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Mindfulness in student life: A phenomenological study of self-awareness, emotional resilience, and identity development

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Abstract:

This phenomenological study explored the meaning of mindfulness in the daily lives of university students. In-depth interviews were conducted with three active students at UIN Salatiga to understand how mindfulness is perceived and experienced in the academic, emotional, and social contexts. Using descriptive-interpretative analysis based on Giorgi's "whole–part–whole" method, five essential themes were identified: present-moment awareness, emotional self-regulation, self-acceptance, adaptive coping, and reflective growth. The findings reveal that mindfulness is not merely a stress management technique but an existential and developmental process that simultaneously strengthens self-awareness, emotional resilience, and identity development as an integrated outcome. Participants demonstrated the ability to stay grounded in the present moment, consciously regulate their emotions, and make decisions aligned with personal and social values reflecting the dynamic formation of their identity. This study underscores the importance of developing mindfulness-based psychoeducational programs within higher education to holistically support students' mental well-being, self-understanding, and personal growth, including the process of identity development.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, mental health among college students is a critical global issue, marked by an increase in the prevalence of stress, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion, which directly impact academic performance, social relationships, and psychological well-being. For instance, Beiter et al. (2015) reported that over 60% of American students experience significant levels of stress, which often affects academic performance, social relationships, and overall psychological well-being. Similar findings have been reported in developing countries, including Indonesia, where students face various pressures from academic expectations and social adaptation, to dual roles as individuals transitioning from adolescence to early adulthood (Arnett, 2000; Sa'adu, 2024).

According to the Indonesian National Health Survey (Riskesdas, 2018), more than 25% of young people aged 16–24 years including university students show symptoms of psychological distress, such as anxiety and depression. Additional data from the Ministry of Health (2021) confirm that mental health problems in this age group have increased significantly over the last five years. These findings indicate the urgency to address student mental health in the Indonesian context, especially considering the unique challenges faced during the transition to adulthood.

In this context, mindfulness has emerged as a promising psychological strategy for managing life stress in a more adaptive way. Mindfulness is defined as "awareness that arises through intentional attention, in the present moment, and without judgment of the experience that is occurring" (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Mindfulness practices are rooted in Eastern meditative traditions but have been scientifically adapted in the context of clinical psychology and education, particularly in the form of interventions such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) (Goyal et al., 2014; Shapiro et al., 2005).

Kabat-Zinn (2003)argued that mindfulness consists of seven basic attitudes or attitudinal foundations, namely non-judging, patience, beginner's mind, trust in oneself, non-striving, acceptance, and letting go. These seven attitudes form the basic framework for cultivating a conscious relationship between individuals and their experiences. In student life, these values can help them deal with academic and social pressures in a more reflective and less reactive manner. In addition, Bishop et al. (2004) propose a two-component model of mindfulness, namely: (1) sustained regulation of attention to the present experience, and (2) an orientation toward experience that is open, curious, and non-judgmental. This model emphasizes that mindfulness is not just about being present in the moment, but also about how individuals respond to emerging experiences including unpleasant ones such as failure, conflict, or stress.

Experimental research has shown that mindfulness-based interventions can reduce stress symptoms, improve emotional well-being, and enhance executive function in students (Galante et al., 2018; Johnson et al., 2023). In Indonesia, mindfulness practices have gained widespread recognition, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, when students have to adapt to online learning and limited social interaction. A study by Komariah et al. (2022) revealed that 55.1% of students

experienced stress during online learning,but their stress levels decreased significantly after receiving mindfulness training. The students reported increased feelings of calmness, focus, and acceptance of difficult situations. However, most previous studies on mindfulness in Indonesia have relied on quantitative or intervention-based approaches and have often reported predominantly positive outcomes. For instance, Setiawan et al. (2020) found that mindfulness training improved academic performance, but other studies (e.g., Putri & Sari, 2021) revealed that mindfulness interventions were not always statistically significant in reducing stress among certain student populations. This suggests that the application of Western-based mindfulness frameworks may not fully capture or address the nuanced and culturally embedded experiences of Indonesian students.

While these studies offer valuable insights, they often overlook the importance of the subjective meaning of how mindfulness is actually experienced, interpreted, and lived by individuals in their unique social and cultural contexts. The subjective meaning of mindfulness is crucial because it shapes how students internalize, practice, and benefit from mindfulness in real-life situations. Particularly in Indonesia, where collectivist values, spiritual traditions, and social harmony are deeply rooted, the personal meaning of mindfulness may differ significantly from that of Western conceptualizations. Without understanding these local nuances, interventions risk being less relevant and effective.

Furthermore, there is a notable imbalance in the literature: the dominance of quantitative research tends to marginalize the subjective and contextual meanings of mindfulness. If this imbalance persists, there is a risk that intervention programs may overlook the personal and cultural dimensions of mindfulness, thereby reducing their effectiveness and relevance for Indonesian students. Thus, it is crucial to explore the subjective meaning of mindfulness as lived and understood by students . The phenomenological approach is particularly relevant in this regard, as it seeks to reveal the essence of lived experiences and to understand how individuals interpret mindfulness within their unique cultural and social realities. This is not merely a methodological alternative to quantitative research, but a means to uncover new layers of understanding of mindfulness that are contextually and culturally grounded.

