Mindfulness and Organizational Change: Where Is the Bridge?

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Abstract: The environment changes in fast pace that might lead to an increasing number of uncertainties and risks. Studies of mindfulness are making an inroad into the management field, including its impact into organizational change. However, the relation between mindfulness and organizational change is ambiguous. It does not provide an easy understanding of how those two concepts are related. How being a present mindset and attitude will impact organizational change. This is a literature review paper that aimed to understand the rationale that previous studies have developed on relating mindfulness and organizational change and to learn the impact of mindfulness on organizational change. As a result, it is shown that mindfulness related to organizational change through various paths. *First*, through the mindfulness characteristic. *Second*, through the cognitive aspect that will influence the behavior then influence the success of organization change. *Third,* through the learning process. *Fourth,* through the member of organizations' transformation. *Fifth*, through the change itself. Moreover, the results of how mindfulness is impacting organizational change show several outcomes. *First*, the relation between mindfulness and resistance to change is indirect. *Second*, Mindfulness leads to some behavior that smooth organization change. Third, if organizations changed viewed as a process, then the process of changes can be done naturally.

1   INTRODUCTION

We experience how the environment changes at a fast pace, technology makes the business environment becomes a flux. For instance, since the consumers have easy and cheap access to information in this digital era, cultures and generation become more homogenous, customers can easily learn from others and change their preference (Gale and Aaroons, 2017). In short, customers easily change their demand and expectation. Furthermore, as everything is available online, thus, people will have depth, comprehend, and updated information easily. It means market changes in today will be instantly available everywhere and change how companies conduct their business. As a result, there is an increasing number of uncertainties and risks. On the other hand, most of the organizations are running their business based on the previous pattern, following routine, and tends to be automatic in which characteristic of mindlessness, and lacking the sensitivity of their environment (Aviles, 2012). These acts might lead to some problems as they might reduce the organization ability to meet the challenges

presented by change sensibly, or to transform the organization in prompt ways to respond to challenges. Mindlessness prevents organizations and their members to respond to change in effective ways (Langer, 1993; Langer and Moldoveanu, 2000). Fries (2007) stated to meet the challenges of fast changes, and it required heightened individual and organizational awareness and cognition of the environments. Moreover, Harari, (2018) stated that in increasing complicated word, and the tendency of group think or individual ignorance, mindfulness is one way to cope with those problems.

Previous researches on mindfulness mostly in the area of psychology that include psychology and scientific application (Baer et al., 2006), social psychology (Langer and Piper, 1987), health (Valentine et al., 2010), and education (Langer and Moldoveanu, 2000). The studies on mindfulness are making inroad in the working environment and management field (Fiol and O'Connor, 2003). Previous scholars have studied the impact of mindfulness in working environment such as the study done by (Hülsheger et al., 2013) that contended mindfulness practice promotes job satisfaction and

aids in the prevention of burnout from emotional exhaustion. In addition, mindfulness practice also leads to a positive impact on creativity, innovation, resilience, work engagement, productivity, communication skills, reduced conflict, absenteeism, and turnover (Chaskalson, 2011).

Previous scholars also attempted to learn the impact between, of mindfulness and organizational change. Langer and Moldoveanu (2000) learned how mindfulness help in providing the solution to current and future problems due to demographic and technology changes. Moreover, Higgs and Rowland (2010) contended that change process is failed due to the leaders whom lack of self-awareness, that makes the leader either consciously or unconsciously reinforce systematic patterns that cause the organization to remain stuck and impair the implementation of the change.

However, the relation between mindfulness and organizational change is ambiguous. It does not provide an easy understanding of how those two concepts are related. For instance, if people discuss sales and marketing activities, people will easily and automatically understand the relationship between those two concepts. However, when people discuss the impact of mindfulness and organizational change, then people do not have a clear path or easier understanding of how to relate mindfulness and organizational change. Hyland et al., (2015) contended that the most commonly cited definition of mindfulness is the definition brought by Brown, Ryan, & Creswell (2007) in which they stated that mindfulness is *"receptive attention to and awareness of present moment events and experiences*." Thus, it leads to the questions on how being present mindset and attitude will impact organizational change. For those reasons, this paper aims to understand the logic or the rationale that previous studies have developed on relating mindfulness and organizational change. Moreover, this paper will elaborate on the impact of mindfulness on organizational change as done by those scholars.

