

Relationships between Socioemotional Competencies and Happiness: Testing the Moderating and Mediating Role of Mindfulness and Social Media Engagement in a Sample of Nepalese Emerging Adults

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To Cite this Article

Bhoj B. Balayar (2024). Relationships between Socioemotional Competencies and Happiness: Testing the Moderating and Mediating Role of Mindfulness and Social Media Engagement in a Sample of Nepalese Emerging Adults. *SAARC Journal of Social Science*, 2: 2, pp. 223-245.

Abstract: This study examines the relationship between socioemotional competencies (SEC) and happiness among emerging adults, with a focus on the moderating and mediating roles of mindfulness and social media engagement (SME). A total of 70 participants ($M_{age} = 25.00$, $SD = 6.33$), including 43% women ($n = 30$), were involved. Data analysis employed hierarchical regression, moderation, and mediation analyses. Results indicate a significant positive association between SEC and happiness, mediated by mindfulness, whereas the moderating effect of SME was non-significant. High SME was found to moderate the relationship between SEC and happiness significantly, although its mediating effect was non-significant. These findings highlight the importance of SEC and mindfulness in enhancing happiness and suggest avenues for further research on their interplay with SME.

Keywords: socioemotional competencies, social media engagement, mindfulness, happiness

Introduction

Socioemotional competencies (SEC) include social and emotional skills to manage an individual's cognitive, behavioral, and affective skills in diverse contexts and cultures. These competencies, which contribute to one's personality development, emotion management, responsible decision-making, relationship management, and ability to exhibit empathy and happiness, are essential for a successful life (Mahoney *et al.*, 202; Niemi, 2020). Individuals with these competencies have the capabilities to coordinate and promote positive social, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral skills (Mahoney *et al.*, 2021) to adjust in new environment (Weissberg *et al.*, 2015).

The framework of SEC was originally developed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) to foster social and emotional competencies. SECs can be helpful in promoting awareness of self and others as these competencies can be useful for developing positive attitudes, increasing social interactions and decision-making skills for academic performance, positive behavior, and wellbeing (Durlak *et al.*, 2022; Durlak *et al.*, 2011; Hermana & Suganda, 2021; Payton *et al.*, 2009; Stewart & Suldo, 2011). Singh *et al.*, (2020) maintain that the psychological phenomena related to SEC and mindfulness, such as empathy, compassion, altruism, self-awareness, and self-management are mechanisms of developing healthy emotions and happiness.

In recent years, psychologists and neuroscientists have examined how mindfulness practices can enhance the role of SEC in individuals' social interactions and wellbeing (Beckes & Coan, 2015; Di & Biswal, 2019; Gu *et al.*, 2022). From a neuroscientific perspective, mindfulness-based cognitive therapy can help people cultivate SEC given its focus on self-awareness and control of attention (Davidson *et al.*, 2003). Explicitly, the social environments in which individuals live can determine their SEC, and, in turn, these individuals can also create social environments (Chernyshenko *et al.*, 2018). In this regards, the notion of environment has had a more complex and extensive meaning by including virtual environments such as social media and technology, which can impact SEC and happiness (Graciyal & Viswam, 2021). Hence, this study significantly contributes to the existing knowledge on how mindfulness and SME moderate and mediate the relationships between SEC and emerging adults' happiness.

Emerging Adulthood and Happiness

Emerging adulthood is a transitional, developmental period between adolescence and young adulthood. It is a new stage of life between 18 to 30 years, during which emerging adults gain new status such as marriage, stable work, educational attainment, and parenthood (Arnett, 2014). These adults' characteristics and developmental changes are largely determined by cultural variation across countries (Arnett, 2007). During this period of life, they are centered on self and focus on their romantic relationships, education and career-related skills, and knowledge that is useful for their young adulthood (Arnett, 2014). The extent to which these adults become happy depends on their successful progression through these normative developmental stages (Demir, 2010) and may often involve hedonism or pleasure and life satisfaction (Haybron, 2003), which varies from person to person (Ng, 2022).

