

An Empirical Study to Investigate the Impact of Mindfulness on Occupational Stress & Perceived Productive Decision-Making

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**A dissertation submitted to the M Sc. Management Programme of the
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partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of
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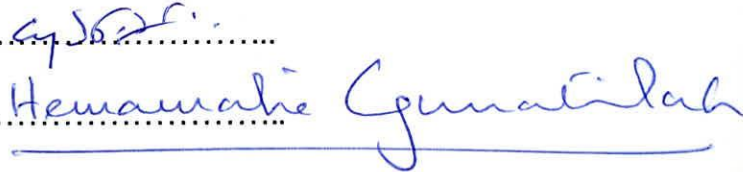


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Abstract

The subject areas, management and Buddhism, which was selected to be scrutinized cover broad aspects in its respective fields and in fact is on two camps. To contrast and brought this research to managerial size, occupational stress and decision-making were selected from management camp and meditation from other side. According to Peter Drucker (1954) no management is possible without decision-making. Hence this study attempts to give input from Buddhism to enhance power of decision-making.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Buddhist philosophy is rich with the teaching of cultivation of happiness, compassion, contentment and helpfulness etc. Mindfulness, which aims at purifying the mind of disturbances such as anger, hatred, ill will, worries, restlessness and replacing them with concentration, awareness, intelligence, will power, self-confidence etc. and the result, is the ultimate happiness. Questionnaire was prepared and respond was collected from the senior decision makers of public and private sector. Data were analyzed by the SPSS Software version 11. Reliability and factor analysis were done to find the reliability of Questionnaire. Correlation analysis was performed to find relationships and subsequently confirmed by the regression analysis. Stepwise regression was carried out to check the sensitivity of the model, which excludes overlapping from the final analysis.

Finding of this research is mainly two fold. One is the positive correlation of Mindfulness with the effectiveness, efficiency and adaptability of Decision Making. Since it is been criticized that the top-level decision makers are ineffective, results of this study is of major importance to enhance the mindfulness of the decision takers. It is also found that Decision-making is highly correlated with faith and wisdom of the Mindfulness. Finally it is proved that analytical effect of the brain is highly correlated with faith and concentration of the mindfulness and effectiveness of the decision-making. It means less emotional, more matured decision makers who control their minds through Samadi. Hence the best mix of personal characteristics, attitudes and organizational culture has to be looked into when training people for managerial jobs.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
<i>Title page</i>	i
<i>Certificate</i>	ii
<i>Acknowledgement</i>	iii
<i>Abstract</i>	iv
<i>Table of contents</i>	v
<i>List of figures</i>	ix
<i>List of tables</i>	xi
 Chapter 1: Introduction	
1 <i>An Overview</i>	01
1.1. <i>Problem Back Ground</i>	02
1.1.1. <i>Basic Meditation: The Foundation</i>	03
1.1.2. <i>Decision Making</i>	04
1.1.3. <i>Occupational Stress</i>	05
1.2. <i>Problem Statement</i>	06
1.3. <i>Objectives of the Study</i>	06
1.4. <i>Scope of the Study</i>	06
1.5. <i>Significance of the Study</i>	07
1.6. <i>Methodology</i>	07
1.7. <i>Limitations of the Study</i>	07
1.8. <i>Structure of the Report</i>	08
 Chapter 2: Part 1	
Literature Survey (Buddhism & Sati (Mindfulness))	
2.1 <i>An Overview</i>	09
2.2. <i>Scientific background</i>	10
2.2.1. <i>Buddhism the Scientific way</i>	10
2.2.2. <i>Four noble truths</i>	13
2.3. <i>Significance of power of mind</i>	14
2.4. <i>Validity of Buddhism to the modern society</i>	15
2.5. <i>Abidharama, the theory of ultimate reality</i>	18

