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Mindfulness: Principles and applications for work and life balance

Topic graduating project

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Rennes, France

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Table of contents

Abstract	6
Keywords	7
Resumen	8
Palabras Clave	9
1. Introduction and Business Problem	10
2. Literature Review of Topic	12
2.1 History and cultural context	12
2.2 Concept	14
2.3 Mindfulness in Business	16
2.4 Work and life balance	22
3. Summary of the current study	25
3.1. Data collected	26
3.2 Methodology of analysis	27
3.3 Descriptive coding approach	27
4 Results	28
4.1 General insights of mindfulness	29
4.2 Organizations permeated by mindfulness and work-life balance	33
5 Conclusions & Practical Recommendations	36
6 Limitation and Future Directions	39
7. Bibliography	41

Table of figures

Figure 1: "Mindfulness": journal articles published by year: 1980-2019.....	13
Figure 2: Dynamics of work stress.	17
Figure 3: Paths from mindfulness to creativity.....	21
Figure 4: Factors affecting work life balance.	23
Figure 5: Factors for a work-life balance.....	24

Abstract

Mindfulness is a vogue topic that has attracted the interest of many scholar people in fields of study such as medicine, psychology, business, education, among others; this has led to an increase in researches and the empirical investigations in the latest years. This paper will show literature review along with some research conclusions that can support the history of mindfulness, its roots, why it started being a trending topic and what more concerns this study: how mindfulness can intervene in the balance between work and life. Besides this, the paper explains many concepts that different authors and scholars had given to the term mindfulness in general scopes and organizations as well. Moreover, it tries to explain the importance and uses that many authors and scholars have founded for mindfulness related with the increasing of stress reduction while using mindfulness-based training and the link between the mindfulness practices and life-work balance. To develop the principal goal of this paper that explains what is mindfulness and its applications for a life-work balance, we pursue an analysis of different interviews to experts and scholars that have specific knowledge of this topic using a qualitative model: interviews with an inductive approach in re-explore of a research topic and using descriptive coding for the analysis. At the end of this dissertation, the goal is to be closer to an explanation of why is important the mindfulness and its applications looking for a work-life balance.

Keywords

Mindfulness, awareness, work, life, balance, coding, well-being, consciousness, practice, meditation, workplace, stress.

Resumen

El Mindfulness es un tema de tendencia que ha atraído el interés de muchos académicos en campos de estudio como la medicina, la psicología, los negocios, la educación, entre otros; esto ha llevado a un aumento de las investigaciones y las investigaciones empíricas en los últimos años. Este artículo mostrará una revisión de la literatura junto con algunas conclusiones de investigación que pueden respaldar la historia de la atención plena, sus raíces, por qué empezó a ser un tema en tendencia y lo que más preocupa a este estudio: cómo el mindfulness puede intervenir en el equilibrio entre el trabajo y la vida. Además de esto, el artículo explica muchos conceptos que diferentes autores y académicos han dado al término mindfulness también en ámbitos y organizaciones generales. Además, trata de explicar la importancia y los usos que muchos autores y académicos han fundado para el mindfulness relacionados con el aumento de la reducción del estrés al utilizar el entrenamiento basado en el mindfulness y el vínculo entre las prácticas de mindfulness y el equilibrio vida-trabajo. Para desarrollar el objetivo principal de este trabajo que explica qué es el mindfulness y sus aplicaciones para el equilibrio vida-trabajo, se realiza un análisis de diferentes entrevistas a expertos y académicos que tienen conocimientos específicos de este tema utilizando un modelo cualitativo: entrevistas con un enfoque inductivo en la re-exploración de un tema de investigación y usando codificación descriptiva para el análisis. Al final de esta disertación, el objetivo es estar más cerca de una explicación de por qué es importante el mindfulness y sus aplicaciones buscando un equilibrio entre la vida laboral y personal.

Palabras Clave

Mindfulness, Conciencia, Trabajo, Vida, Equilibrio, Bienestar, Práctica, Meditación, Lugar de trabajo, Estrés.

1. Introduction and Business Problem

The balance of work-life and personal life is a topic that has more relevance in many fields nowadays. As the world has accelerated its rhythm due to many factors and having the technology as one of the most important of those, people have been able to automate tasks that took a lot of their time, think that they would have more time for develop activities different from make their job like to share time with their families or go back to practising a forgotten hobby. But that is not happening. It is not a secret that in the last decades the stress levels in different activities of the human being has increased, resulting in people's sickness, demotivation, unhappiness, and an endless list of negative consequences. Today the people, scholars, companies, universities are turning to an era in which the most important thing is the well-being of the human being from their personal life until their life at work or school. A concept like mindfulness has a representative meaning in this search for well-being. Its importance has increased because today, people are focusing on the well-being and the balance of their work and life, and how this can help them to improve their development in each one of their tasks.

Mindfulness is “a state of nonjudgmental attentiveness to and awareness of moment-to-moment experiences” (Bishop et al., 2004). In modern psychology, mindfulness is “an approach for increasing awareness and responding skillfully to mental processes that contribute to emotional distress and maladaptive behaviour. (Bishop et al., 2004). This term has its concerns both in

clinical samples and non-clinical samples (Hülshagaer et al., 2013). In the non-clinical sample, experts had been focused and affirm mindfulness as a trait that concerns psychological functioning and well-being. (Hülshagaer et al., 2013).

