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Mindfulness and Self-Esteem across Age and Gender: Insights from Pre-Service Teachers

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Abstract

The growing emphasis on emotional preparedness in teacher education highlights the importance of psychological strengths such as mindfulness and self-esteem in shaping effective future educators. This quantitative study explores the relationship between mindfulness and self-esteem among 213 pre-service teachers (PSTs) from Sivaganga and Pudukkottai districts in India. Standardized tools, the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ-SF) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale were used to measure the key constructs. Data were analyzed using t-tests, ANOVA, and Pearson's correlation. Findings revealed significant differences in both mindfulness and self-esteem across age groups, with PSTs aged 25 years and above showing notably higher levels than their younger equivalents. However, no significant gender differences were found for either variable, indicating that male and female trainees possess comparable levels of emotional attributes. The study also identified a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.417$, $p < .001$) between mindfulness and self-esteem, suggesting that higher mindfulness is associated with stronger self-worth. These findings underscore the need to integrate mindfulness-based training and self-development programs into teacher education curriculum to enhance emotional resilience and professional readiness. The study contributes valuable empirical evidence to the limited Indian research on teacher wellbeing.

Keywords: *Mindfulness, Self-Esteem, Pre-service teachers (PSTs), Teacher Education.*

1. Introduction

Teacher education today places increasing emphasis on the holistic development of PST, as their emotional wellbeing and psychological readiness substantially influence classroom performance and long-term career success **(Jennings,2015; Roeser et al.,2013)**. PSTs commonly lack of confidence, experience stress, anxiety and performance pressure during practicum and academic tasks, which can

negatively affect their professional identity formation (Franco et al.,2021; Hirshberg et al.,2024).These challenges spotlight the importance of psychological constructs such as mindfulness and self-esteem, which are increasingly recognized as essential components of teacher preparation programs (Lomas et al.,2019; Klingbeil & Renshaw,2018).

Mindfulness, defined as a present-moment, tolerant awareness of one's thoughts and emotions, has gained prominence in educational psychology due to its documented benefits for emotional regulation, attention control, and stress reduction (Kabat-Zinn,2015; Emerson et al.,2017). Recent Scopus-indexed studies demonstrate that mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) such as MBSR and MBSEL can significantly reduce stress, enhance cognitive flexibility, and promote greater wellbeing among teachers and university students (Gu et al.,2015; Lomas et al.,2019; Hirshberg et al.,2024). Newer randomized and quasi-experimental trials (2022–2025) show sustained improvements in student teachers' emotional balance, reflective functioning, and teaching readiness following structured mindfulness training (Wu et al.,2025; Juul et al.,2025).

In the context of mindfulness, self-esteem, or one's overall appraisal of oneself, is a key factor in teacher education that affects motivation, confidence, and resilience (Rosenberg,1965; Hanley et al.,2017).Research shows that PSTs who have high self-esteem are more confident in their teaching, make better decisions in the classroom, and get along better with students (Chandna,2022; Franco et al.,2021).Research shows that PSTs who have high self-esteem are more confident in their teaching, make better decisions in the classroom, and get along better with students (Chandna,2022; Franco et al.,2021). Thus, developing self-esteem is regarded as vital for training emotionally healthy and capable future teachers.

Emerging worldwide research reveals a substantial favorable association between mindfulness and self-esteem.Mindfulness lowers rumination and self-criticism while building self-compassion, processes substantially related with higher self-esteem (Neff & Germer,2013; Gu et al.,2015). Empirical research among PSTs also suggests that mindfulness training leads to better mindfulness scores accompanied by gains in self-esteem and preparation for teaching practice (Hue & Lau,2015; Wu et al.,2025). Meta-analytic data further demonstrate that mindfulness favorably improves numerous self-related outcomes, including self-esteem, across multiple cultural contexts (Li et al.,2023; Lomas et al.,2019).

However, there is very little study on the association between mindfulness and self-esteem among Indian PSTs, despite a wealth of data from throughout the world. There is a significant knowledge gap regarding the psychological requirements of trainee teachers because the majority of Indian teacher-education institutes do not offer systematic wellness programs (Chandna,2022). Empirical research is desperately needed in the Indian setting as national policies emphasize teacher welfare and holistic teacher development more and more.

