

# Eastern and Western Mindfulness in The Workplace

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## Abstract

Mindfulness is gaining popularity in organizations, with management placing increased importance on the quality of life of employees while responding to the demands of today's environment. Current research explains the effects of mindfulness on management constructs by basing their studies on either Eastern or Western conceptualizations of mindfulness. This article combines the Buddhist teachings used in the Eastern perspective with the scientific-based Western thought in an attempt to gain a deeper understanding of mindfulness and the components that lead to its benefits. The mindfulness process is portrayed through a spectrum, which explains the states of mind and qualities developed before reaching the "ready to use" state in the workplace context. The development of the mindfulness spectrum contributes to the academic field and provides a more detailed understanding of mindfulness for management to further apply in the organizational context. In addition, the elaboration of the mindfulness process opens more areas for future studies in mindfulness and management literatures.

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## Introduction

Constant disruptions in the working environment have led to the introduction of new practices that challenge organizations to change or risk being left behind. Individuals, in response, must possess the versatility that enable them to align their skills with the organization's demands in a timely manner. However, the well-being of employees has also become a priority for managers if they aim to achieve sustainable organizational success. Managers are now faced with the challenge of cultivating a culture where the paradox of speed and serenity co-exist in an evolving environment.

Mindfulness has been gaining popularity in organizations over the past decade. Some of the most dynamic firms, such as Google and Apple, provide employees with mindfulness training programs as quality of life becomes a managerial concern while simultaneously cultivating agility and effective management (Rieken et al., 2019; Schaufenbuel, 2015). Studies concerning the benefits of mindfulness – characterized by attention, focus, and thoughtfulness – have shown evidence that mindfulness meets both managerial and organizational demands. On the one hand, mindfulness has been found to increase well-being (Nadler et al., 2020) and decrease perceived stress (Bartlett et al., 2017). On the other hand, mindfulness increases creativity (Berkovich-Ohana et al., 2017) and constructive conflict management (Kay & Skarlicki, 2020).

The antithetical outcomes of mindfulness have expanded studies on a topic once limited to the clinical psychology field to diverse disciplines including management research. The management field has witnessed the benefits of mindfulness in the workplace such as improved performance (Good et al., 2016), increased work engagement (Petchsawang & McLean, 2017), and prosocial behavior (Hafenbrack et al., 2020).

The increased popularity of mindfulness research in management literature has resulted in the development of new theories such as metacognitive practice theory, which was introduced by Ravi Kudesia. According to the theory, mindfulness is a metacognitive process in which the mind is in a state of flexibility when processing information (Kudesia, 2019). Metacognitive practice theory has been adopted in this article as an effort to explain the applicability of mindfulness in today's workplace setting – one that is characterized by continuous changes that affect both organizations and individuals.

To gain a deeper understanding of the mindfulness construct, qualities and components that make up mindfulness are thoroughly explained, and their subsequent applicability in the contemporary environment is proposed. Organizations can utilize this knowledge to facilitate in the development of tools and programs that would efficiently and effectively cultivate employee well-being and performance. As a result, it would enable managers to successfully maneuver their organizations through times of volatility and dynamism.

In this article, we discuss the mindfulness construct and explore two schools of thought found in mindfulness literature. We then propose the integration of the two conceptualizations which is presented in the form of a spectrum. This would help the audience more easily visualize the components and qualities that lead to the mindfulness state that is deemed “ready to use” in the organizational setting. Lastly, we discuss the theoretical and managerial contributions of this article, then conclude with propositions for further study.

## Mindfulness

Mindfulness has been studied in various forms: as a state, trait, and meditation practice. State and trait mindfulness both refer to the level of mindfulness in individuals. However, they are distinguished based on whether mindfulness is viewed as a quality that is developed through nurture or if it is acquired naturally. The state form is the nurture counterpart that views mindfulness as a temporary quality that changes within a time period, typically through meditation training (Smalley & Winston, 2010). Therefore, mindfulness levels are typically measured before and immediately after a meditation session to measure changes in mindfulness levels (e.g., Bravo et al., 2018). Research on state mindfulness commonly examine the intra-person levels of mindfulness.

When viewed as a trait, mindfulness is considered to be inherited and is a relatively stable quality in individuals (Smalley & Winston, 2010). In other words, there are individuals who are, by nature, more or less mindful in comparison to other individuals (Carlson, 2013). Research on trait mindfulness compares the mindfulness levels among individuals and examines how these differences affect the outcomes of a construct (e.g., Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2017). Similar to state mindfulness, trait mindfulness can be further developed through mindfulness practice.