Specifically, in the organizational environment, this term had taken more and more importance in the last years. According to Allen (2012), mindfulness has a relevant role in work-related outcomes like the degree of turnover and task performance. Thus, mindfulness is an important asset in today's organizations because as Allen (2012) said, plenty awareness in each moment or stage of human's life could get better performance in the same. Many studies have been done in different kind of companies that try to explain the relation between mindfulness and employee's well-being, just like the one shown by Glomb et al. (2011).

Furthermore, according to Malinowski (2015) other studies have shown that mindfulness predicts work engagement and general well-being. Malinowski (2015) also remarks that positively, mindfulness work in things such as positive affect, hope, and optimism. Meanwhile, mindfulness in a negative way can be related to emotional exhaustion (Hülshagaer et al., 2013).

During all this academic dissertation is going to be reviewed some previous literature review on mindfulness: its history and cultural context, the concept and practices, the importance of mindfulness in business, and work and life balance. Moreover, a qualitative approach based on a re-exploration of a research topic will be analyzed and will explain the importance of mindfulness and its relationship with work-life balance. At the end, this dissertation has as the main goal to

give some conclusions and recommendations, obtained from all the previous-explained work, that can be useful for future researches on behalf of the organizations or further academic purposes.

2. Literature Review of Topic

2.1 History and cultural context

The importance of mindfulness in the latest years had an increase in a notorious way in many fields like science and organizations. But this term is much older than that. According to Glomb et al.(2011), Mindfulness as a term has its roots in the Buddhist word “sati” which means intentness of mind; such aspect has been a central aspect to Buddhist mental training through many centuries (Good et al., 2015). Moreover, nowadays it is used for many fields far from religion and its importance is not only notorious in eastern countries but the whole world has turned its eyes on it. In the latest years of the 1970s, it started to be popular due to its use as a therapy tool for medical patients with chronic illness (Good et al., 2015) and as a technique for the reduction of stress in non-clinical patients (Hülshagaer et al., 2013).

Proof of the increased popularity of mindfulness in the following figure (Figure 1), developed by the American Mindfulness Research Association (2019) which shows that the number of mindfulness publications has increased per year from 1980 to 2019. From the graph, we can see the abrupt growth that the subject of mindfulness has had in terms of research, which is directly proportional to the popularity and increase of interest in it.

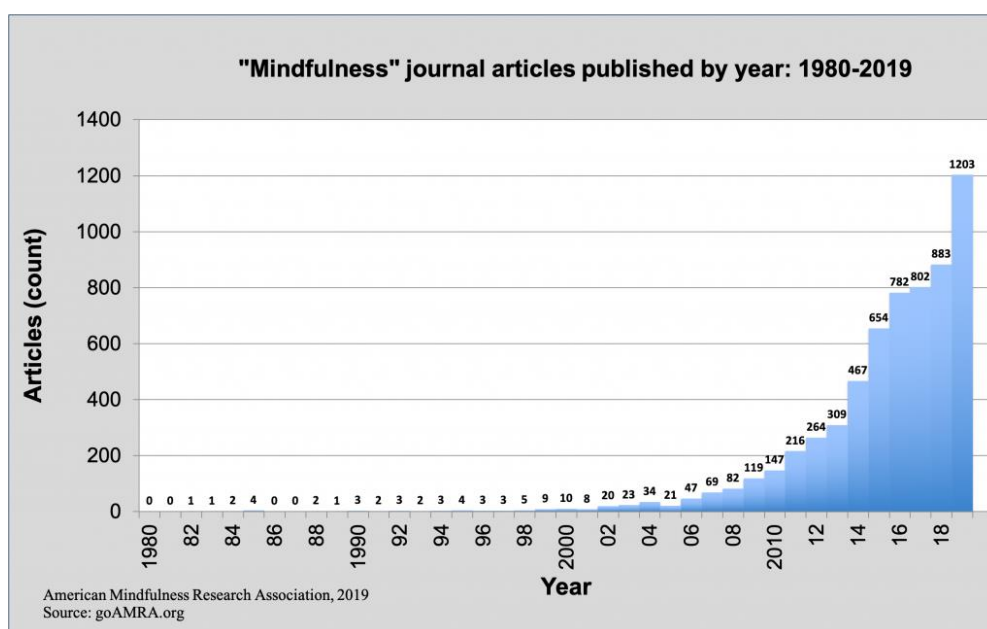


FIGURE 1. "MINDFULNESS": JOURNAL ARTICLES PUBLISHED BY YEAR: 1980-2019.

Source: American Mindfulness Research Association. (2019). Mindfulness journal articles publications by year:1980-1990 [Table].

According to Kirmayer (2015), the researches and literature of mindfulness as a topic has increased exponentially in the latest twenty years. People involved in different industries and with different professions have been attracted to this topic as practising it since has allowed people to cure principal mental health problems such as pain, depression, anxiety and stress reduction. Many of the research done nowadays has been in the field of psychiatry and mental health but beyond

this, mindfulness is being applied in different paths such as sports, education, and business. (Kirmayer, 2015)

2.2 Concept

Mindfulness is “a state of nonjudgmental attentiveness to and awareness of moment-to-moment experiences” (Bishop et al., 2004). Concepts like attention and awareness are pillars in mindfulness matters considering that the integration of these two conceptions helped in the distinguish of the main notion of mindfulness (Good, 2015). Other authors like Brown et al. (2007) describe mindfulness as a “receptive attention to and awareness of present events and experience” that could be a general concept of the term because it does not clarify its relationship with a life-work balance. Even mindfulness as a topic has been increasing its researches by organization and healthcare scholars, is clear that is a topic that is not complete clarify, especially the explanation of how mindfulness work on organizations (Kudesia, 2017).