A phenomenological perspective allows for the exploration of these rich subjective meanings by focusing on the students lived experiences rather than merely measuring outcomes or testing interventions. This approach is not intended to contrast with quantitative research, but to complement and deepen our understanding by capturing the essence of how mindfulness is understood, embodied, and given meaning in the Indonesian student context. By integrating phenomenological inquiry with established frameworks such as Kabat-Zinn's, this study aims to bridge the universal principles of mindfulness with local, culturally embedded experiences.

In the context of humanistic and existential psychology, the meaning of experience is an important part of understanding the psychological transformation process of individuals (Tindall, 2009; Wertz, 2010). More than just a relaxation technique, mindfulness can be understood as an existential approach that reflects an individual's reflective relationship with themselves and their experiences. In practice, many students find it difficult to consistently apply values such as

acceptance and non-judgment, especially when faced with academic pressure and interpersonal conflict . For example, students often tend to blame themselves when they experience failure, or feel anxious when they do not meet the expectations of their social environment (Tomlinson et al., 2018). This indicates the need for a qualitative approach to explore how individuals truly understand and experience mindfulness in the dynamics of their lives.

Specifically, in the Indonesian context where collectivism, spirituality, and social harmony are highly valued subjective experiences of mindfulness may differ significantly from those described in Western literature. Qualitative phenomenological research is therefore essential for capturing the structure of consciousness and the essence of experiences that may not be revealed through survey or experimental approaches. Such studies have the potential to uncover deeper dimensions, such as how students interpret moments of full presence when facing academic pressure, how they understand letting go when they have to release expectations, or how they respond to negative emotions without judgment, all within the context of their cultural and spiritual environments.

To further strengthen the novelty and relevance of this research, the following research questions are proposed: How do Indonesian university students subjectively experience and interpret mindfulness in their daily lives? In what ways do cultural, spiritual, and social factors shape their understanding of mindfulness, self-awareness, and emotional resilience? By addressing these questions, this study seeks to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to the global mindfulness literature and to inform the development of more culturally attuned mindfulness interventions for Indonesian students.

Furthermore, the results of this exploration of the meaning of mindfulness can be used to design intervention programs that are more subjective, personal, and contextual, unlike the generic approaches that have dominated mindfulness training thus far. This understanding can also enrich the literature on positive psychology, particularly regarding mindfulness-based practices in the Indonesian cultural context, where values of collectivism, spirituality, and social pressure influence how individuals respond to stress and manage emotions (Sarfraz & Siddiqui, 2023).

The general objective of this study is to explore the subjective meaning of mindfulness among Indonesian college students. Specifically, this research aims to understand students' perceptions and interpretations of mindfulness in relation to academic pressure, social relationships, and the process of identity formation during the transition to early adulthood. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of a culturally contextualized phenomenological approach to mindfulness, and practically to the design of mindfulness-based mental health programs that are more humane, student-centered, and grounded in Indonesian cultural values.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design, aiming to explore the meaning of mindfulness experiences in the lives of university students. The researcher acts as the main instrument in the process of data collection and interpretation, with a direct

presence in interviews and reflective note-taking. This research was conducted from March to April 2025 in Universitas Islam Negeri Salatiga, and involved three active students as participants. They were purposively selected because they had personal experience in practicing mindfulness, both formally and informally, and were willing to share their inner experiences openly.

To ensure the depth of experience, only students who had engaged in mindfulness practice for at least six months either through formal programs or personal routines were included as participants. This criterion was confirmed during participant screening toensure their familiarity and ability to reflect meaningfully reflecton their mindfulness journey. The decision to involve only three participants is consistent with the phenomenological tradition, which emphasizes the depth and the richness of data over sample size. In phenomenological research, a small number of participants are typical and appropriate, as the focus is to achieve an in-depth understanding of the lived experience and nuanced meanings rather than broad generalization (Giorgi, 2016; Smith et al., 2009). The three participants were diverse in gender, age, academic discipline, and religious background, reflecting the heterogeneity commonly found among Indonesian university students and supporting the contextual relevance of the findings.

The rationale for adopting a phenomenological approach is grounded in the objective of this study to uncover the authentic and subjective meanings of mindfulness as experienced by Indonesian students. Phenomenology is uniquely suited for capturing the essence and structure of lived experiences, which may be overlooked by other qualitative methods such as case studies (which focus on context-bound cases), grounded theory (which aims for theory development), or narrative research (which emphasizes individual stories). By using phenomenology, this study seeks to reveal how mindfulness is interpreted, embodied, and practiced within the students' cultural and social realities.

