



Research Article

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Received: 23 September 2021 / Accepted: 22 November 2021 / Published: 3 January 2022

Mindfulness and Sustainable Consumption: Evidence from Students in Istanbul

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36941/ajis-2022-0005>

Abstract

We are consuming more resources than ever, exceeding the planet's capacity for coming generations. This shows the important role of sustainable consumption for the planet. To understand consumption patterns mindfulness may be regarded as an indicator that helps people gain insight into their true selves, which leads them to stay away from materialistic tendencies. Therefore, the objective of this study is to explore the effects of mindfulness training on the sustainable consumption perceptions of university students. In this qualitative study, a two-month mindfulness training is given and two focus group studies are conducted. Results suggest that mindfulness training has an impact on people's perceptions related to consumption. The findings of this study can serve as proof for the transformational effect of mindfulness on people's overall mood and subjective wellbeing.

Keywords: Mindfulness, Consumption, Subjective Wellbeing, Sustainable Consumption

1. Introduction

Starting from the Industrial Revolution, human impact on the environment has gone up incrementally. In 2020, the Earth Overshoot Day was August 22nd. It is the date when our global demand for nature's resources in a given year exceeds what Earth can regenerate (WEF, 2020). According to the report of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO, 2019), 2018 was the fourth warmest year on record. This increase in warmth affects both humankind and other species. According to the same report, 62 million people were affected by changes in the global climate in 2018. Also, extreme weather, climate action failure, natural disasters, biodiversity loss, and human-made environmental disasters are among the first five global risks in 2020, in terms of likelihood (The Global Risk Report, 2020). Once more, the Covid-19 pandemic has shown us the danger of interfering with natural life. However, some good news is coming from different sources. Some countries are leaning on nature to Build Back Better. Many companies and

business associations showed their cooperation for the European Alliance for a Green recovery. Unilever launched a €1 billion Climate and Nature Fund. 90 French and international companies called on governments to deliver a recovery plan driving an ecological transition (WEF, 2020). “Building Back Better: A Sustainable, Resilient Recovery after COVID-19” report from OECD (2020) states: “*For the economic recovery from the COVID-19 crisis to be durable and resilient, a return to ‘business as usual’ and environmentally destructive investment patterns and activities must be avoided.*” Kate Raworth’s Doughnut Economy model which proposes sustainable development in the limits of the planet and with the social equity borders pointing out UN Sustainable Development Goals is gaining popularity (www.kateraworth.com).

So, sustainability is leading humanity to a better world. At this point, the role of individuals is very important. As a result of the scarce resources of the world which are diminishing, the importance of sustainable consumption is increasing (Bozkurt and Ergen, 2015). The United Nations Environment Program (2020), defines sustainable consumption as “*the use of services and related products that respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life while minimizing the use of natural resources and toxic materials as well as the emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle so as not to jeopardize the needs of future generations.*” When it comes to raising awareness on consuming sustainably, there is a well-researched method to achieve this. This method is called mindfulness meditation. Mindfulness is defined as “*the awareness that arises by paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally*” (Williams and Kabat-Zinn, 2013). Here the key point is intentionality which underpins consciousness and awareness. Through meditation, an increase in people’s awareness of environmental problems can be cultivated. Whereas there are many meditation techniques, mindfulness differs from them as it is secularized and integrated into daily life (Armstrong and Jackson, 2015). Therefore, this research paper focuses on mindfulness as a solution to unsustainable consumption and questions if mindfulness training can make a difference at the individual level. Particularly, the relationship between people’s consumption habits and mindfulness practices is worth further research and can provide valuable insights into the decision-making mechanisms surrounding consumption. The main motive of this research is to explore university students’ perceptions of consumption and environmental problems in general and the effects of mindfulness on these perceptions. Since young people of today will be decision-makers in the future, their attitude and behavior towards the environment will doubtlessly have a great influence on natural resources and their sustainability in the future (Ergen, Baykan, and Turan, 2015). Therefore, this research has an exploratory nature.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Mindfulness and Benefits