The concept of mindfulness had been used to refer to a variety of traits, practices, and processes (Bishop, 2004) but is also common that authors like Glomb et al. (2011) define mindfulness as a process of pay attention of things both internal and external that happen to a person without judgement or evaluation and also specifies that even awareness and attention are the heart of mindfulness, it is necessary as well as to pay attention to stimuli without any judge, memories or

any other mind manipulation. On the other hand, Brown & Ryan (2003) specifies that mindfulness is a state of consciousness within-individual variation in mindfulness over time, and adding to this, they clarify that mindfulness also can be enhanced through practices like the meditation. Referring to what was said by Kabat-Zinn (2004), mindfulness can be expressed as the fact of pay attention on purpose in the current moment and, agreeing with what other experts had said, with a non-judgmental condition.

Following the idea of Bostock et al. (2018) which showcased that mindfulness came from being “mindful” that is a state of a person in which he is paying plenty of attention to one situation or matter in the present moment and with a non-judgmental acceptance. Moreover, the concept of mindfulness is related to metacognition concept that is the process by which people monitor and adjust their mode of information processing to their actual situation (Kudesia, 2017). Furthermore, the metaanalyses have reported that plenty of use of mindfulness interventions decreases the stress level of non-clinical patients. (Bostock et al., 2018)

As the awareness of mindfulness has increased in many fields and many industries, the interest in different practices have grown as well. One strong practice of mindfulness is a meditation practice. This type of practice is used in different fields of life from school, health, business, and so on. According to Birtwell et al. (2018), mindfulness practices are divided into formal and informal practices. As per the opinion of the mentioned author, the formal mindfulness practices arise when the person who is developing the mindfulness is engaged with the practice while the

informal approach is related with small actions that people do in their daily life but that includes mindfulness subconsciously like a mindfulness, talk, walk or breath.

2.3 Mindfulness in Business

For the current dissertation, the business field and its relationship with mindfulness are of high importance. Mindfulness at this moment is a vogue topic within the organization researches. According to Kudesia (2017), “Over 13% of the working population has received some mindfulness training” so, they explain that this trending topic has involved many and many scholars in the last years to research on it. Good et al. (2015) also affirmed that organizations such as Google, Aetna, Mayo Clinic, and the U.S. Army use mindfulness training to improve the operations within the workplace. Additionally, Kersemaekers et al. (2018) affirm that many mindfulness training has been popularly adopted in workplace environments because of its help to improve worker well-being and productivity.

The most relevant negative human behaviours in today’s workplaces are the workplace-related stress, depression and anxiety. The non-treated stress can lead to several mental problems to the employees and, looking in the organization’s eyes, the stress can also be the cause of a significant

reduction in the productivity of the organization. For Kersemaekers et al. (2018), the human costs and economic costs related with stress problems can be significantly high for a company.

These costs and the related stress sources had been explained by Cartwright and Cooper and it is shown in the figure below (*Figure 2*). In this figure, it can be observed that there are many stress sources within a workplace such as relationships at work, career development, organizational climate and many more. These sources can result in not only individual symptoms of stress but also organizational symptoms. The first one is related with health issues that can be faced by the employee caused by the stress meanwhile the second one is linked with company outcomes like absenteeism, turnover of the company and quality of the developing job.

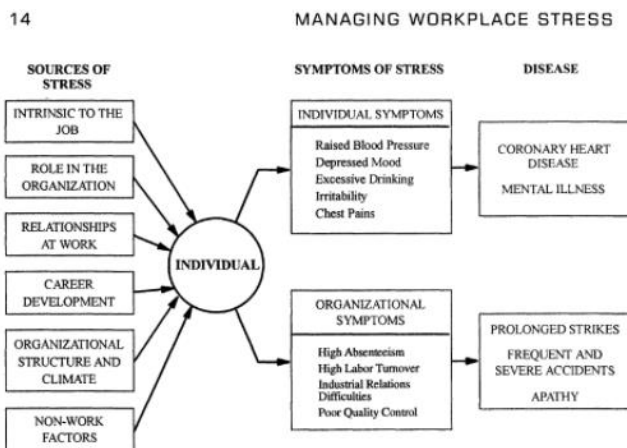


FIGURE 2. *DYNAMICS OF WORK STRESS.*

Source: Cartwright, S. & Cooper, Carry L. (1997). Dynamics of work stress [Figure]

Based on therapeutic researches, mindfulness had been used as a tool for stress reduction used to assist medical patients (Glomb et al., 2011). And according to Jamieson & Tuckey (2017), there

is a potential stress-reduction and psychological well-being while teaching mindfulness, that is why the attention to this subject has a prominent increasing accompanied by empirical support. In contrast, researchers such as Hölzel et al. (2011) have affirmed that mechanisms that can probe the decrease of the stress due to mindfulness are the improved capabilities of the people to react in a good way to high stress-level situations and enhance attention to it.

The relationship of mindfulness with performance in the workplace has been a topic highly analyzed recently by several scholars, but as it was mentioned before, it is a topic with many questions without any answer. One of the prominent matter is the link between mindfulness and workplace behaviour. Many disciplines such as psychology, neuroscience, and medicine and research each one has shown that mindfulness is directly affecting attention, cognition, emotions, and behaviours in positive ways and many landscapes (Glomb et al., 2011).

