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Methods for Teaching Mindfulness Within the Workplace

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METHODS FOR TEACHING MINDFULNESS WITHIN THE WORKPLACE

By

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Abstract

Over the past few years, the world has been shaken by the COVID-19 pandemic and technological advancements that have contributed towards work-life imbalances. Now more than ever, organizations are focusing on improving mental health and well-being. This understanding holds value towards the hospitality industry as employee wellbeing has a direct link towards consumer experience. Considering the nature of the business, employees endure distress resulting from emotional labor, long work hours, etc, understanding how organizations can improve well-being is critical. This paper attempts to make significant contribution towards understanding both individual and organizational outcomes of mindfulness, best practices, and potential limitations within the hospitality industry for future success. By assessing the concepts covered within this document, hospitality organizations will be able to explore and better understand alternative methods aimed at enhancing overall psychological well-being, aiding the current mental health dilemma.

Keywords: Mindfulness, hospitality industry, psychological well-being, stress, training, workplace

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to praise and thank God, the Almighty, who has granted me with countless blessings, opportunities, and the knowledge to complete this literature. Outside of my efforts, the success of this paper should also be contributed towards the encouragement and guidance of many others as I take this opportunity to express gratitude towards those individuals, close friends and family members that have been a positive influence towards the successful completion of this work, as well as my dream to continue my education.

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In deep love and appreciation, I would like to thank those exceptional people for their courage and willingness to embrace inner change. This paper would not have come into existence without them. This includes those who are reaching a point in which they are becoming capable of breaking out of the inherited collective mind patterns that have kept us in bondage to suffering for millenniums.

I trust that this paper will find its way to those who are ready for such transformation and so act as a catalyst for it. I also hope that it will reach many others who find the content worthy of future consideration. Despite not being ready to utilize the information covered in this text in a practical manner, the initial seed may be sown while reading this paper and eventually it may merge with the seed of enlightenment that each of us carries within ourselves.

To those that have made it this far in the acknowledgments section, I would like to say one last thing. Please forgive, but do not forget. Let go of any hatred or anger that may have been sustained by any individual/experience and understand the deeper lesson that has been learned. Life is too short to allow the negative energy of anything in the past to affect your future. The answer you are looking for has and always will be in the present moment, so be grateful for the basic things that often get overlooked such as waking up or even being able to walk! There are individuals out there who have not received the opportunity to spend another second on this planet, so make the most out of your time here and never give up on anything you truly believe in.

In the words of Master Bruce Lee, "Be formless, shapeless, like water. If you put water into a cup, it becomes the cup. You put water into a bottle, and it becomes the teapot. Now, water can flow, or it can crash. Be water, my friend."

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Chapter 1

The hospitality industry is one of the most unique areas of employment in the world. The industry spans across four primary sectors consisting of food and beverage, accommodation, travel and tourism and entertainment and recreation within high-customer-contact service environments (Secchi et al., 2018). Companies put their trust in highly trained employees towards ensuring that the everchanging expectations of consumers are met every day. With the high energy environment of the industry, frontline employees often undergo high amounts of emotional stress as they are often working extensive shifts resulting in work-life imbalances (Gragnano et al., 2020; Deery & Jago, 2009). Being as though frontline employees contribute towards the success and reputation of the organization through employee-guest interactions (Yilmaz, 2018), employee well-being should be a high priority of consideration.

In addition, over the past two years, industries around the world have been trying to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. Advancing technology within the United States has promoted opportunities of efficiency, as nearly 40% of the country's workforce went completely remote (Clay, 2022). Despite new opportunities aimed at enhancing accessibility, adverse effects have been acknowledged dealing with employee psychological well-being (PWB). The border that once kept work and personal life separate has been blurred as individuals feel overwhelmed with job duties and concentration even when their working hours are considered over. Data from The American Psychological Association's annual survey report for U.S. adult workers mentioned that almost 79% of individuals involved experienced stress directly related to work, while approximately 60% of employees reported a lack of motivation or interest while at work and 34% of participants expressed emotional exhaustion (Abramson, 2022).

Researchers and professionals around the world are looking to understand the COVID-pandemics' psychological impacts. For example, DeAngelis (2021) wanted to understand the difference in psychological mental health for adults within the United States by conducting a study measuring stress and depression rates in from December 2019 to August 2021. Key findings from the data concluded that adults reported depression on an average scaling of 6.7% during the year of 2019, while the average increased to roughly 26.25% in 2021. Depression rates showed an even drastic increase in percentages as the average rate was 6.7% in December 2019 skyrocketing all the way to 32.7% at the time of August 2021 (DeAngelis, 2021)

To understand these adverse effects, the hospitality industry has seen further studies towards understanding workplace spirituality and employee PWB. Aboobaker (2022) addressed the correlation between both variables along with the COVID-19 pandemic through the job demands-resources theory and protection motivation theory. The study included 556 hospitality employee responses revealing that employees must have a sense of community, meaningful work, and alignment with organizational values to promote positive well-being (Aboobaker, 2022).

It would benefit the industry to understand how mental well-being works and the appropriate proactive steps that could be taken to provide employees with the tools to enhance their own PWB for the betterment of the organization's success. In more recent studies, a prominent route to achieve efficient PWB is through both mindfulness and positive emotion regulation. Employees must be able to regulate their emotions due to the social nature of the hospitality industry as customer experience and guest feedback are crucial towards brand reputation (Nobar & Rostamzadeh, 2018). Within the hospitality industry, brand reputation is often associated through the customer's experience with front-line employees. Winfrey (2014)

pointed out that negative guest reviews typically affect the guest's perception of the organization more heavily than positive reviews at a ratio of twelve to one (Winfrey, 2014) so employee emotional discipline is critical. Positive emotion regulation deals with an individual's ability and capacity to manage emotional response to stimuli. Baer (2003) defined mindfulness as a heightened state of awareness, by training the brain to accurately focus on the present moment while maintaining a nonjudgmental perspective. By training the mind like any other muscle, altering perspective and response stimuli would enable employees to have a more positive mindset and enhanced efficiency.

