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"Mindfulness in the Workplace: Assessing its Multifaceted Impact on Individuals, Team Dynamics, and Organizational Environment."

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	4
1. Introduction.....	4
1.1 Topic Description	4
1.2 State of the Art in the Topic	5
1.3 Intervention Plan.....	5
2. Program’s Objectives.....	6
2.1 General.....	6
2.2 Specific	6
3. Methodology	7
3.1 Evaluation Methodology	7
3.2 Program participants.....	7
3.3 Data Collection Techniques and Instruments	7
3.4 Data Analysis.....	8
Quantitative Analysis.....	8
Qualitative Analysis.....	8



MÁSTER DE MINDFULNESS EN ORGANIZACIONES CONSCIENTES
The Concious Performance and Well-Being Program.

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4.	Evaluation Results	8
5.	Discussion	12
6.	Conclusions.....	14
7.	Acknowledgements.....	15
8.	References.....	16



Abstract

This study investigates the impact of a mindfulness-based intervention in a workplace setting. The research includes qualitative and quantitative data from employees who participated in a 12-week mindfulness training program. Findings indicate that the intervention is associated with increased self-awareness, better emotional regulation, and increased acceptance of own and others' behaviors. Participants also show an improvement in their ability to discern their most important tasks and prioritize accordingly. However, challenges related to integration of regular practices are identified, highlighting the need to explore ways to ensure consistent practice and the importance of the cultural organizational aspects hereby.

Keywords: Mindfulness, Workplace, Team Trust, Well-Being, Emotional Regulation

1. Introduction

1.1 Topic Description

Stress is one of the main challenges in organizations. High workload, absent leaders, or interpersonal conflicts are common causes affecting workers' well-being (Buitrago-Orjuela et al., 2021). Employees expect sustainable and mentally healthy workplaces, requiring a true shift in work culture (Harvard Business Review, 2021). Gallup's global report (2023) concludes that the working population is stressed, estimating that disengaged workers cost the global economy \$8.8 trillion, representing 9% of the world's GDP. The engagement survey at the company where the program was conducted, dated from April 2023, shows that 66% of workers experienced moderate to severe stress for more than 3 months in the past year, with working conditions cited as the main cause in 63% of cases. This intervention explores the hypothesis that developing



self-awareness, emotional regulation, and time management skills will have a positive impact on the workers' well-being and engagement. At the team level, it studies the impact of relational mindfulness on team dynamics and trust.

1.2 State of the Art in the Topic

Numerous studies on the effects of mindfulness in the workplace show evidence of its benefits for well-being, mental health, stress management, and resilience (Johnson et al., 2020; Michaelsen et al., 2023; Caporale-Berkowitz et al., 2021; Panditharathne & Chen, 2021). Information technologies, while an advancement, have negative consequences such as "technostress," causing fatigue, lack of motivation, and an inability to concentrate, which affects the individuals' well-being and increases the cost of the organizations. Although evidence of mindfulness benefits regarding technostress is limited, Ioannou (2023) shows that more mindful individuals have the skills necessary to manage stress and adopt more constructive and resolute perspectives. Regarding the influence of mindfulness on human interactions, the pioneering study by Hawkes & Neale (2020) proves that mindfulness, through its effect on emotional regulation mechanisms and cognitive reappraisal, has a positive influence on interpersonal relationships among workers. The present study aims to contribute to understanding the effects of mindfulness in the workplace at the individual, team, and environmental level.

1.3 Intervention Plan

The program has been designed to create personal transformation through direct experience. This experiential approach, combined with group dialogue and regular practice, is at the core of the intervention's design for maximum effectivity. The program comprises a range of



practices covering the mind, emotions, breathing, body, and relationships, with emphasis on its application in the workplace. It provides a theoretical basis of the neurological and biological processes behind each practice and concept. The intervention lasts a total of 20 hours and consists of 7 in-person sessions of 3 hours distributed over a 3-month period. The sessions are designed with an initial part involving a centering exercise, theory, practice, and group dialogue, a second part comprising a conscious movement exercise, theory, practice, and dialogue, and a closure involving a reflective journaling exercise and an inspiring reading or video. At the end of the session, participants choose a practice to perform during the week and are provided with audio recordings.