According to Good (2015), one way to understand mindfulness is to relate and to contrast the central process of organizational life with the process of the experience. Mindfulness has an experimental part which requires attention to the inner part of a human being, for example, his emotions or his thoughts. It also requires attention to external factors like stimulus or facts that surround the human being (Good, 2015). Nevertheless, Virgili (2015) affirmed that training based on mindfulness within organizations, especially in the workplace, has proved to decrease the global perception of stress in healthy adults.

However, the interventions of mindfulness within the workplace have been mainly related to psychological stress reduction but with poor empirical researches in mindfulness training as a leading tool to improve other domains like attention stability, control and efficiency leading to improve cognitive, emotional and behavioural domain (Bostock et al., 2018). Scholars like Bostock et al. (2018) had pointed that previous studies of mindfulness in the workplace have been limited by many things such as the focus in general measures of global perceived psychological stress or distress but not examining the specific construct job strain. According to Glomb et al. (2011), mindfulness can be used as a tool bringing more behavioural self-regulation that even designs and shapes the workplace. The principal link that Good (2015) describes between mindfulness and self-regulation is the decrease of the automaticity in the operations and at the workplace. He identifies it as a mental gap which exists between behaviour response and stimulus.

As suggested by Glomb et al. (2011) there is an influence of mindfulness on a range of performance categories such as job, citizenship behaviours, task, deviance, and safety performance. Managers in a middle range that had received training in mindfulness showed an increase in job performance compared with the one obtained at the beginning of his job (Shonin et al., 2014).

In the research made by Glomb (2011) is affirmed that mindfulness is linked with elements that belong to workplace performance just like ethical, prosocial, and deviant behaviour. Moreover, the same research named just before show that the influence in the performance due to the

mindfulness can be done by many ways like increasing productivity levels, decreasing performance variability, buffering performance is threatening contexts and influencing goals.

The importance of the mindfulness in the organizations goes beyond the work-place stress and problems related. One of the most important traits that a leader must have is creativity. Thanks to the creativity trait, a CEO can create strategies to be in constant change along with the market and the industry. Creativity is not just being able to create or launch a new product but the capability of creating and improving an idea, a process, a strategy. Agreeing with Kudesia (2015) who said that besides hiring individuals with creativity traits and promote and motivate people to increase their creativity, there does not exist a third way to get creative in the organizations. Mindfulness training represents a possible approach to increase the creativity at work. In the figure below (Figure 3), Kudesia (2015) express the mindfulness paths that a company should follow to result in a creative outcome.

Mindfulness component	Mechanism	Explanation	Creativity outcome
<i>Direct Paths</i>			
Discursive cognition (-)	Cognitive flexibility	Reduced reliance on evaluative linguistic forms of processing	Beneficial for problems requiring shifts in mental representations or knowledge structures
Meta-awareness (+)	Working memory	Increased ability to hold multiple constraints and potential solutions in mind simultaneously	Beneficial for complex problems with many working parts or potential solutions
Attention regulation (+)	Access to information	Increased ability to broaden or narrow one's focus, thus controlling the flow of information	Beneficial for managing the creative process over time
<i>Indirect paths</i>			
Positive affect (+)	Category breadth	Broader categorization, thus increasing the number of possible connections of ideas	Beneficial for problems that require combination or abstraction processes
Task persistence (+)	Exploration behavior	More thorough and exhaustive exploration of the solution space	Beneficial for problems that persist over time and require external verification for each potential solution
Individual differences (+)	Personality change	Greater trait openness, acceptance, etc. enable creative cognition and its behavioral antecedents	Beneficial for seeking out creative problems, accessing diverse information, and thinking flexibly

FIGURE 3. *PATHS FROM MINDFULNESS TO CREATIVITY.*

Source: Kudesia, R. S. (2015). Direct and indirect paths from mindfulness to creativity [Table].

With this, Kudesia (2015) explains the different situations in which mindfulness and its components can help to increase or reincarnate the creativity within a company.

Another important topic related to mindfulness within the companies is goals and motivation. Scholars such as Kirk et al. (2015) have affirmed that people with mindfulness trainees are less susceptible to external rewards such as money that normally are linked with workplace goal accomplishment. On the other hand, Good (2015) indicated that people with this kind of trainees are less susceptible to goal feedback.

Furthermore, Kudesia (2017) explains that there are six pathways of metacognitive practice that can be used in organizations. As a metacognitive practice, mindfulness entails the expertise that

comes in the perceptions and concepts, enabling beliefs about information processing and can stay quiet to monitor someone's mental activity. The last process, the monitoring, helps both parties (workers and companies) to strengthen their engagement with each other and with the situation they are going through. The consequences that mindfulness has, can be considered through six different pathways that are: the winning of expertise, the retaining of expertise, the articulation of expertise, noticing breakdown, directing concepts, and doubting concepts (Kudesia, 2017).

2.4 Work and life balance

Having given a general coverage of mindfulness: its roots, the concept that has been generated over time, the practices that have recently has gained popularity and the importance and benefits of using it in business and more specifically in the workplace; the term work-life balance and what it entails will be explained forth.

Work-life balance is described as the point in which a person feels fulfilled in the work and life scopes (Rahim et al. 2020). According to Lockwood (2003), Work-Life Balance is a balance in which the importance of both: a person's job and personal life are equal. In the opinion of Vyas & Shrivastava (2017), the main factors affecting work-life balance are the individual behaviours in where the person is seen from the human being's perspective and the psychological and organizational factors as its expressed in the figure below (Figure 4).