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews structured based on the seven main aspects of mindfulness as proposed by Kabat-Zinn, (2003), namely non-judging, patience, beginner's mind, trust, non-striving, acceptance, and letting go. This approach allowed the researcher to flexibly explore students' experiences flexibly, while still referring to a systematic conceptual framework. Interviews were conducted face-to-face and recorded (with informants' consent), and then transcribed verbatim for further analysis. By using a semi-structured approach, the researcher can adjust the flow of questions according to the dynamics and depth of the narrative conveyed by each participant.

While Kabat-Zinn's framework provided a valuable starting point, open-ended and probing questions were also included to allow participants to express meanings and experiences outside the Western paradigm. This flexibility ensured that a unique, culturally embedded understandings of mindfulness could emerge naturally. The researcher was mindful of the risk of imposing Western constructs and, therefore, intentionally encouraged participants to reflect on the spiritual, social,and cultural aspects of their mindfulness experiences.

The data analysis process in this study followed a phenomenological approach adapted from the "whole-part-whole" method of analysis (Giorgi, 2016). The analysis began with a thorough reading of the interview transcripts to complete understanding of the participants' experiential

narratives. Thereafter, meaningful parts of the narratives were marked and interpreted as meaning units that reflected important aspects of the mindfulness experience. The meaning units were then organized into essential themes that represented the deep structure of the students' experiences. This analysis process was conducted in an interactive and reflective manner, with the aim of formulating the most authentic essence of the experience, not only in the form of surface descriptions but also in the underlying psychological meaning structure.

Several strategies have been used to enhance validity and credibility. Member checking was conducted, where participants reviewed and confirmed the interpretations to ensure that their intended meanings were accurately represented (Christou, 2025). Reflexive bracketing and journaling were routinely applied by the researcher to minimize personal bias and maintain transparency throughout the process (Willig, 2008). These strategies helped address the potential limitation of the interview design being influenced by Kabat-Zinn's Western paradigm, ensuring that the findings authentically reflected local, Indonesian perspectives on mindfulness. Thus, this approach is expected to capture the essence of mindfulness as interpreted by students authentically in their lived reality. The results of the research not only provide a description of the experience, but also enrich the theoretical understanding of mindfulness in the context of today's Indonesian students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to explore the meaning of mindfulness in the dynamics of student life. Using a phenomenological approach, data was obtained through in-depth interviews with three participants who are active students at the Universitas of Islam Negeri Salatiga. The analysis was conducted by organizing the results based on essential themes that emerged from the participants' subjective experiences. Each theme was developed descriptively to illustrate how mindfulness is present, practiced, and interpreted in daily life, particularly in responding to academic, emotional, and social pressures.

Present-Moment Awareness

Sub-theme: Focus on current activities, diversion from distracting thoughts

Mindfulness for the three participants was reflected in their efforts to bring their attention back to the present moment.

DS said: "...my body is in class but my mind is wandering... I have to be able to bring my mind back to focus..." (DS)

NAC emphasized: "...we focus on what we are experiencing now without worrying about the past or the future..." (NAC)

DSA adds: "...mindfulness for me is how I don't look back, don't worry about the future, but focus on the present." (DSA)

DSA also says: "Sometimes when I feel anxious, I recite prayers or pray silently, so that my heart and mind can return to the present and feel calmer." (DSA)

This shows that for DSA, the experience of being present in the moment is not only individual, but also spiritual and embedded in Islamic practice.

NAC describes present awareness in social interactions: "When I'm with friends, I try to really listen to their stories and not let my mind wander to personal problems. That way, I feel more connected and our relationship becomes closer." (NAC)

DS also said: "I learned a lot from lecturers who reminded me to remain patient and focused, especially when facing the pressure of assignments. Friends also often remind each other not to compare ourselves to others." (DS)

These findings indicate that present moment awareness is not only practiced individually, but also collectively, reflecting the spiritual and communal orientation of Indonesian students. The uniqueness found in this research lies in the practice of mindfulness, which is inseparable from religious rituals and collective values, giving rise to a "lived meaning" that is culturally different from Western versions of mindfulness.

DSA stated, "I feel calmer when I remember that every second is a gift, especially when I recite prayers or dzikir in the midst of my busy schedule." (DSA)

These findings reveal that present-moment awareness is a central aspect of mindfulness as experienced by Indonesian students. For participants, being present in the moment is not merely a cognitive effort to shift attention, but a dynamic process that involves emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions. This is illustrated by DS, who recounts his struggle to bring his mind back to class, emphasizing the real challenges students face in maintaining focus amid academic demands.

Interestingly, the current awareness of these students goes beyond individual mental control. The NAC's statement about focusing on the present without worrying about the past or future is in line with the core of mindfulness according to Kabat-Zinn (2003), which is to consciously pay attention to the present without judgment. However, participants did not experience this awareness in isolation. As expressed by DSA, being present in the moment is often supported by spiritual practices such as zikr or silentprayer. These findings are consistent with research showing that in collectivist and religious cultures, spiritual rituals are often integrated into daily coping strategies and enrich the experience of mindfulness (Sarfraz & Siddiqui, 2023).

