

MINDFULNESS
AS MEDIATOR OF THE EFFECTS OF LEARNED HELPLESSNESS
AND SELF-HANDICAPPING ON
FLOURISHING

Margarita Bakracheva

Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, Bulgaria

Index of contents

- Theoretical review
 - Research design
 - Results
 - Discussion



THEORETICAL REVIEW: LEARNED HELPLESSNESS

Learned helplessness is defined as passive behaviour and inability to learn when exposed to situations and events, perceived as stressful, uncontrollable and inevitable

- 1. motivational deficit - cessation of attempts to avoid the unwanted stimulus**
- 2. cognitive deficit - not learning from the experience of reaching a positive decision due to the inability to recognize that control is possible**
- 3. emotional deficit - emotions, preventing action**

In educational setting students with learned helplessness feel discouraged and prefer to give up and teachers can reduce and prevent learned helplessness



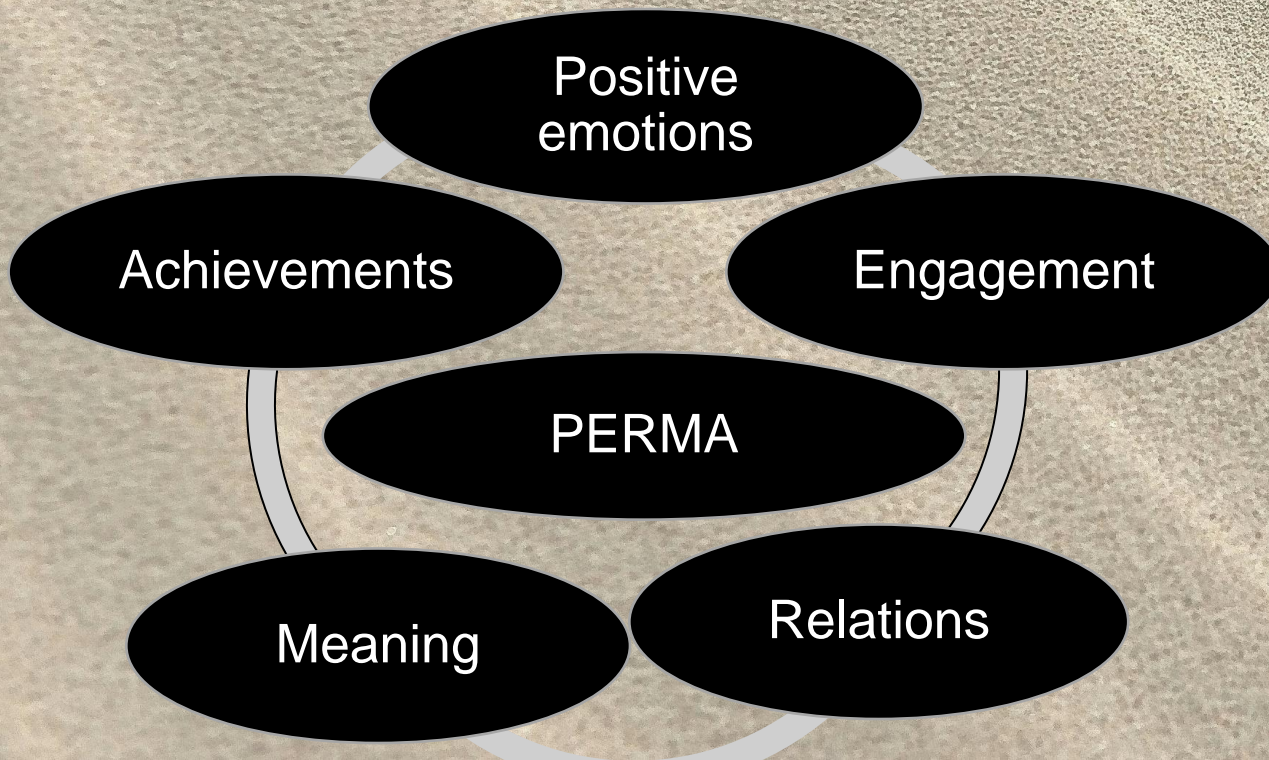
THEORETICAL REVIEW: SELF-HANDICAPPING

- **Self-handicapping is the process of actively defending self-esteem in the event of perceived potential danger**
- **Behavioural and verbal forms of self-handicapping**
- **Active behaviour that interferes performance or passive reaction - non-exertion or any effort**
- **Self-declared obstacles have a defensive function - to protect self-esteem, however in the long run has negative impact on well-being: self-handicapping is associated with depression, low self-esteem, strong orientation towards others, perfectionism, social anxiety, poor academic performance, and deteriorating relationships with others**
- **In respect to educational setting SH affects personal motivation and self-esteem and again the role of teachers is to help students identify the factors they have control over and reduce the tendency**



THEORETICAL REVIEW: FLOURISHING

- Flourishing is the optimal level of perceived well-being.
- Seligman's model for human flourishing is based on his idea of authentic happiness. Individuals are at their happiest (i.e. flourishing) when they are high on PERMA



- Flourishing is not fixed, but can be learnt and pursued and the most effective way is fostering at an early stage in the individuals' development
- Flourishing in education becomes important at the background of the negative tendencies of burnout, mobbing and stress among educators.
- Within the framework of positive psychology, the idea is promotion and learning how to flourish, which concerns both teachers and students.

