



EFFECT OF MINDFULNESS ON JOB BURNOUT AND WORK ENGAGEMENT

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Abstract:

In recent past, research on mindfulness has increased across several fields. However, very minute research has been conducted on mindfulness in workplace. The below study will give you a view by examining the effect of mindfulness on job burnout and work engagement, with a sample size (N = 149) of employees from several organizations in Islamabad, Pakistan. The results provided good support for the proposed hypotheses. As hypothesized, the positive relationship of mindfulness on job burnout and work engagement, however no significant correlations were found between mindfulness and work engagement. We consider in theory and applied assumption of these recommendations and highlight a number of approaches for conducting research on mindfulness in the workplace.

Keywords: Mindfulness, Job burnout, Work engagement

Introduction

Mindfulness is defined as "a state of consciousness in which attention is focused on present-moment phenomena occurring both externally and internally" (Dane, 2011:1000). Similarly job burnout is defined as "Energy turns into exhaustion, involvement turns into cynicism, and efficacy turns into ineffectiveness"(Maslach& Leiter,1997:24).Work engagement is defined as "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption" (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker, 2002:74).

Research in the state of the mindfulness is limited. In fact recently scholars have paid some amount of attention in examining the effects of mindfulness on variety of work related outcomes such as job burnout, work engagement, job stress, depression, anxiety, job satisfaction and job performance (Bishop SR, Lau M, Shapiro S, Carlson L, Anderson ND, Carmody J, Segal ZV, Abbey S, Speca M, Velting D & Devins G, 2004; Giluk TL, 2009; Epstein, 1999).

Several studies suggest that mindfulness may vary across individuals. Some individuals may be more mindful and other may be less mindful (Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer and Toney, 2006; Brown & Ryan, 2003; Lau, Bishop, Segal, Buis, Anderson, Carlson, Shapiro & Carmody, 2006).

Regarding the relationship of mindfulness on job burnout, several studies have examined the effect of mindfulness on job burnout. Studies suggest that mindfulness has a positive relationship with job burnout like when person is less mindful he have better solution of job problems and on interpersonal relationship on job and mental flexibility (Brown, Ryan & Creswell, 2007; Glomb, Duffy, Bono & Yang, 2011; Moore & Malinowski, 2009). Moreover studies also reveal that mindfulness is positively related to depression, stress, anxiety and favoritism. In other word individuals who are more mindful have to focus more on their task therefore they get exhausted and burned out (Kiken & Shook, 2011). Similarly, few studies have examined the effect of mindfulness on work engagement and they suggest that mindfulness has a positive effect on work engagement (brown et al., 2003).

Major studies have been conducted in West and there is little evidence about the study being conducted in East. There is no study that has examined the effect of mindfulness on job burnout

and work engagement in East. Observed research on mindfulness related to job burnout and work engagement is quite limited, so key questions remain unanswered. First, and most directly, it is uncertain that to what extent or to what degree mindfulness relates to job burnout and work engagement.

There are three main research objectives of our research. First objective of our research is to examine the effects of mindfulness on job burnout. Second objective is to examine the effects of mindfulness on work engagement. In addition, the final objective is to provide policy implications for practicing managers and employees.

