



COLECCIÓN CONOCIMIENTO CONTEMPORÁNEO

Educar para la diversidad: Inclusión, bienestar y sostenibilidad en contextos emergentes

Cords.

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MINDFULNESS IN EDUCATION. FOSTERING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND CLASSROOM ENGAGEMENT

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1. INTRODUCTION

In today's higher education landscape, the growing complexity of university classrooms—driven by academic pressures, technological advancements, and the challenges of globalization—demands a holistic approach to teaching that extends beyond traditional academic instruction. To adequately prepare students for the complexities of both academic and personal success, university educators must foster not only cognitive development but also emotional intelligence. This chapter examines how mindfulness practices can be integrated into university settings to nurture *Fides* (trust) and *Humanitas* (humanity), two essential virtues that contribute to creating a supportive and inclusive academic environment.

Mindfulness, defined as the practice of present-focused awareness, offers a powerful framework for university students to develop emotional regulation, self-awareness, and empathy. By incorporating mindfulness into university curricula, educators can help students manage stress, improve interpersonal relationships, and become more engaged in their academic experiences. This chapter will explore the theoretical foundations of mindfulness, its role in fostering trust and humanity among university students, and its positive impact on student well-being and

academic engagement. Drawing on research and practical applications, this chapter underscores how mindfulness can transform the higher education experience, promoting both academic achievement and the personal growth necessary for thriving in an increasingly complex world.

1.1. CURRENT EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT AND EMOTIONAL CHALLENGES

The increasing complexity in modern classrooms is influenced by various factors, including academic pressure, globalization, and the impact of technology. These elements contribute to a multifaceted educational environment that requires educators to adapt their teaching strategies to meet the diverse needs of students. As a result, it is essential to cultivate not only academic competencies but also emotional skills, such as stress regulation and empathy, to foster a holistic learning experience.

Academic pressure has intensified in recent years, with students facing heightened expectations to perform well in their studies. This pressure can lead to significant stress and anxiety, which negatively impacts students' mental health and academic performance. Research indicates that mindfulness training can be beneficial in helping students manage stress effectively (Salvarani et al., 2020). By integrating mindfulness practices into the curriculum, educators can equip students with tools to regulate their emotions and cope with academic demands.

Globalization has also transformed the educational landscape, introducing diverse cultural perspectives and learning styles into the classroom. This diversity can enrich the learning experience but may also pose challenges in terms of communication and understanding among students from different backgrounds. It is very important for educators to foster an inclusive environment that promotes empathy and cultural awareness. Creating a safe and supportive atmosphere encourages students to express their thoughts and feelings, facilitating better interpersonal relationships (Eachempati & Ramnarayan, 2020).

The impact of technology on education is another significant factor contributing to classroom complexity. While technology can enhance learning through interactive and engaging methods, it can also lead to distractions and a sense of isolation among students. The use of digital

tools, such as online learning platforms, has become increasingly prevalent, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic (Amnouychokanant et al., 2021). However, it is essential to balance technology use with face-to-face interactions to maintain a sense of community and connectedness among students. Educators should strive to create a blended learning environment that leverages technology while also fostering personal connections (Philippe et al., 2020).

In this context, the importance of cultivating emotional skills cannot be overstated. Emotional intelligence, which includes the ability to recognize and manage one's emotions as well as empathize with others, is critical for students' success in both academic and social settings. Programs that focus on developing emotional regulation skills can help students navigate the complexities of their educational experiences (Salvarani et al., 2020). Additionally, fostering empathy among students can lead to a more collaborative and supportive classroom environment, where individuals feel valued and understood.

Moreover, the role of teacher-student interactions is vital in creating a positive learning atmosphere. Teachers who demonstrate understanding and support can significantly influence students' emotional well-being and academic engagement (Felaza, 2023). By establishing strong relationships with their students, educators can create a safe space for learning, where students feel comfortable sharing their challenges and seeking help when needed (Turner & Braine, 2015).

