The Role of Mindfulness in Creating Positive Institutions

Mouma Chatterjee[1]*, Ms. Debopriya Ghatak[2]

ABSTRACT

Background: Workplace environment consists of several inter-knitted processes of communication and working abilities. Sometimes it leads to internal chaos resulting in discomfort, stress and uncooperative work environment. Positive psychology is a scientific and applied approach, which enables an individual to thrive as it helps them believe in themselves and cultivate the best within to have a successful and fulfilling life. The application of positive psychology in workplace along with implementation of Employee Assistance Programming is a new concept is a budding stream that orbits the core ideology of positive psychology in an organization. **Methodology:** A small study was conducted on 16 participants who are full time employee of a private organization from 27 to 37 years of age irrespective of their gender, using Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire. After collecting the data for the first set, mindfulness meditation practice was given to each and every participant for 5 days after which second set of data was collected. **Results:** It was found that the data collected after the meditation showed a higher mean value of mindfulness than the data collected before. Also, a significant relationship was found after doing paired sample t-test. **Conclusion:** Hence it can be said that mindfulness has a positive impact on the well-being of the employees' mental health which leads to increased resilience.

Positive psychology can be described as the approach that uncovers people's strengths and helps them identify their positive values and aspects in life, thereby promoting positive functioning. Positive psychology is a scientific and applied approach that enables individuals to thrive. It helps them believe in themselves and cultivate the best within to have a successful and fulfilling life. Applied positive psychology deals with applying positive psychological research that enhances the optimal functioning of individuals, communities and groups, organizations, and societies. This chapter mainly focuses on applying positive psychology in the workplace and how it promotes positive institutions.

Workplaces and organizations are composed of individuals and groups who come together from different communities and strata of society with their knowledge, skills, and creative inputs to fabricate something together with their joint effort. This leads a company to

[1]Student, Department of Psychology, Adamas University
[2]Assistant professor, Department of Psychology, Adamas University
*Corresponding Author

flourish and enhance its future endeavors. This is an inter-knitted process of communication and working abilities. Sometimes it leads to internal chaos resulting in discomfort, stress, and an uncooperative work environment. To keep such scenarios under control, The Industrial Organization Psychologists (IO Psychologists) are in great demand in today's world. Their primary role in an industry is maintaining a balanced and healthy workplace environment. Thus emerges the concept of EAP – Employee Assistance Programming. This new concept is a budding stream that orbits the core ideology of positive psychology in an organisation. It is designed to help employees maintain and regain their work-life balance, enhance job performance, and concentrate on mental and physical well-being. They provide free counseling and psychological assistance to employees in distress.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMING AND MINDFULNESS

According to Dane and Brummel, 2014, it was found there is a positive relationship between workplace mindfulness and job performance and a negatively related to turnover intentions. It further showed that mindfulness at the workplace could determine an employee's sleep quality and contribute to a leader's psychological capital. Long and Christian, in 2015, stated that practicing mindfulness in the workplace reduces family-work conflict and mitigates negative emotions.

Few steps that Employee assistance programming takes to help enhance mindfulness at the workplace and their benefits:
- Balancing work and break- It is the objective of every employee to keep work as the prime priority in life, but it is also required for the employees to take a break from work and, most importantly, the balance between them. Keeping a regular break in tasks helps an employee to increase concentration and be more creative, as too much work with bare minimum breaks fluctuate attention and makes work Employees who know. An employee who knows how to maintain a line between work and leisure does not face too much stress.
- Personal space- Employees should be given their personal space and area where they can be comfortable, focus on their tasks, and come up with various ideas. The concept of cabins and cubicles helps the employees build individuality and boost their concentration level.
- Mastering the art of observation and listening skills- Observing and listening are the basic life skills that a person must know how to deal with. It helps to build interpersonal relationships, acknowledge new ideas, and fill communication gaps. This is highly required for the people who are in the managerial or the position of the leader.
- Accepting uncertainty and changes- Work-life in corporate or private sectors is always filled with changes and uncertainties. A person must groom oneself in such a way if faced with drastic changes in the workplace situation, such as layoff, transfer, or demotion. These situations often hamper a person's well-being to a huge extent. But by exercising mindfulness, one can deal with these types of the situation efficiently.

Stressors in Workplace and the Need for Implementing Positive Psychology
At the workplace, people can face various stressors, which disrupt the employee's mental well-being and hinder them from being at their best. Some stressors can be pointed out as-
- **Harassment and bullying-** Acceptance is one of the most considerable virtues that one needs to be in the corporate world. Accepting a person, a situation, a place, or a

job is one of the most tactful works a person has to do here. Often when a new employee or a person junior to other employees or from a different background, caste, or society joins the company or the organisation, he or she faces much harassment or bullying. It can be because of their tasks, knowledge, age, appearance, looks, and many other aspects. The person facing these discriminations may often go through a major mental breakdown, as in the case of a 9 to 5 job, the person spends most of the time in the office campus area. Often sexual harassments are one of the most reported crimes a working employee has to face. However, as per the reports of the US Government, 13000 cases were recorded in 2018, and ever since then, the number has gone in the declining range, with a record of 10000 cases filled in the year 2021.

- **Lack of recognition-** Often, a team with autocratic leaders faces the problem of favouritism and lack of recognition. The leader often praises, a member with a good rapport or a close bond with the leader. It often might be so that the member is not skilled at the task yet gets a rank or promotion, which is undesirable. When an employee experiences that their work outcomes are not appreciated and go unrecognized despite their immense effort, a passive-aggressive nature develops with the team members. The flow of ideas and creativity becomes stagnant, and the well-knitted group of hardworking members stops sharing thoughts, thus decreasing the productivity of the organization, and gradually, absenteeism and turnover rate increase.

