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Working Paper

Title

The influence of psychosocial and sociocultural situatedness within organisations on the practice of mindfulness among employees: A systematic review of literature

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I. Literature Review

1.1 What is Mindfulness?

Being present, believing and living in the **here and now** without worrying about what happened in the past and thinking about the future is what mindfulness is broadly all about.

Mindfulness is an overarching term which was coined by the Buddhist scholar T. W. Rhys David at the dawn of the twentieth century. He was the first who translated the technical Buddhist term “sati” into mindfulness, thereby introducing this English word. Since then, there has been a burgeoning interest in this area.

A distinct philosophical framework manifested in the ancient Buddhist traditions which defined mindfulness as to “reach a state of deep insight and compassion, not attentive stoicism” (Purser & Milillo, 2015a, p.2). This was considerably different from Kabat Zinn’s definition of mindfulness who defined it as “the awareness that arises from paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally” (Kabat-Zinn, 2011, p.2). Research indicates that the “current operational definitions of mindfulness in the literature differ considerably from those derived from classic Buddhist canonical sources” (Purser & Milillo, 2015b, p.3).

The working definition of mindfulness for the purpose of this literature review would be that mindfulness is a process which when practiced regularly ultimately leads to the habit of completing applying the brain in the present moment (here or now) and the task at hand. In this context, mindfulness would enable employees to concentrate on their present thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment, thereby leading to awareness and non-judgemental acceptance of the present moment (Keng et al., 2011).

1.5 Mindfulness among employees in Organisations

Today’s complex and unpredictable workplace environment strains employees with some of the most emotionally and cognitively demanding situations (Bhui et al., 2016). These stressful situations and complex job requirements are an integral part of almost every organisation which cannot be ignored but needs to be addressed urgently and requires the utmost attention of decision-makers.

Based on intensive literature review, empirical findings and on the outcomes of mindfulness studies with clinical populations, it was concluded that mindfulness appear to be viable interventional options for organizations wishing to improve the mental health of their employees (Van Gordon et al., 2014). Furthermore, private firms such as Google believes that mindfulness practices “creates elated and highly efficient employees” (*This Is How Google Creates Happier, More Productive Employees* / World Economic Forum, n.d.).

1.6 Psychosocial Context within an organisation and its influence on mindfulness practice

Psychosocial factors are the building blocks which fabricate the work environment of an organisation. The psychosocial factors greatly influence the work environment of an organisation. For example- the leadership style is one of the psychosocial factors which might greatly influence the working style of the employees. There is a study which clearly elucidates the significance of leader mindfulness for subordinates’ well-being. It introduced transformational leadership as a mediating variable and the results clearly indicated that mindfulness displayed by leaders had a strong and positive relationship to subordinates’ positive affect as well as job satisfaction and negatively related to subordinates’ psychosomatic complaints (Pinck & Sonnentag, 2018).

Hence, psychosocial in the context of the current study might be defined as the interaction between psychological and social environment and its influence/perceived impact on the practice of enacted mindfulness among employees who work in an organisation (ILO, 1986).

The breakdown of the term ‘psychosocial’ include but is not restricted to (Martin et al., 2016):

- Stress, Anxiety & Depression (SAD)
- Organizational Climate
- Leadership Style
- Communication
- Working condition
- Working Environment
- Work role
- Interpersonal relation

1.7 Sociocultural Context within an organisation and its influence on mindfulness practice

One of the significant aspects of the business environment is the socio-cultural factors as these factors impact the overall decision making within an organisation. ‘Socio-Cultural factors’ assesses the joint impact of social and cultural factors on employees, there is a very strong interaction which exists between them thereby making it difficult to assess their individual impact (Masovic, 2018a).

The working definition of socio-cultural in the context of the current study would be that socio-cultural factors are a combination of all those practices which are a part of the social and

cultural background of the employees within an organisation (Masovic, 2018b). The socio-cultural factors are interwoven, and the overall sociocultural environment of an organisation might be highly influenced by the local sociocultural atmosphere (Boyle, 2008; Riordan, 2015). These factors might impact the adoption and practice of mindfulness among employees.

This term mainly includes:

- Organizational culture
- Religion
- Attitude
- Belief
- Language

This project would, therefore, study the influence of some of the above listed psychosocial and sociocultural factors on the practice of mindfulness within an organisational context.