2 MINDFULNESS, A DEFINITION

In Buddhist practice, mindfulness is the act of seeing a thing as it is in the present moment (Gunaratana 2002). In current practice, the concept of mindfulness started to flourish with the study done by Jon Kabat-Zinn in 1982 (Hyland, Andrew Lee, and Mills 2015) in which he developed a mindfulness program to help the patient in the hospital. There are varied definitions of mindfulness such as "keeping one's consciousness

alive to the present reality" (Nhat 1976), "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally" (Kabat-Zinn 1994), "kind of non-elaborative, non-judgmental, present-centered awareness in which each thought, feeling or sensation that arises in the attentional field is acknowledged and accepted as it is" (Bishop et al. 2004). The definition of mindfulness that most commonly cited is the definition by Brown, Ryan, & Creswell (2007) in which they stated that "receptive attention to and awareness of present moment events and experiences." Despite it is a varied definition, mindfulness has three common elements (Hyland, Andrew Lee, and Mills 2015). First, it is present-focused consciousness, focus on here and now, that requires giving full attention to the present (Dane 2011; Herndon 2008). Second, paying close intention to internal and external phenomena (Brown et al. 2009; Dane 2011). Internal phenomena including internal stimuli such as feeling, though and body sensation whereas external stimuli include sights, sounds, smells and events (Kabat-Zinn 2006). Third, mindfulness involves an open and accepting way to the stimuli without being judge or imposing any perception (Glomb et al. 2011).

Previous studies have shown the several benefits of mindfulness. The study done by Fiol & O'Connor (2003) and Carolynn, (2017) shows that mindfulness practice improve decision making as the individual practicing mindfulness will be more likely to understand the value of information for current circumstances and (b) interpret unexpected results as relevant rather than dismiss them, even when they do not fall in line with current or past (familiar) practices or finding. Moreover, mindfulness practice also enhanced the ability to resist cognitive bias (Hafenbrack, Kinias, and Barsade 2014). Mindfulness practice also leads to a positive impact on creativity, innovation, resilience, work engagement, productivity, communication skills, reduced conflict, absenteeism, and turnover (Chaskalson 2011). Hülsheger et al. (2013) stated that mindfulness practice promotes job satisfaction and aids in the prevention of burnout from emotional exhaustion,

The content of this paper will be explicated in four sections. After the introduction, methods of data gathering and analysis will be explicated followed by discussion. In the end, this paper will be summarized the topic in the conclusion section.

3 METHODS

This is a literature review paper, the data collected by searching in computerized database in JSTOR, ProQuest, Emerald, Springer, Science Direct, and Google scholar using various combination of "Organizational change and mindfulness", "Mindfulness and organizational change", "Organization change and mindfulness", and "Mindfulness and organization change". The search focuses only on the publication in the form of articles and book section from 2013 to 2018. As a result, there are three book sections and two articles as shown in table.1

Table 1: Literature search results.

Tittle	Contributions of mindfulness during post-merger integration
Author	Peerayuth Charoensukmongkol
Type	Article
Years	2017
Publisher/ Journal	Journal of Managerial Psychology
Tittle	The Role of Mindfulness in Leading Organizational Transformation
Author	Peter R. Aviles & Eric B. Dent
Type	Article
Years	2015
Publisher/ Journal	The Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship
Tittle	Situating the Concept of Organizational Mindfulness: The Multiple Dimensions of Organizational Learning. In Mindful Change in times of permanent reorganization
Author	Claus Rerup & Daniel A. Levinthal
Type	Book Section
Years	2014
Publisher/ Journal	Springer
Tittle	Mindfulness and Organizational Change
Author	Rona Wilensky
Type	Book Section
Years	2016
Publisher/ Journal	Springer

Tittle	Bringing Mindfulness and Joy to Work Action Research on Organizational Change
Author	Kathryn Goldman Schuyler Michelle Olsen Taylor Orit M. Wolberger
Type	Book Section
Years	2016
Publisher/ Journal	Springer

4 DISCUSSION

This section will elaborate on our finding from the literature search. It will not only elaborate on the rationale the scholar developed on connecting the concept of mindfulness and organizational change but also the results of their study.