Mindfulness as a practice refers to meditation as a tool of cultivating mindfulness. Studies on mindfulness practice examine the effects of meditation on workplace outcomes. For example, Müller et al. (2016) compared the levels of creativity and cognitive flexibility between samatha and vipassana meditators. The authors found increased levels in creativity in both groups of meditators, although an increase in cognitive flexibility was only found in samatha meditators.

The discussion on mindfulness in this article has so far been based on the spiritually-based Eastern perspective. As will be discussed, mindfulness was first introduced to the Western world as a practice grounded on Buddhist teachings. More recently, the scientific view of mindfulness has also been gaining popularity in management literature due to its influence on highly demanded qualities in today's individuals and organizations such as novelty and creativity. In the next section, two schools of thought in mindfulness literature are discussed and the integration of both concepts is proposed.

## Eastern Mindfulness

The Eastern school of thought was founded on 2,500-year-old Buddhist philosophy. Mindfulness means 'to remember' – remember to be constantly aware and attentive to the present moment (Siegel et al., 2009). The Eastern perspective was popularized by Jon Kabat-Zinn when he employed the Buddhist meditation practice in his mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) program to help patients recover from stress-related issues (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). His work has since gained influence in diverse academic disciplines which has led to the proposition of various definitions of the construct.

The seminal definition of mindfulness is one proposed by Kabat-Zinn himself. Kabat-Zinn (1994) defines mindfulness as "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally." Brown and Ryan (2003) gave a simpler definition and focused on the awareness and attention components of mindfulness. Adding to awareness and attention, Baer et al., (2004) included non-judgement into their definition. Feldman et al. (2007) were more elaborate in their conceptualization and discussed mindfulness in terms of being in the present, as well as being aware, attentive, and accepting without making judgement. Despite

the various definitions of mindfulness, it could be observed that the consistent components found in the definitions are present-orientation, attention, and awareness.

The Eastern school of thought is commonly used as the foundation for studies in individual mindfulness. For instance, Baron et al. (2018) found a positive relationship between individual mindfulness and leadership flexibility. The authors suggested that by refraining from automatically reacting to the current experience and judging the current situation based on past experiences, leaders would have more time to think and to respond with greater objectivity and flexibility.

The focus of the Eastern perspective is on the process of consciousness and the specification that the mind is the core of subsequent events (as cited in Didonna, 2009). The Western perspective, on the other hand, proposes a different interpretation of mindfulness by placing emphasis on the content of consciousness (Didonna, 2009).

## Western Mindfulness

Ellen Langer's conceptualization of mindfulness is based on social psychology and Western scientific studies, and is therefore considered to represent the Western way of thinking (Weick & Putnam, 2006). Thus, this school of thought is commonly known as the Western perspective.

The Western interpretation of mindfulness focuses on changing the ways things are viewed, specifically by drawing distinctions, creating new categories, and being open to diverse perspectives (Didonna, 2009; Langer & Moldoveanu, 2017). Drawing distinctions and creating new categories refer to giving new meaning to past circumstances, or categorizing them differently, to better fit in with the present context.

For example, the success of 3M Post-it® notes is a result of creating new meanings and categorizations. Initially, the product was meant to be a strong adhesive that would tightly stick to surfaces. Instead, it turned out to be a weak adhesive. Rather than fixate on what the product was supposed to be, the designers changed the context in which the product was viewed, thereby resulting in an innovative product and subsequently becoming the popular stationery as it is known today (Post-it® Brand, 2022). This ability to consider various views to find new solutions to the same problem enables people to control both their internal and external environments (Langer & Ngnoumen, 2018).

Langer (1992) explains her conception of mindfulness by comparing it to mindlessness. Mindfulness involves being open to a variety of diverse perspectives and considering 'what could be' in a situation. Conditional and open-ended statements such as "Problem A could be caused by Factor A" are used to encourage different ways of interpreting meaning (Langer, 1992). This is in contrast with mindlessness, which refers to behaving automatically based on similar experiences and is limited to a 'knowing what' approach. Here, fixed and closed-ended statements are used, such as "Problem A is caused by Factor A." Mindlessness results in solutions that are based on past situations without making adaptations to the present context (Langer & Ngnoumen, 2018).

