The Impact of Work-Based Mindfulness Programmes on Employee Health

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Submitted to the National College of Ireland, August 2020

Abstract

The Impact of Work-Based Mindfulness Programmes on Employee Health by Frances Gordon

Health and wellbeing have been a global conversation that has gained momentum over the past twenty years (World Health Organisation, 2007). Primarily due to stress becoming a leading cause of illness in the workplace (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2016). Moreover, the subject of mindfulness and the benefits associated has become a key topic of workplace wellbeing programmes highlighted by many psychological therapists and academics to enable people to live healthier and fuller lives. However, more critical is mindfulness has been widely reported as a tool or technique that can enhance individuals to manage stress, anxiety, health and emotions in a positive way (Kabat-Zinn, 1994).

This dissertation aims to examine in more depth what the benefits of mindfulness has on employee health within a workplace environment. The author has drawn on the empirical research within the secondary data, and on examination of the literature, the specific areas that to date are underdeveloped.

This study, therefore, addresses the gaps in employee education relating to the subject of mindfulness. Additionally, the leadership impact and whether the mindful leader is necessary for the future management of employees. Additionally, what guidance organisations require to implement programmes that have significant health benefits to the workers.

The approach the author has taken in this research has been a mono method process and drawing on a small sample size of semi-structured interviews, and the author used a qualitative data collection analysis. Therefore, due to the nature of this approach applying an inductive method supported this process allowing the author to develop that which has relevance for the subject of mindfulness and health associations and extrapolate the data that can fill the research gaps within this study.

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Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS AND RESEARCH TOPIC

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

List Of Figures and Tables

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

ABBREVIATIONS LIST

Term	Definition
APA	American Psychological Association
CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel Development
IOL	International Labour Organisation
MBCT	Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy
MBSR	Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction
PANAS	Positive and Negative Affect Schedule
PERMA	Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment
OECD	Organisation for Economic Corporation and Development
SBW	Subjective Well Being
WHO	World Health Organisation

INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS AND TOPIC OF RESEARCH

1.0 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

1.1.1 Background To The Topic Of Mindfulness

Mindfulness is contextualised as a state of mind and being in the *"present moment"* "focus" and "awareness" (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Brown, Ryan, and Creswell, 2007). The increasing preliminary evidence of literature indicates mindfulness is a practice of "being" in comparison to a goal-orientated approach of "doing" to which is recognised as the cognitive means of being and doing (Lyddy and Good, 2017; Kabat-Zinn, 2013; Segal, Williams, and Teasdale, 2002). Moreover, hypothesised as "being while doing" suggested to underpin workplace functioning (Lyddy and Good, 2017).

Substantial evidence suggests that the benefits of mindfulness in traditional and secular societies is associated with relieving pain, stress, and anxiety (Langer, 1989). The three key strands of mindfulness interventions are acknowledged as - mindfulness-based stress reduction, MBSR (Kabat-Zinn, 1990) noted as a psychological de-stressor, mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, MBCT (Segal, Williams, and Teasdale, 2002) therapy for dealing with depression and Zen meditation (Buddhist tradition) the elimination of pain and stress. Critically, Seligman (2011) supports mindfulness as a key component to enhancing human flourishing that can radically improve an individual's quality of life.

However, there are many opposing views from academics that suggest being mindful or the mindfulness effects are not any more significant than other available treatments (Desbordes, Lobsang, Negi, and Thaddeus, 2012). Purser (2014) would additionally argue that the view that mindfulness is a life-changing phenomenon has negative connotations. Citing that the advocate's views that mindfulness will potentially change the world are "magical thinking on steroids"(Purser, 2014). Additionally, the literature on how effective these

interventions are when integrated into organisational wellbeing programmes is still relatively unknown. While many academics and studies are demonstrating the positive effects of mindfulness, and the benefits to the workplace this study, will address and critically analyse the above scholar's works in the main section of the literature review in chapter 2.

1.1.2 The Factors Currently Impacting Employee Health

Since the early 2000s, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has been advocating the case to address health, defining it as "physical, mental and social-wellbeing" (World Health Organisation, 2007). The WHO formalised a global policy to encourage a focus on worker's health as a priority at the national and international level and endorsed the protection of employee health (WHO, 2007). However, policymakers have been somewhat unsuccessful in ensuring population wellbeing takes precedence within organisations. Arguably, due to lack of guidance or framework to what organisations wellbeing should look like to combat the health issues. While many scholars may disagree on this point, the statistics on the cost of mental health and stress-related absences continue to increase. Stress and mental health reported as the leading causes of employee illness (CIPD, 2018).

Mental health is estimated to cost Ireland €8.2 billion annually and reported that 18.5% of the Irish population suffers from stress, anxiety, and mental health-related illness (OECD, 2018). Additionally, The Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development CIPD (2018) in Ireland conducted a study that found 20% of organisations experienced a yearly increase in the absence and over 44% referenced stress as the main increase in work-related absence. Stress is defined as 'an experienced incongruence between job demands and job or individual resources that is accompanied by cognitive, emotional, physical or behavioural symptoms' (Le Blanc, 2008). In the Trades Union Congress of 1,000 employees surveyed 70% cited stress as the key indicator impacting their health (See Figure 1).

Figure. 1 Indicators Impacting Workplace Health (Source: TUC, 2016)

Stress is biggest threat to workplace health

Share of UK safety representatives identifying the following as top five workplace hazards

	2016	Change on 2014*
Stress	70%	+3 p.p.
Bullying/harassment	48%	+2 p.p.
Overwork	40%	+4 p.p.
Back strains	32%	-1 p.p.
Long hours of work	30%	+4 p.p.
Slips, trips, falls (level)	28%	-4 p.p.
Repetitive strain injuries	26%	-1 p.p.
Violence & threats	24%	+5 p.p.
Display screen equipment	21%	-1 p.p.
Working alone	18%	-1 p.p.

The research indicates that current job demands acknowledged as *"stressors"* (CIPD, 2018) are key factors impacting workplace stress, heavier workloads, poor management style and the absence of the mindful leader all having a negative impact to the health of workers (Bunting, 2016).

Although public health governance has a significant role to play in health promotion, organisations have a critical role and responsibility to the health of their employees and as responsible employers (WHO, 2019). The literature weighs heavily towards mindfulness as a key enhancer to health improvement and stress reduction. Moreover, evidence increasingly suggests that mindfulness has other beneficial impacts on workers function in the work environment (Lyddy and Good, 2017; Good, Lyddy, and Glomb, 2015) and optimises organisational output. The author examines and critically analyses the benefits of mindfulness further in chapter 2 and within the findings and discussion section in chapter 4.

1.2 GAPS IN THE RESEARCH

1.2.1 Education of Mindfulness

Mindfulness education is the focused presence of mindfulness and the inclusion of mindful principles, philosophies, and practices (Desbordes *et al.,* 2012). The aim of educating on being mindful is to arrive at self-awareness and an ability to control thoughts and emotions (Seligman, 2011). The research shows extensive benefits of mindfulness; however, it poses the question of why more organisations and individuals have not adopted the tools to improve overall wellbeing in the workplace. An apparent gap in the literature is the importance of educating employees on mindfulness as the research has primarily focused at the organisational level. If employees were educated on the health benefits of mindful programmes, it could push and support the case for more organisations to take workplace ill-health more seriously and employ mindfulness as a core workplace initiative.

1.2.2 Link Between The Mindful Leader and Employee Health

Russell, Maître, Watson, and Fahey (2018) cite that leaders have an innate responsibility to ensure that wellbeing is a priority. Moreover, they have a significant influence on landing health initiatives (Berry, Mirabito, and Bain, 2010). However, leaders have been associated as one of the critical causes of employee ill-health (Kelloway, 2005). Influencing workers stress, due to poor leadership style, communication and influenced by organisational culture (Nyberg, Bernin, Theorell, 2005). According to Bunting (2016), a mindful leader can be critical to the successful output of employee health, job satisfaction, and engagement.

Arguably, there is limited research and anecdotal evidence on the organisational and leadership cognisance of mindfulness in workplace settings (Lyddy and Good, 2017). Therefore the academic theories can be challenged by organisations and assumptions made that the mindful approach disrupts the

achievement of goals and performance (Weick, and Putnam, 2006). Additionally, while the research indicates a link between leader's and employee stress, it is still undetermined to what degree (Nyberg, Bernin, and Theorell, (2005). There is a distinct gap in the current literature, and further inquiry to the mindful leader efficacy on employee health required.

1.2.3 Organisational Embracement and Return on Investment (ROI)

There is evidential research of organisations who recognise the importance of implementing health programmes into workplace settings. Moreover, they recognise mindfulness as a critical tool to support the health of employees. The literature highlights companies such as Microsoft and Aetna who have employed numerous mindfulness constructs to enhance the work environment. Additionally, and critically they can demonstrate key measures and results from implementing such programmes discussed in more depth in chapter 2. Nevertheless, companies are still sceptical of how mindfulness works within a workplace setting and not enough guidance on the "how" to support organisations.

However, businesses do have to recognise the alternative is potentially continuous stress experienced in the workplace and when not addressed the result is individuals becoming further overwhelmed (Roeser et al. 2013). Notably, there is nominal theoretical research available on how companies can effectively measure the return of their investment. Therefore the author addresses the gaps in the literature and aims to shine a light on the importance of why more studies are needed to support organisations. Additionally, the focus on what and why they should implement mindfulness to the workplace.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research objectives should be distinct, precise statements that clarify what the investigative desires are to achieve as a result of performing the study (Saunders et al. 2009). Wilson (2014) also suggests that research objectives are the cornerstone and the clarity necessary to strengthen and underpin the research questions. To underpin the objectives in this study, the author has adopted the Martin Seligman PERMA model five principals (discussed in chapter 2) to which Seligman (2011) states are the cornerstone of living a satisfactory life. The author seeks to gain further perspectives of a mindfulness application in a workplace environment. All of the identified gaps have been captured within the design of the objectives and sub-objectives for further in-depth analyses and discussed in Chapter 4.

Research Objectives

Objective 1: To investigate the employee knowledge on health benefits derived from mindfulness practices.

Objective 2: To investigate if mindfulness practices evoke employee health when integrated into workplace wellbeing programmes.

Objective 3: To ascertain what the added value of mindfulness is to a workplace.

Objective 4: To examine whether the application of mindfulness enhances workplace relationships.

Objective 5: To examine the impact a mindful has on employee health.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Overarching Research Question: "The Impact of Mindfulness Programmes on Employee Health

The research question stemmed from the author's interest in the topic of wellbeing programmes and an aspiration to add value to employee workplace health. Additionally, the author has a long term personal practise of mindfulness, which led to the desire of understanding the link between both mindfulness and workplace wellbeing programmes. The study has the primary purpose of establishing what impact mindfulness in the workplace can have on employee health. The author examined the principal research used in the study to pinpoint relevant critical areas that are worthy of further research and development.

Main Research Questions

1. What are the most significant benefits mindfulness can have on employee health and wellbeing? How much is known about mindfulness and its benefits?
2. What are the main benefits that mindfulness can exert in workplace wellbeing programmes?
3. What are the specific benefits gained from having a mindful culture in the workplace? How does mindfulness add value?
4. How does mindfulness enhance workplace relationships? What are the significant factors impacting workplace relationships?
5. What impact does management and leadership behaviour have on employee health? What influence can mindfulness have on leadership behaviour?

Additional sub-questions supported the research questions (See Appendix 1).

1.5 ACADEMIC JUSTIFICATION

One of the critical factors concerning today's workforce is the acknowledged increase in employee stress and absence. A group of academics at the Stanford Graduate School of Business carried out an analysis of the effects of workplace stress. They identified a staggering 120,000 deaths were attributed to how U.S. organisations managed their employees (Aetna, 2019). Further reports of the study found workplace stress impacted employee engagement with 57% acknowledging feeling dis-engaged. Stetz cites "Organisations that figure out how to reduce – or better yet prevent – debilitating stress can benefit themselves and their employees in significant ways." (Stetz, as cited by Aetna, 2019).

Additionally, the current literature highlights several studies on the benefits of mindfulness-based training, and the Cleveland Clinic conducted a study with an unsystematic selection of 900 workers in a high-stress work setting (Aetna, 2019). During the study, employees partook in a nine-week online mindfulness meditation programme called *"stress-free now".* Each group reported a reduction in stress, and a year later, after employees sustained their practice, they reported a drop in stress levels of 31%. Practitioners who advocate the advantages of mindfulness health and wellbeing associate with a compassionate workplace with the transparency of trust and openness (Russell, Maître, Watson, and Fahey, 2018). While empirical evidence indicates the significant benefits of mindfulness, globally, on employee health organisations are only beginning to take note. There is still a significant volume of companies who have not engaged in a workplace programme. Moreover, they have not recognised the empirical research on the mindfulness benefits to the workplace and importantly, its enhancers to manage workplace stress.

1.6 RESEARCH AIMS

In this study, the author's focus is to investigate mindfulness efficacy to employee health within a workplace wellbeing programme. The growing body of research of being mindful and the benefits of mindfulness-based training signifies a case to explore further the impact of mindfulness on the employee and address the gaps in the literature. Additionally, to understand from the employees perspective, mindfulness as a tool to improve employee health. The following proposes to examine the existing research relating to how mindfulness can increase an individual's health in the workplace by:

1. Investigating existing study's on workplace mindfulness programmes and whether they offer long term benefits to an employee
2. To validate the gaps in the literature relating to the education of mindfulness and the mindful leadership positive effect on employee health.
3. Additionally, to examine organisations engagement with mindfulness programmes and the potential return on investment (ROI) to endorse mindfulness programmes fully.