4.1 Mindfulness and Resistance to Change (Charoensukmongkol, 2017)

The article titled "*contribution of mindfulness during post-merger acquisition*" (Charoensukmongkol, 2017) shows the relation of mindfulness in the frame of mindfulness characteristic, and organizational change in the lens of resistance change. The characteristics that might be associated with mindfulness are optimism and general self-efficacy (Gärtner, 2013). The author postulated that Merger & Acquisition might fail due to the resistance from the employee. Previous studies have explored the characteristic of the individuals and various organizational factors that contribute to resistance to change (Marks and Mirvis, 2011; Wickramasinghe and Karunaratne, 2009). In addition, the author also stated that mindfulness might enhance the readiness to change (Gärtner, 2013). However, the author posited the study that empirically focuses on the relation of mindfulness and readiness for organizational change, it has not been done yet.

The author argued that each of individuals has different abilities and capabilities to cope with change, and referring to appraisal theory, and individuals will encounter two phases of appraisal in a challenging situation or stress coping during organizational change. The first phase, primary appraisal in which they evaluate the threat. The second phase, secondary appraisal where they evaluate their capabilities to deal with the situation (Fugate, Kinicki, and Prussia 2008). The results from

these two steps of appraisals will impact on their positive or negative attitude toward organizational change.

In this article, the author did not directly connect mindfulness with resistance to change, but, through characters that associated with mindfulness; optimism and general self-efficacy (Gärtner, 2013). *Optimism* is essential during organizational change as the employees whose have pessimist view will resist changing as they believe that things will be getting worse. On the other hand, the optimist employees will perceive the organizational change as an opportunity. The previous study has shown that mindfulness was helping individuals to develop an optimistic attitude (Kiken and Shook, 2011). Especially, in ways it facilitates individuals to avoid seeing situation based on the negative and habitual pattern. Furthermore, mindfulness also reduces negative bias (the tendency to value more negative information) (Kiken and Shook, 2011). *General self-efficacy* defined as the "belief in one's capabilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to meet given situational demands" (Wood and Bandura, 1989). Self-efficacy helps individuals to cope effectively with organizational change (Cunningham et al., 2002). The role of self-efficacy lays on the second appraisal stages, as when the employees believe that their capabilities are lower than capabilities required, then they will be reluctant to change (Armenakis et al., 1993; Bandura, 1983). The previous study shows that mindfulness promotes individuals' self-efficacy through mental clarity and emotional stability (Charoensukmongkol, 2014). In addition, mindfulness allows individuals to control negative emotions through perceived control and self-regulation that lead to self-efficacy (Gärtner, 2013). Furthermore, mindfulness enhances individuals' ability to see thing nonjudgmentally that associated with realistic perception, that will facilitate self-efficacy development.

The sample of this study is full-time employees at a subsidiary of a Japanese multination bank in Bangkok that acquired a local institution. There were 141 respondents, and the survey was conducted after one month of the official date of the merger. The author contended that first-month post-integration was the most stressful period for the employee as they have to face many changes. The method to analyze the data is partial least square. The framework and the result of the study as shown in Figure.1

The result shows that mindfulness positively relates to general self-efficacy, but not significantly influence optimism. General self-efficacy significantly influence optimism, but insignificantly
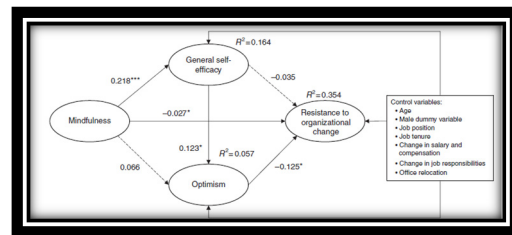

Figure 1: The results of the study.

influence resistance to organizational change, while optimism negatively significant to resistance to change. In short, the paper implied that the relation between mindfulness and resistance to change is indirect through general self-efficacy that impacting to optimism that leads to resistance to change.