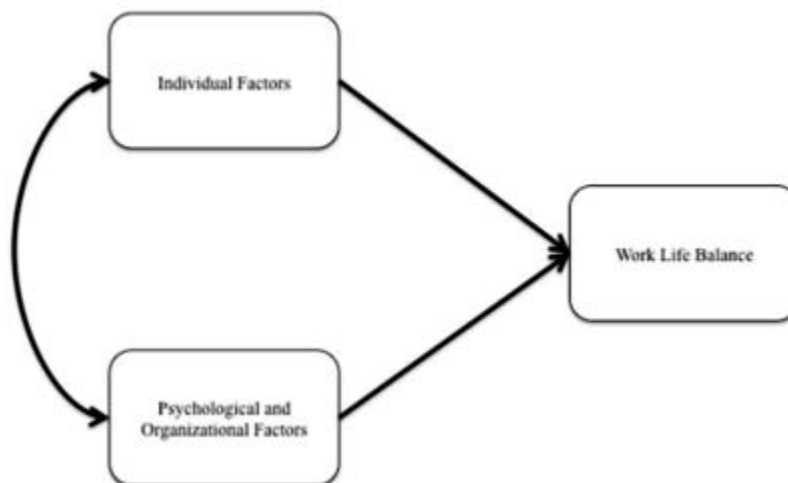


FIGURE 4. *FACTORS AFFECTING WORK-LIFE BALANCE.*

Source: Vyas, A., & Shrivastava, D. (2017). Conceptual model of the factors affecting work life balance [Figure]

The concept of work-life balance had been popular and started in the last century, when different programs were initiated to promote the companies' more fair shifts. Since then, organizations had been more and more involved in the work-life balance universe to recognize the commitments of its employees. For Dhas (2015), work-life balance is related with the creation of healthy work environments, in this order, employees will have time for their personal affairs and the company will enjoy the outputs of increased productivity and loyalty.

The work-life balance study is a topic that had been adapted for countries all around the world. Following, was said by Crompton & Lyonette (2006), the work and life balance had been a priority in the European Union, and many of the countries in this region are leaders in promoting any kind of support for their employees' balance work-life.

Opposite to this, Lacovoiu (2020) mentioned that work-life imbalance can negatively affect an employee's personal life and having negative consequences in their performance at work. The author affirms that this kind of imbalance not just affect the employee's life, but the employer's as well. This is the principal reason why many companies had been studying different ways to fight this unbalance. For Wolor et al. (2020) there exists some key factor that would drive to a work-life balance and is represented in the figure below (Figure 5).

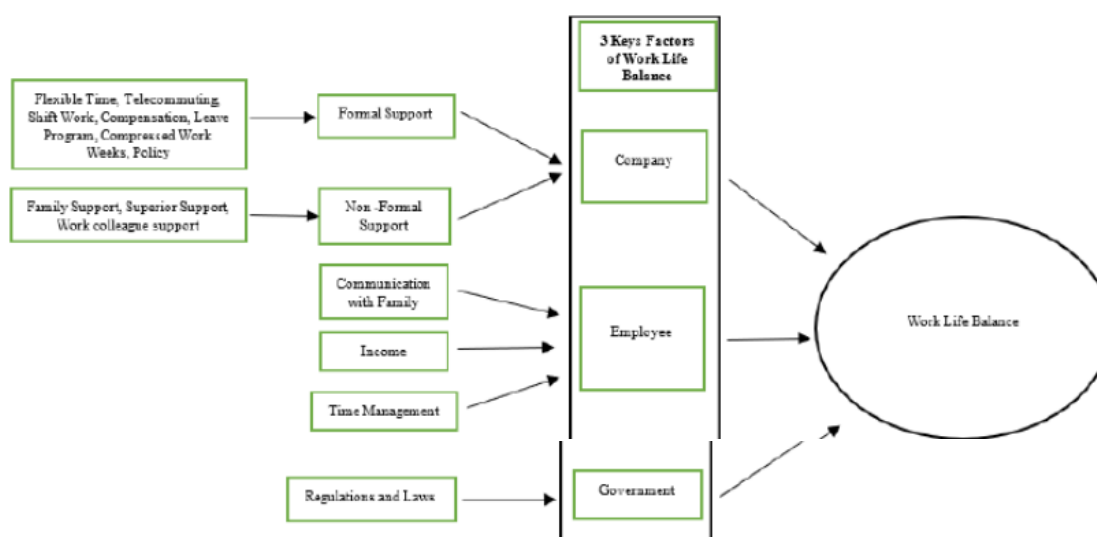


FIGURE 5. *FACTORS FOR A WORK-LIFE BALANCE.*

Source: Wolor, W., Kurnianti, D., Zahra, S. F., & Martono, S. (2020). Key factors of a work-life balance [Figure]

Since work-life balance makes reference to the situation in which a human being feels harmony in these parts of the life, mindfulness can play an important role to achieve this balance. As Pânișoară (2019) said, mindfulness and work-life balance are concepts that could be related to

each other and proved it with a study on 60 young people which has resulted in a stronger relationship between those two topics.

3. Summary of the current study

In the previous part of this paper, an introduction was given to the topics: mindfulness and work-life balance, and what each topic entails. This form of the literature review was previously made by doctors, professors, researchers, and others. From this part, we will continue with research to get closer to our main objective which is to identify and analyze the principles and applications of mindfulness in search of a work-life balance. In this section, the collected data and the methodology used for their analysis will explain the research topic.