1.7 SCOPE OF METHODOLOGY

On analysing the secondary data for this study, specific gaps became evident within the subject of mindfulness in the workplace, supporting the framework of the objectives within this study. There are two general methods a researcher can choose from a mono method or mixed methods. A mixed-method approach Saunders (2009) describes as using two methods qualitative and quantitative. The author rejected the mixed-methods approach due to the secondary data and studies that were available to the researcher and deemed sufficient to support this particular research. Within the mono method, while characterised as one data set, there are different segments to choose from within the qualitative approach, for example, interviews, observations and focus groups that can produce a thorough set of data (Saunders, 2009). The mono method for

this study was applied, and this particular research was supported by a qualitative approach to extrapolate the required data from the perspective of an employee perceived health and mindfulness approach in the workplace.

1.7.1 Primary Research Sample

This study undertook a qualitative semi-structured interview approach, conducted with six chosen individuals with sufficient knowledge of mindfulness or who had a personal practice of mindfulness. It was critical to this particular research that the interviewees had a knowledge of mindfulness and the health benefits perceived. The below chart indicates the sector, role gender, mindfulness knowledge, and participants who had a personal practice.

Table 1. Interviewee Information

Interviewee	Sector	Role	Gender	Mindfulness Knowledge
One	Retail	Manager	Female	Yes
Two	Retail	Branding	Female	Yes
Three	Retail	Marketing	Female	Yes- Personal Practice
Four	Arts	Designer	Male	Yes-Personal Practice
Five	Child Special needs	Assistant	Female	Yes- Personal Practice
Six	Health Care	Nurse	Female	Yes

1.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

It is highly documented that stress in the workplace is prevalent and on the increase (CIPD, 2018). Mindfulness is embedded within the literature as a key instrument to alleviate and reduce stress and anxiety (Kabat-Zinn, 1990) among other workplace enhancers. For example, job satisfaction, improved engagement, good work relationships and positive performance outputs. Therefore, it suggests that more organisations need to recognise these significant benefits. On reviewing the existing literature, it is recognised by the author that for organisations to engage with these programmes, more vigorous empirical evidence is required regarding employee education on the subject of mindfulness and associated health gains. A focus on leadership awareness and their impact and in particular, leader behaviour on employee health. Additionally, inquiry regarding robust measures and framework is necessary to support organisations to invest in these critical programmes. Considerations and research approaches taken are relevant to the gaps highlighted and the mindfulness impact on workplace health that are all addressed within this research.

1.9 OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH STRUCTURE

Chapter 1 – Background To The Research Topic

The background of this study introduces a brief synopsis of the chosen research topic mindfulness and its impact on employee health in workplace programmes. Additionally discussed in this section are the objectives and specific aims of the research, scope of methodology and structure of this study.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

This chapter contains a comprehensive review of the academic literature pertinent to the research question. Current literature on mindfulness benefits as well as wellbeing programmes, will be critically analysed, and the connections between both made throughout this section.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

The methodology chapter discusses the research objectives and the chosen methods and process applied to the primary data collection in this study. Further discussed are the philosophies, approaches, population sample, and a systematic review of how the data collection was conducted.

Chapter 4 – Findings and Discussion

This chapter discusses and critically analyses the findings of the primary research. The PERMA model was used in this research to support the objectives and sub-objectives relevant to this study and to identify central topics to the research question.

Chapter 5 – Conclusions and Recommendations

The conclusions and recommendations section is a comprehensive summary and critical review outlining the research gaps found from the primary and secondary data consulted in Chapter 2, with a final summary on the desired outcome of this research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

This chapter addresses the existing literature on the beneficial impact of mindfulness and its relationship to employee health. It first deep dives into mindfulness and the many synonyms attached to it and the various scholar's schools of thought associated with mindfulness and the parallels between them. The author next explores the literature that discusses extensively the benefits of implementing mindfulness practices primarily in conjunction with workplace wellbeing programmes. What the author further examines is in what capacity mindfulness enhances workplace life and aims to address the gaps in the research on mindful education, the mindful leader impact as well as the embracement and return on investment to organisations.

2.1 MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness has many synonyms attached to it, and the word connotes an amalgamation of awareness, presence, focus, acceptance, and kindness with non-judgment. '*Mind*' relates to thought, memory, or intention, and 'Mindful' to be thoughtful or conscious, intentional awareness (Goodman and Guntanara, 1989). Mindfulness is *"awareness in the moment,"* according to the American Psychology Association and a state of mind, not a characteristic (APA.org, 2012). Mindfulness-awareness promotes wellbeing, a state that involves intentional focus (Vago and Silbersweig, 2012) the intention to have focused attention to the present moment on purpose (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Moreover, mindfulness is one's ability to bring awareness of everything around them into every moment (Brown, Ryan, and Creswell, 2007) with non-judgment (Glomb, Duffy, Bono, and Yang 2011). Cash and Whittingham (2010) would argue that the individual practising elevated levels of non-judgment shows less stress, anxiety symptoms, and less susceptible to depression.

The purpose of Mindfulness Kabat-Zinn (2011) says it is to eliminate suffering and live in a permanent state of awareness and to improve an individuals' daily physical and mental state of being (Roeser and Peck, 2009). Critically, Langer (1989) would argue an individual's behaviour and management of emotions additionally add to the quality of one's mindfulness practice which can evolve to a recognition of the authentic self and equanimity. The authentic self, derived from one's natural existence and once realised, can transform the quality of our experiences (Kabat-Zinn, 2011).

However, Purser's argument is how mindfulness is packaged and sold as a concept. He says mindfulness is just "basic concentration training", and the advocators of such practices should acknowledge there are societal issues to be addressed. He further points out that mindfulness promoted singularly presents broader issues as it keeps individuals focused solely on their selves and not broader world issues (Purser, 2014). Critically supported by Burgoon, Berger, and Waldron, (2000) functioning from a place involving a singular mindset and lack of awareness can have a detrimental impact on interrelations and performance. However, in contrast to this viewpoint Langer et al. would contest and cite mindfulness increases awareness, emotions, and allows people to be more tuned in to their environments (Langer, Pirson, and Delizonna, 2010).

2.1.1 Conceptualisation

The lineage of mindfulness traces back to Hinduism, Taoism, and Stoicism, however, connected more prevalently since 1881 to Buddhism's teachings (Goodman and Gunaratana, 1989). In Buddhism, the word Sati translates to "mindfulness" (Goodman and Gunaratana, 1989) or "awareness" (Grecucci, Pappaianni, Siugzdaite and Remo, 2014). According to Bhikkhu (2020), mindfulness, at its most simplistic level, is "reflective awareness" or one's perception (Brown, Ryan, and Creswell, 2007). The concept and rituals of mindfulness from Buddhist traditions are among the principal components of the Buddhist embodied teachings. According to the empirical literature, mindfulness

arguably has been one of the fundamental elements of Buddhism praxis with the mindfulness concept in existence in Buddhism for over 2,500 years. Trousselard, Steiler, Claverie, and Canini (2014) would argue mindfulness cannot be associated only with Buddhism, and that it has been practised and rooted in many societies and creeds for years. However, Purser critically argues that meditation by modern practitioners is practised without Buddhism's cultural and religious heritage (Purser, 2014). Arguably, through modern interpretation, it has been secularised, with only an abridged attachment to Buddhism's context (Roeser and Peck, 2009) becoming increasingly popular and widely accepted by western culture. According to Purser (2014) Buddhist meditation should always connect to its roots and not be reduced to a denationalised self-help technique detached from ethical foundations.

2.1.2 Mindfulness and Psychology

Mindfulness elevates physical, mental, emotional, and psychological health and wellbeing (WHO, 2019). According to Langer (2000) it enhances individuals to have a sense of purpose and feel able to achieve their goals. Two mindfulness methods that are widely embraced with psychologists and therapy practices are Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). MBSR was a programme developed by Kabat-Zinn, to which he introduced into therapy practices in the 1970s (Kabat-Zinn, 1990) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) designed to address depression and anxiety (Segal, Williams, and Teasdale, (2002).

2.1.2.1 Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)

Kabat-Zinn's MBSR helped bring mindfulness into the mainstream, designed to relieve suffering. Definition of "suffering" suggested as the result of attachment and judgement of what is "good" or "bad" causing fear and anxiety (Nyklicek, and Irrmischer 2017). 2010). MBSR Kabat-Zinn (1990) says it allows individuals to minimise those fears by making a deeper connection to the mind and body. The psychological process of mindfulness is done by internally

interpreting one's thoughts, emotions, and feelings (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Additionally, it evaluates external perception and awareness of the five senses of what an individual sees hears, tastes touches, and smells (Jenssen, Vangkilde, Frokjaer, and Hasselbach, 2018). Critically, studies conducted on physical health show mindfulness can reduce stress levels, enhance emotional regulation in work environments, improve the efficacy of mood, and improve life satisfaction (Jenssen et al., 2018). Moreover, mindfulness encourages engagement in activities, improves social interaction, and gives the ability to engage in more challenging events with more exceptional capabilities to manage emotions (Langer, Pirson, and Delizonna,

Critically, Kabat-Zinn says mindfulness can be cultivated through present moment awareness and applied through a form of meditation (Kabat-Zinn, 2013). According to Campayo (2008), the benefits of MBSR demonstrate significant reductions in stress, depression, anxiety, and pain. Additionally, Holzel, Lazar, Gard, Schuman, and Vago (2011) identified changes in brain activity pre and post conducted mindfulness studies. Holzel et al., (2011) studies consisted of daily forty five minute meditations over eight weeks and showed improved memory, learning abilities, and improved self-perception (Prado and Anastacio, 2019). With a significant increase in both clinical and non-clinical environments, mindfulness meditation practices identified having positive payback on both physical and psychological levels (Glomb, Duffy, Bono, and Yang, 2011). However, Desbordes et al. (2012) argument is that it only has "moderate effects" and does not suit everyone and therefore necessary for other optional methods to be available.

2.1.2.2 Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT)

Segal, Williams and Teasdale, (2002) developed Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), to reduce depression relapse and to replace negative thinking with positive self-talk. Moreover, Jensen *et al.* (2018) say MBCT techniques can be transitioned into the work environment for employees to

support the reduction of stress. Bhui, Dinos, Miecznikowski, and Stansfeld (2016) cite that psychological and mental illness can induce work-related stress. Increasing demands in the workplace, leading to burnout, postulated as one of the most significant causes of stress (Jensen *et al.* 2018). Figure 2 below demonstrates a link between work demands and personal stress.

Figure 2. Economics and Social Research Source: (Russell et al. 2018)
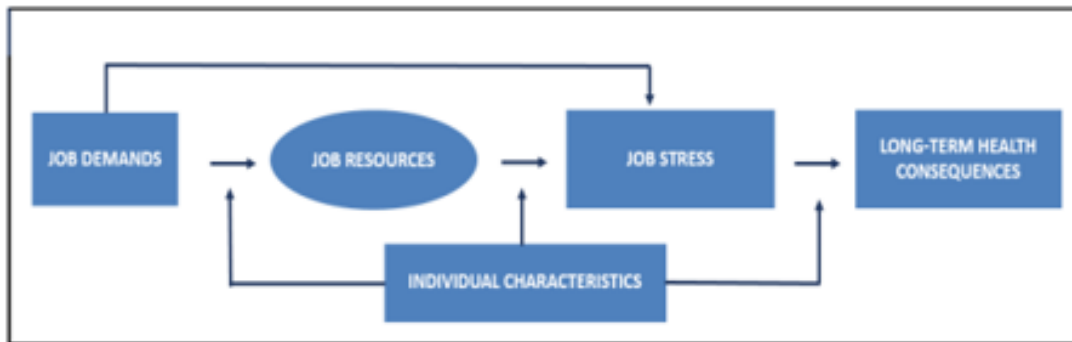
Critically, these stress symptoms can lead to a reduction of engagement in the workplace and cause an individual to develop other health issues (Jensen *et al.* 2018). Due to psychologists widespread use of both mindfulness practices in the therapy of patients, they have increased the positive influences of MBSR and MBCT. Critically, it has demonstrated positive results, particularly in the field of mental health and according to Langer et al., (2010) one of the most positive effective preventative measures of stress and ultimately, mental illness. However, arguably what the literature is limited in, is its analysis of the psychological impact a mindful leader or a non-mindful leader can have on work environments and the health of employees (Nyberg, Bernin, and Theorell, 2005).

2.1.3 Determinants of Mindfulness

Notably, mindfulness has three aspects (1) *Intention* – an individual's hope of what they receive from practising mindfulness. (2) *Attention* – focusing on one's inner and outer experiential perception. (3) *Attitude* –individuals focus on specific attitudes of kindness, compassion, and acceptance (Goodman and Gunarartana,

1989). The consistent practice of attention, awareness and attitude must be employed to see satisfactory results. According to Goodman and Gunarartana (1989) there are four foundations to mindfulness meditation. The body, feelings, mind and Dhamma. Mindfulness of the body is a focus on the breath, mindful walking and sitting. Feeling's, the second foundation, they say, is awareness of pleasant or unpleasantness, manifesting or seeing something disappearing. The mind, acceptance, and appreciation of the value of the mind and awareness of its surroundings. Dhamma is focusing one's attention on what may be arising within. (Goodman and Gunaratana, 1989). Langer (1989) would suggest there are several comparisons between modern secular interventions and mindfulness associated and practised in the eastern philosophies.