In effort of understanding employee psyche, research studies have identified the relationship between workplace spirituality, mental well-being, and mindfulness as one that provides hope towards solving the current psychological dilemma, while offering employees an opportunity to manage daily activities and enhance efficiency in all aspects of life. By utilizing a multiple regression approach, data concluded that mindfulness and workplace spirituality accurately predicts employee mental well-being (Jnaneswar & Sulphrey, 2020). With the proper approach and training, individuals could in fact refine their concentration, decrease stress, and improve job satisfaction (Chen & Wilton, 2018).

The gap in achieving these outcomes relatively comes down to employee accessibility and efficiency. For instance, the average cost of a one-on-one psychotherapy session within the United States ranges from \$150-\$200 per session (Lauretta, 2022). However, with the utilization of modern technology mobile applications are available to instill essential mindfulness training. Bostock et al., (2019) conducted a study on the effects of mindfulness meditation on employee well-being and work stress. Within an 8-week period, participants were allowed access to an app that provided 45 prerecorded guided audio meditations for an average of 15 minutes per day.

Results identified that providing a mobile app did in fact reduce work stress while offering “a convenient, low-cost, flexible alternative to asking participants to attend sessions face-to-face” (Bostock et al., 2019). Although previous research has shown positive results, there is a need to compare the literature to review the best practices and potential drawbacks and restrictions to help determine the best route for employee PWB.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the literature regarding employee PWB to determine both individual and organizational outcomes of mindfulness, best practices, and potential limitations. There are two primary research questions in correlation with this study:

RQ1. Which mindfulness practices seem to be the most effective towards improving employee PWB and mindfulness?

RQ2. What are some potential limitations and challenges associated with offering employee mindfulness practices?

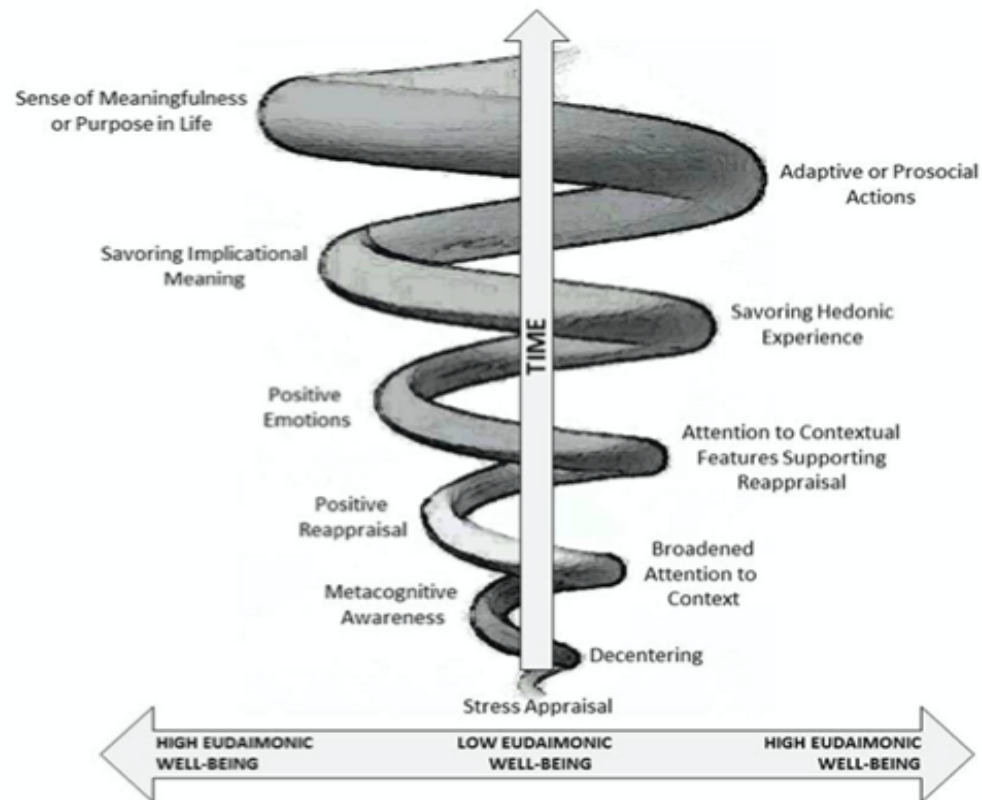
Theoretical Framework

Within this paper, the Mindfulness-to-Meaning Theory will be explored to achieve positive emotional regulation. The Mindfulness-to-Meaning Theory has been identified as a process of positive emotional regulation through cognitive appraisals and enhancing interoceptive attention (Garland et al., 2015). Exercising positive emotional regulation is expected to promote metacognitive awareness, enhance attention capabilities through emotion-regulation strategies, and decrease disengagement (Davis & Hayes, 2012). An illustrated representation of The Mindfulness-to-Meaning Theory (see Figure 1) displays the process of positive emotion regulation as habitual cognitive patterns and attentional systems are

altered over time. Ultimately, this theory will be utilized to assist hospitality organizations and professionals enhance employee mental well-being.

Figure 1.

Mindfulness-to-Meaning Theory



Note. Visual representation of Mindfulness-to-Meaning Theory over time (Garland et al., 2015).

Problem Statement

Over the previous five years there has been an exponential increase in the interest of mindfulness as a psychosomatic construct that requires further investigation (Stankov et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic acted as a catalyst towards the attentiveness of this topic, as it shed light on the importance of mental health in all aspects. Around the country people have been looking for assistance towards the everlasting changes of modern society, but it all starts

with the individual themselves. The current options available for employees within the industry on a grand scale are lacking accessibility, efficiency, and overall guidance since this area of focus is relatively new (Abel, 2015). With the utilization of advancing technologies via mobile application, the current lack of understanding towards improving mental well-being can be addressed and benefit humanity beyond the current procedures that are in place.

Limitations

There were several limitations of recognition when establishing this study. PWB is a fairly new concept of focus so there was limited research revolving around the theory along with a lack of relevant studies showing how improvements in PWB training has affected hospitality industry employees. Due to the complex nature of the topic and precise focus point it was difficult to find supporting information in the hospitality industry within a 15-year (2007-2022) timeframe. References from relevant disciplines such as psychology and sociology have been utilized to help mitigate this problem.

