

A Contemporary Management Practice: Mindfulness in the Work Settings^a

Fatma YESILKUS¹ 

Onur Basar OZBOZKURT² 

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Author 1

Corresponding Author, PhD
Student, Toros University,
TURKEY.

E-mail: fbyesilkus@gmail.com

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-7749-9562

Author 2

Assoc. Prof. Dr.,
Tarsus University, TURKEY
E-mail:

onurozbozkurt@tarsus.edu.tr

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-2325-2433

Abstract

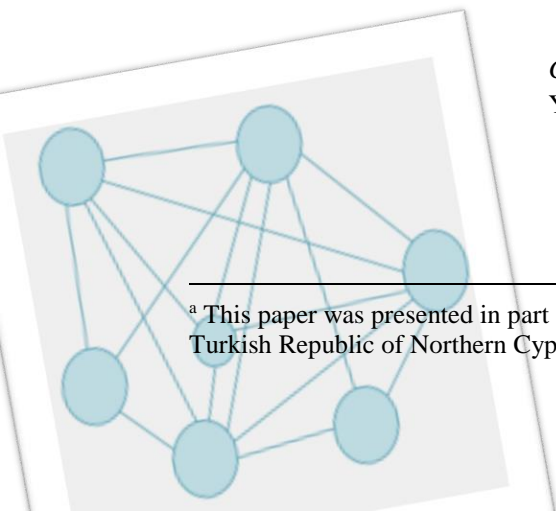
In recent years, the concept of mindfulness has become more salient in organizations that concern about the impact of the constant unpredictable change on the well-being and performance of employees. Mindfulness in organizations refers to the degree to which employees are mindful and aware in their workplace and is a practicable strategy to encourage employee performance and noteworthy organizational efficiency. It occurs when promoting awareness of vision, goals, and values of the organizations, integrating organization vision with the executive team, interacting regardfully and mindfully with internal and external customers, identifying the fundamental problems facing the organization, and creating an environment where employees interconnected each other and their voice is equally valued. In this respect, for organizations, mindfulness has a myriad of benefits that contain empathy and greater acceptance of colleagues, resiliency (response flexibility), improved working memory and task performance, increased self-determination, and more accurate affective forecasting (gut feelings). Therefore, the current study was carried out to understand the contributions of mindfulness to help both employees and managers for improving their core competencies in accordance with organizational efficiency and effectiveness and aimed at exploring the necessity of integrating mindfulness in the work settings as a contemporary management practice.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mindfulness, Awareness, Mindful Organizing, Contemporary Management.

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INTRODUCTION

Organizations cope with the pressure to adapt and perform to constant unpredictable change, employees' stress, and direct or indirect costs to the organizations. In this sense, mindfulness becomes more salient since it is a noticeable strategy to manage and reduce stress and has benefits such as attention, cognition, and wellbeing (Bowers, 2018: 5). In other words, an increasing number of organizations are turning towards the phenomenon of mindfulness which commonly involves more awareness meditation as a fundamental approach. It is a various set of objectives in terms of enhancing employee wellbeing and emotional intelligence (gut feelings), reducing stress, and increasing performance (Reb and Choi, 2014: 1-2).

Mindfulness is explained as a non-reactive, moment-to-moment, and non-judgmental consciousness situation. It includes consciously paying one's attention to the present time in a non-reactive method (Brooker et al., 2013: 123). Mindfulness has a positively impact on performance indirectly through increasing levels of work engagement and psychological wellbeing and it is also a key to reduce stress and behavioral problems of employees (Coo- Calcagni, 2020: 10-26). Additionally, it significantly improves self-compassion and develops deeper connections, empathy, and work satisfaction (Penque, 2019: 40).

From this point of view, the study aims to examine the potential effect of mindfulness on employees, assess its benefits, support organizations at all stages of the mindfulness, and roll out mindfulness in the work settings as a contemporary management practice. Also, the present study will pilot for future research to understand what the best methods may be to boost mindfulness, wellbeing, employee resilience, and reduce the stress in the work settings. In this sense, we focus primarily on the definition of mindfulness and its applications, reveal the benefits of mindfulness, and how to increase mindfulness in the work settings.