3.1.Data collected

The data collected for this research was based on a qualitative approach focus on a re-exploration of research. With the qualitative approach is possible to reunite the deepest insights for the matters of this dissertation. Around thirty in-depth interviews on conversational research was chosen. Data collection methodology is chosen since it is an open question and qualitative answers could contribute more to find stronger points related to mindfulness and work-life balance.

As the data was collected from a re-exploration of research, the interviews analyzed in this dissertation were recollected from different databases selecting the ones considered as most accurate for the dissertation topic. These interviews were made from previous researches like The Mindfulness Summit is where different mindfulness experts give their insight about this topic. The analysis is based on the transcripts of these interviews where an analysis method which will be explained later on, will be applied and different conclusions will be drawn for this thesis.

3.2 Methodology of analysis

The data analysis is done with the main purpose of evaluating and extracting the strongest points of the data that can be used in the aim of this paper. The coding is one qualitative data analysis approaches that are well-known for the extraction of important words or concepts within the data for further analysis. That is why the coding approach was selected as the most accurate tool to develop the analysis of the data. Within all the different coding methodologies, was pick the *descriptive coding approach*.

3.3 Descriptive coding approach

As the data was collected from in-depth interviews, the amount of information to be analyzed is huge. To develop an accurate analysis of this data without taking the risk of leaving aside important information for this dissertation, the coding methodology was picked. According to Saldaña (2013) in its qualitative manual, coding is a link between the data collection and the analysis of the same.

Based on this same manual, the election of the *descriptive* coding method was done. This code is summarized in a word or a short phrase which is the most important essential part of the qualitative data (Saldaña, 2013). Different codes were assigned depending on the interviewee and his insights into the current research.

4 Results

Using the previously mentioned coding method to develop the analysis of the data collected was obtained the following information. On a general view, many of the interviewed authors agree that mindfulness is a state of awareness. Some of the interviewed experts described mindfulness in a general insight for a work-life balance and others have gone further with their explanation of mindfulness as a tool for a mindful company and workplace that is why the result is divided into two parts: general insights of mindfulness and workplace permeated by mindfulness.

4.1 General insights of mindfulness

According to Professor Mark Williams's perspective on mindfulness as the fact to be aware. He uses the term awareness as a description of mindfulness and says being aware of the things around and arriving at a decision may be defined as being mindful. He further explains the problems associated with putting things on autopilot. In this context, the autopilot may be defined as acting out of the habitual state of mind and body. Professor sheds light on the fact that people generally live in a world of ideas which is never really actualized. This is one of the factors which affects work-life balance and that is where mindfulness becomes important since its practices can tackle issues like the mentioned by him, "foggy brain", a situation in which the brain stops working properly after work for 8 hours shifts (Williams, 2019). Williams said that mindfulness has been defined as a "panacea for everything" since it covers different fields and different industries. To conclude the professor sheds light on the fact that mindfulness can be cultivated by joy, kindness, equanimity, or compassion.

Author of the book, "Mindfulness: A practical guide to Awakening" Joseph Goldstein, sheds light on the word *awakening*. He explains that by awakening he means being free from greed, delusion, and hatred. The author further explains awakening into wisdom, love, compassion, and peace is essential. The author highlights the fact that mindfulness is more of a methodology of looking inside into one's minds and is essentially a form of introspection. One of the common risks in mindfulness is that people tend to forget that it is a practice. Other difficulties include self-

judgment or doubt, which can be detrimental to oneself regarding mindfulness. The author explains that one needs to begin again and again. The author speaks about how one's biggest suffering can lead to enormous insight. Goldstein highlights the importance of meditation as one of the factors which affect mindfulness. Some of the factors which reflect our mindfulness include whether we are becoming less judgmental, increasing compassion and being careful with speech.

Dan Harris, a mindfulness expert and book writer, explained in his Mindfulness summit talk (2019) how he turned from being a sceptic of meditation to a believer. He explains the importance of mindfulness meditation practice through the example of his drug problem and how he was able to overcome the same using this method. Also, Harris affirms that the meditation practices not only made strong external relationships but also his relationship with himself. On the other hand, Jono Fisher speaks about how his environment helped him be mindful in the initial years. He speaks of the benefit of mindfulness and stilling the mind on the nervous system, and how this practice gives the body a chance to express different qualities (Fisher, 2019). Some of the greatest strengths which have been pointed out by Jono are emotional honesty, kindness, vulnerability, and compassion. These have often been interpreted as weaknesses; however, these are stated to be the greatest strengths.

During the mindfulness summit talk of Thimotea Goddard (2019), he explains the benefits of mindfulness practise from an in-to-out approach in where the inner awareness is the main character of the history. He expresses his agreement with the statement that mindfulness practice is a tool that helps people to "do something" or "get something", but he goes beyond, explaining that it can

also be used as a tool to be brave enough and look deep inside us and find out things that help us to improve the relationship with other people, animals and even the planet and for further contributions with the society and the world. For him, mindfulness practices benefits are also associated with the born of insights that contribute to facing challenges that humanity is having nowadays.

On the other hand, the expert Dan Goleman, one of the biggest researcher and expert in mindfulness topic explain it as a way to train the “attention muscle” and to be fully present in all and everything people are doing to do it correctly. Goleman affirms that to be successful in everything, we need to do consider the level of concentration that we put in the work. According to him, the most excellent people in any areas are the same that are more focused. This level of concentration is named by him as “Flow: a brain status where people are at their best” (Goleman, 2019). He explains that mindfulness and flow are not the same but are related. Mindfulness is a tool to reach the “flow”. The author of “Focus” explains that mindfulness can be divided into two levels: with ourselves and with the others. While you are aware of your own life and personal affairs, you also have to be aware of the others. This second level is shown through the love and kindness practice, where you can be present not just for you, but for the people surrounding you. Goleman also gave strong insights into the mindfulness and its job in the workplace that will be analyzed further.

