

The Relationship between Sustainability and Mindfulness: Incorporating Mindfulness Practices into Sustainability

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Abstract

The incorporation of mindfulness techniques into sustainability initiatives is explored in this review paper. By balancing the ecological, social, and economic systems, sustainability attempts to foster long-term wellbeing for both the present and future generations. Individuals' cognitive, emotional, and behavioural resilience is fostered by mindfulness, which has its roots in contemplative traditions. Researchers examine the theoretical underpinnings for the incorporation of mindfulness practices into sustainability initiatives in various domains, such as environmental conservation, sustainable consumption, corporate social responsibility, and community development, through a multidisciplinary literature review. Self-awareness, emotional control, empathy, and pro-environmental attitudes and actions are all strengthened by mindfulness, which also fosters cooperation, stakeholder involvement, and systems thinking. Integrating mindfulness practices into sustainability initiatives has the potential to encourage more holistic and transformative approaches to sustainability, foster a deeper connection with oneself, others, and nature, and encourage a more mindful and sustainable way of living and relating to the world.

Keywords: Sustainability, mindfulness, environmental conservation, consumption.

Understanding Sustainability

The idea of sustainability has gained importance recently across a number of disciplines, including environmental science, economics, business, and social sciences. Sustainability is the capacity to satisfy existing needs without jeopardising the capacity of future generations to satisfy their own needs. To ensure a sustainable future for humanity, this idea highlights the significance of balancing economic, social, and environmental aspects.

As humankind continues to consume resources at an unprecedented rate, causing environmental degradation, climate change, and social inequality, sustainability has emerged as a crucial research area. In sectors like agriculture, transportation, manufacturing, and construction, the necessity for sustainable methods has become clear. Sustainability has consequences for global security, health, and economic stability in addition to being crucial for the long-term existence of human civilization.

Sustainability is a broad notion that includes aspects of the economy, society, and environment. The fundamental goal of sustainability is to make sure that we can satisfy our demands today without endangering the capacity of future generations to satisfy their own needs. I will go into great length on what sustainability is, how it has evolved historically, and what research has been done in this area in this section.

In order to meet the demands of the present without sacrificing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, sustainability is the concept of striking a balance between environmental, social, and economic considerations. Sustainable development is described as "development that satisfies the demands of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (Browne, 2021). Sustainability takes into account how related environmental, social, and economic problems are and calls

for a systems-based approach and an understanding of complexity. Sustainable practises promote the health and vitality of the environment, people, and the economy.

Sustainability is crucial since everything that humans require for their life and well-being depends on nature, either directly or indirectly. In order to support both current and future generations, sustainability implies establishing and upholding the conditions that allow people and nature to coexist in productive harmony. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) works to advance sustainability by incorporating sustainability principles into its work and creating procedures, instruments, guidelines, and initiatives that help apply sustainability to decision-making (Environment Protection Agency, 2020).

In today's world, sustainability is desperately needed. The globe's resources are limited, and overconsumption and pollution by humans are putting a growing strain on the natural systems of the planet. Sustainability needs to be adopted as a guiding principle in order to guarantee that the earth will be habitable for future generations. Sustainability can be thought of as a multidimensional notion that includes social and environmental issues. The overlapped area of the Venn diagram illustrating the three sustainability pillars represents the ideal balance between all three pillars. The ability of a society to build and maintain a strong economy is referred to as the economic pillar, whereas the social pillar deals with the welfare of individuals and groups within society. The protection of the planet's ecosystems and natural resources are two issues covered by the environmental pillar.

Governments and big businesses aren't the only ones with a responsibility for sustainability; everyone does. Utilizing public transit or carpooling, avoiding trash, and conserving electricity and water can all make a big difference in lowering our society's ecological footprint.

Governments must actively promote sustainability through measures like carbon levies, financial support for renewable energy sources, and restrictions on greenhouse gas emissions. There is still more work to be done to establish a sustainable future for everyone, even if success has been achieved in promoting sustainability in some areas, such as waste reduction and renewable energy (Kuhlman et al, 2010; and Kotob, 2011).

Understanding Mindfulness

A state of mind known as mindfulness entails keeping a constant awareness of our thoughts, feelings, body sensations, and external circumstances through a kind, nurturing lens. Additionally, it entails acceptance, which is paying attention to our ideas and feelings without passing judgement on them. Instead of dwelling on the past or planning for the future, mindfulness encourages us to pay attention to what we're feeling right now. Every person naturally contains it, and it may be developed using tried-and-true methods. The advantages of mindfulness practise are numerous. According to research, developing a mindful brain can help people feel less stressed, anxious, and depressed. Additionally, mindfulness can enhance focus, lessen job burnout, enhance sleep, and enhance diabetes management. Meditation is one of the most popular approaches to practise mindfulness. People who practise mindfulness meditation concentrate on their breath or a particular bodily experience while observing their thoughts and feelings as they come and go, without judgement or attachment. Other methods of practising mindfulness include guided imagery, structured mindfulness exercises, and body scan meditation, in which you carefully and gently direct your attention to each part of your body in turn, from head to toe. The objective is to establish a sense of presence and tranquilly as well as a more accepting and sympathetic attitude toward oneself and others. We don't need to alter who we are in order to practise mindfulness; it is neither hidden nor alien. It is a straightforward method that has been scientifically shown to be advantageous for ourselves, our loved ones, our friends, and our society as a whole.