Mindfulness

The phenomenon of mindfulness has gained more attention especially in psychological studies (Arendt et al., 2019: 1) and is a fringe subject of scientific research for psychotherapy, a way of collective wellbeing, substantially adopted educational practices, and a guide to building more resilient employees (Van Dam et al., 2018: 36). Rooted in Buddhist philosophy, the term mindfulness (Glomb et al., 2011: 117; Drain, 2018: 1) is an English translation of the Pali word (Siegel et al., 2009: 2) derived from the term "*Sati*". *Sati* links the aspects of attention, remembering, and awareness that are conducted with acceptance, friendliness, non-judgment, and kindness to oneself and other people (Passmore, 2019: 105). These key elements are central to mindfulness as integrating them to distinguish between mindfulness and other related states (Drain, 2018: 2).

Mindfulness is supposed to have a myriad of effects on human behavior and functioning (Brown et al., 2007: 211) and refers to an inherent human capacity that consists of open-minded consciousness and enrollment of intrinsic and extrinsic experiences, present-oriented awareness, and pre-conceptual information processing (Kelemen et al., 2020: 1814-1815). It is also defined as a method that aims to an equal number of observations of reality in the present without a judgmental behavior and with full acceptance and openness (Vásquez-Dextre, 2016:

42). Regarding these definitions, Table 1 demonstrates a large number of studies have been conducted related to conceptualization about the mindfulness phenomenon.



Table 1. The Systematic Literature Review of Mindfulness Phenomenon

Year	Author/s	Title	Source	Definition
1989	Langer	Mindfulness	Addison Wesley Longman	"Mindfulness is a flexible state of mind in which actively engaged in the present, noticing new things and sensitive to context, with an open, non-judgmental orientation to experience."
1996	Trunnell	Mindfulness and People with Stomas	Journal of WOCN	"Mindfulness is defined as being fully awake and is characterized as being non-judging, having a beginner's mind, being trusting, non-striving, accepting, and letting go."
1997	Langer	The Power of Mindful Learning	Addison-Wesley	"Mindfulness is a psychological state in which individuals engage in active information processing while performing their current tasks such that they are actively analyzing, categorizing, and making distinctions in data."
2003	Brown and Ryan	The Benefits of Being Present: Mindfulness and Its Role in Psychological Wellbeing	Journal of Personality and Social Psychology	"Mindfulness is an attribute of consciousness long believed to promote wellbeing."
2003	Kabat-Zinn	Mindfulness-Based Interventions in Context: Past, Present, and Future	Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice	"...mindfulness is the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment."
2005	Krieger	Shared Mindfulness in Cockpit Crisis Situation	Journal of Business Communication	"...mindfulness is both riveted to attention by the novelty of a situation while simultaneously distracted by its immediateness, intensity, and pervasiveness."
2006	Argote	Introduction to Mindfulness	Organization Science	"...mindfulness is conceived as involving attentiveness and the ability to respond flexibly to contextual cues."
2010	Dane	Paying Attention to Mindfulness and Its Effects on Task Performance in the Workplace	Journal of Management	"...it as a state of consciousness in which attention is focused on present-moment phenomena occurring both externally and internally".
2011	Davis and Hayes	What are the Benefits of Mindfulness? A Practice Review of Psychotherapy-Related Research	Psychotherapy	"...mindfulness is defined as a moment-to-moment awareness of one's experience without judgment."
2015	Shapiro et al.	What is Mindfulness, and Why Should Organizations Care About It?	In Mindfulness in Organizations: Foundations, Research, and Applications	"Mindfulness is fundamentally a way of being; it is a way of inhabiting our bodies, our minds, and our moment-by-moment experience."
2016	Sutcliffe et al.	Mindfulness in Organizations: A Cross-Level Review	Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior	"...it is the observation that mindfulness as a particular state of consciousness—one in which an individual focuses attention on present-moment events."
2017	Rodrigues et al.	Mindfulness in Mood and Anxiety Disorders: A Review of the Literature.	Trends in Psychiatry and Psychotherapy	"Mindfulness can be described as a process of sustained attention and awareness toward present-moment sensations and experiences with a nonjudgmental stance."
2019	Arendt et al.	Mindfulness and Leadership: Communication as a Behavioral Correlate of Leader Mindfulness and Its Effect on Follower Satisfaction	Frontiers in Psychology	"...mindfulness means fully paying attention to what is happening in the present moment, both to internal (i.e., emotions and thoughts) and external stimuli with an open, non-judging attitude."
2020	Sanyal and Ring	Integrating Mindfulness into Leadership Development	Journal of Management Education	"Mindfulness can be understood as a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and non-judgmentally accepting feelings and thoughts."
2020	Behringer	Practical Uses of Mindfulness During Organizational Change	Master of Science in Organizational Dynamics Theses.	"...mindfulness is defined as being fully aware in the present moment..."