Langer's conceptualization of mindfulness is frequently adopted in organizational-level research, where mindfulness is defined as "the capacity of groups and individuals to be acutely aware of significant details, to notice errors in the making, and to have the shared expertise and freedom to act on what they notice" (as cited in Sutcliffe et al., 2016). The application of

mindfulness in a group level has led to other common terms, such as collective mindfulness (Aanestad & Jensen, 2016), mindful organizing (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001), and organizational mindfulness (Ray et al., 2011).

## **Convergence of the Eastern and Western Perspectives**

The Eastern and Western perspectives each has its own advantages and disadvantages when applied to the pragmatic context. On one side, the Eastern perspective, which is based on Buddhist teachings, explains the process of consciousness but fails to explain its direct relevance in the workplace setting. On the other hand, the Western perspective, as derived from social psychology and scientific studies, shows more relevance in today's dynamic environment. However, it does not explain the process in reaching a state of mindfulness.

The comparison of the Eastern and Western conceptualization of mindfulness shows that neither perspective is sufficient on its own in providing an understanding of the influence and applicability of mindfulness in the workplace setting. Rather, each perspective complements the other, which allows for a more in-depth understanding of mindfulness and its relevance to today's organizations and management practices. With this gap in mindfulness literature, we propose a convergence of the Eastern and Western perspectives of mindfulness.

The convergence of the two concepts is made possible by two commonalities between the Eastern and Western perspectives. First, both place emphasis on present orientation. This requires the mind to be in the current moment without being influenced by past experiences (Kabat-Zinn, 1994; Langer, 1992).

Second, both concepts involve information processing although the manner of how information is managed varies (Kudesia, 2019). The core of Eastern mindfulness is the bare observation of the current experience, resulting in a passive approach in processing information. This approach entails acknowledging the presence of current information without attempting to make changes (Brown et al., 2007). On the other hand, Western mindfulness involves the active reconstruction of the environment to fit in with the current situation (Langer & Ngnoumen, 2018), as discussed in the example of the 3M Post-it® notes earlier.

In this article, we present the convergence of the Eastern and Western perspectives of mindfulness in the form of a spectrum. The spectrum helps visualize the complementary roles of each perspective and the process that leads to the "ready-to-use" state of mindfulness.

## **The Mindfulness Spectrum**

The mindfulness spectrum portrays the consolidated model of the Eastern and Western conceptualizations of mindfulness. The development of the spectrum is based on an adaptation of the Buddhist path, which progresses from generosity to good behavior then meditation. Gethin (1998) extended the Buddhist path and proposed a model that comprises of good behavior, meditative concentration, and wisdom. The two latter stages of Gethin's model (i.e., meditative concentration and wisdom) are used as the foundation for the first two parts of the mindfulness spectrum. The Western view was then added to the spectrum based on the commonalities found between Eastern and Western mindfulness. To summarize, the first two parts of the mindfulness spectrum reflect the Eastern perspective of mindfulness while the third part represents the Western perspective.

As shown in Figure 1, the mindfulness spectrum comprises of the states of being, the recurring qualities, and the components. The *state of being* refers to the mental state of mindfulness being cultivated, i.e., calmness, wisdom, and metacognitive practice. Each state comprises of *recurring qualities* of mindfulness, namely focus, detachment and understanding, and the corresponding *components*. These components interact during meditation practice (Hölzel et al., 2011).

As mentioned earlier, mindfulness – in trait and state forms – is cultivated through meditation practice. The two main types of meditation are called samatha and vipassana. While both types involve paying attention to the present moment, they differ in the range of attention. Samatha meditation, also known as concentrative meditation, is practiced by focusing on one object. If the mind is found to wander from the focal object, it is calmly reminded to re-focus on the intended object, commonly the breath (Siegel et al., 2009). The attention placed during vipassana meditation is on a wider range. Instead of focusing on one object, as practiced in samatha meditation, attention is placed on the broader inner and outer experiences. Specifically, when practicing vipassana meditation the wandering mind is reminded to return its attention to the breath, body, and environment (Muller et al., 2016). Mindfulness meditation is practiced in a similar way as vipassana meditation as the range of focus is wide and includes current internal and external sensations (Olendzki, 2009).

When applied to the mindfulness spectrum, samatha meditation cultivates calmness while vipassana meditation assists in developing wisdom (Kuan, 2012).