2.6.	Role of objects on senses in decision taking	18
2.7.	<i>Decisions through balance state of mind</i>	19
2.8.	<i>Paticcasamuppada</i>	20
2.9.	<i>Process of arising thoughts</i>	21
2.10.	<i>Thought process in the mind avenue</i>	23
2.11.	<i>Control mind by expulsion (Prgna)</i>	23
2.12.	<i>Control of thoughts by discipline</i>	24
2.13.	<i>Affect of paticcasamuppada to our life</i>	24
2.14.	<i>The truth</i>	26
2.15.	<i>Meditation to remove ware and tare of mind</i>	26
2.16.	<i>Tension and meditation according to Buddhism</i>	28
2.17.	<i>Develop mindfulness gradually</i>	29
2.18.	<i>Original Meditation Insights explained by Buddha</i>	29

Part 2: Literature Review: (Mindfulness & Occupational Stress & Decision Making)

2.19.	<i>An Overview</i>	35
2.20.	<i>Mindfulness & Effective Decision Making</i>	35
2.21.	<i>Mindfulness & Negative Thinking</i>	36
2.22.	<i>Gap Between our Actions & Decisions</i>	37
2.23.	<i>Previous Studies of Meditation</i>	38
2.24.	<i>Modern Research on Mindfulness</i>	39
2.25.	<i>Methods of Buddhist Meditation</i>	40
2.26.	<i>Pattern of Meditation Brain Waves</i>	41
2.27.	<i>The whole Brain Model</i>	41
2.28.	<i>Stress in General</i>	43
2.29.	<i>Occupational Stress</i>	44
2.30.	<i>Definitions of Occupational stress</i>	45
2.31.	<i>Problem Solving & Decision Making Styles of Meditators</i>	46
2.32.	<i>Lab Research Findings of Meditation</i>	46
2.33.	<i>Evolution of Management Theories</i>	49
2.34.	<i>The Classical Era</i>	49
2.35.	<i>Behavioral Era & Human Relations</i>	50
2.36.	<i>Human Behavior Management</i>	50
2.37.	<i>Literature Relating Mindfulness & Decision Models</i>	50
2.38.	<i>Stress & Performance</i>	51
2.39.	<i>Long-term Stress</i>	52

2.40.	<i>Evolution of decision-making</i>	54
2.41.	<i>Wrap model</i>	56
2.42.	<i>Strategic decisions</i>	57
2.43.	<i>Individual models of decision-making</i>	58
2.44.	<i>Role in decision-making</i>	59
2.45.	<i>Problem identification</i>	60
2.46.	<i>Emotional intelligence for effectiveness</i>	62
2.47.	<i>The functional process of decision-making:</i>	62
2.48.	<i>Decision makers planning</i>	63
2.49.	<i>Decision Making Styles</i>	63
2.50.	<i>Finally there is a golden rule of voidness in Buddhology</i>	64
 <i>Conclusion</i>	64

Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework

3.1.	<i>An Overview</i>	66
3.2.	<i>The model</i>	67
3.3.	<i>Conceptualization of decision-making</i>	68
3.4.	<i>Research hypotheses</i>	69
3.5.	<i>Research between Meditation and occupation stress</i>	69

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1	<i>An Overview</i>	70
4.2	<i>Measurement</i>	70
	4.2.1. <i>Definition of measurement</i>	70
	4.2.2. <i>Reliability of measuring instrument</i>	71
	4.2.3. <i>Validity of measuring instruments</i>	72
	4.2.4. <i>Hypothesis testing</i>	73
	4.2.5. <i>Scattergrams</i>	73
	4.2.6. <i>Multi-collinearity</i>	73
	4.2.7. <i>Single measure analysis (Mean & Standard deviation)</i>	73
	4.2.8. <i>t-tests</i>	74

4.2.9. <i>Multiple Regressions</i>	74
4.2.10. <i>Factor Analysis</i>	74
4.2.11. <i>Bivariate analysis (Correlation analysis)</i>	75
4.2.12. <i>Regression Analysis (Multivariate Analysis)</i>	75
4.2.13. <i>Person's r squared (R²)</i>	76
4.2.14. <i>Hypothesis Testing for Beta values</i>	77
4.2.15. <i>Stepwise Regression</i>	78
4.2.17. <i>ANOVA (Analysis of Variance)</i>	78
4.3. <i>Sample size</i>	78
4.4. <i>Data collection</i>	79
4.5. <i>The Questionnaire</i>	80
4.6. <i>Coding of Personal and organizational data</i>	80
4.6.1. <i>Part two of the questionnaire</i>	82
4.6.2. <i>Occupational stress</i>	82
4.6.3. <i>Mindfulness</i>	85
4.6.4. <i>Decision making</i>	86
4.6.5. <i>Left/Right Brain Sensitivity</i>	86
4.6.6. <i>Reliability analysis of the Questionnaire</i>	87
4.7. <i>Component plot</i>	89