Source: Created by the authors



The Components of Mindfulness

Mindfulness is paying more attention to the purpose, present experience, and non-judgment behavior (Kabat-Zinn, 1994: 4) and symbolizes the three axioms of mindfulness such as “on purpose” or “intention”, attention, and attitude. In this respect, Figure 1 shows below the fundamental components of the mindfulness phenomenon.

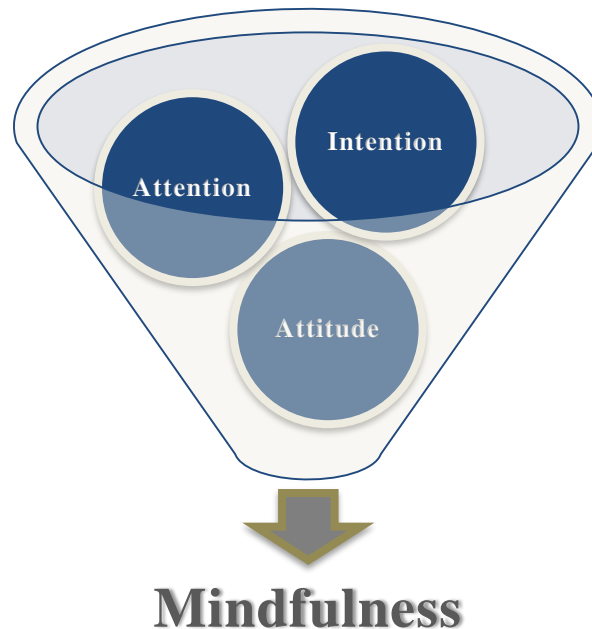


Figure 1. The Three Axioms of Mindfulness

As illustrated in Figure 1, intentions are adopted as dynamic and evolving, which permits them to transform and improve with extensive practices, insight, and awareness. The classification of intention as a core element of mindfulness is pivotal to comprehend the process as a whole and often addresses in the contemporary explanations. Besides, paying attention reflects to observe the acts of individuals' moment-to-moment and intrinsic and extrinsic experiences. Namely, it refers to eliminate all the methods of clarifying experience and assist to experience itself, as it presents itself in the here and now. Furthermore, it is vital to make the attitudinal quality of attention explicit and learn to attend to their own intrinsic and extrinsic experiences, without interpretation or evaluation, and practice acceptance (Shapiro et al, 2015: 3-5).

On the other hand, Dorjee (2010: 153-157) argues that mindfulness also consists of ethical discernment and wholesome emotions in addition to intention, attention, and attitude. Considerably, ethical discernment is an intercorrelated and inseparable component of evolvement and operation of mindfulness and refers to identify negative mental behaviors and patterns and alter them through the employment of other various mental faculties. Wholesome emotions are one of the fundamental factors in mindfulness and its application and a type of learning to relate to experiences in an open and accepting way.

Mindfulness in the Work Settings

Whilst mindfulness is linked to self-compassion in psychotherapy (Germer and Neff, 2019: 1), interest in mindfulness within work settings has increased exponentially over recent years (Vogus and Sutcliffe, 2012: 722; Hülshager et al., 2018: 261) and many organizations have begun to present a different type of mindfulness-based/infused training to their internal customers, namely employees. In this sense, mindfulness addresses critical issues that organizations and their employees face with multi-tasking, attention overload, and stress factors from complicated work systems and 24/7 connectivity (Reb et al., 2020: 3).