Emerging Adulthood and Social Media Use

SME through phone calls, video calls, chatting, and texting influences individuals' mental and physical wellbeing positively or negatively based on the motivation and

satisfaction after using these platforms (Li *et al.*, 2017; Weinstein, 2018). For example, some researchers have found that time spent on social media is correlated with psychopathology, anxiety, depression, sleep problems, eating disorders, and many health risks for some individuals (Branje *et al.*, 2021; Escobar-Viera *et al.*, 2018; Hamilton *et al.*, 2022; Rasmussen *et al.*, 2020; Twenge & Campbell, 2018). The negative influence of social media and technology addiction also includes lower performance (Tenzin *et al.*, 2019), low self-esteem, cyberbullying, depression, social isolation (Best *et al.*, 2014; Nixon, 2014; Orben & Przybylski, 2019; Valkenburg, & Peter, 2011), and poor physical, social, and emotional wellbeing (Hormes *et al.*, 2014; Orben & Przybylski, 2019). Xiao and friends (2022) also found that lower levels of SEC were associated with high social media addiction. Due to all these reasons, it has been reported that 48% of emerging adults seek to reduce their social media use since they get overwhelmed by numerous subject matters (GlobalWebIndex, 2019).

Conversely, other researchers have identified the benefits of SME. The use of social media promotes socialization and friendships through multiple media, which helps emerging adults develop self-esteem, and strengthen their relationship ties and their wellbeing (Best *et al.*, 2014; Haythornthwaite, 2005). Another benefit is that its use promotes prosocial attitudes and cooperation skills (Adachi & Willoughby, 2013). Particularly, during the COVID-19 context, social media facilitated the interaction between parents and peers that was positively associated with individuals' wellbeing and performance (Balayar & Langlais, 2021; Coyne *et al.*, 2020; Iqbal *et al.*, 2021). Hence, the proper use of social media contributes to their developing knowledge that helps them nurture skills that contribute to their sense of identity (Yang, 2018) and emotional, behavioral, and coping skills (Heaney & Israel, 2008).

Role of SEC and Mindfulness in SME

Given the mixed research results examining the relation between SECs and SME, Tibber, and Silver (2022) developed a model exploring whether negative or positive influences on social media are associated with how the user interprets or reacts to content. Specifically, they studied whether social media engagement was harmful depending on the individual's motivation to use the media and their satisfaction after using it. Researchers have found that emerging adults who have a low capacity for emotional regulation may be more likely to engage in higher levels of SME than those who have a greater capacity to regulate their emotions (Hormes *et al.*, 2014). For these individuals, their risk of negative association with SME may impact their sense of wellbeing. Supporting this possibility are findings that high SME have been associated with low SEC (Orben & Przybylski, 2019). In this research, it was indicated that lower levels of SECs were associated with social media addiction and mental health and internalizing

problems (Shah *et al.*, 2019; Tsitsika *et al.*, 2014). Additionally, low SEC leads to stressful lives (Xiao, *et al.*, 2022), decreases mental wellbeing, and increases negative emotions (Lacaille *et al.*, 2018).

In relation to SEC and individuals' wellbeing, mindfulness practice encourages individuals to participate in daily activities with positive emotions. Moreover, mindfulness practice reduces stress, anxiety, and depression while increasing one's ability to empathize with others' pain and suffering. In this way, mindfulness motivates individuals towards a positive daily life and strengthens emotions (Ludwig & Kabat-Zinn, 2008). Specifically, mindfulness encourages nonjudgmental and purposeful attention at the present moment. Thus, mindfulness is a mental therapeutic technique rather than a set of skills (Rosenbaum & Bohart, 2021) that includes principles for positive mental practices (Bodhi, 2011). Kabat-Zinn used an operational definition of mindfulness, calling it "paying attention, in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally" (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p.4). From a secular perspective, this definition is widely used by researchers in the study of mindfulness and mental wellbeing (Rosenbaum & Bohart, 2021). In Western clinical psychology, mindfulness is known as mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) or cognitive therapy (Kabat-Zinn, 2003).

Association between SEC and Happiness with Mindfulness and SME

Happiness is a form of subjective wellbeing achieved through the combination of human experiences, social support, and satisfaction (Diener *et al.*, 1999; Stewart & Suldo, 2011). Researchers define different types of happiness. Hedonic happiness focuses on maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain while the eudaimonic perspective focuses on the result of self-actualization to fulfill personal desire (Haybron, 2003; Haybron, 2013; Maslow, 1968; Norrish *et al.*, 2008). Eudaimonic happiness, as explained by Ryff and Keys (1995), pertains to the holistic standpoint of happiness to measure the six aspects of human actualization: personal growth, the purpose of life, environmental mastery, positive relationship, autonomy, and self-acceptance. Theories of happiness discussed by Haybron include three elements: hedonism, life satisfaction, and affective wellbeing (Haybron, 2003). Similarly, Seligman (2002) mentioned three routes to happiness that include pleasure in life (hedonism), engaged life (flow of experience), and meaningful life (eudaimonia) (Tandler *et al.*, 2020). There is another perspective that focuses on selflessness, self-awareness, and emotional regulation to achieve desired goals through inner calm and satisfaction, also known as *Sukha* or authentic-durable happiness in Buddhist psychology (Ricard, 2014).

