P	Se	LLCI	ULCI	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	P
Criterion : Self-esteem							0.26	0.06	32.97	<0.01
Mindfulness	0.15	5.74	<0.05	0.02	0.20	0.20				
Criterion: Student Engagement							0.43	0.18	51.83	<0.01
Mindfulness	0.22	3.94	<0.05	0.06	0.11	0.34				
Self-esteem	0.80	8.06	<0.01	0.10	0.60	0.99				
Total Effect	0.34	5.83	<0.05	0.06	0.23	0.46				
Indirect	0.12			0.03	0.07	0.17				

Table 2 shows that mindfulness is positively related to self-esteem (B= 0.15, p<0.05, F= 32.97, p<0.01). From the coefficient of determination (R2 = 0.06), mindfulness has an effect of 6.5% on self-esteem.

Furthermore, student engagement was positively explained by mindfulness and self-esteem (R2=0.18, F= 51.83, p<0.01), Specifically, student engagement was positively predicted by mindfulness (B = 0.22, p<0.05). Meanwhile, self-esteem and student engagement have a positive relationship(β= 0.80, p<0.01). From the coefficient of determination (R2= 0.18), mindfulness and self-esteem have an effect of 18.2% on student engagement.

Furthermore, self-esteem positively mediated the relationship between mindfulness and student engagement (B = 0.12, se= 0.03). The level of confidence was 95% with 10,000 bootstrap samples between 0.07 (LLCI) - 0.17 (ULCI). Meanwhile, the total effect showed that mindfulness was simultaneously explained positively by student engagement (β= 0.34, se= 0.06). The 95% confidence interval (CI) results ranged from 0.23 (LLCI) - 0.46 (ULCI). For more details, the results of the regression analysis and mediation are visualized in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Model of Self-Esteem Mediates Mindfulness on Student Engagement

The findings of this study prove that mindfulness predicts self-esteem. This is in contrast with the findings of Rasmussen and Pidgeon (2011) that mindfulness contributes positively to healthy self-esteem. The research results conducted by Pepping et al. (2013) show the link between mindfulness and self-esteem that mindfulness has a direct positive effect on self-esteem. While research carried out by Bajaj, Gupta, and Pande (2016) revealed that individuals with high levels of mindfulness tend to have high self-esteem. Conceptually, mindfulness involves a non-judgmental attitude about themselves, being open to one's emotions, thoughts, and experiences that in turn increases the individual's self-esteem (Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer, & Toney, 2006). Individuals with higher levels of mindfulness are less likely to struggle with situations they cannot change. Individuals accept their emotions, thoughts, and situations. They do not measure their worth by the standards of others. Therefore, individuals with higher levels of mindfulness have greater self-acceptance and self-esteem (Thompson & Waltz, 2007). In addition, individuals with mindfulness can manage their and other's emotions with the tendency to focus on the present (Park, & Dhandra, 2017), thus leading to an increased ability to restrain from potentially negative thoughts about themselves that ultimately leads to increasing self-esteem (Bajaj, Gupta & Pande, 2016).

This study proves that mindfulness predicts student engagement. This is in line with the previous finding of a study conducted by

Minkos, Chafouleas, Bray, and LaSella (2018) that mindfulness is an effective way to increase student academic engagement. A study carried out by Lin (2020) confirmed mindfulness as a positive predictor of students' learning engagement, especially in English lessons. The results of the research confirm that mindfulness can help students become aware of the learning situation and be more involved in learning. Meanwhile, another finding (Bellinger, DeCaro, & Ralston, 2015) shows that mindfulness is useful for supporting academic performance in general. However, their research has not confirmed the effect of mindfulness on academic performance from the emotional and cognitive functions that can be observed from student engagement. This study succeeded in proving the contribution of mindfulness to student engagement from the emotional and cognitive aspects.