Although mindfulness is possible for individuals, it is also an integrated structure within and across the team members. It represents that multi-level concept, associated with benefits for the team members as well as for the organization as a whole, and employees may be trained relationally and socially in addition to contemplation and meditation in mindfulness strategy. When mindfulness is shared as a social practice in the organization and it permeates processes, routines, and work practices across the teams, then the organization transforms more resilient and operates more sustainably (mindfulnessinschools.org, Retrieved: 01.09.2020). Mindfulness is theorized in instrumental concepts to the degree that employees are concentrated more on improving individual performance and wellbeing through mindful thought and behavior and enhancing organizational success, performance, sustainability, and efficiency (Badham and King, 2019: 3).

Since an increasing number of organizations, today perform in a fast-paced business environment (Douglas, 2017: 5) and reacting to unpredictable constant change appears to be an essential norm. In this respect, mindfulness advances a phenomenon to the present that is more comprehensive and distinctive and it contributes the opportunity to “slow down” and manage the full range of experiences as they truly are (Marianetti and Passmore, 2010: 190). Indeed, it is attractive in moments of interior stillness that form opportunities to step out of this overwhelming flow, enhance and clarity of thought, resume the flow, recover the composure, and observe and pursue them with harmony (Passmore, 2009: 4).

Mindfulness in the work settings is concentrated more on a lucid apprehension of rising threats and on elements that interfere with such comprehension (Williams and Kabat-Zinn, 2011: 33; Gebauer, 2013: 205). Organizations that faced with the potential contingencies may spend (1) more time identifying the lack of the system, (2) more time standing the urge to clarify thinking about the world, (3) more time observing procedures and their implications, (4) more time enhancing resilience to operate unpredicted situations, and (5) more time determining local expertise and achieving an environment of deference to those experts (Weick and Sutcliffe, 2006: 515-516).

On the other hand, due to increasing and changing demands and challenges in the business environment, high-stress levels of employees may end up with decreased creativity, effectiveness, and efficiency in both employees and work settings' morale. Combined, these factors may cause decreased productivity and increased employee burnout and absenteeism (www.mindfulnessinstitute.ca, Retrieved: 30.08.2020). In this frame, mindfulness serves the

eventual to reduce work stress between employees who struggle with difficult and challenging work conditions. More mindful employees take part in the present moment, which separates them from the future and focuses their attention on the problems and issues at hand. Therefore, it maintains a clearly different perspective on personal resources for inclusion job resources and demands (Grover et al., 2017: 7-9). In other words, employees learn to step back from stressful situations rather than engaging in habitual negative thoughts and worrying behavior that escalate the stressful situation and develop their inner resources to take better care of themselves (Kent and McGuire, 2017: 16). Also, they appraise demands as less threatening and decrease work-related strain (Hansen, 2016: 9).

From this point of view, employees who practice mindfulness may have more extrinsic awareness, modest and realistic in the work settings; be more accepting and selfless of their work situation; have more optimistic interpersonal relations at work; be less worried about wealth and material acquisition; enjoy their work more and be more likely to derive meaning in life from more sources than just work; have a more intrinsic and fair evaluation; be better able to handle and stay calm in tough situations; be more likely to practice work conditions as challenges than threats, and be more adaptive in the workplace (Hunter and McCormick, 2008: 4). Considerably, mindful employees have a better understanding of the goals related to the organization; make that him/her to gain some interest, and keen involvement in the work setting in addition to aware them of the context and perspective of actions (Langer and Moldoveanu, 2000: 2).

Cultivating Mindfulness in the Work Settings

Mindfulness interrogates the stability, predictability, and rationality of the systems and looks for recent methods to cope with the unpredictable constant change, cognitive biases, irrationality, and impermanence. Thus, enhancing mindfulness pushes executive managers to reconsider principal wisdom about organizing as well as the role of leadership and management (Gebauer, 2013: 207). In this sense, Figure 2 offers strategies on how to increase mindfulness at work.