Chapter 5: Data Presentation & Analysis

5.1. <i>Summary of Data Analysis</i>	91
5.2. <i>Data presentation</i>	93
5.3. <i>Reliability Analysis</i>	99
5.4. <i>Factor Analysis</i>	100
5.5. <i>Scatter Plots</i>	102
5.6. <i>Univariate Analysis</i>	104
5.7. <i>Correlation Analysis</i>	106
5.7.1. <i>Correlation between independent variables and Mindfulness</i>	106
5.7.2. <i>Correlation analysis of factors</i>	108
5.7.3. <i>Relationships between elements of the variables</i>	108
5.8. <i>Simple regression Analysis</i>	116
5.9. <i>Stepwise multiple Regression</i>	117
5.10. <i>Hypothesis Testing</i>	120
5.11. <i>Dendrograms for Cluster Analysis</i>	124

Chapter 6: Discussion

6.1.	Introduction	125
6.1.1.	Role of the future managers	126
6.2.	Discussion on the relationship Mindfulness – Decision Making	126
6.3.	Discussion on the relationship Mindfulness – Effectiveness of DM	127
6.4.	Discussion on the relationship Mindfulness – Efficiency of DM	128
6.5.	Discussion on the relationship Mindfulness – Adaptability of DM	128
6.6.	Discussion on the relationship Mindfulness – Occupational Stress	129
6.7.	Discussion on the relationship Mindfulness – Brain Sensitivity	130
6.8.	Discussion on the relationship Decision Making -Brain Sensitivity	130
6.9.	Discussion on the relationship Decision Making – Occup: Stress	131
6.10.	Discussion on the relationship Occup: Stress – Brain Sensitivity	132
6.11.	Other significant relationships	133

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1.	Constraints and limitations	134
7.1.1	Focus	135
7.1.2.	Contents	135
7.1.3.	Sample	136
7.1.4.	Analysis	136
7.2.	Recommendations	137
7.3.	Implication of the study	137
7.4.	Bibliography	139

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure No.</u>	<u>Title of Figure</u>	<u>Page No.</u>
Fig. 2.8.	Thought process in Buddhism	20
Fig. 2.24.	Negative Thinking	36
Fig. 2.26.1.	Pattern of meditation brain waves	41
Fig 2.27.1	The whole brain model	42
Fig. 2.27.2	Gap between management and Buddhism	42
Fig. 2.28.	A model of Stress	44