Considering happiness theories, SEC is positively correlated with happiness (Chernyshenko *et al.*, 2018), and mindfulness can strengthen the relationship between SEC and happiness (Bajaj *et al.*, 2019). In this regard, there are two major psychological

perspectives conceptualized in the theory of happiness. The first is associated with wellbeing or emotional satisfaction which is connected with subjective phenomenon, achievement, and pleasure. The second perspective deals with positive emotions in daily life activities (emotionally mindful) and is also known as authentic happiness (Christopher & Hickinbottom, 2008; Loureiro, *et al.*, 2019; Ricard, 2011).

The central ideas for SEC and mindfulness concepts have similarities. Mindfulness is complimentary to SEC as it promotes emotions, social values, human compassion, and empathy (Baer *et al.*, 2006). The major difference between these two approaches relates to the level of awareness and acceptance. For instance, SEC is acquired from the outside environment to the memory (internal) process, whereas mindfulness focuses on the nonjudgmental inner mental process before any action, which is known as from inner to outside practice (de Carvalho *et al.*, 2017). The combination of both of these approaches helps increase durable happiness (Feuerborn & Gueldner, 2019).

While there can be several factors that influence human happiness and wellbeing, the use of social media platforms is one factor that may affect happiness. Individuals tend to use various social media platforms for hedonic happiness (Doğan, 2016; Graciyal & Viswam, 2021). When they have positive emotions having used social media platforms, it is possible for them to be happy (Edelglass, 2017). However, excessive use of social media, such as social media addiction, has a negative relationship with internalizing problems (Tsitsika *et al.*, 2014) and happiness (Baltaci, 2019; Brooks, 2015; Orben & Przybylski, 2019).

A crucial question can be asked regarding whether happiness can be attained in an authentic durable way. Happiness depends on one's cultural perception (i.e., collectivistic vs. individualist culture, cultural beliefs, values, etc.) and emotional state (Ford *et al.*, 2015; Uchida & Oishi, 2016). Myers and Diener (1995) stated that happiness is a subjective phenomenon that can be analyzed in the context of each individual. The variance depends on the way people view personal achievement, self-concept, self-esteem, and goals (Uchida & Oishi, 2016). For instance, in the individualist culture, factors such as relational mobility, where one can accommodate to different social networks and attain individual values, which is connected with their self-esteem lead to their happiness and satisfaction (Oishi & Gilbert, 2016). In the collectivist culture, happiness is pursued in a more relatively socially engaged way in terms of spending time with family and friends, connectedness, and interpersonal harmony (Ford *et al.*, 2015). Based on the Eastern Buddhist psychological perspective, emotional regulation and suffering are expected, and happiness is typically out of reach for many (Ekman *et al.*, 2005; Ricard, 2006). Much like happiness, inner peace through daily life helps in flourishing emotional regulation, which in turn enhances happiness (Christopher & Hickinbottom, 2008; Ricard, 2014; Thompson, 2017).

Current Research

The overall purpose of this research was to examine the relationship between SEC and happiness with the moderating and mediating role of mindfulness and SME. The specific objectives of the study were to (i) analyze the relationship between SEC and happiness among emerging adults, (ii) determine the relationship between SEC and happiness with the moderating and mediating role of mindfulness among emerging adults, and (iii) determine the relationship between SEC and happiness with the moderating and mediating role of SME among emerging adults.

Research Questions

RQ1. Is there an association between emerging adults' SEC and happiness?

RQ2. Does mindfulness moderate and mediate the relationship between emerging adults' SEC and happiness?

RQ3. Does SME (time spent using social media) moderate and mediate the relationship between emerging adults' SEC and happiness?

Study Method

Data Collection Procedure and Participants

This research was conducted at a university in mid-west Nepal. The selection of participants in each study was based on the nonprobability convenience sampling procedure. Undergraduate students (also called bachelor level in Nepal). For Study, the major selection criteria for the participants included: acquaintance with the Buddhist culture and practice, being 18 years of age or older, and being proficient in the English language. The study used the Qualtrics survey for data collection. The participation was voluntary and the participants in study was told they could choose not to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without negative implications. Before inviting participants, this study received approval from the institutional review boards (IRB). Survey completion through a Qualtrics survey link took between 10-15 minutes. For the data collection process, all professors and instructors were sent a request letter and flyer to share with students that invited students to participate in the study and provided a link to an informed consent and questionnaire. The participants who did not complete the survey were excluded from the study.