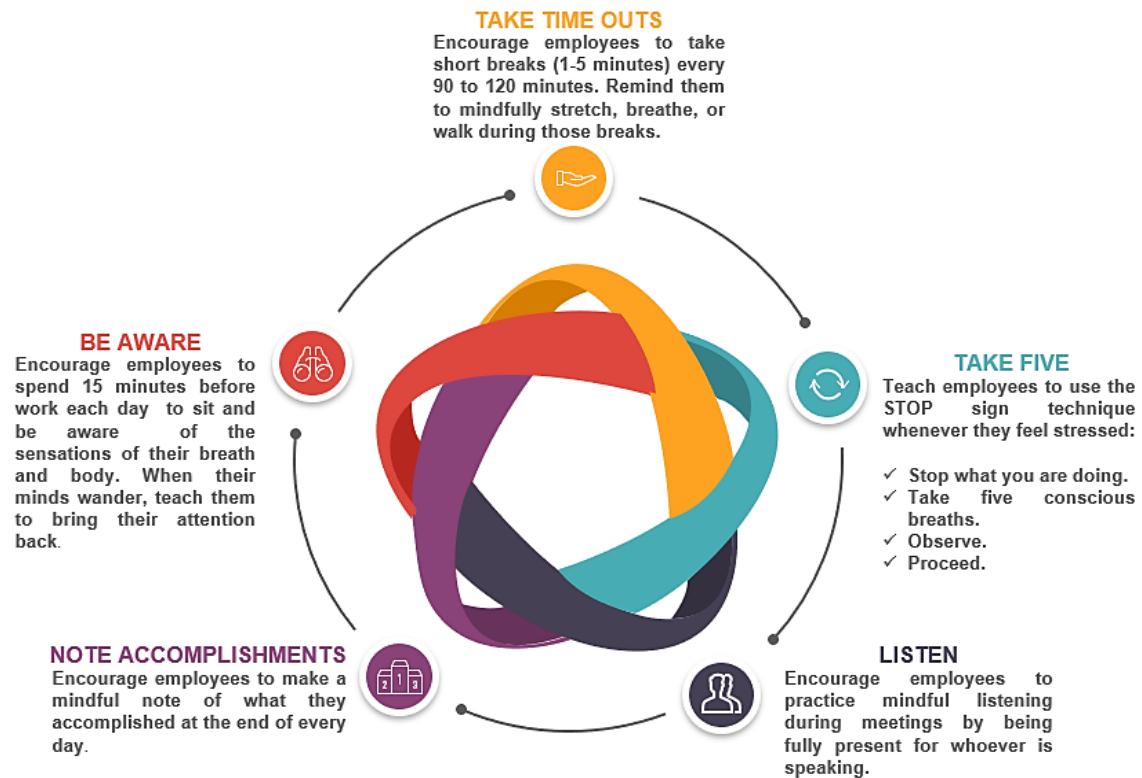


Figure 2. The Methods of Increasing Mindfulness Strategies

Source: Schaufenbuel (2014: 6).

As shown in Figure 2, taking some time to refresh and relax in between projects and tasks is important to focus workflow in the work settings (www.hrtechnologist.com, Retrieved: 01.09.2020). “*The STOP Technique*” is a mindfulness-based practice designed to help you defuse stress at the moment. Taking a brief pause -even for less than one minute- can help to gain perspective and determine the best possible action that takes next (thewellnesssociety.org, Retrieved: 01.09.2020). The enhanced listening capacity of employees by the managers creates an environment that clearer decision making and higher productivity. Active listening also enhances communication and collaboration and reduces interpersonal conflict (Ribera and Guillen, 2014: 25-29). Also, recognizing employees who receive strong performance, celebrating milestones, and strengthening bonds by publicly acknowledging is the strategy to boost mindfulness (www.finextra.com, Retrieved: 01.09.2020). Since mindfulness is the consciousness that occurs paying attention to purpose with the practice of breathing, employees need to relax to cope with stress in the work settings (Ahern, 2009: 1). In addition to these strategies, Forbes Coaches Council recommends more strategies to increase mindfulness in the work settings as have shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Creating Mindfulness in the Work Settings