Student engagement in learning is prominent to create active, creative, and fun learning. Good student engagement is the main requirement for a good academic performance. It also maximizes learning activities in the classroom. Optimal engagement focuses on three components of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). These three components will interact dynamically within students as a form of embodiment of motivation, which then directs students to be energetic, directed, and persistent when experiencing difficulties in academic activities (Ariani, 2019; Connell, & Wellborn, 1991). According to Ladd and Dinella (in Reeve, 2012), student engagement can support the learning process to run well. There is no learning process without the student's active participation. Therefore, in the teaching and learning process, students need to build their knowledge by focusing and interacting directly with objects during class. This will have a major influence on the process of thinking, emotional, and social development.

To strengthen student engagement in learning, mindfulness is very important to contribute to refreshing students' cognitive and emotions. It is manifested in fun learning

activities. Cruchon (in Ager, Albrecht, & Cohen, 2015) explicitly states that mindfulness potentially helps students feel more relaxed, less afraid, and happier while studying. Mindfulness can help students develop a greater awareness of their body, mind, and emotions. Mindfulness is an important center in changing students' thinking and emotional responses (Jannah, 2019). Mindfulness can encourage changes in academic performance, such as certain cognitive skills (attention, concentration, and memory), positive feelings and emotional balance that can support optimal performance even in demanding situations (Franco et al., 2010). In addition, mindfulness can create strong thoughts that lead students to be more resilient in learning (Anindita, & Etikariena, 2020). In other words, when students have mindfulness, students will enjoy the learning process more, which then leads students to engagement and better learning performance.

The results of this study prove that self-esteem predicts student engagement. The results of this study are in line with Virtanen et al. (2016) that confirmed the relationship of students' self-esteem, affective and cognitive engagement. However, a study by Zhang, Feng, and Li (2021) suggests further elaborate on the internal mechanisms that enable self-esteem as a mediator to maintain and increase student engagement in the learning process. This study succeeded in proving the mediation of self-esteem on student engagement

Students' engagement will be stronger if they have good self-esteem during the learning process. Self-esteem is the main component of self-evaluation whose an important role in student development (Palupi, Sunawan, & Murtadho, 2020). Students who show a positive evaluation of themselves will be more committed and more actively participate in academic activities at school (Battle et al., 1988; Mai & Asma'A, 2016). In addition, a positive evaluation of self-esteem will lead students to a self-concept that results in greater responsibility and motivation from students towards the academic environment enabling them to maintain enthusiasm and persistence despite

learning problems (Martin et al., 2021). Thus, how students evaluate themselves can be shifted towards student engagement in a more effective learning process.

Self-esteem can link the interrelationships between mindfulness and student engagement. When mindfulness and self-esteem are integrated, it increases engagement. Mindfulness, which focuses on the well-being of the individual, will form a positive self-evaluation (Bajaj, Gupta, & Pande, 2016). This provides benefits for students' cognitive and affective stability which will ultimately result in greater responsibility and motivation for students towards their academic achievement (Martin, et al., 2021). Thus, the results of this study indicate that mindfulness can increase student engagement through increasing self-esteem.

The results of this study have significant implications for guidance and counseling. Student engagement in the learning process implies reciprocity between teachers and students in academic activities. It creates a conducive learning environment. This study focuses on the importance of respecting students' inner state and behavioral performance. Therefore, it is suggested that counselors and teachers pay more attention to students' self-esteem in daily life. In particular, counselors should provide timely psychological care for students who are pressured during the learning process. When students' self-esteem increases, students can evaluate things to develop their learning capacity. Furthermore, school counselors need to provide students with an understanding that mindfulness is needed in daily life, including in the learning process. With mindfulness, students can focus more on what they are encountering, especially when students are at school.

The study suffers from the limitation that the scope of research is limited to exploring the relationship of mindfulness to student engagement through self-esteem. Thus, it does not provide any form of intervention. Therefore, it is hoped that the results of this study can be used as a basis for experimental studies. Because

mindfulness also acts as a self-skill. It can be manifested in the form of daily or weekly practice to increase self-esteem and student engagement.

## CONCLUSION

This finding confirms the indirect effect between mindfulness and student engagement through self-esteem. This study examines the interrelationships between mindfulness, self-esteem, and student engagement. Therefore, it is expected that the results of this study can be used as a basis for experimental studies. Since mindfulness also acts as a self-skill, it can be manifested in the form of daily or weekly practice to increase students' self-esteem and engagement.

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