Theory and Hypothesis

Mindfulness

“Mindfulness refers to an individual’s awareness both internally (awareness of their own thoughts) and externally (awareness of what is happening in their environment)” (Ruedy & Schweitzer, 2010). It also promotes a greater knowledge about environment of a person with ethical issues and self-awareness. Therefore, leading to a negative relation between unethical decision making and mindfulness. Followed by a positive relation between mindfulness and ethical decision making. The finding of the study also showed that individuals with mindfulness followed being more ethical, more disciplined while not breaking any rules, higher self-control. In addition to applied research (2006), due to mindfulness training participants were feeling more relaxed, feeling of satisfaction at work and their personal life, taking life more seriously and easily manageable. The study also suggests that mindfulness training is most efficiently to be used by nurses and individuals with high level of stress jobs. Mindfulness training results in improvement in the performance, which leads to reduction in mind wandering and focusing on the work performance. Individuals who are more work oriented, focused and challenging benefits from mindfulness training (Mrazek, Franklin, Phillips, Baird, & Schooler, 2013). Furthermore, mindfulness based training produce positive outcomes, with decreased psychological suffering, depression and chronic pains. Moreover, Buddhist practices and traditions provide rich source of knowledge about mindfulness teachings and role in reducing stress (Baer, 2011). Organizational mindfulness leads to tactical and functioning benefits. “Organization mindfulness means leaders signal the importance of mindfulness to employees, which in turn motivates them to act more mindfully” (Vogus & Sotcliffe, 2012). Furthermore, through mindfulness general anxiety and emotional adversity level is reduced. It has a positive relation, however a weak correlation with personal awareness and experience (Lau et al., 2006).

Burnout

Burnout is defined as “a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who do ‘people work’ of some kind” (Maslach, 1982; p. 3). Maslach Burnout Inventory- General Survey (2000) was conducted to

check the level of burnout, which includes three subscales of extreme tiredness, putting less energy and effort in work, and professional effectiveness. It was applied on different employees of white and blue collar, and among different nations. However the studies suggest that high scores in burnout reflected differences in job and employees, attitude toward their work life. In addition to it, the results also showed that burnout is a part of sensitive fatigue, personal accomplishment contraction and deformation. For managing burnout, nurses try to adopt certain practices like solving problems, self-regulating and positive assessment in contrast to escaping stress (Deklava, Circenis, & Millere, 2014). Burnout results in adverse job performance, absenteeism, low self-confidence and inefficiency among workers. To enhance the job performance, the negative impact of job burnout shall be reduced by giving powers to the employees for making decisions, freedom at work, giving them responsibility, acknowledging their work, giving proper feedback of the output and recognizing their skills. All these factors will lead to encouragement among individuals, with decreased job burnout and increased job turnover (Ozbag, Ceyhun & Cekmecelioglu, 2014). Higher the risk at work, higher will be the job burnout at workplaces where individuals are loaded with excessive work. Highly educated workplace individual's experiences relaxation at work, satisfaction from their life and workplace, more rewards and encouragement. Thus, it results in positive outcomes. However, employees with a highly exhausted work routine face more challenges, job burnout and decreased energy at work (Innanen, Tolvanen, & Aro, 2014).

Effects of Mindfulness on Job Burn out

The dominant phase of job burnout is emotional tiredness. This decrease in emotional energy will cause hindrance in meeting the job load (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). Emotional tiredness is unwillingness to go to work and fear of work in extreme situation where there is a lot of work burden directing to decrease in work performance (Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993). Emotional reaction is not controlled by the situation and the person who is more mindful is likely to be more meditative and more effective to the behavioral range and resources to deal with them (Brown et al., 2003). The other dimension of job burnout is depersonalization where the individual feel isolated to such a limit that they stop believing in their job (Maslach et al., 2001). Cynicism is about the job load where individual feel lack of corporation from colleague and they feel inequality on job (Lee & Ashforth, 1990). A research also revealed that more mindful the individual is, more they have to focus on their task, followed by exhaustion and burn out (Kikenet al., 2011). However the mindfulness is positively related to depersonalization. The last dimension of the job burnout is feeling of efficient work that leads to the development of the low self-confidence and poor self-perception. Mindfulness has positive relationship with social anxiety, which includes self-respect and efficient work process (Brown et al., 2003). Mindfulness will permit the individual to grow self-possession, and it is a state of mind in which person is concerned about accomplishment rather than negative feedback (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). This leads us to hypothesis

H1: Mindfulness will be positively related to job burnout.