Present Study

Mindfulness training could be beneficial, not only for those engaged in what CareerCast, in a 2019 survey, have termed less stressful professions, such as hair stylists, but also for those in professions deemed stressful such as certain military roles and fire fighters (*2019 Jobs Rated Report on Stress - CareerCast.Com*, n.d.). There is a plethora of evidence which indicates that mindfulness interventions are extremely beneficial for all the employees in an organisation and it leads to employee's welfare in private such as Aetna (Wolever et al., 2012) as well as public sector organisation (Vella & McIver, 2019). Despite this evidence, those who are engaged in empirical research in this area, report obstacles both to the practice of mindfulness and to the enactment of mindfulness-based behaviours among employees. Little is known about the psychosocial and sociocultural situatedness of the organisation which might influence the mindfulness practice among employees (Lomas et al., 2017.; Wasylkiw et al., 2015).

Aims and Objectives

Psychosocial and sociological factors which influence the practice of mindfulness at workplace have been under-investigated to date (Petchsawang & McLean, 2017). Conducting a systematic literature review can enable an understanding of the hitherto under-investigated psychological and sociocultural factors. Furthermore, it would enable the researchers to illustrate how the various **psychosocial and sociocultural** factors situated within an organisation influences the employee's access to the mindfulness practice. In addition to this, the aim of this systematic literature review is to compile a list of the various factors whose presence/absence might influence the practice of mindfulness among employees within an organisation.

The **research question** was framed by following the PICO & SPIDER framework (refer to table 1).

Table 1: PICO and SPIDER framework for this systematic review

Employees working full time at various levels. For example-staff and managers working either front line or at back end offices.	PICO Population	SPIDER Sample
A mindfulness-based intervention (MBI). The contextual environment of the organisation which might influence the accessibility of MBI among employees.	Intervention	Phenomenon of Interest
The situatedness of the various psychosocial such as SAD, organisational climate, leadership style, work condition, work environment, and sociocultural factors such as organisational culture, language, and religion which exist within an organisation. Qualitative and quantitative studies of the mindfulness-based intervention.	Context	Design
Synthesis of the various psychosocial and sociocultural factors prevalent in an organisation. The perceived impact of these factors and how it influences the employee's access to MBI	Outcome	Evaluation
Qualitative (IPA, interviews, observations, focus group, case studies and systematic reviews) and Quantitative studies (Descriptive, correlational, comparative, and experimental)	NA	Research type

This systematic review followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) guidelines (Liberati et al., 2009) (See table 3).

Literature Search

A comprehensive and valid systematic review includes all relevant studies, thereby making it essential to search through more than one database. This research investigates four databases: Academic Search Complete, APA PsycINFO, Business Source Complete, and Google Scholar.

These databases are relevant because they are closely related to the field of study. In addition, these databases are the largest repository available online to search peer reviewed literature.

Academic Search Complete is a database which not only includes peer reviewed journals but also provides access to superior quality articles in the field of psychology. (*Academic Search Complete / EBSCO*, n.d.) .

“APA PsycINFO has literature in behavioural science and mental health, 99% of papers in it are peer-reviewed” (*APA PsycInfo / EBSCO*, n.d.).

The Business Source Complete is an essential tool for collecting data in the field of management, business, and organisational psychology (Cox, 2020.)

A study conducted by University of Rouen was titled “Is the coverage of google scholar enough to be used alone for systematic reviews” and this study clearly concluded that the coverage of Google Scholar (GS) for studies included in systematic reviews was 100%, it doesn’t leave any references and GS as a search engine was sufficient enough to be used alone while undertaking a systematic review (Jean-François et al., 2013).

Search Strategy

During the first two weeks of January 2021, several papers were searched by their paper titles, abstracts and keywords. To search the databases in an efficient way and to yield relevant quality papers, keywords were generated. Google scholar was searched by using the following key terms: (Mindfulness OR Mental-wellbeing OR well-being) AND (Intervention OR Practice* OR Train* OR strateg*) AND (Organisation* OR Organization* OR Workplace OR "Work* Condition*" OR "Work* Environment*" OR customs OR culture*) AND (Employees OR Staff OR worker*) AND (Stress* OR Anxiet* OR Depress* OR “SAD”) AND ("Leadership Style*" OR Leadership OR “management style” OR management). In addition to this, Academic Search Complete, APA PsycINFO, Business Source Complete would be searched using the same keywords and by following the PRISMA guidelines.

Selection Criteria

For this systematic review, the included studies (i) employees working full time, example-staff and managers working either front line or at back end offices within an organisations, (ii) involved employees engaged in mindfulness practice or a MBI (whether a single session or lasting for several weeks/months) , (iii) qualitative and quantitative studies, (iv) reports relevant to psychosocial and sociocultural context of the organisations, and (v) papers in this subject area that were published in English language in a peer-reviewed journal from January 2012 till December 2020.