After cleaning the data (see detail in Table 1), the study included 70 participants aged 18 years and over ($M = 25.0$ years, $SD = 6.3$) with approximately 43% of participants being women ($n = 30$). Among the 70 participants, 51 participants completed the survey in 2022 (June to December 2022) and 19 participants in 2023 (January to April 2023).

Similarly, the study included 90% Asian-Nepalese emerging adults with 54.3% men and 42.9% women and the other 10% answered Other/Prefer not to answer for their Race/Ethnicity. Additionally, 68.6% of the participants were single, 25.7% were married and 5.7% were dating/not married. More details about the study sample are presented in Table 1. The power analysis conducted using G*Power 3.1 and a post hoc analysis for multiple regression (Faul *et al.*, 2007) achieved a power of .86 for 70 participants with an alpha of (α) = .01 and an effect size (f^2) = .27.

Measures

Demographic Variables

Demographic information was based on self-report questions related to students' age, gender, ethnicity, and marital status. These demographic data served as control variables in exploring the participants' relationship to the research variables of SEC and happiness. We used the control variables in our analysis in the first step of the model to calculate the *R*-square change at each step of the analysis after including the predictor variable (i.e., SEC in Step 2). However, the control variables were not the interest for our research questions for the studies.

Social Emotional Competence Questionnaire (SECQ)

SEC was measured using SECQ, a 25-item scale developed by Zhou and Ee (2012). The SECQ scale was employed because of its simplicity and was tested in various languages and settings (Ahmed *et al.*, 2020). The SECQ consists five comprehensive domains (5 items per domain): self-awareness (e.g., *I know what I am thinking and doing*), self-management or temperament (e.g., *I can stay calm in stressful situations*), social awareness (e.g., *I recognize how people feel by looking at their facial expressions*), relationship management (e.g., *I will always apologize when I hurt someone unintentionally*), and responsible decision-making domains (e.g., *When making decisions, I consider the consequences of my actions*). All items were rated on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all true of me*; 6 = *always true for me*). The overall reliability alpha (α) was .91 for all 25 scales.

Social Media Engagement (SME)

SME was assessed through participants' self-reports regarding the average time spent on social media per day. Participants indicated SME by answering the following question: *How many hours and minutes on average per day do you spend on social media (such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn, YouTube, Snapchat, Reddit, WhatsApp, Pinterest, Viber, etc.)?* [Responses: 1 = *less than 60 minutes (less than 1 hour)* to 6 = *more than 301 minutes (above 5 hours)*].

The Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory (FMI)

The FMI (Walach *et al.*, 2006) was used as a measure of participants' self-reported level of mindfulness. The instrument included 14 items that were rated on a 4-point scale. Example items are "I am open to the experience of the present moment" (1 = *never*, 2 = *occasionally*, 3 = *fairly often*, and 4 = *almost always*). Ratings were summed for a total FMI score. The sum of the scores measured total mindfulness, with high scores indicating greater mindfulness. The reliability alpha (α) for the scale was 0.85. For this study, negative items were reverse coded, and all reported mindfulness scores were computed after checking internal consistency reliability.

Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS)

The SHS (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999) was used to measure the participants' self-reported levels of happiness. Participants responded to four questions using a 7-point Likert scale. The first two items asked respondent(s) their feelings about their happiness rating and compared it with their peers. Similarly, the responses on items three and four offered brief descriptions of happy and unhappy individuals that reflected which character participants would identify as describing themselves. For example, Item 1 evaluated the degree to which individuals thought they were happy: In general, I consider myself: 1 = *not a very happy person* to 7 = *a very happy person*. Item 2 examined how a person felt happy compared to others: Compared to most of my peers, I consider myself: 1 = *less happy* to 7 = *more happy*. The reliability alpha (α) for the scale was .62.

Data Analysis Process

In the analysis process, the data was inspected, cleaned, and coded in the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) software and Excel (Pallant, 2020) for the processing of raw data to minimize errors. Missing data analysis was imputed through the expectation maximization (EM) method in SPSS 29.0 software. In this study, the missing data set was found to be completely random (Little's MCAR). As a result, it was not statistically significant; $\chi^2(467) = 445.70$, $p = .754$ in the sample. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, hierarchical regression analyses were used to examine the relationship between the predictor variable SEC, and happiness. For RQ 2 and 3, independent variables were mean centered to minimize multicollinearity (Aiken & West, 1991), and the interaction variables were created. In the moderation analysis and plotting the interaction from the result, the guidelines by PROCESS Macro, Model 1 (Hayes, 2017) SPSS version 4.2 was used. Similarly, mediation analysis also applied the guidelines by PROCESS Macro, Model 4, SPSS version 4.2 (Hayes, 2017).