Delimitations

The identification process of relevant and accurate information towards employee psychological resources will be beneficial with the implementation of suggested keywords. Literature collected for this review consists of datasets such as Google Scholar, Hospitality and Tourism Complete, APA Psycinfo, Gallup, ScienceDirect, Journal of Occupational Health Psychology and various trade journals. Due to limited research of relevant data, the possibility of overlooking connected information via research experiments, articles, and journals exists. Search terms to identify interrelated data within the industry consisted of “mindful”, “mindfulness”, “hospitality” and “employees”.

Definitions

Eudaimonic well-being: A type of happiness or contentment that is achieved through self-actualization and having meaningful purpose in one's life (American Psychological Association, 2022).

Hedonic- A type of happiness or contentment that is achieved when pleasure is obtained and pain is avoided (American Psychological Association, 2022).

Mindfulness-to-Meaning Theory: A dynamic process model of mindful positive emotion regulation that elucidates downstream cognitive-affective mechanisms by which mindfulness promotes health and resilience to stressful situations (Garland & Fredrickson, 2019).

Mindfulness: The awareness that rises through paying attention in a particular way in the present moment without judgment (Keng et al., 2011).

Positive reappraisal: An adaptive process associated with meaning-based coping in which stressful events are re-constructed as benign, valuable, or beneficial (Garland et al., 2008).

PWB(PWB)- Productive mental/emotional states created by a blend of Hedonic (pleasure/enjoyment) and Eudaimonic (meaning/fulfillment), and resilience towards daily stressors (emotional regulation) (Tang et al., 2019).

Workplace spirituality: A framework of organizational values evidenced in the culture that promote employees' experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of completeness and joy (Rajin & Rathee, 2020).

Chapter Two

Beyond the natural curiosity of the mind, individuals are faced with the daily flood of information such as emails, tasks, and notifications that interrupt focus. Attention is currency as it can determine future behavior as whatever a person may pay attention can impact their thoughts, feelings, desires, and perspectives at a subconscious level (McClintock & Brewer, 2020). What one pays attention to changes the way that the brain flows. In specific, it is not what one pays attention to, but also how they pay attention (Wimmer et al., 2020). In modern society, people are often bombarded with distractable content that conditions the brain to seek new camera angles. In a more descriptive format, this can be found within the literature underneath the concept “digital overload”, which inquires the daily/night barrage of messages and alerts from technologies such as laptops, smartphones, and tablets (Rosen & Samuel, 2015). In the hindsight of focus, short-term pleasure can be problematic towards overall efficiency and enhancing the quality of life (Kringelbach & Berridge, 2011). The skill of mindfulness can enable one to make the right conscious choice and reconnect to the present moment which matters most (Kiken et al., 2017).

Psychological well-being (PWB) has been a recurring topic of interest around the globe as society looks to change for the better (Trudel-Fitzgerald et al., 2019). These changes involve adaptability, efficiency, and ultimately relearning to break old habits or patterns that may not be in alignment with today’s interest. As a transitional period is amongst us, we currently sit at the crossroads of the past and the future. What has worked for people and organizations in the past may not work in harmonic fusion with society’s movement. In the previous chapter we discussed certain historical influencing factors such as advancing technologies and the COVID pandemic, which have shed light on some foundational structure points that are essential towards internal

and external organizational success. This paper is aimed at utilizing the information provided within the literature review in along with the Mindfulness-to-Meaning Theory as a foundation towards the support of mindfulness training within the hospitality industry. This training can help towards the growth and development of an industry that has been recuperating from the COVID-19 as the turnover rates for the hospitality industry an all-time high of 30% in 2020 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022). The number has declined in the last year to a rather high 85% (2021), which has led to employee burnout, frustration, long hours, and lack of coordination (Hurdle-Bradford, 2022). The following research question will be investigated:

RQ1: Which mindfulness practices seem to be the most effective towards improving psychological well-being (PWB) and mindfulness?

RQ2: What are some potential limitations and challenges associated with offering employee mindfulness?

This literature review will be arranged in topical order, emphasizing the relationship of the issues to the main concept of mindfulness. First, PWB will be explained from a foundational perspective along with both approaches, Hedonic and Eudaimonic. Second, the origin and history of mindfulness inspected to understand it's evolution. Next, the interconnection between positive emotional regulation and mindfulness effectiveness will be examined through the lens of the Mindfulness-to-Meaning Theory (MTMT). The flexibility of mindfulness training will then be evaluated with corresponding literature. Examples from research studies accessing corresponding evidence towards both group training, individual trainings, and technologically advanced training via mobile application will also be analyzed. Finally, challenges and limitations associated with mindfulness trainings' will be examined.

Psychological Well-being (PWB)

Hedonic and Eudaimonic

Psychological wellbeing (PWB) is defined as a blend of Hedonic (pleasure) and Eudaimonic (purpose) happiness, along with resilience towards daily stress (emotion regulation) (Tang et al., 2019). PWB is often related to productive mental/emotional states such as hope, pride, inspiration, love, and gratitude to name a few. When examining PWB from a comprehensive perspective, it is important to understand the two levels that work together to structure PWB. The first level touches on the positive emotions associated with happiness and the second level comes with the experience and feelings of purposefulness and meaning (Diener, 2000). It is essential that both levels are included with the entirety of PWB for one to assess their current state of mind. Ryff et al. (2021) presented an accurate dissection of the prominent approaches associated with wellbeing_Hedonic and Eudaimonic.

The Hedonic approach includes components such as overall life satisfaction, positive affects measured by experiencing positive emotions, and negative affects which are associated with negative feelings such as feeling hopeless, sad, worthless, etc (Ryff et al., 2021). The Eudaimonic approach on the other hand is broken down into high or low scores derived from six different categories, built on a multidimensional model towards various positive perspectives for the individual's experience throughout life (Ryff et al., 2021). The first category includes self-acceptance, which is created by the individual acknowledging their personal limitations. The second category includes positive relations with others as individuals as trusting interpersonal alliances are pursued. The third category focuses on environmental mastery, representing the shaping of external environments to meet the individual's standard. The fourth category mentioned was autonomy, and this is contributed towards the individuals' sense of personal

authority and self-determination. The fifth category known as purpose in life is attributed towards the meaning within life's challenges as experienced by the individual. The last category also considered the center of the Eudaimonic model is personal growth. Personal growth is the realization of the individual's distinctive characteristics and strengths, along with the pursuit to enhance these attributes (Ryff et al., 2021). Although there are different categories and associated terminology for Eudaimonic and Hedonic orientations (Huta & Waterman, 2014), the definitions within this project will be solely based upon the work presented by Ryff et al. (2021).