2. Program's Objectives

2.1 General

The general objective of this intervention is to determine if the development of competencies of self-awareness, emotional regulation, and prosocial skills in the workers of a production support team can result in better stress management, greater well-being, and improved interpersonal relationships.

2.2 Specific

The specific objectives for each of the sessions are 1) to learn what is mindfulness and the different levels of practice, 2) to promote conscious behaviors through metacognition techniques, 3) to develop emotional management skills through cognitive reappraisal, 4) to learn about the neuroscience of well-being and the practices for improving the vagal tone, 5) to learn about the optimal conditions for cognitive performance and practice a time planning



methodology, and 6) to understand the neuroscience behind human trust and adopt practices at the individual and organisational level that promote a culture of trust.

3. Methodology

3.1 Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation methodology is mixed. The quantitative evaluation is carried out using questionnaires and habit tracking inventories. The qualitative evaluation is obtained from the experiences of the participants, as collected through questionnaires and group dialogues.

3.2 Program participants

The program is specifically designed for the 17 members of a team that supports warehouse and logistics processes in a factory. Their ages range from 20 to 60 years, and the team is highly diverse in terms of age, educational background, and tenure at the company. All of them are Danish, and 80% are men. Most are not familiar with mindfulness, and their participation in the program is mandatory.

3.3 Data Collection Techniques and Instruments

The quantitative evaluation was carried out using a questionnaire comprising 38 items on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 corresponds to "Completely Disagree" and 5 to "Completely Agree." The questionnaire has been specifically developed for this program and is divided into five dimensions: D1) Conscious Self-Observation and Well-being, D2) Emotional Regulation, D3) Productivity and Time Management, D4) Confidence, and D5) Transcendence. The questionnaire includes self-authored statements in combination with others extracted from the



Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) (Baer et al., 2008), the Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) (MacKillop & Anderson, 2007), Edmondson's Psychological Safety Questionnaire (2018), and the Team Climate Inventory (TCI) (Strating & Nieboer, 2009). Qualitative data on self-perceived progress and the program's usefulness are collected using open-ended questions. The frequency of practice is tracked through an inventory, where participants mark a cross after completion of their daily mindfulness practice.

3.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative data processing was carried out using Excel to calculate pre and post-program means and standard deviations. To evaluate statistical significance, the JMP program was used to perform the non-parametric Wilcoxon test. A reliability index of 0.05 was utilized.

Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative analysis was performed by establishing categories based on the frequency of certain topics in the collected comments.

4. Evaluation Results

The comparison of pre and post-program results shows an overall increase in the mean of 9%, rising from 3.43 to 3.74.



Graph 1

Comparison of the overall mean before and after the intervention

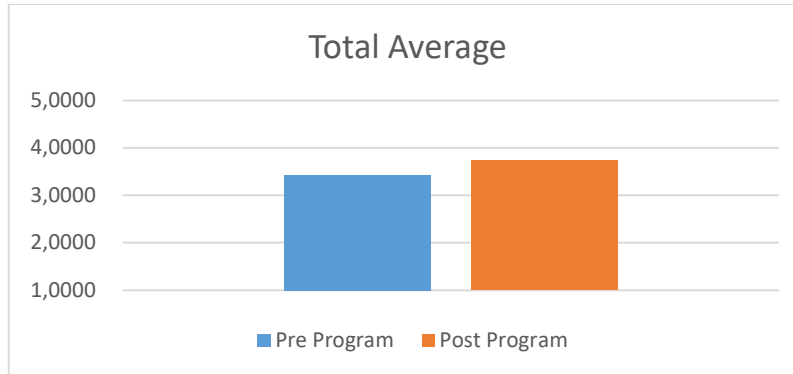


Table 1

Calculations of the percentage increase in the mean, standard deviation, and self-perceived progress for each dimension.