Result

This section of the study analyzed the major four variables (SEC, happiness, mindfulness, and SME) in order to respond to three research questions. In this regard, the study conducted the analysis of descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, hierarchical regression analysis, and moderation analysis to find out the association between the study variables. Descriptive results are presented in Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for the Study (N = 70)

Study variable		<i>n</i>	%
Gender	Men	38	54.3
	Women	30	42.9
	Non-binary/Third gender	0	0.0
	Other/Prefer not to answer	2	2.9
Race/Ethnicity			
	Black/African American	0	0
	Asian	63	90.0
	Native American	0	0
	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0	0
	Latino/Hispanic	0	0
	Non-Hispanic White	7	10.0
Relationship Status			
	Single	48	68.6
	Married	18	25.7
	Divorced	0	0.0
	Dating/not married	4	5.7
	Cohabiting/not married	0	0.0
Age (Years)		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
		25.00	6.33

Note: Students reported quantitative information age, SME (social media engagement) are presented as the means with standard deviation. Categorical information is presented as the count with percentages. The information related to race/ethnicity for Study 1 was based on the Asian population, thus there was no information for other groups.

Preliminary data screening showed that variance inflation factor (VIF) were less than 2 and tolerance values were close to 1 indicating the data was not affected by multicollinearity. Similarly, Table 2 displayed that the data normality of this study was at an acceptable range, below 10.0 for Kurtosis and 3.0 for skewness (Kline, 2011). The correlation analysis of the variables presented in Table 2 revealed that mindfulness was positively correlated with happiness. However, SEC was not correlated with happiness. Also, mindfulness and SEC were correlated. The moderate degree of negative correlation of the predictor variable SME with happiness indicated that more time spent on social media was negatively associated with emerging adults' happiness.

Table 2: Bivariate Correlations of Study Variables for Study 1 (N=70)

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Happiness	-			
2. SME (Time Spent)	-.35**	-		
3. SEC	.21	-.12	-	
4. Mindfulness	.37**	-.27*	.50**	-
M	16.55	2.47	107.94	44.10
SD	3.12	1.39	18.66	7.42
Skewness	-.81	.76	-.37	-.62
Kurtosis	3.82	.05	.70	.20

Note: SME = social media engagement (time spent in social media), SEC = socioemotional competencies. ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Hierarchical Regression Analysis between SEC and Happiness

Hierarchical multiple regression analysis were conducted to find an association between SEC and happiness with respect to control variables including age, gender, and relationship. The overall model predicted approximately 14% of the total variance in happiness with statistically significant results, $R^2 = .14$, $F(4, 65) = 2.61$, $p = .044$. Table 3 indicated that the variables added at Step 1 of the hierarchical regression (i.e., age, gender, and marital status) did not explain a statistically significant amount of the variance, $R^2 = .08$, $F(3, 66) = 1.99$, $p = .125$. After entering predictor variable SEC in Step 2, it significantly predicted happiness with approximately 6% of additional variance accounting towards criterion variable happiness, $\Delta R^2 = .06$, $F(1, 65) = 4.18$, $p = .045$. In addition, demographic variables revealed that there was no significant difference found with happiness. When SEC variable was entered in Step 2, the result indicated that that women ($b = 1.69$, $p = .04$) and SEC ($b = .04$, $p = .05$) were associated with an individual's happiness.

Table 3: Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Between SEC and Demographic Variables with Happiness (N=70)

Variables	b	β	t	R	R ²	ΔR^2
Step 1				.29	.08	.08
Age	.13	.26	1.79			
Gender (1= Women, 0 = Men)	1.52	.24	1.87			
Relationship (1=Single, 0 = Married)	1.62	.24	1.80			
Step 2				.37	.14	.06
Age	.13	.27	1.89			
Gender (1= Women, 0 = Men)	1.69	.27	2.11*			
Relationship (1=Single, 0 = Married)	1.71	.26	1.93			
SEC	.04	.24	2.05*			

Note: SME = Social media engagement (time spent in social media), SEC = socioemotional competencies, b = unstandardized coefficient, β = standardized coefficient, R = variance, R^2 = square variance, ΔR^2 = incremental portion of variance. * $p < .05$.

The overall hierarchical regression analysis result on Hypothesis 1 revealed a significant positive association between SEC and happiness. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was supported.

