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Mental Alertness in Adolescents

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Abstract:

The current research aims to explore the role and impact of mental alertness in adolescents through a theoretical article by addressing the following questions: What role does mental alertness play in the life of an adolescent, and how significantly does it affect them? This article emphasizes the importance of mental alertness, a key variable in positive psychology, during adolescence, a critical and transformative stage in a person's life.

Keywords: Mental Alertness ; Adolescence.

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1. Introduction

Mental alertness is one of the important variables that contribute to fostering positive mental skills, which play an effective role in an individual's psychological health, enabling them to direct their life independently. It helps individuals fully and clearly understand their emotions, improves physical health, satisfaction with life, and psychological well-being, and allows them to overcome life's challenges. Mental alertness encompasses a wide range of practices related to education, including enhancing mental health, improving communication, and fostering empathy. Although the concept of mental alertness has religious-philosophical origins, rooted in Eastern practices and the Buddhist tradition in India, where it was aimed at liberating the soul from suffering, difficulties, and pain, it has firmly established itself in contemporary psychology. Psychologists have successfully developed and integrated this concept into the science of the mind, approaching it objectively from multiple perspectives, rather than viewing it through a single lens. Acknowledging these emotions, no matter how negative or painful, is essential (Christopher & Gilbert, 2010, p. 11). Additionally, psychotherapists have used the concept of mindfulness and mental alertness to treat various psychological and physical disorders, leading to psychological happiness and life satisfaction. Mental alertness has been addressed from two angles: first, as a psychological concept linked to positive psychology, and second, as a tool used in many therapeutic interventions, such as reducing psychological stress and cognitive therapy based on mental alertness (Al-Behairi & al, 2014, p. 121).

Mental alertness enables an individual to accept their current situation, even when faced with emotional pressure or psychological pain. It empowers them to confront challenges rather than avoid them, fostering resilience. This acceptance helps the individual protect themselves from excessive anxiety and heightened emotional responses to situations. By maintaining mental alertness, they can manage the physiological effects that often accompany intense emotions (Al-Dabaa & Talab, 2013, p. 34).

Mental alertness forms the foundation for sound awareness, which is grounded in concentration. Mindfulness is defined as a skill that enables individuals to navigate their lives independently of others. This includes the ability to comprehend their emotions and thoughts, and to handle challenging situations in a more positive manner (El-Said, 2018, p. 28).

Mindfulness plays a vital role in an individual's mental health by helping them manage negative emotions and enhance psychological well-being. It is widely applied in various psychological therapies to aid individuals in improving both their mental and physical health, fostering resilience, and promoting overall life satisfaction.

Several studies and research emphasize the effectiveness of mindfulness in enhancing psychological well-being. Researchers and psychotherapists have successfully utilized the concept of

mental alertness in treating numerous psychological and physical disorders, guiding individuals toward psychological happiness and life satisfaction. Mental alertness has been explored from two perspectives: first, as a psychological concept rooted in positive psychology, and second, as a key component in various therapeutic interventions aimed at reducing stress and improving overall mental health.

Mindfulness is regarded as an effective tool for enhancing an individual's mental health, as it empowers them to manage their life independently, free from external influences. This skill improves a person's ability to understand and regulate their emotions, enabling them to confront challenges and negative situations in a positive way. Rooted in religious and philosophical traditions, particularly Buddhist practices in India, mindfulness has since become integral to many modern psychological therapies aimed at improving both mental and physical health. Research and studies consistently demonstrate that mindfulness significantly contributes to increased psychological well-being and fosters a deep sense of inner satisfaction.

Mental alertness enables an individual to accept their current situation, even when facing emotional pressure or psychological pain, allowing them to confront challenges rather than avoid them. This acceptance helps protect the individual from excessive anxiety and hyper-vigilance related to the physiological responses that often accompany intense emotions (Al-Dabaa & Talab, 2013, p. 34).

Mental alertness is a crucial factor for sound awareness, as it relies on concentration to help individuals overcome life's challenges and accept situations as they are without judgment (Mace, 2008).

Based on the previous, the present study aims to detect the role and impact of mental alertness among a sample of stressed individuals. Accordingly, The study derives its importance from the following:

- The current study addresses a significant variable in positive psychology: mental alertness, which positively influences a person's life.
- The focus on the adolescent age stage, which is particularly critical, as it encompasses numerous physical, emotional, mental, and social changes. This makes teenagers susceptible to conflicts in various psychological aspects, often beyond their coping abilities, potentially leading to negative outcomes, including psychological disorders.
- The novelty of examining the variable of mental alertness within the context of Arab studies, as noted in the researcher's review of existing literature.