Work engagement

Work engagement is defined *as* “A positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption” (Schaufeli et al., 2002:74). There are two components of mindfulness. First one is to self-control emotions so that it may retain instant experience, and secondly, to maintain the sense of the directness and the interest about the existing experience. (Bishop, Mark, Shapiro, Carlson, Anderson, Carmody, Segal, Abbey, Speca, Velting & Devina, 2004).

Effect of mindfulness on work engagement

Lately, research studies say that there is major scholar interest in the field of mindfulness and the effects of mindfulness on work engagement (Christian, Garza & Slaughter 2011; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Rich, LePine & Crawford, 2010).

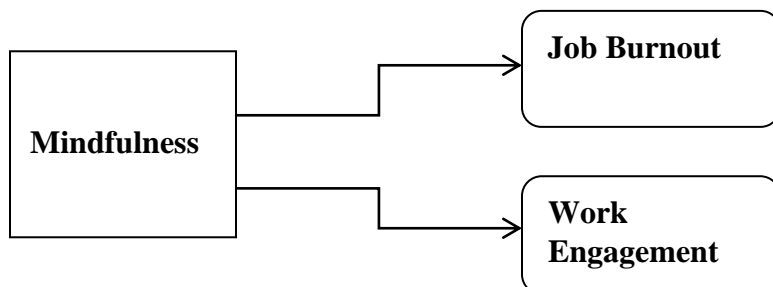
There are three different dimensions of the effect of mindfulness on work engagement. The first dimension is how individuals use different methods to do the work with the certain level of energy and the mental strength (Bakker, 2011). Second dimension is how the work will give employee satisfaction, encouragement, and the sense of pride (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Moreover, last dimension is how the person concentrates fully on work, and also how a person engages himself into the work (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Work engagement is related to the work related events and tasks. (González-Romá et al., 2006; Leroy et al., 2013). Therefore, research on work engagement dimensions has unveiled the practical and theoretical support (Macey & Schneider, 2008).

Likewise, some other studies have examined the effect of mindfulness on engagement. Mindfulness has a positive relation with work engagement such as the employee who is more involved in to work, focused, and have the clarity of the work will have a positive approach towards work (brown et al., 2003). However, many studies have shown that mindfulness is positively related to the work engagement. Employees, who are fully engaged in their work due to their personal satisfaction, will perform better at work and will maximize their work utility (Kahn, 1990).

A person who is mindful, have a better understanding of work that he is performing; make that person to gain some interest, and keen involvement in the work (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000). To visualize the work or the task in mind and creating the relations with past experience will help person to have a hold on that particular task (Carmody, Baer, Lykind, & Olendzkin, 2009; Shapiro et al., 2006)

Hypothesis 2: Mindfulness will have positive relationship with work engagement.

Theoretical frame work



Method

Sample and Data Collection Procedures

Our primary audience is the people who are working in offices. To get relevant and diversified results we collected the data from different organizations. With the help of our personal contacts, we were able to collect data for our survey from the employees of following sectors; (a) Banking, (b) Telecommunication, (c) Nonprofit organization, (d) Health, and (e) Education. We gathered data from twin cities; Rawalpindi and Islamabad, being the capital city of Pakistan. Many different participants ranging from fresh starters who completed their bachelors, fresh internees, managers, doctors, PHD's, MBA's participated in our survey. We believe that effect of mindfulness on job burnout and work engagement is likely to influence on people with white collar jobs.

Data was collected through onsite distribution of questionnaires. It took us 5 to 7 day for data collection by visiting every organization personally through a reference. A cover letter was attached to the questionnaire which explained the purpose of the study and assured the participant that their responses will be held in strictest anonymity and if for any reason they do not want to participate in our study, they are free to decline. The questionnaire contained four sections; (a) mindfulness, (b) job burnout, (c) work engagement, and (d) personal information. In the last section respondent was asked to mention his age, gender, education, and current position in the organization, tenure, nature of employment and ownership status of their current organization.