Mindfulness is a topic widely researched within several fields, from medicine to education, as its remedial effects attract researchers’ attention. An examination of the roots of mindfulness reveals that it is originally an old Buddhist belief that has been secularized and made use of in daily awareness practices (Armstrong and Jackson, 2015). It is defined as “*the awareness that arises by paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally*” (Williams and Kabat-Zinn, 2013). According to the Buddhist literature, mindfulness helps to pause and realize the moment without the mass of different stimuli distracting people’s minds (Hanh, 2008, p 66). Mindfulness makes use of components of everyday life such as breathing, eating, listening, or walking to help people pause for a moment and experience the moment instead of doing these daily activities automatically. Automaticity is beneficial as it facilitates people in multitasking by not expending focus and time on trivial things such as writing the phone’s password. However, the danger is not being able to pay undivided attention even when it is wanted or needed (Neal, Wood, and Quinn 2006).

There are certain positive regulative effects of daily mindfulness practices on people’s emotional states. To begin with, mindfulness helps people to remove the filter of emotions and experience the moment without any attachments to memories and feelings (Rosenberg, 2004). It also leads to

different ways of understanding their existence in general and their existence in nature without any expectations or attached feelings to it. This may help people stay away from materialism as they realize that their aspirations are not the true nature of their existence at that very moment (Mick, 2017). Moreover, it helps people increase self-control and regulation, which enables people to evaluate their inner and outer drives (Chatzisarantis and Hagger, 2007).

Other than individual benefits, mindfulness practices are becoming more and more widespread in business life and at managerial levels as well. It is found that managers who attend mindfulness practices have higher moral reasoning (Pandey, Chandwani, and Navare, 2018). At the organizational level, it increases employee wellbeing, effective leadership, and focus. As clear from the findings above, mindfulness provides benefits both at the organizational and individual levels. For that reason, marketing researchers think that mindful marketing can create a win-win situation for the planet, people, and profit (Vasil, 2014). This win-win situation requires cooperation in raising collective awareness for sustainable consumption (Luchs, Phipps, and Hill, 2015).

2.2 *Integrating Mindfulness to Everyday Life*

One of the most influential ways of integrating mindfulness into our daily life is mindfulness training. Training plays an important role in acquiring mindfulness. It is found that there is a positive correlation between mindfulness meditation and an increase in awareness and prosocial behavior (Ericson, Kjønstad, and Barstad, 2014). Schools can provide certain programs that support students with mindfulness training to raise more conscious people (Rosenberg, 2004). A well-known program called Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction was designed to alleviate anxiety, pain, and unease by applying simple practices. It was developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn for reducing chronic pain and is generally applied for 8 to 10 weeks (Kabat-Zinn, 1991). While this program is mostly used for medical reasons, robust findings are supporting its positive regulative effects for educational settings such as reducing students' stress levels. The purpose of this training is to make people aware of their choices (Solar, 2013) and gain a lifelong skill that can be used in their decision-making processes (Saltzman, 2011). The same positive self-regulatory effects were observed in a 6-week long meditation program on kindergarten students. Moreover, mindfulness training can increase creative thinking and environmental concerns (Siqueira and Pitassi, 2016). Similarly, another type of mindfulness program, namely Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy, was found to be effective in reducing stress in university students (Gallego, Aguilar-Parra, Cangas, et al., 2014). These programs use similar applications, such as body scan, mindful breathing, and sitting meditation. Besides these, schools can also provide skill development programs such as fixing an engine or growing foods in the garden or even a balcony (Kasser, 2017). All these positive effects were found to be more effective when mindfulness-based training is applied in natural settings (Geiger, Grossman, and Schrader, 2018).