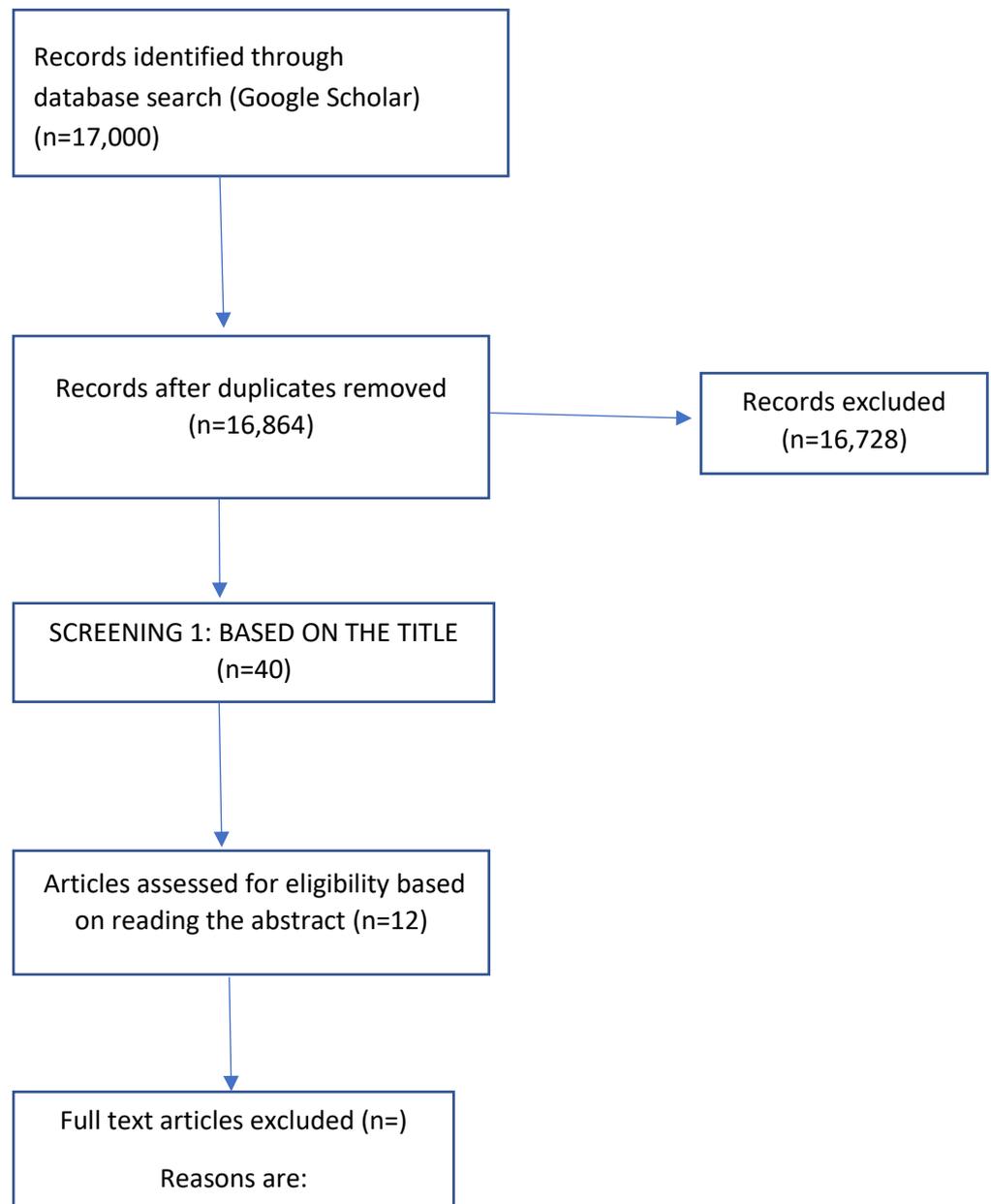
Papers were excluded if they (i) did not include employees working in organisations, (ii) did not include a mindfulness practice and MBIs intervention, (iii) statistical information in the quantitative papers, (iv) studies which only reported findings relevant to employee’s overall performance and wellbeing independent of mindfulness practice, and (v) duplicate study results

were removed (vi) studies which were not published in peer- reviewed academic journals (refer to Table 2 for alignment of inclusion and exclusion criteria with PICO and SPIDER framework).