The diversified data was collected from 149 participants out of targeted 200 participants, through distribution of questionnaires. Yielding a response of 74.5% out of these majority of the respondents were male (66.4%) and female was (33.4%). The mean participant age was 30.10 years (SD=7.00 years). About 44% of the participants had an undergraduate university degree, while 56% held graduate degrees. Average tenure of the respondents was 4.70 years (SD=4.96). Moreover the sample included 15% entry level workers, 65% middle managers and 20% top-level managers.

Measures

The three variables that we used in our study are: (a) Mindfulness, (b) Work engagement, and (c) Job burnout. The independent variable is effect of mindfulness and dependent variables are Job burnout and Work engagement. We conducted a work opinion based survey through questionnaires for collection of reliable and relevant data for our study. Responses of all the variables were examined using a 6 type Likert- type scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *somewhat disagree*, 4 = *somewhat agree*, 5 = *agree*, and 6 = *strongly agree*.

Mindfulness was measured through a questionnaire already developed by (Ruth & Smith, 2004). The questionnaire contained 9 items on mindfulness rated on a 6 point likert-scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 6 (*Strongly Agree*). Examples of some items include “*When I do things, my mind wanders off and I am easily distracted*” and a reverse coded item “*I don’t pay attention to what I am doing because I am daydreaming, worrying, or otherwise distracted*”.

Burnout was measured using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (1996). The questions on burnout measured three components: (a) Emotional Exhaustion, (b) Depersonalization (c) personal accomplishment. The measures consisted of 9 items on a 6 point likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 6 (*Strongly Agree*). Example of some items includes “*Fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job*” and “*Frustrated by my job.*”

Work engagement was studied through questionnaire developed by work engagement scale (Schaufeliet al., 2003). The scale measured three components: (a) Vigor, (b) Dedication, and (c) Absorption. The questionnaire contained 15 items rated on a 6 point likert-type scale ranging from 1(*Strongly Disagree*) to 6 (*Strongly Agree*). Few questions on vigor are “*At my job, I feel strong and vigorous*” and “*At the work, I feel that I am bursting with energy.*” Few items on dedication include “*I am proud of the work that I do*” and “*I am enthusiastic about my job.*” lastly, some items on absorption includes “*When I am working, I forget everything else around me*” and “*I get carried away when I am working.*”

Results

The table below shows the descriptive statistics, correlations and reliability (coefficient $\hat{\alpha}$) for all measures. We have used multiple linear regression analysis to test the effect of our hypotheses (Hypotheses 1 & Hypotheses 2). We have also included the data of age and tenure, followed by

the variables (independent and dependent).The result showed us that mindfulness was positively related to job burnout ($\hat{\alpha} = 0.466, p < .01$) and positively related to work engagement ($\hat{\alpha} = 0.014, p > .05$). The result supported our hypothesis 1 with significant and in the case of hypothesis 2 results showed were insignificant.

As shown in table 2 variable mindfulness is positively correlated to job burnout ($\beta = 0.466, p < .001; \Delta R^2 = .212, p < .001$). We are 100% confident that relation is true. However mindfulness is insignificantly related to work engagement. Therefore increase in mindfulness will result in decrease in work engagement ($\beta = 0.014, p > .01; \Delta R^2 = -0.007, p > .01$

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations, and Reliabilities

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Age	30.1	7.00	-				
2. Tenure	4.70	4.96	.755**	-			
3. Mindfulness	3.44	1.00	-.145	-.022	-		
4. Job burnout	2.98	.794	-.153	-.055	.466**	-	
5. Work engagement	4.31	.562	.206*	.158	.014	-.157	-

Note. N =149; alpha reliabilities are presented in parentheses.

* p< 0.05 ** p< 0.01

Table 2
Results for Main Effects and Moderated Regression Analyses

	Job Burnout		Work Engagement	
	β	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2
Mindfulness	.466***	.212***	.014	-.007

Note. N = 149,

* p< 0.05

** p< 0.01

*** p< 0.001

Discussion

This research is tested upon the effect of mindfulness on job burnout and work engagement. Mindfulness being the independent variable, other two job burnout and work engagement are dependent variables. Different researches also state that mindfulness has some influence on other variables. To prove our research we conducted an opinion based survey and gathered the data to measure results through SPSS to run tests such as reliability, correlation, and regression.

