

EDITORIAL

## Mindfulness, Emotions and Leadership

Oluremi B. Ayoko

UQ Business School and Editor-in-Chief, JMO

Corresponding author: Oluremi B. Ayoko, E-mail: [r.ayoko@business.uq.edu.au](mailto:r.ayoko@business.uq.edu.au)

The interest in mindfulness practice and research has surged dramatically in the last decade. Especially, practitioners continue to incorporate mindfulness (i.e., the “receptive attention to and awareness of present events and experience” (Brown et al., 2007, p. 212; Quaglia, Brown et al., 2015), into their daily programs to improve organisational functions and processes (Levett et al., 2019). For example, organisations like Google, AstraZeneca and Nike are known for their mindfulness programs and in Australia, companies like Medibank and Smiling Mind (a not-for-profit organisation) are partnering to bring mindfulness to more people. Similarly, mindfulness scholars have multiplied while the literature is rapidly evolving, spreading across disciplines, journals, and other research outlets. In their article, Good and colleagues (2016) reported over 4000 scholarly articles on mindfulness. The above is a testament to the growth of mindfulness practice and research.

Mindfulness emerged from the Buddhist mental training that has existed for a few centuries. By the 1970s, it started to capture people’s attention as therapeutic for patients with chronic illness (see Kabat-Zinn, 2003). However, by the 1990s, Weick and Roberts (1993) introduced mindfulness to management literature and by 2023, the research on mindfulness had deepened and gone beyond the mindfulness as sourced from the field of Buddhism (Paul et al., 2013).

Bishop and colleagues (2004) describe mindfulness as the highest level of situational awareness and self-awareness and is usually about analysing events without judgment. Generally, it initially refers to stabilising the mind and engaging what is happening in the body by not forgetting or letting it disappear (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). In this regard, mindfulness involves individuals processing their experiences (Brown et al., 2007) by consciously attending to internal thoughts, emotions, or external stimuli. In this regard, self-talk, emotions, impulses to act, and mental images are hallmarks of consciousness. Altogether, mindfulness essentially signifies a quality of consciousness that is open and particularly sensitive toward what is happening in the current or immediate surroundings (See Brown et al., 2007; Dane, 2011), including routine activities (Frigotto et al., 2015).

We know mindfulness has a widespread positive impact on human functioning (Brown et al., 2007), such as coping with burnout and improving job satisfaction (Charoensukmongkol, 2013). Empirical research suggests that mindfulness positively impacts cognition, emotions, and behaviour; all of these culminate in improved workplace functioning (Glomb et al., 2011). With regards to the connection between mindfulness and emotions, mindfulness training shortens time to peak arousal in a sample of patients with social anxiety (Goldin & Gross, 2010) while trait mindfulness (a dispositional tendency toward mindfulness, Glomb et al., 2011) dampens an emotional reaction to positive stimuli (see Brown, Goodman & Inzlicht, 2013). A recent meta-analysis revealed that mindfulness training is linked with less harmful and more positive emotional tones (Eberth & Sedlmeier, 2012), which are critical for daily workplace climate.

Based on the premise that mindfulness positively impacts organisational processes and functioning (Brown et al., 2007), the collection of articles in our current issue (29.2) interrogates the nexus between mindfulness, emotions, and leadership. First, we present a lead and invited article, “Mindfulness and Emotion: A Five-Level Analysis”, where the authors, Ashkanasy and Kay, mapped mindfulness onto Ashkanasy’s five-level of emotions in the workplace (FLMEW; (see Ashkanasy, 2003a).

Ashkanasy and Kay's article begins with an introduction to FLMEW, where Level 1 (within-person emotions) is mapped onto mindfulness as an ephemeral psychological state like emotions and moods. Level 2 (between persons) refers to individual differences in personality and temperament, and at this level, mindfulness is conceived and measured as a stable dispositional trait associated with emotional intelligence and trait affectivity. At level 3, interpersonal relationships and how emotions are perceived and communicated are central. Here mindfulness is about how mindful people interact with others, mainly how mindfulness attenuates hostile emotions and behaviours. FLMEW at level 4 examines emotions at the team level, and predominantly the connection with team processes and leadership. In this context, team mindfulness enhances the positive relationship between mindful individuals and stress at work. Level 5 examines the whole organisation, and here, organisational climate and culture are the focus of attention. The authors propose that positive affective organisational climate and culture relate to mindfulness. The paper is concluded with the implications for organisations and future research agendas. The rest of the current issue is a collection of articles on various aspects of emotions, mindfulness, and leadership and are categorised into three major subheadings: Emotions, mindfulness, and the individuals; mindfulness, emotions, and supervisors and mindfulness, emotions, and leadership. We begin with the first category.