4.2 The Role of Mindfulness in Leading Organizational Transformation (Aviles and Dent, 2015)

This paper aims to study the cognitive strategy that will examine and scan all facets in the environments that lead to changing behavior that might increase the success rate of organization change. The authors argue that much of organizational behavior is mindless that based only on the routine or based on the learned behavior that gained from experience, socialization, and symbolic management. This mindless behavior will negatively impact the success of the organizational change. Therefore, to increase the success of organizational change, it needs a different approach that moves beyond the current process. The authors contended that Socio-cognitive aspect of change could determine the success of the change. Thus, the authors explored the usefulness of mindfulness to enhance the success of the organizational change.

The authors categorized this paper into four research questions; how may mindfulness alter behaviors in organizations, how may mindfulness/mindlessness affect change in organizations, strategies to improve mindfulness in organization change, and actions to reduce organizational mindlessness. Due to the focus of this study that centers on the connection of mindfulness and organizational change, then, this paper only focuses on the second question of the study done by (Aviles and Dent, 2015)

The method used in this paper is a literature review using evidence-based research involving systematic review. The time frame is until 2015. There were 828 articles gathered. However, only 25

articles categorized as business, management, and social science.

The result shows that mindfulness positively contributes to change in the organization through some aspects. *First,* mindfulness enhances creativity, decreases accidents, and improves better retention of information (Langer and Moldoveanu, 2000) that helps the organization to face the challenges. For instance, one of the organizational challenged faced by the organization in the USA is a change in demography such as "graying of America." It makes it hard for the organization to retain institutional knowledge. Thus, (Langer and Moldoveanu, 2000) suggested that mindfulness helps to turn the tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge to retain institutional knowledge. In addition, due to the fast pace change of environment and technology that required a new approach or problem solving that cannot be achieved by a mindless approach.

Second, mindfulness help organization change through better communication. The concept of mindfulness is being present, that allows individual to fully paying attention at the present moment, helps to reduce the misunderstanding or miscommunication, a misperception that will be harmful to the organization change. *Third*, mindfulness improves readiness to change. Organization change can be succeeded if the members of the organization are ready to change. To improve readiness to change, the members should identify and adjust current practice that can be done through mindfulness. Mindfulness defined as "the combination of ongoing scrutiny of existing expectation, continuous refinements and differentiation" (Langer, 1993). *Fourth*, the mindfulness of the leaders affects the result of the change initiative. The study done by Higgs and Rowland (2010) shows that less successful change effort was more prominent in the leader-centric approach, on the contrary, self-aware leaders used their presence in mindful, not impulsive ways.

4.3 Organizational Mindful/Mindlessness, and Organizational Learning and Change (Rerup and Levinthal, 2014)

The paper aimed to elaborate on the relevancy of organizational mindfulness and mindlessness, into organizational learning and change. The unit analysis in this study is the mindful organization that reflected in a high reliable organization. The author contended that learning is important as it will impact on the success of change in products, structures, schemas

faster or cheaper than competitors. Furthermore, the authors posited that the inability or unwillingness to change is related to the learning process. Normally, organizations more focus on exploitation rather than exploration, as exploitation provides a more optimistic reward with familiar knowledge and condition. On the other hand, the exploration might bring uncertainty to the organization. Managing tension between exploration and exploitation is part of a learning process as (Fiol and Lyles, 1985) stated that "the process of learning involves the creation and manipulation of this tension between constancy and change."

The authors proposed three dimensions theoretical framework that integrates; the period of learning occurs (rare-often), the extensiveness of the object learning (local-global), and the degree of cognitive intensity in the learning process (inert of reflective). This framework is both overlap and distinctive. Overlap in the way its focus not only on seizing the importance of retrospective and, but also the focus on a proactive aspect of organizational learning and change. Distinctive as it captures a unique aspect of organizational learning. Thus, this framework allows conceptual integration involving cost and benefit in retrospective and less-mindful vs. more proactive and mindful learning of the change. For instance, the organization may wait and see until some events are coming and change is necessary, then brace the impact. Alternatively, the organization may proactively scan the environment through realizing unexpected, rare event that emits signals, even the weak one, that predict that something might happen and develop a system to detect and learn from those signals. Both will bring some costs and provides some benefits; the question will be in which approach will bring more benefits compared to cost. In short, this paper proposed that mindfulness and mindless organization should be integrated to enhance organizational learning and change. In addition, mindfulness and the mindful process should be viewed as co-constitutive phenomena, not as parallel or separate processes as both mindful and mindfulness process are essential for organizations notice and understand the context and situation in which they in.