Furthermore, present-moment awareness is also practiced in a social context. The NAC experience of listening attentively to friends shows that mindfulness can be relational, fostering empathy, connectedness, and social harmony. This communal orientation distinguishes the Indonesian mindfulness experience from many Western studies that emphasize self-regulation and individual well-being (Bishop et al., 2004).

The integration of mindfulness with spiritual and social practices reflects the unique cultural context of Indonesian students. Mindfulness in this context is not only about self-awareness or stress reduction, but also about being present for others, participating meaningfully in relationships, and drawing on spiritual resources for emotional stability. This also confirms the findings of Sujarwa (2018) and Saputra & Prawitasari (2020) that mindfulness in Indonesia is always intertwined with religious and social life.

These findings suggest that mindfulness interventions for Indonesian students need to draw on cultural strengths such as collective reflection, spiritual rituals, and active listening in groups to strengthen mindfulness and its benefits. In short, present-moment awareness among Indonesian students is a multidimensional experience intertwined with spiritual beliefs and communal values. This underscores the importance of developing a contextual mindfulness approach that integrates both individual and collective dimensions.

Self-Regulation and Emotional Sobriety

Subtheme: Redirecting activities as a coping mechanism, need for personal space, self-care strategies.

> The three participants described various self-regulation strategies, such as isolating themselves, engaging in enjoyable activities, and seeking support from others.
>
> DSA shares: "...my coping mechanism is... doing things I like, such as listening to music, reading the Qur'an, or chatting with close friends..." (DSA)
>
> DS states: "...I have to really rest physically and mentally, sometimes by going for a walk or just sitting with my family at home." (DS)
>
> Social and spiritual support are also evident: "When I have problems, I usually talk to my mother or siblings first. After that, I feel lighter and can focus on studying again." (DS)
>
> "I always try to pray or read verses when I feel stressed. It really helps me calm down and accept the situation." (NAC)
>
> DSA emphasizes the importance of peer support: "When I'm feeling down, I usually talk to my study group friends. After that, I feel more relieved and less alone." (DSA)

Mindfulness-based self-regulation appears to be a flexible process, integrated into daily routines, religious practices, and social relationships, rather than merely a separate individual technique.

These findings confirm that emotional regulation for Indonesian students is not merely a personal or technical matter, but a process rooted in community, family, and faith (Chin et al., 2022). The presence of "mindful breaks" such as zikr, prayer, and sharing with close friends is a distinctive pattern in this cultural context.

Self-Acceptance

Sub-theme: Reducing self-blame, accepting personal limitations

DSA reflects: "...I believe in the decisions I make..." (DSA)

DS, who previously often blamed himself, slowly learned to accept: "...I accept myself now... I accept what God has given me..." (DS)

NAC states: "Our lives belong to us. I realize I don't need to be like other people, just sincere and grateful." (NAC)

Self-acceptance is found to be supported by faith, social encouragement, and shared reflection.

DSA said: “Sometimes I feel like a failure, but my friends remind me that everyone has their own journey. That helps me accept myself and move forward again.” (DSA)

NAC added the value of communal support: “When I'm feeling down, the campus community often holds sharing sessions. Hearing about other people's struggles makes me realize that I'm not alone and helps me learn to accept myself more.” (NAC).

This experience illustrates that self-acceptance among Indonesian students is not achieved individually, but through interaction with peers and collective religious practices. It is this interaction that fosters a sense of self-worth and a sense of belonging, an authentic lived meaning beyond individual techniques (Bernard et al., 2022). Participants' narratives also highlight the importance of religious beliefs as the basis for self-acceptance.

DS's statement, “I accept what God has given me,” affirms the role of spirituality in redefining self-esteem and reducing self-blame, in accordance with the Indonesian Muslim context (Saputra & Prawitasari, 2020).

Social and Emotional Adaptation

Subtheme: Difficulties and strategies for social adaptation, the impact of introversion, experiences in new environments.

The three participants experienced unique social adaptation challenges in campus life, related to personal characteristics, cultural differences, and the dynamics of a new environment.

NAC, for example, expressed awkwardness in building relationships due to his introverted nature: “...I am an introvert... at home I am also a bit afraid...” (NAC)

This shows that there are social barriers often experienced by new students, especially those who tend to be introverted. This condition has the potential to cause a lack of confidence and reluctance to engage in social activities (Roeser et al., 2013).

Over time, NAC learned to let go of the emotional burden caused by social conflicts, such as feeling excluded by friends: “...my circle of friends seemed to be drifting away...” (NAC)

However, he said that he began to be able to accept the situation: “...after a while, I thought, oh well, why bother thinking about it, it just makes me more confused...” This experience shows a healthy emotional detachment process, which is the ability to limit negative emotional involvement without suppressing or denying those feelings.

DS, who comes from outside the island, faces cross-cultural challenges in the campus environment: “...I have to adapt to the campus environment and friends who speak different languages or something like that.” (DS).