THEORETICAL REVIEW: MINDFULNESS

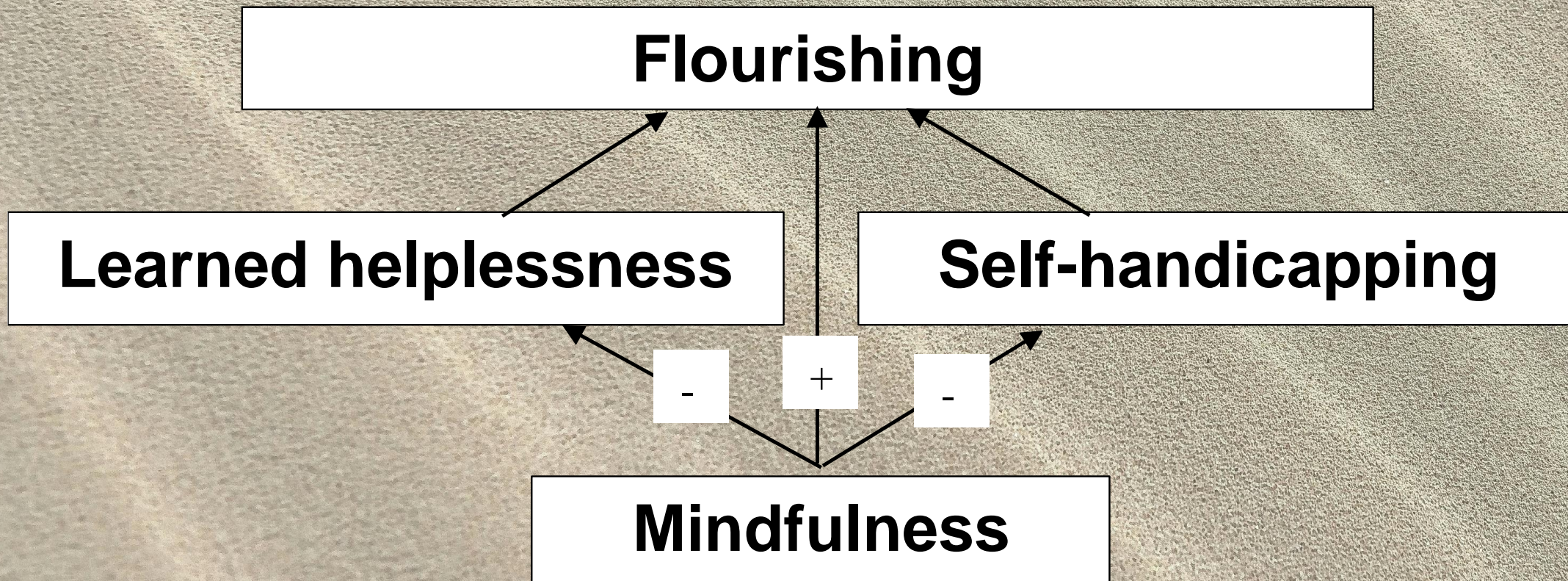
7/17

- **The broadest definition of mindfulness is active awareness at all times**
- **Other definitions are: active awareness of current reality, conscious directed control; cognitive process of creating new categories, openness to new information and awareness of the existence of more than one perspective**
- **The focus is on the present moment, the awareness of partial self-control and taking responsibility for one's own decisions and learning to tolerate anxiety**
- **In most definitions mindfulness is considered a combination of awareness and acceptance - without rumination -experience and search and freedom from conditioning**
- **This is everyday behaviour, but in order to become an attitude, it must be learned and mastered. During the last decade a lot of recommendations are given for practicing mindfulness in educational setting**



RESEARCH DESIGN

- The objective of this study is to trace the relations of learned helplessness and self-handicapping to flourishing and mindfulness.
- H1. Learned helplessness and self-handicapping as protective, ineffective coping strategies, will be related to lower flourishing and mindful mindset
- H2: Mindfulness will promote flourishing
- H3: Mindfulness can mediate the effects of learned helplessness and self-handicapping on flourishing