2.1.4 PERMA Theory of Well-Being

Martin Seligman, one of the co-founders of Positive Psychology, developed the PERMA theory of wellbeing and advocates five fundamentals to the route of permanent happiness and psychological wellbeing (Seligman, 2011). PERMA representing Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meanings, and Accomplishments support an individual to fulfil their life with meaning and happiness (Seligman, 2011). Seligman believes in enhancing "human flourishing," through the five core elements of the PERMA model he cites are essential. Additionally, Seligman (2011) aims is to increase flourishing globally by 2051, "flourishing" the result of optimal development across several psychosocial fields (Butler and Kerr, 2016). Arguably, each of the five core PERMA elements can be approached individually or concurrently but not necessary for all five to be pursued simultaneously to experience joy or happiness. However, generally were one element takes actionable course the other fundamentals naturally follow (Denier, Wirtz, Tov, Prieto, and Choi, 2011).

Figure 3. Martin Seligman's PERMA Model (2011)
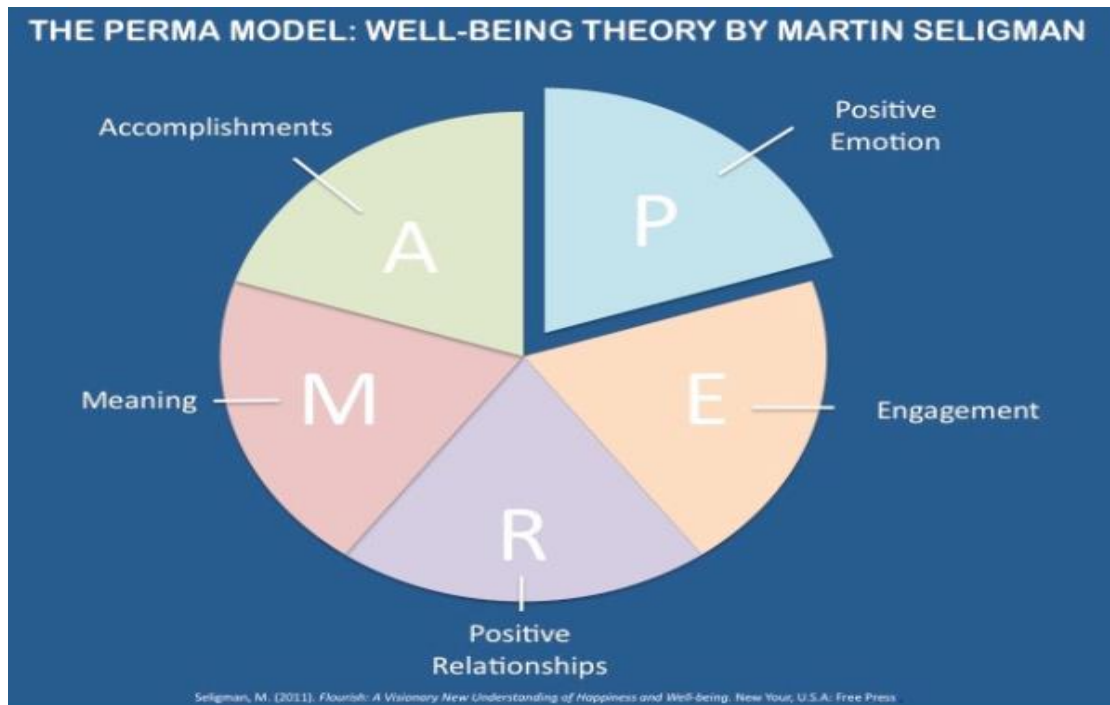
Positive Emotion Seligman suggests, Positive Emotion depends on how much a person feels psychologically and the range of pain or pleasure constructs (Diener *et al.* 2011). Although both positive and negative emotions can be felt simultaneously (Butler and Kerr, 2016). Seligman also suggests an individual's perspective of positive or negative emotions can be pre-dispositioned and why many other routes are available to enhance life satisfaction.

Engagement, he explains, is the experience in giving one's full attention and ability to be absorbed in a given task or activity (Seligman, 2011). Critically engagement is a rare predictor of an individual's wellbeing (Bunting, 2016) and research suggests engagement in activities that have deeper meaning create an influence on an individual's mood or happiness (Schueller and Seligman, 2010). Connection and social capital are fundamental to a thriving life (Brown, Ryan, and Creswell, 2007). Additionally, a passion or love for something can lead to losing all self-consciousness by becoming fully engaged and captivated in the present moment (Seligman 2011). According to Burgoon *et al.,* (2000) supporting positive

social networks can be linked to reducing depression and improving mental and physical health and overall wellbeing. Engagement has become one of the most influential aspects of leadership in organisational environments. Langer et al. (2010) cite that mindfulness is the core of engagement and engagement seen as the cornerstone of a successful business (Bunting, 2016).

Relationship studies have shown that when an individual has a purpose, they thrive in life and form deeper connections and relationships, thus resulting in better mental and physical health. To explore one's life purpose, strengths, and uniqueness are critical to creating happiness for oneself (Seligman, 2011).

Meaning Seligman states is the meaningful life and "using your signature strengths and virtues in the service of something much larger than you are" (Seligman, 2011). He explains his view is that "Authentic Happiness*"* is meant "as a prelude to a meaningful life. The definition of Meaning can be defined as the significance of one's life for something far more significant than oneself or to know innately one's purpose (Seligman, 2011). However, it can have a different meaning to everyone. According to (Dezutter et al., 2013) meaning, which can also be considered "*awareness"* and the search of meaning or *"passion,"* are all interconnected. They both play a major role in a person's psychological wellbeing. Meaning provides a sense of purpose that serves something more prominent and can serve to provide better clarity on life goals and life direction.

Accomplishment or the attainment of personal goals can be a reflection of how well an individual masters a task or activity (Seligman, 2011). Seligman argues that even when other aspects of happiness are absent, a sense of accomplishment is needed (Seligman, 2011).

Butler and Kerr (2016) developed a PERMA-Profiler as a short measuring tool of PERMA. In its design was to assess the influence of the PERMA theory on an individual's wellbeing and its intention to attribute to current measures. Other theorists have established correlations between PERMA theory and Subjective

Wellbeing (SWB). SWB a self-reported measure of a person's wellbeing of life balance and life satisfaction. Goodman, Disabato and Kashdan (2017) suggests that SWB takes precedence over Seligman's PERMA theory and argues it could even be disregarded. However, Seligman (2018) retorted Goodman, Disabato and Kashdan's argument and that PERMA components are essential building blocks of wellbeing in positive psychology. Goodman *et al.,* (2017) challenges of the PERMA model postulates more profound questions on the evaluation of wellbeing measures.

2.2 ETHICS AND MINDFULNESS

An ethical mindset is a necessary foundation to build a sophisticated and civilised environment. However, the transition of Mindfulness from Buddhism praxis to more contemporary has raised arguments the traditional ethical principles of Buddhism have been disregarded (Krageloh, 2016). Buddhist epistemologies describe mindfulness as a psychological state. Sati, or mindfulness in the Buddhist traditions is the appropriate practice and approach to supporting ethical judgement when deciding between what is right or wrong. The Buddhist practices captured within the Buddha's "Noble Eightfold Path," one of the central teachings is to eliminate suffering, applying ethics and morality to promote the right action, the right way of living, and the right speech.

Additionally, one of the most widely used ethical concepts or frameworks is the "Five Percept's," encouraging abstinence from all immoral thoughts with its primary purpose to develop mind and character. In Buddhism, the belief is that ethical behaviour is a crucial component to living healthily and a profound impact on an individual's wellbeing. However, arguably clinical cognitive therapy interventions have equally proven to relieve suffering and have long-lasting effects on individuals (Williams and Kabat-Zinn, 2011). When one's mindfulness practices are rooted in Buddhism traditions and another in Western practices (Williams and Kabat-Zinn, 2011) ethical and moral decisions or beliefs may be conflicting.

Nevertheless, when mindfulness meditation is a regular practice, heightened moral cognitive thinking, and ethical decision-making occur (Raffone and Srinivasan, 2016). It could be argued less of a need to follow Buddhism traditions to ignite these concepts. Benefits from the modern-day mindfulness meditation practices are attainable with proven studies on the elimination of suffering and overall improved wellbeing. However, the negation of the traditional ethical principles of mindfulness does not need to happen. When mindfulness is practised within the constructs of Buddhism, more profound development of ethics, wisdom, and compassion is experienced (Kang and Whittingham, 2010).

2.2.1 Neurocognitive Methods Associated with Mindfulness

According to Raffone and Srinivasan (2016) research has shown in cognitive psychology, a significant improvement in overall cognitive performance through mindfulness and meditation practices. Langer (2000) would argue that when an individual operates with an open mind, it can support long term cognitive dissonance. The research conducted identified that "Mindfulness and Cognition" had several enhancers improving the scope of one's attention, improved consciousness, effort, and cognitive resilience, and reduction of stress (Raffone and Srinivasan, 2016). Additionally, mindfulness meditation can enhance one's process of creative flow, ability to reason, improve memory and regulate emotion (Raffone and Srinivasan, 2016).

2.2.2 Emotion Regulation

Emotion Regulation defined as the ability to cultivate self-control over one's emotional state of mind and positively influence one's reaction or non-reaction (Seligman, 2011). Emotion, meaning "feeling into" and can be experienced in fleeting moments or over a prolonged period with various levels of intensity (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). Regulation meaning "process" or "action. Mindfulness and the influence of emotion regulation can deliver productive outcomes on anxiety, depression, and mental health (Seligman, 2011).

Critically, Foregeard, Jayawickreme, Kern, and Seligman (2011) argue there is a depth of research on positive emotion and its efficacy on wellbeing and various models developed to measure positive and negative emotions. More commonly is the Positive And Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS), a questionnaire found to be reliable and a valid measuring tool (Crawford and Henry, 2004). PANAS is a psychometric scale evaluating whether a person's relationship with emotions is dominantly positive or negative (Watson, Clarke, and Tellegen, 1988). Moreover, Watson and Clarke (1998) investigation of the PANAS model found regardless of the group or subject researched, or the timeline used, the model produces consistent and dependable data.

2.3 MINDFULNESS MOVEMENT

Over the last two decades, research on mindfulness has been growing exponentially, with increasing amounts of studies coming to the forefront of its benefits. New understandings, applications, and the accessibility of mindfulness practices on a global scale have led many to view its roles and functions in fundamental novel ways. To the degree that several sectors have adopted mindfulness practices (Eberth and Sedlmeier, 2012). Institutions such as Psychotherapy, corporations, schools, and prisons, and the U.S. military all implementing mindful programmes (Seligman, 2011). The focus and growing popularity of mindfulness have provided grounds for a global embracement of mindfulness practices.

Arguably how mindfulness is understood and interpreted in modern secular environments is slightly different from traditional positioning within the Buddhist community. According to Purser (2014) the contemporary application of mindfulness practices by secular societies is not supported by traditional Buddhist practitioners. The secular context of mindfulness promotes "alleviating" suffering, whereas Buddhism claims to "eliminate" suffering (Reb and Atkins, 2015). The proliferation of secular mindfulness has been modified to allow for acceptance in western culture. Critically, Buddhist practitioners would argue that

secular mindfulness is more deeply rooted in consumerism, capitalism, and the desires for more outwardly needs (Purser, 2014). Rather than the internal self-actualisation path that is rooted in the actual teachings and practices of Buddhism mindfulness. However, according to Sun, refashioning, and repackaging was essential for mindfulness attributes to become mainstream and widely accepted within the western culture (Goodman and Gunaratana, 2017).

2.3.1 Constructs of mindfulness techniques within a wellbeing programme

According to Kabat-Zinn, one of the most effective mindfulness practices is meditation, a "process being involved and accepting the internal and external moment-to-moment experience in a decentred manner" (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). Prado and Anastacio (2019) investigated what benefits mindfulness programmes had on a group of individuals, using meditation as the primary tool of the assessment to determine the efficacy of mindfulness. During Prado and Anastacio's study, the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) a mindfulness measurement proficiency tool observes, describes, how they act with awareness, non-reactivity, and non-judgment (Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer, and Toney, 2006). The study was carried out with 263 college students. It found to have increased emotion regulation and spiritual benefits in the group who meditated versus the non-meditators (Prado and Anastacio, 2019). The meditation candidates scored higher on the FFMQ than those who did not participate in the meditation practices. The effects of meditation showed improvement in cognitive learning (Prado and Anastacio, 2019) psychological management of stress, resilience, and wellbeing (Carmody, Crawford, and Churchill, 2006). However, it must be practised over a prolonged period for sustainability and long term benefits.

2.3.2 Mindfulness benefits on employee health

In a 2017 study, 59% of employees reported elevated levels of stress within the workplace (Mindfulness, 2020). The empirical research has identified mindfulness as a primary benefit for workers to reduce stress (Hyland, Lee, and Mills, 2015). Employees can often be faced with emotionally charged situations, with customers, colleagues, or management, which can result in job dissatisfaction or emotional fatigue, notably one of the principal drivers of stress in the workplace. According to Hulsheger, Alberts, Feinholdt, and Lang (2013) mindfulness practice has proven to reduce employees experience of emotional exhaustion. Critically, there is growing evidence to show that there are several benefits to employees to practise mindfulness.