By paying attention to routine actions like eating, walking, or cleaning one's teeth, one can practise mindfulness informally throughout the day. People can become more conscious of their automatic thought patterns and behaviours and make more deliberate decisions about how to behave by concentrating on the feelings and experiences of the current moment.

There are many advantages to mindfulness in a person's life. The evidence on the advantages of mindfulness meditation for lowering stress is given a thorough analysis by the American Psychological Association.

The capacity of mindfulness meditation to lower cortisol levels, a hormone that is released in response to stress, is one of its main advantages. High cortisol levels can have harmful effects on the body, including lowering immune system

performance and raising the risk of heart disease and other illnesses. Regular mindfulness meditation practise has been demonstrated to lower cortisol levels, hence reducing the harmful effects of stress on the body. Depression and anxiety symptoms can be effectively treated with mindfulness meditation. According to the APA article, mindfulness meditation reduced the signs of anxiety and depression just as well as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT).

In addition to its advantages for mental health, practising mindfulness meditation has been shown to boost immunity, enhance sleep, and lessen chronic pain. Additionally, it can enhance cognitive abilities including memory and focus.

The study on the impacts of mindfulness on psychological health is reviewed in depth in the paper "Effects of Mindfulness on Psychological Health: A Review of Empirical Studies" by Keng and colleagues. In order to treat a range of mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety, and stress, the authors examined studies on the use of mindfulness interventions, such as mindfulness-based cognitive therapy and mindfulness-based stress reduction.

In addition to reducing the signs of stress, anxiety, and depression, the authors discovered that mindfulness interventions enhanced psychological well-being in general. Additionally, they discovered that mindfulness practises were linked to modifications in brain activity, indicating that mindfulness practises may benefit neurological processes.

The scientists identified a number of potential processes via which mindfulness training can produce these advantageous results. For instance, mindfulness may assist people in controlling their emotions and minimising unfavourable thought patterns. Additionally, it might aid people in growing in self-awareness and acceptance, which would result in a happier and more sympathetic outlook on life.

The authors pointed out that more study is required to ascertain the ideal frequency and length of mindfulness practise as well as to comprehend the long-term impacts of mindfulness therapies. They also stressed the need for more research on the potential advantages of mindfulness for particular demographics, such children and older individuals, as well as for particular mental health disorders, like addiction and trauma. (Keng, 2011)

Daily mindfulness practise can be an effective method to lower stress, boost mental health, and improve general wellbeing. Here are some strategies for including mindfulness in daily activities:

1. The core practise of mindfulness is mindful breathing, which aids in focusing attention on the present moment. Find a comfortable seated position and close your eyes or relax your focus to practise mindful breathing. Inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth as you take a few deep breaths. The sensation of the breath entering and leaving the body should then be brought to the forefront. One can concentrate on their chest rising and falling or the sensation of air passing through their nostrils. One need only return focus to the breath whenever the mind begins to stray.
2. Without interruptions or judgments, mindful eating is the discipline of focusing attention on the act of eating. To begin mindful eating, choose a dish that you will love. Consider its hues, textures, and scents for a time. Then, take a small piece of food and concentrate on the flavour and texture in your mouth. Savor each bite while chewing gently and taking note of the various flavours and textures. Try to eat without any interruptions, like television or a phone, and pay attention to how you feel after.
3. Actively participating in physical exercise while being fully present in the moment is known as mindful movement. This could involve yoga, running, walking, or any other kind of physical activity. Setting an intention to be completely present and conscious of the body and breath is the first step in mindful movement. Just return the focus to the body and breath if the mind begins to stray.
4. Giving someone your entire attention while they are speaking is known as mindful listening. Setting an intention to be fully present and attentive is the first step in practising mindful listening. Remove all distractions, such as the phone or computer, and look the individual in the eye. Without interrupting or passing judgement, attentively listen while attempting to grasp the other person's viewpoint. Simply redirect focus back to the conversation whenever it starts to stray.

5. Throughout the day, mindful awareness requires taking a few seconds to examine thoughts and feelings without passing judgement. Just pause for a moment and pay attention to how your thoughts and physical state are affecting one another to practise mindful awareness. Another option is to perform a body scan, which is paying close attention to every part of your body and noting any tension or physical feelings. One should make an effort to remain objective and in the moment, watching events without trying to alter them.