In conclusion, the growing complexity of classrooms necessitates a comprehensive approach to education that addresses both academic and emotional competencies. By integrating mindfulness practices, promoting empathy, and fostering strong teacher-student relationships, educators can create a supportive learning environment that empowers students to thrive amidst the challenges they face.

1.2. THE RELEVANCE OF FIDES AND HUMANITAS IN THE CLASSROOM

The concepts of Fides (trust) and Humanitas (humanity) hold significant relevance in the educational context, particularly in higher education settings. These classical concepts are foundational in creating a

healthy educational environment that fosters not only academic success but also emotional well-being among students.

Fides, or trust, is essential in establishing a safe and supportive classroom atmosphere. When students trust their educators and peers, they are more likely to engage actively in the learning process. Trust facilitates open communication, allowing students to express their thoughts and concerns without fear of judgment. This environment encourages collaboration and mutual respect, which are vital for effective learning. Research indicates that a trusting relationship between students and faculty can lead to enhanced academic performance and greater student satisfaction Stanton et al. (2016). Furthermore, trust is linked to lower levels of anxiety and stress, which are common challenges faced by university students (Siddiqui, 2023).

On the other hand, Humanitas emphasizes the importance of humanity and compassion in educational interactions. This concept encourages educators to recognize and respond to the individual needs of their students, fostering a sense of belonging and community within the classroom. By promoting empathy and understanding, educators can create an inclusive environment that values diversity and nurtures the emotional well-being of all students. Studies have shown that when students feel valued and understood, their overall well-being improves, leading to better academic outcomes and a more positive university experience (Peralta et al., 2021; Topham & Moller, 2010).

The relationship between Fides and Humanitas is particularly relevant to the development of emotional intelligence among students. Emotional intelligence encompasses the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions, as well as the emotions of others (Quevedo & Díez, 2021). By cultivating trust and humanity in the classroom, educators can help students develop these critical emotional skills. For instance, fostering an environment where students feel safe to share their feelings can enhance their emotional regulation abilities and promote empathy towards their peers (Molina-García et al., 2011). This emotional growth is essential for navigating the complexities of university life, where academic pressures and social challenges can significantly impact mental health.

Moreover, the integration of Fides and Humanitas into the educational framework contributes to the overall well-being of students. A supportive and trusting educational environment can mitigate the effects of stress and anxiety, which are prevalent among university students. Programs that emphasize emotional well-being, such as mindfulness and stress management workshops, can further enhance students' ability to cope with academic pressures (Cao et al., 2020). By prioritizing both academic and emotional competencies, universities can foster a holistic approach to education that prepares students for success both inside and outside the classroom.

In conclusion, the concepts of Fides and Humanitas are very important for building a healthy educational environment in universities. By promoting trust and humanity, educators can enhance students' emotional intelligence and overall well-being, creating a supportive atmosphere that fosters academic success and personal growth. As higher education continues to evolve, integrating these classical concepts into educational practices will be vital for addressing the complex challenges faced by students today.

1.3. THE ROLE OF MINDFULNESS IN EMOTIONAL EDUCATION

Mindfulness, defined as the practice of maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment, has emerged as an effective tool for enhancing emotional regulation and self-awareness among university students. This practice not only improves attention and focus but also fosters emotional resilience, allowing students to navigate the complexities of academic life more effectively

Recent research highlights the numerous benefits of integrating mindfulness into educational settings, particularly in higher education. For instance, Mahama et al. found that mindfulness practices significantly enhance academic resilience among students, particularly in the context of challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic Mahama et al. (2023). The ability to regulate emotions and thoughts through mindfulness can empower students to cope with stressors, thereby improving their academic performance and overall well-being. This aligns with findings

from Schwind et al., who emphasize that mindfulness activities introduced by faculty can support student well-being and academic success (Schwind et al., 2023). Such practices encourage students to engage in self-reflection and cultivate a sense of care towards themselves and others, which is critical in a university environment often characterized by high levels of stress and competition