2.3 *Mindfulness, Subjective Well Being and Sustainable Consumption*

Numerous findings are pointing out the positive correlation between subjective wellbeing and sustainable consumption (Jacob, Jovic, and Brinkerhoff, 2009). Subjective wellbeing contains two sub-categories that complement each other. The first is hedonic wellbeing, which emphasizes seeking happiness through material possessions. The other is eudemonic wellbeing, which is related to finding existential meaning and social relations. While hedonic wellbeing has grown tremendously with the developments in technology and industry, people's happiness in life has not grown equally. One misconception about happiness is that if people have enough financial power to satisfy their needs, they may be satisfied, but the meaning in their life may be ignored (Jones and Hansen, 2015). It has been found that people who have sustainable consumption habits have higher scores on subjective wellbeing assessments than more materialistic consumers (Hellevik, 2014). It can thus be stated that subjective wellbeing and pro-social behavior reinforce each other. Conversely, undesirable feelings divert people from environmental problems and make them ignorant of such issues, as these

kinds of feelings cause people to be more self-centered (Shah, Mullainathan, and Shafir, 2012). This supports the idea that happier individuals are more aware of environmental problems (Brown and Kasser, 2005). When people feel responsible for the environment and have a positive attitude towards it, they are more likely to behave sustainably (Luchs, Phipps, and Hill, 2015). Through mindfulness practices, people realize their place in the environment (Bahl et al., 2016). Besides, there is a positive correlation between one's mindfulness score and one's willingness to take action against global warming (Wamsler and Brink, 2018). Similarly, it is found that pro-ecological behaviors, such as repairing, recycling, sharing, and re-using things, promote one's overall wellbeing, which eventually affects one's sustainable behaviors (Kasser, 2017). However, even if people appreciate sustainability and have a positive attitude towards it, the same pattern is not always observed in their behavior. This leads to a gap between behavior and attitude (Luchs, Phipps, and Hill, 2015). Mindfulness, however, decreases this gap. It helps people gain insight into their true selves, which leads people to stay away from materialistic tendencies. Besides these, it enables people to obtain pro-social and pro-environmental behaviors by making them aware of their unnecessary consumption habits. This helps them become sustainable consumers (Fischer, Stanszus, Geiger, Grossman, and Schrader, 2017).

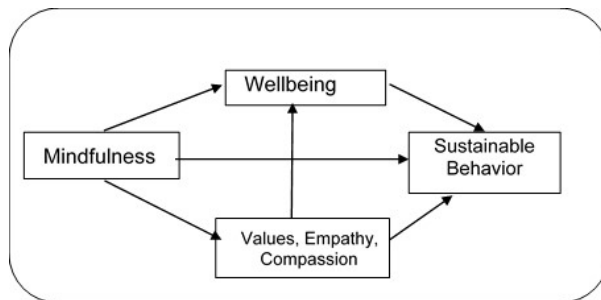


Figure 1: The areas that mindfulness has an impact on and their relationships with each other

Source: Ericson, T., Kjønstad, B. G., & Barstad, A. (2014). Mindfulness and sustainability. *Ecological Economics*, 104, 73-79. p.75

However, mindfulness does not arouse a sense of non-consumption. On the contrary, it motivates people to find better ways of consumption that will not harm the balance of the environment. This need leads them to produce for their own needs, such as growing their food or repairing their possessions to use them longer (Hunting and Conroy, 2018).

Tipsord (2009) stated that mindfulness increases the level of wellbeing and other-related thinking, which is directly related to sustainable consumption. This other-relatedness also drives people to look for ways to consume that do not harm others (Barber and Deale, 2014). Barbarro and Pickett (2016)'s findings support these claims by providing evidence that pro-environmental behavior and mindfulness are positively correlated because more mindful people were found to be more connected to nature. Figure 2.1 summarizes this relationship in a concise way.

