It's in the Mind-The Relationship between Mindfulness and OCB

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Abstract

Studies have been conducted to show the relationship between mindfulness and various organisational variables, like productivity, work engagement etc. However, there was a dearth of literature examining the impact of mindfulness on Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB). In view of the same, this paper attempts to find the impact of mindfulness on OCB using 2 mediating variables, job demands and emotions. While mindfulness allows individuals to deal with increasing job demands successfully, the relationship between job demands and OCB remains inconclusive. On the other hand, there is a significant relation between positive emotions and mindfulness. It has also been proven through various psychological literatures that positive emotions encourage pro social helping behaviour, thus it manifests the positive impact mindfulness has on OCB.

Keywords: Emotions, Job Demands-Resources Model, Mindfulness, Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB)

1. Introduction

For quite a few decades now, psychologists and doctors have put to use the techniques of mindfulness to help people deal with chronic pain, depression, and anxiety (Baer, 2003). The benefits of mindfulness also extend to less extreme situations. Even individuals not suffering from clinical depression can benefit from its practice and application. While there exist ample research on mindfulness and its various benefits in the workplace with respect to various dimensions such as job satisfaction, productivity, and engagement, no clear linkages have been established between the effect of mindfulness and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB). Through this paper, the author has tried to explore the relationship between mindfulness and OCB.

Mindfulness is defined as 'a state of consciousness in which attention is focused on present-moment phenomena occurring both externally and internally' (Dane, 2011). Brown and Ryan claimed that mindfulness involves 'an open, undivided observation of what is occurring both internally and externally' (Brown & Ryan, 2003).

There might also be the dispositional difference amongst individuals practicing mindfulness Brown & Ryan, 2003. Other things kept equal, some individuals tend to be more mindful than others.

Functional magnetic resource imaging gives strong support in favour of practicing mindfulness. It shows that by simply observing and labelling negative emotions, and not judging them or trying to get rid of them can reduce their experience by reducing limbic system activation (Hariri, Bookheimer & Mazziotta, 2000). Furthermore, mindfulness has a negative link with verbal aggression, hostility, and anger (Borders, Earleywine & Jajodia, 2010). Mindfulness practice can also lead to decreased C - reactive protein levels (which are typically associated with inflammation) among obese individuals, and it is further suggested that the effect may be even stronger amongst non-obese participants (Malarkey, Jarjoura,

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& Klatt, 2013). In addition to the benefits mentioned above (Chiesa, & Serretti, 2010) observed a variety of other physical benefits like a reduction of symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis, fibromyalgia, psoriasis, and even HIV.

Continuing in the same vein, research has proven that using mindfulness-based techniques to deal with negative thoughts and emotions yields much better results in reducing their intensity and the urge to react, than employing control techniques, such as suppression (Marcks, & Woods, 2005). Given its varied benefits, many educational institutions are incorporating mindfulness practice into their programs. Harvard Business School, Drucker Graduate School of Management, Stern School of Business at New York University, and Boalt Hall School of Law at the University of California, Berkeley are a few institutions that have implemented formal mindfulness programs to promote their students' success (Hyland, Lee & Mills, 2015).

2. Mindfulness at the Workplace

Globalization, the fast pace of technological change and economic upheavals have changed the world of work dramatically in the past few years. Due to the increasing work complexity and intensity, employees need to be more flexible and mobile than ever.

The demands of the workplace from an average employee are on the rise, and so are its ill effects-workrelated stress results in exhaustion, burnout, and various physical side effects. Another effect of these increased demands of the employer is the emotional exhaustion of the employee. Emotional exhaustion closely resembles traditional stress reactions that are studied in workplace stress research, such as fatigue, job-related depression, and anxiety (Kahn & Byosiere, 1992). Building upon this, studies have shown a significant overlap between emotional exhaustion and such stress reactions (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998).

Absenteeism causes major productivity losses and results in high societal costs in industrialized countries. It is estimated that workplace stress costs American businesses up to \$150 billion a year (Sauter, Murphy & Hurrell, 1990).

As a result, the promotion of health and well-being is now an important objective in occupational settings. The provision of these services is now a billion-dollar industry (Davidson, *et al.*, 2003).

Also observed increased mood and happiness among employees in a high-stress job who completed a mindfulness meditation program. They also reported a rise in energy levels and stronger immune systems (Orzech, *et al.*, 2009).