- **Occupational stress and burnout-** This distress related to one's occupation or job, does not feel supported by the supervisors or co-workers, long working hours, overburdened tasks, and short deadlines. Sometimes the work pressure is dragged from the workplace to the home to meet the workload and deadlines. Most offices use digital technologies to work, such as laptops, monitors, projectors, etc. This prolonged exposure to the screen may lead to problems such as headaches, vision problems, joint pains, and many others. For jobs that mainly require paper pen tasks like clerical jobs and teachers to some extent, they might often face spinal cord issues, spondylitis, migraine, and many others, which might occur due to wrong sitting postures and incorrect table chair distance. These may seem minor issues, but when ignored, they might lead to fatal and serious incurable diseases. Overburden of work often leads to severe physical breakdowns, including stroke, cardiac arrest, and myocarditis. This is referred to as occupational burnout. A study by World Health Organization and International Labour Organization in 2016 found that prolonged exposure to work increases psycho-social occupational stress. Occupational risk factors became the largest attributable disease burden, and an estimation of about 745000 workers died from ischemic heart disease and stroke events.

Study

A small study was conducted in which 16 participants were chosen from 27 to 37 years of age, irrespective of their gender, for the test Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire was used. At first verbal consent was taken from each participant, and then a Google form was shared. The form consisted of basic introductory questions such as the participant's name, age, gender, and work type. Then followed, descriptive types of questions were asked, like if the person can maintain a work-life balance if the person is stressed in professional life, if not, or the probable reasons for the same. The participants with very low or no stress at the workplace were screened out of the study, and the study was conducted on the ones who faced some or major stress. Then a 10 minutes mindfulness meditation video by Daily Calm was sent to each and every subject. The participants were instructed to listen to the video

every five successive nights before going to bed, and no usage of mobile phones or other gadgets was allowed, and they were monitored accordingly. On the sixth day, the following subjects were sent another set of Google forms with the same FFMQ questionnaire and asked to fill up within that day.

Tools

Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) was used for analysis. This questionnaire is a multifactorial scale developed by Baer et al. (2006). The five factors measured by FFMQ are observation, description, mindful actions, non-judgmental inner experience, and non-reactivity to inner experience. The questionnaire consists of 39 questions, and it is a 5-point rating scale where one indicates never or very rarely true, two indicates rarely true, three indicates sometimes true, four often indicates true, and five indicates very often or always true. Overall, the mindfulness facets of this questionnaire correlated with related constructs, including depressive symptoms, anxiety symptoms, and employees' overall psychological well-being, including work-life and workplace well-being.

RESULTS

Table 1.0: The table below shows the mean value of the group before and after the practice of mindfulness meditation and the corresponding t test score:

Type	Mean value	t test score	Significance level
Before the practice	1.26	-2.045	0.05
After the practice	1.40		

DISCUSSION

From the above score table, it can be seen that the mean value of the test before the meditation practice is 1.26, and the mean value after the meditation practice is 1.40; this indicates that the total mindfulness score after administering the meditation is more than the score before administration of meditation. Also, the paired sample t-test score for the group before and after the meditation practice is -2.045, and it is significant at 0.05 level. The results thus reveal that with the help of practicing mindfulness meditation, the employees could manage and regulate their emotions; it can also help them in restoring mental balance and regain emotional resilience. In research from Youssef and Luthans, 2007, two studies with 1032 and 232 participants were taken, and the impact of hope, optimism, and resilience on desired work-related employee outcomes. (Youssef and Luthans (2007). Hence it can be said that mindfulness meditation can be effectively used by various organizations and institutions both private and government sectors for the well being of the employees. The study shows that the attributes of positive psychology relate to and contributes unique variance to the outcomes. It suggested that there is a significant relationship between hope, optimism, resilience, and employee work outcomes. Another study conducted by Jnaneswar K, M.M. Sulphey in 2021, on 333 employees of various organizations in India. It was found that mindfulness and self-compassion influenced the mental well being of employees. Also, the results revealed that there is a significant relationship between mindfulness and self-compassion. (Jnaneswar and Sulphey ,2021). It is observed that mindfulness practices train a person to be opening about self, to be aware of present moment experience. It fosters performance and self-regulation of the employees. (Brown , Ryan,&Creswell,2007; Glomb, Yang, Bono &Du). Another study conducted by Jayanth Narayan, Garland, 2015, on employees of Multinational companies based in major Indian sites, showed that more mindfulness among employees lowered the employee turnover rates, this might be because, mindfulness helps employees to stay focused and concentrated in their work and enables them to deal probable causes that has the potentiality to disrupt progress in organisational

sectors. Mindfulness helps the employees to lower their emotional exhaustion which mediated the relationship between mindfulness and job turnover intentions. Garland et al. (2015) Another study was conducted in the year 2019, by Shaad Habeeb, on 433 employees from Banking, Finance, and Insurance services (BFSI) sectors in India. The study revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between workplace spirituality and job performance. (Habeeb ,2019). Hence it can be stated that mindfulness helps a person to enhance their spiritual character and enable them to calm their mind and concentrate and come up with effective and efficient way of dealing with problems in an organisation.

Limitations of the Study

As the sample size was small, an abundant number of data could not be collected, and hence it cannot be generalized. Since the total number of days taken for practicing mindfulness was less, all the domains of mindfulness could not be explored, and an overview of the impact of mindfulness was found. In the future, this study can be further explored and expanded with more number of participants and more time.

CONCLUSION

Hence it can be concluded that with the help of practicing mindfulness meditation, employees can manage and regulate their emotions, and it can also help them in restoring mental balance and regain emotional resilience. Therefore, Employee Assistance Programming can implement mindfulness meditation practices for the well-being of the employees.

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