Every day, people are exposed to a large variety of ads that convey messages of happiness. These messages lead people to perceive happiness as if it were a consumer good – a purchasable item. This misconception makes people work more and spend more (Kasser, 2017). Another driver of unconscious consumerism is people's need for self-fulfillment. According to Kotler (1999), people perceive consumption as medication against feelings of meaninglessness and emptiness. Through shopping, people feel satisfied for a short time (Rosenberg, 2004). This short-term satisfaction seeking turns into an addiction that requires constant reward-seeking, a cycle referred to as a hedonic treadmill. In this way, people's actions become automated. When people feel down, they want to consume more, but if they consume more they will keep feeling down (Heller, 2011). People consume more to be happy without realizing the root of their unhappiness. Similarly, according to Winter (2004), one other driver of overconsumption is the feeling of lack or incompleteness. This feeling

stems from losing touch with the wholeness of nature.

By the same token, it is found that people tend to prefer products that they are more frequently exposed to (Baker, 1999; Schindler and Holbrook, 1993). When it is considered that human perception of normal and acceptable is shaped by the frequency of things that they encounter (Schultz, Nolan, Cialdiani, et al., 2007), one can understand why people perceive happiness as a material thing. In other words, if people are exposed to pro-consumption advertisements all the time, their perception starts considering it as normal. This leads to the buying action by creating an illusion of a need and perceived obsolescence. Perceived obsolescence refers to a desire to replace older products with new ones such as buying the new model of a phone without wearing out the previous one (Ericson, Kjønstad, and Barstad, 2014). These illusions aggravate unconscious consumption. Another psychological cause is the need for self-expression. People feel a sense of self-expression through what they have or buy. They see their possessions as part of their personality and as a way of expressing themselves (Armstrong and Jackson, 2015). However, it is found that people who have high materialistic tendencies are the ones who are more vulnerable to unhappiness, discontent, depression, and anxiety (Bahl et al., 2016).

2.4 Mindfulness and Sustainable Consumption Habits

Mindful consumption is the process of considering both internal (bodily, sensational) and external stimuli before consumption action. In this process, mindfulness enables people to make more aware choices between sustainable and materialistic behaviors (Friese, Messner, and Schaffner, 2012). As a similar effect, through mindfulness practices, people can be more aware of their emotional drives and free themselves from their pursuit of self-expression through materialistic tendencies. This way people can satisfy their need for self-actualization and meaningfulness by connecting with their inner values and existential meaning (Hunting and Conroy, 2018). Mindfulness helps people observe their behaviors and positively regulate them, which engenders feelings of fulfillment brought on through the elimination of the suffering of endless consumption (Mick, 2017). Moreover, as mindful people are more open to experience, they enjoy relating to other people, which provides a deeper sense of fulfillment (Rosenberg, 2004). In breaking the illusion of “normal” set by society, mindfulness helps people be more flexible and adapt their wants to reality (Hofmann, Grossman, and Hinton, 2011). Eventually, instead of running through an endless reward and novelty hunt, people realize they can acquire a sense of harmony when they are mindful moment to moment (Heller, 2011).

Much research has investigated how mindfulness affects people’s consumption decisions. The difference that mindfulness training provides lies in its profound effect on changing people by using core values and ethical principles. Through mindfulness, people regulate their behavior by creating meaning and value. There are five different areas through which mindfulness affects people and supports their more conscious consumption. Figure 2.2 summarizes these five areas.

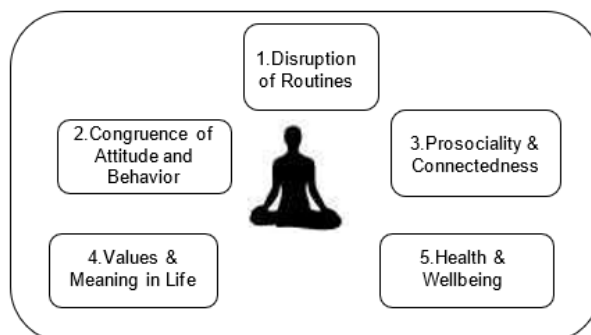


Figure 2: Five effectivity areas of mindfulness training

Source: Geiger, S. M., Grossman, P., & Schrader, U. (2018). Mindfulness and sustainability: Correlation or causation?. *Current Opinion in Psychology*.

