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**The Role of Workplace Mindfulness in Shaping Ethical
Decision-Making, Team Dynamics, Creativity, and
Organizational Culture: A Commentary**

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Abstract

This commentary explores the role of workplace mindfulness in shaping critical aspects of organizational behavior, such as ethical decision-making, team dynamics, creativity, and organizational culture. Drawing on empirical evidence and theoretical insights, the article examines how mindfulness practices within workplace settings influence employees' ability to collaborate effectively, make ethically sound decisions, and foster innovation. It also considers how these mindfulness practices interact with and potentially transform the broader organizational culture. Evidence suggests that mindfulness, when integrated into the workplace, enhances team collaboration by reducing conflict and improving communication, while also promoting ethical decision-making by heightening individuals' awareness of their values and the broader consequences of their actions. Furthermore, mindfulness is found to positively impact creativity by enabling employees to engage in deeper, more reflective thinking processes. However, the implementation of mindfulness practices is not without challenges, including potential resistance from employees and the need for organizational commitment to sustain these practices. This commentary argues that while mindfulness can be a powerful tool for enhancing organizational performance, it must be thoughtfully integrated into the existing culture and aligned with the organization's strategic goals to realize its full potential.

Keywords: *Workplace Mindfulness, Ethical Decision-Making, Team Dynamics, Creativity and Innovation, Organizational Culture*

1.0 Introduction

Workplace mindfulness has increasingly captured the attention of organizational scholars and practitioners, yet its impact remains under-theorized and unevenly applied across diverse organizational settings. While mindfulness has been linked to improved individual well-being and stress management, its role in shaping broader organizational dynamics—particularly ethical decision-making, team collaboration, creativity, and culture—warrants deeper investigation. To date, much of the discourse has remained anecdotal or descriptive, offering limited theoretical rigor or empirical grounding. The urgency of this exploration is underscored by contemporary challenges facing organizations, such as increasing ethical lapses, declining team cohesion, and the growing need for innovation in hyper-competitive markets. Global statistics indicate that unethical behavior costs organizations billions annually, with workplace fraud alone accounting for an estimated \$4.7 trillion worldwide in 2022 [12]. Similarly, Studies have showed that only 23% of employees globally feel engaged at work, highlighting widespread challenges in team dynamics and culture [16]. Mindfulness, when strategically integrated, offers a potential antidote to these systemic issues.

The concept of mindfulness, often associated with Eastern philosophies, particularly Buddhism, has gained substantial traction in the Western world over the past few decades. In the workplace, mindfulness is generally understood as a state of active, open attention to the present moment [8]. It involves observing thoughts, emotions, and sensations without immediate judgment, thereby fostering a heightened awareness of one's actions and their consequences. This heightened awareness can lead to more deliberate and thoughtful actions, which is why mindfulness is increasingly being linked to improved ethical decision-making, better team dynamics, enhanced creativity, and a stronger, more cohesive organizational culture [21]. Recent evidence underscores the transformative role of mindfulness in ethical decision-making by mitigating biases and promoting self-awareness. Critics argue that mindfulness enhances moral reasoning by enabling individuals to align actions with their values, reducing susceptibility to external pressures [4]. Similarly, a meta-analysis found that mindfulness practices reduce

unethical behavior by curbing impulsivity and emotional reactivity [10]. Given that ethical breaches often stem from stress-induced cognitive shortcuts, mindfulness equips employees to pause and deliberate, fostering decisions that prioritize long-term integrity over short-term gains. Mindfulness significantly influences team interactions by cultivating emotional intelligence and fostering psychological safety. Studies shows that teams practicing mindfulness reported 18% fewer interpersonal conflicts and 25% higher trust levels than their non-mindful counterparts [14]. These benefits are attributed to mindfulness's ability to improve active listening and empathy, creating environments conducive to constructive dialogue. Furthermore, it was observed that mindful teams are more adept at navigating diversity, leveraging differing perspectives to enhance collaboration and problem-solving. Ethical decision-making in organizations has always been a complex process, often influenced by a multitude of factors ranging from personal values to organizational norms and external pressures. The role of mindfulness in this process is particularly intriguing. Mindfulness encourages individuals to pause and reflect before acting, which can lead to more ethical and well-considered decisions [11]. Research suggests that mindfulness can help reduce cognitive biases and emotional reactivity, both of which are significant contributors to unethical behavior. A study by Ruedy and Schweitzer (2010) found that individuals with higher levels of mindfulness were less likely to engage in unethical behavior, as mindfulness helped them stay aligned with their core values. This connection between mindfulness and ethical behavior is crucial for organizations striving to foster a culture of integrity and accountability [9]. Moreover, team dynamics and collaboration are foundational to organizational success, particularly in environments where innovation and adaptability are key. Mindfulness can play a transformative role in enhancing these dynamics [1]. Teams that practice mindfulness are more likely to exhibit greater emotional intelligence, better communication, and a higher level of trust among members. These qualities are essential for effective collaboration, particularly in diverse teams where differing perspectives can sometimes lead to conflict. Research by Glomb et al. (2011) indicates that mindfulness reduces interpersonal conflict and promotes more constructive communication patterns within teams [5]. By fostering a greater sense of empathy and understanding, mindfulness helps teams navigate challenges more effectively and work together towards common goals. Creativity and innovation are also critical drivers of organizational success, especially in industries that are characterized by

