

PSYCHOLOGICAL NEED SATISFACTION AT WORKPLACE: THE ROLE OF MINDFULNESS

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Abstract *The purpose of the present paper is to examine the significance of dispositional mindfulness in prediction of basic psychological need satisfaction and explain how positive psychological strengths and capabilities motivate employees to perform in a stressful work environment. According to self-determination theory (SDT), we have basic, universal psychological need for competence, autonomy, and relatedness. SDT proposes that these basic needs represent the necessary nutriment for healthy, fully functioning personality. The study has been conducted on a sample of 322 IT professionals. Data analysis was performed using correlation and regression analysis. The results indicated that dispositional mindfulness is significantly related to basic psychological need satisfaction. The finding suggests mindfulness is a significant predictor, in fostering basic psychological need satisfaction in employees.*

Keywords: *Mindfulness, Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction (BPNS), Self-Determination Theory (SDT)*

INTRODUCTION

The fullest representation of humankind expressed through individuals to be inquisitiveness by nature, and have inner motivation to work, they must have to be agentic, stimulated, determined to learn, open for new experiences, and able to apply their talent with responsibility. Internal motivation is a kind of an innate drive toward growth that prompts individuals to fulfill their unique and natural potential.

Yet, it is also clear that human spirit can be diminished or crushed and those individuals sometimes reject growth and responsibility. Human beings can be proactive and engaged or, alternatively, passive and alienated, largely as a function of the social conditions in which they develop and function. Sometimes due to certain personal and external factors, they are unable to utilise any opportunity to develop their inner strengths and this leads to construction of negative self-schema; once formed, it becomes stable. Such non-optimal human functioning can lead people to engage in ‘primitive thinking’ and involved in ‘analysis paralyses.’

On the other hand, if the environment is supportive for an individual then he or she can build-up a positive persona to develop a novel mindset and thinking patterns. Individuals are motivated by their interests and curiosity that is the crucial element for intrinsic motivation. A range of studies on self-determination theory has mainly focused on the social-contextual setting that prevents the inner motivation to grow and attain healthy psychological development.

Self-determination theory (SDT) is a novel theory of human motivation and personality. The core concept of self-determination theory is that we have basic, universal psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness. SDT proposes that these basic needs represent the necessary nutriment for healthy, fully functioning personality (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Maslow, 1954; Tay & Diener, 2011). Basic psychological need satisfaction is the foundation for the intrinsic motivation and personality integration of individuals (Ryan & Deci 2000). If it is fulfilled, it conduces toward health and wellness. Thwarting of these needs has the potential to produce negative outcome, consequently natural motivation die, much like the plant dies, in the absence of water and daylight.

Self-determination theory posits the proposition that all human beings have innate needs to feel competent, autonomous and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Satisfaction of these needs facilitates autonomous motivation in individuals whereas thwarting the need produces controlled motivation (feeling pressured to behave in a particular way). Deci and Vansteenkiste (2004) claim that self-determination theory comprises three basic steps: 1. human is innately proactive with their potentials, 2. human has natural inclination towards growth, development and to be fully functioning, and 3. optimal growth and development are inbuilt in humans but they don’t occur automatically. By enhancing our state of consciousness and awareness, we can achieve the optimal level of self-determination.

Mindfulness comprises a facet of awareness of the present moment that is characterised by precision and vividness of existing experience and functioning. It unlocks individuals from unnecessary thought, habit, and damaging behavioural patterns and consequently assists in fostering informed and self-endorsed behaviour regulation. One learns to accept all experiences, which allow an individual to respond effectively rather than react habitually to the experience (Bishop *et al.*, 2004). Mindfulness is paying attention to the present moment on purpose and without judgment (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). Mindfulness entails self-regulation of attention to concentrate on the present (Bishop *et al.*, 2004) rather than preoccupied. Langer (1989) has defined mindfulness as “a state” in which one is open to novelty, alert to distinction, sensitive to context, aware of multiple perspective, and oriented to present.

Individual personality traits are unstable and undying by nature including inflexible habits and relatively enduring pattern of thought, feeling and behaviour (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999). This kind of habitual, mind numbing experiences can distract us from what happening in our worlds, as a result we engage in mindless working style, act compulsively and automatically. Conversely, intentional, moment to moment search for optimal experience makes individual personality more flexible. Mindfulness entails self-regulation and attention to concentrate on present (Bishop *et al.*, 2004). Mindful awareness emphasizes to minimise habitual reaction and encourage thoughtful response (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). One learns to attend to and accept all experiences, which allow an individual to respond effectively rather than react habitually to the experience (Bishop *et al.*, 2004), so mindfulness expected to relate to individual personality and help in utilising their inner potential in productive way.