Fig. 2.29.	<i>Stress cause to strain</i>	45
Fig 2.39.	<i>Relationship between long term stress and performance</i>	52
Fig. 2.40.	<i>Uncommon management model</i>	56
Fig. 2.41.	<i>Conception of a good manager</i>	57
Fig. 2.4.	<i>Decision making process</i>	59
Fig. 2.45.1.	<i>Decision Style Model</i>	60
Fig. 2.45.2.	<i>Comparison of Alders, Maslows and Herzberg theories</i>	60
Fig. 2.45.3.	<i>Decision Making Pendulum</i>	61
Fig. 2.47.	<i>Functional process of Decision Making</i>	62
Fig. 2.50.	<i>Theory of voidness By Buddha</i>	63
Fig. 3.2.	<i>The Research Model</i>	67
Fig. 4.2.	<i>Accuracy and Precision</i>	72
Fig. 4.7.1.	<i>Component Plot in Rotated Space for Occupational stress</i>	89
Fig. 4.7.2..	<i>Component Plot in Rotated Space for Decision Making</i>	89
Fig. 4.7.3.	<i>Component Plot in Rotated Space for Mindfulness</i>	90
Fig. 4.7.4.	<i>Component Plot in Rotated Space for Brain Sensitivity</i>	90
Fig. 5.2.1.	<i>Respondents working sector</i>	93
Fig. 5.2.2.	<i>Respondents Position (Seniority)</i>	93
Fig. 5.2.3.	<i>Respondents level of hierarchy</i>	94
Fig. 5.2.4.	<i>Respondents level of education</i>	94
Fig. 5.2.5.	<i>Respondents Job experience</i>	95
Fig. 5.2.6.	<i>Respondents Gender</i>	95
Fig. 5.2.7.	<i>Respondents Age</i>	96
Fig. 5.2.8.	<i>Respondents Civil Status</i>	96
Fig. 5.2.9.	<i>Details of Respondents Spouse</i>	97
Fig. 5.2.10.	<i>Respondents Civil Status</i>	97
Fig. 5.2.11.	<i>Respondents number of Children</i>	98
Fig. 5.2.12.	<i>Respondents Religion</i>	98
Fig. 5.5.1.	<i>Scatter diagram between Occupational Stress and Mindfulness</i>	102
Fig. 5.5.2.	<i>Scatter diagram between decision-making and Mindfulness</i>	103
Fig. 5.5.3.	<i>Scatter diagram between brain sensitivity and Mindfulness</i>	103
Fig. 5.6.2.	<i>Histogram for Mindfulness</i>	105
Fig. 5.6.3.	<i>Histogram for Occupational Stress</i>	105
Fig. 5.6.4.	<i>Histogram for Decision Making</i>	105
Fig. 5.6.5.	<i>Histogram for Left/Right brain sensitivity</i>	105
Fig. 7.3.	<i>Two faces of Stress</i>	138
Fig. 7.5.	<i>Significance Corelations of the Model</i>	187

LIST OF TABLES

Table No.	Title of Table	Page No.
Table 2.22.	<i>Time Management Model</i>	37
Table 4.2.	<i>Accuracy and precision of Reliability Analysis</i>	71
Table 4.3.1.1.	<i>Total no of Engineers registered</i>	78
Table 4.4.	<i>Layout of dependent and independent variables</i>	79
Table 5.1.	<i>Order of statistical tests used</i>	92
Table 5.2.12.	<i>Statistics of Respondents Religion</i>	99
Table 5.4.1.	<i>Factor Analysis of Occupational Stress</i>	100
Table 5.4.2.	<i>Factor Analysis of Mindfulness</i>	101
Table 5.4.3.	<i>Factor Analysis of Decision Making</i>	101
Table 5.4.4.	<i>Factor Analysis of Brain Sensitivity</i>	102
Table 5.5.1.	<i>Comment on Scatter plots</i>	104
Table 5.6.1.	<i>Descriptive Statistics of variables</i>	104
Table 5.7.1.	<i>Correlation between inde: variables and Mindfulness (Pearson's)</i>	106
Table 5.7.1.1.	<i>Correlation between inde: variables and Mindfulness (Kendal's and Spearman's)</i>	107
Table: 5.9.	<i>Stepwise Regression of the model</i>	118
Table 5.9.4.	<i>Summary of Significant relationships against Mindfulness</i>	120
Table 5.9.5.	<i>Other Significant relationships among variables</i>	120
Table 5.10.1.	<i>Hypothesis test of Effectiveness of DM against mindfulness</i>	121
Table 5.10.2.	<i>Hypothesis test of Efficiency of DM against mindfulness</i>	121
Table 5.10.3.	<i>Hypothesis test of Adaptability of DM against mindfulness</i>	122
Table 5.10.4.	<i>Hypothesis test of Innovativeness of DM against mindfulness</i>	122
Table 5.10.5.	<i>Hypothesis test of Occupational Stress against mindfulness</i>	123
Table 5.10.6.	<i>Hypothesis test of Brain Sensitivity against mindfulness</i>	123
Table 6.11.	<i>Other significant relationships</i>	133
Appendix 1: The Questionnaire		140