This adaptation process requires flexibility and self-awareness in dealing with diversity, as well as the ability to manage expectations of oneself and one's environment.

DS states, “Not everything can be according to our expectations.” This indicates an understanding of the importance of accepting limitations and reality.DSA also reveals a tendency to blame oneself when faced with failure:“I immediately blame myself...” However, DSA's emotional

awareness is actually an asset in building healthier emotional regulation, by learning to interpret failure as a learning process, not a source of self-rejection.

The challenges of social and emotional adaptation among students are not only individual in nature, but are also influenced by social relationships and community support. All participants highlighted the important role of friends, campus organizations, andreligious communities in strengthening emotional resilience and assisting the adjustment process.

NAC acknowledged: "After participating in group prayers and sharing sessions, I feel stronger in facing social challenges and more accepted."

DSA added: "Usually, when I have a problem, I talk to my study group friends or mentor, which makes me feel calmer and more confident that I can get through difficult times."

These findings are in line with the research by Fang et al. (2022) and Sujarwa (2018), which shows that social support and spiritual communities play a major role in building the emotional resilience of Indonesian students. This support is not only an escape, but also a means of reflection, emotional validation, and strengthening of self-identity in a broader community.

In addition, the coping strategies developed by the participants were internal and independent, such as watching light-hearted movies, making to-do lists, writing reflective notes, or affirming personal decisions, which indicate the formation of a locus of control and psychological independence, without neglecting the importance of external support.

Emotional adaptation does not mean eliminating negative feelings. The three participants actually acknowledged fear, fatigue, and anger as part of the process of growth and self-learning. Acknowledging these negative emotions is a form of self-validation which, according to Leung et al. (2021), increases psychological flexibility and accelerates recovery from psychological stress.

Overall, the process of social and emotional adaptation among UIN Salatiga students shows that mindfulness is practiced through reflection on experiences, acceptance of emotions, and integration of social and spiritual support. "Lived meaning" mindfulness in this context is not merely an individual technique, but is manifested in relationships, togetherness, and religious practices that are characteristic of Indonesian culture.

Self -Growth and Reflection

Sub-theme: Evaluating experiences, motivation for growth, self-development strategies

All three participants showed a strong tendency to actively reflect on their life experiences.

DSA, for example, routinely wrote down points of error as a form of reflection and learning: "...I write down the points... so I don't repeat the same mistakes..." (DSA).

Meanwhile, DS emphasized the importance of reflection for self-reorganization: "...I can learn what I need to improve, what I need to enhance..." (DS).

This practice of reflection combined with mindfulness is in line with the concept of decentering (Bernstein et al., 2015), which is the ability to see thoughts and experiences as mental events that can be evaluated objectively, not as absolute truths. This shows that mindfulness in

student life is not only a tool for becoming aware of current experiences, but also a medium for active and reflective self-transformation.

Furthermore, self-reflection among the three participants took place in the social and spiritual realms, not merely as an individual mental process.

DS, for example, often reexamines events they have experienced to the point of emotional exhaustion:

"...I like to think things over, why is that, why am I like that... then I get tired..." (DS).

Although initially tending towards rumination, this process becomes a space for recognizing patterns of repetitive behavior and emotions, as well as finding new ways to grow. DSA, on the other hand, applies reflection in a concrete way by writing down important experiences and lessons learned, indicating structured reflection aimed at behavioral change.

NAC also demonstrates a reflection strategy through time and activity management to reduce stress: "...I make a list from easy to difficult..." (W1/NAC/59-62). Although simple, this approach reflects the ability to manage stress consciously and gradually, while also being part of cognitive restructuring (Keng et al., 2020).

Self-reflection in the context of students cannot be separated from social and spiritual support. DSA emphasizes that motivation to develop also comes from awareness of the impact of behavior on others: "...I don't want to repeat the same mistake, because I realize that my actions also affect other people..." This shows that the reflection carried out is not only internal but also relational (Finlay, 2020).

Decision Making and Social Support

Subtheme: Need for validation, self-autonomy, role of social support

Interestingly, even though all three participants tended to be independent, they still needed validation and social support in the process of making important decisions.

NAC emphasized trust in her own intuition: "...I just trust my own intuition..." (NAC).However, DS and DSA highlighted the need for external encouragement and input: "...I need other people to help me..." (W1/DSA/239-241/29042025) to help me." (DS)

"...I definitely need encouragement from outside too..." (DSA).

This phenomenon confirms that in the process of growth and reflection, the existence of social networks of friends, family, mentors, and religious communities is very significant in strengthening autonomy while providing a sense of security and validation (Brown & Ryan, 2003). In Indonesia's collectivist culture, decision-making is often the result of a dialogue between self-awareness and social input, not the result of individual thinking alone.

The results of this study indicate that mindfulness in students' lives is not merely a meditation practice or stress management technique, but rather an existential process that touches on cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions in facing the realities of everyday life. Mindfulness is experienced as full awareness of the present moment, the ability to manage emotions, reflection on life experiences, and relationships with the environment and spiritual values.