The train of thought has been extended in workplace. Till date, management has assigned tasks to employee on the basis of their knowledge, skill, and ability, and motivate their employees on basis of external reward system. This reflects organisation’s obliviousness. To understand in what extent the inner strength (self-determination) as well as state of mindfulness can assist in performing their task effectively and efficiently, there is need of a supporting and nurturing social and contextual environment to actualise their inherent potential. Mindfulness is a process which is helpful in actualising our potential despite the stressful social or working environment and eventually promote basic psychological need satisfaction. The prime idea of this research is to propose a more precise empirical estimate of the relationship between dispositional mindfulness and basic psychological need satisfaction.

Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction

Self-determination theory proposed empirically informed guidelines and framework to encourage people to explore

experience and events, and from the reflective basis, to make adaptive changes in goal, behaviour, and relationship (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Self-determination theory has provided empirical confirmations for the proposition that all human beings have primary need to feel competent, autonomous, and related in existing context. Fulfillment of these essential needs facilitate individual’s autonomous motivation while thwarting the need brings controlled motivation. SDT has its core concept of basic psychological needs.

1. **The Autonomy Need:** It comprises an individual’s feeling of a sense of self-determination and having choices that determine their own behaviour. When this need is fulfilled, a person gets free of anxiety and does not feel a demand or stress to respond in particular way (Patall, Cooper, & Robinson, 2008; Sheldon, Ryan, & Reis, 1996).
2. **The Relatedness Need:** It relates to an individual having an experience of strong interpersonal relationship and support from others. When this need is fulfilled, a person experiences that they have a secure interpersonal base. This lessens external anxiety and threats of outside environment that eventually enhances feeling of well-being (Baumeister & Leary 1995; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).
3. **The Competence Need:** It involves an individual experiencing a sense of self-efficacy and confidence in their ability to face the environment. The feeling of mastery in an individual’s interaction with outside world leads to an increased positive affect for those who feel successful and a reduced negative affect for those who face failure (Bandura, 1977; Bandura *et al.*, 1999). These needs are truly “basic” and having these need thwarted can negatively influence well-being of an individual. In line with this idea, Bartholomew *et al.* (2011) showed that the thwarting of these three needs is correlated with depression, burnout, and negative affect.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness can be described as open or receptive awareness and attention which may be reflected in a more regular or sustained consciousness of ongoing events and experiences (Langer, 1989). It promotes one’s experience with a beginners’ mind (Kabat-Zinn, 1994) as if experiencing the event for the first time with such an approach, one brings to their experience openness and acceptance (Bishop *et al.*, 2004). This is to be contrasted with consciousness that is blunted or restricted in various ways. For example, rumination, absorption in fantasies and anxieties about the future can pull one away from what is taking place in the present. Awareness or attention can also be divided, such as, when people are occupied with multiple tasks or are

preoccupied with concerns that detract from the quality of engagement with what is focally present. Mindfulness also compromises when individuals behave compulsively and automatically, without awareness of or attention to one's behaviour (Deci, Connell, & Ryan, 1980). More importantly, Langer begins the process of unpacking mindfulness as a psychological construct. Langer (1989) states that the mindfulness construct is generally thought of as the default state of cognitive processing. The different domains of mindful thinking are:

1. **Novelty-seeking:** An individual who seeks novelty perceive each situation as an opportunity to learn something new and this domain also describes a person's relative openness to experience, willingness to challenge strict cognitive and nomological categories.
2. **Engagement:** An individual who scores high in engagement is likely to notice more details about his or her relationship with environment.
3. **Novelty-producing:** A novelty-producing person generates new information in order to learn more about the current situation. Sternberg (2002) investigated mindfulness as a cognitive ability, a personality trait, and a cognitive style, or preferred way of thinking.

Relationship between Constructs

In the study "Mindfulness, basic psychological needs fulfilment, and well-being" by Chang, Hunavy, and Lin (2015) proposed that the basic psychological needs fulfilment (i.e. autonomy, relatedness, and competence) is the key mechanism that accounts for relationship between mindfulness and well-being. The result revealed that mindfulness basic psychological needs fulfilment and hedonic and eudemonic well-beings are correlated with each other. This study also explains that the positive relationship between mindfulness and both hedonic and eudemonic well-beings can be mediated via basic psychological needs fulfilment.