2. Problem Statement

An individual is nurtured in the care of their family, which fosters their upbringing and develops their social skills from a young age until they reach maturity. Like all individuals, this child transitions from one developmental stage to another, leaving behind the remnants of childhood. As they enter adolescence, they encounter a new set of challenges that accompany this critical period, impacting various aspects of their lives. This transition brings forth unique obstacles that require adaptation and resilience, shaping their journey into adulthood.

The study of mindfulness is particularly significant for adolescents, as it represents a positive variable within the realm of positive psychology that influences various areas of psychological, personal, social, and academic well-being. Adolescence is considered one of the most critical and challenging stages in an individual's development, characterized by numerous changes and pressures. By fostering mindfulness, adolescents can better navigate these challenges, enhancing their ability to adapt and thrive during this pivotal period.

Adolescents are characterized by continuous renewal and advancement in their pursuit of perfection as rational beings. However, this stage poses significant dangers due to the physical, physiological, mental, and emotional changes they experience. During this time, adolescents often face various internal and external conflicts that can lead to psychological disorders (Al-Sayyed, 2008, p. 54). Anxiety, tension, and depression are particularly prevalent among adolescents, making them vulnerable to crises. As they strive to establish their own identities, these individuals are also confronted with numerous challenges, the severity of which depends on their psychological and social development. In some cases, these issues may become so overwhelming that they hinder teenagers from effectively performing their new roles and responsibilities.

This overwhelming stress can lead adolescents to feel miserable, sad, and dissatisfied with their lives (Abu-Jadu, 2011, p. 421). Many studies have indicated that mental alertness is associated with several positive variables, including psychological happiness, stability, self-regulation, stress coping, psychological well-being, and flexibility. Therefore, studying mental alertness among adolescents is beneficial, as it helps them navigate their challenges and fosters positive aspects of their personalities (Lau, 2006, p. 1446). Additionally, mindfulness has been effectively employed to treat various psychological

disorders, such as stress, panic, depression, suicidal behavior, and anxiety in both adolescents and adults (Al-Zubaidi, 2012, p. 27).

Among the previous studies addressing the topic of mental health, several notable works include:

- **Study by Mansouri & Boumedjane (2022)** titled *The Level of Mindfulness Among Adolescents in Intermediate School*. This study aimed to assess the mindfulness levels of middle school adolescents, identify the skills they commonly use, and reveal any differences between male and female students. Using a descriptive approach, the study surveyed a sample of 400 pupils and employed a mindfulness scale developed by the researchers based on the theoretical framework of dialectical behavior therapy. The results indicated an estimated mindfulness percentage of 74.03, with no significant gender differences found.

- **Study by El-Said (2018)** titled *The Mindfulness and Its Relation to Life Satisfaction in a Sample of Teenagers of Both Sexes*. This study aimed to investigate the relationship between mindfulness and life satisfaction among a sample of teenagers, as well as to determine the levels of mindfulness and life satisfaction and any gender differences in these variables. The sample consisted of 250 teenagers (132 males and 118 females), aged 16-18 years (M=17.47, SD=0.07 for boys; M=17.48, SD=0.75 for girls). The researcher used the Five Facet Mindfulness Scale, developed in (2006) by Baer & al., translated by Al-Behiry & al (2014), along with a life satisfaction scale prepared by Al-Dosoky (2013). The results showed a moderate level of mindfulness and life satisfaction in the sample, with no significant differences between genders. Furthermore, a significant positive relationship was found between mindfulness and life satisfaction, confirming that mindfulness contributes to predicting life satisfaction in the overall group.

From the previous presentation, the problem of the study can be crystallized by asking the following question:

- What is the role and impact of mental alertness among a sample of adolescents?

3. Hypotheses

✓ There is a significant role and impact of mindfulness on adolescents.

4. Objectives of the study

The current research aims to highlight the role of mental alertness and reveal the extent of its impact on adolescents.

5. Importance of the study

The current study addresses an important variable in positive psychology: mental alertness, which positively influences a person's life. The focus on the adolescent age stage is critical, as this period is marked by significant physical, emotional, mental, and social changes. These changes make teenagers vulnerable to various psychological conflicts that can exceed their coping abilities, potentially leading to negative outcomes, including psychological disorders. Additionally, this study offers a novel perspective on the variable of mental alertness within the context of Arab studies, as noted in the researcher's review of existing literature.