Reported a rise in subjective well-being among participants of a month-long mindfulness program, and found (McCraty, 2003) that participants reported an overall increase in emotional health and a more positive outlook on life after only a brief mindfulness intervention. The practice didn't require being months long to show results. Mindfulness training has also been proven to reduce the extent to which employees experience emotional exhaustion (Hülsheger, et al., 2013), especially if they're involved in jobs that are known to be high-stress (Galantino, et al., 2005). Has observed (Chu, 2010) that increased mindfulness meditation is associated with increasing levels of emotional intelligence. Similarly it was also noticed that a brief mindfulness intervention improved participants' visual-spatial processing and their performance on cognitive tasks that required sustained focused attention. They also found that such training could improve participants' overall executive functioning, and positive effects on the performance of cognitive tasks involving executive processing efficiency, as well as a positive impact on participants' working memory capacity were reported. These results have been repeatedly proven over time by a multitude of studies, including (Jha, et al., 2010), which in addition to their aforementioned findings also detected that working memory capacity actually increased for the experimental groups that received mindfulness training. Similarly observed (Roeser, et al., 2013) that a 36-hour mindfulness training program disbursed over 8 weeks led to a rise in focused attention and working memory capacity in a sample of teachers. Also found similar results (Anicha, et al., 2012), indicating that practicing mindfulness was positively associated with greater perceptual abilities in working memory and cognitive control.

In addition, it was discovered that higher levels of mindfulness are associated with lower levels of egodefensive reactivity under threat. This suggests that mindful employees may be less self-focused and reactive during organizational changes (Brown, *et al.*, 2008).

2.1 Organisational Citizenship Behaviour

At the managerial level, citizenship behaviours at the workplace tend to reduce the amount of time a manager has to spend on a given issue, thereby enabling them to focus on other areas for improving organizational effectiveness (Turnipseed & Rassuli, 2005).

A work environment conducive to cooperation is preferred by managers. Individual employees also benefit from this healthy environment as OCB can aid social cohesion between workers (Buentello, Jung & Sun, 2008).

In the hierarchy of productive work behaviours, OCB ranks second as the most common yet productive behaviour (Jex, 1998).

The effects of OCB can be observed at 3 basic levels:

- 1. Minor,
- 2. Moderate, and
- 3. Substantial.

Minor level citizenship behaviours support productivity and get no reward in return- for example- an employee may get a home-made cake for their co-workers, thereby increasing feelings of belongingness in the organisation.

Moderate level citizenship behaviours create an environment conducive for greater productivity- for example- an employee helping a co-worker learn new software.

Finally, substantial level OCB ensures maintenance of or increase in the existing levels of productivity. For example: changing one's own work-days shifts to accommodate co-workers 'needs (Patel, 2017).

According to (Zeidan, *et al.*, 2010) OCB is of 2 types: first, OCB, directed towards individuals, and second, OCBO, directed towards the organization. Has (Organ, 1988) conceptualized OCB into 5 dimensions- altruism, courtesy, sportsmanship, conscientiousness, and civic virtue.

 Altruism means helping a specific other person with a task that is organisationally relevant, which adds value to the organization. Of course, this behaviour like all other OCBs is discretionary. It may not be necessarily directed towards a co-worker, it can be directed towards outsiders like customers, clients, vendors, suppliers, and still be counted as such. These discretionary acts of kindness towards outsiders create in their minds a positive image of the organization.

- Conscientiousness captures behaviours indulged in that are well beyond what is required of the employees.
- Courtesy means touching base with parties whose work will be affected by your decisions or commitments
- Civic virtue means being involved in the political life of the organization- not just being aware of the issues, but also expressing your sentiments about them.
- Sportsmanship is avoiding complaining about petty grievances, taking things in your stride, akin to a person being termed as a "good sport".

3. Job Demands-Resources Model of Burnout

Job demands refer to the physical, physiological, organizational or social aspects of a job that require continuous cognitive and/or emotional effort on part of the employee and are thus associated with such costs (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Physical workload, time pressure, recipient contact, physical environment, and shift work are the 5 types of job demand (Demerouti, *et al.*, 2001).

Job resources are those aspects of a job (physical, organizational, social or physiological) that are either helpful in reducing job demands, or the associated physiological and psychological costs, or both. These tangents of job resources spur personal growth, development, and aid the attainment of work-related goals (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

There are six types of job resources, which include feedback, rewards, job control, participation, job security, and supervisor support (Demerouti, *et al.*, 2001).

It has been proven through (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) in a study of 805 Finnish teachers that job resources result in higher work engagement, even when job demands are high. Furthermore, showed that (Choi, 2013) work engagement shares a significant positive relationship with organisational citizenship behaviour.

Mindfulness has been shown to be positively correlated with work engagement, and further work engagement is positively related to OCB, where mindfulness is present moment awareness and OCB is indulging in pro-social behaviour on a voluntary basis.

The presence or absence of stressors, such as job demands, could, hence, affect the relationship between mindfulness and organizational citizenship behaviours in a positive manner. In the process of meeting high job demands, employees may be performing a high level of emotional labour, leading further to emotional dissonance and then, emotional exhaustion.

In (Cropanzano, Rupp & Byrne, 2003), the authors proved that emotional exhaustion can negatively predict OCB directed toward the organization. Furthermore, found (Bragger, *et al.*, 2005) that time-based work-family conflict, a contributing source of job demands, negatively predicted OCB.