Moderating and Mediating Roles of Mindfulness on SEC and Happiness

Hierarchical multiple regression analysis were conducted to find an association between SEC and happiness with respect to moderating role of mindfulness. The overall model was statistically significant, $R^2 = .14$, $F(3, 66) = 3.61$, $p < .05$. In Step 1, SEC and mindfulness accounted for 14% of the variance in happiness; $R^2 = .14$, $F(2, 67) = 5.35$, $p < .01$. In Step 2, the interaction term between mindfulness and SEC contributed to less than one percent of the additional variance in happiness; $\Delta R^2 = .00$, $F(1, 66) = .237$, $p = .628$, and interaction effect was not statistically significant.

Table 4: Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Between SEC and Happiness with Moderating Variable Mindfulness and SME (N = 70)

<i>Moderating effect of mindfulness on SEC and happiness</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>β</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R²</i>	<i>ΔR^2</i>
Step 1				.37	.14	.14
SEC	.01	.03	.25			
Mindfulness	.14	.35	2.71**			
Step 2				.38	.14	.00
SEC	.01	.3	.23			

<i>Moderating effect of mindfulness on SEC and happiness</i>						
	<i>b</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	ΔR^2
Mindfulness	.14	.33	2.38*			
SEC x Mindfulness	.00	-.06	-.49			
<i>Moderating effect of SME on SEC and Happiness</i>						
	<i>b</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	ΔR^2
Step 1				.39	.15	.15
SEC	.03	.17	1.5			
SME	-.74	-.33	-2.90**			
Step 2				.48	.23	.08
SEC	.02	.13	1.16			
SME	-.60	-.27	-2.39*			
SEC x SME	.03	.30	2.67**			

Note: SEC = socioemotional competencies; SME = social media engagement; SEC x Mindfulness = product of SEC and mindfulness; SEC x SME = product of SEC and SME; *b* = unstandardized coefficient; β = standardized coefficient; *R* = variance; *R*² = square variance; ΔR^2 = incremental portion of variance.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

The Table 4 was indicated that while SEC and mindfulness were entered into the model, the role of SEC was not statistically significant, $b = .01$, $t(69) = .23$, $p = .820$; however, mindfulness had a significant association with happiness in both steps ($b = .15$, $t(69) = 2.71$, $p < .01$ and $b = .14$, $t(69) = 2.38$, $p < .05$ in Step 1 and Step 2 respectively). The moderation analysis was based on PROCESS Macro, Model 1 (Hayes, 2017) SPSS version 4.2, which did not find an interaction effect between mindfulness (such as mean value and ± 1 standard deviation) and SEC to predict happiness; $b = -.001$, $t = -.49$, $p = .628$. That means Hypothesis 2 was not supported by moderation analysis.

A mediation analysis was run using PROCESS Macro, model 4 (Hayes, 2017) in SPSS version 4.2 (see Figure 1). The mediating effect was measured using non-parametric bootstrapping which shows a statistically significant result indicating that a null of 0 falls between the lower and upper bound of the 95% confidence interval ($b = .02$, 95% CI = .002, .040). The direct effect of SEC on mindfulness (i.e., $R^2 = .24$, $b = .16$, $t(68) = 4.63$, $p < .001$) and mindfulness to happiness (i.e., $b = .14$, $t(68) = 2.49$, $p < .05$) was also statistically significant. Therefore, mediation analysis was supported to Hypothesis 2, which was also supported by the correlation matrix in Table 2, with a statistically significant correlation between mindfulness and SEC ($r = .50$, $p < .01$) as well as mindfulness and happiness ($r = .37$, $p < .01$). However, the direct effect of SEC on happiness was not statistically significant ($b = .01$, $t(68) = .75$, $p = .45$).

Moderating and Mediating Roles of SME on SEC and Happiness

The association between SEC and happiness with moderating role of SME were examined through hierarchical multiple regression analysis. The result indicated that the overall model was statistically significant, $R^2 = .23$, $F(3, 66) = 6.68$, $p < .001$. In Step 1, variables SEC and SME accounted for 15% of the variance in happiness; $R^2 = .15$, $F(2, 67) = 5.91$, $p < .01$. Step 2 of the analysis included the interaction variable (SEC x SME) which accounted for an additional 8.3% of variance in happiness; $\Delta R^2 = .08$, $F(1, 66) = 7.13$, $p < .01$. Also, the interaction between SME and SEC was statistically significant, $b = .03$, $t(69) = 2.87$, $p < .01$.