6. Determinants

6.1. Mental Alertness

Despite the growing interest in the concept of mental alertness, it still requires further study. Perspectives on mental alertness vary; it can be viewed as a process, a temporary state, a trait, or a form of meditative practice. Ultimately, it refers to a state of awareness that allows individuals to focus their entire attention and awareness on the present moment, helping them avoid making judgments about their thoughts, observations, and behaviors (Vago & Silbersweig, 2012, p. 22).

6.1.1 Definitions of Mental Alertness

There have been many definitions of mental alertness as a psychological concept, with most emphasizing it as the ability to focus attention on the present moment while accepting and coexisting with experiences, without making evaluative judgments about them (Al-Walidi, 2017, p. 45). Langer & Moldoveanu (2002) defines it as a flexible field of mental ability not tied to a particular perspective, allowing individuals to have a broader view of their experiences. This openness to all mental and sensory experiences enables individuals to refrain from issuing negative judgments that may undermine their value and experiences.

Several studies have explored this concept across various societal samples, yielding diverse results. Baer & al (2006) describe mindfulness as a multidimensional concept that encompasses observing, describing, acting with awareness, not judging inner experiences, and not reacting to them. The current study adopts this definition, viewing mental alertness as a multi-dimensional concept that includes observation, conscious action, and non-judgmental engagement with internal experiences.

Researchers Shapiro, Carlson, Freedman & Astin (2006) identify four components of mental alertness: self-regulation, self-management, clarification of values, and discovery. Cardaciotto & al (2008) emphasize the importance of being present and continuously monitoring experiences while accepting them without evaluative judgments. Mace (2008) highlights the benefits of mental alertness in enhancing psychological solidity, facilitating the experience of meaning in life, and enabling individuals to cope with pressures through awareness and environmental management. Mental alertness has also been associated with reducing fears and depression, improving attention processes, tolerance, and life satisfaction.

Hasker (2010) notes that mental alertness consists of two components: self-regulation of attention in the present moment and openness to experiences. Miller & al (2010) further distinguishes the cognitive treatments of mental alertness as neutral observation without evaluative judgments of stimuli as they exist in the present.

Definitions by Mehdi (2012, p. 34) describe mental alertness as a flexible state of mind characterized by openness to new experiences and innovative activities. The Oxford Dictionary (2014) defines mindfulness as a psychological state achieved by focusing on present-moment awareness and acceptance of feelings, thoughts, and physical sensations.

Grecucci (2015) points to behaviors that facilitate mental alertness, such as refraining from judgments, trusting in one's ability to develop, accepting thoughts and feelings, and practicing patience as situations unfold. Hassed (2016) characterizes it as a wide range of educational practices that enhance mental health, communication, empathy, emotional development, physical health, and learning outcomes.

From the previous definitions, it is evident that scholars focus on mindfulness as attentive awareness of present experiences without evaluative judgments. In light of this, the concept of mental alertness is closely linked to positive psychology, contributing to an individual's ability to live positively, achieving happiness, satisfaction, and love of life. Additionally, mental alertness has been utilized therapeutically for psychological disorders such as anxiety and depression. There is a consensus among scholars that mental alertness represents a state of complete awareness of current experiences, which necessitates acceptance and coexistence with these situations.

6.1.2 Historical Roots of Mindfulness

Mindfulness has its roots in historical, religious, philosophical, political, and medical contexts, particularly within Buddhist traditions, where it was associated with various practices and connotations throughout different eras. Over the past three decades, mindfulness has gained widespread recognition in

counseling and psychotherapy, emerging as a new third-wave technique in cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and dialectical behavioral therapy (DBT).

According to Al-Asmi (2016), the term "mindfulness" predates its use in dialectical therapy and acceptance and commitment therapy, having originated in Buddhist traditions that integrated it into spiritual rituals. Kabat-Zin popularized mindfulness in his meditation interventions aimed at reducing anxiety, pain, and depression in individuals.

Today, mindfulness is an integral component of dialectical behavioral therapy, largely due to the contributions of Marsha Linehan. This concept has spread throughout the Western world, particularly in the United States, where it is valued for its numerous benefits in mental health development. Its application has expanded beyond traditional therapeutic settings to include educational institutions and various mental and medical health fields.

Linehan (2015) emphasizes that mindfulness, initially a philosophical concept, has evolved into a behavioral skill that can be observed and measured. This transformation involved moving from classic therapeutic interventions-focused on meditation and present-moment awareness through techniques like breath observation-to a dialectical approach where mindfulness skills are integrated into behavioral practices. Counselors employ these mindfulness skills in ongoing sessions, using them as tools to facilitate mental well-being and enhance therapeutic outcomes.