Figure 4. Stress and Anxiety Indicators 2019 -2020
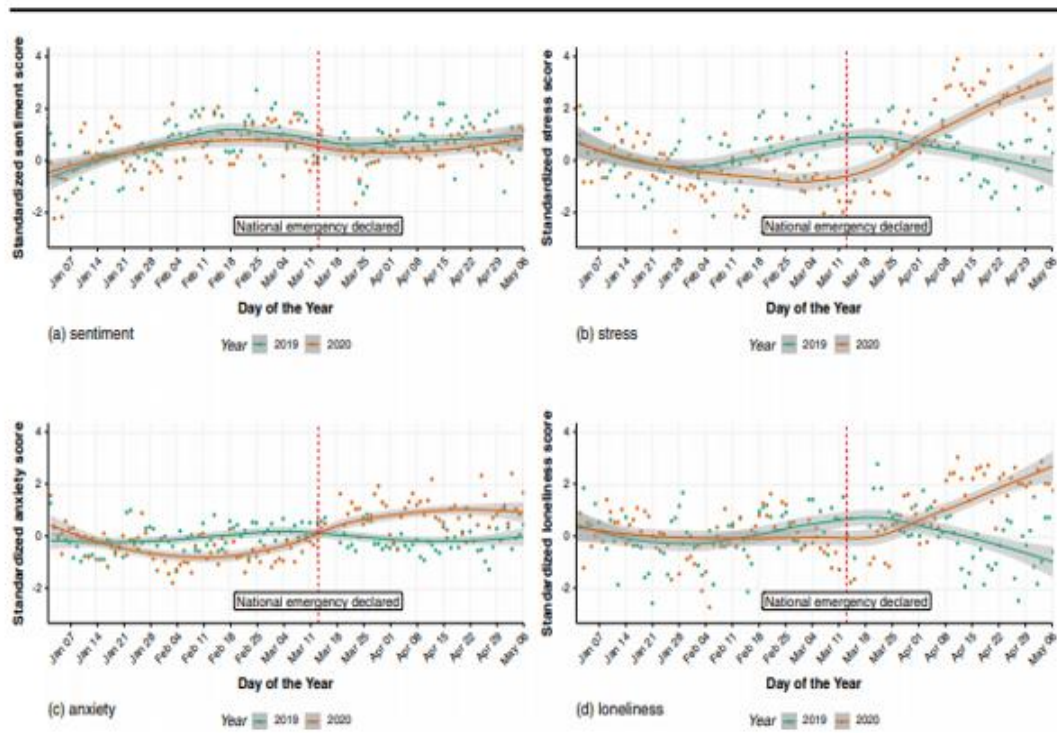
(a) Sentiment, (b) stress, (c) anxiety, and (d) loneliness expressions derived from data-driven machine learning models on Twitter language from the start of January till May 6 in 2019 (green) and 2020 (orange). The measures are normalized by centering and scaling based on January values of the respective years and calculating the mean over all states in the USA weighted by the number of Tweets in each state.

In an organisational setting, Reb, Narayanan, and Chaturvedi (2014) assessed two mindfulness programs in two different companies. What they found was major improvements in employee focus, awareness, memory, work performance and job satisfaction. The participants practised ten minutes of mindfulness a day for nine weeks. They further reported, feeling less stressed and felt improved perception of their work-life balance (Reb, Narayanan, and Chaturvedi, 2014).

Moreover, Glomb, Duffy, Bono, and Yang (2011) acknowledge within their research mindfulness improved behaviour, performance, and emotional resilience. Additionally, they suggest careful thought, emotion management and self-regulation was heightened (Glomb et al., 2011) healthy work relationships and an increase in employee happiness (Reb and Atkins, 2015). However, Purser (2014) finds that the promotion of mindfulness all very indulgent, and the simple acknowledgement or promotion that mindfulness brings instant happiness is unrealistic. However, grounded on the hypothesis employees practising mindfulness will experience health benefits, increase efficiency, other proponents, experts and academics are now recognising the positive impact of mindfulness in the workplace (Carlton, Barling and Trivsonno, 2018).

2.3.3 Mindfulness benefits on employee performance

While the literature demonstrates the benefits of mindfulness on employee health and performance, institutions have been slow to adapt. Although, Seligman's positive psychology and the importance of "flourishing" (Seligman, 2011) is evolving and beginning to increase organisations awareness. Schutte and Loi (2014) suggest that the focus on workplace flourishing encourages positive organisational behaviour, enhances employee wellness, engagement, productivity, and improvement of employee morale (Ngeno and Sma, 2014). Laya Healthcare's (2018) "thrive" creation of wellbeing programmes emulates this with a focus on supporting organisations to empower employees to be their best physically and emotionally (Laya Healthcare, 2018). In today's society, more is

demanded of employees, longer working hours and heavier workloads, thus, heightens the argument for mindfulness to be a focus in the workplace.

Moreover, the neurological benefits of employee mindfulness programmes have been linked to improved emotional intelligence (Reb and Atkins, 2015). When emotional intelligence is awry working relations can suffer, and employee communication lessens (Holzel *et al.,* 2011) however, empathy and self-regulation, when developed, can contribute to better communication and support employees to effectively manage conflict (Reb and Atkins, 2015). Holzel *et al.,* (2011) argument is, mindfulness in the workplace does not remove or prevent workplace conflict; however, conflict handled with recognised awareness is responded to more proficiently. Through mindfulness practices elevation of mental, emotional, and psychological health benefits (Health and Safety Authority, 2008) encourages individuals to adopt healthier behaviours (Ngeno and Sma 2014).

2.3.4 Mindfulness leadership efficacy on employee wellbeing

A leader's state of mind can have a constructive or adverse effect on self-belief, self-efficacy and therefore, critical to acknowledge the relational impact on employee performance and overall wellbeing (Reb, Narayann, and Chaturvedi, 2014). Moreover, recognising the leader's ability to acknowledge their thoughts and behaviour is critical, and playing an active role necessary (Mudd, 2017). Arguably, leaders are seen by many as the vital ingredient to encourage and promote better health and wellbeing initiatives (Das *et al.* 2019). Mudd further notes that a top-down hierarchy approach can obstruct employee performance while an empathetic leader attuned to the environment can enhance the productivity and wellbeing of a workforce. Critical analyses by Hyland, Lee, and Mills (2015) showed a correlation between leaders mindfulness and employee wellbeing and improved reduction of stress, improved performance, and increased employee engagement.

Figure 5. Trait mindfulness: leadership positive effect and leadership self-efficiency (Carleton et al. 2018).
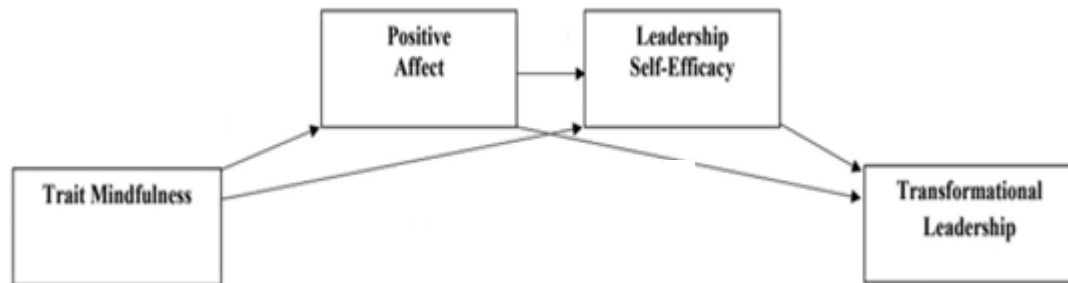
Critically, Carleton, Barling, and Trivisonno (2018) would argue that a Leaders' style that has a positive effect is associated with the leaders' belief of their capability. A developed emotional capacity can support leaders in making informed responses and less reactive ones, which is essential when dealing with stress or change management processes in the workplace (Seligman, 2011). There is modest research on the impact of mindfulness on leadership behaviours; however the data available although minimal argues positive leader behaviour can significantly increase an individuals willingness to seek support when feeling stressed (Dimoff and Kelloway, 2019; Hülsheger, 2013). Additionally, transformational skills are critical leadership traits now sought in leaders and their ability to lead with empathy, compassion, awareness and overall high levels of emotional intelligence a necessity (McKinsey, 2018).

However, workplace leadership can be the cause and cure for wellness issues (Dimoff and Kelloway, 2019) almost axiomatic that work environments lead to stress and adverse health outcomes among employees (Day and Penny, 2014). Active Leadership commitment, in conjunction with a firm's specific policies, however, can shift the focus and importance to employee health (Health and Safety Authority, 2008). Mindfulness, Carleton, Barling, and Trivisonno (2018) argue highly probable it can empower transformational leadership and actions can fundamentally inspire an employee's performance. Critically, further

conjecture is that even minimal training on mindfulness can significantly impact leadership transformation, and therefore, enhancing leadership self-efficacy and intention to improve employee health (Dimoff and Kelloway, 2019). CEO of LinkedIn Jeff Weiner has been recognised for advocating leadership mindfulness, leading with compassion and empathy and according to Bunting rated as one of the best CEO's in the United States. However, Dimoff and Kelloway (2019) argue the point that for successful and sustainable change, both the employee and leader behaviours must transform simultaneously.

2.4 DEFINITION OF A WORKPLACE WELLBEING PROGRAMME

The world health organisation (2019) defines wellbeing and wellbeing programmes as the ethically and morally right thing to do. Similarly, the International Labour Organization ILO (2013) explain workplace wellbeing is intrinsically linked to all facets of life and should be viewed from the perspective of how employees feel about their working environment, quality and safety of the physical workplace and the organisational culture that exists. Both of these organisations strongly suggest that considerations are given to the following three aspects:

1. The physical, mental, and social impact on employees
2. Organisations communication clear how company goals will be accomplished.
3. Health promotion and health protection essential to a wellbeing programme.

2.4.1 Workplace Wellbeing Programmes

The World Health Organisation (WHO, 2019) is steering businesses and leading the global case to cultivate workplace programmes resulting in a growing awareness of the importance of good workplace wellbeing. Critically, they advocate a good wellbeing programme is key to having healthy employees and a productive workforce (Cancelliere, Cassidy, Ammendolia, and Cote, 2011) and should be embedded as a culture within an organisation (MacDonald, and Olsen, 2020). Brion, Burke, and Cooper (2016) postulate a wellbeing programme aims to reduce stress, create healthier environments, and manage the health of the workforce. As previously stated the literature to date shows how businesses and their employees can experience (Leiter and Cary, 2017) workplace stress reduction, the elevation of morale, attracting and retaining employees, and improved productivity (CIPD, 2016). However, Goetzel, Ozminkowski, Bowen, and Tabrizi (2008) argument is that firms and leaders often choose wellbeing options blindly, resulting in ineffective programmes for both employees and their organisations and cause misconceptions of wellbeing programmes.

Table.2 Dimensions of workplace wellbeing represented in Work-Well programmes. Source (Spence, G.B. 2015)

Wellbeing dimension	Description	Example of type of service
Physical ill health - prevention	Any offering that seeks to safeguard an employee's physical health or lower health risk factors	Flu vaccinations, ergonomic assessments, BP tests
Physical health - promotion	Any offering that encourages or supports an improved physical health status	Gym membership, Global Corporate Challenge, fruit deliveries
Mental ill health – prevention	Any offering that helps employees to manage the adverse effects of work stress or recover from a work-related trauma or personal crisis	EAP offerings such as workplace counselling, outplacement services, critical incident debriefing
Mental health - promotion	Any offering that supports flourishing psychological health in employees	Workplace coaching, Positive Psychology seminars, meditation, yoga classes
Financial wellbeing	Any offering (beyond ordinary remuneration practices) that supports employees to improve their personal financial status	Financial advice, salary packaging, retirement planning
Career wellbeing	Any offering (beyond ordinary career management activities) that seeks to optimize the professional growth and development of employees	Mentoring, flexible work practices
Social wellbeing	Any offering that encourages social connections within organisations	Social Club support, volunteering schemes, lunchtime sport

The figure above illustrates examples of wellbeing programmes and their aim to deliver physical, emotional, and social supports. However, Spence (2015) posits that while the aspirations of organisations to deliver these programmes are positive, arguably the results and value of such programmes are still undetermined. Additionally, Spence among other scholars cites the participation rates of such programmes can be characteristically low (Spence, 2015, Goetzel & Ozminkowski, Bowen, and Tabrizi 2008; Linman *et al.*, 2008; Rongen *et al.*, 2014). However, Spence (2015) makes the point that participation rates in workplace programmes may be lower if employee perception is that their organisation values the goals and performance ahead of their health. However, it posits the question if increased communication and employer advocacy of such programmes increased would it deliver a higher participation rate.

2.4.2 Wellbeing programmes adopted by organisations

Kortum (2010) states "It is unethical and short-sighted business practice to compromise the health of workers for the wealth of enterprises.". Firms who have implemented extensive wellbeing programmes experience positive organisational and employee benefits (Goetzel *et al.* 2008). How organisational programmes are designed and implemented (Goetzel *et al.* 2008) are reflective of their success or failure. Mudd (2017) argues that the most successful workplace programmes are the ones were employees actively choose to participate. Discussed in this section are Microsoft known for their successful wellbeing programme, "Fuel Your everything".