Self-reflection is key to the formation of identity and psychological growth in students, especially during the transition phase from late adolescence to early adulthood. This process involves evaluating experiences, reorganizing thought patterns, and learning from failures and successes.Not only does it build resilience, but reflection also serves as a bridge to a deeper meaning of life and strengthens intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2020).

These findings reinforce the argument that Indonesian students' mindfulness is relational and transcendental. The mindfulness experience is not only influenced by personal awareness, but also by social interaction, community support, and religious practices. Therefore, the development of mindfulness concepts and interventions in Indonesia needs to be adapted to the strong cultural, spiritual, and collective context, rather than simply adopting individualistic mindfulness theories from the West. Thus, this study makes an important contribution to enriching the understanding and development of culturally-based mindfulness, while inspiring a more contextual and integrative approach to education and psychology for students in Indonesia.

DISCUSSION

Present-MomentAwareness

Individual, Social, and Spiritual Dimensions

First, the experience of focusing on the present moment was expressed by participants through various personal strategies, such as redirecting thoughts in class (DS), managing concerns about the past and future (NAC), and choosing to recite prayers or meditate in times of anxiety (DSA). This reinforces the finding that present-moment awareness among Indonesian students is not merely a cognitive effort, but involves simultaneous emotional and spiritual processes. In a religious cultural context such as Indonesia, mindfulness practices are often integrated with daily religious rituals, such as recitation, prayer, or spiritual reflection (Komariah et al., 2022; Sarfraz & Siddiqui, 2023).

DSA stated, “Sometimes when I feel anxious, I recite prayers or pray silently, so that my heart and mind can return to the present moment and feel calmer.” This statement emphasizes that the spiritual dimension is inseparable from the lived meaning of mindfulness among Indonesian students. In addition, the experience of NAC, who actively tried to listen to friends attentively, shows that present-moment awareness is also relational. This supports the argument that mindfulness in Indonesia emphasizes social harmony and togetherness (Bishop et al., 2004; Sujarwa, 2018).

DS's experience of receiving encouragement from lecturers and friends to remain focused and patient demonstrates the importance of the social environment in supporting mindfulness practices. In collectivist cultures, as explained by Sarfraz & Siddiqui (2023), social interaction, validation, and group reflection are important parts of building present awareness. The results of this study show that “presence” does not only mean being present for oneself, but also being present for others through active participation in communication and social relationships.

The main uniqueness of this study is the finding that present-moment awareness among UIN Salatiga students is a multidimensional experience combining cognitive, emotional, spiritual, and

social aspects. This differs from many Western studies that emphasizeindividual self-regulation and stress reduction (Johnson et al., 2023; Bishop et al., 2004). The integration of mindfulness with religious and communal values underscores the importance of a contextual approach in developing mindfulness interventions in Indonesia.These findings are also supported by Sujarwa (2018) and Saputra & Prawitasari (2020), who found that mindfulness in Indonesia is always closely related to religious practices and social values. Therefore, mindfulness interventions developed for Indonesian students should incorporate cultural strengths such as shared reflection, spiritual rituals, and active listening practices in groups (Galante et al., 2018).

Self-Regulation and Emotional Sobriety

Integrating Self-Care with Cultural and Religious Practices

DSA participants mentioned coping through enjoyable activities, such as listening to music, reading the Qur'an, and sharing stories with close friends. These activities not only serve as positive distractions, but also as a means of emotional recovery and spiritual meaning. This practice is in line with the research by Komariah et al. (2022), which found that mindfulness exercises integrated with religious activities strengthen the effectiveness of coping in Indonesian students.

DS emphasizes the need for physical and psychological rest, either through walking or spending time with family. This shows the importance of private space as part of emotional regulation, but still within the framework of relationships where family is a source of comfort and tranquility. This phenomenon reinforces the findings of Liu et al. (2021) that emotional regulation in collectivist cultures relies heavily on family support and interaction.

Social and Spiritual Support as Pillars of Emotional Regulation

Both DS and NAC revealed that seeking support from mothers, siblings, and study group friends was an important part of coping with stress. DSA emphasized that sharing with friends in the study group made her feel more relieved and less alone. In addition, spiritual activities such as praying, reading holy verses, and reciting prayers regularly were an integral part of the self-care process for Muslim students. Research by Sarfraz & Siddiqui (2023) shows that integrating spirituality into mindfulness practices increases resilience and self-acceptance, especially in religious communities.

This shows that emotional regulation strategies among Indonesian students are holistic combining individual, social, and spiritual dimensions. Self-care is not understood only as a personal effort, but as part of a mutually reinforcing network of relationships. The presence of "mindful pauses" such as dzikir, prayer, and sharing stories with loved ones are important markers of Indonesian culture that enrich the meaning of lived meaning mindfulness (Chin et al., 2022).

