

Modern Psychology Scientific Bulletin, 2024, 1(14)

P-ISSN 2579-2504

E-ISSN 2738-2664

ԱՐԴԻ ՀՈԳԵԲԱՆՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ

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MODERN PSYCHOLOGY

SCIENTIFIC BULLETIN

АКТУАЛЬНАЯ ПСИХОЛОГИЯ

НАУЧНЫЙ ВЕСТНИК

ԵՐԵՎԱՆ 2024, №1 (14)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46991/SBMP/2024.7.1.073>

## STUDY OF THE INTERRELATON BETWEEN KNOWLEDGE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SELF-REGULATION METHODS OF THE PERSON AND MINDFULNESS (EXAMPLE OF TEACHERS)

Sona Poghosyan (Public Administration Academy of RA, Yerevan, Armenia)

[sona.poghosyan@paara.am](mailto:sona.poghosyan@paara.am)

Astghik Gevorgyan (Public Administration Academy of RA, Yerevan, Armenia)

[astgh.gevorgyan@gmail.com](mailto:astgh.gevorgyan@gmail.com)

Received: 30.08.2023

Revised: 22.05.2024

Accepted: 22.05.2024



The purpose of this article is to study the importance of psychological self-regulation among teachers, as well as their level of mindfulness. Survey, testing and content analysis methods were applied. We applied localized version of Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire and Mindfulness experience questionnaire. In the article, we present the responses or coping mechanisms to stressful situations given by the teachers. Based on the teachers' answers, we have distinguished adaptive and non-adaptive coping mechanisms. Referring to the methods of psychological self-regulation, we presented the role of psychological self-regulation and particularly mindfulness meditation in the process of overcoming stress. During the experimental research, we tried to find out how teachers' knowledge and application of psychological self-regulation methods interrelates with mindfulness.

As a result of the research, we conclude that psychological self-regulation, especially mindfulness meditation, is not widespread among teachers, moreover, there is no clear understanding of self-regulation methods, their use and importance. The level of mindfulness among teachers is average.

**Keywords:** *self-regulations, stress, mindfulness, coping mechanisms, adaptive, maladaptive, teacher, education.*

In the context of rapid developments in the world, the educational system slowly undergoes certain changes, presenting new demands on the professional and psychological qualities of the representatives of the educational system. The demand of the current world is the formation and development of such a person who is

capable of self-regulation, which is an especially important ability for the activity of teachers. The need for self-regulation for teachers is emphasized by the fact that they work in the constant tension, with the new demands presented by the students and their parents, school directors and education officials. This requires having stress resistance, self-regulation skills, high awareness, increased professional skills and self-development. In their work, teachers are constantly faced with the need to manage their own emotions and thoughts, while at the same time live in nowadays uncertain and complex situations.

Psychological self-regulation becomes a tool for teachers to face uncertain situations, to be conscious and regulate behavior, to act «here and now». Mastering the psychological self-regulation skills is important not only for self-realization, psychological well-being, but also for understanding the emotional state of students and influencing them. Psychological self-regulation provides an opportunity to control perception, attention, thinking, speech, imagination, memory, behavior, emotions, which is difficult to control in case of fatigue, tension and stress. At the same time, during the preparation and training of teachers, the issue of mastering psychological self-regulation methods is less emphasized. Along with the importance of mastering self-regulation skills, the concepts about it are scarce and the application is elementary. One of the unresolved questions in the psychology of self-regulation is whether it can be practiced by everyone, or whether it requires specific psychological qualities. In this regard, H. Lindeman notes that self-regulation techniques are mastered by people who are "soft", patient, balanced and has rich emotional life. On the contrary, possession of traits such as high activity, nervousness, aggressiveness, egocentrism, makes it difficult to acquire the skills of self-regulation. [9, p. 15] Mastering the methods of self-regulation is significantly hindered by conscious will-based efforts and high desire. However, we are inclined to the opinion that self-regulation provides an opportunity to expand the boundaries of a person's awareness. We highlight its importance and systematic use for a person, and believe that it is necessary component of professional activity.

**The purpose** of this article is to study the importance of psychological self-regulation among teachers, as well as their level of mindfulness.

We put forward a **hypothesis** according to which teachers' knowledge and use of the self-regulation methods contributes to the increase of mindfulness and its facets, which are observing, describing, acting with awareness, nonjudging, and nonreactivity.

**Methodology.** Survey, testing and content analysis methods were applied. We applied localized version of Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire and Mindfulness experience questionnaire.