Sustainability, mindfulness, and mental health are all related ideas that influence one another in different ways. For instance, studies have demonstrated that practising mindfulness can enhance mental health by lowering stress, anxiety, and sadness. Increased participation in sustainable practises, such as recycling, energy conservation, and waste reduction, can then result from higher mental health. We are more likely to act in ways that benefit the world when we feel more connected to our own health and sense of purpose.

People can take a number of different actions to encourage sustainability and awareness. This could involve engaging in sustainable practises like energy conservation and mindfulness meditation, as well as supporting laws that support sustainability and mental health. It also necessitates a dedication to creating strong, resilient communities that place a high value on the health and happiness of all of their residents as well as the health of the environment.

Review of Literature

- *Integrating Mental Health and Sustainability*

The World Health Organization (WHO) article "Why mental health is a priority for action on climate change" examines the sometimes ignored effects of climate change on mental health. The article discusses the different ways that climate change can have an impact on mental health, such as increased stress, anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) brought on by extreme weather events, displacement, and loss of livelihoods. The article also mentions how vulnerable groups, like women, children, and indigenous peoples, are more prone to mental health problems associated with climate change.

The WHO urges immediate action to address the effects of climate change on mental health, including more funding for mental health services, community-based interventions, and policy modifications that give mental health priority. The paper emphasises the necessity of an all-encompassing strategy that acknowledges the connection between climate change and mental health and asks for sectoral cooperation to foster mental health resilience in the face of climate change.

The article's overall message highlights how crucial it is to address the negative effects of climate change on mental health as part of global efforts to reduce emissions and prepare for them (WHO, 2022).

The aforementioned information leads us to the conclusion that addressing climate change must also prioritise mental health, and that combining climate action with mental health support can lessen the global burden of poor mental health. Few nations, though, have national health and climate change policies that address mental health and psychological assistance. It's also critical to close the financial gap that exists for psychosocial support and mental health.

The relationship between environmental preservation and mental health is discussed in the UNEP article "Caring for the environment helps to care for your mental health." The essay emphasises the damaging effects that environmental deterioration and climate change have on mental health, such as stress, depression, and anxiety.

The essay makes the case that taking steps to safeguard the environment can be advantageous for mental health. For instance, taking part in activities like gardening, planting trees, or environmental clean-up campaigns can give one a sense of purpose and accomplishment, which can boost mental health.

According to the report, developing green spaces in metropolitan areas might benefit mental health because being close to nature has been proved to lower stress and boost happiness. The paper concludes by advocating for increased understanding and action on the connections between environmental protection and mental health and underlining the necessity for a comprehensive strategy for sustainability that takes into account both environmental and human well-being.

The article's main argument is that there is a crucial link between environmental protection and mental health and that taking steps to conserve the environment can have a good impact on mental health (UNEP, 2020)

However, taking care of the environment can also assist in taking care of one's mental health. Numerous health advantages of nature include supporting both bodily and emotional wellbeing. By lowering air pollution, expanding the number of green spaces available, or launching projects for electric and non-motorized transportation, local governments can play a significant role in combating the mental health issue.

The significance of including mental health and wellness in the agenda for global development is emphasised in another article by Izutsu. In order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which include eradicating poverty, advancing gender equality, and enhancing health and wellbeing, the authors contend that mental health is crucial. In order to address the global mental health problem, the essay emphasises the need for increased funding for mental health services, better sectoral coordination, and international collaboration. In order to track progress toward reaching the SDGs for mental health and well-being, the authors also propose for the inclusion of indicators for mental health in the framework (Izutsu et al., 2015).

In a related Forbes piece, Garen Staglin emphasises the significance of mental health in attaining sustainable development objectives. He contends that not only is mental health a fundamental human right, but it also significantly affects social cohesiveness, educational attainment, and economic output. Staglin highlights that efforts to advance global development should take mental health into consideration. In order to lessen stigma and discrimination and advance a more inclusive society, he also advocates for improved awareness of and education about mental health (Staglin, 2022).

A vital tool for advancing mental health in the workplace is environmental, social, and governance (ESG) frameworks, and the movement is already gaining momentum. An organization's performance as determined by a number of social, environmental, and governance variables yields an ESG score. For firms to fully comprehend the advantages of workplace mental health, a mental health lens is necessary. ESG has demonstrated both its business and societal worth. Investing in employees' mental health can enhance productivity and lessen the negative effects of mental health issues.

In a different essay, Staglin suggested that environmental, social, and governance (ESG) indicators and policies should prioritise mental health. According to the article, businesses that emphasise the mental health of their employees and stakeholders can benefit from increased productivity, improved talent retention, and improved corporate reputation. Mental health is an essential issue that has a huge impact on society. In addition, the author contends that metrics for measuring and tracking a company's commitment to mental health should be included in ESG frameworks because it is a critical component of social responsibility and sustainability. The article's overall thesis is that businesses can benefit their stakeholders and society by emphasising mental health in their ESG strategy (Staglin, 2021).