Correspondingly with the attention topic and the way how mindfulness can contribute to it, Katherine Weare (2019) made many important conclusions. From her perspective, mindfulness

can help people to be focused and be conscious of their issues and allows them to go through it. Weare analyses the mindfulness topic from a scholar approach, agreeing with Goleman that the attention in our present moments is really important and even more in the young people. Her insights of the mindfulness topic are based on the kids and how these practices can impact positively their life to make themselves feel on controlled, calm, managing impulses and be more attentive in any moment of their lives.

Judson Brewer through her speech in the mindfulness summit made emphasis on the importance of mindfulness to keep the focus on the daily activities that we develop and how helpful mindfulness can be to stop bad behaviour like an addiction and strengthen the good ones.

One of the most recognized experts in the mindfulness world is Vidyamala Burch thanks to her work in how mindfulness can help people that suffer any kind of chronic pain. Her organization “Breathworks” which trains people all around the world in mindfulness practices. In the first instances, Bursh describes mindfulness as an invaluable tool that helps people to transform their lives, their minds and their emotions. The concept of awareness what gives sense to mindfulness, since a person who practices mindfulness “turned off the autopilot” (Bursh, 2019). This means that a person is conscious of what is living in each situation with complete knowledge of it. This complete knowledge has many benefits related with the life quality and the pain control since the person is aware of what he is feeling and learn to control it, to live with it and to not get affected beyond the physical barrier that the pain can cause. Bursh explains that mindfulness starts from inner awareness and kindness, people must learn through mindfulness practices how to love

themselves. Once the person has learned the self-love, the mindfulness can go beyond to love what surround us.

Jon Kabat-Zinn It is responsible for making what is known as the “Western world know and approach mindfulness”. Thanks to his job, mindfulness has been recognized as an important tool in medicine and the psychiatry, and nowadays, even in school and business. The creator of the Mindfulness Practices for Stress Reduction program has important views on the subject of mindfulness in general. For him, it is quite important to explain and make others understand that mindfulness is not a tool that will have permanent results of enlightening the lives of those who practice it, but that it is a process that must be in constant practice and that is focused on recognition of things that we consider good and those that we consider bad, and learn to cope without feeling that we are experiencing torture or punishment.

4.2 Organizations permeated by mindfulness and work-life balance

Mirabai Bush (2019) is a mindfulness expert that has worked for decades in this huge topic that concerned today, and in her last years, she had been dedicated to mindfulness in the business and at the workplace. She is one of the few people who has focused their research on the business path. In the beginning, Bush agrees that the different mindfulness practices such as compassion,

mindfulness, kindness, and so on, are a strong help to face hard situations even in the private and the professional life. She recognizes the stress that people are suffering due to work issues. Thanks to the job that Bush has developed on mindfulness at the workplace along with Google, she has concluded that mindfulness can be a valuable tool in the companies where people can work along with teams since it helps to increase the emotional intelligence, the self-awareness and the compassion for others. Nevertheless, she explained that mindfulness listening, and speaking is highly important in the workplace. The first one is related to a plain listening in where all your mind is focused on what the other person is saying and not letting arise more thoughts, even if those are not related to the chat. The second one refers to speaking skills like “be truthful, be kind and be timely” (Bush, 2019).

Previously was described some insights of Doctor Dan Goleman related with the mindfulness practice in general, but he also gave some strong points that organizations must pay attention from the mindfulness topic. First, Goleman (2019) recommends companies to encourage their employees to improve their levels of attention, either with mindfulness practices or with another tool. Followed by this, Goleman denies the importance of the multitasking trait. He affirms that the concept of multitasking which to do many activities at the same time is unfruitful. At the end of the day, it is just going to make you lose time and encourage to do the activities badly. Last but not the least recommendation that Goleman gave to the companies that since employees utilise their mind to work at the workplace, they need at least one hour per day which would do not develop any other activity other than to be mindful. Consequently, they will produce creative ideas without any distractions.

According to Michael Chaskalson in his mindfulness summit talk, he affirms that mindfulness practice is a valuable tool for the company's leaders and employees. The first reason for that is, its training can help to increase the working memory capacity even to people that are exposed to high levels of stress (Chaskalson, 2019). Following Chaskalson insights of mindfulness practices, he also affirms that using mindfulness in the companies can help to develop more creative and innovative people.

Likewise, Danny Penman also has his insights on the way that mindfulness can benefit people with creative approaches. He explains the importance of creativity in any field of life since it helps to create and build, new ideas, new solutions, new art and so on. The creativity killer is the stress due to its effect on the human mind: a brain under pressure closes down and do not let minds flow. (Penman, 2019) Penman recognizes that mindfulness practices do help with the stress reduction, agreeing with other experts, but he thinks it is more than that goes. He explains that is not enough to be imaginative and have an idea in mind but be brave enough to make that idea a reality, and that resilience approach would be obtained through the mindfulness.

5 Conclusions & Practical Recommendations

The present dissertation explains the fundamentals of mindfulness: its story, its origins, its concept and how it has been integrated today into what is known as the Western world. Based on a literature review, it was possible to give general points of view on the aforementioned in addition to the relationship of mindfulness with topics such as wellness, creativity and the main purpose of this paper: the work-life balance.

