

# **Teacher's mindfulness - meditation practice, personality trait, and perceived influence on state, in the context of the Estonian religious freedom**

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## Background and objectives

Application of mindfulness theory, created within post-positivist tradition, into the education context, and connecting it to a social constructivist methodology is a challenge. The goal of the survey was to study what kind of meditation exercises and how often the Estonian teachers practice, how they perceive the positive and negative impacts of their meditation practice on their state, and to explore their trait mindfulness, religion and beliefs.

## Methods

The study was carried out using concurrent mixed method approach and consisted of a pilot with purposeful sample of 27 teachers, and cross-sectional main study with 145 nursery school teachers and 225 secondary school teachers around Estonia. SPSS descriptive statistics, reliability and Anova analysis, and NVivo content analysis were used for analyzing the data.

## Results

The results indicated that half of the studied Estonian teachers did not practice any meditation exercises, and in the group of practitioners there were more of those who practiced meditation exercises irregularly or sometimes. The teachers who practiced any meditation exercises had noticed sometimes several positive and seldom negative impacts on their state. The teachers, who practiced meditation exercises regularly, did not have higher (trait) mindfulness, than those who did not practice. The religious beliefs of teachers varied a lot, while the biggest group was secular.

## Discussion and conclusion

The current study enabled us to show that studying within-subjects processes with between-subjects method like a latent variable test, created based on researchers understanding of mindfulness, is not reasonable. The latent variable analyses may be useful at the level of the individual (Borsboom, Mellenbergh, & Heerden, 2003) in the context of mindfulness training. We suggest looking mindfulness as an internalization process from the structural-systemic thought – as a culturally created higher psychological process incorporated of (cultural) signs in the structure of mind (Toomela, 2016).