SAMPLE AND SCALES

- The convenient sample comprises 225 pre-service and in-service teachers.
- 13% men, 82% women and 5% indicated that they did not want to answer
- The age range of the participants is: 39% at the age of 20-25, 17% at the age of 25-35, 21% at the age of 35-45, 17% at the age of 45-55, and 6% over the age of 55.
- We have included 4 scales for the study, all having 5-point Likert response scale: 1) The Flourishing Scale with $\alpha = .839$; 2) Cognitive and Affective Mindfulness Scale – Revised (CAMS-R) with $\alpha = .579$; 3) Learned helplessness scale with $\alpha = .901$; and 4) Self-handicapping scale with $\alpha = .749$.

RESULTS

10/17

| | Min | Max | Mean | SD | Variance | Self-handicapping | Mindfulness | Flourishing |
|-----------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|-----------------|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Learned helplessness | 1.00 | 3.95 | 2.17 | .56 | .313 | .646 | -.470 | -.536 |
| Self-handicapping | 1.72 | 4.04 | 2.82 | .39 | .153 | | -.308 | -.345 |
| Mindfulness | 2.20 | 4.70 | 3.74 | .46 | .213 | | | .546 |
| Flourishing | 2.63 | 5.00 | 4.00 | .52 | .268 | | | |