## **Results**

Self-regulation is a process by which the organism regulates its condition, outlining all the means to achieve the goal. This includes the processes of goal setting, implementing plans and developing strategies to achieve the goal, directing behavior toward the goal, moving away from the goal, and balancing multiple goals. [5]

A. O. Prokhorov distinguishes two approaches to self-regulation: systemic activity-oriented and systemic-functional. In the case of a systemic activity-oriented approach, self-regulation of the mental state is a complete psychological activity only when there is a conscious purpose for that activity and when voluntary efforts are made to use self-regulatory methods. Another approach to self-regulation is the systemic-functional approach, which is based on the functional structures. According to A. O. Prokhorov, the formation of the latter is related to the integrating function of the state. It promotes stable relationships between mental processes and properties. As a result, the trait-state-process mental structure is formed, which is a necessary condition for the effectiveness of a person's activity. During the process of self-regulation there is a transition from one state to another, for example, from anger to calmness. Thanks to the integrating function, a new state is actualized, a new psychological structure is created, which includes new psychological processes and traits. [11]

Self-regulation methods include autogenic training, meditation, visualization, biological feedback. Meditation is used as a mean to achieve mindfulness or a conscious state. Mindfulness is also called sudden awareness, presence or consciousness. [6] Introducing the relationships between mindfulness and meditation, J.Brantley and J. Kabat-Zinn present mindfulness as a meditation-based approach. If mindfulness is a state of being present, then meditation is a transformative process that involves:

- “Directing attention in a calm and steady way,
- developing an awareness, that is light and clear,
- growing understanding and wisdom about yourself and life,
- having the embedded qualities of kindness and compassion”. [1, p. 59]

Shapiro and Carlson note that mindfulness is both a product and a process. The result is mindful awareness, the process is mindful practice. As a result, they propose the following definition that brings these two points together: “The awareness that arises through intentionally attending in an open, accepting, and discerning way to whatever is arising in the present moment”. [4, p. 556]

The Basic Mindfulness System created by Sh. Yang is a set of skills. They are skills for processing sensory experience. In sensory experience, Sh. Yang includes not only physical experience, such as visual, auditory, sensations, but also internal, such as thoughts and emotions. In the Basic Mindfulness System, practice is organized by 5 areas: thoughts and emotions, physical sensations, calmness or stillness, flow or dynamic sensory experience, human kindness and love. [7]

The importance of sensory experience is also expressed in Ruth Bayer's definition. Bayer defines mindfulness as the non-critical examination of the flow of internal and external stimuli occurring at a given moment. [2, p. 6] B. Analayo, R. Gethin, T. Nyanaponika, and G. Watson emphasize paying attention to the body, emotions, and mind, calling them the pillars of mindfulness. [3, p. 71]

**The sample.** The research was conducted among 102 teachers of different public schools. The data of 99 are valid.

**Methodology.** Survey, testing and content analysis methods were applied. We applied localized version of Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire and Mindfulness experience questionnaire. The purpose of the questionnaire was to find out the self-regulation mechanisms of teachers in case of stress, emotional tension and overwhelming thoughts, as well as to find out how much teachers are aware of and use self-regulation methods. [12]

To overcome stress or tension, teachers use both adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies. People usually use different responses to the stress. Some are more adaptive than others, which are more maladaptive. Maladaptive strategies are actions that a person takes to temporarily reduce stress. They are useful in the short term, but in the long term they badly affect human health and well-being. Such behaviors include compensatory or comfort behaviors, such as overeating, smoking, drinking, and avoidance. [8, p. 208]

Adaptive coping strategies have a positive effect on a person's health and well-being in the long term. Support, problem solving, humor, physical activity, relaxation and its various manifestations, including mindfulness meditation, are adaptive. The latter helps especially to overcome stress, remove emotional and physical tension. It is a powerful method of relaxation, which gives the opportunity to quickly relax, restore strength, and work capacity. [6]

It should be noted that the selection of coping strategy in stressful situations and its adaptability also depends on the situation and personal factors. Below are presented the adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies used by teachers (Table1).

**Table 1.** The adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies used of teachers

<b>Adaptive coping mechanisms</b>	<b>Coping mechanisms used by teachers</b>
Support	Speak and share with others (13)
Relaxation	Listen to music (18), Crying (5), Breathing (3), Pray (2), Paint (2)
Humor	Focusing on the positive things (10)
Physical Activity	Walking(2)

<b>Maldaptive coping mechanisms</b>	<b>copng</b>	<b>Coping mechanisms used by teachers</b>
Avoidance		Distraction (11), Stay alone (5), Additional sleep (4)
Unhealthy self-soothing		Watch TV shows or movies (4), Shopping (4)
Numbing		Eat or drink (6), Alcohol (1), Tranquilizer (1)
Compulsivity		Make the day super full (5)

Summarizing the content analysis data, we got the results, which show to what extent teachers are aware and use self-regulation methods, how they overcome stressful situations.

To get rid of an emotional outburst, teachers most often suppress it (16), stay alone, cry and keep silent (22), try to self-control their emotions (26), count (14), try to focus on the positive things (14), speak, express themselves (10). Teachers rarely do physical exercises, dance, and take care of the garden, read Narekatsi.