As a result, mental health is seen as a key pillar in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) initiative of the United Nations, which aims to build a more just, equitable, and sustainable world. Sustainable development cannot be accomplished without taking mental health into consideration, which is a top worldwide priority. Leading organisations and political bodies must band together to use their resources to advance mental health and wellbeing because effective global action necessitates a global response.

- *Integrating Mindfulness and Sustainability*

Studies have demonstrated that mindfulness can be an effective strategy for advancing sustainability. It has been discovered that mindfulness-based strategies focus on fundamental moral values and ethical standards that have the power to influence behaviour and advance sustainability. The relationship between mindfulness and sustainability is discussed in "Mindfulness and Sustainability: Correlation or Causation?" by Sonja M. Geiger, Paul Grossman, and Ulf Schrader. The authors contend that mindfulness and sustainability are intertwined because mindfulness can foster a person's awareness of and appreciation for the natural world as well as their understanding of how everything is interconnected.

The article explores how cultivating a stronger feeling of responsibility and connection to the environment via mindfulness can encourage sustainable behaviour. According to the authors, practising mindfulness might help people get a better knowledge of how their actions affect the environment and motivate them to make more environmentally friendly decisions in their daily lives.

The piece also looks at how mindfulness may help businesses and professionals working in sustainability. According to the authors, mindfulness techniques can boost teamwork and communication within sustainability teams, as well as creativity and innovation.

The authors come to the conclusion that while there is evidence to suggest that mindfulness practises can help to advance sustainable behaviour and attitudes, the relationship between mindfulness and sustainability is nuanced and multifaceted. However, they also recognise that additional study is necessary to completely comprehend the mechanisms underlying this link and to determine the most efficient treatments (Geiger et al, 2019).

The connection between mindfulness and sustainability is also discussed in "The Way Forward in Mindfulness and Sustainability: a Critical Review and Research Agenda" by Ute B. Thiermann and William R. Sheate.

The authors begin by offering a critical analysis of the literature on mindfulness and sustainability, emphasising the advantages of mindfulness for encouraging sustainable behaviour and lifestyles. They contend that practising mindfulness can assist people in becoming more conscious of their impact on the environment and in making more deliberate and responsible decisions throughout their daily lives. The authors also contend that mindfulness can promote a stronger sense of responsibility for the environment by fostering a person's connection to nature and awareness of their interdependence with other living things.

Future research, according to the authors, should concentrate on creating mindfulness-based therapies that are more successful at encouraging sustainable behaviour as well as investigating any possible advantages of mindfulness for encouraging sustainable policy and governance. The authors also stress the significance of considering a variety of viewpoints and experiences in studies on mindfulness and sustainability, especially those from underrepresented and underprivileged groups (Thiermann et al, 2020).

In a subsequent piece published in 2022, Miguel makes the case that mindfulness techniques can foster more environmentally conscious behaviour and help people gain a deeper understanding of their relationship to the environment. The article emphasises how mindfulness can assist people in becoming more aware of their surroundings and present, which can result in a higher respect and comprehension of the natural world. This raised consciousness can encourage people to make decisions that are more ethical and sustainable, such as using less energy and resources and promoting eco-friendly goods and methods. The author also talks on how practising mindfulness can make people more sympathetic and understanding of other people, including future generations and other living things. As a result, people may feel more responsible for the environment and be inspired to adopt protective measures (Miguel, 2022).

Conclusion

The connection between sustainability and mindfulness is predicated on the notion that increasing our environmental impact awareness might result in more responsible and sustainable behaviour. Meditation and mindful breathing are two examples of mindfulness techniques that can help people become more present and aware of their surroundings, which can lead to a greater appreciation for nature.

According to research, mindfulness techniques can encourage more environmentally friendly habits like lowering energy use, preserving resources, and promoting environmentally friendly services and goods. Along with increasing empathy and compassion for others, including future generations and other living things, mindfulness can also help people develop a stronger sense of responsibility for the environment.

Individuals and organisations can build a more thoughtful and comprehensive approach to sustainability by incorporating mindfulness practises into sustainability activities. For instance, by encouraging people to be more conscious of the things they buy and their influence on the environment, mindfulness techniques can be used to encourage sustainable purchasing. By encouraging people to walk, bike, or take the bus instead of driving alone, mindfulness techniques can also be utilised to promote sustainable transportation.

Additionally, mindfulness techniques might aid people in overcoming the stress and ambiguity that frequently accompany sustainable living. A person's lifestyle may need to shift significantly to be sustainable, which can be difficult at times. Mindfulness practises can assist people in building resilience and overall wellbeing.

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