### **Emotions, mindfulness, and the individuals**

Three articles in this issue examine emotions and mindfulness at the individual level. The article "Individual Differences and emotional labour: the effects of core self-evaluations on Depersonalisation" is written by Pujol-Cols, Dabos, and Lazzaro-Salazar. The paper examines the role of core self-evaluations (CSEs) in the nexus between emotional demands, emotional dissonance, and depersonalisation at work. Results from data collected from 423 teachers indicated that individuals with more positive CSEs tended to perceive the emotional aspects of their job as less demanding and, therefore, less likely to experience emotional dissonance and depersonalisation. The implications for practice and future research are discussed.

Next, the paper "The link between fear about COVID-19 and insomnia: mediated by economic concerns and psychological distress, moderated by mindfulness" is by De Clercq, Haq, Azeem and Khalid and proposes mediating roles of employees' economic concerns and psychological distress and a moderating role of mindfulness in this process. In two studies, the authors found that sleep quality worsens the risk for employees who experience fear during a pandemic crisis, but this can be attenuated by mindfulness.

In the "Under Threat: Emotional and behavioural responses to occupational identity threat" paper, Yang and Zhang argue that occupational identity threat promotes negative emotion and feedback-seeking behaviour while negative emotion mediates the relationship between occupational identity threat and feedback-seeking behaviour. Moreover, employee performance self-esteem strengthens both the direct effect of occupational identity threat on negative emotion and the indirect effect of occupational identity threat on feedback-seeking behaviour through negative emotion. They found support for the above predictions.

### **Mindfulness, emotions, and supervisors**

Following on, Rafique, in "Supervisor role overload and emotional exhaustion as antecedents of supervisor incivility: The role of time consciousness", draws on affective events theory to identify how role overload may cause supervisors' uncivil behaviour towards their subordinates in the project environment. Specifically, Rafique examines the mediating role of emotional exhaustion and the moderating effect of time consciousness in the relationship between a supervisor's role overload and supervisor incivility. Data from 296 supervisor-subordinate dyads revealed that supervisor role overload and emotional exhaustion are positively related to supervisor incivility, while emotional exhaustion mediated this relationship. Also, time consciousness moderated the link between supervisor role overload and emotional exhaustion. The implications for theory and practice are discussed.

Additionally, Tariq, Obaid, Burhan Subhan and Babar's article "Can't stop eating my feelings: the maladaptive responses of abused employees toward abusive supervision" highlights the maladaptive responses of subordinates to abusive supervision. Adopting the self-regulatory theory as an anchor, the paper investigates the maladaptive response of subordinates to the outcomes of abusive supervision, namely subordinate overeating behaviour. The diary data from 115 employees and 1150 daily surveys revealed that the subordinate's perceptions of abusive supervision instil a negative mood, which is linked with losing control over employees' behavioural intentions toward overeating behaviour. The authors delineated the future directions for research in this area.

Still, on abusive supervision, our next article, "External observers' reactions to abusive supervision in the workplace: The impact of racial differences" by Gligor, Bozkurt and Gligor, examines the external observer's protective behaviours across four possible abusive supervisor-abused employee racial scenarios. Findings revealed that external observers' willingness to protect an abused employee depends on the abused employee's and the abusive supervisor's race.

### Mindfulness, emotions, and leadership

While the connection between emotions and leadership is already established (e.g., see Ayoko & Callan, 2010; Ayoko & Konrad, 2012; Zineldin & Hytter, 2012). However, the association between mindfulness and leadership is emerging. Reb et al. (2014) found that leaders' trait mindfulness was positively associated with employees' work-life balance, job satisfaction, citizenship behaviours, and job performance but negatively related to employee exhaustion and deviance. Moreover, psychological need satisfaction mediated many of the above relationships. Another study (Liang et al., 2016) found that dispositional mindfulness among supervisors reduced the likelihood that hostility toward subordinates would be expressed as abuse; the authors attributed this finding to supervisors' increased attention to and awareness of their hostility as well as superior self-regulatory capacity.