Mindfulness

A detailed understanding of the origin of mindfulness will help provide an enhanced perspective and understanding about the subject, along with how mindfulness has evolved over the years. The correlation between mindfulness and individual well-being has been illustrated in several publications, suggesting that mindfulness positively affects aspects of individual well-being such as reduced stress, anxiety, and depression (Mayo Clinic, 2020; Wolkin, 2015; Keng et al., 2011). Keng et al. (2011) defined mindfulness as an awareness that arises by consciously focusing on the present moment without judgment. The authors explained the roots of mindfulness as it was derived from Eastern religions such as Buddhism dating back over 2,600 years ago and made its way to western psychological health and medical industries in the early 1970s as a countermeasure against psychological distress. With consistent practice towards present moment awareness, individuals can self-regulate their thoughts and intentionally shift attention from a negative aspect of an experience to another characteristic that provides a more positive perspective.

In this context, mindfulness can be disassociated from religion. In a formative research study conducted by Sun et al. (2022), mindfulness was explored as a principal and technique for

minority stress. Throughout the literature, it was mentioned that many individuals may see a relationship between mindfulness and religion. This can create confusion, especially if the participant experienced trauma or negative experiences stemming from their religious background (Sun et al., 2022). To detach from past/previous negative events, it would be beneficial if mindfulness teachers adopted a distinctive approach when introducing mindfulness and to clarify that mindfulness is not a religion, but instead a practice involving various traditions (Kane et al., 2017; Sun et al., 2022). Being as though practice is required to establish this psychological skill, individuals must have a sense of openness to experience, curiosity, and acceptance towards circumstances/experiences that are out of their personal control.

With, most of the existing literatures covering mindfulness came from industries that primarily deal with measuring the human psyche such as psychology, sociology, and neurology. These literatures provided deep understanding of how the brain functions when encountering different environments, requiring an individual to alter or change their emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses to the stimulus (Gatersleben & Griffin, 2017). Various literature covering the high demands of the hospitality industry has been included to focus on the psychological impact on employees who are under high amounts of emotional stress (Deery & Jago, 2009). With the proper approach towards understanding the psyche in unification with research on positive training methods, mindfulness can improve employee self-awareness, mental agility, and resilience positively affecting job satisfaction (Song et al., 2020). We will now introduce the theoretical framework. The theory presents a relevant fit towards the issue of discussion, modern PWB and improvement.

Broadening Awareness Through Positive Emotion Regulation

Mindfulness-to-Meaning Theory

The Mindfulness-to-Meaning Theory (MTMT) aims to explore how emotional regulation can be promoted through cognitive appraisals and enhancing interoceptive attention. Garland et al. (2015) mentioned that the practice of mindfulness allows the conscious mind to go into a metacognitive state affecting how one concentrates on the experience presently by promoting positive reappraisals as a positive influence towards adaptive behavior (Garland et al., 2015). Note that this does not mean that an individual should only interpret the positive aspects of an experience and deny the “negative” features in fact as they stand; however, utilizing positive appraisal allows one to appreciate adverse experiences in full without judgment towards what is right and wrong as a channel towards the goal of self-development. Positive reappraisal is defined as an adaptive process associated with meaning-based coping in which stressful events are re-constructed as benign, valuable, or beneficial (Garland et al., 2008). This theory provides support to understand how and why mindfulness trainings can revitalizing employees’ psyche.

This theory was recently tested in a cross-sectional study conducted by Sgherza et al. (2022) on assessing MTMT characteristics such as reappraisal, decentering, and well-being with the use of a multilevel structural equation modeling system. After completing surveys for 345 participants between the ages of 18-65 years old by way of smartphone six times a day, studies revealed that dispositional mindfulness was linked to increased reappraisal and savoring of positive experience (Sgherza et al., 2022). In addition, it was noted that the effects between well-being, savoring, positive affect, and decentering were in support of the upward spiral process as shown in Figure 1.

Mindfulness Training

Within the literature review, there were several studies that provided evidence towards the formlessness of mindfulness as it does not have a specific form of presentation that is required through training such as group or individual settings/programs. Johnson et al. (2020) revised 28 experimental studies towards mindfulness-based training as an effective method for organizations to implement with a primary goal of improving the wellbeing, mental health, and performance of employees. After completing analysis, the authors were able to identify 51 mindfulness-related training opportunities based upon four different categories: individual (23), job/work (17), group/team (7), and organizational (4). This literature review was able to provide credibility towards the defining mindfulness as a skill that has an extensive range of methods (meditation, yoga, breathing exercises) to achieve stimulate relaxation, increase concentration/attention, promote emotional intelligence, and even nourish psychological resilience towards distress. The outcomes from this study further support the ideology of various mindfulness practices with ranging environments based upon organizational demands. The hospitality industry is diverse as certain areas have extensive time towards group projects, while other respectable departments are more individual based and focused. Mindfulness training does not have a cookie cut sheet as it flows like water, adaptable based upon the needs of the participant.

Group Mindfulness Trainings

Mindfulness trainings are not required to be presented in a specific manner. However, a common format in organization settings is to have group mindfulness trainings. Several studies that have incorporated mindfulness trainings in a group setting were investigated, Shonin et al. (2014) conducted a qualitative study to understand the effectiveness of meditation awareness

training (MAT) which follows a traditional Buddhist outlook and foundation on meditation, dating back over 2,600 years ago. The outlook is firmly rooted as the origins of the ‘mindfulness’ term that is commonly used in modern western psychological health and medical industries. The study utilized clinical techniques in a group-setting lasting approximately 8-weeks. Participants were provided with both a program booklet and a CD that encompassed pre-recorded guided meditations that were played on daily basis. Every two weeks, participants were required to attend a two-hour group workshop, while individually meeting with a meditation mentor once a month to discuss progress. The authors concluded that those who initially claimed high stress and low emotional states described significant improvements in PWB post MAT.