rapid change and technological advancement. The relationship between mindfulness and creativity has garnered considerable attention in recent years [2]. Mindfulness, by reducing cognitive rigidity and promoting open-mindedness, can enhance an individual's capacity for creative thinking. A study by Lebudu, Zabelina, and Karwowski (2016) found that mindfulness practices such as meditation were positively associated with divergent thinking, a key component of creativity. In innovation-driven industries, mindfulness enhances cognitive flexibility and divergent thinking, critical components of creativity. Studies have found a 15% improvement in ideation quality among employees engaged in mindfulness practices [13]. By reducing cognitive rigidity, mindfulness allows individuals to approach problems from novel angles, fostering breakthrough solutions. In organizational settings, this can translate to more innovative problem-solving and the generation of novel ideas [10]. However, the link between mindfulness and creativity is not without its complexities. While mindfulness can foster creativity, it may also, in some cases, inhibit spontaneous ideation by promoting a focus on the present moment at the expense of free associative thinking [14]. However, mindfulness must be carefully balanced; as excessive present-focused awareness can sometimes inhibit free associative thinking necessary for spontaneous creativity. This duality highlights the need for a nuanced understanding of how mindfulness practices are implemented within organizations. The broader organizational culture and climate also stand to benefit from the integration of mindfulness practices. Organizational culture, which encompasses the shared values, beliefs, and behaviors within an organization, is a powerful determinant of employee behavior and overall organizational performance [20]. A mindful culture is one that values reflection, continuous learning, and a commitment to ethical practices. Such a culture can help organizations navigate the ethical and operational challenges that arise in today's complex business environment.

Mindfulness also shapes organizational culture by embedding values of reflection, empathy, and ethicality into daily practices. Studies have identified a positive correlation between mindfulness integration and lower employee burnout rates, suggesting a mindful culture promotes resilience and well-being [6]. Importantly, mindfulness can institutionalize behaviors that prioritize sustainability and long-term goals, aligning organizational practices with evolving societal expectations. Research by Hyland, Lee, and Mills (2015) suggests that organizations that adopt mindfulness practices are more likely to exhibit

a positive organizational climate, characterized by lower levels of stress and higher levels of employee well-being [3]. This, in turn, can lead to greater organizational resilience and adaptability in the face of change. Despite the potential benefits, the implementation of mindfulness in the workplace is not without challenges. Organizations must navigate the practicalities of integrating mindfulness practices into daily routines without disrupting productivity [7]. Additionally, there is the risk of mindfulness being perceived as a superficial trend rather than a meaningful organizational change. For mindfulness to truly impact organizational behavior, it must be embraced at all levels of the organization, from leadership to frontline employees [16]. Leaders play a crucial role in modeling mindful behavior and creating an environment where mindfulness is valued and practiced consistently. This requires a shift in organizational priorities, where short-term gains are balanced with long-term sustainability and well-being.

2.0 Theorization

The Institutional Theory, Self-Determination Theory (SDT), and Transformational Leadership Theory help to explore the mechanisms through which mindfulness impacts ethical decision-making, team dynamics, creativity, and culture.

i. Institutional Theory Perspective

Institutional Theory posits that organizations are shaped by formal and informal rules, norms, and shared understandings. Mindfulness can serve as an institutionalized practice, influencing employee behavior and organizational norms. For example, organizations that integrate mindfulness into leadership development and team processes may establish a culture that prioritizes ethical considerations, fostering accountability and transparency across hierarchies.

ii. Self-Determination Theory Perspective

SDT emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation, rooted in the satisfaction of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Mindfulness enhances these dimensions by promoting self-regulation, reflective thinking, and emotional connectivity.