Appendix 2: Tables of Statistical Analysis

Table 5.2.	<i>Statistics of Respondents Occupation</i>	145
Table 5.2.1	<i>Statistics of Respondents Working Sector</i>	145
Table 5.2.2	<i>Statistics of Respondents Seniority</i>	145
Table 5.2.3	<i>Statistics of Respondents Class & Grade</i>	146
Table 5.2.4	<i>Statistics of Respondents Educational Level</i>	146

Table 5.2.5	Statistics of Respondents Job experience	147
Table 5.2.7	Statistics of Respondents Age	147
Table 5.2.8	Statistics of Respondents Civil Status	147
Table 5.2.10	Statistics of Respondents Family Income	148
Table 5.2.11	Statistics of Respondents Children	148
Table 5.2.12	Statistics of Respondents Religion	149
Table 5.7.2.1.	Occupational stress vs. Mindfulness Dimensions	150
Table 5.7.2.2.	Occupational stress vs. Decision Making Dimensions	151
Table 5.7.2.3.	Occupational stress vs. Left/Right Brain Dimensions	152
Table 5.7.2.4.	Mindfulness vs. Decision Making Dimensions	153
Table 5.7.2.5.	Mindfulness vs. Left/Right Brain Dimensions	154
Table 5.7.2.6.	Decision Making vs. Left/Right Brain Dimensions	155
Table 5.7.2.7.	Correlation of personal data on part 1 of the questionnaire	156
Table 5.7.3.1.	Correlation between Mindfulness and Decision Making	157
Table 5.7.3.3.	Correlation between Occup: Stress and Decision Making	158
Table 5.7.3.4.	Correlation between Occup: Stress and brain sensitivity	159
Table 5.7.3.5	Corre: between Mindfulness and L/R brain sensitivity	160
Table 5.7.3.6.	Correlation between Decision Making and brain sensitivity	161
Table 5.8.1.	Simple regression of Occup: stress vs. Mindfulness	162
Table 5.8.2.	Simple regression of decision making vs. Mindfulness	163
Table 5.8.3.	Simple regression of Brain sensitivity vs. Mindfulness	164
Table 5.8.(a)	Normal p-p plot Stress vs. Mindfulness	165
Table 5.8.(b).	Normal p-p plot Decision Making vs Mindfulness	166
Table 5.8.(c)	Normal p-p plot Brain Sensitivity vs. Mindfulness	167
Table 5.9.(i) to (iv).	Stepwise Regression of the Main Model	169
Table 5.9.2.	Stepwise Regression of DM and OS against Mindfulness	170
Table 5.9.3.	Stepwise Regression of DM vs. other dimensions	171
Table 5.9.4(a) to (f)	Stepwise Regre: Effecti: Effici: Adap:&OS vs. Mindfulness	172
Table 5.9.4(i) to (iv)	Stepwise Regre: Mindfulness vs.Effecti: Effici: Adap:&OS	175
Table 5.10.1.(i)	Regression of Effectiveness of DM Vs. Mindfulness	178
Table 5.10.1.(ii)	Regression of Efficiency of DM vs. Mindfulness	178
Table 5.10.1.(iii)	Regression of Adaptability of DM vs. Mindfulness	179
Table 5.10.1.(iv)	Regression of Innovativeness of DM vs. Mindfulness	179
Table 5.10.1.(v)	Regression of Occupational stress v. Mindfulness	180
Table .10.1.(vi)	Regression of Brain Sensitivity vs. Mindfulness	180
Table 5.10.1.(vii)	Regression of Brain Sensitivity vs. Decision Making	181
Table 5.10.1.(viii)	Regression of Occupational stress vs. Decision Making	181
Table 5.10.1.(ix)	Regression of Brain Sensitivity vs. Occupational Stress	182
Table 5.11.(i)	Cluster Membership of Decision Making dimensions	183
Table 5.11.(ii)	Cluster Membership of Brain Sensitivity dimensions	183
Table 5.11.(iii)	Cluster Membership of Mindfulness dimensions	184
Table 5.11.(iv)	Cluster Membership of Occupational Stress dimensions	185

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1. An Overview

The intention of this research is to advocate the necessity of meditation and the importance of the mindfulness and argue that it can be used as a strategic weapon in productive decision making to reduce numerous pressures, stresses and strains by disciplining minds of the managers with positive feeling of compassion, tolerance, contentment and helpfulness. Such managers are able to generate positive energy to cope up with various physical and psychological challenges such as low self-esteem, depression, mental insecurity etc. Rearranging external circumstantial factors, either by eliminating stressful ones or adding stress-inhibiting factors is definitely a rational strategy that strained individuals should adopt.