The first of these areas is the disruption of routines, which refers to its positive regulative effects on one's consumption habits by eliminating negative consumption routines. Research conducted by Fischer et al. (2017) presented supporting evidence for mindfulness' ability to disrupt routines and break automaticity functions. This is especially important because it can decrease people's impulsive and compensatory buying behaviors (Geiger, Grossman, and Schrader, 2018). The second is the congruence of attitude and behavior, which refers to the parallelism between one's behaviors and intentions. That is, their positive attitudes for environmental wellbeing are in line with their behavior (Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002). This effect decreases the attitude-behavior gap (Geiger, Grossman & Schrader, 2018). The main reason for the attitude-behavior gap is automaticity which results from the multitasking demands of our modern-day society (Bargh and Chartrand, 1999). The third is pro-social behavior and connectedness to others, which refers to feelings of harmony and responsibility for others. Mindfulness is known to reduce, even eliminate egocentric bias, the condition of not being able to or want to consider others, aside from one's benefits (Nas, Brugman, and Koops, 2008). Compassion for self and others blurs the boundaries between oneself and others which brings about a sense of wholeness and understanding for other beings (Kumar, 2002). According to Oswald (1996), understanding others' intentions and motivations is associated with cooperative and altruistic behavior. This wholeness and feeling of harmony also help people get rid of their prejudices towards other genders and races as well by making them realize that their feelings are the result of environmental stimuli (Lueke and Gibson, 2015). This situation makes them more socially responsible. Additionally, other-oriented mindfulness practices increase people's awareness of socially responsible consumption and lead them to prefer products produced in a fair way (Geiger and Keller, 2018). The fourth area is values and meaning, referring to ethics and values-oriented meaning creation and staying away from materialistic tendencies (Geiger, Grossman and Schrader, 2018). Ethical behavior and mindfulness are closely related both at the individual and organizational levels. The nonjudgmental acceptance subscale of mindfulness is especially found to be related to ethical behavior (Kalafatoğlu and Turgut, 2017). Similarly, meaning construction is correlated with observing and describing subscales. Observing both internal and external stimuli is a supportive factor in meaning formation. Likewise, effectively expressing those stimuli contributes to the meaning construction process. Meaning construction is also related to sustainable and conscious consumption (Hunecke and Richter, 2018). The final area is personal health and wellbeing, a domain that refers to the positive effects of mindfulness on people's psychological and physical health (Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, et al., 2004). This, in turn, affects their attitude towards their environment by shifting their attention from their health problems to environmental problems (Kasser, 2017).

3. Methodology

The objective of this research is to understand the effects of mindfulness training on university students' perceptions of sustainable consumption. First, students attained basic mindfulness training given by the researcher who is a qualified teacher skilled in mindfulness & language teaching. Then, focus groups are conducted after the training sessions. Focus group methodology has been developed and used mainly for marketing research since the mid-twentieth century (Bloor, 2001). It has many well-established benefits in terms of gaining insights into people's thinking and ideas. Firstly, it serves as a medium for people to share their ideas in a group. Through this sharing experience, people affect and get affected by others which is exactly what happens in real-life situations (Kreuger and Casey, 2000 p 11). This research was conducted with the university students of a university in Istanbul. Their ages varied between 18 and 22. Participants were chosen using convenience sampling.

In the mindfulness training phase, CDs by Jon Kabat Zinn and several mindfulness apps were used. Besides these, several curricula about mindfulness training were examined, with Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) training being chosen as the most suitable program for the participants because of its well-established curricula. Training continued for eight weeks, three times

a week, and each session took 20 to 40 minutes depending on the day and the participants. Most of the time, basic MBSR training techniques were used such as mindful breathing or mindful listening, but especially after the first four weeks, compassion and emotion-related training were also applied. In each session, participants were first asked how they feel and, subsequently, the content of that session was explained. Following this, a planned mindfulness meditation was led by the instructor. This core meditation phase took about eight to fifteen minutes. After finishing the meditation, participants were asked to describe their experiences to each other and were then again asked how they felt after the meditation. In this way, mood swings were also observed before and after the meditation experience in each session. Two focus groups were conducted two weeks after the last meditation session. The first group consisted of five voluntary students who wanted to attend the eight-week mindfulness training process. The second group also consisted of voluntary students, but they did not take part in the training process. Five participants were chosen from this group as well.