Microsoft's "Fuel Your Everything" programme was created by Laya Healthcare experts (Laya Healthcare, 2018). The focus of the wellbeing programme was developed to empower Microsoft employees to manage health and enhance their daily lives. The design of the programme has a focused three core pillars, fuel mind, body, and life (Laya Healthcare, 2018). They offer a suite of health, wellbeing and mindfulness webinars, fitness and nutrition classes, a holistic offering of dietician and physiotherapists and a 24-hour gym with weekly

classes. Dimoff and Kelloway (2019) challenged the need for organisations to implement such extravagant programmes posing the question if you build these programmes with workers avail of them. However, Microsoft did see a significant increase in a gym membership with a 211% increase over six months, a 260% increase annually on registrations for the health webinars (Laya Healthcare, 2018).

2.4.3 Benefits of workplace wellbeing programme's on employees

A well-constructed wellbeing programme can enhance an individual's quality of life by 8.5% according to (McDonnell, and Burgess, 2013). Additionally, a supportive workplace wellbeing programme can enhance an individual's productivity, develop a connection, and build confidence (International Labour Organisation, 2013). According to Andy Puddicombe, co-founder of the Nike "Headspace" mindfulness meditation app, says mindfulness is a simple application; it increases concentration, improves resilience, and enhances performance (Nike Inc, 2018). The research from Johnson & Johnson and Microsoft programme's suggest success can come from employees feeling valued by a company and their commitment to employee health. Notably, wellbeing programmes must not be forced upon employees but instead implemented to empower them to reach their full potential (Goetzel *et al.* 2008). Additionally, the gap continues to vary between what employers offer and employee expectations to feel valued and recognised (Deloitte, 2017).

2.4.4 Efficacy of Mindfulness in wellbeing programmes

Mindfulness helps cultivate creativity and improves mental health, according to (Seligman, 2011) individuals known to practice mindfulness, account having increased self- awareness, enhanced communication skills, and the ability to manage and react more effectively to stress (Langer, 2000). Additionally, individuals have acknowledged that mindfulness supports managing difficult situations and conflict in the workplace (Reb *et al.* 2014). Arguably, the

organisational culture and leadership alignment are critical for a wellbeing programme's success (Cooper and Leiter, 2017). Leaders demonstrating the importance of employee wellbeing programmes can increase employee morale, resulting in a more substantial commitment to the company. Moreover, influencing better relationship dynamics between managers and subordinates in the long-term (Firky, and Flynn, 2001). Reb *et al.,* (2014) acknowledges that mindfulness can also improve decision-making and can support senior leaders to improve their focus, improve emotional conditions, and their interaction with colleagues and subordinates in the workplace (McKinsey, 2018).

2.5 ORGANISATIONAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT (ROI)

According to the 2016 Fidelity Investments and National Business Group Health Survey, only 22% of employers offered mindfulness training (Haffenbrack, Stillwell, and Waage, 2019: Wieczner, 2016). Several companies, such as Nike, Microsoft, and Aetna, have integrated mindfulness practices into employees' work programmes (Gelles, 2015). As previously stated, Microsoft has seen significant positive results from its "Fuel your Everything" programme. Equally, Gelles, (2015) cites, Aetna, a large American insurance company, experienced a drop of 7% in health care costs in 2012 following the increase of mindfulness training in the workplace. Additionally, Aetna showed an incremental 62 minutes of productivity per week, increasing value per employee of three thousand dollars (Sigma, 2018). However, both organisations started having happier and healthier employees the most significant and rewarding result.

Ultimately, what an organisation implements and offers its employees will determine the outcome. Environments that encourage mindfulness workplace wellbeing initiatives reap positive rewards (Hyland *et al.,* 2015). However, organisations implementing wellbeing plans whose focus is solely to reduce costs due to poor employee health or high absenteeism can lead to ineffective results. Moreover, could be argued organisations disappointed with the return on

investment can be directly-linked, with not listening to their employees' feedback or examining the most effective programmes for their employees and work organisation (CIPD, 2016). There is an argument that despite the increasing body of positive evidence on health benefits, many organisations are not viewing mindfulness programmes as an essential strategy for the health of its people and long term health of the organisation. Arguably, due to the minimal literature available to organisations on workplace outputs from such programmes.

2.5.1 Employee Engagement

"Organisations cannot buy engagement, but they can create the conditions for authenticity in the workplace." (Sigma, 2018). Investment in mindfulness in the workplace is investing in a more engaged workplace culture that gives people a sense of satisfaction and purpose. A critical acknowledgement by Shain and Kramer (2004) is a more engaged workforce increases productivity, job satisfaction, higher employee retention and greater wellbeing for all employees. Organisations investing in mindfulness programmes gives individuals a sense of belonging and satisfaction (Seligman, 2011). Participants of the Aetna mindfulness training felt the mindfulness programme added positively to the organisation's culture and cited an overall reduction of 28% in stress levels and ability to manage stress more effectively or experienced less stress in the work environment (Gelles, 2015). Additionally, employees said they experienced increased focus, decision making and improved resilience, and improved relationships with work colleagues (Gelles, 2015).

2.5.2 Employee Performance

Employee performance and health are intrinsically linked and can impact employee performance and productivity. Shain and Kramer (2004) suggest that the health of an employee and performance can be affected directly through the physical and psychosocial work structures. Additionally, they suggest employee health can be affected indirectly through the management and leadership styles

within organisations that can cause anxiety, among other negative emotional states such as depression (Shain and Kramer, 2004). Productivity Shain and Kramer argue it can be influenced by poor health and therefore have a strong sense of resilience driven by a culture of support between the employee and employer a necessity (Shain and Kramer). Additionally, Goetzel *et al.* (2008) argue that a workplace health initiative "grounded in behaviour theory" has a higher ability to improve the performance and health of employees. However, they recognise that more research is required to understand effective and ineffective workplace wellbeing functions in order to make lasting behavioural health changes. Critically, however, Langer (2017) would argue that mindfulness has proven to enhance performance and should be considered by organisations to incorporate into their workplace. The below figure 5. developed by Shain and Kramer (2004) highlights the link between the health of employees, productivity and performance as discussed above.

Figure. 6 Links between Employee Health and Employee Performance (Shain and Kramer, 2004)
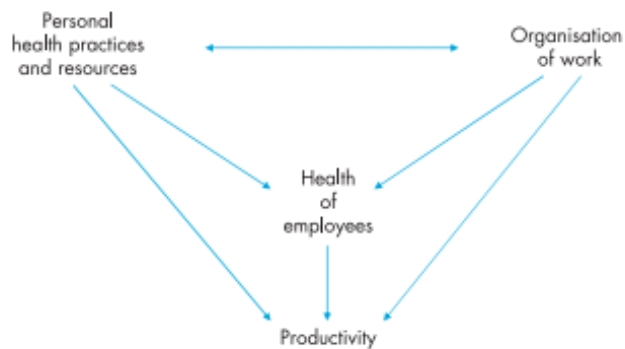
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN, PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

According to Wilson (2014, p.6) research is a course that involves gathering, recording, investigating, and translating data. The purpose of the research is to apprise action and is a process embarked upon by individuals to investigate and increase their knowledge and understanding of a given topic (Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill, 2015). According to Wilson (2014, p.2) to answer a research question, is a process of examining and analysing information that increases knowledge when undertaken methodically and systemically. Critically, Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019, p132) suggest that when designing and developing research, recognising differences, and philosophical incongruities is an inherent part of the research process.

3.1   PROPOSED RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND STRUCTURE

It was the primary aim of this study to understand through an exploratory method employee cognisance of mindfulness and its applications, effectiveness, personal practice and whether accessible within their workplace wellbeing programmes. Critical to the research is the fundamental debate on mindfulness wellbeing workplace programmes and whether they are beneficial to employees and employee health. The aim of the researcher during the process was to remain subjective and recognise and capture nuances within the data. The chapter discusses various methodology and methods considered for this research and the abdication of one comparative to another.

The author has used the Saunders Onion as guidance to the chosen qualitative methodology in this study. Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill (2009) designed the Research onion concept (Fig.4) which contains an outer, inner, and central layer that define the various research methods. Critically, Saunders *et al.* (2009) suggest the process of the research onion is to unwrap layer by layer and advocate the

outer layer must first be revealed before moving to the next. The Research onion charts various methodological approaches which comprise a sequence of decisions necessary before coming to the final methodology approach to the research and data collection process (Saunders *et al.,* 2009).

While the centre of the onion involves data collection and enquiry, the inner layers reveal the necessity to consider research approaches, strategies, and techniques. It is in contrast to the outer layer, which concerns more with the philosophies and possible approaches to theory development which is the starting point of this study's analysis of methodology and methods to adopt. Adopting Saunders, *et al.,* (2015) research onion, the following chapter broadly discusses the philosophy, methods, strategy, design, data collection sample, and data analysis techniques, critical to creating a reliable research methodology (Wilson, 2014, p.7).

Figure 7. Saunders Research Onion: (Saunders, et al. 2009)
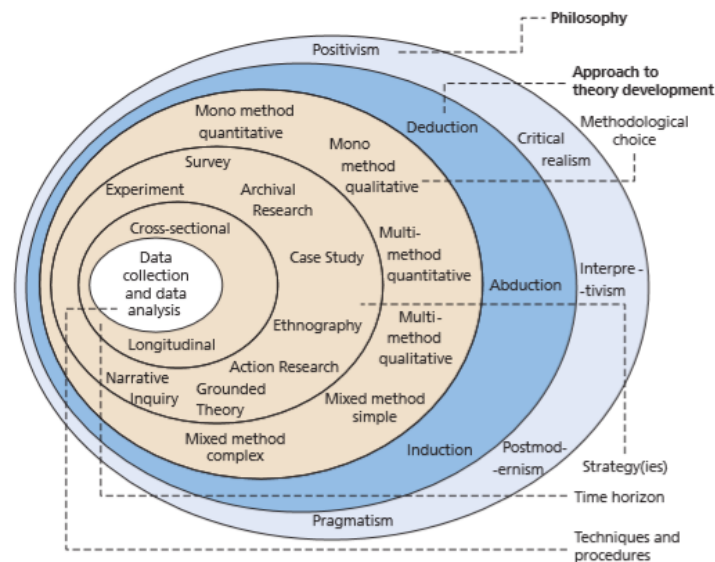
3.2 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

At the forefront of any research project, there is a requirement first to align the research question to a specific philosophy. Saunders et al. (2019) suggest that research philosophies often pursued are founded on personal views, values, and suppositions. The researcher's aim throughout this study was to remove any bias or preconceived ideas; therefore, choosing the correct philosophical approach was critical. According to Dudovskiy (2018), a chosen philosophical approach can be the result and influence of an individual's belief and viewpoint. However, Wilson (2014) argues that rational decisions should equally be determined by the researcher's ability to abate other acceptable methodologies. According to Saunders et al., (2015) these are primarily separated into three different possible approaches; ontology, epistemology, and axiology and influence the approach a researcher conducts its study.

3.2.1 Ontology, Axiology and Epistemology Approaches

The researchers chosen philosophy is a methodical investigation into the assumptions and knowledge that underpins thought or behaviour (Aliyu et al. 2015). The philosophical assumptions discussed in this section define the most appropriate approach to this study.

Saunders *et al.* (2019), states that ontology can be explained as the 'meaning' or 'purpose' of reality. It can be described as the 'study of being', which is depicted as knowing what exists universally and assumptions whether humans can acquire that knowledge or if it already subsists (Moon, and Blackman, 2014). Arguably, applying this philosophical approach supports a researcher to acknowledge how certain they can be regarding the presence of the specific themes they are researching; however, critical to this particular study it rejects respondents interpretations of reality (Aliyu et al., 2015). In contrast to this philosophy, axiology has the primary focus on the 'aims' of the study and viewpoint taken from the perspective of the respondent's value and worth (Moon,

Blackman, 2014). More precisely, axiology occupies itself with the role of the researcher's values throughout the study.

Due to the explorative and open-ended nature of this study, understanding the "what, "how" and "why" was a necessity. Therefore, the method of epistemology was chosen, which can describe as the ' study of knowledge' (Moon, and Blackman, 2014). The author's argument for rejecting both the ontology and axiology philosophies and instead choosing epistemology is that it primarily concerns itself with all facets of accuracy, possibility, and various approaches to acquiring knowledge (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 5). According to Wilson (2014) epistemology, a key determinant is to understand "*What is acceptable knowledge*". Critically, epistemological considerations are the foundation and acceptance of a knowledge statement (Moon, and Blackman, 2014) and having an "*objective detachment*" to the knowledge presented (Aliyu *et al.,* 2015). Therefore, for this study, the author, has aligned to this approach and accepted the respondent's views in this research as reliable information and without expectation of explanation on the knowledge collected (Aliyu *et al.* 2015).

3.2.2 Interpretivist, Positivist, Pragmatism, Realism,

According to Saunders et al., (2015) four diverse approaches with respect to ontology, axiology and epistemology and are specified in distinctive research perspectives, which are positivism, realism, interpretivism, and pragmatism.