### **State of Being 1: Calm Development**

The first state of being is calmness, which reflects a serene and undistracted mind. Calmness is the result of focus and comprises of consciousness and concentration (see Figure 1). Here, the mind starts with consciousness, in which the mind merely observes internal and external experiences, then shifts to concentration by narrowing down its focus on an object.

Before discussing about consciousness and its sub-components, it is essential to explain the factors that arise with consciousness because they affect the development of calmness (Dreyfus, 2011). According to Buddhist teachings, the perception of an experience is affected by mental factors. Negative mental factors are referred to as “sufferings” and comprise of illusion, attachment, and aversion. First, illusions keep individuals from seeing things objectively due to predispositions that cloud a person’s perceptions toward an experience (Rahula, 2006). An example of illusion is excess worry, which results in overthinking about things that have yet to happen. Second is attachment, which refers to clinging to a past or future experience due to idealization (Didonna, 2009). Attachment could cause a person to fantasize and be stuck to a memory from the past or to develop overly high expectations of the future. Third, aversion taints perceptions with rage. Aversion causes an experience to be interpreted as negative rather than neutral or positive (Didonna, 2009).

Negative mental factors are kept from developing with consciousness through samatha meditation. As explained earlier, samatha meditation is practiced by reminding the wandering mind to re-focus on an object (Silananda, 2002) which keeps external factors from affecting the perception of the current experience.

### *Consciousness*

Consciousness is the English translation of the Pali word *viññāṇa*, which refers to an acknowledgment of current phenomena (Rahula, 2006). Consciousness is comprised of awareness and attention (Bishop et al., 2003). Awareness, or *sati*, is the bare observation of current internal and external experience through the six “sense doors.” The sense doors refer to the five sensory organs – eye, ear, nose, tongue, body – and the mind being the sixth door (Rahula, 2006). The organs are coined as such because information enters through these “doors,” causing awareness to occur (Siegel et al., 2009). Since awareness involves mere observation of the present moment, attempts to make changes to the experience do not take place (Brown et al., 2007; Giluk, 2009; Kabat-Zinn, 2003). After the broad observation that occurs during awareness, the mind narrows down its focus to get a clearer view of the immediate moment in which attention takes place (Brown & Ryan, 2003).

It is vital that both sub-components of consciousness are concurrently flexible and stable. First, flexibility allows the mind to see the big picture, which is made possible with the smooth transition between awareness and attention (Brown et al., 2007). Second, stability enables bare observation by preventing negative mental factors from arising.

Awareness and attention play an essential role in the development of concentration because they enable the mind to focus on the present moment (Good et al., 2016). Awareness entails observing current experience while attention is shifted back whenever the mind is found to deviate from the focal object, as practiced during *samatha* meditation.

### *Concentration*

The persistent practice of focusing on an object leads to established and sustained concentration, or *samadhi* (as cited in Hölzel et al., 2011; Sraman, 2002). The presence of concentration and absence of negative mental factors place the mind in a calm state (Kabat-Zinn, 1994; Silananda, 2002). Being in a state of calmness enables the mind to see things as they truly are as the mind is void of tainted perceptions (Dhiman, 2020a). As a result, feelings of hostility become rationality, misery changes into compassion, and fantasy becomes a drive for change (Desbordes et al., 2015).

A calm state meets the requisite for *vipassana* meditation where meaningful and unbiased interpretations of the experience begin, paving the way for the development of wisdom (Dhiman, 2020a, Gethin, 1998).

## **State of Being 2: Wisdom Development**

At this point, the mind begins to observe the body, including the inner and outer experiences (Dhiman, 2020b). The observation of the broader range of experience is an indication of *vipassana* meditation. *Vipassana* meditation leads to the attainment of what Thera (1972) refers to as “directness of vision,” where the mind is free from bias, prejudice, and attachment. This objective interpretation of the world marks the attainment of wisdom (Purser & Milillo, 2015).

According to Buddhist teachings, wisdom is achieved through an understanding of the environment and in conducting life in a particular manner – a life that is detached from negative mental factors and the acceptance that all things are transient (Dorjee, 2010; Gunaratana, 1990; Rahula, 2006). As shown in Figure 1, the detachment quality comprises of equanimity, non-judgement, and emotion regulation.