In a cross-cultural study done by Ozyesil (2012) to determine the relationship between mindfulness and psychological needs, it was found that the mean scores of American students were significantly higher than those of Turkish students in both mindfulness and psychological need sub-dimensions (autonomy, competence, and relatedness). It indicates that across diverse culture, the issue of autonomy can be similarly understood and studied as the most important need and associated with mindfulness.

There is a study by Patricia *et al.* (2014), investigating how both mindfulness and managerial autonomy support affect

work adjustment. Results demonstrated that both autonomy support and mindfulness had direct relations with employee's well-being at workplace. Less autonomy-supportive work climates thwarted employee's basic psychological needs at work, which partially explained the association of lower autonomy support at work and decreased work adjustment. These indirect effects were moderated by mindfulness. Specifically, people higher in mindfulness were less likely to feel need frustration, even in unsupportive managerial environments. Mindfulness is an attribute that may insulate people from the cost of negative environment, allowing individuals more equilibrium in no ideal contexts (Glomb, Duffy, Bono, & Yang, 2011; Weinstein *et al.*, 2009). As such, mindfulness should reduce the negative impact of controlling work climate on psychological need, and their effect on intrinsic motivation.

HYPOTHESES

- H1:** Mindfulness (novelty seeking, novelty producing, and engagement) is significantly related to basic psychological need satisfaction (autonomy, competence, and relatedness).
- H2:** Mindfulness (novelty seeking, novelty producing, and engagement) is the significant predictor of basic psychological need satisfaction (autonomy, competence, and relatedness).

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The research study was conducted on employees working in IT organisation. Convenience purposive sampling was used to collect data through a survey questionnaire attached with a cover letter delineating the research purpose and assurances of confidentiality. Respondents were not asked to write their any identifiable information to maintain the anonymity of responses. The questionnaire included instruments related to the selected variables: mindfulness and basic psychological need satisfaction at work. About 350 duly filled questionnaires were returned to the researcher. The work experience profile of the participants varied from the minimum 1 year of experience to maximum over 6 years and average age of the participants was 30. 81 percent of the respondents were male and 19 percent were female participants. The division of work experience profile of the participants was as follows: 1 to 2 years of work experience constituted 21%, 3 to 4 years of work experience constituted 26%, 5 to 6 years of work experiences constituted 21%, and rest 32% had more than 6 years of work experience.

Measures

Mindfulness

This variable will be measured by Langer mindfulness scale (LMS) developed by Ellen Langer (1997). The LMS consists of 15 questions on 7- point likert scale. The score in the scale ranges from 1= strongly disagree to 7= strongly agree. The reliability estimate for entire scale is .83, Cronbach alpha for the sub-constructs novelty producing, engagement, and novelty seeking scale were .83, .63 & .74 respectively.

Basic Psychological Need Scale

Basic need satisfaction at work: The basic need satisfaction at work (BNS-W) scale was developed by Deci & Ryan (2000) containing 21 items concerning the three needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness on 7-point likert scale. The score in the scale ranges from 1= not at all true to 7= very true. The reliability of the scale reported $\alpha = 0.76$. In total, 21 items were used to assess need for autonomy (e.g., “I feel like I can pretty much be myself at work”), need for relatedness (e.g., “People at work care about me”), and need for competence (e.g., “I don’t feel very competent at work, reversed coded”). BNS-W items reflect the perception of need-supportive contextual aspects.

Analysis of Results

SPSS version 20.0v was used for data analysis and hypothesis was tested through correlation and regression technique.

Table 1 represents the reliability coefficient of all scales used in this study. The value of Cronbach alpha for basic need satisfaction and mindfulness is 0.91 and 0.80 respectively which shows that results are reliable.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis

Scale	Cronbach alpha coefficient	No. of item
Basic need satisfaction	0.91	21
Mindfulness	0.80	14

Pearson correlation among the variables was estimated to indicate the hypothesized relationship. Table 1 presents descriptive analysis and correlations of the study variables. A positive and significant correlation has been found between mindfulness and basic psychological need satisfaction (calculated $r = 0.82$; significant at 0.01 level). Result signifies that higher mindfulness level is associated with increased BPNS. In addition, correlation matrix suggests remarkable positive correlations between mindfulness and three dimensions of BPNS as autonomy, competence, and relatedness which supports our hypothesis 1.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics (Mean, Standard Deviation, and Correlation)