4. Findings

Two focus groups are conducted. The first group was trained and the second was not. The first focus group consisted of five participants. They were asked three sets of questions inquiring about the three main dimensions of this research:

- their thoughts on this meditation training program and its effects on their overall mood
- their consumption habits,
- their thoughts on sustainable consumption and environmental awareness

All five participants stated a feeling of relief and peace after attending meditation sessions. They resembled the feeling of being in a natural setting such as a seaside or forest; or the feeling of hugging somebody that they know well. They defined these feelings as being calm and getting rid of other distresses at that moment. Besides such feelings, they stated an increase in their focus and attention towards the outer stimuli, especially sounds, bodily sensations, and feelings. However, they stated that sometimes they become aware of the sounds of their surroundings or aches in their body even if they do not want to attend to them. This is probably a result of the content of meditations as they were thought to be in the moment and attend to whatever is going around them at that moment. However, they were not trained to shift their attention from unwanted feelings. That's why this is a drawback of the training period. The extent of their focus on these feelings and sensations varies according to the number of training they attended. For instance, while B, who attended 11 sessions, stated that he focuses more on his faint headaches, another participant, G, who attended 20 sessions, stated that he can hear his heartbeat and flow of blood in his ear before sleeping. Similarly, E stated another observed change as:

“During the meditation period, I felt relaxation and peace even if there were exams and homework. It is like forgetting your other problems at that moment. The feeling was like being at the seaside or swimming in the sea. My perspective towards others has also changed, now I try to know them as they are by avoiding judgments”.

When asked about their consumption habits, most of the participants' answers were in line with each other despite some major differences in answers to some questions. They stated that they mostly shop only when they need something, for example, when they need a new computer for special kinds of games. However, G, who has the highest attendance score to mindfulness training among all participants, expressed that he tends to shop whenever he has enough money as shopping makes him happy. He also stated that he wanted to impress others by the quality or look of the purchases he makes. All participants stated that they perform research before they buy goods in various ways such as watching review videos, reading online comments, or comparing the prices and quality of products. For example, A states that:

"I just read comments online and compare the prices and features of the products. I assess whether it will fulfill my needs or not. But I do not read the back of the products at the supermarket, for example".

This is parallel with the findings of previous research which expresses that more mindful people tend to search for both the intrinsic and extrinsic features of a product. According to their remarks, the amount of time spent on product research and its extent is correlated with the price of the product. The higher the price, the more extensive the pre-purchase research becomes. However, participants stated that they give more importance to quality over money for especially electronics or clothes shopping. O says:

"For example, I bought a new pair of shoes last week. When I tried it on, I loved it because it was comfortable, but it was expensive too. I searched in other stores and on the internet for a cheaper price, but I couldn't find it. So, I bought it, because its comfort was more important than its price for me".

They explained that the brand of the product is a strong determinant of its quality, which is why they choose brands that are proven to be of better quality. They gave similar answers to the country of origin question, claiming that the product's country of origin is also important. According to them even if two products are equal in performance, they would still choose the product of the country which is accepted as a producer of higher quality products.