**Table 1: Mindfulness Spectrum**

| State of Being | Calm Development   |   |  | Wisdom Development   |  |  | Metacognitive Practice   |               |            |               |
|----------------|--|---|--|--|--|--|--|---------------|------------|---------------|
|                | Recurring Quality  | Focus   | Detachment   | Emotion Regulation   | Insight  | Understanding  | Consciousness  | Concentration | Equanimity | Non-judgement |
|                | <i>Awareness</i> : the monitoring and perceiving of inner and outer realities through the use of the six sense doors | The mind's ability to hold its attention on a particular object | The mind's calmness towards occurrences, regardless of how pleasant or unpleasant they are | The ability to withhold judgment and related reactions to current experience | Acceptance of current experience while acknowledging that emotions are transient | The "aha" moment that occurs after an impasse is restructured, allowing the individual to see the problem from a new perspective | The process of sustaining both stability and flexibility needed to adapt to novel changes in the environment |               |            |               |
|                | <i>Attention</i> : the focused awareness on a range of current experiences   |   |  |  |  |  |  |               |            |               |

**Note:** Adapted from "The Mindfulness Spectrum: Merging Eastern and Western Perspectives on Mindfulness," by Buranapin et al., 2016, *Academy of Management Proceedings*, 2016(1), p. 15428 (<https://doi.org/10.5465/ambpp.2016.15428abstract>)

### ***Equanimity***

A calm mind enables for the development of equanimity, which is defined as an even-mindedness towards all matters (Desbordes et al., 2015). During equanimity, things are viewed objectively without the influence of positive or negative stimuli (Olendzki, 2009). It should be noted, however, that equanimity does not equate to indifference. Rather, it reflects the ability to refrain from immediately reacting to current emotions and to allow attention to be diverted back to the present within a minimal amount of time (Treadway & Lazar, 2009). In other words, equanimity requires ‘letting go’ of emotions and being in the present.

### ***Non-judgement***

Non-judgement possesses the same ‘letting go’ quality as equanimity. However, non-judgement refers to letting go of negative attitudes towards something based on a past occurrence. This means that the mind would refrain from immediately forming labels such as ‘bad’ or ‘undesirable’ without taking into consideration the current context, as it could be the result of predispositions towards an experience due to its similarity to a past event (Gunaratana, 1990). In addition, a judgement reflects a sense of disapproval towards one’s current thoughts and emotions. An example of a judgemental statement is “I criticize myself for having irrational or inappropriate emotions” (Baer et al., 2004). With mindfulness, current emotions are accepted without making judgements.

It is vital to understand that non-judgement does not mean that the mind is prohibited from categorizing or evaluating experience, nor does it encourage avoiding or suppressing unwanted thoughts and emotions (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Rather, thoughts are merely observed, considered, and accepted as part of the overall experience (Meiklejohn et al., 2012).

The equanimity and non-judgement quality of ‘letting go’ of emotions and negative attitudes facilitates in emotion regulation as negative mental factors are removed from the experience (Farb et al., 2012).

### ***Emotion regulation***

Emotion regulation is generally defined in psychology literature as the process of monitoring and controlling emotions (Gross, 1998). In Buddhist teachings, emotion regulation is defined similarly in terms of monitoring but with the additional quality of monitoring with bare observation (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). This quality leads to refraining from controlling or modifying emotions (Farb et al., 2010). For instance, when faced with an offensive situation, the individual would not react to current emotions nor would one attempt to rationalize the offender’s behavior. Instead, the individual would observe and accept the situation without comparing it with a similar experience.

A common technique used to help de-escalate emotions is called affect labeling. This involves labeling one’s feelings concisely by using words such as ‘frustrated,’ ‘hot,’ or ‘satisfied.’ As discussed in the non-judgement component, it is vital that labeling one’s emotions is done solely on current emotions rather than basing on past occurrences. An experimental study conducted by Lieberman et al. (2011) found that affect labeling plays a role in moderating the responses given by participants when shown pleasant and unpleasant images. The authors suggested that labeling allows respondents to be more objective about their emotions.

At this point, the mind is “ready-to-use” in the workplace context as it has developed the flexibility required to perform in an organizational setting. The attainment of wisdom leads to the acknowledgement that reality could be distorted due to one’s personal “baggage.” Hence,

things are perceived and accepted as they really are (Dhiman, 2020a; Dorjee, 2010). In addition, the quality of detachment cultivates the acceptance of impermanence which results in openness in adapting to changes (Vago & Silbersweig, 2012).