Studying the relationship between self-esteem and mindfulness in PSTs is pertinent, topical, and important from an academic standpoint. By analyzing the relationship between mindfulness and self-esteem among PSTs and investigating the potential benefits of these constructions for their professional and personal growth, the current study seeks to close this gap.

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Mindfulness

Mindfulness is defined as deliberate, present-moment awareness combined with a non-judging attitude toward inner experience (Kabat-Zinn,2015). In educational research, mindfulness interventions (e.g., MBSR, MBSEL and brief, curriculum-embedded modules) are consistently linked with improved emotion regulation, decreased perceived stress, and better attentional control across student and teacher populations (Emerson et al.,2017; Lomas et al., 2019). Recent large and methodologically stronger studies extend these findings to cluster randomized and quasi-experimental trials with PSTs reporting sustained reductions in stress and improvements in wellbeing after 8–10 week meditation-based programs (Hirshberg et al.,2024; Wu et al.,2025). These recent trials also emphasize implementation fidelity and longer follow-up, addressing prior critiques about short-term measurement.

2.2. Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is an individual's global progress of self-worth **(Rosenberg,1965)** is a key predictor of academic motivation, resilience, and professional confidence. Intervention studies targeting adult populations show that psychological programs (including mindfulness and cognitive–behavioral approaches) can raise self-esteem, but effects vary in magnitude and durability **(Niveau et al.,2021)**. Meta-analytic evidence indicates that mindfulness practice positively correlates with multiple self-related outcomes (motivation, self-efficacy, and aspects of self-esteem), although heterogeneity across studies (sample, measures, cultural setting) requires cautious interpretation **(Li et al.,2023).**

2.3. Mindfulness and Self-Esteem among Pre-Service Teachers

A converging body of recent empirical work indicates that improvements in mindfulness are associated with higher self-esteem among PSTs, often mediated by reductions in rumination and improvements in self-compassion and emotion regulation **(Chandna, 2022; Gu et al.,2015)**. Quasi-experimental and randomized studies in teacher education report that brief, embedded MBIs can increase trait mindfulness and concurrently improve self-reported self-worth and teaching confidence prior to practicum experiences **(Hue & Lau,2015; Franco et al.,2021)**. Notably, 2024–2025 trials using stronger designs (cluster RCTs, multi-site quasi-experiments) document downstream benefits such as reduced early-career attrition risk and improved classroom practice indicators, suggesting that gains in mindfulness and self-esteem may translate into professional outcomes **(Hirshberg et al.,2024; Wu et al.,2025)**. However, reviewers and recent syntheses highlight persistent gaps: many studies still rely on self-report instruments (FFMQ, RSES), sample sizes are modest, cultural adaptation procedures are often under-reported, and objective or observer-rated classroom measures are infrequently included **(Li et al.,2023; Juul et al.,2025)**. These gaps identify a clear opportunity for rigorous, culturally sensitive RCTs in the Indian pre-service teacher context.

3. Need for the Study

Developing mindfulness and self-esteem among PSTs has profound implications for their professional effectiveness and personal well-being. Mindfulness enables teachers to remain calm, attentive, and empathetic, while self-esteem fosters confidence, motivation, and a positive sense of professional identity **(Verma & Kumar, 2024)**.

In India,PSTs face unique contextual disputes such as large class sizes, limited teaching resources, societal expectations, and job insecurity. These factors can heighten stress and lower self-esteem if not addressed during training. Studies conducted in Indian teacher education institutions have shown that mindfulness-based interventions significantly enhance emotional well-being, self-efficacy, and self-esteem among teacher trainees **(Bhat & Reddy, 2024)**. As emphasized by the University Grants Commission **(UGC, 2023)**, promoting mental health and mindfulness practices in teacher education institutions is vital for developing reflective and emotionally intelligent educators.

4. Statement of the Problem

However, research examining the relationship between mindfulness and self-esteem among Indian PSTs is scarce. Most studies in India have focused on either general college students or teachers already in-service, leaving a significant gap in understanding how mindfulness can support the development of self-esteem during the formative pre-service stage **(Musood & Kaur, 2025)**.