Employees practicing mindfulness are more likely to feel a sense of purpose and alignment with organizational goals, driving engagement and innovation.

iii. **Transformational Leadership Perspective**

Mindful leaders play a pivotal role in modeling behaviors that align with organizational values and strategic objectives. Transformational Leadership Theory suggests that leaders who demonstrate mindfulness inspire followers to exceed expectations by fostering trust, vision, and ethical alignment. Mindful leadership can thus amplify the collective impact of mindfulness practices within teams and the broader organizational culture.

3.0 Evidence and Logical Reasoning

To begin with, the relationship between mindfulness and ethical decision-making has been substantiated by numerous studies. For instance, a study conducted by Shapiro, Jazaieri, and Goldin (2012) demonstrates that mindfulness reduces emotional reactivity and cognitive biases, which are often precursors to unethical behavior [7]. By promoting a reflective mindset, mindfulness encourages individuals to consider the broader implications of their decisions, leading to more ethical outcomes. This is further corroborated by research from Ruedy and Schweitzer (2010), who found that individuals with higher levels of mindfulness were less likely to engage in deceptive practices, as mindfulness helped them remain aligned with their moral values [14]. Such findings underscore the argument that mindfulness acts as a safeguard against the impulsive decisions that frequently lead to ethical breaches. Moreover, the impact of mindfulness on team dynamics and collaboration cannot be overlooked. Evidence suggests that mindfulness enhances emotional intelligence, a critical factor in effective teamwork [19]. A study by Hülsheger et al. (2013) found that teams practicing mindfulness exhibited lower levels of conflict and higher levels of cooperation. This is attributed to the fact that mindfulness fosters empathy, active listening, and a non-judgmental attitude, all of which are essential for building trust and cohesion within teams [2]. Furthermore, research by Reb, Narayanan, and Chaturvedi (2014) highlights that mindful teams are better equipped to handle stress and ambiguity, leading to more constructive communication and problem-solving. The logical connection here is clear: by promoting a deeper awareness of both

self and others, mindfulness facilitates the kind of collaborative environment that is necessary for organizational success [10]. The link between mindfulness and creativity is also well-documented. Creativity, particularly in the context of innovation, requires an open and flexible mindset. Mindfulness, by reducing cognitive rigidity, allows individuals to approach problems with fresh perspectives [20]. Research by Lebudu, Zabelina, and Karwowski (2016) supports this, showing that mindfulness practices such as meditation are positively associated with divergent thinking, a key component of creativity. Additionally, Ostafin and Kassman (2012) found that mindfulness enhances cognitive flexibility, enabling individuals to switch between different modes of thinking more effectively. This is particularly valuable in organizational settings where the ability to generate novel ideas and solutions is critical for maintaining a competitive edge [16]. These strands of evidence converge to support the central argument that workplace mindfulness is not merely a superficial trend, but a deeply impactful practice that can transform organizational behavior. The logical reasoning here is straightforward: mindfulness, by fostering greater awareness, reduces the likelihood of unethical behavior, enhances team collaboration, and stimulates creative thinking [8]. These outcomes are not only desirable in their own right but are also interconnected, creating a virtuous cycle that reinforces positive organizational dynamics.

4.0 Addressing Counterarguments and Alternative Views

Despite the compelling evidence, it is essential to acknowledge and critically examine counterarguments and alternative perspectives. One common critique of workplace mindfulness is that it may be perceived as a superficial or performative practice, rather than a substantive change in organizational culture [7]. Critics argue that mindfulness initiatives, when implemented without genuine commitment, can become mere box-ticking exercises that fail to address deeper structural issues within organizations [16]. This concern is valid, particularly in cases where mindfulness is promoted solely as a means of enhancing productivity, rather than as a tool for fostering ethical behavior and well-being. To address this critique, it is important to emphasize that the effectiveness of mindfulness is contingent upon its integration into the broader organizational framework [18]. Mindfulness should not be treated as a standalone intervention but rather as part of a holistic approach to organizational development. This requires leadership buy-in, ongoing