Table 2: Extended PICO and SPIDER framework along with inclusion and exclusion criteria applied for literature screening

PICO and SPIDER elements	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Population/ Sample	Employees organisations.	Those who are self-employed.
Intervention/Phenomena of Interest	Mindfulness-based intervention and practices	Any intervention which is not centred around/based on mindfulness. Mindfulness as an outcome and not as an intervention. Not focused on workplace context.
Comparison/ Design	Qualitative papers, quantitative studies, empirical research, intervention studies, review papers, theoretical papers, and reports.	Guides on mindfulness practice, grey literature, and book reviews
Outcome/Evaluation	Perceived impact of various psychosocial and sociocultural factors such as Stress, Anxiety & Depression (SAD), Organizational Climate, Leadership Style, Work condition, Work Environment, Work role, organisational culture, attitude, language, belief and religion on the adoption and practice of MBI among employees in an organisation.	Factors other than the psychosocial and sociocultural situatedness of an organisation which might have an influence on the adoption and practice of MBI among employees. For example- personal, physiological, and genetic factors.
Research Type	Qualitative as well as Quantitative studies	Historical studies
Other	Peer reviewed papers/studies in English language published in academic journals between January 2012 till November 2020	The duplicate studies were removed

Table 3: Prisma Flowchart



Synthesis for the study

There are overall twelve qualitative approaches to synthesis. Thematic synthesis is most appropriate for this study as it matches the inclusion and exclusion criteria, and it enables the

researchers to identify themes that appear in the literature itself. It allows the researchers to analyse and synthesis a variety of studies including papers on systematic reviews.

The first point in the inclusion criteria is to include studies in which there are employees working full time in private as well as public sector. Thematic synthesis is useful when analysing data that is different (different population, sample or results). The sample is heterogeneous (male and female, employees in private and public sectors) and is closely linked to qualitative research. The second criteria are that studies should involve employees engaged in mindfulness practice or an MBI. Thematic synthesis is successful in noting down the experiences of participants who had engaged in MBSR interventions and this approach goes on to create a greater meaning through an interpretative process. Another criterion is to include studies which explore the psychosocial and sociocultural factors within an organisation which facilitate or inhibit the practice of mindfulness among employees. Thematic synthesis allows researchers to explore studies in which negative cases are present. Example- exploring in detail the contextual factors which inhibit mindfulness practice among employees. Thematic synthesis allows for maximum variability and as a result, design and compile set of studies which are heterogeneous in nature. Furthermore, its synthesis studies in a transparent manner which facilitates the production of new concepts and hypotheses (Thomas & Harden, 2008).

Therefore, thematic synthesis meets the prime aim of the SLR which is to assess the available evidence which would elucidate how and under what conditions the intervention of interest (in this study MBSR) has found to be effective, ineffective and has led to unintended negative effects.

Thematic synthesis involves development of 'descriptive themes'; and the generation of 'analytical themes'. "While the development of descriptive themes remains 'close' to the primary studies, the analytical themes represent a stage of interpretation whereby the reviewers 'go beyond' the primary studies and generate new interpretive constructs" (Thomas & Harden, 2008). Therefore, thematic synthesis is a novel and a flexible method for synthesizing several papers.

The biggest pro of using thematic synthesis is that categories and algorithms need not be set up in advance. Therefore, all the papers can be studied in detail thereby generating meaningful analytical themes.

As the purpose of the review is to identify the barriers and facilitators to the practice of mindfulness, thematic synthesis is most appropriate for the study.

Narrative synthesis was not considered appropriate by the researchers given the nature of this systematic review and hence was not adopted for synthesizing the study results. Furthermore, narrative synthesis is suitable to examine studies where complex interventions are given. This study is not about giving an intervention but is about exploring and understanding the participant's experiences after a MBI. Moreover, research suggests that narrative synthesis often lacks 'transparency'. "Synthesis methods are rarely reported, and presentation of data in the review often does not facilitate clear links between visual presentation of the data and the text" (Campbell et al., 2019).

Conclusion

Therefore, the purpose of the systematic literature review is to identify and depict the perceived impact of psychosocial and sociocultural situatedness within an organisation and its influence on the adoption and practice of MBI at workplace (Imbusch, 2019).

Since there is a lot of evidence to support the benefits of mindfulness, it is critical to study the various elements of psychosocial and sociocultural situatedness within an organisation which can have a perceived impact on the adoption of mindfulness at workplace by employees.

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