Similarly, Hülshager et al. (2013) studied the benefits of mindfulness in a workplace setting in attempt to reduce emotional exhaustion and enrich emotional regulation and job satisfaction of 86 employees through two studies. The first study involved 22 employees (control group) and lasted five days. Employees in the control group were given a diary booklet and required to report their emotional state two times a day, once prior to work and once before going to bed. The experimental group (MIG) on the other hand had their progress reported over a ten-day period with a self-training approach as they were given mindfulness meditation instructions focused on daily nonjudgmental practices which varied with training methods based upon individual preference. Options available for the MIG group included mental body scans, love, and kindness meditations, and three-minute breathing exercises. Pre and post surveys were completed by both groups to record differences in psychological/emotional states. Results show that those included within the experimental group had significantly higher levels of daily mindfulness when compared to the control group. This approach may need further studies as

there was no daily time requirement for participants within the MIG group, as well as a noticeable difference in trial period when comparing the two groups.

Alternative Methods

Efficient Time Management: Work Breaks

Earlier within the literature review it was mentioned how distressing the hospitality industry can be in response to high turnover rates and emotional/psychological burnout (Song et al., 2020). The fast-paced industry can make mindfulness practices difficult to implement with the lack of leisure time presented to employees, especially those within managerial/leadership roles. To find a productive solution, Chen, and Wilton (2018) explored the relationship between mindfulness practices and job performance levels with TGI Friday servers. During their study, they recommended that managers experiment with alternative methods of enhancing work breaks for employees to improve PWB and essentially increase through the introduction of mindfulness meditation. Providing employees with the proper information and guidance towards alternatives that could positively impact their psyche is an important factor as approximately 1 in 7 workers within the United States report engagement in some type of “mindfulness-based activity” (Kachan et al., 2017). Spreading awareness to increasing this minor statistic could be beneficial; however, further studies will need to be conducted to support that hypothesis.

Yoga

Incorporating yoga into one’s daily practice for both physical and mental restoration has been a recommendation for several reasons associated with individual well-being. From a physical standpoint, yoga improves strength, balance, and flexibility through slow movements and deep breaths aimed at increasing circulation and warming up the physical body (Johns Hopkins Medicine, 2022). Further scientific research supported by the National Institutes of

Health suggests that yoga also supports stress management, good health habits, improved mental/emotional health, and sleep (National Institutes of Health, 2022). Researchers Kang and Jang (2021) wanted to evaluate the effects of mindfulness yoga on depression, self-esteem, and quality of life. Through the researcher's mindfulness yoga program that lasted 12 weeks, participants were required to meet two times a week, for an average of seventy-five minutes per meeting. Results from the study showed a severe decrease in depression, while self-esteem, social, psychological, and quality of life notably increased (Kang & Jang, 2021).

In like manner, Tellhed et al. (2019) wanted to understand how yoga improved health from a physiological and psychological standpoint. Within the study, middle aged adults who identified as moderately stressed were split into two groups. The first group (control group) did not participate in the intervention program, while the second group were assigned to the 5-week Yoga and Mindfulness Intervention (YOMI) program. Within the YOMI program, individuals participated in an hour of yoga practice followed up with a 30-minute psychoeducation presentation on a biweekly basis; daily breathing exercises lasting just 5-minutes were also assigned as daily homework. After the 5-week period ended, the experimental group reported a substantial reduction in sleep difficulties, depression, and anxiety due to the development of yogic breathing which also contributed towards enhanced mindfulness (Tellhed et al., 2019).

When comparing results, it can be concluded that yoga assists with managing psychological distress and encouraging natural healing (Kang & Jang, 2021; Tellhed et al. 2019). This information serves beneficial towards hospitality leaders due to the diversity in options provided for the individual employee. Alternative methods such as yoga which impacts the psyche like meditation with a twist of increased physical mobility may be an appealing mindfulness training method. A common limitation in mindfulness yoga is that it often requires a

set environment that permits open space, which could be difficult for some organizations to obtain on-site. Nevertheless, the education and knowledge towards the benefits of mindfulness yoga as an option for employees could provide opportunity for those that wish to pursue the method.

Mobile Apps

Mindfulness trainings that are more adaptable to today's advancing technologies and work scheduling were also reviewed amongst present literature. These methods serve beneficial due to the adaptability that they have with one's scheduling and attaining work-life balance. Bostock et al. (2019) conducted a study with two commercial enterprises to improve PWB, reduce work related stress, and improve cardiovascular ambulatory blood pressure over an eight-week period. 238 participants were split into two groups: one that would get access to a mindfulness meditation app and the other who were placed on a waitlist. The mindfulness app provided 45 different prerecorded meditations averaging in between 10 and 20 minutes as the guidelines required the individuals to listen to at least one a day. After 8-weeks a survey was sent out to both groups and to no surprise the group that received the mobile app reported a significant improvement in PWB and perceptions of social workplace support, while showing remarkable decreases in both workplace stress and job strain. Bloodwork also supported the hypothesis for the experimental group, as mobile application participants showed exceptional improvements in systolic blood pressure.

The opportunity for efficiency-based mindfulness training is also an option for individuals that possess a smartphone, whether it be a product of Apple, or Android. Despite the reality of web-based mediators being in the early steps of development, a new field has emerged in response. Mobile health is a transpiring field that enables people to use their mobile devices to

track their health and provide solutions to recurring problems (Mani et al., 2015). Utilizing a mobile health app encourages a healthy lifestyle, increases point-of-care tools to support clinical decision-making processes, provides communication enhancements, and specialized guidance towards a particular goal(s) (Ventola, 2014).

Data towards the inclusion of mobile apps on a grander scale showing the price of bulk access was not found as frequently as expected within the literature; however, software company Calm incorporated two enterprise-level corporate options designed for commercial wellness solutions via webpage (Calm, 2022). The first option provided is designated for smaller teams consisting of 5-20 people, while the second option is more of an enterprise plan for teams exceeding 21 people. Calm also encourages companies to request a demo for consulting purposes aimed at achieving employee mental health and productivity goals in a strategic manner. Both plans incorporate basic analytics/insights, webinar events, custom branding, exclusive workshops, and even a dedicated customer success manager.