support, and a culture that values reflection and continuous learning. Evidence from studies such as those by Hyland, Lee, and Mills (2015) suggests that when mindfulness is authentically embraced by organizational leaders, it can lead to significant positive changes in organizational culture [13]. Therefore, the concern that mindfulness may be superficial is valid only when it is implemented without the necessary depth and commitment. Another counterargument is that mindfulness, by encouraging a focus on the present moment, could potentially undermine long-term strategic thinking [6]. Critics argue that by emphasizing present-centered awareness, mindfulness may lead individuals to become overly preoccupied with immediate experiences, at the expense of future-oriented planning and decision-making. While this concern is worth considering, it overlooks the fact that mindfulness does not entail abandoning future-oriented thinking but rather enhances one's capacity to balance present awareness with future considerations [9]. Research by Good et al. (2016) indicates that mindfulness improves cognitive flexibility, allowing individuals to shift between different temporal perspectives more effectively. Thus, mindfulness can actually support strategic thinking by enabling individuals to remain grounded in the present while considering the long-term implications of their actions [17]. Furthermore, some skeptics question the generalizability of mindfulness practices across different organizational contexts. They argue that the benefits of mindfulness may be more pronounced in certain industries or cultural settings, and less so in others. For example, in highly competitive environments where speed and decisiveness are paramount, the contemplative nature of mindfulness may be seen as a hindrance [15]. However, this critique overlooks the adaptability of mindfulness practices. Mindfulness can be tailored to suit different organizational needs and can be integrated into various aspects of work life, from decision-making processes to team meetings [19]. The flexibility of mindfulness means that it can be applied in diverse settings, albeit with adjustments to fit the specific context. This adaptability is supported by research from Malinowski and Lim (2015), who found that mindfulness practices can be customized to align with the unique demands of different organizational cultures, thereby maximizing their relevance and impact.

5.0 Practical Implications

The findings of this exploration hold significant implications for practitioners. Integrating mindfulness into organizational practices requires a deliberate and strategic approach. Key considerations include:

- i. **Leadership Commitment:** Leaders must champion mindfulness initiatives, embedding them into organizational values and daily practices. This includes modeling mindful behavior and allocating resources for training and program development.
- ii. **Tailored Implementation:** Mindfulness practices should be adapted to align with organizational contexts, ensuring relevance and engagement. For instance, high-paced industries may benefit from short, targeted mindfulness exercises, while creative sectors might leverage extended reflective sessions.
- iii. **Addressing Resistance:** Resistance to mindfulness initiatives often stems from misconceptions or fear of reduced productivity. Organizations should emphasize the evidence-based benefits of mindfulness and integrate practices seamlessly into workflows to minimize disruption.
- iv. **Measuring Impact:** Establishing clear metrics to evaluate the effectiveness of mindfulness programs is crucial. Metrics might include changes in employee well-being, ethical decision-making quality, team cohesion, and innovation output.

6.0 Conclusion

The integration of mindfulness into workplace practices offers a transformative approach to enhancing ethical decision-making, team dynamics, creativity, and organizational culture. The evidence presented demonstrates that mindfulness, by fostering a heightened state of awareness, reduces the likelihood of unethical behavior, strengthens team collaboration, and stimulates creative thinking. These outcomes are critical for organizations seeking to navigate the complexities of today's business environment and achieve long-term success. However, the implementation of mindfulness must be approached with care and authenticity. It is not enough to introduce mindfulness as a superficial trend; rather, it must be deeply embedded within the organizational culture and supported by leadership. This requires a commitment to creating an environment where mindfulness is valued not just for its productivity benefits but for its potential to foster ethical behavior,

enhance collaboration, and drive innovation. Addressing potential counterarguments, such as concerns about superficiality or the impact on strategic thinking, further underscores the need for a thoughtful and nuanced approach to mindfulness in the workplace. Looking ahead, the significance of mindfulness in shaping organizational behavior cannot be overstated. As organizations continue to face increasing pressures from both internal and external forces, the ability to foster a mindful, ethical, and collaborative culture will be a key determinant of success. Future research should explore the long-term impacts of mindfulness on organizational performance, particularly in relation to employee well-being, innovation, and sustainability. Additionally, examining how mindfulness can be effectively adapted to different organizational contexts will provide valuable insights for practitioners seeking to implement these practices. Ultimately, this commentary shows the importance of embracing mindfulness not as a passing trend but as a fundamental component of organizational strategy. By doing so, organizations can unlock the full potential of their workforce, cultivate a culture of integrity and innovation, and position themselves for enduring success in an increasingly complex world.

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