### **State of Being 3: Metacognitive Practice**

Metacognitive practice explains individual flexibility that comes from monitoring and adjusting the way information is processed. This theory views mindfulness as a metacognitive process, or “cognition about cognitive phenomena,” while incorporating the Eastern and Western perspectives of mindfulness (Flavell, 1979; Kudesia, 2019). As discussed earlier, the Eastern perspective places emphasis on attention (Kabat-Zinn, 2003), while Western mindfulness focuses on making sense of situations through conceptualization (Langer, 1992). The interplay of the two perspectives is vital in monitoring situations (Kudesia, 2019), which subsequently determines the mode of engagement that would be suitable in each situation.

The first type of engagement mode is called absorbed engagement. This type of engagement is employed in situations where perceptual information is sufficient, such as in daily routine operations (Kudesia, 2019). Absorbed engagement utilizes current knowledge with an established dominant response to recurring situations (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011). In unfamiliar situations where current knowledge is insufficient and absorbed engagement cannot be used, the mind switches to the second mode of engagement called deliberative engagement. Here, information is conceptualized and divided into comprehensible parts (Kudesia, 2019; Weick and Suitcliffe, 2006).

In this article, metacognitive practice is used to explain the quality of understanding – the understanding of the interconnectedness of factors and their application to specific contexts. The understanding quality is composed of insight and self-regulation (See Figure 1).

### **Insight**

Insight is the “aha” moment after an impasse is overcome (Gilhooly & Murphy, 2005). Prior to attaining insight, the mind acknowledges that the situation at hand is an impasse, and that current knowledge is not enough to manage it. The mind then switches to the deliberative engagement mode and adjusts the way information is processed. The wisdom previously attained enables for the unbiased comparison between the current state of information processing with the demands of the current context, consequently making switching between engagement modes easier and adjusting information processing more accurate (Kudesia, 2019; Shapiro & Schwartz, 2000)

Adjustments to information processing include removing impertinent information, viewing issues from different angles, and changing the approach altogether (Fernandez-Duque et al., 2000; Flavell, 1979). Western mindfulness facilitates this process as it pertains to noticing the differences between current and past contexts, being open to new information, and being aware of diverse perspectives (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000). Results from adjusting information processing would be an expanded cognitive repertoire. This would increase the number of possibilities in conceptualizing information and the ability to challenge current paradigms (Kay & Skarlicki, 2020; Yeganeh & Kolb, 2009).

The ability to adjust how information is processed in each situation would yield an optimal solution that helps the individual solve a novel problem, thus leading to insight.

## Self-regulation

New resources resulting from information processing adjustments can be used to develop strategies that assist in utilizing the optimal response in managing situations. This contributes to self-regulation, which is defined as the process of maintaining the cognitive stability and flexibility needed to effectively adapt to changes (Blair & Ursache, 2011; Efklides, 2008; Shapiro & Schwartz, 2000).

As the last component of the mindfulness spectrum, self-regulation incorporates the prior qualities developed in the spectrum, i.e., focus and detachment, with metacognition. The result is the awareness and acceptance of the current situation and, with the expanded pool of information from insight, the metacognitive ability to anticipate the outcome when various factors interact (Flavell, 1979). This allows for the consideration of alternative strategies and the ability to decide on the most effective option for the situation at hand (Hofmann et al., 2012; Veenman & Elshout, 1999).

The development of the mindfulness spectrum is an effort to integrate the Eastern and Western conceptualizations of mindfulness. It should be noted that the spectrum is intended to portray the consecutive and iterate changes in an individual's mindfulness state (Siegel et al., 2009). For instance, the mind might shift from metacognitive practice to calm development when faced with a threatening situation. Similarly, the duration the mind takes in each state is suggested to vary. For example, it might take five minutes to monitor present internal and external experiences but transitions into solving novel problems within nanoseconds. In this case, the mind passes through concentration, equanimity, emotion regulation, and non-judgment so swiftly that the individual does not fully notice that the shift has taken place.

## Theoretical Contribution

This conceptual paper provides a different view of mindfulness through an examination of its processes and outcomes. While the focus of existing literature is on 'what' management constructs are influenced by mindfulness, this paper seeks to answer the 'how' question by portraying the mindfulness process that would lead to individual adaptability. Doing so allows for a closer examination of the qualities that form a mindful person and the sequence in which they are developed.