Moreover, mindfulness has been shown to promote self-reflection, a critical component of emotional education. By encouraging students to pause and reflect on their thoughts and feelings, mindfulness practices can enhance their emotional intelligence. This is particularly important as emotional intelligence has been linked to better interpersonal relationships and improved academic outcomes (Karali, 2023). For example, Cash et al. discuss how equitable mindfulness initiatives can foster transformative conversations in higher education, promoting inclusivity and emotional awareness among diverse student populations (Cash et al., 2021)

The integration of mindfulness into university curricula not only benefits individual students but also contributes to a more supportive and empathetic campus culture. Research by Yamada and Victor indicates that mindfulness practices positively impact students' health and well-being, enhancing their capacity for learning and social interaction (Yamada & Victor, 2012). This holistic approach to education, which prioritizes emotional well-being alongside academic achievement, is essential for preparing students to thrive in their personal and professional lives

In conclusion, the role of mindfulness in emotional education for university students is increasingly recognized as vital for fostering a healthy learning environment. By promoting self-awareness, emotional regulation, and empathy, mindfulness practices can significantly enhance students' academic experiences and overall well-being. As higher education continues to evolve, integrating mindfulness into curricula will be essential for addressing the emotional and psychological needs of students, ultimately leading to more resilient and engaged learners.

2. OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this research is to analyze the impact of mindfulness on the development of students' inner lives, particularly their compassion, awareness, and capacity to care for themselves and others.

This research examines whether mindfulness can enhance the dimensions of Fides and Humanitas by promoting emotional balance and focused attention in students.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 PROCEDURE

Data was collected through a survey of students from various disciplines, including Business Administration, Psychology, and Sports Sciences. Participants responded to questions about their experience with mindfulness practices in the classroom, including the frequency of their participation and their perceived benefits. The survey also assessed emotional awareness and stress levels using standardized scales.

3.2 PARTICIPANTS

The sample of this study is made up of 284 students from different university degrees. A total of 78 students (27.5%) come from Psychology, 177 students are from Business Administration and Management-ADE (62.3%) and 29 students (10.2%) are from Physical Activity and Sport Sciences (CAFYD). As for the gender of the participants, 131 identify themselves as men (46.1%) and 153 (53.9%) identify themselves as women.

In Business Administration and Management (ADE), there are four first-year groups with a total of 107 participants (60.5%), two third-year groups with a total of 50 participants (28.2%) and one fourth-year group with 20 participants (11.3%). In Physical Activity and Sports Sciences (CAFYD), 29 students belong to the first year of the course. Finally, in Psychology, there are 29 students in the second year (37.2%) and 49 students in the third year (62.8%). Of the total sample of participants,

120 (42.3%) had practiced meditation and mindfulness before, while 164 (57.7%) had never practiced it.

3.3 INSTRUMENTS

The instrument used to carry out this research is an ad-hoc survey conducted on the Google Forms platform. It includes the following 7 sections. general identification data of the participants in the study, data on the studies in which they are currently enrolled, MAAS scale (Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale) and the DASS scale (Depression Anxiety Stress Scale). For the present work we have used part of the results obtained in the research, in order to be able to respond to the formulated objectives.

3.4 DESIGN

To carry out this research, we decided to use a mixed methodology, using Likert-type scales on the one hand, and a questionnaire composed of open-ended questions on the other

4. RESULTS

The research yielded several important findings regarding the role of mindfulness in fostering key emotional and reflective skills.

Emotional Regulation. A significant percentage of students reported that mindfulness helped them manage stress and anxiety, particularly before exams or high-pressure situations. Over 60% of respondents indicated that they felt more relaxed and focused after mindfulness sessions.

Increased Self-awareness. More than half of the participants noted an improvement in their ability to reflect on their thoughts and emotions, aligning with the Fides and Humanitas dimensions that encourage deeper self-reflection and compassion for others.

Enhanced Classroom Engagement. Many students expressed that mindfulness helped them become more engaged in the learning process. Approximately 70% of students felt that they were more focused during class after mindfulness exercises, improving their ability to absorb and reflect on complex material.