However, the contrary has also been proven. Found that (Mulligan, 2018) Job Demands and OCB shared a statistically significant correlation i.e. higher Job Demand was associated with higher levels of pro-social behaviour (i.e. OCB). This study contradicts previous research finding that higher levels of demand and stress in one's personal sphere decrease the chances of partaking in discretionary helping behaviour.

It has also been proven that mindfulness in the workplace effectively reduces perceived stress and health complaints while improving well-being and work-related outcomes such as work engagement, productivity, and job satisfaction (Williams & Anderson, 1991).

Tweaking one's attitude towards greater compassion, acceptance, tolerance, non-judgment, and cohesion by separating from the need to constantly feed one's own ego results in a state of being that recognizes and realizes the importance of helping behaviours in the organization directed towards both insiders and outsiders (Patel, 2017).

3.1 Emotions and OCB

Research on positive emotions shows that a ratio of about 3:1 positive to negative emotions leads to flourishing, i.e., high levels of functioning and wellbeing (Keyes, 2002); due to increased "momentary thought-action repertoires" (Fredrickson, 2001) that come from experiencing positive emotions (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005).

Prior research by Staw and colleagues (Staw, Sutton & Pelled, 1994; Turnipseed & Rassuli, 2005) has found that employees who report more frequent levels of positive

emotions tend to be more socially integrated with the organization, thus leading to higher engagement and citizenship behaviours than those who reported fewer positive emotions.

Emotion induces people into action that will tend to elicit behaviour, but this does not usually happen in a reflexive or non-purposive manner with humans. In the case of strong negative emotions, an individual, may, at times act quite impulsive, lashing out at another person/ object (Spector & Fox, 2002).

Hence, organisational citizenship behaviour can be encouraged by positive emotion. Whereas negative emotion induces avoidance tendencies that cause individuals to exit the situation, positive emotion induces approach tendencies. Furthermore, people in good moods tend to engage in behaviour that will support their moods. For example, people in a good mood may choose to engage in altruistic behaviour as a means of making themselves continue to feel good and prolong such a happy state of mind (Isen, 1984).

It has been well established in the social-psychological studies that positive mood is associated with helping behaviour (Baron, 1996; Isen, 1984; Salovey, Mayer & Rosenhan, 1991). Results also support that MBCT or mindfulness-based cognitive therapy is associated with both enhanced experience of daily-life situations and improves positive attitude responsiveness to pleasant daily-life situations. Results show that MBCT was associated with: a. more overall Positive Attitude; b. higher labelling of activities as pleasant; and c. higher levels of "reward experience" (Geschwind, *et al.*, 2011). This has been echoed by reference, who proved that (Du, *et al.*, 2019) higher levels of state mindfulness predicted more positive emotions.

According to (Avey, Wernsing & Luthans, 2008) p.14-15 PsyCap is an individual's "positive psychological state of development" and is characterized by:

- possessing the confidence to take on challenging tasks and putting in the required effort to succeed,
- being optimistic about succeeding now, and in the future,
- perseverance towards goals and wherever required, changing paths to goals in order to succeed, and
- resilience in the face of adversity and bouncing back to attain success.

It is, hence, a higher-order positive construct comprising the constructs of self-efficacy/confidence, optimism, hope, and resiliency, where resilience is the capacity to adapt well over time to life-changing or stressful situations. It is a successful adaptation to adverse circumstances (Ahern, *et al.*, 2006).

Employees who are higher in PsyCap are likely to have more positive emotions and subsequently be more engaged and less cynical and also exhibit more organizational citizenship and less deviant behaviours (Avey, Wernsing & Luthans, 2008). Empirical evidence exists in favour of a positive relationship between resilience and OCB (Paul, Bamel & Garg, 2016), which means that employees having higher levels of resilience are more likely to display OCB. These employees willingly indulge in voluntary extrarole helping behaviour, own their work, and feel like citizens of the organization. As levels of resilience rises, the individual becomes increasingly capable of handling difficult work situations. There also exists a significantly positive relationship between mindfulness and resilience (Pidgeon & Keye, 2014; Kaplan, et al., 2017), which can lead us to say that an increase in mindfulness will, indirectly, cause a rise in voluntary helping behaviours within the organization.

4. Conclusion

This text aimed to clarify the relationship between mindfulness and OCB, and whether the benefits gained by the employee from such practice could result in pro-social voluntary helping behaviour in the organization. This has been examined with respect to two dimensions- job demand-resources model and positive emotions. Higher job demands cause the employee to perform higher levels of emotional labour, causing emotional exhaustion which is negatively related to OCB. On the other hand, even with high job demands, employees maintain high levels of work engagement, which, further exacerbated by mindfulness can lead to voluntary pro social behaviour.

While the relationship between job demands and OCB starts off as being fairly conclusive, it remains unclear due to lack of sufficient data. The impact of positive emotions is clear- positive emotions induce individuals to maintain that state of being, and they are likely to engage in helping behaviour to do so.

Similarly, employees with high resilience tend towards citizenship acts. Both resilience and positive emotions are strongly correlated with mindfulness-based techniques like MBCT.

5. References

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