6.2 Adolescence

The period of adolescence, typically defined as ages 13 to 18, is a critical phase of multidimensional psychological development influenced by earlier childhood experiences. This stage is characterized by significant moral and psychological transitions as teenagers encounter new challenges that can have lasting effects on their lives. Adolescents often grapple with various issues, including mood disturbances, conflicts with family, and feelings of loneliness. These challenges necessitate proper adaptation to societal norms and expectations.

It is common for adolescents to experience problems during this developmental stage, which is a natural phenomenon. They may require support to navigate these difficulties and become well-adjusted adults. Experts emphasize the importance of intervention to help teenagers understand their emotions, uncover their potential, and utilize their strengths effectively to achieve satisfaction and happiness (Al-Daman, 2005 ; Al-Omaria, 2005).

According to Belhassan (2008), common adolescent issues include concerns related to body image, emotional and sexual challenges, and difficulties in interpersonal relationships. Addressing these

problems requires fostering self-awareness and empowering adolescents to solve their issues while developing their capabilities. The roles of parents, mentors, and guidance counselors are crucial in facilitating this process.

Azuri (2011) highlights the significance of studying mental alertness among adolescents due to their heightened exposure to various pressures, including social, familial, personal, health-related, emotional, and academic stressors. These pressures can significantly impact their attention, focus, happiness, and overall life satisfaction. By promoting mental alertness, adolescents can better manage these challenges, enhancing their well-being and fostering a more positive outlook on life.

7. Study Curriculum

The researcher employed a descriptive approach for this study, which is well-suited to its objectives of assessing the level of mental alertness among adolescents. This approach allows for a comprehensive examination of the current state of mental alertness within the sample, facilitating the collection and analysis of relevant data to provide insights into how adolescents experience and exhibit mental alertness.

8. Conclusion

Through this study, we aimed to reveal the role of mental alertness and highlight its impact on the lives of adolescents. The findings led to several conclusions.

Firstly, mental alertness comprises four key components: attention, awareness, focusing on present experiences, and living with experiences and thoughts without judgment. Understanding these components is essential for grasping how mental alertness influences adolescent development.

Secondly, the level of mental alertness in adolescents is significantly influenced by the customs and traditions present in their social environment from a young age. This highlights the importance of a supportive and enriching social context for fostering mental alertness.

Additionally, schools play a crucial role in developing mental alertness skills among teenagers, fostering their overall growth. Educational institutions can provide the necessary environment and resources to enhance these skills.

Related research, such as a study conducted by Bahnasawy in (2020), explored the relationship between mental alertness and academic advancement among university students, considering variables such as gender and academic specialization (scientific vs. literary). The sample consisted of (836) male and female students at Beni Suef University and employed a descriptive correlational approach using scales for mental alertness and academic improvement developed by the researcher.

The study concluded that both mental alertness and academic improvement levels were high, with no statistically significant differences between groups. Furthermore, a positive correlation was found between the two, indicating that mental alertness moderately predicts academic progress, accounting for (47%) of the variance observed in academic achievement.

9. Study Recommendations:

In light of the results of the current study, several recommendations can be suggested:

- ✓ It is essential to provide training for teachers, psychologists, and social workers to develop mental alertness skills. This training will equip them to help students across various stages and age groups effectively cope with psychological pressures.
- ✓ Schools should organize seminars and workshops aimed at educating students about the importance of mental alertness. These sessions can focus on how to acquire and practice mental alertness skills in their daily lives.
- ✓ When developing teaching programs and educational activities, special attention should be given to integrating mental alertness traits. This ensures that students are encouraged to cultivate these essential skills throughout their learning experiences.
- ✓ All social and educational institutions must collaborate to support and promote mental alertness among adolescents. A unified approach will enhance the effectiveness of initiatives aimed at developing mental alertness.
- ✓ It would be beneficial to design guidance programs that target the development of mental alertness for various age groups. These programs can provide tailored strategies and resources to support individuals at different stages of development.
- ✓ Future research should investigate the relationship between mental alertness and other variables such as self-regulation, positive thinking, academic achievement, and sleep. This exploration will provide deeper insights into how mental alertness interacts with these factors.
- ✓ Finally, further studies should focus on examining mental alertness across different age groups to understand its development and significance throughout the lifespan.

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