Cellular device growth shows to be promising based upon trends from the previous three years. A recent study suggested that there are around 6.3 billion smartphone users around the globe with an average of 4.9% annual increase (Statista, 2022). To put this number into consideration, there has been an increase a 79% increase equivalent to an additional 2.9 billion smartphone users in comparison to 2016 (Statista, 2022). In recent years Huberty et al. (2019) conducted a randomized controlled trial towards the efficacy of the meditation mobile app “Calm” in hopes of reducing stress amongst full-time undergraduate students attending a University in the Southwest region of the United States. Within their study, they mentioned that there were over 560 apps accessible in English through both Apple iTunes and the Google Play (Mani et al., 2015). By simply asking participants to use the calm app for at least 10 minutes per

day over a 12-week period, results towards stress reduction were significant when comparing the control and experimental group. The study concluded that through utilizing the app Calm, individuals can effectively reduce stress, improve mindfulness, and self-compassion (Huberty et al., 2019). Being as though smartphone usage is increasing, providing employees with subscriptions/access towards mindfulness apps such as Calm, FitMind, and Chopra: Meditation & Wellbeing to name a few, can promote positive effects towards employee psychological distress as shown in the University Study.

Back in 2020, well known hospitality company Hyatt had publicly announced that they were teaming up with meditation and mindfulness app *Headspace*. In a release, Chief Commercial Officer Mark Vondrasek stated, “By teaming up with industry leaders like Headspace, we are better positioned to care for our guests and employees and help them prioritize their own well-being both during and in between stays at Hyatt hotels around the world” (Trejos, 2020). This shows the proactivity of the company as they planned and executed a partnership that could both empower and accommodate the emotional distress that is associated with everyday life. The proactive move could also serve beneficial to operations as the Global Wellness Economy currently stands at \$4.4 Trillion and is forecasted to reach \$7 Trillion by 2025 (Global Wellness Institute, 2022).

Corporate Approaches Towards Mindfulness Training

Starbucks

As mentioned throughout the literature review and Chapter 1, COVID was one of the primary instigators towards mindfulness awareness as turnover rates increased (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022) and frontline employees often undergo high amounts of emotional stress due to working extensive shifts. In 2020 and 2021, Starbucks, the world’s largest coffeehouse

chain took the initiative. In March of 2020, the company announced a mental health partnership with Lyra Health suggesting that partners and eligible family members would have access to up to 20 complementary sessions with therapists and coaches at no additional cost (Starbucks, 2020). Fast forward two months (May) and the company announced another partnership with *Headspace*, as partners within the United States and Canada received a free headspace subscription via mobile app including meditations from stress to anxiety (Starbucks, 2020).

Google, Target, AETNA, and Intel

Outside of Hyatt, and Starbucks, there are additional corporate giants that have implemented mindfulness training programs within the last 15 years, providing evidence of towards the importance of organizations investing into employee PWB with measurable results. Schaufenbuel (2015) examined an ongoing movement seen from multinational organizations such as Google, Target, Aetna, and Intel to name a few. The previously mentioned corporations have found value in encouraging employees to de-stress by focusing on the present moment due to today's rapid environment. Schaufenbuel claimed that these organizations are instilling mindfulness after understanding the importance of recharging one's mind and body to reclaim productivity. These companies also understand that utilizing a mindful approach and perspective towards thoughtfulness, openness, and reflection has a highly positive impact on employee's overall performance and most importantly, the company's bottom line. By reducing tendencies to multitask and deliberately focusing with one's full attention, the quality of interactions and decisions are heightened for the better.

Google

The inclusion of large international organizations that provide successful stories towards mindfulness trainings were seen as a necessity within this literature review to enable the reader

to understand that such trainings could be incorporated regardless of the size of your own establishment. Another example can be found in Nair and Vasudev's (2021) study where they investigated the growing trend of mindfulness trainings within large organizations. The study shed light on Google's 2007 employee mindfulness program named "Search Inside Yourself" which aimed to teach employees methods of mindfulness, self-regulation, self-awareness, motivation, empathy, and leadership skills. The program only lasted two days which is relatively short in comparison to other studies that have been examined within this literature review; however, the results were indistinguishable. Post training, employees claimed to have found calmness, improved flexibility to stressful situations, enriched empathy, and further developed listening skills. The time frame for this training may be more suitable for organizations within the fast-paced hospitality industry that works on a rigorous schedule with limited time availability.

AETNA

In similar fashion to Nair and Vasudev's study, Greiser et al. (2018) also focused their efforts on describing the power of mindfulness in corporate companies. The authors brought up a great point as fluctuating markets, shifting consumer demands, and technological advancements make organizational agility difficult to flourish and succeed. In response to that, some corporate giants are taking a deeper look and investment into their employees to provide them with a stronger foundation to adapt to new organizational demands. Aetna, an American managed health care company took this initiative in 2007 where they trained approximately 13,000 employees on mindfulness practices resulting in a 28% annual companywide stress reduction rate. In addition to improved employee psychological wellbeing, Greiser et al., noted that such improvements resulted in an equivalent of \$3,000 per employee in workforce productivity. After

noticing smoother operational improvements and efficiency, the corporation began launching additional mindfulness initiatives. This all started with minor meditations within executive team meetings and grew into yoga/meditation classes for employees in every position. Hospitality employers may want to assess these stories as investing into employees' PWB is showing to be a beneficial course of action, even from some of the worlds most advanced companies.

Challenges and Limitations Associated with Mindfulness Practices

Group Versus Individual Settings

When first understanding mindfulness and the associated trainings, one may think this is a certain practice that needs to be done in isolation, similar to therapy; however, supporting evidence suggests otherwise. Besides individual practices the literature review demonstrated that group mindfulness practices can also provide positive benefits to employees. For example, Kurash and Schaul (2006) wanted to further understand how the development of mindfulness effected participants within a University Counseling Center setting. Authors claimed that group meditation creates a sense of community, as the practice is enhanced when shared and reflected with other individuals in within the group. By gathering staff from the university together for 50 minutes once a week, members claimed that they had a sense of support and guidance. The authors also claimed that by simply sitting together with other individuals during meditation, a sense of present moment awareness was developed as the University was often busy and hectic. Delegating time specifically towards meditating with a group in such a busy environment allowed participants to experience group interconnectedness and a heightened sense of individual meta-awareness. This is a recurring challenge within the hospitality industry, as management often has a hard time delegating time from operations (Arun, 2017).