4.4 Mindfulness and Organizational Change (Wilensky, 2016)

This paper relates the mindfulness with organizational change through the bridge of individual changes. Wilensky (2016) emphasized that individual behavior as essential to organizational

change. Institutional change must align with the changes in the ways the individuals' function, and interact.

The change models utilized in this paper are the immunity to change model (Kegan and Lahey, 2011) and constructive listening (Weissglass, 1998). The immunity to change model emphasizes on the questions of why people in the organization do not want to change, even when they have good rationale and commitment. The theory suggests that individuals that do not change due to two reasons behind it. First, individuals usually have to compete, but the unconscious commitment to their dysfunctional behavior based on unexamined previous experience. Second, the big assumptions on how the individuals see the worlds that again based on previous experience. These big assumptions and competing for commitment impacting the daily activities of the individuals. For instance, it enables individuals to create blind spots about their selves, others, and the worlds. In addition, it ables to pulling to the direction that perhaps the individual wants to take. Kegan and Lahey (2011) provide the intervention to reveal the individuals' competing for commitments and big assumption in which they call "immunity map" that divided into four categories; new behavior, doing/not doing instead, hidden competing commitments, and big assumption. The second model, constructive listening (Weissglass, 1998) emphasized that effort in organizational change should provide equal priority to addressing and supporting the change in individual thinking and behavior. Failure in individual change entrenched in the cognitive, emotional and behavioral consequence of past trauma. Thus, it necessary for individuals to be given the save opportunity to release the felling. This is the basic intervention of Weissglass (1998), to provide the individuals structured opportunities to be listened attentively. In addition, Wilensky (2016) proposed that Mindfulness will help the individuals in doing immunity map and constructive listening through two primary ways; strengthen ones self-awareness and increasing the ability of individuals to cope or tolerate with emotional discomfort. Change in individuals will enhance the success of the organizational change.

4.5 Silent Transformation, Another Approach of Change (Goldman Schuyler Et Al., 2018)

This a book section, "Bringing Mindfulness and Joy to Work Action Research on Organizational Change" (Goldman Schuyler et al., 2018) shows how

organizational change can be done naturally, without forcing the members to attends some training, or forced to do something. This paper showed how organizational transformation-in this case to a mindful organization- can be done gradually without any force or pressure. In the beginning, the author explained the views of organizational change, and their rationale on how change should be done in fluid ways or viewed as a process rather than a thing, and how mindfulness fits of the process of view of change, then the results of the action research.

Traditional views on organizational change described a linear model of change that engaging predictable steps that can be planned and managed (Graetz and Smith, 2010). On the other hand, it has been more than fifteen years the scholars in organization behavior aware that change is a non-linear process, it is a continues process. In the constant flux world, planned change is less appropriate (MacKay Bradley and Chia, 2013). Van De Ven and Poole (2005) categorized scholar in organizational changed into two categorized; ones see the organization as comprised of thing, while others emphasize on organizing as a process. Van De Ven and Poole (2005) traced these different opinions based the Greek philosophers; Democritus and Heraclitus. Democritus described all of nature as comprised of stable materials substance or objects that do not change. However, they are changed only in their development and adaptation to other dimensions and properties. On the other hand, Heraclitus described that reality not as of a collection of things, but one of the process. Thus, there are groups of scholars that see the change in a more fluid way. "*Change is an intrinsic feature of reality, and we need to find new ways in which change may be studied and reported*" (Antonacopoulou and Tsoukas, 2002; Van De Ven and Poole, 2005). Some scholars drew interest to the fluidity, pervasiveness, open-endedness, and indivisibility of change such as the study done by (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002; Van De Ven and Poole, 2005). In addition, Chia (2014) suggested to perceived changed as an organic process that can be managed through the acts adaptation to ongoing, ever-changing, and naturally occurring phenomenon. He proposed to see change as a state of being. Thus, managing change does not require active intervention that can be lead to anxiety and resistance. Furthermore, he proposed the notion of letting happen, as *"the world is perpetually changing, and that uncertainty, incompleteness of understanding and even lack of coherence lies at the core of all human endeavors"* (Chia, 2014). In his view the traditional approach is "*effort-intensive, energy-*