These findings confirm that the development of mindfulness interventions or programs in the campus environment must take into account the power of culture and religion as primary sources of coping. An approach that emphasizes individualism alone is not effective when applied in the context of Indonesian students, who place a high value on community, family, and religious values.

Furthermore, these findings also broaden our understanding of mindfulness as a collective and spiritual process. Students not only use mindfulness techniques to manage stress personally, but also utilize religious practices and social networks as spaces for recovery, emotional validation, and identity reinforcement.

Self-Acceptance

Relational and Collective Dimensions in Self-Acceptance

Unlike the concept of self-acceptance, which is often defined as an individual achievement in Western psychology (Ryff et al., 2004), in the context of Indonesian students, this process is greatly influenced by social support and shared reflection. DSA admits, "Sometimes I feel like a failure, but my friends remind me that everyone has their own journey. That helps me accept myself and move forward again." This quote shows that validation and reinforcement from peers are key to building self-confidence and reducing self-blame.

NAC, who felt the benefits of sharing sessions in the campus community, expressed a similar sentiment: "Hearing about other people's struggles made me realize that I am not alone and taught me to be more accepting of myself." This is in line with the findings of Bernard et al. (2022), which confirm that social interaction and community support can reduce the tendency for self-blame and increase resilience in students.

The Role of Spirituality and Faith

The process of self-acceptance among students at UIN Salatiga is also strongly influenced by religious dimensions. DS stated, "I accept myself now... I accept what Allah has given me..." This confirms that spirituality and religious beliefs are the main foundations in redefining self-esteem and reducing the tendency to blame oneself. Saputra & Prawitasari (2020) in their research also emphasize that self-acceptance among Muslim students in Indonesia is greatly influenced by religious values, particularly the concepts of sincerity, gratitude, and trust in God.

Faith and spiritual reflection not only serve as coping mechanisms, but also as sources of lived meaning that strengthen acceptance of all one's strengths and weaknesses. This is in line with the theory of self-compassion (Neff, 2023), in which complete self-acceptance grows from self-compassion, recognition of limitations, and spiritual meaning.

Integration of Self-Acceptance, Relationships, and Culture

The process of self-acceptance experienced by participants emphasizes that in the Indonesian context, self-acceptance is not solely the result of individual struggle, but rather the fruit of interactions between personal experiences, social support, and cultural-religious values. Students build a strong sense of identity not only through internal reflection, but also through shared experiences, peer support, and collective religious practices.

Thus, the results of this study emphasize the importance of psychological intervention or self-development approaches among Indonesian students to integrate social and spiritual aspects, not just individual cognitive techniques. Community support, sharing spaces, and the strengthening of religious values can be the key to fostering healthy and sustainable self-acceptance.

Social and Emotional Adaptation

Personal Challenges: Introversion and Cultural Differences

NAC highlights the awkwardness in building relationships due to his introverted nature, "...I am an introvert... I am also a bit afraid at home...". This is in line with the findings of Herbert et al. (2023) that students with introverted tendencies are more prone to social barriers and feelings of insecurity, especially when entering a new environment. In the early stages, these barriers can lead to isolation, but over time, the ability to practice healthy emotional detachment emerges.

NAC's statement, "...after a while, I thought, oh well, why bother thinking about it, it just makes me more confused..." shows an effort to limit negative emotional involvement without suppressing feelings, which in the literature is referred to as a cognitive adaptation strategy (Gross, 2020). DS faces cross-cultural challenges as an international student, "...having to adapt to a campus environment and friends who speak different languages or something like that." This kind of adaptation requires flexibility and acceptance of the reality that not all expectations can be met: "Not everything can be according to our expectations." This reflects emotional maturity and the ability to let go, an important aspect of emotional regulation (McRae & Gross, 2020). DSA, who tends to blame themselves when they fail, shows that emotional awareness can be an asset in building healthy emotional regulation. By learning to interpret failure as a learning process, students develop self-compassion and resilience (Neff, 2023).

The Role of Social Support and Spiritual Communities

An important finding from this study is that the process of social and emotional adaptation among students is greatly influenced by social relationships and community support. All participants emphasized the important role of friends, campus organizations,and religious communities in strengthening emotional resilience and helping them adjust. NAC said, "After participating in group prayers and sharing sessions, I feel stronger in facing social challenges and more accepted." DSA added, "Usually when I have a problem, I talk to my study group friends or mentor, which makes me feel calmer and more confident that I can get through difficult times."

This is in line with research by Fang et al. (2022) and Sujarwa (2018), which shows that social support and spiritual communities play a major role in building the emotional resilience of Indonesian students. This support is not only an escape, but also a means of reflection, emotional validation, and strengthening of self-identity within a broader community.

Internal Coping and Validation of Negative Emotions

In addition to relying on external support, participants also developed internal coping strategies, such as watching lighthearted movies, making to-do lists, writing reflective notes, or reaffirming personal decisions. This demonstrates the formation of a locus of control and psychological independence, while still acknowledging the importance of external support.