Likewise, Schroevers et al. (2016) investigated both group and individual mindfulness-based cognitive therapy within a pilot randomized controlled setting. Authors within the literature argued that group environments provide opportunity towards observational learning, emotional support, increased encouragement, and a possible increase towards motivation for individuals to complete daily exercises outside of the group setting (Schroevers et al., 2016). The alternative perspective was also disputed for the individual setting as some people found group sharing disappointing and frustrating (Griffiths et al. 2009; Lau et al. 2012). Additional points such as constrained time schedules, physical environment preferences (lighting, temperature, etc), and reduced feelings of overwhelmingness due to the lack of information/difficulties presented by group participants were deemed effective for some. These small characteristics could have some influence towards whether an individual is able to concentrate within the mindfulness training(s).

Supporting literature for group and individual settings were further provided by Lau et al. (2012) who wanted to determine the preference(s) of employees within large healthcare organizations. The study was presented to 151 employees, while options were broken down into four categories (individual via telephone, individual, group, online group). Results depicted that 69.6% of participants preferred individual treatment as the main preference of face-to-face interactions for effectiveness (47%), 32% preferred an individual technological formatted training scheduled by the employer in advance (Lau et al, 2012). Both options show to be effective despite their individual advantages and disadvantages, further suggesting that time/schedule flexibility and individual preference should be taken into consideration prior to training assignment.

Cost

The price of mindfulness training can also be a challenge and limitation as companies have different budgets. *Mindful Presence*, a well-known company devoted towards reducing employee stress and assisting with leadership, emotional intelligence, and leadership provided their service costs on their website. The pricing structures in the following sentences include introductory and multi-week corporate mindfulness training sessions designed to meet company specifics. As viewed on their website, the introduction to corporate mindfulness course is \$795 per group and includes a 90-minute introduction as participants are provided with the science behind mindfulness meditation, along with the methods used to practice (Mindful Presence, 2022). The organization did not provide any insight towards the maximum number of participants per group. The second option provided by Mindful Presence is a multi-week training that samples different training methods and helps with establishing a work-life mindfulness balance. The training duration itself depends on the companies needs/goals, but typically ranges anywhere from 6-8 weeks at \$600 per week (Mindfulness Presence, 2022).

As mentioned earlier in the literature review, Calm has offered their services for business looking to improve their employee PWB and enhance productivity potential. Through their website, estimates were provided for team plans considering 5-20 participants and a larger enterprise plan that includes more than 21 people. Pricing for the team plan suggested \$55.50 per person or \$832.50 annually, while the enterprise plan exceeding 20 eligible team members requires a demo booking for consulting (Calm, 2022). Over 3,000+ organizations around the globe have created partnerships with this software company towards mindfulness related trainings and the following literature will show evidence towards the importance of investing in employee mental capability, with measurable benchmarks.

To understand the advantage of incorporating mindfulness training in a proactive manner when comparing return on investment, a lifestyle intervention study was evaluated and assessed. Klatt et al. (2016) recruited faculty and staff to participate in the University's health care plan to track the costs and understand if employee investment plans provided kickback. The study assigned the individuals into three groups, (1) exercise/diet education, (2) mindfulness training program, (3) no treatment/control group. The healthcare costs were then measured for 9 months prior to receiving the trainings and for 5 years after the trainings to evaluate long-term influence. Both the mindfulness trainings and the exercise/diet trainings were completed in group settings. Post study, results had shown that the equivalent of savings received by each employee averaged around \$4,000 annually (Klatt et al., 2016) suggesting that employee investments can be beneficial for both short-term and long-term perspectives.

Summary

The literature review implies that mindfulness training can enhance employee PWB within the hospitality industry in response to the demanding work environment and high turnover rates. The hospitality industry is often weary on additional time as efficiency is the best option; however, the literature review showed examples towards the power of investing purposeful time and even alternatives that can be added in by way of advancing technologies which provide improved opportunities, accessibility, efficiency, and well-being. The final chapter will include a summary of the findings presented in the literature review, recommendations on future directions within the industry, potential limitations associated with the study, and a conclusion towards some of the main findings acquired within the study.

Chapter Three

As the hospitality industry flourishes with new opportunities presented by everchanging preferences and expectations from the consumer, employees are often on high demand for a diverse skill set. This development has been a campaign for organizations that are still in the process of reconstruction as adjustments are being made to a post-pandemic society. Within the industry, employees often experience emotional distress due to rapid demands. Providing opportunities towards managing this type of pressure has been a new direction that successful companies such as Google, Starbucks, and Hyatt have invested in for their employees. Fundamentally understanding the systematic processes associated with psychological well-being (PWB) by investing into mindfulness trainings continues to grow and expand with the reoccurring standard towards personal health (Baminiwatta & Solangaarachchi, 2021). Interpreting the development of PWB and employee mindfulness within the hospitality and the growth of society has led to the following questions:

RQ1: Which mindfulness practices seem to be the most effective towards improving psychological well-being (PWB) and mindfulness?

RQ2: What are some potential limitations and challenges associated with offering employee mindfulness?

The final chapter will review several focal points covered within the literature review towards the conception of mindfulness training within the hospitality industry. After reviewing the literature review, practical recommendations will be provided in support of the advancement of mindfulness training within the hospitality industry.

Summary of Literature Results

Despite limited capacity of literature towards mindfulness training within hospitality industry databases, most of the information covered involves social science disciplines' that examine human thought and behavior(s) from the perspective of psychology, sociology, and neurology. The inclusion of these disciplines provides profound knowledge towards the understanding of the human psyche in terms of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral components (Gatersleben & Griffin, 2017)

Studies investigated within the literature towards mindfulness trainings show to be adaptable and efficient towards the complex nature of the hospitality industry (Johnson et al., 2020). The hospitality industry is one that varies in operations, deeming it necessary for both employer/employee preferences and time availability towards personal development to be taken into consideration (Arun, 2017). In cases where group/team settings were constructed, participants improved PWB by expressing stress reduction, encouragement, emotional support, and increased team chemistry (Shonin et al., 2014; Hülshager et al., 2013; Schroevers et al., 2016; Kurash & Schaul, 2006). Alternative methods such as Yoga (Johns Hopkins Medicine, 2022; National Institutes of Health, 2022; Kang & Jang, 2021), time efficiency (Chen & Wilton, 2018), and mindfulness mobile apps were also investigated within the literature to demonstrate the versatility and effectiveness of PWB trainings in various settings.