The main purpose of this research project was explained mindfulness practices and applications ways to obtain a work-life balance. It is no longer a secret that within the last decades, the fast movement at the workplace life has increased exponentially. It makes the employees and the managers face high levels of stress, anxiety, depression and more issues that can lead to developing chronic illness.

Due to the increase of such a risk phenomenon, companies and organizations around the world has increased their concerns about the wellness of their people and the important outcomes that a work and life balance can have in a person and the whole organization. The dissertation is explained according to the findings that mindfulness practices work in different aspects. Experts of mindfulness have dedicated a great part of their lives to studying what mindfulness practices can do to students, chronic pain patients, depression patients, army, organizations and so on.

The research methodology of this document was qualitative, as it sought to find strong points of view from experts regarding how mindfulness can help a balance of life and work, and how it can benefit companies. That is why different experts in mindfulness matters interviews were analyzed.

From what has been analyzed, it can be concluded that the practice of mindfulness is a valuable tool to achieve a work-life balance because, in the first place, it provides awareness of the moment in which one lives in its absoluteness, since the person is fully attentive to the activity he is developing, even if it is the simplest activity. This action of total awareness allows people to be more focused although in their private life when they are developing activities of it, or at work activities. Even experts have agreed that the practice of mindfulness can be a tool to help the decision-making process and to calm impulses generated by stress and anxiety.

Another important insight about mindfulness on the work-life balance is related to the relationship with others. During the Mindfulness Summit of 2019, a wide variety of experts agreed that mindfulness has a two-level approach. The first part is dedicated to the inner awareness, how they react to the pleasant and unpleasant things of the life, how to be aware of their situations, how to be loving and kindness to themselves. The second approach is the relationship with the others, the experts said that once a person achieves the first approach, he will be ready to be mindfulness with the people and the world that surrounds him. This is very valuable for a balance of life and work because people become more compassionate, understand the other and the responsibility that

he has with other people and with the environment they share, thus improving both personal and professional relationships with coworkers, bosses, subordinates, etc.

Furthermore, it was analyzed that mindfulness practices applied to the workplace have good results. Meditation as one of the most important practices is being implemented by different companies as methods for reducing stress due to work problems, which increases productivity within companies. On the other hand, the practice of mindfulness listening, and mindfulness speaking contribute notoriously within a work environment. By listening to mindfulness, it is proposed to pay full attention to what the interlocutor is talking about, without allowing the mind to be influenced by other thoughts. Mindfulness speech refers to speaking truthfully, with kindness, and in due time. These practices complement what was previously said about relationships with those around us and can be used in both personal and work lives.

Another benefit of mindfulness is the way it helps to increase creativity. Danny Penman in his interview with Mell O'Brian expresses the importance of creativity in life and more in the work-life. Creativity is not just for the artist but for decision-makers and any other person. Being creative can help people to create ideas or solutions, new products and new processes. Penman explained that mindfulness is a tool that empowers a person so that in addition to being imaginative, they have enough courage to make an idea a reality. That is a creative person.

To conclude, mindfulness has been proven to be an invaluable tool and has multiple benefits in the professional and personal field. These practices help well-being, mental health, self-esteem, to

make decisions, to manage impulses, to relationships with those who and what surrounds us, and to the quality of life as a whole. According to what was analyzed during this research, it can be concluded that companies should adopt mindfulness as a necessary tool within their companies since its practices not only helps with the well-being of workers but also has positive results for them such as increased productivity and motivation. The present research project bring as implications that the mindfulness topic is not jus a trendy topic but also an invaluable tool to be studied and implemented in the companies and schools.

6 Limitation and Future Directions

Even the topic of mindfulness and its practices is in rage, it is a relatively new topic. Before 1970 mindfulness and its practices was an almost unknown subject outside of Buddhism and meditation experts. Thanks to experts such as Jon Kabat-Zinn, Vidyamala Burch, among others, today mindfulness is a research topic in Western countries and its importance has already been recognized by institutions and companies of international stature such as Google.

Despite this, it is clear that mindfulness research has been either very generalized or more focused on the world of medicine and psychiatry. Except for a few experts who attended the

Mindfulness Summit, many researchers have based their work focused on the research of mindfulness for therapeutic use for mental illnesses and disorders.

The biggest limitation for this current research is the generalization of the topic. This means that after analyzing the expert's insights of mindfulness it is true that the benefits of mindfulness in schools or medicine, can also be benefits in the work-life balance. However, a more in-depth research is needed about mindfulness and its behaviour at work environments and with a view to workplace processes.

To exemplify the aforementioned, Dan Goleman talks about a person's trait of being multi-tasking and how this is a myth since the fact of performing different tasks at the same time causes effectiveness in each one of them (Goleman, 2019). It is considered important that more researches of this nature be done, is that nowadays, characteristics such as multi-tasking is one of the "must" that recruiters look for in the profiles of their possible new employees.

As future directions are concerned, deeper investigations of mindfulness studies are required as stated before and their prompting results in companies. It should be possible to analyze through case studies of companies other than Google, how mindfulness benefits or, if it is the case, worsens the behaviour of workers both at work and outside, to see the influence of this in companies. It is recommended outside of Google since this case has already provided views on the subject, but its author, Mirabai Bush, recognizes that each company is different and the mindfulness practices that work in Google may not work in other companies.

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