

Chapter 8

Mindfulness as an Antecedent of Work Engagement: Impact of Demographic Factors in the Relationship Between Mindfulness and Work Engagement

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ABSTRACT

Today, many organizations look for more loyal, committed, and engaged employees. Employee engagement has two dimensions, which are work engagement and organizational engagement. In this chapter, the moderating effect of demographic variables in the relationship between mindfulness and work engagement is examined. Mindfulness is a concept which has its roots in Buddhism. Mindfulness is defined as a state of mind that enables an individual to be here and now with his/her full potential. This study aims to find the impact of demographic factors (gender, age, educational background, income, marital status) in the relationship between mindfulness and work engagement. Thus, the research question of this study is, Does the relationship between mindfulness and work engagement differ according to demographic factors such as sex, age, educational status, marital status, income level? In this study, quantitative research methodology will be used. In order to answer the research question, survey tool is applied to 142 white collar employees working in Istanbul at different sectors.

INTRODUCTION

Today, many organizations look for more loyal, committed and engaged employees. Engaged employees have been shown to be more happy and productive (Rich, B. L., LePine, J. A., & Crawford, E. R., 2010) Other workplace related positive outcomes of work engagement are increased organizational performance, job satisfaction and commitment (Geldenhuis, Laba, & Venter, 2014; Sorenson, 2013).

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Mindfulness as an Antecedent of Work Engagement

Mindfulness is a set of mind which enables an individual to be here and now with his/her full potential. The concept has its roots from Buddhism. Kabat-Zin (1990) is one of the researches who have studied the concept of mindfulness in a scientific way. He has defined mindfulness as “a particular way of paying attention. It is a way of looking deeply into oneself in the spirit of self-inquiry and self-understanding”(Kabat-Zinn,1990,p.12). Moreover he defined mindfulness as an awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose and non-judgmentally in the present moment.

Several personal resources, as antecedents of work engagement, have been identified and empirically investigated, such as coping style and being problem focused (Rothmann & Storm, 2003), and self-efficacy, optimism, organizational self-esteem, and resilience (Bakker, Gierveld, & Rijswijk, 2006, cited in Bakker, 2009; Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2007). More recent studies have investigated the role of psychological capital (PsyCap), self-leadership, and mindfulness in work engagement (Leroy, Anseel, Dimitrova, & Sels, 2013; Malinowski & Lim, 2015; Shaoping, Huachun, & Yongheng, 2015; Tabaziba, 2015). However, this study aims to explore the effect of mindfulness on work engagement in the Turkish context. There is no specific study which examines the effects of demographics on the relationship between mindfulness and work engagement. Within this framework this study has two research questions;

RQ1: Is there any relationship between mindfulness and work engagement?

RQ2: Do demographics moderate the relationship between mindfulness and work engagement?

MINDFULNESS

The term “mindfulness” is defined as “paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and non- judgmentally” (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p.4). This conceptualization structured the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction program (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). Different opinions and arguments have been done on the dimensions of the mindfulness. While Brown and Ryan (2003) referred to mindfulness as a one-dimensional construct, Bishop et al. (2004) described mindfulness as a two-dimensional construct, comprising self-regulation of attention and orientation to experience.

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Many disciplines such as psychology and socio-psychology have been interested with the concept of mindfulness since it has many health related beneficial such as sleep quality and sleep durations (Hülshager et al., 2014) and cognition (Zeidan et al., 2010). Moreover, in organizational psychology research, significant relationships were found between mindfulness and emotion regulation, emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction (Hülshager, Alberts, Feinholdt & Lang, 2013), vitality, sleep quality and work-family balance (Allen & Kiburz, 2012), and safety behavior (Zhang & Wu, 2014). Mindfulness was found negatively associated with deviance and emotional exhaustion (Reb, Narayanan, & Ho, 2015).

As Brown et al. (2007) stated mindful state of mind has several qualities: Being in a mindful state, involves bare attention to everything that enters awareness. Secondly, being in a mindful state is directly related with being at the present moment. Mindful individuals do not carry future worries, anxieties

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