The literature suggested that individual settings and the incorporation of mindfulness apps (Calm, FitMind, & Chopra: Meditation & Wellbeing) also served to be beneficial based upon preferences as those participants claimed a feeling of encouragement towards living a healthier lifestyle, stress reduction, and significant improvements in present moment awareness (Bostock et al, 2019; Huberty et al., 2019; Trejos, 2020). Incorporating the accessibility of

mobile apps appeared to be a proactive decision amongst employers ranging from small businesses to corporate giants as cellular device usage (Statista, 2022) and mobile health tracking (Mani et al., 2015; Ventola, 2014) has increased around the world in exponential fashion. Companies such as Starbucks, Google, Hyatt, Intel, and AETNA have welcomed this golden opportunity towards assisting their employees and guests via mindfulness programs and mindfulness app partnerships (Starbucks, 2020; Schaufenbuel, 2015; Nair & Vasudev, 2021; Greiser et al., 2018).

Limitations

Challenges and limitations associated with the development of mindfulness trainings within the workplace were acknowledged in two primary areas: training preferences (Kurash & Schaul, 2006) such as a group or individual setting and training cost/pricing (Mindfulness Presence, 2022). Individual preferences can be clarified through the feedback gained from employee satisfaction surveys lead by incentives to promote completion (Yu et al., 2017). Cost wise, group/team environments are often the most economically efficient. Data towards the inclusion of mobile apps on a grander scale showing the price of bulk access was not found as frequently as expected within the literature; however, software company Calm incorporated two enterprise-level corporate options designed for commercial wellness solutions via webpage (Calm, 2022). The price for organizations to incorporate the use of mindfulness apps seem to be more efficient when compared to face-to-face training sessions as mentioned within the literature review. Regarding research, there was limited research within the hospitality industry showing how PWB training has affected hospitality employees. As mentioned within chapter 1, there was a lack of data towards supporting the concept within the hospitality literature within the last 15

years (2007-2022). Being as though this paper was based upon an exemplary revision of literature and not an exhaustive revision, a systematic literature review should be conducted.

Industry Recommendations

The industry recommendations towards PWB training could positively benefit an organization as documented within the literature review. It would be beneficial for employers to first understand the values and needs for their employees, as this will provide organizational leaders with a clear perspective to what the employees truly care about. In a training concept this will enable employers to identify individual preferences. This information can be acquired through surveys led by incentive-based rewards to promote feedback/communication as some individuals may prefer group yoga over an individual mindfulness training session focused towards breathwork. Another advantageous proposal would be educating employees about the concept of mindfulness, along with associated practices to improve present moment awareness and positively influence PWB. The connection between mindfulness and Buddhism has its pros and cons, but organizations may find a smoother transition and application of mindfulness if the concept is taught from a less religious perspective. An example of this would include the reduction of bells during mindfulness practices (Sun et al., 2022).

One of the most efficient ways to accomplish both recommendations could be through utilizing a standard needs assessment. The needs assessment could prioritize the needs of employees while structuring efficient program planning, development and evaluation based upon organizational resources (Brown, 2002; Iqbal & Khan, 2011). For example, some organizations may offer their employees with a variety of opportunities to choose from based upon individual preference, such as a cafeteria-style benefit plan focusing on well-being, which could include fitness classes and other activities. After the appropriate training has been offered, it would

benefit organizations to assess training satisfaction and compare the changes in well-being and work performance post-training.

Following that, it would be beneficial for organizations to make partnerships with companies that offer mindful apps as the global wellness industry is expected to reach \$7 Trillion by 2025 (Global Wellness Institute, 2022) and cellular device growth is increasing at a 4.9% annual increase (Statista, 2022). Showing this proactive behavior will benefit employees and guests in a way that will enhance their overall experience for the better. Moving forward, an internal rewards program could also be utilized towards improving employee PWB. For example, if employees complete 6 months of mindfulness training, they receive an annual/monthly discount towards health insurance. The last industry recommendation would be internal/departmental group health-based competitions to encourage involvement and help promote team chemistry which is a key component towards achieving organizational success (Filho, 2015) while also improving employee well-being through the relationships that are built and strengthened.

Future Research Recommendations

One future research idea is to measuring employee well-being before and after mindfulness training(s) while comparing both short-term and long-term effects. For instance, it would be interesting to study how long the results last after 6 months of mindfulness training. It would also be beneficial to see how the mobile apps affect individuals in the long-term (over one or more years) since subscriptions can last much longer. Another recommendation regarding future research would be more intervention-based research in hospitality context. This could include workshops regarding mindfulness, educating employees about mindfulness to enhance awareness and benefits. After the workshop, a mobile mindfulness app can be implemented and

measured to understand the difference in results when comparing someone that has been educated on mindfulness in comparison to a person that has no insight towards the subject and is just presented with the app. Lastly, a systematic literature review on the topic within the hospitality database(s) is needed which could create a summary of what has already been studied, so that hospitality professionals can better understand practical-based research and researchers can develop new studies based on gaps found in the current literature.

Conclusion

In today's fast-paced society lead by technological advancements, work-life balance is a concept that many individuals struggle with more frequently than not. Over the past few decades, technology has made day to day operations more efficient, but at what cost? This study provides hospitality leaders with a proactive approach towards the ongoing distress regarding PWB as the need for this type of guidance regarding mindfulness is evident towards the rising numbers of anxiety, depression, and stress throughout the world. As employees contribute towards the success and reputation of hospitality organizations through employee-guest interactions, employee PWB should be a high priority of consideration. Providing the proper structure and knowledge about mindfulness and alternative methods would not only benefit organizations with positive ROI's and improved employee performance, but more importantly it would empower individuals with an alternative perspective that complements the potential that everyone has within them. Being as though we currently sit at the crossroads of the past and the future, it would benefit society if we were proactive towards mental health, rather than being reactive and adjusting towards a complication that has been foreshadowed.

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