To get rid of many thoughts, 58 of the teachers engage in other activities (watching a movie, reading a book, talking with other people, listening to music). Eleven teachers focus on positive, good thoughts and eight teachers classify their thoughts by importance. One response was recorded in each of the following cases: writes down and throws in the trash can, self-control, does not seek to get free and runs away. For fewer teachers, many thoughts are even pleasant, in particular the following responses were written: «Sometimes many thoughts help to find the best thoughts, I like to think».

In order to relax muscles, calm strong emotions, and get rid of too many thoughts, 50 of the teachers do not use self-regulation methods. Self-regulation methods are used by 49 teacher, 15 of them practice meditation. 49 teachers, who use self-regulations methods, do that by the following frequency: every day (11), several times a week (12), once a week (5), once a month (4), several times a month (10), several times a year (5).

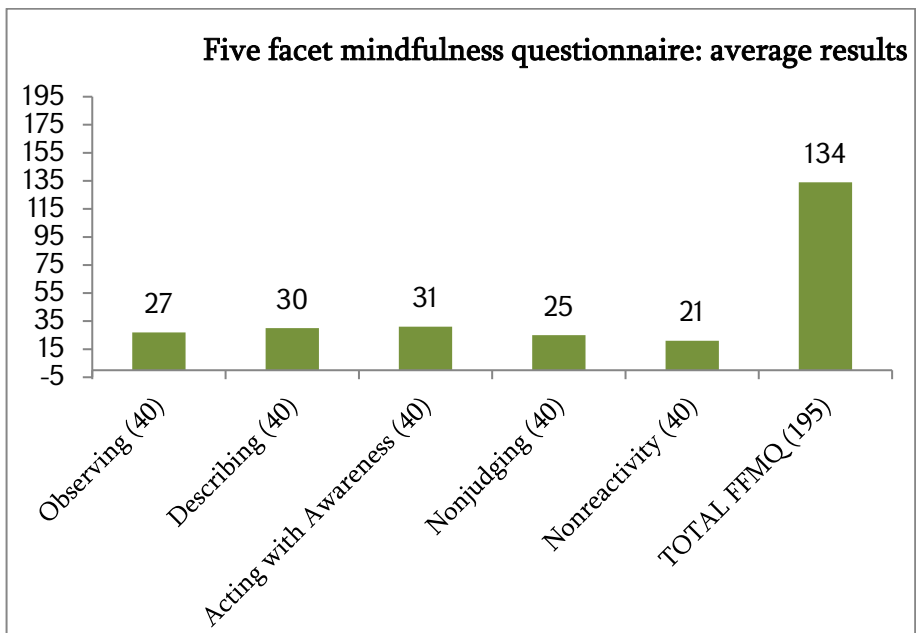
As for the practicing meditation, 80 teachers does not practice meditation, and 19 teacher practice with the following frequency: every day (4), several times a week (6), once a week (1), once a month (1), several times a month (1), several times a year (4). Teachers mainly practice the following types of meditation: focus on thoughts (11) and emotions (3), breathing (8).

61 teachers want to learn and practice self-regulation techniques and mindfulness meditation. According to the teachers, learning and practicing self-regulation techniques and mindfulness meditation will help focus (2), manage

emotions and feelings (7), manage thoughts (5), become stress-resistant (9), calm (11), self-control (10) and self-recognition (2).

Summarizing the results of the survey, we can state that psychological self-regulation, especially mindfulness meditation, is not widespread among teachers, moreover, there is no clear understanding of self-regulation methods, their use and importance.

Comparing these results with the study of mindfulness, we note that the level of mindfulness among teachers is average ( $M=134$ ,  $n=88$ ). All the mindfulness facets are at an average level.



**Figure 1.** Five facet mindfulness questionnaire: average results

If we compare the indicators of mindfulness and its facets between those who use self-regulation methods and especially meditation and those who do not, we notice that the indicators of Observing and Non-reactivity are high among those who use them. In this regard, it is a remarkable observation that the self-regulation is fundamentally conscious, which is related to the uniqueness of the human psyche and differs from the self-regulation of animals. [10, p. 494]

### **Conclusion**

Summarizing the results, we can conclude that the knowledge of psychological self-regulation methods among teachers is at a low level, and their practice is limited and infrequent, mostly amateur in nature. The use of psychological self-regulation methods, especially mindfulness meditation, gives an opportunity to increase not only

the level of awareness, observing, non-reactivity, but also has a positive effect on stress management, emotional and thought regulation. Based on the research data, we suggest that during the preparation and training of teachers, special attention should be paid to the formation of their self-regulation skills, which will give an opportunity to make it one of the necessary components of their professional activity.

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**Information about authors**

Sona Poghosyan, Scientific secretary, Associate Professor of the Chair of Psychology and Political Science, Public Administration Academy of the Republic of Armenia, PhD Psychology, [sona.poghosyan@paara.am](mailto:sona.poghosyan@paara.am)

Astghik Gevorgyan, Master in Management Psychology, PhD student, [astgh.gevorgyan@gmail.com](mailto:astgh.gevorgyan@gmail.com)

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