Interpretivist, according to Bryman and Bell (2007, p.17) has many variables between the different purposed philosophies. Arguably, for this study, the most appropriate approach was the branch of epistemology; interpretivism. Interpretivist is a critical application and analysis and integration of individuals and their organisations (Bryman, and Bell, 2007, p.17) gaining access to respondents perspectives of reality. Although owing to the qualitative nature of interpretivism, the trustworthiness of the data, the measurement of information can be challenged (Wilson, 2014). However, interpretivism is a distinctive

approach, and one which supported the research question in this study and with *"the phenomenologist attempts to see things from that person's point of view"* (Bryman, and Bell, 2007, p.20). Critically, applying the interpretivism philosophy to the research allowed the extrapolation of knowledge and action that has meaning to individuals (Bryman, and Bell, 2007 p. 20).

The alternative approaches rejected were Positivist which Wilson (2014) suggests is a truth held that is based on empiricism and relies on data that is verifiable. Arguably, this is in contrast to the interpretivism approach and instead is a strategy that involves detachment from participants and must be approached scientifically. Moreover, positivist is associated with a quantitative research method and inquiry, which is value-free versus interpretivism associated with a qualitative method and inquiry, which is value bound and reflective of the study undertaken here. Further approaches rejected were Pragmatism depicted as the approach one might take when the researcher's views may not be aligned with either positivism or interpretivism approaches (Wilson, 2014). The fourth approach is Realism which Saunders *et al.,* (2015) suggests underpins the positivist philosophy and the experience of factuality.

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

Empiricism theory is grounded on the postulation that experience is the source of knowledge (Bryman, and Bell, 2007, p.10). Bryman and Bell (2012) further outline the significant considerations in the connection between theory and research a necessity to establish whether the reference and chosen theory, is Inductive or deductive. Two approaches intrinsically associated with research methods (Wilson, 2014, p.12) which Bryman and Bell suggest choosing between the two rationalities are critical to the research process (Bryman, and Bell, 2001, p.11).

Table.3 Variances between Deductive and Inductive research approaches (Saunders, 2015)

Deduction emphasizes	Induction emphasizes
• Scientific principles	• Gaining an understanding of the meanings humans attach to events
• Moving from theory to data	
• The need to explain causal relationships between variables	• A close understanding of the research context
• The collection of quantitative data	• The collection of qualitative data
• The application of controls to ensure validity of data	• A more flexible structure to permit changes of research emphasis as the research progresses
• The operationalization of concepts to ensure clarity of definition	• A realization that the research is part of the research process
• A highly structured approach	• Less concern with the need to generalize
• Researcher independence of what is being researched	
• The necessity to select samples of sufficient size in order to generalize conclusions	

3.3.1 Deductive Versus Inductive Research

According to Saunders *et al.,* (2019, p.153), the deductive theory accepts evidence between concepts and varying predictions to be true and works on the premise the conclusion is therefore also factual. Concerning itself with an existing concept and testing its assumption by designing an appropriate research strategy (Wilson, 2014). It is less concerned with observation or experience, unlike the inductive theory (Saunders *et al.,* 2019, p.156). Instead, it focuses on concepts that need to be reduced and expounded into something that is researchable and thus, a hypothesis of what is known can then be exposed for further empirical examination (Bryman and Bell, 2007, p.11). The deductive method is often associated more with a quantitative approach, which is highly structured and as previously stated, generally supported by the positivist methodology (Dudovskiy, 2018). Researchers who align with the induction method are often critical of the deduction approach due to rigidness and lack of alternative explanations of findings (Saunders *et al.,* 2019, p.155).

The inductive method or inductive reasoning defines itself with initial observations followed by patterns and fundamentally theory conclusions (Wilson, 2014). Often referred to as a "bottom-up" approach focusing first on

observation, then identifying patterns, tentative hypothesis to theory conclusions. Inductive reasoning identifies with being open-ended and exploratory. However, the research question will be a key determinant for each research approach chosen (Dudovskiy, 2018). According to Saunders et al. (2019) applying the correct strategy is critical to the success of the research.

However, to produce a conceptual framework, the inductive theory has been applied to this study. This approach will underpin the research to gain further understanding of mindfulness workplace programme benefits to employees through the sample of social actors. Individual interpretations and subjectivity are a fundamental aspect of the research process and are more inclined to be achieved through the interpretivism philosophy (Saunders *et al.,* 2019, p.155). The Inductive approach was initiated in the direction of qualitative interviews. A small sample of individuals is considered more effective as opposed to a large cohort of subjects more suitable when applying the deductive method (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 155). Although both approaches have been dichotomised (Dudovskiy, 2018) researchers have challenged the need to have such opposing views. Saunders *et al.,* (2019, p.155) would argue an Abduction approach can be considered and thus allowing the researcher to move between both logics merging inductive and deductive theories for a study, however a rejected approach for this particular research.

3.3.2 Descriptive Versus Exploratory

Saunders et al. (2019) discuss variable forms of research design: descriptive, and exploratory. To which they say each research design has a different function depending on the chosen methodology. Descriptive generally demonstrates how things are connected and to depict a situation, individual or an occasion as it naturally transpires (Saunders *et al.,* 2019). However, descriptive research is unable to articulate why such an event has taken place and is much more appropriate for a moderately new research topic (Wilson, 2014) and therefore been rejected as a process for this study.

Exploratory, however, according to Saunders *et al.* (2019) can be particularly crucial within the constructs of qualitative research design. Additionally, the exploratory approach lends itself to ask open-ended questions and thus allowing the author to achieve further insights into participants perspectives and an appropriate approach for this study. This approach allows the author flexibility within the interview process. Critically, following the analysis of the existing literature extrapolating additional thoughts and perspectives from respondents in the study is critical. Understanding the in-depth benefits employees feel they receive from participating in mindfulness work-based programmes.

Moreover, to establish the challenges and opportunities to employee health through the participation of mindfulness both in work and in personal environments. Furthermore, the focus of exploratory is to explore the specific aspects of the research study; however, the design does not purpose to conclude final conclusions to the research questions (Wilson, 2014). Within the constructs of exploratory research, it allows the researcher to take an alternative direction in the study if required, though not wholly (Blumberg, Cooper, and Schindler, 2011).

3.4 RESEARCH STRATEGY

The primary data collection methods are Qualitative and Quantitative research (Bryman and Bell, 2007). According to Saunders et al. (2019), the researcher's ontological expectations, or their epistemological expectations can influence if a qualitative or quantitative approach is undertaken in the study.

Figure 8. Qualitative and Quantitative Data Analyses (Guest et al., 2012)
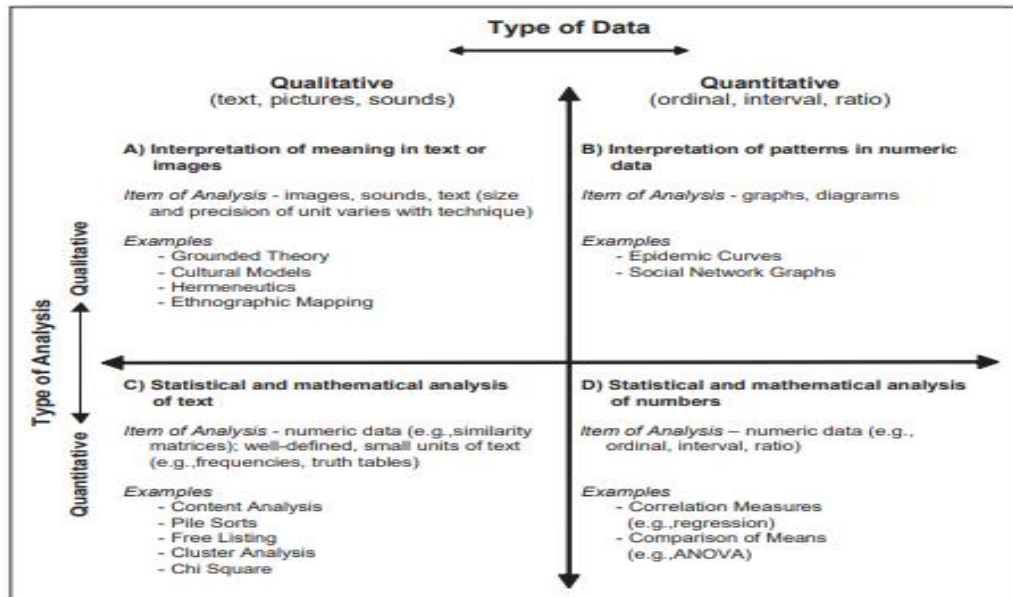
3.4.1 Qualitative Versus Quantitative

Quantitative research concerns itself more with a mathematical analysis that can be transferred into a usable statistic (Saunders *et al.,* 2015). Equally, it likes to quantify other variables such as behaviours, attitudes, or opinions. Additionally, the quantitative approach prefers to take data from a large population sample and adopt surveys, questionnaires, or polls, and tend to be more closed-ended questions (Perrier, Blondall, McDonald, 2020). Quantitative can be limiting, in that it is more focused on the view of the researcher versus Qualitative, which is more concerned with the participants perspective (Bryman and Bell, 2007, p.425). Qualitative research involves examining the meaning of people's lives, expressing the opinion's and perceptions of participants (Bryman and Bell, 2007, p. 163, Yin, 2016: p40). Qualitative action described as the process of identifying an issue and developing a resolution based on the findings (Bryman and Bell, 2007, p.428). Researching issues within organisations and assisting a solution to alter patterns of thoughts and action (Bryman and Bell, 2007; Argyris, Putnam, and Smith, 1985).

The research in this study takes account for previous studies of a similar nature, particularly Langer (2000), whose primary studies on mindfulness have taken on a quantitative approach and limiting to specific cohorts. Langer references the need for more qualitative studies conducted on the subject of mindfulness to gain a broader population viewpoint on mindfulness benefits (Langer, 2000). Taking into account situations, supplying insights that can explain social actions and recognising the significance of numerous sources of evidence rather than relying on one specific source (Yin, 2016, p. 40). Qualitative research, according to Perrier, Blondall, McDonald, (2020) is to understand attitudes, behaviour, words, sounds, feelings, and emotions and tends to undertake more open-ended questions. Supported by Yin (2016) who also suggest qualitative approach benefits from the use of the participants, behaviour, silences, and language expressions. The qualitative approach in this research gives a broadness and depth to the data by allowing respondents to elaborate on their perspectives and thought reasoning (Dudovskiy, 2018). The motivation for this research is to understand how people perceive and feel about various experiences relating to mindfulness benefits (Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill, 2015).

However, Yin (2016) argues that as qualitative is an extensive area of research with an array of variants and referred to as a thematic analysis application (Guest, McQueen and Namey, 2012), it can be challenging to arrive at a concise method. Given that the topic of work-based mindfulness research is still in its infancy, a mono method of qualitative was the most appropriate for this study. However, it is recognised by the author while qualitatively approaching this research, and there are alternative design options that can be applied to conduct this study. The author has chosen the qualitative method to demonstrate if mindfulness programmes in the workplace validate its effectiveness to employee health using an approach of semi-structured interviews. The authors chosen approaches of Interpretivist and Inductive methods outlined in the previous sections, along with an exploratory approach, support the qualitative design (Dudovskiy, 2018) in this study.

The qualitative approach taken is in the form of Semi-Structured Interviews outlined below:

(1) The data collection involved six interviews

(2) Each participant took part in a 30-minute interview session

(3) Participants chosen for the study were employees who had some knowledge of mindfulness or who practised mindfulness outside or in the workplace

(4) The purpose is to gain participants perspectives across twenty questions derived and directly- related to the research question

3.5 DATA COLLECTION

Data can be explained as a set of standards of qualitative or quantitative differentials (Yin, 2016, p.169). To underpin the research strategy, Yin (2016, p.117) states there are four essential design methods (1) Validity (2) Trustworthiness (3) Triangulation (4) Rival Thinking. According to Yin (2016, p.118) the following four elements must be considered.

Validity to ensure the study has correctly translated the data to diagnose the findings accurately and acknowledging bias within the sampling process.

Trustworthiness the researcher's ability to project strong, trusting credentials and authenticity and reliability critical to the data collection process.

Triangulation the ability to seek opportunities to reinforce the credibility of the study, linking data, investigators, theories, and methods.

Rival thinking expresses findings that are open to challenges by opponents researching in the same field and can expose the research to be rejected.

The design methods must be given explicit attention to ensure the chosen method gives accuracy in the data collection process. The integrity of the research is of primary importance (Bryman and Bell, 2007), ensuring the data collected is trustworthy, truthful accounts of all statements (Yin, 2016, p. 75). As part of this study's process, the author invited two of the respondents to validate their

transcripts to ensure their themes were accurate accounts identified through the data collection process. The qualitative data collection approach had the primary aim of accurately and reliably extrapolating participants thoughts and feelings about the benefits and challenges experienced during practising and participating in mindfulness programmes.

3.5.1 Qualitative Primary Data Collection

Gathering data from qualitative research generally requires fieldwork and connecting with individuals who experience real-world scenarios (Yin, 2016, p. 116). Field data is a reference to a set of new data that is gathered within an environment that is uninhibited (Yin, 2016, p. 169). The process applied was semi-structured interviews, conducted remotely, and audio recorded, facilitating participants to part with their views on the research topic. The interviews were recorded to assist with the collection of accurate data analysis. In addition, four variant methods to data collection, interviewing, observing, collecting, investigating, and feeling (Yin, 2016, p.169). There are many benefits to each, and all four methods can be effectively applied together (Yin, 2016). However, the individual interviews are a significantly effective method which allows the researcher to gain insights into the beliefs, views, actions, and behaviours (Saunders *et al.,* 2019). Qualitative interviews allow procuring reliable explanations of the participant's experiences over alternative data collection options (Bryman and Bell, 2007).