	Average Pre	Average Post	STD Pre	STD Post	Delta (%)	Average Self Perception
D1: Self Awareness	3,2469	3,2876	1,0810	1,0211	1%	4,058824
D2: Emotional Mgt	3,1875	3,8603	1,0707	0,9514	21%	3,588235
D3: Productivity	3,3798	3,5752	0,9997	0,9226	6%	3,235294
D4: Trust	3,6358	3,8681	0,9410	1,0288	6%	3,882353
D5: Transcendence	3,7037	4,0858	1,0211	0,9864	10%	N/A
Total	3,4307	3,7354			9%	

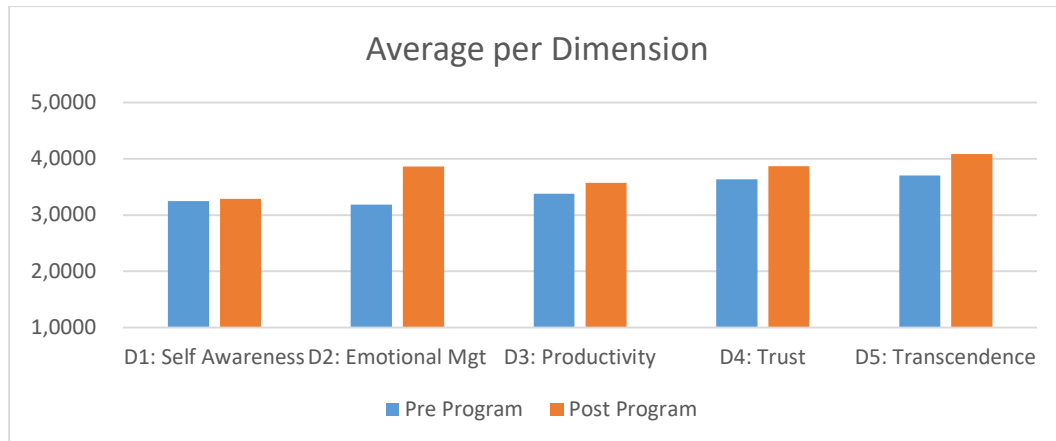
Note: "Average Self Perception" is the average of self-perceived progress, where 1 corresponds to "completely disagree" and 5 to "completely agree".

The variable that shows the highest increase is Emotional Management (21%), followed by Transcendence (10%), Productivity and Trust (6%), and finally Self Awareness (1%). However, participants reported a greater self-perception of progress in the dimension of Self Awareness (4.05/5), followed by Trust (3.88/5).



Graph 2

Comparison of the mean before and after the program for each dimension



In the following table, specific skills are presented where significant improvements have been recorded within each of the dimensions:

Table 2

Increases recorded by representative items for each of the dimensions

Dimension	Item	Mean Improvement
D1: Self Awareness	<i>When I have distressing thoughts, I “step back” and am aware of the thought without getting taken over by it</i>	30%
D2: Emotional Mgt	<i>I know a few mindfulness techniques that I can apply when I need to calm down</i>	60%
	<i>When I have distressing thoughts or images, I feel calm soon after</i>	29%
	<i>I know what to do when I feel overwhelmed</i>	28%
D3: Productivity	<i>Each day I am clear about the one thing I must accomplish</i>	21%
D4: Trust	<i>I find myself listening to someone with one ear, doing something else at the same time</i>	18%
D5: Transcendence	<i>I realise how precious my existence is</i>	21%

Regarding statistical significance, as shown in Table 3, the variables of Emotional Management and Transcendence have p-values below 0.05, allowing the rejection of the null



hypothesis, as there are significant differences between the pre-test and post-test. The Trust variable has a marginally significant p-value, while Productivity and Self Awareness show higher p-values, making it impossible to conclude their statistical significance.

Table 3

P values obtained by the Wilcoxon Test for each of the dimensions

	Wilcoxon Test
D1: Self Awareness	0,6161
D2: Emotional Mgt	0,0001
D3: Productivity	0,0839
D4: Trust	0,0749
D5: Transcendence	0,0401

The qualitative data recorded reports a positive impact of the program in the categories of Acceptance of Reality, Conscious Behavior, Understanding of Others, Stress Management, Self-Awareness, and Emotional Regulation. The following quoted statements illustrate this evaluation by the participants:

"I have managed to think twice about how I react both in work matters and private. Allowing myself to be present and patient helped me not always to bring negativity into the day and knowing I have a choice to do better."

"For me it has been the beginning of a new journey. I have learned a lot of techniques that I can use for relaxing, destressing and getting a better sleep."



"It has given me perspectives to perceive both myself and others in a way that makes it easier to accept my own and others' reactions in conflicting situations."