The moderation analysis was based on both PROCESS Macro (Hayes, 2017) SPSS version 4.2, that reflected on the statistically significant interaction effect of the SME variable; $b = .03$, $t(69) = 2.87$, $p < .01$. The standard deviation above mean (+1 *SD*) was $b = .06$, $t(69) = 3.24$, $p < .01$, indicated that, the moderating role of high SME with high SEC revealed a significant association with emerging adults' happiness. Moderation analysis indicated that direct path coefficient from SME to happiness was associated with negatively significant ($b = -.72$, $t(69) = -2.82$, $p < .01$), however, other coefficient path were not significantly associated with happiness. Therefore, mediating effect was not measured a statistically significant result.

Discussion

The correlation analysis results of Study 1 showed that SEC was not significantly correlated with happiness. In contrast, the results of the hierarchical analysis demonstrated a positive association between SEC and happiness. It was also noted that demographic variables such as age and relationship status were not significantly associated with happiness whereas gender was associated with happiness. The existing research indicates that the environment, culture (Ford *et al.*, 2015; Mahoney *et al.*, 2021; Myers & Diener, 1995; Uchida & Oishi, 2016), and geographical region (Oishi & Gilbert, 2016) correlate with individuals' happiness. Past studies have also found that happiness depends on individuals' positive emotions, which helps one establish better social relationships and influences one's mental willingness and life satisfaction skills (Christopher & Hickinbottom, 2008; Loureiro, *et al.*, 2019; Stewart & Suldo, 2011). In this connection, happiness is seen as a subjective phenomenon that depends on altruistic interventions and emotional wellbeing (Lu *et al.*, 2021). The result of the study also supports Chernyshenko *et al.*, (2018) regarding the positive association between SEC and mental wellbeing.

The result of the mediation and correlation analysis of RQ2 in our study confirmed that mindfulness practices were positively correlated with SEC and happiness, meaning that mindfulness could play a positive role in developing the SEC skills that are essential

for improving individuals' happiness (see Table 2 and Figure 1). This could be partly due to the participants of the study being Nepalese Buddhist mindfulness practitioners. The present study extends the result from a study regarding the positive role of mindfulness in SEC for happiness (Alahari, 2017). This supports research indicating that mental training known as mindful meditation is associated with satisfaction, enjoyment, self-fulfillment, and happiness (Bodhi, 2011). The results of the current study was supported by past studies where the interconnection between mindfulness and SEC (Alahari, 2017; Feurborn & Gueldner, 2019) as well as developing self-inquiry and self-observation skills through mindful actions (Kabat-Zin, 1994) can enhance happiness. This could be partly due to the fact that mindfulness practices can help individuals' emotional wellbeing (Bajaj *et al.*, 2019). In this regard, this study views mindfulness as a state of mind that can help bring awareness and attention to regulate emotional experiences that support one's happiness. In par with Wong and Law (2002), the association between mindfulness and SEC had a positive correlation with happiness, supporting the results of this study.

However, the moderating role of mindfulness, also known as the interaction effect, indicated that mindfulness did not moderate the relationship between SEC and happiness. That means the relationship between SEC and happiness was not strengthened by mindfulness practice. The result suggests that while mindfulness and SEC both are positively associated with happiness, the interaction effect between mindfulness and SEC did not make any difference in happiness.

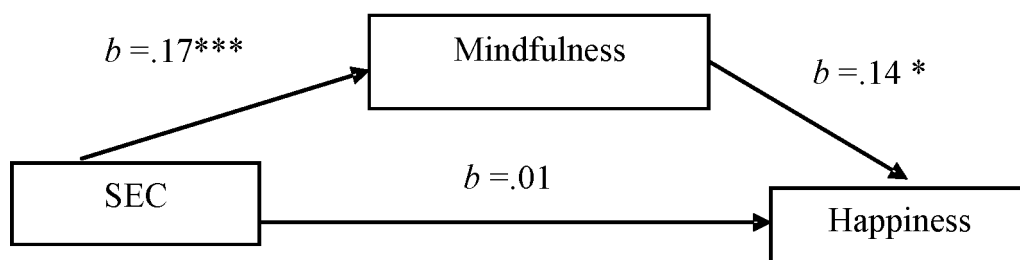


Figure 1: Mediating Effect of Mindfulness on SEC and Happiness

Note: The mediating effect of mindfulness on SEC (socioemotional competencies) and happiness *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

The result of SME and SEC relationship with happiness provides an additional understanding of how these variables are related. The hierarchical regression and correlation analysis result of our study found that SME was negatively and statistically significant with happiness (see Table 2 and Table 4). Based on the study's result, better SEC skills were associated with awareness and paying attention to one's actions when

spending more time on social media, which is connected with happiness. This result is consistent with past studies that highlighted the role of SEC in increasing emerging adults' self-esteem (Apaolaza *et al.*, 2019) and reducing negative thoughts, actions, and emotions (Rawlett *et al.*, 2019). Some research studies have found that the active use of social media (i.e., making a post) was related to creativity (Acar *et al.*, 2021), and the use of multiple social media with high frequencies strengthened relationship ties (Haythornthwaite, 2005), helping in life satisfaction, psychological wellbeing, and happiness (Doğan, 2016).