Emotional adaptation does not mean eliminating negative feelings. All three participants openly acknowledged fear, fatigue, and anger as part of the growth process. Acknowledging and validating these negative emotions is an important form of self-acceptance in increasing psychological flexibility and accelerating recovery from stress (Leung et al., 2021).

Overall, the social and emotional adaptation of UIN Salatiga students takes place through reflection on experiences, acceptance of emotions, and integration of social and spiritual support. Mindfulness in this context is not merely an individual technique,but rather a lived meaning embodied in relationships, togetherness, and religious practices that are characteristic of Indonesian culture (Sarfraz & Siddiqui, 2023; Fang et al., 2022). Therefore, interventions and programs to strengthen student adaptationin Indonesia need to integrate community-based mindfulness approaches, group reflection, and spiritual sharing spaces to build resilience and psychological well-being more comprehensively.

Self-Growth and Reflection

Mindfulness as a Medium for Self-Transformation

The DSA strategy of recording mistakes as lessons learned ("...I write down the points... so I don't repeat the same mistakes...“) and DS reflection to improve oneself (”...I can learn what I need to improve, what I need to work on...") demonstrate a practice of reflection that is in line with the concept of decentering (Bernstein et al., 2015). Decentering is the ability to view thoughts and experiences objectively, without considering them as absolute truths, thereby opening up space for changes in mindset and behavior. This shows that mindfulness is not limited to being aware of the present moment, but also serves as an active means for reflective and continuous self-transformation.

Relational and Collective Dimensions in Self-Reflection

Self-reflection in students does not occur in isolation. This process often takes place in interaction with the social and spiritual environment. DS describes a tendency to reflect deeply to the point of emotional exhaustion, but through this process he isable to recognize recurring patterns and find solutions for growth. Meanwhile, NAC manages stress by making a list of task priorities (“...I make a list from the easy to the difficult...”), a simple yet effective strategy as cognitive restructuring (Keng et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the motivation to grow among students is strengthened by an awareness of the impact of behavior on others. DSA emphasizes, “...I don't want to repeat the same mistakes, because I realize that my actions also affect other people...” This confirms that student reflection is relational they consider not only their personal development, but also their social responsibility within the community (Finlay, 2020).

These results reinforce the argument that mindfulness in the Indonesian context is strongly influenced by collective and spiritual nuances. Social support, such as sharing spaces with friends and communities, as well as joint reflection in religious groups, becomes a source of motivation and an arena for self-reflection. This synergy strengthens intrinsic motivation, builds resilience, and fosters a growth mindset (Ryan & Deci, 2020). On the other hand, reflection also serves as an important mechanism for overcoming rumination or overthinking tendencies that have the potential to hinder students' psychological growth. By directing reflection towards learning and constructive change, students are able to manage academic and personal pressures more adaptively (Sternberg, 2022).

These findings indicate that self-development interventions and mindfulness programs for Indonesian students need to integrate reflective approaches that are collective, spiritual, and contextual in nature. Reflection should not be taught solely as an individual cognitive technique, but should be facilitated through discussion forums, mentoring, and religious activities that encourage openness and social responsibility.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this phenomenological study, it can be concluded that mindfulness in the lives of Indonesian students has a different and more contextual conceptualization than compared to the mindfulness models commonly found in Western literature, particularly Kabat-Zinn's theory. This study successfully identified that mindfulness among Indonesian students is not merely an individual relaxation technique or practice, but rather a collective, spiritual and psychological experience that is strongly influenced by communal culture and deeply rooted religious values.

The distinctive feature of mindfulness among Indonesian students lies in its integration with communal activities, religious practices, and a strong social orientation. Present-moment awareness is experienced collectively through spiritual rituals, group interactions, and emotional support from the community, rather than through individual contemplation. Emotional regulation and self-acceptance develop through interpersonal relationships, communal reflection, and spiritual meaning, thus forming a more holistic pattern of mindfulness rooted in local cultural identity and religion.

Adaptation to academic and social pressures is not only based on personal efforts, but also involves maintaining harmony within the group and sensitivity to prevailing social norms. The process of reflection and self-growth takes place in dialogical spaces, both formal (study groups, religious communities) and informal (conversations with friends or family), emphasizingthat mindfulness in Indonesia is an intersubjective process that is inseparable from social networks.

The main contribution of this research lies in offering a locally rooted and contextual framework for mindfulness, that is fundamentally different from the individualistic models commonly used in global research. By presenting the lived meaning of mindfulness among Indonesian students, which combines spiritual, collective, and cultural dimensions, this study broadens the theoretical and applicative horizons of mindfulness and opens up opportunities for the development of interventions that are more relevant to the needs and characteristics of Indonesian students.

Thus, this study not only enriches the understanding of mindfulness from an Indonesian perspective, but also encourages the importance of developing a mindfulness approach that is more sensitive to the cultural values, spirituality, and social structure oflocal communitiesin Indonesia . These findings are expected to serve as a foundation for future mindfulness research and interventions that are more innovative, contextual, and impactful on the overall well-being of Indonesian adolescents.

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