Entries in the habit inventory show a lack of regular practice between sessions, making it difficult to conclude on the practices' effectiveness to address daily challenges. However, it seems that the lack of intention is not the cause, as 70% are committed to practicing regularly after the program. The habit inventories highlight the breathing exercise 4 4 8, cognitive reappraisal, and active listening as some of the most popular techniques.

The program has proven to have a significant ecological impact, as 100% of the respondents find a mindfulness-based approach more effective for reducing stress and increasing engagement than the annual climate survey. 88% consider it worth investing 20 hours, and 94% would recommend the program to other colleagues.

After analyzing the quantitative and qualitative data, it can be concluded that the intervention has a significant impact on improving the dimensions of Self-awareness, Emotional Regulation, Trust, and Transcendence, as well as competencies related to discerning the most important tasks, belonging to the dimension of Productivity.

5. Discussion

The significant improvement registered in the Emotional Regulation capabilities suggests that mindfulness-based interventions can be highly effective for stress management, increasing eudaimonic well-being, and improving interpersonal relationships in the workplace. This improvement could be justified by the attentional expansion derived from decentering, favoring



the reappraisal of existing circumstances and allowing the adoption of more beneficial behaviors for the individual and their environment (Garland et al., 2015).

In the present study, of mandatory participation, a specific team was chosen at the leader's request, so the initial level of experience and the predisposition to engage in the program varied significantly for each individual. This aspect is relevant when considering broad interventions in organizations, as there are no prequalified audiences, and caution must be exercised in program designs to be inclusive and respectful of personal boundaries. The improvement in terms of interpersonal relationships is attributed to a greater acceptance and understanding of one's own reactions, which raises the threshold for triggering maladaptive behaviors. These results are in line with those seen in the study by Hawkes & Neale (2020), which demonstrates a significant positive correlation between mindfulness and cognitive reappraisal. The ability of conscious individuals to self-observe and pay attention in the present moment would help perceive interpersonal relationships as more cooperative and increase trust in others. The convergence of results between these studies suggests that these correlations could be extrapolated across different cultures and industries.

It remains of great interest to study whether the positive impact of mindfulness can go beyond individuals and their relationships and be reflected in tangible improvements in organizational performance and results. The review conducted by Panditharathne & Chen (2021) shows that common contemporary issues in organizations such as stress, demotivation, poor leadership, performance, or teamwork can be successfully addressed through mindfulness practice. It even goes further, suggesting that interventions can be specifically designed to



improve the different organizational requirements such as increasing psychological capital, prosocial behaviors, financial performance, or sustainability, which opens a broad potential in the field of research. The causative processes or mediating mechanisms behind these results may lie in the heightened attention, awareness of the present moment, and non-judgmental acceptance, which promote positive behaviors at the cognitive, emotional, physiological, and behavioral levels. Although the present study is inconclusive in the dimension of Productivity, a positive evolution in the participants' ability to discern the most important tasks is observed, which is in line with the study conducted by Krishanamacharyulu & Rajyalakshmi (2021), that suggests meditators have a greater ability to prioritize and manage their time effectively.

6. Conclusions

Based on the compilation of results, it can be concluded that the intervention shows a positive correlation between mindfulness practice and the abilities of self-awareness and emotional regulation in the workplace. In an organisational context, this translates to more effective stress management, more conscious behavior patterns, greater acceptance of one's own and others' behaviors, and better discernment of important tasks. There is also a significant increase in transcendence, manifested as a greater appreciation of one's own existence. However, difficulty is found in integrating mindfulness practice on a regular basis. The results should be understood within the limitations of the program, as it involved a small sample without a control group and was a short-term intervention. Evaluation questionnaires are subjective and assess only the internal perception of the individual. Besides, the questionnaire was developed specifically for this program, due to which its reliability is not validated. These limitations may



affect the statistical significance results. However, qualitatively, participants expressed improvements in all the dimensions.

It is therefore suggested to continue research through controlled longitudinal studies of greater temporal scope, using more precise evaluation techniques to measure collaboration and reciprocity in terms of relational perception, and ultimately, organizational performance results. The intervention's design could be improved with a more intentional approach to creating regular practice habits. From an economic perspective, it is interesting to study the impact of mindfulness on company costs. To address cultural and organizational aspects, a line of research on conscious leadership is proposed.

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