Special Issue Call for papers

Working in the Present Moment: Understanding Mindfulness in Organizations

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Background and Rationale for the Special Issue

Mindfulness at work is currently in vogue (Kudesia, 2019). Many multinationals have incorporated mindfulness training into their work cultures as a means of improving employee wellbeing (Ehlrich, 2017; Schootstra, Deichmann & Dolgova, 2017). Blogs, popular press articles and websites continue to promote anecdotal evidence and practitioner views on the benefits of mindfulness for individuals' health and happiness in and outside of work. Alongside these practice-based developments, there is also a growing scholarly interest in understanding and assessing the impact of mindfulness in the field of organizational behavior (Sutcliffe, Vogus & Dane, 2016). In recent years, the number of academic books (e.g., Chapman-Clarke, 2016; Purser, Forbes & Burke, 2016) and journal publications (e.g., Good et al., 2016; Hafenbrack & Vohs, 2018; Hyland, Lee & Mills, 2015; Kudesia, 2019; Liang et al., 2018; Long & Christian, 2015; Reina & Kudesia, 2020; Sutcliffe, Vogus & Dane, 2016 Thoroughgood, Sawyer & Webster, 2020) on this topic have increased.

Originating from Buddhist and other Eastern spiritual traditions (Dane, 2011; Ehrlich, 2017), mindfulness relates to maintaining a receptive attention to and awareness of present events and experience (Karremans, Schellekens & Kappen, 2017; Yu & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2019). It is "being attentive to and aware of what is taking place in the present" (Brown & Ryan, 2003, p. 822). To be mindful is to be present, open and fully engaged (Ehrlich, 2017; Hafenbrack & Vohs, 2018) to one's intrapsychic and to external environmental phenomena (Dane, 2011). The practice has existed for thousands of years but only recently entered the secular domain. Mindfulness historically is closely associated with and said to be developed through the long-term practice of meditation. However, recent scholarly dialogue suggests that mindfulness is a broadly accessible state (Karremans, Schellekens & Kappen, 2017) amenable to rapid development through a variety of means. This is good news for management because it shows the capacity to apply mindfulness training and practice to the work environment without needing to follow stringent regimes of meditation or religious beliefs.

Evidence-based research on mindfulness in organizations remains nascent (Sutcliffe, Vogus, & Dane, 2016). The literature is fragmented and scattered with large theoretical and empirical gaps existing. For example, Karremans and colleagues (2017) state that researchers should examine how mindfulness affects relationship processes between different groups of people, including co-workers. Thus, the area is ripe for and in urgent need of theory building and empirical research. At the moment, we know little about why and how mindfulness might

be useful for management and organizations. The few empirical studies conducted on mindfulness at work show promising results for reducing employees' emotional exhaustion, increasing job satisfaction and performance (Hülsheger, Alberts, Feinholdt, & Lang, 2013), reducing turnover intentions (Dane & Brummel, 2014), and promoting insight-based problem solving (Ostafin & Kassman, 2012). Moreover, when employed as an emotion management technique, mindfulness can reduce rumination, which theoretically can buffer people from absorbing negative emotions and their harmful effects (Petitta, Jiang & Härtel, 2017). These findings come at a time when organizations face increasingly new and complex challenges in the form of unanticipated and rapid change, issues related to performance and productivity and increased competition all of which severely challenge employee well-being. Thus, there is a need to utilize novel and innovative strategies to help employees face these challenges effectively. Positive Organizational Behavior (POB: Luthans, 2002a, 2002b) advocates the development of employees' strengths to increase their wellbeing. We believe mindfulness at work as one strength employees can develop and use to face challenges and thrive in a changing world.

Objectives of the Special Issue

With this special issue, we seek to advance interdisciplinary research and theory on how and why mindfulness is being used at work and understand the boundary conditions and mechanisms underpinning these. This special issue thus aims to unpack the antecedents, processes, and outcomes of mindfulness at work to further advance our knowledge and understanding of this construct within organizational contexts. Collectively, the articles in the special issue will facilitate the development of mindfulness research and theory in the context of employees, groups, leaders and organizations and lead to wider discussions and a future research agenda on the use of mindfulness within organizations. We believe that questions of the kind that follow are worthy of investigation for deepening our understanding of this important construct and for further developing it to harness its positive power. They may be addressed through multiple-levels of analyses, quantitative, qualitative and mixed-methods cross-sectional and longitudinal research designs in different work contexts.

Questions that might be addressed by papers in this special issue call (by no means exhaustive) include:

- What is the mindfulness construct? What are its dimensions, what levels of analysis can it operate at, and how is it differentiated from similar constructs?
- What is the relationship to mindfulness as a construct and the wider social, cultural and physical context of the organization?
- What are the antecedents of mindfulness in organizational contexts? What is the process by which these antecedents translate into mindfulness? How can organizations further develop these antecedents?
- What are the barriers or challenges to mindfulness in organizations? How can organizations identify these and overcome them?

- Are some employees more mindful than others? What impact does employee mindfulness have on their emotions, attitudes and behavior within work contexts?
- Can mindfulness be developed at the workgroup level? If so, how and with what outcomes and boundary conditions?
- Is mindfulness important for leaders, and if so, what aspects, why, how, and under what conditions?
- Can an organization have a climate for mindfulness, and if so, how does this develop and with what consequences?
- Can mindfulness possibly harm employees, work groups and organizations? If so, what antecedents and conditions lead to such negative outcomes?
- How are mindfulness tools being used in business school programs, why, and with what effects on educational outcomes? What are the implications for improving management education and development?
- What methodological tools can be used to better measure mindfulness at work? For example, can daily diary studies and Experience Sampling Methods capture the process of mindfulness? How might neuroscience approaches contribute to mindfulness measurement?

Papers should make a new contribution to our understanding of the place mindfulness can play in making workplaces more effective and healthier as well as any downsides or potential for misuse. Empirically-based papers are especially welcome, but strong, insightful theoretical and conceptual papers that provide a strong foundation for further research will be considered.

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