Meditation may not only help to develop maturity in a person but possibly evokes a warm-hearted feeling of friendliness, sympathy, empathy and compassion, which will help to enhance the ability to cope up with stress. The macro purpose as said above of this dissertation is to share the fundamentals of mindfulness with managers/professionals and to build their self-confidence, with out which life may not be meaningful.

1.1. Back Ground of the Problem

It is expected that manager would take timely, efficient, effective, innovative and adaptable decisions to suit the prevailing environmental conditions. But in practice it is not so, instead top managers suffer from stresses and owing to which they might not be able to cope up with their own health, sometimes it leads to take even their lives. Thus it is time to address this critical issue and sort-missing factors and/or find answers from the Buddhism.

Religious knowledge will work as a catalyst to obtain professionals maturity. **Because wisdom is "knowledge + experience"(Buddha, 500 BC)**. Perhaps this maturity with solid technical, human and conceptual skills makes a person to remove selfishness and greediness. This type of managers might never change their values but take correct, most appropriate, impartial and unbiased decisions.

Research done by Joseph Ledoux at New York University (2003) reveal that a person can be conditioned, to be scares of a thing that really is not worth being scared of. Paul Ekman of California University (2003) found that experienced mediators do not get shaken or shocked, as ordinary people by unpredictable sounds like a gunshot. Professor Owen Flanagan (2002) of University of Duke conducted lab research using PET and MRI scanning and found that left globes of the experienced practitioners' of meditation light up consistently even after the meditation. **This "left side" indicates positive emotions and good mood** where as "right" for the negative emotions (New scientist, 24th May 2003).

“Environmentalists have found Buddhist doctrines, such as Dharma practices and meditation is extremely useful” (Center for the studies of Religions: Harvard University, 1997). Buddhism can give some answers to our personal problems. These answers might surprise us. Buddha’s teachings prepare ground for all further comments on consumption and reproduction, since interdependence is the bottom line, which cannot be defied. Nothing happen apart from or contrary to “cause and affect”.

For 2500 years, Buddhists have used a strict methodology in an attempt to free themselves of destructive emotions and become more compassionate, less selfish, happier human being as explained in the “inner science” of Buddhism, in particular its approach to perception, cognition and the emotions (Dalai Lama, 2003). In Buddhism there are two ways where mind is set in motion or aroused. One is cognitive using reasoning and taking evidence into account. More thoughtful mode tends to give rise to positive emotions as in arousing loving kindness.

1.1.1. Basic Meditation: The Foundation

As a manager it is worth to know, at least there is a technique that exists to make aware feeling and control people’s minds. No matter up to what extent s/he succeeds. But this knowledge will help him/her to take matured and unbiased decisions in future; when s/he realizes that there is something more than objective world.

Advantages of meditation:

- De-stress quickly and easily, Remove wear & tear
- Experience more control, order, release and energy.
- Calm and focus your mind and attain clarity.
- Defuse negativity, aggression and turbulent emotions.
- Open up to peace of mind, balance and harmony.
- Begin to heal wounded parts of ours. (Buddha 500 BC.)

There are **two basic methods of meditation**; i.e. Samatha and Vipassana meditation. Samatha means concentration. Vipassana means insight or experiential knowledge of bodily and mental phenomena. Of these two types of mental training Samatha meditation is practiced to attain higher concentration of the mind, peaceful and blissful living and the cessation of suffering. Vipassana meditation is practiced to attain not only deep concentration of the mind but also liberation from all kinds of mental and physical suffering, through realization of body-mind processes and their true nature.

Concentration (Samadi): As a result of meditation one may develop samadi. It is the focus of mind to an object. But after the meditation samadi or concentration also fade. If a