Interviews can take two forms, structured and a qualitative interview approach (Yin, 2016, p. 171). Structured interviews are often related closely to a quantitative approach such as poll or survey and generally consist of closed-ended questions. Qualitative interviews Yin (2016) states are beneficial in that they are efficient. While the research interview questions are fully prepared in advance, and the questions are designed to capture critical information from the interviewee, the process can be flexible, so all knowledge is captured (Bryman and Bell, 2007).

All relevant themes extrapolated from the gathering of the data collection will be thoroughly analysed and discussed in chapter four.

3.5.2 Secondary Data Collection

The author undertook a critical review of the existing literature and experts in the subject of mindfulness and associated articles to the health benefits. The process involved numerous review and critical analysis of books and journal articles in order to establish an in-depth understanding of the research topic. Bryman and Bell (2007) suggest that every research must be approached subjectively and with careful attention. However, the analysis has allowed the author to ascertain current gaps in the literature which is significant to this study. The information was gathered over an extended period from mainly the NCI library and additional online databases using primarily scholarly peer-reviewed articles for the trustworthiness of the academic literature applied.

3.5.3 Population Sample

The researcher conducted a total of six semi-structured interviews. Critical to the research was establishing a selection of viewpoints from a set of participants who could contribute to the research topic. The interviewees were employees known to have experiences, knowledge, participate in mindfulness programmes within their workplace, or practice mindfulness personally. A mindfulness person could be described as a person who has conscious awareness and lives in the present moment. The interviews were conducted by phone, participants gave consent for recorded interviews but refrained from consenting to the filming of the interviews.

As discussed in the limitations, the sample size presents challenges. Of the participants who took part, 83% were female, and 17% male. The interview questions can be reviewed in Appendix 1. Additionally, a description of the gender split, age and field of work and expertise of the interviewees shown in Chapter 1.

under section 1.7.1. The personal information of each interviewee has been removed to protect their data. In the findings and discussion chapter, the author will refer to each as primarily as the Interviewee. The author will reference each of their responses or quotes, for example, Interviewee one referenced as (IV 1).

The researcher conducted the interviews and took responsibility for all recordings and transcripts and data collection. The interviews were conducted through the use of Otter. All interviews were recorded and then exported into transcripts for decoding and purpose of analysing the data. Additionally, the researcher carried out a thorough check for errors within the transcripts to ensure the key points of the interviewees were captured. The author reviewed the transcripts thoroughly to identify common themes and if there were parallels to the literature in Chapter 2 and possible new phenomenon that may not be captured within the literature review.

3.5.4 Analysing Qualitative Data

Conducting a qualitative method requires the researcher to have the capacity to listen carefully to what the participants articulate and carefully interpret what they are saying (Yin, 2016, p. 189). To do this accurately, Yin says are five critical exercises to collecting the data thoroughly. (1) *Actively listening* (2) *Having an inquisitive nature*, (3) *Sensitive to managing others time* (4) *Differentiating between traditional, primary, and secondary information*, (5) *Triangulating information from different sources*.

Due to the highly documented nature of a qualitative approach, there are three critical considerations to ensuring accuracy, (1) rechecking the data collected to ensure (2) thorough and (3) complete analysis (Yin, 2016, p. 216). According to Saunders *et al.* (2019) the researcher must not have a subjective bias to the results of the research.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The ethical concerns involve how an individual is treated when research is carried out. Additional considerations should be given to whether or not specific activities should be conducted within the context of the research (Bryman and Bell, 2007, p.127). The Code of Ethical Conduct insists the researcher assesses the full impact to all participants (Bryman and Bell, 2007, p.133) and insists it is critical to the integrity of the research (Yin, 2016). Prior to undertaking the research in this study, the author completed a full ethical review, outlining the steps the research would take with the primary purpose to ensure that participants of the study are given the correct duty of care and treated ethically. This ethical form was filed with The National College of Ireland.

3.7 LIMITATIONS TO THE RESEARCH

The research conducted a small sample size of six interview's; therefore, it is reasonable to assume the results may not be entirely conclusive, as bias and subjectivity can be expected. According to Bryman and Bell (2007, p.525), In addition, correlating themes may prove difficult due to different individual perspectives and anomalies within the data collection can be dependent on the various experiences, and exposure interviewees have to mindfulness practice and mindfulness workplace programmes. If the author had more time, additional interviews would have been conducted to widen the sample size to a broader audience and further investigations carried out.

CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 INTRODUCTION

The literature extensively demonstrates how mindfulness techniques can significantly enhance existence and alleviate suffering, stress, and anxiety (Kabat-Zinn, 1990) as previously highlighted within chapter 2. The inductive method applied allowed the author to gain more in-depth perspectives of the employee partaking in this study and a grounded theory of knowledge in the subject of mindfulness. The purpose of the objectives was to gain perspectives from the respondents on the research question *"The Impact of Mindfulness Programmes on Employee Health".* The sub-objectives underpinned by Seligman's PERMA theory, as previously discussed in chapter 1 and 2 gave further in-dept data collection to reinforce the framework within the following chapter.

This section aims to present any parallels between this study's data collection and the current literature. Data analysis from the sample conducted gives the participant's insights of mindfulness and their current mindfulness cognisance. Additionally accepted were the viewpoints based on their level of participation in mindfulness activities and whether they felt a direct link to employee health existed. Additionally, to examine new phenomenological perspectives and previously identified specific gaps in the literature, as discussed in chapter 1. This research has explored those gaps within the constructs of this study's research design.

4.1 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH FINDINGS

The questions had an overarching query and built the framework for the sub-questions to support the gathering of the data (See Appendix 1). The findings of this study identified that 50% of the interviewees had a consistent daily practice of mindfulness meditation. The remaining 50% described their activities as a form of mindfulness and outlined the benefits from their routines. The Mindfulness

Initiative (2016) in their report of Mindful Nation support this theory and cite that mindfulness is not only associated with meditation and that other forms of exercise and activities can strengthen a state of awareness and intention. However, only two interviewees highlighted their workplaces offered mindfulness classes while the other respondents said their workplaces did not offer any mindful practices but did offer some online information.

4.1.1 OBJECTIVE 1 "To investigate the employee knowledge on health benefits derived from mindfulness practices."

The author outlines and discusses the data collected in this section, highlighting the health benefits of mindfulness from the interviewee's perspectives. Additionally, they pointed out a clear gap in the broader employee understanding of mindfulness and the lack of knowledge associated with its health benefits.

4.1.1.1 EMPLOYEE KNOWLEDGE OF MINDFULNESS

Each interviewee participating in the study had relatively acute knowledge of mindfulness and the benefits associated with it, although as previously noted, only 50% of participants had a consistent practice of mindfulness meditation. However, it became evident when analysing the data, the educational aspect of mindfulness understanding was lacking. Although there is a growing enthusiasm for mindfulness from the participants in this study, they each discussed a large misconception and miscommunication of what mindfulness is.

The interviewee's viewpoint was that mindfulness needs to become a bigger conversation and to become more fully incorporated within work environments. "*I think there is a way to go in this country for mindfulness to become. I suppose the norm" (IV 4).* When questioned how mindfulness is perceived they acknowledged in the main there is still ambiguity around the topic of mindfulness and fear-based associations due to the "unknown" attachments to it. "*some people*

think it's a load of rubbish and why would you be bothered. Lying down and closing your eyes" (IV 5). "I think the expression of mindfulness is probably still something that makes people feel nervous." (IV 1)

The author had a preconceived assumption that mindfulness was more prevalent in people's lives due to the increased focus it has received recently. The adoption of wellbeing programmes, the vast increase in yoga studios available, increased availability of mindfulness apps such as *"Headspace"* and the increased online data available. However, arguably, the data collected was in contrast to that opinion, and all interviewees felt more was required by their organisations to normalise mindfulness in the workplace. More critically, the importance of educating workers of mindfulness is not addressed within the literature examined for this research and essential if mindfulness is to be more widely accepted.

4.1.1.2 MINDFULNESS AND SELF AWARENESS

Self-awareness is an innate benefit from the practice of mindfulness. Each interviewee felt self-awareness and self-reflection is critical to a positive and successful work environment. *"Understanding yourself being self-aware, you know having that self-reflection and just be mindful about what's going on in your own environment, definitely will improve your health and wellbeing." (IV 6).* The secondary research details the intrinsic link between mindfulness and self-awareness (Kabat-Zinn, 1990) and draws parallels to the opinions of the participant's views.

4.1.1.3 ACCESSIBILITY OF MINDFULNESS PROGRAMMES

The researcher aimed to gain employees perspectives on the accessibility of mindfulness to workers. The individuals who stated they participated in mindfulness meditation, said it came from a personal interest and practice. However, all participants in this study posited if mindfulness classes and techniques were taught or offered in the workplace, they would actively

participate in them and felt that other employees would benefit. However, some scholars would argue if organisations actively promoted mindfulness, the benefits could equally be obtained by integrating into daily work activities and not necessarily needed as a programme on its own (Allen et al., 2017).

4.1.2 OBJECTIVE 2 "To investigate if mindfulness practices evoke employee health when integrated into workplace wellbeing programmes."

While many organisations have adopted and implemented mindfulness practices as discussed in Chapter 2, the data collected provided insights that more prevalence and accessibility for a broader application and awareness is a necessity. Out of the six participants, only two could discuss accessible classes in their workplace, one company offered mindfulness classes twice a year, and another offered one yoga class per week. The participant who had access only twice a year said it felt like a tick box for the employer and not enough to encourage employees to embed a daily practice, though if actively available believed employees would participate in them.

"like twice a year, within our service is very poor in some respects, there is scope for definitely more mindfulness....more team building, doing more training days, additional training days....bring it into your workplace environment." (IV 6).

However, the participants could only give a view from their practice perspective as their organisations either did not offer or what they did offer was minimal. They discussed the benefits that they gain from their activities, such as better emotion management, improved relations, calmer and able to manage stress more effectively. Therefore it can be interpreted that mindfulness would enhance employee health if integrated into the workplace.

4.1.2.1 MINDFULNESS INTEGRATION IN WELLBEING DESIGNS

There was consistency with the interviewee's views on how mindfulness could positively impact the reduction of stress, enhance positive emotion, improve

workplace relationships and overall self-awareness and self-management. However, accessibility to programmes and an acknowledgement from participants for workplace leaders' to advocate it. "*I think managers and leaders have a huge responsibility for the people that they manage or lead." (IV 4)*

4.1.2.2 IMPROVED EMPLOYEE HEALTH

The participants who outlined their specific practice of mindfulness identified themselves as being calmer, able to react to situations more effectively, more resilient towards stress and their purpose enhanced through their practice. There were several parallels between the views of the interviewees and the secondary data. *"It calms you down and calms your body down." (IV 2). "benefit for me is definitely a sense of calmness" (IV4).*

Calmness, positive emotion were all highlighted by the participants as specific benefits to managing their life "*it really focuses you and leaves you feeling more balanced, emotionally, whenever you go to work" (IV 4).* The secondary data signifies emotion regulation and positive emotion that Seligman PERMA theory cites as a critical attribute to a healthy life (Seligman, 2011).

The data this study gathered demonstrates that employees feel that having a positive mindset does impact on their health. *"I do believe there is a link....when you reinforce a positive mindset into yourself....What it does is it essentially feeds into your core beliefs about yourself. (IV 4).*

4.1.2.3 MINDFULNESS BENEFITS EXPERIENCED

Interviewees additionally pointed out the benefits of reducing stress *"Well, definitely reduction in stress levels" (IV 6). "In terms of health, it has an impact on having a more positive mindset, because I would attribute it to stress levels*" (IV 4). Stress reduction is one of the critical analysis within the literature associated significantly with mindfulness practices and more specifically, with the Kabat-Zinn (1990) MBSR programme. Additionally, it correlated with other researcher views

on the relatedness of stress reduction due to mindfulness practices (Clarke, 2012; Glomb, 2011). Furthermore, supports the participant's perspectives on the connection of positive emotion and psychological influence it can have on an individual feeling well (Diener *et al.,* 2010; Foregeard *et al.,* 2011).

4.1.3 OBJECTIVE 3 "To ascertain what the added value of mindfulness is to a workplace."

A primary goal of this particular section was to understand if there was a correlation between mindfulness and resilience, engagement, accomplishment and employee health.

4.1.3.1 LINK BETWEEN MINDFULNESS PRACTICES AND RESILIENCE

Mindfulness has been linked to strengthening resilience, and the data collected in this section supports this account. The mindfulness initiative (2016) said in a study, over 50% of 160 companies employees cited their resilience was as a direct result of their healthy workplace relationships. Mindfulness supports the enhancement of resilience, which interviewee two had a strong view on and in addition its link to workplace engagement *"I think it helps to build resilience, so taking control and being able to take control of your emotions, helps bring self-awareness and engage with others." (IV 2).*

4.1.3.2 MINDFULNESS AND WORKPLACE ENGAGEMENT

The research findings demonstrated that engagement was critical within the workplace and a direct link between having positive emotion and engagement. *"There is a massive link between engagement and positive emotion." (IV 4).* Engagement Seligman (2011) says, is a key component to having a satisfactory life, as discussed in the literature review chapter 2. The data from this research has significant similarities from the interviewees perspective to the secondary research. Interviewee 6 felt displaying positive mindset had a significant impact on engagement in the workplace. *"if you're displaying a positive approach….Your*

team is going to see that and going to be more engaged with the with you as an employee." (IV 6).