Starting a conversation about mindfulness	Mindfulness may be a scary concept to the unaware employees. Employees generally may not figure out that mindfulness may be connected through a multitude of ways. Starting an effective conversation in which other team members reveal the methods that work for them may help employees struggling with the phenomenon interiorize and solve the concept.
Leading by example	A lack of mindfulness in departments, teams, or organizations as a whole is a clear expression of lack of value clarity. Mindfulness does not desire or demand. It permits, and through its acceptance, attracts others to value and practice.
Looking at the response from another's point of view	Thinking about the acts from another colleague's point of view and considering their thought are the best way to create a mindful organization. This is a key alone that may go a long way toward creating a mindful environment in the work settings.
Challenging questions	Asking difficult questions to employees by leaders who want to affect their team to think bigger is a crucial element for employees' mindfulness, acts, and thoughts.
Teaching mindfulness practices to employees	Giving employees some basic mindfulness instruments may help them become more conscious about their feelings and accurate reaction to emotions, more present listening and communicating, more observant of their inside and outside worlds, and raising the overall level of awareness.
Leading with an emotional connection	To truly comprehend the gut feelings for employees and their efforts, and form an emotional unity to support them handle the challenges, reconnect the team together, and manage their emotional blocks are one of the best practices to enhance employees' mindfulness.
Not being a micromanager	Adapting more mindfulness among team members begins by creating space and giving time for employees. Because stress is a crucial obstacle to be mindful and one of the most important stressors is being a micromanager.

Source: www.forbes.com, Retrieved: 02.09.2020.

CONCLUSION

Mindfulness, which refers to focus the acts in daily life, is constituted of various facets, such as non-reacting, acting with awareness, describing, observing, and non-judging experiences (Mäkinemi and Heikkilä-Tammi, 2018: 20). Whilst mindfulness has an individual feature, it also has an impact on interpersonal attitude, quality of dyadic, and team members' relationships. Emotional and attentional processes inspired by mindfulness, such as reduced emotional reactivity and more permanent attention, may be crucial to comprehend the beneficial effects for relationships. In this regard, it has an impact on workplace practices that

dependent on leadership, effective working relationships, and teamwork (Good et al., 2015: 126-127).

Mindfulness is a technique of being conscious to see considerably whatever is occurring in people's life. It helps employees to recognize and step away from habitual, often unconscious emotional and physiological reactions to everyday events. It provides them with a scientifically researched approach to cultivating clarity, understanding, and insight. Practicing mindfulness permits employees to be completely present in their life and work, and enhance their quality of life (federation.edu.au, Retrieved: 03.09.2020). Additionally, it reduces stress and depression or improves working quality in the work settings (Goldin and Gross, 2010: 87; Weare, 2014: 2; Soysa and Wilcomb, 2015: 225; Ahmed et al., 2017: 28; Ghodspour et al., 2018: 216; La Torre, 2020: 1037; Pérez-Fuentes et al., 2020: 1859).

Since mindfulness enhances focus, positivity, and concentration among employees, executive managers should encourage employees to understand and apply mindfulness and communicate about mindfulness benefits in the work settings. To this end, they should concentrate more on arranging successful meetings, creating an enjoyable work environment, or getting closer relationships with employees. Considerably, employees that experience gratitude and mostly optimistic and positive outlook have an impact on more qualified working relationships, health, and wellbeing as well as creativity and overall quality of work.

Moreover, leaders should help employees to manage their work stress levels to benefit them and the organization alike. In this sense, determining the fundamental reason for employees' excessive stress may a key point to create a mindful organization. Because it is impossible to solve a contingency when leaders do not know what is causing that problem in the work settings. In this frame, leaders should try to figure out to reduce or prevent the work stress of employees by interiorizing mindfulness in the organizations. Thus, the work environment that facilitates problem-solving solutions, creative, and secures the mindful organization may seem as a leader in the given industry.

Since creativity and productivity boost when taking regular breaks during work, organizations should build a flexible workplace where employees can be more relax, tech-free, and get closer to colleagues instead of communicating in front of the computer. By fully disengaging from work, even if only for 15 minutes, represents employees are capable of being more alert, refreshed, and focused. Also, organizations may create a designated "quiet space" in which to meditate, refocus without the multitude of distractions and include flexible wall color, calming images or photos from nature, and optimistic and positive figures reflecting the mission of the organization.

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