In addition, the integration of the Eastern and Western schools of thought, as to the knowledge of the authors, has not yet been attempted. Rather, current literature views Eastern mindfulness and Western mindfulness as distinct interpretations which would limit the study of mindfulness to an either-or exploration of the topic. Lastly, this paper expands on the metacognitive practice theory by applying the components of the theory to the mechanisms of mindfulness. This helps build on research of both mindfulness and management.

## Managerial Contribution

The mindfulness spectrum provides a visualization of the qualities that comprise mindfulness, which enables managers to gain a clearer view of how mindfulness could be employed to attain sustainable organizational success. One way this could be accomplished is by precisely identifying the quality that needs to be developed in order to acquire the needed skill. For instance, since it was found that the detachment quality leads to flexibility (Baron et al., 2018), vipassana meditation training should be provided to employees whose job requires them to be adaptable in different conditions. Similarly, organizations could provide samatha training to employees who may have stress problems since samatha meditation increases

calmness. As a result, not only would the training program be effective, the benefits of mindfulness would also come to fruition in a timely manner.

Next, managers are recommended to consider mindfulness as an additional qualification in future and current employees. Commonly used selection criteria, such as hiring for culture fit or solely on technical skills, are no longer sufficient due to the increased demands for diversity and adaptability. Therefore, the inclusion of individual mindfulness as a selection criterion should be considered as a new practice in the recruitment process. There are several individual mindfulness scales available for recruiters to use as they are made accessible to the public, such as the Five Factor Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ; Baer et al., 2006), the Philadelphia Mindfulness Scale (PHLMS; Cardaciotto et al., 2008), and the Toronto Mindfulness Scale (TMS; Lau et al., 2006). The scales differ mainly on whether they measure mindfulness as a trait or a state. When applied to recruitment in the organizational context, we would recommend measuring the level of trait mindfulness in candidates as it would be more suitable to the general population. Mindfulness could then be further cultivated through training when the candidate has been hired.

It should be noted that when choosing mindfulness scales, discrepancies have been found in a study by Gu et al. (2016) between how meditators and nonmeditators interpret the observing dimension of mindfulness. In other words, the definition placed on observing by meditators is different from that of nonmeditators. Therefore, the authors suggested the exclusion of the observing dimension to obtain a more accurate assessment of mindfulness, particularly when the samples are the general population such as those used in this context.

In addition to the spiritual perspective of mindfulness, assessment of the practical aspect should also be conducted to gain insights on novelty seeking and attentiveness to changes. The currently known scale available for measuring Western mindfulness is the Langer Mindfulness Scale (LMS; Piron et al., 2012). Measuring both perspectives of mindfulness would provide a holistic view of each candidate on the mindfulness criterion.

## **Propositions for Further Study**

The mindfulness spectrum can serve as a foundation for expanding mindfulness research in several ways. First, the qualities of mindfulness, as listed on the spectrum, can be linked with components of management constructs. The study would help identify the mindfulness qualities that have the greatest impact on a specified component. For example, it would be beneficial to examine the mindfulness quality that has the most effect on the creativity factor of adaptive performance. Results of the study would make theoretical contributions in both mindfulness and management literatures by exploring the managerial relevance of mindfulness.

Next, the spectrum can be utilized to develop an individual mindfulness scale. While there are several existing scales available in mindfulness literature, they are found to employ straightforward items which could affect the accuracy of the results due to response bias. A recommendation for a more accurate assessment of mindfulness is to ask respondents indirect questions about their attitudes towards a given scenario. The items used in the scale can be developed by referring to the mindfulness spectrum since it encompasses the Eastern and Western mindfulness perspectives. The responses from this scenario-based scale are expected to provide a more accurate measure of mindfulness as respondents are instructed to answer based on their immediate reactions towards a scenario rather than answering direct questions.

Third, it would be an interesting topic to learn the impact each mindfulness quality would have on the metacognitive practice stage of the mindfulness spectrum. As proposed earlier, this last stage comprises of the qualities acquired from the calm and wisdom development stages. Therefore, it would be useful to examine if different combinations of the mindfulness qualities would yield different levels of flexibility. The study would help determine if people with, for instance, high levels of detachment have the same flexibility as those with high levels of focus. If conducted, results of this study would have theoretical contributions as it provides more specific details as to whether each mindfulness quality has the same level of impact on a person's level of flexibility.

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