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Organizational Mindfulness in the Digital Economy and Its Impact on Productivity

TREO Talk Paper

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Abstract

With the rise of digital workplaces amidst the abrupt transition during the COVID-19 pandemic, many organizations have been transformed structurally and operationally. Throughout this transformation, these organizations realized that employees' productivity was negatively affected due to several technology-related reasons such as technostress as well as personal challenges such as lack of self-regulation skills. As individuals and teams were coping with and adjusting to these changes, these organizations implemented different initiatives and mechanisms to maintain productivity. Encouraging *mindfulness practices* was among these solutions. While some employees positively responded to mindfulness practices, managers and team leaders were skeptical about the practicality of these practices. The impact of these practices is thus a matter of debate among both scholars and practitioners due to their inconclusive outcomes. This study is to review the current evidence over this debate, explain the relationship between mindfulness and productivity and inform future development of mindfulness-based interventions.

The concept of *digital mindfulness* in work settings has gained attention in recent years as its effects on employees have been linked to reduced stress and increased focus. In this study, digital mindfulness is defined as the psychological state of behavioral awareness and engaged focus on the present task to improve technological outcomes including innovative use of technology. Digital mindfulness can be the crucial step needed in optimal decision-making within organizational groups. Prior studies claimed that through mindfulness practices, employees' alertness and attention to context can result in better usage of digital technologies through both individual tasks and group efforts (Abhari et al. 2021; Klase et al. 2022; Li et al. 2021; Shahbaz and Parker 2021). These studies documented the benefits of mindfulness to effective technology use. For example, team leaders who use mindful interventions demonstrated increased alertness to issues in virtual environments and exhibited productive use of resources in digital transformations. Our study, however, revealed that there was a commonality among the successful intervention; digital mindfulness could positively affect productivity when implemented at an organizational level.

We characterize *organizational digital mindfulness* as an organization's willingness to take the necessary steps not only in encouraging digital mindfulness among all employees but also in reflecting on past group experiences, uncovering new ways to utilize technology, and openness to use technology in new ways. We observed that the effective adoption and use of mindfulness practices are typically top-down, stemming from organizational leadership and embedded in the organizational values and culture. Our study revealed that organizational digital mindfulness when promoted and encouraged by the organization leadership and practiced by management teams, directly contributes to not only team productivity but also to digital innovation. For example, digital mindfulness from organizational leaders involves awareness and scrutiny of group cognitive biases—for example, groupthink and bandwagon that have hindering effects on digital innovation—if remain unnoticed. Organizational leaders who are mindful must also be sensitive to work processes that can provide context to new digital solutions. Similarly, mindfulness implemented by leaders within organizations allows employees the framework to examine the consequences of outcomes and remain skeptical of current procedures to uncover possible improvements.

In short, this study characterizes organizational digital mindfulness as an organization-wide strategy promoted and practiced by leaders, embedded in work practices, and routinized by digital transformation. We argue only when digital mindfulness is formally institutionalized and practiced at all organizational levels, it can lead to meaningful, productive, and innovative use of technology. Our preliminary findings can pave the way for a broader understanding of digital mindfulness strategies and their practicality in not only maintaining productivity in digital environments but also creating values using digital technology.

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