4.1.3.3 MINDFULNESS AND ACCOMPLISHMENT

Employee accomplishment was highlighted as a critical driver of enhancing further improvements in employee engagement and performance. Interviewee four discussed how individual behaviour impacts on engagement and its effects to the employee *"If you are acting in a calm manner, and in an assertive manner in a focused manner and an energised manner, it has a knock-on effect to employees, and to the people that you are engaging with." (IV 4).* Seligman's (2011) PERMA theory supports this statement and the importance of a positive mindset and goal accomplishments, moreover, he states out of all five emotions accomplishment is the one emotion critical for each individual. *"When you keep reinforcing a positive mindset, you then unconsciously end up believing in yourself....more natural to achieve your goals." (IV 4).*

4.1.4 OBJECTIVE 4 "To examine whether the application of mindfulness enhances workplace relationships."

The objective was to gain insights and interviewee perspectives on the impact of workplace relationships on employee health and whether they were cognizant of mindfulness ability to increase relationship effectiveness. Data collected from the study highlighted from the interviewees how a mindfulness practice could positively support the transition of unconscious behaviours and reactions that influence relationships. Many individual responses and personal actions in relationships can often be a reflection of a predisposition (Seligman, 2011); however, participants views reflected the importance of further education of mindfulness and conscious awareness required to improve working and personal relationships. The World Health Organisation (WHO, 2019) cites *"individual health beliefs and practices are a very small contributor to a settings based health promotion approach".*

4.1.4.1 CONNECTION BETWEEN MINDFULNESS AND PURPOSE

Mindfulness practices in this regard are linked to supporting meaning in life and the alleviation of both physical and emotional pain (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). The data in this section of the study could interpret that mindfulness and having meaning and purpose alleviates and supports a healthy life.

"When you have a purpose, you feel more motivated, and you're more involved in what you're trying to achieve." (IV 6). Interviewees reflected having a sense of purpose promoted many benefits, better relationships, and improved job satisfaction *I think, to have a purpose and to be positive, will improve your job satisfaction as a whole."(IV 6).*

4.1.4.2 LINK BETWEEN POSITIVE EMOTION AND POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

There were parallels to the research from Seligman's (2011) PERMA theory of positive emotion. Interviewee 6 felt having a purpose is linked to motivation and ultimately, job satisfaction and referenced the psychological impact if they had no purpose. In most of the research studied, mindfulness has a direct link to enhancing having a purpose and positive emotion which is linked to improved relationships. The research findings in this section highlighted a link between positive emotion and mindfulness practices. *"It's important to have a positive mindset because there can be too much negativity around." (IV 5)*

4.1.4.3 ENHANCED WORK RELATIONS

The participant's views drew similarities to the current literature, such as mindfulness improves social relationships due to a person's innate ability to self-regulate their attention, thus leads to an enhanced workplace and improved employee performance (Glomb *et al.* 2011). *"Important you can go to your colleagues that are doing the same job, and because of your relationship with them if you are stressed, that's important, and good work relations that has to be in place for everyone." (IV 5)*

Patterns evolved throughout the interviews, and all highlighted the importance of working as a team and being united. However, (IV 5) discussed participating in a workplace yoga class once a week with their work colleagues and described this as an excellent way to bond and unwind as a team after a stressful day. Additionally, they added it enhanced relationships in the workplace due to understanding of each other's issues and better placed to support one another. The data in this research indicates that individuals need a purpose in life and essential to each existence. This opinion is equally reflected in the literature, particularly aligns with Seligman's theory (2011) on having a meaningful life, resulting in life satisfaction, significance, and a sense of fulfilment.

4.1.5 OBJECTIVE 5 "What impact does a mindful leader have on the employee health."

The findings here highlight through the data collection, the interviewee's thoughts, and views on how a leaders' behaviour positive or negatively can impact based on their interaction with the employee and therefore on their health. The Interviewees responses were aligned regarding how leadership interaction can impact on employee wellness (Reb *et al.,* 2014; Mudd, 2017; Hyland *et al.,* 2015). *"I think it has a massive impact on employees like managers and leaders have a huge responsibility for the people that they manage, or lead." (IV 4).*

A mindful leader understands the benefits of mindful practice and therefore, can and should empower their team to do the same. "*Working with them, as opposed to just demanding stuff, and then I feel that would empower the workers. They would feel more empowered to give more of themselves for that for that manager." (IV 4).* Positive leaders the participants felt can influence a workforce positive emotions and performance within an organisation.

4.1.5.1 MINDFUL LEADER IMPACT ON EMPLOYEE HEALTH

Interviewee (IV 4) discussed how leaders interaction could affect an individual's mental health, the importance of inclusivity while (IV 1) spoke about everyone needing to feel part of a community and included. Critical to an organisations success is having highly effective leaders who demonstrate compassion, empathy, and a high level of emotional intelligence. The interviewees highlighted the profound influence a leaders emotions and attitude can have on workers and (IV 1) identified managers in their organisation who demonstrated positive emotion and a right attitude got the most from their teams. Equally, (IV 4) posited that mindfulness spaces in the workplace would allow managers to refocus and re-energise themselves if they experience moments of stress, anxiety or being overwhelmed by certain situations and help them to handle challenges better.

4.1.5.2 LINK BETWEEN MINDFULNESS AND POSITIVE LEADER EFFECT

During the mindfulness initiative (2016) study, they identified out of forty-five mindfulness workplace programmes a key highlight was the improvement of workplace relationships. There are similarities between the statements from both the mindfulness initiative study and from the participants in this study, interpreted as employees needing to feel safe and well in the workplace and can impact relationships if that experience is not felt.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

Although the data produced consistent similarities amongst the interviewee's and the existing literature, it must recognise the data may not be entirely conclusive due to the qualitative nature of the research approach and the time constraints. If the author had additional time, it would have allowed for further thorough statistical analysis of a larger cohort of individuals. The primary research approach and inductive method heavily relied on the knowledge and skills of the individuals participating in this study. Particularly on the subject of mindfulness

and opinions of individuals who may be subject to bias based on personal experiences. Additionally, the researcher's ability to remove personal opinions and bias to the research topic can pose challenges (Bryman and Bell, 2007) and critical to not allow bias to direct participants responses. However, the author felt the sample size was sufficient for this study, and in examining the data, the author's primary aim was to add to the conversation of mindfulness benefits in the workplace and inspire further studies into building a case for more organisations to introduce mindfulness to their workforce and influence the research gaps identified and developed further.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 OVERVIEW

The author reviewed the current literature and its limitations to understand the effectiveness and impact of mindfulness on employee workplace health. Primarily the objective was to elaborate on whether mindfulness programmes enhance employee health and additionally, investigate the gaps in the literature that required further examination. The research objectives and sub-objectives focused on gathering definitive data to underpin the purpose of the research question.

The data collected in this study indicate deficiencies in the broader employee population perceived efficacy of contemporary mindfulness techniques and the benefits of their application. The accumulative knowledge of mindfulness and education of mindfulness benefits to employees is not adequately addressed within the secondary data. Highlighted as a gap during the data collection analysis in this study, supporting the lack of focus on workplace mindfulness. Initiatives Challenges presented from the data collection were the broader employee population understanding of mindfulness, the complexities of programmes and limitations of offerings. Additionally, highlighted was the significance of the leadership impact on the employee and acknowledgement of essential benefits to employee health

The gaps in the literature identified in Chapter 1 are supported by the data collected in this research and worthy for more robust academic research to support organisations adopting such programmes. The three recommendations for further examination in the future are as follows: **1.** Education of Mindfulness and Employee Health, **2**. The Mindful Leader and Positive Affect on Employee Health, and **3.** Organisations Effective Implementation of Mindfulness Health Programmes.

5.1 EDUCATION OF MINDFULNESS AND EMPLOYEE HEALTH

As stated by all participants in this study, not enough is known on the subject of mindfulness by employees or enough discussion in the workplace to normalise it. If the literature is highlighting the benefits practitioners advocate, then people education should be a significant factor, moreover, would allow an employee the opportunity to employ techniques and tools to manage their stress and anxiety. Organisations have a critical responsibility to ensure they have healthy employees, and arguably encouraging more individuals and businesses to adopt a mindful approach needs a bigger conversation. While online information hubs have great benefits and can educate the reader, the need to adopt and offer employees more practical solutions should be reviewed.

5.2 THE MINDFUL LEADER AND POSITIVE EFFECT ON EMPLOYEE HEALTH

Critical to improving leadership behaviour, according to Bunting (2016) is self-awareness and accomplished through the application of mindfulness. Leaders are incredibly influential in the workplace; how they act and interact with their employees is arguably one of the most critical factors and can be detrimental to employee health. Focusing on this element would support the transversal skills expected of future leaders—emotional intelligence, compassion, empathy all critical characteristics now considered essential to managing a cohort of employees.

If organisations incorporate leadership mindfulness training and support as a consistent leadership style, they could reap positive benefits and improve the organisational culture. Bunting (2016) cites highly engaged companies are proven to be the most effective and successful. Mindful leaders can create opportunities to encourage employees to access mindfulness tools to enhance healthier work environments for all employees further.

5.3 ORGANISATIONS EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF MINDFULNESS HEALTH PROGRAMMES

There are divided opinions on implementing mindfulness into the workplace, primarily due to misconceptions of where it originates from and its specific aims. Organisations remain sceptical of implementing mindfulness as there is still little known concerning what programmes work, and what programmes are suitable for different work environments. Additionally, there is a view that mindfulness encourages a tuning out approach when, in contrast, it provides more energy and alertness (Kabat-Zinn, 1994) and proven to enhance performance. Moreover, the primary and secondary data evidenced and critically analysed in this research demonstrates the benefits mindfulness in the workplace has to offer, improved resilience, performance, interpersonal relationships, and workplace engagement. The challenges, however, there are several critical considerations before organisations should implement such programmes as demonstrated by the Laya health care research "Fuel your Everything" programme for Microsoft and a necessity to reflect on the cost implications.

However, Microsoft and Aetna wellbeing programmes have done significant groundwork in the research and demonstrating positive outputs and are creating happier and healthier employees. Moreover, there are other attainable and available shorter options that can be considered, for the smaller business, such as webinars, yoga class subsidies, and even more critical is mindful training thus normalising a mindful workplace culture. Mindfulness encouraged and supported within organisations, and their leadership teams can produce significant positive outcomes (Laya Healthcare, 2018). However, there is a specific need for more in-depth practical studies to demonstrate more proficiently to organisations the benefits of having healthy employees and not only from a cost standpoint but from a moral and ethical perspective

5.4 SUMMARY

As discussed in the literature review, the traditional programmes of mindfulness, MBSR training and MBCT training have been the most common and successful teachings of mindfulness. In addition, the programmes that are designed by Laya Healthcare and Aetna for example and discussed in previous chapters are of a more secular form within the workplace and additionally designed to cultivate a mindful awareness to allow for a fuller healthier life.

There are robust literature and studies from psychology experts and academics on the health benefits of mindfulness; however, there is a minimal knowledge or literature from the workplace perspective and a requirement for further studies to fill the gaps in the data outlined in the conclusion section in this chapter. Until there is further robust studies and research to show organisations on the "what" "why" and most importantly "how" to of mindfulness working effectively in the workplace there may not be the progression achieved at the pace that is a necessity to improve the health of the employee. The desirable outcome of this study would be for further research on the gaps outlined.

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Appendix 1 Interview Questions

Part 1. Employee Wellbeing

Q. 1 Do you participate in any workplace wellbeing programmes or have a personal practice involving health improvement, such as exercise or mindfulness outside the workplace?

Q, 2 How does your practice or regimen benefit you?

Q. 3 What specific emotional benefits do you feel you experience from the activities you participate in?

Q. 4 In your opinion, do you think having a positive mindset has any impact on health or actions in the workplace?

Part 2. Engagement in the Workplace

Q.1 Do you think having self-awareness can enhance engagement with others?

Q. 2 In your opinion, do you feel workplace engagement adds value to employees?

Q. 3 Do you think there is any connection with engagement and positive emotion?

Q. 4 Do you think there is any connection with engagement and positive emotion?

Part 3. Workplace Relationships

Q. 1 In your opinion, do social relationships/interactions improve the health of employees?

Q. 2 What impact do you think relationships have on employee performance?

Q. 3 In your opinion, do you think leaders and how they interact with colleagues has an impact on employee wellbeing?

Q.4 Do you think workplace mindfulness practises would enable better work relationships between employees and management?

Part 4. Having a "meaningful life" can lead to a healthy work environment

Q. 1 What does a "meaningful life" mean to you?

Q. 2 Do you think mindfulness techniques or practice would enhance having a meaningful work life?

Q.3 In your opinion, would mindfulness workplace programmes improve employee health in the? Workplace?

Part 5. Employee Accomplishment

Q. 1 What supports you to achieve your goals?

Q.2 In your opinion is there a link between a positive mindset and achievement

Q.3 What are your thoughts relating to health and wellbeing impacting on achieving goals

Q. 4 Do you think practising mindfulness increases your ability to accomplish goals

Q. 5 How, in your opinion, is mindfulness interpreted?