Given the importance of emotional well-being for effective teacher preparation, it is crucial to examine how mindfulness relates to self-esteem and whether demographic factors such as age and gender influence these constructs among Indian PSTs. Addressing this gap can inform teacher education curricula and interventions, ensuring that future educators are not only skilled but also emotionally resilient, self-aware, and confident.
Hence, the problem addressed by this study can be stated as:

To explore the relationship between mindfulness and self-esteem among PSTs in India and to examine the influence of demographic variables age, gender on these constructs."

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study is guided by the following objectives:

- To examine the relationship between mindfulness and self-esteem among PSTs.
- To determine whether demographic variables (age, gender,) influence mindfulness among PSTs.
- To determine whether demographic variables (age, gender) influence self-esteem among PSTs.

6. HYPOTHESES

The following null hypotheses (H_0) are proposed for statistical testing:

- There is no significant difference in mindfulness with respect to age among PSTs
- There is no significant difference in mindfulness with respect to gender among PSTs
- There is no significant difference in self-esteem with respect to age among PSTs
- There is no significant difference in self-esteem with respect to gender among PSTs
- There is no significant relationship between mindfulness and self-esteem among PSTs.

7. Methodology

This study adopted quantitative research design using the survey method. The sample consisted of 213 PSTs from various teacher education institutions in Sivaganga and Pudukkottai district, selected to represent diverse age groups and genders. The researcher used standardized tools for data collection: FFMQ-SF to measure different dimensions of mindfulness and the RSES to assess overall self-esteem.

7.1 Statistical Techniques

After the completion of data collection, the obtained data were systematically tabulated and analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques. The analysis was carried out with the help of a computer-based statistical software package (such as jamovi and jasp). Both descriptive and inferential statistical methods to interpret the data and to test the formulated hypotheses. Inferential statistics, including t-tests and ANOVA, were used to examine whether demographic variables influenced the scores.

8. Data Analysis

Hypothesis: 1

There is no significant difference in mindfulness with respect to age among PSTs

Table 1: **Descriptive Statistics of Mindfulness by Age**

Age Group	N	Mean	SD	SE	Coefficient of Variation
20–22 years	56	75.29	6.843	0.914	0.091
22–24 years	75	74.77	6.528	0.754	0.087
25 years & above	82	79.34	8.471	0.935	0.107

From the above table, it is observed that themean score of PSTs aged 25 years and above(Mean = 79.34, SD = 8.47).The meanscore of PSTs aged 22–24 years (Mean = 74.77, SD = 6.53).The meanscore of PSTs aged 20–22 years (Mean= 75.29, SD = 6.84)

Table 2: ANOVA – Mindfulness by Age

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	η^2	Lower CI	Upper CI
Between Groups (Age)	962.3	2	481.16	8.755	< .001	0.077	0.019	0.150
Within Groups (Residuals)	11541.0	210	54.96	—	—	—		

The Table shows thesignificant difference in mindfulness with respect to age among PSTs.

The calculated F-value (8.755) for mindfulness among different age groups of PSTs is greater than the table value (3.04) at the 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that there is a significant difference in mindfulness levels among PSTs belonging to different age groups. Hence, the null hypothesis stating, "there is no significant difference in mindfulness among PSTs with respect to age" is rejected.

Table 3: **Post Hoc (Scheffe) – Mindfulness by Age**

Comparison	Mean Difference	SE	df	t	p (Scheffe)	Cohen's d	Interpretation
20–22 vs 22–24	0.512	1.309	210	0.391	.926	0.069	Not Significant
20–22 vs 25+	-4.056	1.285	210	-3.156	.008	-0.547	Significant
22–24 vs 25+	-4.568	1.184	210	-3.857	< .001	-0.616	Significant

The post hoc comparisons using the Scheffe method revealed that there was no significant difference in mindfulness between PSTs aged 20–22 years and 22–24 years (p = .926). However, significant differences were found between the 20–22 and 25 years & above groups (p = .008) and between the 22–24 and 25 years & above groups (p < .001).