wasteful and, therefore, highly costly; much heat and friction are generated and wasted in overcoming incipient resistance". Therefore, he suggested that a strategic approach to let the change happen that involves effortless and quiet infusion of silent transformation.

Seeing the rationale above, then the authors stated that If change is seen as an ongoing state of being, then mindfulness is able to contribute significantly. Mindfulness emphasizes of being present that helps individual to respond to change (as a consequence of interaction) in genuinely novel ways as mindfulness "*allow the mind to relax again objectlessness attention or to let go and simply rest our minds in bare attention*" (Rinpoche and Swanson, 2010). In addition, in managing change, the leaders convey a direction and engage the employees in exploring options, and let change happen (Chia, 2014). The authors conducted action research on Utah Valley University's Student Affairs (UVU) to explore the value of mindfulness in the organization. The research did not force the mindfulness practice, but, only asking the members of the department to notice moments in their lives when they were more present. As the author stated that the important aspect is the mindset of all members of the department. The leader, lead in being mindful and compassionate, not being an expert in methods for becoming

The result shows that before the practice, the participants experienced burnout, fatigue, and hard to find work-life balance. Even the authors still analyzing the data in depth (as the book published), the authors already see how the reflective practice effect the participants that change them in three levels; how they related to here and now, they connected with the meaning and purpose of work, and how they connected with others. More importantly, the data revealed that the process change emerging in a continuous, open-ended, collective, and self-organizing way.

5 CONCLUSION

The unit of analysis of mindfulness in organization categorized in two units; organization and individual. The scholar develops various method to connect mindfulness and organization change. *First*, through the mindfulness characteristic such as optimists and self-efficacy and resistance to change (Charoensukmongkol, 2017). *Second*, through the cognitive aspect that will influence the behavior then influence the success of organization change (Aviles and Dent, 2015). For instance, the concept of being

present allows the individuals to attentively paying attention to present moments, to speakers that might decrease the misunderstanding or miscommunication, the misperception that will be harmful to the organization change. *Third,* through the learning process (Rerup and Levinthal, 2014). Fiol and Lyles (1985) stated that "the process of learning involves the creation and manipulation of this tension between constancy and change" or in other words between exploitation and exploration or between mindlessness vs. mindfulness. *Fourth,* through the member of organizations' individual transformation (Wilensky, 2016). Institutional change must align with the changes in the ways the individuals' function, and interact. The organizations should provide some opportunities for individual change and reduced their unconscious barrier to change that based on previous experience. *Fifth*, through the change itself (Goldman Schuyler et al., 2018). If we view change as a process, not in a predictable model, then a change should be done in fluid ways and how mindfulness fits in the process of view of change.

The results of these studies show the impact of the organizational change in several outcomes. *First*, it shows that relation between mindfulness and resistance to change is indirect through general self-efficacy that impacting to optimism that leads to resistance to change (Charoensukmongkol, 2017). *Second*, Mindfulness leads to some behavior that smooth organization change such as; optimism, better retention of information, creativity, better communication, self-awareness of the leaders (Aviles and Dent, 2015; Wilensky, 2016). *Third*, When organizations changed viewed as a process, not a thing, as we see the river as ever-changing flow, not as a river, then the process of changes can be done naturally without any force. The actions research shows how mindfulness smooth the natural organization change in Utah Valley University's Student Affairs (UVU) that consist of a thousand employee (Goldman Schuyler et al., 2018)

However, even though previous scholars have developed paths to connect mindfulness and organizational change, the correlation might be still ambiguous for certain people, but, it might be understandable for the ones whose practice mindfulness that already experience the benefits of mindfulness.

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