	Mean	SD	MDF	NS	NP	ENG	BPNS	AUTO	COM	RLT
MDF	64.31	11.21	—							
Novelty Seeking (NS)	24.52	5.78	.92**	—						
Novelty Producing (NP)	21.99	3.24	.82**	.82**	—					
Engagement (ENG)	17.78	5.12	.67**	.39**	.38**	—				
BPNS	97.18	20.35	.82**	.75**	.66**	.61**	—			
Autonomy (AUTO)	30.96	6.28	.81**	.82**	.72**	.49**	.87**	—		
Competence (COM)	28.68	7.23	.79**	.70**	.50**	.70**	.83**	.73**	—	
Relatedness (RLT)	37.58	9.57	.57**	.52**	.54**	.45**	.89**	.65**	.61**	—

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Hypothesis 2 maintained that with respect to predicting basic need satisfaction through mindfulness, it accounts for variance unique from that associated with three dimensions of basic psychological need satisfaction. To test this hypothesis, we used stepwise multiple regression analysis. The result of regression analysis for model 1 represents that among all the dimension of mindfulness, novelty seeking predicted autonomy with multiple $R = 0.82$ ($F=698.22$, $P<0.01$, $\beta=0.82$).

Table 3: Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis Showing Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction as a Dependent Variable with the Dimensions of Mindfulness as Predictor Variable (n=322)

Independent variable	R	R ²	SE _m	F-value	D.F	β
1. D.V: Autonomy						
NS	.82	.68	3.53	698.22	320	0.82
NS, NP	.83	.69	3.51	355.14	319	0.73, 0.12
NS, NP, ENG	.84	.72	3.33	273.50	318	0.68, 0.08, 0.20
2. D.V: Competence						
NS	.70	.49	5.17	307.85	320	0.70
NS, NP	.71	.50	5.09	164.79	319	0.89, -0.23
NS, NP, ENG	.86	.74	3.70	301.61	318	0.77, -0.33, 0.52
3. D.V: Relatedness						
NS	.52	.27	8.15	123.19	320	0.52
NS, NP	.56	.32	7.93	73.86	319	0.23, 0.35
NS, NP, ENG	.61	.38	7.55	64.41	318	0.17, 0.30, 0.27

Source: Constructed by the author

Notes: NS: novelty-seeking, NP: novelty-producing, ENG: engagement

$R^2=.68$), novelty-producing predicted autonomy with multiple $R = 0.83$ ($F=355.14$, $P<0.01$, $\beta=0.12$, $R^2=.69$), and engagement predicted autonomy with multiple $R = 0.84$ ($F=273.50$, $P<0.01$, $\beta=0.20$, $R^2=.72$). Accordingly, novelty-seeking dimension has been found to be the strongest predictors of autonomy with the calculated β value 0.82. Moreover, model 2 of Table 3 reveals that among all the dimensions of mindfulness, novelty-seeking predicted competence with multiple $R = 0.70$ ($F=307.85$, $P<0.01$, $\beta=0.70$, $R^2=.49$), novelty-producing predicted competence with multiple $R = 0.71$ ($F=164.79$, $P<0.01$, $\beta= -0.23$, $R^2=.50$), and engagement predicted competence with multiple $R = 0.86$ ($F=301.61$, $P<0.01$, $\beta= 0.52$, $R^2=.74$). Accordingly novelty-seeking dimension has been found to be the strongest predictor of competence with the calculated β value 0.70. Additionally, model 3 of Table 3 reveals that among all the dimension of mindfulness, novelty-seeking predicted relatedness with multiple $R = 0.52$ ($F=123.19$, $P<0.01$, $\beta=0.52$, $R^2=.27$), novelty-producing predicted relatedness with multiple $R=0.56$ ($F=73.86$, $P<0.01$, $\beta=0.35$, $R^2=.32$), and engagement predicted relatedness with multiple $R=0.61$ ($F=64.41$, $P<0.01$, $\beta=0.27$, $R^2=.38$). Accordingly, novelty seeking dimension has been found the strongest predictor of relatedness with the calculated β value is 0.52. Regression model represents the significant independent predictor mindfulness of basic psychological need satisfaction. The overall model $F(592.194)$, $P<.001$ accounted for 64% of the variance of basic psychological need satisfaction, which means mindfulness has high contribution in predicting basic psychological need satisfaction.