These results indicate that PSTs aged 25 years and above possess significantly higher levels of mindfulness compared to their younger counterparts. Therefore, age appears to play an important role in influencing mindfulness levels among PSTs.

Hypothesis: 2

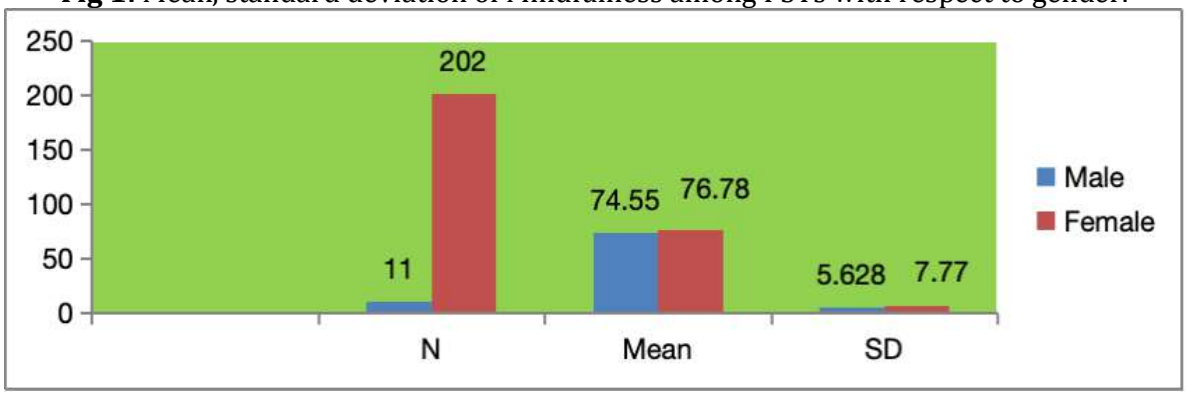
There is no significant difference in mindfulness with respect to gender among PSTs.

Table 4: t-test – Mindfulness by Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p	Result
Male	11	74.55	5.628	-0.940	211	.348	Not Significant
Female	202	76.78	7.770	—	—	—	—

From the above table it is observed that the mean score of female PSTs (M = 76.78) had a slightly higher mindfulness mean score compared to male PSTs (M = 74.55). However, this difference was not statistically significant. The calculated t-value (–0.940) is less than the table t-value (1.96) at the 0.05 significance level with 211 degrees of freedom. This indicates that there is no significant difference in mindfulness levels among PSTs belonging to gender. Hence, the null hypothesis stating that "there is no significant difference in mindfulness among PSTs with respect to gender" is accepted.

Fig 1: Mean, standard deviation of Mindfulness among PSTs with respect to gender.



HYPOTHESIS: 3

There is no significant difference in self-esteem with respect to age among PSTs.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of Self-Esteem by Age

Age Group	N	Mean	SD	SE	Coefficient of Variation
20–22 years	56	17.38	3.550	0.474	0.204
22–24 years	75	17.99	3.186	0.368	0.177
25 years & above	82	20.01	3.522	0.389	0.176

From the above table, it is observed that themean score of PSTs aged 25 years and above (Mean =20.01, SD =3.522).The meanscore of PSTs aged 22–24 years(Mean =17.99, SD =3.186).The meanscore of PSTs aged 20–22 years (Mean=17.38,SD =3.550)

Table 6: ANOVA – Self-Esteem by Age

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	η^2	Lower CI	Upper CI
Between Groups (Age)	275.8	2	137.89	11.82	< .001	0.101	0.034	0.180
Within Groups (Residuals)	2449.1	210	11.66	—	—	—	—	

The calculated F-value (11.82) for self-esteem among different age groups of PSTs is greater than the table value (3.04) at the 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that there is a significant difference in self-esteem levels among PSTs belonging to different age groups**.** Hence, the null hypothesis stating, "there is no significant difference in self-esteem among PSTs with respect to age" is rejected.