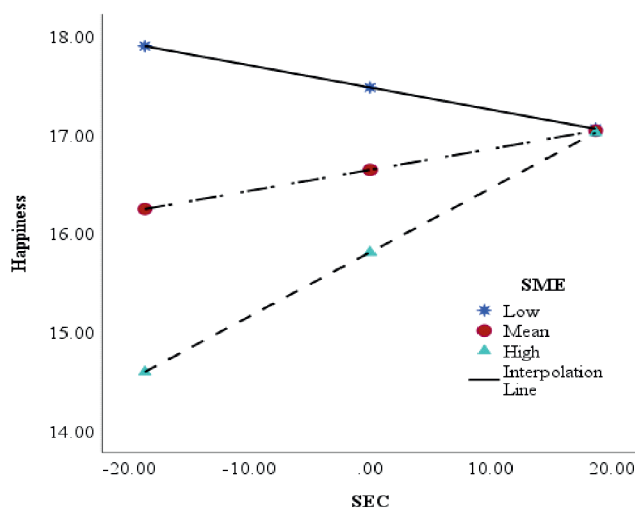


Figure 2: Interaction Effect of SME on SEC and Happiness in Study 1 (N = 70)

Note: Interaction effect of SME (social media engagement) on SEC (socioemotional competencies) and happiness.

Additionally, the interaction effect was statistically significant, indicating that the relationship between high SEC with high SME was associated with happiness (see Figure 2). Our study's result was supported by past research showing that a lower level of SEC could lead to media addiction and depression (Xio *et al.*, 2022). In contrast to the negative role of SME in psychological wellbeing and happiness, our study result is in line with Tibber and Silver's (2020) perspective where an individual becomes more mindful, purposeful, and aware due to their positive SEC, which has a positive association with happiness. For instance, the result of the interaction effect between high SEC and high SME showed that even though more time was spent on social media, having a higher level of SEC is related to higher happiness (see Figure 2). This was also similar to mediation analysis result that found that the high media engagement negatively associated with lower happiness among emerging adults. This was also similar to past

studies that found that the positive and negative impact on emerging adults' happiness varies depending on the individuals' level of motivation and utilization of time on social media (Valkenburg & Peter, 2010; Weinstein, 2018). The study's result also suggested that the strength of the relationship between SME and happiness depends on the level of SEC in terms of having a positive motivation towards engagement in social media.

Conclusion, Implications and Limitations of the Study

The study result found that mindfulness and SEC are important contributing factors to individuals' happiness. The reason behind this could be that mindfulness and SEC are interconnected constructs reliant on self-awareness, self-management, and relationship management with compassion, empathy, and altruism (Bluth & Eisenlohr-Moul, 2017; Christopher & Hickinbottom, 2008; Loureiro, *et al.*, 2019). Researchers have found that SEC interventions play a supportive role in increasing positive thoughts, feelings, emotions, and behaviors toward human wellbeing (Christopher & Hickinbottom, 2008; Koydemir *et al.*, 2020; Jazaieri, 2013). Hence, the result of the current study supported the empirical evidence regarding the association between mindfulness and SEC that provide additional evidence for further development of comprehensive SEC framework with considering elements of mindfulness practices. Similarly, the study suggests that a higher level of SEC is connected with happiness in the present social media dominated society. The association between SME and SEC showed the importance of SEC. However, this study was based on a limited sample and homogeneous population which suggests the need for future studies to gather a wide range of data from diverse cultures and geographical locations.

There was some limitation to this study. The study adopted a survey approach for collecting the participants' experiences regarding SME, SEC, mindfulness, and happiness. Although this approach has been widely used in gathering information, the information gathered from this method is limited to personal feelings and opinions expressed through questionnaires in the small sample size. This study can be applied in the field of SEC and happiness as well as mindfulness and SME. However, our findings cannot be interpreted for any causal inferences. To test the causal link among the associated variables, future research should adopt experimental or specific designs such as regression discontinuity. Another limitation was the limited reliability alpha in the subjective happiness tool. There were certain factors that might potentially have reduced the reliability alpha, such as a low number of items, the homogenous participant group, and participants' English language proficiency (Ary *et al.*, 2018). For instance, since the participants of the study was non-native speakers of the English language, they might have experienced difficulties in understanding reverse item statements.

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