DISCUSSION

All hypotheses outlined at the beginning of this article were supported by the statistical analysis and results. It has been found that mindfulness is positively and significantly correlated with the constructs of basic psychological need satisfaction. It states that if workplace encourages, mindfulness at workplace can enhance basic psychological need satisfaction of employees. Ryan *et al.* (2008) propose that promoting mindfulness is a way of fulfilling basic psychological need. On the basis of results of this study, it can be suggested that there is a significant relationship between mindfulness and basic psychological need satisfaction. The findings have indicated that mindfulness (novelty seeking, novelty producing, and engagement) leads to fulfill basic need satisfaction. Table 1 indicated that all distinct dimension of mindfulness are significantly related to basic need satisfaction at work. It is also evident from the result that mindfulness at workplace plays a significant role in determining the autonomy, competence, and relatedness of employees at workplace which eventually facilitates to achieve basic need satisfaction. Individuals who are focused on the present moment might be fully aware of both the inside and outside of the world. This provides a more autonomous and less controlled or defensive base state from which persons can fully engage in themselves. In addition, novelty-seeking and novelty-producing features of mindfulness allow individuals to realise that they are not totally driven by habitual and controlled behavioural patterns. Therefore, persons are able to change themselves and realise how they would like to react. They can fulfill the need for autonomy through this mindfulness awareness. Novelty-seeking behaviour is a dimension of mindfulness in which an individual who seeks novelty perceives each situation as a prospect to learn something new. This sphere also illustrates a person's relative openness to experience, readiness to face up to strict cognitive, and nomological categories and this study is also supporting this proclamation. Thus, mindfulness can fulfill these three basic psychological needs and further enhance an individual's self-motivation at work environment. Table 3 reveals that autonomy has been predicted by novelty-seeking behaviour with the joint effect of novelty producing and engagement. The findings suggest that if managers were more mindful with present context and enhance their attention span, consciousness level and engagement with present task would eventually increase need satisfaction at workplace.

Mindful individuals are also more likely to see stressful events as less demanding or threatening. Mindfulness has been proposed to foster and accelerate equanimity, which is defined as the ability to maintain serenity and mental balance when confronted with provoking events, resulting in a faster recovered from stressful situation (Carmody *et al.*, 2009;

Kern *et al.*, 2011). The study is showing that the construct mindfulness and its dimensions novelty-seeking behaviour, novelty-producing behaviour, and engagement behaviour are good predictors of BPNS. The result shows that mindfulness would account for variance in need satisfaction (BPNS) in employees.

FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

Maximising employee productivity has long been a major concern for organisation leaders. Examination of research shows that when three basic and universal psychological needs are supported, employee motivation and productivity rise, providing support for basic psychological need satisfaction. It also facilitates the process of internalisation toward greater autonomous motivation, which is associated with high quality of behaviour persistence and performance, as well as physical, psychological, and social wellness at the workplace and other areas of life. Mindfulness is a quality that fosters an individual to be more determinant and more productive. By understanding individual differences and its relation with SDT and how mindfulness acts as a facilitator for basic psychological need satisfaction, an organisation can create a supportive work environment for their employees. Leaders cannot force their employees to internalise their motivation, they can however contribute to their employees' workplace success by providing a viable environment and facilitate certain behaviour that allows employees to satisfy their need for competence, relatedness, and autonomy, thus promoting optimal motivation and functioning.

In addition to workplace contexts, individual's characteristics of employees can enhance employee adjustment and well-being at work and potentially buffer against negative workplace climate. Recently one much discussed factor thought to promote wellness in employee is mindfulness, or open, receptive awareness to the present moment. Many organisations (e.g. Apple, Procter & Gamble, Aetna, General Mill) are promoting and training their employees in mindfulness (Gelles, 2012; Hansen, 2012).

CONCLUSION

Human motivation is very crucial aspect of human personality which provides fuel for the growth of personality towards fully functioning person. SDT provides the strong ground to support that it is innate tendency of human being to grow and to be fully functioning. The researchers have found that individuals are intrinsically motivated to perform work-related task efficiently and effectively, thus the task leaders should perform is to create conditions at the workplace that are conducive to optimal employee motivation. Mindfulness facilitates intrinsic motivation which in turn strengthens our self-determination.

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