Table 7: Post Hoc (Scheffe) – Self-Esteem by Age

Comparison	Mean Difference	SE	t	p (Scheffe)	Interpretation
20–22 vs 22–24	-0.612	0.603	-1.014	.599	Not Significant
20–22 vs 25+	-2.637	0.592	-4.455	< .001	Significant
22–24 vs 25+	-2.026	0.546	-3.712	.001	Significant

The post hoc comparisons using the Scheffe method revealed that there was no significant difference in mindfulness between PSTs aged 20–22 years and 22–24 years (p = .599) However, significant differences were found between the 20–22 and 25 years & above groups (p = .001) and between the 22–24 and 25 years & above groups (p < .001).

These results indicate that PSTs aged 25 years and above possess significantly higher levels of self-esteemcompared to their younger counterparts. Therefore, age appears to play an important role in influencing self-esteem levels among PSTs.

Hypothesis: 4

There is no significant difference in self-esteem with respect to gender among PSTs.

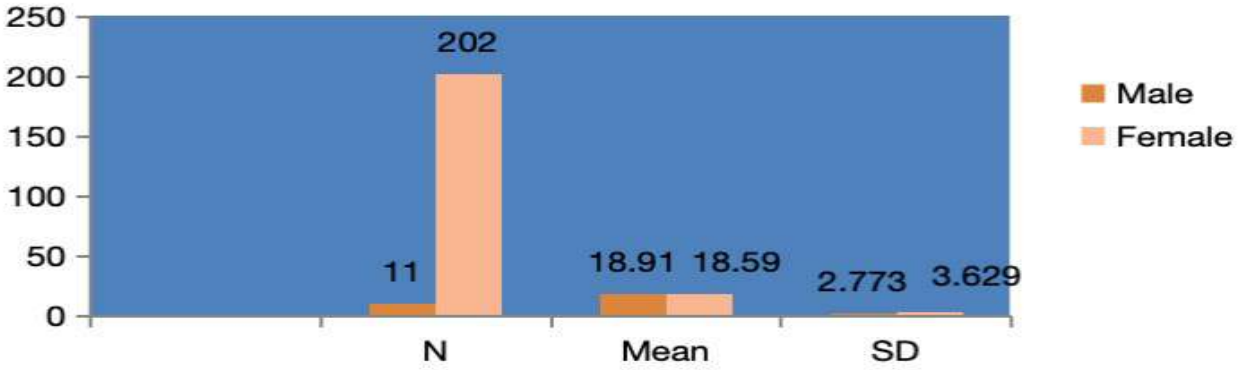
Table 8: t-test – Self-Esteem by Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p	Result
Male	11	18.91	2.773	0.288	211	.774	Not Significant
Female	202	18.59	3.629	—	—	—	—

From the above table it is observed that the mean score of male PSTs (M =18.91) had a slightly higher mindfulness mean score compared to female PSTs (M =18.59). However, this difference was not statistically significant. The calculated t-value (0.288) is less than the table t-value (1.96) at the 0.05

significance level with 211 degrees of freedom. This indicates that there is no significant difference in self-esteem levels among PSTs belonging to gender. Hence, the null hypothesis stating, "there is no significant difference in self-esteem among PSTs with respect to gender" is accepted.

Fig 2: Mean standard deviation of Self-esteem among PSTs with respect to gender.



HYPOTHESIS: 5

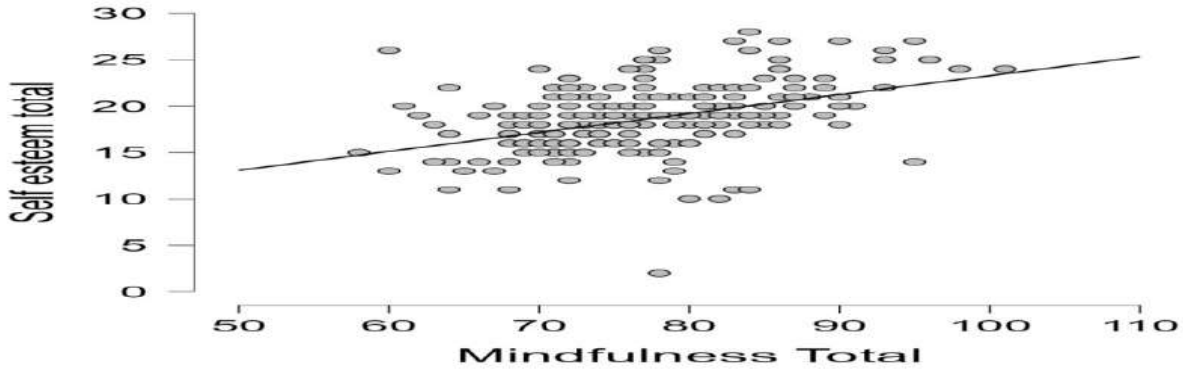
There is no significant relationship between mindfulness and self-esteem among PSTs.