All participants accept the human impact on global warming and pollution. They claim that this impact is likely to stem from ignorance and humans' not experiencing its consequences directly or not being able to empathize with nature. According to them, individual effort is important and sustainable consumption is possible. Such consumption, however, is more expensive as organic products are more expensive than others. They stated that they do not investigate whether a product is environmentally friendly or not, claiming however that if money were not an issue, they would choose sustainable products. They stated that if they did not have any other problems, they would have more concerns about the environment. However, now that they have a stressful life, they prioritize other problems that they perceive they can have a bigger impact on solving. One such statement is: *"To be able to try to solve environmental problems, I should get rid of all of my problems first"*. This statement supports the previous findings expressing that subjective wellbeing and sustainable consumption are correlated. They also expressed a desire for producing their food if they had a big enough place and enough time to do so. However, they stated that these are also age-dependent concerns, meaning that they would likely search more for organic and sustainable products if they were older. However, they stated that meditation brought about a feeling of being in nature but according to them it still did not affect their current consumption choices. Even if they claimed to experience a decrease in the frequency of shopping and emotional consumption, for them this is not a result of meditation training. In individual proactive and reactive actions to the climate change question, they used *I language* while talking about individual responsibility.

The second focus group also consisted of five participants. These participants had, however, no meditation training. They were asked the same questions except for a question related to meditation training and its effects on people's moods. For this reason, this group's answers are collected under two categories regarding

- their consumption habits,
- their thoughts on sustainable consumption and environmental awareness

Except for one participant, all individuals in this group stated that the main determinant of their consumption is having enough money. Only one stated that his consumption habits are need-oriented. The reasons they stated for making purchases include the need for appreciation, social status, and entering new social domains such as starting university. Their shopping habits are mostly psychologically driven, which results from either the need for self-appreciation and being content

with themselves or gaining others' appreciation. One exemplary answer is given below:

"My consumption habits are mostly psychological, for example when I am content with my appearance, I do not need to buy new clothes. Once I had my hair cut very short and I did not like my new look. Then, I started to look for new clothes which make me look better".

They stated that they mostly do not search for information before buying, because their buying action is mostly instantaneous and affected by outer stimuli such as advertisements, discounts, or new products. They stated that the appearance of the product or others' comments about it affect their choices, but still for them the most important factor is having enough money. They perceive a product as old when they get used to that product. This explains their regret after buying a product and not perceiving that product as they did in the pre-purchase phase. However, one of them stated a contradictory example as:

"I have a cardigan that belonged to my father. It is maybe 20 years old, but I do not think of it as old. I feel happy wearing it. My father used to wear it after his football matches, and it means a lot to me. I do not think it will ever wear off for me".

When they were asked about the importance of the origin countries of products there were various answers. They mostly stated that the country of origin is an important indicator of the quality of that product. One participant mentioned another perspective on this issue. This person would be embarrassed to share the country of origin of a product if it is produced in a country that is perceived as producing low-quality products.

In this set of questions, answers were mostly in line with the answers of the first group (who had participated in the mindfulness training), with some minor differences. This group also agrees that global warming and pollution are human activity-related problems and if they do not face heavy consequences for it, human activities would not change. The main difference in this group was related to their answer to the individual action question. They admitted that even if all the properties of the two products are equal, they may not choose the sustainable one because they simply do not prioritize the issue of sustainability. They stated that other people's attitudes would determine their course of action. One exemplary statement is:

"Before I take action, I consider what other people would think about that action. If I am sure that they will not react negatively, I do not change my behavior. Besides, it is not my business and my small impact is not important. I cannot save the world after all."

They also stated that when the action is easy to take and widespread around them, they would take that action as well. However, as that action requires extra effort right now, they do not pay much attention. These statements are also parallel with previous research expressing that ease of action and magnitude of impact are crucial determinants of environmentally friendly behavior.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

To begin with the first group, it is observed from their answers to the first set of questions that mindfulness training had a positive impact on their feelings and overall mood. Their stress level decreased and their perspective towards others shifted in a positive direction. It is understood from their answers that meditating aroused nature-related feelings in them. These are related to feeling at peace and whole in nature. Besides, participants who attended more training stated more fine-grained changes in their attention.