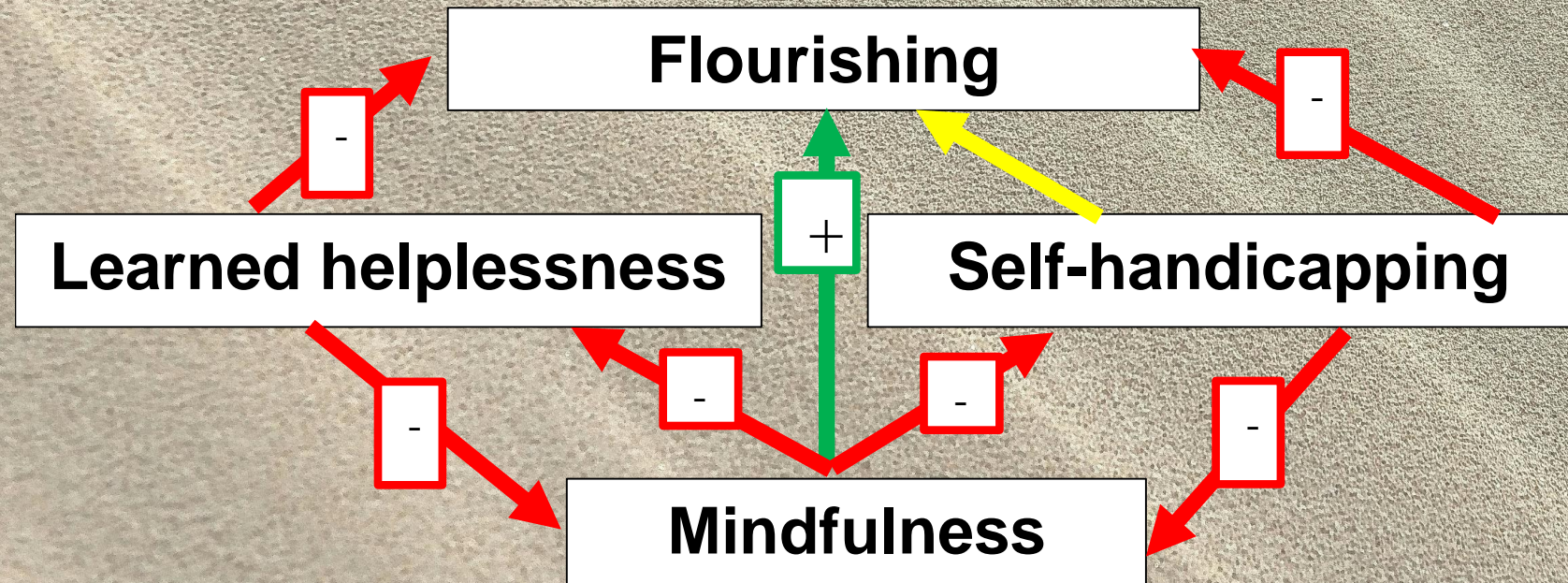
RESULTS

| Model | stand. Beta | t value | sig. | 95.0% CI for B | | Adjusted R Square | F value and sig. |
|----------------------|-------------|---------|------|----------------|-------|-------------------|------------------|
| | | | | LLCI | ULCI | | |
| Learned helplessness | | | | | | | |
| Step 1 | | | | | | | |
| (Constant) | | 31.582 | .000 | 4.351 | 5.536 | .292 | 49.177 p < .01 |
| learned helplessness | -.546 | -7.013 | .000 | -.620 | -.169 | | |
| Step 2 | | | | | | .472 | 53.199; p < .01 |
| (Constant) | | 2.716 | .008 | | | | |
| learned helplessness | -.093 | -1.158 | .250 | -.620 | -.169 | | |
| mindfulness | .228 | 3.189 | .002 | .389 | .741 | | |
| Self-handicapping | | | | | | | |
| Step 1 | | | | | | | |
| (Constant) | | 16.625 | .000 | 4.751 | 6.036 | .132 | 18.828; p < .01 |
| self-handicapping | -.374 | -4.339 | .000 | -.475 | -.061 | | |
| Step 2 | | | | | | .410 | 41.689; p <.01 |
| self-handicapping | -.203 | -2.566 | .012 | -.475 | -.061 | | |
| mindfulness | .503 | 6.364 | .000 | .389 | .741 | | |

DISCUSSION

12/17

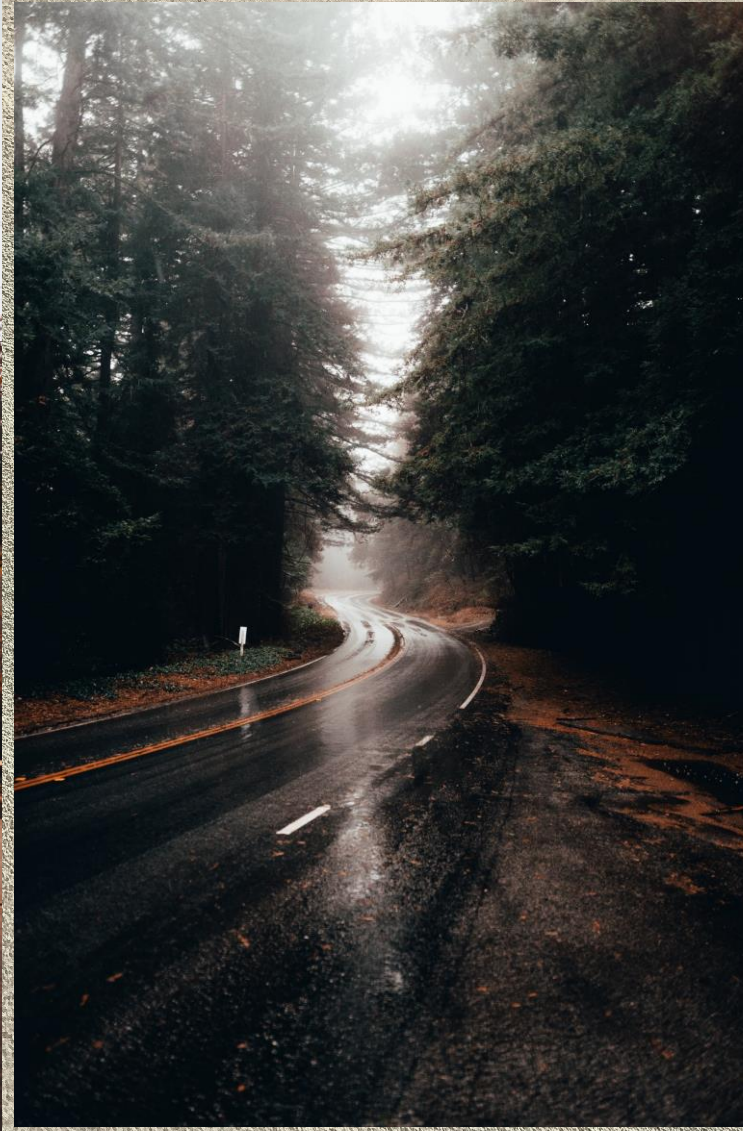
- All three hypotheses were confirmed:
- Learned helplessness and self-handicapping predict lower perceived flourishing and mindful mindset.
- Mindfulness on its hand promotes flourishing and has effect on learned helplessness and self-handicapping.
- The effect of learned helplessness on flourishing is fully mediated and of self-handicapping on flourishing – partially mediated by mindfulness.



DISCUSSION

- The perceived and generalized lack of control and anxiety about the unknown provoke learned helplessness and self-handicapping
- This gives grounds to make a possible assumption about the role of mindful mindset, leading to more adaptive coping and higher flourishing
- A wide range of interventions that can be implemented for fostering mindfulness as prevention of learned helplessness and self-handicapping and promoting flourishing. They are equally beneficial for students and teachers and promote personal proactive attitude, performance and well-being in long-term







must

shall

should

not
allowed

want



PLASTICITY



STABILITY

THANK YOU FOR THE ATTENTION!