Table 9: Correlation between Mindfulness and Self-Esteem

Variables	Pearson's r	p	Lower 95% CI	Upper 95% CI	Interpretation
Mindfulness & Self-Esteem	0.417	< .001	0.299	0.522	Moderate Positive Correlation

From the above table, it is inferred that the calculated Pearson's correlation coefficient between mindfulness and self-esteem among PSTs is **0.417**, which is statisticallysignificant at the 0.05 level ($p < .001$). This result indicates a moderate positive relationship between mindfulness and self-esteem, suggesting that PSTs with higher levels of mindfulness tend to exhibit higher levels of self-esteem.Therefore, the null hypothesis, which stated that "there is no significant relationship between mindfulness and self-esteem among PSTs," is rejected. This finding implies that mindfulness plays a meaningful role in enhancing self-esteem among PSTs.

Fig-3: Correlation plots between mindfulness and self-esteem among PSTs



9. MAJOR FINDINGS

9.1 Findings Related to Mindfulness

There exists asignificant difference in mindfulness among different age groups of PSTs. The null hypothesis. "There is no significant difference in mindfulness among PSTs with respect to age." is rejected.

The mean and standard deviation of PSTs aged 25 years and above (Mean = 79.34, SD = 8.47).The mean and standard deviation of PSTs aged22–24 years (Mean = 74.77, SD = 6.53).The mean and standard deviation of PSTs aged 20–22 years (Mean=75.29, SD = 6.84).The calculated F-value (8.755) for mindfulness among different age groups of PSTs is greater than the table value (3.04) at the 0.05 level of significance.

The post hoc comparisons using the Scheffe method revealed that there was no significant difference in mindfulness between PSTs aged 20–22 years and 22–24 years (p = .926). However, significant differences were found between the 20–22 and 25 years and above groups (p = .008) and between the 22–24 and 25 years & above groups (p < .001).

These results indicate that PSTs aged 25 years and above possess significantly higher levels of mindfulness compared to their younger counterparts. Therefore, age appears to play an important role in influencing mindfulness levels among PSTs. These people have greater maturity, patience, and self-regulation, leading to higher mindfulness.

There is no significant difference in mindfulness based on gender. The null hypothesis "There is no significant difference in mindfulness among PSTs with respect to gender" is accepted.

The mean score of female PSTs (M = 76.78) had a slightly higher mindfulness mean score compared to male PSTs (M = 74.55).The calculated t-value (–0.940) is less than the table t-value (1.96) at the 0.05 significance level with 211 degrees of freedom. Both male and female PSTs were found to have similar mindfulness levels.

9.2 Findings Related to Self-Esteem

There exists a significant difference in self-esteem among PSTs of different age groups. The null hypothesis "There is no significant difference in self-esteem among PSTs with respect to age" is rejected.

The mean and standard deviation of PSTs aged 25 years and above(Mean =20.01, SD =3.522).The mean and standard deviation of PSTs aged 22–24 years(Mean =17.99, SD =3.186).The mean and standard deviation of PSTs aged 20–22 years (Mean=17.38,SD =3.550).The calculated F-value (11.82) for self-esteem among different age groups of PSTs is greater than the table value (3.04) at the 0.05 level of significance.

The post hoc comparisons using the Scheffe method revealed that there was no significant difference in mindfulness between PSTs aged 20–22 years and 22–24 years(p = .599) However, significant differences were found between the 20–22 and 25 years & above groups (p = .001) and between the 22–24 and 25 years & above groups (p < .001).