Regarding their consumption habits, there is no clear indication of psychological motives for consumption. They stated that their consumption is need-driven, which shows that they are trying to satisfy basic needs. However, it is interesting that the participant with the highest attendance in the

training is the only one who stated that he is affected by psychological motives and is concerned about other people's judgments about him. The fact that participants research for information about the product in parallel with previous research which states mindful individuals evaluate not only a product's intrinsic features such as quality and performance but also its extrinsic features such as packaging and country of origin, before making a purchase (Bayraktar, Usly, and Ndubisi, 2015). As a result of this inclination toward information seeking about the products, it seems that mindfulness practices lead to wiser consumers (Luchs and Mick, 2018). When it comes to their ideas towards sustainable consumption and awareness of environmental problems, they accepted that human influence is evident but individual efforts are also worth considering. In questions that seek to elicit the importance of personal responsibility they used I language which shows that they do not only accept human impact but also take personal responsibility for the environment. Their answers regarding sustainable products showed an interest in them, which was diminished by participants' concern for monetary problems. However, the fact that these participants do not support themselves financially makes this tendency quite normal. Overall, the first group who took mindfulness training realized a positive increase in their subjective wellbeing but did not observe any change regarding their consumption habits after mindfulness training. This finding may be because habit formation is a gradually developing phenomenon. In other words, while mood change can be acquired in the short term, habit formation takes a longer time. Similarly, they did not state any change in their perspective towards nature except for a need to return to nature. However, it is clear from their remarks that they take personal responsibility for the current state of global problems.

In the second group's consumption habits answers, the most striking result was regarding their motivation for consumption. It can be understood from their remarks that their main drive for consumption is psychological, an impulse that stems from the desire to gain others' appreciation and status in a social context. This suggests that through shopping they try to satisfy their need for prestige. However, it is also worth noting that valuing possession, which has emotional meaning, proves that people think that certain possessions have an evocative effect for them beyond their materiality. When it comes to their remarks on sustainability and environmental awareness, they do not believe the personal effort is effective in countering the problem. Additionally, while talking about individual responsibility, they kept using *we language* which can be an unconscious attempt to normalize their negative impact on the environment and to share the guilt with others. Moreover, they asserted that this is the government's responsibility - not theirs - and so they deny the incremental effect of individual effort.

This research has an exploratory nature that aims to raise new, more specific questions. As the study employed a small sample group and as the research is purely qualitative, the findings cannot be generalized. They can, however, be used to create new perspectives.

The findings of this study can serve as proof for the transformational effect of mindfulness on people's overall mood and subjective wellbeing. However, only indirect implications can be made regarding the effects of mindfulness training on people's perceptions of sustainable consumption. While clear differences between focus group answers support previous findings stating that mindfulness enhances conscious consumption, no direct evidence could be found tying these tendencies to mindfulness. A similar result was acquired from the last set of questions regarding environmentally friendly consumption. Here again, there are obvious differences between the two groups, but no direct evidence could be found.

Even so, it is clear that people are open to new ways of positive consumption. This has important implications in terms of designing marketing activities. Previous literature and this research show that a new kind of need has emerged and remains unfulfilled. People search for new methods of consumption that enable them to acquire information about the products they consume, and they want to contribute to environmental wellbeing without having to spend too much money.

The results show implications for the application of mindfulness for consumption studies. In further research, the level of mindfulness may be measured before and after the training to make the difference clear. Similarly, another focus group study can be conducted at the beginning of the

process. Another suggestion relates to the length of the training. The training may be longer than eight weeks and the study can employ a longitudinal methodology, as habit formation takes time. For example, if it lasts one year, instead of two months, clearer results will be obtained. The final recommendation relates to the questions asked during the focus group. In this study, direct questions were asked to the participants who were expected to self-report their progress. However, this also requires overt awareness of changes in their perspective and tendencies which can only be realized after conscious self-observation and self-introspection. Future researchers may instead use projective techniques and make inferences from them. This kind of research would likely yield clearer and more comprehensive results.

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