5. DISCUSSION

A significant percentage of students reported that mindfulness helped them manage stress and anxiety, particularly before exams or high-pressure situations. More than 60% of respondents indicated they felt more relaxed and focused after mindfulness sessions, which shows a notable impact on their ability to handle these emotions. The practice of mindfulness, which involves paying full attention to the present moment, promotes emotional self-regulation (Masicampo & Baumeister, 2007). According to mindfulness theory (Brown, 2015), it allows students to observe their emotions and negative thoughts without reacting impulsively. This is particularly useful in stressful situations, such as exams, as it helps reduce anticipatory anxiety and exaggerated emotional responses. The fact that more than 60% of students felt more relaxed and focused after mindfulness sessions can be interpreted through the lens of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). MBSR (Stahl & Goldstein, 2019) posits that mindfulness alters emotional processing in the brain, activating areas related to attention regulation, such as the prefrontal cortex, while reducing activity in areas linked to stress and emotional reactivity, such as the amygdala. These changes promote calmness and mental clarity, improving cognitive performance during high-pressure moments. Moreover, the increase in concentration following mindfulness sessions is directly related to the ability to manage internal and external distractions. Information processing theory (LACHMAN et al., 2015) suggests that mindfulness improves students' ability to filter out irrelevant stimuli, which is critical in educational settings. The enhanced concentration is due to improved inhibitory control, a key component of executive functions that allows students to direct their attention more effectively toward important tasks. This inhibitory control enhances their ability to engage with learning and absorb complex material. The use of mindfulness to reduce stress before exams also aligns with performance anxiety theory, which posits that stress and anxiety can block access to memory and logical reasoning (Marin et al., 2019). By practicing mindfulness, students reduce the fight-or-flight response, lowering cortisol levels, and facilitating better access to the cognitive skills needed to perform well in these situations. This has significant

implications for time management and organization, as students can plan and study more effectively when less overwhelmed by anxiety.

More than half of the participants also reported improvements in their ability to reflect on their thoughts and emotions, aligning with the Fides and Humanitas dimensions. These dimensions (Lozano, 2022) encourage deeper self-reflection and compassion for others. The increase in self-awareness reported by participants indicates a significant shift in their ability to reflect on their thoughts and emotions. This is closely related to the dimensions of Fides, which emphasizes trust, and Humanitas, which promotes empathy. Both foster deeper introspection and greater empathy. Self-awareness is a central component of emotional intelligence, as described by Daniel Goleman (Goleman et al., 2018). It involves recognizing and understanding one's emotions and how they influence thoughts and behavior. The fact that many students reported improvements in this area suggests that mindfulness exercises, which often involve observing internal experiences without judgment, enhance emotional reflection. This increase in awareness not only promotes personal growth but also improves interpersonal relationships, as it fosters better emotional regulation and decision-making. The Fides (Lozano, 2022) dimension, which emphasizes trust, relates to how individuals manage their emotions and relationships. By practicing mindfulness and increasing self-awareness, participants develop greater trust in their ability to navigate their own emotional landscape. This can extend to interpersonal relationships, as a deeper understanding of one's own emotions often leads to better communication and empathy toward others. In this sense, mindfulness helps build an internal sense of stability and self-confidence (Oguntuase & Sun, 2022). On the other hand, the Humanitas dimension (Lozano, 2022) emphasizes empathy and compassion for others. As participants become more self-aware and reflective, they also become more attuned to the emotional states of others. This aligns with the concept of compassionate mindfulness (Conversano et al., 2020), where greater self-awareness allows individuals to approach others with more understanding and kindness. Reflecting on one's own emotions often leads to a more nuanced perspective on others' emotions and struggles, fostering a shared sense of humanity. The increase in self-

awareness through mindfulness has several psychological benefits (Richards et al., 2010), including improved emotional regulation, reduced stress, and enhanced mental well-being. Additionally, this growth in self-awareness contributes to better social interactions by fostering empathy and reducing impulsive reactions to emotional triggers. Participants who experienced these improvements are likely to benefit from these effects both in their personal and professional lives.