These results indicate that PSTs aged 25 years and above possess significantly higher levels of self-esteem compared to their younger counterparts. Maturity and life experience contribute to a stronger sense of self-worth. Therefore, age appears to play an important role in influencing self-esteem levels among PSTs.

There is no significant difference in self-esteem based on gender. The null hypothesis "There is no significant difference in self-esteem among PSTs with respect to gender" is accepted.

The mean score of male PSTs (M =18.91) had a slightly higher mindfulness mean score compared to female PSTs (M =18.59). The calculated t-value (0.288) is less than the table t-value (1.96) at the 0.05 significance level with 211 degrees of freedom. Both male and female teachers displayed comparable self-esteem levels.

9.3 Relationship between Mindfulness and Self-Esteem

The Pearson correlation coefficient (r = 0.417, p < .001) indicated a moderate positive relationship between mindfulness and self-esteem.The calculated Pearson's correlation coefficient between mindfulness and self-esteem among PSTs is 0.417, which is statistically significant at the 0.05 level (p < .001). This result indicates a moderate positive relationship between mindfulness and self-esteem, suggesting that PSTs with higher levels of mindfulness tend to exhibit higher levels of self-esteem.

Therefore, the null hypothesis, which stated that "there is no significant relationship between

mindfulness and self-esteem among PSTs,"is rejected. This finding implies that mindfulness plays a meaningful role in enhancing self-esteem among PSTs.

10. Discussion

The findings of the present study are consistent with several recent investigations examining mindfulness and self-related outcomes among PSTs and student populations. For example, **Hirshberg et al. (2024)** demonstrated through a cluster randomized controlled trial that mindfulness and connection-training programs introduced during pre-service teacher education produced long-term benefits, including reduced early-career attrition and improved wellbeing. This aligns with the current study's evidence that higher mindfulness is strongly linked with positive self-evaluations such as self-esteem.

Similarly, **Wu and Qin's (2025)** quasi-experimental evaluation of a culturally adapted Mindfulness-Based Social and Emotional Learning (MBSEL) curriculum found significant improvements in mindfulness, self-compassion, and life satisfaction among PSTs, reinforcing the argument that mindfulness-based practices enhance socio-emotional functioning in teacher training contexts. The present findings also resonate with **Chandna's (2022)** Indian study, which reported a positive association between mindfulness, self-esteem, and self-efficacy, suggesting that this relationship is culturally robust and relevant within the Indian teacher-education environment.

Moreover, **Li et al.'s (2023)** meta-analysis confirms that mindfulness consistently predicts better self-related outcomes, although effect sizes vary across cultural contexts and measurement tools. Compared to these studies, the present research specifically adds insights on age and gender differences, showing that older PSTs tend to report higher mindfulness and self-esteem, whereas gender differences are minimal. This demographic pattern is not often highlighted in previous studies, marking a meaningful contribution. Overall, the comparison with existing literature strengthens the validity of the current results and highlights the growing consensus that mindfulness is a critical component of emotional wellbeing and professional readiness among future educators.

11. Conclusion

The study aimed to highlight how the development of mindfulness practices can contribute to the enhancement of self-esteem among future teachers, thereby improving their emotional stability, professional readiness, and personal well-being. Ones, possibly due to greater life experience, responsibility, and emotional regulation acquired through marital relationships.

Pearson's correlation analysis showed a positive and significant relationship between mindfulness and self-esteem, indicating that individuals with higher levels of awareness, emotional control, and acceptance also tend to exhibit stronger self-confidence and personal worth. This insight reinforces the psychological connection between emotional balance and self-perception. This means that as mindfulness increases, self-esteem also improves. It implies that mindfulness practices such as meditation, self-reflection, and emotional awareness help PSTs develop a stronger sense of confidence, acceptance, and personal worth. The present study concludes that mindfulness and self-esteem are positively correlated and significantly influence the professional competence of PSTs. The findings indicate that older and married teachers exhibit higher levels of mindfulness and self-esteem, highlighting the role of maturity and life experience.

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