

ABSTRACT

Background. Many definitions of mindfulness have been proposed, with corresponding mindfulness scales being developed. Such proliferation of mindfulness definitions and measurements has led to the confusion of what ‘mindfulness’ really means and which scales most appropriately measure it.

Aim. This study aimed to establish a new operational definition on mindfulness based on the original Buddhist teachings, develop a corresponding mindfulness scale, and validate it.

Method. An operational definition of mindfulness and 55 items pertaining to this definition of mindfulness were created. These items were reviewed and rated by five experts, with 48 items being selected and included in further scale validation. 1050 participants were recruited in the scale validation study. After screening for valid responses, 897 of them remained and 500 were randomly allocated to (1) examination of factor structure and (2) examination of construct validity stage. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted examining the factor structure of the new mindfulness scale. Correlations between this scale and other related measures/constructs were estimated to establish the new scale’s construct validity.

Results. Four factors with 26 items under the two theoretical factors of mindfulness and discernment were extracted by EFA. They formed the new Mindfulness-Discernment Scale (MDS). This scale was found to be positively correlated with various Buddhist-related constructs (concentration, tranquillity, nonattachment to experience, nonattachment to self-notion, impermanence, even-mindedness of equanimity, and wisdom) and mental well-being, and negatively with psychological distress. It was not correlated with the nonjudging facet of

the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire–Short Form and hedonic independence of the Equanimity Scale and had no to weak correlation with compassion.

Conclusion. This research study developed the new MDS based on a new operational definition of mindfulness according to original Buddhist teachings. The definition and scale may be used for further research on mindfulness, well-being, and Buddhist psychology.

Keywords: mindfulness; discernment; scale development; factor analysis; construct validity