In addition, many students reported that mindfulness helped them become more engaged in the learning process. Approximately 70% of students felt more focused during class after mindfulness exercises, which improved their ability to absorb and reflect on complex material. This increase in engagement highlights a significant impact on their educational experience. The connection between mindfulness and increased concentration (Anālayo, 2019) suggests that this practice can be a powerful tool for improving cognitive engagement, information retention, and reflective thinking in educational contexts. Mindfulness exercises train individuals to maintain sustained attention on the present moment, directly combating distractions and mind-wandering, two common challenges in academic environments. The improvement in concentration can be explained by the development of selective attention, a cognitive process that allows students to focus on relevant information while filtering out irrelevant stimuli. This sharpening of attention enhances their ability to absorb and engage with complex material during classes. Furthermore, the link between mindfulness and concentration goes beyond superficial attention. It fosters deeper cognitive engagement, meaning students are not just passively receiving information, but actively processing and reflecting on it. This deep engagement is essential for understanding complex or abstract material, which requires more than memorization. Mindfulness improves cognitive functions (Zainal & Newman, 2024) such as working memory, which helps students retain and manipulate information, enhancing their ability to connect concepts and think critically about what they are learning. Additionally, mindfulness cultivates reflective thinking (Moghadam et al., 2022), a key component of meaningful learning. By encouraging students to observe their thoughts without judgment, mindfulness

promotes metacognition, or awareness of one's learning process. This self-reflection allows students to evaluate their understanding of the material, identify areas of confusion, and make more informed decisions about how to approach their studies. The result is more intentional and reflective engagement with class content. Several psychological theories support the idea that mindfulness enhances classroom engagement (FELVER & SINGH, 2020). According to self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci 2024), students are more engaged when they feel autonomous, competent, and connected. Mindfulness fosters a sense of control over one's attention and emotional responses, contributing to a greater sense of competence in managing academic demands. Additionally, the increase in concentration and self-regulation developed through mindfulness exercises allows students to engage more deeply with challenging material, reducing feelings of overwhelm or frustration. All of this has clear implications for academic performance. students who are more focused and engaged not only understand information better but also retain it more effectively. This can lead to higher grades, increased participation in discussions, and greater overall satisfaction with the learning process. Finally, mindfulness helps mitigate the anxiety and stress that often accompany academic pressures, allowing students to approach their studies with a calmer and clearer mind.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Mindfulness has proven to be an effective tool for fostering emotional regulation, self-awareness, and classroom engagement among university students. The practice helps students manage stress and anxiety, particularly before exams or in high-pressure situations, with over 60% of participants reporting feeling more relaxed and focused. This highlights mindfulness' role in promoting emotional self-regulation by allowing students to observe their thoughts and emotions without impulsive reactions, thereby reducing anticipatory anxiety.

The research also reveals that mindfulness enhances concentration, allowing students to filter out distractions and focus better on academic tasks. This improvement in cognitive control suggests that mindfulness

can serve as a powerful mechanism for boosting academic performance, enabling students to engage more deeply with complex material and reflect more meaningfully on their learning processes.

Moreover, mindfulness fosters increased self-awareness and empathy, aligning with the educational values of *Fides* and *Humanitas*. These classical virtues—trust and humanity—are essential for creating a supportive learning environment. By cultivating mindfulness, students not only develop a deeper understanding of their own emotions but also enhance their capacity for compassion and empathy toward others. This contributes to a more collaborative and inclusive classroom atmosphere.

Overall, integrating mindfulness into university curricula offers a comprehensive approach to student development. It promotes not only academic success but also personal and emotional growth, helping students navigate the complexities of modern education with greater resilience, empathy, and cognitive engagement. As higher education continues to evolve, the inclusion of mindfulness practices can significantly enhance the well-being and overall success of students.

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