Ayoko, Tan and Li, in their article, "Leader-follower interpersonal behaviours, emotional regulation and LMX quality", investigate how a leader's perception of a follower's behaviours may impact the follower's perception of a leader's behaviours, which in turn, may relate to a leader's rating of the LMX quality. Their multisource data from 315 leader-member dyads in 27 military teams demonstrated that a leader's perception of a follower was related to the follower's assessment of a leader's behaviours and was, in turn, positively related to how the leader rated their LMX quality. Additionally, the leaders' emotional reappraisal moderated the link between a follower's perception of the leader's behaviours and leader rated LMX quality.

Next, in the article "Mindfulness older workers and relational leadership", the authors Roche, Shang, Bentley, Catley, Blackwood, Teo and Sutton examine the influence of older workers' mindfulness on their job engagement, job satisfaction and turnover intentions. They also address practical leadership approaches for older workers, comparing two positive relational leadership styles, leader-member exchange and leader autonomy support. Data from 1,237 participants in 28 organisations showed that mindful older workers enjoy greater well-being and are discerning of the leadership styles that are most beneficial for their engagement, satisfaction, and intentions to stay within the organisation. Similarly, mindful older workers exhibit greater work well-being than non-mindful workers. The implications for theory and organisational leaders are discussed.

Finally, we know that mindfulness-based mentoring intervention can be a treatment for teams working with in-patients (Singh et al., 2006) because they facilitate active listening, more focused discussion and collaboration, and tremendous respect among team members. Similarly, mindfulness may support relational team processes, such as cohesion, through improved conflict management (see Barnes et al., 2007), while mindfulness training may bolster perspective-taking (Krasner et al., 2009) that may be crucial for negotiation (Galinsky, Maddux, Gilin, & White, 2008) and task conflict resolution. Additionally, the outcomes of a study by Kay and Skarlicki (2020) revealed that mindfulness facilitates constructive conflict management by increasing collaboration and reducing avoidance.

The last article of this issue, “Does maximum emotional intelligence facilitate team organisational citizenship behaviours: A perspective of integrating strategic core roles and multilevel theory”, Zhang, Li, & Wang address how maximum emotional intelligence members can contribute to the emergence of team-level organisational citizenship behaviour. Data from 129 project teams showed that the relationship of maximum emotional intelligence with team-level organisational citizenship behaviour is mediated by intrateam trust. This relationship is more robust for lower levels of emotional intelligence diversity and trust divergence than for higher levels of diversity and divergence. The paper has some implications for organisations attempting to harness the practical value of emotional intelligence.

## Conclusion

Emotions, mindfulness, and leadership are interrelated and connected. We know emotions are primarily linked to organisational behaviours such as emotional regulation and leadership (see Fisk & Friensen, 2012). For example, unhappy employees tend to be disconnected from work (Frost, 2003). Likewise, mindfulness is associated with behavioural change. In this regard, mindfulness has been shown to help individuals quit smoking (a behaviour that is deeply ingrained and often automatised) by reducing cigarette cravings (Westbrook et al., 2013) and by breaking the connection between craving and smoking (Elwafi et al., 2013). The above shows that the practitioners’ and researchers’ interest in mindfulness will continue to grow.

Nevertheless, mindfulness research is still plagued with some challenges. Grossman (2019) argues that while mindfulness is gaining popularity in organisational research, Buddhist mindfulness is predicated on the long-term cultivation of introspective awareness of lived experiences that are not highly accessible to empirical studies. Furthermore, the conceptualisation of the mindfulness construct is still being refined, and there is tension between the science of mindfulness and the practice of mindfulness (Grossman, 2019). In this respect, more longitudinal studies are warranted in future research not only to progress the refinement of mindfulness as a construct and clarify its multifaceted dimensions but also to reconcile the science and the practice of mindfulness, especially as it relates to organisational behaviours and outcomes.

Moreover, how can we leverage the study of mindfulness in organisations with technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI)? There are suggestions that digital mindfulness may be the path forward in mindfulness research. Such training can enhance the accessibility, standardisation, personalisation, and efficacy of the training program (Mrazek et al., 2019). Future research should explore the possible connection between mindfulness, emotions, and technologies such as AI and the robotics.

Our lead article suggests that mindfulness can be mapped to different levels of emotions and at different organisational levels and identified several ways our understanding of the nexus between mindfulness and emotions can be deepened. In addition to these suggestions, a multi-method examination of the connection between mindfulness, emotions, and organizational consequences and in different work contexts would significantly improve our understanding of how these constructs are meshed and embedded both in theory and practice.

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