In hypothesis 1 (H1) we stated that mindfulness has a positive relation with job burnout. With $p=0.00$ we are 100% confident that we will accept H1. Therefore, findings of our study suggest that

mindfulness has a significant relation with job burnout. Mindful person is the one who has multi tasks to do and the one who is more focused. Mindful person will put more energy into work and will perform better at job. Individuals who are high in mindful have a more ethical approach, behavior, and they are the ones who cheat less at work (Ruedy et al., 2010). Moreover, a person who is aware of his own thoughts and feelings is likely to perform better at job leading to more stress and job burnout.

Furthermore, in hypothesis 2 (H2) we mentioned that mindfulness has a positive relation with work engagement. However, in our results the value of $p=0.863$, so we are 14% confident that is why we will reject H2. Therefore finding of our study suggest that there is insignificant or inverse relation between mindfulness and work engagement. This further explains that increase in mindfulness will lead to decrease in work engagement. A person who is more mindful and focused will face stress which decreases the work performance or output of an individual. According to Wright & Bonnet (1997), reduction in work performance negatively affects one's self competence and increased level of stress.

Implications for Practice

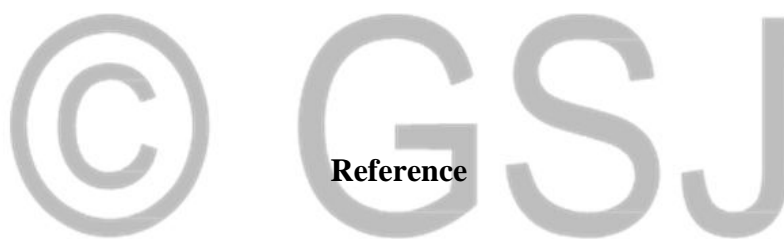
Our research guides in some implications for practice for work place individuals. We targeted people who work in organizations and offices. People who are mindful, they tend to do lot activities at one time. They can absorb more work into their brain and can work efficiently and effectively. This further increases stress and burnout among individuals because these are the ones who need to meet several deadlines and have to manage work. Some people also take stress due to their personal matters which makes them completely lost at work. Therefore it will lead to decrease in work performance or engagement. To overcome these problems meditation or different activities on mindfulness should be under taken amongst individual to make improvements at works. Their stress levels can also be checked through medication or some other test. Managers should keep motivating their sub ordinates through giving job incentives, some relaxation at work, a friendly environment, job promotions, social benefits, etc. Thus it will increase their interest in their work and will make them more mindful. Different training activities on stress control will help improving the psychological means, productiveness, achievement of employees so that they can confront difficult and tense environments. Moreover, organizations should hire those individuals who are more mindful, by examining them through tests, surveys, or interviews.

Strengths and Limitations

This research has Considerable strengths. Firstly, all the previous researches have been taken place in the West. However not a single research has been done on 'Effect of mindfulness on job burnout and work engagement' in the East. Secondly, we gathered data from multiple organizations, so our sample was quite diversified, ranging individuals at work place of different ranks. Our findings also supported the statement that effect of mindfulness has a positive relation on job burnout also in comparison with other researches. However the limitation of our research was a lower reliability of the independent variable mindfulness ($p= 0.47$). Nonetheless, results showed a significant correlation between variables.

Conclusion

Our research shows that all the three variables are significant and their relationship is also important because they will help in anticipating outcomes for work place individuals and employees. It is proven in our research that effect of mindfulness has a positive relation with job burnout and effect of mindfulness has an insignificant relation with work performance. The findings will implement fruitful insight to employees and organizations. Yet, it will also help future researchers, especially in the East.



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